

## COUNTER/Weight 17: Metal That Has Died Twice

Transcriber: Alexis (@alexiorsays)

[RECAP]

AUSTIN (as Tendency Porter): Well this here is uh.... It's uh, it's a thing I'm interested in, and I think that it would make more sense for it to be in my hands, ah, than in the hands of the people who have it currently; ah, it's a bunch of religious fanatics, you understand, they call themselves the Iron Choir.

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[*The Long Way Around* playing]

JACK (as AuDy): We have the capacity to contact the Iron Choir.

ALI (as Aria): Wait, how?

JACK (as AuDy): I- oh.

KEITH (as Mako): Yeah I dunno where they live, how'd you know where they live?

JACK (as AuDy): Well! Oh.

ALI (as Aria): Yeah!

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JACK (as AuDy): We'd like to contact Sister Rust. We would like to have a conversation with her, face to face.

AUSTIN (as Tungsten): Well she ain't comin' here. You're gonna have to go see her, out on the seabed. My understanding is that there's a bit of a blockade keeping them from the central domes, these days. OriCon has stepped up their military presence.

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AUSTIN: You get a better picture of the orb. The fog disperses, and what's revealed is a kind of crisp picture of a little stream.

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AUSTIN: It says [excitedly] "Cassander Timaeus Berenice! You've been chosen! Click here to-" and you're like "ah, I can't, lemme just click off-" and you click it by mistake. And it seems like it's a Liberty and Discovery Automatic Corps application, and it's just tracking your device right now.

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ART (as Cass): I need to go with AuDy because we're the people they saw earlier.

AUSTIN: Sure.

ART (as Cass): Mako, you need to use that mobility to be like on call and *get* the orb. Aria, I think is heavy weapons. I think-

JACK: Hmm.

ART (as Cass): I think you're either gonna be diversionary, or potentially brute force.

[END OF RECAP]

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AUSTIN: Alright. So. You take up out of, you leave out of the Rethal-Addax Spaceport here, right, to the east of Centralia, and begin to head around the dome as the sun rises in the early morning. I think this is probably an early morning sortie, like five, six A.M. As you get to the north end of the West Shore Dome, dome 32-- Aria, are you still in the ship? At what point do you leave?

ALI: I think I leave before, like-

AUSTIN: Immediately?

ALI: I get into the Brilliance, and like, get out.

AUSTIN: Ok. Ok. Then, I'll say that both the Brilliance and the Kingdom Come catch the scanner, catch this on the scanners at the same time, which is that, like, this whole part where that black- there's a black line running south from the West Shore Dome, down into the seabed. That whole space is marked on your scanners as a no-fly zone. The OriCon Expeditionary Group has marked it as a place where no civilian vessels are allowed to move. What do you do? Both of you individually. I guess, so on the Kingdom Come, as that beeps up, let's say, Tungsten points down at the unfinished freelev- or not freelev system, Starlight Straight system, the lev-train system, and that's like lower, and he points down at that as if to indicate that that's the path you should take. But Aria, you don't see that happen, 'cause you're not on that ship.

ALI: Right.

JACK (as AuDy): Do we follow the train line, or do you want us to fly that low?

AUSTIN (as Tungsten): You should fly through the gap. It's probably the only way to go unnoticed.

JACK (as AuDy): Aria.

ALI (as Aria): Yeah?

JACK (as AuDy): Fly through the gap-

AUSTIN: Do you communicate with her?

JACK: Uh, yeah, we have, um, we have our phones, right?

AUSTIN: OK-

ART: Yeah, but is that- do you wanna tell this guy that you're with another person?

JACK: [Inhales] Ooooh....

AUSTIN: Also, are you ready to communicate over, like, airwaves right now? That's the other thing that I'll say.

JACK: In front of the other guy.

AUSTIN: Not just in front of the other guy. In general.

ALI: We have that weird, like, virus-

AUSTIN: This close to the- right. Just this close to the no-fly zone stuff.

ALI: Mmm.

JACK: Oh, I know what I do. Ok. So. The, ah..... Oh, my goodness, the Dead Metal don't fly spaceships, do they?

AUSTIN: They do not.

JACK: Ok, so-

AUSTIN: Or as far as you know, anyway, right?

JACK: Ok, so it's unlikely this dude has been in the cockpit of a ship like this before.

AUSTIN: Right. Other than the crashed one that they've torn apart and stuff.

JACK: So I guess I just reach forward and click a load of switches, and say to him, "Oh, we're beginning the descent," and begin to descend; but on the outside of the Kingdom Come, the beams, the spotlights, are all snapped around to face the Brilliance and flicker on and off as we begin our descent.

AUSTIN: Nice. Ok. Give me a "Cool" check to "Act Under Fire", AuDy.

JACK: Of course... and the "under fire" here is Dead Metal just staring at me.

AUSTIN: No.

JACK: Ooh, okay.

AUSTIN: The "fire" is OriCon noticing you.

JACK: Great. Eleven.

AUSTIN: Eleven! Nice work. You easily slide into- there's like a... again, to describe, the rail line has like, a big gap in it, where the giant rail cars, would like, zip through, and you're able to like, fly the Kingdom Come down into that groove that's been cut into the ground here. And the other thing here, is that it goes deeper and deeper because it's running along the seabed, right? So it's like, as you get deeper and deeper out into the now-desert, you know, it's just cut deeper and deeper into this rock formation. Aria, do you follow? Or what do you do? So at this point, let's say that the Kingdom Come is getting out into the sea. Do you follow closely, what's your plan here?

ALI: [hesitant] Um, no, that's probably your best bet... my other idea would be to, like, is it like a security stop?

AUSTIN: If you get caught, it- that "Cool" roll that AuDy just made was to not be stopped and questioned.

ALI: Okay. 'Cause I was gonna say, like, if I get stopped and questioned, I would say like "Oh, I'm investigating these people, they're bad... You should watch out for them!"

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

ALI: [laughs] "But... once I tell you to!"

ART: So, to be clear, if you mess up, your plan is to just burn the rest of your team?

ALI: [laughing] No! No, no no, I mean, like, the Iron Choir-

AUSTIN [simultaneous with Ali]: I think she meant- the Iron Choir, not the Chime-

ALI: Yeah, I'm going here to like- yes. Yes, yes, yes.

ART: Oh.

ALI: Yes. Yes. Yes.

JACK: I think the Brilliance is pretty distinctive.

AUSTIN: It is. It is.

ALI: [laughs] Just to be like, oh, I'm not in a civilian ship, I'm like-

AUSTIN: So are you following them, or are you staying back? What are you doing for now, Aria?

ALI: Uh, I'm following them.

AUSTIN: Okay, then give me... you should also give me a "Cool" check. And actually, now that I think about it, it should be- hang on one second...

ALI: Oh.

AUSTIN: Well you got it, but I just wanna make sure that that's the right roll, given that it is with your ship. But I think it is. Yeah, "Cool" plus "vehicle's power." So yeah, you're totally fine. So yeah, you slip down there too, your scanners though are like *filled* with OriCon signatures, all the way through this groove. You know, any time that you pop your head up, even a little bit, you see that there's just dozens and dozens of OriCon vehicles out here. A combination of Rooks, and a number of supply vessels, and they are kind of sending out active sonar, like, scanning, throughout the dead- throughout the seabed, but you're able to dodge it. It's a long travel, this way, because you can't go as fast as you'd like to, AuDy, because if you go that fast, you'll crash into the walls of this thing.

JACK: Haha, yeah.

AUSTIN: Eventually, they start weaving to and from, trying to keep aligned with the seabed, and then eventually the track kind of runs out, but thankfully that's also just about the end of the

no-fly zone, like right here. Off in the distance you can see a form, and for Cass and Mako, it's kind of like you emerge- so you emerge from this trench, right, and Cass and Mako, the last time that you were in the West Shore Dome, you saw that darkness to the west. And now you can see it much, much more clearly. There is another dome that has been broken to the west. It has been shattered, through the roof, and you can see that because poking up out of it is a giant, giant machine. It is a humanoid shape, and its head is down, and you can't shake the feeling that its head is down in prayer. Those of you old enough-

JACK: Ohhhh...

AUSTIN: Apos- I guess, Cass, for sure-

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: Cass, for sure. Cass is maybe the only one here, I think, maybe, who knows this for sure. But you recognize it as the Divine of Addax, the Divine Peace.

JACK: Sister Rust told me that they worshipped a Divine, right? But she didn't tell me what it was.

AUSTIN: I think she said that they worship the Divine Order.

ALI: Yeah, which used to be Peace.

AUSTIN: Which used to be Peace. I don't know that she talked about it, [inaudible].

JACK: I don't think so, I just know that it was here. Huh.

AUSTIN: And it towers over a city. The dome is shattered-

JACK: Because it's there?

AUSTIN: There are bits of it that are- because it's literally poking out through the dome, it's bigger than the dome is. Right? There are bits of the dome left, but, you know, whoever's inside there is completely exposed to these elements. As you pull up closer and closer to it, you see signal flares launch up into the sky, and they seem to be indicating a pathway for you to come land. What do you do?

JACK: I look at Tungsten and go, "Down there?"

AUSTIN: He nods.

AUSTIN (as Tungsten): Home sweet home.

JACK: I guess I follow.

AUSTIN: Alright.

ART: This is like, this is like being near an A-bomb, though, right?

AUSTIN: Yes.

ART: This is like finding out they worship, that there's a, that like in the middle of their house there's an atomic bomb.

KEITH: To be fair, it's an atomic bomb named Peace.

JACK: No. It's named Order, now.

ART: [inaudible]

KEITH: Oh, it was named Peace. I got the reverse.

AUSTIN: AuDy knows that it's named Order. I'm pretty sure that she told them that it was named Order, that they worshipped the Divine Order.

KEITH (as Mako): Huh! You didn't mention any of that, to any of us.

AUSTIN: No! It didn't come up. Ah, in fact I think Tungsten, at first sight, does, reaches down and lifts up the upside down symbol of Peace and kisses it, and lowers it again. You're guided down to a landing pad, and you can see all of the freelevs that you'd fought previously, those sorts of things, and you can also see that there's like way more people out here than you'd thought there might be? As you come in for a landing, you actually fly past the Divine's shoulders, and like lower down into a courtyard; it like clearly used to be like a hotel courtyard and you park the ship, and there are people there waving, but on your way down you can see that there is a great deal of like, hustle and bustle throughout the place, and people are like walking to and fro. There's not much color out here- there isn't the pomp that was in the monument square, but there is still life here. The majority of people are not outfitted in the kind of religious iconography and the almost hyper-zealous, very religious clothing that the Iron Choir members were wearing previously. Aria, I just remembered what I wanted to ask, what are you doing?

ALI: I think that once we pass the no-fly zone, we, I kind of wait there?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Sounds good. The ship goes in, past the Divine, and lowers, and you lose sight of it, and you cannot talk to AuDy anymore.

ALI: Oh. That's bad.

AUSTIN: Yep. Ah... What do you do, when you park, AuDy? And, and Kingdom Come crew.

JACK: Um, so I guess...

JACK (as AuDy): Tungsten, can they come with us?

AUSTIN (as Tungsten): [Mumbling] Su-

KEITH (as Mako): I'd like to go!

AUSTIN (as Tungsten): Sure. But stay close, don't go anywhere you're not allowed, don't go anywhere unsupervised. We'll know.

JACK (as AuDy): Okay.

AUSTIN (as Tungsten): These are good people. If you hurt them... [sighs].

AUSTIN: And he leaves, and opens the door and heads outside.

JACK: So I guess we follow him, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Out front are a number of people, who are dressed in the kind of clothing of the Iron Choir, and the immediately begin, they bring out old, or they have with them kind of old rusty- or maybe rusty's wrong, but like worn, uh, pallet-like, what do you call those things that you lift-

KEITH: Pallet lifters.

AUSTIN: Not pallet lifters...

JACK: Oh, like, over here we call them sack trolleys.

KEITH: Nope, we don't call them those!

AUSTIN: Nope!

KEITH: "Sack trolley" is something *entirely* differ-

AUSTIN: It is like a hand truck. Yes. "Sack trolley" got me the thing! Uh, we call them hand trucks over here I guess-



JACK: Of course you do.

AUSTIN: And begin to load boxes of food onto them and pushing them around, out through this kind of courtyard from this hotel, and into the city streets.

ART: I think the Divine is completely transfixing for Cass, I think Cass is like basically slack-jawed.

AUSTIN: Yeah. There is a vibe here in its presence. There is a very real feeling of strangeness for you three, in that you spent the last decade-plus of your life living in this world where everything felt so precarious between a few specific poles, right. The world felt like oh, it could become more like the Diaspora, it could become more like OriCon, Apostolos could rise again, war could kill us all. And here is a weird culture that doesn't even seem to know about those things, living its full life.

This place is bombed-out, but kind of has been patched back together. There are, as far as you can tell, similar sorts of establishments that we'd find in Centralia. There are restaurants, that are not really well attended, I guess it's midday, or maybe it's like early, but there are people who are making food. There are people who are distributing flyers in the streets here or there. There's a big group of people down towards- like there's a main boulevard that leads down towards where Order is, and there's a huge group of people walking down there, who are dressed in like finery, presumably heading towards some sort of religious ceremony, but like not everybody's doing that here.

It's very quiet. It's *incredibly* quiet. Coming from Centralia, and anywhere else on Counterweight, where it's just a constant overflow of information- here, it is just, there's nothing. There's like a low din of conversation between people, but that's about it. And none of your connections work, to anything, right, you're not getting any data at all from any of your devices. Tungsten leads you through the streets, this way and that way, a few key turns, and takes you to an old post office. Leads you through the front door, up the stairs, there are a couple of people downstairs, like, checking, you know, looking at like clipboards, and checking things off, and some of the food gets moved in here, into the back rooms, which have been converted from kind of parcel delivery places, or parcel- what do you call it when you like, look through a bunch of different things- like parcel separation- into like, just ration separation and distribution center.

And Tungsten leads you upstairs, to where you find Sister Rust, not in her, like, full nun getup, but still in what looks like a kind of- you've seen like a Catholic priest on his off day, he still kinda looks like a Catholic priest- it's like that. Right? He isn't in his full regalia but he still has the collar on, right? And I think that's this. She's there, at a desk. You know, she still has a gun at her side. She's still, like, uniformed, but is not ready to go to war in the same way. And she looks up, and says:

AUSTIN (as Sister Rust): Ah. AuDy the Dead. Welcome back. It is good to see you. Your friends, I'm surprised to see them, though.

JACK (as AuDy): Hi. Ah-

KEITH (as Mako): Wait, it's good to see AuDy?

[pause]

AUSTIN (as Sister Rust): Yes. He's<sup>1</sup> ah... He is one of us, even if he doesn't know it. Sit, please.

JACK: I guess I sit down.

AUSTIN: It's an old, it's an old chair, it's an old wooden chair-

JACK: Ooh-

AUSTIN: And it doesn't quite break, but it's one of those chairs where you're kind of like leaning on your tippy-toes 'cause you definitely don't want it to actually break.

JACK: Um, okay, I have a... Is AuDy dead by choice, or by design, by now?

AUSTIN: Did you-

JACK: I'm not asking, this is a, like, so we talked about AuDy not being networked.

AUSTIN: Oh, oh oh oh oh. It's definitely by choice. It has to be by choice. Because if it's by design, then AuDy could never have gotten into that body. AuDy got into that body via the Mesh.

JACK: Is that permanent?

AUSTIN: I don't think so. Nothing is permanent.

JACK: I assume that they would know, they'd notice if I started emitting, right?

AUSTIN: ...Yes.

JACK: "Emitting." [laughs]

AUSTIN: Someone there would notice.

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<sup>1</sup> AuDy uses they/them pronouns.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: They are attuned such.

JACK: Fine. Um...

ART: A fuckin' Divine would notice.

AUSTIN: Sure would.

JACK: Okay. Sssso...

AUSTIN: Maybe. If it's aware.

JACK: What are our directives, again, Cass? Don't say "Boom(???) in front of Sister Rust."

[Art and Jack laughing]

AUSTIN: I will remind you of your mission directives, separate from your tasks-

JACK: Oh no, sorry, I mean the tasks that Cass has set us.

AUSTIN: Okay. Yeah.

ART: Oh, you're trying to find out where it is, and divert their resources away from it, so Mako can grab it.

KEITH: And I'm on orb recovery.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: But Cass doesn't have a task... Okay... Alright... Fine. Okay. I'm trying to work this out.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK (as AuDy): Sister Rust. We have received word that OriCon is mounting an attack on this location. Specifically, ah... aw, crap.

[Ali laughing]

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

KEITH: Wait, okay hold on-

AUSTIN: Nn-no, finish your sentence! [pause] Or don't, maybe, is that the end of the sentence?  
Is mounting an attack on this-

JACK: I guess, I guess... ah. I guess, "is mounting an attack on the location."

JACK (as AuDy): We thought it would be in your best interests to receive an early  
warning.

AUSTIN: Give me a "Fast Talk"...

JACK: [nervously] Mmm... [inhales]

ART: And take your plus one...

JACK: Thanks.

AUSTIN: Take your plus one. Yes.

JACK: [quietly] Thank you. Fast Talk is uh...

AUSTIN: What are you trying to get from her with this? This is-

JACK: I'm trying to get her to believe me and reassign forces I guess.

AUSTIN: Okay. That's what you're trying to get, her to reassign forces. Good. We're clear.  
[Reading manual] "When you try someone to do what you want to do with promises, lies, or  
bluster, roll 'Style.'"

JACK: Well this is definitely bluster!

AUSTIN: Yep!

JACK: Okay, so...

ART: [laughing] It's a little bit lies!

KEITH: [laughing] Also a bit lies, too.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Well, it could not be! It might not be lies, depending on how Aria does some  
stuff!

JACK: Yeah I'm, I'm hedging my bets here.

AUSTIN: We'll see.

JACK: Also, I assu- yeah. We'll be fine.

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm!

[Jack laughing]

AUSTIN: Rolled a three!

[Ali and Keith making pained groans]

AUSTIN: That's good. That's good!

ART: Plus one!

KEITH: [as if dragging hands down face] No, no, no, you guys are still good, we're still good.

JACK: [simultaneous with Keith, Ali] Nope, nope. I included that.

ALI: [simultaneous with Keith, Jack]: This is fine.

JACK: Nope, I-

AUSTIN: This is good.

JACK: [flatly calm] It was a three. I rolled "Mind."

AUSTIN: It was a three. You lose your bonus plus one going forward. Ah... Also, I advance a clock, that's good...

JACK: [nervously] I'd like to go on record that dice failed me there. [laughs]

AUSTIN: They did! They did fail you there.

KEITH: To be fair, that is also the only way you can be failed in this game, is for the dice to fail you.

JACK: That's true.

AUSTIN: Right. She stands up, and like turns her back to you, and opens the, there's like curtains behind her, looking out over the city. And she shakes her head, she says:

AUSTIN (as Sister Rust): We've been watching OriCon for the last few days. They seem... content with holding their position. I don't believe you, AuDy. And I think... I think you're here because you want something.

KEITH: Listen, he didn't wanna worry you.

[Jack laughs quietly]

AUSTIN: Aria.

JACK: Aria, this would be an amazing time...

AUSTIN: No!

ALI: I'm...

AUSTIN: Ha ha ha, Aria, you notice some new things pop up on your scanners.

ALI: Oh.

AUSTIN: There's like, six, seven, eight, nine units moving in. They're small, they're not as big as a Rook. And you run, like some preliminary scans, and they have Liberty and Discovery Automatic Corps markings on them.

ALI: Oh, but of course.

AUSTIN: They're in fact, they are Liberty and Discovery Automatic Corps "Bright Silhouette" drones, and they fly right over your head, and towards the Divine Order. It's a shame no one convinced Sister Rust that there was a threat incoming, because there *definitely* is.

["The Antenna" playing]

JACK: Right. So, I guess AuDy turns and looks at Cass. AuDy doesn't have any eyes or a face but it's definitely a pointed look, just for like one second, and then they look back at Sister Rust and goes:

JACK (as AuDy): Sister Rust, I came here to bring you a gift.

JACK: And they reach up, and they pull out antennae. AuDy has these two long antennae that come off the top of their head, and they just pull one out of their head. And they hand it to Sister Rust, and they say:

JACK (as AuDy): An artifact: metal that has died twice.

[Pause as music continues]

AUSTIN: Sister Rust takes the antenna and like looks at it for a second, and she says, "You're here for something." And she takes the antenna, and like, curls it, and loops it around her holy symbol, at like the bottom of it, and adds a chain to it. Like a link to the upside-down Peace symbol.

[Music ends]

AUSTIN (as Sister Rust): What is it you're here for, volunteer?

JACK: Hmm. I guess I just glance over at Cass for a second. [chuckles]

ART: I, I think I give the, like, the-

[Ali giggling]

AUSTIN: [amused] You have to describe what that is for the listeners.

ART: [laughing] Ah!

JACK: [laughing] He made sort of like a "yeah, go on!" gesture.

ART: Yeah, like, go on! [laughing] You know what we're here for!

JACK (as AuDy): You have an object in your possession that we would like.

AUSTIN (as Sister Rust): We don't have much, here.

JACK: Ooh, do we have- oh, there's no network here. Dammit.

AUSTIN: Mm-mm. No.

JACK: We're looking for... I assume we've all pooled our research by now, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think so. Also, just to be clear, this is like a change of tact, right. At some point AuDy decided to be up-front?

ART: Yeah, well he failed.

JACK: [protesting sounds]

AUSTIN: Okay. 'Cause there was that bit where you were going to try to convince them to reassign forces, and open them up to-

JACK: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Okay, so, so once that failed, you switched tact-

JACK: What I was anticipating was she was going to take it to where the thing was.

AUSTIN: I see. I get where you're going. No, she just kept it.

JACK: [simultaneously with Austin] She just, she just put it on?

[Ali chuckling darkly]

ART: Oh...

AUSTIN: Yes, she's wearing it now. I see.

JACK (as AuDy): We're looking for a golden orb...

AUSTIN: You might still have this, just on local... Is there or... [crosstalk, inaudible]

JACK: [crosstalk] I don't want to freak them out... [crosstalk, inaudible]

AUSTIN: I'm curious if there even is local data, anymore.

JACK: I bet they've gotten rid of it, I bet they don't need [crosstalk, inaudible]

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's all, it's all in the cloud, right? It's all in the...

ALI: Yeah, and I'm sure AuDy would be like, weird about what he saves onto his hard drive [inaudible]

JACK: [simultaneous with Ali] It's a planet, it's a whole planet out there.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that too.

KEITH: I bet they've got like a journal somewhere.

JACK: [simultaneous with Keith] I don't think that they have- I reckon they have- Yeah, I reckon I have like 200 megabytes [Ali giggles]; or, or I have the opposite, which is, I have like 7000



terabytes or whatever, but that, nowadays, is just, tch. [simultaneous with Austin] It's like a half a movie.

AUSTIN: [laughing] It's one song, yeah.

ART: Yeah, well think of how much your life is, right? In terms of data?

AUSTIN: Oh, boy.

JACK: [confidently] It's about 14 gigabytes, right?

[Art chuckles]

AUSTIN: Ahh... ok. So.

JACK (as AuDy): So. Yeah. We're looking for an orb. It's about this big.

JACK: I guess they go like this.

JACK (as AuDy): Well, we don't know the size. It appears to us to be about this big.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: We imagine it to be about... Do we have pool still? About a pool ball.

[Ali and Keith laugh]

JACK: About the size of a pool ball. A really large pool ball. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Ugh... Wait, like a pool ball, like you're playing pool, like billiards, or a ball that you play with in the pool.

KEITH: I was thinking billiards. [crosstalk] I imagine it to be billiards size.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Okay. She shakes her head and says,

AUSTIN (as Sister Rust): I'm sorry we can't help you.

AUSTIN: I think... AuDy should give an assess, maybe? I think this is an Assess. Or I think someone- I guess I shouldn't ask for that. That's not the way this should work. Someone here at some point should have talked about studying her, this is the sort of thing where that would come in handy.

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: So, Assess is when you closely study a person, place, or situation, or when you quickly size up an opponent in a charged situation roll Edge, which, I'm only suggesting because we've kind of taken- for people listening at home, we took like a couple days break between the last episode and this episode.

ART: So our [inaudible] is a little...

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

ART: I'm willing to roll Assess, I feel like that's-

AUSTIN: That's a Cass thing to have done?

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: Yeah, go ahead and do that. [pause] And you got a nine, which means [reading from the book] "you gain one hold in the ensuing action. You may spend one hold at any time to ask the emcee a question, from the list below, if you examination could have revealed the answer. The emcee may ask you questions to clarify your intent. Take +1 forward when acting on the answers. Potential complications-" Oh, this is when you study a person, place, or situation or when you quickly size up an opponent in a *charged* situation. This is not a charged situation, but you are kind of closely watching her.

JACK: It feels pretty charged.

AUSTIN: Charged tends to mean, like- I guess, maybe when you offered her the antenna, maybe it became charged. Charged tends to mean a situation that could explode into violence.

JACK: Ahh.

AUSTIN: Or, violence, physical or emotional or men- you know, of some sort. Uh, [reading from the book] "what potential complications do I need to be wary of; what do I note despite an effort to conceal it; how is blank vulnerable to me; how can I avoid trouble or hide here; what is my best way in, way out, way past; where can I gain the most advantage; who or what is my biggest threat in this situation; and who or what is in control here. That's the sort of move you might want to start rolling whenever you can. You know, those are pretty useful.

ART: Uh, this- ugh! One more, and I would have-

AUSTIN: This is hold! This is hold, so you don't have to, you don't have to-

ART: Sure. But “vulnerable” and “notice despite an effort to conceal” would both be super useful right now, and I don’t know which one to pick.

AUSTIN: Yes. Yeah.

KEITH: Wait, what was the first one?

ART: “What do I notice despite an effort to conceal it.”

AUSTIN: You don’t have any other bonuses here, right? No.

KEITH: I feel like that’s the- that’s the key one, I think.

ART: Well... You know... “Vulnerable” is always fun.

KEITH: Yeah, but we can just kind of, like, we can just kind of figure that out on our own.

ALI: Yeah, I think that’s gonna probably become clear.

KEITH: That’s gonna come up.

ART: We’re terrible at figuring things out, you guys. It’s like none of you are listening to this show.

[Jack laughs]

KEITH: I feel like- I feel like we’ve been okay!

AUSTIN: [simultaneous with Keith] Okay, let’s move on. Let’s not have this debate again.

ART: What do I notice despite an effort to conceal it.

KEITH: [simultaneous with Art] We have to have this debate at least once a week. It’s in our contract that you made us sign.

AUSTIN: It’s the worst. It’s the worst. Art, what’d you say?

ART: What do I notice despite an effort to conceal it. [simultaneous with Austin] Is it the big gold orb?

AUSTIN: Sister Rust- Sister Rust- [simultaneous with Art] Yeah, it’s that she’s wearing it. It’s the third chain. She’s Flavor Flav, except the gold chain, the gold orb is just right there, where the clock would be. [Jack laughing] She, when she says “We can’t help you with that,” you see her

eyes, like, slightly turn towards the window, and like look out at the kind of fallen Divine. Like unconsciously looking at where the orb is.

ART: Sure. I don't wanna go there. Could we...  
[00:30:00]

JACK: Yeah, that's just-

ART: Remember last time, when we were like "let's just fake it!" Could we just fake this one? I don't wanna go to the Divine.

[Austin and Keith laughing]

JACK: [crosstalk] I don't have any gear anymore.

ART: [crosstalk] How much could [inaudible] cost?

KEITH: [crosstalk] To be fair, Divine things are like, my whole thing, though.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. That's true.

JACK: That's true.

AUSTIN: Aria. You notice another- they're in the distance still, but another five, less, like, stealthy blips show up on your radar. Um, they are probably... So, that first set of things flew past you like, five minutes ago. These next ones are probably twenty minutes away, from the direction of OriCon, or from the direction of where the OriCon forces were, and they're much higher in the air, they're not as, they're not running low the way you are. Which is why you pick them up.

ALI: Um, do they have, um, the OriCon, like... coding on them? Or the other things I saw the second time I saw them.

AUSTIN: The second time, you were able to run like an analysis on what they were, and you knew that they were these... They're registered as Bright Silhouette drones, your computer just analyzes them and is like oh, that's what these are! These are Liberty and Discovery Corps Bright Silhouette drones. And these are too far away to register what they are or what they're registered to.

ALI: Okay. And I don't see any, like, action in the distance from the Bright Silhouette ones?

AUSTIN: They're getting close now to the city.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: To the broken dome. What do you do?

ALI: I dunno- they're kinda doing my job for me! [laughing] So-

AUSTIN: Okay! You don't have to do anything, this isn't a- just wait, that's totally fine.

ALI: Yeah, no no no, I... [pause] I feel like I head closer to the city? To see if maybe, I could pick up a signal on the rest of them. 'Cause I don't know what's going on.

AUSTIN: Right. Um, as you get closer, no, you're not receiving anything.

ALI: Right. Yeah.

AUSTIN: And you can tell, in fact, that there seems to be a dead zone. There's a moment that you pass inside of that you lose the... you can't track the other objects that were coming in before, and with a little bit of testing, you actually realize that there's like, almost a line. You pass a certain line and they vanish off your radar, you go back out of it, and they show back up.

ALI: Okay. So I stay past that, like, so that I can still know that stuff is around me.

AUSTIN: Keep- okay. Okay.

ALI: But then at least I'm closer to the city, so if stuff does pop off...

AUSTIN: Yeah, I imagine you're like landing down on like a little hillside, a little, like, desert cliff.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or maybe like, under it, a little bit, so that someone from above couldn't see you. You know?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. So, back inside. What are you guys doing?

JACK: I guess we-

ART: Umm... Trying to create a diversion so Mako can go to the divine?

AUSTIN: That's the new plan?

KEITH: "Hey, where's your bathroom?" That's worked for us before, right?

AUSTIN: Sister Rust goes, like,

AUSTIN (as Sister Rust): Oh, it's right over-

AUSTIN: And before she can point, there's an explosion, probably, I mean it's loud. It sounds loud. Which means it's either nearby, or it's echoing through the canyons of these old abandoned buildings. I don't think- I think the fact that this place is so deserted means that sound travels in a really frightening way. Like, explosions are already scary, but explosions that echo through already empty cities are even worse. She springs into action quickly and is like, before you can say another word, shoots you guys glances [Jack laughs], like "if you're fucking responsible for this at all," like she clearly is blaming you for what is happening. And like, moves out the door and starts shouting orders to the rest of her group.

JACK: We warned her about this exact situation! Well, we were [crosstalk, inaudible]

KEITH: [simultaneous with Jack] To be fair, we were bluffing.

JACK: Well. Yes.

AUSTIN: Right.

[Keith laughs]

KEITH: We don't even know this is that exact situation yet!

AUSTIN: Well it isn't *that* exact situation.

KEITH: Oh, I see. A different exact situation?

ART: Well as long as it's not Aria, it's not us... We're all here...

JACK: Do we want to just... take advantage of this?

ART: Yeah. This was the diversion I wanted, except better, 'cause it's not us that rigged the explosion.

[Ali laughs]

JACK: Austin, do I have access to my drones? [crosstalk] Or can I not reach them?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] No. Aren't they in the shi- They're with the ship-

JACK: [crosstalk] They're with the ship which is parked, like-

AUSTIN: Also, how do you control them?

JACK: Uhh-

AUSTIN: Previously, the way you talked about controlling them before was using "Gear" in the Kingdom Come to operate them.

JACK: Not the dog- no, the dog flies itself. I mean it-

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: The dog drives. It does itself. But the... Junebug, I need to fly from inside.

AUSTIN: Right. So what's your telecommunications connection with? Is my question. 'Cause I-

JACK: With the dog?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Ver- verbal?

AUSTIN: 'Cause if it's verbal, then you have to be there... so is it with you?

JACK: I don't think- I think it's on the ship, 'cause-

AUSTIN: Then you'd have to go to the ship to talk to it. Unless you're connected- oh, well here, it doesn't matter. Here, if you're connected to the mesh, then you can't talk to it anyway.

JACK: I don't think that they're even connected to the dog, generally.

AUSTIN: Right, that's kind of what I figured.

JACK: It doesn't seem [crosstalk, inaudible]. Okay, should we just go? Should we just aim for the Divine?

[Pause]

ART: Oh. I thought- I thought we should just send Mako to the Divine and you and me should hang out to not look quite so guilty.

[Pause]

JACK: Should we just sit down? In this office?

[Ali giggles]

AUSTIN: [amused] Um... the office next to yours explodes. And debris starts flinging through the [simultaneous with Art] offices. This is not a safe place, is what I would say.

[Ali giggles]

ART: [simultaneous with Austin]: Alright, well we're gonna run back to the ship.

KEITH: I wanna get that ball!

AUSTIN: You can do that!

ART: Right, the ball's in the Divine. *You* should go to the Divine ahead of us, honestly.

AUSTIN: [scoffs] "Ahead of us."

KEITH: [disbelieving] Okay.

AUSTIN: Good.

KEITH: I hop on my space skateboard.

AUSTIN: So you run outside, do you go through the front door, or do you just jump out this window? [inaudible]

KEITH: I jump out that window.

AUSTIN: Alright, good.

KEITH: I jump out the window *before* I even have the board off my back.

AUSTIN: Right. Good.

JACK: Cool.

AUSTIN: As you fly up out from like, this kind of lower building up around some of the skyscrapers in here, you see that there are about nine... sorry, there are eight of these ah, circular drones that are... about the size of a car, in like, weight, and stuff? But are-



KEITH: Size?

AUSTIN: Size, but in- they're circle- they're not like, long, elongated rectangle things, they're like circles, that are like-

KEITH: So it's like a, it's like a Honda Civic if a Honda Civic was a circle?

AUSTIN: Yeah, like a Honda Civic if a Honda Civic was a circle. Exactly.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: With like, little turrets pointing out the bottom and the top, and they're like shooting, and they're like turning sideways, and like going through different- they're like basically doing trench runs through this place, just blasting the shit out of it? Ah, and there's also another... there's another unit that is like a rigger, it looks like, that is a bunch of kind of oblong- it has very like, modular, oblong-looking pieces? As though it's like a long, long oval for the legs, and big oval-y arms, like, antennas sort of like AuDy's were, coming up of the side of it; its face is kind of like circular or round, and everything really nicely curved, everything kind of has a very, ah...

KEITH: So whoever these people are, they hate angles.

AUSTIN: They hate angles. They hate them. And that's flying slowly, way above the rest of the city, and is scanning, clearly looking for something. What do you do?

KEITH: [stage whispering] Guys. I bet I know what it's looking for!

AUSTIN: Heh.

JACK: Cass- is it in my best interests to actually start fighting from the air?

AUSTIN: I mean, you're not at your ship yet.

ART: Yeah, we should get to the ship, and you should-

JACK: [simultaneous with Art] What I'm saying is, when we get there do you want to stay on the ground, and I'll just try and engage them in the air?

ART: Yeah. I'm not entirely sure what I'm gonna do on the ground, but I'm not any-  
[simultaneous with Jack] I'm not any use up there.

JACK: [simultaneous with Art] Well, you could come with, but-

KEITH: You do have- you do have a robot.

JACK: Oh, yeah! Do you have... where is the Megalophile?

ART: Nope.

AUSTIN: [simultaneous with Art] It's in the ship! It's in the ship.

KEITH: Yeah! Okay, so you could just take the robot-

ART: [simultaneous with Keith] Alright, I guess I just go to the ship to get my giant robot.

AUSTIN: Okay. As you- as you two run out the front door, these drones are doing strafing runs, and the sis- sorry, the Iron Choir is like jumping into action. There's lots of shouting and yelling from the civilian population of Seabed City. Uh, and there was that procession going towards what is now a church, is yelling and going inside, in the distance you can see people are like, rushing for cover. You guys are heading towards the... the ship, give me- either each of you individually can give me a "Act Under Fire," or one of you can give me an "Act Under Fire" and the other one can help.

JACK: Uh... I have two Cool points

ART: I also have two Cool.

JACK: Great!

ART: But it's probably better to help, right?

AUSTIN: It's up to you.

JACK: Well- our Links, our Links are good.

AUSTIN: [simultaneous with Jack] I actually don't know what the math works out-

ART: Yeah, I'll roll my plus Link, and I'll help AuDy.

AUSTIN: Okay, how are you helping.

ART: I'm using like, military experience? I'm like, "hey look, there's that! It's gonna go over there. Don't be there when it explodes."

AUSTIN: Right. Sounds good. Give me a- give me your Aid check?

KEITH: So you're using your military experience to provide on-the-fly definitions of bullets.

[Austin chuckling]

ART: Yeah! Don't get hit by that!

[Keith laughing]

AUSTIN: I think probably like, you know what the strafing run, like the proper tactical strafing run, like "okay look, they're running north-south patterns up and down these roads, meaning if we go east-west we'll be able to time moving, like, diagonally through these streets," or something. That's an eleven! That's nice! So AuDy, take a +1, on your roll to act under fire.

JACK: Okay. I'm just gonna add one to this number...

AUSTIN: Yep!

JACK: Eleven!

ART: Oh!

AUSTIN: Nice. Nice work. So you manage to move through the streets as things are popping off all around you, and you get to the Kingdom Come, and you see that there are- two of the drones have begun, like, circling around that hotel courtyard, and are like... They're not shooting at the Kingdom Come, but they're definitely like, scanning it. Mako. You're on your... Tech Deck, you're on your Ring of Saturn, what do you do?

KEITH: Sorry, what's the- what is the distance between me and the Divine and me and the turrets?

AUSTIN: You're...

KEITH: Turret ships?

AUSTIN: Those are like spreading out across the city, so there are a couple of those... You're within a turn, let's say, of any-

KEITH: Of all of them?

AUSTIN: Or, not of any, but of a couple of the drone ships, a couple of the Silhouettes, and then you're also... You would have to "Act Under Fire" to get to the Divine, but you could get there by acting under fire and trying to get there, you know?

KEITH: Okay. Okay. I'm... fairly certain, that while the rest of this stuff in this town is "dead metal," these new ships are not that.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

KEITH: So I'm going to try to... to compromise them with my head.

AUSTIN: Okay. Ah, while you're flying around... Give me an "Act Under Fire" first, and then you'd have to... Because that's the- they'll be shooting at you when you do this.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: As a new thing flying around in the air. So give me an "Act Under Fire"... [inaudible]

KEITH: Alright. Is anyone still with me?

AUSTIN: No. I mean, now you're flying around, right?

KEITH: Okay. I'm just like- there's no one- just, yeah, everyone, everybody else went to the ship?

AUSTIN: Um, Mako [sic] and AuDy did, yeah.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And then, and then, the Iron Choir is sort of jumping into action, too, and you can hear the roar of their, their, you know, their traditional fuel-based engines coming up as their gear starts to roll out into the streets. [Keith groans] They have like, big, like, flak cannons they've rolled out, from little garages and stuff? Like, big, old things that just shoot metal, right? They just shoot just *junk* that they have, almost like cannons.

JACK: Weapons from a sequel to Mad Max that takes place in a city.

AUSTIN: Exactly. [pause] I would watch that movie, by the way.

KEITH: Um... I've got a bad feeling about this roll, I'm just gonna press it.

AUSTIN: Alright! Succeeds partially.

KEITH: Oh! So, almost bad but not!

[Jack chuckles]

AUSTIN: Right! So you got a seven, um... Actually, you know what, you get +1 to that, 'cause this is *definitely* still "according to the plan," right? Like, this is your, you want to get through that to go-

KEITH: [simultaneous with Austin] I'm on the thing, getting the thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah. But on a 7-9, [reading book] "you stumble, hesitate, or flinch. The emcee will offer you a worse outcome, hard bargain, or ugly choice." Let me take a look at your sheet really quick... Um, let's see. Oh! Also, lemme see, wait-wait-wait, you're making this move from your thing. From your...

KEITH: From my board, yeah. [simultaneous with Austin] Oh, is that a Synth thing?

AUSTIN: Which means, [simultaneous with Keith] you're actually rolling Cool plus- no, it's Cool plus your Power. Plus your... plus your vehicle's Power, which is two.

KEITH: Two! Oh, so it's ten!

AUSTIN: So yeah, you're good, you got it.

KEITH: Perfect!

AUSTIN: So yeah, you manage to like, you're dodging between all of their incoming fire, and then you get to now make your attempt to log in to that.

KEITH: Alright.

AUSTIN: So give me- give me a... what is the first, the "Jack In" move.

KEITH: Hold on- "Jack In" is Cool, but "Log In" is Synth.

AUSTIN: I think you have to "Jack In" before you "Log In."

KEITH: Okay. So I have to just do both in a row?

AUSTIN: Uh, well "Jack In" is just, gets you- okay, sorry. "Jack In" is when you get jacked in.

KEITH: When you get jacked in you get [inaudible].

AUSTIN: Yes. So you're jacked in now. You manage to connect to them through- I think the thing here is, you have to keep line of sight with them? You have to, you can't- 'Cause the mesh isn't like, in the air, here? But you can still, like, laser-sight your connection there, it's part of what they trained you, right, it was like-

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: Even when you, even when Divines deploy, or even when Divines deploy EM jammers, or whatever, you're able to connect through your weird super powers.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So yeah, roll Synth.

KEITH: Synth. Al-right. [pause] It's an eleven.

AUSTIN: It is an eleven!

KEITH: Without any bonuses, an eleven.

AUSTIN: Totally! Um, alright, so, 10+, you're in clean. So you see that these, the- okay, so. You're- Heh. This is actually really weird, because, because you're flying around physically, this world just kind of- the world you've kind of zipped into, like, their network, just maps onto the world around you in a weird way? Where it's like, it was a weird dilapidated city, but the second you get in, it's like a living city? It's a version of this city from before it fell. And it's like, oh! People are on the ground, walking about their day, meanwhile these drones are flying around, and around each drone is, like, a weird aura of gold that represents the different nodes of their network. And you can see that they're all networked, when they're near each other, they're networked together, and then they break apart, but they're all like networked to one hub, which is that mech.

KEITH: The circle thing?

AUSTIN: Which is the main, the main rigger, that is like, high above the sky. But right now, you're just in like, you're just in the main zone. So now you'd have to either go after individual drones, or try to move through like, closer towards one of the hubs or something. You can also see that the different drones have some different functionality, like there's one of them that is in charge of, there's the two that are hovering over the hotel, and they have like, oh, they're the ones who are running, like, the scanning software. [Keith mm-hms] There's one of them that's running the militar- like the, uh, the tactic- the tactical program, and that's the one that's ordering them to like, go through the different fight patterns, you know, or the flight patterns.

[00:45:00]

KEITH: Do you think I could- I could hack into the one that's got the tactical software and mess with them enough to have them start colliding into each other?

AUSTIN: Sure! Give me a... let's see... that's probably "Manipulate"... So you zoom closer to it, so that you're within its orb, basically.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So that you can access that directly. Yeah, give me a "Manipulate Systems."

KEITH: Umm... "Manipulate Systems." That's another Synth roll?

AUSTIN: That's another Synth roll, yep.

KEITH: Okay. Oh, also, for, um, "Log In," I got a ten, so-

AUSTIN: Yes.

KEITH: Okay. Never mind.

AUSTIN: No, don't you get a- get a-

KEITH: I don't choose anything.

AUSTIN: You just get- isn't the other one the one where you get to- when you jack in?

KEITH: Yeah. With "Compromise Security," uhh... hold on... let me- I still-

AUSTIN: Haven't totally internalized these... yeah.

KEITH: I feel like the switch to this game has streamlined everybody else's but made mine much more complicated?

AUSTIN: It is, but it's also given you some stuff that's like, better.

KEITH: That's some cool stuff that I can do.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay, here we go: [reading from book] "When you-"

KEITH: "-touch a secure system, roll Mind." Is that what you're looking at, Console Cowboy?

AUSTIN: Also, it's- no, sorry- oh, right, you *a*lso have Console Cowboy. Yes. That's the one.

KEITH: Yes. Alright. Console Cowboy...

AUSTIN: So that's roll Mind.

KEITH: That's a seven... Plus one is eight.

AUSTIN: Plus one is eight, yeah, you're not gonna get above that. So what's that say... On an eight- or on a seven to nine...

KEITH: I gain one hold, I may spend the hold for any of the following: [reading from book] "Prevent a construct from triggering an alert, avoid an ICE routine executed against me, my deck, or my programs, increase my hold over compromised security systems, or manipulate the system that I want."

AUSTIN: Okay, cool. So you get that one hold.

KEITH: Yep. And then... Now I can do Manipulate Systems-

AUSTIN: Yep!

KEITH: Which is the Synth roll. And that's a twelve.

AUSTIN: Nice work! That means- and that says when you do that, you can Manipulate Systems three times, I think? Is that correct?

KEITH: Uhh, "gain three hold over the subsystem [inaudible]," yeah.

AUSTIN: So that means now you have three hold to do stuff with their military tactical thing. So you wanna spend one hold to make them attack each other?

KEITH: Umm...

AUSTIN: Is that what you said you want-

KEITH: Attack each other... I want them mostly to *think* that they're still, uh, doing their complicated military maneuvers, but actually they're colliding into each other.

AUSTIN: Okay. Cool. So yeah, you can spend- each time you spend one of those holds, that will happen once.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: So you do that right away, and two of the ones that are strafing the Iron Choir people slam into each other and explode.



KEITH: Okay. Great.

AUSTIN: Let me take that as a Harm for them. Alright. Back to Cass and AuDy. So you're there and you can see the two drones above you, are you just running for the ship?

JACK: Yeah, should we just go for it?

ART: Yeah, we can't do anything on foot against these. I mean, I'll shoot them with my gun, but that's not gonna work...

AUSTIN: That's not gonna work. Uhh-

JACK: I have a shotgun.

AUSTIN: So you manage to sprint into- [chuckling] yeah, the shotgun's not gonna reach, probably. You sprint into the Kingdom Come, and you actually have to strong-arm your way past some Iron Choir people, who are like there to keep you from getting back on board, clearly, but have since become, like, "Oh, my god, there are drones, what is happening." So, you head back in, you go through the launch proceedings, and you can be in the air, if you want.

JACK: Yeah. Can I take off into the drones?

AUSTIN: Uh, they'll break away, when you do that. They're not gonna-

JACK: Ohh, I can't hit them?

AUSTIN: You can give me a- you know what, give me a... That sounds like a Play Hardball- or not a Play Hardball, that sounds like a Mix It Up to me.

JACK: I'm threatening you, drones. I will hit you with my spaceship.

AUSTIN: Or no, Mix It Up is when you use violence against an armed force to seize control.

JACK: I'm a small gang!

AUSTIN: You- well, now that you're in the ship you're not a small gang.

JACK: Oh, rats!

AUSTIN: The ship isn't a small gang. You know?

JACK: It's a large gang!

[Crosstalk, inaudible, Jack and Austin laughing]

AUSTIN: So yeah-

JACK: That's what, my Meat score?

AUSTIN: No, it's not your Meat score, 'cause you're piloting, so when you're piloting, you're rolling Synth instead of Meat. Synth plus your vehicle's Power.

JACK: Okie-dokie. And my vehicle's power is...

AUSTIN: Two. I think it's two.

JACK: So that's an eleven.

AUSTIN: That's an eleven. You did it. So on a seven to nine-

JACK: Oh- my ship's power adjectives are-

AUSTIN: Yeah, give-

JACK: -are rugged, and workhorse, which I think works really well [inaudible].

AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally. I think it just like, the starts up really quickly, like it's ready to roll as soon as you start it up, like you didn't let it warm up, do you know what I mean? Just- it's that- it's BRVWRRM! And it slams into the drones, and they go flying off, and crash into each other. That is another- oh, you know what? They count as a gang, that whole group. This system is weird- so, there's some transparency for you guys, these eight drones don't each have their own HP pools, there's just "the drones" as a single unit, that count as a small gang. But that's... You do damage to them. You're good.

JACK: "The Drones" sounds like a backing group.

AUSTIN: It does, it does. And guess what: they kind of are!

JACK: Yes!

AUSTIN: Ahh... Cass- you launch?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Do you launch once he's off the ground, or do you just like, step out as he's lifting off?

ART: I think I launch once he's off the ground.

AUSTIN: Give me, give me your launch, give your-

JACK: [incredulous] Do you just drop out of the bottom of the ship?

AUSTIN: What do you- what's Cass say as he<sup>2</sup> takes off?

ART: Cassander. Mark.

AUSTIN: Hm. So you like, catapult out of the back of the Kingdom Come... Where do you land?

ART: Oh. Uh, on a building?

AUSTIN: Okay, cool. You land on a building, it's an old building, so it crumbles a little bit, but it holds. It might even sink a little bit into the ground, with the weight of the Megalophile landing on it, but you definitely are able to land. What do you do?

ART: So there's, there's a bunch of drones, and then there's the one rigger commanding the drones?

AUSTIN: That's what it seems like, yeah.

ART: Ahh... I wanna shoot my railgun at the rigger.

AUSTIN: Okay. Give me a... Mix It Up. Which is Synth plus your Megalophile's Power.

ART: Alright, so this plus two. Damn.

AUSTIN: Beautiful! So- you rolled a twelve. You're shooting your railgun, right? Is that on your arm, or your shoulder...? What's the Megalophile's-

ART: I believe it's a shoulder-mounted Armored Core-style weapon-

AUSTIN: Nice.

ART: Where it kind of goes to a knee and...

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<sup>2</sup> Apostolosian pronouns default to they/them. This would probably include Cass.

AUSTIN: It folds down, and it's like "be be be BEEP," and you have the lock and you fire. The second you fire, one of the other drones spins up from another, from one of its routes, and intercepts that rail shot, which is *incredibly* impressive-

ART: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Because rail shots go very quickly. But hey, you hurt that drone army.

ART: I'm very impressed.

AUSTIN: Aria, you see five- in the distance, you can now see with your visual sensors, five incoming riggers. They are all Rooks. They all seem to look modified; they all come up as like, Rook Customs, of various sorts.

ALI: Okay-

AUSTIN: You... [thinking sound] You can't recognize them yet.

ALI: Okay... [laughs] "Yet." Um, how much of like what's going on in the city can I see?

AUSTIN: Mm. Oh, now you can hear it. Shit's poppin' off, and I think you even see the Kingdom Come, like from a distance take off. You know?

ALI: Okay. Um, am I able to enter the city? Do I still have to get past the Divine to do that, or can I just-

AUSTIN: No, the Divine's inside the city. So yeah, you can totally go in...

ALI: Oh. I mean I know I'm seeing everyone else fight, so maybe I realize that I should help them?

AUSTIN: Totally.

ALI: What am I closest to?

AUSTIN: Um, you could get to the Kingdom Come pretty quickly.

ALI: Okay. So then there's a few drones left, and then there's that one rigger that's like in the sky, kind of just not... doing anything... ?

AUSTIN: Yes. It hasn't moved yet. It hasn't- at the time that you look at it, in fact, yeah. You see it pass into the actual broken side of this dome, right?

ALI: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: And then, yeah. It's- maybe, in fact, when you come in, it turns and looks at you... That's actually what's happening. You come into the city, the Megalophile takes the railgun and shoots up into the sky, and like, as the drone comes up to block the shot, as like the explosion disperses, you can see that the Key Field, which is the name of the thing that's- the rigger, turns to look down at you. Like, it's behind the explosion, looking down at the Regent's Brilliance. And the moment it... Actually, no, I think it's going to turn back to the Megalophile, and it begins diving down at that.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: So what do you do? Or you know what, you're there now, that's what you just did. Let's jump back to Mako. What's up, Mako?

KEITH: [sharp sigh] So this big thing is a problem.

AUSTIN: Yeah!

KEITH: Um, how many drones are there, in total?

AUSTIN: Right now, there are two... or, there are still three left, as far as you can see.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: And those have, those have begun turning towards the Megalophile at this point, now that it's been identified.

KEITH: Alright. So I've got two hold left; instead of having them hit each other, I'm going- can I send them into the big thing?

AUSTIN: You can... You can- so you do that, as they start heading back that way, [Keith mm-hms] there's a point at which, once they hit the kind of aura around the big- around the rigger, around the Bright Field, or sorry, the Key Suit, or, ahh... the Key Field Suit! They stop. So you can do that to stop them from hitting the Megalophile, but they don't slam into the Key Field Suit. Once they get towards it, it regains- once they're in its aura, it regains control of them.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: But you did prevent them from hurting, ah, the Megalophile.

KEITH: [muttering] Well, that's something, I guess.

AUSTIN: What do you do next, though?

KEITH: Um, so by looking at the auras around the drones, I can tell specifically what their task was; can I do that to the big thing? Or is it doing different things?

AUSTIN: You don't even need to spend a thing to know that. You can just tell that. Like, it's the root. [Keith okays] If this was a server, that's the root architecture, and you can also tell- here's a thing that I'll just give you, you can actually tell that isn't just one hub. There is a hub inside of it, but that hub is actually-

KEITH: Is it a hub-hub?

AUSTIN: -itself, surround- or like, there's the hub field, right?

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: But like, inside of that, a bit further, there is something deeper, more core to it.

KEITH: Okay. Then, if that's a hub, then can I compromise its security?

AUSTIN: You can... give me a... You'd have to get close to it, again. That's the thing. You'd have to get close to it to break into its thing. Which you can do-

KEITH: Alright, is that an Act Under Fire roll, or is that-

AUSTIN: That's an Act Under Fire.

KEITH: Okay. Instead of-

AUSTIN: 'Cause that's literally-

KEITH: Instead of that, can I go towards the Divine?

AUSTIN: Sure. Totally. That's not a- at this point, you can just head toward the divine.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN. You fly like, over crowds of people, and you see that some of them are running toward the Divine. As you get closer and closer to the Divine, a thing you notice is that- it's hard to even notice this, but like, in the anime of this, the color palette shifts. Right? So at the edges of the city, the hotel, even where the post office was, the color palette were kind of muted blues and greys, but as you get closer they shift in tone and become a little bit more bright. You start so

see that there is dirt closer to it, it's like brown, like a rich, deep, brown. And then, right towards its feet, you see that there's some limited farming happening, just under the Divine. And at this point, you're probably a couple kilometers from where the action is happening, and you can see there are like people there, with like hands over their eyes, looking to see where the explosions are coming from, and like, people even there are starting to rush for cover. And one person, one farmer looks up at you, as you start to head towards the Divine, and like, points at you, as if to be like, "hey, look, there's a- what is this?" You know?

[Keith chuckles]

AUSTIN: Being in the presence of a Divine- is this the first time that Mako's been in the presence of a Divine?

KEITH: Um, I'm sure that if the September Institute doesn't have like, some dilapidated Divine, [Austin mm-hms] they have at least a really close approximation to what Divines are?

AUSTIN: Sure.

KEITH: For like-

AUSTIN: Is this- is this- does it match up? Does being in the presence of that...

KEITH: I think that, maybe it would to a different Divine, but maybe not to this Divine, where there's like clearly something else happening with it?

AUSTIN: Sure. Totally. Alright, cool. Let's hop back to AuDy. AuDy, you see that one of the remaining drones, the tactical drone, has, the one that's like in charge of the military operations? Has started to head down lower, to be under where the Megalophile is, and as part of that, it's doing a strafing run on some of the people, who are huddled near the church. What do you do?

JACK: Um, we're talking... This is the Key... The Key-

AUSTIN: No, this is just one of the- so, one of the drones had, was like running tactical situations-

JACK: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: And was like running tactics programs? And that one, now that the Key Field has taken up the other two remaining attack drones, this one has shifted into like, running a secondary program, where it's dipped under the building that Cass is situated on, so that Cass can't aim down easily with that railgun and knock it out.

JACK: Right.

AUSTIN: And as part of that, it's just always firing, basically. And it's firing towards the people who have been huddling near the church.

JACK: Okay. If I open fire on it, will I be able to hit it before it reaches the apex of its strafing run?

AUSTIN: We would have to, we would have to make a roll to figure that out.

JACK: Okay!

AUSTIN: Uh, we also- also. This is- there's a-

JACK: I feel like-

AUSTIN: Do you risk that shot? Because if you miss, and hit those people... does that break one of your Laws of Robotics?

JACK: I feel like saving the people in a strafing run is almost too obvious of a situation for AuDy's laws to switch on?

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: And I wonder whether or not, in this instance, they just see it as an opportunity. The thing is just- Also, the ship is way too big to- I couldn't get in the way of this thing?

AUSTIN: You could not get in the way, no.

JACK: Without hitting these people?

AUSTIN: Definitely.

JACK: So I think there's definitely a degree of pragmatic... like, opening fire is the best thing I could probably do, I think.

AUSTIN: Okay!

JACK: I mean, we've-

AUSTIN: Know that, if you miss, it means hitting those people.

JACK: Yes, but if-



AUSTIN: You will have killed people.

JACK: But if I don't open fire, those people are going to end up dying anyhow.

AUSTIN: Okay. So there is no conflict in AuDy's... circuits, over that.

[1:00:00]

JACK: I think they're just going, "ah, drone!"

AUSTIN: Okay. Take a shot!

JACK: Umm, yes.

AUSTIN: Again, that is again going to be-

JACK: Ohh, wait a second! Is there time for me to deploy the Junebug? Because I get rolls-

AUSTIN: No.

JACK: No? I can't just chuck it out of a window?

AUSTIN: Not- you could do that, and then that would be a thing that you could control, for like the next time we bounce around to you, right now...

JACK: But I would, like, fail. Alright.

AUSTIN: Or, you wouldn't fail- It would hit, it would do its run. Yeah.

JACK: It would do its run. Okay, I'm gonna use "Mix It Up."

AUSTIN: This is "Mix It Up." Which in your current-- because you're controlling the ship, is Synth.

JACK: Plus my vehicle's power.

AUSTIN: Plus your vehicle's power. Which is two.

JACK: So whatever this number comes up as, we're gonna add two to it.

AUSTIN: Yep.

JACK: [Sighing] Oh god.

AUSTIN: That is a four! Ah, so you, you open fire... What's the weapon that's on the...?

JACK: It is a... burst-

AUSTIN: An auto-canon?

KEITH: It's a BB gun! It's a BB gun.

JACK: Yeah, it's a BB gun. It's a bubble-- it shoots bubbles.

AUSTIN: [Lightly] I don't think it is.

JACK: It super is, Austin! That's what it is!

AUSTIN: Hmm, it doesn't... that wouldn't have helped.

KEITH: It drops a crate of fresh vegetables.

[Ali giggles]

AUSTIN: Oh, okay. I see. I see.

JACK: [Laughing] Umm...

KEITH: It's for combating food deserts.

AUSTIN: [Reading from sheet] It's a burst cannon, three harm, near-far, area, loud, messy, auto-fire... uh, so-

[Keith groaning distantly]

AUSTIN: This cannon just zz- is it on the front of the Kingdom Come?

JACK: [In a high, distant voice] It's nowhere...

[Ali giggling]

AUSTIN: It's on the front. It's on the front of the Kingdom Come, [Keith laughing] and it goes like "BRRT" and it does that thing that-- have you ever seen what the cannons on a Warthog plane sound like? There's like these Warthogs--

KEITH: Yeah, yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: Like the A-10 Warthog...

ART: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: Where it's just like "BURRRRT," and each second, is just like this incredible blast of hundreds of bullets. And those fly through the air, and you sweep it towards the drone, and the drone is like a step, is almost surfing above the bullets, and the bullets just like slam down into the church, and cut off-- separate the people--

KEITH: Jack is so visibly upset right now, [Austin uh-huhs] which does not line up with how *easily* he made the decision to, if he misses, kill people.

AUSTIN: Right? I think I was pretty clear that--

KEITH: [Grinning] You were very clear.

[Jack making sounds of protest]

AUSTIN: Okay!

JACK: If I didn't open fire...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh!

JACK: They would have all just gotten shot anyway!

AUSTIN: Eh, maybe!

ART: [Inaudible]

KEITH: Not by that gun!

[Ali laughing hard]

AUSTIN: Not by that gun.

[Keith laughing]

AUSTIN: No, this--

JACK: This gun had already--

KEITH: It's like shooting a mugging victim, 'cause they were about to get shot anyway.

JACK: No!

KEITH: It doesn't matter, they were gonna get... I get it, like who cares...

JACK: I was gonna shoot-- the drone--

AUSTIN: Anyway, how does AuDy feel?

JACK: [Flat, immediate] Nothing.

AUSTIN: No?

JACK: [Laughing] No, nothing at all. They're just, I think they probably just move the ship.

AUSTIN: I'm curious-- That's interesting to me, because it externalizes those rules in a way that I wasn't expecting.

JACK: I feel that-- Ok, so, like from a character perspective here, I feel that what I just did there was a sort of internal version of "playing hardball," as far as AuDy's laws of robotics go.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: And I think contingent to "play hardball" there is the fact that they don't have a negative reaction to it. If I had chosen to go for the rules of robotics, and then done it, and then failed, AuDy would probably be I guess as close to freaking out as they can?

AUSTIN: Okay, sure.

JACK: But now, they're just sort of like... okay.

AUSTIN: Yep. Okay, so, let's... head back to Cass.

ART: All right.

AUSTIN: There is that drone that AuDy was shooting at, has like swept behind, has done that strafing run, dodged the incoming fire, looped back around, and is now behind you. So now you're in a position where there's this one drone behind you, and then there's the Key Field suit in the air above you, with its two remaining drones aimed down at you and about to start firing. So you're sort of stuck between two incoming--

ART: How far above me is the Key Field?

AUSTIN: Higher than jumping distance? It's like thirty floors above you.

ART: Aw, jump tackle was my plan.

AUSTIN: Ah. No. It's out of jump distance.

JACK: Aw, that would have been good.

AUSTIN: That would have been pretty good.

ART: Uh, I think I wanna key onto the missiles?

AUSTIN: Okay. So you're locking-- you're gonna start launching missiles at them?

ART: Yeah, I think I want to send one missile at each target ahead of me, and I guess I'll just get shot in the back.

AUSTIN: Okay! Sounds good. That's a "mix it up," which again, is Synth. Synth plus your vehicle's power, which is two. Your Synth is one.

ART: So this plus two.

AUSTIN: Yep. Look at that! Eleven. Alright, so you launch those missiles forward... Also, let's do the harm second. Megalophile-- The shot for me is like, again, it's a sideways shot, it's a profile shot of the Megalophile's rocket launcher, or missile launcher, is that the other shoulder, I'm guessing?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Kind of coming down? And then, behind it, on the other side of the profile, in the background, that free drone, the drone that's being ignored right now, flies past the megalophile's head, and the missiles shoot out of its shoulder, and like careen up through the sky, leaving those trails, and then the... one of those drones charges down at the incoming missiles, and explodes *Missile Command*-style, so that that one explosion takes out the other ones. But there's only one of those drones left. And then the Key Field suit.

JACK: Is it the one that killed all those people?

AUSTIN: You know what? Both of those two, let's kill both of those two... both of those go down to intercept. I had to look at what their harm was currently. So those are just gone now. And there's the one behind Cass now, and that one opens fire, to do three harm. Or two harm, sorry. So give me a "harm" role?

ART: Okay, remind me?

AUSTIN: Sure. "Harm" says: [reading from book] It's a dangerous world out there, especially in your line of work. When you suffer harm, even zero harm or S harm, lower the harm suffered by the level of your armor, if any-- what's your armor in the Megalophile?

ART: Two!

AUSTIN: Okay, so lower it by two, which drops it to zero; but you still have to roll this harm. [Continues reading] Fill in any segments on your harm clock equal to the remaining harm, if there is any, and then roll harm suffered. So just roll 2d6, straight. An eight! Okay. On a seven to nine, the MC will choose one: you lose your footing, you lose your grip on whatever you're holding, you lose track of someone or something you're attending to, or someone gets the drop on you. The--

ART: Ha! I'm not holding anything! Eat it, rulebook!

AUSTIN: You're not. [Everyone giggling] The drone that you left alone slams onto you, like sideways, like from edgewise on, and it dives into you. Like it hits... what's the word I'm looking for... it digs into you, and the side of it starts to spin up, as the razor edge begins to drill down into the back, like the very tight back of the Megalophile. This will do more harm, if it is left unattended. Aria!

ALI: Hi!

AUSTIN: How you doin'? What're you up to?

ALI: So I had gotten into the city, and my plan was to approach Cass, [Austin mm-hmms] is the mech within jumping distance? I have thrusters, so I can jump higher.

AUSTIN: You can get up to it, totally.

ALI: So I do that, I like jump up and ignite my beam saber, to try and get behind it to attack it?

AUSTIN: Okay, give me a... you'll have to give me a "act under fire" for that.

ALI: Okay!

AUSTIN: So that's Cool... except is it Cool or is it Synth... Yeah, Cool plus power. So that's Cool plus one.

ALI: Hah. That is a four. Wonderful.

AUSTIN: Okay! That's good.

JACK: Hey Ali!

ALI: Hi!

AUSTIN: How's it going?

JACK: Welcome.

AUSTIN: So, as you fly up at it, you like boost up towards it, and just when you-- you have your beam saber out, and just when you're about to hit him, the suit, the Key Field suit breaks apart, and all those oblong pieces reveal themselves to be Bright Silhouette drones. And inside is a guy with like, a splash of long, up silver hair, and big red goggles, and a grin who's wearing this bright blue and turquoise suit, with a bunch of little booster packs on it. And those open up, all of those drones sort of circle around the Regent's Brilliance, and he jumps from one of them to the other, with this tether that he grabs from one of them to the other, and then swings, like Indiana Jones whip-swings from one drone to another, up and over and around you, and then pulls tight, and his laser whip has caught the Regent's Brilliance's leg, and he like plants it into the other drone, and they begin to pull in different directions. Take three harm.

ART: Who the fuck is this motherfucker!

[Ali giggles]

AUSTIN: Oh, this is [excitedly] Territory Jazz.

ALI: *God.*

ART: His name-- His mama named him Territory?

AUSTIN: His name is Territory Jazz, and he is havin' a fun time!

[Ali sighs]

JACK: Austin's fake-name generator for this game turns out to be just a tourism booklet?

AUSTIN: Basically!

[All laughing]

JACK: Where he's just got random words from.

AUSTIN: This is how the Diaspora rolls! The Diaspora is all about like, that sounds pretty fuckin'-- The Diaspora is just like, anime has weird names, how did they get there, oh, what if in culture you were just allowed to put words together until they sounded neat. That's just--

JACK: So, Cene Sixheart's name, that's very tame for the Diaspora.

AUSTIN: Yes! Oh yeah, that's a very basic name.

ALI: Uh-huh.

ART: The John Smith of the Diaspora.

AUSTIN: Remember-- Yeah, exactly.

JACK: As opposed to Cartography Maps.

AUSTIN: That's next episode! Don't spoil Cartography Maps! So, what's the armor on the Regent's Brilliance?

ALI: Uh, one.

AUSTIN: Okay, so take two harm. You take two harm, which means you go up to 18:00. And then you roll... harm, which is 2d6 +2, because you still took two harm.

ALI: That is an eight.

AUSTIN: That is an eight. So... I think your... I mean I guess this is already kind of... Let's see. You've kind of lost your footing here.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You're being held by one of these laser caltrops, or not caltrops-- these laser-like wires, and these two drones are, oh you know what? I'm just gonna read it the other way. You lose your *footing* here, and they pull tight, and the Regent's loses its one leg from the knee down.

ALI: What!

AUSTIN: And is like flying, straight down, into the ground.

ALI: That is so much worse than what you were describing.



AUSTIN: Eh, it's fine. It's good. This is what they were trying to do, they were trying to draw and quarter you, basically. But they only got your knee, so it's not permanent damage. You're just missing part of the Regent's leg now!

KEITH: Yeah, and you've got thrusters, so you're good!

AUSTIN: Mm! Speaking of thrusters, Mako!

KEITH: Hello!

AUSTIN: What are you doing. Where are you heading on this Divine?

KEITH: I want to head towards the... the... the place where I know to be the entrance?

AUSTIN: Uh... you don't know where that entrance is.

KEITH: I don't?

JACK: Does it vary, Divine to Divine?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, the Divines are all different, right? Like if you listen to the faction game, one of the Divines is like a big robot; another one is like twelve tanks.

JACK: Oh, yeah! Isn't it just like, a fleet?

AUSTIN: They're all... one of them, right, exactly. Each Divine is a completely different, unique, totally unique thing.

JACK: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: That's part of what makes them so hard to deal with.

JACK: And this is like a humanoid, like a gigantic...

AUSTIN: This is giant human-- this is a skyscraper tall--

JACK: And it's like kneeling over, or...

AUSTIN: It's kneeling down on one... I should describe it better, yeah. It is kneeling down on one leg. I'm-- The shapes in my mind for it are very similar to, like, the EVA units in Evangelion, in terms of just like, some big sharp points coming off of it in certain places, almost monstrous,

like humanoid, but not human. Right, like not... this was made to terrify people in some ways. Or at least the way it looks now, it was.

JACK: This was Peace! Oh, I see.

AUSTIN: Well, this is Order. And it is black, and gold, and grey. It has a sort of... it doesn't have the sort of... many of the robots you've seen in the world have like, eyes, and faces, right? Like, oh, it needs cameras, so we'll make a face and it'll look human. That's part of the question of this game, is in why do we do that. And this does not do that. Or at least, it doesn't have anything there. It has a head, but it is flat black where it head is, or at least right now. And it has a kind of bulky center and big bulky arms, and it looks like it would move slowly, but at the same time, because of how big it is, that would still just be devastating. You know? Each... again, I'm imagining it to be the height of something like the Empire State building. It's massive.

JACK: Kneeling down?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Kneeling down. And at the bottom are farms, right?

KEITH: You mean, it's as tall as something that it took King Kong a while to climb up?

AUSTIN: Right. Yes. Correct.

JACK: Also, this is like, out of all the Divines, this is maybe the most famous? Right?

AUSTIN: [Thinking] Yeah. This is...

JACK: This is the one that Jace flew--

AUSTIN: Or Addax. Addax flew this.

JACK: Oh, sorry, Addax flew, yeah.

AUSTIN: So in some ways, this is the most famous... Currently, I'd say Grace is the most famous, which is smaller than this, by a ways. But did not have the war history that this one did. Right? So like-- Grace is like the current president of the Divines, so to speak? So like, everybody knows Grace, but everybody *remembers* Peace. And no one has seen Order. No one outside of this group really, as far as you know, has seen Order.

ART: Aw, I fucking hate this motherfucker.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

[Keith and Ali laughing]

AUSTIN: So, you should... Mako, you can give me an assess check, to see, to actually... 'Cause it looks like you're looking for a place in.

KEITH: Okay. I am, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: So that's just... what is that. That's assess.

KEITH: That is Edge.

AUSTIN: Yeah, roll Edge.

KEITH: I don't have a very good Edge.

AUSTIN: You'll get a plus one, since it's still acting towards the plan.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Seven! Or eight. So you get one hold, and you can spend it on any of those questions. And those questions are in your basic moves.

ART: One of them is, like, "what's a way in."

AUSTIN: Yeah-- [reading from the book] what is my best way in, way out, way past?

KEITH: Yeah, I guess what is my best way in?

AUSTIN: Okay, so you know... you do like a preliminary study, which is just like, flying around it a few times? And I think you catch sight of a ladder, from its knee, up its side, and it's painted such that it wouldn't even-- Or you know what? Maybe it's not even a ladder, it's vents, but like the vents clearly are built at hand-hold length, so it's like, oh, this is where a person could climb up into this side pathway that leads into it. You're also checking to see if you can connect to any sort of network here, and right now, you can't, at least.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: So you fly up to where that thing is, and there is, there are little hand-holds that you'd have to grip, and hold onto. So do you pop off-- and there's a place where you can like, just barely stand. Do you grab them and try to open it? What do you do?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah, I'm gonna try and go in that way.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: Pop off the board.

AUSTIN: So normally, nothing would happen. But, I think I have to give you a chance to Log In.

KEITH: Sword in the stone?

AUSTIN: ...Not exactly. Sort of.

KEITH: No?

AUSTIN: Sort of! Like, what if... You have to convince it you're Arthur, right?

KEITH: Right. Yeah. I have to fast-talk the Divine into thinking that I'm...

AUSTIN: Or, maybe not even fast-talk it. Give me the Log In roll. Which, again, that's Synth?

KEITH: Alright. That's... a nine.

AUSTIN: Nine. Alright, [reading from book] when you attempt to gain access roll Synth, on a seven to nine, you're in, but choose one. Passive trace, plus one trace; Ice is activated, an alert is triggered, advance the mission clock--

KEITH: Okay-- I'm going to trigger an alert, and then use my one hold from Console Cowboy to--

AUSTIN: This is a different system. This is not that same system.

KEITH: Dammit.

AUSTIN: So, roll Mind, now, because you are connecting to a secure system.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: In fact, you should have rolled that first, because you connect before you log in.

KEITH: So hopefully I can do that same move but with this system.

AUSTIN: Yes, exactly. [Pause] You do not, you in fact rolled *five* on Console Cowboy...

KEITH: I roll a five! Or no, that was on Compromise Security, is that the wrong roll?

AUSTIN: No, no, sorry, you should be rolling Mind. For Console Cowboy.

KEITH: Okay. I rolled... That was for Compromise Security. So roll Mind.

AUSTIN: Well is that the same stat?

KEITH: Uhh... Oh. Yeah.

AUSTIN: So we'll just count it as that. So, you don't get Console Cowboy, which actually makes a lot of sense; Console Cowboy normally would have given you those bonus hold that you can use when you're in that system to cancel out negative effects.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or to automatically succeed at other rolls. So you don't get that, and I think it's because this is just the first time you've been in this Divine.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or any *actual* Divine.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: Physically, you're also doing this, right? I think you kind of expect it to open up, the way most systems do? And literally, you're the side of this door. And you like pull at it a few times, it doesn't open smoothly-- you just have to like, yank it up. And in the process, you're opening it in a way that isn't... you're forcing it, you know?

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: It isn't opening for you. And as you step inside, it's a little hallway that opens up into a museum, inside of the holographic projection of what the system looks like. Inside, it's just a tunnel. And it like, goes for a long time. And it's hard to tell if that's a trick of being connected to the system, or if that's a trick of being... or if it really is just like, yeah, this is really big. But it's black, and as you step, little purple lights turn on with each step that you take. And it blends, again, this is a weird space, 'cause it blends the physical and the hologram-- the like, area around it. So it's a black hallway for real, but inside of the weird holographic projected museum, there are displays all around you of Peace in different fights. Right? So there's like, Peace punching into a giant, or not a giant, but a fairly large spaceship, and just tearing through it. There's one of Peace shooting a bunch of different beams off of its sides, like upper body, at a bunch of different targets that are exploding around it. And it's sort of like the way the sphere, these are like weird holographic gifs that are animating for a few seconds and then looping?

Except these are like those perfect gifs that just roll forever? It looks really good. And the final one is a close-up of Peace... the side door of Peace, open, and another suit, this kind of black rigger, that has its cockpit open.

[*The Long Way Around* starts playing]

AUSTIN: And in the middle of it are... you can see there are two pilots. One is on the side of Peace, and one is coming out of this other black suit. And the two of them are jumping off and reaching for this golden orb.

[*The Long Way Around* continues]

Episode End 1:21:07