

Tabletop Squadron Transcript, Tink Interstitial 1, Part 2: Mynock Lake

Transcript by Tyler (Twitter: @Tyler_MoonSage)

Intro

LILIT: Hello, and welcome to Tabletop Squadron, a Star Wars: Edge of the Empire actual play podcast. I'm Lilit, your MC for today. Every other Thursday, our story follows a thief, a bounty hunter, and a slicer as they explore the galaxy helping a mysterious benefactor and each other.

Except for today, where we follow a slicer as they explore the stage helping a prima donna dancer and themselves.

Music for today's episode can be found in the show notes. Enjoy.

##

NICK: Hello! Welcome to Tabletop Squadron. I'm your host and game master, Nick. We're back again for Part 2 of our ballet saving adventure? I always do this thing, I forget what I'm gonna, or I don't realize what I'm gonna call it until we're recording. Oh well. Uh, ballet adventure fun times go 2000 double plus premiere edition.

HUDSON: Yeah!

NICK: That's the name of the episode.

AARON: It's a good name. Yeah. It's a great name.

NICK: Let's go around the table and everybody introduce themselves and say what character they're playing today, and if you have any plugs to do it's a great time, starting with Hudson.

HUDSON: Hi. My name is Hudson, and I play Tink, a Gigoran slicer whose pronouns are he/him.

NICK: Nice. Wonderful. Next we got Aaron.

AARON: Hudson's were so succinct and to the point, and here I am in my head trying to go over everything.

HUDSON: [laughs]

AARON: I've already doddled just in this explanation more than Hudson has introduced themselves.

NICK: [laughs]

HUDSON: I can plug if I need to plug, but...

AARON: I'm just saying, the heat is on. Hey everybody, I'm Aaron J. You can hit me up on Twitter at the handle @ImAaronJ, pretty easy to figure that out. I'm playing Azul, our favorite Mirialan dancer with a lightning bolt tattoo down their left arm. Super excited to be here. If you like what you hear, which I hope you do, check out my show UniCURSEity on iTunes and all of your favorite podcatchers. Just type in UniCURSEity wherever, shout it into the universe and it will come back to meet you, and yeah, I think that's about it.

{EDIT: new handle, @TurboHoodie}

NICK: Well, but if you shout UniCURSEity into the universe you might end up versus the universe, right?

AARON: [smiling] How dare you.

HUDSON: Ohh...

NICK: [laughs]

AARON: How dare you. Very good. My company is named Versus the Universe. How dare you, Nick.

NICK: Yeah~ But yeah, I love UniCURSEity, I love what you're doing with the Astound project, I think everybody who hears about it should definitely check it out. It is great.

AARON: Thank you, friend.

NICK: I want Season 2 real bad.

AARON: I want Season 2 as well, but self-isolation and social distancing has prohibited Season 2. [laughs] But hey, it's on paper, we just need to do it.

NICK: Ehh, I don't know... Fine. Good.

HUDSON & AARON: [laughs]

NICK: Alright. When we last left off, Tink had been sort of contracted by a, or scouted I guess, by a bar patron of mysterious origin to go and help a ballet company with a computer problem, was able to find that place pretty quickly, meet the premiere dancer for this ballet company, fix the lighting, but someone mysterious in the rafters dropped a sandbag towards the second dancer down on the stage, and they attempted to find this mysterious figure who vanished into the dark and basically decided to keep looking, and we'll start right about there.

We will not do another Destiny Roll because this is kind of a one-shot setup, but as a reminder we are sitting on three dark side points right now, so fun for me, none for you until I decide otherwise. Ha-ha.

HUDSON: Mwahaha.

AARON: Wow, Nick really is a jerk. Can you believe this? Three dark side points?

NICK: It's true.

HUDSON: yeah, worst GM ever.

AARON: Some Scooby Doo nonsense.

NICK: [laughs] And so, that's where we are going to kick it off.

We open on the sun rising above the theater, the light of the sun filtering down. You're 10 or 15 levels down in Coruscant, so there's no direct sunlight, but it filters down and goes through the small drizzle of water that goes over the theater and through the flickering lights. We never decided what the theater is called. What should we call it?

AARON: The Catastrophe Dome.

NICK: [startled] Okay! Great! [laughs]

AARON: Catastro-Dome? I don't know. It just sounds cool, right?

NICK: I like the Catastrophe Dome.

AARON: [softly, pondering] Catastro-Dome...

HUDSON: Catastrophe Dome works for me, because it's like deeper artsy ironic or something.

AARON: Yeah, yeah, it's called the Catastrophe Dome: Theater in the Ground.

[laughter]

HUDSON: Alright. Alright. I like that.

AARON: Yeah. We're like 10 or 12 levels underground, right? So it makes sense.

NICK: Yeah. It's 10 or 12 levels down from the top, because Coruscant is like all skyscrapers built insanely high, so you're just not exposed to air, so yeah you're basically underground. Theater in the Ground. I think the Catastrophe Dome was originally a theater built specifically for a show called Catastrophe. It was about large loth-cats singing about why they should be reborn, but that show failed horribly because it sounds terrible and is a really bad idea, so your ballet troop was able to pick it up for really cheap, which is how you got started here.

AARON: Perfect.

NICK: So, we go inside. This is the next morning. Did Tink and Azul search all night for clues or did they call it quits at some point and are they meeting up again?

HUDSON: I don't think they went all night. I think they called it a night.

NICK: Okay. We see Tink walking into the theater and down the ramp. Would Azul be an early riser, Aaron, or coming in around the same time?

AARON: Oh, Azul has been there I think for an hour or two already, and when you come upon the actual stage Azul is there, towel at one side, water bottle on the other, and they're just stretching now. They're probably in a split and they're extending their arms from one foot to the other just trying to get as limber as possible, because they know it's gonna be a long, long day of detective work.

HUDSON: Tink comes in holding a drink carrier with two Spacebucks coffees tucked into it, and you meet by the stage.

AARON: Yeah. I think once Azul sees the Spacebucks coffee they immediately bound up and just run towards Tink, arms open.

AARON (as Azul): Ohh, best friend! Thank you. This is so good~ Getting my bean juice in the morning~

HUDSON (as Tink): Yeah, yeah~ Best friends 'til the very end, yeah~

AARON: Azul looks at you, Tink.

AARON (as Azul): I know we did this last night, but... can I get back on my perch spot?

HUDSON (as Tink): Yes you can.

AARON: In one fell swoop, plies and jumps off the ground and elegantly jumps on top of Tink's back and is just now Yoda-ing on your shoulders with their Spacebucks drink.

NICK: How tall is Azul?

AARON: I think Azul is, let's say like 6'2", but it's all muscle, it's all tone, there's probably not an ounce of fat on them, very, very slender.

HUDSON: So I start running around and going:

HUDSON (as Tink): Weeee!

NICK: [laughs] You're having a grand old time, and the rest of the dance squad is starting to filter out on stage for the morning rehearsal. Azul obviously beat them all there, was getting all warmed up and ready, because she is a leader and must set a good example. One of the chorus dancers, a Kaminoan guy, is looking around confusedly as the rest of the group starts to show up.

NICK (as Kaminoan): Hey, uh, has anyone seen Selona? I haven't seen Selona—I saw her come in, but she should be out by now.

AARON (as Azul): If Selona is late for call then we're not gonna be able to rehearse anything today. Ugh, Tink, you wanna go off and find her or should we send somebody else?

HUDSON (as Tink): Yeah, I'll go, I'll go after her. The Twi'lek, right?

AARON (as Azul): Yeah, and you know, I just wanna make sure nobody's alone right now.

AARON: Azul looks back at the rest of the dancers.

AARON (as Azul): Find a buddy or two. I don't want anyone going anywhere solo right now. Tink has told me sometimes case solving takes like a moment, other times it takes all the way up until the time of the show, so until that show starts I want you buddied up with at least one or two people. Do you hear me?

NICK: A really burly Human says:

NICK (as Human): [vaguely Schwarzenegger sounding] We'll be using the buddy system.

NICK: The Kaminoan says...

NICK (as Kaminoan): Well, I saw Selona go to her dressing room. Maybe she's still in there.

NICK: ...and starts to stretch, and watching a Kaminoan stretch is wild because they've got these long, graceful limbs and they're very flexible and they also move very slowly like seaweed under water.

AARON: I think Azul peers down and looks Tink right in the eye.

AARON (as Azul): Well, you heard the Kaminoan. We should get to that dressing room, don't you think?

HUDSON (as Tink): Yeah, we should. Wait, don't you have to rehearse? No, you're on investigative duty, aren't you?

AARON (as Azul): I'm on investigative duty. That's why I got here early. I rehearsed everything, I'm warmed up, I'm good to go. I just wanted to see if I could get a few reps in before we solved this thing. That's why I got here early.

HUDSON (as Tink): Oh, I see. Alright.

HUDSON: Then Tink goes...

HUDSON (as Tink): Hup-hup!

HUDSON: ...and then starts running, because—

AARON: Yes!

HUDSON: —I think they just saw that somewhere, like that phrasing or those noises, and just does that before they run.

AARON: Perfect.

NICK: Oh my gosh. We get Tink high-stepping it off the theater and backstage to where the dressing rooms are. It's really interesting because Tink has a naturally light step, his feet make almost no sound on the ground, or his foot rather, because he's still not used to his prosthetic leg, so you hear no noise

and then clank, and then no noise and then clank, as he goes stepping off. You can tell Tink is extremely strong, because he is carrying Azul around like it's nothing.

AARON (as Azul): Tink, you know, I gotta say I'm very impressed with your form right now. You have very beautiful lines. This is very elegant, I mean even with the robo-leg you have here. Have you ever thought about taking up dance?

HUDSON (as Tink): [delighted] Yes! I absolutely have.

AARON (as Azul): Oh my goodness. Do you want to dance? Like, I can teach you dance. Do you wanna dance? We can make this happen.

HUDSON: I start dancing.

NICK: [laughs]

AARON (as Azul): Oh my goodness. Oh my damn. Tink, this is good. You have a good flow. Wow, look at you.

HUDSON (as Tink): yeah, I've been told that before, like by my doctor and by other people.

AARON (as Azul): Wow, no, we should definitely capitalize on this. I think we can get you a blue jacket. We can get you some of the shoes. Even if you wanna stand in the back and be a hype man, we would love to incorporate you into the show. I think this could be really, really great.

HUDSON (as Tink): This could be my future.

AARON (as Azul): It really could. It really, really could. Just to let you know, there's very little job security in theater, but we would love to have you.

HUDSON: [chuckles]

NICK: As you're talking about Tink's budding dance career, you get to the dressing room of Selona the... I think she's like the dance co-captain.

AARON: [hesitantly] Yeah.

NICK: Like, Azul is the dance captain, Selona's the co-captain.

AARON: Selona's like the second.

NICK: Yeah, but lobbied real hard with Madam Zostra for the phrase "co-captain," so even though it's the second one it's a whole thing. The nameplate has multiple stickers on it changing what the title is. Most of these rooms are a little rundown, the doors are worn, this isn't a new theater. Selona's room has pastel flowers painted on it, like she decorated it herself to try to make it look nicer.

AARON: As we approach the door, Azul just says:

AARON (as Azul): Ugh, these colors, the pastels, it just doesn't jive with the squad and I've been telling her that forever. Sorry, it just steams me.

HUDSON (as Tink): I can totally see that. These colors just don't run together.

AARON (as Azul): Right? No, they just—Ugh. It doesn't- It clashes. It feels like I'm putting chocolate ice cream next to concrete. I don't like it. Ick.

NICK: So, you're talking about the door, and do you try to go in?

HUDSON: I knock.

NICK: You knock? Okay. There's no answer.

HUDSON: I knock harder.

NICK: I'm going to flip a dark side point. There's one light side and two dark side. As you try to knock harder you punch through the door. It was kind of rotted and you just smashed the door, so there's a face-sized hole in the door where your hand was.

HUDSON: [quiet strained and confused noises]

AARON: Azul places their face into that face-sized hole.

AARON (as Azul): Heeere's Azul~

NICK & HUDSON: [laughs]

AARON (as Azul): Selona, you in here? Selona? Selona?! Ugh.

NICK: You do not see Selona in the room from where you're looking. You do—Actually, roll me a Perception check.

AARON: Perception check~ I've got, heh, it looks like Samus Aran's helmet. It's like an upside-down triangle and then the advantage thing.

NICK: You got an upside-down triangle and the advantage thing, so you got a failure with one advantage. So, one of the more interesting parts of this game is you do not succeed in seeing anything related to where Selona is, but you do see something else that is helpful. What do you think that is?

AARON: [pondering] What do I see that is helpful in this dressing room...? Oh, okay, so the thing that I see that's helpful is, I'm gonna try to humanize Selona a little bit. The thing that I see that is helpful is there's a breathing humidifier that is on her dressing room table essentially, and I think that's something that is given to people that are having issues with allergies, and that's typically something that helps people breathe, it helps people remain a bit calmer, and at that moment Azul just says:

AARON (as Azul): Oh! If I would have known. I didn't know that they were having allergies. That's gonna affect anyone's performance. This makes total sense. I feel kinda bad that they didn't come to be with the information, but... oh well, I guess it is what it is.

NICK: So, you have taken away from this that Selona is a private person with allergies and slight breathing issues.

AARON: This is the most important piece of information by far I think. [laughs]

NICK: yeah, obviously. [laughs]

HUDSON (as Tink): Is it a clue, though?

HUDSON: I go over to the humidifier and check for fingerprints.

AARON: [laughs]

NICK: Okay, so are you opening the door?

HUDSON: Yeah.

AARON: I like to imagine that Azul's face is still in that face hole, so when you open the door I kinda swing forward with it.

HUDSON: [laughs]

AARON (as Azul): Whoa~

NICK: We'll say with the fact that you punched through the door, it's locked, but you just kinda grab the handle and jolt and it springs out of the doorframe. There's not a lot of resistance. I mean, it's a dressing room, they're not expecting to need to keep people out, it's just the lock is to show hey, there's someone in here, be polite. You know? You crack the door open, and with the door open as you walk in you see that this room has been turned over. There's an obvious sign of a struggle, something has happened here, and Selona is nowhere to be found.

AARON (as Azul): Ugh, I can't believe she keeps her dressing room this messy. This is... ugh. I understand allergies, but this is something entirely different.

HUDSON (as Tink): Oh yeah. Oh yeah. I mean, I've gone through messy periods. Maybe it's something personal in their life. They're a reserved person, right, you were kind of implying?

AARON (as Azul): Yeah, they don't really talk a whole lot, but I'm looking at the feng shui of the clothes on the ground and what I'm getting from this is anxiety, what I'm getting from this is a sad temperament, I feel a weird energy coming off of this. We definitely need to get them a massage or something. That would clear all this up.

HUDSON (as Tink): Yeah, I smell lavender, but that's probably the... the soap, from the clothes.

AARON (as Azul): Ooh, lavender. Nice.

NICK: Tink, you wanna roll me a Perception check on this room?

HUDSON: Sure. I thought you were gonna say on the lavender clothes for a clue, but I'll just do what you're saying.

NICK: Oh.

AARON: [laughs]

HUDSON: I have a triumph plus a success.

NICK: Nice. So, with a success, there was clearly a physical struggle here. Selona must have been kidnapped by someone.

HUDSON: Hmm.

NICK: With the triumph, I'll let you skip the next bit of investigation if you want. As you're looking around you see that there's more of those pastel flowers painted around the dressing room mirror, and one of them looks to be, like, it doesn't match. It looks like it's at a weird angle and the petals are different. As you go over to it you see that it's not painted on the wall, it's painted on something else, and you twist it and the mirror and that section of the wall pops away and you see a secret tunnel going back deeper into the theater.

HUDSON (as Tink): Ooh. Do you see this?

AARON: Azul's behind you, still looking at the mess on the ground, and I think has just continued talking about how messy everything is and doesn't notice that any of this is happening.

HUDSON (as Tink): Hey, uh, Azul, there's a... You should turn around.

AARON (as Azul): I don't even know if I can. Is it worse on that side of the room?

HUDSON (as Tink): You know, no, but it's more interesting.

AARON (as Azul): Oh, okay, let's see...

AARON: As they turn around they're just like:

AARON (as Azul): Alright, what—Oh! Wow! Look at that.

HUDSON (as Tink): I know, and you know what, this really begs the question. If a door can be that shitty but then this can be built, they must have had two different sets of contractors.

AARON: Yeah, and I think as you say that she walks over to Selona's chair, which is this nice, fancy chair.

AARON (as Azul): Yeah, I mean, this chair is really nice, it's super dope. That door is not great at all, but this is a comfy chair! Oh, and there's also a doorway. Where did that come from?

HUDSON (as Tink): Do you wanna take the chair?

AARON (as Azul): I kinda do. Should I...? Do you just wanna like wheel me in the chair down this thing?

HUDSON (as Tink): Yeah, I think that would actually speed things up, be a little safer, and it could be doubled as a weapon.

AARON (as Azul): Yeah, and you know, I just wanna keep off my legs, wanna keep everything good for the performances later.

HUDSON (as Tink): Alright, I'll push you.

AARON (as Azul): Nice. Thanks bud.

HUDSON (as Tink): You got it.

NICK: [laughs] So, the next scene we see is cobblestones on the ground, walls, and ceiling of this corridor that seems to go deeper and deeper into the theater. With your understanding of the way the theater is, Azul, this is not... it's all in one big building, like the theater is built into the side of another building, you are out of the realm of the theater. You are going deeper into this giant skyscraper that rises up from the depths of Coruscant. It's also really weird that there's cobblestones, because this is still a space building, but you know, whatever.

HUDSON: And it's probably loud as hell, because we're in a roly-chair basically going over cobblestone.

AARON: [laughs]

NICK: If you've ever rattled caster wheels on a wooden cart or something over cobblestones it's super rattle clacky and stuff, it's very (jagged rattle sounds) as you go. Are you all—I was gonna ask if you're moving stealthily, clearly not. Are you moving quickly or at a comfortable pace?

AARON: Oh, I don't think anything about this is comfortable. [laughs]

HUDSON: [laughs] I think we're moving quickly.

NICK: Okay, so we see Azul holding onto the arms of this comfortable chair, leaning back to keep their balance, and y'all are just running down the corridor like (jagged rattle sounds), and you come out of the end of this corridor and standing in front of you, you see a man.

[tense music begins]

He is wearing a full-faced white mask and leather biker clothes, and the biker clothes are all studded with different data breakers and data pads and slicing kits and data spikes, so he's just covered in bits and pieces of glowing blue screens and technology, and he has a long, black cape on as well.

NICK (as masked man): [deep voice, with reverb] Welcome...

HUDSON (as Tink): Welcome to what?

NICK (as masked man): ...to my labyrinth.

AARON (as Azul): Oh, you know, this explains a lot. We've been having trouble heating the dressing rooms, but we're probably losing all this heat to this catacomb type area. This explains an awful lot. Okay.

HUDSON (as Tink): Well, it doesn't explain the person who is in front of us though. Honestly? You just look like you're holo-net incarnate. You're wearing a white mask to hide your identity, you got the cape, you just have data breakers to show off all over your body. Are you insecure?

AARON (as Azul): You know what, I kinda wanna take a bet. Tink, you wanna bet he's insecure?

NICK (as masked man): I don't think my security is relevant in this situation.

[tense music switches to happy, quirky game menu music]

HUDSON (as Tink): Hey, hey, we're taking a bet. Shh.

AARON (as Azul): Okay, yeah, yeah. Alright, alright. Hey Tink, you want some heat? You want some heat here? I bet this guy's insecure. What do you think?

HUDSON (as Tink): Ooh, ooh, I think... You know what, I think he's not, and I think there's a way we can find out, so uh, let's do that.

AARON (as Azul): Alright cool. I mean, he's all computers. Do you wanna take it or should I?

HUDSON (as Tink): I'll take it.

AARON (as Azul): Alright cool.

HUDSON (as Tink): So um, how do you feel about your mother?

AARON (as Azul): Oh, good, good.

[quirky music ends]

NICK: Oh my gosh. You gotta roll some sort of check.

HUDSON: [laughs]

NICK: What is mental combat do we think?

AARON: [laughs]

NICK: I wanna say Education?

HUDSON: [laughing] Okay, I'll do Education. Okay, one success, two advantages.

NICK: The dramatic gesture of this man falls a little and he tilts his head to the side.

NICK (as masked man): Why are you asking about my mother like that? She wouldn't approve. Well, she didn't approve of a lot, especially not me, but that's not important. You have come to my labyrinth—

HUDSON (as Tink): Alright, I guess you win the bet. Ugh.

AARON (as Azul): Okay. Actually, can I take a crack at this guy?

HUDSON (as Tink): I mean, yeah, he's already cracking a little bit. I can tell. Go ahead.

NICK (as masked man): I am not cracking! I am the master of my own fate!

AARON (as Azul): I'm so sorry. I feel bad addressing you if I don't know your name. Can I have your name, sir, miss?

NICK (as masked man): It is sir, for I am the Technophantom of the Ballet!

AARON (as Azul): Oh wow, that's such a great title. Is that a title or is that your actual given name?

NICK (as Phantom): It's what you can call me, for I am dramatic and mysterious.

NICK: He's gesturing like a stage magician right now.

AARON (as Azul): This is fantastic. It's great to meet you. My name's Azul. This is my friend Tink. Tink, wave. Hi.

HUDSON (as Tink): Hello~

AARON (as Azul): Hi. Mr. Phantom, I just have a question, because it seems like it's gotta be awfully lonely down here. Are you lonely?

NICK (as Phantom): Mwahaha. Not anymore, having kidnapped the star of the ballet for my own dastardly ends.

AARON (as Azul): Oh, and what are your dastardly ends?

NICK (as Phantom): The ballet will perform my ballet.

AARON (as Azul): Ah.

NICK (as Phantom): The true ballet!

HUDSON (as Tink): [gasps] Called it! Called it! Called it! Okay, sorry, go ahead.

AARON (as Azul): Yeah, you did, Tink, you did.

NICK: [laughs]

AARON (as Azul): I just have one more question for you, Mr. Phantom. If you could change one thing about you, what would it be?

NICK (as Phantom): You know, I really think it's that I work too hard, like I care too much.

AARON (as Azul): Yeah? Ohh.

NICK (as Phantom): And sometimes that, while it benefits the people that I'm with and everything that I do, it can be rough on me, so I know that's something that I really challenge my leaders to just kinda keep me honest with that and make sure I take some time for myself.

AARON (as Azul): Yeah. Okay.

NICK: He looks stunned for a second even though he's wearing this white play mask, just shocked that he's had this moment.

[laughter]

NICK (as Phantom): But you will never get the principle ballerina of the theater back again without acceding to my demands.

AARON (as Azul): Okay, well, two things about that. One, I'm the premiere ballist for this squad, and two, you know, I would feel bad if I didn't try to help you. You just wanna do some breathing exercises with me real quick? I think that might help you out.

NICK: [laughing] He looks like he doesn't know how to respond to that.

HUDSON: [laughs]

AARON: While this is happening, Azul I think shoots a look over at Tink and then motions with their hand to go ahead.

HUDSON: I do a sideways summersault, while Azul is still in the chair, push the chair as hard as I can towards the phantom.

NICK: [pauses] Cool.

AARON: [laughs]

NICK: Let's say you can make a Melee attack using Azul as the weapon, because we've done that before.

[laughter]

HUDSON: Six successes.

NICK: Wow! Okay.

[action music begins]

So, I'm picturing when you see an acrobat do a summersault without using their hands, so I'm picturing like, Tink, you do this cool sideways jump flip and then do a straight armed punch to send Azul flying towards the Technophantom of the Ballet, and Azul, right as you're about to hit them, you're prepared for this attack, you smash into some sort of invisible barrier that shatters [shattering glass sound] sending broken transparesteel everywhere, and you find yourself looking down this reflective hallway, and you hear a voice reverberating through the area.

NICK (as Phantom): The Technophantom of the Ballet is inside your mind. Welcome to my labyrinth of mirrors~!

AARON: I think immediately Azul looks up to see if they can find a place where the mirrors end.

NICK: They appear to go to the ceiling, but the ceiling is not reflective.

AARON: Got it.

HUDSON: So it's like a funhouse.

NICK: Yeah, it's a funhouse hall of mirrors that this person has constructed in the basement of your theater.

[laughter]

HUDSON: Okay.

NICK: So you all are going to have to figure out how to get through here. What is your plan?

[action music ends]

HUDSON: I break a mirror.

NICK: [laughs]

AARON: yeah, yeah, I was gonna say. I think Tink smashes that first mirror, but then, before going in, Azul just says:

AARON (as Azul): Hold up. I work with that super pristine, clear door every day I walk in here. I can tell the difference between a mirror and what's actually in front of me. So, you know, maybe just get behind me. I think I can handle this.

HUDSON (as Tink): Alright, I trust you.

NICK: Roll me a Perception check.

AARON: Alright, Perception is Cunning which is 1, plus one little bubble, so that's gonna be what?

NICK: One yellow, and this is hard so three purple.

AARON: Okay, it looks like I have one pow and two hexagons.

NICK: Oh wow! You succeed, actually.

HUDSON: [laughs]

AARON: Hell yeah!

NICK: Good for you.

AARON: [laughs]

NICK: Tink sets one of his big, strong hands on your shoulder and you're able to walk, but you almost run face-first into a mirror and then you stop. "No, you can tell because my breath fogged the air, and then also I can see my own face." You are able to make your way through this labyrinth fairly smoothly. With those threats though, as you are walking, it takes probably about an hour to get through this maze with this method. You do notice that from the mirrors that shattered there is a ton of broken glass on the ground, and Tink doesn't wear shoes and you're wearing your dance shoes, and that could have been pretty dangerous, so you're glad you didn't smash through all of them. You might have gotten hurt.

AARON: I'm just jeté-ing over all the broken shards of glass, for sure.

NICK: [laughs] You get to the end of this maze and you feel this light twang, like you kicked through a string, because you were so focused on the mirrors you weren't really looking down. I need you to make me a Coordination check.

AARON: That's four yellows and one purple?

NICK: Three yellows and one green versus two purple, but you have two black dice as well because you are surprised.

AARON: Alright, roll... Okay, so I've got two pows, I've got a circle that looks like it has a lightsaber and a pow in it, and three hexagons.

NICK: You have two successes, a triumph, and three threats. You kick through this tripwire and a series of large darts come flying out of the wall. You are able to dodge them, pretty dramatically. Describe how you do that.

[measured, contemplative music begins]

AARON: Oh, for sure. When I kick the tripwire I think immediately everything in Azul's mind starts to slow down. They can see the series of traps start to encroach upon them, and in their head I just picture like a metronome, and they can picture the music of this situation occurring to them. As they are deftly stepping through and over and avoiding all these different traps they're just counting out in their head,

one and two and three, and one and two and leap, and one and two and stretch, and one and two and go! And they come out unscathed, I hope.

[contemplative music ends]

NICK: Yeah, they do. That's dope as hell. You are able to dodge these darts. Tink is left just watching this performance, although at this point probably Tink's pretty used to the fact that gravity just doesn't seem to apply to you the same way it does for other people, so...

AARON: [laughs]

HUDSON: Yeah. Yeah.

NICK: he may just be getting acclimatized to it. As you do your last jeté out of the way of these darts, because it turns out to be more than just three, it's a hallway full of them that you dodge, you land and the ground shifts under you. It doesn't collapse or anything, but you do lose your balance and rather than turn an ankle or anything you fall, and you fall prone, [dramatic bass noise] because that's your three threats, so you fall down.

AARON: [laughs] Aw.

NICK: But you do have a triumph. It doesn't have to be related to dodging these darts. If you want something really good to happen now's a good time.

AARON: I'm gonna say that when I fall prone I definitely am hurt a little bit, but falling prone was actually a good thing because a series of darts shoot out that just narrowly miss me and if I was standing in any way, shape, or form they would have clipped me right at the ankles and that's the most valuable part of a dancer's body. So, falling prone was actually a pretty good thing for me.

NICK: Essentially you use your triumph to kinda salve your self-confidence almost.

AARON: Yeah. I think when that's done I turn over and just go:

AARON (as Azul): That's entirely what I intended and perfectly worked out.

HUDSON (as Tink): Oh yeah, I can see that.

NICK: So, you help up Azul, Tink, and the two of you continue onward. You can tell that this phantom spent a majority of his time making this maze, because there's not a lot else here. There's no longer cobblestones, it's just a concrete floor, saw board walls kind of hallway with just industrial lighting. It's almost like you came out not in the entrance that the "visitors" would be, you walked to the maintenance side and are just walking through.

HUDSON: [laughs]

NICK: You can see through some windows some more traps with pendulum blades and stuff, but you're not on that corridor, you came out of a different door, so you keep going. You pop out into this large

room. It looks like one of those rooms where they do perspective painting on the walls to make it look bigger. It's probably about the size of half of a high school gym, but it looks like it's supposed to be like a football field size. It's got more of those cobblestones on the ground, but there's just enough cobblestones to give texture and then the rest of it's all painted and spray-painted to look like it. It looks like stage decoration.

AARON: I think along the way Azul has been checking in with Tink to make sure they're not hurt, but as we come upon this room they remark that:

AARON (as Azul): Huh, it seems like the budget kind of ran out here. We had cobblestones, we didn't have cobblestones, and now this room is kind of getting dicey with the decoration. I don't know, I think maybe this guy just needs a sponsor or something. Clearly he's got passion, but there's just no audience here for him.

HUDSON (as Tink): Speaking of dicey, you wanna roll some dice to see if this is gonna get better or worse? Like, the whole situation, what do you think is gonna happen here? You wanna bet?

AARON (as Azul): You trying to bring some heat?

HUDSON (as Tink): Yeah. Yeah.

AARON (as Azul): Are you asking me if I wanna bet? Of course I wanna bet. You wanna bet? I wanna bet right now.

HUDSON (as Tink): Alright, so I think things are gonna turn out A'OK.

AARON (as Azul): I think we're gonna get in a spot of bother. I don't think we're done. I think there's gonna be at least one more trap.

HUDSON (as Tink): Alright, I'll take you up on that.

AARON (as Azul): Alright. What do you wanna bet?

HUDSON (as Tink): Ooh.

HUDSON: I look down at my leg again.

NICK: [laughs]

AARON (as Azul): I'm gonna get that leg. I'm gonna get that damn leg.

HUDSON (as Tink): Okay, see... I just really need it, though. Let's bet... I'll bet you a coupon book that I'll home make whenever I got back to my place, and it's gonna have different things like take you out to dinner, and you use the coupon and I gotta take you out to dinner, things like that.

AARON (as Azul): Okay. Alright. If I'm right, I will give you one half day where I do all of your errands and I get your groceries and I clean your place.

HUDSON (as Tink): Alright.

AARON (as Azul): Alright, sounds good. Shake on it?

HUDSON (as Tink): Shake on it.

NICK: Okay. You walk out into this room and you can see, right next to where you come out, you can see a cage that looks like it's made out of PVC pipe and bound with bungee cords. It's not super nice, but it's all been spray-painted black, and Selona is in there sitting on the ground looking like she's kind of nodded off, and ahead of you, facing away from you, you can see the black caped figure of the phantom staring towards the far side of the room.

HUDSON: Ooh.

AARON (as Azul): Alright. This definitely has one more trap vibes about it. I'm just gonna lay that out here.

HUDSON (as Tink): Hmm, we'll see it when we see it.

AARON (as Azul): I mean, do you just wanna walk up and get Selona and leave? I'm pretty sure he's gonna make us do something.

HUDSON (as Tink): You know... Ugh.

HUDSON: I wanna roll Perception to see if I can find the play that they're talking about that got rejected.

NICK: Okay.

AARON: [chuckles]

NICK: Yeah. Roll me Perception. This one's going to be hard. Would you like to flip a light side point to upgrade it?

HUDSON: Yes I would.

NICK: Okie-dokie.

HUDSON: Two successes and two threats.

NICK: Huh. Okay. You actually do see what looks like a manuscript. I don't actually have any idea how ballets are notated. I know that there's like a novella and then the choreography and the music, but this is like a big old manuscript that says like The Technophantom of the Ballet in big letters and it's sitting on the music stand of an organ, but it's an electric organ so it's really small, it just has a big keyboard on it and it's sitting there.

AARON: [laughs]

NICK: The threats are that the organ is on the far side of the room, so the technophantom is between you and this ballet.

HUDSON (as Tink): Hey Phantom.

NICK: He jumps like four meters in the air.

[laughter]

NICK (as Phantom): Gah~!

NICK: Like whips around to look at you.

NICK (as Phantom): Welcome to my la—How did you get over there? You're supposed to come through this door.

HUDSON (as Tink): Oh... You should have done the reverse there.

NICK (as Phantom): I can't believe you took the service entrance. You're supposed to go through the maze and then get frustrated and break some of the glass and it filters you towards the rest of the traps. Did you all actually solve the maze? Only I can do that.

AARON (as Azul): Oh. Were we not supposed to solve it? We did break one mirror. Is that fine? Do you need us to go clean it up?

NICK (as Phantom): I mean... broken glass is pretty dangerous, I would prefer that you clean it up, but...

HUDSON (as Tink): It will happen.

NICK (as Phantom): Great.

AARON (as Azul): Yeah. Yeah.

NICK (as Phantom): But, anyway. [huffs] Ruined the...

HUDSON (as Tink): I'm sorry we ruined it. I just—

AARON (as Azul): Yeah.

HUDSON (as Tink): Okay, so here's the thing. I was thinking about what you said, and you know, I think that people just need to maybe give you a chance on your ballet, on your manuscript there. Could I check it out maybe?

AARON (as Azul): Oh, we should definitely read through it. I don't want to do anything without reading the script. I need to evaluate it, you know.

NICK: The phantom almost pushes the mask up on his face and then stops and brings his hands down.

NICK (as Phantom): Well, of course, you have come to admire my genius. It is there on the organ. Take a look.

AARON (as Azul): Oh, well, hold on. Hold on. I definitely have notes, alright. Phantom, let's get clear on this. I haven't read the material yet, but you know, there could be promise. I think, you're, you know... Let's just read through it.

NICK (as Phantom): How do you have notes? You haven't even read it yet.

AARON (as Azul): Oh, I have notes in this whole production here. It's all about showmanship. It's about the presentation. I mean, the reveal from the dressing room to the maze was exquisite, it's fantastic, but we gotta talk about your set design here. It really looks like you pulled some punches.

NICK (as Phantom): Well, I'm working with a limited budget.

HUDSON (as Tink): Azul has notes on like every person. People call it, like, judgmental. I think it's just being proactive.

AARON: [laughs]

AARON (as Azul): Mr. Phantom, can you give us a few minutes just to take a look at the treatment here? Do you need us for anything else?

NICK (as Phantom): Yes, yes, of course. Why don't you sit down at the bench. There's an organ if you want to hear what the composition sounds like...

AARON (as Azul): Oh, absolutely. I need to hear the music. Would you be so glad to do that?

NICK (as Phantom): Oh, I don't, I don't know... I just play enough to compose.

AARON (as Azul): Oh, come on, this is a thick script. I'm sure you can tickle the old ivories there and show us what it's all about.

HUDSON (as Tink): Right there, those are some organ hands if I've ever seen them.

AARON (as Azul): Yeah, you can tell, you can tell. Big knuckles.

NICK (as Phantom): These hands have held an organ from time to time... I mean, I've played music with them before.

HUDSON (as Tink): Ha.

NICK: Yeah, so he sits down at the organ and says...

NICK (as Phantom): Well, if you turn to Page 4 that's past the Dramatis personae, and... we'll start there.

AARON (as Azul): Okay. Alright.

NICK: ...and he lays out a very thick chord. What I'm gonna say is, you go through as much of this as you can stand.

AARON: [laughs]

[gentle music begins]

NICK: The choreography is okay. It's very obvious that this guy isn't a dancer. The music is... okay. The story is interesting. Like, it's something that people wouldn't normally make in a ballet, because it's the kind of story of someone who's down on their luck and decides to help a ballet theater by composing them a show for free in exchange for his fame and that he's rewarded for his efforts with being promoted and owning the theater and how he goes on to a huge rise of success. The challenge part at the beginning is very small. The rest of it seems to just be about how cool the person who's helped this theater is. It's a show you could do. Honestly, the show that you're doing has amazing choreography but the story isn't particularly interesting because that wasn't the focus, so you know, pros and cons. It's not the best thing you've ever heard.

HUDSON: Tink turns to the phantom.

HUDSON (as Tink): I'm intrigued. You know, I'm an up and coming ballist myself...

AARON (as Azul): Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

HUDSON (as Tink): ...and I've been looking for something, just something that touches me on a different level, to be my first ballet. Honestly, I think I could do it as a solo, or as a double with Azul, if you're into it, Azul.

AARON (as Azul): Honestly, I read this script and I don't think, honestly, phantom? Can I just be frank with you right now? I read this script and I don't see a ballet. I read this script and I see a play with dance.

HUDSON (as Tink): Ah, you're right.

AARON (as Azul): Ugh. Yeah, you know? I mean, it's all there on the page. It's written out there in black and white. I notice that this main character seems a little bit like someone I know. Do you know who that is?

NICK (as Phantom): Who do you think it is?

AARON (as Azul): Phantom, I think it's you. I think it's you, man.

HUDSON: I gasp.

AARON (as Azul): I know! I know.

NICK: [laughs]

AARON (as Azul): Here's what I wanna do. Here's what I wanna do. Okay? We have Tink. Tink, very up and coming dancer. Tink's fantastic. I think honestly what I wanna do here is direct it. I really wanna choreograph it, I wanna direct it, and we have Selona over there. Selona's fantastic, she's got some allergies, yes, but we can work through that. The cobblestone is gonna be a little bit difficult to dance on, but I think we put this together. What do you say?

NICK (as Phantom): You'll perform it for the show to save the theater in two days?

AARON (as Azul): Oh, okay, alright. So, here's the thing, here's the thing. I don't wanna perform this unless I can see what it looks like. I'm not gonna make any promises right now. We can try a run-through this afternoon, but I don't wanna commit to anything until I put this together. Does that make sense?

NICK (as Phantom): Yes, that makes sense.

AARON (as Azul): Okay. Alright. Alright.

HUDSON (as Tink): That's more than fair to me.

AARON (as Azul): You know, I really think so. I really think so. If we put this up in the theater people are gonna be SAG eligible. I just wanna make sure we're putting our best foot forward, I wanna rehearse it, and I think Selona and Tink are gonna be the best people to bring this to life, especially with me in the director's chair. You can definitely give us notes, you can give us new pages whenever you'd like, but I would like to retain some creative control over this.

NICK (as Phantom): SAG, you mean the Space Actors Guild.

HUDSON (as Tink): Ahh.

AARON (as Azul): Yes, of course, of course.

NICK: [laughs] He is kind of wringing at his wrists and his hands.

NICK (as Phantom): Well, if you wanna give it a shot I think it'll surprise you.

AARON: [laughs]

NICK (as Phantom): I know there's some notes here, but really it comes together when you see it actually done. So yeah, if you're going to perform the show then there's no reason to kill you and then convince Selona to perform the show. This is amazing.

AARON (as Azul): Oh... Oh my goodness. Ugh, I really wish you didn't say that. you were gonna kill us?

NICK (as Phantom): Well, I was going to fight you until you agreed with me I guess is a better way to put it.

AARON (as Azul): Ugh. That's the thing about ballet, it's not a fight, it's a conversation. Right now you're fighting, you're trying to pummel us, and right now we're trying to dance with you, we're trying to make some music. This is jazz!

HUDSON (as Tink): Well, it's a ballet—Okay, it could be jazz.

AARON (as Azul): Yeah. Yeah.

HUDSON (as Tink): You know what? It's everything.

AARON (as Azul): It's modern. It's space modern.

HUDSON (as Tink): Yeah.

NICK: [laughs]

HUDSON: I turn my head very slowly to Azul and I just say, almost under my breath but loud enough that Azul can hear it:

HUDSON (as Tink): I won the bet.

AARON: [laughs]

AARON (as Azul): [laughs, seethes, playful angry noises] No, no, Tink, I think the last obstacle is making this material work. I think that's the obstacle.

HUDSON (as Tink): Aw man, that is one way to look at it. If I learned anything about the arts today, you could look at anything however you want.

AARON: [laughs]

NICK: [laughs] I'm gonna flip a dark side point and say that Selona wakes up and sees you all sitting there, talking over the organ.

NICK (as Selona): What are you doing? This asshole kidnapped me and said that I could not leave until I perform his stupid show.

AARON: I think Azul just shoots Selona a look.

AARON (as Azul): [softly] Quiet. We almost have this. Please, shut up.

NICK: Selona just glares back at you and pulls the bars of the cage apart, because they're PVC, and walks out and comes over to you.

[laughter]

NICK (as Selona): Look at the third act. There's no drama. It's just about how great the main character is. Who would ever dance this?

NICK: And glares at the phantom.

AARON (as Azul): Well, I think Phantom, this is the really the first audience you have. You're gonna have people who disagree with your material. What do you have to say to that?

NICK: The phantom pulls out a blaster pistol and shoots Selona on stun and she collapses to the ground.

NICK (as Phantom): I have that to say.

AARON (as Azul): Oh, you see, one of the biggest things about working in theater is being able to take a note, and you Phantom can't take a note.

NICK (as Phantom): Well, I mean, her note was really aggressive really. I don't think it was particularly constructive.

NICK: [laughing] He's like waving his gun around while he's talking to you.

HUDSON: [laughs]

AARON: I think Azul says...

AARON (as Azul): I have a note for you.

AARON: ...and then plinks one of the keys of the keyboard and yells at Tink to rush him.

NICK: Okay. I'm gonna have you all roll Cool and the Phantom is going to roll Cool but with two black dice because he has a false sense of security, and that's gonna be our initiative.

AARON: Okay, I got a pow and three winged dot things.

HUDSON: I have no Cool and 2 Presence, and I got three advantages.

NICK: Okay... The way this is going to work, we're gonna start with a PC slot, and then there's the NPC slot because he rolled six advantages, and then another PC slot.

HUDSON: Oh geez.

NICK: Yeah. You all have six advantages total. The way advantages work on initiative checks is you can use it to add to the scenery or to the scene to make the fight a little more advantageous. Is there anything you want in this room or close to hand that will help you out?

AARON: [chuckles] I know we spoke about Azul being a little bit of a defensive character, more of a pacifist than anything, so I don't think that they are gonna be looking to be the aggressor here, I think they're looking for a moment of opportunity to restrain the phantom if anything.

NICK: Okay.

HUDSON: I'm looking for the death blow at this point.

AARON: [laughs]

HUDSON: [laughs]

NICK: What if we say that there are a lot of prop chains and stuff laying around and some binders, like the Star Wars handcuffs, but they're made up to look like old-timey manacles and they're hanging on a wall, so there's plenty of stuff to restrain this person if you would so choose.

HUDSON: That sounds good.

NICK: His advantages are just going to be for all the fun things he has hidden in this room, because he originally thought this was going to be a fight, but it's a PC slot first.

HUDSON: I take my vibro-axe and I put it across my chest, I hold it with two hands across my chest, but it's not blade first, it's like the blunt edge, and I rush him to like push him on the ground.

NICK: So are you just trying to tackle him?

HUDSON: Yeah, basically.

NICK: Okay. I would say that's a Brawl check then.

HUDSON: [laughs]

AARON: If Tink is gonna rush after this person and try to tackle them, I think Azul just watches the run and just admires the form.

NICK: Y'all are pretty close together because you were all just around the organ, so it's only like four good steps and you're to this guy.

HUDSON: Nice. What's the difficulty?

NICK: Average.

HUDSON: One failure and one advantage.

NICK: So, you charge at this technophantom and he steps neatly out of the way. The advantage can be that he stepped towards Azul, so whatever you're going to do, Azul, you'll get to add a blue die because he's very focused on Tink, the giant with a terrifying axe, but he is able to not be restrained. It is his turn.

NICK (as Phantom): You don't get it. I'm a phantom. I'm a menace!

NICK: He shoots at Tink. His gun is on stun.

AARON: Oh, Tink is definitely like, arms, I think even just behind their back, legs spread out in a shoulder-width apart, and they're just ready to avoid, dodge, and react to the situation. They've been on this kind of prevent defense for a while.

HUDSON: I can definitely see that happening. We're gonna see how good this roll is. [laughs]

NICK: Yeah. He got two successes and three advantages, so he shoots Tink in the chest with his pistol. You're going to take 8 stun damage.

AARON: Oof.

HUDSON: Okay.

NICK: Which goes against your Strain.

HUDSON: So I have 2 Strain, because I had 10 Strain.

NICK: And also a crit, a 74.

HUDSON: Severity is two diamonds. Hamstrung: Lose free maneuver until end of encounter.

AARON: [laughs]

NICK: Wow. We've been so focused on everyone's movement form that it just becomes very apparent when Tink gets a horrible cramp in the back of his leg after getting stunned, and he's a lot jerkier, it's not comfortable, so yeah, you don't get to do your free maneuver. If you wanna move towards people or do anything that's a maneuver it will cost you 1 Strain.

HUDSON: Okay. Sounds good.

NICK: Up next is a PC slot. Azul, whatcha doing?

AARON: I think the play is Azul wants to pull the agro, because Tink is obviously gonna be the aggressor. I think Azul has to take on a distraction role. So, Azul picks up the script and immediately begins rifling through it and comes to a random page, like Page 36, and then says:

AARON (as Azul): Phantom, I'm reading here, it says that the main character, who is you, it says that the main character is unbelievably handsome and charming. I definitely have a few notes for this, because it's not what I'm pulling from real life.

NICK: Oh! Make me a Coercion check.

AARON: Okay, that's Will, which is 2, and nothing else, so what do I do?

NICK: It'll just be two greens, but I think this guy is very easily coerced, so it'll be easy, just one purple.

AARON: I got an upside-down triangle and two winged dot things.

NICK: You got a failure and two advantages. So, I think... because you failed I was going to make it so that you had the agro and he was upset enough to miss more, I think you have the agro and he is going to be able to aim quite true, which will be great for you, but he does roar and point his gun at you. Those advantages can be used to give Tink a blue die so that he gets a more clean shot on his turn.

AARON: Perfect.

NICK: Cool. So, it's because he is very focused on you and upset.

NICK (as Phantom): Enough with your kriffing notes! Clearly you don't recognize genius.

NICK: And he's waving his gun everywhere very dramatically, which is not very efficient.

AARON: Not very efficient, but I think Azul then positions the script in front of themselves so that it becomes a game of don't hit the script.

NICK: [laughs] He goes:

NICK (as Phantom): [in a goofy, startled voice] Ohh!

AARON: [laughs]

NICK: Tink, it's your turn. What are you gonna do?

HUDSON: Oh man. Am I prone or am I just shocked a little bit?

NICK: Yeah, you're not prone, just your leg hurts and it's hard to walk.

HUDSON: I do three summersaults forward to try to knock them prone.

NICK: So are you just trying to hit him again?

HUDSON: Yes.

NICK: You're not trying to kill this guy?

HUDSON: Yeah, well, I was thinking about doing that earlier. I've pivoted now and I wanna go with Azul's thing.

NICK: Okay. You'll have to spend 1 Strain to get into range with him, because that's what your crit does, but besides that, yeah, roll a Brawl check.

HUDSON: Heh. Also, what happens theoretically if you run out of Strain?

NICK: You pass out.

HUDSON: [laughs] Okay great, I have 1 Strain left.

NICK: Watch, this adventure's gonna end with y'all Space Jam style being chained up having to perform his show three times a day.

HUDSON: One success, one advantage.

NICK: Nice. I don't know if that's how it works with Brawl, because there aren't really grapple rules, but since that was your goal I'll either let you do damage as Strain or real damage based on the amount you got, like if you punch him, or for no damage you can knock him down and be over him. Which would you like to do?

HUDSON: Knock him down and be over him.

NICK: Okay. Tell me how you knock this guy over after your summersaults.

HUDSON: After my summersaults, I basically go into bear hug motion and just grab the sides, not like a hug but just grab the sides and then just fall forward so it doesn't hurt them, like I'm not pushing them down actively, I'm kind of holding them up as they fall.

NICK: You notice that the phantom is actually a lot heavier than you expected them to be based on their size, but you land down on top of them like a get down Mr. President kind of gesture, and it is his turn.

HUDSON: Yes. Yes.

AARON: [laughs]

NICK: He's still holding his gun, so...

HUDSON: [laughs]

NICK: He really wants to shoot—You know what, I think he still does. I don't think his arms are trapped, so even though Tink's on top of him, he knows that you're trying to protect Azul, and Azul has the script, so he's going to use his maneuver to aim, giving himself a blue die, and he is going to shoot at Azul.

AARON: Oh... Okay.

NICK: You said you drew agro. Two successes and three advantages again, so that is 8 stun damage, so that goes against your Strain, Aaron, but it is minus your Soak, so you only take 6. You just took 6 out of 13 Strain.

AARON: Not ideal.

NICK: So, shoots you, also gets a crit with those two advantages, and got a 39. What's a 39, Hudson?

HUDSON: 39 is Stinger: Plus one diamond of severity to next check.

NICK: Oh okay, so you have one more difficulty on whatever you try to do next, because it just makes you flinch. It hurts real bad. I don't know if you've been shot with a stun bolt before, but it's not fun. Up next it is Azul's turn.

AARON: I think as I'm recovering from that blaster shot you see Azul's eyes kind of narrow in on the phantom, and they grit their teeth and they begin to grab pages from the script and tear them out of the book.

NICK: The phantom yells.

NICK (as Phantom): [pathetically] N-Nooo! Don't—Stop. Stoop!

AARON (as Azul): Well, if you're not gonna play nice then I'm gonna destroy this really shitty story that you wrote.

NICK (as Phantom): It's not shitty.

AARON (as Azul): It's not good.

NICK: Okay, so are you wanting him to give up with that?

AARON: I think they hold the script in one hand, and it looks like they're gonna tear the script in half.

AARON (as Azul): You will come quietly, or I will give the benefit of the people out there the gift of never having to read this.

NICK: Oof. That really feels like a Coercion check since you're just straight threatening this person. I'll give you two blue dice for having such a successful threat.

AARON: Alright, let's roll. Two pows and two advantages.

NICK: Nice. He stops moving and says:

NICK (as Phantom): My prime directive is to preserve my work. Please stop. You have defeated the Technophantom of the Opera.

AARON: [laughs]

AARON (as Azul): My prime directive is to put on good works of art, so thank you.

NICK (as Phantom): I just said you won. There's no need to be a jerk about it.

AARON (as Azul): Tink, knock him out.

HUDSON: I punch.

AARON: [laughs]

NICK: You punch. His head slams into the ground with a clang, and his mask slips off, and you see that he's actually a protocol droid.

HUDSON: Ohh.

NICK: So you've dented in his head and his eyes are starting to flicker.

NICK (as Phantom): Love... never dies.

NICK: And then the lights go out in his eyes as you knock the droid offline.

[laughter]

HUDSON: [claps]

NICK: You have rescued Selona. The Technophantom of the Opera is defeated. You have his shitty, shitty play. There's just one more day before the performance. I think there's a rush to get ready for the show.

[peaceful music begins]

Let's do the performance. So, describe the opening number of this ballet and who's doing what.

AARON: Nick, do you know the title of the ballet? Did we ever title the ballet?

NICK: We didn't. Do you have an idea?

AARON: I am going to say the title of this ballet is... Lasers and Feelings.

NICK: [laughs]

AARON: And, the opening of the ballet actually starts with a spotlight specifically on Azul, and the very first thing you see is their left forearm is in front of their face which illuminates the lightning bolt tattoo that they have running down their arm, and as it sweeps away from their face the lights flood the rest of the stage and the rest of the dance squad comes out. They begin doing this electronica ballet that has all sorts of adage lifts and all these interesting pirouettes that go at this speed that seems unnaturally fast.

[music grows intense]

And as the music begins to roar you just hear this techno, like (simulates heavy bass and drum beats), as the music drops out for a moment—

[music ends abruptly before rising again more peaceful and dramatic]

There's these silky strings that proceed what's about to happen next, it sounds like [sings a high note meant to sound angelic or ethereal]. From the back, I think that's Tink's entrance.

NICK: [laughs] Okay.

AARON: Tink, what kind of dance do you wanna do here, man?

HUDSON: So, I put my arms against my chest, it's little arms like a T-Rex, and I start T-Rex walking out from the back of the stage.

AARON: [laughs]

HUDSON: But I'm looking around and I'm kinda going with the music, and then I stop and I throw one hand into the air and my head throws upwards, and I spread my legs, so it's like in one gesture, leg's

spread, hand up, other hand down, head in the air, and then I just start spinning in place using my feet and it doesn't look very good... but I do that.

AARON (as Azul): Oh Tink, Tink, no-no-no, it looks good my dude.

HUDSON (as Tink): Aw, thank you.

AARON (as Azul): Come on, man. Like, all that hair shimmering? Ugh!

NICK: I think we should let the dice decide that.

HUDSON: [laughs]

NICK: As we come to the climax of the opening number, I need you both to make me a dance for Performance check.

AARON: I got four paws and an advantage.

NICK: Damn.

HUDSON: [laughs] I got nothing.

AARON: [laughs]

NICK: You got a total wash?

HUDSON: Yeah.

NICK: Let's say that Azul is able, with her advantage, to also make you look good as well. You do okay, but Azul is able to highlight your dancing and the opening number goes off without a hitch. The climax is a crazy laser light show and the supporting cast are all doing classical ballet behind you all which then turns into just straight Cirque du Soleil backflips and stuff as they go off the stage. The theater isn't full, it's about two thirds full which is pretty good, and the crowd as this goes on is more and more wrapped and more and more engaged. The curtain comes down, and there's cheering, and then we see a brief scene of Tink standing triumphantly on a plinth in a later part of this ballet while everyone dances around him, and then red lights come down like he's on fire.

HUDSON: [laughs]

NICK: Then we see another brief scene of Azul doing a one-handed handstand that turns into splits that turns into supporting their whole body perpendicular on the one arm while really, really sad music plays. Then we come to the end and we're seeing the company front of everyone standing on the stage and the crowd is cheering and throwing credits and flowers up on the stage, and the show goes amazingly. You all take your bows and run off stage and Madam Zostra is in the wings. The rest of the crew is going by. I think Selona stalks by, and there was a last minute change where Selona is now the handmaiden for the principle dancer so it's a lot less of a prestigious dance part, but Selona winks and puts a hand on Azul's shoulder as she goes by.

[music ends]

NICK (as Selona): You did great out there. I really appreciate you. Keep up the good work. Maybe someday I'll be as good as you.

NICK: Even though her voice still sounds kinda sarcastic you can tell she's trying, and she walks by with the rest of the dancers. It's just you two and madam Zostra, and Madam Zostra says:

NICK (as Zostra): Well, that went surprisingly well.

HUDSON (as Tink): I think Azul did an excellent job.

AARON (as Azul): Yeah, and I think that hoe Selona finally learned. This is really all a win-win for me.

HUDSON: [laughs]

NICK (as Zostra): Now-now, Selona has a lot of talent and sometimes you want to take a day off, so don't be a jerk to your understudies.

AARON (as Azul): [laughs] Oh fine, but if she tries to drag that spotlight away from me one more time she's gonna get a kick across the face.

NICK (as Zostra): One, yes, she should probably get a kick across the face, but two, you're going to need to learn that it's okay to not always be in the spotlight, Azul. I was really hoping that this experience would teach you some humility and selflessness. Apparently that is not the case.

AARON (as Azul): Oh, absolutely not. If anything it's only fed my ego and I got a good friend out of it.

HUDSON (as Tink): yeah, she did.

NICK (as Zostra): Well, I guess things don't always wrap up all nice and clean like in the stories... but that's life!

[laughter]

NICK: The last thing we see, the camera drops below the stage and drops past the shattered mirror maze and down into the slapped together lair, and we can see the Technophantom of the Opera's droid body.

[dramatic music begins]

The lights flicker on red, and you can see his hand dramatically punch towards the sky.

NICK (as Phantom): Maybe my real calling is to travel the stars. It's time for the Starlight Express!

NICK: [giggling] And that's where we'll end this episode.

[music ends]

AARON: I've got a bad feeling about this~

NICK & HUDSON: Ba-naaa~!

AARON: [laughs]

Outro

LILIT: Thanks for listening to Tabletop Squadron. If you've enjoyed our show, please consider logging into iTunes, or wherever else you listen to podcasts, and giving us a review. Good reviews help new listeners find the show and decide if it's right for them. You can also support the show through our Patreon at Patreon.com/TabletopSquadron. We have all sorts of fun Patreon levels like Tarkin's Underwear Drawer which gives you access to our secret feed full of bloopers, fun extras, and more.

Azul is played by Aaron J. Amendola. He can be found on Twitter at [@ImAaronJ](https://twitter.com/ImAaronJ).

{EDIT: new handle, [@TurboHoodie](https://twitter.com/TurboHoodie)}

Tink is played by Hudson Jameson. He can be found on Twitter at [@HudsonJameson](https://twitter.com/HudsonJameson).

Our game master is Nick Robertson. He can be found on Twitter at [@alias58](https://twitter.com/alias58).

Our intro song is Space Jam by Pablo Ribot, and our outro song was performed by James Gunter.

Follow the podcast on Twitter and Instagram at [@Tabletop_Squad](https://twitter.com/Tabletop_Squad), and join our Discord at bit.ly/TabletopDiscord where you can share all of your food and cute pet photos with us. We do occasionally talk about Star Wars. See you next time.