

Hi folks! Welcome to Follow the Leader's third episode, and the first episode of our second game! In this episode we play Kingdom by Ben Robbins. The players in this game are Han, Jade, and Dora. (Direct quotes from the players are highlighted in their colors.)

## GAME PREP (2:00)

To begin, each player chooses a role for their character, as a member of the kingdom, to fill. A character can either be a Power, who has authority over the kingdom and decides what it does and doesn't do (they can make Orders, which are actions the Kingdom will take at the resolution of a Crossroads); a Perspective, who understands the kingdom and makes predictions about the consequences of any action the kingdom may take; or a Touchstone, who knows the people and reflects the attitudes and desires of the populace. The characters representing the Kingdom, in this game, are:

- Kuiper Jasco, played by Han, who's a Power character and the head of communications for the enclave;
- Max "Damage" Valera, played by Jade, who's a Perspective character and the head of maintenance (Jade: "She has high amounts of energy and little to no fucks to give about anything outside of her remit.");
- and Marisol "Sol" Hawke, played by Dora, who's a Touchstone character and a bounty hunter (Dora: "She's basically Angsty McManpain but a lady.")

Everyone realizes we haven't talked about what our Kingdom actually is— it's a space station, "kind of like a pirate enclave slash hive of scum and villainy." The threats to the kingdom are from the legal organizations, one of which is identified as the Unified Solar Fleet, the main naval force in the sector. There is also the threat of infighting within the crews docked on the station, as well as the risk of running low on supplies.

Each player comes up with two locations related or relevant to their characters, where they can usually be found.

- Kuiper is usually in the main station bridge, where most of the communications equipment can be found, or in the Joyopolis game hall, "a really shitty neon arcade" where Kuiper is playing something adjacent to skeeball.
- Max can be found in the maintenance level (Jade: "It's less of a specific location and more a state of mind") or in the docking bay, where the maintenance crew has a little office with a shutter they hole up in.
- Sol can be found in The Monkey's Uncle, possibly the seediest dive bar on the station where she has a "reserved stool", or in the stockades where she's either throwing someone else in for a bounty or she herself has been thrown in for drunk and disorderly.

Next each character has a wish or a fear for the kingdom. Kuiper's wish is "I wish the Kingdom would take on riskier jobs." Max's fear is that the Kingdom is "held together with spotweld, duct-tape, and hope... one of these is going to run out sooner rather than later." Sol's fear is

that “the Kingdom will collapse under the weight of people who can’t see past what’s right in front of their noses.”

Next, each character has an issue that may affect their role in the kingdom. Kuiper’s issue is the crimes of her past are not far behind her. (Han: “I don’t know what they are right now but they’re... near.”) Max’s issue is that she takes on way more shit than she should (Jade: “Sleep is for the weak, stims are for people who need to get shit done.”) Sol’s issue is that she can’t put her past to bed and that makes it difficult to see any kind of future, good or bad.

Last, each character has a bond with the next character on the list. Kuiper relies on Max for upkeep and repairs to the communications equipment so she can maintain her side gigs, in exchange for undefined favors. Max perceives Sol as a destructive force that she’s forever having to clean up after. Sol depends on Kuiper for the best information on bounties, and sees her as integral to her livelihood.

## FIRST CROSSROAD (12:30)

Kingdoms reach crossroads, which are decisions the Kingdom must make to move forwards. The players play out scenes which may either advance the Kingdom towards crossroads, lead the Kingdom towards crisis, or time may simply pass. At the conclusion of each scene the player whose scene it was decides whether the scene warrants a mark in either Crossroads, Crisis, or Time Passes; when a certain number of one type have been marked, we resolve the Crossroads as fitting. (It’s a little confusing to try and explain in one go, but it’ll make more sense as the episode progresses.)

Our first crossroads is “Should the Kingdom take in refugees from the Star Marlin Assembly, even though they are loathed among the population?” The Star Marlin Assembly are a band of pirates who were wrecked by UniSol; however they’re a nasty group of people and though our station is like Space Switzerland people will likely be very unhappy to have these folks wandering around.

## FIRST SCENE: Kuiper’s scene, with Sol, at the Monkey’s Uncle (14:50)

“Not the stockades. Let’s not start there.” — Han

Kuiper finds Sol curled at the bar with a glass of terrible, terrible alcohol and takes the stool next to her, ordering “whatever the brightest neon drink you can get at this bar is.” Kuiper tells her that there are some high-profile bounties in the pack of refugees. Sol questions why Kuiper is telling her this— if so she can get paid or if she should look the other way. Kuiper offers to send her a list of names, and also admits that “some of the names on the list... either we put them in jail and we get the bounty, or they put me in jail and they get a bounty.” Sol acquiesces, since Kuiper being in jail hurts her business. “I thought it was because you cared!” Sol does care for Kuiper, but she’s also gotta make money.

Kuiper says she'll send the list and notes that Sol's at the bar earlier than she usually is. Sol says she's here whenever she wants. "Listen, I don't know. I don't ask questions. You do you. You know where to find me." Sol toasts her and then knocks back the rest of her shitty, shitty drink.

Han decides this scene counts as a mark for Crossroads, since Kuiper is pretty firmly throwing her support behind taking in the refugees. An order is made: "If we take these people in, some of them will have their bounties collected on them."

SECOND SCENE: Max's scene, with Kuiper, at the hangar bay (21:20)

"I don't know engines— the booster, or something." — Jade

Max is repairing the shuttle of someone who was wrecked by the Star Marlin Assembly when the person catches wind that the station is considering giving them refuge. They storm out. Kuiper comes in to figure out what's going on, and asks how long "this" is going to be. Max says if Kuiper's talking about the engine, it won't take long at all. "If we're talking about how long that captain you just passed is gonna be pissed off, well that depends on how things go, doesn't it?" Kuiper says people can be pissed off all they want, but it doesn't change that the station could make a good profit from taking in the Star Marlin Assembly. "Yeah, sure, having loads of extra people in a small confined space that you can't get off easily, that's in no way gonna end up in anything bad!" Kuiper thinks that's a pessimistic view; Max says it's a realistic view.

Kuiper says if the Kingdom takes in the refugees, then the captain can take care of his "personal vendetta" and other folks (namely, Sol) can make money off of the bounties on some of the other pirates. Max just asks if it's worth other people being angry. "I'm gonna be here doing this shit regardless of what happens, so." "I mean... You could be making more money off them... if... you wanted to?" "You're cute when you're trying to convince me to do something you want me to do."

Kuiper says Max'll have unfettered access to the pirates' ships, if they end up on the station. Max points out that those ships will likely be in serious need of repair. Kuiper points out that if Max repaired her ship and returned it to her she wouldn't be able to tell if it was repaired... or stripped for parts... Max sighs and says she doesn't have a vote in whatever goes on, and no matter what happens she'll make the best of it. "Regardless of the good, there will always be shit that comes with it." But if the refugees come on board, people are going to be pissed. "People are always going to be pissed! You're pissed right now!"

Max asks if Kuiper wants her to back her up; she does. "Can I remind you that you owe me a favor right now? And by 'a favor' I mean I have a list about as long as my arm of shit you owe me?" "I mean... yeah... are you trying to collect right now?" Max acquiesce to seeing what she can do about soothing hurt feelings, but she makes no promises.

"You're the best!" "I know."

Jade marks this scene for Crossroads. There's a prediction: "If yes, tensions will run higher than usual, and the station will suffer for it."

THIRD SCENE: Sol's scene, with Kuiper, in Joyopolis (29:10)

"Kuiper's playing Time Crisis 5." — Han

Sol stomps up to Kuiper and tells her there's people in the Monkey's Uncle saying they have a crop of bounties coming in and she thought there was a deal that she'd have first pick. Kuiper snaps that she's not the only one who knows who's coming in. "Well, I'm not planning on sharing any of these bounties with any of these fuckwits—," "Look, I gave the list to you cause you're the best one out there, so I don't know why you're so concerned."

Sol looks indignant— she's not concerned, she's pissed, but she's gonna deal with it. But it's going to be bad— "There's gonna be all of these vultures over all these people." Kuiper asks— isn't this how bounty hunting works? Sol points out there's usually a whole stellar system, but all the hunters being on the same station is going to be like a bunch of wolverines competing over a single scrap of meat in a barrel. Kuiper says then Sol just has to be the fastest wolverine.

Sol doesn't want Kuiper to tell her to do her job, just to keep a tighter lid on who's on the passenger manifest, cause otherwise it's gonna get ugly. Kuiper points out if she keeps too tight a wrap on the manifest then people will start to investigate her, and then Sol will be out of a job. Sol rolls her eyes and storms off again, punching a Dance Dance Revolution 58 as she goes out.

Dora marks this scene for Crossroads, but because Sol is a Touchstone they can also mark the scene for an additional state, and since public opinion is not great right now a mark is also made that the Kingdom is moving towards Crisis.

FOURTH SCENE: Kuiper's scene, with Max and an NPC quartermaster, on the bridge (33:40)

"I'm having a hard time not just picturing a Star Trek bridge, but I'm going to try my best." — Han

The quartermaster (Kat Zimki, played by Dora) tells Kuiper that unless the Marlins are planning on giving the station a hefty portion of their supplies, she doesn't know how they're going to make this work without going on a shoestring ration plan. Max says that'll be great for morale, giving everyone one more reason to be pissed off. Kuiper says what she's hearing is that they do have the resources to take them off. "That is not what I said, ma'am." "Sidenote, it's really throwing me off when you call me ma'am, please do not do that." Max laughs. "Do I look like a ma'am to you?" Kat says Kuiper looks like a superior officer who she doesn't want to piss off and she'll call Kuiper anything if it'll get her to listen and not kill her.

Kuiper says she's listening and what she's hearing is it'll be "hard and bad but they can do it." Max asks if there's anyone they can divert a supply line from to take the weight off. Kuiper's

sure they could find someone. There's a tiny UniSol contingent in the vicinity that they could take on if they needed to. Max groans. "Don't give me that noise!!"

Kat sighs and says that if they can get something more— from the Star Marlins, from the UniSol frigate— then she can rerun the numbers and see what they've got. Max admits that if they can take something whole, she can try to fix some stuff to make it function better. But if they're going to take on the Star Marlins, Kuiper's going to need to do something first. "Sold. Done."

Han marks this scene for Crossroads. There's not really another order in there, besides the knowing implication that the Kingdom will have to fuck up a UniSol frigate in order to make this work, but Han doesn't see it making a good order.

## RESOLVING A CROSSROAD (44:42)

Every mark down for Crossroads, Crisis, or Time Passes takes the Kingdom one step closer to a Resolution. Since we have four marks for Crossroads, that is the resolution we reached. There is a series of questions to ask when resolving a Crossroads. The first is if the resolving of this Crossroads marks the end of the game. Everyone wants to see what happens from here, so no.

The next step is to set the stage for what's about to happen. In order to make this work, we sort of have to go out of our way a little— not making concessions, just making moves. It's up to the Power, then, to decide which way the Kingdom goes on the Crossroads— if Yes, or if No. Han points out that we only have Orders and Predictions in the Yes column. The Kingdom is going to go with Yes anyway, despite the prediction that tensions will run high and the station will suffer for it, since the higher-ups want to strengthen their alliances.

Next is resolving the Orders and the Predictions. The bounties are collected on the Star Marlin Assembly— they're desperate enough to give up a few people for the greater good. The crew that had the run-in with the Star Marlins were around when the Marlins were brought in and some fights broke out that damaged parts of the station, leading Max and her crew to run ragged trying to deal with it, putting the improvements on hold while they patched up something more important. Then, the popular reaction— the stockades are a bit fuller than usual, and some of the fights are instigated or ended by Sol trying to do her job.

Next is Reflection, where the Characters see if their Wish, their Fear, or their Bonds have changed with the resolving of the crossroads. Kuiper's wish and bonds remain the same. Max's fear is the same, but she amends her bond with Kuiper to "Kuiper owes me big for supporting her." Sol's fear and her bonds remain the same.

Last, we decide on our next Crossroads. Given everything that's happened with this Crossroads, it's only fitting that the next Crossroads be "Will the Kingdom spend some of its limited person power to attack the United Solar Fleet?"

END EPISODE