

## **Crytek Junior Narrative Designer Writing Samples**

This document includes three writing samples that I believe show my range as a writer. The first two are game-related, while the third is a short screenplay. Feel free to contact me with any additional questions.

### **Destiny 2 Announcer Barks**

**pg. 2**

Fan-made announcer barks inspired by characters from Destiny 2. Written for a competitive PvP gamemode.

### **Jericho's Bar**

**pg. 8**

A branching mission inspired by Cyberpunk 2077 (written before the game's release, not related to CD Projekt Red). The interactive version (which is much easier to follow) is available here:

<https://hartcrompton.github.io/cyberpunk-2077-mission/>

### **Birdsong**

**pg. 28**

A short Americana-fantasy screenplay about music and necromancy.

## Crucible (Clash) Announcer Barks - Drifter fills in for Shaxx

In Destiny 2, the competitive game modes each have their own announcers. The more traditional PvP mode has Lord Shaxx who acts like a supportive and enthusiastic coach. Another mode has the Drifter. He's a bit of a rogue, not exactly law abiding, and has a wild west / gambling vibe. I wrote these lines imagining what Drifter would say if he had to fill in for Shaxx. They are intended for the more traditional team deathmatch PvP mode. These are fan-written and not related to Bungie.

	Gameplay Trigger	Announcer Bark	Notes
	<b>MATCH START</b>		Since each PvP playlist is siloed, match start lines can be more flavorful because they don't need to announce the gamemode.
1	Match Start	This just a temp thing, dig? Drifter doesn't like to be tied down.	
2	Match Start	Banned weapons? Safety regs? Shaxx is no fun.	
3	Match Start	Heard the other team talkin', the things they won't say to your face....	
4	Match Start	Get moving, I've got money on this one.	
5	Match Start	Get out there and knock 'em down.	
6	Match Start	Make me proud.	
7	Match Start	Shaxx is out, I'm filling in. Show me how you shoot.	
8	Match Start	It's simple. Put 'em down, keep 'em down.	
9	Match Start	Alright, alright, alright, Guardians on the field. Heh, always wanted to say that.	
10	Match Start	Light versus light? This I gotta see.	
11	Match Start	You can't die and neither can they, where's the fun in that?	
12	Match Start	Keep your ghost on the sidelines, this could get messy.	
13	Match Start	Your crew looks antsy, show 'em why they shouldn't cross you.	
14	Match Start	Asked Shaxx to let me bring a primeval, he didn't say a word.	
15	Match Start	Give 'em hell, <sister/brother>.	
16	Match Start	Enemy's ready for ya, let's see what you've got.	
17	Match Start	Hunting Guardians today? Well, I don't judge.	
18	Match Start	Shaxx wasn't always so nice, know why they call him "lord"?	
19	Match Start	In the dark age, Ghosts didn't sit on the sidelines. Remember that.	
20	Match Start	Funny thing, guns and shovels both make holes. Best crews know how to use both.	
21	Match Start	Thanatonauts says death is a doorway. Show the other team out.	
22	Match Start	Alright, let's see what Shaxx is always hollerin' about.	
23	Match Start	Reckon I could get a bank in there, harvest some motes... nah, Shaxx'd never go for it.	
24	Match Start	How 'bout some target practice?	
25	Match Start	You ever seen an arena after a match? Eugh. Make sure to wipe your boots.	
26	Match Start	I tried the crucible once. Kicked me out for "unorthodox armaments". Welp, their loss.	
27	Match Start	People pay to watch this? Shucks, I went into the wrong business.	
	<b>MATCH RESULT</b>		The goal here is to give the winning team fun and congratulatory lines and to help the losing team shrug off the loss and not make them feel worse.
28	Match Won	If the Shadows come knocking, I know who I'm calling.	
29	Match Won	Wish you were around in the dark age, <sister/brother>. Would have saved me a mess of trouble.	
30	Match Won	They thought they could step to you?	
31	Match Won	You'd give the man with the golden gun a run for his money.	
32	Match Won	I love when people fight fair, mean's they never see it coming.	
33	Match Won	If I were a gambling man I'd be counting my glimmer just now. Good thing I am.	
34	Match Won	People watch this? They're as bloodthirsty as you.	
35	Match Won	Don't know who's gonna want to fight you next.	
36	Match Won	You do this for fun? Huh, I've been paying too much for Gambit.	
37	Match Won	Heard only two guardians gave Shaxx a run for his money, you trying to be number three?	
38	Match Won	Way I see it, you did them a favor. Best way to learn.	
39	Match Won	You don't go easy, huh? Respect.	

	Gameplay Trigger	Announcer Bark	Notes
40	Match Won	You ever go to the dark, I'm bugging out.	
41	Match Won	You belong on the frontier.	
42	Match Won	You got iron, <sister/brother>	
43	Match Won	You made six-fronts look like a barroom brawl.	
44	Match Won	Shaxx has no enterprising spirit, could be raking in glimmer from this.	
45	Match Won	You ever get tired of winning? Heh, me neither.	
46	Match Won	Don't cuss at me, not my fault you bet on the wrong horse, just get me that glim- whoa, hehe, wrong channel.	
47	Match Won	Now that was a thing of beauty.	
48	Match Won	Another notch for your cannon. If you still got room.	
49	Match Lost	Can't win 'em all, hero.	
50	Match Lost	That's what happens when you play nice.	
51	Match Lost	Next time don't go easy on 'em.	
52	Match Lost	Dust yourself off and try again.	
53	Match Lost	Fight's over, walk it off.	
54	Match Lost	No worries, I put money on both sides.	
55	Match Lost	That's it, enemy team was hungry today.	
56	Match Lost	Wanna cool off? How 'bout some Gambit.	
57	Match Lost	Nothing you could learn here you wouldn't pick up in a day on the frontier.	
58	Match Lost	My advice for winning a duel? Run. Settle up when they're nice and tired.	
59	Match Lost	Gambit's just around the corner if you need a change of pace.	
60	Match Lost	Just lost a whole lotta glimmer because of you. Just fooling, I always have contingencies.	
61	Match Lost	Blow off some steam, then try again.	
62	Match Lost	That doesn't count, you had the sun in your eyes.	
63	Match Lost	No worries, you can always get even later.	
64	Mercy Rule	What'd I miss? Eh, it's over already?	
65	Mercy Rule	Over already? Barely had time for popcorn.	
66	Mercy Rule	That's enough, cuttin' it short.	
67	Mercy Rule	I think we've both seen enough.	
68	Mercy Rule	Sorry <sister/brother>, I'm calling this one.	
69	Match Tied	Nah, nah, that can't be right, count 'em again. Well I'll be: tie.	
70	Match Tied	Hmph, that's no good. We'll settle this later.	
	TIME		Time notifications are more to the point because they convey crucial information.
71	5 Minutes Remaining	Five minutes, could go either way.	
72	5 Minutes Remaining	Five minutes on the clock.	
73	5 Minutes Remaining	Five minutes left.	
74	5 Minutes Remaining	You got five minutes. Make 'em count.	
75	5 Minutes Remaining	Five minutes before I call it.	
76	3 Minutes Remaining	Three minutes, let's see some hustle.	
77	3 Minutes Remaining	Three minutes, tick tock.	
78	3 Minutes Remaining	Three minutes to knock some heads.	
79	3 Minutes Remaining	Just three minutes left.	
80	3 Minutes Remaining	Three minutes. Make a move.	
81	1 Minute Remaining	One minute, knock 'em dead.	
82	1 Minute Remaining	Sun's gettin' low, one minute left.	
83	1 Minute Remaining	One minute, step it up.	
84	1 Minute Remaining	One minute left.	
85	30 Seconds Remaining	Thirty seconds, break some legs.	
86	30 Seconds Remaining	Thirty seconds, you're cutting it close.	
87	30 Seconds Remaining	Thirty seconds, this gunfight's almost finished.	
88	30 Seconds Remaining	Just thirty seconds left.	
89	10 Seconds Remaining	Ten seconds, finish strong.	

	Gameplay Trigger	Announcer Bark	Notes
90	10 Seconds Remaining	Ten seconds, make 'em count.	
91	10 Seconds Remaining	Ten seconds, this is it!	
92	10 Seconds Remaining	Ten seconds and that's all.	
	ENEMIES DEFEATED		Defeat notifications have more flavour because they serve more to reward the player rather than keep them aware of time/points.
93	2 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Back to back	
94	2 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Who's next?	
95	2 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Not bad.	
96	2 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Solid work.	
97	2 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Double or nothing.	
98	2 Enemies Defeated Quickly	One after another.	
99	2 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Nice and easy.	
100	2 Enemies Defeated Quickly	That's two.	
101	2 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Two. Solid.	
102	3 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Three down.	
103	3 Enemies Defeated Quickly	That's three.	
104	3 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Set 'em up and knock 'em down.	
105	3 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Three buried.	
106	3 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Three of a kind.	
107	3 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Back to back to back.	
108	3 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Triple down.	
109	3 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Three in a row.	
110	4 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Four in the dirt.	
111	4 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Showed 'em the door.	
112	4 Enemies Defeated Quickly	You'd make a good invader.	
113	4 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Hang 'em high.	
114	4 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Dropping like flies.	
115	4 Enemies Defeated Quickly	That makes four.	
116	4 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Four out of commission.	
117	4 Enemies Defeated Quickly	You're cleaning 'em out.	
118	5 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Full house.	
119	5 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Five in the ground.	
120	5 Enemies Defeated Quickly	You make 'em look like rookies.	
121	5 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Five down, get digging.	
122	5 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Keep 'em coming.	
123	5 Enemies Defeated Quickly	And that's five.	
124	5 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Five for revive.	
125	6 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Where do they keep coming from?	
126	6 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Six taking dirt naps.	
127	6 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Six shot down.	
128	6 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Woo! Keep it up.	
129	6 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Six graves.	
130	6 Enemies Defeated Quickly	[Chuckles] What a riot.	
131	7 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Kid.... You scare me sometimes.	
132	7 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Seven guardians with their tails between their legs.	
133	7 Enemies Defeated Quickly	How many was that? I lost track.	
134	7 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Woo! They scared yet?	
135	7 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Woo! Who's hungry, just me?	
136	7 Enemies Defeated Quickly	You're killing them quicker than their ghosts can bring them back.	
137	7 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Woo-oo! Slapped 'em down.	
138	7 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Scratch seven.	
139	7 Enemies Defeated Quickly	Seven? [Whistle] Nice work.	

	Gameplay Trigger	Announcer Bark	Notes
140	10 Enemies Defeated w/o Dying	[Laughs] Stop it, you're gonna make 'em cry.	
141	10 Enemies Defeated w/o Dying	[Laughs] their ghosts can barely keep up.	
142	10 Enemies Defeated w/o Dying	Ghosts'll be working overtime.	
143	10 Enemies Defeated w/o Dying	Still counting? I lost track.	
144	10 Enemies Defeated w/o Dying	You're a menace [chuckles].	
145	10 Enemies Defeated w/o Dying	Only law out here is you.	
146	10 Enemies Defeated w/o Dying	Judge, jury, and executioner.	
147	20 Enemies Defeated w/o Dying	Who's next? Who's next?! You ain't <i>done</i> yet!	
148	20 Enemies Defeated w/o Dying	Thanatonauts ought to call you.	
149	20 Enemies Defeated w/o Dying	[Chuckles] Shax'll be sorry he missed that.	
150	20 Enemies Defeated w/o Dying	Woo! They're <i>never</i> gonna live that down!	
151	20 Enemies Defeated w/o Dying	Shucks, you showing off for me?	
152	20 Enemies Defeated w/o Dying	I'd call the sheriff, but I think you killed him too.	
153	20 Enemies Defeated w/o Dying	[Laughs] This ain't a fight, it's a <i>massacre</i> !	
154	50 Enemies Defeated w/o Dying	You killed the backup. You killed the backup's backup. You killed the backup's backup's backup. There's nobody left.	
155	50 Enemies Defeated w/o Dying	I remember once, dark age, warlords came to town. <Sister/Brother>, we could have used you.	
156	50 Enemies Defeated w/o Dying	[Whistles] Shaxx didn't say a thing about this. Next time you're in the reef, drinks are on me.	
157	50 Enemies Defeated w/o Dying	The Cabal got a name for folks like you. It's uh... [snaps] Hell, I forget. Means you got tusk, though.	
158	Assisted Defeat	That's how it's done.	
159	Assisted Defeat	They shoulda run.	
160	Assisted Defeat	Best way to win a duel.	
161	Assisted Defeat	Team's got your back	
162	Assisted Defeat	That's why we bring backup.	
163	Assisted Defeat	Shoulda watched their back.	
164	Assisted Defeat	Your team knows the dance.	
165	Assisted Defeat	Can't outdraw all of you.	
166	Defeated an Enemy in Their Super with a Weapon	Bet they feel silly.	
167	Defeated an Enemy in Their Super with a Weapon	[Chuckles] Low blow.	
168	Defeated an Enemy in Their Super with a Weapon	Light's no substitute for iron.	
169	Defeated an Enemy in Their Super with a Weapon	That shut 'em up.	
170	Defeated an Enemy in Their Super with a Weapon	Ooh! That stings.	
171	Defeated an Enemy in Their Super with Your Super	Woo! They were looking for a fight and you gave it to 'em.	
172	Defeated an Enemy in Their Super with Your Super	Even their <i>Ghost</i> felt that!	
173	Defeated an Enemy in Their Super with Your Super	Woo-ooh!	
174	Defeated an Enemy in Their Super with Your Super	Ghost's gonna need a mop.	
175	Defeated an Enemy in Their Super with Your Super	Just like the dark age.	
176	Defeated an Enemy in Their Super with Your Super	And people think gambit is barbaric.	
177	Defeated an Enemy in Their Super with Your Super	If this was gambit, I'd pay you for that.	
178	Defeated an Enemy in Their Super with Your Super	I get why Shaxx likes this.	
179	Defeated an Enemy in Their Super with Your Super	Boom! [Laughs].	
180	Defeated an Enemy in Their Super with Your Super	Ooh! They felt that.	

	Gameplay Trigger	Announcer Bark	Notes
181	Defeated an Enemy in Their Super with Your Super	There's <i>nothing</i> left!	
182	First Kill of the Match	That's why I always bet on you.	
183	First Kill of the Match	You're hungry, I get it.	
184	First Kill of the Match	Not bad, quickdraw.	
185	First Kill of the Match	Fastest gun out there.	
186	First Kill of the Match	A real desperado.	
187	First Kill of the Match	Keep it up.	
188	First Kill of the Match	I like the way you work.	
	HEAVY AMMO ACQUIRED		Heavy ammo notifications both reward the player for securing the ammo and ensure they know they're the ones who grabbed it if multiple people are going for it at once.
189	Heavy Ammo Acquired	Special delivery, let 'em have it.	
190	Heavy Ammo Acquired	Heavy ammo, my treat.	
191	Heavy Ammo Acquired	How about a little collateral damage?	
192	Heavy Ammo Acquired	[Chuckles] Oh they better run.	
193	Heavy Ammo Acquired	Love the smell of heavy ammo.	
194	Heavy Ammo Acquired	Don't say I never did nothin' for ya.	
195	Heavy Ammo Acquired	Have fun.	
196	Heavy Ammo Acquired	Uh-oh [chuckles].	
197	Heavy Ammo Acquired	Fresh heavy ammo, mm-mm.	
	POINTS		Points announcements are shorter and to the point because they convey important information.
198	Team Ahead in Points	Enemy's in the dust.	
199	Team Ahead in Points	You're ahead. Kick 'em while they're down.	
200	Team Ahead in Points	Your team's got the edge.	
201	Team Ahead in Points	Your team's ahead.	
202	Team Ahead in Points	Don't let up.	
203	Team Ahead in Points	You're in the lead. Keep it up.	
204	Team Ahead in Points	Opposing team can barely keep up.	
205	Team Behind in Points	Come on, pick it up.	
206	Team Behind in Points	They're rolling you, get it together.	
207	Team Behind in Points	Your team's trailing.	
208	Team Behind in Points	Enemy's ahead, pick up the pace.	
209	Team Behind in Points	Enemy's got the lead, chase 'em down.	
210	Team Behind in Points	They're ahead, but you can catch up.	
211	Teams Close in Points	It's close, run 'em down.	
212	Teams Close in Points	You're neck and neck.	
213	Teams Close in Points	This one's close, fight dirty.	
214	Teams Close in Points	This one could go either way.	
215	Team Takes the Lead	I smell a comeback.	
216	Team Takes the Lead	You got the lead. Keep it.	
217	Team Takes the Lead	You clean up good. Now don't fall behind.	
218	Team Takes the Lead	You're back in the lead. Nice work.	
219	Team Takes the Lead	Back in the lead. Had me worried.	
220	Team Takes the Lead	Your team's on top.	
221	Team Loses the Lead	Get out there and even this up.	
222	Team Loses the Lead	You're behind. Careful.	
223	Team Loses the Lead	You lost the lead, take it back.	
224	Team Loses the Lead	Enemy pulled ahead.	
225	Team Loses the Lead	They took your lead!	
226	Team Loses the Lead	Enemy's ahead. Reel 'em in.	
227	Close to Winning	Nearly there, cinch this.	

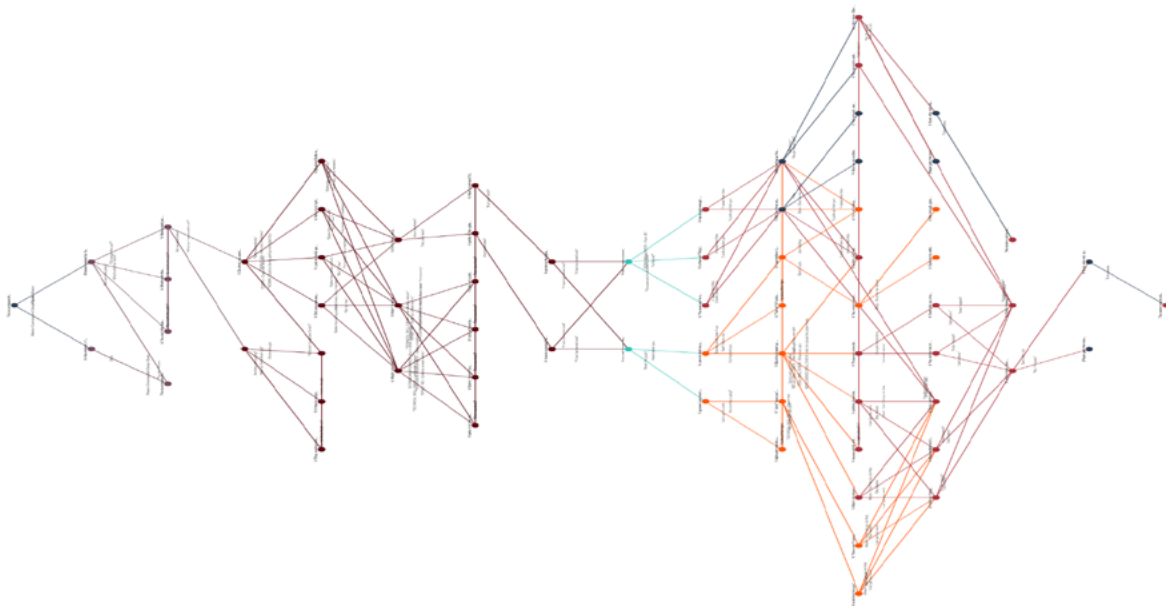
	Gameplay Trigger	Announcer Bark	Notes
228	Close to Winning	You've got this in the bag.	
229	Close to Winning	Just a little more.	
230	Close to Winning	Your team's close. Don't get cocky.	
231	Close to Losing	This doesn't look good, <sister/brother>.	
232	Close to Losing	Enemy might take this one.	
233	Close to Losing	Enemy's close, you gotta step it up.	
234	Close to Losing	Enemy's about to win, don't make it easy.	

## Jericho's Bar

In this mission, V is hired by bar owner Jericho Matsumura to try to scare a wannabe gangster, Leon, away from a life of crime. There are numerous outcomes that result from dialogue choices and character skills/history. (This is fan-written and not related to CD Projekt Red.)

The interactive version is available here: <https://hartcrompton.github.io/cyberpunk-2077-mission/>

I believe the interactive version is (much (much (much))) easier to follow than this plain text version. This mission has many options and paths and this version mostly exists to show all the possible permutations. Below you can see the overall mission flow:



In this mission, I wanted to make a situation where just going through and doing the bare minimum results in a somewhat vague outcome. Leon isn't dead, but he's probably not going to survive long if he keeps doing what he's doing. This isn't some "scared straight" special born from the D.A.R.E. program, you can't scare someone and expect them to turn their life around. The "best" outcome requires learning a bit about Leon and then giving him an out. You can also just murder him and then threaten Jericho into paying you anyway if you are playing a cyberpsycho sort of character.

I also included many opportunities to utilise skill checks to make the player's character building choices feel impactful.



The largest fork in the mission is determined by V's street cred. A complete no-name V without much of a reputation would probably not be able to do much of anything to change Leon's mind, but if V is well known then Leon just might be convinced to at least hear V out. V can use this influence to help or hurt Leon (although I tried to make it clear that encouraging Leon to go out and start a gang is a bad idea).

**[Bold]** choices will advance the mission along the critical path. Non-bold lines are optional.

The player gets to the mission objective and sees it's a below-ground bar in the Watson neighborhood. The sign above the door reads: The Decker. From the outside it looks like a dive. Inside it's certainly not classy, but definitely well maintained. The bartender's an older man in his sixties, grey/white hair slicked back with a crumpled button up pushed past his elbows. There's an old netrunner cyberdeck mounted on the wall behind him. It's out of date, but was definitely top of the line when it was new.

The bartender nods as V walks in.

Jericho: You the merc? 'Bout time you showed up.

V steps up to the bar and takes a seat.

V: Yeah, name's V. How'd you know?

Jericho: Not a lot of new faces here, 'specially not with the hardware you've got. Name's Jericho. (Jericho offers his hand to V and shakes.)

1. [You own this place?]

a. V: You own this place?

b. Jericho: Yeah she's mine. Tried retirement, didn't know what to do with myself after the first week.

2. [What's with the name?]

a. V: What's with the name? "Decker" sounds pretty old school.

b. Jericho: I ain't exactly "new school" myself. It's an advertisement, tells folks what to expect.

3. **[So what's the job?]**

a. V: Notice said you needed some muscle, what's the job?

**[From: 3. So what's the job?]**

Jericho: (Sighing) Well we've had a bit of trouble the past couple nights – hot-headed kids. Just posturing, you know how it is, they get a few pieces of hardware, buy a mass repro'd gat and act like they run the city.

1. [Tell me about them.]

a. [Are they with a gang?]

- i. V: They running with a gang?
- ii. Jericho: Not really; they've taken to calling themselves the Alphas but it's all for show. A real gang'd chew these punks up and leave 'em on ice.

b. [Why not throw them out?]

- i. V: If they're trouble, why don't you just throw them out?
- ii. Jericho: Really they're just trouble for themselves. Buncha kids with heads full of stories and derms, don't know the risks they're inviting.
- iii. V: You're worried about a couple of wannabe gangsters?
- iv. Jericho: (Irritated) I'm worried about a couple of decent kids getting in over their heads. Listen, they're just bored. Kids like them don't have a lot of opportunities that haven't already been snatched up by corps and gangs.

2. [What am I supposed to do?]

- a. V: So what, you want me to rough them up?
- b. Jericho: If it comes to that, yeah. Better you than somebody wearing real colors. These kids, they're alright, just dumb. Dumb and bored.

**[From: 2. What am I supposed to do?]**

V surveys the bar, checking out the groups of locals, looking to see if any are looking a little too deep in their cups.

Jericho: So how'd you get into the merc life?

1. [CORPO – Corporate security.]

- a. V: Did corporate security, lot of transferable skills.
- b. Jericho: Used to work for the collars huh? Well I'll try not to hold it against you.

2. [NOMAD – Lost my family getting into Night City.]

- a. V: Lost my family getting into night city, started running jobs to get by.

- b. Jericho: You came out of the badlands? Shit, hear it's all goin' south out there.

**3. [STREET KID – Not a lot of options.]**

- a. V: Not a lot of options when you come out of Heywood.
- b. Jericho: Not a lotta folk who'd go it solo, how come you didn't join up with the Valentinos?

**4. [Same as anybody.]**

- a. V: (Evasive) Gotta work, same as anybody.
- b. Jericho: (Raises an eyebrow) Fair enough, I won't pry.

**[From: Any above response.]**

The conversation is interrupted when a huge blast of sound comes from the back of the bar. Ringing, bells, gunshots, synth, it sounds like an arcade machine orgy.

V stands up, ready for action, but Jericho waves them down.

Jericho: Ah shit, braindance cabinet's acting up again. Listen I hate to do this, but do you think you could take a look at it? IEC said they can't get a tech out here 'til next week.

**1. [Better than sitting around.]**

- a. V: Alright, got nothing better to do.

**2. [Not for free.]**

- a. V: I don't work for free.
- b. Jericho: Merc's gotta eat huh? Get it working and I'll give you what I woulda paid the tech.
- c. (V will receive a small bonus at the end of the mission.)

**3. [I'm a merc, not a mechanic.]**

- a. V: I'm a merc, not a mechanic.
- b. (V refuses and stays seated, Jericho sighs, flips a switch, and the cabinet turns off, still broken.)
- c. Jericho: Long as you're waiting, how bout a drink? (Jericho offers V a selection of drinks.)

**[From: 1, 2 – Agreeing to fix the cabinet]**

V gets up and walks down the bar to the machine which is clearly going haywire. It looks a bit like an oversized Virtua Cop cabinet with cables to jack in instead of light-guns.

**1. [TECHNICAL SKILL CHECK – Just needs a reboot.]**

- a. V jacks into the cabinet and quickly resets it.

**2. [STREET KID – Gotta be a reset switch.]**

- a. V: Damn, haven't touched one of these in years. Let's see, reset switch should be just around...
- b. V reaches behind the cabinet, flips the switch, the machine power-cycles.
- c. V: Got it.

**3. [PERCUSSIVE MAINTENANCE – Needs a hard reset.]**

- a. (V looks at the cabinet from side to side and sighs.)
- b. V: Worth a shot.
- c. V slams their fist into the side of the cabinet. With a few good hits, the machine reboots.

**4. [EXTREME MAINTENANCE - Shut it down. Permanently]**

- a. V pulls out a pistol and shoots the malfunctioning machine.
- b. Jericho: The hell d'you think you're doing?
- c. V: I shut it up, didn't I?
- d. Jericho: Just sit down. Better cool that attitude.
- e. V returns to their seat at the bar.

**[From: 1-3 – Cabinet is fixed]**

V returns to their seat at the bar.

V: Got it working.

Jericho: Seems you did. Here, on the house.

(Jericho offers V a selection of drinks.)

**[From: Any braindance cabinet outcome]**

- 1. [That your deck?]
  - a. V points to the cyberdeck mounted to the wall behind Jericho.

- b. V: That your deck? Looks ancient.
  - c. Jericho: Mhm. Me and that old Kasahara been through a lot together.
  - d. V: You're a jockey?
  - e. Jericho: Used to be. Corps, high-sec installations, military, you name it and I could cruise through like a ghost on the wire.
  - f. V: You still working?
  - g. Jericho: Nah, nah my cowboy days ended a long time ago. (Nostalgic, thoughtful.)
  - h. V: Gotta be a story there, what happened?
  - i. Jericho: Got cocky, got sloppy. Ran a job for some net tycoon out of Moscow, hardened military installation, black ice thick as can be. They didn't even see me coming, burrowed through the data fortress and nicked the code. Wanted to leave a calling card and tripped an alarm on the way out. Stupid. Black Ice, AI, still not sure what grabbed me. Fried the trodes and every neuron rigged to them. Medics say I'm lucky it didn't flash-fry my entire brain. Haven't been able to get on the net since, connections are just... (Jericho looks away) Zap. Gone.
2. [How's business?]
- a. V: How's business? Seems like you do pretty well here.
  - b. Jericho: I do OK. Wife always said I'd do better running some yuppie alchemy joint in Westbrook.
  - c. V: Why'd you pick Watson then?
  - d. Jericho: Grew up here, got friends here. Couple of drinks are the best way to get a good story out of a cowboy or a merc. (Jericho shrugs) Most the folks I used to run with either skipped town or dead, gotta keep up with the kids somehow.

### 3. [Wait]

#### [From: Picking both 1 & 2 or 3]

A group of three guys come in wearing matching jackets. Jericho looks at V then nods in the direction of the group. All three are young and boisterous. The one in the front is clearly the ringleader and has a couple higher-end cybernetics.

Leon: Jerry, joint's really going to hell, you just letting anybody in here now?

Jericho: How's that, Leon?

Leon (ignoring Jericho and addressing V): You new? We got a tradition here, newcomer buys a round for the regulars. (Leon and his cronies laugh.)

**[If V has LOW street cred]**

V hasn't made a name for themselves yet; nobody would recognize them on the street, especially not some young punks.

[Go to -> \[Low Street Cred Path\]](#)

**[If V has HIGH street cred]**

V is a well known merc. As Leon gets closer he recognizes V and smiles.

[Go to -> \[High Street Cred Path\]](#)

**[Low Street Cred Path]**

**1. [You sure you're allowed to drink?]**

- a. V: You sure you're old enough?
- b. Leon: Funny, funny, your friend's a joker, Jerry.
- c. V: What's it matter? He's already got you three clowns.

**2. [Is that so?]**

- a. V: Is that so?
- b. Leon: It is, see, me and my boys, we try to keep things friendly on our turf.
- c. He grins and leans in to reveal the cheap pistol holstered under his jacket.
- d. V: Your turf? (V scoffs) Three of you couldn't take an alley from a junkie in Pacifica.

**3. [BODY SKILL CHECK – Fuck off.]**

- a. V has a high enough body stat that one member of the group is spooked off before the confrontation starts.
- b. V: Fuck off.
- c. Leon: What'd I tell you Jerry? People need to know this is a place for respect.

- d. Crony (clearly worried): Leon, chill man they look serious.
- e. V: Should listen to your friend, kid.

**[From: 1, 2, or 3 – Picking a fight]**

**1. [V pulls out their gun.]**

- a. V kills the three wannabe gangsters. Jericho is horrified.
- b. Jericho: Oh Jesus, Leon... What the fuck is wrong with you? Those were good kids! Get the hell out of here.

**c. [Give me my money.]**

- i. V: Give me my eddies or you're gonna join them.
- ii. Jericho: Fucking psycho. Here, now get out of here.

**iii. Mission End**

**d. [Fine.]**

- i. V: Fair enough, see you around.

**ii. Mission End**

**2. [V raises their fists.]**

- a. After beating up the punks, V grabs Leon by the jacket. He looks terrified. He's just realised he's in way over his head.
- b. V: Get out of here and burn these dumbass costumes before someone from Maelstrom decides you're on their turf. I see you in colors again and you're gonna burn with 'em.
- c. V lets Leon go and the three gangsters scramble out of the bar.
- d. Jericho: (Half amused, half irritated by the mess in his bar) Shit, you could have given me a little warning.
- e. V: Sorry about that, doubt they'll try it again though.
- f. Jericho: Yeah well here's hopin' they learned a lesson.
  - i. [You gonna be safe?]
    - 1. V: You gonna be safe? They looked dumb enough, they might just come back for more.

2. Jericho: (Jericho laughs) Well I reckon you scared them straight. Expect they'll cool off before coming here again.

**ii. [Job's done.]**

1. V: Job's done. Give me the Eddies and I'll be on my way.
2. Jericho: Sure, sure here you go. Feel like another round 'fore you hit the road?

**a. [No, I'm good.]**

- i. (Player gets the money and leaves.)
- ii. V: No, I'm good, see ya around.
- iii. Jericho: See ya.

**iv. Mission End**

**b. [Sure, why not.]**

- i. V: Sure, why not, maybe I'll get to finish this one.
- ii. Jericho: Should be a quiet night from here on. Glad I didn't miss the show though, really brought me back.
- iii. V: That why you bought a bar, entertainment?
- iv. Jericho (grinning, amused): I've been on the other side too. Ran a gig with a bagman and some other jockeys in Seoul a few years back...
- v. The scene cuts to show time has passed, Jericho is wrapping up his story.
- vi. Jericho (starting in mid sentence): ....Turned out he'd swallowed the damn thing. Client didn't feel like paying for half-digested bioware, but we snatched a few things on the way out to settle up.
- vii. V: (Laughs) Still sounds better than half the jobs I've done. (V stands up) Right, well I've still got business, I'll see you around.
- viii. Jericho: (Warmly) Come back any time.

**ix. Mission End**



### [High Street Cred Path]

Leon: Holy shit, V? We've seen you on the fixer boards, heard Arasaka's gunning for you. What're you doing in a dive like this? No offence, Jerry.

V:

#### 1. [These the guys?]

- a. V ignores Leon and turns back to Jericho.
- b. V: These the guys you were talking about?
- c. Jericho nods casually.
- d. V: Just a couple kids.

#### e. [Let's get to work. (Attack)]

- i. V sighs and stands up.
- ii. V: Right, let's get to work.
- iii. V grabs a bottle and smashes it over Leon's head and the fight begins.
- iv. [Go to -> \[Fight Ending\]](#)

#### f. [You running a gang?]

- i. V: "Jerry" says you're making trouble, running around like you own the place.
- ii. Leon: Jerry, you really need to learn to mind your business. We're gonna make something of Watson. The older gang's are yesterday's news, they don't got the hunger to stay on top.
- iii. V: (Laughs) Big boys lay off for a hot minute and the roaches and mice move in.
- iv. Leon: The fuck did you just call me?
- v. Leon draws his pistol and points it at V.

#### vi. [TECHNICAL SKILL CHECK - Disarm him.]

- 1. V snatches the gun from Leon and quickly field strips it.
- 2. V: Sit down. This running around, making a racket, you're gonna call down all the wrong attention. Act this way around Maelstrom and they'll peel you open and sell you to the scavs.

3. Leon: We can take care of our own.
4. V glances at the disassembled weapon on the counter.
5. V: Uh huh. I can see that. This is just some friendly advice. You and your boys there don't have the skills to survive this life, trust me.
6. Leon: Here's some friendly advice for you, V. I see you on my turf again and you're dead. Let's get out of here, guys.
7. **[I can get you work.]** (This option is only available if V asked Jericho for more information about the job earlier.)
  - a. V: Hold up, I've got connections. Padre, Wakako, Rogue; a few good words from me and they can get you something better than running back-alley deals on scrap.
  - b. Leon pauses and half turns.
  - c. Leon: I don't need your help.
  - d. V: I know. Just think about it.
  - e. Leon hesitates, he's clearly thinking over the offer.
  - f. Leon: Come on, guys. Let's get out of here.
  - g. [Go to -> \[Talk Ending\]](#)
8. **[Attack - Can't let you do that.]**
  - a. V: Sorry, can't just let you go.
  - b. [Go to -> \[Fight Ending\]](#)
9. **[Stay seated.]**
  - a. V stays seated and the group leaves.
  - b. [Go to -> \[Talk Ending\]](#)

**vii. [Not too bright, are you?]**

1. V: There aren't many people in this city dumb enough to pull a gun on me.
2. Leon: I'm not scared of you.
3. V: No, you're not scared of anything, are you? Corps, gangs, mercs, it's all so far over your head you can't even see it. You

want freedom, you want a name for yourself? Somebody else owned you before you were even born. You only have until they decide to come and collect.

4. Leon: That's why we're hitting back, gonna make sure this city knows our names.
5. V: Take it from me, the city always hits harder. Keep your head down--bus tables, get a desk job--and maybe your momma won't have to visit you in the columbarium.
6. Leon scoffs and lowers his weapon.
7. Leon: Christ, never would have taken you for a killjoy. Come on guys, let's get out of here, this merc's bumming me out.
8. **[I can get you work.]** (This option is only available if V asked Jericho for more information about the job earlier.)
  - a. V: Hold up, I've got connections. Padre, Wakako, Rogue; a few good words from me and they can get you something better than running back-alley deals on scrap.
  - b. Leon pauses and half turns.
  - c. Leon: I don't need your help.
  - d. V: I know. Just think about it.
  - e. Leon hesitates, he's clearly thinking over the offer.
  - f. Leon: Come on, guys. Let's get out of here.
  - g. [Go to -> \[Talk Ending\]](#)
9. **[Attack - Can't let you do that.]**
  - a. V: Sorry, can't just let you go.
  - b. [Go to -> \[Fight Ending\]](#)
10. **[Stay seated.]**
  - a. V stays seated and the group leaves.
  - b. [Go to -> \[Talk Ending\]](#)

## 2. **[Heard about you.]**

- a. V: Jericho told me about you, says you're running a gang.

b. Leon: That's right, me and my boys are gonna own Watson.

c. Jericho: Don't let Maelstrom hear you say that.

**d. [Cut that shit out.]**

i. V: Buncha jumped up street kids. Keep this up and you'll be on a slab in some scav's basement.

ii. Leon: (laughs) I respect you V so I'm gonna give you a chance to apologize. Nothing against you, but nobody talks to me like that in front of my boys.

**iii. [Let's get this over with.]**

1. V audibly rolls their eyes then smashes a bottle over Leon's head and the fight begins.

2. [Go to -> \[Fight Ending\]](#)

**iv. [Gonna end up in the gutter.]**

1. V: Night city doesn't need more mercs or gangers. You've got time, a future, don't waste it bleeding out alone in a gutter.

2. Leon: Don't fucking lecture me, merc, you know this city. NCPD locks you up just for looking at 'em. Corps and gangs bleed us dry at every turn and the mayor's on the take from all of them. They own the future. I'd rather go out making a mark than be some dried up has-been running a bar for other washouts.

3. V: You see this? (V taps their head where they got shot by Dexter) Got that from a fixer I respected. That's all this life gets you: a skull full of lead. Get out before someone tosses you in the dump.

4. Leon: Then how come you're still here?

5. V: It's not the same, I've got my reasons.

6. Leon: We're all the same, V. Just trying to make something before the whole city goes belly up. Come on boys, don't need to hear any more of this.

7. **[I can get you work.]** (This option is only available if V asked Jericho for more information about the job earlier.)

a. V: Hold up, I've got connections. Padre, Wakako, Rogue; a few good words from me and they can get you something better than running back-alley deals on scrap.

- b. Leon pauses and half turns.
- c. Leon: I don't need your help.
- d. V: I know. Just think about it.
- e. Leon hesitates, he's clearly thinking over the offer.
- f. Leon: Come on, guys. Let's get out of here.
- g. [Go to -> \[Talk Ending\]](#)

**8. [Attack - Can't let you do that.]**

- a. V: Sorry, can't just let you go.
- b. [Go to -> \[Fight Ending\]](#)

**9. [Stay seated.]**

- a. V stays seated and the group leaves.
- b. [Go to -> \[Talk Ending\]](#)

**v. [REFLEX SKILL CHECK - Take his gun.]**

- 1. V moves quickly and grabs Leon's gun from its holster. V holds the gun under Leon's chin.
- 2. Leon: Whoa, whoa - be cool, that thing's got a hair trigger.
- 3. V: You're just a kid playing with toys. I've killed whole gangs for less than that. Lucky it was me that took this job, someone less charitable might have shot you when you walked in.
- 4. Leon: Wh-what do you want?
- 5. V: Get out of here, burn the jackets, ditch the guns, tell your momma you've seen the light and you're gonna fly straight. If I come back and see you in colors? You're done.
- 6. V pulls the gun away and fires a shot straight up into the ceiling. Leon and his friends run out.
- 7. [Go to -> \[Talk Ending\]](#)

**vi. [COOL SKILL CHECK - Draw your gun.]**

- 1. V subtly draws their gun and points it at Leon under the bar.

2. V: Let's not make a scene. Hate to have to make Jericho mop you up off the floor.
3. V reaches across and grabs Leon's gun and tosses it away.
4. V: The way I see it, if you can't see someone pulling iron right in front of you then scavs are gonna have a field day grabbing you off the street and stripping you for parts.
5. Leon: What are you two waiting for? Fucking get them.
6. V: Either of you move and your buddy's dead. Now: listen. I know what it takes to make it on the street, and you don't have it. There are samurai a lot meaner than me out there.
7. Leon: Are we done? Come on boys, let's get out of here. 'Less you're gonna shoot me for real.
8. Leon stands and moves to leave.

**vii. [INTELLIGENCE SKILL CHECK - Ask him about his cyber mods.]**

1. V: Those are some decent mods, you install 'em yourself?
2. Leon: Pff, I built these. You won't see anything else like them.
3. V: You seem like a smart kid, so I'll level with you. You're gonna run around playing pretend, maybe get a few eddies to your name, do enough work that someone hears about you. Maybe Maelstrom, maybe Sixth Street, maybe you just piss off the wrong corpo.
4. Leon: I ain't scared of anybody.
5. V: Course you're not. What about your boys huh? What about your family, you think you can keep them safe? Open your eyes, only one way this story ends.
6. Leon: Why should I listen to you?
7. **[I've been around.]**
  - a. V: You remind me of my friend, Jackie. Head full of dreams and stories of old mercs. I watched him bleed out in a fucking cab, still talking about how we'd made it. Any idea how much blood's inside you? That's what dreams buy you. When you get tired of acting like a gangster, get in touch. I know some people who could put you to work.

- b. Leon shakes his head.
- c. Leon: Come on, let's get out of here.
- d. [Go to -> \[Talk Ending\]](#)

**8. [I've got connections.]**

- a. V: Seem like you know your mods. I know a ripper doc, Viktor, best in the business. Honest work, none of that scav shit. I could put in a word for you, he's always complaining bout how much work he's got.
- b. Leon: (Scoffs) You sound like my dad. Come on, let's get out of here.
- c. [Go to -> \[Talk Ending\]](#)

**e. [Yeah? Show me.]**

- i. V: That so? (V looks them up and down) Doubt you could take an alley off a junkie in Pacifica.
- ii. [Go to -> \[Fight Ending\]](#)

**f. [Sounds good, keep it up.]**

- i. V: I can believe it, you kids are gonna go far.
- ii. Jericho: Excuse me, the hell do you think you're doing?
- iii. Leon: Relax, Jerry, good to meet someone who can recognize talent.

**iv. [Just kidding.]**

- 1. V: I'm just fooling, didn't want to hurt the kid's feelings.
- 2. Leon: Oh we've got a joker here, boys. Thought you were smart, V.
- 3. Leon moves to punch V.
- 4. [Go to -> \[Fight Ending\]](#)

**v. [Best of luck.]**

- 1. V: You remind me a lot of my friend, Jackie. Good luck on the street, hit me up if you ever make it big.
- 2. Leon: I knew I liked you, V. Come on, guys, let's get out of here.

3. Jericho: What's wrong with you? Those boys aren't like you, they're gonna get themselves killed.
4. V: Well, they better learn quick then. Now where's my money? I talked to them like you asked.
5. Jericho: I told you to get them to stop, not encourage them. You can get the hell out of here.

**6. [BODY SKILL CHECK - Give me my money.]**

- a. V: Give me my eddies or those kids aren't gonna be the only ones who need to watch their backs.
- b. Jericho: Fucking psycho. Here, now get the fuck out.

**c. Mission End**

**7. [Fine.]**

- a. V: Fair enough, give them my best if you see them again.
- b. Jericho: Just get out.

**c. Mission End**

**8. A few days later, while driving through the neighborhood, V notices a police cordon. They investigate and see the three kids from the bar laid out on the street. They must have pissed off the wrong people.**

**[Fight Ending]**

**1. [V pulls out their gun.]**

- a. V kills the three wannabe gangsters. Jericho is horrified.
- b. Jericho: Oh Jesus, Leon... What the fuck is wrong with you? Those were good kids! Get the hell out of here.

**c. [Give me my money.]**

- i. V: Give me my eddies or you're gonna join them.
- ii. Jericho: Fucking psycho. Here, now get out of here.

**iii. Mission End**

**d. [Fine.]**

- i. V: Fair enough, see you around.



**ii. Mission End**

**2. [V raises their fists.]**

- a. After beating up the punks, V grabs Leon by the jacket. He looks terrified. He's just realised he's in way over his head.
- b. V: Get out of here and burn these dumbass costumes before someone from Maelstrom decides you're on their turf. I see you in colors again and you're gonna burn with 'em.
- c. V lets Leon go and the three gangsters scramble out of the bar.
- d. Jericho: (Half amused, half irritated by the mess in his bar) Shit, you could have given me a little warning.
- e. V: Sorry about that, doubt they'll try it again though.
- f. Jericho: Yeah well here's hopin' they learned a lesson.
  - i. [You gonna be safe?]
    - 1. V: You gonna be safe? They looked dumb enough, they might just come back for more.
    - 2. Jericho: (Jericho laughs) Well I reckon you scared them straight. Expect they'll cool off before coming here again.

**ii. [Job's done.]**

- 1. V: Job's done. Give me the Eddies and I'll be on my way.
- 2. Jericho: Sure, sure here you go. Feel like another round 'fore you hit the road?

**a. [No, I'm good.]**

- i. (Player gets the money and leaves.)
- ii. V: No, I'm good, see ya around.
- iii. Jericho: See ya.

**iv. Mission End**

**b. [Sure, why not.]**

- i. V: Sure, why not, maybe I'll get to finish this one.

- ii. Jericho: Should be a quiet night from here on. Glad I didn't miss the show though, really brought me back.
- iii. V: That why you bought a bar, entertainment?
- iv. Jericho (grinning, amused): I've been on the other side too. Ran a gig with a bagman and some other jockeys in Seoul a few years back...
- v. The scene cuts to show time has passed, Jericho is wrapping up his story.
- vi. Jericho (starting in mid sentence): ....Turned out he'd swallowed the damn thing. Client didn't feel like paying for half-digested bioware, but we snatched a few things on the way out to settle up.
- vii. V: (Laughs) Still sounds better than half the jobs I've done. (V stands up) Right, well I've still got business, I'll see you around.
- viii. Jericho: (Warmly) Come back any time.
- ix. **Mission End**

### **[Talk Ending]**

- 1. [Think I helped?]
  - a. V: Think I helped? They don't seem like the type to listen.
  - b. Jericho: (Sighs) We'll see, least you gave it a shot. I'll try to talk sense into them the next time they come around.
- 2. **[Job's done.]**
  - a. V: Job's done. Give me the Eddies and I'll be on my way.
  - b. Jericho: Sure, sure here you go. Feel like another round 'fore you hit the road?
  - c. **[No, I'm good.]**
    - i. (Player gets the money and leaves.)
    - ii. V: No, I'm good, see ya around.
    - iii. Jericho: See ya.
  - d. **[Sure, why not.]**
    - i. V: Sure, why not.
    - ii. Jericho: Should be a quiet night from here on. The way you handled that really brought me back.
    - iii. V: That why you bought a bar, entertainment?
    - iv. Jericho (grinning, amused): I've been on the other side too. Ran a gig with a bagman and some other jockeys in Seoul a few years back...

- v. The scene cuts to show time has passed, Jericho is wrapping up his story.
- vi. Jericho (starting in mid sentence): ....Turned out he'd swallowed the damn thing. Client didn't feel like paying for half-digested bioware, but we snatched a few things on the way out to settle up.
- vii. V (laughs): Still sounds better than half the jobs I've done. (V stands up) Right, well I've still got business, I'll see you around.
- viii. Jericho: (Warmly) Come back any time.
- ix. **Mission End.**
- x. If V told Leon that they could him work, V will get a message a few days later from Leon asking if V is still willing to get him in contact with a fixer or ripperdoc for some non samurai/merc work.

BIRDSONG

Written by

Hart Crompton

EXT. FOREST - MORNING

Shots of a forest, early autumn, slightly cold and the leaves are just starting to change color.

MARIN (V.O.)  
My grandfather loved birds.

A small bird sits on a bare branch, singing. Every now and then it stops, turns in place, waiting, listening, searching, then starts singing again.

MARIN, a young woman with choppy, self-cut short hair writes on rough parchment. Her left cheek bears a fading burn. She wears work clothes and boots, a woman accustomed to labor.

She looks at the singing bird, cocks her head, goes back to her writing.

MARIN (V.O.)  
But he was more afraid of death.

In her lap, we see she is writing sheet music as she listens to the bird. She works with a stenographer's speed, catching each and every note.

The bird concludes its song and the forest is silent except for the scratching of Marin's quill.

Marin finishes her transcription. As she writes the final note, the bird falls DEAD from the branch and lands in the grass below.

MARIN (V.O.)  
He wanted his life to be a symphony  
without end.

Marin takes the music sheet and tucks it inside her rucksack. As she does so, several similar parchments can be seen.

With the music sheet safely stored, she rises and walks to where the bird fell.

We watch from overhead as she approaches its body in the grass. She considers the small, crumpled shape.

INT. STUDY - DAY

Thin light trickles through heavy curtains illuminating a cramped but tidy study. Walls are lined with leather-bound books and a wide, thick wooden desk occupies much of the space. A single white candle sits in the center of the desk.

Behind the desk sits an old man: Marin's GRANDFATHER. He looks at us over the desk. Long but thinning grey and white hair, intense eyes, traces of a beard.

Young Marin sits across from him. Longer hair, no burn mark, a softer face.

Grandfather gently holds a live sparrow between cupped hands.

GRANDFATHER

There's power in endings. Songs,  
the last day of summer, a life.

He lifts the bird, letting its head peak out of the cage of his hands.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

We can harness that.

With a twist of his left hand, he breaks the sparrow's neck, killing it.

A thin flame appears on the candle's wick, just for a moment, then flickers out. He sets the dead bird down on the desk.

GRANDFATHER

You see? Here--

Grandfather reaches down next to him and raises a bird cage with another sparrow. He sets it on the desk.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

Now you try.

EXT. FOREST - MORNING

We return to the scene in the forest, looking down at Marin and the dead bird. She kneels next to it and plucks a single feather, then walks away.

Marin trudges through the trees and returns to a small camp. The remains of a fire, a MANDOLIN sitting on a bedroll, and a makeshift litter made from scrap canvas and branches. Almost like the sled a team of dogs would pull. On the litter, there is what looks to be a CLOTH-WRAPPED CORPSE.

The cloth wrapping has hundreds of feathers stuck into it, no two seem to be the same. She takes the newest feather and sticks it into the rough fabric. As she does so, we see a jade-green length of cloth tied around the body's head.

Marin puts her equipment in an empty spot on the end of the litter. Then she shoulders the straps and drags it off into the woods.

We see Marin's face, thoughtful, slightly strained from the exertion of dragging her strange cargo.

MARIN (V.O.)  
He taught me music.

INT. STUDY - DAY

Young Marin sits on a stool, awkwardly holding a mandolin, clearly not yet accustomed to the instrument. She stares intently at her left hand on the neck.

Behind her, other instruments line the walls.

Grandfather leans over and uses his index finger to indicate frets one at a time.

GRANDFATHER  
Here, second finger here, third here.

Marin struggles slightly, not used to contorting her hand to form this chord. She squints in concentration and tentatively strums. The sound is not wholly unpleasant.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)  
Good. Good, just like that. Now, next--

CUT TO:

INT. BARN - DAY

MARIN (V.O.)  
I wasn't the first. He was hard on his students.

Young Marin grips a knife with both hands, knuckles turning white. She holds it at arm's length, like a snake, like it might bite. She is shaky, afraid, staring straight ahead.

Grandfather kneels behind her, his hand rests reassuringly on her shoulder.

MARIN  
I - I can't.

Her hands shake, the knife's point jitters in the air.

GRANDFATHER

Of course you can, he's nothing.

In front of them, we see a boy, Marin's age, in rags, chained to a post. He's unconscious.

MARIN

Please. Please, I can't.

Grandfather firmly pushes her forward. She's on the verge of tears and takes one shaky step.

GRANDFATHER

Swift and clean, like the birds.

She's trembling, she knows that this is wrong but some unspoken fear drives her forward.

She's hyperventilating as she takes another step.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

MARIN (V.O.)

Saying no meant death.

A rustic, well maintained house in a forest clearing. Handmade wooden fetishes hang from the eaves and branches of surrounding trees.

MARIN (V.O.)

So I ran.

The shutter of a second floor window creaks open. Marin swings a leg out through the window, we see she has a stuffed leather rucksack and her mandolin strapped to it.

She lowers herself from the window, fingers grip the sill, she walks her feet down the side of the house and then lets go, dropping the remaining distance.

She pauses, listens to make sure the sound hasn't aroused suspicion. Satisfied, she moves on.

She picks her way to the tree line carefully, each footfall calculated to make as little noise as possible.

She looks back at the house. A flicker of candlelight appears in the window next to the one she climbed out of. Any previous sense of caution is lost to pure animal fear and she sprints into the woods.



EXT. CITY - DAY

Marin walks down a packed dirt street through a quiet part of town. Big but not cosmopolitan, like an overgrown frontier town.

She looks older, tall and strong with a harder jaw and darker eyes, long hair pulled back in a ponytail.

The head of her mandolin peaks out of her bag. She's taken care of it, the wood still polished, tuning pegs still silver and shining. She isn't hurried or lost, she knows these streets, knows where she's headed.

MAN 1 O.S.

Get back here!

The shout comes from an alley. There are sounds of pounding footsteps, shouts of pain, the clatter of a scuffle.

Marin stops for a moment. She glances at the alley's entrance, she looks off down the road. With a sigh, she turns and strides into the alley.

Past bits of urban detritus, she sees two men, cheap leather armor, worn clothing, holding a third at knife point.

The man they're threatening is CANTER: mid 30s, dark messy hair kept out of his face with a jade-green length of cloth, short beard, a once-nice-now-worn traveling coat. He has a large bag over one shoulder.

CANTER

Fellas, why so eager? I still got three days to square up.

MAN 1

Boss is tired of waiting, heard you were gonna skip town.

CANTER

Now why would I do that and deprive you fine boys of my company?

MAN 2

Shut up. What's in the bag?  
(to Man 1)  
Search him.

MARIN (O.S.)

Leave him be.

The men turn their heads, startled by her sudden appearance.

MAN 1

And who are you, you his friend?

MAN 2

Doubt he has friends after that last stunt. Leave us be, darling, we're just having some words.

CANTER

Boys, I'm sure we can--

MAN 1

Shut up.

(to Man 2)

Grab her, we'll sort them both out.

Man 2 advances on her. She reaches behind her into a hip pouch.

She pulls out a small BONE, the femur of some small animal, and holds it in her fist.

She glares at the man.

MARIN

Walk away.

Man 2, perhaps in superstition, pauses for a heartbeat. He squints at the bone, looks at Marin then resumes the approach.

Marin SNAPS the bone in her hand.

Instantly, the man collapses, howling in pain. His left leg is a staircase of fractures.

She looks for the other man only to see that he's already running.

CANTER

Pfft. Knew he was soft.

Man 2 is still on the ground howling in pain.

MARIN

What'd they want?

Canter ignores the question. He soccer kicks Man 2 and knocks him out.

CANTER

Shouldn't have let him run. Folk round here don't take kindly to necromancers, he'll be back with friends and then some.

MARIN

I'll be fine.

CANTER

They won't hang you, won't bury you neither. They've a penchant for fire.

She tosses the shattered bone to the ground between them.

MARIN

You don't seem afraid.

CANTER

Ha, sister, once something's dead it's dead. What you do with the pieces after that don't matter.

MAN 1 O.S.

This way!

The sound of several people's footsteps can be heard approaching.

CANTER

Come on, I know a place we can lay low.

Marin considers the offer, she doesn't trust him, but it's better than waiting for the mob. She nods.

Canter in the lead, the pair dart off down the alley.

INT. INN - EVENING

The two of them sit at a well-worn table in a cheap, busy inn, taking advantage of the anonymity of the crowd.

Canter takes a long drink from a tankard and sighs happily.

CANTER

Ah, negotiatin' always make me thirsty.

MARIN

Negotiation? I'd hate to see you get in an argument.

Canter waves his hand dismissively.

CANTER  
I was handling it.

He leans in, keen eyed like he's spotted something valuable.

CANTER (CONT'D)  
That trick with the bone, where'd  
you learn that?

She almost goes tight-lipped, then relents. Canter's the first person she's met that doesn't seem bothered by what her grandfather taught her.

MARIN  
My grandfather showed me.

Canter laughs, not sure whether to believe her or write it off as a joke.

CANTER  
All my grandpappy taught me was how  
to lead a mule.

MARIN  
So what do you do, mister...?

CANTER  
Oh, just call me Canter.

MARIN  
Canter then.

CANTER  
I get up to a bit of everything.  
Everywhere. Mostly things other  
folk won't touch.

MARIN  
Like a vulture.

CANTER  
Nothing wrong with that, sister.  
Whole world's built on bones.

Marin glares before eyeing the other patrons, is anyone listening? Canter catches her worried glance.

Marin takes a swig then goes to stand.

MARIN  
Thanks for the drink.

Canter sees his plans slipping away.

CANTER  
Listen, I like the way you carry  
yourself. You lookin' for work?

Marin calculates.

MARIN  
Do all your deals end like that  
one?

CANTER  
Nah, not with you they won't.

Canter sticks out his hand like a question.

MUSIC starts, a guitar & mandolin duet, a real barn burner.

After a bar or two, Marin takes Canter's hand and shakes.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

A man sprints down an alley. He looks behind him at just the wrong moment. Marin steps out and slams him face first into a wall.

She holds him there, arm twisted up painfully behind him.

Canter walks up, grabs a pouch from the man's belt.

Marin gives the man a pat on the back then lets him go.

Canter and Marin walk away as the man cradles his arm.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

We see a well-accoutremented office. Stout desk, full bookshelves, gilded decorations. Behind the desk sits a man with wealthy robes of dark silk.

Canter stands in front of the desk. He leans forward, puts his hand on the top and says something with a grin.

Behind Canter, Marin stands near the door, hands crossed over her chest.

The man sneers and shakes his head.

Canter lifts one hand from the table and holds it out, palm up.

The man glares at Canter, then reaches into his desk and pulls out a small sack.

He holds it over Canter's hand, pauses, then lets it go with a wince.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Canter kneels in front of a locked door, fiddling with picks. The door is made of a dark wood reinforced with metal. He's taking his time, working carefully and methodically.

Marin stands watch, looks up and down the alley. She glances at Canter, clearly getting impatient.

Canter jiggles the picks in frustration, then sits back on his heels and shakes his head.

Before he can make another attempt, Marin rolls her eyes, pushes Canter out of the way, and kicks in the door. She turns to face Canter and gestures like an usher towards the now open door--right this way, sir.

Canter grins and walks in with a spring in his step.

INT. INN - NIGHT

A busy inn, packed with people in the rougher part of town.

A large man, maybe a mason or bricklayer, grabs Canter by his jacket. Canter raises his hands, he's not looking for a fight.

The larger man clearly is and snarls something into Canter's face. Canter looks over the man's shoulder. He points twice with his index finger: behind you.

The large man turns his head just in time for a stool swung by Marin to connect with his face. He goes down like a sack and Canter stumbles back a step before adjusting his jacket.

He ducks another man's wild swing and a brawl breaks out.

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Marin sits on a wooden bench inside a dingy stone prison. She looks a little bruised and bloodied, but she probably didn't get the worst of it.

She looks dejected, bored, forearms on her knees, staring at the floor.

The door swings open, revealing Canter. He greets her with a casual lift of his chin. She smiles and follows him out. In the hallway outside of the cell, Marin nearly trips over an unconscious guard splayed out on the floor.

She looks down, raises an eyebrow and shouts something. Canter keeps walking and she jogs to catch up.

END MONTAGE

INT. INN - NIGHT

Marin is on stage playing out the last bars of the song that played through the montage. She hits the final lick with a flourish.

Hoots and cheers when she finishes. She pushes her mandolin behind her back and steps off the stage without any flair, allowing herself a little smirk.

She weaves her way through the crowd and returns to her seat at Canter's table. He's already got them both drinks. He toasts her when she sits down.

CANTER

Real nice, your grandfather teach  
you that too?

He's known her long enough to know better than to bring up her grandfather, but his curiosity still gets the better of him.

Marin's mood instantly sours. She squints, purses her lips.

Canter notices, tries to change the subject.

CANTER (CONT'D)

Never told me where you're from.

Marin's eyes stare down through the table, thinking about something else but still manages an offhand answer.

MARIN

Valles.

CANTER

Valles? *Blackwood?*

(Canter scoffs)

No one's from there. Sane folk  
don't go within twenty miles.

Marin shrugs.

MARIN

We got by.

Canter stares at her, is she being serious? It's like someone saying they're from Chernobyl. He opens his mouth, shakes his head, looks at his drink.

MARIN (CONT'D)

What?

CANTER

Just stories is all. Homesteads up in flames, missing kids, shapes in the woods.

Canter makes an exaggerated shiver.

CANTER (CONT'D)

Gives me the spooks. Your grandfather's a bold man to live there.

Canter bites his tongue too late, knows he shouldn't have brought up the grandfather again.

MARIN

He isn't.

CANTER

How's that?

MARIN

My grandfather, he isn't. There was an accident, my parents - I hardly remember.

(beat)

There was a fire.

CANTER

Huh.

He waits for her to say something else and takes a drink.

Marin scoots her chair back and stands.

MARIN

I'm gonna go get some rest.

CANTER

You do that, big day tomorrow.



Marin is already walking away. She gives a half-hearted wave over her shoulder.

INT. INN - NIGHT

Upstairs, the door to Marin's room is ajar. She eases the door open, standing far enough back that no one waiting on the other side could ambush her.

A man is standing in the middle of the room. Well dressed, arms behind his back, waiting for someone.

GRANDFATHER

Marin. You played beautifully tonight.

Marin's eyes go wide, she instantly recognizes his voice. It's been years, but he doesn't look any different.

MARIN

What do you want?

GRANDFATHER

I recognized the music. What a wonderful surprise to find you here. I've missed you.

Marin moves towards him cautiously, she knows this isn't just a social visit.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

Haven't you had enough gallivanting? I'm here to take you home.

MARIN

You're a monster. I'm not going back.

GRANDFATHER

So much potential... I need you, I'm so close.

He steps forward, extending his hand, he expects her to come willingly. Marin bats his hand away. Grandfather's kind facade fades.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

You always were unruly.

Grandfather lunges, more agile than a man even half his age, and catches her neck in his hand.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

It didn't need to be like this, but  
we have so much work.

She tries to pull away, but he is inhumanly strong. She draws her knife, thrusts, burying it to the hilt in Grandfather's sternum.

He doesn't even flinch.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

We're going home.

Behind them, Canter walks past the door, his swagger disappears the instant he takes in the scene.

CANTER

What in the god damn--

He looks at Marin and Grandfather, Marin shakes her head: stay back.

Canter rushes the old man, who releases Marin. She falls to the floor, coughing, trying to come back from the verge of unconsciousness.

Canter slams into Grandfather and the two struggle. Canter moves like a street fighter, quick, light, angling for any advantage.

Grandfather takes a few hits but is unfazed then catches Canter's wrist.

Grandfather draws the knife from his own chest, pulls Canter in, and rams the blade into Canter's neck.

Canter stumbles back and collides with the wall. He sinks to the floor, hand held uselessly to his neck as a river of blood pours to the floor.

MARIN

No!

Marin staggers towards him, trips, and catches herself on her hands. Her left hand splashes down into the growing pool of blood.

GRANDFATHER

Enough playing with strays. Get up.  
We're going home.

Canter looks at Marin, his breathing slow and measured, he knows he's done, still manages a grin.

She tears her eyes from Canter and sneers at her Grandfather-- if looks could kill--and staggers to her feet, Canter's blood dripping from her left hand.

Grandfather looks at her with weary eyes.

CLOSE IN on his face, his expression turns to shock. A pinprick of light reflects from his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. INN - NIGHT

We see the inn from the outside now, the upper floor windows all dim save for diffuse lighting from candles or open doors.

Suddenly, a light flares in one of the windows, impossibly bright. Whoomph, the air-rush of an explosion. The light fades to the warm tones of a fire and people begin to shout in panic.

EXT. FOREST CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Firelight flickers across Marin's face, her burn, her intense gaze. She stares back into the fire. Behind her, the litter and the corpse of Canter sit silently.

EXT. SEASIDE CLIFF - DAY

Marin emerges from the tree line, dragging the litter behind her. Ahead: short grass and smooth rocks lead to the edge of a cliff with the ocean beyond; the end of the world.

MARIN (V.O.)  
(With a hint of smugness,  
half a chuckle)  
You'd hate this, wouldn't you?

Marin reaches the cliff and lifts Canter's body. She lays him parallel to the cliff's edge.

MARIN (V.O.)  
All your teaching used up on a  
stray.

Marin takes the music sheets from her pack and sets them one at a time in a semi-circle in front of her.

Then, she grabs her mandolin, gives it a light strum with her thumb. She frowns, tunes, strums again.

Satisfied, she silences the strings.

She looks at Canter's body with some trepidation, she isn't sure this is going to work.

She lets out a long, slow breath and lets the tension leave her body.

MARIN (V.O.)  
Well, this one's for you.

Marin takes a deep breath, her head raises, lips part, she's about to sing.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. SEASIDE CLIFF - SUNSET

We hear the sound of the ocean first, then the same scene as before fades in, now washed in the afternoon light. Marin is gone. Canter's body is missing as well.

MUSIC STARTS, 'OOKPIK WALTZ' by Chris Thile and Michael Daves. (Important: this version of the song begins as a solo mandolin then an accompanying guitar comes in, mirroring what has just transpired on the cliff's edge.)

As the music plays and the sun sets, the wind picks up, grabbing the loose music sheets and carrying them away.

FADE TO BLACK.

END