

Bluff City 18: Messy Business Pt 3

Transcribed by lucy @battlestarvalk

t/n:

ALL: Agent Ryder/Christine Andrews [from Bluff City 05/06: There Is No Greater Love]

JACK: Agent Page/Florence Slowly [from Bluff City 05/06: There Is Not Greater Love]

JANINE: Agent Seals/Maggie Darcy [from Bluff City 01/02: A Bowling Alley, A Boxer, and A Bird]

KEITH: Agent Heard/Robber Twig [Created for Messy Business]

00;00;00 - 00;03;21

[\[Intro music starts - notes on the track here. Further notes in the Patreon description.\]](#)

AUSTIN [as Specialist Corson]: Specialist Corson, start record: Article intake, file number 8504. Object: Um, it's a car? You sent me a car. Let me see: It says- it says 'Teardrop Coupe'. C'mon, you *know* this isn't- [sighs]. Alright, description: Um, two doors, four seats, it's- it's round. Like- I, uh- it has- it has really nice curves, uh, it is a great, kind of powder blue, silver trim, cream interior. That's what it's called, right? Interior? There's the stick in the middle, three pedals - so I'm gonna say it's a manual.

Big trunk, [sighs] there's a spare tire in here. Um, condition: I don't see any scratches or anything. Let me pop the hood and look at the engine. Yeah, that's an engine alright. Look, you *know* I don't have the diagnostics for something like this, you're gonna get what you're gonna get unless you wanna shell out for an expert.

[sighs] Alright, the tires: They look a little rough, actually. You know what? Now that I'm down here, there's some dirt and muck on the rear- carriage? The undercarriage? Is that, is that what it's- [beat] Wait, there's *blood* on this fucking thing, Mammona! You're supposed to check for shit like this before you send it my way. You *know* my policy on unclassified blood! I'm doubling my invoice for this one. Deal with it.

[sighs] Price: Um, blue book says 7k, but with the wear and tear on this one, no way. Fifty... four hundred... maybe. Comments and analysis: Fire in *hell*, what do you want me to say? It is a *car*. I think it probably hit someone, or drove through a crime scene, or maybe it *is* a crime scene. I'm not saying it's a waste of my time but you *know* my specialty. Crosstown ephemera - pencils, glassware, home movies, those little canvas grocery bags. *That's* my speciality, crosstown ephemera. Are cars ephemera? Like, maybe from a real bird's eye view, I guess, maybe, and do *not* tell me to take my aerial form, okay, fuck you.

Next time, bring me a licence plate, bring me a... detachable faceplate from a stereo receiver, one of those little cigarette lighter things, perfect. I can tell you who used that, I can tell you where they were going, I can tell you what *brand* they smoked - but a whole *car*? Fuck, you know the story. I am the Knower of Things *Hidden*, secret and divine both.

Not the Knower of Parking Lot Subsection 4C. And before you say anything- no, it is a nice car, but it is *not* divine. It has been a long week, and things have been weird, so, sorry for snapping, but please, next time, bring something like this to Bathin, maybe to Lee. Those folks? They know their chariots.

[Intro music fades to dial tone, but wind foley remains]

00;03;21 - 00;11;27

KEITH [as Robber]: Heard here.

AUSTIN [as Leslie]¹: Heard. Status Report.

KEITH [as Robber]: Which part?

AUSTIN [as Leslie]: [takes deep breath] The most recent. The Thicket.

KEITH [as Robber]: Uh... There was a hostile agent here. And now there isn't.

AUSTIN [as Leslie]: Very good. [sighs] Have the others made moves on Squire?

KEITH [as Robber]: Others... with me?

AUSTIN [as Leslie, interrupting]: Yours.

KEITH [as Robber]: [crosstalk] Yes. Well. Maybe. Cage- they're cagey.

AUSTIN [as Leslie]: Watch them closely, and move with... similar confidence, if the time comes. We are considering you for great things, Heard.

KEITH [as Robber]: I've heard that before.

AUSTIN [as Leslie]: Mm. If you need anything, let me know.

KEITH: I hang up.

AUSTIN: Alright. I'm just- gonna put her name here, on the map, just so that we know she called. And that is from the static going up. Alright.

ALI: Can I have a pull aside with Florence [laughs] while this conversation is happening?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah, sure

¹ Leslie Strada, AKA Agent Ward, introduced Bluff City 05/06: There is No Greater Love

ALI: Um-

AUSTIN: Also, really quick, before we do the pull-aside- did you communicate the body being pulled away stuff, and all that other shit? I mean- I was gonna ask that to- to, um, Maggie- to Agent Seals, but I guess you've seen the photo of the murder now- you all have it- you all have- what happened?

JANINE: Yeah

AUSTIN: Okay, I just wanted to make sure that was all... But you do also know that- that the car was stolen from here, so that's- that's something extra. Alright, go ahead and pull Florence aside, Chris.

ALI: Real quick, is the car in the photo? Or is it just the weird monster?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah- no, the car in the photo. Mm. Let's say that the photo was taken from the second or third floor of one of those nearby houses being built. So, yeah- we get the corner picture- the corner of the photo, looking down angled- in the corner of the picture is like, the tyre, and the rear end of the Teardrop Coupe. So you- definitely that car, and you see- you see that, uh, Blake Blossom is like, crawling towards it? And then there's just this collection of hands coming from off-screen, just these arms reaching for him. From off- off frame, basically.

KEITH: We- so that- that means Sleeves was like here, watching the murder as it happened?

AUSTIN: A hundred- one hundred percent, yes.

KEITH: Okay

AUSTIN: A hundred percent yes. Uh- go ahead and pull aside Florence then, Chris.

ALI: Yeah, I think it's really quick, just like - they're- them pretending to help with the body, but when it's clear that Seals has it, I guess [laughs] I don't know. Just being like-

ALI [as Chris]: You need to give me a sign, if you need my help.

JACK [as Florence]: Yeah. You're right. You're right. I had it under control- I had it under control right up until they killed him-

ALI [as Chris]: I don't- [pause, chuckles] I don't mean the photographer.

JACK [as Florence]: [pauses, takes breath] Ryder, we have to consider the possibility- [pauses] We have to consider the possibility that we might not be able to... trust Heard's authority in quite the same way, indefinitely.

ALI [as Chris]: We can investigate two things at once, okay?

JACK [as Florence]: Okay.

JACK: And I think Florence just like, turns back around to the- to the group, as though she's gonna say something? But instead just- just stands there with her arms folded, it's just like- [Ali laughs] I've transitioned from conversation A to conversation B.

AUSTIN: God. Great. Good. How's conversation B? Any questions about the scene still? You've got time to look at stuff, et cetera.

KEITH: Well, I was going to look for witnesses, but we found one. And... [Keith, Jack laugh]

JACK: And then you killed him! [Keith laughs]

KEITH: Yeah, well, you know. [Jack is laughing in the background]

JACK: The classic witness move. Um... could I look- now I know that we're dealing with the Curator, which is presumably an entity- I mean, it's in our dossier [pages flicking in background]² so it's an entity we presumably know exists?

AUSTIN: Yeah, it is- it is, you know, Hostile Personality #44, right? So that's enough to be like, okay, there are weird things out here.

JACK: Yeah

KEITH: Have we read, by the way, the dossier before...

AUSTIN: You all have the dossier, 100%, yes.

KEITH: Oh, okay... no, I mean- I mean...

AUSTIN: Oh.

KEITH: Have we read it since- it became a thing this episode? Like, out loud?

AUSTIN: I just read the Hostile Personality thing, yeah [KEITH: Oh, okay], when I explained what the Curator was, I read it, yes.

KEITH: Okay, got it.

JACK: Um... could I-

AUSTIN: But here's what I- mm- I really wanna give you a little more about it, because the dossier presumably has additional information about this stuff, right? Here's what I'll add- because the dossier probably wouldn't be this one excerpt, it would probably be the entire breakdown on this

² In Bluff City 16, Jack mentions having a hard copy of the dossier. You can hear it sometimes on the mic.

thing, right? So we're not, just the fact- so the Curator... there is- there is Bluff City, there is Blough City³, and... there's also like, hell? And hell is a codeword, or it's like a real place-

KEITH: Oh, you're talking about the home for eternal losers.

AUSTIN: The home for- HFEL, yeah, uh-huh. The demon Belial was in a game for us, previously, briefly, for us- Mr Lee LB. And he is a middle man, and a deal-broker, and a black marketeer, he is not part of the Concern. He is not part of Bluff City, or Blough City, he is some weird place in between- you know, maybe hell is the road between the two, depending on which way you go? It is not a third place, in that sense? But I do like it as a collection of rest stops and roadside attractions [laughs], and the world's tallest fork, you know? All that stuff is hell. [laughs] And I'm not just saying that because of life experience, but, it kind of is. And Mr Lee LB is... the people who operate in that space are... are... people who collect things, who collect... you know, who can give you stuff, if you didn't want to go through the Concern specifically? Or maybe say on the record, you know, you have to file a form, Mr Lee LB could give you something, you know, if you have something he looks for. And the thing he looks for is, often dreams, and ideas, and wistful thoughts- and the Curator is in that business. The Curator is not a known associate of Mr Lee LB, but is like- they move in similar circles? Mr Lee LB is all about *deals*, the Curator takes stuff. And so, to some degree it's like, you know- the Curator would love to, you know, interfere with someone like Blake Blossom, he's a filmmaker- there's probably a lot there? But even the Curator still... you know, they're called the Curator. There is a degree of what they do is business, is like- there's a degree to which it is more professional than just a random killing in the middle of the dark, out in the Thicket, you know. The Curator doesn't- isn't a wolf. The Curator is the Curator. And so, at some point, the Curator had to *learn* where Blake Blossom was, the Curator- the Curator had to decide and come and do this. And so it's this weird middle ground between, this thing is clearly monstrous, but is also not- it's not just a force of nature, you know?

JACK: Right

AUSTIN: So why did the Curator come here? Who put the Curator onto this, et cetera. These are questions you could ask.

00;11;27 - 00;14;26

[pause]

JACK: But I don't think I'm going to.

AUSTIN: Okay

KEITH: I mean, questions we could ask who?

³ t/n: Blough is spoken as "Blue" in accordance with the Lacuna playbook, but was spelled as B-L-O-U-G-H in an earlier episode.

AUSTIN: Uh- the world.

KEITH: Right

AUSTIN: I mean, you could investigate.

JACK: I think I'm going to meditate. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh, okay!

JACK: I think that... and I think that this is, not even close to what meditation looks like, even within Bluff City?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm

JACK: I think we see Florence turn... with her arms folded, back towards Ryder and Seals, and just like, close her eyes [laughs] standing there. Like, take a very long, shaky breath-

AUSTIN: Yeah

JACK: With her arms folded and her arms closed.

AUSTIN: Alright

JACK: So I remove one point of commendation.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

JACK: And I roll one d6.

AUSTIN: Yes, you do.

JACK: Austin-

AUSTIN: And a third thing happens too.

JACK: This sounds like- OH, sh- Nope! Mm...

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] What's up?

JACK: I've gone down this road [laughs]

AUSTIN: Did you roll it?

JACK: [away from microphone] Nope. Not yet.

AUSTIN: Are you gonna?

JACK: [back to microphone] Um...

ALI: [laughing a little] What's wrong?

JACK: If I roll this, static will go up.

AUSTIN: That's true.

ALI: Oh, what?

AUSTIN: You're using a technique.

ALI: [sighs]

AUSTIN: That's fine! You've only at eight static!

JACK: I'm just standing there- [laughs, dejected]

KEITH: [crosstalk] We're only half way- [Jack laughs] about half way to disaster.

JACK: I'm just standing with my eyes shut.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. You're using a technique.

JACK: I do this all the time, Austin [laughs] i-r-l.

AUSTIN: Do you? [stumbles, laughs] You're using a technique.

JACK: [sighs] Oh.

AUSTIN: If you were using a technique in Bluff City, it wouldn't be a big deal!

JACK: Mm-hm

AUSTIN: But you're using it in Blough City.

JACK: Sure, I'll roll this. I mean, I- the other thing is like, rising action, you know?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. Go ahead.

KEITH: God, raising static for a maximum of six?

AUSTIN: You know? If it's one extra roll inside of peak though... that's not bad.

KEITH: Is it? Wait, I don't think it is.

JACK: [crosstalk] Oh! Wait... [trails off]

AUSTIN: It could be!

JACK: It'll go up by one static, right? Not the amount that I roll?

AUSTIN: No, no. One- one static. One static.

JACK: [laughs] Okay, sure. Okay.

ALI: Is there a way to lower static?

KEITH: [crosstalk] Just this.

AUSTIN: You need a senior agent, you- you need a senior agent who can lower static [ALI: Okay] by spending a commendation point, but it's-

JACK: [interrupting] Do we have a senior agent?

KEITH: [crosstalk] It's me

AUSTIN: You don't have that ability.

KEITH: I don't have that ability, but I *am* a senior agent.

AUSTIN: You're like, an acting senior agent in this capacity.

JACK: Can we get a senior agent? Can you get that ability?

KEITH: You could roll access maybe to get to a senior agent?

AUSTIN: You can roll access, you could call Agent Ward back up, maybe.

ALI: Oh!

AUSTIN: Knowing that a failure would again, be rough here- let's talk about what happens at static nine, maybe you don't wanna do this. Maybe you don't feel like you need to. Which is- another car pulls up, another car is coming this way.

KEITH: Great.

JACK: [crosstalk] I'm calmer now, though [laughs]

AUSTIN: What kind of car is this- huh?

JACK: I'm calmer though.

AUSTIN: You are calmer, by four. So your stress is now only one-fourteen. So yeah, there's a chance you'll sneak in a whole second roll here. Um... what kind of car does Mike Truk have?

00;14;26 - 00;18;59

KEITH: Mike Truk has a- [pauses, laughing] Mike Truk... has a truck.

AUSTIN: Yeah, okay. Is it like a pick-up truck, like a 1950's- like a big...

KEITH: [crosstalk] It's a- it's like a farm pick up truck?

AUSTIN: Okay

KEITH: Instead of- instead of like, like a normal 4x4, the car extends back into a bed that looks like the car, but it's- the rail, it's got like, gates, you know what I mean? It's got the wooden rails.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I know what you mean. Yeah. I got you, I got you.

KEITH: You know what I'm talking about?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. So, Mike Truk shows up- pulling up, in this car- it's like a, a rusty orange colour? And he's pulling into a different driveway just down the block, between two houses. And it's one of those houses that's in, a little bit better state? In terms of being built? There's like- you know, wooden boards in the back, there's some paint, and he is like- going- he's about to unload that stuff, when he sees you. And he waves at you. He's like-

AUSTIN [as Mike]: Heard! Heard?

KEITH: No, no, that's not-

AUSTIN: Sorry, sorry, he doesn't know you as that. What does he know you as? As, ah-

KEITH: Robber Twig.

AUSTIN [as Mike]: Twig! Twig?

AUSTIN: And he's starting to walk over to y'all!

KEITH [as Robber]: Hi!

KEITH: I go over- I walk over to Truk.

AUSTIN: What are the rest of you doing?

ALI: Are you walking like- you're walking to meet him in the middle, right?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Right

KEITH: [crosstalk] I'm walking to intercept.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN [as Mike]: You moving into the neighbourhood?

KEITH [as Robber]: No, no. We came out here... well, we all had pretty positive feelings about the wetlands and kinda wanted to... take a peek around before this particular patch turns into houses...

AUSTIN [as Mike]: [interrupts] Ah, that's why I'm moving out here. Gotta see the wetland.

KEITH [as Robber]: Gotta see the wetland. Yep.

AUSTIN: This is all... not gonna be wetland, but the time his house is done [giggles].

KEITH: Yep, yep.

AUSTIN [as Mike]: Love it, love it! Love it.

KEITH [as Robber]: Love it.

AUSTIN [as Mike]: What are you all up to, uh, what are you just- taking in the nature? On a good day.

KEITH [as Robber]: [crosstalk] Taking in the nature, fr- bre- damp air.

AUSTIN [as Mike]: Do you not get enough of it?

KEITH [as Robber]: We have very positive feeling about wetlands and damp air. And so we wanted to get some.

AUSTIN: As you say that, he just like, looks up at the snow very slowly, and like... eats one of the snowflakes as it falls, just does that. And then he looks back at you and goes-

AUSTIN [as Mike]: Yeah, I love it. You going to the parade?

KEITH [as Robber]: Um... [pause] My friends have all gotten a headache. And so... and so that's why we decided to come out here today, to experience the damp air.

AUSTIN [as Mike]: Do you want to come in? I have some headache medicine.

KEITH [as Robber]: Friends, would you like to have some headache medicine? For your headache? My friend Mr Truk has some headache medicine.

JACK [as Florence]: No, I'm okay thanks. Thank you for offering, though.

JACK: Florence is just like, glancing at the body [laughs]

AUSTIN: Which is in the- where is it? Florence, you were getting rid of it? Or Maggie was getting rid of it?

JACK: [crosstalk] It was Chris, right?

AUSTIN: Or was Chris getting rid of it?

KEITH: [crosstalk] It was Chris and- I thought it was Ryder and Page together getting rid of it.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: Yeah. I think- but as the question is asked, Chris is lighting another cigarette [laughs]

AUSTIN: Okay! Good [Jack laughs]

ALI: And just like, closes the car door as like, the heads turn towards the party [AUSTIN: Great] like, body successfully concealed.

KEITH [as Robber]: Tobacco clears up the sinuses. Pressure on the sinuses can cause a headache.

AUSTIN [as Mike]: Cigarettes are the best medicine, I say.

AUSTIN: Maggie, what are you up to?

JANINE: Smoking.

AUSTIN: Also smoking. [Ali laughs] Good.

JANINE: [crosstalk] Conveniently, yeah.

AUSTIN [as Mike]: Oh, you all have headaches. I getcha. Alright well, I'll be around. Whenever you need me, just let me know!

KEITH [as Robber]: You got it, Mike Truk

AUSTIN [as Mike]: I'll be right behind ya.

KEITH [as Robber]: Okay.

AUSTIN [as Mike]: Alright, have a good day!

AUSTIN: And just. Turns around. Doesn't explain what that means. And heads over to his house and you can see him- he opens his door, like- this isn't where he's permanently living yet, because of it not being a finished house, but it's a two or three floor- it's a two floor home. And the- there is like, the second floor has been built to a certain floor. It's like an unfinished house, where you can see into where the second floor will be because there hasn't been walls built there yet. But as he opens the door he reveals that there's just a living room that is furnished inside of there.

[Ali laughs]

KEITH: I have been there, buddy.

[Austin laughs]

00;18;59 - 00;23;06

AUSTIN: And he... closes the door. And that is your nine static.

[pause, Ali sighs]

KEITH [as Robber]: [sighs] Agents, do not trust Mr Mike Truk.

[Austin laughs in background]

ALI [as Chris]: Yes sir.

JACK [as Florence]: Yes sir.

JANINE [as Maggie]: I- I'm sorry, are you *telling* us not to trust him, or asking if we trust him?

KEITH [as Robber]: [deliberates] I- I guess telling you not to? Do you trust him?

JANINE [as Maggie]: He's just some guy.

KEITH [as Robber]: A lot of people in this city are... just some guy.

JANINE [as Maggie]: And I don't trust any of them. So...

KEITH [as Robber]: There we go. Problem solved. Where to now, gang?

[pause]

KEITH [as Robber]: Ryder, are we gonna- are we gonna meet... Achilles?

ALI [as Chris]: Oh, I should go see him. Someone- [trails off]

KEITH [as Robber]: Just you? I think you should- I think you should take Seals.

ALI [as Chris]: Yeah, I just think if it was the four of us, he would get spooked. That's all.

KEITH [as Robber]: Yeah.

ALI [as Chris]: And I think on the way back I can try to make sense of some of these- photos. At least a timeline or... something.

KEITH: What other leads can we hit?

AUSTIN: Anything in the dossier, right?

KEITH: [crosstalk] Did we hit a lead?

AUSTIN: Yeah, you hit a lead. You hit a lead.

JACK: [pages being turned in background] Yeah, I'm [filing] through the dossier here.

AUSTIN: And also things on the board, right? [JACK: Yeah] City Wide Film Festival is still tonight, we haven't actually spoken to Gale Green [ALI: Yeah], you know where the Teardrop Coupe is- you have the keys to it, I mean obviously you're going to Achilles Apollo, so I'm guessing Ryder you're gonna want to hold onto those. You know that Finnegan Hands is connected in some weird way, he has some... insight. You know the Cultural Trust is connected to this somehow. Um... and you know the Curator is- has killed Blake Blossom. And you can- we can be very open-ended when you're like, thinking about ways to start to piece this stuff together, because so much of it is, again, kind of procedural in some ways.

KEITH: Mm-hm. I wanna look into the Cultural Trust.

AUSTIN: Okay

JACK: I was also thinking about the Cultural Trust.

AUSTIN: Alright, then that sounds like two pairs.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Perfect

AUSTIN: Perfect.

KEITH [as Robber]: Page, you're with me.

AUSTIN: Alright. There's- ah- one car. So is this a situation where someone gets dropped off?

ALI: Oh- we can wait for the hire car, right?

AUSTIN: OH! Right, right. You can wait for the car to come back [ALI: Yeah]. So who's taking the car?

KEITH: I guess the furthest away one?

AUSTIN: Ah- the highways meet.

ALI: I would prefer to go back in the hired car, thank you [Ali, Jack laughs]

AUSTIN: Okay, so the hired car team goes to the bar across from the Southside Garage, and that is Ryder and Seals- that is Chris and Maggie. Then, Page and Heard are gonna go to- are you just going to the Cultural Trust? Like the building?

KEITH: Um... I don't- do they have like, a sort of adjunct office where it's not the main one? Like, that has access to the information but not the main- like, the Big Building?

AUSTIN: [sighs] Yes and no, right? Because like, we're pre-internet, right? So there's no like- no shared computer database. There will be some information that is only available at The Cultural Trust. What I bet is- what exists is like, smaller satellite offices for things like- either divided by- I don't think it's divided by space, because space is so weird in this place. So I bet it's divided by like, subsection? So, I don't know, maybe this is useful for you- There's the Cultural Trust Architecture Building, there's the Cultural Trust, you know- journalism office. There's the Cultural Trust Film Office, right? So like-

KEITH: Right

AUSTIN: There you go.

KEITH: Film Office sounds right, right?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. So from you- someone who's driving now. Whichever one of you is driving, I'm gonna need an access roll to find that place.

KEITH: Um, it would be me driving.

00;23;06 - 00;26;43

AUSTIN: Okay, then give me your two Access- plus one to the roll, because you're driving this guy's stolen car.

KEITH: I- oh, I have three Access.

AUSTIN: Oh, you have three Access- so you have three Access [KEITH: I do] right, okay. And I guess- again, you're in the zone, you could roll whatever the fuck you want here.

KEITH: Right, good point. But I'm also still further away from out of it than Florence is?

AUSTIN: Yes

KEITH: So I should roll... I'm gonna go... 4d6.

AUSTIN: 4d6

KEITH: [whistles] Boy, I hate this.

AUSTIN: [laughs]

KEITH: In a good way! Good way.

AUSTIN: It's a good stress around this, I like it a lot.

KEITH: 16

AUSTIN: 16! So raise up from- 112- to 128 [KEITH: 128, yeah]. You're still inside of it, for now.

KEITH: For- I've got a minute in there, too.

AUSTIN: You do, you've got a nice range here. [pause] So yeah, at 16, you're able to find it, and like park nearby, but not in a way where- I think we get shots of y'all driving away, and then the shots of y'all parking in maybe- another parking lot, somewhere that's like- somewhere in the corner where the car won't get spotted? Can I just get a final confirmation of what happened to this dude's body, before we continue?

KEITH: I don't know, is there an undrained river- I mean pond?

AUSTIN: There's gonna be a pond. Are you just leaving him in the pond?

KEITH: [crosstalk] There's gotta be an undrained pond. [pause] Yeah, I mean someone-

JANINE: [crosstalk] Ugh.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Someone might dig him up.

[pause]

JANINE: That seems like such a stupid idea. Like, it's a corpse? In a residential area?

JACK: [crosstalk] That's clearly also a Concern member?

JANINE: Yeah. Isn't that gonna maybe... cause more trouble?

AUSTIN: Some static maybe?

KEITH: I mean, if you're at the bottom of the pond.

AUSTIN: It's a drained pond.

KEITH: No, I said undrained pond.

JANINE: [crosstalk] They did- they did manage to find- I mean- okay,

KEITH: [crosstalk] Undrained pond.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Ohh.

JANINE: I'm assuming the pond wasn't drained before they found the corpse in it? The current- the other corpse, right?

KEITH: Yeah, I'm sure it's gives us enough time, right? I mean, what else are they gonna do-

JANINE: [crosstalk] And- and they drained the pond to-

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] They drained- they found him because they drained the pond.

JANINE: Okay, but why wouldn't they drain the other pond also? [is cut off by crosstalk]

KEITH: [crosstalk] Eventually

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] They will do eventually, yes. You're totally right.

KEITH: But we don't- we don't need like-

JANINE: To ever come back here ever again, for sure.

ALI: Yeah, like we're gonna- like, we'll know there's gonna be another murder investigation about the body they found in the pond for certain.

KEITH: [crosstalk] I just- I don't feel like Concern members murdering each other is super out of left field. Like, I got a call from my boss saying *Nice work on killing that guy*, you know?

JANINE: Maybe- maybe your boss wouldn't have said that if they knew where you were planning on putting the body [laughs] I don't know.

KEITH: Alright, where else am I putting the body?

JANINE: Do we have that big van still? Just like, tuck him in the back?

AUSTIN: Wait, which van?

JANINE: Didn't he have a van?

KEITH: I don't know- [trails off]

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] He had a car.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Yeah, yeah, a car

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] You have his car- you've stolen his car.

KEITH: [crosstalk] We've stolen his car.

JANINE: He was developing photos in the back of his car?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, the trunk opened up, there was a whole shelf system... there was curtains.

JANINE: Okay, sure.

KEITH: I mean, we could put him in the back of the car, but I feel like bringing the car that we're inside of into the city is more risky than leaving him in an undrained pond in the wetlands.

JANINE: Is there like a, wet foundation of cement that's been poured somewhere? [laughs]

AUSTIN: I don't think today.

JACK: Can we reverse requisition?

KEITH: [crosstalk] Yeah, you said development had been frozen, so...

AUSTIN: Yeah. Can we reverse what?

JACK: Can we reverse requisition something? Can we call for extraction?

AUSTIN: Yes. Good call. Yes, you absolutely can.

JACK: Because I feel like the best person to remove this body would probably be somebody who was hired for like, that to be their specific job?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm

JACK: That would be an Access roll?

AUSTIN: That would *definitely* be an Access roll.

00;26;43 - 00;37;05

AUSTIN: Nobody has any Access abilities, right? No Access talents.

JACK: No. I think we're explicitly not good at Access.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm!

[laughter in bg]

KEITH: Yeah. Does someone want to have rolled that?

AUSTIN: Yeah, we can retcon that it, right. We're still basically there.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Does someone want to have rolled that?

KEITH: It seems like Seals is most concerned about the body.

JANINE: Mm. I don't know if that's true, but I'll roll it.

[Ali laughs]

ALI: I can too, depending.

JANINE: I think-

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] That'll push you out of your target heart rate, into your peak.

JANINE: [continuing] My heart rate is still the lowest, I'm not there yet.

ALI: [crosstalk] Eh.

AUSTIN: Go ahead and give me a- the roll, then. Whatever you want to roll.

[pause]

JANINE: That's a 10.

AUSTIN: That's a 10, but this is Access. You can spend the commendation point on it.

JANINE: That's true.

AUSTIN: You're at a 10 though. Boom. Alright. So yeah- you get a- you use the phone in this guy's car. Or do you use Chris' device?

JANINE: May as well use the phone in the car.

AUSTIN: Alright, yeah. You- you dial in the right set of numbers, you again hear like- *ding dong-ding*. And that means that they'll come get that body! And, so yeah- you can be confident that it'll happen. I think it does, while you're waiting for the- just like, two agents sitting in the fuckin' suburbs smoking, waiting for the car service to show up-

JANINE: [interrupts] Having a great time.

AUSTIN: Yep- but first a van shows up. And just like- without talking to you at all, just people in gas masks show up. They're not wearing hazmat suits- they're in like, coveralls- like, navy blue coveralls with bright yellow gas masks. And come over and grab the body, they zip it up into a bag, they put it in the back of a van, and they drive away.

[beat]

So let's do the- do you wanna do the bar then? Do you wanna do- cool bar. So I think you go to- you get this ride, they drop you off in- I wanna say it's in Counting House? I think it's at the edge of Counting House, which is like the downtown financial district. Which is the- lots of skyscrapers and stuff, but also just like- tall buildings, and banks, and offices and such. And- the southern parking garage- it's like a 15-12 floor parking garage, and across the street from it is a little- a little bar. What's it called? Let's see- I think it's just called *Lounge*. And... it is....

JANINE: What kind of bar is it?

AUSTIN: It's kinda like, as divey as you can get inside of a financial district, you know? Inside of a business district?

JANINE: Is it called something like...

AUSTIN: Oh, it's just called Lounge.

JANINE: Oh, okay

AUSTIN: None of these places have real names. None of these places have develop- none of these places have individuality, they're not allowed. Best you could do is bar versus lounge versus pub, you know? And so this is Lounge. And it is... it's kinda like someone's finished basement? There's lots of wood- a pool table, lots of like, dark stained glass? You know what I mean? Like, interior stained glass that goes into, like, shitty bars? [laughs] Like, it'll be a booth with- with like, red vinyl... padding, or like red vinyl and whatever. And between the booths, above where your head- where your neck is, is just like a really weird stained glass separator that just says *Lounge* in stained glass? And that is where you are meeting Achilles Apollo. I think you've beaten him here, probably, so you're able to get a booth. There's a rule, as you step in- it says, ah- "Whispers and Words only". By words, you know they mean notes- handwritten notes.

ALI: Oh, thank god. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Why?

ALI: [laughing] Because I've been playing Chris as like, unable to talk out loud, because of the how the Bluff City that she lived in worked?

AUSTIN: Yes

ALI: [laughing] So... [crosstalk, laughing, partially intelligible] this is that kind of vibe... okay.

AUSTIN: This is... that. Like, it literally is. The Bluff City that she lived in was influenced by this place, in a real way.

ALI: Okay

AUSTIN: And again, for Maggie... time is weird here. For Maggie... there was a Billy Joel song playing as a bird was fighting someone, and they stormed a bowling alley, and everyone was yelling, and- there was just a weird, strange, loud, aggressive, exciting world. The Bluff City that Chris is from... is a little more restrained, a little more restrictive- so things this specific thing that happened in Bluff City, happened in places like, CD Bar, that happened at the police galas, et cetera- originates in Blough City. And the reason that you lived through it was- you were living in an era where Blough City had successfully begun to influence Bluff. So, that is what this place is like. And you were able to get a booth- it's quiet right now, it's before the end of day rush. And we definitely- again, as you get dropped off, a marching band goes off behind- pulls behind you? The whole road closes up as this parade continues. And it's growing, it's definitely growing- like, there's new instruments every time we see it. Maybe even a float.

ALI: Can I-

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

ALI: I was gonna ask- I am not out of my target yet, am I able to Meditate?

AUSTIN: Do you have Meditate?

ALI: I don't [laughing] Okay-

AUSTIN: Then no

ALI: [continuing, still laughing] I just thought it was like an agent thing- okay.

AUSTIN: It's an agent-specific technique.

JACK: And- and static would go up, as I learned.

AUSTIN: And static would go up.

ALI: Okay, fair.

AUSTIN: Um... so yeah. But what you have instead- you have endurance, which is just a broader range than other people have, so.

ALI: Okay

KEITH: We're also one hit away from a new stage, by the way.

AUSTIN: You are one hit away from a new stage. Alright, so you're there- you're waiting for this guy. Does anything happen before that? Do you get drinks?

ALI: [sighs] Yeah, I think so. [laughs] I think it's just like- Chris writing these long letters to Maggie, because now she's like- Oh, how many parades have you seen, haha - because they're both like, agents, and they get the static thing? [AUSTIN: Right] But not so much that like... um...

KEITH: Ryder can read and write? Ryder's the only one?

AUSTIN: None- none of you can read and write....

KEITH: Okay

AUSTIN: ...in this place.

ALI: Oh, I can't even write like-

AUSTIN: You can write to each other

KEITH: Sorry, yeah- I just meant- in Blough.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Keith- yeah, you can't read or write Blough.

ALI: Yep.

KEITH: Just in case you wanted to put your order on a napkin. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Right, yeah. [Ali laughs] That would get you in trouble, don't do that.

ALI: Fair.

AUSTIN: But you can whisper it, you know. Basically, the two of you are writing notes back to each other as you're killing time?

JANINE: I think-

AUSTIN: Is that- sorry, what were you saying?

JANINE: I think Maggie is finding this extremely weird, but will like, going along with it?

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Okay. Well, after getting drinks- water, beer, [JANINE: Sidecar], whiskey- whatever

JANINE: Sidecar

AUSTIN: Sidecar, love it. [Ali snorts in background] Good job.... Achilles Apollo comes in. As a reminder, he's a very big, black dude- he's a prize fighter, like he's a heavyweight fighter- which means he's a subst- like, he takes up the room as he comes in. He's bald- it's like- his head is shaved, uh- and in this moment, he has like a grey suit with a black turtleneck on- with a white pocket square. And he's wearing, uh- I don't think he's wearing sunglasses, but he does have a very nice umbrella which he closes in the- you know, at the side of door, like he hangs it. And he nods to you and he comes over and he sits down and goes-

AUSTIN (as ACHILLES): Who's your friend?

ALI: [laughs] I think- um- like Chris specifically waits for Seals to introduce herself, so she can decide what codename she wants to give?

AUSTIN: You don't- you don't know Maggie Darcy as- all you know her as is Agent Seals

ALI: Yeah

AUSTIN: So

JANINE: Uh... shit, can I say anything, if he's asking my name?

AUSTIN: Yeah, he's asking your name

JANINE: Uh... I think she just says, like- Emi. Which is weird [laughs] because she does not look like an Emi.

AUSTIN: No [laughs]

JANINE: But she says it very seriously.

AUSTIN: That works. He goes

AUSTIN (as ACHILLES): Alright. Emi.

ALI (as CHRIS): She's a coworker of mine, we're both here.

AUSTIN (as ACHILLES): I get you. Alright. So uh- how are you doing, Ryder?

ALI (as CHRIS): Good, great. Like you said- I'm here to investigate- oh

JANINE: [interrupting] Wait, sorry.

ALI: Oh?

JANINE: Wasn't Achilles Apollo at the fight that Maggie Darcy broke up with guns and the IRS?

AUSTIN: Oh shit! Yeah... [Ali laughs] Yeah he was! So yeah, good catch- [makes tape rewinding noise as Janine laughs]. Stops in his tracks... like tilts his head and just sits back down... Like, the thing I was talking about, with the- yeah, he was the one there. Um... with the Billy Joel song playing... He's like- does he know you as Chris or does he know you as Ryder?

ALI: Oh, I- I mean, I assume they met here, right?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] So Ryder

ALI: They've probably like- they've got a closeness that they've probably spoken about Bluff City before?

AUSTIN: Okay

ALI: You know? When they're like- they've both been there. But yeah, I guess- I guess just Ryder.

00;37;05 - 00;49;29

AUSTIN: Okay, so he's just like-

AUSTIN (as ACHILLES): Ryder... you joining the... IRS?

[Keith laughs in background]

AUSTIN (as ACHILLES): That's a switch.

AUSTIN: He like, nods to you.

AUSTIN (as ACHILLES): I don't remember your name, ma'am, but... this seems like a far far away from some tax evasion shit.

JANINE (as MAGGIE): Well, you know, the treasury reaches deep.

JANINE: And she like, smirks a bit [Ali laughs] and takes a sip of her drink. [laughs]

AUSTIN (as ACHILLES): [sighs] So... what is it you're looking for? Or what is it you found?

ALI: Um... I think Chris has the keys and the note, and is like, squeezing them in her hand, and like, has her hands in front of her on the table, and has not like- revealed them to Apollo, but he probably understands. And I think that she's just like...

ALI (as CHRIS): Well I'm here for an investigation, and... I wanna know... [laughs nervously] there are things I'd like to find out from you instead of finding out from somebody else.

AUSTIN (as ACHILLES): Sure. [sighs] What type of things?

ALI (as CHRIS): I want to understand how you're involved in this?

AUSTIN (as ACHILLES): That's a... particular question. If I answer those sorts of things, it gets you involved. Deeper.

ALI (as CHRIS): I'm already involved. I'm an investigator.

AUSTIN (as ACHILLES): Investigators ain't involved. Investigators are nearby. Investigators are... hm.

ALI (as CHRIS): Investigators are given a... a mission and they involve themselves.

AUSTIN: Give me a... an instinct.

ALI: Sure. [pause] I think I'm just gonna go with four here?

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: And we're gonna see [laughs]. Would this be a thing I can spend a point on, because I have intuition?

AUSTIN: Intuition, I- um, maybe? Maybe- what they break down as Intuition, just so we know. Ah- [reading] "Sensing an ambush, general wrongness, following hunches"- following hunches is a maybe, here. It's not Communication- Communication's an easy yes, you know what I mean? If you'd had-

ALI: Right, yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: [continuing] But we're see how it goes... and, mm, we'll see what the roll is.

ALI: Right, yeah. I think there's some- oh, it doesn't even matter, okay.

AUSTIN: There you go, you got 13. Boom. [ALI: Alright] Which takes you to- up and out your target heart rate, which takes you back down and locks you to- the other stuff. You're at 148 on your heart rate, now. He's like-

AUSTIN (as ACHILLES): [sighs] Alright.

AUSTIN: So a thing that happens in TechNoir, when you're doing stuff- is eventually you don't have to roll anymore, as the GM? Whenever you want to, you can roll to give you a lead on somebody's thing. But you can also just be like 'Oh, this is the thing that makes sense, I'm going to start drawing my own connections', you know? [ALI: Mm] We're at the point now where the map is pretty well developed- the plot map is pretty well developed like, oh I know- how he was involved and blah blah blah, right? [pause] He's like.

AUSTIN (as ACHILLES): [sighs] You wanna know how I'm involved? Man, I wanna know how I'm involved.

AUSTIN: And... he looks out towards the door and back towards you. And he reaches in his jacket pocket, and pulls out a reel- a little film reel.

ALI: [gasps]

AUSTIN: And he goes- [sighs] - and he slides it back in. And he says-

AUSTIN (as ACHILLES): Look... Blossom has some movie, before he died he made it- and everybody wanted that shit. Gale Green- and I think he just said Gale wanted it, for the uh- festival, apparently something big would change people's mind about somethin'. The Trust wanted it, because ah- you know, they ah- didn't want people seeing it. And the Syndicate wants it because it's leverage. So, Syndicate was pretty sure it was inside the Coupe that Blossom used to drive around. Gale was pretty sure it was in the Coupe that Blossom used to drive around. And The Trust was pretty sure it was in the Coupe that Blossom used to drive around. The Trust... got that Coupe, the way they get things. And uh... they had it impounded, they hadn't gotten the reel yet. So what I did was that I told the people who

asked me, that I would get them the Coupe. So I did. The only thing is- Gale asked me, and the Syndicate asked me too. So now I got a choice- see, I gave Gale the key.

AUSTIN: And he looks at you, Chris. And is like-

AUSTIN (as ACHILLES): Or at least I left it on her desk. And I told the Syndicate that I had the reel. The easy play here is that I give Gale the car back, I give my boss the reel, and everyone knows I told them the truth, right? Gale thinks the Cultural Trust got the reel first, or someone else did- but, doesn't have to be me. I can give it to my boss and not get them upset that, you know, I was speaking to Gale in the first place.

AUSTIN: So I'm just gonna lay it out in real words, like regular-ass, you know- full-on lines and such that I'll draw here.

ALI: [giggles]

AUSTIN: Achilles was hired- or Achilles works for the Whi- what did I call it, the Whitaker Syndicate- put the Whitton before, but the Whitaker Syndicate, a criminal organisation here who-

ALI: D-

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

ALI: Do we know the name Whitaker from any other Bluff City episode?

AUSTIN: From- from the Fiasco game.

ALI: Oh, right, right.

AUSTIN: He was their prize fighter, remember there was the bet- so the bet was from the organised crime family from Bluff, and the organised crime family from Blough. Was the- the bet in that boxing fight. [pause] So the Whitaker Syndicate hired Apollo to steal the Coupe and the reel- the film. Gale Green also convinced Achilles to do this? We don't know their relationship, they're- they're friends, presumably? Right, they're connected in some way.

ALI: Mm-hm

AUSTIN: So the- Achilles told- Achilles stole the Coupe, gave Gale the keys to it, but kept the reel to give back to the Whitaker Syndicate. So that... he could keep his promise to Gale, but also keep his promise to his boss.

ALI: Right

AUSTIN: And then when Gale is like- ah, the reel wasn't there! He was just gonna be like 'Damn, the Cultural Trust got it' or 'Damn, someone else must've got it'.

ALI: Mm. Did he hand me the reel or is it just on the table? [giggles]

AUSTIN: [overlapping] No, no he has the reel- nah, he put it back in his jacket.

ALI: Okay

AUSTIN: For sure.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: So I'm also gonna add that there... I'm gonna move y- I'm gonna move Agent Ryder to sympathetic so we have more space here. [Ali giggles in background] Because there's a lot goin' on... What are you two doing in response to this?

JANINE: The problem with Lacuna is that it keeps making me think in like, Matrix-y terms?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh! [Ali laughs]

JANINE: And it keeps making me think like, oh, we should just call in to get the file duplicated [laughs], and then he can do whatever and we can also have the film... and that doesn't really make sense in this context.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] You could do that, there are places – so, what I'll say is- here's the thing that would be good for you to- the way that you would understand this - one, I don't think your... The Concern would not like it for anyone to have this tape besides them, right? So that's one. It is your job to retrieve it, not to- for them to see it, but so that it is not in the world. So that they are the only ones with it. You would know that, this isn't me like- um, so two- two is, you could get it made, you could get it from somebody else. Mr Lee LB could do that for you, Ollerenshaw, Office of Requisitions could do that for you - they would want a Requisition notice about it, but maybe you could shmooze your way into making that not happen. Theoretically-

JANINE: [interrupting] But we would need to have it anyways?

AUSTIN: You would need to have it, totally.

JANINE: [overlapping] Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: For some period of time, for sure... regardless, if you were calling it in, you would need to have it. You couldn't do without it, you know? But... Achilles Apollo has the Blossom tape, we now know.

ALI: [sighs]

AUSTIN: But, here's what he says- he's like:

AUSTIN (as ACHILLES): [sighs, is talking like he's smirking] But here's the thing that's real tricky is- I had made up my mind to do what I had just told you. And then you stole the keys. So now- the problem isn't that you stole the keys, the problem is that you gave me another opportunity to change my mind. And that's not what I want.

ALI [as CHRIS]: You don't- It depends on how you change it

AUSTIN (as ACHILLES): Well, I'm all ears.

[Ali pauses to laugh, deliberates a lot before speaking]

ALI: I think um... Chris glances at Seals, also in sort of a- "You're a better cop than me" gesture [Austin, Janine laugh in background]. But also just like... I think that she's trying to weigh how much of a... Aria Joie she can be- [AUSTIN: Uh-huh] [Ali laughing] right? Where she's like, 'That tape I'm absolutely going to give to Gale, also help me find Hector, let's be best friends'. But I'm not gonna... she isn't that character! But I think that there's- at the opportunity, like she definitely wants to sway him that way, right? [AUSTIN: Yeah] Especially since he seems conflicted, like...

AUSTIN: Yeah

ALI (as CHRIS): [takes deep breath] You're... when I said I involved myself, you know I- your fingerprints don't even have to be on this anymore, right? Like...

AUSTIN (as ACHILLES): I mean, look. The Whitakers know I got the Coupe. I could tell them the tape wasn't there, but once it shows up at the festival... they'll know, they'll put it together. They got long arms.

JANINE (as MAGGIE): [clicks tongue] You know how to take a dive, Apollo?

AUSTIN (as ACHILLES): No! I win... I always win. What are you suggesting?

JANINE (as MAGGIE): I mean... there are certain sorts of circumstances that... reasonably, they'd have to get mad at someone else. Instead of you, right?

AUSTIN (as ACHILLES): [pauses, sighs] That's not taking a dive, that's taking a bullet, right? What do you have in mind?

AUSTIN: But he's like, interest- You know what, give me a roll. Give me a roll on this, this is Instinct- Intuition, to convince him to do... whatever bullshit you're about to pitch [Janine laughs, Ali laughs] Um... that's 3. Oh no- you're still in, you're still in range- right, Maggie?

JANINE: Yep

AUSTIN: Alright, gimme- gimme those rolls then. [pause, typing] Try to... not go too high.

JANINE: Is... this....

AUSTIN: This is instinct. I don't think this is investigation.

JANINE: Yep

AUSTIN: So I don't think you have that option.

JANINE: Um... alright that's there.... Oh, that's fine!

ALI: Ooh!

AUSTIN: Wow, you rolled 4d6 and got 11! Wow! Right on the nose! [Ali laughs] God damn! So you're up to 133, still within your range. Nice work! Um... hell yea... So he's like-

AUSTIN (as ACHILLES): Tell- tell me what you're thinking.

00;49;29 - 00;56;39

AUSTIN: But I think we cut there and we go to the... two agents who have parked the car in a little corner lot, Agents Heard and Page. And you're walking to.... I've mentioned there's only a limited number of building- like styles? And the Cultural Trust is not hypocritical about this. They build their buildings out of the same pool as everybody else, they don't get special buildings. And the building like this one, the Cultural Trust's film department is inside of a bank. The outside of the building is a bank, but instead of just saying 'BANK', it says '**TRUST**' in big Impact serif font, basically.

KEITH: Which a bank might say!

AUSTIN: It might, it totally might, right? So... yeah, there's a big Cultural Trust seal on the floor as you approach, and the sound of a marching band, as the parade continues- I think there's a second- this isn't static going up yet, but the parade is continuing. There's a second float up there now- does anyone have an idea for another holiday float? Besides 'Businessman who is shopping'?

JANINE: A cow?

JACK: I was gonna say a pig! [laughter in background] We went in the same direction!

AUSTIN: Wow!

JANINE: A cow and a pig, and they're facing in opposite directions.

AUSTIN: Aw, love it.

JACK: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: Love it. And they're playing... they're still playing slow Christmas music? Love it. Maybe it's picked up a little bit- it's like a mid level Christmas song, like a mid tempo. Alright, so you go inside... what is- what is the play here from you two?

JACK: [sighs] We don't know that they've gotten the film?

AUSTIN: They have not gotten the film, yet.

JACK: [laughs] We don't know that the film- as far as we know, the only copy of the film is currently being held by- [trails off]

AUSTIN: Right. We do not know that- In fact, we don't know that.

KEITH: Drummer Boy? Is that a- mid- slightly up tempo from the...

AUSTIN: Yeah, I like that, and then you also get the- get the drums as you go into that building, that's good. That specific drum beat is good.

JACK: Okay.

KEITH: Rum-pum-pum-pum.

JACK: Um... [deliberates] What's the inside of this... how is this structured? Is there like, a reception, with people working in the reception? Or more like...

AUSTIN: Yeah, it is a bank- it is a bank lobby, and they've put like, a reception area on to the... So I think you go in, there's a huge seal, like a- like a, you know, an official government seal that says "The Cultural Trust", and there's a picture of the... the picture of a bird, like a person with an eagle head? It's like Lady Liberty... or not Lady Liberty, like the blind Justice? Like Justice holding the scales? [JACK: Mmm!] Except it's an eagle head and... it's holding in one- it has two hands, one hand is holding- what are they? What are the two things?

KEITH: There could be- instead of the scale that balances, it's just weighing stuff.

AUSTIN: Yes! It's just weighing stuff, yeah. It's like...

JACK: [crosstalk] Oh, that's great.

AUSTIN: Like a- what's a good symbol- it's a feather on the high side, what's the symbol for weight?

JACK: [sighs] I mean- it's lead right? But...

AUSTIN: Yeah, so like little lead balls, basically? Stacked up into a pyramid or something? [pause]
Or like a brick?

KEITH: [crosstalk] What, like BB sized? Cannonball sized? Or...

AUSTIN: I think cannonball sized, yeah.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Or like pool balls?

AUSTIN: And then with her other hand, the eagle's other hand [chuckles] Yeah, her- she's holding a blindfold that's been- that's been- [Jack laughs] holding it like a sword. Like, as if I'm going to blindfold *you*.

JACK: [laughing] You're gonna... [Keith laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah

JACK: [still laughing] TRUST! Big letters! [Keith still laughing in bg]

AUSTIN: Trust in big letters! So I think it's like- that's on the floor, there's a big reception desk, but all around the reception is like, desks where people are sitting and working? And there is the... there is probably still a place where you can deposit and withdraw things, like a bank, and there's a vault back there somewhere. There's offices around, you know? There's a manager's office... and I bet some of the offices above have been converted into like, viewing rooms if you have the right approval to watch something that's there.

JACK: I think I just, like, I think I just sort of pull Heard aside and say-

JACK [as Florence]: Sir, if I might, may I make a suggestion?

KEITH [as Robber]: Yeah, of course.

JACK [as Florence]: I think we should divide and conquer. We go in there and say we're from the Concern, they'll think we're strong-arming them. That's not what either of us want- Well, I mean, that is what we *want*, but we don't want them to think that.

KEITH [as Robber]: Good point. I think we should stick together and not to tell them we're from the Concern.

[Austin laughs quietly in bg]

JACK [as Florence]: Well, if we explain that we're from the Concern, they'll- there'll be compliance there, I mean what other authority can we... you know, wield?

JACK: [laughs] Man, Ali talked about metering her speech to match the Noirlandia game [Ali laughs], now I'm like...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh!

[Jack and Ali laugh]

JACK: I'm being like, retroactively tripped up, it's great.

[Ali continues to laugh]

JACK [as Florence]: Much will be gained through separation.

KEITH [as Robber]: The good thing about being members of the Concern is that we're not members of the Concern, we're members of the Cultural Trust.

JACK: [sputters, laughs] Florence just has this like- Florence has the expression I just did? [Austin laughs] Which is kind of like, blank misunderstanding?

AUSTIN: [laughing] Oh, my God! I mean, you do have documents.

JACK: What, we're gonna just- this is me- okay.

JACK [as Florence]: We're gonna impersonate the Cultural Trust?

KEITH [as Robber]: Yeah. [beat] Yeah!

JACK [as Florence]: Indeed.

[Jack quietly laughing in bg]

KEITH [as Robber]: And think of it this way, two people impersonating at the same time? That's much stronger than one person impersonating separately.

JACK: [overlapping] Florence is like, perfectly bad at pretending.

AUSTIN: You know, I figured out how to aid in this game, by the way. I've just invented that.

JACK: Oh, yeah?

KEITH: [crosstalk] For you to aid?

AUSTIN: No, for you to aid each other.

KEITH: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: You just both roll.

KEITH: I don't think that we're trying to aid each other. I think we have total opposite agendas here.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] No, no- Oh, you do- I'm just saying if you wanted to aid each other, you just both roll! And if one of you succeeds, you succeed, but both of your heart rates go up, and if you fail, static still goes up.

JACK: [crosstalk] Oh, that's really fun!

KEITH [crosstalk]: Oh, okay.

JACK: Yeah, that's really fun.

KEITH: But that doesn't add anything, it just gives you two chances?

AUSTIN: [laughs] It just gives you two chances!

KEITH: That sucks.

AUSTIN: [still laughing] It sucks, it's terrible. But it seems like it would make sense in this system as I'm understanding it. I'm sorry, continue.

KEITH: Because that's just the same thing as one person rolling twice.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] -twice, yep.

KEITH: And you have to decide- you have to decide beforehand that you've- that you'll fail, right? Unless you're saying that you could do it afterwards, like...

AUSTIN: I guess that's what I'm saying is that you could just- you could just, you could do it afterwards- you could spread the stress out, is what would be happening. That would be the benefit of it, right?

KEITH: Yep.

JACK: Okay, I have an idea.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

00;56;59 - 01;00;06

JACK: Okay, Florence is going to approach... the... reception.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm

JACK: And- oh man, I just have to open up my names folder. I am... going to need a codename.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm?

JACK: Ah... yes! She walks up to the reception and she puts down her documentation on the table, and she says...

JACK [as Florence]: My na-

AUSTIN: [interrupting] Wait- quick thing.

JACK: Mm?

AUSTIN: [clearly smirking] You know what happens if you use the documentation, right?

ALI: [mumbling] Static.

JACK: Is it- [cut off]

AUSTIN: Static. It's a technique.

JACK: Okay, right. Let's roll it back. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Okay. I- I just remembered that, is the thing.

KEITH: [overlapping] I have my- I can take the lead on this one. Unless you feel comfortable with your current heart rate. For a- for a roll. [pause] This is- this is an instinct roll?

AUSTIN This is an instinct roll

KEITH: Okay, I'm- I'm

AUSTIN OR- no, this is an instinct roll

KEITH: Okay.

JACK: Yeah, yeah- go ahead.

AUSTIN It depends on what you're doing.

KEITH: Well, I'm gonna let them know that I'm Robert Wig, from the main office.

AUSTIN [beat] This is an instinct roll. [laughs]

KEITH: Yeah. [Jack laughs in bg]

AUSTIN Robert Wig! You're literally just moving your fake identities of t from Twig into the- [sighs]
Okay.

[Keith is laughing in bg]

JACK: [still laughing] It's so good! It would've fooled me for about six minutes, but that's long enough.

AUSTIN Yep. Yep. Okay... [sighs] Give me an instinct roll.

KEITH: Roll... let's go four...

AUSTIN: Yeah, you're still in.

KEITH: Yeah, I'm still in. [beat] Thirteen.

AUSTIN Thirteen! So you are up to one-hundred...

AUSTIN/KEITH: 141.

KEITH: Yeah

AUSTIN: So you are up to- your last, you have one more before you go over... The receptionist looks up to you, and they're like- ah-

AUSTIN [as Receptionist]: The Main Office, ah- yeah we- I guess we expected a couple people... Yeah, everyone's upstairs, you can go head up. [sighs] Is this your-

AUSTIN: Points at Florence

AUSTIN [as Receptionist]: You... together?

KEITH [as Robber]: Not *together*. I mean-

AUSTIN [as Receptionist]: No.

JACK [as Florence]: No, ah-

AUSTIN [as Receptionist]: Just go upstairs.

JACK [as Florence]: Oh... okay.

[Keith laughs]

JACK: [laughing] I was going to take the opportunity to separate us.

AUSTIN Oh... okay. Well, once you- you can separate if you'd like to, at this point. This person- this receptionist has sent you upstairs, and... [trails off]

KEITH: Can I- can I like, have noticed that was- I'm explicitly telling Florence to come with me.

AUSTIN Yeah- if Florence decides not to come with you, that would be breaking... I don't think that's happened yet. If Florence breaks away from you...

JACK: [crosstalk] No, I'm... yeah.

AUSTIN She would have broken away from you, it will be disregarding an order.

JACK: Yeah- yeah, yeah. [pause, crosstalk] It's like a vampire thing, you're being specific-

AUSTIN [crosstalk] So does that happen, or do you... [trails off]

JACK: No, I'm with- I'm with [laughs] Robert right now.

AUSTIN [heavily emphasises the "t" in Robert] Robert. Robert Wig.

KEITH: Robert Wig.

AUSTIN It's very funny, because I've been looking at Robber Twig all night, so hearing "Robert Wig" [Jack laughs], which is a real name [Keith laughs] feels strange in my mouth, and my ears. I hate it.

KEITH: I mean- that's- that's Blough City, man.

AUSTIN [sighs] It is.

JACK: It's true.

AUSTIN You get- so you go up the stairs, there's like a little balcony overlooking this- the ground floor, and you see- ah- someone just like, as you come up the stairs, someone just like, turns and points at an office for you two to go into?

JACK: Cool!

AUSTIN And then just turns and walks down the stairs. And they leave. But that is where you are being directed, if- because you've told these people you're from the Main Office. You could do whatever you want in this building. Tell me- tell me what you do.

01;00;06 - 01;07;38

KEITH: [sighs, pauses]

KEITH [as Robber]: Alright Page, this is- this is your first bigshot mission. Where do you think we should go?

JACK [as Florence]: [pauses, breathes in] Personnel.

KEITH [as Robber]: Oh?

JACK [as Florence]: I think if we can break down anything they know about Blossom, we leave here with more information than when we came in. Surely they've confiscated stuff from him in the past, maybe they have something that would lead us to him.

KEITH [as Robber]: Alright.

JACK [as Florence]: [interrupting] I know he's dead, I mean lead us to him in... [laughs] a more metaphorical sense.

[Austin laughs]

KEITH: Lead us to the resolution of the mission.

AUSTIN: Alright, so yeah- the personnel, we all get a shot of you walking down the hallway- you go past the room that they are pointing at, and you can see through some blinds that it is people watching like... like sixteen people in a conference room, basically? All smoking cigarettes and watching vacation slides, from someone- someone else's vacation slides.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Like confiscated slides? Like these are too...

AUSTIN: [beat] Say again?

KEITH: Conf- like slides that they've confiscated?

AUSTIN: Oh, absolutely. 100%.

KEITH: [continuing] Like these are... these are not Cultural Press approved vacation slides.

AUSTIN: Yes... and they're just watching it, like- it's just a smoky room, yeah. So they're just reviewing these vacation slides to see if they're allowed to be... allowed. And you walk past-

KEITH: [crosstalk] Objections are like- "They're counter-cultural!"

AUSTIN: Uh-huh! [Keith laughs in bg] Can't let people have their own home memories? What?

KEITH: Yeah, anybody besides us has these, then society would crumble.

[Austin laughs]

--01;01;35--

AUSTIN: So you walk past that- you walk past a row of um, you know, materials- you walk past that, and there's someone who, you know, would have to like check materials, you file a form or whatever- you walk past that. And then yeah, there's just a personnel room, there's just an information room that is row after row after row of file cabinet filled with, you know, information and stuff. Who wants- you're allowed in, you go in there- there's gonna be someone else who's looking at stuff, someone else reading- there's gonna be like, little reading nooks and stuff? Little cubbies? But like, nooks is right. People at tiny desks looking over tiny little files with a magnifying glasses and there's definitely a microfiche- reader in this room, and it's just like- so cramped, and hot in here. They've turned the heat on, and they don't get to do that ever, so there's just like these long- one whole wall of this is a baseboard radiator with is just like, blaring heat which, cannot be good for anything in there. [pause] Give me- give me a roll, I think- I think this- Mm- it's Instinct. Because Instinct includes Investigation, which is what this is.

KEITH: Ah- I got the last one.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh! Also this is Florence- I think this was Florence's idea, I want Florence to roll this.

JACK: So these are filing cabinets, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah

JACK: So going to H rather than going to B, or I guess going to [deliberates] S?

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's the thing, right? [KEITH: Wait, hold on-] OHH, are you asking 'Would you be seen doing this'?

JACK: Yes. [pause, Austin begins to say something and then stops] Can I move fast enough that Heard won't have a familiarity with the room?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think- I think, if that's what you want to do, then yes. Give me that roll.

[pause]

JACK: This is Instinct?

AUSTIN: Yeah, and as many dice as you want, as you're still in your zone. You're at 114, and your cap is at 127.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: Your- your peak cap, your target cap. [beat] And that's a 14. [Jack exhales] Raise your heart rate by 14- oh you're just over- you're one over your target [Keith whistles] Brutal! You're at 128.

JACK: And I get- I get a commendation.

AUSTIN: You do get commendation, yes! Make a note.

ALI: Oh, I got one too.

AUSTIN: You did- you did get one earlier.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Yeah, Ali got one earlier.

AUSTIN: Yes

KEITH: OH! I got one too.

JACK: Oh, hey! [laughs]

KEITH: Look at that, look at us not noticing stuff.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh [Ali laughs] Alright.

JACK: This is just like the Cold War- Cold War drama, I'm thinking Spielberg's Bridge of Spies, Hitchcock movies, [Austin agrees] like- tight close-up on Florence's feet, walking, on her hands, and on her eyes as she's like scanning for the- thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah

JACK: The camera moves really quickly with her down a corridor, and instead of approaching Blake Blossom, she- [pauses, sighs] Now, what would it make sense- what name am I searching for here?

AUSTIN: I don't know.

JACK: Oh, thanks! [laughs]

KEITH: Like- like it could- could be, what is it- Stri-?

AUSTIN: It could be Squire [KEITH: Squire or Hector Hu], it could be Hector Hu, it could be- yeah.

JACK: How- [trails off]

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Do you want me to tell you- [trails off]

KEITH: [crosstalk] Before- before Jack had an idea of what to do, and like, search for Hector Hu, my joke was gonna be "I'll check Bla- and you can check Blow-"

[all laugh]

AUSTIN: [laughing] That's really good! So I think the thing that's happening- so the it is a mess, it is not- like, Director, Actor, Producer, Executive Producer- but there's also alphabetical, it's also by season [JACK, laughing: Oh God], it's also by genre, Western, you know- uh- Drama, War film, right? There's a lot of weird cross-categorisation, so two things happen for you. Florence, one is that you find Hector Hu's file. And then two is- you see at the bottom of his file, it says "For additional: Correspond with the Blake Blossom file".

JACK: [laughing] Oh, cool! This is- [trails off, pauses]

AUSTIN: So, Keith, what is your question- oh, you're okay? You can go on.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Ah, I just had- I'll say what it was anyway, but I decided it's not okay- I was going to say leaving Page to search for Blake Blossom and [laughs] I could look up information on Squire.

[Jack laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh, you would both end up doing the same bit?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah.

JACK: [in background] Oh, I love that.

KEITH: [laughing] It's just me being comical

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah, very funny, yeah-

KEITH: Yeah, yeah, no- it doesn't work.

AUSTIN: Alright. So... I'm gonna add something to the board real quick, which is-

JACK: I wanna-

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

JACK: I wonder if you- if you're gonna raise static?

AUSTIN: Oh, I wasn't gonna, but yeah, I'm gonna. Good call.

JACK: No- no- no, no! Because like- I wanna get- let's talk semantics here [someone snorts in bg]. I was explicitly told to stay together.

AUSTIN: No, yeah, but I said at the very top of the game that looking into things that were not- looking into Hector would raise the static.

JACK: [laughs] Oh shit, you raised it in a *different* way to the one I was suggesting.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] No, here's the thing- you see, here's what I'm gonna raise- you'll see under "Threats and Hostile Personalities" [JACK: Mmm], you'll see that there is one that is just redacted all the way through with "Blue Level Agents, avoid at all costs, Deep Blue Level Agents" and then that's also blacked out? That is Hector Hu.

JACK: Oh!

AUSTIN: So I'm just gonna add that there... to the map... as a bunch of redacted lines, ah- boom. I'm just gonna write Hector Hu, but you know- in the dossier, that is what that is- So, God, what do we get here? [pause] Is someone else also looking for the Blake Blossom file?

KEITH: Yeah, I am, I am.

AUSTIN: Alright, you give me a roll on that then- give me a roll- that would be an- also- an Access roll.

KEITH: Got it. This is- this is my last one, right?

AUSTIN: I think so.

KEITH: [typing] Slash... roll... [beat] eh, fuck it.

[Austin, Jack laugh]

KEITH: Eighteen.

AUSTIN: Eighteen! Yikes... You're getting close to maximum too... so you get that.

KEITH: 190 is my maximum.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's true. I mean- you're up to 159 now.

KEITH: Yeah, that's true.

AUSTIN: I mean, you won't be rolling four-five dice anymore.

KEITH: [crosstalk] I mean, that last die was just one, so I would've gotten... would've gotten a seventeen.

AUSTIN: That's true, that's true.

KEITH: [muttering] 159...

01;07;38 - 01;16;46

AUSTIN: So, [deep breath] we get the two of you in your cubbies looking at files over- and this is the thing, it has to be more than just, you're looking at a single file. There are like- oh, here's the dossier on Hector Hu and stuff, but there's a lot of cross-reference, and the cross-reference are not meant to make things easy. So it's like- you get something on Hector, Florence, or it's like yeah, it's like check the thing on Blake Blossom- but it's also like, check the file on the- on this specific scene in this specific movie, that has been annotated thirty times, and like one of the annotations is like 'Oh, you can briefly hear Hector Hu coughing... off-screen', right? And here's the big picture that you place together, Florence is- that Hector Hu was collaborating with Blake Blossom, as creatives, as filmmakers.

JACK: Mm.

AUSTIN: I mean, I think you put it together pretty cleanly, even- which is that... *shooooo* I'll put this big long line down here, the Blossom tape is a collaboration between Hector Hu and Blake Blossom.

JACK: [sharp intake of breath] Right.

AUSTIN: Ah... [typing]

KEITH: Oop! I don't think that's right.

AUSTIN: Wait, what?

KEITH: You wrote- it says "Ki-", oh okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah, sorry.

KEITH: [crosstalk] You wrote "Killed", okay.

-- 01;09;10 --

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Sorry, yeah, I was re- I was rewriting it [Keith laughs]. Okay. [pause]

There we go. So, you get- what do you get, Keith? I think you get some things- one, Florence, you get that Hector Hu- actually, no, you know what? I think what... what Heard gets is that Blake Blossom shows up, about a year ago- maybe a little more than that- I forget what I said at the top of the game- and begins to, very quickly- too quickly, starts making films. Was probably working with someone who was established, something you already knew in that sense? [KEITH: Okay]

In that the... the Cultural Trust believes that it is someone connected to the group known as the Concern, who is providing funding, and providing expertise. And that the Cultural Trust believes that this stuff is dangerous, and there's a- an instance where at a smaller showing of one

of Blake Blossom's films, two things- wait, Blake Blossom starts showing his films privately in local- not just movie houses, but in like, people's houses, in bars, in parks. Begins projecting his stuff onto buildings without approval, which they believe- was- they believe, and I'm gonna draw another long connection here, they believe was also the work of Gale Green, who was- ah, I drew that wrong- who was a- a well-established... ah-

You know what I'm gonna do? I'm gonna move this all this shit around so that Hector is in between two of them- it's easier that way- ah. That Hector- basically, Hector, Gale, and Blake are all collaborating on the production of weird, experimental films. Some of which have to do with- a lot of which have to do with nature, which we already talked about, which is bad because it convinces people that they should not just be bulldozing everything. But also that have to do with something deeper, and more ideological. The Cultural Trust thinks that they are attempting to shift people against the Cultural Trust, against the kind of, proprietary and respectful nature of culture here- people should know their places, et cetera... so Gale, Blake, and Hector are all working together, and I think that basically- you get the Blake-Gale connection, Heard. And Florence, you get the Hector-Blake connection. And they're both- there's the emptiness in the map between the two of you, you know what I mean? So, if you're focusing on the Hector side, it's like oh- they also had *another* skilled filmmaker who also- who was also deep in the organisational side of all of this stuff, who could set up projections, who set up private showings, and who had the resources to protect Blake and Hector from this stuff.

And then, you get the big thing- which is that the Blossom tape is their magnum opus. And they had been privately spreading around that this was going to totally change the way everyone thinks about the city, what everyone thinks about this place, and convince people to leave. It was specifically about getting people to flee the city. Or change it in such a dramatic way that it would become completely unrecognisable and the Cultural Trust would be utterly undercut.

--01:12:49--

KEITH: Huh. Did I get that part or Hector's part?

AUSTIN: You get the goal part, which is that Gale and Blake are working on the same thing. So you get that exact same thing, but without the Hector Hu info.

KEITH: Right, so I still got that they were trying to get people to leave?

AUSTIN: Yeah, definitely, definitely.

KEITH: Alright. I don't know, but that sounds- that sounds kinda- I guess, no, it doesn't. I was gonna say that it sounds like an okay thing for- for the Bluff Concern.

AUSTIN: Totally

KEITH: Because it would destabilise- Blough.

AUSTIN: That's if- if they're right about it, you know?

KEITH: If they're right about it. But al- but also, it's like this weird thing where the- where the people, I guess, ostensibly in charge of The Concern don't want an- a balance instability?

AUSTIN: Right, yeah, yeah.

JACK: Right, we've probably been told to sort of just, keep the line even.

KEITH: So I guess I'm not- I'm not sure how Heard feels about- I don't know how deep in is Heard-like, is Heard brought into the intra-departmental Cold War between Blough and Bluff Concern, or is Heard understanding of like- well, it needs to be balanced, or Bluff doesn't get to be Bluff?

AUSTIN: So I think both of those are still opposed to what Blake, and Hector, and Gale want, right? Which is... which is that, there should be... I think both of them want there to be- well, not both of them, all of them really. All three are more aligned with Bluff than Blough, right?

KEITH: Right

AUSTIN: All of them are pro-Blough... oh- pro-Bluff

KEITH: Pro-Bluff

AUSTIN: But they're also not pro-Concern, right?

KEITH: Right, yes, right. Heard is.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] They- Heard is, right now, 100%. These are all people who are like, we can't just do this by killing people [laughs]. And, like... you know, black helicopter-ing people, and positioning ourselves as like, the- the people in great deals of power, we have to do this in a cultural sense. We have to make major changes to how these places operate and what these people believe, right?

KEITH: Yeah. I just mean, my specific motivation as like-

AUSTIN: Yes

KEITH: [continuing] like, oh- would I be interested in using this tape to destabilise Bluff Concern, that I don't like, or-

AUSTIN: Right

KEITH: Or, do I see the bigger, like- [trails off]

AUSTIN: Good question.

KEITH: Yeah, like I don't know.

AUSTIN: I don't know.

KEITH: I don't know.

AUSTIN: I also mean, you don't see the Hector side of this quite yet, right? So that is- that means- that is- right, so- here's the question- [trails off]

KEITH: [crosstalk] Right- Oh, so I guess that's like- if I- yeah, okay. Got it, okay.

AUSTIN: You're not sharing that info, Florence, I'm guessing?

JACK: No way! Nooooo way!

AUSTIN: Okay

[Ali giggles in background]

JACK: Noooo way.

[Austin laughs]

AUSTIN: Alright. So... I have ten hits, and you immediately above you, on the roof, you start hearing the sound of just like... Like, it sounds like someone is shooting outside, at first? But it isn't. It's that the snow has changed, to hail. And huge, fist-sized balls of hail start slamming into- into Blough City, all across the city. But they're not- a couple of things, the parade is still going, and the hail isn't breaking the balloons. The floats are protecting the people underneath, and the parade has gotten even louder. You can hear the sound of the horns outside, as the hail begins to like, completely drop down.

KEITH: Balls of hail collecting on the- balloons are now moving closer to the street.

AUSTIN: Yes

KEITH: [continuing] as the balls are coming down?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

JACK: Ohhh.

AUSTIN: And every now and again, someone shakes these balloons to get these huge, off-pourings of hail down onto the street. Lounge Crew?

01;16;46 – 01;19;36

AUSTIN: [beat] What's this weird plan that you convinced this fucking poor guy to do? [Ali giggles]

JANINE: We're gonna fake-rob him.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: And fake-beat him up?

AUSTIN: How? Uh-huh.

JANINE: Um... I mean, you know... he's a fighter, so we can probably get some hits in, and it won't... like, hurt him.

AUSTIN: That's the thing though, it has to be convincing, right?

JANINE: Yeah. I mean, there are places you can hit someone that don't do lasting damage.

ALI: [laughs]

JANINE: Um...

[Ali and Keith laugh]

JANINE: Did you wanna add something else?

[Ali and Keith are still laughing]

KEITH: That's like a verbatim quote to Achilles.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, exactly. He's like-

KEITH: [imitating Maggie] There's place we can hit you that won't do lasting damage. [still laughing]

AUSTIN [as Achilles]: I think you gotta go bigger, I think you gotta bigger if we're gonna do this. Because-

ALI: I- [stops]

AUSTIN: Yeah, go ahead

ALI: No, you go on.

AUSTIN: No, you go ahead. You're the player.

ALI: [laughs] No, because I think Chris is like- writing out a letter whilst they're having this conversation.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?

ALI: I'll just say it now, before this scene is over. I don't know if I have the capacity to do this, but if I can, like- [sighs] I'm sure witness protection isn't a thing?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm

ALI: But like, I was also offered a job under duress. I was wondering if I could make him the same offer, which is like-

AUSTIN: [deep breath] So I think you would have to get it approved. That would be an Access roll.

ALI: Okay

--01;18;16--

AUSTIN: What I will say is- start to think in that direction is not bad, right? You know, I don't know how many laws you're ready to break, so to speak [Ali laughs], you know. Finnegan Hands isn't in witness protection- Blake Blossom wasn't in witness protection, but- Hector Hu brought- I guess this is some more information for Florence really quick- Hector Hu brought Blake Blossom across from Bluff. Hector Hu was the person who brought him over- Hector Hu was the person who set him up. So, like- yeah, agents have been known to do exactly that. So maybe you could- you could do a deal with one of the devils, literally. [Ali laughs] Mr- Mr Bee, [Keith laughs] might be able to make this happen for you. Or- or you could, you could try to bring him across with you when you go back out, and hope to get rid of him before- hide him somewhere before the Concern picks you up, or something else. Uh- talk to Ollerenshaw and try to bribe them to bring him across, you know?

ALI: [pauses, deliberates] I would gladly make this offer and then expend any resources I have depending on what he wants to do. But yeah, I don't know if you want to finish this conversation. I think it's a long one-

AUSTIN: Yeah

ALI: [crosstalk] it's like... [trails off]

AUSTIN: I love this idea of like- and it's like, writing this conversation about how to fake beat him up? [Ali laughs] I think he's like-

01;19;36 - 01;26;58

AUSTIN [as Achilles]: You can't just... I... I am the heavyweight champion, you can't just hit me in the knees a few times.

JANINE [as Maggie]: Yeah, but they don't bring tire irons into the ring- so, you know, there's stuff that you wouldn't be reasonably expected to hold your own against. [AUSTIN [as Achilles]: No, I'm-] And then we maybe just put you in the trunk of the Coupe- and then like, give you a whistle or something, so you can get someone's attention when it's good- you know- after a few minutes have passed.

[beat]

KEITH: [slightly off mic] What're you doing?

[pause, Ali laughs]

KEITH: Sorry, my cat jumped up.

AUSTIN: Oh okay, I was confused.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah, Cricket's getting in front of everything-

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] I was like, you're not in this scene?

KEITH: Get outta here, you little rat.

[Ali is still laughing]

AUSTIN [as Achilles]: Alright well, we can try it- [sucks in breath]

AUSTIN: And he like- clutches his knees for a second?

AUSTIN [as Achilles]: Don't hit me in the knees though.

JANINE [as Maggie]: No, no, I wasn't gonna go for the knees.

AUSTIN [as Achilles]: And be careful, because you could do lasting damage.

JANINE [as Maggie]: Yeah, you don't aim for joints.

AUSTIN [as Achilles]: Or- organs!

JANINE [as Maggie]: Yeah, I know. No kidneys, that's a big one. No joints. Um... there are certain parts of the head that are okay, others aren't.

AUSTIN [as Achilles]: Sssh!

JANINE [as Maggie]: What?

AUSTIN: The bartender is just staring at you [Janine laughs] as you're describing places to hurt someone. [Ali laughs]

AUSTIN [as Achilles]: [low tone] We gotta stay quiet when we're talking in here.

JANINE [as Maggie]: Right.

AUSTIN [as Achilles]: Plus, we're talking about weird shit, so...

ALI: I think, that's the point at which this letter gets slid across the table, and at this point it's like-

ALI [as Chris]: I'm sorry to make you more conflicted, but I think that that's a good thing to see. You're a talented person, and shouldn't be wasting it stealing cars. If you wanna get out of here, I can work on that. If you want bigger things, I can work on that too.

AUSTIN: Cool. [Ali laughs] He sees that and he's like-

AUSTIN [as Achilles]: Alright, let's do it.

AUSTIN: And... he tells you, I think, so, we get the slow cuts. Or like, you all stands up, and it cuts to you leaving the building- then it cuts to you on the street, and then it's the exact same angle- side angle shot, like- full bodies walking from left to right, and when you get the edge of the frame it cuts. And it does that three or four times in the- in the parking garage, then you're one of the ramp going up, and then finally you're at the Coupe. You're at the Teardrop. And he says, like-

AUSTIN [as Achilles]: Put me in here. I can blow the whistle. And I'll be able to say yes to everything that they say. [beat] Yeah- a tire iron? That's what we're doing.

ALI [as Chris]: [quietly] Mm.

JANINE [as Maggie]: I mean-

AUSTIN [as Achilles]: IRS?

JANINE: Are we doing the protection thing- I mean- this is me, out of character- asking.

AUSTIN: I think we're doing both, right?

JANINE: Because if we're doing the protection thing, then why do we have to beat him up at all?

AUSTIN: Well- how are you- how are you getting him into protection this quickly, is the question. Because if this airs tonight- the Whitakers are going to know *immediately*.

ALI: Yeah.

JANINE: Okay- so- [laughs] the whole point of beating him up- [Ali laughs] Was to somehow indemnify him. If we're then going to extract him, it seems very silly to go at with a tire iron [Ali, Austin laugh] put him in a trunk for half hour, and then extract him. It kinda seems like we're doing two other things [trails off]

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] It wasn't gonna be a half hour, it was gonna be put him in the trunk for the next few days and then extract him. I don't know how quickly you can get him extracted, like genuinely I don't know.

KEITH: I mean, is it worth a few days in a trunk to get out of Blough?

AUSTIN: That's the other thing- could you just hide him now, for the next few days- what I will say is like, if that vi- if this film airs, if the Whitakers find out that the film is out there, they will know that he got it for them, and that he gave it away. Or they will believe that, and they are organised crime, and that is bad. This is Blough City. This is not the Veranda family.

KEITH: So Austin, what you're saying is that the promise of extraction is making it worth it to take the risk of getting, of pretending to get beat up?

AUSTIN: I mean- the other thing convinced him that it is a good thing to do, and that he would follow whatever their pitch is for keeping him safe. So... but, like, you have to keep him safe. Like yeah, if you beat him up and take it from him, then he at least has a bit of a window where he can be like "Yeah, I had it for you, but they beat me up and took it". And then... some other time, later down the road- near-future, far future, whenever it is- you can get him *out* out. That seemed to be-

JANINE: [crosstalk] I don't understand why it would buy him any time at all, if not like...

AUSTIN: Because he could say that you beat him up, or someone beat him up, and-

JANINE: And then the Whitakers believe it for three days? And then decide not to?

AUSTIN: For a few days, sure. But they would go look into it.

ALI: [crosstalk] Well, we could tell them that he went missing, right?

AUSTIN: Right

ALI: Like...

AUSTIN: I think there's a limit to how long they would believe it, because they would start looking into the stuff too.

KEITH: Yeah

AUSTIN: Like, you met him in a public place.

KEITH: And, it totally makes sense, like now that I'm thinking about it- if they knew it was him, and then went looking for him and couldn't find him, that then they would really up the search. Which would be bad for everybody.

AUSTIN: Or they could- or you could roll the dice, right? Like, if this goes out today, then if he doesn't- if he doesn't have an alibi for *today*, that's trouble. For him. Or, you could try to find a place- that's reasonable. You could make that call today and say 'Hey, could we have a safehouse for today?' and try to keep him... safe, until then. Like, short term witness protection type stuff, basically?

KEITH: Oh yeah, we do have like, access to- well not access to- but access to access to...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] You have Access, is a thing you could roll.

KEITH: To a safe house

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Yeah... I was, I think that makes more sense? The other suggestion I have is that we... we do the part of the plan that was in his mind, which is that oh, you fake beat me up and they find me, and they think you beat me up, but make it more material by have it like... telling him to like, call someone you know, and like threatening them over the phone? But that would be way worse for us, maybe. So maybe don't...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] It would be way worse, yeah.

JANINE: It just seems kind of pointless to beat him up if... it doesn't like, do- [laughs] you know what I mean? Like it seems silly.

ALI: Yeah

JANINE: It seems incredibly pointless to, like, well we'll beat you up, and then we'll leave you alone for a day, and then we'll get you out.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] I'm saying, he needs- [trails off]

JANINE: [continuing] I mean, why not just get him to a safehouse, for now.

AUSTIN: I mean, let's try that! Let's try that.

JANINE: I mean, it's probably going to be a roll either way. So it seems silly to-

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] It will be, it will be a roll either way.

JANINE: [crosstalk] pick a roll that- [trails off]

AUSTIN: I will say, the roll that is- that is the Access roll- Anytime you're Accessing things... [pauses, starts again] So, what I'm saying is, the thing to know with Access rolls is that you've crossed a boundary with static. So... any- you're at ten, so the relationship with the Concern is starting to get frayed. So that's why I bring up that it is risky to do that directly through the Concern in that way. So if there's a favour you wanna call in first here, that's a little safer- in some senses.

01:26:58 - 01:34:05

JANINE: Oh! Yeah, Finnegan...

AUSTIN: Okay

JANINE: I mean like, Finnegan already owes Apollo?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] He likes him anyway? Yeah, totally.

JANINE: So that seems like a really easy favour to call.

ALI: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: Totally. Um... sure, so you just dial him up on the phone then, basically?

JANINE: Yeah

ALI: Yeah, I have the Caller thing, I'll... is that...

AUSTIN: That's probably Instinct, that's not Access, right? You're convincing someone of something. It's risky, and it is risky for Finnegan to do this, right? Jack, do you remember how Finnegan sounds?

JACK: Man! My- my abiding memory of Finnegan is him at the end, but I remember him being like- he wants to help, he- he's- Oh! Finnegan's like... his whole thing was like, the colossal misunderstanding of the plan, right? [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yes

JACK: He's very enthusiastic, even when he doesn't grasp the full details of the situation- but that was him in- in Bluff City?

AUSTIN: Yeah

JACK: I imagine it's similar in Blough City, but sadder?

AUSTIN: [chuckles] That sounds right. Alright, so what's this call sound like?

ALI: Um, let me roll it, and we'll see.

AUSTIN: Okay

[roll20 beep in the background]

ALI: Okay, that's a fifteen, so I go up to... 63?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

ALI: Yeah, hah- um... [laughs] I don't know if I have a relationship with Finnegan. But I guess... [trails off]

AUSTIN: That's a good point! Should Maggie have done this?

ALI: Well, I think there's probably like... a version of that conversation happened in this parking lot, right?

AUSTIN: Mm

ALI: Where it's like- yeah, the second the trunk is opened it's like, wait a minute- okay

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

ALI: We're gonna beat you up, but... [laughs]

JANINE: Also, I don't know if Maggie and Finnegan have that kind of relationship where that would help?

AUSTIN: Gotcha

JANINE: We don't... she feels protective of him? I don't think there's any reason for him to feel anything towards her [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's a- that's a good point. Yeah, yeah.

ALI: Right. But I think that like- if- if the three of these characters were together like, okay, who are we going to lean on for this plan, I think it'd be like- either Maggie or Apollo would suggest Finnegan separately, right? And it would be Chris calling to be the agent.

AUSTIN: Yeah

ALI: [continuing] Who has the weird phone.

AUSTIN: Yep

--01;29;20--

ALI: [laughs] So yeah, I think she waits for it to go through, and it's the kind of like, looking awkward at the people you're in the room with, seeing what the wait is at the restaurant, and just being like-

ALI [as Chris]: Hi! Is- is Finnegan there? This is Agent Ryder.

AUSTIN: Finnegan?

JACK: Oh, *I'm* playing Finnegan?

AUSTIN: Sure. It's a short scene.

JACK [as Finnegan]: Uh, yeah, hi? Uh- who's this?

ALI [as Chris]: Agent Ryder. I'm um... I'm with the Concern. I'm a... friend of Apollo's?

ALI: And she looks at Apollo and like, shrugs.

JACK [as Finnegan]: Oh... yeah, I mean, I'm always gonna be there for a friend of Apollo's... what can I do for you? I can't talk for very long, I'm sorry, but you know it's a busy- a busy day. Have you seen outside?

ALI [as Chris]: Oh, that's fine, I- [laughs nervously] Um... love a parade! Um... it's about Apollo, actually. I'm trying to protect him, and I need the help of a... a, um resident.

JACK [as Finnegan]: Oh? Oh, you want me to do a solid for... Mr Achilles?

ALI [as Chris]: A solid, yeah. Like, two solids.

JACK [as Finnegan]: Okay

ALI [as Chris]: Not two different actions, I mean... something that like- ice, and diamonds.

JACK [as Finnegan]: Oh! Oh- right, like a diamond.

ALI [as Chris]: Like a *very* solid

JACK [as Finnegan]: Right. Double solid. Um... what does he need?

ALI [as Chris]: He just needs somewhere to be. Until he has a way out.

JACK [as Finnegan]: A what?

ALI [as Chris]: A way out.

[beat]

AUSTIN: Ohh!!! [pause, Ali chuckles] I hadn't thought about this. [Ali laughs] Because Finnegan is here too, huh?

JACK [as Finnegan]: Oh, he's getting out?

ALI [as Chris]: I- uh-

ALI: [laughs, recovers] I think that there's a... point that- Chris hears that in Finnegan's voice...

AUSTIN: Yeah

ALI: And like... [laughs] I don't know... I'm curious as to how Maggie and Apollo are reacting to this situation, but she's just like...

ALI [as Chris]: It's just a visit...

ALI: And just like, shrugs at them again.

AUSTIN: Oh...

ALI: [laughs] But like... it's a similar situation where you like, wanna take my phone instead of a cigarette, then you can do that? [Austin laughs]

JACK [as Finnegan]: When's he getting out?

ALI [as Chris]: Oh, um... I'm still working out the details, but it would be... soon. By the end of the week.

JACK [as Finnegan]: Oh. You gotta get me out of here.

ALI [as Chris]: Of course.

JACK [as Finnegan]: [the slightest tinge of hope] Of course?!

ALI [as Chris]: You wanna go?

JACK [as Finnegan]: Yeah, I wanna go! I've wanted to go since I got here! I- I don't know how much longer I can be here! I don't know if I can make it to the end of the week here- what- what was your name? Look, um- I'm gonna write down your name-

JACK: And you just hear him like, scrambling for papers.

JACK [as Finnegan]: It's Agent Ryder, right?

AUSTIN: [muttering] Fuck.

ALI [as Chris]: Yeah.

JACK [as Finnegan]: And you'll get me out?

ALI [as Chris]: I'll help you however I can.

JACK [as Finnegan]: And all I have to do is- is- is he in trouble?

ALI [as Chris]: He will be if you don't help.

JACK [as Finnegan]: [laugh of disbelief] Okay! Okay... okay, when should I expect him?

ALI [as Chris]: Soon. Where are you now?

JACK [as Finnegan]: Um, well... I'm at my house.

ALI [as Chris]: Is that secure?

JACK [as Finnegan]: [chuckles] Is that secure? No... [recovers]. No, nowhere's secure here. Wow, you haven't been here long.

[Austin laughs]

ALI [as Chris]: I don't plan to be.

JACK [as Finnegan]: [chuckles] You don't plan to be... okay! Well... I mean you drop him round, we can meet at a safe location, uh- we can meet at a safe location, and I guess you can tell- you can tell them that we'll be coming. By the end of week, right?

ALI [as Chris]: I'll call you. Yeah.

JACK [as Finnegan]: Okay. Thank you, Agent Ryder.

ALI [as Chris]: It was nice meeting you.

ALI: And then she just hangs up. [laughs]

JANINE: [in background] Oh...

AUSTIN: Oh, my god. Thank you, Jack, for just injecting all the tragedy that there is.

[Ali, Jack laugh]

AUSTIN: Fuck! Me... [sighs] And he gives you the tape.

01:34:05 - 01:43:53

AUSTIN: There's a degree to which... so he hands you the tape, and you feel it move in your hands for a second, like there's something inside it, moving. And then it stops. It clicks in your hand for a second, or like... like a marble, or... I don't know, something like- you know jumping beans? It's like there's a jumping bean in there, but like...

JANINE: So there's a bug in it?

AUSTIN: I wanna underline the larval sense of a jumping bean, like a bug.

JANINE: Eugh

AUSTIN: But it's in a little... cup or container, like in a film reel, or a can. It's small, it was shot on, like... it's pre-Super 8, but it's 8mm. It's like a camera somewhere between an original 8mm and a Super 8. I have a specific one in mind with an image that I will link you too, because it's a cool fucking camera... I have a cool gun and a cool camera. [laughs] Because that's... that's Bluff City [Ali laughs]. I linked- I almost linked it in our fan discord, for a second. Ah- is this... little handheld camera that has a little- a little handle, like a briefcase you carry around?

ALI: Ahh!

AUSTIN: It's very cool. But the film is not that... it's in a little film reel canister. And whilst we're at it, the pistol is a- it's like a little box? Um... silencer, or something? It's a Russian- it's a revolver with a silencer on it, and that was the pistol that you got. But not like a long- not like a long silencer, but a tiny cylindrical little boxy thing that goes on the end of the gun barrel that goes underneath, so that it expresses the gas that reduces the sound- it's a real weird looking thing. Anyway... Props. Trust people - you have all this info, it's hailing, the parade is bigger than ever. You step back outside, I guess. What do you do?

--01:36:17--

JACK: [sighs]

AUSTIN: And we'll wrap up very shortly.

JACK: Do we... I mean is this the point at which we... arrange to meet at the gala- at the festival?

AUSTIN: Yeah, right? It's soon, for sure. Yeah, yeah- for sure, for sure. That's what we do, right?

JACK: So do we contact- I mean maybe we've done it already.

AUSTIN: Yeah

JACK: Maybe we've split like- alright, if these wrong, let's just [AUSTIN: Meet- back at-] if this runs long, meet back at the festival.

AUSTIN: At the Citywide Film Festival, at the Courtyard- yeah. And by the time you get there, people are starting to arrive. You know, it'll start soonish? But... you're- you're allowed to get back in, you've already done the work at the beginning of the game to establish that you're allowed to go to Gale Green's office, so they're not gonna stop you again.

JACK: Are they like- are folks like, arriving in the hail? [AUSTIN: Oh yeah] Like, stepping out of their fancy cars with people holding [AUSTIN: Umbrellas] umbrellas over them and like... hail hissing off the streets.

AUSTIN: Totally, and they've put up... they've put up a bunch of like- a bunch of things over the projection screen to keep it safe. It's like a- like a clamshell-style stage, that has a roof already? It's like open- open to the park, but it has a clamshell cover basically. And people are lining up and sitting down already in their fancy formalwear, and they're all holding umbrellas. There's just this shot of you getting out of your cars, and it's almost behind you, like a close third-person camera or something? Just a little shakier than that... and you walk in, turn and just see this entire park full of people seated outside in the sunset, holding umbrellas as hail bounces off of it. It's basically one or two people for every- for every three or four seats because the umbrellas are taking up so much space. Like- I don't even know how they're even going to see the screen like this! It's just like, this very upsetting, strange image. And also, Christmas music playing from the parade, which is like- if you're in the park, you're outdoors, you can still see these floats everywhere. And I think... one of you... Chris and Florence, you see something- you catch your breath for a second, because you see a symbol that is confusing at first? There is an infinity symbol on one of these floats.

ALL: [gasps]

AUSTIN: And... it is not infinite love, it is something else. And someone like, bumps- bumps into you, as you're getting out of the car, and says to you, like

AUSTIN (as UNKNOWN): You should join up! It's- it's time for the Endless Jubilee!

AUSTIN: And you look closer, and there is a ram's horn, which is the historical symbol for the Jubilee. And it strikes you, Chris, like in this moment before- it's happening again, right? Like, it's Infinite Love-Omega Love, but this isn't Bluff, so it couldn't have just been Omega Love again. Here it's the Endless Jubilee- it's- it's, you know, you're- people are singing songs about forgiveness, and the- the new year, and in fact it is- it's- how does Auld Lang Syne actually go?

JACK: [reading] Should auld acquaintance be forgot-

AUSTIN: Yeah

JACK: And never brought to mind? - *I'm looking this up* - Should auld acquaintance be forgotten, and never brought to mind? Should auld acquaintance be forgot, for the sake of auld lang syne? For auld lang syne, my dear, for auld lang syne, we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet, for auld lang syne.

AUSTIN: For- for all the past, for the old days- shall we move on, basically-

JACK: For old times' sake

AUSTIN: For old times' sake, yeah- yeah yeah. Shall we- celebrate old time- so that's what's being sung here, extremely early because it's not even the holiday here, yet. What do they call it- what do they call their Christmas- I don't know if they call it Christmas, because it's businessman pig-cow holiday.

JACK: [laughs] I assume there are other symbols.

AUSTIN: Maybe

KEITH: Well there's a Santa. What does Santa look like in Blough?

AUSTIN: There is a Santa-

JACK: [crosstalk, laughs] Oh yeah, awful.

AUSTIN: Finnegan Hands! Right?

JACK: [laughing] Yeah

--01;40;35--

JANINE: We know what it's called, right? It's called *Sealageths*⁴.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's called *Sealageths*.

JANINE: [crosstalk, laughing] *Halpus Sealageths*.

AUSTIN: [continuing] Except that- except that you and I both know that- on one of the postcards, if you got the postcards-

JANINE: I'm gonna put this picture in the chat, because Keith hasn't seen it, and it's unfair to him to just say that, then to leave it.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, please do. There's a- oh, make sure you put the back, too!

JANINE: Right

⁴ These are nonsense words, I've listed what they sound like phonetically in italics.

--01:40:55--

AUSTIN: For the postcards- one of the postcards of... an infinitely big Christmas tree, with two little girls looking at it- including one who has... eight arms, on one side of her body at least, [JACK, laughing in bg: It's so good] and it says- *Auth vedar bri-goris, det vyer skort cable-ting, Halpust Sealagoths!*

KEITH: Haha! Nice!

[Jack is laughing throughout]

--01:41:18--

AUSTIN: And on the back it says- and there's a little poem that says- *Telleden kwilsom burrum, tella-i ath ur-frem, paup goris con, kan-ya goris, at-torrels ol forum, at-benn*. Which is another Christmas poem, about something. And both of our things have Christmas in them, which tells me - if you're not from Blough City, then the same word can look the same, different ways. Can look different ways, and mean the same thing. So yeah, so yeah- that is- that is what's happening here. But yeah, it's happening again, it's- has Hector been working on these people this whole time already, right?

KEITH: I mean- this also, could also be- a worse Bluff- a worse Blough version of this thing, that-

AUSTIN: Totally! It could be, it could be... I'm really speaking to Chris and Florence who saw the Omega Love shit go down.

KEITH: Yeah

AUSTIN: And it does, it does feel like the Blough City version of it, right? Because the Bluff City version-

KEITH: [crosstalk] Endless Jubilee sounds worse.

AUSTIN: Right! Than- than Omega Love- the Bluff- But I wanna be clear, I don't think it's bad. I think this- the thing that's- any political moment- any political resistance is defined by the possibility space that politics and ideology has already set up? So, for the people in Bluff City, this expressive- expansive, endless- you know- position of resistance and creativity [Jack laughs] It meant that the regular- that people fought the National Guard and won? And in Blough City that's unimaginable. But what is imaginable is that- they break the schedule for their Christmas parade, and that they inflate way more balloons than there's supposed to be, and that they clog the streets, and prevent business from operating as it's supposed to. And then-

KEITH: [crosstalk] Better music than it's supposed to- faster music.

AUSTIN: Faster music! Yeah... And that they- and that they didn't- you know, there are ways in which you can clog the system that tells you that you're not allowed to curse, and you do this by, you know- playing music at a loud volume. Where you're not allowed to protest, and it's by...

having a parade instead of a protest! Right, so I think you recognise that that's already been happening here, and to some degree, whatever is on this reel is what's supposed to push them over the edge.

KEITH: I mean, there's something for just having Blake Blossom having been in operation for so long?

AUSTIN: Right! Blake... and Gale [KEITH, crosstalk: and Gale, yeah] have already been doing this stuff, and Hector also been playing in here, right? They've been stirring the pot a little bit. This is a moment of 'oh shit, they've been stirring it more than anyone knew'

KEITH: Yeah...

AUSTIN: You know?

KEITH: There's a difference between magnum opus and debut.

AUSTIN: Right! Yes, yes... But then you're here! What do you all do?

01:43:53 - 01:51:30

ALI: Um... I think at first, Chris is just like, grinning? [laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

ALI: I think it's like her, in the last scene is like- she went through the Omega Love thing, and like does not see any sense of community in Bluff City- or Blough City!

AUSTIN: Blough City, yeah

ALI: And like... thinks that's why people need to be saved from here? [laughs]

AUSTIN: Sure.

ALI: So like, seeing that they're, like, in uprising is like, almost giddy.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

ALI: But I think that, yeah, I think that she wants to go find Gale

AUSTIN: Okay. She finds her in the office. Is everyone here? Is this a big group thing to wrap?

JACK: Yeah, I could see that.

JANINE: Mm

AUSTIN: Okay... Gale is in her office, getting things ready, you know. I think it's like, practising her speech, her welcoming speech, basically? And you can see [chuckles], the camera shows- fourth version of the- fourth version of the, ah- the schedule, with Blake Blossom's name crossed off the schedule, again? Because she didn't have the keys to go get the car? And... you show up! And it's Gale Green, aka Dorothy Delanza, aka Goldfinch. She is... she is what a su- what a beautiful woman superhero in the world of Blough City looks like, right? Which is this very mid-century image of perfection- of blonde hair and blue eyes, she is- she is that stereotype, right? And gets to be a good person, also. In a weird way. In the world of Bluff City, where we are very very conscious of making sure that we talk about marginalised identities, and queerness and- she's- she's queer, right? She's a gay woman... and everything else, like also weirdly this woman wants to do right by the world? She left this place as a little girl, and saw a better world... and decided to come back here, and make the place better. But is still confined by it's conceptions of beauty, and everything, and fights against them, but there she is, right now, working inside of the system. And... she is practising her speech. And you open the door to her office, and... I think she immediately is like- is like-

--01;46;24--

AUSTIN [as Gale]: Did Achilles send you?

ALI [as Chris]: Um... yeah...

ALI: I think that... so Heard knows that I got the... the tape- no, no, he knows that I got the keys and the piece of paper? And I think that Chris-

AUSTIN: He knew that you were meeting this Achilles guy, but you did not report that you had the tape, right?

ALI: No, no no no, no no- and I think that Chris specifically... hands the, um, the paper is folded in half, and she hands all three to Gale, but in a way that's like...

AUSTIN: Stealthy?

ALI: Yeah! And like... [laughing] you have this tape now. I think there's probably a note inside that's like 'Just nod and smile'

ALI [as Chris]: Oh! He told me to give you this...

AUSTIN: This is eleven- this is static, rather- I'm putting static up to eleven at this moment.

ALI: [laughs] Okay

AUSTIN: And- ah- which I'll get to - she just nods and smiles. And says-

AUSTIN [as Gale]: Thank you, I hope that Achilles is doing well? He's always been a great... ally to the arts, you know. Do you all need seats? For the festival?

JACK [as Florence]: Oh! Uh...

JACK: And Florence just like, looks out at the people holding the umbrellas.

KEITH: Wait! Hold on, I'm sorry- I'm confused, where- what's- Where am I?

AUSTIN: You're there

KEITH: I'm there? Oh!

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah yeah yeah.

KEITH: Sorry, I totally missed where we are, back together.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. You're all there, you got back together at the festival. 100%. Yeah.

KEITH: Oh! Okay, well I need to try and stop the tape from being handed over.

AUSTIN: First, you need to see if it was- okay, give me an- these are two Instinct rolls, then. Against each other.

ALI: Yeah

AUSTIN: Okay, so static is actually going to go up to thirteen, then.

KEITH: Yeah

[Jack laughs]

ALI: [giggles] I mean, I didn't tell you that I have it, and- [trails off, laughing]

AUSTIN: No, the Instinct rolls is whether you're able to stealthily slide it.

ALI: Okay

AUSTIN: That's the... yeah.

ALI: Should I roll?

AUSTIN: It is Instinct for both of you, you can- whoever, whatever y'all are at- so Heard is at- is just past- are you, are you both past?

KEITH: We're both past

AUSTIN: You're both past- okay, so it's Instinct 3 versus Instinct 4...

[Keith whistles in background]

JANINE: Can I roll to aid? Or- or-

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Let's see the rolls first.

JANINE: Or- or- our hashed-out aid.

AUSTIN: We- we can, but you don't have to do it right away.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Also, Ryder has- has Intuition, which absolutely helps here, if she wants to tap that.

KEITH: Nine

ALI: [crosstalk, muttering] Alright

KEITH: Nine.

[Ali laughs suddenly]

AUSTIN: Alright, gimme that- well, spend that Intuition

ALI: [crosstalk] Can I spend mine to- yeah. To bring that to a ten.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Make sure you- yeah. Make sure you both add the respective things- I mean you have to actually, sorry, Ali, you actually have to roll- roll 1d6.

ALI: Oh, do I?

AUSTIN: You'll succeed but it adds to your heart rate.

ALI: Oh, I thought if I spend a point, and it's a thing that I have, then it's just...

AUSTIN: Ah, talent... the talent gives you 1d6 if it's inside the realm of the talent, that you can add on after the roll. So. That's a five- that's why it's important- right? It's like, oh shit, you actually just increased by... [trails off]

KEITH: [crosstalk] So, after that, let's add these numbers... [trails off]

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] So... [stops]

KEITH: Not, we're rolling again?

AUSTIN: [sniggers] Alright, let me- let me explain again how this works. So, you're up to- Chris-

KEITH: [crosstalk] 68- it's on 168, for me.

AUSTIN: Alright, so Robber's up to 168, out of... 190?

KEITH: 190

AUSTIN: Chris is up to 177 out of 184... Again, this isn't death when you hit that-

JACK: [crosstalk, exhale] Oh my God

AUSTIN: [continuing] but it makes everything after that do Risky, after that fact. So, at this point-

ALI: Okay

AUSTIN: [continuing] what Heard is doing is, I'm going to play chicken here? I'm going to push this further? If you agree, static continues to go up... so, in other words - Keith is saying 'I want this to come out a different way', or 'I think Heard wants this to come out a different way', is challenging you. If you say 'No, fine, you win', then the challenge ends. If you say, 'Fuck that, I wanna win', then... you're both gonna roll again, and your stress is going to continue to go up, and static will go up by two. Maggie... wants to help here, and we need to figure out how the fuck *that's* supposed to work. [Jack, Ali laugh] In contested rolls... I think it is the same as before, as we said before- completely by my gut, there is no rule in the book we can look to help this? So... I think Maggie, you can step in to help here, but- if Chris fails, but I worry if this is just a race to the bottom, right? Or the top... of stress, or static. Which is fine? I'll say... this could all could blow up in a fun way, and I am fine with that... but I don't know if there is a rule, for like- that's it, cut this conflict off, outside of social agreement, do you know what I mean? Like... there is no way to be like- I've won this so well that the other opposing agent decides to back down. There's definitely- definitely a weird filibuster angle here. So, let's start with where we're at, which is - Heard has said 'I'm challenging again'. Ryder?

01:51:30 - 01:55:55

ALI: What happens if we reach maximum?

AUSTIN: Everything you do will become Risky.

ALI: Okay

AUSTIN: [continued] Which means a failure- not everything, Force and Instinct rolls will become Risky, which means a failure will reduce your Force or your Instinct. At zero... bad. [Ali laughs] Those hitting zero, is basically your HP hitting zero, so to speak.

ALI: Okay

AUSTIN: They will take you out of the game

KEITH: [crosstalk] One of them- one of them hitting zero.

AUSTIN: Either one- either one of them. Access, also, but Access- I think drops a different way, I don't- remember.

ALI: Um.... I'm definitely rolling it.

AUSTIN: Alright! Both you of roll! [beat] Was that you- just there?

ALI: That was me, yeah.

AUSTIN: Damn!

ALI/KEITH: Fifteen.

AUSTIN: So again, Chris is... is stealthier than Heard is. I don't know of a fun way to do this camera work, it's just- it's just close-ups on Heard trying to piece together if something is happening, I guess? Chris, playing it as smooth as fucking silk- because it is smooth. Increase your maximums- if you've hit your maximum it just maxes out at 184, it does not go over.

ALI: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: [muttering] I don't- I don't- [trails off]

JACK: [crosstalk] It's like the realisation at the end of the Usual Suspects, where it's really tight with no realisations? [AUSTIN: Yes] Like a tight close up on... Heard's face, and we can just hear Ryder talking in the background of the scene.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Yeah.

JANINE: They're both at their maximum now, right?

AUSTIN: Right, you- [trails off]

KEITH: [crosstalk] I'm- I'm below my maximum, still.

AUSTIN: Are you?

KEITH: My current is 183, my maximum is 190.

AUSTIN: Wait- was that 183 *including* what you just rolled?

KEITH: I just added the fifteen to it, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. So that means that- so again, where are we at? Are we good?

JACK: [whining] Ohhhhhh

KEITH: Wait- but who won? No-one won that one yet?

ALI: I won

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah- yeah, Ali got that one.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Oh! You got that eight- I thought I rolled first, okay.

AUSTIN: No- Ali rolled an eighteen.

KEITH: Okay, so- this is the mission? The mission is get this tape, and return it?

AUSTIN: Yes

KEITH: Get this tape and play it at the festival...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] No, no- yeah, she is going off of the thing here, but you haven't noticed that, that roll is about you noticing it, right?

KEITH: Okay

AUSTIN: So you can continue as a- I'm- I'm gonna abstract this out, because it's an important thing- I wanna explain what the abstraction that's happening here is. [beat] I think that both in the fiction, what we have is an- an appropriate moment where Heard does not trust that his agents are... being truthful-

KEITH: Right

AUSTIN: [continuing] There is good reason to believe this. They have gone off to meet someone who Gale Green clearly knows, who- Chris has known- or that Agent Ryder has known from before- something- and has not told you what happened there- [KEITH: Yeah] Ali was very clear, that that was not- there was no 'oh, and then this happened'-

KEITH: Okay

AUSTIN: At a metafictional level, we as co-authors can decide that something is happening here, right? Which is- we are collaborating on this story, and we can decide if Heard- if Ryder gets one over on Heard or not.

KEITH: Okay

AUSTIN: What do we, as writers, want to happen here?

KEITH: At this point, Ryder does.

AUSTIN: Okay, so we eject from the conflict because we think it is more interesting as a group of storytellers that Heard *really does* check here, feels bad about it- I think that's fair, you're both really stressed about this! That this is... there is a- a heist is happening, you've just- the heist has just happened in front of you, and you feel it in your fucking gut that a heist is happening, but you can't see it-

KEITH: [crosstalk] See it- yeah

AUSTIN: [continuing] happening, and you- you are a company man, to some degree, and you're not going to accuse someone of it if you can't see it. So, as a- as a player, we have to play this as Heard doesn't know this happened yet.

KEITH: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Um... there may be a moment in the near future where that is not clear. We also hit fifteen static [Ali laughs], which is a fun jump to have. [beat] Can I just narrate out the conclusion of this recording?

ALI: Sure!

JACK: [laughs] Yeah, go ahead.

AUSTIN: Or does anyone have things to do?

KEITH/JACK: No

AUSTIN: Before we see the festival happen?

KEITH: So- is- is it the end of the recording or the end of Lacuna?

AUSTIN: End of the record- I think it's just the end of the recording, we may need one more session unless people- we stay late, it is *very* late for Jack right now.

KEITH: It is very late, yeah.

JACK: Yeah, no, I cannot like- I cannot keep going

KEITH: [crosstalk] Yeah, it kind of seems like we're close to the end, but we're never close to the end.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] We're kind of close to the end, but we're not close to the end.

KEITH: Yeah

AUSTIN: We- we have one more session in this. I would rather set the stage as best I can for the next thing, because the next thing is going to be like...

KEITH: Crazy? [sniggers]

AUSTIN: You'll see. [Jack, Ali laugh] Okay, so, so...

01:55:55 - End

AUSTIN: She says-

AUSTIN [as Gale]: I have some great seats for you if you go to there-

AUSTIN: She leads you- and remember, this is converted church, right? And she leads you up to the second floor of the church, and there is a balcony- on the outside, the church that has its own- they've put up a- not a the ceiling but there's a temporary- a temporary roof, basically. That people here can sit on the balcony, and see the screen all without having the hail hit their heads. [beat] And she sets you up in some nice chairs- they're like chairs from the church, they're like old Spanish colonial chairs [chuckles]. They look really rare... and valuable but here they are, and you're sitting on them... and the festival begins.

And... it's a couple of other films, she goes out and gives us great speech about power of film and the power of cinema- this emerging art form which some people go- [gasps]- like the idea of an emerging art form is terrifying for them, right? She absolutely says 'It's not just newsreels anymore' in the tone of someone saying 'Video games aren't just Pac-Man anymore' - it's not just newsreels, or war films anymore...

And, then she shows her own films- really quick thing, I just want to note - We also absolutely see a photo of- of Waxwing on the desk- of her partner from Bluff City, like the two of them together happy on her desk- she absolutely keeps a photo of the two of them there- it's an important note...

Anyway, she- but you know, she shows other filmmakers from the city here, and many of them are just weird movies, for you even from Bluff City, unless you happen to be a filmmaking buff there, or just like- here's thirty minutes of traffic- of just, the traffic happening... one of them was film of the parade, today- and this is the quickest we can imagine turning around this film- we're using all sorts of new techniques to turn this around very quickly, you know. There's- there is

stuff where- what you would think of 90s exploitation films, where there are like, queer themes that are like not well explored-I would say it was problematic in a lot of ways...

But, it's people struggling to make films about queerness, or about race, as best they can- sometimes it's ham-fisted, and sometimes it's- it's very broad, but you know- you can tell that, like all this- this is a film that is about, you know- this is a film for women to watch - to see women's bodies in a way that is sexualized, without it being for a male view, right? or a masculine viewer.

This- this is- a movie in which the skin tones of the characters of colour are well-developed, and are well lit, and are beautiful to see on the screen. Oh, this is- this is a film about the sexuality of- of, you know- of men, and- and is actually about it, and you know these films- this isn't, like just pornographic work - although I suspect a lot of these people have also done pornographic filmmaking, in this city... and I suspect that, like, that does well for them because fucking, the Cultural Trust would not like that at all, and people do.

And so there's a lot of experimental stuff happening here, and finally at the end, Gale Green comes up and says-

--01;59;34--

AUSTIN [as Gale]: I am- ah- pleased to say that we have one more film today, and it is- it is going to be a doozy, folks. We have a- the last film by the great Blake Blossom. We knew him... too shortly, for the talent he offered us, the love, the... insight into filmmaking as a craft. And I'm pleased to say that here in the audience is one of his... one of his collaborators...

AUSTIN: And she like, points up towards you all? And, you see that- in the back corner, is Hector Hu, sitting in a different chair.

JACK: [inhales sharply]

--02;00;25--

AUSTIN: [continues] Wearing a pair of sunglasses, and a priest's collar, and black pants and a black shirt. Round, small sunglasses- you know, he's- he's Asian, he's Chinese, and... latino, and black. I've always imagined him kind of like- as Toro Y Moi- Chaz- Toro Y Moi is a band, is a musician I really like- and he is Filipino and black. Hector, I've always imagined as an aged-up version of him, he could play him in the movie in twenty years, or whatever. And is just like, sitting there. And she says-

AUSTIN [as Gale]: And I'd like to give him the honour of st- you know, I'd like to give him the honour.

--02;01;13--

AUSTIN: And he like, hits the button on the projector. And... it is, the Blossom tape. It is a... a film- it is immediately entrancing. You are standing at the edge of the thicket, the wetlands that go off into the desert proper. And there is- there is a tunnel. And it is not... it is not attached to a mountain, the road just descends... into the ground out between the wetlands and the emerging desert, further into the east- basically. And the tunnel- the camera slowly walks into the tunnel, and then begins to pick up speed- and there's some lighting in the tunnel, and then there's, you

know- more and more distance put between, behind and forward- and you can't see anything, at a certain point, it just goes completely dark.

And at this moment- up on- up on the balcony where the projector is, you can hear- one of you looks back and sees the film- it looks like bugs moving around a projection screen. It's like you can see the hard, chitinous shells- it sounds like bugs moving through it, and it sounds like it on the projection screen too- and you can feel people getting tense, and scared, and it pushes further and further into the dark, and every now and again there's a flicker of light and a movement of an object in the- in the dark, and then finally there is light at the end of the tunnel. The process of going through it takes twelve minutes, it's long- and at a certain point, you realise you're inside of a car, and the car is making strange, bug-like noises too? And finally you punch out at the end of the tunnel and it is-

Footage of somewhere else. And... for everyone in the seats, everyone watching- it is somewhere beautiful, and different, and colourful- and there is a boombox playing, there is... *the world can be like that?* they think... there are people on the boardwalk laughing and smiling, and you know, cursing at each other? It is like, found footage style, of people at the beach, at a boardwalk with casinos, and- there are, you know, people laughing, and kids flirting, you know- and old parents who have come in from out of town to spend their money on vacation, at the slot machines - there are the sounds of songs which these people have never heard before? And it's grimy in this really intriguing way.

And for you all, you know immediately that this is not Bluff City. Sure, it's bright and colourful, but you can tell when the cop looking at the couple holding hands and their hands break, because the cop doesn't approve of relationships like theirs, that it's not Bluff City. You can tell, based on the way that the trash is piling up on the corners- by the way the guy slumps on the side of the casino and no-one comes to help him- you can tell, by the sound of the casinos raking in money... this is not Bluff City. This is a third place. And... the camera pans over and reveals, on the screen is Hector Hu. Who says-

--02;04;56--

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Alright! [claps] I'm gonna give you the tour of a- a wild place, it's called- Bluffington.

AUSTIN: And he just like, starts showing you around? And he says-

AUSTIN [as Hector]: This is it! This is the real world...

AUSTIN: And, you know- in the newspapers the next day, people are gonna talk about this like it's a weird science fiction movie, right? And it will have a long term effect, for sure. People will think about what *could be* instead of what simply *is*. But for those of you who are on the edge- who are already in the Concern- who already know that there are two worlds- whether you believe it or not, the doubt sets it- it has to. This is something that the Concern would not want anyone to know. That there is third place- a place where the rules are more material, make more sense, where time is linear and space is set. There cannot be a Bluffington or a Bluffington Beach or whatever the fuck this place is. There can be Bluff City and there can be Blough City, those things make sense. One of them is clean and expressive and exciting! And one of them is restrictive and terrible... that makes sense. There cannot be a third place, that is somehow more real.

So it is still your job to get that tape and destroy it, or somehow bring it home.

--02;06;15--

[Wind foley of outro plays - [notes on the track here](#). [Further notes in the Patreon description](#)]