

Bluff City 45: Give Way to Open Sky Pt. 1

Transcriber: anachilles#0191

0:00:01.0

[Highway wind, rain]

[Car door closes]

[Sounds of someone walking outside, opening a post box and placing something inside]

[Person returns to the car, shuts the door, puts car in reverse]

[A clear of the throat]

[A phone number is dialed and the phone rings]

Austin: It's me again. Hector. I promise I won't hang up this time.

[[Give Way to Open Sky](#) by Jack de Quidt begins]

Austin: I promise.

I had to... I had to put something in the mail, I'm sorry, but I had to, something paper, I do not trust the hands... but I trust the hands more than the air. The waves, radio and ocean and sign and wind and electromagnetic, they, they can't — they've been ripped away from us, they used to be ours, or at least we used to know how to ride them, but they're not free anymore, they ain't loose, they're tight, they bit down on the line, like in Job 41, "Can you pull in Leviathan with a hook, or tie his tongue down with rope, or—"

[hesitating] Nothing. It's nothing. It's — we were wrong about what Leviathan is. We thought it was aberrant, we thought it was a creature, or a clever devil, or a conspiracy. We knew it was aligned with the tall city, but we did not know how high Bluff's towers would reach.

I'm going. I need to — I can feel it. It wants me to be another me, but I'm going. Don't come after me. Heard is already there, he — we made a covenant. I have to. I, I have to follow him. But I'm having thoughts. I drive between the hills and their shadows are doors to other mes I've already been, but not yet.

Electrical wires give way to open sky, and, is there a difference... between me and I — the thread on the wall, I could follow it, I could open other people's eyes, there's more than one mystery. I could put this one —

[music is interrupted by static, stalls into a single repeated chord]

Austin: Shh. Shh. Wait, listen. Do you hear it?

[fizzes of static]

Austin: “Can you pet him like a bird? Or put him on a leash, for your maidens?”¹

[music resumes loudly]

Austin: Bluff City is Leviathan, and I cannot keep silent about its limbs anymore, “its power and its graceful form. Who can strip off its outer coat? Who can open its jaws? Its rows of scales are its pride. One scale so near to another that no air can pass between them. Its snorts flash with light. Its eyes like the rays of dawn. Smoke billows from its nostrils, as from a boiling pot over burning reeds.”

[music begins to fade]

Austin: [softly] “Nothing on earth is its equal: a creature devoid of fear, it looks down on all the haughty. It is the king over all the proud.”

[music ends]

Austin: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical world-building, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. I am your host, Austin Walker, and joining me today, Ali Acampora.

Ali: Uh, hi.

Austin: Hi. Where can people find you, Ali?

¹ Hector is quoting from Job 41 again.

Ali: Oh, I — [chuckling]

Dre: [laughing]

Ali: I'm over at @ali_west on Twitter.

Austin: Ah, okay. Andrew Lee Swan.

Dre: Hey, you can find me on Twitter at @swandre3000. You can also find me on our Twitch channel, Twitch.tv/friendsatthetable, every Monday night, playing robot games.

Austin: Fucking Mech Mondays is back, babyyy! Let's go.

Ali: [giggling]

Austin: Also joining us, Jack de Quidt.

Jack: Hello. You can find me on Twitter at @notquitereal, or on Cohost at @JDQ. You can also buy any of the music featured on the show, including the theme of this very episode that you're listening to —

Austin: Oh.

Jack: At notquitereal.bandcamp.com. Did you like the music? I don't fucking know what it is, at this point.

Austin: I have some ideas. I'll message you after this. I have some, I have some big ideas. I have some — not big ideas as in, it's a, it's a big thing that's going to take you a ton of time. I mean, it is, because it's work, you know. It's hard to compose songs. But I have, like — it's not like a conceptually big idea, do you know what I mean? I just have a sonic direction to point you in.

Jack: Yes. [coughs]

Austin: Are you okay?

Jack: I saw an interview — yes. I, I saw an interview with, uh, Rian Johnson —

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm.

Jack: About making the soundtrack for Looper. His composer is like, his cousin. They're, they're very close. They've worked together on basically everything. Uh, he also worked on, you know, Knives Out. And they were talking about, whenever they sit down, they, they start with these conceptually big ideas —

Austin: Right.

Jack: That they almost immediately throw out for the sake of, like — it's hard to make a movie and make music. And the example that he gave for Looper was, “can you write a film soundtrack that's all one chord?” Uh, and it's like —

Austin: [chuckling]

Jack: I want to hear that.

Austin: That's very fun. That's a very fun assignment. Uh, I don't have to make music, so I can just say that it's very fun, instead of saying, uh, that's a nightmare. [chuckling] Instead of being —

Jack: I think it's a fun nightmare.

Austin: Yeah, okay. That's good. Yeah. Today, we are continuing? Our game of Dream Askew, Dream Apart, uh, by Avery Alder and Benjamin Rosenbaum. We're really focused in on Dream Askew, but I always want to, you know — they came together in a book, I have that book over on my shelf, I have a PDF of it in front of me, uh, and it's, you know, it's a group project, in a real way, and I always want to make sure to include both folks, even though we're really leaning into the Dream Askew, Queer Strife amid the collapse, I almost said apocalypse, but that's not what the subtitle is, by Avery. Uh, uh, and I say continuing with a question mark at the end, because, I —

Jack: Mmm...

0:06:13.6

Austin: You know what? I'm going to actually check properly, here.

Dre: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Ali: [snorts]

Austin: Let's open our drive up, go on the Patreon folders — I know when the mp3 hit the feeds, because I was listening to it today, but I want to see [chuckling] start scrolling. Is it even in this folder anymore, you know? I guess, oh, I guess I don't know what month it would be from.

Ali: You can check the YouTube. Check the YouTube of when it aired.

Austin: Oh, check the YouTube of when it aired, good call.

Dre: Oh, wow.

Ali: Yeah, mm-hm. Hello.

Austin: This is good. I think I know when, but let me just double-check.

Ali: [chuckling]

Austin: Let me click on, what do I click on here? I click on My Channel, I love that. I click on Live, uh, and then I start scrolling. No, these are all, these are, I need the ones, I need Manage Videos. This is great audio.

Ali: [laughing]

Austin: This is great podcasting right here. And then I click on Lives. And then I start scrolling. And then I click on the [chuckling] next page, because it's not on this first page.

Ali: Mm-hm.

Austin: And then I scroll all the way down and I click on the next page, because it's not going to be — I'm going to keep doing this, because it's going to keep going. Uh, here we go, 2018, definitely then. All right. I think... I think, oh my god. [chuckles] Is it earlier than I, even I thought it was?

Ali: [snorts]

Austin: Could it...

Ali: [laughing]

Austin: When do you, when do you think it is?

Dre: Mmm. Okay, really quick — how long have we been doing podcast?

Austin: I found it. I found it. I found it. I found it. I found it. I mean, we've been doing [chuckling] we've been doing this podcast since 2014, Dre.

Dre: Okay. Okay.

Austin: 8 and a half years, basically. I found it.

Ali: Mm-hm.

Austin: It is... finding this is wrong. Is this right? This must be right, if it's on the thing, right?

Ali: [wheezes] I don't think YouTube could like, lie about it.

Austin: Yeah, I guess you're right. Yes, okay. Uh... June? Of 2018.

Ali: Sure, yeah.

Jack: Sure.

Austin: 4, almost 5 years.

Ali: [chuckling]

Austin: 4, almost 5 years.

Jack: This has —

Ali: Uh-huh.

Jack: This has been sort of —

Austin: I guess we should explain what that means. Because there are people, 5 years of people, who have joined us after this, and some of them may not have gone through all of the Live at the Tables. We started playing this game 5 years ago.

Ali: [cackling]

Austin: We sat down and made characters, we started making decisions about our enclave, our, our sick, cool, queer enclave, that takes place on a —

Dre: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Austin: Inside of, at the time, Bluff City. Uh, we did a scene. We had a single scene.

Ali: Mm-hm.

Austin: Ali, I said, I said something like, "Ali, could we do a scene where I break up with you?"
And do you remember what your response was?

Ali: Any time?

Austin: It literally was — any time. It was, it was —

Ali: [giggling]

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: It was enthusiastic, about the, the promise of doing a breakup scene.

Ali: Mm-hm.

Austin: Which then we did, and then, uh, my dinner arrived, and we had to stop.

Ali: Mmm, mm-hm.

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: Uh... and that was, and then, do you remember what I said at the very end?

Ali: [chuckling] No.

Jack: Did you say something like, "we're going to try and come back to this tomorrow?"

Austin: I didn't say tomorrow, but I said, "we've got to get back to this very soon."

Dre: Mm-hm.

Jack: Right.

Austin: I said, "we gotta come back to this, like, we gotta get back to this super quick."

Jack: And then we entered deep time.

Ali: [laughing]

Dre: Yeah. Mm-hm.

Jack: This has been kind of...

Austin: Uh, in many different ways, right? Right.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Jack, do you, do you remember what time it was when we finished the recording, for you?

Jack: Probably between 3:30 and 4 o'clock in the morning.

Austin: In fact, you said, "oh, it's kind of early, we're ending early, it's only 3AM." Because at the time —

Jack: Whoa! Oh god, Jack...

Austin: You lived in, the United Kingdom.

Ali: Uh...

Jack: I did!

Dre: I forgot about those —

Jack: Yes.

Dre: Dark, literal dark times for Jack.

Everyone: [laughing]

Jack: Ugh. I, no, and — now it is, uh, 5:13, and I'm looking out of the windows —

Austin: PM!

Jack: And, you know —

Dre: PM.

Jack: Yeah, 5:15 PM.

Ali: [laughing]

Jack: Looking out of the window at bamboo.

Dre: Now I'm in the dark time, compared to Jack.

Jack: In Los Angeles.

Dre: We all are, really.

Austin: Yeah, all three of us —

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Now live in the dark. Yeah, exactly, compared to Jack.

Jack: Right. We've sort of swapped.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: And we've talked about coming back to this. So, we talked about coming back to this before we, we even talked about coming back to it as part of Bluff City proper, am I right? I think we had been like —

Austin: I...

Jack: "Oh, we should get back to that game." And then that rapidly turning into, "we should get back to that game as part of Bluff City."

Austin: Yes. And very rapidly —

Jack: And then as Bluff City season 2 kind of developed, we were like, "oh, we know, we know when it's going to fall."

Austin: Yes.

Jack: We just need to, we just need to get there.

Austin: Yeah, I mean, we've talked about this before, I think, and, and, maybe it's never, it's one of those things I bet other people forget because it's not a big deal. The games in Bluff City season 2 have gone back and forth in time, starting from a sort of middle point in the 1970s. Also, I'm saying season 2, but again, like — season, season 2 of Bluff City has now run for years, right?

Ali: [chuckling]

Austin: Season 1 ended very cleanly at Messy — Messy Business, our Lacuna game. You know, that still took many, that took a lot of time, but it took way less time to come out than what season 2 is. Season 2 started with Hard Luck, uh, which was the — what did we —

Jack: [chuckling] Horse racing.

Austin: Was that Fiasco Horse Racing, right.

Jack: Oh yeah.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Uh, and that took place sort of in the 70s. Then we went forward in time to Moving Pictures, which took place, I want so say, modern, that was the one with the sort of like, thriller, horror, weird — the introduction of the tunnel project. I mean, it kind of gets teased in Hard Luck. Uh, but that takes place like, basically modern Atlantic City.

0:11:47.5 Uh, then we go back in time to the 1920s with extracurricular, where we played, uh, Capes? No, what's that, I forget what it's called. Ah, fuck, I forget what it's called. Anyway, you know, we did like, time travel back in time, Blough [Blue] City, like —

Ali: It was Capers, right?

Austin: It was Capers, that's what it was called. Capers, yes, thank you. Uh, uh, which, and that was a long one. And then, and then — and I think somewhere in there [chuckling] is when Bluff started really slowing, as, uh, the world started really slowing, uh, because of Covid, right? We just in general, everything got derailed. Uh, yeah, like that hits in 2020, and so, it instantly just stops, so everything slows down. Then we did To Be Young Near the Shore, which is, uh, Tales from the Loop. Then we did — and is the future, right?

Ali: Mmm.

Austin: Uh, then we did America's Playground, which is even further back. You know, if Capers and Extracurricular were 1920s, America's Playground was back at like the turn of the century. And we did Engines on the Track, which is in the future. Uh, and there was a point at which I was like, "well, we could do another game set in like the late 1800s," but at that point I kind of felt like, you know, we did it. We did the thing. Let's get to the next, you know, big show we want to do for the Patreon. Uh, and so, we — for instance, I want to wrap up Bluff City season 2, and I knew it would be this to wrap it up, from the beginning, we started it, I knew we were eventually going to come back to Dream Askew, to tie the knot on the season, because I want to get to the next produced show, which is going to be Realis, which we teased back in July of last year for the National Abortion Fund, as a side project. I'd been working on, and we're going to do like a playtest mini-season of that, as the next Patreon campaign.

0:13:33.5 So, Jack, yes. For a long time, I knew we would come back to this. I just also, uh, uh, we just also just didn't get there, right? It was the last thing on the list, and so, it went from being like, a little delayed, to like, 5 years later. And what a weird one to choose for 5 years later, given so much about it?

Jack: It's kind of perfect.

Austin: Yeah, do you want to talk about, about why that is, while I continue to work on these sheets, and moving them over to a new, better page? Anyway, continue.

Jack: So... I don't know that we can exactly say, exactly say when this game is set, other than that it is set pretty remotely from where we have been, and it's not set in the 1800s.

Austin: We know it's in the future —

Jack: Uh, yes.

Austin: Because we know it's after, it's after Gravity Rip.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: In fact.

Jack: But I just wanted to make clear that we weren't doing the bouncing, we weren't bouncing back again. In fact, we were diving further —

Austin: Right, we've now finished that. The point — sorry, yeah, the point was originally to go back into the 1800s, and then go the furthest forward we could with Dream Askew, I derailed my own brain when I was thinking about this and forgot to finish that, that thought. So, yes. We stopped back and forth now and are putting the closer on it with Dream Askew, which take places after Gravity Rip —

Jack: In the distant future.

Austin: Uh, but maybe not that far after Gravity Rip, because of some of the themes of Dream Askew, right?

Jack: Yeah. Dream Askew is a game about living in and working through ideas of queer commune and community, following a collapse of some kind. Many things have been ruined, uh, material, and, and immaterial. And many things remain intact, material and immaterial. When we talked about it 5 years ago, we talked about, you know, great ruined skyscrapers on the horizon, that you could still hear the pounding bass of, uh, like clubs inside and parties. Uh, community gardens, uh, broken-down piers, and people who live in them.

0:15:40.9 Uh, one or two cell phones that are able to work. Uh, and this game uses —

Austin: Uh, I don't even know if they were cell phones. I think that they are physical, like, I think that they were — they're phones with hard lines.

Jack: My character has a cell phone that works, and we talked about it.

Austin: Oh, okay. I thought that, I thought the thing was that there were —

Jack: Uh...

Austin: That there were like are particular pay phones that still worked, and you had, like there were like three of them, but maybe I —

Jack: Oh, that you could dial in.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Wait, no, you might be right. Let me — no, my character has a phone that's still got service.

Austin: Okay. Okay.

Jack: We can talk about this as we go. So, here's the thing. This game uses the, the Belonging Outside Belong system, which has this very loose, uh, gestural, dreamlike feel to it. So we couldn't have accidentally picked a better game —

Austin: [chuckles] Uh-huh.

Jack: To take a 5-year break —

Austin: Oof.

Jack: [chuckles] With. We are dealing with a combination of having reread the book, the notes that we have, our memories of the characters and the place, and like, I listened to the recording, but I listened to the recording about a month and a half ago, which is —

Austin: When we first said we were going to finally do this one.

Jack: Yeah. Slightly further-off than I like to listen to a recording for prep, you know. I like to listen to it the night before, and then sit down and be good. And as we were coming up to today's recording, I thought, "should I relisten to it?" But I was like, "nah, I think I've got —" [chuckles] "I think I've got what I need."

Ali: [giggles]

Austin: [chuckles] Do you feel now that you have what you need?

Jack: Do I feel now that I have what I needed?

Austin: Here.

Jack: Is this a lyric?

Dre: Is this — oh yeah.

Austin: I was going to say, that's a heavy question.

Dre: Uh-huh.

Austin: [chuckles] Do you feel like —

Jack: Should we talk —

Austin: Go ahead, what were you going to say?

Jack: Should we talk about what the hell we're going to do? Are we going to, are we going to —

Austin: I don't fucking know.

Jack: Pick up where we left off, or — put it this way.

Austin: What are our options, Jack?

Jack: There are going to be — okay.

Austin: Talk to me about, about what we could do.

Jack: So, something we could do is, we could say [chuckling] I think this would be the most chaotic option, I don't advocate for it. We say, everything that we did 5 years ago, is gone. We are going to begin the game, again, from scratch.

Austin: Anew, yeah.

Jack: This would be... [laughing] Chaotic and time-consuming.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: The second option, which is maybe just as chaotic, is we go, "we're going to pick it up exactly where we left off, and we're going to try, with punishing exactitude —"

Austin: [wheezes]

Jack: To ensure that we tell the story canonically, to our previous recording.

Dre: That is sounds more chaotic. [laughing]

Ali: Mm-hm.

Jack: Yeah. What I suspect we're going to end up doing is some sort of combination of the two. My gut says, and I don't know what y'all have thought, we are going to talk through our characters, making, uh, uh, changes, and overwriting bits, as a result of loss of memory, or as a result of changing priorities, and then [chuckling] we are going to pick up the game in what Avery calls, ugh, loose dreaming?

Austin: Uh, it is called —

Jack: What is that —

Austin: What is it actually called? It is called... it's not loose dreaming, uh...

Jack: It's got a much better name.

Austin: It's not free dreaming, it is...

Jack: It's not deep dreaming. Because that's what AI does, or used to.

Austin: Wow, yeah, we used to call that, that, huh? Wild. Uh, god, what is it actually called, it's going to kill me.

Jack: It's something to do with dreaming, right?

Austin: No, it's 100 percent something to do with dreaming. Uh, is it before Follow Your Curiosity? It has to be in here somewhere. It — oh, idle dreaming, idle dreaming.

Dre: Mmm.

Ali: Oh yeah.

Austin: Idle dreaming, yeah.

Jack: Uh, how do y'all feel about how, how we want to approach this?

Austin: Can I underline one other thing about the setting that is, should help us kind of think through and accept some of the variance between what there was and what there is?

Jack: Mmm.

Austin: Which is, when we first played this, we thought we were playing in Bluff City. We have come to find out that we never were. [chuckling]

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: We have come to find out that we are in Atlantic City, the city that has been ruined by the Tricity Tunnel Project, that has turned into, uh, you know, the extremes between, between, uh, uh, poverty and wealth, uh, have been pushed out even further. We saw some of this in the Gravity Rip game. We saw some of this in the Tales from the Loop game. Uh, uh, the, the story, we heard some of this in the background of the intro to Gravity Rip, as I was reading a fake or a fictionalized Wikipedia article about future Atlantic City, though some of it was probably very hard to hear, but I wrote up a whole bunch about what happened in Atlantic City between now and the, and like 2070s, or whatever. Uh, uh, things got bad. Things continue to get bad there. Uh, uh, and, you know, I think part of the thing that's so interesting to me, uh, about coming back here is, you know, in that intro, there's, there are moments when it's clear that my character, who I was voicing in that intro, uh, uh, my character, the Augur, Providence, uh, is steeped in all three of the settings somehow, is existing in some crossover situation. Uh, and I think our Dream Askew game, in some real way, has been ripped from Bluff City, or ousted from Bluff City and put here, because it's not a desirable thing, right?

0:21:24.0 Uh, the — part of what happens in the Tricity Tunnel Project, part of what would have been slowly discovered over the course of season 2, in the background, I never really wanted it to be a — [chuckling] I never wanted to do like a big mystery season, “oh, what's going on? Like, people are investigating the Tricity Tunnel Project.” I wanted snapshots of various people existing while this was happening.

0:21:43.5 No one was going to like, derail it, that wasn't what the point of the season was. The point was to like, live around this vast, terrible, you know, collaboration between private and public forces that do not have the people's best interests in mind, or thinks they have the people's best interests in mind, but look at what the fallout is from that. And, and I, I genuinely think that like, when we started this game, it was going to take place in Bluff City, and then literally, metaphysically, it was sort of like, it and the, the inroads to it were ousted from Bluff City, uh, and put here in Atlantic City, where it's okay that people are living through the apocalypse. [chuckles] Uh, Bluff City can't allow that, right? And so I think that there's like, we should feel free to take what we want from this stuff, and ditch what we don't, and choose different things, and start fresh where we want to, uh, and, and keep the stuff that still speaks to us, partly because we should always do that anyway and that's just good play, but also because it literally fits what the theming of all of this has been, both from what Dream Askew is already doing, and then also what Bluff City Season 2 has been, at least partially about throughout the thing. I mean, Bluff City season 2 has also been about, like, children getting up to no good [laughing] you know? And about all sorts of other stuff that's very good and fun, and I'm glad we spent time doing that.

0:23:08.6 But here as we, as we put a button on it, to, to zero in on that big-picture thing of like, this big public works project that actually like, you know, goes through neighborhoods, and displaces people and displaces stories. Uh, you know, uh, thinking about the thing in, uh, Dre, your character in Tales from the Loop, uh, who was supposed to go to Bluff City, but your family wound up here in Atlantic City, and your father different get the — or was it your father who didn't get the doctors, or was it your mother?

Dre: Father.

Austin: Ronnie's, Ronnie's father, yeah, did not get the right medical treatment, because that story was ousted from Bluff City, you know? You were put here instead. And I think that that's like, you were redirected here. And I think that like, that is how you end up with a place where I'm looking at a map, and there are places that are called [chuckling] The Society Intact. Uh, it's

—

Ali: [chuckling]

Austin: It's, you have that as your ethos, right? Uh, so, so yeah. I think that we should feel free to throw some stuff out, and to keep some other stuff, and to think in the way that, that, you know, in line with the theming that I was just kind of gesturing at, you know?

Jack: Yeah. And, and — there will be people listening to it, and I am sometimes, I'm sometimes one of these people, who will go, “but, but should, does this mean I should listen to the first one?” Or, “but, which one of these things is true or accurate?”

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: And I think the answer here is, if you feel, if you feel like listening to the first one, go ahead. These are two mirrors facing each other, you know? Uh, like, we're not necessarily picking this up as a direct sequel, where you would have had to have listened to the first one. You will, uh, there was a, there's a podcast I listened to called 2.0, where they try and improve things that are fine.

Austin: [chuckles]

Jack: Uh, and they improved the experience of camping, once. They did camping 2.0. And then 2 years later, they forgot that they had made camping 2.0 —

Austin: Oh, that is incredible.

Dre: [gulps]

Jack: And made it again, and didn't realize this until both [laughing] episodes had been released.

Austin: Oh my god, did the fans go like —

Jack: And it's like —

Austin: “Wait a second, you did this one already.”

Jack: Wait a second! But it's a completely different episode. And it's really fun, because the stuff they talk about is like, like a mirror facing a mirror of the previous podcast.

Austin: Right.

Jack: And I think that that's kind of what's going on here, right? Which one of these is real? Well, this is the one that is in this season of Bluff City —

Austin: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Jack: And it's the one you're listening to now.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: But if you, if you want to go back and listen to the other one, it's available to you.

Austin: Love it. Uh, here's a thing. Currently, y'all are on the map called Dream Askew, right?
Uh, I'm —

Dre: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, I don't know how we see the name of the map.

Austin: Oh, really? Y'all can't — I guess that makes sense that you can't see that, I guess I have the GM view. I'm moving you over to Dream Askew New. [chuckles] uh...

Jack: Whoa.

Dre: Oh, Dream A... Skewnew.

Austin: Skewww. Or snew, sure.

Dre: Asnew.

Austin: Because, remember, we've played on this map [chuckling] for years now, across a bunch of different games.

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: What started as — let me take you to the, the true, very first version of this map. Does anybody remember the first version of this map? Dre, [unintelligible]

Jack: It's a triangle, right? It's just a big triangle?

Austin: It's way worse than that. Here's the Inspectres version of this map. Uh...

Dre: Show me the map. Show — wow!

Ali: Yes. Let's go! [laughing]

Jack: Wow. So, what we're looking at is. Um, there are three colors visible —

Ali: [laughing]

Dre: Uh, it's a cardioid microphone that has come to life.

Austin: [cracking up]

Jack: [laughing]

Dre: And is shooting lightning out of its chest.

Austin: That's kind of right, yeah.

Dre: Also it has a —

Jack: Austin has attempted to —

Dre: Sorry, go ahead, Jack.

Jack: Austin has attempted to, I think, color in the ocean.

Austin: Uh-huh!

Jack: Uh, [chuckling] with a teal pen, except that the pen was small and the ocean was big —

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: So we have a sort of Jackson Pollock-esque disaster on the right-hand side of — put it this way.

Austin: This is very kind.

Jack: If you are familiar with, uh, if you're familiar with the horse from the finale of Spring in Hieron —

Austin: [laughing]

Ali: [cackling]

Jack: That Austin drew.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: This is from the same art school of the Spring in Hieron horse.

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm. Exactly.

Jack: Oh! Someone has now drawn [laughing] an upsetting face.

Austin: Oh, is someone adding to it? I've, I've clicked away, and so I'm now missing...

Jack: Oh, Austin, you've got to get ready for a scare. Reader beware.

Austin: I have finish — oh, boy. I have to finish making this new chart, this old chart. Okay, let me click away. Let me go back, uh, let me click up here, let me lean closer to the microphone, what do we got here? You've drawn — ahhh! Yeah, I see it.

Dre: [laughing] Thank you. This is my art.

Austin: Yeah. The original cash for coats. Dre has turned the, the, you know, the island of, of Bluff City into a face, or has revealed a face that was already there, perhaps, and now made it go, "rawr!"

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: So... great. Anyway, that eventually became our Dream Askew map. Our original Dream Askew map.

Jack: Beautiful.

Austin: Beautiful, simple.

Jack: Looks fucking professional! [chuckling] In contrast.

Austin: I sketched over the shape of Atlantic City sort of, I added another little island, I added some other stuff, I like, gestured at there being a bigger bay than there maybe really is, and we worked on this. And we, we played with this sort of map across, that first Dream Askew, [chuckles], episode. We used it for our, uh, I want to say we used it in Catch the Devil? Is it actually here? Everybody click over on this, is this really here? Yeah. Scroll down, there it is again.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: And we started adding to it. Look, there's the train station, there's Bluff City studios, there's an abandoned luxury casino and a lighthouse. And so on and so forth. We ended up using this map again, with our Tales from the Loop game, uh, here, I think. I have so many things in, and this is on here. Is it actually on here?

Jack: Yeah.

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: It is, and more got added to it. Uh, and now it's been covered up by where it says [chuckling] robotics, for some reason.

Ali: [chuckling]

Austin: Uh, is that — oop, that's this drawing, let me move this. Oh my god, let me click things. There we go. Uh, and so on and so on. And so finally, now, what I've done is, I've taken this most modern version of the map, which includes things like the Upper Crust Casino, you may recall that, has reworked where like, the cove, uh, the, the uh, sort of pier is, where, uh, uh, some of the kids hung out during Tales from the Loop, their hideout, and the grove of trees, and the old, creepy boathouse that showed up there.

0:29:30.2 All of that stuff is now here on Dream Askew New [chuckles] The old high school where the kids went in, also in Tales from the Loop, and the middle school, and the airfield, all that shit, like remember the airfield where the, uh, where the Blake Blossom society — whatever they ended up, Blake Blossom, I forget what they ended up calling it. Like the Blossom Florists or something like that, was the front for the Hector Hu, uh, investigation firm?

Jack: Oh yeah.

Austin: Uh, that's still, that's over there. So this is that map. This is like the Bluff City season 2 map that's been basically updated. I've added more detail from our original, uh, uh, Dream Askew game, which again, could all change. And of course, I've added this hover racetrack, which is like, something out of, uh, F-Zero, out over the ocean, where it belongs, so —

Dre: [laughing] Where it belongs.

Austin: That's where it happened, right?

Dre: Sure.

Austin: Uh, I've also, I've also added, uh, rewritten, or rebrought over all your character sheets, along with the sheets from, uh, uh, the... or, or with, with, you know, both your character sheets and the setting sheets, which I guess we'll have to go over all that stuff, uh, and I've done my best to replicate everything that was already on there. I just realized I didn't write Ali's name in one place, let me write that. Ali, you are here.

Ali: Huh?

Austin: And then, and then we should be, and then we should be able to talk through a little bit about what this game is, and how we're going to play it, I guess, question mark, question mark. Because we still haven't really fully answered, how we're going to do this, though, huh? Or did we decide on —

Jack: No.

Austin: Like, let's go over what we have, and...

Ali: Yeah, let's, let's sort of go through, what, what, overview of what was said, and then be like —

Austin: Sure.

Ali: Let's, yeah.

Austin: That makes sense. Uh... do we want to start with our characters? Do we want to start with the enclave itself? Do we want to start with just like a high-level recitation of what Dream Askew is doing?

Jack: We should, we should play this as though we're playing the game [chuckling] you know?

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: Let's talk about what Dream Askew does —

Austin: Yes.

Jack: And then talk about the space, and then talk about our characters in that space.

Austin: I'm going to read from Dream Askew on page 46. It says: Dream Askew gives us ruined buildings and wet tarps, nervous faces in the campfire glow, strange new psychic powers, fierce, queer love, and turbulent skies above a fledgling community asking, "what do you do next?" Imagine that the collapse of civilization didn't happen everywhere at the same time. Instead, it's happening in waves. Every day, more people fall out of The Society Intact. We queers were always living in the margins of that society, finding solidarity, love, and meaning in the strangest of places. Apocalypse didn't come for us first, but it did come for us. Gangs roam the apocalyptic waste land, and scarcity is becoming the norm. The world is getting scarier, and just beyond our everyday perception, howling and hungry, there exists a psychic maelstrom. We banded together to form a queer enclave: a place to live, sleep, and hopefully, heal. More than ever before, each of us is responsible for the survival and fate of our community. What lies in the rubble? For this close-knit group of years, could it be utopia?

0:33:00.6 Uh, and there's a note here: Queer Strife Amid the Collapse — collaboratively generate an apocalyptic setting. Content warnings for violence, gangs, oppression, bigotry, and queer sexuality. For 3 to 6 players, across 3 to 4 hours. Avery, you're so optimistic. I'm going to make this game last more than 3 or 4 hours. We might not start playing. Who knows? I mean, we've already proven how [laughing] how good we are at kicking this one down the road, you know?

Dre: Uh-huh.

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: Uh, so that is the high-level of what this, of what this is. Uh, there's also a higher level in a sense, right? Which is, Jack, the... you kind of gestured at this before, you said this was a Belonging/ Outside Belonging game. It's also a No Dice, No Masters game. It has a format that you as listeners will have heard already from us. We played Orbital a few months ago, and that show up in the Road Palisade. Uh, one of my favorite games we, we did on the Road. Uh, and then, Ali and I, you, we just did For a More Civilized Age, we played Going Rogue, uh, which is a hack or an expansion of galactic, 2E. And all those are, Belonging/ Outside Belonging, and No Dice, No Masters games. Uh, you tend to find those two categories together. I imagine [chuckling] you could make a No Dice, No Masters game without it being a Belonging/ Outside Belong game, uh, because Belonging/ Outside Belonging is kind of more of a perspective, and an interest, and a, uh, a sort of exploratory direction for the work. And, uh, No Dice, No Masters is like, "hey, you have moves that give you tokens, and then you can spend those tokens to do different moves."

0:34:47.3 And I think that is still infused with some of that stuff. But you could theoretically make a game that is just like, not interested at all in queerness, or identity, or, you know, politics, or whatever, and still end up using a dice system. So I get why they are two separate things. Uh, so, I — we've done the bit here. Creating characters. We started by reading overview out loud. Then what we're supposed to do is randomly distribute 6 character roles between everybody, and we read those roles, and then, and then we pick one of them each. And then we go down the character sheet, and circle the things we want to, to circle, uh, uh, that are like, our desires, or our — no, sorry, desires is from a different thing. Things like our name, our look, our gender, our wardrobe styles, our — the things that we provide, et cetera.

0:35:41.8 Uh, uh, and we did all this already. So we do have a place to begin from. Do we want to review these for a second and see if we're happy with our choices, and then if we are, read them? Or do we want to start from the beginning, and also look at some of these, the classes we didn't choose to begin with?

Jack: Great question.

Dre: Mmm.

Austin: I am happy with my character, uh, uh, but I would absolutely and happily spend the time looking at other ones. Or letting folks look at others.

Jack: I am also happy with my character.

Austin: I would imagine so, Jack.

Dre: Uh, I am mostly happy with my character. I would like to make... like one tweak.

Austin: Go ahead and do it, you should be able to.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: Uh, maybe you, maybe you can't. If you can't, let me know and I'll delete some stuff, let you make, make your adjustments as you need.

Ali: Uh, yeah. I think I'm good sticking with the characters that I had.

Austin: Okay.

Ali: Uh, I wish that I could like, redo drawing these lines. [snorts]

Austin: Oh, you, you can. You can. I can delete those really quick and let you just redraw them.

Ali: Okay, okay. Thank you.

Austin: Uh, because, I mean, you can see that I literally did just redo them. That's why they're a different color than yours. Which ones do you want me to delete?

Ali: Oh, I just meant like, all of the lines, so I could make it look nicer. [chuckling] Which you don't have to do.

Austin: Oh.

Ali: That would be such a waste of time.

Austin: Wait, which lines, what?

Ali: Well, because, like — choose a look. It says friendly face.

Austin: Oh, I'm looking at the wrong character, I'm looking at the wrong, uh, —

Ali: Oh yeah, I'm, I'm the hocker.

Austin: Oh yeah, you know what? [chuckles] I actually tried to capture your exact style.

Ali: [snorts]

Austin: So like, the reason why Dre's are little boxes, and yours are lines, is because I was trying to capture what you did first time.

Dre: Aw!

Austin: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Ali: Wow...

Austin: It's fine. I thought it was like, part of the — but I'm just going to delete them all and let you go through, and pick your thing.

Ali: Sure. Okay, thank you.

Austin: Making them as nice as you'd like.

Ali: I think that the Dre box is, uh, —

Austin: Yeah, I think it's better.

Ali: It's — yeah, it's a fantastic —

Dre: Oh, wow. Thanks.

Ali: [chuckling]

Jack: Dre's actually getting the patent through on that.

Ali: [snorts]

Dre: [laughing]

Jack: They have invented the box, and any future use of the box —

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: Will... and it's frankly very out of character to, to make such an IP lock on that.

Austin: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Jack: But, you know. Get the bag.

Austin: Dre, I think I've, I've properly updated your things, is that correct?

Dre: Wait, huh?

Austin: I deleted the ones that you crossed off, is that —

Dre: Oh, yes. You did.

Austin: Is that good?

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: Okay. Nice. Nice, nice, nice.

Jack: I'd love to read, uh, really quickly from the inspiration section of the book. Uh, it talks, you know, first about, uh, fictional inspiration. Or rather, first it talks about mechanical, structural inspiration. Dream Askew was directly inspired by Apocalypse World by D Vincent Baker and Meguey Baker. And Avery talks through, you know, Apocalypse World. Uh, and then she talks about, uh, Station 11, a post-apocalyptic novel, and Black Wave, which also, they say, "about what it means to be queer and heartbroken when the world is crumbling all around you, about how breakups and apocalypse aren't dissimilar." And then she goes on to say, "this game is also inspired by fiery, radical, queer community-building in the real world. I'm looking to groups like Star, Radical Fairies, Gay Shame, The Bashback Network, and The Degenderettes. Dream Askew frames the apocalypse as a perpetual process, and the queer enclave as a contemporary artifact. And that's because it's a truth about the world as far as I understand it.

0:39:10.3 The AIDS crisis was a queer apocalypse, with enclaves formed and obliterated as a result of it. That's not the first or only time. From radical fairy communes, to post-war dockside communities struggling to keep alive the queer connections people found a disservice, from Star house to tentatively-staked gayborhoods everywhere, the enclave is more than just a speculative device. We are constantly falling outside of The Society Intact. And so, while Dream Askew is a work of strange fiction, it's also a reflection on what precarity means for actual queer people." Uh, which I think is super interesting, and I think it's, it's, notable and welcome to encounter a game that is, like, "this is the real-world context that this game is working within."

Austin: Totally. Uh, and I think it's, I think it's one of those things where, this — we never finished this game, but I think the influence I think that it had on us is fairly clear, I think, in the way we have thought about, uh, some of these issues and some of these ideas, right? Like, in so many ways, the, the notion that, uh, as a read a few moments ago, and as Jack, part of what you just read touched on, too, the collapse of civilization doesn't happen everywhere at the same time, it's happening in waves. The idea that the apocalypse is a process is in many ways the other side of the coin of the thing that we said a lot during Twilight Mirage, that utopia is a process.

0:40:38.7 Uh, it's, it's — uh, you know, it underscores or is aligned with us in so many ways, when we think about, you know, things contingent and historical, and not being, you know, uh, separate on some metaphysical plane that's like, “oh yeah, then the apocalypse happened, and it hit everybody.”

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Or, or the world is good for everybody. Uh, these things always have nuance, uh, and they always are grounded in ways that there are fundamentally, you know, there will always be exceptions to whatever the situation is, and zeroing in on those exceptions will help, uh, illuminate what you, what you know about the setting and the people in it. Uh, [chuckling] truly walking right up to the line of the game Study Buddies' closing phrase, of course, that the social is predicated on its exclusions. [chuckling] Uh, this is —

Jack: Don't they say, “we do it for Steve?”

Austin: That's, yeah. They say, “we do it for, we do it for the world, or we do it for Steve.” Yeah, that's right. That's from the game, study — Study Buddies. I actually think Avery Alder said that, said, “we do it for Steve.” I'm pretty sure, that's —

Jack: [laughing] What Steve was she talking about?

Dre: My dad.

Austin: Uh... oh!

Jack: [laughing] Oh, sure.

Ali: Oh.

Jack: Striking.

Austin: [laughing] Congrats. Congrats to, to your dad —

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: For getting a good shoutout. Yeah. Uh, how are we looking?

Jack: That's also —

Austin: Oh, go ahead.

Jack: Yeah. Everybody, everybody listening knows this, so it is barely worth saying.

Austin: Yeah?

Jack: We made the first part of this before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Austin: Oh, yes.

Dre: Oh, yeah. Uh-huh.

Jack: Now, as Avery talks about, there are things that approach apocalypses happening in all communities and all strata, all the time. Always have been, enclaves being formed and obliterated within them.

0:42:29.1 But the breadth of the reach of the Covid-19 pandemic, I can say with utter confidence has touched you, the listener, and everybody you have met.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: So when we talk about, uh, large-scale, transformative events around society, uh, we, we didn't have that in mind, when we were making the first part of this. And now we do.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: Well, we had it in mind, we hadn't lived through it in this particular way, I think, right? Uh, I — going back and listening to some of that, we are talking about Hurricane Katrina, for instance.

Jack: Oh, right, yes.

Austin: In that initial recording. We're talking about the way moments like that lead to, uh, you know, one of the things that we'll talk about in a little bit is the idea of scarcity thinking, the fear that, you know, being compelled by the fear that there will never be enough again, uh, makes you judgmental of others, uh, who are reaching for the something, uh, to make their lives brighter. Uh, for instance, uh, in, in, in that way, we're already engaged with the politics around policing, uh, SNAP and other sorts of welfare programs and the usage of, of, you know, support funds from things like that. We were definitely engaged with those things. But I think there's something very different between that, and then seeing what happened over the last 3 years, uh, uh, during Covid and, and continuing through Covid now.

0:44:00.8 Uh, it definitely, listening back to us talk about this stuff, it's like, "damn. Yep. Here — yep. Here it is. Here it is. Here it is."

Jack: [chuckles]

Austin: Uh, very interesting listening. Uh, do we want to talk about our character sheets, and what we've selected?

Dre: Sure.

Ali: Sure.

Jack: Let's do it.

Austin: We're ready? All right. Who wants to start?

Ali: I can, because I'm in the sort of noon position. Noon, to 1 o'clock.

Austin: Yeah. Can you read your intro, your — introducing the blank!

Ali: Mm-hm.

Austin: And then go through your names, and all that other stuff.

Ali: Uh, yeah. So I'm going to be playing the hocker. Uh... the, the description for the sort of class or character type is, "the market failed. The shops and restaurants and factories close their doors. And into that void stepped the hocker, hustling and working on jobs and pulling a livelihood out of the rubble of the apocalypse. The hocker — [chuckling] the hocker is an industrious individual. Their power is material, social, and contagions. Contagion? Contingent?

Austin: Contingent.

Ali: Contingent. Uh, so yeah, the, uh, the, the character name I've chosen is Samantha, pronouns are she/her. Uh, my look is, uh, friendly face and calloused hands. My gender is high femme. Uh, my two wardrobe styles are a stained apron, and stilettos. The three things that I provide are easy food, companionship, and a thriving social scene.

0:45:31.9 My two desired currencies are protection and work trade.

Austin: Ooh, what's work trade? I guess it's like —

Ali: You know, cleaning the bar...

Austin: I'll clean the bar, if you give me a meal, or whatever.

Ali: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Scrubbing down the stove.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Makes sense

Ali: Mopping the floor, et cetera.

0:45:52.0 Uh, and then my one to two key relationships are the wasteland salvager, who brings me what I need, which I believe, when we started this, was Dre's character, not to stole.

Dre: Mm-hm.

Ali: Uh, and then [chuckling] my second choice, which I think is actually different from my original choice, is the pissy kill — uh...

Dre: [snorts]

Ali: The pissy killjoy next door.

Austin: Mmm.

Ali: Uh, which is fun. The, the, the the thing that I changed it from was my kids. Uh, and in that first recording I was on the fence of whether that was like a literal relationship —

Austin: Uh-huh.

Ali: Or just like a, you know, uh... like, spiritual one — not spiritual, you know what I mean.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: Uh, [laughing] —

Austin: I know what you mean.

Ali: Uh, I ended up, because that was sort of up in the air, then I felt like it would be good to change it. Because I also don't want to like, talk about children today. Or, or think of who her, her kids would be.

0:46:45.7

Austin: Right. Yeah, at the time it wasn't clear if it was literal kids or not, but also —

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: It was, it, it felt at the time like it was more of a gesture at the idea that you were, there were lots of people here that you were taking care of. I mean, can we just talk in natural language? What is the character?

Ali: Yeah, uh, so with all of that said, the, the character concept was a, a woman who was still running a queer bar, in this sort of like, post-fall Bluff City. Uh, it's funny, I, I remember saying in that, being like, “oh, I've always really wanted to put a queer bar in Bluff City. And then I ended up doing that in Capers.” [wheezes]

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: Oh, wow.

Austin: Sure did.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: [laughing] So, here we are again. Uh, but, yeah. I — someone for whom, like, the, like, the like, practice of service is still something, like, important. Like, I think that like, if I woke up tomorrow and like, didn't have electricity or water anywhere in New York City, I would still want a diner waitress who would be kind of mean to me. Like, [laughing] I think, like that performs a social function, —

Austin: [chuckling]

Ali: And she thinks that, and is like, “okay, I'm going to be that person.”

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: Uh, but in terms of like, also like running this sort of community space, because like, you know, it, in terms of just queer history in general, a thought of like a specific bar, a specific place to, you know, hook up, or just hang out, or watch a movie, or, you know, be in a place where you feel like you can kind of unwind is, is...

Austin: Right.

Ali: Completely valuable. [chuckling] And like —

Austin: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Ali: You know, worth putting sort of on the page here, at least. Uh, so that's Samantha's deal. Uh, I think that we... it was like a pier restaurant? It was like a restaurant that was like, sort of hanging off of the shore.

Austin: It was, it was... so, do you see where it says, “the cove,” on the map?

Ali: Mmm, mm-hm.

Austin: Uh, uh, it's like, it's like the back bay. It's near the community garden. It's, I'm, I'm going to — can I ping? I forget how to ping.

Ali: I think it's by the train station?

Austin: It was, it was, at the time it was a big, pink pier. It was here.

Ali: [chuckling]

Austin: It was facing the other way. We've since like, clarified.

Ali: Okay, yeah.

Austin: Watch, ready? I'll move us over to the old map, and you can see it. Do you see where it says pier and club?

Ali: I see, uh-huh.

Austin: Yeah, so now, it's — the, the pier is facing the other way. It's like, it's a long pier along the — it's almost like a second boardwalk, you know what I mean? On the —

Ali: Oh, the cove. That brown —

Austin: The cove, yeah, yeah, yeah. The cove. Yeah, yeah, yeah, it's that.

Ali: Okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Which is like, it's like a bunch of shops, and, uh, and restaurants, and bars, or it was that. Uh, what we'd set up was the idea that like, what is now The Society Intact, all the supercasinos, the boardwalks, which, as we've now established in Gravity Rip, are like, they're hover [chuckling] boardwalks up in the sky, that people like us could never, ever be allowed to.

0:49:42.2 Uh, uh, but like the old ones are now down on the ground that are completely disused and flooded and stuff. But this was like the community's — you know, some time in the past, before the collapse hit us in the way that it's since hit us, this was a way for us to be like, “hey, we need places where like, kids can go ride a Ferris Wheel. We need places where people can go out to drink and dance and hook up. We need places where — you know, for your local community, not for tourists.”

Ali: Mm-hm.

Austin: Very funny to go back and listen to this recording, and hear us talk about Trenton, as the out of towners, which is like —

Dre: [chuckling]

Austin: You know, a huge, important, you know touchstone for the first like, three sessions of Bluff, and then we've [laughing] kind of like, twisted that in so many ways until now, when you say out of towners, it clearly means something different, you know.

Ali: Mm-hm.

Austin: Uh, but that was the vibe, right? Was like, the tourists go to the casinos. Locals can't afford that. The cove was a place for us to do that. And it seems like, the pitch that we had at the time was, it's certainly not stores now, but a restaurant is still a restaurant, you know? People, it's still a place that has a kitchen that works.

Ali: Mm-hm.

Austin: Uh, we're hooked into like the power from the wind turbines, you know, there is lighting. The, one of the last things that happened in the previous recording was the lights all went out.

0:50:55.3 Uh, and, and, so, yeah. I think like, your restaurant is on that pier, you know? I don't think we had a name for the restaurant, though, so, I think if you had one of those, that would be good.

Ali: Okay.

Austin: So... uh, what is your, did you pick... so, so, one of, one of the two key relationships that you picked, again, the wasteland salvager who brings in what I need, which was Dre, which you said, and the pissy killjoy next door, we haven't picked that person yet, we'll find out who that is in play, presumably.

Ali: Mm-hm.

Austin: Did you have choose one to ask left, and did I forget to bring it over? No, you did not. Maybe we didn't get there.

Ali: Oh, no. We definitely did this, because that's how we got to, how did we break up, right?

Austin: Oh, did we? Because I thought we got to do mine, which was, why did we break up?

Ali: Yeah, I thought, I thought yours was the last that —

Austin: We did.

Ali: On that cycle, which means...

Austin: It would be, you're right. Because I, you would be to my left, based on the names at the bottom of roll20. So maybe —

Ali: Oh, I think — okay, wait. It was, what do I regularly hook you up with?

Austin: It was.

Ali: And it was giving —

Austin: Oh, I remember what it was. It was giving our next characters food for someone that they, for someone that they take care of.

Ali: Yeah. Uh, mm-hm.

Austin: I don't want to spoil what that is. So, yes, that's what it was.

Ali: Mm-hm. Which is a perfect slide into [chuckling] the person to my left.

Austin: Uh-huh. Or, in this case it's... yes, that's correct. Yeah. Uh-huh. Jack.

Jack: Hello. Am I to your left in the list of names along the bottom?

Austin: Yes. That is —

Jack: Is this how we're doing this?

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Right. Because I am to your right on the character sheets.

Austin: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. [chuckling]

Ali: [giggling]

Jack: I was, my brain was...

Ali: Uh-huh.

Austin: But remember, we didn't have the character sheets to begin with, right?

Jack: Right.

Austin: We would have had, but we did have the always reliable roll20 Bluff City list of names at the bottom. So, there it is.

Ali: Mm-hm.

Jack: Yes. Yes. Hard to go wrong. I am playing the arrival. Uh, and the copy here says, “when society shoves you out, you don't really have time to protest. You need food, shelter, friends. The arrival found their way to the enclave. Can they barter a measure of amnesty into a permanent home? The arrival is an individual in flux. Their power is contingent, technical, and suspect.

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: Uh, and I'm going to be playing a character called Already, who has they/them pronouns. Uh, and underneath Already is written, “dog: Duke.” Uh... I'm very glad that, uh, I wrote down Duke's name, because I would have forgotten, and I would have had to go hunting through the transcript. Uh, my look is a tired frame with gloved hands. My gender is ambiguous. My wardrobe style is shoplifted club clothes. I don't know where I — Ali, would you say Samantha runs more of a bar than a club?

Ali: Yeah.

Jack: Maybe I... hm. I, I stole —

Austin: Oh, you — I missed one. You also have the literal next thing in line. I just had to check.

Jack: And my old uniform, yes.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, decide how you knew that the enclave existed. I used to drive an armored grocery truck through the area every week. So I figure that the old uniform is the... [sighs] it is a green and purple, uh, like coverall, with a shopping cart on the front, and a human — like an anthropomorphized carrot on the back. It's, it's faded green and purple, and I've got, the uh, top part of the coveralls, like, uh, zipped down and folded around my, tied around my waste. Uh, and underneath, I am wearing, like, a mesh top, uh, that I stole from a club.

Austin: Mmm. Love it.

Jack: Uh, when I say mesh top, I don't mean like a, I suppose I mean like a string vest. I'm just thinking of like a cool, you know, you'd see Rihanna wearing it, or —

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: A bunch of cool queers at at nightclub. Uh, the armored grocery truck that I used to drive through the area every week was presumably part of my job for The Society.

Austin: Uh-uh. No. Because, we set up, and I'm keeping this, for the — excuse me, the outlying gangs, one of the, the setting elements that we can control — so, The Society Intact, and we'll get there in the detail, is the parts of civilization that are still “intact,” quote/unquote.

Jack: Right.

Austin: The places where scarcity has not hit, where natural disaster has not overcome, et cetera. That is where people are watching Gravity Rip races in the stands, and in the casinos. That is the people who live in the burbs. That is the people who literally, you know, uh, won't even — those are the people who lock their doors if they ever have to come anywhere near any of us, right? There are also the outlying gangs, which, uh, are people who don't live in the enclave, but who also don't live in The Society Intact. And what we decided those were, were various members of competing, or not necessarily competing, but operating gig, uh, uh, like, app, uh, companies.

Jack: Oh, wow.

0:56:28.7

Austin: So like, the fish — there, there are people who are doing the fishing for, to produce the fish needed to feed the people in The Society Intact. And that's a gang. That's the group of people who do fishing, who maybe like go out on a boat, they're part of an app. Another one was grocery delivery, or like agriculture — like, big agra stuff in the nearby area, where it's all “self-employed,” quote/unquote, and it is like, they're the people who can officially get you things, right? That's like —

Jack: Yes.

Austin: In a real way, they are not the gray market. They are the regular, actual, laborers as part of, part of The Society Intact's local economy, right? Uh, uh, and again, like, they're gangs because that's the fun, post-apocalyptic, Mad Max-y spin on it. [chuckling] Uh, also, that came out a year before Death Stranding did this with Amazon Delivery people. I had to —

Dre: Mmm.

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: I gave myself a little high-five, and I was like, "I beat you on this one."

Jack: That's a good idea.

Austin: I beat you on this one, Hideo.

Ali: [laughing]

Austin: I got there first. Now did we the finish the game?

Jack: Okay —

Austin: No, we did not. But I image your —

Jack: So, it's —

Austin: Carrot app is part of this. [chuckles]

Jack: Okay, it's not a carrot. It's an anthropomorphic potato.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: And the app that I used to drive for, the gang that I used to, I guess be a part of, or was press-ganged into, uh, was called Potato, Potahto.

0:57:51.0

Austin: Love it.

Jack: Uh...

Austin: Spelled, uh, Potato, potato?

Jack: Spelled Potato, potato. Well, actually, it's spelled Potato, Pota, and then dot TO.

Dre: Oh...

Austin: [cracking up] Ah. Oh, that's very good.

Jack: Uh, yes. Uh, so that's my armored grocery truck.

Dre: Ugh, that's so funny.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Choose two things you brought with you when you fled. A phone that's still got service.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Now...

Austin: That does sound like a cell phone to me.

Jack: This does sound like a cell phone, but... I'm trying to, time trying to, I'm trying to figure out what I was thinking 5 years ago, and I'm going to say, whether or not this is true —

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: That this phone was given to me as part of my job, working for Potato, Pota.to. It is a company phone, in the sense that it is very limited —

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: And it is very heavily, uh, scrutinized.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: It, it is a company phone, which has a lot of the privacy constraints taken off. It has a thing going, where it... when the Potato, Pota.to app is running, a solar panel on the back allows it refill its battery.

Austin: Oh...

Jack: So you can functionally use it for as long as you need to, so long as you are in the app.

0:59:09.2 As soon as you're doing anything other than, you know, in the, the driving app or the grocery delivery app, it has like a terrible, piss battery, that, that goes down to nothing very quickly. Uh, but it still has signal, and it works, under certain conditions. I've also brought my dog with me. My dog is Duke. Uh, I don't know how I described — I think I probably described Duke as a very strong, square dog, in the original. I think Duke is a pit bull. Uh, she is... two and a half.

Dre: Aw.

Jack: But has still got that kind of puppy, puppyiness about her.

Austin: Mmm.

Dre: Because she's only two and a half!

Jack: Yeah, yeah. But it's a hard world, you know. And I don't have time to train, uh, Duke. Uh, but Duke knows one trick. Uh, choose one to two key relationships. The people I fled from. Now, do we think this is Potato, Pota.to, the groceries —

Austin: It could be.

Jack: Potato, Pota.to. Stay in, groceries out. No, wait. Stay in, groceries — [wheezes]

Austin: [laughing]

Ali: Mmm.

Austin: Potato, Pota.to. Why do we call it an ov-in — [laughing]

Jack: Wait, let me —

Dre: [laughing]

Ali: [giggling]

Austin: [laughing]

Jack: What is their slogan? It's Potato, Pota.to. Is it, is it about, however you say it —

Dre: However, how —

Austin: However you say it, it's groceries. [laughing] Yeah, something like that. Uh...

Ali: [snorts]

Jack: Let's call the whole thing on.

Austin: Let's call the whole thing on. [laughing] Yeah, uh-huh.

Ali: Mmm, mm-hm.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Ali: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, I fled from Potato, Pota.to. Uh, for some reason.

Austin: Which, again, very silly, but also, as a, as a reminder, uh, and I'm just going to jump ahead and steal a thing here. One of the things listed in the varied scarcities, a setting element is, no refrigerated trucks hauling groceries into the area, right? You are — which is to say, there was that, or there is that for other people.

Jack: Yes.

1:01:09.3

Austin: Uh, and imagine that the people who control that are a... a group that you could actively call a gang, who are themselves at, under a different part of the boot of The Society Intact.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Right? They would like to be, they would like to climb the pant leg of The Society Intact, and that's part of why they are happy to be hostile towards us. Uh, uh, —

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: And you were part of them, you know?

Jack: Right. The woman who coined the name Potato, Pota.to has bought her dog a sodastream, at the time that this game is taking place. Right? There's like —

Austin: [chuckling] Right.

Dre: Okay.

Jack: People out there at the very top of this pyramid, who are just like, “my dog needs sparkling water.”

Austin: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Jack: I invented Potato, Pota.to. Let's call the whole thing on. Uh...

Austin: [chuckles]

Jack: The second key relationship that I have is the first person to offer me a stiff drink. Now, I think this is Samantha, right, Ali?

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: Oh yeah. Do we have, I guess we could... yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That seems right.

Jack: I mean, if you would like... not to, I can find someone else who offered me a stiff drink, but —

Ali: No, no-no. I would be happy to.

Austin: [chuckles]

Jack: Uh...

Austin: Sam wants the business, you know?

Ali: [giggling]

Jack: Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Uh, and then should we do choose one to ask left? No, we'll do that in a bit.

Austin: You did do that, though. You do have the, right?

Ali: Oh, but, yeah. So my choose one to ask —

Jack: But Ali hasn't.

Austin: Oh, right.

Ali: Choose one to ask left. Uh, what do I regularly hook you up with? I had, at the time, described the way that you might take, like, food scraps, and old bones.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: And skin, of that nature, and like boil it to make a broth. And then I would take, I would filter out the water [chuckling] make soup out of it, and then everything that was left I would feed to your dog.

Jack: Incredible.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: Which was a point of tension for the community. The people could be eating that.

Jack: Yes, because... yeah. Absolutely. You made dog soup. Well, no, the soup is not for the dog.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: The bits, the remainders.

Ali: The soup is for the people. It's just the, it's just the.

Austin: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Ali: Like, boiled cabbage, like —

Jack: But there are people who are hungry, right? And who are like —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: Yeah.

Jack: But, this means that, you know, I can have a stiff drink, and Duke is great. The Duke loves you.

Ali: [giggling]

Austin: Duke can chase the, you know, the gophers out of the community garden, right? Like, you're making, there's a case you could make.

Jack: Right. All the people out of the bar who should not be there.

Austin: [chuckling] Right, yes.

Ali: I need protection.

Austin: Right.

Ali: And work trade. And The Duke is providing, you know.

Jack: Wow, dog with a job?

Ali: [giggling]

Austin: Some dogs got a sodastream —

Jack: Some dogs have jobs.

Austin: Some dogs got, got jobs.

Jack: Some dogs got a sodastream.

Ali: You know, that's true.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: The sodastream company is called Woof, wow!

Austin: [laughing]

Dre: Woof wow? Or just woof?

Jack: Woof, comma, wow!

Austin: Wow!

Dre: Okay.

Austin: Comma, really does it.

Jack: Because the dog takes a little lick of the...

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm.

Jack: And then is like, "this is carbonated."

Austin: Wow.

Dre: Wow.

Jack: That's what the dog says in the commercial. " This is carbonated."

Austin: [chuckling] And looks at the screen. Slobbering.

Jack: Uh...

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh.

Jack: Choose one to ask left. Now, who is, this is me asking —

Austin: Dre is to your left.

Jack: Dre.

Dre: Mmm.

Jack: Dre, you describe your character, and then I will ask you the question, because then we can kind of work those things together.

Dre: Sure. Uh, I'm playing Robyn, who is the stitcher. Uh, the stitcher is described as, "things break, supplies run out, bodies get wounded. The stitcher is there, fixing, mending, making, repurposing. They have a workshop and an uncanny intuition. The stitcher is a resourceful individual. Their power is technical, material, and reactive." So, again, I'm playing Robyn, who is agender. Uh, they have appraising eyes, greasy hands, fucked-up hair, and they wear overalls.

1:05:00.6 Uh, to me, fucked-up means that, uh, I don't get regular haircuts, but I get things caught in my hair a lot, so I just have like, you know, I'll just chop off whatever is too gunked-up. Uh, but I think it's probably also like, just a lot of stuff that gets stuck in my hair that doesn't bother me. I might have like a screw up there, or like some wood chips. Uh...

Austin: The shit from around the shop is just in there.

Dre: Yeah, you, have you, do you know, do you know what I mean if I say like, oil slick hair?

Austin: Yeah, totally.

Ali: Mm-hm. Yeah, I've heard of Roman Reigns.

Dre: God. Uh...

Austin: Oh god.

Dre: Uh, that's, it's more of a color than, than grease hair tech, but...

Ali: [giggling]

Austin: I do know what you mean, yeah.

1:05:42.8

Dre: Uh, but imagine, you know, oil slick hair, but it's actually from, like, oil, not from, like —

Austin: From actual motor oil.

Dre: Not, not, not nice job at the hair salon, yeah.

Austin: Right, yeah.

Dre: Uh, my two workshop functions are woodworking, uh, and since you're going to give me a hover racetrack, Austin, I gotta do vehicle repair, too.

Austin: Oh, interesting. So is that part of the way you make your, make your way is, you're like a freelance hover racetrack repair person?

Dre: Yeah. Yeah.

Austin: Interesting. That's a fun way of, of interfacing with The Society Intact.

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: Even though you're on the outside of it.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: That's fun.

Dre: Uh...

Austin: Uh, Dre, do you want me to tell you something that you, you, uh, about your hair that you said before? And I'm curious if it's still true?

Dre: Oh yeah, hit me.

Austin: You would use parts of your hair as like —

Dre: Oh yeah. Yeah, totally.

Austin: Okay. Do you want to finish the thought for me? Or for you?

Ali: [snorts]

Dre: Yeah, I use, I use, sometimes I gotta cut off my hair to like, finish building stuff. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Yeah, like, you need some thread, you need some extra string, whatever.

Dre: Mm-hm. Sure.

Austin: You just use your hair.

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: Whoa. This is pre-Chine.

Austin: Ha-ha-ha!

Dre: [laughing]

Ali: [giggling]

Dre: Man, Friends at the Table.

Austin: Yeah, this is on the — this is on the —

Dre: Is just always building on itself, over and over again.

Austin: Uh-huh. This is on the Even Gardner to Chine pipeline, I would say.

Ali: Oh, sure.

Dre: Yeah, sure. Fair.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah. Where is The Figure in Bismuth in that? Both before and after and in the middle, and, you know.

Dre: Vehicle repair.

Austin: All over the place, right? Vehicle repair. Uh-huh.

Dre: Yeah. Uh, oil slick hair, right? That's kind of Bismuth-y.

Jack: Oh yeah.

Austin: Yeah. Sure.

Dre: Uh, where do I get the bulk of my supplies? Uh, people bring me the weirdest shit.

Austin: True.

Dre: My one to two key relationships, uh, a ghost who haunts my work space. I think I named the ghost Knots. KNOTS.

Austin: Good.

Jack: Great name for a ghost.

Dre: Yeah, I love — thank you. Uh... and then —

Austin: What's up with that ghost?

Dre: I don't know. Play to find out what happens, Austin.

Austin: Okay. Okay. Uh-huh.

Jack: [wheezes]

Austin: Fair enough.

Dre: Uh, I don't know. I think the ghost is chill. I probably talk to the ghost a lot —

Ali: [laughing]

Dre: While I'm fixing things, while I'm working on stuff.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Uh, you know, I don't want to be nosy.

Austin: That's fair. You know what? That's fair.

Dre: The other relationship, the void kid who needs my maintenance to stay alive. I don't know what that means. I don't think we talked about that.

Austin: [laughing] We — Dre... Void kid, uh, let's see here. You said, “and then the void kid, who needs my maintenance to stay alive. I don't think I know what that means.”

Ali: [giggling]

Dre: [chuckling]

Austin: You actually said, “I don't think I know what a void kid is yet.” I said, “me either.”

Dre: Great.

Austin: And you said, “uh, I guess we'll figure it out, I guess.”

Dre: The more things change, baby. [chuckling]

Austin: Uh-huh.

Ali: [laughing]

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: That's right. Ugh... uh, all right. Can you read, uh, do you want to pick one of the ones that's choose to ask left, of me?

Dre: Well, did Jack —

Austin: Or do you want to hear about me first?

Jack: Oh.

Dre: Did you still need to resolve yours?

Austin: Oh, Jack, right. Yes.

Jack: Yes. So the question I'm going to ask left is, “why do you wish I had never arrived, driving the Potato, Pota.to... truck?”

Ali: Mmm.

Dre: Uh... I don't know how to work on your truck.

Austin: Ooh.

Dre: It makes me very self-conscious. And I worry that other people, it's going to ruin our reputation.

Austin: Ooh. Interesting.

Jack: Mmm, okay.

Austin: Little, little anxiety around it.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: All right. All right. I... am playing, uh, The Augur, Providence. I use she/her pronouns. I am playing as the torch playbook. Quote: all routines and mundane knowledge crumble under the weight of apocalypse, but the torch has answers. Are they ancient teachings, ecstatic fantasy, or a new faith dawning? Followers draw near to their warm glow. The torch is a compelling individual. Their power is spiritual, social, and mystical. I think that, uh, you know, some of the most obvious touchstones for this as a class are things like radical fairy, which, Jack, you were talking about before, kind of queer, uh, uh, spiritualist, queer Pagan collectives, stuff like that.

1:09:56.2 Uh, I, 5 years ago, said a thing that I'm keeping, I'm staying on this, which is, "I really wanted to be a post-apocalyptic fire-keeper from Dark Souls, or Emerald Herald, Herald from Dark Souls 2."

Jack: Mmm, mm-hm.

Austin: Uh, or, uh, I think I actually was watching, I said I was watching lots of Demon Soul Let's Plays at the point, so, so like the Maiden in Black. Except, that what I really am, and I'll start to answer my questions in a second, but I want to get this out there, is... uh, and I, I'm thinking of, I'm, this is like an interesting thing, is like, do I want to pitch it as cleanly as I pitched it before? I think I don't. I think who built me and how I was built and how I became who I am I think is much more interesting as a question mark, now in the world of Bluff City season 2, where I've already gestured at this character having occasional visions of both Blough [Blue] City and Bluff City, despite living in Atlantic City, which, again, happened in the first intro of Gravity Rip.

1:10:57.5 Uh, I think I am, I am, for sure, an android who has been put together from the parts of various amusement pier androids. And so, I'm sort of like, I'm sort of like a, what if the Maiden in Black from Demon Souls was an android clown, and also had the face of the queer theorist — sorry, the feminist theorist Rebecca Walker, who's a sort of third-wave feminist icon, and important theorist from 90s feminist, uh, movements. Uh, so, you know, I'm, I'm the android clown lady who also will speak to you about strange, mystical things. Uh, my name, again is The Augur, Providence. I think we've probably not used augur, yet, as a Spring in Hieron finale thing, [chuckling] speaking of things of staying the same.

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: Uh, uh, my look is flickering eyes. Again, I have the, the flickering eyes of like, you know, almost like a, another touchstone here would be, instead of like a clown android, which I still love, and I think I still have bright clothes on like a clown does, but like a, uh, like a, you know, a fortune teller robot, you know what I mean? Like one of those, like —

Ali: Mmm.

Austin: Fortune-telling machines? I, I think that's my, my flickering eyes light up in that way. I have a marked face. Do I still have a marked face? I think I'm going to change that. I think I'm going to have, I think I'm going to have... I am going to have a marked face. It's marked, it's marked with clown face paint. That's why it's marked. Uh, I didn't look that up, I just, I just decided slash remembered it. I think I have the sort of, like... sometimes you just gotta be yourself, right? You just have to. Like, I kind of have the Trowa Barton clown [laughing] half face, uh, mask.

Jack: Trowa Barton?

Dre: Oh, Jack. Oh, Jack.

Austin: [chuckling] I'll post it. Don't worry, I got you.

Jack: I don't know — oh, this is someone from Gundam.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: It's from Gundam wing, yeah.

Dre: Okay. So, 30,000, Hunter x Hunter show —

Austin: [laughing]

Dre: 35,000, Gundam wing.

Austin: We — we can't do it.

Ali: [wheezes]

Dre: You already did it.

Austin: Trowa Barton — you're right, I've already do it.

Ali: Uh...

Austin: Uh, you know, it's just like —

Jack: Woah.

Austin: That really severe, super— like, it's, you're clown mode on the other side, baby. You're just all the way, I'm all the way clown mode, half my face.

Dre: Hey, how long are your legs?

Austin: Uh, my — so long, I think.

Dre: Okay. Good. Perfect.

Austin: Uh, but I don't think that, I think that my legs come, this is the thing. I think my, my body up is, like, torso is fortune-telling android body. Legs are acrobat legs. Face and arms are clown face and arms. My arms can do all sorts of weird shit. Uh, I don't know that I use that very often. Anyway. My gender is —

Jack: Oh, I see.

Austin: Predestined. My wardrobe styles are striking colors and drawn sigils. The two rituals I know... I seem to have only reselected one, which is, tripping the circuit, uh... god, these are all really good. Oh, right. And the other one was close reading of the holy texts, is what it was. Do I want to keep that? Or, since I'm the augur, do I also want augury? I think I'm changing it. Hm... I should have paid more attention here, you know? I think it's, I think I'm doing... as nice as, I think I'm doing augury. And I'll have to think about what means. Decide what looming threat you alone truly understand. Uh, and keeping, hope and mischief are fires that we must keep ever-burning, or we will face eternal darkness, I think I'm keeping that. Uh, and then I'm choosing one to two key relationships. And I realize I was talking instead of reevaluating these. I'm keeping students I must teach. And by that, I'm leaning in to, I want to be a fire-keeper from Dark Souls.

1:15:08.9 Those are like, the people who come to me for advice, or with questions, after they leave our little enclave and go out into the world to look for things. So, like, Ali, you have, uh, one of the things that you have is work trade, and then, I guess, the wasteland salvager who brings in what I need, right, was obviously about, uh, the arrival, it was about Already. Uh, which, Jack, don't think I'm going to let you get away with just saying the name Already here without asking more questions momentarily.

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: Uh, but I think that my students, so to speak, are people like Already: salvagers, scavengers, the people who go out and, uh, negotiate with the, the, uh, the gangs, the outlying gangs to keep us safe. Uh, the people who, uh, need to make sense of things they don't understand. Uh, god. And you know what? For that reason, for that reason, I am, in fact, going to keep close reading of the holy texts. Because part of what I —

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: Part of what I really loved about this character concept to begin with was the idea that one of the things that she had, uh, was a collection of just, like, old, you know, World War II and Vietnam era, like army how-to guides.

Jack: Oh.

Austin: Uh, she had, and, and like old textbooks.

Jack: I've got one of those in my office right now. If we, if we need any, in this game.

Austin: Yeah. I, I used to work at an army/navy store, and so I used to like, flip through them all the fucking time.

Jack: They're fucking wild. [chuckles]

Austin: They are wild. And I think I'm going to keep tripping the circuit and get rid of augury. So I'm an augur who can't actually do augury. I think. Uh...

Jack: Oh, that's great.

Austin: Right? I think that, like, I provide a, I don't know. I think that I do close reading, I do exegesis more than I do actually augury, but I'm called The Augur, Providence for now, at least. Uh, my other key relationship is with an herbalist who distills my tinctures. I have, I seem to have here herbalist slash mechanic slash translator, named Depot. [chuckles] Uh, and I think I'm probably going to get rid of the translator part of this, which I think worked better in my mind at the time, uh, wasn't, wasn't a literal translator. It was someone who could like, you know, make sense of the sort of mysterious terms I would use. But I think I'm just, I'm just going simpler with, with herbalist slash mechanic, someone who keeps my body working, right, who can make the android body —

Jack: Sort of a Cene Sixheart.

Austin: That was literally who I shouted out in the thing, right, was like, I kind of —

Jack: Aw, shoutout to Cene.

Austin: Shout to Cene. So, yeah. The herbalist to distills my tinctures, and then, and then, who also, again, I can kind of imagine as like, someone comes back with a bunch of, uh, plants. And I can point people to Depot, who will then help them turn those plants into, you know, medicine, or into drugs, or whatever they need, right? And then finally my choose one — oh, wait, I guess Dre, at this point you want to ask me something from yours, right?

Dre: Oh yeah, uh-huh. Uh... what broken thing do you have that I could fix?

Austin: Hm. At the time, it was like, uh, recordings, old reel-to-reel recordings, of the person who made me. Uh, but I actually don't think I want to keep that. I think I want to change that. Uh, what do you — you do woodworking and you do vehicle repair. Because that's the thing, if you used to do something else, I think it made more sense for reel-to-reel stuff then. I think it's something wooden, I think it's something... what's the most complex thing you could make out of wood?

Dre: Oh, boy. Are you asking like, me specifically? Or in general?

Austin: Oh, in general.

Dre: Oh, Austin.

Jack: You can make anything out of wood, right?

Dre: Yeah, man. [laughing]

Jack: Uh, like a, a, a remarkable piece of Japanese joinery, or like a beating heart, or...

Austin: Can you make a beating heart out of wood?

Jack: It — wood plus something to move it.

Austin: That's what I'm saying. Pure wood. What's the most complicated machine you can make with pure wood?

Dre: Uh... hm. Hm. Hm.

Jack: You could use Gravity. You could, you could, drop something down...

Dre: You can make a — you can make, you can make a glider out of wood.

Jack: Because a machine presumably has moving parts.

Austin: No, that's not machine enough.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: I want something with moving parts. What is it?

Dre: Oh, I don't know what this thing is.

Austin: Jack — oh, uh-huh.

Dre: Oh, never mind.

Jack: Oh, what about a strand beast? We keep coming up back to strand beasts.

Dre: Mm-hm.

Jack: But, like, I feel like we put strand beasts in every fucking show we make. [chuckles]

Austin: Uh-huh. We sure do. They're very cool, is the thing.

Jack: Oh, uh, winter garden, uh... uh... let me share this, yes. Winter garden, it is this —

Dre: You can make an escalator out of wood.

Jack: This uses marbles of wood.

Austin: Uh, it's an escalator. Is it an escalator? What would prevent us —

Ali: Oh...

Austin: The thing about an escalator, no, it's a — hm. Hm. Oh yeah, this thing's very cool. But I don't think — I'm not a musician. I don't... if this played itself, maybe, it'd, something I care about, but I don't think I do.

Dre: Mmm.

Jack: The instrument that plays itself.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Uh, let's see. You could, you could make a bicycle out of wood.

Austin: I want you to make me — sorry, what's the exact question?

Dre: Uh... let me find the reading. Do you —

Austin: What broken thing that I, that I, do I —

Dre: Do you have that I could fix?

Austin: Do I have. Right.

Dre: It doesn't even have to be made out of wood.

Austin: No. But you're, I guess it could be a vehicle, also.

Dre: Yeah, I work on cars.

Austin: You're a vehicle repair person. No, yeah. It's a body, uh, it's a body.

Dre: Sure. Okay.

Austin: It's a human, it's a wooden, it's a, it's like a full-scale, uh, like, uh, uh, what is it, what is it called? Like, not a mannequin, a, um, like a drawing figure, you know what I mean? What are those actually called?

Jack: Oh, yes.

Austin: Like a figure, the figure drawing mannequins?

Jack: A dummy? Uh... artist's dummy?

Austin: Art — sure, yes. Oh, wow. Are they really called, are they also known as laymen or lay figures? That's wild.

Jack: [singsong] Sangfielle 2, I'm squirreling it away!

Dre: [chuckles]

Austin: [laughing] Uh, yeah. So it's one of those. It's fully, it's my full body, and you can take the — looks like me. And you can take the entire front of the chest off, and there are a bunch of broken organs inside —

Dre: Hm, okay.

Austin: All made of wood. Uh, uh, I have not told you where I got it — actually, I did tell you where I got it from, and it is what you said before, which is, I found an elevator, and I went down it. And at the bottom I found a warehouse or a storage room, filled with things. And under a spotlight, I found this, and I dragged it back with me. And it's broken and I'd like you to fix it.

1:22:20.9 And so you've given it to you, and I'm hoping you can fix it for me.

Dre: Mm-hm. Sure.

Austin: Should be easy.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Uh, I'm now also — [chuckles] me, me, my own brain. Uh, also I'm the Bloodborne [wheezes] doll, I guess. I hadn't even made —

Ali: [giggling]

Jack: [laughs]

Austin: That one, but here we fucking go. Uh, great.

Jack: And the fucking puppets from Elden Ring, now.

Austin: Are there puppets in Elden Ring? What are the puppets in Elden Ring?

Dre: Yeah!

Austin: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Right, the puppets, yeah, yeah, yeah, of course, yeah. See, if they can double dip, I can double dip, you know what I mean?

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: Yeah. Okay. And then finally, I get to ask a question. So I'm asking Sam a question, which is, why did we break up?

Ali: Mm-hm. I mean, we, we did a scene about this, which is like —

Austin: Is it still true?

Ali: I guess we were both like, too busy?

Austin: That's kind of what we said, yeah.

Ali: [laughing]

Jack: Break. Up. Again!

Ali: [laughing]

Dre: Yeah, do it again.

Jack: No, you do not have to do it again.

Austin: What if we, what if we broke up for a different reason this time? [chuckles]

Dre: Oh...

Ali: Sure, why do you want to break up? [cackling]

Austin: I asked you. It's my question!

Ali: Oh, sure.

Austin: [laughing]

Ali: Sure, sure, sure. Sure. Uh...

Austin: I mean, we don't have to. We could break up for the same reason.

Ali: [chuckling] Uh...

Austin: Or, or I could choose the other one, and we could not break up, or could have never been dating.

Jack: Oh, aren't stories good. Nothing's true until we say it into the microphone, and even fucking then.

Ali: [laughing]

Austin: I could say, are you one of my followers and devotees, and that's a whole different relationship.

Ali: That... really is.

Austin: [laughs]

Ali: Uh...

Austin: But I don't think you are, because we've already, I've already established that my followers and devotees are like, the people who go out into the wilderness, you know —

Dre: Mmm.

Ali: Right.

Austin: Who go out into the maelstrom.

Ali: Yeah, I'm kind of, you know —

Austin: You're a homebody.

Ali: I have a lot going on, yeah.

Austin: Uh-huh. Wow, you have a lot going on, huh?

Ali: [wheezes] [cackles]

Austin: No wonder it didn't work out.

Dre: You all right? You okay?

Ali: I mean, I, I feel like, I feel like the, the like, breakup scene that we had was like an iconic... it was really good.

Austin: Can we drop that in and keep it, or should we just let that continue to be a thing that we just, we already did it, and so we don't need to let people — people can go dig it out, if they want to.

Ali: Mm-hm.

Austin: Okay. So we broke up because we both were very business, in the post-apocalypse.

Ali: Yeah, I, that's, that's, just the, the specific conversation was, your character approached mine while she was like, doing paperwork or whatever.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Ali: And then, uh... started to have this conversation about like, "oh, do you think that we're, what do you think about progress?" Or something like that.

Austin: That sounds like me.

Ali: Uh, [laughing] you're like... and, my character was like, "oh, I think we could be doing more, I think that we should be thriving," or whatever.

Austin: Right.

Ali: And your character was like, "you know, the capitalists want to thrive, we're just trying to survive."

Austin: I didn't say those words, but yeah, we're just trying to survive.

Ali: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Basically, this is all, your character is wanting, is wanting to be a little too close to The Society Intact, right?

Ali: Sure, sure. Yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: And then your character said something about, like, us not having the availability, or whatever, and then my character said something like, "if that's what you want to do, we can just sit that, instead of having this whole conversation."

Austin: Uh-huh.

Ali: And then your dinner came. [wheezes]

Austin: Then my dinner came, and I described all of the lights in the place turning out, and you being like, "yeah, we'll get to that."

Ali: Mm-hm.

Austin: I think that's all still good.

Ali: 5 years.

Austin: 5 years.

Ali: [giggles] I think for what it's worth, I will put, I will link the YouTube stream and the transcription —

Austin: Transcript isn't done.

Ali: Is it not done?

Jack: Oh, that's so great.

Austin: It, it — Ali —

Jack: I love this.

Austin: It, do you want, do you want to see where it ends?

Ali: [wheezes] [laughing] Why not?

Austin: Uh, we can just read this. Can we just do a quick reading of this together?

Dre: Mmm.

Ali: Yeah, please, link me.

Austin: There we go, I've, I've, I've screenshotted the final page.

Ali: There's no fucking way. [wheezes]

Austin: Uh-huh!

Ali: [cackling]

Austin: Can you start reading from where you say, "cool?" I've described what the place is like. Or I say, "hey, can you describe what your, what your bar is like?" Or your pantry. We meet in the pantry.

Ali: Oh yeah. Yeah. [clears throat]

[both reading previous transcript]

Ali: Cool, uh, I think it's one of those really thin places. Like, I'm sitting in a table in the back, and like, you standing in the middle of it. It's like, blocking the light on me. You know how that works. And like —

Austin: Yeah, totally.

Ali: Yeah, totally. Yeah.

[Ali and Austin laugh]

Austin: Hello.

Ali: Hey. Is everything... is it all...?

Austin: So busy.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: How... how has your day been?

Ali: Uh, good. It's, it's been busier than usual, which is always good.

Austin: New people? Or just more of the usuals?

Ali: Uh, a mix. More usual than usual. But, uh, I, you know, it's good to see smiling faces, so...

Austin: Always.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: So much to smile about.

Ali: Yeah.

[no longer reading]

Austin: And that is where the transcript cuts off.

Ali: [cackling] Whoever this transcriber was, it was like, “you know what?”

Austin: I'm fucking done!

Jack: Their dinner came!

Austin: They, they didn't, Jack! There's like, 5 more minutes after this!

Jack: No, no, no. Their dinner came.

Austin: Oh, I mean, yes. Their dinner came.

Ali: [giggling]

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. 100 percent. 100 percent.

Jack: I cannot tell you how much I love this. That we basically, we have, we have all the extra material around this episode, and the episode, and the production of the episode, is fucking busted. It's great.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: [laughing]

Austin: Mm-hm. Uh, this, this transcript is by Lids, uh, uh, until 38 minutes, and then the remaining like, 20 minutes of it was by Doobie, uh, and then Doobie has stopped right here, in the middle of the breakup scene.

Jack: Who we are not putting on blast for stopping.

Austin: I, no, no, not at all.

Jack: I want to be as clear as possible.

Ali: No, no, no, no, no. No, no, no.

Austin: This is ideal.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: This is ideal.

Jack: This is fucking great.

1:28:25.9

Austin: And again, like, and then I looked out the window and saw Blough [Blue] City, you know what I mean? [chuckles] And then three versions of this conversation happened, or whatever. Weird Bluff City shit has to have happened at the moment I say, “so much to smile about,” and you say, “yeah.” You know? [chuckles] It's perfect. It's ideal. Uh...

Ali: Austin, just quick shoutout, Transcriptsatthetable.com —

Austin: Yes.

Ali: Transcripts_FATT on Twitter.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: It is so cool. The, the, the, the angel and the devil on my shoulder, except they're both two buff angels helping me make friends at the table, is the transcript project, and FATT.wiki, [chuckles] is —

Austin: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Ali: [laughing]

Austin: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. Uh, it's, it's so useful. Uh... so, yeah, shoutouts to the transcript team, who is just about done with all of the main feed. There's two episodes of Partizan left.

Jack: Yes.

Ali: Oh, wow.

Austin: And then, and one episode of Road, the Road to Palisade, and that is it.

Jack: That's so exciting. But, uh, joke's on them. We're going to keep making it.

Austin: Ha-ha-ha. Gotcha.

Ali: [giggling]

Dre: Get wrecked.

Austin: [chuckles]

Jack: Uh, before we move on from characters, something I, I want to clear up that I, that I remembered is, you know, I don't think I have the Potato, Pota.to truck. Decide how you knew that the enclave existed.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: I used to drive an armored grocery truck through the area every week. And something we established in the first one that I think I would like to keep, is that I know where my truck is. It is just broken-down. It is like, out there.

Austin: In the — right.

Jack: It is hidden in some place, that like, a manage to push it into a place where it was hidden, cover it in some stuff, so in theory, it's still there. But I think that works even better with, uh, Robyn's, uh, reason why they wish that I wasn't here, right? Which is that it's like, there's a truck out there that could work and could be our truck and could help the community, but I don't know how to fix it, is, is what Robyn's thinking, right?

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: It's like, it's an even worse reputational thing of like, “well, we have the truck and we could strip it for parts.” It's like, it's out there, in the world, and we can't make use of it.

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm. Because if, if Robyn could, if they could, then you could — they could tell you, “hey, bring me to it, I'll fix it.” But —

Jack: And then we have a truck. And this is like, this is where scarcity thinking is going to come into play, I think, as we'll get to in a second. But like, the idea that there is a grocery, a refrigerated grocery truck out there...

Austin: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Jack: Hidden.

Austin: Uh... so. Those are the characters. Uh, the next thing to talk about is the, uh, elements of the setting. Uh, share the setting. Randomly distribute the six setting elements between the players. Going around in a circle, have everyone introduce the setting elements they're holding by reading out the title and italicized flavor text.

1:31:19.8 Just like with the character roles, it doesn't matter who introduces which ones. Once they've been read aloud, everyone picks which one they'll play. Put the ones that weren't chosen in the center of the table — they are still part of the game. To flesh out a setting element, circle two things it desires from the list. What it means for a setting element to desire something is determined moment to moment during play. It might be expressed through the ambitions of minor characters, or through strange developments in the landscape. Have everyone announce their choices. Ask everyone to familiarize themselves with the pickup when and trade away when prompts setting on their setting element. Explain that throughout play, it's likely that the setting elements, uh, will trade hands and be played by different people. The core idea for many of the trade away when prompts is that you don't want to have to play both sides of a conversation.

1:32:08.6 When your character is the one facing a challenge of a particular setting element, someone else should be responsible for playing that part of the setting. I mean, I guess we should say here again, this is a GM-less game, right? Uh, like Orbital, like, uh, uh, Galactic 2E and Going Rogue, these are not, uh, uh, this isn't a game that like, I'm GMing and I have a story for, right? Or that anybody is. We are all playing different elements of the setting. We'll pick up these various parts, uh, of the setting, when they come up. Uh, and use their moves. I guess I should also say, broadly, uh, for people who have not, uh, uh, seen one of these games before or listened to us play one before, the character sheets, beyond the sort of like, starting things we have, we each have a set of strong moves, regular moves, and weak moves. We can do, uh, regular moves whenever we want. Uh, and so far a very high-level example of that, or very straightforward example of that, rather, I have a move called gather supplies. I can always, just, in a scene, be like, "I'm going to go gather supplies." I could also do a weak move, which is what I did during our breakup scene, uh, when I, uh, I believe admitted I didn't have the answer to someone's question or problem, maybe. Uh, uh, I don't know what it was, but I somehow ended up with a token. I don't know what that was. Maybe I don't have it anymore, because it's been 5 years, and that's fine. Uh, uh, so I could do something like that one. I ostracize one of my followers, is another example, to gain a token.

1:33:39.4 And then, spend a token are strong moves. Uh, and so that's something like, get out of harm's way, or soothe — soothe someone's pain or duress. Those are examples of my strong moves. Every character class also has a lure. Mine — LURE, a thing I struggled with saying even before I had Invisalign in my mouth. Uh, whenever — mine is, whenever someone participates in one of my rituals for the first time, they gain a token. Uh, can we quickly just go around and read what our lures are before we go further? Uh... Jack, what's your lure?

Jack: My lure is, whenever someone gives you an opportunity to prove yourself to the community, they gain a token.

Austin: Dre? Robyn?

Dre: Yeah. Whenever someone comes to you with something precious that needs fixing, they gain a token.

Austin: Mmm. And, finally, Samantha.

Ali: When someone offers you a new gig or gets hooked on your supply, they gain a token.

Austin: Okay. Yes. So, I say all that because the setting elements also have moves, and other things that target, or other things that trigger, uh, in similar ways. So, Dre, do you want to read the first of these, that you have your name — you already picked this one 5 years ago. You don't have to keep your, you don't have to continue to pick it, but can you at least read it?

Dre: Oh, boy. Which — okay, hold on. Where am I reading?

Austin: This is, that is, this one.

Dre: The varied scarcities?

Austin: That is it.

Dre: Uh, there's no postal service, no municipal waste treatment, no reservoir operations manager to treat your water, no ecological impact survey team. No police, no road maintenance crew, and that means no refrigerated trucks hauling groceries into the area. No signal in the cell towers, most days. The people who used to think about this stuff so that you didn't have to? They're gone now. Uh, and then the two desires that I circled were scrappy DIY, and suffering without.

1:35:33.6

Austin: Are you happy with those, still? Do you want to shift those up? Do you —

Dre: I'm happy with scrappy DIY. I'm not —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Dre: Hm. I think I'd rather shift suffering without, to collaboration.

Austin: So it, so, in other words, the, the world, in a sense, wants, wants collaboration.

Dre: Yes.

Austin: Deeply — a deep change here, in terms of tone, Dre.

Dre: Uh-huh. Hey, uh, a lot has happened over 5 years, Austin.

Austin: A lot. A lot has happened.

Ali: [chuckling]

Dre: Uh, I don't need to play a game to think about suffering without. I would like to play a game and think about a world that desires collaboration. [chuckles]

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm. Mm-hm. Uh, and then can you read — pick up when, give away when.

Dre: Sure. Uh, pick up when someone wanders the wasteland, seeks a buyer, or this is a marketplace. Give away when you need something material and don't immediately know where to get it.

Austin: So an example of this would be if you, playing as Robyn, uh, uh, had a moment where you were like, "ah, shit, this repair I'm doing for the void kid needs, uh, a lot of copper pipe, and I don't know where to get copper pipe," you would give this — even though you currently hold this sheet, or did 5 years ago, you would give it to somebody else, so that they could play the varied scarcities, the things that were missing —

Dre: Oh...

Austin: So that you wouldn't have to be like, "well, I guess, uh, here's where I go to find it."
Another player could pick up this sheet and be like, "well, I'm going to play this now, and I have moves —" the scarcity, uh, sorry. I almost said scary vairsities, that's nothing. The varied scarcities have three moves: uh, show someone acting foolishly out of need or desperation, introduce a traitorous individual, or spread disease. Uh, and so I could then pick this up and be like, "ah, you need, you need copper, huh?" Well, it's funny. On your way home that night, you see someone who says, "hey, buddy, you need something? You need anything? Uh, you need medicine, you need copper?" And that could be me introducing a traitorous individual, for instance.

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: Right? Uh, uh, and that way you don't have to play both sides of that, right? Uh, and so all of these that we're about to go over have pick up whens, give away whens, and moves. We don't need to read all the moves, but it's probably a good idea to read all the pick up whens and give away whens.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: So we're going to have desires for this, collaboration, and scrappy DIY. Jack, do you want to read the next one?

Jack: Yes. So I had —

Austin: You had The Society Intact.

Jack: The Society Intact. And I'm considering keeping it, but I don't know. Uh, let me read through what it is here, and then we can talk it through. Uh, for some reason, we thought the collapse was going to hit everybody at the same time, but nothing happens like that: neatly, evenly. Civilization crumbles in waves, eroding the peripheries of good society. Apocalypse is only a distant nightmare for the privileged, a cautionary tale about what might happen to them if they should fall from the master's clutches. You'd be surprised what one of those people would do to keep their society intact. Circle two desires — orthodoxy, uh, and profit eternal, are circled here.

1:38:49.4 Now, I was considering switching over to the psychic maelstrom, because I've got some ideas for a psychic maelstrom.

Austin: [chuckling]

Jack: But, I think... [chuckles] I think, I've been thinking about it, and I think I'm going to hold onto Society Intact for a time being. The nice thing about these games is that we will almost — these, these cards... played right, and we're going to try and play it right, these cards change hands pretty regularly.

Austin: Mm-hm. Yeah. 100 percent.

Jack: Pick up, so, pick up when somebody wanders into The Society Intact, or you have an idea for why they might pay the enclave a visit. Give away when you need to deal with The Society Intact, or they remember that you exist. Uh, and the you there would be already, rather than —

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: The group.

Austin: Correct, yeah. It would be whoever's holding this page, this sheet at the time, right? So, again, let's imagine I picked up, give away when — or, sorry. [chuckles] Picked up varied scarcities when Dre gave it away. I would then give it away if my character, Providence, needed to give it — needed something material, and didn't know where to immediately get it. And so, likewise, Jack, if someone picked up The Society Intact from you, then they would give it away —

Jack: Right.

Austin: Ran into someone who needed... from The Society Intact, right? Et cetera. Cool. Uh, Ali, do you want to read the one that you had originally picked?

Ali: Yeah.

1:40:14.6 You also play the earth itself. We built a new world upon its back, glass and steel stacked towards the heavens. We learned how to pull electricity out of every natural element to mechanize? To mechanize, to automate. Uh, some of us went whole days forgetting that anything existing outside of our edifice. We wounded the earth, we alienated ourselves from its touch and its harmonies. We broke holes in the sky. When it tried to warn us, we didn't listen. What now will — [sputters] Will apocalypse cement that alienation for all of eternity, or finally bring us home.

1:40:53.5 Uh, and the two desires that I had previously circled are, [having trouble pronouncing] ugh!

Austin: Do you, do you want to tag, do you want to...

Ali: [laughing] Yeah. How to you pronounce this?

Austin: It is, it is, it is reciprocity.

Ali: Reciprocity, okay.

Jack: Too many Cs, and in the wrong places.

Austin: It's, it's, yeah. I agree.

Ali: Mm-hm.

Austin: I hate the CIP there in the middle, is rough. It's rough.

Ali: Uh, reciprocity and trembling awe, were my two desires.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: Uh... oh, there's a lot of good desires here.

Austin: There sure are.

Ali: I'm going to read all of them.

Austin: Okay.

Ali: The ones that are unpicked are healing, strange new forms, the fall of man, Eden renewed, carrion?

Austin: Yeah, that's like, uh, it's like... dead carcasses. [chuckles]

Ali: Oh, sure, sure, sure, sure, sure, sure, sure.

Austin: Right? Like, like vultures eat carrion.

Ali: Uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh. And, to be reborn in fire. Which would be desire for the earth itself.

Austin: [chuckles] Uh, that would be a desire for your character in Elden Ring, I believe.

Ali: [giggling] That's okay, the DLC's going to come out, and she's going to be reincarnated.

Austin: Uh-huh. Uh-huh, uh-huh.

Ali: We're going to go high faith at the beginning and see how that goes.

Austin: Ah, interesting.

Ali: Uh, [laughing] ask me after class for my —

Austin: Yeah, we need to talk. You need to talk about that, for sure.

Ali: My [laughing] My Elden Ring, like, in-character bullshit.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: Anyway, uh...

Austin: Uh, pick up when and give away when.

Ali: Oh, yeah. Pick up when —

Austin: Oh, sorry, yeah. You were going to pick two of those desires, presumably. But, let's start with the pick up when, give away when.

Ali: Okay, yeah. Uh... pick up when you want to describe weather, mutation, beasts, or the natural world. And give away when you brave the elements, instigate something organic, or walk with nature — walk in nature.

Austin: Walk in nature. I, this is like a great one to remind, that reminds us, this and like, psychic maelstrom are like, “oh, right, this is a post-apocalyptic setting in the genre way, also.” Like, yes, Dream Askew is a game about big ideas around queerness and radical politics. Also, it's a game where there are cool mutants, and beasts, and —

Ali: [giggling]

Austin: Uh, maybe the world desires strange new forms, and it's interested in — like, it's not, it — Avery isn't joking when she says that this game is inspired in part by Apocalypse World, right? Like, it's a fucking post-apocalyptic game. It wants us to have fun with those elements too, you know? So...

Ali: Mmm. Uh, yeah, in that case, I think I want to switch, uh, rep — [laughing] reciprocity for strange new forms.

Austin: Okay.

Dre: Mmm.

Ali: Especially, like we've had, we've had proper noun, The Tunnel Project —

Austin: Uh-huh.

Ali: As part of, like, the over-arching sort of development of, of season 2, in Bluff City.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: And I think the idea of like, rats go through there, right?

Austin: Yeah they do. Uh-huh.

Ali: Or like, you know...

Austin: All sorts of shit has come through there.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: It's not a one-way, it's not a one-way, uh, tunnel, right?

Ali: Yeah, like, drones of flies.

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm.

Ali: Uh, and like, if, if, you know, this sort of like... wrong place, wrong time thing that we've seen, of like, sometimes people will put things huh there, and then the thing that was in there at that time comes out on the other side, like —

Austin: Yeah. Yeah.

Ali: The sheer, just —

Austin: This goes back to the Lacuna game, right? The very end of, mis, uh, uh, not Misspent Youth, what the fuck is it actually called? What's the actual finale of Bluff 1? Uh...

Jack: Uh, Messy Business.

Austin: Messy Business, of the, in the casino, right?

Jack: Yep.

Austin: In Atlantic City, here comes... the fingers guy. [chuckles] Whose name I —

Dre: Sure, the fingers guy.

Ali: Yeah...

Austin: Oh yeah, Mike, was it Mike Truck, is that right?

Jack: Mike Truck.

Austin: Mike Truck came through.

Ali: [giggling]

Austin: Uh-huh. Yes. Spoilers, I guess.

Jack: God.

Austin: God, that game ruled. Uh, so yeah. You're right. That's part of that, right? All of that different stuff, the rats coming through the tunnels. And the Tunnel Project, the Tunnel Project was, was... and we, we talked about this previously, like... it was, it's about getting things, uh, it, it doesn't — this place and Blough [Blue] City were not being treated well by the [chuckling] Tunnel Project, you know? Again, like, people were being sent here to clear up Bluff City. We haven't, like, I haven't gotten too deep into the ideology of what was going on there, but I think that'll be a future Bluff City story to some degree.

1:45:31.5 Uh, but, it's all the stuff that you said. Weird, weird pests, uh, uh, things that, that others might look down their nose at. Things that are too gross even for Bluff City, you know what I mean? And gross not in like a, I mean, maybe gross in every possible meaning, right? Uh, uh, and, and they get shoveled off onto the people of Atlantic City. Uh, and presumably also to the people of Blough [Blue]. Uh, but Blough [Blue] already had it, so [chuckling] Blough [Blue] already had it pretty rough, you know? So, uh, in some ways I think about Blough [Blue] City as being like, a place that's actively under the, the boot of, of tyranny, and I think of Atlantic City in our setting, Bluffington Beach, as being a place that has been failed but its leadership, that has been left to, to deteriorate, that has not been given the resources it needs, that has been pillaged, uh, in a way that's not about like, authoritarianism, it's, it's about, uh, we've, we talked about this term somewhat in Partizan, uh, but the, uh, uh, and it's in relation to a Foucault, Foucault has this idea of, of biopolitics.

1:46:47.7 Uh, but there's also this, this notion of, from a theorist named Mbembe, called necropolitics, which is explicitly about the... Foucault says, "in modernity, the change from —" this is a very, very vulgar version of this, is, uh, in the Middle Ages in the pre-modern era, the sovereign has power over life and death. And then, in the modern era, the sovereign has power over how you love. It used to be that if you did something the king didn't like, you would get your head chopped off. And now, it's what you get to look at with your head. It's how you get to speak, it's who you get to kiss with your lips, it's what types of food do you get to eat. Those are the sort of things that are controlled by the sovereign now, uh, and your body is policed, your desire is policed, et cetera. That's bio, that's biopolitics, that's biopower, right?

1:47:38.7 Mbembe says, "yeah, dude, sure. Like, that's how it works in France, that's how it works in the United States, and not even all of the United States. Here, in my life, in the places that I have studied, the places I'm, I'm caring about, it is about how you, it is about access to different types of foods, and who you can kiss and who you can eat —" ugh, who you can eat. What you can eat. "What you have to eat. But to a fatal degree." Right? It's about, uh, do you have access to clean water? It's about, do you have access to medicine, so that you can treat any sort of diseases you might get? Uh, is it, do you have access to, or are those things turned off in such a way that, uh, you are eradicated instead, and the sovereign can kind of shrug their shoulders and say, "well, it wasn't me. Those people are just dirty. Oh, it wasn't me," et cetera.

1:48:31.5 And for me, Bluffington Beach/ Atlantic City is, is much more of that in this setting than it is there's a particular, uh, uh, the mayor isn't just corrupt, you know? [chuckles] Uh, the way that that would happen in Bluff City. Or in Blough [Blue] City, where there's like, "ooh, this is the evil architecture department, or city planning department," or whatever it is was that we had during those games. It's, it's, it's a lot more callous here, and a lot more thoughtless. It's just a shrugging indifference to the cost of, of all this shit. Anyway... all of that is to say, that is, uh, that is the world in which the earth itself is now seeking strange new forms and trembling awe. I think those. Uh, I am playing the outlying gangs. People had wildly different ideas about what the collapse of law and order meant for the future. Some shuffled the mortal coil at the first sign of real danger. Others took to the hills, equipped with water purifiers and dried goji berry. But some people said right where they were, armed and alert, ready to carve, uh, carve out an empire by whatever means necessary. Stop whatever you're doing, crane your neck just a tiny bit. You can probably hear their roaring in the distance.

1:49:45.6 Uh, and at the time, what I had picked was territory and unspoken fealty. Uh, and the unspoken fealty — the unspoken really hit me. I really like the idea that like, you didn't even — their power was not even questioned. Like, of course they ran their territory. Uh, and I think I might trade that, now that we have a little bit better of an idea of what they want and who they are, to home-cooked meals.

Jack: Oh, ho ho.

Austin: I don't think that they're immune, in the same way, in my mind, now that we know that they're, now that we know that they work for Potato, Pota.to, right? Uh...

Jack: Well, some of them do.

Austin: Right, right, right. Some of them, you know, work for —

Jack: Woof, wow.

Austin: Woof, wow. And some of them work for, uh, Fish... not Fishteen Minutes. Not Fishteen Minutes. But something —

Dre: They could.

Ali: [gasps]

Jack: Oh, no.

Austin: I would never say they work for Fishteen Minutes.

Jack: No. No.

Austin: No, no, no, no. That's different.

Jack: Goodness.

Austin: Fishteen Minutes —

Jack: You'll be hearing from our lawyer.

Austin: Fishteen Minutes was a podcast that was very good in the 2010s and 2020s —

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: And that was long in the past of this setting. So they couldn't work for Fishteen Minutes.

Dre: Mmm, okay.

Jack: Completed?

Austin: Did they complete the project? Yeah, they —

Ali: [giggling]

Austin: Talked about, they did an episode for every fish.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Believe it or not.

Jack: Sick. [chuckles]

Austin: Uh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Uh-huh. For sure. Uh, they... uh, they work, instead, for... uh... hm. Hm. What's a fish pun that I can turn into an app?

Dre: Uh... uh...

Ali: Go Fish.

Austin: Finishing. Uh... yeah. Like, fins? Like fins?

Dre: Holy Carp.

Ali: Oh, sure.

Austin: Holy Carp?

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: Like... right, no.

Dre: Koi Boys.

Austin: [chuckling] I don't think it's... [laughing]

Jack: Koi Boys is a great club in this setting.

Dre: [laughing]

Austin: [chuckling] Yeah, uh-huh. Is that a rival club?

Jack: [chuckles]

Ali: Oh, is that my, my pissy next door neighbor?

Austin: Yeah, your pissy next door neighbor. You run the lesbian bar, and —

Ali: Is the Koi Boys?

Jack: Runs Koi Boys.

Austin: And the Koi Boys is the gay bar next door. Yeah, uh-huh.

Ali: [chuckling]

Austin: Uh...

Jack: Uh...

Austin: I don't know what — you know what, I need to listen to more Fishteen Minutes. I find I don't really know enough about fish.

Jack: Well, have we got the podcast for you.

Austin: Oh, what is it?

Jack: It's Fishteen Minutes, a podcast — take a time out of your time day. Take time from your day, to think about fish.

Dre: Austin, I got it.

Austin: Gotcha. Okay.

Dre: You wanted a fish app name. It's, it's, it's —

Austin: I do.

Dre: It's Walleye, but it's spelled WALL dash I.

Austin: Wall-I, like a, like a — like WALL-E, but also like a walleye fish.

Dre: Yeah, uh-huh.

Austin: Uh-huh. I feel like we're going to get sued by Disney, Dre.

Dre: Oh.

Austin: I feel like they're not going to let us do this.

Dre: All right. That's fair.

Jack: What, what about —

Austin: Gill... bert.

Dre: [snorts] [laughing] Well, now we're just going to get sued by —

Austin: Nope. Uh-huh.

Dre: Whoever made, "What's Eating Gilbert Grape?"

Austin: Uh-huh. Right, yeah, uh-huh.

Jack: What about — [chuckles]

Dre: [laughing] No, go for it, Jack. Come on.

Jack: [laughing] What about... [can't keep it together]

Dre: [laughing]

Austin: Wow, you can't even get this one out, huh?

Jack: Fwish.

Dre: [completely losing it]

Jack: It's Fish Wish. [chuckling]

Ali: Mmm.

Austin: Oh, Fwish! Yeah, Fwish. Yeah, yeah, yeah, Fwish. Spell it?

Jack: It's a lower-case F, WICH.

Ali: Ooh.

Austin: fWich.

Jack: fWich: Wish for a Fish.

Ali: C?

Austin: Well, the C like the sea, like the ocean.

Dre: CH?

Austin: CH, like the —

Jack: Oh, wait. SH. I just misspelled wish.

Austin: Nope.

Dre: No.

Austin: Nope! It's fWich.

Ali: [laughing]

Dre: Also it's like a sandwich. It's like a fish sandwich.

Austin: fWich. F-wich. Yeah, uh-huh. Ali?

Ali: I was going to say school of something.

Austin: Oh, school.

Ali: Can it be school of... fWich?

Austin: Of fWich?!

Dre: School of fWich!

Everyone: [laughing]

Ali: [laughing] School of fWich?

Jack: Oh, yes, because —

Austin: School of fWich.

Jack: They're delivered by automated little, uh, silvery-blue painted little drones.

Austin: Ooh.

Jack: Uh, that are of course piloted by real people, like so many of these —

Austin: Right, yes.

Jack: Purportedly automated drones are.

Austin: And, and handmade and all that shit. Right, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: Yeah. And it's called, it's called the School of fWich. [chuckling]

Austin: Love it, great.

Jack: And when, when you, when you're blocking road, one of them says, "splish-splash, coming through!" Uh, —

Austin: Well.

Jack: As the school of fWich —

Austin: As the school of fWich swooshes by. Got it. Uh-huh.

1:54:01.2 So these are our, these are our various gangs. School of — and, you know, I know what you're thinking. They don't sound so, they don't sound like hot shit. You say that now. Wait until you have the free-flying fWich drones charging at you. Wait until you've pissed off someone from Potato, Pota.to and he brings out a fucking potato gun and starts shooting at you with it, you know?

Jack: Also, they probably have an actual gun.

Austin: Yeah. This is what I mean. Like, they are also that. They are also armed. [chuckling] They are also that style of thing. Uh...

Jack: Yeah, fully. Like, the, the companies that exist like this in the real world are materially damaging. Uber Eats is fucking grotesque, in its operational policies. And it has a cutesy name.

Austin: Mm-hm. What was the, we had a third one, what was the —

Jack: Woof, wow?

Austin: Woof — uh, wow, wow, Woof, wow. Woof, wow. Do we have another other one. What was our — I was about to say, what was our fishing one. Our fishing one is School of fWich, right? That's correct?

Jack: Potato, Pota.to, School of fWich, Woof —

Austin: Uh-huh. That also does the fishing, presumably.

Jack: Uh, yes. It's, it's really upsetting.

Austin: Yeah. What's the one that does the wind farms, that runs like the wind, the wind turbines?

Jack: Oh, oh. They're called, uh...

Austin: Breeze? But BREZ? No? Okay.

Jack: No, they just have like a full name. They're called something like, "Bluffington Biopower," or like, like —

Austin: Right, yeah.

Jack: Like, uh... because, because the wind power doesn't need to be — the wind power sail... if you're going to buy that through an app, it's going through an intermediary, right?

Austin: Right.

Jack: And at that point, you license the wind power through Breeze. Or whatever. But the people running the wind turbine are like —

Austin: Right.

Jack: Atlantic Bioelectric.

Austin: Mm-hm. Yeah. Atlantic — yeah, it's, it's... uh, what's a, what's a word that starts with C, that is like, engineer? Or technician?

Dre: A word that starts with C but is, but is like a synonym for engineer.

Austin: Is like a synonym for engineer or technician.

Dre: Uh... pshhhhh. Are you looking for something specific? Or are we brainstorming?

Austin: No, no, we're brain — I'm brainstorming.

Dre: Uh, collaborator.

Austin: It's close.

Dre: Uh...

Austin: It could just be, it could also be like, you know what? No. We got it. We got it. It doesn't need to be, it's ABC. It's the Atlantic Bioelectric Company. There you go. Boom.

Dre: Oh, okay.

Austin: ABC. All right. Cool, that's enough for me to say that we a bunch of gangs, I'll add these over to the, to the list here. [chuckles] Uh, don't fuck with them. Uh, all right. We still need to read the varied — sorry, the psychic maelstrom, and, uh, the digital realm. Who wants to read those? Even though we're not starting holding them, I'd love for us to go over those things. Oh, sorry. The outlying gangs, pick up when someone wanders the wasteland, takes a major road, or trespasses. Uh, and then give away when you do any of the above, or you have a gang debt that you run out of time on.

Dre: Mmm.

Austin: Uh, so yeah. So now, after those, does anyone want to read the —

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Thank you.

Jack: So, we have the digital realm. Everything we'd ever known or said was embedded somewhere inside of it. Even though the digital realm was young, it was hard to remember back to the way life was without it. It seemed as permanent as it was pervasive. Apocalypse pulled the digital realm to pieces. Networks fell into disconnect. Satellites blinked out. Computers were ripped apart and stripped of their precious metal content. But humans were wily and resourceful. They know how to salvage, repurpose, and rebuild. Maybe the digital realm still has a future.

1:57:40.5 Now, we're not going to circle these desires, right? We would circle them when we pick the card up for the first time?

Austin: I believe that that is true. When we first pick them up, we will circle these —

Jack: But I'll —

Austin: And — go ahead.

Jack: I'll read through what the desires are, unless you want it to be a secret.

1:57:53.1

Austin: No.

Jack: Uh, the two, the, the — circle two desires from this list. Expanded networks, shared knowledge, escapism, trafficked secrets, fresh code, to reinvent the world in its image. Pick up when someone interacts with a digital device, or you have an idea about how digitization shaped this environment. Give away when you interact with a digital device, or recall memories of the digital realm.

1:58:20.0

Austin: And so, this is a moment where, let's say a character said, "oh, I'm going to turn on the old computer that still has access to, uh, an old database." Somebody else would, in that moment, pick this up, because someone would be interacting with a digital device, right?

Jack: Right.

Austin: Uh, even though you already have a setting element, uh, you would, I believe, either hold two or put yours down and pick this up. I think it's the latter. I think you put down yours and pick up the other one, so that the person has something to bounce, someone to bounce off of, right? You, uh, you don't necessarily, uh, you're not picking one of these for yours forever. We're sharing the GM duties so that everybody will always have someone to bounce ideas off of, and, and to help run the different bits of the world. Uh... and that leaves us with the psychic maelstrom. Close your eyes, open your brain. Something is wrong with the world.

1:59:19.3 That something is the psychic maelstrom. It's just beyond our everyday perception, ever-present and howling. It can offer guidance, protection, even flashes of brilliant inspiration. But it's hungry, and nobody knows what price it demands in return. It does have two desires, though, and they will be chosen from: human dependence, cosmic revelation, revenge, entropy, fervent intimacy, or to be ushered into the world forever.

1:59:51.3 Pick up the psychic maelstrom whenever someone uses a psychic gift, seeks out the strange, or invokes the maelstrom. Give away when you're involved in any of the above, or leave yourself psychically vulnerable. I love leaving myself psychically vulnerable, don't you?

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: Uh, I'm going to slide this over just a little bit so that the word Out can be fully seen. All right. That is... that is the five, uh, setting. Elements. Six setting elements? Six. I know how to count. Uh...

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: Uh, so, I think the last thing we need to go over, uh, before we move into idle dreaming and picking things back up where they were, is the enclave itself. Uh, we have a list of 3 to 5 visual — we have a list of a bunch of visual possibilities. Uh, uh, and it says to circle 3 to 5 of them, and then to circle 3 things that are in conflict in the enclave. Uh, and I'm trying to remember if there's a previous earlier thing about... about this stuff. But I, maybe we already read it. Did we already read the bit about how like... hey, these conflicts are like, real conflicts. Like, it's not, uh, it's —

Jack: Oh, I don't think we did read that this time around. We might have done —

Austin: Okay.

Jack: In the, in the dream.

Austin: In the [chuckling] right, in the dream episode that doesn't exist in — all right, here we go.

Dre: Mm-hm. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Uh, let's see here. Okay, yes. Uh, create your community. It is, it is community that ties our individual — sorry, this is on page 21. It is community that ties our individual characters together, and situates them within the wider setting. Both dreams, Dream Askew and Dream Apart, are about marginalized groups of people maintaining their own community just beyond the borders of a dominant culture. The enclave and the [shuttle] are built on uncertain ground, ripe with potential but also risk. What else is true about them? As a group, uh, go down the left-hand column of the community worksheet, circling as prompted.

2:01:52.8 Make decisions collaboratively. If you get stuck, talk it through and look for compromises. Aim to set up a community that has something interesting for everyone. Uh, expect that by the time you've filled out the left-hand column of the community worksheet, you'll be 50 to 60 minutes [chuckling] into your session, not including —

Jack: [laughing]

Austin: Any meals shared together. In Dream Askew, you'll start by circling a set of visuals that define the landscape and vibe of your community. You'll circle three ideological or material forces that are in conflict with, with each other, a situation with no simple answers or stable solutions. As you circle things, talk about them and flesh them out. Discuss the scale of conflict. Is this a petty squabble between neighbors? Or an entire town divided by rival ideologies? Uh, and I think the important thing there to underscore is that like, uh, the... it totally can be petty, but there's no easy, it's not as easy as like, "all right, I'll do the dishes more often." [chuckling] Uh, and I think that that's kind of clear in the list of these things.

2:02:54.6 Uh, we already have visuals picked out here from last time. Looking at them quickly, do we have feels about the ones that are picked, that we've already picked out, that we like or don't like? Do we have anything here that we'd like to change, anything here we'd like to shift?

Jack: Let's go over what we've got, currently.

Austin: Sure.

Jack: So, currently, uh, circled, we have glass and concrete, community gardens, a train station, the ocean — very important for, for, uh, Atlantic City. And raging parties. And, I feel pretty good about all of these.

Dre: Yeah, me too.

Jack: I think — uh, when we, when we went over this in the dream, we, we managed to build up a picture of this kind of, like, transformed, post-collapse space that I think we were all pretty excited about. Uh, I think we talked a lot about, it might have been Ali, was talking about, uh, ruined skyscrapers? Am I misremembering?

Austin: Mmm.

Ali: No, I'm pretty sure that was me. I remember talking about like, uh, big, like entryways into like hotels, or like office buildings in that way.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: That are just such wide spaces, that would have these sort of like, cubiclesque, like, this is where... this, the space is sort of shut off in a way that like, would be used for like an office meeting —

Austin: Right.

Ali: Or like a conference hall or whatever. And like, that's like a really convenient place to like, set up some of these, like...

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: Water recycling centers, or like... [laughing] you know.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Right.

Austin: It's funny that you say, you say a convention center, because the, the train station in Atlantic City, the real one, which, which is, does not get a lot of, I mean, it connects to Philly, right, and goes through Jersey. But it no longer [chuckling] connects up to New York, which you would think —

Jack: Oh, wow. That's telling, huh?

Austin: It would do, but it, it, it didn't do that, it did it when I was a child, and then they stopped doing it. And then in like, the late 2000s, they tried to bring it back, and then it didn't go well. Uh, but, it is also part of the bigger, more modern convention center. Like, they're literally sharing, they literally share the same front. Uh, so like, our — the fact that we have a train station, and we have the glass and concrete, feels like it fits very nicely, uh, because it, those things literally do connect, you know? Uh... so...

Jack: Right. And then community gardens, in the sense of like, there's a really great note in the book on page, uh, 50, uh, where she points out, “without grocers, all the plants in this soup —“ oh, there's recipes in this book, which —

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh.

Dre: Oh!

Jack: Uh, the book, like a big chunk of the book is recipes.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh... all the plants in this soup, an actual soup that you can make with the book, using book as guidance, not —

Dre: [laughing]

Austin: [laughing]

Jack: Are hearty and resilient. Kale grows year-round in many places, and beans are easy to dry and store. Aliums deter deer and other grazing animals from your garden plot. They all grow well in dialogue, with beans replenishing the nitrogen that kale demands of the soil. If you have the means to garden, this meal can nourish you through the collapse. I think this is very much the vibe of community gardens, of just like... you know, maybe there's wildflowers growing. Maybe, maybe there's some room to grow flowers, if, there, there — we're spending most of our water and energy and effort on growing lots of kale.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Or, you know, big, uh, we've repurposed big bins to grow potatoes in.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Or tomatos. Uh, and then trying to spread those things around, so that if something gets blighted, or if there's some fungus in the air or in the soil, it doesn't take out all the crops. But I imagine that is also a concern, with like, large-scale community gardens, is, you know, are the plants healthy? Are we going to be able —

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: To produce enough food, without, you know, our entire tomato crop going down this year, or whatever.

Austin: I also imagine we have, because the ocean is one of our visuals, uh, and because we're set up on a back bay, uh, that there's some fishing going on, right? Now we know that there might be some tension with our very, uh, one of our gangs. Uh, of course, uh, School of — [chuckling] School of fWich, who handles —

Dre: Hell yeah.

Austin: Fishing, commercial, you know, industrial fishing, and fish delivery, using a drone fleet. [chuckling] Uh, but, I do imagine that like, the thing of like, “okay, I'm going to go out on the dock and just throw a line out.”

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Or, I'm going to go out in a little tiny — when I, when I was growing up, I would do back bay fishing in this area, actually. More like in, if we're looking at the map, closer to like, the, this side of things, down nearish to where the high school is on this map, and all this back area here, and all through here actually, too. Uh, but, uh, this whole area has these, these marshes and back bays, uh, where you can go out on small, little boats, of like — I mean, not, not small, little. Because small little — a small, a boat can be one person, right?

2:08:05.7 So it would be bigger than that. You can do like a little tiny party boat, with like 10 people, and their fishing rods, and a radio.

Jack: Right.

Austin: And some drinks in a cooler, and have a really nice day. Uh, and, and produce enough fish for you to then go home and have a fish dinner, you know what I mean? Between the group of you. Uh, even on a fairly dry day with 10 people, someone's caught something, you'll have a little something. Uh, and so even if it's like a supplementary, uh, food source for us, you know, I can imagine that's an important protein source for many people in the community, so...

Jack: Totally. And I think that there's, you know, there's some added tension there as well, which, I, I have to imagine that there is, you know, we talked about School of Fish, but there's also, there's large-scale fishing that you can see from the —

Austin: Right.

Jack: From the dock. You can look out and see, you know, like —

Austin: So, this is what I'm saying, is there probably isn't. Because that's on the eastern shore. That's off, that's in the ocean.

Jack: Oh. That's out on the other side.

Austin: We're on the back bay. Yeah, exactly.

Jack: Right. Yeah, totally.

Austin: We're on the western coast of Atlantic City, where there is the inner, the, the sort of like, uh, uh, you even get, you even get some fish here that are freshwater fish, who have wandered too close to the sea. You know, this is a, it's a, uh...

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: What's the word I'm looking for?

Jack: Brackish?

Austin: Brackish. It's a brackish, uh, area. So, so... and, and you can straight up follow, I mean, look at our map. We could follow the rivers up into the mainland, if we ever needed to, or wanted to, and leave this area behind.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Uh, you know, maybe some people want that, and, and we disagree. I mean, this is maybe time to talk about some of the, the, uh, the, conflicts, which —

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: I, we completely erased here. I could go over and check to see what they used to be. Uh, but I, I think we wanted to change for sure one of them. Uh... and, right now, nothing, nothing is circled. Do you want to just read what all of these are and take this fresh? Or do we want to —

Ali: Sure.

Austin: Okay. Uh... psychic privacy, gender abolition, space is for women, religious customs, goddess cults, racial identity, indigenous land rights, revolutionary fervor, mutants, scarcity thinking, politics of the void, reckless hedonism, the need for purity, party culture, barriers to access, the use of violence, food justice, trauma, the limitless possibilities of queer sex, known abusers, and desiring a return to society.

2:10:44.9 I don't remember if we had this conversation on-mic, or if this was an off-mic thing, where we were like, "a lot of the ones we selected before, we've now done shows that touch on these." [chuckles]

Jack: Yeah, this is off-mic. Uh, the first one that we kind of looked at and, and, in coming back to this, was like, "revolutionary fervor," which means something very different before we made, at this point, [chuckling] one full show and starting a second show —

Austin: Yeah. Yeah.

Jack: About a revolution.

Austin: And also, it meant something different when this was a Bluff City and not a Bluffington Beach/ Atlantic City game.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Uh, closer to the Hector Hu, Omega Love stuff. Uh, and in a real way, I kind of like the idea that like, whatever revolutionary fervor might have happened in this space was sublimated by the, the Tricity Tunnel Project, that like, — no, no, that's just not the focus here anymore. I kind of love that as an almost diegetic reason for us moving, for our non-diegetic desire to not retell a story we've already told. Not that there's a limit on how many stories you can tell about revolutionary fervor, but we're literally telling one of these right now in another place.

Ali: [chuckling] Mm-hm.

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: So...

Jack: Similarly, questions about known abusers, which was something that we were thinking about, uh, the first time around. We've also been telling similar stories in that area.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: As well, with like, what does it mean when someone is ideologically or methodologically, uh, uh, impeding or causing problems for the kind of society that you want to build, and how do you approach that? That was a lot Partizan, for example. Uh...

Austin: Yeah, it's like, I think it, it's easy to — [chuckles] It's easy to be compelled by the excellent play behind Clementine Kesh, and not, uh, put the known abuser lens on her. But... [chuckling]

Jack: Oh my god.

Dre: Comma, but.

Austin: Yeah. Comma, but. Now skip —

Jack: Comma.

Ali: [laughing]

Dre: [laughing]

Austin: What do we do with the person who used to own us? Is, uh, absolutely a known abusers question, right?

Jack: Uh-huh. 100 percent.

Austin: Uh, she still, she is still moving with us now, you know?

Jack: Yep.

Austin: Uh, so... uh, what, what do we do with that? I think we, I think we've, you know, hit that topic in a way that I could understand if that's not something people are hyped to get back to. [chuckles] People aren't hyped to get back to the known abusers narrative.

Ali: [chuckles]

Austin: Obviously, there are —

Jack: [chuckles]

Austin: Other known abusers stories that we haven't told, so if someone here did really think that like, “oh, that's still a thing I'm interested in,” I wouldn't — this isn't me vetoing that, you know?

Ali: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Well I think the, when it was initially, uh, brought forward, and I think I was the one who did it, I was thinking of like, what do you do with like, loan sharks?

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm.

Ali: Or like, people who've, who've preyed on the community in that way, who like, now —

Austin: Mmm.

Ali: You know, also don't have these resources.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Right.

Ali: But I think even like, within Bluff City, we've seen some of the like... CEO guy who sucks.

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Ali: You know, stories. And I don't know, like...

Austin: I am compelled by the idea of like, loan shark who is now...

Ali: [laughing]

Austin: Loan shark who didn't make it into The Society Intact, or into the gangs, uh,

Ali: Hm.

Dre: Hm.

Austin: The, the, whatever the —

Jack: Just sort of stuck.

Austin: Neat gang's name is? What is it? I keep trying to scroll down, and my mouse will not let me get there. The outlying gangs. Uh, uh, but, I'm also not so compelled that I'm like, "that's the one for sure," you know? All right, how about this. Let's go the other way. Is there something here that people are like, "that's the one I want to do for sure?" Of, of our total 3, number of 3, is there anything here that people are like —

Dre: Hm...

Austin: Extremely excited about? Uh, the other one that we used to have was scarcity thinking. Uh... which is to say, the like... you know, uh, uh, austerity, this feeling of like... now, we shouldn't be throwing parties. We don't have, we don't, we don't have what we need. We need to be very protective, potentially, of what we have. Uh, a sort of paranoia that can creep in around who has access to resources.

2:14:51.4 Uh, you might think this also is like, you know, uh, putting someone in charge to ration food —

Jack: Right.

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: Or to keep things under lock and key. Uh, you might think about this as, in, in relation to whatever our other conflicts are, uh, you know, uh, uh, you can imagine someone saying, this same up with some of the character creation, I think, around Sam, in the original recording, in the dream, you talked about Sam being high femme as like, a, uh, because, you were interested in, in seeing all sorts of womanhood and femme stuff onscreen, but also, that like, even in this post-apocalyptic setting, here is, here is an expression of a, of a person.

Ali: Mm-hm.

Austin: And you could imagine scarcity, uh, thinking, interfering with that, and saying, “well, listen.” The things that we do — you can image scarcity thinking intersecting with, for instance, gender abolition, in a way where, where you could have someone who wants to abolish gender, but in a way that like, uh, removes gender performance and expression, because it's a waste of resources or something, right?

Ali: Right.

Austin: Uh, so you can have these things interact in very interesting and non-traditional ways, in terms of the way that you could end up being on different sides of this. So, scarcity thinking can be a lot of different things, depending on what we end up with, you know? Uh... you know, obviously something like indigenous land rights and scarcity thinking, you can imagine the person who is like, “hey, yeah, it would be great to be able to give back land to people. But right now, we need the land to live.” And like, that's a shitty perspective to have, but that's what would emerge by those two things. This one thing that might emerge, between those two things being key conflicts.

Ali: Mmm.

Austin: Or, again, scarcity thinking and our current visuals of raging parties, very easy to imagine the person being like, “stop having raging parties. We don't have what you need to have ragers.”

Ali: [chuckling]

Austin: You're wasting our food and drink. [chuckles] Everyone eats too much, et cetera.

Dre: Right.

Austin: So I think that's where our thinking was there. Then, I'm not tied to any of the three that we chose. I'd be happy to choose all new ones.

Jack: Yeah. Uh, goddess cults is very interesting, given the kind of character you're playing, Austin.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Dre: Uh...

Austin: It is. I, I feel like I haven't yet found if there is a goddess behind the cult, you know?

Jack: Right, but people might think there is.

Austin: There could be. Right, right. Yeah. That's true.

Jack: Uh... whether or not there is, we have this, we have a, a, a character who is literally in part composed of a fortune-telling device. And I could definitely see people being like, "oh, right, this person knows the future."

Austin: Right. Right.

Jack: Uh... let's see.

Austin: Even though I quite literally do not, because I still don't have this ritual.

Jack: Yes, absolutely do not.

Austin: Right. Mm-hm.

Ali: [chuckles]

Jack: Uh, party culture is very interesting, uh, in terms of, you know, we know that there are raging parties going on here. You can hear, you know, you can see, uh, makeshift lights moving in the dark, in the ruined buildings. You can hear the sound of the bass. Uh, whether it's improvised instruments, or someone's managed to rig up, you know, a pirate antenna to, to get the, uh, EDM station [chuckling]

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: From The Society Intact, or whatever.

Dre: [chuckling]

Jack: At like an extremely low bitrate.

Austin: That's quite fun.

Jack: Uh, yeah, god, yeah. It's an antenna on top of the tallest currently-surviving skyscraper, kind of in our thing. And it has to be up there because, you know, it has to be able to catch the signal.

Austin: It doesn't — yeah. Like, push through our, like, the fog that, that like, the smog cover up to the higher levels.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: That, so it can receive the signal.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: That's a fun, that's a fun argument for party culture.

Jack: Well, but party culture as well, right, is, and, and this sort of dovetails on some level with scarcity thinking, but it also is about questions of, like, propriety, I think —

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm.

Jack: In a lot of community spaces, party culture is like, “well, what kinds of party —” you know, we talked about ragers early. Is there like, drug use or drug culture?

Austin: Mm-hm. Yeah.

Jack: Is there... uh, what kind of music is considered, uh, uh, like, like proper?

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, uh, who is the taste makers? Are there cliques, uh, within the —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: The party culture, people's bands not getting played, people's bands getting kicked out, people trying to come down and play. You know, there's like a lot there, I think alongside and beyond the scarcity thinking.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: But again, I'm not making a hard pitch for it. Desiring a return to —

Austin: Well, we know that Already — we know that Already has history with the band, right? So... as a child.

Jack: Oh yeah. [chuckling]

Austin: Theoretically.

Jack: Who knows?

Austin: Who knows? Who could say?

Ali: I feel like some of what's missing from the conversation that we had, and what might sort of help us here, is like, what do we actually want, like, the tone of this game to be?

Austin: Totally.

Dre: Mmm.

2:19:36.6

Ali: Like, what are our touchstones in terms of the story we eventually want to make out of what this game is?

Austin: Great question.

Jack: Right.

Ali: Uh, because I mean —

Dre: Right.

Ali: We could be the four people who are like, are we, you know, are we creating a, of a sort of like vibrant city-like joy for ourselves? And therefore, like, the questions of parties is more interesting than, say, the question of the politics of the void.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: Uh...

Dre: Oh, I was actually going to say maybe to that one. [laughing]

Ali: You — [laughing]

Austin: Yeah. I mean, talk to us about that.

Ali: I wasn't vetoing it, but yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Well, I don't —

Austin: Talk to me about politics of the void, Dre.

Dre: [sighs] I don't have any firm ideas. Uh, that one just, just was interesting to me, because of me still having this unresolved relationship with a void kid.

Austin: Oh, right, sure.

Dre: And figuring out, I would, I, I would like to throw that to the group to help figure that stuff out.

Austin: Right, what is, what do we mean when we say void kid, and —

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Does it have a politics of its, of its own.

Dre: Right. What does it mean to be, are there void people? Or is this just an individual void person?

Austin: Mm-hm.

Dre: And either way, what does that mean? For them, and this space.

Austin: Yeah. I, I, and maybe this is a good place to actually try to... do a little bit of the tie-in to that big metaplot stuff is like, I don't, you know, I was not building to the, the fact that there might be a word called the void, tied to this, right? So this is not, this is not prepped material, right? But you can imagine one answer to what is the void, and what is a void kid, is like, someone who got lost, uh, in the tunnel, or between these spaces. Obviously, we — we know that fictionally, uh, there are devils who live in the spaces between these cities, or who used to live in that way. Uh, but I also think that it, it's kind of fun to think about the things that didn't quite, the people who didn't quite make the cut to make it into Bluff City, uh, or who got lost between these two places, and uh, maybe lost a bit of themselves, and don't necessarily have — you know, uh, we, we did literally have that whole story in, uh, Tales from the Loop, about the kid, the, the, the I forget what the name was.

Jack: Right. Bethany Namour?

Austin: Yeah, Namour. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think that's right.

Jack: No... uh, yeah.

Austin: I think that that's right. Bethany Namour feels right. Uh, uh, who got caught between the cities, and was like, that like, video person, you know?

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: Are there more people like that? Have the, have the videos, like, have the video people solidified? Gotten more stable, but they're still video projection people? And they're like, you know, the equivalent of, uh, the equivalent, the range being, on one hand, you have people like, uh, your character from Tales from the Loop, Dre, who went to the wrong city. And then on the other hand you have people like, not just like Britney [sic] but like, almost like characters who were cut from TV shows.

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: If we think about Bluff City as being a fictional first place, a place where like, it follows genre conventions, it, it exists when the camera is there, you know. The... the, uh, the unfunny cousin character who gets added to the sitcom, and everyone hates them. You know? Or, or the other version of that, right, which is like, the first season of Happy Days, uh, the main character has an older brother, and then he just vanishes from existence.

Dre: Sure.

Austin: Uh, you know, and then gets, gets, where does he wind up? Oh, he winds up in Atlantic City, as a void person. Uh, and maybe he doesn't even know that we was part of a bigger story. Maybe he just knows that he was cut from — he doesn't know that he was — he knows that, like, that's what people think about these people, is that they were cut from other fictional worlds, but like, he doesn't have... he remembers having a family, maybe, but he doesn't necessarily remember how that all fits, you know? Or maybe they remember everything. I don't know. I'm, I'm kind of throwing things at the wall, in this idea.

Dre: Well, you bringing up the idea of like the in between, quote/unquote, "video people," made me think of, what if that is also a competing resource for, uh, oh, I just lost the word. The big antennas that we're talking about that are useful for like the raging parties, like —

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm.

Dre: What if there is a limited bandwidth.

Austin: Oh.

Dre: And like, part of it is like, “okay, we have to use this for a lot of different stuff, including, you know, these, these video people,” in some way.

Austin: These, do they, what do they need from that? Do they, is it, is it food? Is it — for them? Is it sustenance for them? Is this a thing that lets more of them come over? Is it a thing that they need to leave, and like reconnect with some other place? Is it...

Dre: I mean, I'm wondering if it's just like, it's just like, the transmission allows them to be here at all.

Austin: To be, to exist, right. It saves them from —

Dre: Like, it's not, I don't, maybe they wouldn't die, right? It's not sustenance in that way. But, it allows them to be in this place in addition to other places.

Austin: I, see, I think if they're here, they can't be somewhere else.

Dre: Mmm, okay.

Austin: Like, for me to — for you to have a void kid you're taking care of, what's the exact thing? The void kid who needs my maintenance to stay alive.

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: That, to me, feels like, like — they live, they live here. You know? In a real way.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: So...

2:25:08.2 Uh, this doesn't really answer, Ali, your bigger question of tone. And like, genre space.

Ali: Mmm.

Austin: You know. Uh, because the post-apocalyptic genre is so broad.

Dre: Right.

Jack: Right.

Austin: Ali, did you have a, a sort of sense for tonally, where you wanted to be here?

Ali: Not particularly. It just felt like it was the friction in terms of like, what we were talking about and how to...

Dre: Sure.

Austin: I would like to, have to sometimes leave the enclave behind to go on little journeys, and to get something you need. I know that's like a, like a — that might seem like no shit. But I think you could do an entire, an entire arc inside of a, inside of a place, and not have to worry about the outside.

Dre: Sure, yeah.

Austin: And so this is me saying, I think one thing I want is for us not to just do what's happening on our local block, but to be a little more like... I want to have to cross no man's land a little bit, you know what I mean? I want to have to like, risk running into the outlying gangs, or risk, you know, veering too close to The Society Intact.

Dre: Mm-hm.

Ali: Mm-hm.

Austin: Uh... uh, if we do the void kid thing being, the void people thing being, the sort of digital video emanations of the, of fictional worlds people who don't get to stay in Bluff City, then that could help us, that could help inform what the digital realm is, which is interesting. Uh...

Ali: Oh yeah.

Austin: I hadn't thought about that.

Dre: With what you were saying, Austin, I wonder if just desiring a return to society could be an interesting conflict.

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm.

Dre: Of, of people being like, "well, we have to make these journeys outside anyway, why not just finish the trip?"

Austin: Well, and I also imagine that would be people saying things like, "I want to save up enough money to move into The Society Intact."

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: I have a cousin who's up there, and they said, if I can get together X dollars, then they can let, they can get me a job, and I can live up there. They can get me a, you know, a, a live-in, you know, maintenance job or something. Uh, so that, that could be —

Jack: Yeah, I think that's interesting. Yeah, I would put in a vote for desiring a return to society.

Ali: Mm-hm.

Austin: I will circle it.

Jack: With the obvious flip side of that being, or rather, one expression of the flip side of that being like — no, they abandoned us.

Austin: No, right, yeah, yeah.

Jack: We're not going back there. You know, we can, we can get somewhere better, but we're not going to get there with them.

Austin: Mm-hm. Yeah. Totally.

Ali: Does that feel like... and we don't have to choose things that are too connected, but like, would, like, barriers to access also feel like it's a part of both of those ideas, in terms of like...

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: You know, if the conflict is that some people want to go and some people want to stay, is it the thing of like, "well, you're with us, then you've got to be with us."

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: And, you know...

Jack: Right.

Ali: We only have so many resources to share, it requires some dedication. But also in terms of the gangs thing of like, we do need some sort of security, we do need some sort of like...

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: Uh, you know, there's an othering from what our enclave is, and who people outside are, and like, how do we navigate that?

Austin: Mm-hm. Yeah. I like that a lot. I actually think that that, that's a fun connection here. I also just have this —

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Great image of us, like, pulling the big metal gate down on the pier, as it like — do you know what I mean?

Ali: [chuckling] Yeah.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Almost like the retail store front gate, you know, but like huge thing, that goes like [chunk chunk chunk chunk chunk chunk]as you lower it.

Ali: Mmm.

Jack: Yeah. And there's like a breadth, I feel like barriers to access is really interesting, in terms of, you know, both the avenues that Ali was talking about, and also what Austin was talking about, about... having to go out across no man's land. You know, there are certain opportunities that are available to this enclave — enclave, even setting aside The Society Intact, that are restricted to certain groups. You know, there, there could be the in-group and the out-group of the, of the explorers, the people who go out, and come back, and are either heralded as heroes, or there's some degree of resentment that they're the ones who get to go out and get the thing. Uh, and are they keeping information hidden from us about what's going on out there, et cetera.

2:29:54.2

Austin: Mm-hm. Yeah. I, I think I want to put in a vote for the politics of the void stuff, because it's a bit of a curveball to this stuff that makes it Bluff-y, do you know what I mean?

Jack: Right, yes.

Dre: [chuckling]

Austin: That's, that's my thinking, my, my — we could play a straight-up... we already, in some ways we did this, uh, uh, with Tales from the Loop already. Obviously, we had the Bluff connection in there. But like, we could play the straight-up story that is just like, here's this pier-based, you know... uh, post-apocalyptic enclave, that's dealing with its shit. But I want to kind of, uh, so at the heart of what Bluff City as a series is, is the place of fiction and fictional entities, and how fiction connects to our desires, and who we want to be. Uh, and so I kind of want to play with the idea of like, what's it mean to live in a world where you see people who you remember from TV shows? Or who feel like they're pulled from that? And what's it, what, what is it to want to be like that in some ways?

2:31:00.4 I'm sure we have people among us who wish they could be video people, you know?

Ali: Mm-hm.

Jack: Right.

Austin: Uh, or for whom that speaks to them in some way. Or people who are, who feel belittled because they are only, uh, this kind of digital projection, or, uh, or people who have mastered some sort of elements of this void — you know, we are playing a game in which we have the psychic maelstrom, and the, and the digital realm, right? You pick up, you pick up the psychic maelstrom when someone uses a psychic gift, seeks out the strange, or invokes the maelstrom. You know?

2:31:37.1 Uh, uh, and so, uh, there is, there is a sort of magic in the world, and it's like, well, what's that stuff open up for us? What's it close off? Uh, what, what ways of being are, are potentially available in a world that has, like, digital video magic? Uh, uh, and how does that intersect with like, this group of people who feel very physical, you know?

Jack: Right.

Austin: Uh, who feel not like that? Or, you know, unless, unless retroactively, some of us want those elements in us. But, but I don't think that we necessarily have made that... we didn't know that this was a setting element until this second, you know? [chuckles]

Jack: Yeah. Is... does politics, uh, does, you know, we can make of it what we will.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: Does politics of the void have a specific meaning, Austin? In like philosophy?

Austin: No, I think that this is, I think this is, this is one of those great terms —

Dre: Mmm.

Austin: That, uh, that Avery has invented for this book.

Jack: [chuckles] Okay. It's not like necropolitics, where, where like —

Austin: No.

Jack: Oh, that means something.

Austin: No. I believe that this is like, the other, the other part of this, where it's like, uh, —

Jack: Oh, talking about gender?

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Jack: The, the real genders and the made, made-up genders?

Austin: There are new, there are new type of — uh, right. Like, Raven and gargoyle, or whatever, you know? Yes. Gargoyle and Raven emerge entirely anew, if you wanted to be gargoyle gendered, you know? And I suspect, I believe — maybe I'm wrong, you know? I'm, I'm... uh, I have not encountered, you know, is it a phrase that has been used? Yes. But I don't, I don't see it as a, uh, I'm not seeing it as like, a well, importantly established thing. I would imagine that in other games, you would think of the politics of the void as, as being tied to, you know, the politics of the lack of a clear future —

Jack: Right.

2:33:31.1

Austin: The politics of a world where meaning has been obliterated. The politics of, the politics of absence, and lack, you know? Et cetera.

Jack: Which on some level is actually what we're talking about here —

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: With the, the VHS people with the big —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: The people trapped in the spools of...

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Of celluloid, down in the tunnel project.

Austin: Right, is like, these are people who, in, in some ways, have been, you know, it is almost a necropolitical thing, [chuckles] right? Or, or a biopolitical thing. It's, it's someone saying like, "uh, yeah, you don't stack up enough to get the resources we have available here in Bluff City. We're going to leave you behind on recording." You know? "We're just going to run the tape forever." And I think that that's... yeah, uh-huh.

2:34:16.6

Ali: [giggling]

Austin: You know. I've said it.

Jack: Bluff City just loves stories. They love stories.

Austin: Bluff City does love — good stories. Mm-hm.

Ali: Yeah...

Austin: We'll get there.

Jack: And Blough [Blue] City loves terrifying exploitation of... [chuckling]

Austin: Uh-huh. Yeah.

Jack: The entire populace.

Austin: Exactly.

Ali: [chuckling]

Austin: All right.

Ali: I, I do really like this direction, because I feel like, especially after the like, the like, roller coaster ramp-up of like, Tales from the Loop, into —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: Gravity Rip.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: Like, to like, keep some of the like, spookiness, the like —

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Ali: The like, techno spooky is like —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: Is like, something I would like to achieve in this game.

Austin: Yeah. All right, then I have a thing for me, which is, I think I came into this world as a void kid, or a void person. Which I think is like, I think I was effectively summoned here, and put in this robot body. I am not visually —

Jack: Wow, interesting.

Ali: Mmm.

Austin: In the VHS form, at this point. I think the absent witch who summoned me, in the, the late days when we were still part of The Society Intact, the, the woman who knew that the world was falling around her, uh, brought me in, rescued me from, from the tape deck, right? The tape deck, uh, place that we rescued, uh, Namour from. Uh, what's her first name, actually? Britney?

Jack: Britney?

Austin: Britney? Yeah, okay.

Jack: Yeah, I said Bethany earlier, but my brain corrected itself and was like, "It's definitely Britney."

Austin: I think it's Britney.

Jack: [chuckles]

Austin: Yeah. Uh, uh, uh, you know, this person who rescued me from there, uh, uh, put me into this body, uh, as a way of like, giving me more permanence, and keeping me, like, I'm not tied to the, to the broadcast needle needing to be working, right?

Dre: Mmm.

Jack: Right.

Austin: Uh, uh, which, which again, politics of the void, baby. You know? I, I have this other thing, even though I don't have some of what the other VHS folks might, which is like, I bet they can broadcast themselves to different places, as long as that needle's working right, you know? Uh, because I'm in this robot clown body [chuckles] for life, as far as I know.

2:36:31.0 So, uh, —

Dre: Does that... I'm trying to remember. Because what you gave me, as like, what broken thing do you have that I could fix, was a...

Austin: Yeah, what was it?

Dre: It was like a copy of your body, wasn't it?

Austin: Oh, it was a, it was a wooden, remember, it was a wooden, it was a physical body —

Dre: It was a wooden — yeah, okay.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's what it was. Uh-huh. It was, it was an incredibly detailed —

Jack: Oh, that's cool.

Austin: Wooden body of myself. Sorry, folks. We recorded this over two days. The, we were still in character and setting creation stuff. We actually still, we had to take a break because it is was so late the first time we were recording. So, that has been edited out, but...

Dre: Specifically also say that it had, like, wooden organs and things, like —

Austin: Yeah, mm-hm. You could take the whole front off.

Dre: Like, not the instrument organ, but like, heart, lungs.

Austin: Yeah, mm-hm. Heart, lungs, yep. Uh-huh.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: Totally. Why do I want that? Great question.

Jack: I love this sensation, though, of — and, you know, we might get into it, this is like, play to find out what happens. But, there's immediately echoes and evocations here of like, having been a digital existence for so long, exploring different kinds of physical embodiment, right?

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Of like, oh, I'm in this one kind of body. Now, what does it mean to be in a wooden body, how does that affect, you know, my signal, my sense of self.

Austin: Mm-hm. Uh, I [chuckles] can also now go one step further, in wanting to play, what if there was a post-apocalyptic Dark Souls fire-keeper.

Ali: Mmm.

Austin: Uh, because I just was, right? Like, that was the thing I was part of. I was the level-up lady that you went to. Uh, who is then —

Jack: Oh, in some sort of Bluff City —

Austin: Eradicated. Yeah, uh-huh. And then was, you know, put on, put on tape, which is to say, locked up, not allowed in, or kicked out, exiled from the Bluff City canonicity, and then rescued by this person, this, this researcher, who then, was like a digital feminist researcher vibe, like that, but also a witch, you know? Who then did the summoning spell, slash digital whatever, hexography —

Dre: Sure. Yeah.

Austin: Necessary to pull me from the tape and put me in a clown body. A clown [laughing] android body.

Jack: Friends at the Table, baby.

Austin: A clown gynoid body. But — Friends at the Table, uh-huh.

Dre: Yeah. How many of you watched Buffy back in the day?

Austin: I did. I watched a lot.

Ali: I did.

Dre: Do you remember, do you remember the deal with like, Gilles's first love interest character?

Austin: Can I tell you I don't, Dre? But like, I did at the time.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: I would have at the time. What, what was her deal?

Dre: Uh, she was a computer science teacher who, it turned out, was a techno-Pagan.

Austin: Love it.

Dre: And, yeah —

Ali: Mmm.

Dre: So they did stuff like summoning rituals via like, 1990s internet. [chuckling]

Austin: Yeah, okay. Well there you go, right?

Jack: Techno-Paganism is like a whole thing. It's like a, like an existing art movement.

Austin: Oh, I believe it. Yeah.

Dre: I'm very much willing to believe that what that movement looks like is much more expansive than how it was represented by Joss Whedon.

Jack: [laughing]

Austin: I fucking bet, dude. Ugh.

Dre: [laughing]

Austin: Ugh.

Jack: Uh... yeah. Totally. So, it looks like our 3 are, and I — this is, god — tabletop games are good. The 3 things that we're going to be exploring as —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: In conflict. So it's not even, it's worth reminding ourselves that this isn't even just like, things that we're thinking about in the enclave.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: This is in conflict in the enclave, are — politics of the void, as it relates to previously abandoned, semi-fictional people on film reel that have come alive — [chuckling] That have, that have entered into the world via digital void projection.

Austin: I think some of them are also people who tried to go to Bluff City and were rejected, and like, Britney was from Atlantic City, got stuck in the VHS on the trip back from Blough [Blue] City, right?

Jack: Yes.

Austin: Sometimes you just get stuck in there, because the, the tape is bad.

Jack: Yeah, sometimes it's just a mistake.

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh.

Jack: Yeah. Uh, you know, back in the days of Blockbuster and everything, you would constantly, encountering like, "Oh, this tape is broken in some... this just doesn't work." Uh...

Dre: [laughing]

Jack: Uh, barriers to access, across all forms, you know. Who is in the in-group, who is in the out-group, who is on the side of the gigantic rolling screen on the end of the pier.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, who is able to go outside and explore. Who is able and safe enough to stay at home. And then desiring a return to society. What if we could just be part of those people up there above the smog, who have that banging EDM station that [chuckles] that, that we love.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Because, because we get their —

Austin: Or, even —

Jack: DJ, too, presumably.

Austin: Oh my god, I bet we do. I bet we get DJ Atomica, for sure.

Dre: [laughing]

Jack: Oh my god.

Austin: Uh, but also, I want to go back to Bluff City, or even, I thought I'd find a new life here, you know, Blough [Blue] was bad, but it was better than this.

Jack: Yep. Yeah. Absolutely. 100 percent. Yeah, god.

Dre: Good game.

Austin: All right.

Jack: We haven't started.

Dre: [wheezes]

Austin: Yeah we have. We've been — this is all play.

Jack: This is all play, yeah, that's true. [chuckling] This is all play.

Austin: This is all play. In my mind.

Jack: Friends at the Table: it's all play.

Austin: Yeah. Uh-huh.

Ali: Mm-hm.

2:41:26.1

[\[Give Way to Open Sky\]](#) by Jack de Quidt plays]