

## Bluff City 16: Messy Business Pt. 1

Transcribed by: Andrea (@garbagemonger) [First 21 mins]

Also transcribed by: Lucy @battlestarvalk

t/n: An easy guide for agent and civilian names is presented at the end of this document. [Page 54] is the section in which the game begins, the rest is establishing setting/characters. The Japanese baseball game bit starts at 01:59:21 [Page 59].

00:00:00 — 00:03:22

[SOUND EFFECT: distorted ringtone, becomes increasingly louder]

[MUSIC: [Notes on the track in the Patreon description](#)]

AUSTIN [as Specialist Corson]: Specialist Corson, start record. Article intake, file number 8338, object: paper flier for Citywide Film Festival. Description: cream colored, heavy stock, single page, lime green design elements, black text. It describes a film festival organized by one Gale Green and includes a list of directors, actors, and producers attending the event, along with a schedule of activity. Condition: moderate wear, single crease at the bottom, two rounded corners, mm...let's say 'very good.' Price: in auction, start at \$25, request single increment bids to begin. For a buyer tomorrow? Eh...\$40 even.

Comments and analysis: the design work here is...interesting—strike that, it's gaudy, it's gaudy. But in the right moment, uh, garishness is interesting, right? And, uh, I think it was the right moment when this was printed. Given restrictions on printed materials, and especially on typeface and color, I don't think this was made in Blough City. This was imported, which leads to some questions—why would you import fliers? What was so important about these embellishments that you'd risk the wrath of an inspector if you smelled funny at the border, or if your smuggling route was ferreted out? Jeez, that was unintentional.

Anyway, answers, of course, are on the object itself. Familiar names: Gale Green, Blake Blossom, the whole ordeal around the missing tape, the so-called 'agents' sent in to retrieve it—messy, messy business. [sighs] Regardless, note to the seller, unlike a cabinet or a pistol there's no obvious use value for an object like this, so you either need to convince the buyer that there *is* one, or else find the unique collector for whom ownership is its own use.

That's it from me, I'll send it over to Halfway as soon as I can.

[Music continues to end of song]

[SOUND EFFECT: Distorted dial tone, becomes increasingly loud, fading out to the sound of wind blowing]

00;03;22 — 00;08;17

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. I am your host, Austin Walker, you can find me on twitter [@austin\\_walker](#), and joining me today: Janine Hawkins.

JANINE: I'm Janine Hawkins, you can find me [@bleatingheart](#) on Twitter.

AUSTIN: Jack de Quidt.

JACK: Hi! I'm Jack de Quidt, you can find me on twitter [@notquitereal](#), and buy any of the music featured on the show at [notquitereal.bandcamp.com](#)

AUSTIN: Keith J Carberry.

KEITH: Hi, my name is Keith Carberry, you can find me on twitter [@keithjcarberry](#), you can find the Let's Plays that I do at [youtube.com/runbutton](#).

AUSTIN: And Alicia Acampora!

ALI: Hi, you can find me [@ali\\_west](#) on twitter and you can find Friends at the Table over [@Friends\\_Table](#).

AUSTIN: And as always, you can support the show by going to [friendsatthetable.cash](#), and chances are if you're hearing this, you already are doing that, so thank you so much for that. Today we are playing a game and half, we are playing [Lacuna](#) by Jared Sorensen, illustrated by Manning L. Krull, and we are also—I've hacked in a number of things from a game that we've played before, called [TechNoir](#) by Jeremy Keller. Um, so...what is this game? [chuckles] I guess—here's the high level pitch and I'll just read what I, what I sent to y'all today from this dossier.

"Film star Blake Blossom is dead. This is, on its own, not surprising—famous actors die, at least as often as everyone else. But it is where he died that makes this an issue for—" and, it's blacked out here but it's "for the Concern. Blossom was last seen walking down the beach, one week after the filming of 'The Eighty-Six' at approximately 0200 hours, far from any shunt points. Yet within the month, green-level agents reported that he had emerged in Blough City<sup>1</sup>, where he quickly began a new career as an avant-garde filmmaker—something no transplant could do without connections and support. Eight months later, he disappeared without a trace. Two days ago his body was found in the Thicket, by a construction crew while draining a pond at a new housing development. Witness reports indicate that he was found with a portable film camera, its reel empty. Due to the strange nature of his arrival, his rapid ascent in the Metropolis's social scene, and the secrecy around his cause of death, it is possible that he was in contact with Agent Squire—a.k.a. Hector Hu—or another hostile personality. Operate with caution. Identify his cause of death, locate the tape, and bring his killer to justice."

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<sup>1</sup> t/n: This is pronounced as "Blue City", as part of the original Lacuna flavour text

Lacuna is a game that does not give itself a nice pitch, like there's not like a big nice thing I can copy and paste to be like "Aha, here's what the game is!" But it fundamentally, I'd say, is like—it's a game about espionage and intrigue. You could play it as a Cold War game, you can play it as an Inception game. It's a game about diving into a collective unconscious and then doing spy shit there. It's a hostile environment, in which you need to proc—uh, you know, uh—procure? Is that the word I'm looking for? That's a word, right? Procure? Like get?

KEITH: [cross] Yeah, procure means get, yeah.

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah, got it. Procure, you know, cover, or disguises, hook up with connections that you know, find information and solve some mystery. It is a game that, it has a great deal of kind of weird slash supernatural stuff in it, and has its own big setting, which we are largely discarding, outside of the use of some NPC names, and some kind of, like kind of core ideas around things like "Blue" vs "Deep Blue" level clearance, and stuff like that. You are playing as agents of a group that was first brought up in the Noirlandia game called the Concern. This is a group that, as far as listeners and characters—the characters in this game are concerned, investigates or interacts with a place called Blough City, which is where Hector Hu seems to have disappeared to. Hector Hu was the radio man who was supposedly killed at the start of the Noirlandia game and then, uh, we learned was actually killed well before that. And then beyond that we also saw him a bunch, walking around and doing stuff, so we know he was not fully dead. Right?

Um, some of you are playing old characters who have since joined the Concern. We should just go over those at a high level—just, name, and who you were before, and what your agent name is now. Let's start at the left here: Ali.

00;08;17 — 00;12;57

ALI: Oh, hi, uh, yeah, so, um...I'm playing Agent Ryder, a.k.a. Chris Andrews, who I was playing in the Noirlandia game. Um, [crosstalk] where do you want me to go from there?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] So—yeah she was a big—that's all, that's all!

ALI: [laughs] Okay.

Austin: You were a big fan of Hector Hu and if people don't remember, if you haven't gone back and listened to Noirlandia, which—*fair*—there's like, a ton of mechanics up top in that game and that's a real barrier to listening to that a second time, but—go back, just skip those mechanics. [Ali laughs.] Just listen to the stories, there's some amazing fucking scenes in that game! The end of Chris's story was that you were, kind of coerced into joining the Concern by a woman named Leslie Strata, who is actually AKA Agent Ward who is a—a personality in this game. And you've since joined the Concern. Uh...Janine?

JANINE: I'm playing as Agent Seals, also known as Maggie Darcy, who was from that first uh, Fiasco game we did in Bluff City.

AUSTIN: Awesome. I just realized that the names are wrong on this thing, I don't know why I didn't fix this. That explains why there was some confusion before. So yeah, Maggie Darcy was, the like, IRS boss, right?

JANINE: She was like a, like a—not like a boss-boss, but like a local...she did a lot of like investigation but also managing some like undercover agents and field agents and stuff.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. The...Tawny Buck, and Jodi O'Brien reported up to Maggie Darcy.

JANINE: Yes.

AUSTIN: Keith.

KEITH: Hi.

AUSTIN: Who are you?

KEITH: Oh, god. Should I have a real name?

AUSTIN: Uh, maybe! I don't think your character would use it with these people, right?

KEITH: Only maybe. Yeah, well, they know me as Agent Heard.

AUSTIN: Heard.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Heard.

AUSTIN: That's what it was, you were Heard, right?

KEITH: Heard. H-E-A-R-D.

AUSTIN: [cross] H-E-A-R-D. Okay.

KEITH: Agent Heard.

AUSTIN: There you go. And then, that's—your character as far as I know is just kind of like, you—so, one, your character has a higher level of clearance than them which means there are times at which I'll be like, "Keith, you know 'blank'!"

KEITH: Yeah, I'm 'Deep Blue.'

AUSTIN: I will say that explicitly fairly soon. But other than that, we know that you...were...well, we'll get into that stuff as we go through character sheet stuff. Uh, lastly, Agent Page. Jack de Quidt.

JACK: Yeah, uh, I am Florence Slowly, who we last met in um, in the Noirlandia game. Uh, she is a former, she is an older woman who is a former police detective, [AUSTIN: Yep.] who previously had some kind of run-ins with Hector and also the—the weird nature of Blough City. [AUSTIN: Yeah.] While not quite fully understanding what was going on at that point.

AUSTIN: So, I just re-listened to that Noirlandia game. So I can be pretty clear on this stuff. You—what the Florence Slowly who started...so when you started the game Noirlandia, there was a secret about your past was one of the things that was like, brought up [JACK: Mm...], and one of the questions was whether you would reveal that secret to yourself. Throughout that game, you avoided revealing that secret to yourself, but it was absolutely revealed to the audience at home, which is: while you only remembered Hector Hu, the radio man who gave you some uh, tips and was a source for helping you break one or two cases but also leading you down the garden path on some other ones, you had actually once worked with Hector directly, as an agent of the Concern—something you did not remember at all. And, you chose, at the end, to not have that revealed. But, over the course of a few postcards, [Austin and Jack chuckle] the plan is to reveal that Hector slowly brings you in again, and reminds you of what you were.

JACK: Uh, so by now, I—I...I know what I did in the past. [crosstalk] Or I know that I did stuff in the past.

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah, I think so, yes, yes.

JACK: Also, I don't quite remember how I described Florence Slowly in the first one, but I have decided, and I don't know if this is close—that I want to describe her as 'Tilda Swinton playing an actor playing a policeman.'

AUSTIN: You did use the Tilda Swinton connection before [Ali chuckles]—the other—the other thing that you described her as was, um, do you—I think the way you said it was...

ALI: Birdlike?

AUSTIN: Definitely birdlike, but you said, "Do you know how when you are very young, there is a moment at which you come to understand that your parents are older. And then, when you are older, there is a second time at which you understand that your parents are older. She is somewhere between those two." [slight laugh]

JACK: Oh, wow. [cross] Okay!

AUSTIN: [cross] And so, that is—that is how—I asked, I was like "well how old is Florence?"

JACK: [cross] That is really helpful, Jack, thanks.

00;12;57 —00;18;38

AUSTIN: Uh-huh! Yeah. So those are the—that is—that is Florence Slowly.

Um. This game is weird, and character creation is weird; I'm gonna ask you some weird things about it. I'm also gonna say up top that there's some things we threw out. This is a game that says like, "okay, well, you play a character who's the same gender as you, and that determines one of your stats." I've thrown that out entirely. I don't care what character—what gender your characters are, I don't care what char—what gender *you* are, you can play whatever character you want. And also, there's a thing that says your character's heart rate—which we'll get into in a moment—is tied to your character's age; I've also thrown that out. It is so uh—immediately conceivable of people being various ages having different like, peak performance heart rates, so...let's just do that, let's just pick one of their sets and assign it to the characters as appropriate. It is very—this is a very "2006" game, uh, for a lot of reasons, not least of which is, as some of us have pointed out *before* we started recording, the antagonism of the book. This is a book that does not—not only does it not *have* a section that says "this is what an RPG is," it does have a paragraph that says [derisively] "If you don't know what an RPG is, put this book down, or have someone in the know explain it to you."

KEITH: There's also a section that tells you not to read a section you're *definitely* supposed to read.

AUSTIN: I think it's even the section you're *currently* reading.

KEITH: Yeah, uh, it's *right* after that, it's like the next page.

AUSTIN: Okay. Right, okay, yeah, sure. Um, it's—it's a very weird book. I was saying before we started recording that like, it comes out of a moment in the early-to-mid 2000s where independent small press RPGs were just starting for the first time, and so I give it a little more slack when it comes to things like its attitude, because it comes from a designer who I know is making not that much money, and spending what money that they had on a kind of passion project game. This is not a Wizards of the Coast product—er, project. But I'm so glad we have learned in the RPG space the importance of clarity, and searchability, and like, organizational stuff—that those things are as important as like, flavour. Which this book has in spades, but. Would love to very quickly be able to jump to the page that has like, stats on it.

JANINE: Also something that might be worth mentioning about this book: um, if you have a thing about spiders [AUSTIN (emphatically): Oh yeah!], this book is covered in realistically sized pictures of spiders [AUSTIN: Mm-hmm!] inside. Like all over the place.

AUSTIN [cross]: *All* over the place.

JANINE: And like, I get it, but for some people that's gonna make this, um...not ideal. So.

AUSTIN: Absolutely. A hundred percent. Um, there's also—I mean this is also, the book's back half is about its setting, and its setting is a kind of near-future dystopian—or, its setting is the place called the City. Or Blue—it's called Blue City. The place—the people there call it "the City." But it is, it is a weird dream world kind of metropolis. But, to get there, you have to go through like, weird brain transfer shit—again, think about Inception, which is a movie that came out after this book, um, and, the way that like, those people go into people's minds. Similar to that, but in the backstory of how all that stuff came together it includes like, experimenting on prisoners and a

very dystopian desire to eliminate like, "the criminal impulse." And I don't think this is a game that believes in that, I think this is a game that's very critical of that, it does not think that the Company, which is what it calls the Concern, is a good group, or anything like that. But it's very Warren Ellis, if that makes sense, if people have read any Warren Ellis comics or books. Uh, it's very much like, it's eager to show you the grimness of like, dystopian organizations. It's also a very post-9/11 book. Even though it's playing on like, Cold War stuff a lot, it's also very much interested in, uh...you know, in this game you're not supposed to talk about specific cities, you're not supposed to talk about specific countries; you can talk about "The City," "The Country" and "The War". And The War has always been going on, and it's—when people talk about it, it's, you know, about a presumably Middle Eastern country, and no one in The City cares about what's happening there because they've given up on any sort of, um—encountering the notion of war with any sort of ethics. It's a very cynical game in that way. So all of that stuff is important to know going into it. I think it's a really neat game, and I'm really excited to play it.

But as I said, I also have hacked in some stuff from TechNoir, which is one of my favorite games, but which I also found really hard to do in Actual Play format before, because of the way it did resolution. It did like uh, "Hey, I wanna do a thing!" "Uh, okay well, roll these dice, we'll figure out an adjective if it goes well..." and there's lots of dice trading and that made it really hard to listen to as an RPG [cross] and as an Actual Play podcast.

KEITH: [cross] Yeah I don't know if...I don't know if you mentioned but, TechNoir is the un-Meched version of the—what we started COUNTER/Weight with.

AUSTIN: [cross] Right, sorry.

00:18:38 — 00:20:41

AUSTIN: Yes, yeah, we played MechNoir which is a hack, also by Jeremy Keller, of TechNoir. Um, and the—but what I *loved* about it was the sense of open-endedness and mystery. Because the way it works is, you have a thing that TechNoir calls a Transmission, which is a collection of people, of like contacts; events; factions; objects; locations; and threats. And, those are all put out on various tables and you kind of build a mystery as you play. The GM can obviously direct that in different ways and can kind of point things at different directions, but like, at any point when you like, go to a place to investigate something, there is a table to roll on. To be like, "okay, you got a success! You found out something about—about, you know, this other weird part of all this. Okay, interesting. Cool." And that helps to produce a mystery that even the GM doesn't necessarily know the answers of. And I thought that was a really cool thing, back during COUNTER/Weight, that we haven't been able to ever like, play around with again and I think it makes perfect sense here in Blough City, because Blough City is a very confusing, strange place, and I really love the feeling of not knowing what's gonna happen. I obviously know some big picture things. I know who these characters are. I know what some of—I know, you know, who Blake Blossom was. I don't know who killed Blake Blossom, right? In that way it's similar to our Noirlandia game, in which we procedurally came up with the story of Hector Hu's death by way of the game mechanics. But, the other thing that's nice here is, Lacuna does not give you much in the way of structure. Lacuna is a—y'all probably didn't read the GM section, but like, like it says up top, there is no "and this is how you build a good mystery." [chuckles] There is no, "and this is how you put together a, you know, a good adventure." Um, there is stuff in the back that's mechanics for the GM, there's a system

called Static, which is like, you get extra—in fact, I should put a Static tracker up on the screen, I will do that—that, this kind of thing that goes up as people fail rolls, or are insubordinate to Control, or are using techniques. And those things, as Static goes up, things get weirder and weirder and weirder. And so, that is a thing that is uh...that's neat, but like beyond that there's not much guidance in terms of, "how should you be building a mystery?" And so the TechNoir stuff will help a little bit there. Uh, we'll play it by ear. We'll see how it goes. You know.

Uh, any questions before we get into character stuff?

00;20;41<sup>2</sup> — 00;25;48

[pause]

AUSTIN: Okay, so...

KEITH: No, no questions! [laughs]

AUSTIN: None! None questions. [Keith laughs]. There's like some setting stuff that I think we'll get—I'll become more...like open about, I guess? As we continue. Because there's stuff that people will have questions about, like "what the fuck is Blough City?" But we'll get to that when it's time to get to that, you know?

KEITH: Yeah. Not having questions now just means that we're gonna have all of them in a little bit.

AUSTIN: All of them. In a little bit, yeah. I'll go over like, what you know about Blough City and stuff, before we actually start-start.

Alright, so, at the bottom of the screen you should see—oh wait, are you [referring to players] on the right page? Did I put you on the right page? Yes. Okay. Phew. Um, at the bottom of the page there are like, your names. And there's like, a "Force"—uh, there are, this game has Attributes, it has Techniques, it has a Mentor, and it has things called Talents. Attributes—there are three attributes—also! Here's a fun thing—I put a cheat sheet in the sidebar here for people to open up, in which it basically breaks down the entire game in a page. [giggling] So that, again, speaks to the organisation of this game? To some degree.

JACK: Oh my God, incredible. Thank you so much!

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's very useful... so, there are three Attributes: Force, Instinct, and Access. Force covers physical conditioning and the ability to commit random acts of violence, including brawling, climbing, resisting torture, breaking objects, and shooting someone. Instinct governs perceptive abilities, force of will and intuition, including sensing danger, hiding, tracking, gambling, and discerning truth from lies.

I should note—I did not write this—this cheat sheet, I did not build this cheat sheet, I found it on [rpg.net](https://forum.rpg.net)<sup>3</sup>, which—which is a forum for people to play RPGs, and talk about RPGs. Access

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<sup>2</sup> t/n: new transcriber takes over here! I've tried to copyedit to gel the two typing styles into one but you may notice a handful of changes between us.

<sup>3</sup> t/n: I believe Austin is referring to this one:

<https://forum.rpg.net/index.php?threads/lacuna-one-page-cheat-sheet.540410/>



governs the acquisition, management and exchange of resources. The important one there is—did my audio get weird just now? No, it's fine.

KEITH: Nope!

AUSTIN: I think my *ear* just got weird just now? The pressure just changed in this room in a very weird way. Anyway!

KEITH: It's Blough City, it's doing it to you.

AUSTIN: It's fucking Blough City! It's coming for me! [Ali giggles] There's like a light ringing in my ear, it's fine...

Force is really obvious, I think Instinct is really obvious, right? For the most part... Access can be a little weird, because Access... one of the things to know is, you're kind of being dropped... again, I love Inception as a touchstone here, obviously the Matrix is also probably a really big touchstone here... You're going into a City, and you are—you're kind of going in naked? Not... literally naked, you have your uniforms, but you don't go in with any weapons, you don't go in with any vehicles, you don't go in with any identification, you don't go in with any... food... or—or—I almost said milk? [Ali, Keith laugh] You don't get any food *or* milk when you go in. [all laugh] Which is a problem!

JACK: God, that's a thing that we don't often say about our games—our characters... always take milk with them on quests.

AUSTIN: They normally just have milk with them, and now they don't

KEITH: Austin, if you could block your ears for a second—

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

KEITH: Austin thinks the only drink is milk? And [Ali giggles] none of us have been able to figure out—

JACK: [crosstalk] Yeah, I've noticed this. Yeah.

KEITH: —how to tell him there's... stuff.

JANINE: I just don't see a need to tell him, that's all. [Ali laughs]

KEITH: Sometime's it's like in the South, how they call soda 'Coke' in some places? Like all soda is Coke? [Ali laughs] Sometimes Austin will drink water and say 'Ooh, this is nice milk!'—like—'I like clear milk.' [beat] I don't know, it's weird. Okay, Austin, you're good! [slight pause] Hold on, I'll DM him...

AUSTIN: Mm! Sorry, I was just taking a good sip of this great caffeinated milk [Keith laughs, all laugh]

So Access is interesting—it's finding that sort of stuff, but it's also things like, knowing how to navigate Blough City, because Blough City is weird—it's also... being able to contact and ask for things from Control, which is like—your handler, basically. So that's—that's basically what it is... so, we could start with just that, if you want to go down what those are—if that makes sense? Instead of going all at once and then going from person to person, let's just start...

KEITH: [crosstalk] Yeah, that makes sense.

AUSTIN: —one more thing, for each of these things—for Force, Instinct, and Access, there is also a Talent, and Talents give you a bonus dice, is basically what they do... we'll talk about how that actually happens when it's time to talk about how that happens, but for now, know—if you do something that your Talent can do, then it is—you get a bonus when you do it. So for instance—in the 'Force' category, there is the Athletics, Aggression, and Strategy Talent. And there's some overlap there, but it's not... it's never a complete overlap, right? So one of the Talents for Force—Aggression, is 'kill, destroy, or damage something', right? So if I'm in a fight, can I use my Aggression Talent? Totally! You're in a chase? Okay, well are you trying to kill this person? No... okay, well, then you probably can't use your Aggression Talent for it... Are you in a chase and you have Athletics? Okay, yeah, totally! You can use Athletics for that, 100%... What about Strategy? Well, maybe? Are you trying to capture somebody? Okay, maybe then you could do that, in a chase in that way. Or if you're being chased, can you use Strategy? *Probably* not, right? So... there are three per each thing. So let's just start, Ali, with Agent Ryder. What is your Force, Instinct, and Access?

00;25;48 — 00;31;40

ALI: So... my Force is 2, my Instinct is 4, and my Access is 3.

AUSTIN: Awesome. Do you want to just add them down to the sheet there?

ALI: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay, cool... what is your Talent?

ALI: My Talent... I think I'm gonna go with... [hums] Intuition.

AUSTIN: Okay! So Intuition says 'sensing an ambush or general wrongness, following hunches'. Again, it's up to us to decide what that means, and that's under the Instinct category. Cool. Also, everyone will either have 3-3-3, or 2-3-4 in some order, basically. Very easy attributes—

KEITH: [crosstalk] One really funny thing that the book does, instead of saying that—[Ali, Austin laugh] it lists every possible combination of...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] It's so—! It does both!

KEITH: [crosstalk] 2-3-4. Yeah...

JACK: [crosstalk] I like that one actually, that one's really funny.

AUSTIN: It does both of those things, like I read it and was like '...okay'... It says that you can have either 3 in everything, or a combination of 2, 3, and 4... and the next page begins [laughing] with this big, ridiculous chart... it's so goofy!

JACK: That shows every permutation...

AUSTIN: Yeah, starting Mystery Agents have 9 points to spend on Attributes, either rating with 3 in all three or ratings of 2, 3, and 4. [Jack laughs] Then there's another paragraph that says 'Agent, using the 9 points allotted to you, write down your Attribute ratings. As the minimum rating allowed is 2 and the top scale is 4, Attribute ratings break down into these permutations.' And then there's a HUGE fucking chart!

KEITH: Three—it takes three whole lines... [AUSTIN: It does.] going across... it's very funny—sorry, real quick—are we supposed to have... three different Talents? No, right? Just one?

AUSTIN: No, one. One Talent.

KEITH: That's what I thought, okay. I saw that it said [JACK: I think...] Talent on all three, so.... I was like, 'Oh no!'

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: Someone is filling out my... card.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?

KEITH: Oh! Sorry, I'm one over.

AUSTIN: You are? [Ali giggles]

KEITH: My page got switched.

JACK: Agent Heard, you might have a higher security clearance, [Austin laughs] but you don't know which index card has your name above it.

KEITH: [crosstalk] I'll tell you what your... [laughs, Jack laughs] how forceful you are...

AUSTIN: Um... and then, also add your Talent... awesome, there it goes, perfect! Maggie Darcy, in red?

—00:27:50—

JANINE: Yeah... I'm going with 3 in each—

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: [continuing] because... Maggie seems very well rounded? In general... and for her Talent, Investigation seems like the obvious call there—

AUSTIN: Yeah

JANINE: [continuing] It... seems the one that fits best.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that seems like, in line with who she... with who she is, with having previously done that.

JANINE: And the expertise that she's already bringing.

AUSTIN: And also like kind of where her interest is, right? You were pitching me this version of Maggie—you didn't play Maggie as your main character in... in Fiasco, right?

JANINE: No, we invented Maggie as a... as a like, [laughing] Maggie was just invented purely because Jack was like 'I—I think there's an IRS person in this scuba shop' or in this sub—sub thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Mm-hm. [starts giggling]

JANINE: So we were like 'Oh, okay! Uh... her name's Maggie Darcy, and... [laughs] she's worried about your binders.'

AUSTIN: Right. And the thing that you pitched was like, Maggie Darcy as... wanting to be more of a field agent.

JANINE: Yeah.

—00:28:49—

AUSTIN: So, Investigation: Search crime scenes, analyse evidence. Nice. Uhh... Keith, I appreciate that you have taken the Lacuna school of layout here. [Keith laughs]

JACK: [crosstalk] Keith is making his look real spooky and I love it. Um... [laughs]

AUSTIN: [Keith is still laughing] Um... all of your stats are skewed? And also... originally, the word 'Strategy', which is your Talent... was just sort of, spilled out on your character sheet? As if little pieces of cereal.

JANINE: [crosstalk] It's really good, super good...

KEITH: I'm not exactly done arranging it, I'm gonna do a little bit more work on it, but yeah—each letter is its own... sort of text box here?

AUSTIN: [laughing] Uh-huh?!

JACK: Oh, God, it's incredible.

AUSTIN: I love it. I'm surprised they're all in the same font, honestly.

KEITH: Oh! I forgot I could change that! God...

AUSTIN: [laughing] I shouldn't have said anything! Um... [Jack chuckles] You have 3 in everything. 3 Force, 3 Instinct—

KEITH: Yes.

AUSTIN: [continuing] 3 Access... And your Talent is Strategy... which is a Force Talent, and is 'Incapacitate, subdue, capture, or process.' Process is an interesting one there. Because that makes me feel like—'also I do paperwork well,' um. [chuckles]

KEITH: Yeah! [pause] It does says... let me see... I'm gonna—there's a quote on one of these things—it says, 'To say that the life of a Mystery Agent is exciting—well, it's a lie really. Really, we're boring individuals with boring lives and boring clothes, and we huddle together for warmth like hairless rats in our boring little grey offices.' [Austin laughs] 'Grey rats, grey lives.' [giggles]

AUSTIN: Yeah—Then again, that is written in the section called 'Green'. So... my guess is green agents live much more boring lives than the deep blue agents.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Yeah, that's true. But you have to live through green to get to deep blue.

—00:30:25—

AUSTIN: You do. It's true. [pause] Finally, Agent Page—Florence Slowly.

JACK: I have Force 4 [AUSTIN: Ooh!], Instinct 3, Talent 2. Um—

AUSTIN: [interrupting] Or—Instinct—uh, Access 2?

JACK: Uh—yeah, Access 2. The... Florence we saw in Noirlandia was retired Florence, who's been like... not trained recently? [AUSTIN: Mm-hm.] And I like—I want to commit to the idea that—in its grimmest possible way, Florence used to be a cop?

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: So she's Force 4, Instinct 3, Access 2. I'd originally written down 'Strategy' before Keith wrote down his spectacular Strategy hellscape? [Austin chuckles] And I'm wondering whether or not just to go for Aggression.

AUSTIN: Mm! That's interesting.

JACK: To just go like—Florence is this weird, sharp object.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Who is like... 'Yeah, I retired, I raised a kid, my basement got haunted...' [pauses]

AUSTIN: And now I kill—[trails off]

JACK: [continuing] 'Now I'm far away from my kid and my basement and I've been sent into a parallel city to fuck things up?' [giggles]

AUSTIN: Yeah... I love it, I'm good with that. This is a very—this is a very interesting grouping, I like this a lot. So, again, you are 4 Force, Instinct 3, Access 2, and your Talent is Aggression.

JACK: Aggression, yeah. Oop, shit! Okay. No, I'm good.

00;31;40 — 00;36;55

AUSTIN: Alright... okay. The second thing here is heart rate. So, everyone has a target heart rate, a Resting heart rate—which is your starting heart rate—and a Maximum heart rate. The way that heart rate works in this game is... when you do stuff, your heart rate goes up. Any time you roll the dice, your heart rate goes up. When you are—when the game starts, you have between a 70 and 75 heart rate—you can just write that down under “current” right now, it's up to you. In this game—it defaults to gender-locked, I forget—someone has 70 and someone has 75, I'm throwing that ent—

JANINE: Men have 70, women have 75.

AUSTIN: [mock annoyance] Thanks, women.

JANINE: Quote unquote.

AUSTIN: [mock annoyance] Nice work, women. I don't think that's grounded in *any* science [Janine chuckles], throw it out the window. I also just don't think it's true for these characters. These characters have whatever their heart rate is inside of their balance of 70 to 75... but there is a list of—again, in this game, the book is written as such that each age that you have is tied to a specific heart rate. There's a bunch of those, and you're supposed to roll for it, and it's very clearly supposed to be like 'oh, you rolled for some shit! That's fun! It's always fun to roll random dice and get numbers!' but—the basic gist of it is—the lower your age is in this book, the lower range of these heart rates—your maximum is really high? But your target range is harder to get to—it's higher up. And so... I guess I'll explain what target and max does...

When your—I guess I'll have to explain how rolls work in this game. Let's just do a simple one for real. One time, Agent Heard, you are in a fistfight with somebody. And... you wanted to win that fistfight, so you used your Force Skill. Can you give me 3d6 right now?

KEITH: I can do that, yes.

AUSTIN: Because the way—the way this game works is you roll 1d6 for each Attribute point you have.

KEITH: Alright, 3d6?

AUSTIN: Give me 3d6. [pause] That is a ten! Which in this game would be a failure, because your goal is to get to eleven. So, when you fail in this game, either something happens, and I get to decide a thing, right? One thing that happens is that static goes up, and I can do other shit—or, you can say—‘no no no no no, I really want to succeed here, let me try again’, and what happens then is that you roll again, so give me another 3d6.

KEITH: Seven!

AUSTIN: That’s a seven, you would have failed again, this is bad—this is a bad fight sequence for you.

KEITH: Yeah. Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: This is a very telling thing here, right? So.. at this point, for each roll that you make, as you’re rolling, whatever number you roll, your heart rate goes up by that number. So when you first roll that 3d6—

KEITH: [crosstalk] Only when you fail?

AUSTIN: No, always.

KEITH: Always.

AUSTIN: Always, always. So that first roll, maybe you would have gone from that starting 72, up to... an 82, and then you would have gone up from an 82 by another seven you just rolled, so you’d be up to 89... I just realised, I need a third thing here, which is your target heart rate... uh—thing. Yeah, just do what Ali smartly did, and just add it underneath. Nice work, Ali. So... here’s the thing, when you hit your target heart rate, which is a range—so for instance, Ali’s—Chris Andrews’, or Agent Ryder’s—is between 93 and 138. You can roll as many dice as you want to. That’s what the book says, and I’m just gonna read it that way. I’m not saying it caps out at five, even though your character sheets top out at five, or four, or whatever.

JACK: Woah!

AUSTIN: You get to roll as many dice as you want to. But that can—

JACK: I can just roll 4d6 dice and *die*.

AUSTIN: Yeah—well, what it does is [Keith chuckles]—you would—[laughs] in fact, add—continue to add to your heart rate. And at that point—when you hit maximum, you don’t die, but what happens is, everything that you would try to do that uses Force or Instinct is a—what is called a

'Risky' roll. At any point, you can be in a Risky roll—being in a gunfight is a Risky roll. When you fail a Risky roll, the related attribute drops. So, like, if—if Agent Heard fails this—boxing match—this fistfight, I forget what—I forgot the word 'fistfight' and jumped to 'boxing match', which is fun [Ali giggles]. If he fails this fistfight—actually—is Agent Heard he/him? I actually don't know what Agent Heard's pronouns are...

KEITH: He/him, yes.

AUSTIN: Okay. So if Agent Heard fails this fistfight, you would drop your Force down from 3 to 2. And there are ways that you can raise that back up but—that's not great! That's bad! Right? And so... the point is that, when your heart rate gets to maximum, it's not like you die. It's just that, even traditionally things that wouldn't be risky in that way, can become Risky, right? So, even though you're just trying to climb the... the side of this—building or whatever, you know, you're not being shot at or anything—that becomes a much more risky thing, because your heart rate is all the way through the roof. And... that is, to be clear, it's not just your heart rate in the moment. This is a game that's like, imagining you on a slab, tied up—or you know, with IVs and weird pulse monitors and shit all hooked up to you. Again, think *Inception*, think *The Matrix*, think in that space. So like, your natural body's heart rate is pounding, even though in the world, you might look really calm, you know? And again, there are other ways to like, manage that stuff between scenes, and other stuff like that...

00:36:55 — 00:39:57

AUSTIN: So... Chris Andrews, what is your current and maximum heart rate?

ALI: So my current is—

AUSTIN: [corrects them both] And target.

ALI: ...Yeah, um—my current is 73, my maximum is 184, and my target is 93-138.

AUSTIN: It's like right in the middle there, right? [ALI: Yep.] You have a nice, sizable target range, but also a... a pretty high—up maximum. Ah—Maggie Darcy.

JANINE: Current heart rate is 72, maximum is 183, and the target is the same—it's 93-138.

AUSTIN: Alright! Agent Heard...

KEITH: My current heart rate is also 72, my maximum is 190, and my target is 95 through 142.

AUSTIN: Alright, so again—kind of in that same basic space—you want a high maximum and—but a, kind of a late-ish target. Agent Florence—or Agent Page. Florence Slowly

JACK: My current heart rate is 70. My maximum is 170. And my target—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Mm! A little lower.



JACK: [continuing] [amused] My target heart rate is 85-127.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. So that's a... you'll get into that target range way quicker, which is great, 'cause like Florence is experienced, right? Florence—

JACK: [overlap] I'm kind of like a glass cannon, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah... uh-huh! Here's hoping. I mean, you're—[JACK: Also I should—] go ahead.

JACK: I should just say that Kei—[laughs] Keith has been—refining his hell card? [Keith laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah!

JACK: Uh... the highlight for me, right now [Ali giggles], is the indifference between letters written in—numbers written in numerals, or in letters. [Keith laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?

JACK: So we've got Force, Instinct, and *Talent*\* are written in the *word* 'three', in what seems to be some kind of Papyrus-like font.

AUSTIN: Yeah. [Ali giggles]

JACK: And then, where his target heart rate would be written, it is off the bottom of the card...  
[AUSTIN: Mm-hm] in a *truly* illegible red, that says something like—[slightly off mic]  
remember—85—through—145...

AUSTIN: Something like that.

KEITH: It's 95 through 145... yeah, written out in words, right.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Written out. In words.

JACK: [crosstalk] But in words. Yeah, in words.

AUSTIN: And in print-block font, not in handwriting.

KEITH: Yeah... and it also extends from—from the edges of my card and onto—well, it's outside the bounds of my card [Austin laughs] but it does—it's so big that it also goes onto the cards next to mine.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it begins at Maggie's...

JANINE: [interrupting] It's printed on to the corkboard, if I'm not mistaken [all laugh]

AUSTIN: Yes.

JANINE: That's hard to do.

AUSTIN: It's hard to do! It's not—that's not a useful—that's not great!

KEITH: It's like—it's—they're vinyl stickers.

AUSTIN: Right. Great. Good...

JACK: Individually applied!

KEITH: Individually applied viny—no, they were [AUSTIN: Perfect—] custom-ordered full words.

JANINE: It's custom-printed clear washi tape.

AUSTIN: God! [Keith laughs]

JANINE: It just says that, over and over and over again.

AUSTIN: Love it. Alright, so—

KEITH: [interrupts] Oh, it does say 'three' in numerals, by the way—sort of next to the Talents.

JACK: Oh yes, it does!

KEITH: [continuing] Yeah, so you do get both.

JACK: [crosstalk] I hadn't noticed that.

AUSTIN: That way, whatever you need, it's there.

JACK: A minor concession for readability.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Thank you... [chuckles]

00;39;57 — 00;49;46

AUSTIN: So next up, let's talk about—so you have something on the sheet called 'Techniques', but the way you get Techniques is through something else called a Mentor. Uh, The Concern has a lot of people working for it—other Agents, both who are field agents, or former field agents; people who have various degrees of clearance; people who are dedicated to training, or who have fallen into training; people alive, dead, and missing. And those are your Mentors. Let's start with you, Agent Ryder, with who your Mentor is.

ALI: Um, yeah. I—so—[giggles] so I was looking at the list... who was the person who brought me on, are they an option?

AUSTIN: They are not. They are a contact you could have.

ALI: [crosstalk] No... okay....Okay, cool.

AUSTIN: [continuing] Because she is still in the field, at this point—basically.

ALI: Okay...

AUSTIN: I will give you some more on her out of character, in a moment, but—I guess you already know some of this, which is you know that she is ex-Coast Guard. And Coast Guard has been a weird thing that has recurred throughout this entire Bluff City run... and, the... I'll just put it on the table. The Concern is a group which monitors the relationship between Bluff City and Blough City. The Concern is, on paper, interested in maintaining the borders between those two and keeping a balance, and making sure that Bluff City—which is a city filled with creativity and... expressivity, and a billion other really positive words for like, thinking about stuff, and being kind of paradoxical, but in a really powerful way, and—you know, identity being important, but ever-changing and expansive. They are concerned with making sure that it stays that way, and making sure that the parts of Blough City, which are restrictive, and repressive, and are hierarchical, and coercive—are kept in Blough City. Except that The Concern operates in both Bluff and Blough City, and is at war with itself. The Concern is in a constant state of cold war—which is to say lots of little proxy battles, lots of little, you know, deniable operations... between a faction inside of The Concern, which we know as the Coast Guard when they appear in Bluff City—and a faction that we've not seen what they look like yet on the screen, of people from Bluff City going into Blough City. So, on paper—all of these people are allied, right? But, in reality, they are constantly sniping at each other, even as they report up to the same chain eventually. And so... the person who recruited you was Leslie Strata, who was ex-Coast Guard, which is to say she is from Blough City, and betrayed Blough City, and joined the Conce—stopped being part of, you know—Blough City faction of the Concern, and started being part of the Bluff City faction of the Concern. So, that's who she is—she is a contact, and she is a personality in—in Bluff City—or in Blough City, that you could run into during the game. If you do wanna have her as a person who you interact with, you could choose a Mentor who knows her, and would have, you know, put you in touch with her on the other side, basically. And I think that's either Gardener or Forester—are the two who have her as a contact.

—00:43:28—

ALI: Oh, okay. Um...

AUSTIN: But the Mentor also determines some other stuff that you might think is more important, you know?

ALI: ...Yeah, I was like, so lost on the Techniques thing... I think I'm gonna go with Agent Duke?

AUSTIN: Okay!

ALI: Even though I don't...

AUSTIN: I can talk you through what that stuff is, basically.

ALI: Okay, yeah.

AUSTIN: So, each Mentor gives you a Technique that you have immediate access to, and then also opens up a category of Techniques for you to learn. So, for Agent Duke, he gives you access to the 'Endurance' technique, immediately. Which is, ah... this is one of those things that I just wish was on the same page! Uhm... the Endurance technique extends your target heart rate by 5 bpm in either direction... so either you could start five lower, or you could—or you could—or your maximum could be plus five. So you just get that right away.

ALI: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: Then the other thing that Duke does is gives you access to... is it Skills? I left the page and now I have to scroll back down a bunch...

ALI: Uh, Assets is the other one.

AUSTIN: Oh—it's Assets? Alright... so it gives you access to the Assets category of techniques. The Assets category of techniques are things like... 'Bulletproof: The Agent may ignore one point of Force attribute loss'. In other words, so when you fail a Force roll, you don't lose Force... or the same thing but for Instinct, ESP. Or Driver, which gives you access to a sleek, four-door sedan. Because otherwise, you don't have a car when you go into Blough City. So, because of the way we're playing, I'm giving everyone one of these more advanced techniques—I'm acting as if you've already leveled up once, basically. So if you choose—if you choose Agent Duke, you'll start with Endurance, and then you will also start with any one Asset technique that you think is interesting—that you think is what Chris would have.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Does that make sense?

ALI: Yep!

AUSTIN: Cool. So, you're gonna go with Duke, or you gonna pick somebody else?

ALI: Yeah, I'm sticking with Agent Duke. I just think it's a personality fit [giggles].

AUSTIN: Yeah... do you wanna read what the Duke write-up is, [ALI: Yeah!] or do you want me to read it?

ALI: So... Agent Dukes works in CME—Cursor Mnemonic Exploration?

AUSTIN: Yeah, he's like a—he's like a scout, basically, right? He's the person who's doing like—he's going to Blough City, right? But he isn't doing... dirty work at this point—he's not doing wet work, or whatever.

ALI: Yeah, and is known for his clever mind and quick wit. Although trained under Agent Wagner to work in Blough City as a Mystery Agent, an incident while on the slab caused Agent Duke to involuntarily eject from the mission. Subsequent reinsert—[giggles] Subsequent re-insertion proved impossible for mysterious reasons. Agent Duke isn't especially bitter about the change in clearance. He finds his work challenging in a different way, one that takes advantage of his perceptive nature.

AUSTIN: Yeah, he's like laid back about it. He got a demotion and is like—[Ali laughs] 'you know what? This is alright, actually... what if I didn't have to go kill weird things, or get shot at, like—I'll just become a reconnaissance guy, and get to go to this weird city and hang out, and that's okay.' You know? Which is neat... Um, cool... So then, write down Endurance, and then pick one of your other—one of your other, the Techniques available to you, one of the other asset techniques.

ALI: What page are those?<sup>4</sup>

AUSTIN: Those—

ALI: Oh, I see them, I got em.

AUSTIN: Oh, you got them? Okay...

ALI: Mm-hm, sorry. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Nope! This is not—this book is not good at this thing. And normally, what I would have done is taken a screenshot and put a whole drop-down thing in the sidebar, but that takes a lot of time, and I did not... I built a whole transmission for this, which was a lot of work, so that I did not have time to do—some of the stuff that would have made some of this stuff a little bit easier. And the last thing is, you get a contact, by way of Duke. Your contact is...

ALI: Achilles Apollo.

AUSTIN: Right! Whose name, again, is someone who you may recognise... Achilles Apollo was the boxer that Doyle McKay fought, from out of town, in Fiasco.

ALI: Ohh...

AUSTIN: He came as like, the prize fighter, with a guy named Walt Whitaker? And... we now know what 'Out of Town' means... out of town, in that case, at least, meant "from Blough City". So, Apollo Achilles—sorry, Achilles Apollo is 26. He is an underground boxer who works as a—who is an enforcer in the Whitaker syndicate. He often works as a third-party agent for the Concern who

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<sup>4</sup> t/n: [tv voice] for viewers at home, this is Page 8. The Mentor bios are pages 16-18.

can't get their hands dirty. So, he is someone who... you know, I imagine Duke introduced you to—you know, so what's your relationship with Achilles Apollo?

ALI: Um... the adjective that I wrote down was 'Sympathetic'. And... yeah, I don't know... I—when I originally played Chris when she was in Bluff City, she was someone who was like travelling to Bluff City week by week, [AUSTIN: Yeah] not sleeping a lot, staying up all hours of the night. And I think, within the strains of this game... this game starts out being like 'You are capable of doing this, or else you wouldn't... be doing it'? [AUSTIN: Yeah. Yes.] But I think the kind of nature—the way that she came onto it, and the way that she's adjusting to it—means that like, she's cool with the guy who's like 'Yeah, I got a demotion, I'm whatever' [AUSTIN: Right] and this other person who's an Agent who is like—'Okay, you're gonna—you'll get there.' You know?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. Who's like, there's very like... like, kind of—a working class affinity that Chris Andrews has? Right, like she's an everyday people type of person, you know?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That's one thing I will say that I am happy about, with this game, is that when I look at the Agents that they have—when I got to that section, I was so ready for it to be a bunch of like, hard-ass assholes? And there's a couple of them in there! But there's also a lot of people who are like, kind of shlubby? You know? [Ali giggles] Or like... kind of like, kind of smarmy, but in a friendly way? And that was... not what I expected. I'm glad that there's a range there. Um... alright, cool. Do you know which of the Assets thing you're going to pick, or do you want me to come back around?

ALI: I'm so torn between Driver and Caller, that I'm gonna wait for—to hear what everyone else is.

00:49:46 — 00:59:47

AUSTIN: Sounds good. Alright, Maggie Darcy, AKA Agent Seals.

JANINE: Um... so I was really torn on this, [Austin affirms in background throughout] 'cause there are some Techniques I was really interested in... but the contacts... I didn't really like—[stammers] I don't know, I just didn't have a feeling? [AUSTIN: I'll say, no matter what, these—] There's one contact in particular that feels like the easy call, you know? And feels like the call that should be made...

AUSTIN: Yes, there is!

JANINE: So... I think if it's better to...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] I should be clear, these characters will still exist in this world, and will recognise you and know you? The fact that they're a 'Contact' going in, is that you know how to get to them, right? Like... you won't have to make a roll to... like, if Chris—if Agent Ryder wants to go to see Achilles Apollo, I'm not gonna say 'Well, how do you find him? In this weird mystery city?'... So—so... does that make sense? You know what I mean?

JANINE: Yeah... yeah, um—what—can you cover what, um—the... Commendation Points? Or the...

AUSTIN: Yes! So... Commendation Points are basically experience points, is what I would... they're like experience points, but they're also something you can spend to do certain techniques, basically. You get a Commendation Point when you...

JACK: Roll a six.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Roll a six!

JANINE: [crosstalk] Roll a six while you're in your...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] In your target heart rate.

JANINE: [crosstalk] heart... range....

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly.

JANINE: Yeah.

JACK: On any dice?

AUSTIN: On... yes, on any of the die you roll, exactly, totally. And then you can spend those to do certain—to do certain... techniques, certain techniques cost you a Commendation Point? So, one of them is... what is it, like—

JANINE: Meditation costs you a Commendation Point to subtract 1d6 from your heart rate.

AUSTIN: From your heart rate... exactly. Totally. I think everyone should come in with some amount of Commendation Points, because you've been acting—you've all been doing this? I kind of want maybe just like three—everyone gets three to start. Does that make sense?

JACK: Mm-hm!

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That way, there's a little bit of a pool? And then, if you get ten, you basically level up. That is not true, though, with—I guess, yeah—there's a thing we're not doing here, which is we're not, which is that, by default, a Deep Blue Agent is one that has all their Talents, in a single thing—or one Talent per category... Though maybe we should just do that? Like, I want Agent Heard to be a Deep Blue Agent... and I could just give Keith more shit [KEITH: Yeah, sure] but I don't wanna do that and make people feel bad, do you know what I mean? Also—

KEITH: Hey, well maybe... maybe they should have had characters from Noirlandia that less fit this game. [Austin, Jack, Keith laugh]

AUSTIN: Yeah, Patty Fink was not gonna make this transition—was not going to go work for the Concern. Patty Fink has like...

KEITH: And the Concern wouldn't maybe want Patty Fink...

AUSTIN: That's the big one. Yeah, Patty Fink was not one the Concern would fuck with, probably. Um... I'll think about it [Ali giggles]. Let's wrap back around and see where I'm feeling about it... because there's an interesting thing here, which is, actually, becoming a Deep Blue Agent ends up being really interesting, mechanically?

JACK: Ohhh.

AUSTIN: When you become a Deep Blue Agent, you—one, get access to the Deep Blue part of the book, you start to be allowed to do it... but also, you can reduce static. Which is the thing that pop—it's almost like a clock? Static in this game is like an early form of the clocks I love so much? And senior agents can reduce that static by spending Commendation Points... but, as they do that, they start to gain private Static? And private Static basically sets a Static floor, going forward. So it's like, what if you could turn back clocks that I've advanced, except—every time you do it, there is the private... the bottom of the clock gets a little bit higher up, which is—

KEITH: [interrupts] Wow... it's *Click* starring Adam Sandler.

[beat]

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: It's *Click* starring Adam Sandler, exactly.

JACK: It's *Click*! Starring Adam Sandler!

KEITH: [crosstalk] It's *Click* starring Adam Sandler.

AUSTIN: There is a popular—a popular thing in the [JANINE: Yuck.] games world that says that *Click*, starring Adam Sandler, was actually secretly based on Lacuna, *but*—[Keith, Ali laugh]... you know.

JACK: Mmm, but Christopher Nolan didn't say...

AUSTIN: Exactly, but Christopher Nolan was—'No. Also, here's the' [trails off laughing]

JACK: Do you know what my Christopher Nolan movie is? [laughs]

AUSTIN: *Click*, with Adam Sandler? [Ali laughs]

JACK: Yeah!



AUSTIN: I've always thought about how it's like a great analogy for game design, you know? *Click*, with Adam Sandler... [Jack giggles] Alright.

[pause, Ali giggles]

—00:54:17—

AUSTIN: So what are you thinking, Maggie?

JANINE: Okay... so, I love how far apart these pages—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Oh, it's great.

JANINE: [continuing] that describe all these Techniques and stuff is from the actual Mentor—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Here, give me two seconds.

JANINE: [continuing] The, sorry—*Menu—Meñtor Profiles*.

AUSTIN: Did I mistype Mentor?

JANINE: No, in this thing, there's one of the squiggles on the n?

AUSTIN: Ohh, okay. Woah, wow. [chuckles] If y—

JANINE: Like the mañana squiggle?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: Mm-hm.

KEITH: [crosstalk] A tilde?

JANINE: [crosstalk, muttering] I don't know how you would—

JACK: That symbol doesn't mean something in another language, it's fine!

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] No, that's just for flair, right?

JACK: [crosstalk] You can put it in for a weird thing, yeah!

JANINE: Yeah...

AUSTIN: Here, I'm gonna put all of the Techniques—I'm doing the thing that I said I would do if I'd had more time—it doesn't take that much time, but. You know, it's one of those things that you don't want to do on the call, you know?

JANINE: Do you want me to read the Mentor description while you do that?

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: I'd like to have... Senior Instructor Snyder?

AUSTIN: Sounds good.

JANINE: [reading] Snyder is known throughout the Company as its toughest trainer. He's also an anomaly; the oldest agent in the Company. Big blacked-out section of text.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Uh-huh? [Jack giggles]

JANINE: [continuing reading] When he was active in the field, his no-nonsense attitude and extreme methods... *was* the stuff of Company legend. Though no longer sent out on assignments, Snyder hasn't changed a whit. Recruits placed under his care can learn a lot, but the grizzled ex-Mystery Agent demands only the best from his students. Snyder's age and current status owe to a previous retirement age of 65. He enjoys telling new recruits that his time—that in his time, “retirement” was a single-malt scotch and a bullet to the back of the head—oh my god [laughs nervously] Uh, he says it as though it's a joke, but he never laughs...

AUSTIN: Yep! Here's a thing I just realised—I've been reading a thing wrong here. So he's 63, which is older than 59, which is the maximum age for a starting character, so what the—the way they remedy that is they say “Snyder age and current status owes to a previous retirement age of 65”. Here's how *I've* been reading it and *I* choose to believe it's canon. “Snyder's age and current status owe to his *previous retirement* at age—the age of 65. Don't ask me why he's 63 now! [Jack laughs] And he was 65 when he retired!” but. And I'm, I'm gonna roll with it, that's I think is true about him... yeah, yeah I could see the Maggie connection here. He like—he is a company man in the sense that she is, right? A consummate professional. And he gives you access to... Meditation, which, I've put the Techniques in the sidebar, people can pull that up now.

ALI: [under breath] Nice!

AUSTIN: Which is the one that lets you spend Commendation Points to detract 1d6 from her heart rate, so that is a—a nice thing to keep your heart rate in play. And then... he also gives you access to Skills—the Skills sub-category, Which of those are you gonna take?

—00:57:08—

JANINE: Mm-hm... [pause] Judge. The Agent can detect falsehoods when questioning a suspect.

ALI: Mm.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's good... that's great! 'Cause that's just like... you can detect falsehoods, you know when someone is lying... Classic—classic move. Um... and who did you get connected to? By that?

JANINE: Ah... Finnegan Hands.

AUSTIN: Oh, there you go! Finnegan Hands!

JANINE: [chuckles] Yeah... I believe so.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] This was—this was a very fun moment...

JACK: [crosstalk] Hm.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Mm.... Finnegan Hands.

AUSTIN: Finne-gan Hands... [Ali giggles] Uh, there was a good moment last night... or two nights ago for this, when I was doing some of the prep for this in a Drawing Maps stream at which I was building out the personality list, and I went back and listened with the audience... Two things: one, the Fiasco Aftermath table, and then two, where Jack described the end of Finnegan Hands... and I'm going to just read again from the Aftermath table in Fiasco, where Finnegan Hands once lived...

[reading] Zero: The worst thing in the universe. This probably doesn't include death, since death would be way better than whatever this is. Be creative and don't settle for the first "worst" thing that comes to mind – there is something darker, more awful, more wretched in there somewhere.

And that more wretched thing is Blough City... In the dossier, Finnegan Hands—it just says, "62, scarred, battered, broken by one too many good ideas, Hands is good with engines, better with boats, and miserable here in a world where good faith is nothing but a target on your back. Currently working as a Santa." [beat] Because this is a holiday game. [Keith laughs] And so... Finnegan Hands...

JANINE: [crosstalk, Ali giggling in background] Oh, okay, I was gonna say, year-round Santa does sound like a miserable...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Year round Santa... Yup! [laughs]

JANINE: And also like a thing I would totally buy existing.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm! You know, maybe it's always holiday time... you know, what is darker at Friends at the Table than a city where it's always the holiday game? [Ali giggling] It's always a holiday special in Blough City! [giggling]

JACK: [crosstalk] Oh my god...

[pause, laughter]

JACK: It's been the holiday special all along!

AUSTIN: It has been!

JACK: You bastards!

JANINE: Based on what you've said about Blough City to us, it totally makes sense though that there would just be like [AUSTIN: Yup!] low key—no, you like Christmas.

AUSTIN: You like it. You like Christmas.

JANINE: You like it *so much* it's always here.

KEITH: We did it for—we did this for you. It's always now.

AUSTIN: It's always Christmas.

JANINE: Everyone's so happy [Jack laughs] at Christmas, so what if it's just always Christmas?

AUSTIN: It's just always the time—it's always either Thanksgiving—it's just Thanksgiving until New Year's Day. Over and over and over again.

JANINE: Eurgh. [Ali giggles]

JACK: Hey!

AUSTIN: Like, the day before Thanksgiving—

JANINE: [crosstalk] No Halloween ever.

AUSTIN: [continuing] No Halloween ever, no—no real summer, you know? I mean, we'll get there, too!

JACK: [dejected] Oh, god...

JANINE: Easter, because everyone's faking it...

AUSTIN: Everyone's faking it, 100%. There's no... you know.

JACK: Hey, do you like pigs in blankets? Yes, you do!

00;59;47 — 01;04;37

AUSTIN: [laughs] So here's one thing that everyone should start doing as we talk about this place is... this is like—Blough City... I think about Bluff City as being large or tall in time, not in space. Not wide—it's tall, and it's tall in time. Bluff City exists in all sorts of pasts and futures, and it doesn't really make sense, and it's confused in time—but there's a lot of it. It exists. There's a place called Bluff City, and we can go back to the late 1970's and forward until the future, and we've done all that stuff, we've seen it all—and for whatever reason, it's a place that can have both bird heists, and also ghostbusters, and also... superheroes, and also, like, sad wrestlers, and sadder zookeepers. You know? Like... it has space full of that, in Bluff City.

Blough City is a place that's... wide. It's large in space but stuck in time. It is always kind of post-war Americana, 40's to late 50's. It is always this very specific vision of what it means to be a good person and what it means to be an American. It is much more Los Angeles, it's more west coast than east coast. Start thinking about film noir, start thinking about—you know, the rapid suburbanization, and the spread—

JANINE: [crosstalk] Convertibles?

AUSTIN: What did you say?

JANINE: Convertibles?

AUSTIN: More convertibles, for sure. One of the objects I've given you in this dossier is just "a very nice car", right? It's a Coupe—a Teardrop Coupe. One of the locations is—the suburbs, which here are called the Thicket, which is the wetlands of Los Angeles being drained out and turned into—into suburban sprawl. It is still a casino town, there is still a boardwalk. It is still that style, of like—it does have those elements of Bluff City, but I do think—I do think the water is at the west, right? I do think you get there, and the beach is at the west, and the boardwalk goes forever, literally. You could walk on the boardwalk forever. It is—it is, uh—in the same way... There is nothing but land waiting to be turned into suburbs, and then those suburbs turn into urban sprawl, and onward and onward, around Blough City. It is just, literally—desert, then wetlands, then suburbs, then city, and it's constantly growing, over and over and over again. And because it's a strange dream place of restriction and, I guess, a nightmare place in this way, all the buildings are cut from the same cloth.

One of the things I realized while doing prep for this is—I went back and looked at all the Noirlandia stuff, I looked at like—there are four rules in place for Noirlandia, about what the city was like—and that was like, all the houses were converted—or all the buildings were converted residential. There was these galas—these mass galas, no-one was allowed to talk and speak their true emotional states. And... everyone—you never wanted to be the first one to arrive, or the last one to leave. All of that stuff was imported from Blough City. Because at some point in the future—and I'll just actually put this on screen really quick. Let's see if I can just copy it—woop, I didn't mean to erase it! Ah... at some point in the future, Blough City gains a foothold on Bluff City. Actually, that's the wrong one, that's the one that's like the way that Bluff City works. I'll send you both of these, where's the other one... give me my timeline... here we go. Y'all should watch Drawing Maps, it's great. All sorts of MS Paint fucking... weird shit.

—01;03;36—

JANINE: We can't!

AUSTIN: I know you're not... after—afterwards! I did a tour of New Jersey... also, I'm partially talking to people listening... but if you look at that second one, I lined up where all of our previous games were, and in a sense there's kind of four eras of Bluff City that we've seen? We know about the past, which is when Millenium Alexander Black was fighting vampires [chuckles]. Then we know about modern Bluff City, which is like the Bowling Alley game, we know about the Cost of Greed, the Eighty Six, Grapplers Down At Promenade Arena, When Justice Is Done... and then we see No Greater Love, and that place is fuckin' weird, that place is not like the other Bluff City... and that era

is when Blough City, and the Concern—the Blough City-aligned Concern members have started to kind of like, take over Bluff City and transform it into this much more restrictive, terrible thing. And then—

KEITH: [interrupting] Ah, quick question—are all Concern members Blough City aligned? Or...

AUSTIN: No.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] There's a—it's a—it's a weird internal civil war, it's an internal cold war...

KEITH: [crosstalk] Okay. That's what I thought—yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah yeah—totally. Anyway, we got way off the fucking chart... there...

KEITH: Yeah.

01;04;37 — 01;10;28

AUSTIN: Agent Heard, I think you're up?

KEITH: Hi. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Also, Maggie, can you add that stuff to your...

JANINE: Yeah, yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. Cool. Thank you. Anyway, also—Finnegan, Finnegan Hands is there and is sad, and is trying his fucking best, so hopefully he can be the...

JACK: How did he... do we know how he got there?

AUSTIN: I do!

JACK: Okay!

AUSTIN: I mean—I do... I do, I kinda hinted at it earlier, in my intro, which is like—there are points of connection, called shunt points, where you shunt, like a train changing tracks. And he just stumbled into one? And it was bad. [Jack laughs] But he got on his feet! Which means someone helped on his feet, right?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Someone there got him a Santa job. Someone helped him... get that right.

JACK: [crosstalk] Santa!

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Santa did.

KEITH: [crosstalk] That's also like the same thing with the filmmaker, you said there's no way to do anything there unless someone helps you?

AUSTIN: There's no way... it's just a matter of, this is a really repressive, terrible society, Blough City, right?

KEITH: [crosstalk] Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Like... someone who shows up who has no social connections, and who has no resources?

KEITH: Yeah

AUSTIN: And who is—also, who is in a weird nightmare city that's always changing... Like, and always growing... not a good look, you know? But like, the fundamental laws of reality are almost different there—it is just not built for the creative, hopeful people of Bluff City. And so—yeah, you need a little bit of help. Blake Blossom had that help, and also Blake Blossom got there... not by accident, very clearly was brought there... which you can hear happening in the intro for the Eighty Six—or, no—whatever's before the Eighty Six. In the... [KEITH: Eighty Five.] Noirlandia intro, actually, is where it happens. Yeah. [amused] Yeah, the Eighty Five—yeah, exactly. [Ali giggles] Alright... Keith, Agent Heard.

KEITH: Hi! Yeah. So this one's weird—so, you changed this one. [AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. Mm-hm.] This is a different—so... in the book, it's Special Agent Miner. So now it's Special Agent Squire.

AUSTIN: Right! Squire, yeah—Squire, because Squire is another name that came up in Noirlandia [KEITH: Mm-hm]. I'm just gonna say it outright: Hector Hu was your mentor.

KEITH: Oh!

AUSTIN: Agent Squire is Hector Hu... and Hector Hu was your mentor, when Hector was still an active agent... before... before Hector—before all the weirdness around Hector happened.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So that is who Agent Squire is.

KEITH: Should I just read it as written, though, from the book?

AUSTIN: ...Yeah, go ahead!

KEITH: Okay, uh—

AUSTIN: [interrupts] Actually, just read 'Squire' instead of 'Miner'.

KEITH: Right, yeah. [reading] Senior Agent Squire disappeared while on special assignment in Deep Blue. Control has tried him in absentia for various breaches in departmental protocol and any prior association with Special Agent Miner\* is viewed with suspicion. Short redacted sentence... Unfortunately, this even extends to new recruits that worked with Agent Miner.\*

\*Squire

AUSTIN: Yeah

KEITH: That's me.

AUSTIN: So, all of that's true for Squire, for Hector Hu.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: Hector disappeared while doing something in Blough City, on assignment in Deep Blue. Control has tried him—Control is anti-Hector Hu at this point. That is Hec—so again, via postcard stuff, we know that Hector has been in contact with at least Florence, we imagine probably Chris as well. We don't have that as an established fact, but Hector and—uh—Hector is someone who is close to Chris and Florence. So—for Florence and Chris, like—finding Hector is a thing you would like to do, you know? But for, you know, maybe Agent Heard also wants to find Hector—but Hector is a persona non grata. Agent Squire was tried, was found guilty for doing—for looking into shit he should not have been looking into, for disobeying orders. Hector sent back some sort weird, Dougie-style, fulltaur-style<sup>5</sup> duplicate? [Keith giggles] Jack, do you remember the name that we came up with for those?

JACK: Yeah, they're called Peels?

AUSTIN: Right!

JANINE: Eurgh!

AUSTIN: Also sometimes called Fingernails.

ALI: Hmmm...

JANINE: Eurgh...

JACK: Yeah, Peels or Fingernails.

JANINE: We might be infringing on Simply Nailogical's brand.

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<sup>5</sup> These are references to Twin Peaks and to one of Fero's created animals from Spring in Hieron O3.



AUSTIN: I don't know what that is. Tell me what that is. [Jack laughs]

JANINE: She uh... keeps a bag of peelies? That she peels off—because she uses a peel off base coat when she does her nails, for nail art, so.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Oh, I see, gotcha.

JANINE: And she keeps the peelies in a bag, so they are both peels and fingernails.

JACK: Mmm, mm-hm!

AUSTIN: Great, love it. Well, [stammers] we'll give it a little bit more complication here, which is, it's not just—so it's called the paratrepsis technique, which is the thing that animals do when they try to distract you from something that's important—and there are just like, regular Peels, which are the ones that are like fulltaurs, or like Dougies?

KEITH: [interrupting] Sorry—wait—

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?

KEITH: When is an animal trying to distract me from something important?

AUSTIN: Like a bird that wants to lead you away from its nest.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Oh, okay.

JACK: [crosstalk] Yeah, or like when you need to be doing taxes, and a cat is like—

KEITH: [crosstalk]—rubbing on your leg?

JACK: [crosstalk] “No, don't do that, because—”

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Don't do it. I'm laying on—[trails off]

JACK: [crosstalk] “you'll reveal the inconsistencies in my account.” [Keith laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly. Exactly like that. Perfect. [laughs] So—so yeah, so that's called the paratrepsis technique. It's called a Peel when it's a wholetaur—when it's just like [exaggeratedly cheery voice] ‘Hello! Ah!’—you just need to put someone on a boat to make it look like you're on a boat, you know?

KEITH: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: But what Hector knew how to do was make something called a—

KEITH: [interrupting, using fulltaur voice] Fishing's good!

AUSTIN: Ah—love to fish!

KEITH: [fulltaur voice] Love the fishing!

AUSTIN: I—love it! [imitating second character] This is a—a tugboat, sir. [laughs]

KEITH: [fulltaur voice] They're biting!

AUSTIN: I love a fish! [pause, laughing] There's also something called a Content Aware Peel. Which is what Hector made, which is... one who can live a real life. And that is what the Hector Hu, Radio Man was. And, you know, in proof that we really only have the same thirty-two ideas [Ali laughs], Hector ends up doing what Fantasma does, elsewhere... which is starts digging into some shit.

JACK: Yeah, but they're great ideas!

AUSTIN: They're good ones, I like 'em a lot. Um... so yeah, so there is some Hector Hu there—Hector Hu, the Radio Man ends up digging into shit he shouldn't, and the Concern does some—takes action. So—

01;10;28 — 01;14;47

KEITH: They didn't care about the Con—the Peel before that?

AUSTIN: No! Because like, okay, whatever.

KEITH: Yeah

AUSTIN: [continuing] You've made a radio person, sure. But once the radio person has downloaded a document that is an interrogation of the himself that he doesn't remember? That's when things start to go bad.

KEITH: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: So what does—what does Squire give you?

KEITH: Squire gives me Endurance?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh! Which you've written down as... 'to endure'. [Keith laughs]

KEITH: Uh, yeah—let me—where does it say what that is?

AUSTIN: It's in the sidebar, it's in the sidebar. I added a Techniques handout.

KEITH: Oh, ex—right, you talked about that. [trails off unintelligibly]

AUSTIN: I did. It extends your target heart rate by 5 bpm in either direction.

KEITH: Right, exactly.

AUSTIN: So which way are you extending it?

KEITH: Um. Oh, I thought it was both—I thought it was both.

AUSTIN: Oh! It might be both.

KEITH: I think it's—it does.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] I'll say—it's an inclusive either, not an ex—

KEITH: [interrupts] Yeah, 'cause Training gives you 10 in one direction, and Endurance is 5 in both.

AUSTIN: [continuing] ...in each.

KEITH: Yeah

AUSTIN: Okay. Cool. So then, both Ali and Keith, make sure you adjust those.

ALI: Oh, okay.

KEITH: Right. And, ah—Squire also gives me Identity.

AUSTIN: Which is a category—oh, so you're—it's the cover—it's the cover—

KEITH: Right, it's under Cover. Sorry, it's under the 'Cover' heading.

AUSTIN: [amused] Mm, okay.

KEITH: But it is literally undercover, as in, the Agent has a cover identity in Blough City.

AUSTIN: In Blough City, so you will need a name for that person, so let's come up with a name for that, [KEITH: Yes, yeah.] whatever your identity is... one of the things I like about these Techniques is this is one of those games that's like, 'Oh wait a second, if that's a Technique, then I guess I don't know... that... I guess I don't have that, unless I have that Skill'. So for instance, if no-one here has the Writer Skill, you will not be able to understand written material in Blough City.

KEITH: [whistles in surprise] That's a cool—that's an interesting one, because in dreams, the part of your brain that [AUSTIN: Yes.] reads stuff doesn't work right.

AUSTIN: That's exactly it. I'm sure that that's what it's going for...

KEITH: [crosstalk, continuing] I actually had a dream yesterday where someone couldn't remember how to write... in print?

AUSTIN: Mm!

KEITH: And I was trying to show them and couldn't do it, and...

AUSTIN: That's a nightmare!

KEITH: Yeah, it was a nightmare, yeah. It was bad—it was a really stressful dream [Ali giggles in background]. And I was just like—trying to play it off like the letters were working right—but I *knew* something was wrong, it was bad. [laughs]

AUSTIN: God... Likewise, if you don't have Spy, there are going to be rolls involved when you need to like, be... disguised in public—in places where you would be very obvious, or if nobody with you has the ability to make disguises, you know? You'll have to roll to set that up ahead of time... whereas if you had Spy, you would just be like, yeah yeah yeah, I have a disguise, no big deal, I have this Identity, it's fine... you know? So... we'll see how that all goes. [pause] What is your contact?

KEITH: My contact is... Agent Ward.

AUSTIN: Who is Leslie Strata from Noirlandia, and who is...

KEITH: Yes, Senior Agent on deployment in Blough City.

AUSTIN: Yes. Yes... oh!

JACK: Wait, isn't your contact Jennifer Jetta?

KEITH: Is it? Does it have to be? Why—what's the...

AUSTIN: Yes... 'cause it's tied to—it's tied to whoever your Mentor was. Your Mentor connects you to somebody.

KEITH: Oh, I missed that! I thought—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yes yes yes—no—

KEITH: [continuing] I thought I was thinking about that, but couldn't find it in the book?

AUSTIN: It was just—it's not in the book, it was in... chat. [Ali laughs] That's where it was.

KEITH: Oh! Okay...

AUSTIN: Mm-hm! Yeah.

KEITH: Yeah, well, that's—I saw people talking about it and I was very confused 'cause I was... alright.

AUSTIN: No worries. Yeah, so Jennifer Jetta—

KEITH: Jennifer Jetta.

AUSTIN: [continuing]—who... last reminder about Noirlandia, was somehow invested in the death of Hector Hu.

KEITH: Yes. So the text there is: Investigative journalist for the *Bluff City Current* and the *Sentinel* in Blough City; was involved in Hector's death somehow.

AUSTIN: Yes... I'll note no-one in Blough City calls it Blough City—it's just the City, or the Metropolis, or 'around here'.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: The City doesn't identify things like that.

KEITH: It is—just in case people forgot—I don't think we mentioned—it is spelled Bluff? I mean, it's also spelled Blue.

AUSTIN: Bluff... it's spelled a fake word, this isn't a real word! Right?

KEITH: *Blow*? It's also spelled *Blow*?

AUSTIN: *Blow*, you could say *Blow*... you could say *bee-low*... it's B-L-O-U-G-H. But you could say, "Bluff, as in, it rhymes with rough", you know?

KEITH: Right

01;14;47 — 01;19;59

AUSTIN: Who could say? Another thing really quick. Maggie—

KEITH: [interrupting] I mean, we could say, we're just not.

AUSTIN: We could say, but we're not. Yeah. Both you, Keith, and Janine, I need to know what you feel—or what your relationships with these contacts are. So what is Maggie's relationship with Finnegan and what is Heard's relationship with Jenna. Those adjectives are in the chat, again, I'll link—er, they're—if you scroll up again.

ALI: I pinned it.

JANINE: Is that how we feel about them or they feel about us?

AUSTIN: You feel about them. Per TechNoir's rules.

KEITH: I feel... I guess suspicious of Jennifer.

AUSTIN: ...Fair, fair.

JANINE: Um... I think—I think protective is in line with where we've taken Maggie with in terms of... both the original game she was featured in and that call-in bit.

AUSTIN: Yeah, definitely. Agreed with that. Okay. Can you write both of those under the contacts, so that I can see them? Thank you... Florence. Who is your Mentor?

—01;15;52—

JACK: I think I'm gonna go with Senior Agent Baxter.

AUSTIN: Okay. She seems cool.

KEITH: [sneering] Senior Agent Backstab.

JACK: Um, she... [laughing] More like Senior Agent Backstab... [Austin laughs] Senior Agent Baxter is an amiable member of the Concern with years of experience under her belt. As the head of the operation in which Senior Agent Squire went AWOL, she was investigated by the Directorate and found not guilty of misconduct.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Yeah, right. [Ali giggles]

JACK: [crosstalk] So—sorry. So the Directorate likes her... they don't like Squire [AUSTIN: No], but they're like, yeah, Baxter was fine. Weird black mark on her record, but something we can look past.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: [continuing to read] Despite her exoneration, the Directorate revoked her Deep Blue Clearance (a fact that has slanted her views on company policy).

AUSTIN: Unlike Agent Duke, who was like—ehhhh, I got a demotion, no big deal—she's like, I didn't do shit, fuck you.

JACK: Yeah, exactly, yeah. I mean, does she know something? We don't know.

AUSTIN: We don't know! Play to find out...

JACK: [continuing to read] Senior Agent Baxter is noted for—

KEITH: [interrupting] Well, the—the Company says no... the—what is it? What's the real...

AUSTIN: And then they also revoked her Deep Blue Clearance, right? [JACK: Yeah...] So maybe it's like... one of those situations where they know she knows, but they can't prove she knows?

JACK: Or she'd be more trouble if she knew they knew she knew?

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly. Yeah, very clear.

JACK: Yeah, you know, I'm just following in the spirit of the book here.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh!

JACK: Ah—[reading] Senior Agent Baxter is noted for innovative training techniques that have only recently been adopted by Special Company Services.

AUSTIN: That's interesting

JACK: Yeah! So the technique that she—uh—what's it called? The Standard Technique that she affords me is Meditation.

AUSTIN: Great, good to control that heart rate!

JACK: I'm gonna write that down... Meditation lets me spend a Commendation Point to subtract 1d6 from my heart rate... which I feel is a good contrast to Florence as this, like—angry police entity. [AUSTIN: Mm-hm.]. She has been told—look, sometimes, shut your eyes. [Austin laughs]

AUSTIN: You know, meditation. Shut your eyes. Take a nap.

JACK: Meditation, Step—mmm...

KEITH: [crosstalk] You can meditate with your eyes open!

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Oh, is that Medit—[unsure] uh...

KEITH: Lots of them have that.

JACK: Yes. Yeah...

AUSTIN: It's true!

JACK: And she also gives me something from the Cover menu. The options in our Cover menu are: Identity, the Agent has a cover identity in Blough City—which is what Keith's character has; Documents, the Agent carries official-looking identification; Credit, the Agent can acquire provisions and equipment using their Mentor as a reference; Contact, the Agent has access to a friendly contact known to the agent's Mentor—

AUSTIN: I've kinda given everyone that? But if you want a second one, you can, and you can pick.

JACK: Mm... And Safe House, the Agents have access to a safe, secret location set up by their Mentor.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Umm... hold on, do we get all of Cover? I thought we just got one.

JACK: No no no no—just one.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Just one.

JACK: I was just reading it so that people would be like, here's what we've been picking from

KEITH: Okay.

JACK: Um... and Keith has Identity?

AUSTIN: Yes

KEITH: Thank you. [Jack laughs]

JACK: Yeah. I think I'm going to pick Documents.

AUSTIN: Interesting. Okay.

JACK: Official-looking identification... here, I'll also write that down...

AUSTIN: But not an identity, which is interesting—an interesting divide.

JACK: Yeah, totally!

AUSTIN: Right? It's broader, I guess... Documents feels broader than Identification, I guess? Even though it does say identity...

JACK: It's really interesting! I think—Identity is—Identity for me is much—is much broader, you're right. It's like what—does the greengrocer trust me?

AUSTIN: Right, yes.

JACK: And Documents is like... I can walk into a checkpoint and hold up papers that might work, but I might fall apart under scrutiny, or under interrogation.



AUSTIN: Yeah... I guess the other thing here is it means that Agent Heard does not have documents, only a sort of like... social identity, right? People will vouch for Heard...

JACK: [overlapping] Yeah, people will be like I know who Heard is.

AUSTIN: Yes

JACK: But then if Heard needs to walk through—I'm picturing Cold War checkpoints a lot... if Heard needs to drive through a checkpoint, it'll be like [sucks in breath] I don't know.

AUSTIN: I hope it's someone who—knows who I am. Okay, cool. I like that a lot.

01;19;59 — 01;23;51

JACK: My contact is Gale Green.

AUSTIN: Interesting... very important person.

JACK: A 43-year old filmmaker and radio producer whose work often pushes the boundaries of social mores. Spent time in Bluff City, where she known as Dorothy Delanza, and Goldfinch.

AUSTIN: Yeah, so for the people who played in Masks, you may recall, there was a picture—a painting of a little girl. That little girl was Gale Green, who went home.

JACK: Where have we heard the Dorothy Delanza pseudonym?

AUSTIN: So that was what her name was in Bluff City.

JACK: Oh, that's her like cover...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] She was Dorothy Delanza... yeah, she was adopted by the Delanza family. Her Clark Kent was Dorothy Delanza.

JACK: Right. But her real name is Gale Green.

AUSTIN: Her birth name was—I think they're both her real name, you know?

JACK: Right right right right right. [AUSTIN: Y'know, she—] She's 43, and I feel... hm... So I'm—as a resident of Bluff City, I will have known her as Goldfinch.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah. And I think if you know—if you've been introduced to her by Agent Baxter, what what you know is—um—she is an agitator, right? She is here to make—she is here to make Blough City more like Bluff City.

JACK: Right, yes, because her whole thing was like, my people need me back home, and the thing they need her for is that [amused] Blough City is an awful place to live for a lot of the time?

AUSTIN: [laughs] Yes... yes. And her decision to try to fix that, seems to be... making movies. Making art, is what she's trying to do.

JACK: Yeah. And so I think I feel respectful towards her?

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: I think that like a lot of people in Bluff City... probably, esp—uh, when did she—how long ago did she leave?

AUSTIN: Good question. [sighs] A while. You can probably—

JACK: Long enough—would my daughter have been a kid when the superhero left?

AUSTIN: Absolutely.

JACK: Yeah. So I think that for a long time—Florence, raising a young daughter on her own, and seeing a superhero disappear, was like a double gut-punch, right? It was like—I'm not—we are less safe because she's gone, and also what am I supposed to tell my kid, who saw a superhero working, and I have to say she's gone now?

AUSTIN: She left, she thought somewhere else was more important.

JACK: [crosstalk] She left, she—she—yeah. But then I think as Florence's daughter grew older, and as Florence began to move away from the force, and as Florence learned more about what was happening in Bluff City, I think that Goldfinch's departure... aligns with—with some way Florence thinks about duty.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: As like—you have a duty to your city. Whatever that means.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah, right, right, of course. [chuckles] Yeah.

JACK: Like, Florence is a cop.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: Whether or not her belief in her duty to her city is misplaced or not, she still believes that she has a duty to her city. And I think that she sees—she respects that instinct, or what she perceives to be that instinct in Goldfinch.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Yeah, I like that a lot. All right. So go ahead and add... her to your contact sheet, also add Baxter's name to the sheet too.

JACK: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: Awesome! I think that's everything on the sheets. Am I missing anything on these sheets? I mean, the real sheets are these big complex, weird documents... that have a bunch of other shit, but...

JACK: Oh, I wrote down... I wrote down 'Respectful' instead of Goldfinch's name.

AUSTIN: [laughs] You did... you truly did.

JACK: [laughing] Now... I just wrote down 'Goldfish' . That's—

AUSTIN: Love it... great. Alright. So... are there questions before we continue here? Intro stuff...

01;23;51 — 01;31;43

KEITH: Austin, you can remove the question marks for my 'AKA'.

AUSTIN: Okay. You are Robert Twig—Robber Twig.

KEITH: Robber Twig, yeah.

AUSTIN: Robber Twig? Oop—I deleted the wrong part, [Ali sniggers] there we go.

KEITH: Robber Twig

AUSTIN: [muttering] Robber Wig...

JACK: Hey, first name Robber?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: Surname Twig?

AUSTIN: Yeah!

JACK: Two sets of double letters?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

KEITH: Robber Twig, yeah. Sorry, is there something confusing about that? [chuckles]

JACK: Nope! Nope... all's fine here [giggles]

AUSTIN: Is that a thing? Is there a thing I'm missing?

KEITH: No... well.

JACK: No, it's just a dumb name and I appreciate it a lot [Austin laughs]

AUSTIN: It's perfect.

KEITH: It's—well, when you say the first name and then the last name it sounds like Robert Wig, that's what the thing is. That's all that it is.

AUSTIN: Right, okay, gotcha... uh-huh.

JACK: There's a character in the transmission called Waxon Wayne.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh!

JACK: [laughing] Which is incredible...

AUSTIN: I came up with that name recently, I'm very happy with it.

KEITH: How do you spell—how do you spell that?

JACK: Waxon?

AUSTIN: Waxon is the first name, W-A-X-O-N.

KEITH: Oh, okay.

JACK: And then Wayne is like Bruce Wayne.

AUSTIN: He operates... Yeah, it's Bruces—yeah. And also he is Goldfinch's—

KEITH: [interrupting, crosstalk] Oh, it's like David Wayne.

AUSTIN: David—ah—[amused] He is Goldfinch's nemesis.

KEITH: David Wayne is?

AUSTIN: David Wayne... Yeah. *Damon* Wayne.

JACK: [crosstalk, in background] All right, I'm gonna be back in a second.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Marlon Wayne... alright, BRB.

—01;25;00—

[beat]

AUSTIN: Okay, so... we are back. We're back?

ALI: Yeah.

JACK: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Let me tell you about plot maps, which is not a thing from Lacuna. Do y'all remember plot maps?

KEITH: No.

AUSTIN: From—from COUNTER/Weight?

JANINE: I wasn't there for that, so no.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Yeah, big no.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] So. They were there—they were in the first episode... Start with a blank sheet of paper. When you generate your first plot nodes, before the first session begins, you write them out in the center of the page and draw lines between them. As you generate additional nodes in play, you add them to the page and draw lines linking a new node to an existing node... is any of this coming back to the COUNTER/Weight players at all?

ALI: [a 'yes'] Mmm!

JACK: Very vaguely, it feels like a very long time ago.

AUSTIN: That's 'cause it was. It was because it was three years ago. [laughs] We were all so much younger then. [Jack laughs] Uh—so... there is a thing called the plot map, which is how you map out what the fuck is going on in the world of the mystery. The plot map is out in front of everybody, everyone gets to look at it, and it will be a collection of... names from people, threats, factions, locations, objects, and events... and it begins with either a hand-picked selection—set—of nodes from this transmission, or with a randomly generated one. And I would like to try maybe randomly generating one to see what the dice throw together, in the spirit of Blough City, does that make sense?

JACK: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: So...

JACK: There's nothing more Blough City than frightening and incoherent.

AUSTIN: Exactly! So, we are going to roll for—for some stuff... Who wants to roll to start out this—this mission seed? You will find at the bottom of the sheet—or at the dossier, rather, that I gave you, a thing that says TABLES. And then there's a bunch of tables underneath. [pages rustling in background] Those tables are...

JACK: Oh jeez!

AUSTIN: The master table, which has our list of every possible object and threat, and et cetera—connection et cetera—and then individual character ones. The way that the structure of TechNoir works... is that the—when you push on a lead or connection for information, or when you go to a location to investigate something, when you succeed, you roll on their table to kind of get more information, and it connects, procedurally, to one of the other things that they know about or that they're connected to in some way. But to start, your starting stuff just comes from this big master table with everything. And so what I need is 2d6, three times. Who are the people who want to roll these 2d6?

—01:27:50—

KEITH: I got one.

ALI: I can...

AUSTIN: Go for it! Both of you...

KEITH: 2d6 each?

AUSTIN: Each... Alright.

KEITH: Wow!

AUSTIN: So, Ali, you got a 1 and a 6. I'm gonna go, 1 is the... top thing, and then 6—no, I'm gonna go 1 is the category, and then the first thing you roll is the category, the second number is which one in the category, does that make sense?

KEITH: Yeah.

ALI: Sure.

AUSTIN: So you rolled a 1, which is Connections, and then you rolled a 6, which is Achilles Apollo, which is interesting, because Achilles Apollo is already involved. So I'm going to move Achilles Apollo to the center, and then I'm just gonna—I'm gonna just circle Achilles Apollo really quick, so that I remember to do something else once it is time to wrap back around to Achilles. And then Keith, you rolled a 3—which is one-two-three, factions, and 4, the Cultural Trust. That's a fun one. Do you want to read from the dossier what the Cultural Trust is?

KEITH: Yeah! Sure, I got that. I got it open....

AUSTIN: Thank you.

KEITH: Objects, locations... factions! There we go! [reading] Operated under the guidance of artist steward Waxon Wayne, the Trust operatives—sorry—the Trust operates as a censorship bureau dressed up as a grant-giving arts foundation.

AUSTIN: Yeah, they suck. They decide what is allowed to be—we need one more of these, give me one more. From anybody. Ideally from—oh! All right, Keith, okay.

—01;29;22—

KEITH: Too late, got it already

AUSTIN: You got it, you snuck in there. [Ali giggles] 5 and 3... so that is the Objects category, and 3 is the Teardrop Coupe. Love to have a Teardrop Coupe.

JACK: This is a car that will make us so fashionable the streets will cry?

AUSTIN: Yeah, do you wanna read that out loud?

JACK: Sure, um... [pages rustling in background] it says... let me find it—I have this printed out, because you gotta have a dossier printed out.

AUSTIN: Oh, I'm glad you printed it! That makes me feel good.

JACK: It gives this great sound of... paper.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: It says... it does mean that I have to look through it, though.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Teardrop Coupe: the peak of design, the height of luxury. You will be so fashionable, the streets will cry.

AUSTIN: Yeah. It's a very nice...

JACK: [crosstalk] Is that in the brochure for the Teardrop Coupe?

AUSTIN: Oh, absolutely, right? Totally... So, the way this works is...

KEITH: [crosstalk] "Make the streets cry" sounds like one of the patterns from the end of Winter in Hieron. [laughs]

JACK: [laughs] Yeah.

AUSTIN: It absolutely was. [laughs]

JACK: Make the streets cry!

AUSTIN: Yes... alright... Alright, so, the Mission Seed is made up of the first three nodes that are added to the map. You do this while your players are generating protagonists... instead, I just made you all do it. Use the Master Table to select three nodes. Write them in a triangle pattern in the middle of your plot map. Draw lines between each of the three. So, I'll just draw some lines real quick between Achilles Apollo and the Cultural Trust, to the Teardrop Coupe and the Cultural Trust, and the Teardrop Coupe and Achilles Apollo. Um... [reading] When you draw these lines, invent a relationship that these nodes have with each other. Is that connection the rightful owner of the owner, or did they steal it? Is that threat staking out the location, hoping for something to go down? Or is this where they were ambushed? Is the faction being hurt by the event or did they instigate it in the first place? These first three nodes and their relationships to each other should get you started on imagining the plot that the protagonists will be interacting with soon.

So... This is a really easy one, right? Here's what I think is happening here... either, the Cultural Trust has—has impounded the Teardrop Coupe that Achilles Apollo drives, and Achilles Apollo wants it back, or, Achilles Apollo has stolen the Teardrop Coupe from the Cultural Trust. I think I like one more than two, but... could go either way. What do y'all think?

01:31:43 — 01:36:50

JACK: Two raises this really interesting question, which is like...

AUSTIN: Why?

JACK: Why? Why would the... because I feel like the less interesting answer to "Why would the Cultural Trust want the Teardrop Coupe?" is they think it's illegal, or they disapprove of it in some way...

AUSTIN: Right, right. Yeah.

JACK: The more concerning answer is they have an interest in this car.

KEITH: They need it for something.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yes... yeah.

JACK: But at the same time, I do love the idea of Achilles Apollo having just a truly incredible car, a car that is so cool, that a bureau says—that car is too cool! [Ali giggles]

AUSTIN: Right... so... Alright, so yeah, I like that. I like the idea that there's already that—so, we have... let me just add it to the map also... [makes sound effect] put that there, and then make it tinier... *boop*... 'stole', and then 'used to have'... 'used to own'. There we go... good! So the thing that is interesting here, though, is that when... there's a thing we didn't do in this game, which is, we did not... we're not doing it because we're not playing fucking TechNoir, because—here's a thing I'm sure no-one remembers, but when you play TechNoir, when you make your characters, there's a thing at which point you like, oh, these are what my connections are! And here are the favours they can do me... and certain characters, and certain connections like get you equipment, or drugs, or can increase your stats...



KEITH: [crosstalk] I remember that! That's how, um... that's how we got the ship. Someone got us a ship. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yes, yeah, 100%, someone got you a ship that way—Orth got you a ship that way, I think.

KEITH: Yeah. Yep.

AUSTIN: And... the more you call on those favours, the more connected they become to the Mission Seed. In this case, we're not doing that, and so instead what I wanted to do was just say like "hey, everyone's just on the mission to begin with once, and then if we rolled it and got a second time, they get even more involved here." So, what I want to do now is draw a second line from Achilles Apollo to somebody else here—either Finnegan Hands, Jennifer Jetta, or Gale Green... Do you wanna roll for that too? That seems fun...

KEITH: We can do 1-2-3 clockwise? Just like a 1d3?

AUSTIN: Clockwise, yeah. Yeah, do a 1d3. [pause] That's a 1! So connected... Achilles Apollo is somehow connected to Finnegan Hands... interesting. What do we think that connection is?

[longish pause]

KEITH: Well... Hands needed someone to come help him out. That's the simplest possible thing... I'm sure we could come up with something...

AUSTIN: Well, what's that—what's the—why [stammers] it doesn't have to do anything to do with the Teardrop Coupe, right? It's just connected in some way.

KEITH: Right... well, I mean, but Finnegan Hands, like—has the Santa job...

AUSTIN: Oh, I see what you're saying! You're saying...

KEITH: [crosstalk] Right. It's just like the—it's the most...

AUSTIN: [continuing] Achilles Apollo...

JANINE: [crosstalk] Got set up, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah! *Yeah yeah yeah*... I like that... Achilles Apollo helped get Finnegan Hands up on his feet, basically...

JACK: What city is Achilles Apollo from?

AUSTIN: ...Here.

JACK: He was born here, raised here?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

JACK: Travelled to Bluff City to fight...

AUSTIN: [overlap] And then went to fight in Bluff City, yeah.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: The Whitakers... the Whitaker family, who is like, the big crime syndicate here, brought him to fight the Verandas' big fighter, who was... not such a successful fighter in that *ridiculous* outcome. [Jack chuckles]

KEITH: Um... how connected is Apollo—like, Apollo's part of the Whitaker syndicate but how, like, how in it? Like how connected?

AUSTIN: Ah.... Enforcer level.?

KEITH: Right

AUSTIN: Right?

KEITH: So like... not, you know... big loyalty guy?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Not decision making... Big loyalty. Big loyalty, but not big, like... what's the way to think about this? Someone who... Achilles Apollo has probably killed somebody for the Whitakers in Blough City, a hundred percent. Right?

KEITH: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: But, is not like high up in the food chain in the sense that he lives in a mansion, you know? And like gets to decide things for the Whitakers... He is like a very good attack dog for them? But because this is a Friends at the Table joint, I wanted to make sure that the attack dog was the agent and the Whitakers were the kind of background... characters, you know what I mean?

JACK: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: He is a person who still has his own interests, and his own selfhood... and there might be limits to that loyalty, right? And like... I think this idea of Achilles, you know, saw Finnegan Hands at that fight, and knows that he was caught up in all that shit, and was like 'You should not be in Blough City... I don't know how to get you back, but like—yeah, you can stay in this like, you can stay in this little apartment that we have, I'll make sure you have enough money to get on your feet...' is a thing I can totally believe, you know? He wasn't a bad person, you know, in that sense. Alright. So, there's our starting thing... and so, what I think is this is all information you all know,

right? This is information that Green level agents have... given you, going into this. This is some extra intel... [reading out typing] helped... to get onto his feet... boom. Okay... cool.

01;36;50 — 01;40;14

AUSTIN: Ah—so. How do—how do Concern agents traditionally get into Blough City from Bluff City? We have this idea of shunt points. We know that we saw Hector get into a jitney once. Is it jitney based, is it mass-transit based in some—in some regard? Are there special...

KEITH: Like there's a bus?

AUSTIN: Yeah, is there a bus? Is it... because again, in the book—as Lacuna is written, the idea is like, alright, everyone lays down on medical slabs, and you—put on all this gear, and you go to sleep—and when you wake up, you're somewhere in Blough City. But—and we can do that! There's nothing wrong with that thing, you know? But I'm open to other suggestions, and I wanted to keep it kind of open here.

KEITH: Well, you said there was different shunt points...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: So does every... Agent have to have... use the same one? Can't different people pick which one they like best?

AUSTIN: [pause] I bet not.

KEITH: No?

AUSTIN: I bet Control picks which shunt point you use, and I bet it's a little... you know, one of the things that is clear and what I like about this is, when you go in, you might not necessarily all be in the same place. I'm not going to separate you by like a lot, but I do like the idea of it being like, oh shit! Like... we're not all in immediate direct communication, you know?

KEITH: Okay, so like this—different shunt points aren't like tied to different places on—in Blough City?

AUSTIN: Not—I think like—maybe they are, in very vague—you know. Not vague but—[trails off]

KEITH: There's a radius—they each have like a radius?

—01;38;26—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] There's a radius—that's exactly—I think each one is maybe tied to a district, right, so we have—we should go over those districts really quick. There are six districts that I've outlined inside of Blough City... they are:

The Diner—which is not a district, it's a location—the Diner is a recurring restaurant location with entrances and facades across the city. There is even a rumour that there is always at least one

diner in the country, which is the kind of outside—I obviously meant the county here. Chrome, neon, vinyl. It's one place, you go into it, and you go to the Diner. And the Diner is the Diner, and it's all the—it's all the same place. You and someone else could go into two different places and wind up in the same one.

There is the Boardwalk—amusement piers, pizzerias, movie houses, gambling halls, tourist shops—built from converted residential homes... an endless walkway of dead wood, midnight curfew.

There is the Taffy District, which is an industrial district named for sweet smelling air that's due to the large-scale candy factories there. It focuses on exports.

KEITH: To where?!

—01;39;27—

AUSTIN: I—you know? Exports.

There is Countinghouse, which is the name of the financial district deep in the heart of the city. Tall office buildings wrap around city blocks, arranged in a concentric circles. At the center, arotunda, hiding a statue.

There's Standard Town, which is the city's nightlife district, which offers drinking, dancing, and your favourite jazz tunes... and that's just in the clubs you know about.

And there's the Thicket—the suburban sprawl of the city, expanding forever into wetland country at its periphery. Some water remains—a pond here, a creek there—but more and more, all you see is houses, all the same.

So those are the kind of districts here. And so yeah, maybe pick one of those as your entry point? And then let's think about what the shunt would be to get you there.

01;40;14 — 01;43;03

KEITH: Well, it can't be the Boardwalk, because they—the Concern would never pick that, because sometimes you're not allowed to be there.

AUSTIN: Right, yeah—that's just dangerous, right, you could wind up at midnight and be like "Ah, fuck."

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Though, though! If you don't want to be spotted, going to a place that has a curfew is a good call, right?

KEITH: Sure, yeah.

AUSTIN: So maybe sometimes, you still pick it.

KEITH: Um...

AUSTIN: Does anyone have a strong feeling for where we start?

JANINE: Sorry, I was just gonna ask—does our way there have to be... like... a sort of quick and internal thing? Or should—[trails off]

AUSTIN: I'm—it's super open for me. I think we're all deciding this stuff together, you know? When you say internal, what do you mean by internal?

JANINE: Like, within the city limits of Bluff City.

AUSTIN: Ah—you—in—yes, to some degree, right? You couldn't get to Trenton to get to Blough City.

JANINE: No, yeah, I know. I was thinking of something way more vague.

AUSTIN: Do you have like, an example?

JANINE: I was thinking like, if it was like a weird—middle of nowhere bus transfer.

AUSTIN: Yeah! That's totally fine. I think that's great.

JANINE: Like, I'm thinking of—there's an episode of *Star Trek: Voyager*, where you see the Q Continuum envisioned as a gas station in the middle of the desert, basically?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Yeah.

JANINE: With like a weird house attached to it, and it's like there's fucking nothing there except for a water tower and a bunch of people reading the newspaper?

AUSTIN: Right. Yeah, we've played with this with stitches right? In—in *Twilight Mirage*, as similar liminal spaces type thing.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'm happy for that. I would love there to be... a weird jitney that you take out of town, and then you switch to a different one, and somewhere along the way you have left Bluff City behind. Or at least, that gets you to one of these places, right? That's one of the ways that you can do a shunt. Which—which place does it take you to? Is it to the Boardwalk? Is it to a specific Diner in one of these other districts? Is it to... the Financial District? Is it the Nightlife District—the nightlife district is also just a residential zone, right? It's just like... you don't have a lot of space to write when you do these... also, really quick—shout-outs to [LaminatedMoth](#), who is one of Waypoint's mods, who put together like this dossier... format-template that I used. Because... they are working on a game that is like an X-Files-style, *Blades in the Dark* hack, that hacked in parts of the TechNoir system... the parts of the TechNoir—whatever this is called system, the Table system, basically? Doesn't actually include the tables, but does include contacts and other stuff like that... I talked to them about this hack, and they provided some input and then let me use this nice template, so... Anyway, which of these locations do you want to come in on?

01:43:03 — 01:45:20

JACK: I have an idea... if, unless you're tied to something, Janine?

JANINE: No.

JACK: Um... there's a—the last... The last short in the new Coen brothers thing is set in a carriage. And it's not a single take, but it's a single journey in the carriage, and you see the landscape change from sort of like the planes in the sun in the evening, to just like this weird night time marshes, just as a conversation takes place, with no establishing shots or anything... and I love the idea that the landscape that we are driving through in the jitney—or in the bus, maybe we've changed to a bus... on one side of it, it just starts becoming water? [AUSTIN: Mm.] And you're not sure when exactly—it's not necessarily it becomes more waterlogged, or becomes swampy or whatever—it's just like... you'll be looking out at fields and hills, and then you'll be like—wait, hang on a second, I think that's the ocean. [Austin chuckles] And you feel the texture of the road surface under the—under the wheels change, and you're driving on the wooden slats of a boardwalk. And—and we show up, just like pulling up next to a pizzeria [AUSTIN: Right.], or a movie theatre, or something. And it's like—we've driven in a direction that in no conceivable way would ever bring us to the ocean and the Boardwalk?

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: But we've ended up there.

AUSTIN: Right... you've effectively driven west, and yet somehow have ended up back at the Boardwalk... though actually, again, we've established the western—so maybe you've driven a direction that would not even—even if you went across the entire nation, you would not have returned, you know?

JACK: And also, it's like a fairly short—it's not like a short journey, but it's three hours or something.

AUSTIN: Right! Right... [crosstalk] You should be in the mountains, in the Appalachians, not the...

JACK: [crosstalk] I've driven across the US, and it takes a long time...

AUSTIN: Right, right.

JACK: I think also, an image that I keep thinking of is the train station in *Spirited Away*?

AUSTIN: Yes! Yes, yes...

JACK: Like a station out in the middle of a weird, low lake. Except here it's the ocean, and a boardwalk.

AUSTIN: So, I think that they let people off at the Boardwalk in pairs? This is one of the rules of the bus... and they let you... one person off at a pizzeria, and then they drive for another mile down

the Boardwalk and let—or two people off at the pizzeria, they drive two miles down the road, and let two more people off at a different pizzeria. What are opening pairings of agents?

01:45:20 — 01:48:42

[pause]

AUSTIN: Who gets assigned together? Or we could roll for it, right? It could be—

JACK: Or Heard could just choose?

AUSTIN: I—actually, yes! Heard should choose. Heard, you're a Senior Agent here.

KEITH: That's true! I'm in charge!

AUSTIN: You are in charge.

JACK: He's in charge and his car's fuckin' weird.

AUSTIN: And I'll note this... partially... one of the—one of the ways—so, in fact, I should add a static chart, or a static meter to the—to the screen. I'm just gonna do that by having another... one of these, and then flipping it sideways, and then writing 'STATIC' on it. Disobeying—there are ways to gain static, and I'll go over static really quick, that way you know what it is—static represents the level of distrust and unreliability that separates Control from agents in the field.

A low static mission is one where things run smoothly, and egos don't come into conflict. High static missions are fraught with misinformation, incompetence, and outright betrayal. Agents do not have individual static scores. Instead, static is earned by the team as a whole. Teams begin each mission with zero static, static increases by one point when an Agent fails their first roll when attempting an action. So if you fail consecutive rolls, you're not going to continue to—like if you fail, and you're like 'I'm gonna do it again, and I'm gonna do it again, I'm gonna do it again,' you keep failing, only that first time raises static. An Agent uses a Technique, except for Seniority which is used to reduce static. An Agent is insubordinate to the lead Agent, or fails to perform an order—in this case, Agent Heard is the lead Agent. And then you get two or more points of static when you come into conflict with each other, plus two static when an Agent vs Agent roll is made, plus one additional static whenever another Agent joins the conflict, and then whenever you encounter one or more of the crab-men. It says spider-men here, but we're using crab-men.

Every time a static—every time static increases, a static-related event is triggered... there's a whole bunch of these, and they range from contact with a Personality—like someone will just show up—to minor or surreal events are triggered, to Control's attitude towards the Agents shifts—to... a Personality becomes a recurring character for future missions. And then it goes up through medium and high static, as static continues to increase from one to the twenties, where things end up become more and more surreal: Control starts to relay faulty information to Agents; you contact a Hostile Personality; Control deliberately misinterprets requests from the Agents, et cetera... and so yeah, I'd say—let's start at static zero.

I've also decided, Keith, I'm not gonna give you all that extra shit, let's just keep it simple, because I don't want to have to track your private static. That feels like a lot of extra work. So right

now, static is at zero—*boop*—and I'll say the thing that everyone here knows is—alright, when we first get in, you start to figure out where shit is, and figure out what your goals are. But one of the things that everyone does know how to do is the Skill for Access. The Skill Access is what can get you new stuff, and that is one of the reasons why, and one of the ways you will continue to be in contact with Control. I will be playing Control who is like, your handler, basically. So yeah. So Lead Agent Heard, what are these opening pairings, then?

01:48:24 — 01:51:51

KEITH [as Heard]: [sighs] Seals, you're with me, we go second; Ryder and Page, you go first.

AUSTIN: Alright, so Ryder and Page... AKA Florence Slowly is Agent Page, and Chris Andrews is Agent Ryder... you've immediately put together the two people who know Hector Hu, and just set them out... [Jack laughs] Let's talk about you two! You get off and you're in front of a pizzeria. It just says 'PIZZERIA'... All of the—the names here are just the things they are? Maybe—

KEITH: [interrupting] Piano Store.

AUSTIN: ...Yeah, uh-huh. Exactly. Maybe—

KEITH: [crosstalk] Sorry, that's one I know that's close by me, where I used to live.

AUSTIN: Yeah... oh, is that a real one that you know?

KEITH: Yeah, it's a real one. It says 'Piano Store.'

AUSTIN: Great, love it. Totally. Um... what time of day is it? Is it middle of the night? Is it afternoon? What's—what's going on here?

[pause]

AUSTIN: Let's say it's—

ALL: [at exact same time] I think it's like—[stops]

AUSTIN: Oh, go ahead. Nope.

ALL: I was gonna say it's like, early morning?

AUSTIN: Ooh, okay! Seagulls are cawing?

ALL: Right, it's like that kind—time of day where people aren't on the street yet, unless they're like—really going somewhere, you know?

AUSTIN: Yeah... so like, the pizzeria's not even open yet?



ALL: Yeah, yeah... it's like, 8am, or something.

AUSTIN: Yeah... so you two get off of this bus, on the Boardwalk—it's like a big bus, driving down the Boardwalk, because we have to start there... The sun is rising. You know, this does—this does feel West Coast, in some senses, so there are like—there are palm trees here. You probably see some people running, you know, doing a jog, out on the—like—the running path next to the beach. You know... there are still all the stuff that we know from Bluff City in terms of there being amusement piers and gambling halls and stuff. But they're a little smaller... they're gambling halls instead of casinos, and they are definitely much more quaint, in terms of—of the overall feeling. Things don't feel corporate in the same way on the Boardwalk here? There are less chains... even though it'll just say "Pizzeria", it's clear that this pizzeria is probably owned by a different person than the other places that also just say "Pizzeria"... And it's also like... bigger? It just goes. It is a sprawl... it's like not only do you see an amusement pier, you see multiple amusement piers. There's something kind of paradoxical here, which is even though every pizza place has a different sign—it's like, oh, this one is clearly owned by a different person—the actual interiors of all these places, of all the pizzerias—maybe there's two or three types of pizzeria building, total. And they repeat. So like, every retail store has basically the same layout, which is all these converted homes, and all of those homes are basically the same. It's this kind of weird repetition. Because the people who control... the zoning committee, also control what types of buildings can be built. And there is a very limited supply of approved designs. So, there's that.

So... early morning, nothing's quite open yet, no-one's here to like, spoil your disguises... What do you two get up to when you get off this bus?

01:51:51 — 01:57:03

JACK: Have we been into Bluff City together before?

AUSTIN: You mean Blough City before?

JACK: Oh! I'm sorry—[laughs, Austin laughs] yes, Blough City.

AUSTIN: The two of you... paired off?

JACK: Mmm.

AUSTIN: I don't think so... but you know each other!

JACK: So this is the first time we have sort of been working together since the events of Noirlandia?

AUSTIN: Yeah... I think maybe, Chris, you saw when Florence joined up and were surprised by it, probably? Because you remember the run in with... uh... Agent Ward, who was the woman who crashed into your car and broke your coffee pot... and fucked up, like, your day real bad? And knocked Florence into a really weird state... and then, later, you saw Florence wandering around and even talking to Agent Ward! This is the first time you've like, really been on the field together—out in the field together.

JACK [as Florence]: Well, it's good to see you again.

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

JACK [as Florence]: I don't know, I... do we feel prepared? Are we ready to go?

ALI [as Chris]: Yeah, yeah, of course! Ah... I was thinking we should check out, like... see if there's a rental store? We could find out about this guy's movies?

JACK [as Florence]: Oh! To be like, what's his deal?

ALI [as Chris]: Yeah! We should start there, right?

JACK [as Florence]: Sure! I mean, I think I saw some of his films... they were—it was more my kid's thing than me, I was never much of a Blake Blossom fan. What does he do?

AUSTIN: You have to go look into it! [Ali giggles]

JACK: No, but like—he was in—he was in Bluff City, right? We would know his movies...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] He was, and he was like a... you know his movies that he starred in Bluff City. Here, he's become a director.

JACK: Oh damn! Okay...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK [as Florence]: Well, uh, okay—[sighs] I mean, do you see anywhere that's like—would you put a rental store on a Boardwalk?

AUSTIN: This is a roll. [Ali giggles]

ALI: [laughing] Okay.

AUSTIN: This is definitely a roll.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: We've made it. This is a...

JACK: [laughing] To be like, find a rental store?

AUSTIN: Well, so, it probably won't be a rental store, right? It's the 1950's. [Ali laughs] The idea of like, home rental is not a thing yet, but there are other places to figure out where to see his movies, right? And I think that's probably an Access roll, right? Or, um, mmm. What's the one for

like—Yeah, Access is the one that includes, like, navigation and stuff, right? Let me find... the write up. This fucking book. [Jack laughs] Complications, resolution, target heart rate... am I too high or too low—here we go, yeah. Uh... Access defines the Agent's ability to requisition material and information from Control, so this is not that. It represents personal charisma, resourcefulness, and pull within the Company. It also describes the Agent's familiarity with the map, and affects the Agent's ability to enter and leave Blough City. So yeah. I think this is Access, because Instinct is like... Instinct is perception, reaction, intuition... observation, hunches, deduction, et cetera, but this is like, knowing how to get around Blough City. So I'm gonna say it's an Access roll.

ALI: Okay, so that's—

AUSTIN: So that is 3d6, to start.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: You don't have a Talent for it, right? Your Talent is Intuition, not Access, so [ALI: Mm]. Yeah, it's 3d6 and your target is 11. [pause] That is a 10. [Ali gives a pained laugh] So immediately increase your heart rate to 83.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: And now you have a choice, so. Players of the game use a six-sided die to decide success or failure using their attributes. You roll a number of dice equal to the attribute being used, hoping to roll at least an 11. That number is added to your heart rate. Fail—failure causes you to fail the attempted action. If you wish to push the roll, you can make another roll if hoping to get an 11. The drawback is that each roll adds further to your heart rate. Talents add a bonus dice after you've rolled your normal ones, so in this case it doesn't come up, like Intuition hasn't helped you here. But if it did, let's say you did have Navigation as your Talent, you could then, at this point, say: and I wanna roll one more die, right? That way you wouldn't have to roll three more die. That's the benefit of having a Talent. Talents and equipment increase the probability of rolling a success with only the amount of dice you have. So now, you failed this roll, and you can, if you want to, re-roll it, and continue to push your heart rate. That is up to you. And I can tell you what happens if you fail [Ali laughs], or I can tell you what happens if you—if you don't fail here.

01:57:03 — 02:04:44

ALI: Um....

AUSTIN: Or if you push it, you know?

ALI: How far after Noirlandia is this?

AUSTIN: Far enough that you've become, like, an Agent... so like I think a year? Is probably right?

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: You've spent a ye—or it's—yeah, you've spent a year in this agency. So maybe even more than that, right? Like, between training and doing this stuff?

ALI: Okay, so this isn't like, one of my first jobs, or whatever.

AUSTIN: You've been here a couple of times.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: You're not a Deep Blue senior agent, but like—yeah, you could have been here—you've been here enough times to have leveled up once, right?

ALI: Okay, yeah. In that case, I think I'm just gonna take the fail. Instead of push my...

AUSTIN: Okay, so I think... yeah, no worries. The thing that you end up looking for—and I can tell you exactly what happens, which is... and this should still give you some information. You know that, like, unlike Bluff City, there aren't rental shops... The two places you can look are—or, I mean, there's more than two, right? But libraries are a place where you can find film reels. Schools, obviously—especially colleges, like the university would have some sort of film department. But also, active theatres. This is a period of time where films come in and out of rotation... pretty regularly. So like, if Blake Blossom made 'The Western', right? The Western would be in theatres this week, and then in six or seven weeks, maybe it comes back into rotation. And so a lot of times theatres will just hold onto those reels—they'll own those reels, and rotate them, basically. Or they become the B picture, right? The A picture is whatever the new release is, but the B picture is an old release that people have. And so you go to—you kind of find a newspaper, or—oh, you can't read... right.

[Ali, Jack laugh]

AUSTIN: So you go to a... a movie house, right? And you're looking basically for—you can basically recognise the names of anything in the dossier, so if you see the word 'Blake Blossom', you kind of have the—the whatever the version of writing is here. And I imagine it's like—it's an indecipherable cipher, basically? That still uses the same basic characters, and probably even has sound—you could probably read it out loud and it could make sounds, that sound like—like, approaching English, but are not English, you know? You remember those names from—

—01:59:21—

KEITH: Just like gibberish.

AUSTIN: [continuing] that baseball—that gibberish baseball game?<sup>6</sup> Do you know what I'm talking about?

KEITH: No.

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<sup>6</sup> 1994 Super Famicom game *Fighting Baseball*, [article about it here](#), [original tweet here](#).

JACK: [crosstalk] Oh yeah—and also there's that song, right?

ALI: [crosstalk] Mm, yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: That's—that song is also a great touchstone, yeah.

KEITH: Wait—gibberish baseball?

AUSTIN: It's from a—

JACK: [crosstalk] Yeah, where it's like Bobson Dugnut, and...

AUSTIN: Yeah, Steve McDichael, Onson Sweemey, Darryl Archideld... [Keith laughing in background] Anatoli Smorin, Rey McSriff...

KEITH: [laughing, crosstalk] What is... what are you talking about... What—why do you know all these?! [Jack laughs]

AUSTIN: You know! Glenallen Mixon... Mario Mcrlwain...

ALI: [crosstalk] It's a popular tweet. [laughs]

JACK: What did you google to get this? Baseball...

AUSTIN: I'm gonna link it here in Bluff City...

KEITH: What's the name of the game?!

JACK: Keith—so, this is a—hang on. Keith, this is a Japanese baseball game—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk, away from mic] It's so fucking good!

JACK: [continuing] and the Japanese designers made a truly incredible effort to make names that sound like American names, and I think, just for the value of the recording—could you give us a read of these, Keith?

KEITH: Yeah, sure! Austin, did you read any of these already?

AUSTIN: I read up through—ah—Mario Mcrlwain

KEITH: I'll read the second column.

—02;00;18—

AUSTIN: Alright, so I'll finish the first column. Rau—Raul—[laughs] ah... Raul Chamgerlain, Kevin Nogilny [Keith laughs], Tony *Shmerk*—Smehrik, and Bobson Dugnut. You go ahead and take over the second column.

—02:00:33—

KEITH: [doing an announcer voice] Willie Dustice! Jeromy Gride! Scott... Dourque! Shown Furcotte! Dean Wesrey! Mike Truk! [wheezes in laughter] Dwight Rortugal!

AUSTIN: [interrupting] No! No! Not Dwight!

KEITH: Dwigt—

[all pause to giggle]

KEITH: Dwigt—[wheezes in laughter]

[Austin laughs, Keith is laughing off mic]

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?!

KEITH: Oh... I am genuinely light-headed... from this one. [Austin laughs] Dwigt—Ror—[stops to laugh, Austin laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?!

KEITH: [laughing, struggling to speak] Okay—no, I got it, I got it... Okay, this time I got it... [recovers, announcer voice] Dwigt Rortuga—[breaks off laughing]

[Austin, Ali laugh]

KEITH: [laughing] I'm crying... it's so funny...

JANINE: It's just like Portugal... but...

JACK: [crosstalk] You know... like a man's name...

KEITH: [laughing, attempting announcer voice] Dwigt... Rortugal...

[Ali laughs]

KEITH: [announcer voice] Tim Sandaele! [Austin laughs] Karl Dandle—[breaks off laughing] Dandleton! Mike Sernandez! And... T—[breaks off] Todd Bonzalez! [breaks off laughing off mic]

—02:01:48—

[pause, all are laughing and struggling to recover]

AUSTIN: [announcer voice] Those are your New York Gankees!

[pause, all are laughing still]

JACK: Oh, god...

KEITH: [sputtering] Dwigt... Rortugal!

JACK: People say we make good names... I think this makes us look like fucking rank amateurs...

KEITH: Oh my god, yes, this is *phenomenal*...

—02:02:05—

AUSTIN: This is so much better... but this is it, right?! Or it is, Jack—the, um—what is the name of that song?

JACK: I looked it up. It's called—uh, [Prisencolinensinainciusol](#)...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: And it's a song composed by Adriano Celentano. [crosstalk] Can I spell that?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Can you spell that? Yeah.

JACK: P-R-I-S-E—it's one word—P-R-I-S-E-N-C-O-L-I-N-E-N-S-I-N-A-I-N-C-I-U-S-O-L.

AUSTIN: [chuckling] If you type in Prisen—P-R-I-S-E-N-, it might auto-complete.

KEITH: Can I take—

JACK: [interrupting] The song is intended to sound—sorry, go on.

KEITH: Sorry, I just wanna take one last take on 'Dwigt'?

AUSTIN: Yeah, please.

—02:02:44—

KEITH: [announcer voice] Dwigt Rortugal! I just needed...

AUSTIN: There you go. [Ali giggling]

JACK: Yeah, you nailed it... Yeah. So it just sounds like people in Bluff City talking? Except we just can't—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: It's like Keith trying to write print in his dream.

KEITH: Yeah

AUSTIN: Yeah, 100%.

JACK: We just can't... hear it. Or understand it.

AUSTIN: You recognise the phonemes of... of American English... but it is not forming words. And it's not a thing that you can—I mean, it is a thing you could learn how to decipher and internalise. You can—you would need to write it, um—or I guess, I guess maybe hearing it is fine—

KEITH: [crosstalk] The spoken words, we have. Yeah, it's just—

AUSTIN: [continuing] The spoken is fine! Spoken is fine—but reading it is this style of thing. And you could learn how to read it. It's just not... easy... because otherwise, everyone would just have that Skill! But, you could recognise the picture of Blake Blossom, you know how to read Blake Blossom, and so the failure here is you go to a nearby movie house, and you're able to look through what they're—they have a printed schedule of everything that they've run, and not only does it have—not only do you not see Blake Blossom's name there—there's like a thing that's very clearly "Director", because you do see Gale Green listed, you do see Gale Green listed and so that gives you enough to be like 'Aha! This would be where it would say Blake Blossom, and there's nothing there.' So it's like, okay, his films—whatever he's making—are not being publically distributed. They're not being—they're not part of this... they're not part of the pop—popular cinema? You do know the dossier says he's part of an avant-garde—he's like an avant-garde filmmaker, which means his work is maybe not even available in that kind of ready-to-access way.

02:04:44 — 02:08:28

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: So that, you know—we've now got you two outside of this movie house—and the movie house is starting to open up, and so y'all have to kind of like make sure that you're not being... too—too seen. Let's jump over to Agent Seals and Agent Heard. Y'all get off at a different pizzeria. What are your first steps?

KEITH [as Heard]: Alright, well, we should meet them half way. They're probably on—on their way over here.

[pause, AUSTIN huffs a laugh]

JANINE [as Maggie]: Are—are they?

KEITH [as Heard]: Yeah, that's what I said earlier. Were you not listening?

JANINE [as Maggie]: Okay...

AUSTIN: I just realized static [JANINE: No, I] went up. Go ahead.

JANINE: No, it's fine...



KEITH [as Heard]: [clears throat] Yeah, well, they're probably on their way—on their way this way, we'll be on our way that way.

AUSTIN: I should note here—when the—when you failed that roll, Ali, static went up by one.

ALI: Mm.

AUSTIN: And the... there was a moment where, as you're finishing—a police officer just kind of turns the corner and catches you—catches sight of you, and then like—crosses the street and then walks back the other way? And maybe he's on patrol, or maybe he saw you. And it's hard to say.

KEITH: How aware of—how aware of Bluff City are the—is the average denizen of Blough City?

AUSTIN: The same way—to the same degree the average denizen of Bluff City is aware of Blough City, which is *not at all*! But they know it when they see a crab-man.

KEITH: Right. [Ali snorts] Yes.

AUSTIN: Right? And so like... don't lower your guard, so to speak.

KEITH: Right. Well—

AUSTIN: Don't get seen too close.

KEITH: Wait—are we all supposed to be crabs?

AUSTIN: You are all crab men. [Ali gasps] Unless—[JANINE: What?!] you are able to disguise yourselves, yeah. Which you can do without the Disguise ability, to be clear.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Right, well I have a whole alternate identity.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Do you remember how... [trails off]

JACK: [crosstalk] Wait, wait wait—hang on.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm?

JANINE: I didn't know that part.

JACK: [crosstalk] Yeah, hang on...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] So it's a—it's a—thing that, one of the reasons I was asking like okay, what time is it, et cetera... is, you have plenty of time right now to get yourselves hidden, and also I wasn't just gonna like, spring it on you. [JANINE: Okay] Because you are secret Agents who would not...

JANINE: I thought it was just because we were wearing anachronistic high heels or something.  
[chuckles]

AUSTIN: No! No...

JACK: [crosstalk] So like... is it...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] You know how Mr. E Masque revealed that his face was like, a weird shield? Like the weird crab shell, like the shield side of the crab shell?

KEITH: *Yeah yeah yeah.*

AUSTIN: That is what Blough City agents look like when they are seen in Bluff City. What Bluff City agents look like when they're seen in Blough City is the bottom side of the crab. Is the legs, and the eyes, and the mouth.

KEITH: Oh! So we are crab men.

AUSTIN: You are crab men.

JACK: So is it just a case that—you know how in the world that we inhabit, the north pole of a magnet is attracted to the south pole?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: Is it in this world, strangers in the other one look like a kind of crab?

AUSTIN: It's not strangers. It's specifically agents from the Concern. [crosstalk] So Finnegan Hands does not look like this.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Right, so everyone else looks like... regular... people-faced people?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. Totally. Absolutely.

KEITH: But because we are in the—we are in the different plane...

AUSTIN: And I'm curious, what is your uniform like? And I wanna be clear, this is not a thing—most people would see this at a distance and be like, okay, yeah, that was weird, weird beard on that person, or oh, they have a weird hairstyle. It's like—the crab moment is a very specific one. It's a very like 'Oh my god, I think I saw a crab person in this dark alleyway'. From a distance it just doesn't—it's blurry—it's weird. Blough City is weird already... but I am curious what your uniforms are. Because we know that the Coast Guard is what the Blough City-based agents look like in Bluff City. What do the Bluff City agents wear here?

02;08;26 — 02;10;55

KEITH: Oh, do we... oh, we have—we have to have a uniform?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] I'm asking. This is a worldbuilding thing.

KEITH: That makes sense.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uniforms are... you're secret agents. You got some uniforms.

KEITH: Um...

AUSTIN: Like, is it just like FBI agent stuff?

JANINE: Pizza delivery. [crosstalk] Or whatever.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Is it a pizza delivery, where you're all...

KEITH: [crosstalk] No, I think... I'm making a pitch for... we are dressed sort of like... dressed sort of like someone that would work in the taffy district, or sort of like—not as, not as formal as a special agent. Sort of maybe like a grey—I mean, I would be like maybe in a three-piece grey suit with a wool blazer—like not—or like a—like not wool, but...what's that...

JANINE: Isn't taffy district industrial?

AUSTIN: It is.

KEITH: [crosstalk] I thought that was the... oh! Counting Town.

AUSTIN: Countinghouse.

KEITH: Countinghouse! That's—

AUSTIN: Countinghouse is the—is the financial.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So yeah, like a business person?

KEITH: [crosstalk] Boring... business... suit...

AUSTIN: Suits and dresses and like... [trails off]

KEITH: Yeah, business, not business-casual.

AUSTIN: Right... yeah! I'm good with that. As long as y'all are—as long as the rest of you are good with it.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I will not give you static if you disagree. This is not disagreeing with a lead—a lead agent,

KEITH: Yeah, no, I'm up for whatever, but I'm thinking—

JACK: [crosstalk] Business drab.

KEITH: I'm trying to think 19—what do people in the 1950's look like, and they look like they are wearing boring suits.

AUSTIN: They are.

JANINE: They look like business or business.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: Yeah, perfect. Um... cool. So yeah, that is—that is—you two, you just start heading in their general direction... to meet up.

KEITH: Yep! We're meeting half way... that's what we decided on.

AUSTIN: Mm—ah... Did you decide on that?

KEITH: Yep!

AUSTIN: Did you decide—do they know that part?

KEITH: [beat] I'm deciding that they... ignored me talking about that we should meet up.

AUSTIN: You can't do that.

KEITH: No?

JANINE: N—[sighs]

AUSTIN: That you cannot do. No.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: No, you cannot decide that. There are limits. You could say that you told them—

JANINE: [crosstalk] Deciding that your character knows how to tapdance.

JACK: Mm!

AUSTIN: [amused] Right. You could say that you decided that you told them that, and that—and then we can ask them if they have decided this other thing instead. That's up—that's up to them....

KEITH: [crosstalk] Yeah, sure, I...

AUSTIN: But we can't do, like...

KEITH: I'm at least saying that I told them.

AUSTIN: Okay. So what I wanna make sure is clear then is then they... then they get the decision that is either, narratively speaking, do you have enough time to go meet up with them halfway? Or did you decide to disregard that and start doing the investigation yourself? 'Cause if you wanna be able to have met up with them halfway, you can also still do that. 'Cause that was not part of your choice, before.

02;10;55 — 02;12;50

KEITH: No, no—I br—I thrust that upon them. Maybe I'm lying, maybe I just didn't... or, maybe I thought that I said something and didn't, or just assumed that we we were gonna meet up halfway. 'Cause that makes a lot of sense.

AUSTIN: If you assumed, that's fine. 'Cause then that's on you.

KEITH: Yeah, sure! Let's say that. Let's say that I'm saying that I said, but I'm actually just having assumed.

AUSTIN: Okay. Alright, so you get halfway, and there is like an ice cream parlor, which has also not opened yet, and a grocery—like a corner-store grocery that's here. And that is open, and there are like—you know... There are pears for sale, you know? Out front. Just rows and rows and rows of pears.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Pairs of what?

AUSTIN: Pears.

KEITH: Okay. Pairs of pears. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Pairs of pears, yeah. You have to b—they're—they're two for a dollar. Pears—you know, which, I don't know if they're expensive or not, I don't know.

JANINE: That's a terrible 1950's price!

AUSTIN: You know? I don't know what the [JANINE: Holy shit!] economy was like back then, you know? Maybe [JANINE: That's awful.] it's hard to import pears, okay, Janine?

KEITH: Yeah.

JACK: That's like extremely expensive for pears, right, Janine?

JANINE: [crosstalk] It's terrible!

KEITH: [crosstalk] We focus mostly on exports anyway.

JANINE: That's not even a good price for *today*, never mind back when you could [crosstalk] get a pair of shoes for five bucks.

JACK: [crosstalk] That is true, yeah. [laughs]

AUSTIN: You know? I gotta tell you, the economy in a world where the only thing that exists is your own city is not great.

JANINE: [unconvinced] Yeah...

AUSTIN: Also, it's weird 'cause it's all they have. You think that they'd be priced to move, but no. Or maybe it's two for a penny, and you just don't know, 'cause you can't read. [laughs] So you can see the '1', and it's like wait, is that a cent or a dollar?

JANINE: [crosstalk] That's—eh... [laughs]

KEITH: Maybe it says two for one [crosstalk] like it's 50% off—it's buy-one-get-one.

JANINE: [crosstalk] Or is this a barter system and it's actually...

AUSTIN: Could be buy one get one. Um, you're waiting for them, you're waiting for them... they're not really coming yet. Other crew, if you wanna show up, you can totally show up here. But actually, you know what—I think as they're waiting... this has to be—this is a thing on Agent Heard's side... someone you know approaches you—or someone who recognises you, Heard, approaches you. Who is it? Not one of your contacts, just like a random person.

02;12;50 — 02;16;22

KEITH: Who is it—random person? Are you asking me to make up a guy?

AUSTIN: Yeah. You know. Just make up a—how do you know them?

KEITH: Um...

AUSTIN: Who do you know in the Boardwalk district?

KEITH: Uh... let's see.

AUSTIN: Is someone on their way to their job?

KEITH: Souvenir vendor!

AUSTIN: Okay! Souvenir vendor Mike Truk shows up...

[pause, Keith laughs]

AUSTIN: And... is like...

KEITH: [still laughing] T-R-U-K, for everyone out there.

AUSTIN: T-R-U-K... and has not, has not spotted Florence Slowly—Agent Page yet. Maybe Agent Page, you're looking at a newspaper, or whatever.

JACK: Wait! Wouldn't it be Janine's character? Seals?

AUSTIN: Oh, sorry—I was pairing them off by left and right on the screen. Yes, Seals—sorry. Seals, you are not being seen yet. Though actually, maybe that's gonna be part of this thing, actually—is like hey, can you keep your fucking—can you keep yourself chill?

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Robber! Robber, I haven't seen you around here in a little while!

KEITH [as Heard]: Hey, Truk...

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: How's it going?

KEITH [as Heard]: Oh, it's good. Just takin' a rest.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: You're resting out here by the ice cream shop, waiting for it to open, I guess...

KEITH [as Heard]: Mm-hm, yeah. Morning walk.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: What's your favourite? What's your favourite?

KEITH [as Heard]: Um... white.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: I like a nice... yeah, me too.

KEITH [as Heard]: Yeah. White swirl.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: I like a white swirl... Tried the brown swirl, it was too much for me. Who's your friend?

KEITH [as Heard]: Um... here you go, friend!

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Excuse me?

[Janine laughs]

KEITH [as Heard]: I'm looking at my—this is my friend. Here you go.

[pause]

AUSTIN: What are you doing? I can't see you, Keith, we don't have cameras on.

KEITH: I'm jerk—sorry—jerking my head... towards—towards Seals.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Ah!

AUSTIN: Seals, what are you doing?

JANINE: What does 'here you go' mean? In this context? [laughter in background]

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] I have no idea!

KEITH: [crosstalk] [laughing] I'm presenting... I'm presenting my friend!

JANINE: [laughing] The fuck... Is that how you've... okay.

KEITH: Well, I don't know if you have a name that you're going by, or if I should call you Seals, or if you want to be Maggie... So here you go!

JANINE: You tell me, *Robber*. I don't have a co—mm...

AUSTIN: You don't have a cover.

KEITH: You don't have a cover, that's why I'm lost here!

JANINE: Or a face!

AUSTIN: Or a face...

KEITH: Yeah.

JANINE: This—[laughs] it seems—it feels to me like you did the opposite of a [KEITH: Anyway, Truk.] good thing in this situation, by drawing attention to me, but okay...



KEITH [as Heard]: Anyway, Truk. So how—how have you been?

AUSTIN: How—are—Seals, are you like hiding your face, are you turned away, are you ignoring this person?

JANINE: Ah... I think I've got the paper up, and I just rudely go kinda like 'Mehh...'

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Oh...

JANINE: Like I'm busy...

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Must be... must be a little too warm for your friend.

KEITH [as Heard]: It's super warm. For my friend.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: It's warm for a holiday season... you have any holiday plans?

KEITH [as Heard]: Um... yeah, I'm gonna contemplate the season.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: That's what I do every day.

KEITH [as Heard]: Yeah.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Gotta think about the, uh... the reason for the season.

KEITH [as Heard]: Yeah.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: The big guy...

KEITH [as Heard]: Yup.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Alright, well. It's, uh...

KEITH [as Heard]: God, he's big.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: He's the biggest... the biggest guy... It's been good seeing you. I'm gonna go with the shop, open up...

KEITH [as Heard]: Yeah!

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: You need anything, you let me know, okay?

KEITH [as Heard]: Absolutely, Truk, see ya.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Alright...

[pause, Austin laughs]

KEITH [as Heard]: Seals, you played that smooth.

AUSTIN: Janine in the chat says 'The big guy. Santa' [Keith, Jack laugh]. Yeah—the uh—as Mike Truk is leaving, at this points Agents Ryder and Page can show up and you can reconvene.

02;16;22 — 02;18;44

JACK [as Florence]: Well, it didn't go well.

KEITH [as Heard]: Meeting us halfway? What, didn't go well?

ALI [as Chris]: We were looking for movies... [Austin laughs] 'cause the guy makes movies...

KEITH [as Heard]: Oh! I thought we were all gonna meet up halfway, that's fine.

JACK [as Florence]: We thought we'd get a bit of a head start.

KEITH [as Heard]: Yeah.

JACK [as Florence]: [continuing] But... they're not showing any of his stuff in the cinemas around here.

ALI [as Chris]: We can check their like, storage later maybe? But that's gonna be like a couple of hours from now.

KEITH [as Heard]: Have you considered library?

ALI [as Chris]: Mm! Mm... I guess we haven't.

JACK [as Florence]: Well... as in the films would be stored in the library?

KEITH [as Heard]: Yeah! Library has... movies sometimes, sometimes some of the weirder stuff.

JACK [as Florence]: [sharply inhales]

ALI [as Chris]: Do we think he's like, that popular?

KEITH [as Heard]: [crosstalk] There's a lot of unpopular stuff in the library. In all libraries.

JACK [as Florence]: [crosstalk] Yeah, like... Let me check the notes... It says he's an avant-garde filmmaker. Um.

KEITH [as Heard]: Mm-hm. That sounds like some library... business to me.

—02;17;19—

JACK: I think Florence is just like, holding the thing that I have, [crosstalk] has just like carried the case file into Blough City.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] The dossier... great.

KEITH [as Heard]: What do you think libraries are? This is—you know. They have—they are—they *store*... the stuff.

ALI [as Chris]: No, I just feel like we should go where like... cool people hang out.

AUSTIN: [ominously] Mm.

KEITH [as Heard]: [crosstalk] Yeah, the library.

JACK [as Florence]: [crosstalk] Yeah, like a...

Like underground cinemas, or [crosstalk] maybe we could approach...

ALI [as Chris]: [crosstalk] Or like a cool... bar?

KEITH [as Heard]: You think that [crosstalk] maybe he's at a bar?

JACK [as Florence]: [crosstalk] Oh yeah, to be like—

[Ali laughs]

KEITH [as Heard]: You think maybe they're storing...

ALI [as Chris]: [crosstalk] I think that maybe...

KEITH [as Heard]: [continuing] the avant-garde cinema at a bar?

ALI [as Chris]: No! I just think the people who like his movies wear cool clothes, and go to [crosstalk] cool parties, and like...

KEITH [as Heard]: [crosstalk] And go to a bar?

JANINE [as Maggie]: Like a coffee house?

ALI [as Chris]: Yeah! Like a coffee house! Like a coffee house...

JANINE [as Maggie]: Mm-hm.

KEITH [as Heard]: Okay. A coffee bar is what you meant.

JANINE [as Maggie]: So we should find some beatniks.

ALI [as Chris]: We—

JACK [as Florence]: We shouldn't all go, right? [crosstalk] Just like four crab-faced agents rolling...

KEITH [as Heard]: [crosstalk] No, I think we should all go.

JACK [as Florence]: [continuing] into a coffee shop, and they're just like, 'hello'.

KEITH [as Heard]: We should all go. We can... [trails off]

AUSTIN: That's—the lead Agent says we should all go.

KEITH [as Heard]: We should all go!

AUSTIN: You can disagree...

JACK [as Florence]: [crosstalk] Sir...

AUSTIN: [continuing] you'll just get a point of static, you know?

ALI [as Chris]: Yes sir...

JACK [as Florence]: [crosstalk] With respect...

JANINE [as Maggie]: [crosstalk] Can we get scarves and elegant veils first?

KEITH [as Heard]: Yeah! Any style of veil or scarf you want, elegant or no.

AUSTIN: Oh, you know who sells that stuff? Is Mike Truk in the souvenir shop.

KEITH: Yeah.

02;18;44 — 02;22;52

AUSTIN: Do you want to make a roll for disguises?

KEITH: [crosstalk] Not elegant... well, sorry—not elegant veils.

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah, that's fair. They're not elegant veils.

KEITH: Funeral veils... [long pause, Austin is laughing]

JACK [as Florence]: I'm not gonna wear a funeral veil.

KEITH: ...and casual veils.

AUSTIN: You also are trained enough to know how to, like, get a disguise going. You just have to tell me how you're doing it. Do you know what I mean?

KEITH: Yeah.

JACK: Right.

AUSTIN: You can make weird masks and shit from stuff you can buy places, it's just a matter of getting that stuff. The good news is, one of you has an identity already, which allows you to do that.

KEITH: Mm-hm. And I bet Mike Truk is used to me buying... [pause, Ali giggles] neck warmers.

AUSTIN: [overlap] All sorts—yeah, yeah, that's probably why you're friends, right?

KEITH: Yeah, I'm always there buying neck warmers.

AUSTIN: Um... Can everyone add five points of commendation to their thing, by the way? I just realised we did not do that, and I've decided to go up to five, from where it was before, because... uh, just because—just in case we need them, for pacing.

ALI: Where should we write them?

AUSTIN: Just anywhere on your sheet, basically. There's not much room but, you know.

ALI: Okay. While we're pausing, I didn't say what my second Technique was before?

AUSTIN: You did not do that! Apologies...

ALI: And I have Caller.

AUSTIN: Ooh!

ALI: Which lets me communicate with y'all when we're separated, or with Control, so...

AUSTIN: Awesome. That's really good.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So what do you have—what's the device that lets you do that?

ALI: [sighs] Oh my God—um... I think that it's like... It's like, an apple watch, but if it was like, a McDonald's... toy? [giggles]

AUSTIN: Yeah. Mm-hm! [Janine chuckles in background] Great. [Ali laughs] It's like a—the Dick Tracey watch.

ALI: Right, yeah, exactly—I have this really specific image of like, um, it switching between screens when you... like they're plastic screens that's inside of it—it's like a scroll that's inside of it, essentially...

AUSTIN: Oh, that's so good!

ALI: [continuing] that you have to like, twist it to like... go to the like, communicate, or to go down... your contacts list or whatever...

AUSTIN: Right... Perfect.

ALI: [continuing] Or to switch between modes.

AUSTIN: Yeah... yeah, I love that. Does that mean, also—based on the way that the thing is written—the way it's written is—[reading] Caller: The Agent can communicate with distant Agents, and with Control, without an Access roll. This does not require the Agent spends a Commendation point.

That's good. Does that mean that people have to talk *through* you? Are you kind of like the de facto... operator? Like if Maggie was in one place, and Robber was in another place, could they both talk to you but not to each other?

ALI: Yeah! I mean I think so, I'm the one with that... Skill, right? Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I like that idea. I like that idea, 'cause it also kind of immediately puts you into a certain position of—of, it gives you a roll, in a very clear way.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Cool. I like that move a lot.

ALI: And what was the points that we're bringing up? What's that word?

AUSTIN: You have five Commendation Points.

ALI: [reading out slowly] Commendation Points...

AUSTIN: Which you can use... um... in fact, wait, I wanna make sure—you may have actually succeeded at the roll, now that I think about it. One second. Um... Commendation Points, blah blah blah, Techniques... They spend that... [reading] Agents may *also*... [pauses] Okay, no. So, mm... yeah, actually, wait. [reading] Agents may spend a Commendation Point to push through requests

for information or equipment while in Blough City. Every Commendation Point spent in this manner may add +1 to any Access: Logistics or Access: Intelligence roll made by the Agent. This bonus may be applied after the dice are rolled, and is not added to the Agent's heart rate.

So! We're gonna ret-con something, if you want to. [Ali laughs] You can spend one of those points—you were at 10, right? So, I'm cool with totally retconning that, because we're still learning the system, and I'm playing as a fan of the characters—I have a list, by the way, of my goals and agenda and all of that, even though this book does not have one of those, I wrote a bunch. [Ali laughs] I'm a big fuckin' nerd... So, if you want to spend one of those to have retroactively succeeded there, I can give you a little bit more.

ALI: [inhales] Um... I, uh—yeah, I mean, sure—why not? We've been doing this a long time.

AUSTIN: Okay. The other thing there is that means we erase the static, you're still at zero static, which is good. It's good to be at zero static.

ALI: [crosstalk] Okay, cool.

02;22;52 — 02;24;58

AUSTIN: Um... one second here... so... let's go... *bah-bah*... and—ze—zero. Zero. There we go. Um, so, uh, you are... [pause]

You know, maybe it's one of these things where you are... we can—we can kind of keep it—keep it working in a weird way, in that like, let's say you took one of those schedules, basically? And... you—at first you just didn't see anything, right? And now you're back together—and you've been like, staring at it—and you can almost make sense of this thing? Which I kind of like, again, kind of leads into Chris as communications expert here? [Ali chuckles] And it's like—[sighs] You can't see exactly what the—you can't read it exactly? But you notice that Blake Blossom's name also appears in an advertisement on like—there's like ad space inside of the schedule book, right? And there's an advertisement for... the... City-Wide Film Festival.

And on the advertisement, you see that it says, um... it says Blake Blossom, Gale Green, and then there's other names that you don't recognise, but you can presume that these are all adver—these are all avant-garde, or emerging film directors? And it says underneath, like... you can't read it, but what it says is like the New School of Director, or the New School of Cinema. [Ali giggles] And so, that is the... you see that there is a thing called the Citywide Film Festival which you know about. You know that that is... it's in the dossier. I'm gonna add it here... Festival... there we go... And that is, that Blake Blossom was going to have a film there. So that is one place you know you could go for more information.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: In fact, you like crack that in this moment, when people are like, ah, I don't know where to go, what are we doing? [Ali giggles]

02;24;58 — 02;26;39

AUSTIN: Jumping back forward. Robber, do you want to make an Access roll to get speople some fuckin' disguises?

KEITH: Uh,yeah! Let's do it.

AUSTIN: Alright! So that is definitely Access, so that's 3d6.

KEITH: 3d6...

AUSTIN: And then, you don't have an Access Talent, right? You have a...

KEITH: Force.

AUSTIN: You have a Force Talent—[drawing out word] *Strategy*.

KEITH: [keystroke noise] 11.

AUSTIN: And that's an 11! Look at you! So what's this do—do you like—ten minutes later you show up to Souvenir Shop?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And Mike Truk is there, and he's like...

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Oh, hey!

KEITH [as Heard]: [Suspicious as hell] Heyyyy... Truk.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Robber?

KEITH [as Heard]: Yeah, yeah yeah.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Nice to see you, Twig.

KEITH [as Heard]: Yeah.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: How's it going?

KEITH [as Heard]: [too fast] It's good, we, uh—me and my friends—

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Did you get that white swirl?

KEITH [as Heard]: Yeah, we all—we each got a white swirl, and now we're cold so I'm gonna need... some...



[Austin laughs, Ali snorts]

KEITH [as Heard]: I'm gonna need, uh—two... neck warmers, and... do you have your casual veils in?

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Got the casuals. Just got 'em in.

KEITH [as Heard]: Two casual veils, please. Thank you.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Yeah, of course.

KEITH [as Heard]: A maroon, and a dark green.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Alright. You don't want the puce?

KEITH [as Heard]: The puce... I guess I'll take puce instead of maroon.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Per—yeah, we got the puce.

KEITH [as Heard]: Yeah.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Alright, here you go. That'll be... the usual.

KEITH [as Heard]: Here you go. Here's the usual.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Seven—seventy two.

KEITH [as Heard]: Yep. Here's my usual.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Money units.

KEITH [as Heard]: Thank you.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Thank you.

KEITH [as Heard]: Have a good one.

AUSTIN [as Mike Truk]: Mm.

AUSTIN: And uh—you get a bag full of stuff that can... you know! Don't fail rolls, 'cause there's a chance that stuff can—can fuck up? But for now at least...makes you...

KEITH: Yeah. Okay...

KEITH [as Heard]: Okay, so, who wants puce veil, and who wants, um... green veil... and who wants a neck warmer?

ALI [as Chris]: Neck warmer, please.

02;26;39 — 02;29;50

KEITH [as Heard]: Here you go!

AUSTIN: And as you put it on, like... you do look like a person again. Like, this is a supernatural effect, right? This is like... you know how they say the clothes make the man?

KEITH: Yeah. [Ali snorts]

AUSTIN: It's like, very literal here? Where... you add enough stuff to you, and... bit by bit, you start to look like a person, for them.

KEITH: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: And right now, it's a green neckwarmer. [laughs]

KEITH: Yep. [Ali laughs] Oh no, no, the neckwarmers are black. Both black...

AUSTIN: Sorry. [crosstalk] I thought there was a green neckwarmer.

KEITH: [crosstalk] The veil is puce... no, two black neckwarmers,

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Puce veil...

KEITH: [crosstalk] A puce veil, casual, and a green—dark green veil, casual.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. So who's taking the veils?

JANINE [as Maggie]: I'd like the dark green veil.

KEITH [as Heard]: Okay, here's the puce.

JANINE: [crosstalk] That's not dark green?

KEITH: [crosstalk] No, sorry, I'm handing it to... to Page.

KEITH [as Heard]: Here's the puce, Page.

JANINE: Okay.

JACK [as Florence]: Thank you!

AUSTIN: Perfect. And you're also taking a neckwarmer?

KEITH: Yes. I'm taking my—us—my usual.

AUSTIN: Even though you—okay. Gotcha. Gotcha. Good.

JANINE: I'm imagining these veils as like the, um... mesh, like fishnetty ones?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: That you have attached to a hat or like a hairpin or something?

AUSTIN: *Yeah yeah yeah.*

JANINE: You could probably like, pin them... very noir.

ALI: Oh!

AUSTIN: Yeah... Yeah, absolutely.

JACK: Oh yeah, absolutely. That's great.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Perfect.

JACK: I'm more into it now, thanks, Janine. The—the prospect of a puce veil, I was... [Keith laughs]

JANINE: I wanted... I wanted to be clear about that too alo, because I also know that 'veil' can also be used as a word for like, headscarves and stuff.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Totally.

JANINE: And I think that would be confusing.

JACK: *Yeah yeah yeah.*

AUSTIN: Yeah. That makes sense, yeah. No, this is...

JACK: This is like a film noir, like...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Fancy lady?

JANINE: [crosstalk] Fascinator...

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah.

KEITH: [crosstalk] This is a wide—it is a wide—

JANINE: [crosstalk] Shade the eyes kind of thing.

KEITH: I mean, it's the sort of thing where if you had never been to Blough City and I handed you this thing and said "here's your disguise" you would... be mad at me. [laughs, Austin laughs]

JANINE: You'd be like, thanks for this bag that oranges come in, I guess. [Keith, Austin laugh]

AUSTIN: Perfect, yeah. Um... Alright, so yeah, what is next? You have two potential leads, right? One of you suggested maybe going where the nightclubs are, which would be, uh, the—the Standard Town? And then the other place would be the Citywide Film Festival you could start looking into.

JACK: [sighs] First we—

AUSTIN: You also know where the Citywide Film Festival is supposed to be, because there's a photo of where the Citywide Film Festival's supposed to be, and it's like a... where is it? It would be at a—it's an outdoor film festival, so it's like, at...

KEITH: It might be on the in-skirts of the... the suburbs, the Thicket? The border of the Thicket?

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's definitely in—it's on the border of the Thicket and the kind of more downtown...

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Financial district? The—the Countinghouse? And it's like, a nice park? It's like a—I'm trying to think of like, what are other ways to say park?

KEITH: Common.

ALI: Square?

JANINE: Courtyard?

AUSTIN: I love that all of you had a different answer. [Ali giggles] Courtyard. It's at the Courtyard. Which is—which is this very nice park that's been taken over by it. Presumably it's not happening first thing in the morning, or in the morning at all, but that is the location of it. Um... do you break up? Or do you go in as a group? To places?

02;29;50 — 02;31;36

KEITH: Um...

JACK: If we split up, we can kill two birds with one stone?

JANINE: Mm-hm.

JACK: In terms of learning more about what Blake's deal is, perhaps from some people in a bar, to be like—hey, that filmmaker? Blake Blossom? What's his deal? While also going for his professional stuff maybe more, by going to the... the festival?

ALI: ...Yeah, I'm up for that, and then if, you know, you can just contact me if... you know, [amused] things happen.

JACK: Well—we're—who—what's the pairing?

KEITH: Um...

JANINE: I'd like to go to the nightclub situation.

KEITH: [slight sarcastic tint] Oh! Would anybody else like to go somewhere?

[Ali giggles]

JACK: I'll go to the nightclub with Seals.

KEITH: Okay, yeah!

JACK: [continuing] You know, a cop and an IRS agent showing up at a nightclub. [Janine chuckles]

JANINE: In beautiful veils, like, it's fine. [Austin, Jack laugh]

AUSTIN: In beautiful veils and grey formal dress—like, not formal but business dresses I'm guessing?

JANINE: Like grey wool, knit...

JACK: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Yeah... Love it.

JACK: *Yeah yeah yeah.*

JANINE: With like, peplum waist.

AUSTIN: Yes! Perfect.

KEITH: Oh, peplum waist...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] That's also on the baseball name...

JANINE: [crosstalk] That's my favorite baseball—[all laugh]

AUSTIN: Ahh. Love it. Okay.

KEITH: I have to google 'peplum waist' 'cause I don't know what that is.

AUSTIN: [muttering] Neither do I, I don't know what it is...

JANINE: You'd know it if you saw it.

ALI: Oh, yeah, you'd know [mumbling] you saw how high waist it is...

KEITH: *Oh!* Yeah, of course, yeah. Peplum waists.

ALI: Yeah...

JANINE: Yeah.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, of course. Okay. Yeah. I gotcha.

KEITH: Yeah. Totally.

ALI: Big two thousand... fourteen? Fashion... thing...

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah. Yeah... Um, cool! So who's—wait, one more time, I need those pairings one more time. Apologies.

KEITH: Uh, sorry. It is Page and... Seals, and then—

AUSTIN: Right, right.

KEITH: Me and... Ryder...

AUSTIN: Going to... okay, who wants to go first? Maybe we do a little bit of this set up and then we'll call it for the night.

02;31;36 — 02;34;34

ALI: I think when they split up, like—[giggles] Chris like, waves to Florence as they walk down the street.

AUSTIN: Oh, to be like, 'bye', basically? [giggles]

ALI: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Aw, that's good.

JACK: And I think Florence is like, taps an invisible watch on her wrist to be like 'Contact me?' while knowing full well that Florence doesn't have a receiver watch, or whatever? It's just like this... [Ali giggles]

AUSTIN: It does say you can contact each other, because of Caller?

JACK: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Right, you can contact her, somehow? So I wonder what it is.

KEITH: Uh-huh. But it might—

JACK: [interrupting] Oh! We'll find that out when we get there.

AUSTIN: We will!

KEITH: I don't know, that motion doesn't seem to me like 'Call me?'. It seems like, 'we're in a hurry!' [Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Right, but when you have a watch—

JACK: I think that motion—We know that she has a watch—

KEITH: [crosstalk] Okay. Yeah.

JACK: [continuing] that she talks with, so it's like—I think it's just like—

JANINE: [interrupting] We are—sorry, finish what you're... [pause] I was just gonna say that we are also—this is an era where phone operators were a real thing?

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: So we could—just—abstract that, in a way?

AUSTIN: Oh! Maybe you could just use phones? Yeah.

JACK: Oh, yeah.

JANINE: That's what I mean, is like—we call out of the phone, but instead of an actual operator who is sitting at a switchboard with a bunch of cables.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: It's Chris.

AUSTIN: It's Chris, and you need to get to a payphone, and you put in like—you hit, you know, star thirty-seven or whatever, and it dials to—

JACK: [crosstalk] O-100-C-H-R-I-S! [Ali giggles]

AUSTIN: Yeah, there it is! [All laugh] Alright, so... which group wants to go first? Standard Town or Citywide Film Festival?

—02;33;00—

JACK: Um.... [KEITH: Um.] You wanna go to a bar, Janine?

JANINE: Sure... I was gonna say I kinda feel like the... the groundwork has already been laid for the Film Festival in a more direct way... so that one might make more sense...

JACK: Oh, that's true... and it might like inform our questions... in some—

JANINE: Yeah.

JACK: You know, even though it won't literally, but like...

ALI: Oh yeah, you guys are going to a nightclub, so you probably have some time to kill. [giggles]

KEITH: Well, it's the morning—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Oh, true [Ali laughs]

JACK: [crosstalk] Oh yeah!

JANINE: [crosstalk] That's also true.

KEITH: —which I would argue—I would argue early in the morning is closer to when people are still in a nightclub from the night before to when a film festival starts.

ALI: Mm.



AUSTIN: Sure. Either way, what you're gonna get is like—I think what you're gonna get in both cases is people who work at those places? The people prepping for the film festival and the people who are getting off their late night hours, and who are maybe even like, getting what is their equivalent of dinner from having just closed up... from the clubs, do you know what I mean? They finished their shift at the club and now they're grabbing a bite before heading home. In either case. But let's go to the film festival—let's go to the Courtyard. I imagine the Courtyard is like a—ah, it has a lot of... light brown... what's the—what's the material I'm thinking of?

KEITH: [instantly] Dirt.

AUSTIN: Dirt. It has lots of light brown dirt. [slight laughter in background] Ah... it's like what like—

JANINE: Canvas?

AUSTIN: *No no no*, like for—in architecture.

KEITH: Tarpaulins.

AUSTIN: Like—Spanish architecture, like that style of... like Spanish colonial architecture, do you know what I'm talking about?

JANINE: It's not stucco. It's, um...

KEITH: Um...

02;34;34 — 02;37;14

JANINE: [muttering] Ah, fuck, it's on the tip of my fucking tongue...

KEITH: Adobe?

JANINE: Adobe's... like orangey?

AUSTIN: Is that right? It could be that.

KEITH: Adobe's a... thing?

AUSTIN: I can't just search for adobe, because that's a company...

KEITH: Adobe is Spanish for mudbrick.

AUSTIN: Adobe... could be right. Mmm. No, because adobe looks a little more muddy—a little more red than what I'm talking about... there is a—it is like—it is this much more light—um... [trails off]

KEITH: Oh, see, a lot of the adobe that I have seen has been more like a beige... colour...

AUSTIN: Well, maybe it is... I'll just...

JANINE: I think it might be stucco.

AUSTIN: Ah—*oop*, here we go.

JANINE: Stucco is beige. And like... textured...

AUSTIN: This is saying... canterra... yeah, stucco. Yes. Prodigious use of stucco... um. Yeah. You know what I'm talking about, basically, right, in terms of this style? If you go to the "[Spanish Colonial Revival Architecture](#)" page on Wikipedia [Ali giggles in background]... you will see what I'm talking about... I've linked it.

JACK: It's like a textured wall surface.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: A textured exterior wall.

ALI: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Yes. And so it's like, a bunch of columns of that, with some palm trees—there is a big beautiful fountain in the middle of this big park—it's a sizable park—ah. It's a sizable park in the sense that it would take you, like, fifteen to twenty minutes to run the perimeter of it? It's not like, Central Park big, do you know what I mean? But it's—it's a major city park. In fact, it's called 'Major City Park!'—no, it's called the Courtyard [laughs]. And, in fact—I think maybe there is literally a church in the middle of it... that has been converted from being a church into being kind of a civil centre—and it says 'Civil Centre' up front. And you can see that there are people setting up a big screen off in the distance, in one kind of corner of the park—and you can see that there are—there's people running cables and setting up—like plugging into the city power grid—and there are lots of people moving big carts around and... There's lots of—there's lot of police here? Who are... they're like, at the entry points to closer into the park—or closer in to where they're setting up the kind of viewing area? And you can tell that they're kind of like—they're not agit—... There's a combination of them—looking like they don't wanna be here slash they are not interested in protecting this place, but also believing they're going to need to protect this place, do you know what I mean? There's kind of an attitude of like, this is gonna fucking suck... You know?

KEITH: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: What do you—what do you two get up to here?

02;37;14 — 02;40;53

KEITH [as Heard]: What exactly are you hoping to learn by watching this movie?

ALI [as Chris]: Wait, what?

KEITH [as Heard]: You wanna watch one of the movies, right? That's what you said, you wanted to watch the movie.

ALI [as Chris]: No... like—he—he was dead with one of his movies missing. And like... if we know about his work, or the people who were fans of it, or... any of that stuff, we can get to... the end of this, right? That's what we do?

KEITH [as Heard]: I'm willing to watch the movie.

[Ali wheezes, laughs]

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

KEITH [as Heard]: [quickly] Yeah!

ALI [as Chris]: [quickly] Let's—sir. Let's go. Yeah.

KEITH [as Heard]: Let's go.

AUSTIN: So what do you do? You're here.

KEITH: Um...

AUSTIN: Again, there are kind of police at the outskirts... who aren't letting just random people in, uh, but.

KEITH: I'm not 'random people', I'm Robber Twig!

AUSTIN: So you go up to this cop, and you're like—'I'm Robber Twig'?

KEITH [as Heard]: [in unison] I'm Robber Twig.

AUSTIN [as cop]: Uh, sir.

KEITH [as Heard]: Yep?

AUSTIN [as cop]: Uh... p... you look familiar, but can I see a... pass?

KEITH [as Heard]: Yeah.

AUSTIN [as cop]: For the Festival?

KEITH [as Heard]: Yep!

AUSTIN: You—d—do you have a—you don't have a pass for the Festival.

KEITH: I—well, I don't have the move that says I have like legal documents, but I do have a secret—I have like a known identity.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] We talked about this at the launch of this game—at the top of this game, you don't have—

KEITH: [crosstalk] Oh, okay, that's fine. I can—can I roll something?

AUSTIN: You could—you could... at this point, you're rolling to like, talk your way in. You could also have—instead of going to talk to this dude, try to procure some documents or whatever, first.

KEITH: Uh... well, let's see if I can talk my way in first..

KEITH [as Heard]: I left... my ID... in my work... other work pants...

ALI [as Chris]: Yeah!

AUSTIN [as cop]: And your friend here?

ALI [as Chris]: Yeah, we're here for... the—the festival. We're...

KEITH [as Heard]: I carry her ID. 'Cause she loses it all the time. And I lose it a little bit... less. You know me, I'm Robber Twig! We've—you know...

AUSTIN [as cop]: [crosstalk] Is that true, ma'am?

KEITH [as Heard]: Seen you around.

AUSTIN [as cop]: Robber. Yeah, I've seen you around, Robber, but I didn't know you were in the film business. Miss, who are you—

KEITH [as Heard]: [crosstalk] Film-*viewing*, film viewing business.

AUSTIN [as cop]: Well, you can *view* the films later tonight, once the festival begins.

KEITH [as Heard]: Ah, I like to... you know. I like to really get in there.

AUSTIN [as cop]: ...Ma'am? Who are you?

ALI [as Chris]: Hi—... uh, Christine, hi. Nice to meet you.

AUSTIN [as cop]: Christine... great name. Unique.

ALI [as Chris]: [giggles nervously/uncomfortably]

AUSTIN [as cop]: What, um... I'm gonna need documentation here.

ALI [as Chris]: Oh, by all means! I—we are... [giggles nervously] We're meeting someone inside?

AUSTIN [as cop]: Who are you meeting inside?

ALI: Ah... is there... a roll here that I can make [laugh] to...

AUSTIN: There's an irony here... [Ali laughs] which is you do—your dossier certainly has the names of people who maybe would be here.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: And one of them is Gale Green. Who Agent Page knows.

ALI: Okay, fair.

AUSTIN: But y'all don't have that connect, in that way... But you could still namedrop her.

KEITH: Mm-hm.

ALI: Yeah! Okay...

ALI [as Chris]: We're—um—we're... I'm sorry for the—the—what is the word that I'm thinking of—

KEITH [as Heard]: [crosstalk] Identification mix-up.

ALI [as Chris]: The inconvenience! We're here—we're investors with Gale Green? And just a very pressing morning meeting... is about to happen.

AUSTIN [as cop]: I see.

AUSTIN: Um, I think this is... Instinct?

ALI: Sure!

AUSTIN: I guess? I'm trying to—I'm trying to decide here. [Ali giggles] Yeah, Instinct—Interrogation, Persuasion, and Subterfuge, absolutely.

ALI: Okay.

02;40;53 — 02;43;23

AUSTIN: So... what do you have—

ALI: So that's roll 3d6?

AUSTIN: No, you have 4 in Instinct, don't you?

ALI: Oh? Dang.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You have 4d6, yeah

ALI: [crosstalk] That's a 16!

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] 16! Boom! So add 16 to your current heart rate, bringing you up to 99, which is in your target heart rate.

ALI: Okay...

KEITH: Ooh, by the way, I did not change my heart rate earlier.

AUSTIN: Oh, you should do that.

KEITH: Yep.

AUSTIN: Definitely do that, have to be on that one.

ALI: So, I'm in target now, so I can just...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] You are now in target, which you can roll as many dice as you want until you're out of target.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Um... I love Target, gotta go shopping at Target... [Ali giggles] So yeah. He's like—

AUSTIN [as cop]: Oh, Gale Green! Okay. Yeah, Ms Green just stepped out for her morning... tea, but, um. Of—of course, come in. She said to let anybody who—yeah, she has some meeting—uh, yeah, come on in.

ALI [as Chris]: Thank you.

AUSTIN [as cop]: [continuing] We'll show you to her office...

AUSTIN: Um.. and—and he leads you over to—or he leads you into the church? And into a converted rectory that's become... a guest office, for whoever's renting out this part of the park. And so you can see that there's like—it's still like a church in there. [clears throat] Like—they might even do church services sometimes... to Santa, you know. There's a big Santa up front. The big guy. And then there's—but there's like—

ALI: Mmm.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Oh, what a big guy.

AUSTIN: He's so big... he's just big! Um... he's as big as my love for him, you know? Which is big.

KEITH: And growing! He's growing.

AUSTIN: Ah—every day. Um... and yeah, so there is this little—there is a little back—back room, a converted rectory that has—your—clearly has some scripts out laid out. It has... an inbox that's filled with letters, a typewriter... there's like a photo on the desk... and... I don't think there's anything else... but you're there. You're inside. You've made it inside.

KEITH: Is the cop still with us?

AUSTIN: [continuing] And you're waiting for her to show up... No, the cop leaves you.

KEITH: Okay. Cool.

ALI: Um... I want to look for... I think I am specifically zeroing in on either looking for... a list of events?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

ALI: And specifically looking through drafts of those to see if there's been changes.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: Pre and post...

AUSTIN: That's an interesting—yeah. Okay.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Totally... Um. Give me another Intuition here.

ALI: Okay.

02;43;23 — 02;45;42

AUSTIN: How many dice do you wanna roll? Or Instinct rather, but—but yeah.

ALI: So I want 11...

AUSTIN: You want 11.

ALI: And... I don't wanna—I want it to be 11, not more... than 11. [laughs]

AUSTIN: You don't wanna... yeah, uh-huh.

ALI: Um, I think I'm still just gonna go—I'm gonna go with, ooh, four...

AUSTIN: Four? You don't wanna drop it to three?

ALI: Mh...

KEITH: Rolling four dice... will get you like—you know, you roll em a billion times, it'll average out to 10-ish... so that's—four or five is probably your best bet.

ALI: [crosstalk] Okay, yeah [laughs]

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] [typing out] Like a dice average?

KEITH: Yeah, right? Dice average. [Ali giggles]

AUSTIN: Dice probability calendar. Calendar. Not a calendar...

KEITH: Calendar? I don't—we don't need that.

AUSTIN: That's not what I wanted, I wanna... do that—and then how does this work... can I just link this and it shows you? Oh, that's cool as shit! Here, look!

ALI: Oh?

AUSTIN: I've linked you... I think this 'll work... this shows you [Ali laughs] what the averages are on...

KEITH: Yeah!

ALI: Oh, wow...

AUSTIN: 4d6...

ALI: Sure. Um...



AUSTIN: So yeah, that's all mostly in there, right?

ALI: Yeah, that's all where...

KEITH: [crosstalk] So the average is... [trails off]

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] 84% of the time, it is at least 11—or at least 11, okay.

ALI: Yeah! I have—I have... I have 40... [giggles] I have 44 heart rate to play with.

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: And I have 80 before I get—in trouble! [giggles]

AUSTIN: Into a dangerous place, yeah! I'm with you. Give me that 4d6...

ALI: [laughing] Yeah

KEITH: Yeah.

[beat]

AUSTIN: 12! Look at that. That's that shit right there.

KEITH: 12! Perfect!

ALI: Okay. See? There you go.

AUSTIN: Perfect!

ALI: That's exactly what I wanted.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright!

KEITH: You could've done a *little* better. [Ali giggles]

AUSTIN: ...oh my god. Um... so, here's a fun thing. This is effectively using Gale Green as a lead, so... Gale Green is currently on the map, but she is not connected to the—the crime, or to the mystery, right? And if you look at the bottom of the dossier, there's like... individual people have leads, right? It's like, two lists of six things that they're connected to, right? One is if they're connected already and one is if they're not connected already. Give me a 1d6 for—for her list of unconnected leads.

ALI: Sure. [gasp] Also, what is the—I know there's a special rule where if you roll a thing and one of them is a 6?

02;45;42 — 02;49;18

AUSTIN: That's true. That is 100% true.

ALI: [crosstalk] And I got that last time, and I just wanna make sure...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Is that a Commendation—oh, I think that was for... I think it's for when you're inside of your heart rate, is when you get the Commendation Point based on—

KEITH: Inside of the target heart rate?

AUSTIN: [continuing]—if you get a 6. Right, but you were not already inside of your target heart rate.

KEITH: Oh! Okay, gotcha.

ALI: I had entered it, yeah, okay... And I have to add 12 to my current right now, right?

AUSTIN: You do.

ALI: Okay... 1 oh... and 11. Kay. And then I'm rolling this, sorry. [giggles]

AUSTIN: No, you're good. So a 5. You got a 5, she's unconnected... oooh! Interesting...

ALI: Mm?

AUSTIN: So! She has a list of—she has a list of things she could be connected to. On her list of things she can be connected to, what you just rolled was... the Teardrop Coupe.

[Ali gasps, Keith whistles in surprise]

AUSTIN: So...

ALI: That's my friend's car!

AUSTIN: That's Achilles'... well, it's the car he fucking stole, certainly. [Ali laughs] I think you just find the keys? [Ali gasps] And a note from Achilles... And because everything is weird, when it's something written by someone you know—especially from someone who's been to both places—I think you can just read those notes, right? Having them as a connection means you can get letters from them, it means you can always communicate with them. And this is two people who are on this list, right? So.

KEITH: Sorry, real quick, I... the way that this works, you roll a 5, and this means that Gale Green is connected to the Teardrop Coupe, but *not* connected to the Blossom tape?

AUSTIN: Well, so the... it doesn't necessarily mean she's not connected to the Blossom tape? The way connected and unconnected works is that... if—[sighs] so, there are kind of two states. it's ki—I was kind of trying to like zip past this, because it's...

KEITH: Oh, we can zip! I don't mind zipping.

AUSTIN: It's wor—it's cool to know? It's just also... one of those things that's like... It's cool to know. We're playing an actual play game, I wanna explain this. [reading] During run time, a protagonist can lean on her connections for information. You may be attempting to find some information or an opportunity you want to take advantage of, or get further details of a plot you've started to learn about. When this happens, have the player roll a die and consult that connection's table in the transmission, or in the dossier. Add the resulting node to your plot map, and draw a line from it to another node already associated on your map. As usual, invent a reason why this new node is associated with the existing node. Once you've done this, take on the persona of the connection—that's me, I would be like—"I'm Gale Green, and I'm telling you this", but we've already kind of side-stepped Gale by doing this the way you're doing it? *Blah blah blah*. If you want more information, you can get more information. If protagonists ask for information, *blah blah blah*. I'm trying to find this specific bit.

[reading] In the event that rolling on a connection table results in a node that already exists on your map, you don't need to add it again. Instead, draw a line from that node—in this case, the Teardrop Coupe—to the connection being leaned on. Now the protagonist has hit upon part of the plot that the connection has direct involvement with. When you take on the persona of the connection, you may be much less willing to divulge the truth. [laughs, Ali laughs] Connections can lie and mislead, *blah blah blah*. So, there is a world in which you push on Gale—okay, there's a world in which, let's say you came here and Gale wasn't already on the map. Let's say you'd gone to interact with...—um—a cha—who's another character—Mr Lee LB, right? Who is not one of your connections, let's just say you stumbled into Lee LB's office, for instance? Um, and you rolled—well then, you know, you would just get whatever was there, and he wouldn't even show up on the map. But with Gale, she was already on the map, because she's one of your connections. And now, because you've rolled something that's also already on the map, it doesn't just get added, she's *connected* to it.

KEITH: Got it.

02;49;18 — 02;52;22

ALI: Mm.

AUSTIN: So. In this case, you find the keys to a Teardrop Coupe—to *the* Teardrop Coupe, and we find a letter from Achilles Apollo that says... Southern Car Park, Floor 7. Um... so that's what you have. Ah...

ALI: Um... [sighs] I think that I just immediately pocket these things. [giggles]

AUSTIN: Oh yeah. Of course. Do you tell this to... to Heard?

ALI: Oh, *yeah yeah yeah*. Just like—

ALI [as Chris]: Sir, come check this out.

KEITH [as Heard]: Huh.

AUSTIN: Um... yeah. And I wanna give you the other thing you were specifically looking for, which is, there was a schedule, that had a film from Blake Blossom scheduled to play... called *The Tunnel*, and then it gets crossed out. And it gets crossed out on the updated schedule that was updated on the day that his death was announced in the papers. And then... there's a third schedule—it's like literally—because this is film noir, it's literally in her typewriter? It's what she was just working on, and she's re-added it to the—to the schedule.

JACK: Hmm.

ALI: Oh, so it was in, and then out, and then now it's back in?

AUSTIN: And now, *today*... she has re-added it. Maybe that means she has what she needs already, maybe it means she doesn't—who could say? Maybe it means she's confident she'll get *The Tunnel* back. But. Which I'm gonna add.

ALI: Ohhh.

KEITH [as Heard]: Good finds, Ryder.

ALI [as Chris]: Thank you, sir.

AUSTIN: [quiet laugh] There we go. I'm gonna add it to the other info thing over here. Okay! So, y'all go to Standard Town, right? Which is... you know, I have a very specific type of building in my mind, and a very specific type of neighbourhood, which is not a neighbourhood I have actually seen a lot in Los Angeles, but it is a neighbourhood I've seen in a lot of New Jersey, and so I'm still happy to pull from it. It is suburban, but it's at once... [sighs] more spread apart than any city is, right? Well, not any city, right, LA is just huge suburbs, but there is like—there are points at which regular road turns to dirt. There are people who have chicken coops, and who have the land on which you could have a chicken coop, which is to say, a big backyard, and a big tree. And sometimes a back yard will just turn into the football field of a high school behind it, through the brush... but it's still denser than the kind of nice neighbourhood. This is not the Thicket, right? And so you end up having like, segments of—you'll go down a main street, and on Main Street, there will be all of these houses, some of which are like up on stilts, or there will be like big outdoor stairwells that were clearly attached onto this building later, going to a floor that was also attached onto it later.

KEITH: You're describing like, literally where I live. I live on a suburban street—

AUSTIN: Yeah. This is like—

02;52;22 — 02;54;23

JANINE: [crosstalk] Also Northern Ontario, weirdly.

AUSTIN: Yes! This—the world is filled with the place I'm talking about, right? [Ali giggles] This is like where my dad grew up.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah. I live in a mile radius of like, four nightclubs? But also I live on a suburban street, but the houses are all close together.

AUSTIN: Right. Totally, so that is the—that is the vibe. And so, you could turn down one street and like, hear jazz music even now, at 8am—you could turn down another one and hear the sound of a donkey. Like it is not—the cool area is actually not that far away, largely because the cool area is the place where... broke people live, right? So where are you looking in Standard Town? What type of places are you trying to find?

JACK: Dive bars?

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Um... but like—but like that kind of like, that kind of like—a dive bar that is on the way to being gentrified?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. So again, probably, again, close-ish to the border with the downtown area—with Countinghouse and... with Countinghouse, probably, specifically.

JACK: Yeah.

JANINE: Probably like... specifically a dive bar that has something interesting in the window? Like I feel like that would be...

AUSTIN: Mmm.

JACK: Yeah!

JANINE: [laughs, unsure] Think of like every...

AUSTIN: What is it? What's the interesting thing in the window?

JANINE: Mmm... this is not the time for—the time period for painted windows...

JACK: What about a—big, stuffed animal? Or a stuffed animatronic from a movie, or something?

AUSTIN: Ooh... a prop, like a Hollywood prop?

JACK: Like a Hollywood prop, like a... a... um.

JANINE: Is it a bunch of movie monster masks?

JACK: Ohhh! Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah...

AUSTIN: That could be good. Yeah, uh-huh!

JACK: And like a—like, high-quality enough that they're clearly not from just a party shop or a joke shop or something?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: But like, faded and kind of falling apart.

AUSTIN: Totally. Um... I wanna know if this is the right place. Can you give me an Access check?

02:54:23 — 02:57:46

JACK: [sharp inhale]

AUSTIN: Because you're going on gut to some degree here, right?

JACK: Yeah, we're just sort of being like—it's—I feel like it's very much the IRS and cop approach of just, someone round here will know about this sort of movie.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Give me an Access roll. Who wants to do this?

JACK: [muttering] Florence's bad at Access...

JANINE: I could do that, because my Access is better. [chuckles]

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah, this scene—this was your—and you named the thing you were—not looking for, but the thing that caught your eye, so give me your Access.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or! Or... [clicks teeth] gimme your inve—your Instinct, 'cause you have Investigation, which—which feels like it's in line with this.

JANINE: That's true.

AUSTIN: So it's 3d6. Goal is 11, target's 11. [pause] 14!

JANINE: [crosstalk] That's a 14!

JACK: Woah!

AUSTIN: Add 14 to your heart rate. So your heart rate is now 76. Your target is ninety—begins at ninety-thr—no, sorry, 86, and your target *begins* at 93. Um... alright, so. It is—it is the right place here. You head inside and you can hear—it is a 24-hour bar, and I think the morning barman just came on, and... he is... in his... [deliberates] you can't really name his age. Ah—he's a—there's a guy there who is kind of cleaning some glasses, putting them up on the shelf. There's someone who's passed out on one of the tables. There's someone playing a low piano tune, but is just like, very lazy—you know what I—not in a bad way, necessarily? [Jack laughs] But like, there's no-one awake in this bar. He's playing for himself. You know?

JACK: Yeah, I know. I know the feeling of playing piano lazily. [giggles]

AUSTIN: [laughs] Alright. And the bartender nods to both of you, and looks at you—and frankly, like, as far as I know, Florence and Maggie are white, right? Like.

JACK: Mm-hm! Or... Florence is.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Maggie also?

JANINE: I think so, yeah.

AUSTIN: He is like—he is not. He is a thin black man, with like a—a five o'clock shadow, who is wearing like a white dress shirt, but like, the dress shirt—has seen better days. Ah—this is Jeremy Gride [Jack laughs]—just gonna use all these baseball names today. [Janine laughs]

JACK: Are we sure it's not *Jeromy* Gride?

AUSTIN: It's Jeromy. It's Jeromy Gride, yeah, you're right, there's an 'o' in there. Jeromy's friends call him Jerome, or Romy—I think his friends call him Romy, that's good.

JANINE: That's better.

AUSTIN: Yeah, Romy.

JACK: This is my favourite Bound 2 lyric.

AUSTIN: Yeah! [Austin, Ali laugh] Yes, good.

JANINE: This is also technically a pre—or non-High School Reunion universe [Austin laughs] so you can get away with being called Romy.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm! Um... and he says—so he says like—

AUSTIN [as Romy]: Oh, you're out of towners. You're lost, huh?

JACK [as Florence]: Ye—well, we've come from... we've come from some distance, yes. Um. A glass of water, please.

JANINE [as Maggie]: [scoffs]

AUSTIN [as Romy]: You came to the bar—okay. You like sparkling... or tap—what do you prefer?

JANINE: [laughing] I just—can—mm.... I feel like when Florence asks for water, Maggie like—slides up,

AUSTIN: Uh-huh? [laughing]

JANINE: And is like... I—I don't know. This is tough, 'cause I don't know booze.

AUSTIN: No.

JANINE: And I'm playing a character who...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] But Maggie Darcy does.

JANINE: ...is two fingers of whiskey a thing? It sounds like a thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that sounds like a thing.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: That. That's a thing to order at 8am [laughs]

KEITH: Yup.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh! He nods and he's like—

AUSTIN [as Romy]: Yeah, okay.

02;57;46 — 03;01;59

AUSTIN: And pours out two fingers of whiskey for you. I should note really quick, the reason I bring up race here, and have not that often in Bluff—have now and then, I think in the Eighty Six we talked about it is—I've thought a lot about race, and identity in general, in Bluff City, and one of the things that is true about both of these places is that... identity matters in both of them, but it matters in different ways. In... Bluff City, identity is expansive and expressive. There is no such



thing as one black experience or one queer experience or one... masculine or feminine experience, there is no one American experience—and Bluff City is the place where that is accepted, by and large, right? Obviously, there are still outliers—there are people who resist that, but they are outliers. It is a space where queerness has been accepted for a long time, and that means that we can run games in the 80's in which queerness makes sense and is not oppressed, right? We don't need to make games in which we are constantly struggling with our queerness in that space, because Bluff City is literally a strange realm where identity gets to be as expressive as it is in all of our best days.

Blough City is not that place. Blough City is hierarchical, Blough City is backwards, Blough City is Bad, with a capital B. And that is to say that the people who live in Standard Town, the people who live and work in—in... Taffy District. Those folks are not getting the best lives that they could have. Sexuality—both in terms of sexual attraction and who you are attracted to, and in terms of gender identity, and in terms of how you perform your sexuality, even if you are straight—all of that stuff is policed here. This is a closed world, a world in which your desires are meant to be repressed, unless they are desires bent in the shape of society. This place sucks. And that's important to me. It's important to be able to tell that story too.

—02:59:54—

JACK: It's stuff like this, right, that makes... Finnegan Hands' result—

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: [continuing] in the end table feel legitimate, right?

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: In that this is a really bad place that Finnegan has ended up, especially as a resident of Bluff City.

AUSTIN: Yes. And came—and Finnegan—came from a great place, right?

JACK: Yeah, yeah. Exactly.

AUSTIN: Like, Bluff City has its problems—Bluff City does have its corruption—Bluff City—and...

JACK: He was drowned and left for dead in a submarine.

AUSTIN: Yes! Yes, yes, totally. And I at once want to be clear that... this is—there is something aspirational about Bluff City in that way, and there is something magical about it. We'll—we'll continue getting into this, but, for all of your characters—and I mean, I think this is the thing—and I'll—I'll give you this, because we're at the end of the session. This is a thing that neither... Maggie nor Florence knows this yet, as Blue-level clearance agents, but Robber Twig does. Bluff City is not the real place, and Blough City is some weird collective-consciousness place. They're both strange magical realms. And, as far as Robber knows, that's all there is, for sure. But we, as the audience, know there is probably something else going on here, right? For Florence, for Maggie, for Chris, Blough City is so clearly this other worldly, other-realm, *bad*, bad, bad place that feels like—*being* in

it, especially when it's at its worst, feels like a perversion of the real. Not just a bad place, but something kind of sickening to be in. And so... in a weird way, though, this bar is not like that. So for both of you, stepping into this place is... it's... maybe it's frustrating to you, to have been identified as an outsider in some way. But also... you have not seen many black people around at the Boardwalk, having a nice day, right? And so this is immediately real in a different way. In any case, Romy pours you your two fingers of whiskey. And he says, uh—

03;01;59 — 03;05;08

AUSTIN [as Romy]: Getting off to an early start? I respect that.

[Jack laughs in background]

JANINE [as Maggie]: Yeah, you know. I'm honest with myself.

AUSTIN: Janine in the chat says, Pitch: The blade in the dark, but it's nunchucks. Yeah, that's it, that's the—that's basically it. What's the chain connecting the two things? I don't know...

JANINE: Crabs.

AUSTIN: It's crabs.

JANINE: Crab chain.

AUSTIN: Um. So, he's talking to you... Maggie. He asked—you getting off to an early start, basically.

JANINE: Yeah, no—I said, I like to be honest with myself.

AUSTIN: Oh, I thought that was a—I thought you were saying you like to be honest with the blade in the dark, but nunchucks. [all laugh] I was like 'okay! You wanna be honest with yourself!'

JANINE: [laughing] No. That's... not honesty.

AUSTIN: No. He says...

AUSTIN [as Romy]: Nothing wrong with honesty... you still good with water, ma'am?

JACK [as Florence]: [pauses, considers] ...Yeah, I don't—I don't drink. [pauses] I've—I've got a headache that I can't shift.

JACK: And I think Florence just says that, I think that's something that Florence has been—has noticed. You know when you arrive somewhere very early—I'm thinking, Austin, specifically of your experience getting on and off buses—long distance buses.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh-huh?

JACK: And you have that dull headache at the back of your skull? [AUSTIN: Mm-hm.] And it's either too early in the morning or too late at night? [AUSTIN: Mm-hm.] And I think that for Florence at least, this is a sort of jetlag that she feels when she's in Bluff City.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Or Blough.

JACK: Just this like weird, empty, tired headache. Or Bl—oh my god! It's the Lem and Fero problem, [Ali laughs, AUSTIN: It is!] but with two sides of a weird magical city.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Yes! Weird!

JACK: Um... yeah, I think Florence just says

JACK [as Florence]: [pained] I've got a terrible headache.

AUSTIN [as Romy]: [sighs] Alright, I... I got a mix for that.

AUSTIN: And he, you know, takes out like a soda water—like—gun, you know what I'm talking about?

KEITH: Mm-hm.

JACK: Yeah yeah, totally.

AUSTIN: And mixes some combination of various soda drinks? And then...

KEITH: This guy's a regular soda jockey!

AUSTIN: He really is, and then pops in like, a pill. Like a alka-seltzer style thing that starts to fizz. And he says—

AUSTIN [as Romy]: Let it fizz for thirty seconds. Then drink it all at once.

JACK [as Florence]: Thanks! Thank you...

AUSTIN [as Romy]: So what do you really want? Two people like you don't come here... ever.

JACK [as Florence]: We're, uh... you heard about Blake Blossom?

AUSTIN: His eyes catch yours, and he says...

AUSTIN [as Romy]: Interesting name. What do you want to know about Blake Blossom?

AUSTIN: He's very defensive here. *You look like cops*. He doesn't say that, but it is clear he is looking at you like you are cops.

JACK: Yeah...

KEITH: And he's not wrong, really.

AUSTIN: No.

JACK: No! No... we're tax cops, and cop cops.

KEITH: Oh, yeah, you two are even extra cops.

AUSTIN: You're extra cops!

JACK: Yeah, we're both—[laughs] we got the cop bonus.

KEITH: That's not real, don't anybody think that's real. There's no bonus for that. [Jack, Austin laugh]

AUSTIN: You lose points!

JACK: [laughing] Yeah, exactly. Goes in the other direction. Um. Hm.

03;05;08 — 03;08;17

JANINE: I have a story here, if you need a hand.

JACK: No, go for it. I kind of—yeah. I don't want to outwardly lie to this man in the same way that... that—

JANINE: I'm fine with outwardly lying. [amused] To this man...

JACK: [continuing] Robber was like, 'I'm the king of movies!' [Austin, Janine laugh]

AUSTIN: "'Tis me, the movie king!"

KEITH: Hey, just watching 'em. [Jack laughs] You don't know Robber Twig! [Janine laughs]

JANINE: Uh.

JACK: Yeah, go ahead.

JANINE: I think that, uh... [cat cries in background] Annie, please. [all giggle]

AUSTIN: Annie!

ALI: [giggles] The bar cat.

JANINE: She just like, rubbed her face on the door, and did it in a way that her mouth hung open and then she just made sounds for a bit and it was very weird.

AUSTIN: Perfect baby.

JANINE: Um... So I think Maggie, uh... you know, takes a—a ladylike sip of her little tiny whiskey and like, smiles, and says... something like—

JANINE [as Maggie]: Yep, you got us. We're actually... so we're buyers for a private collector, and we're—you know, it's a collector who has some interest in Blossom's work, and we're just trying to track down some more... isoteric—

JANINE: Esoteric? The other one, not the triangle one?

KEITH: Isotopic? [Austin, Janine laugh]

JANINE [as Maggie]: We're trying to track down some... some more esoteric leads in terms of, you know, things to add to the collection, pieces of interest, bits of trivia—anything really.

AUSTIN: Give me—

JACK: Florence is—

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

JACK: Florence is just like, visibly uncomfortable at this artifice?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: Just like, looking at her glass of—whatever the guy made, and just stirring it with her finger, and deliberately trying to like, not be in this conversation.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Give me a... an Instinct roll again. This you will not have access to your Talent for, but—so it's just 3d6. Or wait—

JANINE: It was 3d6 before, too.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. It was 3d6 before, too. You know what, I was looking at Maggie's Investigation Talent before—or no, you are Maggie.

JANINE: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: I'm getting so confused because of the placement of this on...

JANINE: So do I roll two... what do I roll, then?

AUSTIN: No, it's three. It's three. The Investigation Talent—

JANINE: What should I have rolled before then?

AUSTIN: Also three. The Investigation Talent is a thing you can call on if you've failed doing an Investigation.

JANINE: Oh, okay. Okay.

AUSTIN: [continuing] To just roll 1d6 more, instead of having to roll all three more.

JANINE: Oh, okay. Okay. Okay.

KEITH: Do we wanna—

AUSTIN: That's another fourteen, hell yeah!

JANINE: [crosstalk] I got another fourteen somehow. What? The hell.

KEITH: Oh, nice!

AUSTIN: God damn! Go ahead and increase your heart rate again, up to—ah—a nice hundred, nice even one hundred, putting you into your target.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Oh, were you in—oh, okay. You were not in target before? Okay.

JANINE: No, I wasn't before.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] No, now you're in target.

KEITH: Do we wanna do—change Agent Seals AKA Maggie Darcy to Janine AKA Agent Seals, AKA Maggie Darcy?

AUSTIN: No, I got—I got it, I got it, I got it.

KEITH: Okay!

AUSTIN: It's about—it's weirdly about the placement on the board that's throwing me off?

KEITH: Okay.

03;08;17 — 03;12;22

AUSTIN: It's fine. Uh... [pause] so he's like—

AUSTIN [as Romy]: Buyer? Fancy stuff, fancy stuff... Yeah, I know Blake. Blake used to come through here every now and then. Haven't seen him lately... heard about what happened, in the news... [sighs] A bad one to lose. He, uh... he was trying to do something different. You know. Documentaries, he was makin' out in the Thicket? You know the Thicket? I know you're not from around here, so.

JANINE [as Maggie]: Heard of the Thicket.

AUSTIN [as Romy]: Out in the edges, in the periphery, he—uh... I don't know. Strange, you know... he was telling stories, but with like—birds, and plant life, and fish. Slow things. I sit down, I watch a Blake Blossom movie, it would take me a night, and I'd step away, and you ask me the name of the characters and... uh... Bill? That's it. There's nobody else, it's just about a guy walking through the woods. But... made me—made me feel something, which is what I know good art does. Uh... I don't know. Uh... haven't seen one of em in a minute... and most of his type don't come this way. He was special in that way. He told me, this place reminded him of a bar he used to know when he was younger. Which is a surprise to me, because I like to think we are hot shit.

JANINE [as Maggie]: [polite laughter]

AUSTIN: I'm adding 'The Thicket' to the board. This is basically what you'll get from this guy?

JANINE: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: In terms of specific leads, but if you have other questions or other conversational things here.

JANINE: And I'm not detecting any deception or anything. It seems like he would..

AUSTIN: He's not lying to you. I mean...

JANINE: I got that thing, so I may as well ask.

AUSTIN: Yes, yeah. The only thing he's lying about is that he acts at all that he believes you are what you say you are? But what he does believe is that you're not cops.

JANINE: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: That you're not like—you're not here to arrest, or hurt him, or anyone Blake Blossom knows. He can sense that there is a sort of like—um... You know, part of this is actually, you know, Florence's side of this? That she is being... that she... it's clear that there is an artifice at work here, and so, because Florence isn't all the way bought in on it, it almost helps your case. Do you know what I mean?

JANINE: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: 'Cause you're not being bad cop here, but—but Florence is acting like you're being bad cop here. [Janine chuckles] And that's enough for him to be like, alright, everyone needs a cover story, that's fine. But.

JACK: Mm. [sighs]

AUSTIN [as Romy]: [crosstalk] Your stomach feeling better? Or your head? Sorry.

JACK: [crosstalk] I think—

JACK [as Florence]: It's the head and the stomach, it's—you know? Um... has anybody gone missing recently? I know folks go missing all the time, but like... anything notable?

AUSTIN [as Romy]: You mean with someone specific? Or you're just saying... people?

JACK: I'm tryna—I'm tryna... Yeah, like... [sighs] I'm thinking about how—I'm thinking about what you said about how Bluff City isn't the real and this is the weird flipside to it, right?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: And I'm thinking about how... when—when we're in Bluff City, and someone disappears...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: With the implication that—that they've either found some way to Blough City, or there's something more sinister afoot. It's like an event? [AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Right.] And—and I guess Florence is feeling out what the other side of that is.

AUSTIN: And the answer is—I think he says like...

03;12;22 — 03;14;48

AUSTIN [as Romy]: Miz... people go missing every day here.

AUSTIN: And puts another glass on the shelf.

AUSTIN [as Romy]: You can't expect me to keep count. It's a big city. Sometimes you go missing, and you ain't ever leave.

JACK [as Florence]: Okay.

JACK: And Florence is just like finishes her—finishes her drink. And there's seltzer at the bottom—there's that awful seltzer powder at the bottom, and she like makes a face, and then... puts it down, and takes out—takes out a wallet with that kind of practiced, um—competency of someone dealing with currency that isn't their own. And you're like—



AUSTIN: Yeah. And you leave like a couple of bucks or whatever? You leave whatever...

JACK: You're like yeah, you're like—[assured bravado] 'I know this currency!', and in that performance you clearly don't.

AUSTIN: Right. [pause] So I think I'm gonna raise static by one here. You're asking around about things that are not tied to your mission. And, I think, as the—as you finish off that drink, the phone in the bar rings? And he's like 'One second', and Romy goes over and grabs this old black—uh—uh... what-do-you-call-it phone. Why am I blanking on the—

JANINE: Rotary?

JACK: [crosstalk] Like a—with the spiral—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Rotary, yeah, rotary phone. Yeah, thank you. Jesus.

JACK: [crosstalk, continuing] Yeah. I was gonna say, like the spiral...

AUSTIN: And he goes...

AUSTIN [as Romy]: Bar?

AUSTIN: And he nods, he nods. And he says—

AUSTIN [as Romy]: Florence. Is one of you Florence?

JACK: Yeah, and Florence's head just like, snaps up.

AUSTIN: He says...

AUSTIN [as Romy]: They say it's for you.

AUSTIN: And holds you the receiver.

JACK: And like... glance—Florence takes it, but doesn't put it to her ear, and just sort of like glances at Maggie?

AUSTIN: Maggie, this is the first time you've heard Florence respond to the name Florence. Because you're secret agents?

JACK: Oh, yeah!

JANINE: [chuckles] Ah... yeah, I guess—so we don't know who each other... are, either...?

AUSTIN: No! No... The only people here who've known each other from the past are Florence and Chris.

JANINE: Yeah... and Maggie's also definitely done the, you know, she's handled undercover operatives before [AUSTIN: Yes] so she—at the very least. So she's probably just like 'Oh for fuck's sake'.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Like, downs the rest of her whiskey like, okay.

03;14;48 — 03;19;20

JACK: Florence slowly raises the phone to her ear.

AUSTIN: And what you hear is your voice, saying back to you...

[Wind blowing/phone static noise starts]<sup>7</sup>

JACK [as Florence]: [over the phone] Hector. Hector, this is Florence. Hector, are you okay? Hector, we're coming for you.

Hector, can you hear me? This is Florence. Hector, are you okay? We're coming for you, Hector.

Hector, can you hear me? This is Florence. Are you okay? Hector, are you okay? We're coming for you. We're coming for you, I promise. We're on our way.

Hector, this is Florence. Hector, are you there? We're coming for you, Hector, I promise. Hector.

[dial tone]

—03;15;49—

[dial tone continues, wind blowing/phone static noise continues as music plays]

[MUSIC: [Notes on the track in the Patreon description](#)]

## Agent Names/Civilian Names

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

JACK: Agent Page/Florence Slowly [Bluff City 05/06: There Is No Greater Love]

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

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

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<sup>7</sup> This is the same piece heard in the Bluff City 15: When Justice is Done introduction.