

Bluff City 36: America's Playground Pt. 00

Old Mister, Old Mister

Transcriber: door#2609

["America's Playground" begins to play. It moves between soft, slow piano and cheerful, carnival-esque lilting music.]

AUSTIN (as narrator): Do you ever feel you were born in the wrong time? The wrong place? I was born—I was made—in a world of *shit*. But just a tunnel away, a few hundred years ago, there was a paradise. Ah, Bluff City. The old Bluff City, before the era of the tri-city agreement, before anyone knew about *the Blue*, before things blended so haphazardly.

It was a world of surprise and wonder. A family-friendly dreamland. It was pure and simple and...American. Not like Atlantic City, not like Bluffington Beach, not like today. There were no walls of smoke, there was no cacophonous drone of the anti-grav walkways, or the bleeding neon hollows which advertise the symptoms of a better life to a bunch of unwashed dregs that wouldn't know what to do if they got them.

It wasn't always like this; even Atlantic City was once America's Playground. But Bluff-Bluff was a *phantasy*, the kind you spell with a 'ph' to emphasis its...beauatificy. It was a boardwalk you could eat of off—the waves were bigger and bluer and the salt was the sort you find in candy, which to say it was especially edible. And the sand—it never got in your shoes, I've heard, or, if it did, it did in the cool way, where it sort of made you nostalgic about the day you had at the beach. Ah, the beach! As if anyone here in Bluffington knows what that means anymore.

I'm sure you're wondering, Pluperfect, how do you know all of this? Have you been there, to the past? To the beautiful past? No, but I've been to the second closest thing. I'm a VIP member of the Upper-Crust Tri-City History Museum, which you should visit at your first opportunity. They named a *wing* after me, the wing about cars, and so, once a season, I visit the museum and I say my hellos and I sign some digigraphs and I pose with the fans. And it was during my last visit that—y, yes? I'll be right there. And no, those tigers cannot be in the interview.

["America's Playground" stops playing.]

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual-play podcast focused on critical world-building, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. I'm your host, Austin Walker. Joining me today: Art Martinez-Tebbel—

ART: Hey, you can find me on Twitter at atebbel.

AUSTIN: Keith Carberry—

KEITH: Hi, my name's Keith J. Carberry, you can find me on twitter at keithjcarberry, find the letsplays that I do at youtube.com/runbutton.

AUSTIN: Janine Hawkins—

JANINE: Hey, uh, I'm Janine, you can find me at bleatingheart on twitter.

AUSTIN: And Jack de Quidt.

JACK: Hi there! You can find me on twitter at notquitereal and buy any of the music featured on the show at notquitereal.bandcamp.com.

AUSTIN: Today we are continuing Bluff City, Season Two, ah, by playing Mall Kids, a game about teens and malls, by Matthew Gravelyn, with art and design by Kaitlin Bruder, um...this game seems sick. Uh, and I've done basically no prep outside of the intros that I read, or that I did for the last arc, which, if you missed those, those were intros from the perspective of a teen girl, teenage girl, who was working in her father's taffy, saltwater taffy, shop during summer break, the first ever summer break in Atlantic City, New Jersey, or I guess in our case Bluff City. Um, because that wasn't a thing that existed forever, that was a turn of the century invention, it turns out, the 20th-century invention, in, in American schooling at least, in United States schooling.

And so we're going to play a game set in 1899, uh, set, I think, Labor Day weekend, 1899, the closing weekend of the summer. Labor Day, also a pretty new invention at the time, late 1880s I want to say, is when that became a, a federal holiday—maybe it was 1890s even—um, uh, and uh, we're going to play teens that work at—not a mall but, um, a pier? A pier plus some nearby shops?

The thing I set up in the other intro is that it's the first ever summer break for students and then, two, a new big pier opened on the boardwalk, uh, that uh, is eating up all the business basically. That it's a super pier. We can either play at that super pier—it's called the Golden Fortune—or at the kind of like one a couple blocks away where it's kind of down-and-out and struggling, because the Golden Fortune is eating all of its lunch. I'm happy to go either way there. Um, for people who don't know anything about, like, Atlantic City—or I guess again, Bluff City—in this time zone, um, you know, this is the picture of quote-unquote "America's Playground," uh, Atlantic City at the height of its kind of pure resort, uh, all-American, extre—you know—extremely *white*, let's be clear, uh, version, uh, vision of a holiday, beachside resort.

In the mid- and late-1800s Atlantic City gained a reputation as like a destination for health resorts, you know, going on, walking your constitutionals in nearby nature, across the shore or some of the nearby kind of forested area and just kind of hanging out, and then in the late 1800s

and into the early 1900s the boardwalk got built, you know, amusement piers got built. A thing started happening that Jack, I believe, has no idea about—horse diving and other sorts of spectator amusements.

JACK: No.

AUSTIN: It's fucked up. It's really fucked up. Uh, horses used to dive. They used to make horses do diving acts. No one—

JACK: I don't—

AUSTIN: Has no one on this podcast, has no one heard about horse diving?

ART: No, I, we were talking about this together on Sunday.

JANINE: No, I know about it.

AUSTIN: Okay, okay. I thought so. Yeah, diving horses. Hmm.

JACK: I don't like it. And I don't think the horses did either.

KEITH: No. Well, they're not natural-born divers.

AUSTIN: Mostly, no. Yeah. Um...it got, it kept happening—

KEITH (overlapping): Yeah.

JACK (overlapping): And that's why there are diving horses?

AUSTIN (overlapping): This happened until the 70s.

JACK: Jesus.

JANINE: Yeah, and that's why it's in a lot of like old Loony Tunes cartoons and stuff.

AUSTIN: Right, right.

KEITH: If I remember, the inception was that some rich guy did it by accident and almost died and was like, "that's a sport!"

AUSTIN: That's accurate, this is 100 percent true.

JANINE: That's how every sport starts though, right? Like...

KEITH: That's how marathons started, right?

JANINE: Hmm, yeah. Pretty much, yeah.

JACK: By Pheidippides, back in the day?

[**AUSTIN** laughs.]

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, ugh, yeah. It's, it's, there's a lot of rough history around this. But people loved it. But that's the sort of, you know, I should also say, the Ferris wheel was first invented around this time.

JACK: That's much better. I like that way more than horse-diving.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Well, what if I told you there was a whole long history of it being potentially stolen by somebody else? Stolen *from* somebody else? In 1892 William Somers created the Somers wheel and then there's a whole patent infringement lawsuit that he fails and—

JACK: Oh my god...

AUSTIN: But, you have to understand that William Somers—Art and I did a deep-drive on this, privately, recently—was, like, from a famous family, to the, to the degree that, Art, you and I have been in Somers Point and gone to, like, a diner—we played L5R in Somers Point. I want to say, Jester's, the place I used to work and and we used to play L5R, we did an L5R tournament that one time that you came down. That was in Somers Point, named for the same family that the true inventor of the Ferris wheel, William Somers, was from.

JACK: Huh!

AUSTIN: Um, so, like, his family was extremely rich and he wound up being a failed attraction inventor. Don't worry, I think either his son or something turned out to be a very corrupt mayor of Atlantic City eventually.

KEITH: Nice. Very cool.

JACK: He also got his own back in the end because we did name summer after him.

AUSTIN: Right, the season, right, of course. Yeah, mhmm. But that's the *vibe*. The game we're playing, Mall Kids, um, says:

“The point: you are a teen employee at the local mall. You struggle between wanting to earn a paycheck and sticking it to The Man. It is the space between *that* that you will explore.” Uh, sorry, “it is the space *between* that you will explore. During the game, you will create a scenario that plays out over the course of a single day and explore the mall as the teen employees who work there.

“Mall Kids is a tabletop storytelling game with 2-6 players and is intended to be played in a single 4-6 hour session. You can come back to your characters for another adventure, creating a sort of campaign style of play, but there’s no experience leveling or any of that business. The game is played without a GM; no one person will be running the game. It is recommended that at least one person be familiar with the rules to handle your questions. Ultimately if all players buy into telling the story together the game is run by your collective imaginations.”

Um, uh, you can find this game at mr-matthew.itch.io, mr-matthew.itch.io; um, and uh, I said this, we all read this PDF beforehand obviously there are a lot of; there’s a whole page basically on safety on, around, specifically the fact that we’re playing kids, and so let’s be extremely thoughtful about the ways in which this is a game about kids—I think we do a good job playing kids, I’m not worried that we’ll cross into anything, but, you know, I think it’s probably worth saying here:

“You should respectfully and earnestly explore being a kid in a mall. If your goal is to exploit, endanger, or abuse minors this game is not for you.” Um, uh, and then otherwise our big kind of principles here are: “to be respectful, offering your friends space and freedom; be supportive, helping clarify rules and answering questions; and to be a fan, cheering your friends on and validating their experiences.”

Um, the way this begins—I guess I should give you a little bit of the structure. The structure of the game is that we will have a total of six scenes: opening, morning, lunch, closing, evening, and after hours. Over the course of that, we—there’s kind of a very loose instructions as to what you do in each of those scenes. Like, opening will be like ‘define the group’s goal, talk about what’s happening, make promises’. Morning is like ‘get to work, learn something new, etc’ and that goes through the entire thing.

Um, there’s a very core dice mechanic that we’ll get to when we get to character creation, uh, but it’s sort of like you would think about Lasers and Feelings, but it’s how much of a sell-out you are, versus how much of like a cool punk you are [laughs]—it’s corporate versus cred, and it runs a little bit differently than Lasers and Feelings, but they’re, but it’s similar in the way that you can only ever be really good at one, not, not both. Um...

KEITH: The, the, the only real movement of stats in the game is like, they shift back and forth—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Correct.

KEITH [overlapping]: Basically, based on how often you use them?

AUSTIN: Yes, 100 percent. Yeah. And, well, and *how* you use them, I guess is what I would say. We'll, we'll, you know we'll get there when we get there. I guess to begin with though, I guess I should say do we want start with characters, do we want to help hammer out more about the sc, the scenario *before* we get to making characters....does anyone have questions?

KEITH: Uh, I have a *slight* preference for scenario first.

AUSTIN: Sure. In my mind, the thing I'd like to explore with this is a classic Bluff City thing—*one*, I'm not really interested in this being a meta plot Tunnel Project game. What I *am* interested in is *two*, a classic Bluff City *theme* that the Tunnel Project stuff is just tied to, which is, do you stick around your kind of dead-end town to try to make it better, or do you get the fuck out of dodge? To me, this is interesting playground space for being a teenager in a resort town where you deal with tourists is like, do I make it my best spot here, or do I find a way out, or do I buy in or do I look at it all through a side eye.

Those are the sorts of stakes that I'm, that excite me about doing teens working on the boardwalk, um, uh, if other people have other things that excite them, especially about this, like, I'm very much coming to this as like a, as like a period piece in the most fun and loose way possible. You know, there's a point in this were we decide if you're a prep, a stoner, a jock, a nerd, a popular kid, or a scene kid? I cannot wait to decide what a scene kid is in 1899 Atlantic City.

[JACK laughs.]

AUSTIN: You know? Um, uh, so I'm not looking for, personally—

ART [overlapping]: A real taffy-puller!

AUSTIN: That is the—I am *playing* a taffy puller. That is not a joke, that is the character I'll be playing.

ART: Yeah but that's, that's the scene.

AUSTIN: Is that the scene? It's taffy-pulling? That feels...

JACK [overlapping]: Confection.

AUSTIN: Hmm... Is it that—

JACK [overlapping]: Is it confectionary or is it specifically taffy-pulling?

ART: I imagine it as specifically taffy-pulling but I don't, I don't speak on—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: But that—that's not *cool*. Scene kids are *cool*.

ART: I mean that would have been—you don't think that would have been—I mean—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: No! Working in your dad's candy—

ART [overlapping]: Candy didn't exist back then!

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yes it did! What!

ART [overlapping]: No...

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Working in your dad's candy shop is not a scene, Art. It's an arms race, that's what we all know.

ART [overlapping]: It is when it's the first candy shop.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: It's *not* the first candy shop!

JACK [overlapping]: Candy was invented—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: The candy shop is invented already, was invented already, that's how it became salt water taffy, is that it got flooded.

ART [overlapping]: No! I don't think they had—

AUSTIN: What do you think—where do you think salt water taffy came from? You think it's the first candy?

ART: The birthplace of candy!

AUSTIN: [Chuckles] Okay.

[JACK laughs.]

JANINE: There's like a candy-making guy on youtube, uh, oh god I forget what they're called, it's like "Good" something... It's like a Florida candy shop and they post youtube videos of them making their candr—candy, and the things they use to cut the hard candy, I want to say, are from like the mid-1800s. They had to, like, buy them up from old, from like old—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Wow.

JANINE [overlapping]: They're like antique candy dyes and rollers and shit. That are like, um, no one makes them anymore, if they break you're kind of fucked, like...

KEITH: The last time anyone made anything sharp.

[AUSTIN and JACK chuckle.]

JACK: The 1800s.

JANINE: I mean, also, I think the real thing, I think the thing maybe Art is actually unconsciously touching on is that *good* candy is new. Candy's been around forever but it sucked.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: I don't believe any of this!

JANINE [overlapping]: It *sucked*.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: People's *palates* were different.

JANINE [overlapping]: They used to just make, like, little statues out of sugar. Just straight-ass sugar.

KEITH [overlapping]: Right.

JANINE [overlapping]: And you would would make a picture, make like a lady out of sugar and everyone would eat a bit of the sugar lady—

KEITH [overlapping]: Yeah. Well, *sugar* was new.

JANINE [overlapping]: And that was just sad. Yes.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: I'm gunna, I'm gunna, I'm gunna—

JANINE [overlapping]: Candied peel is good, so actually I'm reconsidering. Like, candy orange peel is a nice treat.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: I simply am not going to say that only us, only we—

[JANINE laughs.]

AUSTIN [overlapping]: In the last hundred years of human history have figured out how to make sweets, small treats.

JANINE [overlapping]: That's true, that's fair.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Like, I don't know—maybe Europe—

JANINE [overlapping]: Also, yeah, Turkish delight has a following, certainly. Um...rosewater stuff.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: This is what I'm saying. We've been making—we've been making stuff we think is delicious are for as long as we've been.

KEITH: Yeah.

JANINE: Yeah...

AUSTIN: Anyway.

JANINE: I would also argue saltwater taffy isn't even that good.

AUSTIN: Oh my god.

[JANINE laughs.]

KEITH: They were already selling, uh, plas—they were already selling packaged store-bought Turkish delights.

AUSTIN: Sure!

JACK: Oh, in the 1800s, yeah! There was a lot of like—

JANINE [overlapping]: Yeah.

JACK [overlapping]: Sweet shops were, you know, they were all, they were kind of all dope. I...you were mentioning earlier, Austin, like do we want to be on the cool new pier—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mmhmm.

JACK [overlapping]: Or do we want to be in the [chuckles] in the old pier that's rapidly getting eclipsed?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mmhmm.

JACK [overlapping]: And I think that if we, if those are the themes that you want to go with, and I think that they would be interesting themes to explore, it seems to me that being on the old pier is the way to go, right?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah. Because then you at least—even if you don't want to leave Bluff City, you have the, the out option of trying to get a job at the fancy new pier, you know what I mean?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: The...Golden Fortune.

JACK [overlapping]: And watching the—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Where all the hot shit is. Mmhmm.

JACK [overlapping]: Watching the punters beginning to, to—

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JACK: Turn their heads that way, right?

AUSTIN: I don't know what that means, but I, yeah, but from context clues I can. I can understand.

JANINE [overlapping]: So it kind of—

ART: So if a, if a team doesn't get a first down in the first three down.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh.

ART: They'll bring on a, uh, a guy to kick the ball

JANINE [overlapping]: A punter.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: A punter.

JACK [overlapping]: You don't call people punters in the U.S.? Punters?

ART: We call *punters* punters.

JANINE: Is it a brand name? Is it a thing? Is it a...mineral, a vegetable?

JACK [overlapping]: A punter is like a buyer. It's like a—

KEITH [overlapping]: Sorry—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: A *buyer*?

JACK: Like, someone who *buys* things. A customer.

KEITH: A customer.

AUSTIN: *A customer.*

KEITH: *A punter is a customer?*

AUSTIN [overlapping]: A punter is a customer?

JANINE: Are you making this up? Are you just, like making this up to—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: No, they're not. I'm seeing it. I'm seeing it here. Yeah. This is, they're saying this is real. This is a real thing.

JANINE: Are they called that because they punt to you? Or because you punt to them? If you're selling them...

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Uh, Doctor—Doctor Gary Wood, whose—I just have to show you the header image that Doctor Gary Wood, uh, recor—or uh, website here, um, uh, chartered psychologist—

JACK [overlapping]: Huh!

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Author, and solution says, in this, this this header, in this blog post says, “if you call your customers punters, do you deserve to have any?”

KEITH: Wow. Harsh words.

JANINE [overlapping]:” What an exceptionally gifted teacher. He is ethical, compassionate, insightful, *and* witty,” says a psychotherapist.

[JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: Do you think that's *his* psychotherapist?

KEITH: This is—sorry, are we still talking about jealous divines?

AUSTIN: No! [Laughs.] Anyway.

ART [overlapping]: This doesn't actually say a psychotherapist, it could just be someone named Psychotherapist.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Psychotherapist, yeah.

JANINE: I want to shave this guy's eyebrows off. Just looking at his face.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I can see it. I can see it. Anyway, I—yes, Jack, the *punters* are leaving. [Laughs.] The punters are leaving, the punters are leaving.

KEITH: Did we get an answer to what they punt?

AUSTIN: I don't know.

JACK: I think that they are...I don't know. We're kind of in the weeds but my guess is that it's to do with the sort of antagonistic relationship between the seller and the customer. Where they're like, the customer is sort of taking a gamble on what is being sold there and—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mmhmm.

JACK [overlapping]: And you, ah, your relationship as the seller is to try and basically get them for all they're worth, in terms of money.

KEITH: Got it.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's...that makes sense. I still don't know why they're called that but, yes.

JACK: That's my guess.

AUSTIN: Anyway.

KEITH [overlapping]: I didn't know that punting can mean gambling, which I see here on the, in the dictionary that it can.

AUSTIN: Yeah, apparently.

KEITH: "Punt: to play"--

ART [overlapping]: Yeah, I only knew the long kicks.

KEITH: "To play at a gambling game against the banker."

JACK: So that's so that's where it comes in, right, because in the shop the, the—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Sure.

JACK: You know.

KEITH [overlapping]: Yeah.

JACK [overlapping]: Take a punt on some cheap—okay, I mean, I think I have an idea for a shop where I work.

AUSTIN: Ooh, okay.

JACK: And, is that—is that a place to start? I’m trying to think of, like, what’s—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah, I mean, do you want, do you want me to—I mean, at that point are we ready to talk about characters? Because the first thing—the first thing is where you work. Also there is a, there is a “roll some dice to determine where you work” thing if that that’s a thing that someone really wants to do. Obviously, this is a take this as guidance because of it being set in the modern era and not in the 1899 era, uh—

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: But what’s your idea? Where do you want to work, Jack? I’m also—

JACK [overlapping]: I want to work—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: I’ve also added these sheets to the table.

JACK: Oh, yeah, nice. I, uh, I want to work for my dad.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JACK: And my dad is a, is a boardwalk inventor. He, um, invents all kinds of cheap, useless things for people to use on the beach. You know, new innovations in like a sun shield—

AUSTIN: I was going to say, yeah. Sure.

JACK [overlapping]: That you can clip onto the back of your deck chair that you will let you read. Or, for example, a new way to make a deck chair fold so that it can be used more regularly.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: [chuckles] Jack, I need you, I need you to know that for a second, I really thought you were going to say, “or a new type of way to protect yourself from the sun” and you were just going to keep doing sun-related things. Yeah.

[Background laughter.]

JACK [overlapping]: Just sun-based things. Or a new kind of sunglasses.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

JACK [overlapping]: But it's, it's very like, you know, back of the shed, cheap inventing.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mmhmm.

JACK [overlapping]: And his latest and greatest invention, which I am selling on a small stall—

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JACK: Is, is basically like a—it's a means for looking at fish, it is like a small tube with a cheap mirror inside that you put down into the water like a reverse periscope.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Into the water, right. Sure.

KEITH: Right.

JACK: So you can see the fish. But mostly what you see, because it's the Bluff City beach, is just, like, grey water and—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Hey! Listen, wait wait wait—1899. Things were not as bad as it is now.

JACK: That's true. *Slightly* clear water.

[AUSTIN laughs.]

JACK [overlapping]: And other peoples' legs and a bit of seaweed.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yes. Now we're talking.

JACK [overlapping]: Um. But I'm, I'm selling these things. I have them laid out in front of me—oh, and I have a little bucket of water on a stool with a plast—I was going to say plastic—with a little wooden fish in the bottom of it that I am doing a demo with. Um.

AUSTIN: Can you add 'where do you work,' then? Or add that to this first 'were do you work' sheet?

JACK: Yeah. I'm gonna write, uh, I'm gonna write "elaborate beachside invention stall."

AUSTIN: Love it. Fantastic. Um, I'm going to add "father's candy shop" to my character's thing. We've all sorts of—

JACK [overlapping]: We've both got fathers!

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh. We've all sorts of new, um, fonts, by the way.

JACK: What?

JANINE: Ooh!

AUSTIN: In—there's like a billion new fonts in Roll20.

ART [overlapping]: Wow.

AUSTIN: There's like triple the amount from, like, four, to, to twelve.

JACK [overlapping]: There's like—tw—twelve here, Austin, I don't—

AUSTIN: It's sixteen or something.

KEITH [overlapping]: Ooh, Goblin 1. I want to try out Goblin 1.

AUSTIN: I don't like Goblin 1.

KEITH: Ew, Goblin 1 sucks.

JACK [overlapping]: I don't like Goblin 1.

KEITH: Goblin 1 is like bad serif-ed Impact.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Oh, I quite like, I mean, I think I used Crimson Text. Yeah, Fatal Frames 2 Crimson Text

KEITH: Yeah, Crimson's pretty good.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Um. Uh, do you want me to read the character creation rules and then we can go from there?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. "First, each player creates a character to embody during the game. Here's what you need to describe about your character to get started. Character's name and pronouns. Look: hair, eyes, build, skin...uh...style, clothing, accessories, attitude. Uh, uh, and then, and then, roll one die for each of these questions below to randomly create your character's background. Alternatively, you can just choose from each section or make it all up! [Clears throat.] It's your life. You do you."

And then we have a "where do you work," "who are you," and "what do you want." Uh, dice...uh, kind of tables 1 to 6 in each of them.

“You could add as much extra detail as you want, like who you’re crushing on, your home life, and who you’re crushing on in school. Once everyone’s created their character, take turns introducing them. The more you share, the more opportunities there will be for your character to interact with the other kids. After introductions, go around the table again and describe one relationship your character has with another character. Give this depth so you can draw on it later. Jot this down on your character sheets. Don’t try to define every relationship; it’s interesting to figure it out as you go.”

Let’s just do a loop, like the way we would do with, like, uh, you know. Um...what do you call it...

JACK: Fiasco!

AUSTIN: Fiasco! Yes. Yes. Uh, and if anyone wants to roll on these charts, let me know and I can tell you what you get.

ART: I have a place to work.

AUSTIN: Yeah? Where do you want to work?

ART: I’m working in a stall that’s selling a brand-new food.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: New food. Okay.

JACK [overlapping]: Ooh!

ART [overlapping]: New food.

JANINE: Beef tube.

ART: Um. Only, only invented in the last—well, invented is a strong word...I looked up the history of this...

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Ah.

KEITH: Ooh, I—

ART: But under this name it’s very new. We’re selling *funnel cake*.

AUSTIN: Oh hell yeah. I love funnel cake.

JACK [overlapping]: Ooh! Wow!

[JANINE laughs.]

AUSTIN: So we're all—

ART [overlapping]: Funnel cake—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Wait, so far three of us have, have inventor parents?

[KEITH laughs.]

ART: No, I—no one *invented*....

KEITH: You were not involved with the invention of funnel cakes.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: I see. I see, I see, I see.

ART [overlapping]: I just sell. I *sell* funnel cake for—

KEITH [overlapping]: Right, but it's a new natural craze.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: It's a new—got you.

ART: It's a new thing.

AUSTIN: Here. Yeah. I got you.

ART: Funnel cake.

KEITH: I don't actually know the year of this, but I think it's pretty close—I *really* thought you were going to say ice cream cones.

AUSTIN: Mmm.

ART: Mmm. Ah well, if that's recent, we have a heated rivalry with the ice cream cone people.

AUSTIN: Great.

ART: I also have a name but I'm worried that it's a little too much.

JANINE: No such thing.

AUSTIN: Well, you gotta say it then.

ART: I looked up famous—I looked up popular names in the 1890s. I would like to introduce you to Pomp Circumstance.

JACK: Oh! Wow!

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: That's nice.

AUSTIN: I don't know. It's a little much.

ART: Pomp was a top-10 trending name in the 1890s.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Okay!

JACK: Wow.

KEITH [overlapping]: I didn't realize they had trending names.

JANINE [overlapping]: Was it?

ART: Well, you can observe trends from any time.

[JACK laughs.]

JANINE: Also, wait, is that—does that—well, that doesn't matter, nevermind. I was going to say does that mean that only babies in the 1890s were named Pomp?

AUSTIN: Uh.

JANINE: Pomp was like the equivalent of, like, Madyson with a 'y'?

KEITH: You're saying that Pomp was on, like, the bleeding edge of names.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Uh-huh.

JANINE: Mmhmm.

ART: I can say it was, it was less than 100 in the 1870s

KEITH: I gotta—

ART: When some of these characters were born...

AUSTIN: No, It wouldn't have been 1870s, right? I guess...no, they *couldn't* be 1870s. Getting too old.

ART [overlapping]: Oh, no, it'd be 1880s.

JANINE [overlapping]: 1880s. Yeah.

AUSTIN: 1880s. Yeah.

KEITH: Oh!

JANINE: 80s babies.

KEITH: Hold on. In this—I'm looking in this list. This says *trendy* names, not—

AUSTIN: Not *trending*? Well, trendy means the same thing. In name lists. Right?

JANINE: Trendy would mean they leapt pretty high on the ranking lists all of a sudden, right?

AUSTIN: I guess so, yeah.

ART: Anyway. Pomp Circumstance checking in.

AUSTIN: Hi, Pomp.

JANINE: Circumstance also a popular, trending surname at the time? [Laughs.]

ART: I find surnames are less effected by trends.

[AUSTIN and JANINE laugh.]

AUSTIN: Uh...

ART: It is notable that the "Pomp and Circumstance March" would, uh, have not been recorded yet. Has not been composed yet.

AUSTIN: Mm.

JACK: Is that Edward Elgar in the early 20th century?

ART: Yeah, we're a couple years out. Maybe we could inspire—

JACK [overlapping]: Yeah, he named it after—

ART [overlapping]: The march, yeah.

JANINE: Um. I've also got a workplace and a name.

AUSTIN: Mm.

JANINE: Uh, I'm going to be playing Cattie Pontecorvo.

JACK: Incredible.

AUSTIN: Great name.

JANINE: C-A-T-T-I-E Pontecorvo [laughs], I'm not going through that. Um. And, uh, Cattie—she works at a photography studio.

AUSTIN: Mm!

JACK: Ooh, wow.

JANINE: Like the, boardwalk—boardwalk portrait stuff.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Love that. That's fun. That's fun, yeah.

JACK [overlapping]: What do you do there?

JANINE: Just an aide, you know. Like, helping out. Taking portraits that are less important than the fancy portraits.

JACK: Right.

AUSTIN: My name is Eloise Salt, don't ask if it's related...if it is to the candy. Um, and again, like I said, work at my father's candy shop. It's the *Salt* Water Taffy Shop.

[KEITH laughs.]

JANINE: Oh, so it's just tap water.

AUSTIN: [Laughs.] Well...

KEITH: Oh, right, there's not actually salt-water taffy—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: There's salt in there. It's Salt Water taffy.

JANINE [overlapping]: So you salt tap water.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ART: It's our water, it's Salt water.

AUSTIN: Right. Exactly! [Laughs.] I don't know what the question is! Um.

JACK: I'm going to be playing, um, Melinda Guppy. Uh...

AUSTIN: Oh, gr-[laughs.] Uh-huh. Great.

JACK: Um, my look is tall and thin, two tight braids and a scowl.

AUSTIN: Mmm.

JACK: Uh, and I have a simple navy blue dress and a grey apron over the top for the inventions. Uh...

AUSTIN: Love it.

JACK: I have a—I think I—I either have my sleeves rolled up or I have short sleeves because I have to keep putting the stupid thing in the bucket.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JACK: So that people can look at the wooden fish. Uh, the name of my stall is Gadgets By Guppy.

AUSTIN: Great.

JACK: I found this out the other day—gadgets is an extremely old word often just used to mean “that thing over there,” or, like, a thing that sailors couldn't remember the name of or didn't have a name for.

AUSTIN: Huh.

JACK: Um...and I, you know, I think that fits with Melinda's dad being like, you know, “keeps the sun out of your eyes I guess!”

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

KEITH: Okay so we've got—I'm trying to, I'm

JANINE [overlapping]: Uh—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: The thing we don't have right now is, like, the amusement pier. Like, if you wanted to think about things on, like, an actual pier. Like, carnival game, you know, barker, person who runs the ferry—the Ferris wheel—the ferry-go-round is what I almost said. Merry-go-round and the Ferris wheel. Um. I guess we already have concessions.

JACK [overlapping]: Somer wheel.

AUSTIN: Yeah, the Somer wheel. Um, the person who...what are other fun carnival—

KEITH [overlapping]: So, what, the *wheels* were invented.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah!

KEITH [overlapping]: Okay.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: The Somers wheel was up and runnin', for sure.

KEITH: Wow. Wow, amazing.

AUSTIN: I mean, I say that but it's, actually I—

KEITH [overlapping]: I think that, I—I would like, uh, I've always wanted to—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah, 1892. It was up and runnin'.

KEITH: I've always wanted to run the sc—the carnival scam games.

[Time stamp: 0:30:00]

AUSTIN: Uh, they're legitimate? [JACK laughs.] And I don't know what you're talking about.

KEITH: Well, it's just—I've always been so impressed with the games that no one can ever win and then the guy says, "look, I'm not cheating, here," and—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah, uh-huh.

KEITH: And then does it perfectly because they know the trick, or whatever?

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

KEITH: That is such a—that is so fun to me—the, like—

[AUSTIN laughs.]

JACK: What games?

KEITH: Well, you've got—you've got the ball in the bottle. You've got dart games, you've got—oh, probably a gun game, and, let's see...one more...um...how about one where you've got—there's a weirdly shaped thing that you've got to—you just have to push it over. Like but it's like a weeble-wobble but it's giant.

JACK: Huh!

AUSTIN: Mmm.

KEITH: It's like a strong man test but instead of with a hammer you've just got to try to knock it down so that it stays down.

AUSTIN: Sure. Love it.

JACK: Perfect.

AUSTIN: And I have big, freckled cheeks. I have a white blouse and a deep blue skirt with small white kinda polka-dots on it. I guess this is two different—this is *look* and, and, *style* are different thing, huh. I'll break this out. Um, uh...trying to figure out if there's any other style notes here.

Very, like, I am not—I might pick *nerd* as my 'who are you.' The options there, according to the game as written are, "prep, jock/cheerleader, popular, stoner, nerd, and scene kid." And I think I'm, I'm very much, like, *nerd* in the *try-hard* sense, the sort of, like, Betty Cooper tries to, you know, do all the homework on time, feels very pressured to be the, the best daughter I can be, according to very traditional, very particular metrics, you know?

ART: Hunts serial killers.

AUSTIN: Hunts serial killers. Right, exactly.

KEITH [overlapping]: Has the serial killer gene, famously.

AUSTIN: Has the—famously, yeah, dark Eloise Salt coming [laughs] coming next season. Fuck Riverdale, man. [Laughs.]

KEITH: I, honestly, it's—it's one of the hardest I've ever laughed at a TV show, so.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

KEITH: I have to thank it for that. For that scene.

JACK [overlapping]: For the serial killer gene.

KEITH: The serial killer gene thing, I thought, was so funny, uh, that it kept me for a whole another season, I think.

ART: I'm...still watching that show; I can't tell you what's happening in the season at all. I have no idea.

AUSTIN: Love it.

KEITH: Yeah. It's how the show wants to be.

ART: I feel like other seasons I could be, like, oh yeah, this is basically what's happening. And like, I think—I couldn't tell you what happened in the last episode I saw. It doesn't even stick in my brain anymore.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

ART: Maybe I'm being hypnotized and they're robbing me in those hours.

JANINE: That's probably it.

ART: Yeah, it's probably that one.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: It's probably that, for sure. I would say.

KEITH [overlapping]: It's some *pretty* high effort scam.

JACK [overlapping]: Austin, you've written here that you work at your father's candy *shope*.

AUSTIN: [laughs] That's right!

JACK: Was that supposed to be candy shoppe spelt with two p's, like, old style?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: You would have to ask my father, wouldn't you.

JACK: Ah, I see. Fair enough.

[ART laughs.]

AUSTIN: It's called "Father's Candy Shope."

JANINE [overlapping]: You know how now people are like, "they used to put e's at the end of it—"

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: His, his thing is that “they used to only put one ‘p’ in it.”

[AUSTIN and JACK laugh.]

AUSTIN: Exactly! [Laughs.]

ART: I think it’s they used to, uh, they used to charge by the letter.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: They used to—uh-huh—oh but that doesn’t—wait, but then why would they add the ‘e’? [Laughing.] Are you, wait, are you saying that they started with S-H-O-P-P-E and then my father was like, “we can get rid of one of those p’s, people will understand.”

ART: We could sa—we could save a nickel by only using one ‘p’.

KEITH [overlapping]: Well, you’ve got to—you’ve got to keep the ‘e,’ because the ‘e’ is what makes it fancy.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ART: But who really looks for two p’s?

KEITH: Right.

ART: You’re looking for the word “candy.” And “father.”

AUSTIN: Welcome to our candy shop, you’ll notice there’s only one ‘p’ in it. Don’t pee in our candy shop.

[JACK laughs.]

ART: Leave off the second ‘p’ for “Please buy more candy”

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Please—yes. Um, again the last thing here is “what do you want?” and their example things here are “get promoted, quit, ask someone out, discover a secret, slack off, or do a crime.” [Laughs.]

JACK: God, what *would* the scene be?

AUSTIN: I don’t know. What’s—what’s youth cul—

ART [overlapping]: First person to pick a scene kid gets to pick.

AUSTIN: What's *youth* culture like in the turn of the century?

JACK: Is there a lot of swimming involved? I don't know.

AUSTIN: Mmm...

JACK: I'm just saying—now I'm just saying verbs to think of things people do. Like, the first thing I thought was go and play at the arcade, but I think I would lose all my money to Keith and also I would, um, like, we've done the arcade kids as a, as a group before.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Um, swimming—swimming out to the buoys? Um, like swimming races? But that might be more jock/cheerleader. Um...

AUSTIN: Is it like.... [Sighs.] Is it like, are we tied—is this tied to, like, ragtime?

JACK: I was going to say: is it something to do with—and the other thing is, we're in Bluff City, I feel, so it's got to be something—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Oh, right, yes. Of course.

JACK [overlapping]: Kind of weird.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Like, something that might not even necessarily have worked.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JACK: Is it like, oh—I'm, I'm really...really into the, like...beach donkey racing circuit? Um...I'm really into, like....

KEITH: Sorry, what is the question here?

JACK: What is a scene kid in 1899?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: We're trying to—right.

JACK: In Bluff City.

AUSTIN: In Bluff City. And I—

KEITH [overlapping]: Honestly, I didn't know what a scene kid was when I was going to school.

AUSTIN: Yeah well, that's...

[JACK laughs.]

AUSTIN: Wait wait wait, do you mean that, like, you knew who the scene kids were but you didn't understand what the *scene* was, or do you mean that—

KEITH [overlapping]: I don't think my school had any scene kids at it. Either—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Do you now know what a scene kid is? Do you know what we mean when we say that?

KEITH: Barely. It's, like, a lot to do with the hair—it's, like, rainbow goth, right?

AUSTIN: It—it—what the scene kid is has shifted over time, but that was certainly an era in scene kid culture.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, it is, I would say, you would go from like pop emo forward into more, uh, niche, associated genre spaces, like, crunk-core [laughs].

KEITH: I spent two years of high school at an all-boys Catholic school with a uniform.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Right.

KEITH: So there were no scene kids there.

AUSTIN: There were. They were hiding it. As someone who also went to Catholic school for high school. Does any—

KEITH [overlapping]: Well, but, okay—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Is there anyone who would have gone to a Taking Back Sunday show, or a, you know, Panic! At the Disco show, or a...

KEITH: Right. But I didn't know them.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: So I couldn't have learned what it was.

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

KEITH: And then none of the people that I hung out with in my very brief time in a new time at a new school—

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

KEITH: Were scene kids.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: And so. The aesthetic was, like, not—I wasn't seeing it. What I know—or, at least, believe now—was the sort of, 2008-10 scene kid look. I wasn't really seeing it, so...

AUSTIN: Right, right.

KEITH: I didn't even hear the term, probably, until 2013.

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

JACK: Twenty-thir-scene.

KEITH: Twenty-first-scene, yeah.

JACK: Um, are—we can come back to this, we can wrap back to as to what the hell this thing is.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh. This is fantastic. The Vandervogel, or Wandervogel, in English, the 'Wandering Bird' was the name—was adopted by a popular movement of German youth groups from 1896-1933 who protested against industrialization by going on a hike in the country to commune with the nature and woods.

[AUSTIN and JACK laugh.]

AUSTIN: Ah, ugh, gotta keep readin'--gotta keep readin'--

JACK [overlapping]: No, Austin, you-

AUSTIN [overlapping]: You gotta keep reading

JACK: You introduced them and I thought, "you know where I think this is about to go?"

AUSTIN: Yup!

JACK: Please continue.

JANINE: Uh-huh, yeah.

AUSTIN: Drawing inspiration from medieval wandering scholars, their ethos was to revive old Teutonic values—

JACK [overlapping]: Weird.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: With a strong emphasis on German nationalism.

JANINE: Mmhmm.

JACK: Huh.

AUSTIN: Simply love to invent the nation and, and—

JANINE: Yeah...

KEITH: Who is this?

AUSTIN: Oh, the wandering bird kids. Yeah.

JACK [overlapping]: Some weird German hiking children.

KEITH [overlapping]: Oh.

JANINE [overlapping]: I was going to say, like, I bet this ties into World War II shit where they were like, “let’s put our kids in lederhosen and send them into the woods.” Ugh. Sounds...yeah.

AUSTIN: It pre-dates, but also. That’s how it goes, right?

JANINE: You know that’s...everyone gets their ideas from somewhere.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm. Oh! The Nazis *outlawed* this.

JANINE: Oh! That’s weird because it seems like it...yeah.

JACK [overlapping]: And then set up basically their own thing.

AUSTIN: I mean, this is...right, exactly.

JANINE: Was it just it, like, they liked some of the ideas but they also were like, “Well, you’re going to do it with us if you’re going to do it.”

AUSTIN: They outlawed all, including—they also outlawed the German Scouts, and a bunch of other groups and basically—

JANINE [overlapping]: Right, ‘cause they—

JACK [overlapping]: It was like a consolidation.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah. Mmhmm.

JANINE [overlapping]: Yeah, they would have wanted to channel every one into that one. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yup, totally. Totally.

JANINE: It’s a competition thing, I see.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm. Anyway.

JANINE: I’m thinking really hard about these classes. Or these...

AUSTIN: These kind of category things?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Thinking about what I would want.

JACK: Okay, I think I can make a pitch for scene kid.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm. Hmm?

JACK: All along the boardwalk are barrel organ vendors. Which, uh—not vendors, but people playing barrel organs. And what is being played on the—uh, god, what are they called? Canisters? The rolls of these barrel organs?

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JACK: The fashions involved there absolutely move like the tides, you know? New stuff will come in and that will kind of sweep down the boardwalk—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mmhmm.

JACK: And people will get more and more obsessed with a particular sound. And, so, you know, I think I got into this culture of—it’s, it’s not even like running the barrel organs, like, being near someone running the barrel organs and being, like, “Aw yeah!”

AUSTIN [overlapping]: You're like an organ grinder groupie.

JACK: I suppose, yeah!

AUSTIN: Not a *groupie*, but, you know. A fan.

JACK [as organ grinder fan]: Wow, you've heard what they've got in this week?
They're playing, like "Old Mister...Old Mister..."

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right. Yeah.

[Background laughter, overlapping.]

KEITH: They're playing "Old Mister, Old Mister."

JACK [as organ grinder fan]: They're playing "Old Mister, Old Mister," which goes like this: [in a low, grindy voice] *Old Mister ba ba ba ba bum bum*.

[Background laughter.]

JACK [overlapping]: All down the boardwalk.

KEITH: And so, are you hearing, just like—are you always, just, like, hearing 90% the closest organ and 10% the other four organs?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: Yes. Absolutely. Um, and some people hate this, but I think that there's definitely this sort of weird [laughs] counter-cultural aspect of it where, like, young people—maybe some young people who work on the boardwalk, perhaps as a way to protect themselves from the tedium of having to hear this, have gotten, like, really into the internal sort of, like, politics and machinations of how these organ grinders are working. Um...

KEITH: I like to imagine a group of really excited teens surrounding a barrel organ—one goes—they're, like, cheering and clapping and one goes to the other, "You know, some people hate this?"

[Background laughter.]

JACK: Yes that's exactly what it is.

[KEITH laughs.]

JACK: Or, like someone running down and going, like “Ah they’ve got ‘The Old Horse’s Legs’ on the one over there! They’re playing that! It’s coming to town!” And everybody runs up and listens to that. [JACK imitates ‘The Old Horse’s Legs.’] They all sound the same but I’ll swear that they don’t.

AUSTIN [laughing]: In...um, according to Wikipedia, in New York City in the 1880s—in the year 1880—nearly 1 in 20 Italian men in certain areas were organ grinders.

KEITH: Wow.

AUSTIN: Because of it being a job you were allowed to do as an immigrant, and, like, culturally.

JANINE [overlapping]: Right.

JACK [overlapping]: God, and the thing is—with that many people doing it, there must have been this deep internal culture of, like, how it worked—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

JACK [overlapping]: How the music worked and how trends worked and what was taboo and what wasn’t...

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Uh-huh. In many towns in *Europe*—

JANINE [overlapping]: Who the good organ repair-man was.

JACK [overlapping]: Oh, yeah...

AUSTIN [overlapping]: The barrel street organ was not just a solo performer but used a group of musicians as part of a storytelling street act to get together for brightly-colored posters and sing-along sessions.

JACK: Yeah, you know, I wish that we could do that and I wish we could go to Europe, but, like...

AUSTIN [overlapping]: It’s not what we’re—it’s not where we are. Yeah. No. Sorry. [Laughs.] This is the one thing, Jack? That we’ve finally—Bluff City went to Europe and it brought back the organ grinder.

JACK [overlapping]: [laughing] The story-telling organ grinder. So, yeah, I’m a scene kid but, again, in the loosest, most Bluff City definition of the term, in 1899.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. The Mayor of New York, by the way, eventually outlawed organ grinding in the 1930s.

JACK [overlapping]: Every single one of these stories that we look at—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Uh-huh.

JACK: Every single one of them—we were looking at football the other day and all we could talk about was about how people were trying to ban it.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh-huh.

JANINE: This is why New York went down the toilet in the, in the latter half of the 20th century. Because—

JACK [overlapping]: No barrel organs?

JANINE [overlapping]: No organ grinders to...yeah. Keep peoples' spirits up.

AUSTIN: It's true. It's true.

JANINE: They got rid of the organ grinders, they got rid of the automats—what do you got left at that point?

JACK: As go the organ grinders...

ART: We went to an automat last week and it was terrible.

JACK: Was it really?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: It wasn't *terrible*. It was...it was...mediocre.

ART: The food was bad.

AUSTIN: The food wasn't good. And the service was trash [laughs].

JANINE: Listen, I don't think the promise of an automat was just—like, the most—to me, if the food was good, that's, like, well okay that's very superior automat then.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right. We had an authentic automat—yes.

JANINE: You're getting food that was made and put in a box at some point, and then you get the box and you never make eye contact with anyone. Like, it's not going to be good. [Laughs.]

AUSTIN: God.

ART: No, like, they had an open kitchen, that was the weirdest part.

JACK: What?

AUSTIN: It was so...you could see them making...it was very weird. It was very, very weird.

JACK: Huh. Anyway.

JANINE: Anyway.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: Um. Much as we've, as we've litigated what a scene kid might be, um, I've chosen stoner but I think we need to litigate a little bit what a stoner means in this context, like...

AUSTIN: Ah, fuck.

JACK: Yeah! Let's go.

JANINE: Uh, because, I don't think—I don't think—I don't think a lot of the stuff we would describe as stoner-y was accessible in the way that...I mean...[sighs].

AUSTIN: Before...hmm...

JANINE: We don't need to tell a story about a teen who's really into, like, opium dens...

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Opium? Yeah. Uh-huh.

[KEITH laughs.]

JANINE: Um. So my thinking here is more about, like, well, what does it mean to be a stoner in, like, teen-oriented stories, right?

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: And there are two sort of branches of it. The one branch is, like, you're the hilarious comedy relief fuck-up who, who is, who just kind of...screws around and is funny and everyone laughs and you just kind of don't have your head on your shoulders.

But the other half of it is—and this is, like, a thing that I feel like is missing from these categories—is a person who is just kind of outside of everything else?

AUSTIN: Mmm. Mmhmm.

JANINE: Um, where it's, like, "I'm doing my own thing, I'm pursuing my pleasures, people think I'm wasting my fucking time and I don't super care." Um.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JANINE: So I'm choosing stoner in the sense that, like, I don't think nerd is correct, I don't think scene kid is correct, I don't think prep is correct, because, you know, she's a young lady with a job who wants to get promoted and she's working in a sort of—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mmhmm.

JANINE: Technical field and, like, photography also is, is not, like, the safest thing to do. You're handling a lot of bad chemicals. Um. And you're doing so to make art. Which I feel like, if you're passionate about that could really easily put you kind of on the outside of things. Um. So in that sense it felt like stoner was the pick, even if I put it in quotes here. Um.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Do you have that slacker chic vibe, or do you have a different—do you know what I mean?

JANINE [overlapping]: Yes. I, I didn't, I almost didn't say it but, like, I absolutely picture her, like, behind the shop, like, smoking a cigarette butt that she has to, like, put out—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mmhmm.

JANINE: And then, like, hide somewhere so she can finish it later or something? Like, just kind of...you know, it's not that she doesn't care about things? But also...you know, she's, she's living her life.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JANINE: Um. For her look and style, I've said that she looks bored/tired, which was a choice I made before the stoner thing but definitely led me there. Um, she has cropped blond hair that's sort of pinned up so it doesn't look cropped. It looks like she just has her hair styled normally, but if she took it down it would probably be, like, sort of fluffy and, and above her shoulders a bit.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Little bit avant-guard. Um. She has dark eyes, she is very petite, and she has a pale/flushed complexion. I sort of imagine, sort of, uh, rosacea on the cheeks, that kind of, that kind of thing. Um. She wears a striped dress with a blouse and a necktie underneath, and it's kind of like a wrap, uh—there's sort of like an outer dress that kind of wraps around and then there's the blouse and the necktie and it's like a button-up blouse. Um, but she is also partial to a bicycle suit, which is like skirt with pants built in underneath it. Um.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: And...yeah, like I said she wants to get promoted, and I also named her photography studio as "Arvo and Stacks."

AUSTIN: Um...wait, what's named Arvo and Stacks?

JANINE: The photography studio.

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

JANINE: It's "Arvo and Stacks Photography."

AUSTIN: Love it. A-R-V-O and—

JANINE [overlapping]: Yeah.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: S-T-A-C-K-S Photography.

JANINE: Yes.

AUSTIN: Got it. Um, and you want to get promoted. So you have, you have a clear one, uh, a clear goal—

JANINE [overlapping]: She wants—she wants Arvo and Stacks and Pontecorvo, which will never happen. But boy she wants it.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Aaaaah. See, *that's* a big promotion.

JACK [overlapping]: Oh, wow.

JANINE: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: That's as big of a promotion as you get.

JANINE: She does more work than Arvo *or* Stacks! You know?

AUSTIN: Yeah...yeah.

JANINE: And they get—and *both* of them get their names up there? Come on.

ART: Wait, what is this, a law firm?

[AUSTIN and JANINE laugh.]

AUSTIN: Um...I think I'm going easy with 'what do I want.' I think I just want to slack off. I think it's been—it's, like, one of those things where it's like, it's the last big weekend of the—of summer—and I feel like I didn't get a chance to have a summer? So I was promised this big, you know, summer off and I didn't get it. And instead, I worked all summer and so this last big weekend, all I want to do is, like, sneak away from Father's Candy Shop and, and, hang out with my friends.

JACK: Um, I want to quit. Uh..

[AUSTIN and JANINE laugh.]

JACK: I hate these stupid inventions, and—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: There's only one invention for your heart, baby, and it's [laughs] and it's the barrel organ!

JACK [overlapping]: It's the barrel organ [laughs]. The wooden fish keeps floating so I sort of have to jam it in there with the reverse periscope, which Father hasn't even bothered to name, and that means that because it's kind of jammed in there, people put their heads to the periscope and can't see the fish, because it's underneath it—

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: So then they have to lift the thing up a little bit and the fish just goes, like, whizzing up—

[JANINE laughs.]

JACK: So they get to see it for, like, one second through the periscope—

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JACK: It's, it's, it's dogshit.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Um...anyone else have final things here? I guess we have 'what do you want' from Art and Keith, and also 'who are you' from both of them? Is that right?

ART: Yeah. Um.... Pomp Circumstance, I'm going with just prep.

AUSTIN: Sure. From money, from—?

ART [overlapping]: I'm going with—yeah, I—well—'cause there, there was no, like, going to college for people back in the 1890s, right? It was like—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: I mean, there was, but you had to be from money for, for real-real. Yeah.

ART [overlapping]: Yeah. From money...yeah, yeah. But then, like, why would you be working at a funnel cake stand?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Funnel cake shop, yeah. Sure.

ART: Working on it. But maybe just, like, “go out and learn—learn what people are like, boy!”

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Maybe, what if—yeah, what if your parents got—what if you have that classic, your parents did not come from money but they made money?

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: And are sending you to college but your parents are like, “before you go, you have to spend a summer working...” [laughs] “at the funnel cake stand that we own.”

[KEITH laughs.]

ART: Great, honestly, fantastic. Love to—happy to be here.

[AUSTIN laughs.]

ART: Um, but—I’d like to discover a secret.

AUSTIN: Just in general, in life?

ART: Yeah, I want to know—I want to know something.

AUSTIN: Yeah, got it. Can you—did you already do look and style for us?

ART: I guess I didn’t. Uh, good hair, bright eyes, narrow build, fair skin.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

ART: Wearing a shirt and tie with an apron, and a *possibly* anachronistic paper hat. I don’t know when the paper hat...

AUSTIN: It’s Bluff City, baby.

ART: Yeah.

JANINE [overlapping]: Those are old, right? People used to have those paper crowns for New Years and stuff? I feel like that’s, like, Victorian and earlier.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Sure.

ART [overlapping]: I'm not sure when they invented paper.

JANNE: Art. Art.

KEITH: A really, really, really long time ago.

ART [overlapping]: That's, uh...1910s, right?

AUSTIN: Nothing was printed until the 20th century, folks.

[JACK laughs.]

ART: Yeah.

JANINE: Yeah, they invented the printing press but then they just had to, like, you had to get someone's hand and get them to line their hand up under the plate and then you'd stamp their hand, and then they'd go around reading it out loud to people.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Yeah. Mhmm.

ART: I'm not going to wear a hand-hat, that's gross.

[JANINE laughs.]

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's, that's Sangfielle.

JACK: Making up a new kind of guy, and then reading the newspaper on him.

[AUSTIN and KEITH laugh.]

AUSTIN: Uh...Keith. I need—we need your whole sheet, basically.

KEITH: Yeah yeah yeah. I haven't, I haven't said anything about my guy yet. So we've got, uh, Sank Gettliffe is his name.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

KEITH: For his look I've got, uh, finger-combed brown hair, pale, clean shaven, uh, style: warm, collarless buttoned shirt, new overalls, although—I didn't, I don't mean overalls, I mean suspenders, very different thing, but similar—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Much different. Yeah.

KEITH [overlapping]: Similar thing. Uh, we've talked about his carnie games.

AUSTIN: Yup.

KEITH: That's still true. Um. I—I wasn't—I guess...I was leaning toward stoner and Janine, your stoner thoughts, I felt, still in line, but I had written while I was still deciding—he's sort of like an entry-level con-man and a runaway, so he's looking to do a crime.

AUSTIN: I feel like 'runaway' is a pretty distinct thing there, from, like, Janine's version of stoner, right? Like...Janine, uh, Cattie—not Cattle, right? [Laughs] Cattie.

JANINE: It's Cattie, yes...

AUSTIN: Okay. I couldn't—I'm zoomed out too far.

KEITH: Oh, I literally thought it was Cattle.

JANINE [overlapping]: I think it's in...

AUSTIN: See.

JANINE: What?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: If you're zoomed out too far-

KEITH [overlapping]: I really liked Cattle. Cattle Pontecorvo is great.

JANINE [overlapping]: Why would it be Cattle?

AUSTIN: I was very—

JANINE [overlapping]: It's—the, the, the justification in my head is that it's probably Caterina?

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JANINE: But she abbreviates it to Cattie.

AUSTIN: I get it.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I'm fine with it being Cattie. I'm just saying when you're zoomed out—

ART: It looks like Cattle.

KEITH: Yeah.

JANINE: Oh my god.

KEITH: At 100% it looks like Cattle.

AUSTIN: Exactly. That's exactly the thing. At 100%. Anyway.

ART: It's not too late to be Cattle-lina.

JANINE [overlapping]: I bet I, I bet I can fix this. Hang on. No. That's just...oh, kind of.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: [laughs] Oh, yeah. Cattle-lina. Yeah, uh-huh.

JANINE: Here. Does that—is that readable?

KEITH [overlapping]: Oh, yeah. That's distinct, too.

JANINE: If I use a semi-colon instead of an 'i'?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: No, that looks a little weird.

KEITH [overlapping]: Well this is before we locked-in what an 'i' looks like. So it's great.

[JANINE laughs.]

AUSTIN: Yeah, the 'i' wasn't—yeah, uh-huh. Um. Anyway, what's your goal? Your goal is to do a crime.

KEITH: Yes.

AUSTIN: Okay. Um.

KEITH: I want to do my—I want to do my first, like, multi-step con.

AUSTIN: You've, like, taken money from people in a con situation but you haven't done—

KEITH [overlapping]: Right, like the shell game, I mean the carnie games are sort of like a con...

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah yeah yeah. Yeah. But that's for somebody else. Somebody else gets that money.

KEITH: Right. Yeah, yeah exactly. But you got to, you know...

AUSTIN: You're skimming off the top, obviously, but also.

KEITH: You, you can't go straight into four-step cons. Or you'll get arrested.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

KEITH: Or whatever they did to you in 1900.

AUSTIN: Kill you.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Probably.

ART: Made you—made your hand be the newspaper.

AUSTIN: Right [laughs].

JACK: It says, "Man Arrested."

[All laugh.]

AUSTIN: Oh, that's good. Um.

ART: I hope people are liking this.

[JANINE and JACK laugh.]

AUSTIN: Eeeh. Doing our best. Um, is that it? That might be it. Um, I should say, really quick, that Eloise is, is r—you know. I, I, did a bunch of reading to be like, what was the state of race in, in, uh...in New Jersey at the top of the, the last century, and it's a mess, obviously.

ART: Yeah.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I will say it's, like, more—there weren't, for instance, there were never any anti-miscegenation laws passed in New Jersey, right? So, like better than much of the country. Uh, still deeply segregated. In Bluff City, I think it's okay for me to have Eloise Salt be mixed. Um, I think her dad is white because he's allowed to have a business on the boardwalk. Um,

and that is, like, a big—you know. I think it's important not to fully have Bluff City be, like, the realm of weakening your history.

JACK: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: Do you know what I mean? But she is biracial, probably light-skinned enough to not—not to pass, I don't think she passes, but all of the colorism that the world has, some of it has seeped into even this dream space of Bluff City. Um, uh, and so she benefits from that, in a way, in a way that she's not fully comfortable with, because she sees how people have looked at her mother differently than her. I doubt that the three—I doubt that that family goes out as a unit very often, you know? There's a lot of assuming her mother is the laundress, or a maid, or something, you know?

And that's deeply uncomfortable and I think this is part of both her goal of—both her who she is is this kind of try-hard who wants to, like, be accepted in, in every part of her life. She wants to, like—for the, the parts of her family that are Black and that see her as an opportunity to break into, you know, parts of, of the upper crust or the, you know, acceptable white culture, and improve their situation there—there's a lot of pressure there. And there is *more* pressure of, uh, of the purely negative kind from, like, her white teachers, and, etc, so. Uh, so that is—that is the—and also, it's why it's so hard for her to just fucking chill out, you know?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So, Eloise, that is her. I think I've said everything—curly hair in a kerchief, I think she has like a white kerchief, you know, hair up in that, um, uh...classic, classic “I'm working with food and I need to get my hair out the way” situation.

And I think that's all of our characters! Um, it does say here:

“Now, it's time to create the mall that your teen weirdos work at. That includes deciding just what the big action taking place today is. This could be a collective goal for your teens or just something that's happening around the characters. You can focus on as much or as little of the action as you want, but it will always be there in the background.”

Again, we could roll these die, or we could make choices. Uh, the first thing is, which mall—and that's like “outdoor mall, huge mall, strip mall, fancy mall, downtown mall, local mall”—throw those all out! We are a pier and adjoining—

JACK [overlapping]: It's 1899!

AUSTIN: [Laughs.] It's 1899, baby! Uh, we are a pier and some adjoining boardwalk shops, you know.

JANINE: Isn't this—isn't that kind of what the word 'mall' originally referred to? Right? Like a sort of outdoor...Like, indoor malls are very new in the grand scheme.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: I'd believe that. I know that's, like—sure. I actually don't know.

JANINE [overlapping]: I think initially they were called arcades or something like that at first? Yeah.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Arcades, yeah, that I can talk—

KEITH [overlapping]: Uh, yes, actually, I think—in, in downtown Providence, I believe the oldest indoor mall in the country. The Arcade. Westminster Arcade.

JACK: Oh, wow.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Um...

KEITH: There's a stupid Lovecraft store where you can buy dumb T-shirts.

AUSTIN: [Sarcastic] Great. Uh..Ah! There you go. Um, uh, apparently its gets its name from a promenade where you could play 'pall mall,' which, I guess is a game?

ART: The cigarette?

JANINE: [Laughing] I also thought it was a cigarette.

AUSTIN: I guess that's named for something.

JACK: Pall Mall is a place in London. It's a, a street down to...

AUSTIN: Right. Okay. But why is it named that?

ART [overlapping]: Do they make cigarettes there?

JACK: Um.

JANINE: It's made *of* cigarettes.

JACK [overlapping]: I don't know why it's called Pall Mall.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: The thing I'm looking at says that...okay, here we go, I've found it...well that doesn't fucking help.

[ART laughs.]

JANINE: All right, great.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: The thing I'm reading says, "In 1737, noun, shaded walk serving as a promenade. Generalized from 'The Mall,' the name of a board, tree-lined promenade in St. James' Park, London, so-called from 1670s/earlier, 'maill' my-ll? Mall with an 'i' in there, 1640s, which was so called because it formerly was an open alley to play pall-mall." Pahl-mahl? Paul-maul?

Oh! "This—" I should have kept reading. "Was a once-popular game played with a wooden ball in a kind of smooth alley, boarded in at each side, in which the ball was struck with a mallet to send through an iron arch—"

[Time stamp: 1:00:00]

KEITH [overlapping]: Wait—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: "placed at the end of the alley." What's up?

JACK: It's kind of like fucked up croquet?

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: Also, I'm so stoked to see what—is someone going to try to ban it, in this Wikipedia page?

AUSTIN: Let's find out! The game's name is from French...a French word and then from an Italian word. From "palla"—ball, see balloon—and "maglio"—mallet—see Italian 'malleus,' a hammer. Mallet. Mallet-ball. Um, this goes back into the kind of proto-indo-european language, da da da da da...uh.... It doesn't say that this was banned, but I'd believe it.

JACK: Ah, phew, they managed to invent one sport that successfully—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: That was not banned.

JANINE: Was it taken over by eugenicists at some point?

[JACK laughs.]

AUSTIN: Oh, probably. Wait! Wait! Let's see..

KEITH: So—

JANINE: I'd be—the thing is, I'd be shocked if they didn't...it's got a...someone's got to try to ban it, right, because every time someone has fun in an alley—

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JACK: [laughing] Fucking losers come and ban it.

JANINE [overlapping]: Throughout history, someone tries to ban it. Yeah! That's how it goes.

KEITH: This is exactly the sort of unfair treatment that my game, 'Alley-Smash'—

[Background laughter.]

KEITH: Also got banned. A game where you go in an alley and smash stuff up!

[JACK and JANINE laugh.]

AUSTIN: Uhhh....I see when it was introduced. It doesn't look like it was—it may not have been banned!

KEITH: This is the pall-mall game you're talking about?

AUSTIN: Yeah! It's the—yeah, Alley Smash, of course, was banned. We all remember.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: Because we had such a good summer with it?

KEITH: Yes.

JANINE: You should check Samuel Pepy's Diary.

AUSTIN: It's in there, I know! It is! Wait, are you joking? Is that...

JANINE: No, I'm serious. I bet he mentioned it somewhere, right?

AUSTIN: He does. Yeah yeah yeah—in-

JANINE [overlapping]: Yeah, of course.

AUSTIN: Yeah, in April 2nd 1661—

JANINE [overlapping]: Fuck that weirdo, of course he mentioned it.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Records are that “he went into St. James’ Park, where I saw the Duke of York playing at pall-mall, the first time I ever saw the sport.”

JANINE: Mmhmm.

KEITH: Wait, so, the mall is named after a place where you could play this stupid croquet game?

[JACK laughs.]

AUSTIN: That is correct!

[Background laughter.]

KEITH: It—it’s...uh... I wonder...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh! Specifically the word ‘mall,’ again, is the word ‘ball.’ Like a little ball that you—sorry!

KEITH: Right. Pall.

AUSTIN: Sorry sorry, it’s the m—‘pall’ is the ball—it’s the mallet. It’s mallet. Yes.

KEITH [overlapping]: Okay. So it’s ball-mallet.

JANINE [overlapping]: So it’s, like, if casinos were called, like...dice...room...or something, I don’t even know.

AUSTIN: No, it’s not even that, because you still play dice in a casino. You don’t mallet in the mall anymore.

KEITH: No.

JANINE: Yeah...

JACK [overlapping]: They don’t let you, they banned it.

KEITH [overlapping]: The other thing that I’ve learned from this, though, is that Pall Mall, in London, is in the city of Westminster, which is the street where the arcade is on in Providence, because New England is weird, and they have to do—every little fucking thing has to be named after whatever British thing.

AUSTIN: Mmm. Mmhmm. Do you ever wish you still lived in the age where you could be like, “What’s this game called?” “Uh it’s ball-mallet”? Love it.

[Background laughter.]

JACK: Ahh, now you have to call it 'Far Cry.'

[Background laughter.]

JANINE: Listen, we still have pin-ball. That's a game about pins and balls.

AUSTIN: That's true. That's true.

JANINE: Lawn bowling. You're bowling on a lawn.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JACK: Ice hockey.

JANINE: Football. Yeah, ice hockey.

AUSTIN: God.

AUSTIN: Pall-mall played in the 1930s.

ART: Baseball.

AUSTIN: A ball on a base.

JANINE: Baseball is truly just the contemporary pall-mall.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I mean, there are—baseball is also very old

JANINE [overlapping]: Baseball. Yeah, yeah.

KEITH: It's also the historic Far Cry.

[JACK laughs.]

AUSTIN: Is it? I guess so. Yeah, in many ways. Uh...[laughs] how old is baseball? Baseball...

KEITH: Baseball is very old. Baseball is like 150 years old, almost.

AUSTIN: Mmm.... Okay. But's very old in an American sense.

KEITH: Right, sure, yes. True.

AUSTIN: In a North American, United States sense.

KEITH: Hey! It's older than pall-mall.

JANINE: No.

ART: Oooh.

AUSTIN: Get 'im!

JANINE: What?

AUSTIN: It's not, it's not older than pall-mall.

KEITH: It's not older than pall-mall?

AUSTIN: Pall-mall is 1600s.

KEITH: Shit. Ah, fuck.

AUSTIN: Yeah, sorry.

[JANINE laughs.]

JACK: The street in London is called Pall Mall [pronounced Pal Mal] and it's killing me.
[Laughs.]

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Paul Maul.

JACK [overlapping]: You're all saying Paul Maul. Like a man's name.

AUSTIN: The thing is, in the United States there is a—I think this is only the United States—there is a brand of cigarette that everyone aunt calls Pall Malls [pronounced Paul Mauls] [laughs]. And so...

[JACK laughs.]

AUSTIN: That's what I know them as.

KEITH [overlapping]: Oh, yeah. That's also why. Well, we're also—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: And so we don't say Pal Mals.

ART [overlapping]: It is the official cigarette of being someone's aunt.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

KEITH: We're also led to believe that it, it eventually became the word 'mall,' the place where you go and shop.

AUSTIN: Right, this is true.

JANINE [overlapping]: Yeah, no one says "let's go to the mal." Unless you're from...somewhere. That's an accent somewhere.

KEITH [overlapping]: And I'm definitely not saying Pal Maul.

AUSTIN: Can we say Pal Mal? Sorry, can we say "Hey pal, do you want to go to the mal?" See?

KEITH: Well, because that sounds too much like "pell mell."

AUSTIN: Pell mell.

JACK [overlapping]: That's where it also comes from! Pell mell has the same root. Because it's to do with playing Alley Smash.

KEITH [overlapping]: Pell mell has the same root as pall-mall [pronounced Paul Maul]?

AUSTIN: Wait, what's pell mell?

JACK: Pell mell is, like, helter skelter. It's like. Yes.

KEITH [overlapping]: Pell mell is to run in a jumbled, confusing mess. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Oh! Is that because you're playing this game?

JACK: Yes, you are!

AUSTIN: Ooooooh!

JACK: Etymology's incredible.

KEITH: I know pell mell—

JANINE [overlapping]: And they really never tried to ban it?

JACK: I know!

AUSTIN: I can't see it...it doesn't look like...it doesn't look like it was...

JANINE: It sounds dangerous.

AUSTIN: The thing is, I will say, it's a little hard to do a search for pall-mall banned [JANINE laughs] because of the cigarette thing?

JANINE: Yeah.

JACK [overlapping]: Aunt.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: Because of how our aunts were all banned! [Laughs.]

JACK: We need to put this on a clapcast.

KEITH: Um. I know pell mell from it being how a bunch of little dogs ran in a children's book that I had as a four-year-old.

JACK: Aww!

KEITH: And I just always remembered that—those words because it was so weird.

JACK: They ran like the game.

KEITH: They ran like the game, yeah. I believe they ran pell mell down a hill, is where the dogs ran.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Wait a second...these motherfuckers. It became *golf*.

JACK: [Laughing] Wh—what?

AUSTIN: Or it has the same...it has the same precursor? Jeu de mall? Game of Mallet?

KEITH: So, on wikipedia, it called itself a precursor to croquet, and it does look just like that.

AUSTIN: Yes. It does look like croquet. So, yeah, that's the thing: it becomes croquet; the more open-ended version of it, uh, okay, yes. "It's an early modern development from jeu de mall," which is mallet-game, in which case you were hitting much harder with big, long, wooden mallets. Which then becomes golf.

Hitting stuff with a stick. You're out here.

JACK: One of the two classic games. The other one is "run over there."

AUSTIN: Run over there.

JACK: All games fall into one of those two categories.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

KEITH: Which is why I love baseball.

JACK: A combination.

AUSTIN: It's both of them. It's both, right. Yeah.

KEITH: It's both, and then it's not *really* run over there, it's run around and then get back over here.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

JANINE: You should get into cricket, Keith.

KEITH: Uh, I have tried to get into cricket.

AUSTIN: This makes the most sense to me,

KEITH: But I have not been able to pay attention to it.

AUSTIN: It's long.

JANINE [overlapping]: I love a game where you just run back and forth as much as you can.

[AUSTIN and JACK laugh.]

JANINE: It's not much but it's honest work.

KEITH [overlapping]: I tried to play that cricket game that was on the Xbox and I couldn't get that to work for me.

ART: Did they have something so that it didn't last for days, or do you just, like, sit there and play?

KEITH [overlapping]: Ah, I don't, I—I believe that cricket does not *have* to last for days, they choose to make it last for days sometimes? I think that's true. My understanding is that there's a rule—that there's a certain kind of cricket that's really, really long.

JANINE: Yes, there's—

ART [overlapping]: Long cricket.

KEITH: Right, there's long and short cricket. I think. I don't really know.

JANINE: There are a few different kinds, I think.

AUSTIN: I don't really know.

ART: Or criiiiiiiiiiiiicket.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: All right, we've characters, it sounds like. [JANINE laughs.] What, what is—okay, we know what type of mall we have.

JANINE: Outdoor mall.

ART: [Laughing] and the etymology of mall!

AUSTIN: What, what is going on?

KEITH: That's an ep, there. That's a whole episode on mall, just on just the sound 'mall' and all the different things it can be.

AUSTIN: Yeah. The next question is, “What’s going on: the mall’s closing, a new store’s opening, there’s a new hire, Black Friday, a secret shopper, a string of thefts.” I think we kind of established this as, like, the final weekend. The final day of the summer. Right? This is the last big tourist influx.

JACK: Right.

AUSTIN: “Who’s messing stuff up?” And the options here are “mall management, popular teens, angry customers, mall cop, someone’s boss, or shoplifters.”

ART: I've an idea!

AUSTIN: I want to hear it.

ART: Why don't we roll this one?

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Ooh! I'd be—I think all of the are potentially interesting.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Art, go ahead and roll this one.

ART: Yeah, see, what's what I'm saying. We haven't rolled any—

AUSTIN: We haven't! We've rolled nothing so far.

JANINE [overlapping]: It's true.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: I'd like to roll [mock-angry] some fuckin' dice—it's, it's supposed to be a *game*.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Right?

ART: Yeah.

KEITH: Not a talk—it's supposed to be a game, not a *talk*!

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Angry—angry customers.

JANINE: That's good; that's the one I was going to suggest, so I'm really happy about this.

AUSTIN: [Laughing] Why are they angry?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I guess we'll find out? Janine, it sounds like you have been thinking about this one.

JANINE: Well, the other—the other mall is, like, newer, right?

AUSTIN: It's fancy, yeah.

JANINE: It's like, it's like fancy, it's brand new.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: This is definitely a time period where everyone is like, “advancement is always better than the existing thing,” basically, right? Like...

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

JANINE: I mean, other than, than, the people who don’t believe that. [JANINE and AUSTIN laugh.] But, like, by and large, in terms of, like, a general social atmosphere—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: In terms of, like, fancy new shit and—yes.

JANINE: Yeah, people are really into fancy new shit. And the fact that there’s a fancy new thing makes our mall look old and—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Uh-huh.

JANINE: Not new and not fancy, and so it is always going to be compared to, like—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Uh-huh.

JANINE (as pier customer): “Well at the other, at the other place they have this and you can do this, but this place has been the same for forty years, what the fuck?”

AUSTIN: Do we have, like, a.... Have we brought them in with some sort of big act, or some sort of big coupon, or.... I will say that, there was a moment when we were going to use a different, more complex, game for this game, before Ali found Mall Kids, called, uh—Damn the Man, I believe is what it was called.

Named so—I mean, obviously that’s named so because people...because “damn the man” was once in, uh, popular culture a thing you might say. But Damn the Man, Save the Music is the name of the role-playing game and that is very clearly an Empire Records, uh, riff. The 1990s? God, I hope that was 90s—maybe it was early 2000s—movie...yeah, 1995, that was right.

Movie that featured, like, you know, a lot of, like, Letters to Cleo [laughs]. And, and similar alt-rock from the mid-90s. Um, about a small record store being put out of business by a big, giant record store. And they had, like, their big Hail Mary play which was to get a, uh, a famous musician, a famous washed up ‘80s pop idol, named Rex Manning, uh, to come do like a signing. And that was going to give them enough, like, you know.... Uh...uh...whatever. New customers to get the money they needed to keep the lease on the on the store for another year or whatever. It was a nightmare. Rex Manning sucks.

JANINE: Is...is this how we get our horse diving tie-in?

AUSTIN: I don’t want to do horse diving, it’s too fucked up.

JANINE: Okay, that's fair.

AUSTIN: I get it. But, like, I wouldn't mind there being a thing like horse diving that we could sleep with at night. [Types into search bar:] "Atlantic City attractions 1900."

JACK: Yeah, I think we've got, like, I think we've got a thing. Uh, and it's today only.

AUSTIN: Right. Which is why we have the influx of customers who are also like, "yo fuck this place, this place sucks, this isn't like the Golden Fortune."

JACK: Yeah, 'cause the thing has to be, like, ostensibly impressive but also bad.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Um....

AUSTIN: A double Somers wheel. Um....

JACK: A...a.....

JANINE: I.... What's the Victorian equivalent of a bad cover band? [JACK laughs.] I guess Edwardian? We're, like, right on the cusp.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh...a really big horse. [Laughs.] It's not diving, it's just—

JANINE [overlapping]: Oh, you could, you could sleep at night with the, if the, if the horse is very big, okay.

AUSTIN: It's not diving, it's just hanging out.

KEITH: [Headline announcer voice] How Big Can This Horse Get?

JANINE [overlapping]: Oh, that's—who come to that?

[Background laughter.]

AUSTIN: That's the question, isn't it. Uh...

ART: I've seen some big horses.

AUSTIN: I've seen some big horses. Art, you remember when went to that equestrian thing?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It was wild.

KEITH: What kind of equestrian thing?

AUSTIN: Like a competition?

ART [overlapping]: Like an equestrian meet? Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I don't know what you call them.

ART: It probably has a very fancy name.

KEITH [overlapping]: Meet, M-E-E-T.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh-huh.

KEITH [overlapping]: This is not a horse meat party.

[Background laughter.]

AUSTIN: Um, diving cage? Diving bell? Um.... motorcycle cage? No. Dangerous.

JACK: We could do something with, like, a glider?

AUSTIN: Ooh.

JACK: Like a really rudimentary plane that is, that is promised to, like, skip across the sands or whatever?

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JACK: Oh! Oh, what about a balloon? Like, go up in a balloon?

JANINE [overlapping]: I was just thinking that.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Oh, a balloon's good.

JANINE [overlapping]: Yeah, yeah. I was wondering, like, is balloon—is that, like, dated at that point? I feel like balloon is the, is the fun exciting exciting attraction you hear, like, more Regency kinda—I mean, it's still exciting. I mean I guess a hot air balloon would get people out right now.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Hot air balloon would get—yeah, you know?

JACK: But it doesn't go very high.

JANINE: Is that safe—is that safe on the shore? Isn't that like—

AUSTIN: Let's find out!

[JANINE and JACK laugh.]

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: No horses are involved, right?

JACK: Ah, the balloon is tied to a very big horse.

AUSTIN: Ah nooooo!

JANINE: There's a horse on each side of the basket, and when they want to go higher they—
[JANINE breaks off, laughing.]

KEITH: [Laughing] they drop the horse into a pool.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: They drop the horse into a dive!

[ART and KEITH laughing.]

JACK: Right into a swimming pool.

AUSTIN: Into a...

JANINE: It's a two-fer!

[KEITH still laughing in the background.]

AUSTIN: Oh my god. That's so scary.

[KEITH stops laughing and sighs.]

JACK: Oh. I mean, yeah, okay, we got a balloon, we got an orga—the people who are—it's not us, right? Like, it's like the people who—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: It doesn't sound like it's any of us. Unless it is. Unless we each have, like...we each have a, um, like a slot in the day where we have to operate the balloon, or have to, like, let people onto the balloon—you know what I mean? It's like, oh yeah, each of the local—

JANINE [overlapping]: That sounds like a *terrible* idea.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: business has, has—

JACK [overlapping]: Oh no, I think that's really fun with the structure of the game, though?

AUSTIN: Yes.

JANINE: Or maybe there's like a—maybe there's, like, a duty. Maybe it's not specifically operation because that feels—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah, we're not going up, maybe.

JANINE: But like, there's, like.... If the food vendors have, like, special—you get, like, a tray and you have to go work near the hot air balloon to sell a tray of shit to people.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: Who aren't going to walk over to your shop, or, like—you know, for Cattie maybe she's got her Kodak Brownie out and she's like taking pictures of the balloons and then, like, offering to sell them to people or whatever.

AUSTIN: Yeah. The thing that I really—

JANINE [overlapping]: Like, come get your whatever and we'll sell you the picture of you up in the balloon.

AUSTIN: The thing that I really love is that if we each had our shift with it, it would map out to where we each got to spend one shift on the balloon that day—you know what I mean? Or, whatever....

Um, I guess it could just be that, that, throughout the day, each of the shops has a shift, like, almost like advertising at the balloon stand. Not, not literally advertising, I mean, literally advertising *by* giving out free samples, taking free photos, whatever, to like, be like, "and then you can come get these developed at the shop after you're back down!" And that's only there in the morning, or whatever. Right?

JANINE: Mmhmm.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or something like that.

JACK: I could see that—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Whereas, at lunch, you know, then Father's Candy Shop sends Eloise to go give out free saltwater taffy, like, samples, or whatever. Um. Etc. Is that—that makes sense.

All right! I think we have what we need here, right? That's the scenario.

JACK: Yeah, I think so.

AUSTIN: Um, we still don't have a name for this pier. I would love a cool name for our pier. Uh, popular piers at the time...let's see...[typing noises.] Uh...obviously, Steel Pier is the big one that, like, people—

KEITH: Popular Peers is a really good Jeopardy category.

AUSTIN: Popular Peers. Uh-huh.

KEITH: Yeah, just famous people who work together a lot.

AUSTIN: Uh, oh, Steel Pier had a human cannon ball, we could add a human—we could still have a human cannon ball. Uh...[laughs] "Elsie the Borden Cow." See? People just put cows on the piers as things to go hang out with! Um...this is a lot of Steel Pier. Diving bell, uh.... I want different piers! Show me all the piers!

The West Jersey Pier.... Howard's Pier, Applegate Pier, Iron Pier, damn, that must've sucked, to be like, "hey we got the Iron Pier," like, "oh yeah? Well we got the Steel Pier." [Laughs.] Ah, here we go, this is a great one—

KEITH [overlapping]: Titanium Pier.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Oh, I worked here! Wow! That's wild! So, when I grew up I used to work in a place called Ocean One, the Ocean One Mall. Uh, then it became the Pier Shops at Caesars, and now it's the Playground. Um, it has been, like, built, like—you know. Deteriorated, built, rebuilt, over and over. Before it was the Ocean One Mall, which is what it was when I was growing up, it was the Young—it was Young's Million Dollar Pier.

KEITH: I love that.

JANINE: That's pretty good.

AUSTIN: The Garden Pier...

KEITH: The Playground is a very, like, revitalization name for a place. It sucks.

AUSTIN: Yup, uh-huh. It sucks. And it sucks, it's a bad mall.

JANINE: I, um—

AUSTIN: I hate it, what it is now. Anyway.

JANINE: I found the list of—list of boardwalks in the United States? Um, and there, it's just fun, because a lot of these are just, you know, is just Daytona Beach, Hollywood Beach.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JANINE: Venice Beach, blah blah blah. Um, Ocean City...Hampton Beach. Sandwich.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh!

JACK: Hmm!

AUSTIN: Sandwich.

JANINE: It's just a list of Blah Blah Beach, Blah Blah beach, Sandwich.

KEITH: Sandwich is, is, I assume, Sandwich, Massachusetts.

JANINE [overlapping]: Yeah, yeah.

KEITH: That's where Kylie from Run Button lived for several years.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay.

KEITH: Hampton Beach—also, where we would vacation. Hampton Beach, yeah...

JANINE [overlapping]: Sandwich Beach is a great name. That's just like, fun?

AUSTIN: It's, it's good. Yeah.

JANINE: Get a picnic, go to Sandwich Beach.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JANINE: That's just what I would call it, whenever I had a picnic anywhere.

AUSTIN: Sandwich Beach?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: [Laughing] and I got an article here: “Atlantic City’s Old-Timey Piers—” or, “Old-Time Piers are Fading Fast.” I got some quotes to read here.

“‘Atlantic City doesn’t seem to be a resort for piers anymore’, said Atlantic County historian Adrian W. Phillips. ‘I think the temperament of Atlantic City has changed and I just don’t see the piers coming back.’”

And then later on, “the burned-out remains of the old Million Dollar Pier became the Ocean One Mall in 1983, the only successful pier. It’s designed to look like an ocean liner and attracts tourists bored with gambling. It recently opened a small section with indoor amusement rides. ‘This is a shopping center where families can come to have a good time,’ said Ocean One advertising manager Rita Similides. ‘We’re trying to emulate the old amusement piers as best we can. Sometimes it’s easy and sometimes it’s not, given the interesting mix of people that now visit Atlantic City.’

“But Phillips said, ‘In no way is Ocean One family entertainment, nor does it parallel what Steel Pier or Steeplechase Pier used to be. There’s no variety of entertainment.’”

JACK: God, wow.

KEITH: Bored gambler is definitely a market you want to corner.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Strong words. Like I said, I used to work here, and so, fully, like, the bored gambler, or the “I’ve been up all night playing cards and I need a new shirt because I’ve sweat through the shirt that I wore last night” gambler—

KEITH: Yeah. Yeah.

JANINE: Ugh.

AUSTIN: These are the people I grew up around. This is it. This is how I—this is my first jobs, was working in retail places in this mall, so...uh.... You know. This is how I got to be me. What about Picnic Pier? What about Sandwich Beach? Sandwich Beach Pier?

JANINE: Steal Sandwich Beach?

JACK: What’s the new one called?

JANINE: Um....

AUSTIN: The *Playground*. It sucks. Because—

JANINE [overlapping]: It sounds like a club—

JACK [overlapping]: No, I mean the new mall opening—

AUSTIN: Oh, oh oh oh. Oh. Uh, Golden Fortune. Very clearly me having read, months ago when I first wrote it down, about the Million whatever and being like, “oh, that’s the same.”

KEITH [overlapping]: Well, we could do the Iron Pier/Steel Pier thing and call it like, Silver Beach or something.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Silver...yeah, yeah.

ART: Silver...Silver Dollars...

JANINE [overlapping]: I feel like it should feel *old*, though.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Silver Dollar Pier.

JANINE [overlapping]: Like, it should feel...

JACK: It should be like, more...

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah, but what if we—what if we named it for the silver dollar, the—the—thing. The, um—or is it a sand dollar? No, it’s Sand Dollar Pier!

JACK: Oh, Sand Dollar isn’t bad. It’s a bit, like...it’s a bit cutesy.

KEITH [overlapping]: Oh yeah, that’s way less valuable than gold!

AUSTIN: Yeah...

JACK: Were you thinking of something more explicitly, like, Edwardian, Janine?

JANINE: More Victorain—because if it’s, if it’s, if it’s old and dated, I feel like it should—I feel like it should sound like it was originally just like one dude’s pier.

[JACK laughs.]

AUSTIN: Right, I mean, this is, this is the other type of thing where it’s like Morey’s Pier. Or whatever. Right? Like, those exist. In my mind, those are the names of—so, Wildwood, which is further south than New Jersey, is like one of the places I used to go to as a kid to go to, like—again, it’s like amusement, lots of amusement piers there, and so, like, um.... Morey’s Pier,

and there's another one that's a very much similar, like, name pier, the thing that you're talking about, Janine. Um....

I will say, the thing that's worth noting is that the *boardwalk* didn't exist until 1870, so our name stuff should not start until the late 1880s, right?

JANINE [overlapping]: That's true. Yeah.

AUSTIN: That should be the space that we're talking about.

JANINE: I found a beach name generator and this is—this is not for use now, but I just want to point it—one of these things is “Tis No Margin” and I love the idea of a beach being referred to as a margin.

AUSTIN: That's good. Yeah, I love that.

JACK: Oh yeah, that's good.

JANINE: That feels useful.

AUSTIN: That is useful. I love that, put that away. Yeah.

KEITH: Um, here's a, uh, maybe naming convention for a pier in the late 1800s is just naming it after the kind of fish that's there?

AUSTIN: Mmm.

KEITH: Like, whatever people are catching.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm, yeah.

JANINE: Oh, sure.

AUSTIN: That's good. This is good.

[Keys clicking in the background.]

JANINE: New Jersey fish.

ART: That's something that can be used to sell that reverse periscope, too.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Uh-huh.

JACK [overlapping]: Yeah!

ART [overlapping]: You can't visit without seeing the such-and-such.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: You can see the salmon.

KEITH [overlapping]: The fo—the famous Acadian Redfish.

AUSTIN: We don't have those in Jersey.

ART: What about Redfish Pier?

KEITH: I mean, that is...that is a...coastal fish. Of America.

JANINE: [Using search bar] New Jersey saltwater fish.

KEITH: Also known as the Ocean Perch

JANINE: They got shad. Got a lot of shad.

[ART laughing.]

JACK: God, Shad Pier is just.... Shad Pier sounds like it's from Blough City.

AUSTIN: It does. Uh, Bluegill.

ART: Shad Pier sounds like a British TV personality that's going to come up here and ruin something.

[AUSTIN laughs.]

JANINE: I like Shad—I like Shad Pier because it reminds me of shadflies, also, which are gross. Um, I also love—there's also a fish here, this is a nice one, called the weakfish.

JACK: Ooh.

JANINE: It's just kind of...it's just...also—

KEITH [overlapping]: E-A-K or E-E-K?

JANINE: E-A-K, weakfish, all one word. There's also the Atlantic croaker.

AUSTIN: What about the fluke? Fluke Pier?

[KEITH laughs.]

JANINE: They got flounders. Flounder is fun. Fluke and flounder.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah, flou–flounder is what I used to—I used to fish flounder out here, out in these back bays.

JACK: Flounder are like, uh, like, uh...like a low, flat fish, right?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Little flat motherfuckers, yeah.

JANINE: Yeah. I hate looking at it.

KEITH: *Extremely* flat. They're so flat, Jack—get a look at where they had to put the eyes on those things!

[AUSTIN laughs.]

JACK: Let's see.... Oh, these are good.

ART: Looks nothing like the little fish thing they named Flounder in *The Little Mermaid*.

AUSTIN: No! At all!

JANINE: Porgy. There're porgies.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Can you imagine if they made—they're porgies? Yeah?

JANINE: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: I don't know what a porgy is.

JANINE: Sea robins. A porgy is also called a scup.

AUSTIN: Let's see...oh, I've caught sea robins! I've caught sea robins. Uh, out there. I forgot about sea robins, damn.

JANINE: Oyster toadfish. I think—[trails off]

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Sea robins are wild—if you ever catch a sea robin, it's like, "oh my god, this thing is beautiful, I'm going to free this thing and send it back immediately," because it has these big wide fins.

JACK [overlapping]: Oh, wow, look at that. Sea Robin Pier is kind of—it sounds a bit modern, weirdly.

AUSTIN: It does, it does, and I think it's also wordy.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I think we're—

JACK [overlapping]: I think Shad Pier is good.

AUSTIN: I don't like Shad Pier. [JANINE laughs.] I don't like it.

JACK: Flounder.

KEITH: I like—hey, I like perch.

JACK: Perch.

AUSTIN: Perch Pier, though? That's like, that's—

JACK [overlapping]: Trout Pier?

AUSTIN: Trout Pier is not good.

JACK: That sounds like it should be on a river.

AUSTIN: Yeah...hmm.

JACK: Um...

KEITH: Skate?

AUSTIN: Skate Pier? No one skates yet, so it doesn't have the double meaning, so you could get away from it.

JACK: Or we've gotten stuck on fish.

JANINE: Alewife.

JACK: I'm sorry? Alewife?

JANINE: Alewife is another kind of fish.

AUSTIN: *Really* thought you said something else.

JANINE: No, I said alewife, don't worry.

KEITH: That was my old—that was my old trolly stop.

AUSTIN: Crab. Crab Pier?

JANINE: Kingfish? Kingfish Pier?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Kingfish Pier! That's good.

JACK: Kingfish Pier isn't abad.

AUSTIN: I kind of like Kingfish. Yeah.

JACK: Especially because it's sort of got that grandeur that we know it doesn't have. They got, they got a balloon.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It maybe—maybe it did twenty years ago. “Kingfish Pier!” And it was like a big, wooden fish with a king—king's crown on it.

JANINE: It evokes that, like, golden...

AUSTIN: Yeah. Mmhmm.

JANINE: It really does feel like the previous iteration, you know?

AUSTIN: Yeah, it totally does. Like, Golden Fortune is just—is like, there's no subtext, you know what I mean? Where as, “ah, yes, the Kingfish.” That has a certain...

JANINE [overlapping]: Yeah, also, look how happy this little guy is!

ART: It sounds fun....

AUSTIN: Let's see it, let's see this kingfish.

JANINE: He looks so happy!

AUSTIN: What are we at, general? Dogpound? There we go. Yeah! He's a smiling fish!

KEITH: That is a happy fish. Janine, you also said scup, which I also like. I think Janine said scup....

JANINE: A scup is a porgy.

KEITH: That's what they say! [Laughs.]

AUSTIN: People are always saying that.

KEITH: [Stuttering while laughing] The kids are on the organ grinder but instead they say, "a scup is a porgy."

[Seagull sounds and "America's Playground" start playing.]

[AUSTIN laughs.]

JANINE: That's the other hit song. It's the old man song and then the "Scup is a Porgy" song.

JACK: Sorry, "Old Mister, Old Mister."

KEITH [overlapping, still stuttering from laughter]: "Old Mister, Old Mister."

JANINE: Sorry, "Old Mister, Old Mister."

JACK: [Laughing] "A Scup is a Porgy."

["America's Playground" keeps playing.]