

[Give Way to Open Sky Pt. 2](#)

Transcriber: robotchangeling

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Intro

[music: **"Give Way to Open Sky"** plays during recap]

Austin: We have come to find out that we are in Atlantic City, the city that has been ruined by the TriCity Tunnel Project. The extremes between poverty and wealth have been pushed out even further, and I think our Dream Askew game, in some real way, has been ripped from Bluff City or ousted from Bluff City and put here, because it's not a desirable thing.

Ali: A woman who was still running a queer bar, in this sort of, like, post-fall Bluff City.

Jack: I used to drive an armored grocery truck through the area every week, so I figure that...the app that I used to drive for—the gang that I used to, I guess, be a part of, or was press-ganged into—uh, was called Potato Potahto.

Dre: Um, I don't know. I think the ghost is chill. I probably talk to the ghost a lot while I'm fixing things, while I'm working on stuff.

Austin: [laughs] Yeah. I'm the android clown lady who also will speak to you about strange, mystical things.

Ali: We've had, proper noun, The Tunnel Project [**Austin:** "Uh huh"] as part of the, like, overarching sort of development of season 2 in Bluff City.

Austin: Yeah.

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

Austin: Yeah, they do. Uh-huh. Some of them, you know, work for, uh...

Jack: Woof Wow.

Austin: Woof Wow. And some of them work for...hmm. Hmm. What's a fish pun that I can turn into an app?

Jack: What about... [Jack and Dre laugh]

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

Jack: Fwish. [laughter] It's Fish Wish.

Austin: Oh, Fwish.

Ali: Mm.

Austin: Yeah, Fwish!

Jack: We know that there are raging parties going on here. You can see makeshift lights moving in the dark, in the ruined buildings.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: You know, hear the sound of the bass.

Austin: What's it mean to live in a world where you see people who you remember from TV shows or who feel like they're pulled from that? And what is it to want to be like that in some ways? I'm sure we have people among us who wish they could be video people, you know?

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Right.

Austin: Or for whom that speaks to them in some way. Or people who feel belittled because they are only this kind of digital projection.

[recap and music end]

Austin: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical world-building, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. Could you hear me sit up in my seat and take this seriously while I was doing my intro spiel? I don't know. Maybe you could; maybe you couldn't. Today, we are continuing our game of *Dream Askew / Dream*— I guess, really, we're playing *Dream Askew* by Avery Alder. It, of course, is sold in a book along with *Dream Apart* by Benjamin Rosenbaum. And joining me, Jack de Quidt.

Jack: Hello there. I'm Jack. You can find me on Twitter at [@notquitereal](https://twitter.com/notquitereal) or on Cohost at [JDQ](https://jdq.cohost.com), and you can buy any of the music featured on the show at notquitereal.bandcamp.com.

Austin: Ali Acampora.

Ali: Hi. You can find me over at [@ali_west](https://twitter.com/ali_west) on Twitter...

Austin: Mm-hmm?

Ali: Sorry, I was looking at this thing Dre just sent me. [Ali and Dre laugh]

Austin: Uh huh?

Ali: Which is a figure of Kiryu Kazuma holding a bicycle.

Austin: Ah, holding a bike.

Ali: His face looks a little weird.

Austin: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Ali: So, you can go check that out as well.

Austin: Go check that out. [Ali laughs quietly] Also joining us, Dre. Dre is here. Andrew Lee Swan is here.

Dre: Hey! Hey, I'm here to ruin the show. Uh... [laughs]

Austin: No! Not true!

Dre: Just by interrupting Ali.

Austin: Oh, okay, okay, okay.

Dre: You can find me on Twitter at [@swandre3000](https://twitter.com/swandre3000). You can also find me, most Monday nights, on our Twitch channel, [twitch.tv/friendsatthetable](https://www.twitch.tv/friendsatthetable).

Austin: Doing some mech stuff recently.

Dre: Uh huh. Yeah.

Austin: Dre, we gotta play *Anthem*.

Ali: Mm.

Dre: [laughs quietly] You keep saying this.

Austin: I'm Anthempilled right now. I've put 11 hours into *Anthem* in the last week.

Dre: What?!

Ali: Do they still have the Christmas lights up?

Austin: See, this is what I'm saying. Wait, do they still have the Christmas lights up?
No.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: No. Were there Christmas lights up in *Anthem*?

Ali: Yeah. The last time I played *Anthem*, it was like, I think, right around the time they announced that they were going to stop doing updates? I don't know if that's true. But it was like March/April, and the Christmas stuff was still up.

Austin: Oh, that's so funny.

Ali: And I was like, "Oh, *Anthem*..."

Austin: Yeah, it's sad, but I'm having an all right time.

Ali: "You deserve better than this."

Austin: It does. I don't know. I keep thinking, in my mind—

Dre: I can't believe you have played 11 hours of that game this week.

Austin: I mean, okay, like, the last two weeks. Ever since you said it on stream that time or we said it on stream.

Dre: Oh, yeah, don't bring me into this. [Ali and Austin laugh] This is a hell of your making.

Austin: The chat raised it. I was playing— okay, so, I played the new *Destiny* expansion, which was not good.

Ali: Oh.

Austin: There's stuff about that expansion that's good, like the quality of life stuff is great—it's like really good—but the story was a huge miss, and, like, I don't know how they got to where they got. I mean, they got to where they got to because they needed more time to finish the real finale of the series, and so they injected a new expansion in between, and it's just not...it just doesn't hit the way I wanted it to. So I've been in that mode of like, I want to go out there and do live service game stuff, and we've been playing *Titanfall 2*, so my mind has been like, "Wouldn't it be cool if there was a *Titanfall*

2 *Destiny*?" I would just let it consume me. I'm not saying that it would be a good thing [Ali snorts] for *Titanfall* or the industry or the culture or the medium, but it would be good to turn my brain off and go collect, you know, *Titanfall* style things, the way you do with *Destiny*. I'm not saying it would be good for my brain, but it would feel good on my brain, you know? And I said that out loud during one of your Mech Monday streams, and someone in the chat was like, "Austin, you're describing *Anthem*," and I was like, "Those are exosuits, not mechs, but also, you're not wrong," and I kind of...I wasn't—I didn't like—I didn't love *Anthem*, but there were things I liked about it to begin with. Let me dip back in. and I was like, "Let me revisit—" and I've had just a very weird, interesting experience of revisiting this hashtag dead game with the remove of having already played through it once and not having any of those expectations and, like, getting to approach it on its own merits, and...you know, it's still not a perfect game, by any means, but like, it's \$5, you know what I mean? And I think it's worth—

Dre: Where's it \$5?

Austin: On Origin.

Dre: I see it for \$20.

Austin: It was \$5 the other day. [Ali laughs quietly] Also, it's on Game Pass with the EA thing, so, you know.

Dre: Mm.

Austin: I'm seeing it as...I guess I can't actually see it, because I own it, but I saw it the other day for five bucks. Maybe they were doing a spring sale, you know? Anyway.

Dre: Alas, maybe spring has already sprung.

Austin: Maybe spring's sprung. You're right. Maybe you can't...the moment has passed for everybody but me. I'm gonna keep playing it. Anyway...I'm distracted now. Why? What were we talking about?

Dre: Hey, *Dream Askew*.

Austin: *Dream Askew.*

Jack: Oh, we're talking about where you can find us on other platforms.

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Austin: Right. Right.

Dre: Uh, PTP.

Austin: Wha...?

Jack: I'm sorry? Oh, yes, PTP.

Dre: Yeah, PTP.

Jack: Push the Patreon.

Austin: Push the Patreon! [Ali laughs] Patreon.com/friends_table, friendsatthetable.cash. It's just friends_table over there, right? It has to be.

Dre: Sure.

Ali: Is it slash?

Jack: Um...it's friends_table, yeah.

Austin: Yeah, okay.

Ali: Okay, yeah.

Austin: Patreon.com/friends_table.

Dre: [quietly while typing] Darren Young, Titus O'Neil...

Austin: What?

Dre: Cameo prices...

Austin: No!

Dre: Well, if we're going to be PTP.

Austin: Right. Uh huh.

Ali: No, mm...

Austin: No. I don't think...let's not open the door to anybody... [Dre laughs quietly] to anybody we don't know, you know what I mean?

Dre: Okay. That's fair.

Austin: I don't trust anybody.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: I don't trust anybody except for Dan Ryckert on Cameo, so... [Jack laughs]

Dre: That's fair.

Austin: But I wouldn't make Dan shill my shit, you know? That's not how...that's not the vibe.

Jack: You can find us on TikTok at [friends-table](#) and on Cohost at [friends_table](#).

Austin: That's correct.¹

Jack: And that's where we are. We're also here, right now, in your headphones or on your speaker. If you've found another way to listen to Friends at the Table that isn't headphones or a speaker, let us know. That sounds incredible.

Austin: Maybe it's like a Teddy Ruxpin.

Jack: Oh, where it's like spinning some horrible combination of discs?

¹ It's not. The two sites are reversed.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: How does a Teddy Ruxpin work?

Austin: It's a cassette tape that goes in the chest.

Dre: It's a cassette.

Jack: Oh, that's a speaker.

Austin: No, that's a little bear guy named Teddy.

Jack: You don't think there's a speaker imbedded within the bear?

Austin: It's Teddy Ruxpin. Here's another alternative. Someone could have memorized the transcript and is doing it like a one-person stage show, just saying all of our things over and over again. Or they could have cast other people in the roles.

Jack: Wow. Wild.

Austin: That's not a speaker.

Dre: I don't know which one is more or less horrifying.

Austin: [laughs] I think those are the big ones, though. It's speaker, headphones, live stage reenactment.

Jack: Mm.

Austin: Those are the big three. Where do we want to begin today with *Dream Askew*? Do we want to just go over our character names and, like, high level concept? Names, pronouns, high level concept maybe?

Dre: Sure.

Austin: To get us all back on the same board.

Jack: Yeah, and then talk a little bit about the setting we're in and its conflicts.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And then some Idle Dreaming.

Austin: Yeah. Uh...

Ali: I can go. Top of the list here.

Austin: Yeah, you're top left. Yeah, uh huh.

Characters and Setting [0:10:11]

Ali: Introducing the Hawker. The Hawker is like a salesperson-esque character but not exactly.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: I'm playing Samantha. Samantha is she/her. She's like the owner/proprietress of a queer bar in our little enclave here.

Austin: We don't have a name for the bar yet, do we?

Ali: We'll go back.

Austin: Okay. Okay.

Ali: [laughs] I just glanced to my right very slightly and saw a pair of Snoopy scissors that Jack gifted to me and almost said Snoopy's.

Dre: Snoopy Scissors is pretty good, though! [laughs]

Ali: Snoopy's is a really great name for a bar.

Austin: Snoopy's is very fun, yeah.

Ali: So, let's go with it.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: [laughs] I have a friendly face and calloused hands. My gender is high femme. My wardrobe styles are a stained apron and stilettos. Three things that I provide are easy food, companionship, and a thriving social scene. My two desired currencies are protection and work trade.

Austin: Mm.

Ali: My one to two key relationships are the wasteland salvager who brings in what I need, which I believe is Dre's character, and then also the pissy killjoy next door, which we have not established but is going to be another sort of storefront owner NPC, who sucks, I guess. [laughter]

Jack: Screw them.

Dre: Fuck 'em.

Ali: The question that I asked to my left is, "What do I regularly hook you up with?" and that's Jack's character.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: I give Jack's character a specific type of food. I'll let Jack introduce that. Should I go over my Tips or my Lures or my...?

Austin: What's your Lure?

Ali: Yeah, my Lure is: "Whenever someone offers you a new gig or gets hooked on your supply, they gain a token."

Austin: Mm, okay.

Jack: I am playing the Arrival. The Arrival's sort of broad hook is that I've been shoved out of something approaching society. In my case, I was a delivery driver for one of the outlying gangs, which in this world, represent kind of gig economy delivery services with trucks and drones and things like that.

Austin: Mm-hmm. And you, of course, worked for Potato Potahto. Potat.to.

Jack: I worked for a company called Potato Potat.to, yes.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Which delivered groceries. Not just potatoes, as the tagline said. I'm playing Already, whose pronouns are they/them, and I have a dog called Duke, which I will get to in a second. My look is that I have a tired frame and driving gloved hands. My gender is ambiguous. My two wardrobe styles are shoplifted club clothes and my old uniform. I knew that the enclave existed, because I used to drive an armored grocery truck through the area every week. The grocery truck has broken down somewhere outside the reach of the enclave, and I've managed to hide it, but I don't know how to get it working again, although I do know where it is. Choose two things you brought with you when you fled: I brought a phone that's still got service—albeit a Potato Potat.to phone, so it's sort of owned by the company and has weird restrictions there—and my dog, Duke. And Duke is who Samantha provides sort of food scraps to in exchange for having a bar dog. My two key relationships are with the people I fled from, the people, presumably, who run Potato Potat.to—or not run, the sort of foreman of Potato Potat.to—and the first person to offer me a stiff drink, which is Samantha. My Lure is: “Whenever someone gives you an opportunity to prove yourself to the community, they gain a token.” And my choose one to ask left is to Dre's character, and I asked, “Why do you wish I had never arrived?”

Dre: Yes, and I believe my answer was because I can't fix your car. I can't work on your car.

Jack: Yeah.

Dre: And that makes me very self conscious, because I am the Stitcher, a resourceful individual who is basically like a fixer and mechanic. My character's name is Robyn, and they use they/them pronouns. They have appraising eyes and greasy hands. They are agender. They have fucked up hair, and they wear overalls. In my workshop, I am able to do vehicle repair, woodworking, and I get the bulk of my supplies by people bringing

me the weirdest shit. [Austin laughs quietly] And then, in my workshop, I have a ghost who haunts it, and then I also have a void kid who needs my maintenance to stay alive. And the question that I asked to Austin's character is, "What broken thing do you have that I could fix?"

Austin: And I—the Augur, Providence, pronouns she/her—brought you a wooden body, full scale, with a chest piece that could be removed, revealing an array of wooden organs, all of which could move like clockwork, if only they were functional. And I brought that to you in my own autonomous body, in my robotic body, as I am a sort of fortune telling clown android. I have flickering eyes and a marked face, and my gender is predestined, and I think that gets at a little bit of gender anxiety my character has around, like, her...she is...I've described her many times now as being sort of like a flamekeeper from *Dark Souls* or the black maiden from *Demon Souls*, and there is a sort of insistence that those roles as caregivers and guides be women in this very maternal but also very desirable state. Like, they're always playing on that, and I think that's something that Providence feels she couldn't escape, and she's not sure she would want to escape it. She might choose womanhood for herself, but she feels she was not necessarily given a choice, you know, in that, and she feels that gender put on her regularly by other people, and so I think there's a lot of anxiety around that. I don't know that that will get resolved, necessarily, here, but that's part of her subjectivity. Her wardrobe styles are striking colors and drawn sigils: the paints and, you know, big, bright, broad color pallet of a clown.

My rituals are— I have two rituals. One is the close reading of the holy texts, which is a combination of everything from, you know, actual manuals of witchcraft to lots of vintage army/navy style, you know, operations manuals for water filters and the operations manuals for, you know, a portable generator. Probably the sort of manuals that teach you how to heat up your GREs. Not GREs. Your, um...MREs. MREs, not GREs. GREs are a test. An MRE is a meal ready to eat. [Jack laughs quietly] And weapons, like old war manuals. And then probably also old tech manuals, because the other ritual I can lead is tripping the circuit, whatever that means. And then, decide what threat you alone and only you alone truly understand, and I have selected here: hope and mischief are

fires that we must keep ever burning, or else we will face eternal darkness. My two key relationships are the students I must teach, who I've described as being the folks who leave our little enclave and go out into kind of the wilderness beyond...interacting and intersecting and interfacing with the Outlying Gangs and the Society Intact—and whatever the word is for, like, the wilderness—just the Earth, the Varied Scarcities, in order to bring us things back. And then, also, someone named Depot, who is the herbalist who distills my tinctures, who I also think was being the sort of mechanic who keeps my body going when I need that. And, as a final note here, I am from the Void. I am someone who was either barred entry into Bluff City or exiled from it. I am a pseudo-fictional character who has now been put into the body of this clown fortunetelling android, and I think that's the other—the last big thing there is: unlike those other folks, I have a physical, material, concrete presence. I am not just a projection from the Void. Finally, I asked one person to my left, “Why did we break up?” and that was you, Ali.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: That was Sam. Why did we break up, again?

Ali: Um...differences of opinion.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Not having enough time for one another.

Austin: Mm, mm-hmm.

Ali: The way that you wrote...or not wrote, just spoke about your character's relationship to her gender and the sort of expectation of a caretaker pushed onto her...

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: For her to immediately be like, “Oh, I'm going to start dating the caretaker of the community that I'm in,” seems like a loaded decision.

Austin: Yeah, I'm going to start dating the queer bar's mom? Like, yeah, uh huh. [Ali laughs] You know? This is the thing. Sometimes you like what you like, and it's complicated.

Ali: You know what? You know what.

Austin: It's just like that sometimes, so.

Ali: And we tried it out, and now we are post-relationship, going into the game.

Austin: We are post-relationship starting this game. It's true. [Ali laughs] And now, I think I hand over to...is that it? Are we done? Yeah, that's it.

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: We should briefly...

Austin: Oh, go ahead.

Jack: Alas...

Austin: Fuck.

Jack: We should briefly talk about the setting elements that we also play.

Austin: The enclave. Yes.

Jack: So, there's also...

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: God, how does Avery describe what setting elements are? In addition to playing our characters, we are also taking on the role of broader concepts in the game. I am going to be, at times, taking on the role of the Society Intact, which has two desires: orthodoxy and profit eternal.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: And I pick up this card when someone wanders into the Society Intact or you may have the idea for why they may pay the enclave a visit, and give it away when I—as in, Already—need to deal with the Society Intact or they remember that I exist.

Austin: Let's finish these and then go back around, because only Ali gave her Lure. No, I guess, Jack, you also did. Am I the only one who didn't? Dre, did you give Robyn's Lure?

Dre: Oh, I didn't.

Austin: Okay.

Dre: You're right.

Austin: What is it? Let's just do them now.

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

Austin: And mine is, "Whenever someone participates in one of your rituals for the first time, they gain a token." Whose setting element is next?

Ali: I'm going to be playing the Earth Itself. Uh...should I read this thingy? Or just say...

Austin: Just the desires and then pick up— I mean, you could say broadly what it is.

Ali: Yeah, the, you know, the stuff underneath you, right? The Earth and the sun and the sky and the dirt and the...et cetera.

Austin: Uh huh. Yeah.

Ali: [laughs] So. The two desires are strange new forms, which we've spoken about as, like, you know, rodents that have gone through the tunnel and gotten really weird.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: The guy with all the fingers from the season one finale.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: You know, the void people are interesting here.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: But I feel like, since they're such, like, technology based, I don't know that they're under this umbrella.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: And I feel like that's an interesting thing to cut, in terms of thinking about dynamics or conflicts in that way. The other thing that the Earth Itself desires is trembling awe.

Austin: Mm.

Ali: You know, just normal rainstorms, ocean crashing, birds in the sky.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: This is what the Earth has wanted the whole time.

Austin: The whole time. Just fucking look at it all, you know?

Ali: [laughs] You know? That's what the Earth is saying. And we pick this up when you want to describe weather, mutation, beasts, or the natural world. Give away when you want to brave the elements, instigate something organic, or walk in nature.

Austin: Mm, mm-hmm. I am playing, also, the Outlying Gangs. They are—as Jack already suggested—for us, they are a group of middlemen, gig companies and their workers who serve the Society Intact but operate in territory between us and them. The three that I have written down in front of me...four: School of Fwish, an industrial fishing and fish delivery group; Potato Potat.to, a grocery delivery group; Woof, Wow, who makes seltzer for dogs. [laughs quietly]

Ali: Oh, sure.

Dre: Yeah, uh huh.

Austin: And the Atlantic Bioelectric Company, ABC, who then contracts out to various gig mechanics and engineers to keep things like the wind turbines working, but ABC is the bigger...I would imagine they're actually part of the Society Intact, but they just hire independent freelancers who go out, you know? And I bet they use like a Fiver style system, you know? So.

Jack: Oh my god. Fiver for managing massive wind turbines sounds so dangerous.
[Austin sighs]

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: I mean, managing massive wind turbines is already an exceptionally dangerous job, but...

Austin: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Jack: Paying the lowest bidder.

Austin: Yeah. And then, Dre, I think you have a setting, and is that it? Our last setting that has already been picked up?

Dre: Yeah. Uh huh.

Austin: Oh, sorry, you pick up...I didn't say my things at all. You pick up the Outlying Gangs when someone wanders the wasteland or takes a major road or trespasses, and you give it away when you do any of the above or you have a gang debt that you've run out of time on. All right, Dre, go ahead.

Dre: Mm-hmm. I'm playing the Varied Scarcities: "There's no postal service, municipal waste treatment, [Austin: "Mm-hmm"] reservoir operations manager to treat your water, no ecological impact survey team, no police, no road maintenance crew, and that means no refrigerated trucks hauling groceries into the area, no signals in the cell towers most days. The people who used to think about this stuff so you didn't have to?

They are gone now.” The Varied Scarcities desire collaboration and scrappy DIY. You pick them up when someone wanders the wasteland, seeks a buyer, or visits a marketplace; and you give it away when you need something material and don't immediately know where to get it.

Austin: Mm. And of course, all of these things have some tips for us to read as you pick them up, and, importantly, moves to use in play, as if you were doing the GMing, because we all are. This is a no GM game. It's, in fact, a No Gods No GMs game, No Gods No Game Masters. Is that what it's actually called? Am I getting this wrong?

Jack: No Dice, No Masters.

Austin: No Dice, No Masters. Yeah. Not “no gods.”

Jack: “No gods, no masters” is nearly *Bioshock*.

Austin: Uh...

Jack: That's “No gods, no kings, only man.”

Ali: Mm.

Austin: To be clear, that's a...it stole that from anarchists, Jack.

Jack: *Bioshock* stole stuff from anarchists? [Ali laughs]

Austin: Yeah, dude. Uh huh. Like, forever. Like, forever ever.

Dre: Wow. Wow.

Austin: Like, that's like hundreds and hundreds of years old. Yeah. Anyway.

Jack: One day, Ken Levine will pay for what he's done.

Austin: I increasingly doubt he will. [Jack laughs] There are, of course, also the Psychic Maelstrom and the Digital Realm. We will read those when it's time to pick those up. And again, we all have our own moves that we'll use as we play, and as you hear them,

we'll say them out loud, and it'll be fun. You'll be like, "Oh, wow, that's a cool move," et cetera. So. And also, just for us, I put a big pile of tokens at the bottom and like a token tracker. You can just put these on your sheet, if you prefer that.

Jack: Can we drag these around? Yes, we can.

Austin: Yeah, you should be able to. Whoops, I did not mean to make a big square. There we go. So, yeah, you can totally move these around. Put them wherever makes sense for you, and then when it's time to dispose of them, you can drop them on the big photo my mom took of the...

Jack: Oh, this is a...wow! I didn't know.

Austin: You know, maybe this isn't. Maybe that's a different one. Maybe this is one I found on the internet.

Jack: It's a great picture.

Austin: Atlantic City wind turbines.

Jack: This is like, a...

Austin: I don't think she would have gotten this close. This would have been a wild...maybe she would have, though. I don't know.

Jack: This is like a low view, you know, from grass level.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: We can see cattails and things growing up on either side of the camera, across first a sort of wide, flat river and then low wetland; and then, out in the distance, the sort of new industrial crawl of wind turbines, a...is that an airport? A radio tower.

Austin: It's not an airport, because the airport is the other direction from here, but yeah, that's...it is a little bit of like an industrial sprawl around this wind farm, basically.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: It's a great picture.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Ooh, I found another really good one. I'm just going to copy and past it in our chat. That's like a great aerial view of it that helps, I think, communicate a little bit of, like, how close it is to everything.

Jack: Oh, wow! Look at this!

Austin: It's so interesting. I think, again, that's just the vibe, right? Like, this is the northern end of Atlantic City, in front of it, here.

Dre: Ooh.

Austin: The casino that you're seeing is the Borgata, which is one of the fancier casinos. I don't know if the Borgata is still open, actually. And then, across the way there, I believe that's...mm, is that Absecon or is that Brigantine? That might be Brigantine, which is part of our Society Intact. And then, most of Atlantic City goes the other direction, to the right of this photo, and you can't even...this is kind of like the richer casino end of it, but most of AC is the other direction. It's almost behind this photo, in some ways, so. But really fun photo of this little area, so.

Idle Dreaming [0:30:00]

Austin: All right. Idle Dreaming time. I'm going to read about Idle Dreaming, if that makes sense as a way to just start thinking about how we kick things off.

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Because, unlike *Orbital*, we don't really have the sort of, like, "You go; you go; you go; you go," structure. Instead...this is on page 24: "As everyone defines the community, use the remainder of the worksheet to start sketching a map. Everyone can

draw, though one person emerging as the de facto cartographer is fine too. Leave lots of empty space to fill in during play. Talk about where people sleep, where they get their drinking water from, where they seek quiet moments of reflection or prayer, and more. As the map is being sketched and the community is being fleshed out, you enter a mode of play called Idle Dreaming. This is a time for questions and curiosity, for tangents and musing. Talk about whatever is interesting or unknown or scary or beautiful about this place that you're building together. Make up details about the landscape, its history, and its residents. Setup becomes play, one flowing directly into the next. To get you started in the process of idle dreaming, each character role contains a short list of questions to ask the person to your left," we've done this, "located at the bottom of the middle column. Answers can be short and simple, or lead into conversations of their own. In the process of asking and answering, you may find yourselves eager to plunge directly into a scene. Go for it!

[cont.] "With everyone asking questions and excitedly contributing their vision, scene ideas will soon emerge. Maybe something seems especially poignant. Maybe the answer to a question is clouded by uncertainty, or it just feels too big to make an arbitrary decision about. Maybe two players are figuring out why their characters recently broke up, and it's like, 'Hey, should this be a scene? I want to witness this happening in real time. Maybe it happened by the river?' Idle dreaming stokes curiosity and excitement, and that leads into scenes. If ever a scene concludes and there's uncertainty about what might happen next, it's always fine to return to idle dreaming until a compelling answer rears its head and demands attention. With that said, it's common that once the first scene emerges, the session quickly builds momentum and never returns to that starting place of idle dreaming." [sighs] So, we've already asked our various questions. Any other lingering questions about the setting or about us or about what a day looks like or about where we are in the moment?

Jack: I'd love to know how many people are here and if that number changes dramatically, you know, as a result of seasonal stuff, as a result of seasonal work or, you know. How many people are we talking about, [**Dre:** "Mm"] and in what ways does that number fluctuate?

Austin: It has to be enough for raging parties, right? And I guess you can have raging parties with, like, five people, so maybe that's not true.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: But like, we're talking about people going on a mission to steal EDM broadcasts.

Jack: Right.

Austin: To me, that makes it feel like it's fairly significant in size.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: But, by that, I don't mean thousands of people, right? I mean...hundreds? At the most, for one of these parties?

Jack: 400, 500 people?

Austin: Yeah. I mean, and we're thinking about...when we look at the map, we're saying almost—I'm just going to draw a little bit of a...I mean, we talk about...one of our things is access, right? One of the things in conflict: barriers to access. We know that the...is the train station part of the enclave, or is that just a visual? That's just a visual. So, we know that the cove, which is our pier, Robyn's workshop, and the community garden are all part of the enclave, right? So, presumably, some other buildings near Robyn's workshop, and that's retail storefronts; that's bars. Ali, we still don't know who your next door neighbor is, right?

Ali: No. Um...I don't know. I was thinking—it wouldn't be another bar, probably. Maybe, like...hmm. Because we sort of set up that I have a kitchen in the bar, [**Austin:** "Mm-hmm"] so it wouldn't be, like...well, I guess there's a difference between bar food and actual food.

Austin: Yeah, but like, in our post-apocalyptic enclave of 400 people?

Ali: Yeah, no. Yeah.

Austin: It's very funny to have two different... [Ali laughs] It would be funny. It would be funny to have Snoopy's and then next to Snoopy's be like...

Ali: What if it's the guy who's just really like, "We, as a society, need funnel cake," but then, why wouldn't he be going back to society?

Austin: I feel like "We, as a society, need funnel cake," is in the bar.

Ali: [laughs] Sure, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Dre: Yeah, I was gonna say that sounds like bar food to me. [Jack and Dre laugh]

Ali: Fair, fair. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Fair, fair, fair.

Austin: Whereas, I think the person who's like, "We, as a society, need foie gras," or like, you know.

Dre: Ugh.

Ali: Oh, okay, okay, okay, okay.

Austin: You know what I mean?

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Or maybe not that far, right? But "We, as a society, need..."

Jack: Oh, god, what do we need?

Austin: "We, as a society, need to put napkins in our shirts and sit down and have civilized meals," you know what I mean?

Dre: Sure.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Dre: Can I interject real quick? If you are someone who's never heard of what foie gras is...

Austin: Uh huh.

Dre: Just, content warning before you google that.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah, it's gross. It's a gross French food thing.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: In terms of what the production of it is. It's deeply fucked up.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: It's...if animal welfare is something that means a lot to you, let me tell you: bad.

Dre: Yeah. It's a bad time.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Dre: Sorry.

Austin: No, that's an important note. I appreciate it.

Ali: Yeah, because I guess I sort of want the relationship to feel curmudgeonly?

Austin: Okay, versus being actually hostile.

Ali: Right. But I don't want to lean on the like, "queer bars versus queer bakeries," thing.

[Dre and Austin laugh] Like, "we need more queer spaces where you don't drink."

Because, you know, that's...eh, valid. But yeah, I don't know. So, that's why I was thinking, like, another food stall. The thought of, like, parties [**Austin:** "Mm-hmm"] and people spilling out of the bar and this other food stall or something near me.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Maybe it's just like... [laughs] It's less of, like, a restaurant type place and more of a market slash this is where you're getting the, like, beans that are getting harvested or

whatever.

Austin: Oh.

Dre: Mm.

Austin: Like a ration.

Ali: And it's like, "People gotta stop coming in here drunk and buying, like, a bunch of fucking green onions. [laughs] Like, this is not working for me."

Austin: Right. I mean, are we...here's a real question. Are we...is money...? Is money?

Ali: Oh, sure. I guess commerce isn't a thing.

Austin: Right. I mean, you specifically trade, right? That's your thing? Like, one of the things you need for...

Ali: Yeah, my desired currencies are protection and work trade [**Austin:** "Right"] and not, for instance, cash up front.

Austin: [laughs] Right. Right.

Ali: So, yeah, I think that we've been avoiding that.

Austin: Mm-hmm. So, is it as simple as—

Jack: But even then, right?

Austin: Yeah, I mean, yeah. Go ahead, Jack.

Jack: Especially in that case, right? It's like, this guy's like, "Look. I got green onions, and every night, 15 drunk people come 'round and want the green onions, and I have to haggle with them for some sort of trade or— I don't even know what they want the onions for!" It's like, I feel like, in a full barter economy or in a work trade economy, being the people who sells vegetables next to the bar would be a wild experience. [Ali laughs quietly]

Dre: Oh, god, yeah.

Austin: Hey, why doesn't he just close up shop for the night?

Jack: Yeah, that's a good question. [Ali laughs] Why doesn't he just close up shop for the night, if the problem is that people keep coming round to be like—?

Dre: Hey, you know, you gotta be open when the business comes.

Austin: I guess, yeah.

Jack: Just like, "I want a fresh apple!" [Ali laughs]

Austin: I mean, is this why it's...you know, this is the pissy killjoy next door, not the rival who wants your business to fail next door.

Ali: Right, yeah, exactly.

Austin: Right? Yeah.

Ali: I think the trouble is just I'm having trouble thinking of other type retail things

[**Austin:** "Mm-hmm"] in like a boardwalk-esque equivalent?

Jack: Right.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Does he run, like...is this like the pachinko hall or whatever? [laughs] He's like...

Austin: God. Yeah, I mean, we haven't even said the word gambling.

Ali: Yeah.

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Austin: Despite setting a show in Atlantic City and its...you know, we said casinos, right? There's lots of casinos.

Ali: Right.

Austin: The casinos are still in the Society Intact.

Ali: But yeah, I guess that's like, in terms of what the question is here, and like...

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: One of our conflicts, for instance, is desiring a return to society.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Like, is there a subsection of people who are like, you know, "Playing cards with my friends is an important pastime to me, [**Austin:** "Mm-hmm"] and I think it's a community identity for this place, but like, I'm not gonna go fucking do that with these people."

Austin: So yeah, could it be a casino next door to you? Which also means...but the thing is, like, if he's the killjoy—or if they're the killjoy; we don't know anything about this person yet.

Ali: Right, yeah.

Austin: If the person next door to you is the killjoy, they're probably not...unless, is it—
[sighs]

Ali: Upset that I...yeah.

Austin: Yeah, that you're, like, sending drunk people over to gamble. [Ali laughs]

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: [sarcastic] "Oh no!"

Austin: That's what the casino lives on.

Ali: [sarcastic] "How dare you!"

Dre: It is worth asking. I mean, so far, we've kind of used party culture synonymously

with drinking, but it doesn't have to be that.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: No, but I do think Sam's place is literally a bar, right?

Dre: Okay. Yeah.

Austin: So, like, there will be drunk people there because of it being a bar. You're right that party culture can mean other things. I wasn't necessarily saying that the raging parties came from Snoopy's.

Dre: [laughs quietly] Okay.

Austin: It might be bigger than that. You know what I mean? That might be happening in the train station or, you know, other neighboring little areas, you know?

Ali: Right, yeah. Yeah. But I do like the idea of just having this weird relationship with this guy who owns, like, an empty 2000 square feet...how much is that?

Austin: Right.

Ali: And just has, like—

Austin: You know I don't know how space works.

Ali: [laughs] Yeah. But has the— you know, does the equivalent of, like, Magic tournaments. [Dre laughs quietly] Where it's just, you know, here's a picnic table; here's three of them, but it's people playing solitaire or whatever.

Austin: Right, right, right.

Ali: It's very lowkey.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Like, there's no slot machine, for instance.

Austin: Right.

Ali: There's no, like...

Austin: It's all card games. It's all...

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah. And maybe that's the thing, right? Is like, maybe it's a dry establishment even, you know?

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Maybe not.

Ali: We could just not like each other. It could be a noise complaint thing.

Austin: You could just not like each other, yeah.

Ali: Yeah. It doesn't have to be...

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: God.

Austin: Yeah, "My players can't hear the dealers."

Ali: Right, yeah.

Austin: "You're so loud next door." Yeah.

Ali: Uh huh. Okay.

Jack: Yeah. Do we want to put this onscreen? I would play this person to introduce them, or have we got enough of them? [Ali laughs]

Austin: Please do, Jack. Please do.

Jack: Okay.

Scenes at Snoopy's [0:41:24]

Austin: Is it nighttime? Is it...

Jack: Yeah, I don't know. Ali, what are you doing when this person comes to call?

Ali: Um...maybe the scene makes most sense at, like, opening hour? Like, we're both sort of outside turning the signs to "Open"?

Austin: Mm.

Ali: Sort of, you know.

Jack: Yeah.

Ali: I'm brooming the entranceway. [Dre laughs]

Jack: God.

Ali: Getting the leaves. What? That's what you do. You clean the front of your fucking bar. [laughs]

Jack: "Brooming."

Dre: Yeah, I've never heard, uh...I've heard sweeping. I haven't hear brooming.

Ali: [laughs] Sure. Well, you know.

Austin: Fair enough.

Ali: All sorts of words.

Dre: Hey, different sweeps for different peeps, you know?

Austin: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Jack: [laughs] Okay. So, this character is called...god, let's see. What is this character's name? Beep beep. This is Melvin Calvin.

Ali: Good.

Austin: Melvin Calvin?

Ali: [laughs] Melvin Calvin.

Dre: That's great. That's great.

Austin: Not Melvin Kelvin.

Jack: No, Melvin Calvin.

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: I'm really glad. [laughs quietly]

Jack: And I think that when he sees you...he's like a tall fellow, broad shouldered, hair sort of slicked back greased, wearing glasses with thick rims. On some level, he looks pretty fashionable, but he's wearing the kind of shabby clothes of, you know, day-to-day wear in the enclave. When he sees you opening up and brooming, he says:

(as **Melvin**): Oh! Wait right there. I've got something for you.

Jack: And goes into the house, into the business. I don't know what his business is called. It's probably called Calvin's. Snoopy's and Calvin's. [Ali laughs] And he comes back out with his arms absolutely full of tupperware, and says:

(as **Melvin**): Yes, this is yours after I bought the food two weeks ago. I kept saying that you could come 'round and take them back, but you never did, so, uh, they've been stacking up, and...are you ready to take your tupperware back? You know, I don't have a kitchen. It's been cluttering up the place.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Oh, sure. Yeah, yeah, thanks. You know, there's, uh...people usually leave them out back. There's kind of a recycling bin, and I just pick them up in the morning. But thank you so much! This is...

Jack (as **Melvin**): Is there a sign?

Ali (as **Samantha**): Uh, well, there's...

Jack (as **Melvin**): Like, "Tupperware Here"? I didn't see a sign when I looked.

Ali (as **Samantha**): There's not a sign.

Jack (as **Melvin**): So, uh, right, there's your problem. You see, if there'd been a sign, if it had said, "Tupperware Here," or, for example, there'd been some tupperware there, I'd have known where to put it, but I'm glad to be able to give these back to you.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Great. Yep. Thank you. Glad to have them back. How's the, uh, the old table standing today?

Jack (as **Melvin**): Well, you know, expecting business. Expecting business.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Mm.

Jack (as **Melvin**): And there's a big game happening tonight.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Oh, yeah?

Jack (as **Melvin**): I meant to say, actually. There's a big game happening tonight, so if you could...you know, maybe try and keep it down a little.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Oh. Oh. Um...yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah! I'll let the band know.

Jack (as **Melvin**): There's a band?! [Ali and Austin laugh] What day is it?

Ali (as **Samantha**): You know, it's Thursday night. It's Thursday night open mic.

Jack (as **Melvin**): I thought that the band was on Fridays.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Well, but, you know, you do open mic on Thursdays, and then you have, you know, the good ones on Friday.

Jack (as **Melvin**): Why did you change it? On the schedule, it said Open Mic

Fridays.

Ali (as **Samantha**): No, it didn't.

Jack (as **Melvin**): Didn't say anything about "the good ones."

Ali (as **Samantha**): No. No, Fridays is, uh, you know, the Grinders.

Jack (as **Melvin**): [aghast] The what?

Ali: No, that's an app. I can't do that. [Ali, Austin, and Jack laugh]

Austin: Oh, I was going the other way. Like, a grinder...

Dre: I was thinking of sandwiches. Okay.

Austin: I was thinking sandwiches. I was like, "Oh, it's sandwich night."

Ali: Oh, okay, okay. Perfect. Then I'll keep it.

Austin: It's grinder night.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Hoagie night.

Ali: [laughs] Well, no, it's...

(as **Samantha**): You know, they're...you know, people...they're a very interesting band. [Austin laughs] And, um...

Jack: Melvin just, like, narrowing his eyes at you.

Ali (as **Samantha**): You know, people love a grinder, so I think it's...you know, I'm excited to be able to book them for Friday, and...

Jack (as **Melvin**): What is a grinder?

Ali (as **Samantha**): You know, like a sub.

Jack (as **Melvin**): Like a sandwich of some kind?

Ali (as **Samantha**): Yeah. You know, lettuce, cheese... [Ali laughs] No, you don't?

Jack (as **Melvin**): Never heard of this before. Well, how the other half lives, I suppose. Sandwiches.

Ali (as **Samantha**): I'll let them know. You know, does your...are these games of yours starting at a specific time? I can let people...you know, I can tell people to come over.

Jack (as **Melvin**): Well, they run on 45 minute intervals, generally, and we try and keep it so that play doesn't extend for much longer than that.

Austin: I've now, by the way, become incredibly in love with the idea that it is *Magic: The Gathering*. [Ali laughs]

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: It's just, you have a complete set of Magic or two complete sets of Magic, and people can, like, trade cards. Like, there's a limited number. You have the set.

Jack: Oh, god, that's great. So, I guess the—

Austin: You know what I mean?

Jack: Yeah. I guess his answer is like:

(as **Melvin**): Well, it begins at 5:30, but we don't know how long the games last. You know, they can go very long or they can go very short. It's very interesting, actually.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Sure. Well, yeah, I...you know, if I see someone finish their drink, I'll let them know they should check it out.

Jack (as **Melvin**): Right. Well. But...okay.

Ali (as **Samantha**): You need anything extras? You know, some extra napkins, or you want to hold onto one of these tupperwares, or...?

Jack (as **Melvin**): No, no. I want to give you the tupperwares. I'm done with the tupperwares.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Sure. You need some, like, peanuts, or—? I guess you don't want that for the cards, huh? Eh. Sure. Well, yeah.

Jack (as **Melvin**): Okay. Well, you have a good night, Samantha.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Yeah, you too.

Austin: I'm walking up as you're leaving. What do you say to my clown face, Melvin?
[laughs quietly]

Ali: Wow.

Jack: Me? To you?

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. Yeah, what's our relationship?

Jack (as **Melvin**): Providence.

Austin (as **Providence**): [coldly] Melvin.

Jack (as **Melvin**): Are you here to play?

Austin (as **Providence**): No. I'm here to talk with Samantha. I hope you have a good day.

Austin: And I'm carrying, like, an old suitcase. Like an old worn leather— it's not a suitcase. Like, a briefcase. Like a briefcase, but the leather is all wrapped.

Jack (as **Melvin**): Okay. Well, okay.

Austin: I'm just giving you a death glare, currently, Melvin.

Jack: Yeah, backing into the shop, hitting the little bell.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And I say:

(as **Providence**): Samantha, we need to talk.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: I walk past you, smoothly, and haul this briefcase up on top— how many people are in the bar, at this point? Is it, like, nobody, because you just opened up? Or do you have regulars basically immediately?

Ali: Um, I probably have, like, a tender on staff.

Austin: Mm, mm-hmm.

Ali: Someone who's, like, wiping down tables and stuff. Not on staff, but like, you know, who's assigned tonight or whatever.

Austin: Yeah. I lift this briefcase up, and I slam it down onto the...I don't slam it. It's heavy, and I put it down on top of the bar or maybe, like, a two-top table, not the whole bar. And I open it, and I look at you as if...I'm not wearing glasses, but I'm like, you know, my eyes are up as I look at you, you know what I mean? Like, I'm looking from the top of my eyes at you? And I open up the briefcase, and inside are a bunch of little wind-up toy soldiers, and I begin to wind them up and set them on a second empty table, and they begin to walk around in strange...as if in random circles, and I say:

(as **Providence**): One of the scavengers brought this back.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Great?

Austin (as **Providence**): It's not done.

Ali (as **Samantha**): They're doing another thing?

Austin (as **Providence**): They're...give it a second.

Austin: And, finally, they come to a halt, and I say:

(as **Providence**): Now, look at them from above.

Austin: And they've walked in a way so that if you look just at their heads, they spell out the words: STILL WATER.

(as **Providence**): It's what I keep saying, Sam. We are stagnant. This is a sign. Not...the enclave is stagnant. Every Thursday, it's Open Mic Thursday. Every Friday, the Grinders play. There's the big game. They get the EDM music from the Upper Crust, the pizza casino, and they blare it on Saturday nights. It's the same.

Ali (as **Samantha**): So, the toy soldiers are upset about this now.

Austin (as **Providence**): The toy soldiers are an extension. The toy soldiers don't speak for themselves. The toy soldiers speak for the world.

Ali (as **Samantha**): [tired] Yep. Mm-hmm. Well, um...

Austin (as **Providence**): We have to do something new.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Yeah, uh huh. Yep. Yeah, uh, we'll just start thinking of other stuff to do, on top of the things that we do day-to-day. Do you have any ideas on that? Any suggestions, in terms of how we're gonna shake things up?

Austin: I sit down. I begin to put the toy soldiers back in the briefcase, one by one, and I remove...they have like wind-up keys that you have to remove. They were already in there for speed purposes before, and I'm removing them and putting them in a little pouch.

(as **Providence**): No, I don't. I don't. We have enough...we have enough going on, as it is. I'm doing my best to mentor the younger scavengers who need it still, and I find that we can only just barely get by, but I am afraid that we are just becoming another...another broken machine.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Machines break down, you know, but they...you know, they keep running. [sighs] I...

Austin (as **Providence**): Just, if you think of anything...an event, something immaculate and strange to do, let me know.

Ali (as **Samantha**): I'll put my mind to it.

Austin (as **Providence**): Thanks. I have to go talk to Melvin now and tell him this. Wish me luck.

Ali (as **Samantha**): [laughs quietly] Good luck.

Austin: Picks up all the things.

Ali (as **Samantha**): You know, Melvin's an immaculate guy, so I'm thinking you're gonna get some suggestions there.

Austin: And I believe this is probably what my day is, is trying to convince people, over and over again, that, like, we are falling into a rut, as a people, as a culture, and even these toy soldiers support this idea.

Ali: Kind of a power play. [laughs]

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. I didn't make the soldiers. Someone brought me the soldiers!

Ali: Yeah, yep.

Dre: [jokingly skeptical] Suuure.

Ali: "Hey, this weird omen agrees with me very strongly."

Austin: The weird omen agrees with me! [Austin and Ali laugh]

Jack: "You don't have to listen to me. Look at what these little guys are saying." [Ali laughs]

Austin: Yes!

Dre: Listen, it's not her fault for saying smart and right things, you know? [Austin laughs]

Jack: And then the toy soldiers go, "Click click click click click," and you look at it,

[**Austin:** "Uh huh?" and it says, "Listen to the Augur, Providence." [laughter]

Austin: What's going on with Robyn and Already today? On this...I guess it's probably, like...what time's the bar open? Is it like, a...is there a lunch service, or are you just evenings?

Ali: Um...maybe this is like a 4:00 opening?

Austin: Yeah, I like that.

Dre: Mm. I mean, I was almost thinking, like, does Robyn show up as Augur is leaving,

[**Austin:** "Mm"] to like check on the speakers and everything for Open Mic Night?

Austin: I kind of like that. I kind of like people rotating through Snoopy's.

Jack: Yeah, that's great.

Austin: As a thing, it's like an opening sequence.

Ali: Come in.

Dre: Yeah.

(as **Robyn**): Hey! Uh, Sam?

Ali (as **Samantha**): Wha— hey!

Dre (as **Robyn**): Is, uh, everything looking good? Any, uh...did you run the sound test already?

Ali (as **Samantha**): Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Um, I...yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. You might want to take another look at it. I think I was getting a little feedback?

Dre (as **Robyn**): Okay. All right. Um, which...do you know...was it coming from a certain one, or was there a certain mic, or...?

Ali (as **Samantha**): Uh, left side, I think?

Dre (as **Robyn**): Yeah, sure. Do you still have that ladder in the back?

Ali (as **Samantha**): Uh huh. Yep, yep, yep. Oh, it might be behind a bunch of tupperware.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Oh. That's cool. Where'd you get all this tupperware from? [Ali laughs quietly]

Dre: And I start just fishing through it.

Austin: Oh my god.

Dre: Like, kind of throwing stuff to the side, picking up a piece, like, eyeballing it.

Ali (as **Samantha**): It's a long story.

Dre (as **Robyn**): You need this?

Ali (as **Samantha**): Usually. Why? You need it for something?

Dre (as **Robyn**): I don't know. I could find something to do with it. [Ali laughs quietly]

Ali (as **Samantha**): I could spare three of those tupperwares.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Okay. Like, any of 'em?

Ali (as **Samantha**): Yeah, yeah. Pick a size.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Okay. All right. I'll do that after I... [Ali laughs quietly] Okay, yeah, here's the ladder. Okay, let me, uh...yeah, don't worry about me! You probably got stuff to do. I saw...I saw Providence leaving. She didn't look happy.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Yep. Uh, yeah. Well, you know, she's just trying to get some things shaking. Yeah, you seen anything extraordinary today?

Dre (as **Robyn**): Um...well, normally Knots can't really manifest any sort of, like, physical force, but I think Knots knocked over my teacup today, so that's cool or worrying, depending on how you feel about the paranormal.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Mm, mm-hmm. [sighs] Yeah. Well, you know. Yeah, I...it's already been a long day.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Sure. [Ali and Austin laugh quietly] Yeah, no, listen: I get it. Exes, am I right?

Ali (as **Samantha**): [quietly] Yep. Well. [regular volume] Oh, can you do me a favor and just, um, make the gain a little lower on the speakers when you do your test? There's some sort of game event happening next door.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Oh. Okay, all right.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Yeah. Thank you.

Dre: I think, right after you say that, the bass is extremely loud.

(as **Robyn**): Fuck! [Ali and Austin laugh quietly]

Austin: How do you do these tests? Like, what's the...what type of— what's the situation there?

Dre: Oh. Um, I probably have some kind of...hmm. What is the word for this? Is multimeter the word I'm looking for?

Austin: Yeah, I think that's right. I think I know what you're talking about. Like, a handheld device thing that has, like, the...

Dre: Yeah, making sure the voltage is coming through right and everything.

Austin: Yeah. Do you have to turn on the speakers to do this, or are you just doing,

like...?

Dre: Oh, sure. Yeah, if it's feedback, yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: So it's probably, like, turning on the speakers.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Dre: Making sure the wires are all plugged in. Maybe I find a loose, like, a cable that's starting to, like...what is the...the wrapping, I guess? The wrapping on the cable?

Austin: Yeah. I know what you mean. Yeah, like, the actual...yeah.

Dre: It's starting to fray a bit, and so I just snip off a piece of my hair [**Austin:** "Mm-hmm"] and kind of tie a nice little knot over that, and then I start moving the mic around, turning levels up and down, trying to isolate which speaker is giving feedback.

Austin: You're getting some sort of feedback. I'm picking up the Digital Realm, because you're interacting with a digital device, which is the stereo system in here. And you're getting some sort of feedback that...on the main, local microphone. Like, you're tapping the microphone. That specific channel is getting some sort of feedback, but it's like, you don't have it near the speakers or anything, so I don't know what— you're like, "What's going on there?"

Dre: What's it sound like?

Austin: It's like the sort of squeaky feedback sound, you know? But you can feel it. It's like you can hear someone talking, kind of, but you can't make out what they're saying. I mean, or maybe you have a move that lets you.

Dre: Uh...

Austin: But I am doing the move "introduce a glitch" from the Digital Realm.

Dre: Yeah, let's see. Um, I do want to use a regular move.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: To fix or make something partially or shoddily.

Austin: Mm.

Dre: I am not fixing this microphone to work better. I am fixing this microphone so that I can better hear whatever this voice is saying.

Austin: Yeah. The... [sighs] You are overhearing a distant ghostly voice of someone...you know how you can do chess summaries by being like...you know, you look up, like, a chess game summary that's just like the basic maneuvers, like the "blank to blank; blank to blank."

Dre: Like, pawn to whatever.

Austin: Pawn to— yeah, exactly, to whatever, B5 or whatever, right? It's that, but it's for a *Magic: The Gathering* game. It's someone being like, you know, "Green land. Tap green land from last turn. Play Llanowar elves."

Dre: Sure.

Austin: You know, "I'm going to swing on you. You're going to defend," and you can't hear the other person talking. So it sounds almost like, "Oh, am I picking up someone next door?" or something.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: But the games haven't started next door.

Dre: Ooh. I almost...hmm. I almost want to write these down.

Austin: Ooh, that's fun.

Dre: And then go to the games tonight and see if this happens.

Austin: Do you fix the microphone first, so that it's not playing someone...? [laughs]

quietly]

Dre: [laughs quietly] Um, I don't...hmm. I don't think so. I don't have a token, so.

Austin: Oh. [laughs] Right. Great! Good! So, there's just, quietly in the background...it's not feedbacky anymore, at least.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: But it sounds, at this point, like you're hearing someone else playing this.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Playing a *Magic: The Gathering* tournament from the future.

Dre: Sure.

Austin: Or from— maybe not from the future. It sounds like what you want to investigate is if it's from the future or not.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah. I have circled a desire, by the way, for the Digital Realm, which is expanded networks, but I've left the other one open, because...I don't remember if this is a story thing or not, but you know, I've picked it up, but I don't want to circle two desires right away, just by me, you know? So.

Dre: Oh, were we not supposed to have stuff circled ahead of time?

Austin: Well, we didn't. We only circled stuff on the ones that we picked, you know?

Dre: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Right, okay.

Austin: So, yeah. Sorry, Ali, you were going to say something.

Ali: Oh, I was just going to say there's...because it's already part of, like, a tinkering scene, I guess...

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: That it is worth looking at some of the weak moves and seeing if you can gain a token here.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Dre: Oh, sure. I mean, I can take this microphone apart or just leave it broken. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: It's your call, but I just know that that's the economy, quote, unquote, of this game.

Dre: Yeah, no, I think I am going to take apart the microphone, because now I'm like, "Oh, what's going on with this microphone that I can hear this voice or whatever?"

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Dre: And I lie to Sam and say:

(as **Robyn**): Oh, yeah, there's something wrong with the microphone. I'm gonna have to take it back to my shop to replace the part.

Austin: Damn.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Oh. Um...yeah, I just...

Dre (as **Robyn**): I know it's rough to have Open Mic Night without a mic. [Austin laughs] I might have, like, a megaphone or something?

Ali (as **Samantha**): No, can you...can you go next door and make a big deal out of it?

Dre (as **Robyn**): Oh. Wait, like, oh, like it's his fault?

Ali (as **Samantha**): Well, like I'm doing it to be so nice.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Oh! Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. No, yeah, I can totally do that.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Cool. Cool, cool. Two birds, one stone.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Sure.

Ali: That's right, right?

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Mm-hmm. [Ali laughs]

Dre: Uh, did you say his name was Melvin Calvin?

Jack: Yeah.

Ali: Mm, mm-hmm.

Dre: Yeah, I think, as I'm walking out the door, you can hear me yell:

(as **Robyn**): Yo, Kelvin, I got great news! [Austin and Ali laugh]

Austin: Already, what are you up to?

Jack: Do we want to see how this plays out, or...?

Austin: Oh, I don't— I think we know how that plays out, right?

Jack: Yeah, I think we know how this is going to go.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: How does it go? Is it the future?

Austin: Oh, oh, oh! I meant— I thought you meant do we want to see how the...trying to brag about Samantha—

Dre: [laughs] Oh, how me calling him...

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Dre: Yeah. [Ali laughs]

Austin: And calling him Kelvin. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Dre: Oh, yeah, no. I don't need to see that. I just...

Austin: I imagine there would be some time, maybe, between now and the game tonight.

Dre: Okay. Gotcha.

Austin: But maybe not. Maybe we go right into it. I don't know.

Already [1:04:10]

Jack: Uh, I think Already hasn't quite got their circadian rhythm around...a couple of things. I don't think that they have gotten their circadian rhythm off driving the Potato Potat.to truck.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: And I think they also have not gotten off...or not gotten onto the way this community works, of like when people get up and start working or whatever. So, they have...they are asleep, and they are woken up by their phone, the Potato Potat.to phone [Austin: "Mm, mm-hmm"] making a notification, which is strange, and they look at the notification, and they, you know, look of worry on their face, and they hug Duke to them and then sort of get up and throw on clothes, and I think they are going to go and seek advice from the Augur, Providence. Do you know where I would find you?

Austin: Yeah, I think that I live in a sort of...there's, like, an arcade that was part of this pier at one point, that has been, you know, basically emptied out. It's not useful as an arcade anymore, but in the arcade, there was the back room where arcade machines would be brought in to be fixed and stuff, and I've turned that into my bedroom, and I

use, like, the front of the arcade...I probably, like...I kind of meet people at the ticket redemption booth, you know?

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Austin: Like, you've won a bunch of tickets playing Skee-Ball, and you want a big stuffed animal. I sit behind there as my, like...that's the place you come and meet me, you know?

Jack: Are there still stuffed animals, or has that stuff all just decayed away?

Austin: I think it's probably all gone, yeah. It's either been decayed away or— you know, I might use that storage. I use that storage as, like, someone's brought me back a strange thing, you know?

Jack: Right.

Austin: The briefcase is currently hanging from a hook that used to hold a stuffed animal, a big stuffed Shrek or whatever, you know? Now holds a briefcase filled with—

Jack: Shrek is not an animal.

Austin: Prove it. [Jack laughs quietly in surprise]

Dre: Yeah, you can't.

Austin: You can't, can you?

Jack: Wow.

Dre: Well, if anything, Shrek isn't an animal, because ogres are like onions, and onions aren't animals. Unless!

Jack: Prove it.

Austin: Are ogres like onions? Is that...?

Dre: Yeah, that's what he says.

Austin: Oh. But they're not literally like onions. They don't grow from the ground. They're not like 40K orcs.

Dre: No, but they have layers.

Austin: Ah, I see. I get it, yeah. Yeah. I missed *Shrek* when I was a kid, I guess.

Dre: That's fair.

Austin: Yeah. Anyway.

Jack: I miss *Shrek* now, spiritually. [Dre laughs] He's gone away from us.

Dre: There was a *Shrek* rave in the city last week. You could have gone to it, Jack.

Austin: Oh my god.

Jack: Yeah, so, I think I come in, and I'm, like, hustling in. I'm looking over my shoulder. Something has gotten me spooked.

Jack (as **Already**): Have you got a moment? Can I talk to you?

Austin (as **Providence**): Already. Take a seat.

Austin: And I have, like, the arcade stools, you know what I mean? They're like barstools, but they have, like, metal bases that you can drag them around the arcade, so if you want to sit down and play pacman, you can. Also, this was a retro arcade, for sure. It was like one of those spots you could come in and spend 20 bucks and they just let you do free play for three hours, you know? That was the vibe, so.

Jack (as **Already**): Seems like you're the kind of...the kind of leader of this place. If you...you know. I'm happy to go to someone else, but you seem like the person people come to talk to when they need some help.

Austin (as **Providence**): I don't promise anything like that, but I'm happy to listen

and advise.

Jack (as **Already**): But you know things. You know what to do. You can...right.

Jack: And I take my Potato Potat.to phone out of my pocket. It looks like an iPhone, like a small smartphone, like one of the nice mini ones [**Austin:** "Mm-hmm"] that I always manage to get for the six months when they offer them.

Austin: Uh huh. Yeah, same.

Jack: And it has the Potato Potat.to logo on the back of it, which is an anthropomorphic potato, but the back of it is in a clear plastic case that has been almost completely covered by little red round stickers that have a clock-in and a clock-out time, and those stickers are dispensed by the little machine, [Austin laughs quietly] and at the end of the day, you don't need them anymore, and Already has just, you know, pasted them all on the back of their phone. And they turn their phone over, and on the screen is a notification, and it is from the Potato Potat.to company, and it...I don't know what the exact wording is, but it amounts to recognition that I've gone AWOL and acknowledgment that they are coming to take back the phone and the truck along with the value of any goods that were in the truck and that they are on their way. It doesn't say when or how, but that my number is essentially up.

Austin (as **Providence**): Do they know where the truck is?

Jack (as **Already**): [sighs] I don't know. I have to imagine that they can track it in some way. I thought I hid it pretty well, but...maybe they think I'm still with the truck, and they're just tracking the phone? I don't know. They know where the phone is.

Austin (as **Providence**): Why did you bring the phone with you?

Jack (as **Already**): What?

Austin (as **Providence**): Why not leave the phone with the truck?

Jack (as **Already**): Because it's a phone. It's my phone. I can make calls with it. I can...

Austin (as **Providence**): Who are you calling?

Jack (as **Already**): [pause] Well, I could make calls, if I needed to make calls. It seemed useful.

Austin (as **Providence**): The age of phones is behind us. You're wasting your time with that device. My advice to you is to throw it away, far from here, where they won't find it and where they won't find us.

Jack (as **Already**): [hesitantly] Okay. Is it too late for that, though? Will they— let's say I throw the phone in the water. I take a boat out and throw the phone in the water, they'll know that it's not out in the middle of the water, and they'll come to the last place it was.

Austin (as **Providence**): Turn it over. Look at the bottom near where the tickets come out, or the stickers come out.

Jack (as **Already**): Uh huh.

Austin (as **Providence**): Does it say it's fitted for water pressure?

Jack (as **Already**): No.

Austin (as **Providence**): Then you can toss it in the water.

Jack (as **Already**): [sighs]

Austin (as **Providence**): Is there anything else, Already?

Jack (as **Already**): Well, what if they come here? Have I fucked us?

Austin (as **Providence**): Are you asking me if you fucked us, or are you asking me to tell you they haven't?

Jack (as **Already**): I don't know.

Austin (as **Providence**): Because it sounds like your asking me to tell you that you haven't.

Jack (as **Already**): [pause] Would you tell me if—

Austin (as **Providence**): I'm sympathetic.

Jack (as **Already**): [deep breath] You don't sound very sympathetic.

Austin (as **Providence**): I am...I am concerned that by being here with that device you will have brought them here and given them an excuse. [sighs]

Austin: And she sighs and stands up and goes over to...she goes over to a big Yellow Pages book—from, you know, 50 years ago, when they still made the Yellow Pages, 100 years ago—and brings it over and flops it down on the countertop, which is one of these glass countertops, you know, they used to sell, you know, sticky hands inside of the countertop.

Jack: Yeah.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: You know? And when she flops it onto the glass, for a split second, you and the camera make it feel like, it's like, "Ah! is it going to break the glass?" and it doesn't, but it doesn't feel like it might not go that way. And she says:

(as **Providence**): I can attempt...I can attempt to give you guidance of a more direct kind.

Jack (as **Already**): Ye- yeah. Of course. That's...yes.

Austin: I'm going to use one of my regular moves to commence a ritual.

Jack: And I'm going to gain a token.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: Because I...what's the exact wording here on your sheet, Austin?

Austin: It's "Whenever someone participates..."

Jack: "Whenever someone participates in one of your rituals for the first time, they gain a token."

Austin: Mm-hmm. And I'm going to do a close reading of the holy texts, which in this case means I take your hand, I take one of your hands in mine. My hand is, you know, at the bottom, holding yours. My thumb is pressed kind of at the exact kind of middle of the back of your hand, and I look you in the eye, and I say:

(as **Providence**): Give me a letter.

Jack (as **Already**): Uh, D.

Austin: And I move the book to the first page of D, and I say:

(as **Providence**): Give me a number.

Jack (as **Already**): Uh, 12.

Austin: And I turn 12 pages forward, and I say:

(as **Providence**): Tell me a color.

Jack (as **Already**): Uh, gray.

Austin: And my hand moves along the yellow pages, and I'm not quite there yet, and I say:

(as **Providence**): And, finally, which bird is it that you're thinking of?

Jack (as **Already**): Uh, a brown bird.

Austin (as **Providence**): What bird?

Jack (as **Already**): Oh, god. Like, a...what are those birds? They're white. They live out in the wetlands. They're tall, tall white birds.

Austin (as **Providence**): A heron?

Jack (as **Already**): A heron!

Austin (as **Providence**): You're thinking of a heron.

Jack (as **Already**): Yes.

Austin (as **Providence**): Brown was close, though. I'm sending you here.

Austin: And I spin the Yellow Pages around, and I'm pointing at an advertisement or, like, you know, a...someone has taken out one of those— do you know the Yellow Pages? Do people know the Yellow Pages anymore?

Jack: Yeah, yeah.

Dre: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Okay. You know how in the—

Jack: I mean, we should tell listeners, in case there are listeners who don't know what the Yellow Pages are anymore.

Austin: Yeah. The Yellow Pages is a business directory that used to be a big physical book that you could get that would have—

Jack: Fucking ruled.

Austin: Yeah. That had, like, every business in the area available, and a lot of it was just full text. You know, just a line of text that would say...I'm like looking at a random Yellow Pages thing now. You know, like...sorry. Buildings. See, building— eh, that's not what I want. I want, like, actual Yellow Pages ads, you know?

Jack: Would it be like, "Big Mike's Alterations"?

Austin: Yes. Yes. Big Mike's.

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: Alterations of all kinds.

Austin: And then, underneath that, it might say, "Big Ned's Alterations," [Jack laughs] and it's subdivided into categories, and it's not just alphabetical, but then it eventually gets to be alphabetical, you know? And among the lists where it would say Big Mike's and Big Ned's, you could also take an ad out in the Yellow Pages, so you would get more page real estate, so you could get, like, a big half page ad or a quarter page ad in that section, so that you would get, like, a big fancy thing. And in this case, I am pointing at a thing that says, "Jeff Brown Dentistry," and there is a picture of a crane or a heron, kind of like a, you know, black and white, almost like a vector drawing or a clip art drawing of a really goofy-looking cartoon heron that, you know, the address is on a road near the marshes. And I say:

(as **Providence**): Bring the phone there. If you do this, you will keep us safe.

Austin: And I'm going to take a token, because I believe, Jack, that I am giving you an opportunity to prove yourself to the community.

Jack: To prove myself to the community, yes.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And I'm going to mark this spot on the map, really quick.

Dre: Is this...is what happened here, is this an opportunity for me to pick up the Psychic Maelstrom?

Austin: I did not open my brain to the psychic maelstrom, but what's the thing...? And I say that only because I literally have a move that is "Open my brain to the world's psychic maelstrom."

Dre: Sure. [Ali laughs quietly]

Austin: But I certainly was using a psychic gift or seeking out the strange.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: So. So, please.

Dre: I would like to pick it up and use the move “foreshadow a threat.”

Austin: Mm.

Jack: Ooh.

Dre: I think another, like, sticker prints out of the bottom of the phone.

Austin: Ooh.

Dre: And says: “As a reminder, you are not permitted to move out of a five mile radius until we have gathered our instruments.”

Jack: Ah.

Austin: Can we make that a tighter than five mile?

Dre: Yeah, sure.

Austin: Five miles is kind of a lot on this tiny island.

Dre: Sure. I don't know, one mile?

Austin: One mile.

Dre: 500 yards? Yeah.

Austin: One mile makes sense. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Totally. It's one of those classic, like, five miles is not a lot, but it can be a lot inside of cities, you know?

Dre: Sure. Yeah.

Austin: So, in fact, it's kind of far. I've marked this on the mainland here. Do you see where I've marked up here?

Jack: Oh, damn. Yeah, okay. Requires me to cross a bridge.

Austin: This is also, all of this is— yeah, it requires you to cross one short bridge and then a longer bridge. It's not, you know, it's not a long bridge, but it's, you know, it's a bridge.

Jack: Yeah, it's a bridge.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Yeah, and I have to imagine that the bridges post-collapse are— well, it depends how the Society Intact moves around. I have to imagine that they mostly, because they're off this island...

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: They have bridges further up north that they would cross [**Austin:** "Mm-hmm"] and not have to go through past Bluff City Studios and the boathouse and past the wind turbines.

Austin: Yeah, I imagine— yeah, exactly.

Jack: I imagine that the big concourse in and out is...

Austin: I'll note that—and this is a classic "I used to live in this place for real, and so the physical memory of Bluff City is accessible to me in this other layer." This would be the bridge we crossed with the horse in the back of the truck and crashed. Remember we crashed into the marshes?

Jack: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, absolutely.

Austin: That would be this. That would be here. That would be this...

Jack: Although, that was in Bluff City, and this is in Atlantic City.

Austin: I know. Yes, yes, totally. Yes.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: But this is still...

Jack: God, that game was such a mess. [laughs]

Austin: Uh huh. Yeah, it really, truly, truly was. I'm going to add some marshes here, just for...

Jack: I think we made Art so mad based on our shared knowledge of horseracing. [Dre laughs]

Austin: We understood it in a way that I think he didn't, and I think that that was hard for him, you know?

Jack: Oh, and that was hard. Right, I see.

Austin: Yeah, you know?

Jack: Yeah, there's book smarts, and then there's horse smarts, [**Austin:** "Sure"] and we have horse smarts.

Austin: We got horse smarts over here, baby.

Dre: Yeah. Were you all talking about, like, betting some tries?

Austin: Yeah, we were betting.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: We were talking about horse bets [**Dre:** "Sure"] and were upsetting Art at our various misunderstandings of some basic horse betting stuff, you know?

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: So. Which is fair. All right. I think that's probably a scene, Jack, right?

Jack: Yeah, I think so.

Austin: Do we want to go back to the...I mean, do you do something right after this? Or do you want to zoom out and maybe go over to the Magic tournament tonight?

Jack: I, uh, am walking—

Austin: Also, wait, do you show Providence the warning you just got, or do you keep that to yourself?

Jack: Um, so, I get the warning as I'm walking home, and I'm, like, walking quickly [Austin: "Mm"] with Duke next to me and kind of looking down at the phone and sort of holding it preciously, like a precious object, and I get the new sticker.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Oh, while we're here.

Jack: You know, like, rain starting to fall.

Austin: Right. Dre, do you want to circle one of the desires of the Psychic Maelstrom?

Dre: Oh, sure, yeah. Uh...

Austin: Which I don't think we read this before, so let me read this.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: "Close your eyes, open your brain: something is wrong with the world. That something is the psychic maelstrom. It's just beyond our everyday perception, ever-present and howling. It can offer guidance, protection, even flashes of brilliant inspiration. But it's hungry, and nobody knows what price it demands in return."

Dre: Hmm.

Austin: And our desire options are: human dependence, cosmic revelation, revenge, entropy, fervent intimacy, and to be ushered into the world forever.

Dre: The two that I'm leaning towards right now are human dependence or revenge.

Austin: Mm.

Dre: Because I—

Austin: Let's pick— go ahead.

Dre: No, yeah, I don't want to pick both of them.

Austin: Right, right, right.

Dre: I feel like revenge, because this is Potato Potat.to, like, coming back.

Austin: But it isn't.

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Austin: This is...I mean, it is. This is Potato Potat.to in this particular instance.

Dre: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: But you're choosing something about the Psychic Maelstrom.

Dre: No, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Which is bigger than that, you know?

Dre: Sure. Um...I'm gonna circle—

Austin: But I do like that as an idea. I don't dislike revenge as a thing the Psychic Maelstrom might want.

Dre: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm going to circle human dependence.

Austin: Okay. Rad.

Ali: Oh, that's fun.

Austin: Mm-hmm. All right. How's the bar day go? And how many hours is it before this Magic tournament kicks off? And does that affect your side of the business at all, Sam?

Ali: Probably not, right? I mean, there might be...there might be people who are, like,

leaving earlier, right?

Austin: Mm, right.

Ali: Like, people who might sit and stay all night are going next door.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: But like, I don't know that it's...especially without commerce.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: [laughs] I don't know that there's, like, a rivalry in that way? Like, somebody going back and forth is not the end of the world.

Austin: Right.

Ali: I think that what would be an issue is if, like, a dishwasher or somebody who said that they were going to come in tonight was like, "I gotta go play Magic!" [Austin, Ali, and Jack laugh]

Austin: God, someone calling out sick so they can go to the big Magic game is very funny. [Ali laughs]

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Ali: You know, the world still turns, [**Austin:** "Yeah, yeah"] even when living through a psychic maelstrom, you know? So.

Austin: You know, you're not wrong. You're not wrong.

Jack: Yeah, just a brief flash to next door, where Melvin Calvin is, like, standing on a little raised platform and saying:

(as **Melvin**): *Magic: The Gathering* is a game for two players!

Jack: And then it cuts back to... [all laugh] How does the lack of the microphone

affect—? Yeah, here's my question. How is Open Mic Night going?

Ali: [laughs] You know, as well as one could, I guess. I don't want to disparage open mics too much.

Dre: Wow.

Ali: I do think the, like...it changes the vibe, right, if there isn't a microphone, because then it's just sort of someone on stage, like, talking? [Jack laughs] And I wonder if, for some performers, it's like, "Oh, yeah, you know, I really was able to reach a more intimate place there, [**Jack:** "Right"] trying to sing up there," but for some people, it's like, "This is weird. [laughs] This is not what I signed up for."

Jack: Yeah. I saw Godspeed You! Black Emperor in Los Angeles a couple of weeks ago, at an outdoor venue where the stage was also outdoors, and halfway through, it started raining torrentially.

Dre: Ooh.

Jack: And so everybody had to come on and put the band Godspeed You! Black Emperor under little tents, like little white gazebos to play. [Dre and Ali laugh] Which meant that, as it got darker and darker, and as the evening set in, the band became more and more invisible, because the stage lights weren't catching the performers, until in the end, it was just, like, these eight shadows of people and this immense wall of noise coming off the stage, which was...that was the equivalent of the open mic night and the person being like, "I kind of got to a cool place here." But I imagine, also, there was the vibe from Godspeed of like, "We would have liked it if you could have seen us play as well as just heard us." But it's going okay? It's happening all right, just a little quieter?

Ali: I think so. It's such a weird...you know, it's a Thursday night. There's maybe 15 people here.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Out of 400. Like, it's not...I don't know that I...it's an interesting place to be like, "Oh, I'm glad people are here and they're happy," right?

Jack: God.

Ali: I don't know that there's a lot of friction there, in terms of what the desire is? But you know, it's a night. It's, you know...

Dre: Is that a slow— you said 15 people. Is that slow for you, or is that busy? Is that average?

Ali: That's probably slow-ish.

Dre: Okay.

Ali: If it's, like, 400 people here. I don't know percentages, but like...

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: It's probably on the lower end.

Jack: God.

Ali: I'm looking at my moves here. [laughs]

Dre: Oh? [laughs]

Ali: I could be begging somebody for mercy! That seems a little early in the game for doing that.

Austin: That's a little early, yeah. Jeez.

Dre: Yeah.

A Visitor [1:26:20]

Jack: I have something, if you're thinking of a scene. I think I might want to pick up the Society Intact.

Austin: Ooh.

Ali: Sure.

Jack: I think you're turning...you're, like, getting something from the bar, and you turn around to be face-to-face, straight up, with a woman leaning across the bar. She has blonde hair and a big smile, perfect white teeth. She's dressed very fashionably but with the kind of...the care of someone who has the money to...put it this way: she has not had to make due with few pieces that she has to construct outfits out of. She can get whatever outfit she wants, and she's sort of put them together. And she smiles at you with these, like, perfect white teeth, and says:

(as **blonde woman**): Cute place!

Ali (as **Samantha**): [warily] Hi.

Jack (as **blonde woman**): Hi! I'm Lorelei. What's your name?

Ali (as **Samantha**): It's Sam. Nice to meet you. Hi.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Hi! [laughs lightly] So, you're not called...are you called Sam Snoopy? Or is this, like...is Snoopy's, like, just a cute name?

Ali (as **Samantha**): No, it's just, uh, the guy I got it from.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Oh, I see. I love it! I love the vibe! I love the vibe. It's like...

Ali (as **Samantha**): Mm.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): It's chill here, right? The no-mic open night is really...it's great. Where did you get that idea?

Ali (as **Samantha**): From not having a microphone. Can I....?

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Oh! [laughs] Yeah, okay. Cute.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Can I get you something?

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Yeah, what do you got? I'm in the mood for something light, but, you know.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Right.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Really, just, whatever you got, you know.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Sure, sure.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Do you know what a martini is? [Ali laughs]

Ali (as **Samantha**): You know, we've had trouble getting olives down here.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Oh! Wow.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Yeah.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Okay.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Have some, um...

Ali: [quietly] What's in a martini?

Jack: It's, uh, gin or vodka...

Austin: Gin.

Ali: Yeah, it's gin and, uh...

Jack: And then vermouth, dry vermouth.

Ali: I, you know, ol' gin pickleback if you'd like.

Dre: Ugh.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Wow! Yeah. Yeah! [Ali and Austin laugh] You know what? Go for it.

Austin: Mm...

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Go for it. Let's live a little, right, Sam?

Ali (as **Samantha**): Huh?

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Live a little, you know? I'm saying I'm gonna live a little by having the gin pickle.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Mm, mm-hmm.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): How much do I owe you?

Jack: Takes out her purse.

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: Yep.

(as **Samantha**): Um...where're you from?

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Mm?

Ali (as **Samantha**): Where are you coming in from?

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Oh, I live in the city.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Oh...cool.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Just taking a little trip down. You know, seeing the world?

Ali (as **Samantha**): Just a trip, huh?

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Well, I'm from here, you know? So it's not like a tourist thing, but yeah, seeing out and about, getting a little outside of my comfort zone.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Mm. [Ali laughs] I'm afraid I might have to ask you to leave.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): What?

Ali (as **Samantha**): You can take the drink to go, if you'd like. And if you were

planning on staying, that would be a different conversation, but...

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Well, what do you mean, planning on staying? Also, wait, why do I have to leave? I thought we were having a great time. [Ali laughs]

Dre: I told you your micless mic night was great and everything!

Ali (as **Samantha**): Lorelei, you seem like a very lovely woman. Uh, I might be one of the only people in this room who might pay you that compliment, but I understand that you're trying to be friendly here. But if your intention is to go home tonight, then I am gonna save this pickle juice for someone who needs it, if you catch my drift.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Okay. Well, can you recommend, like, a hotel? Or do you have a room or something? I'd be happy to pay.

Ali (as **Samantha**): [laughs quietly] Yeah, I don't know that your money's any good here.

Austin: One of your regulars—you don't know her real name, you just know that she goes by Cheddy, C-H-E-D-D-Y.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Great name.

Austin: You can see her eying up Lorelei. Was that—? Her name was Lorelei?

Jack: Yeah.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Right? Like, hey, this might be some...you know, the money's no good for you, but the money might be good for Cheddy, who maybe deals with people who still take money sometimes, right? Cheddy is very much someone who would love to get out of this shithole and return to society, maybe came from society. Maybe Cheddy's parents

were part of the Society Intact, and Cheddy wound up here at some point and kind of, like...you know, is perfectly...you know, picks up a shift or two. Has washed plenty of dishes, has made plenty of funnel cake. [Dre laughs] Has done the work to be part of the community but doesn't want to *live* here. You know, this isn't home. And you can feel that Cheddy is eyeing up Lorelei, like, "How do I take that money from her? How direct do I have to be?" This is someone...someone has visited a marketplace, and it's Lorelei. Lorelei didn't realize it, but Lorelei just walked into the Varied Scarcities. [Ali laughs quietly]

Dre: Mm.

Austin: And I'm using the move...I'm using the move either "show someone acting foolishly out of need or desperation," or "introduce a traitorous individual." We'll see how it goes. [Ali laughs] But you get that sense, right? This is your space. You understand how this goes. You're not being ill-informed when you say, "You should get out of here before things go bad for you," to Lorelei. Cheddy is someone who will pounce and might pounce in a very friendly way, you know? Might pounce in a like, "Oh, I know a place you can stay for the night," and might genuinely take her to a place she can stay for the night and then take way more money from her than she thinks she's going to be spending, you know? Or might knife her in an alley. I don't know. We haven't really spent a lot of time with Cheddy, you know?

Ali: [laughs] Sure. Sure. Sure. Yeah, and I don't know that Sam is the character to really impede that, right?

Austin: [chuckles] Mm-hmm.

Ali: She's a character who, like, wants to set a boundary and sort of inform Lorelei of, like, the naivety [Austin: "Mm-hmm"] of being like, "Well, you know, I'm just out for a walk." [laughs] So, I don't know...you know, if the social function, if one of my social functions is to provide a thriving social scene or companionship...

Austin: Mm.

Ali: You know, I have done this, in a roundabout way, and like...I don't want to make it sound like she's a cruel person, by being like, "Well, you know, the outcome of this situation is not mine to determine." [Jack chuckles] But again, it was like, you can either leave my bar or, you know, go see what's going on with Cheddy, but that's sort of like, "You don't have to go home, but you can't stay here," sort of situation?

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Which is a chronic opinion among bartenders. [laughs]

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Mm.

Ali: So, you know, the "I've washed my hands of this thing," does not seem outside of what would be done in this scene.

Jack: Yeah. Then, I think that Lorelei probably picks up on what Cheddy is putting down, at least in terms of...I don't know, is Cheddy like, "Hey, I can help you out"?

Austin: Yeah, 100% that. Yeah.

(as **Cheddy**): Oh, hey, I overheard— sorry, I was over sharing a drink, and I overheard you're looking for a place to stay, huh?

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Yeah, just for a couple of nights. Just for...

Austin (as **Cheddy**): Couple of nights, couple of nights.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Start out tonight.

Austin (as **Cheddy**): Start out tonight.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Maybe for a couple of nights.

Austin (as **Cheddy**): Yeah. Yeah, no, I know a perfect place. The view is incredible. Let me tell you.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Tell me about it.

Austin (as **Cheddy**): Oh, you got the back bay on one side. You see the beauty of nature. It's trembling, awe-inspiring. The other side, you can see out into the high life, you know? You see the way things are over on the other side of the tracks, so to speak, and it's just beautiful. It's the perfect— you're kind of in between both worlds.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Wow, yeah.

Austin (as **Cheddy**): You're kind of moving. You're shaking.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Yeah.

Austin (as **Cheddy**): And it's very affordable. What did you, uh...tell me, is this like a "just the fries" vacation for you, or is this more like a cheeseburger deluxe? Because I have a couple places. You know, that's one place that I could take you to, but, you know, a number of places.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Well, I don't know that I want to go as far as the cheeseburger deluxe, but I might be able to go for, like, the—

Austin (as **Cheddy**): Right, right.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Well, no, hold on. I didn't finish.

Austin (as **Cheddy**): Hmm.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): I might be able to go for the cheeseburger, you know?

Austin (as **Cheddy**): Just the cheeseburger. Cheeseburger and the—

Jack (as **Lorelei**): More than the fries, but a little less than the cheeseburger deluxe.

Austin (as **Cheddy**): Right. Not the deluxe. Right, right.

Ali (as **Samantha**): No coleslaw, is what you're saying.

Austin (as **Cheddy**): No coleslaw. No pickle.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): No coleslaw is what I'm saying.

Austin (as **Cheddy**): [chuckles] No pickle.

Jack (as **Lorelei**): No.

Austin (as **Cheddy**): Well, I mean...

Jack (as **Lorelei**): [laughs]

Austin (as **Cheddy**): Now, listen. Now, listen. How about this? How about this: you let...uh, sorry, Lorelei was your name, right?

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Lorelei Lake, yes.

Austin (as **Cheddy**): Lorelei Lake. Beautiful name, Lorelei Lake. How about this: I'll get Lorelei Lake settled away. You let her have the gin pickle back. You put it on my tab. You know I'm good for it. Right, Sam?

Austin: Smile.

Ali (as **Samantha**): You're good for it?

Austin (as **Cheddy**): Yeah.

Ali (as **Samantha**): You're gonna be here next week to, uh, wash dishes?

Austin (as **Cheddy**): You know I'm gonna be— I'll be here next week, for sure.

Ali (as **Samantha**): [unconvinced] Uh huh.

Austin (as **Cheddy**): Was I here this week? Was I here last week?

Ali: [laughs] I'm trying to dance around how to say, like, I don't know that you're going to

be here next week if you have...

Austin: Uh huh. Money.

Jack: [laughs] Lake money.

Ali: This woman's purse in your pocket.

Austin: [laughs] Uh huh, uh huh. Mm-hmm?

Ali: How's the funny way to say that? How's the way to gesture towards that? Um...

Ali (as **Samantha**): You know, I thought I heard you were saving up for that vacation. Maybe Lorelei here can tell you some good places to go.

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Austin (as **Cheddy**): I bet she could. You know what? Lorelei, have you been to other places? You have suggestions for doing a little tour?

Jack (as **Lorelei**): Of course! We could sit and talk. Absolutely.

Austin (as **Cheddy**): But the thing is, you know, I couldn't do a tour next week, because, of course, I'm booked next week, but I would be able to do the tour after that, so, Sam, you shouldn't have any worries. Give the lady her pickle back.

Ali: Just, like, sucking teeth, pouring pickle juice into a glass. [Jack, Austin, and Ali laugh]

Austin: And she gives you just the most, like, "thank you for leading this fly into my web" look you've ever seen.

Ali: [laughs] Great.

Jack: Great.

Ali: I don't know— yeah, that's the scene, I think.

Austin: Should we go to the Magic—? I mean, that's scene, yeah. I don't know that we need to...

Jack: Lorelei, like, picks up her purse.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: Clips the thing shut. [Jack and Ali laugh]

Game Tournament [1:38:20]

Austin: Uh huh. Magic tournament.

Jack: Is it *Magic: The Gathering*? Yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Let's fucking go.

Austin: What's the vibe?

Jack: I mean, it's fucking great, right? [Austin laughs quietly] Like, Magic is a good game.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And in the same way that, I don't know, kicking a soccer ball around is a good game, [Austin: "Mm-hmm"] I feel like even in the post-apocalypse, if you have a *Magic: The Gathering* set and you have people who have come and chosen to sit down and play it, they'd be like, "Yeah, this rules." [Ali and Dre laugh]

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Game's still good, huh? Game works.

Austin: [chuckles] I mean, especially with the added restrictions of, like, there are only

these cards. It's only the cards we have here. There are not more coming. Or like, maybe sometimes someone will find extra cards that get added to the set, you know, that's available. But no one's allowed to—

Jack: Oh my god. It's so exciting, but sometimes it's just a blue land, and it's like, yeah, okay, it doesn't actually meaningfully change anything. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Oh, yeah, put it— yeah, exactly. Or what if there's like...what if, for a year, there was a real discrepancy? Someone left with 30 blue lands. They fucking, they left the enclave, and it bottomed out the blue economy for the blue decks, you know?

Jack: [laughs] Yeah, yeah.

Austin: And like, finally. We're slowly putting it back together, one blue card at a time, you know?

Jack: Right.

Austin: Yeah, so what's—?

Jack: Red aggro decks are very popular, because you can just get the game over and done with in a few cards.

Austin: Right, because you don't have the blue, and you don't have— yeah, exactly, that too. [Dre laughs] Yes, yes, yes. Exactly. Uh, is...are you playing, Robyn? Or are you just watching?

Dre: Oh, no, I am watching very intently and recording every move.

Austin: Mm, mm-hmm. There's someone there who is, I think...who also seems to be out of place, just an observer. He's fairly short; you know, I'd say 5'6", somewhere in there, right? Checkered suit, red bow tie. You know, kind of very square haircut. What's the— what are the glasses I'm thinking of? Uh...horn-rimmed glasses, basically, right?

Dre: Okay, yeah.

Austin: You know, big circular frames. And he's just standing next to you, watching. How tall are you, Robyn?

Dre: Oh, like 5...I don't know, 5'8"?

Austin: 5'8". Okay. I'm actually... [chuckles] I'm actually...I'll explain what my little...I'm using a very roundabout way of getting this character to this scene, but I'll explain that in a second. He looks up to you, and he goes:

(as **observer**): You know this game?

Dre (as **Robyn**): Uh...

Austin (as **observer**): I've never seen this game.

Dre (as **Robyn**): I've heard of it. It's kind of...are you not from around here? It's pretty popular around these parts.

Austin (as **observer**): I'm, uh, visiting. You know, I'm passing through, doing a little work.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Okay.

Austin (as **observer**): Doing a little work. Uh, are you from around here?

Dre (as **Robyn**): Uh, yeah.

Austin (as **observer**): Yeah. So, how's the game work?

Dre (as **Robyn**): Oh, um...I would not be the person to ask.

Dre: Is very trying to, like, quickly exit this conversation so they can continue focusing on all the moves and stuff.

Austin (as **observer**): Seems very detailed, very complex game, to me.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Yeah, um...

Austin (as **observer**): Seems a very...lots of maneuvers.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Yeah. No, it's...I'm trying to learn.

Austin (as **observer**): You don't like to play that much.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Well, I don't know how. I'm trying to learn. That's why I'm writing all this stuff down.

Austin (as **observer**): You're paying attention. Yeah.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Yeah.

Austin: Looking at...like, kind of peeking at your notebooks a little bit here.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin (as **observer**): What was your name?

Dre (as **Robyn**): Oh. Uh, Robyn. What's yours?

Austin (as **observer**): Vincent. Vincent Ketchle.

Austin: And then like:

(as **Vincent**): Uh, one second.

Austin: Reaches into his suit jacket, and you can feel, for a moment, if you're— I mean, are you paying attention to him, or are you just paying attention to the game and ignoring him?

Dre: Oh.

Austin: The camera certainly notices something.

Dre: Yeah, no, I'm ignoring him. I'm paying attention to the game.

Austin: Uh, he has a gun. You know, underarm holster.

Dre: Oh, cool.

Austin: But he reaches in past that or maybe above that into an inside suit jacket and hands you a card, and it says, “Vincent Ketchle,” K-E-T-C-H-L-E, and then underneath that, it says, “Catch-all capture and retrieval and return.”

Dre: Oh.

Austin: Very wordy. And he goes:

(as **Vincent**): Vincent Ketchle. Nice to meetcha.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Oh yeah, nice to meet you.

Austin (as **Vincent**): I'm here on business, you know? Why don't you start playing? If you want to learn how to play, I find the best way to— I don't take notes. I'm not a note taker. I find the best way to learn things is by doing 'em, you know?

Dre (as **Robyn**): Oh, I'm a note taker. [Jack laughs quietly]

Austin (as **Vincent**): That work for you? You take notes?

Dre (as **Robyn**): Yes. Yeah.

Austin (as **Vincent**): Huh. Interesting. Can you take a note for me? I'm looking for something. You know, I do, um... Vincent Ketchle, catch-all capture, retrieval, and return. I'm kind of an independent contractor, you know? Skunks and gophers and wolves, and, you know, malfunctioning drones and AWOL soldiers and things like that.

Dre (as **Robyn**): That's a lot of stuff.

Austin (as **Vincent**): Yeah, I bring 'em back. The, uh... I'm looking for—

Dre: Uh, quickly, I stick his business card into a piece of gum that's stuck in my hair.

Austin (as **Vincent**): [scoffs, unamused] That's very funny. That's very funny.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Oh, no, like, I'm holding onto it for later. That wasn't...I wasn't trying to be rude.

Austin (as **Vincent**): Okay. You have a unique way about you, that's all. I guess it's up there. I'm not gonna lose it, huh? You're not gonna lose it. Sure. The, uh...the thing I want you to write down. I'm looking for a grocery truck. Have you seen a grocery truck around here?

Dre (as **Robyn**): Uh...

Austin (as **Vincent**): Someone lost it, you see.

Dre: I'm going to double check my moves before I answer here. Hmm. I'm just trying to figure out if I would want to use any of these moves or if any of them would apply.

Austin: Totally. A thing that we didn't note, by the way, is that everybody has these Ask questions under the Moves lists, and it's worth saying out loud the thing that's written about them in the book, which I am rapidly reapproaching. [Dre chuckles] That I read moments ago, and yet, somehow have missed. Wait, let me just search for the word "ask" again and hit Find. Of course, the game's name is *Dream Askew*, which means "ask" shows up a lot.

Jack: Oh, yes.

Austin: I found it earlier, and I was reading it. Oh, here it is. Nope. Nope. Doo-doo-doo. The short answer is: those are things that we can ask, and if it makes sense for our characters to understand the solution, that can be stuff that we have deduced in game, basically, you know?

Dre: Gotcha. So, are these questions that I would ask of you? Or are these questions you ask me?

Austin: You would ask those questions.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: Those are the types of things your character would— ah, here we go. “Some moves on each list are italicized questions. While they’re questions about the characters and the story, they’re always asked from one player to another, with an honest answer given in response, even if their character remains cagey about it. The answer is knowledge that your character deduces, intuit, or manages to get out of someone through conversation.” So, for instance, you could ask...I’m not going to read your questions, but, you know, you have those things, right?

Dre: Sure, sure, sure. Yeah.

Austin: So. And my question that, I guess, is not necessarily clear here...I guess it says they’re moves on the list, so they would be moves, so you could do those things [**Dre:** “Yeah”] to get tokens or spend tokens, you know?

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: I have a token now. I could spend a token to ask another character, “What’s your character’s greatest fear?” and my character would then come to learn that, even if you were being cagy, because I’ve spent the token to do it, you know?

Dre: Yeah, yeah. Um...okay, before I answer: at this point, have I noticed anything about these moves that are happening?

Austin: Uh, about these— oh! I don’t know. I don’t know.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: Someone should play a move from the Digital Realm or the Psychic Maelstrom or...you could tell me. Did you? Is it the same?

Dre: Um...I’m going to say—

Austin: I was introducing a very interesting premise, but I was not...

Dre: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: I'm not going to insist on a...yeah.

Dre: Yeah. I'm going to say that this conversation is happening right as three moves out of the, like, eight move sequence have started happening.

Austin: Gotcha.

Dre: So, I'm very torn.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Dre: Because I think I'm paying enough attention to know that, like, yeah, I know who has a fucking grocery truck.

Austin: Right.

Dre: I don't like them because they have it. But I don't know if I don't like them well enough to, like, turn them in to a person who seems very shady and from out of town.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Dre: Um...oh, you know what? Okay, yeah. I do want to spend a token.

Austin: Mm.

Dre: I want to jury-rig a temporary solution while under duress. [Austin laughs]

Jack: Oh, perfect.

Austin: Perfect. Perfect.

Dre: And I'm going to say:

(as **Robyn**): Wait. Hold on, you said grocery truck. Um, I don't know if it's a grocery—hmm. I've seen a truck. I've got a truck, actually, back in my garage somebody asked me to work on.

Austin (as **Vincent**): Back in your garage? Yeah.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Yeah, it looks like it got painted over, so maybe it coulda...what size are we talking about?

Austin (as **Vincent**): It's standard size, you know?

Dre (as **Robyn**): Well, I don't know. What's the standard size of a truck?

Austin (as **Vincent**): You know Potato Potat.to? It's one of those trucks.

Dre: Uh, would I know Potato Potat.to? Probably, right?

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, you know that that's the truck you wish you could fix.

Dre: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, right.

Austin: So.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Oh! Oh, yeah, it is— okay. Well, listen. Why don't I take you back to my shop? We can, uh, check out this truck, see if it's what you're looking for, and then, um, you know, go from there?

Austin (as **Vincent**): Sounds great. Let's watch the game, I guess. And then, once it's over—

Dre (as **Robyn**): Oh. You seemed like you're in a hurry.

Austin (as **Vincent**): Oh, do you want to go now?

Dre (as **Robyn**): Yeah. I don't know how to play.

Austin (as **Vincent**): Let's go now. Sounds good.

Austin: I thought you were spending a token so you could...I thought the solution was going to be letting you pay attention to the...

Dre: Oh, no. No, no, no, no, no.

Austin: Gotcha.

Dre: The temporary solution I'm jury-rigging is I want to take this person back to my garage.

Austin: Uh huh.

Dre: And then have my ghost Knots possess him.

Austin: Oh my god. Okay, well, how are you doing *that*? [Dre laughs] That's the...

Jack: That is two steps. [laughs]

Austin: That is two steps.

Dre: Okay, yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay. Well, I guess the solution, then, is I want him, like, physically bound up in a way.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah, I mean, I guess you...you're spending the token to jury-rig a temporary solution.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: The solution here is getting him out of here and getting him— I'm fine with zooming out like that. Yeah.

Dre: Well, yeah, so maybe I just take him back to my garage, and I just hit him over the head with a wrench, and I knock him out, and I tie him up.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: Oh my god.

Austin: God. Yeah, I mean, it is...you know, sees the truck and is like, "That could be it..." Clank! Fall over.

Dre: Probably gun clatters to the ground as he falls over.

Austin: Gun clatters to the ground, 100%.

Dre: Pick that up! [laughs]

Austin: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yeah. I mean, it's very clear that he...I mean, he probably also has a phone on him, very similar to the one that Already has, [Dre: "Sure"] in that it has...it's not tied to a particular service. Are you going through his stuff at all? What are you doing?

Dre: Um, no, I think...I mean, probably eventually, but honestly, I think the way to frame and end this scene is what you said.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Dre: He says, like, "Oh, yeah, that could be," and then, clunk!

Austin: Uh huh.

Dre: And then, as he, like, hits the ground, the phone and the gun clatter to the ground.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: And then, I think, somewhere, you hear a mug fall over and break.

Austin: Ah.

Dre: And I just scream:

(as **Robyn**): Well, what the fuck did you want me to do, Knots?

Austin: [laughs] A thing about the phone is it also has a sticker printer on it, and the sticker that's been printed and stuck onto the back of the phone is, like, a Game Boy camera photo of Already.

Dre: Gotcha.

Jack: Oh, wow. Great.

Austin: Speaking of Already, how quickly are you going for this dentist's office? Or are you...what are you doing tonight? Presumably, you were not at the big game, otherwise you would have just been seen by Vincent.

Jack: Yeah, no. Although, I think I do get, like, a drink to steady my nerves at Sam's.

Austin: Oh.

Jack: At Snoopy's.

Austin: Snoopy's.

Dre: Can I ask an important question?

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Mm.

Dre: About your phone? I know, like, you can make calls. Is there a method for which people like us could reach you via that phone?

Jack: Not unless you have a phone, [**Dre:** "Okay"] which I don't think you do.

Dre: Well. [laughs]

Jack: Oh, well, yeah. You would need to know my number.

Dre: Sure, unless it's saved in this phone.

Jack: Unless it is saved inside Ketchle's phone.

Dre: So, yeah, I would say: why don't you do this scene, and then, at some point when it would be interesting, I will figure out how to use this phone? [laughs]

Jack: Okay, yeah. Excellent. Um...yeah, I think it's just mid— we come in midway through conversation, and Already is sitting at the bar and says:

(as **Already**): Why isn't the mic working?

Ali (as **Samantha**): It's in Robyn's house. Workshop.

Jack (as **Already**): Robyn's got it?

Ali (as **Samantha**): Yeah, they had to take it apart.

Jack (as **Already**): [crosstalk] Is it broken?

Ali (as **Samantha**): Eh, well.

Jack (as **Already**): Yeah, sounds like Robyn.

Ali (as **Samantha**): There was a little bit of feedback.

Jack (as **Already**): Oh, okay. Yeah. Well, I suppose that Calvin's pretty, uh— how long have— is he always like that?

Ali (as **Samantha**): Old Calvin next door?

Jack (as **Already**): Yeah, Calvin next door.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Yeah, well, you know, he's got his thing.

Jack (as **Already**): [sighs]

Ali (as **Samantha**): Did you try to play one of those...you try a round?

Jack (as **Already**): I can't. My mind's not— I can't really think about that tonight. I just got back from seeing your girlfriend.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Mm. Mm, we're not...

Dre: Mm. [laughs]

Jack (as **Already**): Oh, you— I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Yeah.

Jack (as **Already**): I'm new here.

Ali (as **Samantha**): No, no, no. [Ali laughs]

Jack (as **Already**): She wants me to get rid of my phone.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Mm. Wait, why? Well... [Austin and Dre laugh]

Austin: God. That feeling when your ex has a thought, and your instinct is like, “Well, that must be wrong,” and then you're like, “Well... [Ali and Dre laugh] I don't know, maybe— eh, okay.”

Jack (as **Already**): It's fucked up. So, I used to drive for Potato Potat.to, and...

Ali (as **Samantha**): Oh, right, right.

Jack (as **Already**): They... [sighs]

Jack: I'm like a pickle juice martini deep.

(as **Already**): They, uh...

Ali: [laughs] I was just going to say I'm preparing your regular, so I'm preparing a second pickle juice martini.

Jack: [laughs] You're like, “This is the second time I've made one of these tonight.” [Ali laughs quietly]

(as **Already**): They want the phone back and the truck back, and I think they're gonna come and get them, and so, obviously, when I told this to Providence, she said, “Get rid of the phone.” She said, “Throw it in the—” Well, so, first she said, “Throw it in the water.”

Ali (as **Samantha**): Mm-hmm.

Jack (as **Already**): Aaah, she's probably right, but... [sighs] Well, and then she said, “Go to this dentist's up on the mainland.” She did that thing with the Yellow Pages.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Oh, right, right.

Jack (as **Already**): Ah, but I don't want to. I mean, I don't know what to do. Like, look, if I throw the phone in the water, the phone's signal has been receiving it as being here, right? Not like Snoopy's, but like, here in town for the last week. So of course they're gonna come by here anyway, so that's just a waste of the phone at that point, right?

Ali (as **Samantha**): But what do you use the phone for?

Austin: That's what I'm saying! [Dre laughs]

Jack (as **Already**): To make calls. [Ali laughs]

Ali (as **Samantha**): Who are you calling? [Austin and Jack laugh]

Jack (as **Already**): If I needed to make calls, I could make calls. But I don't...but...

Ali (as **Samantha**): So you're trying to keep a foot in.

Jack (as **Already**): To having a phone? Yeah, of course I am, Sam!

Ali (as **Samantha**): Well, okay, but I...

Jack (as **Already**): These things don't grow on trees.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Yeah, but who are you...if you were in trouble, what is the phone gonna do?

Dre: Oh, man. I think, at that point, the printer starts printing on your phone. [Ali laughs]

Jack (as **Already**): Fuck!

Dre: And it's just— it is, like, zoomed in Robyn's face, because they're staring at the Game Boy camera on the phone, trying to figure out how it works.

Austin: [laughs] Ah!

Jack (as **Already**): That's Robyn.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Does Robyn have a phone? [Austin and Dre laugh]

Jack (as **Already**): Does Robyn have a phone? Should we call them?

Ali (as **Samantha**): Well, not on that thing. That's why you gotta get rid of this thing!

Jack (as **Already**): Wait, what? Why?

Ali (as **Samantha**): Well, because if you call them on the Popayto— the Potato phone. [muffled laughter] If you call them on the Potato phone, they're gonna know about Robyn.

Jack (as **Already**): [quietly, somberly] Right.

Ali (as **Samantha**): The truck, you know, I don't know about the truck, but the phone is—

Dre: Another picture prints out. It's just, like, the ceiling. [Ali laughs quietly]

Jack (as **Already**): Are they okay?

Ali (as **Samantha**): Call them.

Jack (as **Already**): Okay. Okay.

Ali (as **Samantha**): No, wait, no! Not on the phone! God. [Ali laugh quietly]

Jack (as **Already**): What, what, what? You gotta give me some good advice!

Ali (as **Samantha**): Can you recognize the ceiling?

Jack (as **Already**): Can I recognize the ceiling? It's like 200 pixels.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Go there.

Jack (as **Already**): No, I can't recognize the ceiling. [Ali laughs]

Austin: [laughs] A Game Boy camera phone picture of the ceiling!

Jack (as **Already**): I'm gonna go by their workshop.

Austin: Another unfamiliar ceiling.

Ali: It's literally just, like, a white photo, right?

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Ali: Like, we think that Robyn has disintegrated, at this point.

Austin: Uh huh. [Dre and Ali laugh]

Jack (as **Already**): I'm gonna go to their place. I'm gonna go to their place. I just don't...

Ali (as **Samantha**): Yeah, maybe it's just Knots fucking around.

Jack (as **Already**): Maybe it's...I don't want to get rid of the phone.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Oh, but then the potato people are gonna know— [quietly] fuck, man. [sighs] Yeah. What was this dentist thing?

Jack (as **Already**): I don't fucking know. She just says: go north to the dentist's with some sort of egret or something on it. Like, it's like a tall bird. It lives in the wetlands.

Ali (as **Samantha**): Well, when are you going?

Jack (as **Already**): I don't want to go, because it's gonna— I'm gonna have to get rid of the phone!

Ali (as **Samantha**): Well, meet me when I close up, and we'll go.

Jack (as **Already**): Okay. Okay. I'm gonna go check on Robyn. I'll meet you when you close.

Ali (as **Samantha**): See if Robyn wants to come.

Jack (as **Already**): Yeah, okay. All right.

Ali: There we go. [laughs]

Austin: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm! Mm-hmm.

Jack: Hmm. Where now?

Robyn's Workshop [1:58:24]

Austin: Oh, I have a thing for going back to Robyn really quick.

Jack: Yeah, totally.

Austin: Robyn, you've tied this person up now, presumably?

Dre: Mm-hmm. Yep.

Austin: You've fucked around with his phone. What are you doing when there's a knock, like a bang on the door? Or like a...actually, I don't— can the void kid bang on the door?

Dre: Sure!

Austin: Yeah, okay. Bang, bang, bang! Bang, bang, bang!

Dre (as **Robyn**): [quietly] Oh, god damnit.

Dre: I'm going to say that the void kid has, like, a specific bang.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Dre: It's, like, a fun little rhythm they do.

Austin: Yeah. Like a “shave and a haircut,” but distinct.

Dre: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. So, I just kind of swing open the door and be like:

Dre (as **Robyn**): Come on. Get in. Quick, quick, quick, quick, quick, quick, quick, quick, quick. Come on, come on, come on, come on, come on.

Austin: Quickly runs in. Do you already have an image in your mind for this void kid?

Dre: Hmm.

Austin: Because I have a suggestion that’s very silly.

Dre: Yeah, please. I would love it.

Austin: All right. This kid is from a...this kid looks like what if instead of being animals...what if there was a world where, instead of *Pokémon* being about animals, [Dre: “Sure”] it was about different types of kids?

Jack: Uh...what? [Dre laughs]

Austin: You’re not throwing them. But like, they’re animal— they have, like, powers and animal-like elements, so like, instead of Pikachu being a little electric rat, it would be like a person who had a little electric tail and mouse ears and big red cheeks. Do you know what I mean?

Dre: Sure.

Jack: Sort of.

Austin: And this is: what if a little kid, like an 11-year-old, was a Mareep from *Pokémon*?

Dre: Okay.

Austin: Big, curly hair. These, like, antennae almost, coming out of their head. I’m going to post— do you know what a Mareep is? Am I...?

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Dre: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Okay. Mareep's great. So, like, imagine a Mareep, but it's a person. So, like, you know, big fluffy hair. Big weird antennas. A little electrical energy moving around them at all times. And this is just the types of people that exist in this world.

Dre: Sure.

Austin: And this kid's name is...something that someone else is going to say in a second, and it's not me. And, as always, you know that they are here because they need your maintenance. You need to maintain them so they stay alive?

Dre: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Austin: And they're losing...their signal is losing, like, focus or whatever, right?

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: They're becoming more video and less physical in this moment, and every time this happens— it's not every time. It's not every time, but it feels like it happens constantly. It's one of those things, you know what I mean? Where it's like...

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: It actually goes months without happening, but then it happens, like, five times a year, so it feels like it basically happens constantly. They're supposed to come by for regular maintenance when they're at, like, 30% of tracking loss or whatever, but they always wait until they're at like 70% tracking loss. [laughs quietly]

Dre: That's the worst.

Austin: Which makes it harder to understand them. It makes it harder to see them. Their body gets all weird and, you know, VHS distorted. And I don't know what— you have to tell me what maintenance looks like. Is this something you can do on the signal

raw, or do you have to go somewhere to tune them right?

Dre: Hmm.

Austin: I don't know what it looks like, and also, I need a name for this person, who's a little sheep kid.

Dre: Uh, Quincy is the name that came to me.

Austin: Quincy. Love it. Shoutout to Quincy. I think Quincy is they/them?

Dre: Sure.

Austin (as **Quincy**): Robyn! Robyn. Robyn. Robyn. Robyn!

Dre (as **Robyn**): Yeah, no, I know. I know.

Austin (as **Quincy**): Robyyyn!

Dre (as **Robyn**): [impatient] Yes! God. Okay.

Austin (as **Quincy**): [whining] I'm losing signal!

Dre (as **Robyn**): No, I know!

Austin (as **Quincy**): Can I use the bathroom?

Dre (as **Robyn**): Yes!

Austin: Runs past the tied up bounty hunter, [**Dre:** "Sure"] without noticing or without responding and then slams the door shut, and then, from behind the bathroom door, is like:

(as **Quincy**): [distantly] Who's that guy you have tied up? [shouting louder] Who's that guy you have tied up?

Dre (as **Robyn**): It's a bad person!

Austin (as **Quincy**): Why do you have a bad person tied up?

Dre (as **Robyn**): Because he was gonna hurt someone!

Austin: Hear the water rushing, and then they open the door and step back out.

(as **Quincy**): Who were they gonna hurt?

Dre (as **Robyn**): [sighs] Already.

Austin: Do I know Already? Or am I confused by you saying—

Jack: Probably not. I'm new, right?

Austin: Yeah, you're newer.

Dre: Yeah. Oh, maybe you don't know Already, but maybe you know Already's dog, because you're a kid.

Austin: I'm a kid. Yeah, the dog.

Dre: And you would definitely remember a dog.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's true.

Dre (as **Robyn**): It's, uh...you like Duke, right? It's the person that Duke stays with.

Austin (as **Quincy**): Oh, Duke's dad!

Dre (as **Robyn**): Yeah, Duke's dad. See, I couldn't let—

Austin: Duke's parent. I guess Already is they/them.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: I think this kid is going to say Duke's dad.

Dre: Sure.

Austin: Quincy— Quincy, they/them, misgendering Already, they/them, [Dre laughs] because of preconceived notions about dog parentage.

Jack: Ain't that the worst?

Dre: Hey, they/thems can be dads.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Yeah, true.

Jack: Hey. [laughs quietly] A they/them can be a dad.

Austin: A they/them can be a dog dad, 100%. [laughs quietly]

Dre: Yeah! God.

(as **Robyn**): Yeah, so I had to tie him up!

Austin (as **Quincy**): Is someone gonna— what are you gonna do with him?

Dre (as **Robyn**): I'm trying to— he had this phone.

Austin (as **Quincy**): Is that his gun?!

Dre (as **Robyn**): Yeah, he had a gun! It's fucked up! I shouldn't say that in front of you.

Austin (as **Quincy**): Don't say bad words.

Dre (as **Robyn**): I'm sorry! I'm stressed out.

Austin (as **Quincy**): Mom used to tell me, "Don't say bad words." That was— she said, [imitating] "Don't say bad words! Don't say them!"

Dre (as **Robyn**): Okay. All right, well, how bad is it, Quince?

Austin: Holds up their right hand in a way that then, almost like looking for a signal with a phone, you know what I mean? And as their hand goes past where, like, 3:00 would be on a clock face, their whole body except their arm vanishes. [Jack chuckles]

Dre (as **Robyn**): Oh, god. Okay, it's bad.

Austin: And then, when their hand's up there, they do almost like a sock puppet, but with their hand, and they go:

(as **Quincy**): [funny voice] Pretty bad, Jack.

Dre (as **Robyn**): [laughs] Oh, that's good. That's pretty— okay, yeah, okay. Fuck!

Austin: Which was an impression of, like, a late night talk show host that you have no idea what the fuck they're referencing, but they do this bit a lot with their hands, where they put up their hand and do a little sock puppet voice, and they're doing, like, Johnny Carson, but they don't know who they're doing.

Dre: Sure.

Austin: That's just the type of gag— you know, it's like the sort of gag that's written for parents who are watching the show, you know what I mean?

Dre: Yeah. Um, I guess we didn't establish this.

Austin: Mm-hmm?

Dre: Already, is your truck at my garage?

Jack: No.

Dre: Okay.

Jack: It is not. It is hidden somewhere outside of the enclave.

Dre: Okay, but there was— okay. Okay. I do work on vehicles, so I'm going to say there's, like, a hover racer here, right?

Austin: Mm, mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Dre: I'm going to use one of my regular moves, which is to fix or make something

partially or shoddily.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Dre: I'm going to— this guy that I have tied up, I'm gonna throw him into the back seat of a hover racer, or I guess it probably just has a front seat. It just has a front seat. You don't need a four-door hover racer.

Austin: No. No, that's true.

Dre: And I'm just gonna weld the door shut.

Jack: Whoa!

Austin: [laughs quietly] Yeah, okay.

Dre: And...let's see.

Austin: Is that around the time that Robyn shows up?

Dre: Boy, I hope so. That'd be great. [laughs]

Jack: No, that Already shows up.

Austin: Sorry, that Already shows up. Robyn is Dre's character, right.

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: Um, I don't...do we want to play this scene? Is there information here that it's worth getting on screen? Or...?

Austin: Wait, which scene?

Jack: The— because, I mean, Already is just going to say— oh, I suppose the having the phone...

Austin: You don't want to place the scene of Robyn just welded a bounty hunter looking for you into a car?

Jack: Yeah, that's true. That's true. [Dre and Jack laugh] My brain was still on the, "I had the same conversation with two exes."

Austin: Mm-mm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Jack (as **Already**): Already—

Jack: No, I'm Already. You're— [Austin and Dre laugh]

Dre: Who's on first.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack (as **Already**): Robyn, are you okay?

Dre (as **Robyn**): Oh, Jesus, you scared the— um, no!

Jack (as **Already**): What are you doing?

Dre (as **Robyn**): I'm welding a man into a car that is here to kill you with a gun!

Jack (as **Already**): Fuck!

Austin (as **Quincy**): And I'm Quincy! Don't use bad words!

Jack (as **Already**): Hi. Hi.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Quincy, sometimes adults say bad words when things are very stressful.

Austin (as **Quincy**): Why don't I get to say bad words when things get very stressful?

Dre (as **Robyn**): You could say a bad word right now, and I won't tell anybody.

Austin (as **Quincy**): Mom said not to say bad words! I'm not gonna say bad words.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Okay. Um...okay. Already, this person was here. They had your phone— well, not your phone, but one of the phones like you have.

Jack (as **Already**): I was gonna say. You sent me a picture on a—

Dre (as **Robyn**): Oh!

Jack (as **Already**): Oh, I see. So, you must have got his...yeah. Yeah, that was me.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Yeah. He also had—

Austin (as **Quincy**): Do you have games on that phone? [Dre laughs]

Jack (as **Already**): I think so, but the battery goes down really quick. [quietly] Oh my god. I'm not gonna do this. [louder] Uh, maybe. We'll look at them...if I can get the games working, I'll show—

Austin (as **Quincy**): [crosstalk] Who's Maybe? [Dre laughs]

Jack (as **Already**): If I can get the games working, I'll show you. I just need to focus real quick for just one second. Who— the guy was looking for my van, right?

Dre (as **Robyn**): Yeah.

Dre: I take the business card out of my hair and, like, shove it in your chest. [Austin laughs quietly]

Jack (as **Already**): Oh my god. Ketchle? Fuck. Sorry. [quieter] Fuck. [Austin and Dre laugh] This guy means business. This guy's serious. When the company's—

Dre (as **Robyn**): Yeah, he had a gun!

Jack (as **Already**): Yeah, no, I mean—

Dre: And I point to the gun on the table. [laughs]

Jack (as **Already**): If you knew how many of them had guns...you know, the gun is not the rare thing. The fact that they sent Ketchle after me is.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Why are they sending people after you?

Jack (as **Already**): Because the van is worth a lot of money, apparently, or the phone is worth a lot of money. They're just trying to get property back.

Dre (as **Robyn**): So just give it back to them!

Jack (as **Already**): I'm not gonna give them back the— they'll— no, because they...okay. [deep breath] The way it works is this: when I left with the van, it was fully stocked. The stocks went into the enclave. It was my gift to you, to take me in. When they recover the van and the phone, they also want to recover the value of all the items inside the van, which means that we would have to pay them an amount of money.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Okay.

Jack (as **Already**): They're not gonna take goods.

Dre (as **Robyn**): So, you're saying that the gift you gave to us has fucked us.

Jack (as **Already**): Yeah, I suppose I am saying that.

Dre (as **Robyn**): It's not a good gift.

Jack (as **Already**): It was a good gift at the time. You know, you really gonna look at me and say that, you know, you guys didn't need the tomatoes?

Dre (as **Robyn**): I don't need a person with a gun!

Jack (as **Already**): No. Well, look, things got worse, didn't they, Robyn?

Dre (as **Robyn**): Okay. Speaking of worse, uh, Quince is not doing good. So, I'm gonna take care of them, which means I need to leave, and so, here.

Dre: I just put a blowtorch in your hand.

(as **Robyn**): You can take him out and do whatever you need to do, and I don't need to be involved anymore.

Jack: I push the thing on the blowtorch, but because I'm not, like, I don't know how to use a blowtorch, I haven't started the pilot light, so it just makes the little gas *pshh pshh*.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: And I put my hand up like a little glove puppet and go:

(as **Already**): It doesn't work, Jack! [Austin laughs]

Dre (as **Robyn**): [sighs]

Austin (as **Quincy**): No wonder Duke likes you. You know all the jokes already. Already!

Jack (as **Already**): Yeah!

Dre (as **Robyn**): Oh, that's good. That's good.

Austin: As if, like, they've figured out why you're called that, which is not true, but maybe it is. I don't know. That's what they think.

Jack (as **Already**): That's what they say.

Jack: I feel like Already has had a lifetime of people making already jokes [**Austin:** "Mm-hmm"] and so has just sort of done the, like, "Yep, that's how it works."

(as **Already**): Okay, look. I'm gonna be out of town later. I have to go—

Dre (as **Robyn**): [disapproving] Oh, you're just leaving. Okay.

Jack (as **Already**): No. No! Oh, god. I'm not leaving. I'm...

Jack: Let me just check my moves real quick. [Austin chuckles] Uh...

(as **Already**): I'm not leaving. I just— I need to get— I need to do something with the phone. I spoke to Providence, and she wants to send me north to some dentist's with a bird. The dentist's logo is a bird. I don't know why. Birds don't have teeth.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Great. You can take this person with you to the dentist's office.

Austin (as **Quincy**): I don't want to go to the dentist!

Dre (as **Robyn**): Not you, Quincy.

Austin (as **Quincy**): Oh, okay.

Jack (as **Already**): Quincy, are you okay?

Dre (as **Robyn**): No!

Jack: I think Already is seeing Quincy's...like, static is moving across Quincy's body.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. Yeah.

Jack: It wasn't terribly clear to Already that, like...that there was something wrong.

Austin: Wrong wrong, yeah.

Jack: And I would like to spend a token to reveal a previously unmentioned skill.

Dre: Ooh.

Jack: I don't know how best to describe this. I think that Already starts speaking, and what they're speaking isn't sinister. I think they're just, like, in conversation with Quincy. They're not doing, like, a...we've been making PALISADE, and there's a monster in PALISADE that makes people speak nonsense.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: It's not something like that, you know. It's not like Already starts speaking a spell.

They're just talking. But in the same way that when you meet a really good doctor or you meet a really good therapist, they're able to modulate their voice in a certain register that kind of makes stuff work better.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: Or work smoother or your understanding of your situation work smoother. And I think the voice, the cadence that Already takes on is unmistakably the cadence of someone speaking on television, either speaking as a talk show host or speaking as a voice in a commercial. And I'm not talking about their voice specifically changing in that way. It's a cadence that they're adopting.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Or it's a register that they are adopting. And the sound of this voice almost has, like, a degaussing effect on the edges of Quincy, where it's like, just by asking, you know, "How are you feeling?" the edges kind of ripple and stabilize a little. And it's clear that this isn't, like, going to be a panacea, or is...

Austin: Right.

Jack: You know, Robyn is going to have to do the work to fix this person.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: But Already has revealed that they can kind of speak television in this way.

Austin: And I think Quincy says:

(as **Quincy**): Do you know my mom?

Jack (as **Already**): I don't know, do I know your mum? Tell me about your mum.

Austin: Uh, and they describe, you know, a perfectly normal sheep person mom. You don't know their mom, but there's—

Jack: No.

Austin: You know? But there is a...the familiarity that they go to is their family, right? And the familiarity you've introduced instantly that puts them at ease is the extension—the only way they know how to explain the extension of this sort of space that feels real to them and feels safe and literally materially helps stabilize them a little bit is to gesture back towards their missing parent, you know?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: So. Uh, something else is going to happen.

Dre: Oh, sure.

Austin: The phone buzzes. Not yours; Vincent's. It goes *bee-dee-dee-boop!* Sam, it's Die-Hardman. [Dre laughs]

Jack: That's also the opening—the PALISADE beep.

Austin: [laughs] Yeah, uh huh. It is. It totally is!

Jack: Doo-doot!

Dre: I think when it beeps, I go:

(as **Robyn**): Ah!

Dre: And I, like, throw it at Already.

Austin: There's a countdown. [Ali gasps]

Jack: Shit.

Austin: And it says two minutes until— you know, update due in two minutes or replacements will be dispatched. Or it says, like, "Two minutes until contingencies," but you know what that means.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: You know that that means: hey, if you don't give us an update on this, we're going to send more people. And this is very much Outlying Gangs, "bring gossip in from the wasteland," or "put a gun in someone's hand," except the phone you're holding is, in many ways, a gun. Isn't it?

Jack: Yes. Ali?

Ali: Yeah, I— sorry.

Jack: No!

The Storm [2:16:20]

Ali: [laughs quietly] I really wanted to find a good point here to abruptly storm.

Austin: Oh, great. It's time.

Dre: Please.

Ali: Because I like the idea of having the second act of this, like, wherever we're going outside of the enclave [**Austin:** "Mm-hmm"] to be within this torrential downstorm, and I think the idea of, like, people are coming to get you, but also the, like, oh, it's going to be harder for anybody to move in this space.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Yeah, that's really good.

Ali: Is interesting in this exact moment.

Jack: Everybody gets...

Austin: Right, can we get a wide shot of all through the parts of the city that are not the Society Intact, because that's mostly indoors, but all through our neighborhood and then the neighborhoods that extend north and south around the train station, out past the community garden, near Old Ben's pawn shop. I don't know what that's from, but there it

is. [Dre chuckles] Up through the marshlands where the prop shack is. Anywhere that there are people. And remember, there's like...we've described there being more skyscrapers, more tall buildings here than there are on our map specifically. People were partying outside, right? Because this is our, like—

Jack: Yeah!

Austin: This is one of the things. One of the visuals is raging parties.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And this storm starts, and everyone's like, "Fuck it. Take it inside!" and the streets begin to empty, but bit by bit, lights flip on, on third and fourth and fifth floor buildings.

Jack: People try to start generators, and...yeah.

Austin: Yeah, *bum-bum-bum-bwoom*. Yeah, you hear the generators start up. You can hear the— you know, people are starting fires inside to create light. The party is continuing as the storm rages, you know?

Jack: God, I love it. Oh, yeah. A tiny detail: I think that seated under an In-N-Out umbrella...so, In-N-Out Burger, in California, where it doesn't rain, have the wildest parasol— like, outdoor umbrellas or parasols, [**Austin:** "Mm-hmm"] which look like lego parasols. They're just, like, a circle of hard striped plastic. They are not, like, a peak so rain can run off. They're just for shade.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And seated in one of those, with like a perfect waterfall of water raining down on either side of them, Lorelei Lake and Cheddy are talking, and it looks like they are hashing something out. There is money changing hands [**Austin:** "Mm, mm-hmm"] under the table, in the rain. It seems like Cheddy's purse is going to get lined, but potentially also Lorelei's purse is going to get lined in some way? But we can see how that goes as and when we come back to them.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: But yeah, then just like, over the sound of the right, the L-cut on the rain to the phone in Already's hands. And I think Already unlocks the phone and hits the Update button.

Austin: What do you— what's the update that you send? You spent your token, right?

Jack: Yep.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: Okay, let's see. Let's talk this out.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: Because what I would like, and I don't— you know, this is a pitch. We can go in other directions if we want. It seems like Samantha and Already are heading out to the phone.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: In this rainstorm.

Austin: Or to the...

Jack: To the dentist's across the bridge.

Austin: To the dentist's. Yes.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And it seems like it would be a good narrative if somehow Robyn was coming along and this television ghost child also had to tag along [**Austin:** "Mm-hmm"] in this, like, rainstorm dash.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: The question is—

Austin: I mean, the place that you might need to go the repair the television ghost child would be near the Tunnel Project stuff, which is on the way to the dentist office, right?

Dre: Sure, yeah.

Jack: Yeah, absolutely.

Austin: That's where the VHS, you know, the reels are.

Jack: That's probably the easiest way to do it, right?

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Is to just be like, "Let's go."

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: But I— we should figure out what the result of this update is. Like, is it a case where we've managed to stall them but not for long enough that it means that it galvanizes us into this flight north? Or...

Austin: Can I give you a hard bargain or an ugly choice?

Jack: Yeah, go for it! [Dre laughs]

Austin: I know that's not one of my moves here, but...

Jack: Absolutely! Always.

Dre: That's always a move at Friends at the Table.

Austin: Yeah. There are kind of two results that I think are interesting. One is that this becomes *The Warriors*, and you have to get from point A to point B while moving through the terrible rainstorms while the hitmen and the bounty hunters are trying to

track you down, right? And you're moving through places and are under threat. The other is that those people are coming here.

Jack: Yeah, that's really interesting.

Austin: And you're leaving it behind while the Augur, Providence and Knots and—

Jack: Melvin Calvin.

Austin: Cheddy and Melvin Calvin have to lock it down in the middle of this terrible rainstorm. I think both of those are interesting, you know?

Jack: Yeah, let me look at my...the other classic Friends at the Table—

Austin: The other thing here is: I would happily have Providence go with you, but does not seem...that has not seemed the nature of the relationships at this point, you know what I mean?

Jack: No. The question there would be whether you, narratively, would want Providence on the road trip, as it were.

Austin: Um, I think it would be—

Jack: Because we could get her there.

Austin: I think it's fine. I think it's fun. I could do whatever. You know, this is eternal GM voice talking. I like having— I like Providence. She's great. I'll find my own fun. [Jack laughs] You know, the streets makes its own uses for things, so.

Jack: Yeah. That's from *Bioshock*.

Dre: You've had fun telling us not to say bad words, it seems like, so. [laughs]

Austin: Yeah, it's fun to play a little kid. They're great. You know. I like Providence. I'll find other scenes for Providence. The back home scenes will continue, you know?

Jack: Yeah, totally. And in that—

Austin: I would miss Providence and Sam roleplay. I like that. That's very fun.

Jack: Yeah, yeah!

Austin: And I think that she has— she's interested—

Jack: We should put the exes on the road trip together, though, right?

Austin: Right. [Ali laughs] She is interested—

Jack: That's just, like, a core principle.

Dre: Mm.

Austin: Uh huh. [Ali laughs]

Jack: Of storytelling.

Austin: It is. She is interested in, like, finding something, right?

Jack: Oh, man.

Austin: Again, her looming threat that only she understands is that hope and mischief are fires that we must keep ever-burning, or we'll face eternal darkness.

Jack: God. I have a hard pitch here for...

Austin: Please. Give me the hard pitch.

Jack: You know, what if we get out, and we're a small bit into the thing, and just waiting for us in the road, drenched, is the Augur, Providence, being like, "All right, I am also..." you know?

Austin: [laughs] Yeah, as it was said.

Jack: She knew you were coming. She knew you would do it.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Jack: As it was said.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: I mean, that would be the way to get her on, and if that's the case, then we should probably trend towards *The Warriors*, [**Austin:** "Yeah"] because then we've removed all of our PCs from the enclave, which is fascinating.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: That's big, um, when we accidentally took Everest Pipkin's *Ground Itself* and played it over, uh, one week, when it's designed— [laughs]

Austin: Three days or whatever, yes. [laughs] Instead of over three months or three years or 30 years, which it's built to do. Uh huh.

Jack: Yeah. But, you know, every...what did the Bard say? Every inside has an outside?

Austin: Every inside has an outside. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Uh huh.

Jack: You know, an enclave is as much about how it situates itself in the...

Austin: Well, and we can know things about the world outside, in some ways negatively, which is that, like...what we know is true about the enclave is that it's a place that you can go and get some funnel cake and a beer. You can't necessarily do that easily other places. We know that, at Snoopy's, the way you pay for a beer is by doing some dishes, and that's not necessarily how it's going to be on our way to the dentist. [laughs quietly]

Jack: God.

Austin: Also, some of the stuff that we know is true is still true in both places, right? Again, the raging parties go beyond just the cove, the pier that we're one. The train station is literally to our south. The ocean is all around us. You know, et cetera, so. So yeah, I like that. I like that just fine. So, what do you do that gets us there?

Jack: Oh, I hit Update, and it loads a video call instantly.

Austin: Ah! [laughs]

Jack: It is not a Game Boy Color picture. It is a clear picture [**Austin:** “Uh huh”] of a man who looks fucking evil. [Austin laughs] We have had some subtle descriptions on Friends at the Table before. I'm gonna say it: this man looks like...I don't know how to describe to you the malice radiating off this man's face. He is sitting in front of a wall, and on the wall behind him are pistols, just 51 pistols. [Austin sighs] He's a white man with a— I'm kind of describing the villain from *Avatar*, I imagine.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: He's a white man with a scar over his eyebrow, he has close-cropped military hair, he is wearing a combat jacket, and he says:

Jack (as **evil man**): Have you got them? Oh.

Jack: And ends the call. [Austin and Dre laugh]

Austin: Oh no!

Jack: Okay.

Austin: [crosstalk] Can— yeah.

Jack: So, now it's just flight, right?

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: It's, we pick up— we could do this in a montage if we wanted, unless folks want to hit stuff before we leave. I know that Ali and the Augur...

Austin: I want to be there— right, I want to be there when the group of you meet— Sam, where were you supposed to meet with...?

Jack: I was gonna come by after work.

Austin: Right. I see.

Jack: So I think I was gonna go to Snoopy's.

Austin: Right, and then—

Jack: But was there any bar business you wanted to hit before we left, Ali?

Ali: Not especially. I think we got a good range of bar scenes, in terms of people coming and going.

Austin: Are you wearing your stained apron and stilettos?

Ali: Maybe not the apron... [Jack laughs]

Austin: But, yes, the stilettos.

Dre: Sure, yeah. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Hell yeah.

Dre: [sarcastic] That's the part that doesn't make sense for the road trip, for sure.
[laughs]

Jack: Hell yeah!

Austin: Hell yeah.

Jack: Gender is high femme. Let's go.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, let's go. Keeping it.

Ali: I think I'm wearing one of those, like...you know when you sort of tie a, like, handkerchief around your hair?

Austin: Yeah, I totally do. Good look.

Ali: [laughs] Big sunglasses, even though it's, like, 4:00 a.m.

Austin: [laughs] Yeah, I don't know what time it is, but it's late!

Ali: [laughs] Yeah.

Jack: God. This fucking rules. We are just making *Streets of Fire*, because what happens is, like, they go into the—

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: All the parties go inside.

Austin: Oh, just really quick.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: I don't know if people caught it, but I was just describing Rick Moranis's outfit from *Streets of Fire* when describing Vincent Ketchle's.

Jack: Oh, that's so good!

Dre: Ohh.

Austin: Also, that's the height he is. That's the...yeah. It's just Rick Moranis from—

Jack: Also, Rick Moranis was apparently, like, a real lowkey piece of— not like a bad dude piece of shit, but lowkey piece of shit in the making of that movie.

Austin: Yeah, I believe it.

Jack: Nobody has anything nice to say about Rick Moranis on set making *Streets of Fire*.

Ali: Really?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: God, *Streets of Fire* is so good.

Jack: Just, like, pissed everybody off, was really beavery. Just, like, cantankerous all the time.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: It's so funny that he's in that movie as that character, and then when they shouted "Cut!" he was just grouching. [others laugh]

Austin: Yeah, that character's name is Billy Fish. Like, fuck! It's so good.

Jack: So good.

Austin: Go listen to our *Streets of Fire* episode. It was very fun.

Jack: Also...yeah, because what's happening here is we're gonna get a musical montage.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: And the musical montage begins as the call ends. He says, "Have you got them? Oh." and the call ends, and we hard cut to inside one of the indoor ragers, where someone puts two wires together and pizza crust themed EDM starts playing, or rather EDM from the pizza station.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: I don't think it's all pizza themed, because I do think that—

Austin: Uh, nope! I'm pretty sure it is!

Jack: Well.

Dre: Nope. Nope, you said it.

Austin: You said it! [Dre and Ali laugh] Uh, there's a special rule, by the way. It's called

the “You said it!” rule. [Dre laughs] It can be overruled by an X card, but, uh...

Jack: Right, right, no.

Austin: But by default: you said it!

Jack: Okay, here’s the thing, though. Here’s what I will say: the music is actually great, because queer people in the post-apocalyptic future have great taste.

Austin: Ah.

Jack: They’ve chosen to dance to this music.

Austin: Right, that’s true. That’s true.

Jack: It is pizza-themed, but it is...god, it’s like when you encounter those awful corporate lofi things, [**Austin:** “Yeah”] except, very occasionally, one in a hundred times, you’re like, “Oh, they actually did it. This is good.”

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Do you remember that ridiculous track from the *Evergrace II* soundtrack?

Jack: I do not, Austin. [Dre laughs quietly]

Austin: No? Is this not...it’s not? I’m gonna link it, and everyone’s gonna yell at me because of how unlistenable it is. But it’s not actually unlistenable, and that’s the thing. It’s called “Buying Goods at Palmira”. I’m gonna link it in our chat.

Jack: Oh, I love this track. Right, yes. Yes.

Austin: And it makes no— you’re gonna hear the first 20 seconds, and you’re gonna be like, “Austin, you sent me garbage.”

Jack: No, I love this.

Austin: And then, it’s gonna start making sense.

Dre: Ah.

Austin: And then, the second time through, the beginning makes sense too, because you've learned the actual rhythms that are being used in this nightmare song.

Jack: Yeah. It's great. It's so good.

Austin: And that's what's happening. They've gotten past— it's not ironic.

Jack: No.

Austin: But they've found something in the pizza EDM that makes it work.

Jack: Yes. Yeah, absolutely.

Austin: And they've attuned themselves to it. And also, let's be serious: it's probably a queer person making the pizza EDM. If someone's making—

Jack: Yeah. It's me in 40 years when I've taken the pizza EDM contract. [laughs]

Austin: After the apocalypse. Yeah. Yeah! It's a—

Jack: Well, the composer's probably not in the apocalypse.

Austin: No.

Jack: Based on how composers are paid, the composer's probably not having a great time, but I don't think that they are...

Austin: Ah...no, that's what I'm saying. I mean after the apocalypse, the person who's doing this is living in the Society Intact.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Because they happened to make the right connections ahead of time.

Jack: [laughs quietly] To pizza EDM.

Austin: I mean, that's the other thing, right? We live in the queer enclave. There are queer people in the Society Intact, you know?

Jack: Oh yeah, fully. Yeah, totally.

Austin: They are living different lives, and that is how it goes, right?

Jack: Mm-hmm. So, the music plays, and the crowds are jumping up and down, and you see Robyn looking at a map and realizing that the Tunnel Project is close and, you know, grabbing Quincy's hand— Quince or Quincy?

Austin: Quincy. Right?

Dre: Yeah, Quincy, and I think Robyn just refers to them as Quince sometimes.

Jack: As Quince, right.

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: Grabbing Quincy's hand, out into the rain. Already running down to the...outside Snoopy's, where Sam is like, you know, locking up or something, standing there in your head scarf and outfit, and then just like, grabbing Duke, getting stuff together, heading out onto the road to the tune of pizza EDM.

Austin: And there I am, with a...

Jack: Rain-drenched.

Austin: Rain-drenched, with a parasol that's not— that is a regular sun parasol that is not working great as an umbrella, and the briefcase filled with toy soldiers. And I say:

Austin (as **Providence**): Oh, I'm surprised you're coming, Sam.

Austin: Despite not even being invited myself. [Jack and Ali laugh]

[music: ["Give Way to Open Sky"](#)]