

Bluff City 31: To Be Young Near the Shore Pt. 00

Transcriber: Ishkhan

[Beginning of transcript.]

[Music begins: [To Be Young Near the Shore](#) by Jack de Quidt.]

Austin:

Intro:

Dear diary,
For the first time ever we're doing something called summer vacation. Mr. Williker says that the classrooms get too hot in the summer and it's bad for your constitution to study in the heat. I've heard that they've been doing this for twenty *years* in New York and Philadelphia! We are always so behind the times here but I cannot lie, I am exceedingly excited.

[music plays]

Austin:

Intro:

Father will want me to work at the taffy shop sometimes, I'm sure, but just think! Swimming any day of the week. A whole afternoon to walk the boards, and maybe even visit the piers. A new one's opening soon, the Golden Fortune, and it sounds just deluxe. I cannot wait to go there with the girls and try my luck on the games and ride some of the amusements, and...and maybe meet someone.

There is one bad thing about this vacation though. Mr. Williker says that we have a summer assignment. A theme essay based on the question "What does it mean to be young near the shore?" And I just— I hate it. You may as well ask me why the sea separates us from Europe or Asia. You may as well keep us in class for another month. In fact, I would prefer that. At least learning geometry is useful.

What does it mean to be young near the shore? What should I say to that? Am I to speak to how the salt air bolsters the physique? How the fishing and rowing gives us good opportunities to connect to nature? That the city gets visitors from all around and that means that there'll be plenty of jobs for us after schooling? What does it mean to be young by the shore? I hate this question.

I just want to run along the surf with my friends. I just want to stand up to my ankles in the water and call out to the gulls. I just want to dance at the open-air pier when the band plays my favorite number. I just wanna find a skirt, the right skirt, the sort of skirt that makes me feel more like *me*. To go to the music shop, to run my hand along the keys and strings, to find time when there isn't any. To fill a glass bottle with dyed sand and laugh at the shapes and the colors. To ride the great big summer's wheel and point to my house and say, "There it is. There it is. That is my house." What does it mean to be young near the shore? How could I begin...

[Introduction and music fade out.]

Austin: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. I am your host Austin Walker. Joining me today, Sylvia Clare.

Sylvi: Hey. I'm Sylvi, you can find me on Twitter [@sylvisurfer](#) and listen to my other show [Emoji Drome](#) wherever you get your podcasts.

Austin: Keith Carberry.

Keith: Uh hi, my name is Keith J. Carberry, you can find me on Twitter [@keithjcarberry](#) and you can find the lets plays that I do at [youtube.com/runbutton](#).

Austin: Jack de Quidt.

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

Austin: And Andrew Lee Swan.

Dre: Hey, you can find me on Twitter [@swandre3000](#).

Austin: Amazing. Um, today we are playing Tales from the Loop. Or we're creating characters for Tales from the Loop, a game by the Free League, designed by Nils Hintze and based on the incredible books, or incredible book I guess in this case, by Simon Stålenhag. We've been wanting to play this game forever. I think I've played it once, I've played it on the player side of it years ago and really enjoyed it. And so we're very excited to jump into this. Before we do that, we have to make characters. Um, does anyone have any like, super preliminary questions about what we're doing with—what is Tales from the Loop, et cetera.

Jack: When are we? In Bluff City.

Austin: Good question. Um, so, I don't know that it's... Maybe it hasn't become clear yet, but we're doing a fun goofy thing this season in Bluff City, which is we're jumping around in time in terms of the games, right? So we started with the incredible Fiasco game. What was that called? Hard... Hard Luck? Is that what that was called?

Jack: I think it was called Hard Luck, right?

Keith: Was that the one with the horses?

Jack: Yeah, that was the one where everybody understands how betting works.

[Keith laughs]

Austin: Yeah, we all understood—

Keith: And how horses work.

[Dre laughs]

Austin: —extremely well how both of those things work.

Jack: And also Art lost his entire mind.

Austin: That's true, yes. Unrelated, though. Um [laughs] and so that took place I wanna say in like, the 1970s or something, right?

Jack: Sure, opening of the casino...

Sylvi: Yeah, that was sort of the...

Austin: [crosstalk] Opening the casinos, exactly.

Sylvi: Aesthetic or tone at least.

Austin: And then we did the Cost of Greed which was the... Which one was that? No, that's not true. That was last year. Then we did uh, Moving Pictures, which was the kind of jumped forward in time a little bit. That was the one with the Bluff City movie company. The Bluff City Pictures. Where that took place in kind of modern day. That sort of took place in like the early 2010s or the 2020s or something like that. Maybe we even said— Maybe we even say like, 2007, like in the middle of the recession, right? 2008, something like that.

And then we jumped back further in time, we kind of leap-frogged past the 70s back into the 20s with the most recent one, which was Extracurricular, Out of Time, the sort of 1920s one. Well, now we're gonna jump forward a little bit more into the near future. I think this is like, 203X,

you know what I mean? Like, somewhere in the next twenty years. Maybe it's even the late 2020s, who could say.

Austin (cont'd): For people who don't know what's up with Tales from the Loop, it's written as a 1980s kind of retro-futurist, but not the thing that people think of in our circles when you hear retro-futurism, which is specifically about like the futurist aesthetic from the 1950s and 60s, right? The atomic era stuff that you see a lot when talking about something like Fallout. Instead, this is like a 1980s aesthetic but with a dose of you know, what's sort of like the emerging electronics market turned to eleven.

There are robots for home purchase, and strange scientific facilities over the horizon, and weird robots underneath overpasses, and electric cars, and proto-internet stuff, and more household computers but they all have the sort of monitors that you would find from 1980s. Nothing high-resolution. Mostly bright mono— What's the word I'm looking for? Monochrome stuff, you know. So that's the vibe. If you haven't seen any of Simon Stålenhag's work, I really suggest pausing and just Googling some of it and maybe even—

Keith: Ooh!

Austin: —buying something like Tales from the Loop.

Keith: Quick addendum to that.

Austin: Yes.

Keith: We— I don't know who remembers that Amazon did a Tales from the Loop TV show this year?

Austin: Yeah. They did.

Keith: Make sure you're— I mean, I guess you can look at screenshots from the show, but if you search for Tales from the Loop it's all...

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: The TV show. And so you have to be more specific about—

Austin: [crosstalk] For what it's worth, I do think that that show gets that look pretty well.

Keith: Yeah, it's just not as good.

Sylvi: Yeah, it does it, like—

Austin: Yeah, but what is? Right?

Sylvi: Yeah, not as well as Stålenhag's stuff.

Keith: Yeah. Well that's just the thing, like— I just think it's better to look at his art than stills of the show. You have to really dig if you just search Tales from the Loop to find anything that's not screenshots.

Austin: Totally. You can also look at the rest of Stålenhag's work, which will also be a touchstone for us here.

Keith: I haven't seen that show, so I don't know if it turned out good or not, but.

Austin: You should— It's weird. It's like— Has anyone else watched it besides me? I didn't finish it, but I watched the first...

Sylvi: [crosstalk] I've seen like two episodes.

Austin: Yeah, I watched like, the first three or four. It's such a slow quiet show in a way I was not expecting, in a way that feels right? I very much expected them to turn up the Stranger Things dial, because if you look up Tales from the Loop today all you'll hear is, "It has like, such a Stranger Things vibe." And it's so... It puts me in a fucking mood to read that shit.

[Jack laughs]

Austin: [laughs] 'Cause it— Let me tell you—

Keith: Sometimes people don't know when one thing has one vibe of another or the reverse.

Austin: Yes. Totally. It's just tough when it's like... Stranger Things is absolutely biting Stålenhag vibe more than anything. But of course Stålenhag is building up of stuff in the 80s anyway, and other work. Anyway, the point is, go look up some of Stålenhag's work. S-T-A-L-E-N-H-A-G. Go look up Jack de Quidt's incredible interview with Simon Stålenhag—

Jack: [crosstalk] Oh thank you.

Austin: —which ran on Waypoint a few years ago. It was a fantastic conversation. And so we're playing in that space, and I think we're playing in the near future in our own setting. But there is gonna be a little twist to it, which is, it's going to be very 90s infused in the way that the Tales from the Loop is very 80s infused. One of the questions we're gonna get to is "What is your character's favorite song?" And I think it should be a 90s song to help sell that. That is the vibe. That is the, like...our little twist on that aesthetic. So like, you know, what if Saved by the Bell was melancholy instead of...

Sylvi: [quietly] Oh my god.

Austin: Like, bodacious, right?

[Keith and Dre laugh]

Jack: God, melancholy instead of bodacious.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: Is a powerful mood.

Sylvi: I'm trying to be both.

Austin: Trying to be both! You're allowed to be both! You're right. But you can't be— You can't only be bodacious.

Jack: Solely bodacious.

Austin: You have to be melancholy *and* bodacious at the very least. Or the world has to be. You can be whatever. There's a ways to turn bodacity—bodaciousness into melancholy.

Keith: I prefer bodacity.

Austin: Bodacity? Okay.

Sylvi: [laughing] That's really good.

Keith: My new— That's my new open source audio work station.

[Austin laughs]

Jack: People keep telling us to record in something other than Bodacity, but it really does the job.

Sylvi: Oh my god.

Austin: It does the job!

Jack: Bodacity is just Audacity but with a 90s Winamp skin on it.

Austin: Aw, that sounds great. And so that's a good example. That's a good example of something that should exist in our Tales from the Loop game. 90s Winamp skins are exactly this, you know? Though actually I think that might be one of those ones that we're remembering as being 90s but is actually— I— Yeah, it's late 90s.

Jack: Early 2000s, yeah.

Austin: Yeah yeah yeah. Anyway. For I guess maybe a little firmer of an introduction into what this is, I guess what I'll say— I'll just read from the thing. In this game, a story is called a mystery. It deals with a group of friends who try to solve mysteries together. The friends are kids age 10 to 15 years old. In our case, living in Bluff City in the early 2030s or late 2020s. Everyday life is full of nagging parents, never-ending homework, and classmates bullying and being bullied. The mysteries allow the kids to encounter strange machines and creatures that exist as a result of the nearby Loop, a huge underground particle accelerator built in the late 1960s. That is gonna be changed for us, 'cause we don't have a Loop, but we do have something else, don't we? [laughs]

Jack: Mhm.

Austin: We have the Tunnel Project this season, which has been a recurring thing across I think most of the games, at least in mention. A set of tunnels. A set of highway tunnels, basically, that connect Bluff City, Blough City, and Bluffington Beach. And they do that not only to allow people to pass between them, or that has been kind of the set-up, but also goods. Also, it seems, ideas or dreams or energy or something else. There's lots of material concern for why this exists.

And I'm gonna start talking in present tense here because it exists in the time that we are playing. In the time that we are zooming in on here, the Tunnel Project has been completed. These three

places are connected. But they're connected in this very hazy and mundane way. Your uncle might have a job transporting stuff between Blough City and Bluffington Beach via truck. You might have visited Bluff City from Bluffington for a vacation. But your memories of it aren't necessarily clear.

Austin (cont'd): I was describing this to Dre earlier and suggested that there is a sort of Silent Hill vibe here, where like, do these places interact? Yes. Are they real? [hesitating] Yes. Are they—Is it easy to explain how to get there? [laughs] Or to know if what happened in any of them is true? Uh... It gets weird. It gets hazy. It gets strange but also it's that thing in Silent Hill where no one talks about it. [laughs]

Keith: [crosstalk] Suspiciously so!

Austin: Where you've spent the last seven hours killing monsters, but then you walk in and are like, "Hey, do you have a slice of pizza for me?" Or whatever.

Jack: They look like monsters to you?

Austin: Right, exactly. But I don't think it's even that far, right? That said, I do think there's an important distinction between where you've been raised as kids. Your worldviews will be different, and also we need to determine for sure where this takes place. We'd talked previously, months ago now, about it taking place in Bluffington. Dre has a really good idea for a character that I think makes more sense if we start in Bluff? But I don't know, Dre, do you think you could swap that around a little bit?

Dre: Okay. Help me remember the rules of Bluff City...

Austin: Yes.

Dre: What is the one that like is quote unquote real and what is the one that's like the weird Silent Hill universe.

Austin: Okay, so. So. There's three.

Keith: You can tell from the chain link.

Austin: [laughs] Yes, and the sirens. There's three locations. Just to do the quick recap. We started in Bluff City. Bluff City is a place of incredible creativity and difference and almost an overwhelming chaotic amount of contradiction and strangeness. It's a place that only exists so long as a camera is focused on it. Which is to say it's a place driven by stories, it's a place driven by narrative. That's like the kind of heart of it, right? That's the engine that moves Bluff City. That's where we started our superhero game, that's where we did any of our big Fiasco games, I think have all taken place there.

Then there is Blough City. B-L-O-U-G-H. Which is our kind of noir, Inception-y, Silent Hill, Twin Peaks, horror-themed, horror slash thriller slash just tense space that we first saw in Messy Business.

[15:00]

Austin: And then we saw in the last arc which was the superhero arc where we specifically saw our superheroes from Masks, two of them get displaced and wind up in a 1920s version of Blough City, which seems like it had traveled back in time somehow? Like the dial had turned back from that, from where it had been, because previously it had seemed much more 30s, maybe even early 40s, but became very clearly this kind of late 20s vibe in the last Capers game we played.

Austin (cont'd): And then there is Bluffington Beach, and Bluffington Beach was revealed at the end of last season, and that is a neighbourhood inside of Atlantic City, New Jersey, the real world, two hours from where I am sitting, right? It is kind of the north end of Atlantic City, which for reasons that we haven't really explained, has been renamed Bluffington Beach, is tied

to a family called the Bluffington family, and has a strange, mysterious past that we've seen bits and pieces of, specifically in intros and through one character from the Capers game.

Those are the kind of three big settings, right? Blough is restrictive. If Bluff City is all about creation and openness, Blough City is all about resisting newness, is all about keeping things orderly. It's the place that only has, you know, a few hundred types of buildings that are repeated again and again and again. It's much more Los Angeles and specifically that sort of film noir Los Angeles, than the sort of bubbling boardwalks of Bluff City. It's kind of our west coast vibe.

Austin (cont'd): And then Bluffington is like, the real world, which is to say it's a city that has a poverty problem. It's a city that has had governors try to come in and fix it but mostly kind of pillage it for money. It has a vibrant immigrant community that's tied close to the churches, but all of them have been in the targets of ICE lately, you know? It's Atlantic City in that real way. Not that that stuff can't be tackled in those other setting, but like— It's also the place that doesn't have magic, [laughing] or hasn't had magic or superheroes or, you know, if there are Men In Black it's because they're part of the FBI or the NSA. Not because they are part of— I guess, though increasingly the Concern seems to be interested in real Bluffington also.

Keith: And it— Just to—

Jack: Oh, go on, Keith.

Keith: You go, Jack.

Jack: Oh, at one point an actual honest to god monster appeared in a restaurant with multiplying hands and a woman killed it with a can of air freshener.

Austin: Yeah, and a lighter.

Jack: Which must have been monumentally traumatic for everybody in the building.

Austin: Right. Keith?

Keith: I was gonna say, it's sort of fundamental that Bluffington doesn't have magic, because Bluff takes all of that, right? Is that sort of how this works?

Austin: It's not clear. I don't think we— We've never really— We talked a little bit about it in a post-mortem that only I think a few of us got to be in 'cause of scheduling issues last year.

Keith: Right.

Austin: The sort of metaphysics of how all these places are connected is not something I've completely pulled the curtain back on at this point.

Keith: Right.

Austin: And also it's changing because [laughs] now, you can hop on a bus and go to Blough City. And when I say now, I mean at this point in the timeline, not on a future view. Again, our next game is gonna go further back in time.

Keith: Because this is future.

Austin: This is future, yeah. And we know, for instance—

Keith: [dramatically] This. Is future.

Austin: [dramatically] *This* is future. Uh, we've actually seen Bluff City further in the future than this once, which is we started a game of Dream Askew in Bluff City that was set in like, the late 20-somethings. We have no idea when or where that is, but by then it was like, the ruins of a cyberpunk city, and it had been turned into a post-apocalyptic... Like, we were running a post-apocalyptic queer commune in the marshlands basically, at some point. So we know that that's further in the future than even where we are now. And so this is kind of at the point at

which I think we should talk about... Or I guess Dre, if we talk about your character a little bit, the way you pitched them, do you want to pitch them in just the broad scope?

Dre: Yeah. So basically my character, his name is Ronnie Lee Highsmith Junior. He grew up in Appalachia and his dad is sick. And his family has moved to, insert whichever universe version we're using here.

Austin: Right.

Dre: Um...to basically be closer to someplace where he can receive more advanced medical care.

Austin: Right. And I think some of the story that we talked about which I think is fun and interesting is like, your... However your parents met, one of them is from Bluff and one of them is from Bluffington. Or one of them is from the Bluff world, and one of them is from the real world, right? And you've crossed over that line here and gone into the other space. Whether that means you're coming from a world in which the Mothman is real, and going into one where this shit shouldn't exist, or coming from a more real, gritty world and going into a world where there is a tinge of magic and strangeness, either one of those is super interesting to me. The other half of it is, I think we talked about like, your dad had been basically sent to set up a car factory in... Right? Or was the other way?

Dre: That was the... Because originally we had said the...

Austin: Oh is it like a mother, or—

Dre: The mom's dad. So basically the kid's maternal grandfather was sent here to set up a car factory.

Austin: Sent here— Here meaning Kentucky.

Dre: Like eastern Kentucky, yeah.

Austin: Eastern Kentucky, yeah. Appalachia basically. And the thing I like about that is I really love this little— There's a little detail which is like, I think that it's harder to bring stuff from Bluff and Blough into Bluffington than it is the other way around, because they rely on the world being a certain way, and so it's one of those things where it's like only certain cars can always successfully move between these spaces. Which is why like, remember we kind of touched on this back in our Lacuna game, because remember you had to get special equipment that worked in Blough City, you couldn't just bring whatever you wanted to from Bluff. And I think it's a very similar thing here where it's like, your grandpa was basically hired to get ahead of that once the Tunnel Project was ready. It's like, "Yeah, we're gonna need cars to get to sell to people who wanna go between these places. Go set up a shitty car factory in the mountains somewhere where we don't pay people enough and [laughing] we ruin the environment."

Dre: Mmhm.

Austin: "So that we can then sell them at mark-up to people in Bluff who wanna come to Bluffington or whatever."

Keith: They're hybrid cars. They can do either city.

Austin: Either city, yeah, hybrid cars. I think the excuse is very much like, "Oh, it's the salt. It's the salt in the air. It just, you know, it ruins the engines. It just goes right to 'em." Like, isn't there salt— These are all coastal cities, [laughs] why would that be diff—? "It's different salt. It's a different make-up."

Keith: It's different salt. One city has Mothman.

[Austin laughs]

Keith: One city has too much salt for car engines.

Austin: Has too much salt, exactly.

Dre: Has Saltman.

Sylvi: I want Mothman doesn't hang out in the other city. There's too much salt there.

[Austin laughs]

Dre: Yeah. Exactly.

Keith: Do moths dislike salt?

Sylvi: I don't know, I just feel like... I don't know. I just kind of went off...

Keith: If I was a Mothman, I would dislike salt.

Sylvi: Yeah, same.

Austin: Sylvi as the one person here who's played a Mothman...

Sylvi: Yeah.

[Dre laughs]

Austin: I feel like you have the definitive...

Sylvi: So, my Mothman would not like salt. Or, wouldn't like that much salt. You know?

Austin: [laughs] Fair, fair.

Dre: Trying to watch that blood pressure.

Austin: Yes. Important.

Keith: Trying to balance it with fat, acid, and heat.

Austin: Yes. That way you get a good— I would just love to get a cookbook from the Mothman's best recipes.

Sylvi: Oh my god.

Austin: You know?

Keith: Mothman's Choice. Mulled apple cider, no salt.

[Austin laughs]

Jack: Mulled apple cider.

Austin: Mulled, mulled, molled, mo— Yeah. Anyway.

Sylvi: A cardigan, is the other... Just how to knit is the other recipe.

Austin: Aw. Yeah, that's good.

Keith: And then how to eat the sweater.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: [laughs] So... Where do we wanna be? Do we want this game to be in Bluffington, where the sort of relationship to the Tunnel Project is, it's this weird background thing that feels a little weird. There's some strangeness associated with it, but it's not... It's a background, it's like

background radiation in your life, the same way that any big construction project is in the neighbourhood or in a city. Or do we wanna be in Bluff, where your characters theoretically have already encountered some weirdness and this is just the latest issue, or this is tied to an on-going thing. Maybe the question here is do we want to be... I feel like Bluff is more like Goonies, and Bluffington is more like, you know, the Tales from the Loop more directly?

Dre: Mmhm.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: How high adventure do we want this to be? Because, I guess to continue reading from the book a little bit... The mysteries allow kids to encounter strange machines and creatures that exist as a result of the nearby Loop. I already said that bit. The kids get to escape their everyday lives and problems and be part of something meaningful and magical, yet also dangerous. They risk getting injured and also changed by the troubles they have to overcome to solve the mysteries. You all create kids, your kids are gonna have stats, you're gonna go on a sort of mystery-solving adventure here. And along the way you will have relationships with each other and with NPCs and will frame scenes on the way to discovering the truth about whatever the local mystery is.

Keith: It's funny because there's this sort of push and pull between two of the, what are they called, principles I think they call them in this book?

Austin: Mmhm.

Keith: Which is a good book. I haven't read all of it, but I really like the first like, thirty pages plus the character stuff which I read. But there's sort of a push and pull between the second principle, which is "Everyday life is dull and unforgiving," which is like, that the baseline of the mystery-less day is boring and uninteresting, but then also...

Austin: You're stuck in classes, you never get as much sleep as you want to, your parents get into fights.

Keith: Right.

Austin: It's raining.

Keith: But then also part of that feels like, and, you know, the... Until you look into it, the mysteries just look boring on the surface, because then the next thing is that adults are out of reach and out of touch, part of which is that they a little bit they don't care, a little bit they don't believe you.

Austin: Right. Yeah.

Keith: And that feels more Bluff to me.

Austin: The first one is your home is full of strange and fantastic things, right?

Keith: Right.

Austin: Like, we'll just go over the rest of these principles while we're here.

Keith: Okay. I did skip to the second one.

Austin: No, that's fine, I just, we may as well read them all, right?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Or at least gesture at them all. You know, huge transport vessels fly, cyborgs and robots can think, scientists create time portals and objects that replace people's identities, strange beasts

roam the landscape and humanity can contact people and creatures from other times and places. You know, it's big.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: There's a lot happening there. See the world through the eyes of kids—

Keith: [crosstalk] Sort of the second principle is sort of like, you might as well go— Despite this, everything in your life is dull and unforgiving.

Austin: Yes, exactly that. Exactly that, yes. And then the fourth one is that the land of the Loop is dangerous but kids will not die. Kids can be hurt, locked up, mocked, displaced, robbed, or broken-hearted, but they cannot die in this game. And then fifth, the game is played scene by scene. We are not doing a simulation where you are just constantly going, "Okay what do you do next?" It's much more scene-focused in a way that we're pretty familiar with. As in, we go, "Okay, what sort of scene do we wanna do next? Where are you at?" We don't need to do the thing where you have to roll to get from place A to place B unless that is a scene.

And then finally, the world is described collaboratively. It's my job to kind of set scenes and describe things, but that y'all should be jumping in and describing characters in your life, describing things and places that you've been to, et cetera. Again, in a way that I think we are pretty familiar with. So yeah, Keith, you were saying based on those things, Bluff actually works for you.

Keith: Bluff, yeah. It seems, I mean, I don't want to hamstring our ideas on what the book says that we should do? Like, I'm totally fine with...

Austin: [crosstalk] [quietly] —a fuck.

Keith: Yeah, the way that the book— The reading of the book leads me to Bluff as the place.

Austin: Mmhm. Other folks?

Jack: Yeah, I think I agree. [sighs] I really could go either way. I think... If we are close enough to the Tunnel Project in Bluffington, we might not have a lifetime's experience of weird shit, but we would be encountering fairly weird shit a lot, right? It would be like, dream-like and it would be woozy.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: But it would be like... We would have our finger on the pulse of the strangeness just by dint of proximity, right?

Austin: And you'd have a bunch of adults around you who remember times before the tunnel opened? And maybe whose attitudes would predispose to dismiss that stuff. Because they've a lifetime of mundanity to say, "No, the Jersey Devil is not real. No, there are not... Like, of course there are robots now, we invented robots now."

Keith: Right.

Austin: "It's nothing special. It's just a company invented a cool new robot, what do you want from me?"

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Do you know what I mean? And I think that that's kind of interesting.

[30:00]

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: There's an interest as well in actually putting this particular moment on screen, as well, right? Where this boundary is being crossed in some way, and—

Austin: So I actually think we're skipping that moment. And I thought about this earlier, and I don't mean to cut you off, but I actually have a very strong f— I actually have a strong... I don't wanna— There is no grand opening on screen. We don't get the ribbon cutting, because it's nothing. Because it's, a tunnel opened. Another tunnel opened. Who cares? Okay, well there's trucks that come in through here now, I guess that's interesting. Ugh, there's so much noise now. There didn't used to be noise in this neighborhood, but now the eighteen-wheelers drive through here. Right? And, the other thing is that we know it was twelve years ago based on—at least, we know it was, I guess minimum, or maximum twelve years ago? I'm getting confused on my own timeline here. The fact that Ronnie was born in one and crossed over to the other means that it has to have been at least as old as Ronnie was, right?

Jack: Right.

Austin: Because otherwise people couldn't have moved between those places. I mean, I guess they could have. We've seen characters move between the places, but my understanding, Dre, your character's parents and grandparents are not, like, especially... They're not Concern members.

Dre: No.

Austin: They're not dimension-hoppers. They're someone who set up a car factory and someone who did some blue collar labor.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Basically, right? So yeah, and you're twelve, that's the character's age you're thinking? Somewhere in there?

Dre: Um...

Austin: I mean all characters are ten to fifteen.

Dre: I was thinking eleven to twelve, yeah.

Austin: So in this game you have to be ten to fifteen. So that means even if tomorrow you're like "I think I'm gonna be fifteen instead," the cap on how recent the Tunnel Project is, is fifteen years.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: So yeah. That's one way of thinking about it. But yeah, I kind of... I'm with you to the degree, Jack, that it's fun to focus in on a point in time near when the tunnel starts running?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: But I don't want this to feel like, and this is the definitive moment where the tunnels have opened...

Jack: As people realize...

Austin: Right. I don't—

Jack: No, no.

Austin: This is one mystery— It speaks to that second principle of life is mundane, fundamentally, still.

Jack: But at some point in the sort of shared history of these three worlds, there is a point where four kids go, "Hey, there's something kind of weird in our town?"

Austin: Mmhm. And that feels like Bluffington more than Bluff.

Jack: Yeah. Yeah.

Austin: Because the Bluff kids are like...more familiar.

Jack: "My dad has a talking bird!"

Austin: Right.

Keith: It brings me back to the tension between the second and third principles which are like, what is— It leads me to ask, what is the scope of the thing that the adults you won't believe? Like, there's a cap at which it starts to become unreasonable that people will not care or believe the things. The thing that Bluff gives is that it can be weirder.

Austin: Right.

Keith: And the thing that Bluffington gives is that it can seem more like our world.

Austin: Right. The Bluff version of it is like, of course I believe in superheros, comma but, time travel? Absolutely not. Or something, right?

Jack: It's like the— There's a great tiny gag in What We Do In the Shadows which is a show about vampires in which they reveal fairly early on that they unequivocally don't believe in ghosts because that's magical bullshit.

[Keith laughs]

Jack: And I think that's so good.

Austin: That's very good. It is.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Ghosts aren't real. What?

Keith: I had such a good time with that show this year. I ate it up in like two weeks. It was a really good show.

Jack: My vote is Bluffington. I am voting Bluffington, and I think we can turn down the dial on— We can adjust the weirdness dial if we feel like we're getting too weird or not weird enough. I don't think we need to go fully into the Stålenhag thing of like, there are dinosaurs here and there are time portals or whatever.

Austin: No, yeah, right right right.

Jack: We can turn that down.

Austin: Dre, does it work for you then, that the idea is someone on your Bluff side of the family moved here. I mean, it already was kind of the thing, right? They moved to Appalachia from Bluff to set up a car factory and now you've moved up to Bluffington Beach because it's closer to, like, Philly and New York and DC hospitals basically. And you have family in Bluffington, basically.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Right.

Dre: No, that works.

Austin: I like Bluffington here. It also lines up better with the previous intro that I did, so there's that. Which, it is what it is. Alright, so do we wanna start looking at character stuff? Character intros or character creation stuff. Everyone should have a sheet in the Bluff City Roll20 that we have set up. And the character creation stuff starts on page 49. Each player creates a kid. The process is shown step by step and then explained more thoroughly. There are four pre-made kids at the end of the book. [laughs] Just pre-made kids.

Jack: Pre-made kids.

Austin: Just some kids that are already made for us. Um, and if we wanna look at those for inspiration or anything we can do that. Or if someone's like, "Hey, I don't feel like making a character today, let me just grab one of these pre-mades."

Sylvi: Really sounds like how a gamer would talk about adoption.

[Keith and Austin laugh]

Dre: Jesus!

Sylvi: Sorry.

[Keith laughs]

Austin: No, it's good. It's great.

Jack: Gamers fucking suck, is what we can agree.

Austin: That is what we all agree on. Alright. So. Let's take this bit by bit. Number one. Choose what type your kid is. There should preferably be only one kid of each type in the group. There are eight types of kids. Bookworm, computer geek—

Keith: Electric.

Austin: Electric, yup.

[Sylvi laughs]

Austin: Jock—

Dre: Woogie woogie woogie woogie.

Austin: Popular kid, rocker, trouble-maker, and weirdo.

Keith: I've had such a hard time with this.

Austin: Well let's start with someone— Dre, you've already decided this for you.

Dre: Yeah, I'm gonna play the hick.

Austin: Do you wanna tell me— Do you wanna read for me what the hick is?

Dre: Yeah. Let me pull this PDF up really quick once again.

Austin: You were on page...

Dre: I got it, I got it.

Austin: 54 I think? Something like that.

Keith: 52.

Austin: 52 in the book, 54 on the PDF.

Keith: 52 on the page numbers.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Okay, so the hick. Your classmates smile at you because of your tan, your pronunciation, and your jokes, but what does it matter when you need to go out in the fields and the woods every day? The smell of corn and the grateful sounds the cows make at morning milking have been a part of your life since you were born. You know how to build and repair an engine, how to drive a tractor, and how to hunt and slaughter animals.

Austin: There you go. And your starting— Your key skills are force, move, and tinker.

Dre: Mmhm.

Austin: The way that this game's rolls work is that you have attributes: body, tech, heart, and mind. And then you have a bunch of skills, and however many... You make a dice pool based on how many you have in the attribute and the skill. And you roll that, and any sixes you get are successes. So, there you go. So you're deciding on hick.

Dre: Mmhm.

Austin: Who's up next? Who is trying to decide between what at this point?

Jack: I think I'm going to play the book worm. And the book worm is... When you read, you travel thousands of miles to foreign countries. You speak with mad poets and discuss the meaning of life with philosophers who died hundreds of years ago. You have secret rendezvous at alpine peaks and shootouts with Russian agents. In real life, you wish that your pimples would not show as much as they do, and you long for the day you will leave this place so your real life can truly begin.

Austin: And your skill focuses...

Jack: My key skills—

Austin: Key skills, that's what it's called.

Jack: Calculate, investigate, and comprehend.

Austin: All right. So Keith and Sylvi, where are you leaning?

Sylvi: So I'm kind of torn between two character—the two playbooks right now. I sort of... It used to be more. I've narrowed it down between the popular kid and the rocker. And I kinda was— Because I was thinking, hearing both Dre's character being the new kid from out of town, and Jack's character being a book worm, if Keith's character is also sort of a nerd, I could be the one popular kid that's inexplicably friends with them? Or I could just be a little [laughs] metal-head dweeb. And I'm kind of just torn between the two, 'cause they have slightly similar... They both have charm, they're both talk-y playbooks, so I'm still sort of...

Jack: They're both really fun.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvi: They're both really good.

Austin: They're both really good.

Jack: The idea of the popular kid who is inexplicably in the group is really funny. But also a metal-head dweeb is great.

[Austin laughs]

Sylvi: Like, only knows how to do power chords basically. But...

Austin: What else do you need?

Sylvi: Yeah, exactly.

Jack: I think you need four power chords and then you're just good.

Sylvi: Okay, I might have sold myself on rocker.

Dre: Yeah, just put that in drop D and you don't even have to use only one finger!

Sylvi: Exactly!

Keith: Just one finger, yeah.

Austin: Okay.

Sylvi: Yeah, I think I'm going to be playing a rocker then.

Jack: What a great instrument.

Sylvi: It's the best.

[Austin and Dre laugh]

Jack: It might be the best instrument.

Keith: I think it's maybe the best instrument.

Sylvi: Should I read this excerpt for the rocker, then?

Austin: Absolutely. Do it.

Sylvi: It was a worn cassette tape that changed your life. When that song had finished playing, you had found a home. You are an insane hard rocker who is high on life and playing music so loud the windows crack. In any case, you wish it would be like that, but you've just learned to play a C on the electric guitar and soon you will form a band down at the recreation center. Key skills are move, charm, and empathize.

Austin: Okay. Love it. So Keith, that leaves you.

Keith: Just me, huh? Okay. I'm having trouble with this one. I have— I mean, I guess this is part of the point, but I have seen myself in so many of these different archetypes at different points, and it's hard to be like, which one of these would I have most fun being.

Austin: Mmhm.

Keith: Um... I think... I guess that— There's only a few left. There's not a ton of classes or types. Kid types. Maybe there is a ton. There's like what, seven? Six?

Austin: There's eight.

Keith: Eight? Okay. I guess I'm torn between... It was the rocker, the weirdo, and the computer geek. So I guess it's now down to those two.

Sylvi: Sorry.

Keith: No no, it's fine. Um... But maybe instead of doing either of those, I would be the popular kid and I would steal Sylvi's idea of being the popular kid who's in—

[laughing]

Austin: That's really fun. We get both. I'm down with that.

Sylvi: That would be great.

Keith: Yeah. Okay. Let's do that. The— I have... One of the ones that I had concerned being the least. So let's do it. So we have what, the rocker, the hick, the book worm, the popular kid.

Austin: I believe that's right, yeah.

Jack: I would watch this television show. And I will over the next six hours.

[Sylvi and Austin laugh]

Austin: Alright. So now decide your age from ten to fifteen years old. This is important because your age determines how many... Your attribute points and also your luck points. In this game your characters are between ten and fifteen years old. Choose your age freely. Your age... I'm trying to see if they broke it down more clearly than this. In this section it does not. But I believe it's basically, however old you are— Yes, here it is.

Distribute points equal to your age in your four attributes. So if you're at fifteen, you have fifteen points to distribute between those four attributes. But your luck points are equal to fifteen minus your age. And luck points are really useful because they let you re-roll dice even after you've failed. After you've failed something, basically. So if you're older, you have higher base attribute scores, if you are younger you have more luck points to play with.

Jack: It's the Crusader Kings method.

[Sylvi laughs]

Austin: Basically.

[Dre laughs]

Sylvi: God, a little bit, honestly.

Jack: I think I'm going to be eleven.

Austin: Okay.

Sylvi: I just like twelve or thirteen... So maybe I'll do... I'll do thirteen.

Austin: Okay.

Dre: I also have myself as eleven.

Sylvi: Okay, maybe I'll do twelve then.

Dre: ["I don't know" noise]

Sylvi: I don't know.

[Keith laughs]

Austin: Do what you want.

Sylvi: I don't know. If I was thirteen, I'd be like weir— I know that I'd have hang-ups about hanging out with kids who are not teenagers, because that's how— Because turning thirteen warps your brain.

Dre: Mmm.

Austin: Totally. But there could be a familial connection here.

Sylvi: That's true.

Austin: There could be a, you know, a babysitter connection.

Sylvi: That's true.

Austin: There's all sorts of ways that you get a weird friend group.

Sylvi: I'll think about this.

Austin: Uh... Keith? Thoughts?

Keith: This introduces a new dynamic because it's... It means three different things to have a popular kid who's also younger than everyone else. So you're popular presumably with a different group of younger kids.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: And the thing that makes you popular—

Austin: [crosstalk] And why are you popular?

Keith: —is that you're hanging out with the older kids.

Austin: With the older kids, yeah.

Jack: Older, uncool kids.

Keith: Well, but when you're ten...

Austin: It doesn't matter.

Keith: It doesn't matter.

Austin: Exactly. Yeah.

Keith: And then the reverse is, if I was older... I don't even know what that would say. What would it say if a thirteen year old popular kid is hanging out with the twelve year old weirdos.

Sylvi: One of them could be like your younger sibling or something, like Austin said.

Austin: Right.

Sylvi: But it is still, like...

Austin: Or you got held back a year in school? But you're still the popular kid for some reason?

Keith: I always felt that the kids that got held back had a certain like...

[45:00]

Austin: Coolness.

Keith: Yeah. They had a certain default popularity by being bigger and older than everyone else. I think I'll be... Who's already the— I think eleven is the... I'll be ten. I'll do— Yeah.

Austin: Okay. Alright. Well, the next thing you're gonna do is distribute your attribute points.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Your attribute points are equal to your age. And they go into body, tech, heart, and mind. Body is the ability to jump high, run fast, fight, sneak, and climb. Tech is the ability to understand machines and robots, program technological things, open locked doors, and build things. Heart is the ability to make friends, lie, know the right people, create a good atmosphere, and persuade others. Mind is the ability to find weak points, understand people, situations, and creatures, solve riddles, understand clues, and have the right knowledge at the right time. And those can all be from one to five.

Keith: And what was the calculation for luck again?

Austin: Luck is fifteen minus your age.

Keith: That's what I thought it was.

Austin: So you're gonna have five luck.

Keith: Okay. And then... So five luck, and then attributes is...

Austin: Your age. Exactly. And I think you need to have a one in everything at least. You can't have a zero in something.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Also let me know if there's any questions about attributes. In fact, maybe while this is going on I will read what the skills are that are tied to each of these attributes?

Jack: Mmm.

Austin: Because that could help clarify some stuff for y'all. It's worth noting the next step is going to be about skill distribution. Everyone is gonna start with ten points and you can take any

of your key skills up to three, but other skills you can only start at one. So again, keep that in mind. Body has the following skills: sneak, the ability to hide and sneak; force, the ability to lift heavy things, the ability to fight, endure, and endure in physically stressful situations; and move, the ability to climb high, balance, and run fast. So sneak, force, and move are tied to body.

Tech has: tinker, the ability to build and manipulate machines and other mechanical objects or items; program, the ability to create and manipulate computer programs, electronic devices; and calculate, the ability to understand machines and other technical systems. So that's tech. Heart is the ability to connect— Sorry, contact, the ability to know the right person; charm, the ability to charm, lie, befriend, and manipulate; and lead, the ability to make others work well together and to help them when they are scared, sad, or confused. That's all heart.

Austin (cont'd): And then mind: investigate, the ability to find hidden objects and understand clues; comprehend, the ability to have the right piece of information or to be able to find it at the library; and empathize, the ability to understand what makes a person, an animal, or any kind of conscious thing tick, and how to find its weak spot. So those are all the skills and their related attributes.

Keith: And again you said that we get our age as many of these?

Austin: Your attributes is your age, your skills is ten.

Keith: Ten. Oh, it just happens to be the same. That's why.

Austin: That happens to be the same for you, exactly.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Yes.

Keith: Okay.

Jack: I think I might have my attributes.

Austin: Mmhm?

Jack: Body, one. Not great at that stuff. [laughs]

[Dre laughs]

Austin: No. Bad at that stuff.

Jack: Tech, three. Heart, three. And mind, four. Adding up to a total of eleven.

Austin: Which is your age. And that gives you four luck to start.

Jack: The fact that luck is here in these horizontal check boxes is giving me real Blades in the Dark stress vibes.

[laughing]

Jack: Which makes me feel bad.

Austin: Yeah, fair. Fair. Anyone else have their attributes?

Sylvi: Yeah, I've got mine.

Keith: [crosstalk] I've got mine.

Sylvi: Oh.

Dre: Yeah, I have mine too.

Austin: Alright, let's go down the list then. Keith, go ahead.

Keith: Sure. I've got body, three. If you're ten, you gotta get hit, you get right back up. That's being ten.

[Dre laughs]

Austin: Gotta get hit, gotta get right back up. Yeah, mmhm.

Keith: Tech, one. Heart, four. And mind, two.

Austin: Okay. Yeah.

Keith: Also ten. I plead ten on mine.

Austin: [laughs] Okay. Sylvi.

Sylvi: Yeah. So I've got three body, two tech, four heart, and three mind.

Austin: That's twelve year olds right there.

Sylvi: Yup, that's a twelve year old.

Austin: Pretty well balanced, little good at talkin'. Are you the best talker so far?

Sylvi: I think so.

Austin: You and Keith are both at four heart, so that makes sense. Are you the best tech person?
No, okay.

Sylvi: No, I'm the— Nah. Not at all.

Austin: No, not at all. Alright, Dre. Tell me about Ronnie.

Dre: I have four body, three tech, one heart, and three mind.

Austin: Okay. That's a pretty good spread of stuff across everybody's stuff. I think everyone—I think we have... We have a four mind, we got a four body, we got a four heart, and we got another four heart. So we got two four hearts. Okay, that's fun. That's good. I'm just, you know, doing some calculations in my own mind. Alright, so now attributes. Again, you have ten points. Anything that is one of your key skills you can put three points into. Otherwise, you have a starting skill max of one. I wish there was a way to mark that you had—what your key skills were [laughs] on this sheet.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: But I guess for the record, book worm has calculate, investigate, and comprehend. Hick has force, move, and tinker. Rocker has move, charm, and empathize. And popular kid has contact, charm, and lead.

Keith: It's three if it's a key skill, and how many if it—

Austin: One if it's not.

Keith: One? Okay.

Austin: Yeah. Maximum, maximum.

Keith: Maximum, alright.

Austin: You don't start with anything.

Jack: I might be missing something. It says you can take up to level three in the three key skills of your type. What determines your type?

Austin: That's your playbook. So, Jack, yours are calculate, investigate, and comprehend.

Jack: Oh, I see.

Austin: Otherwise the highest you can go is a one in something.

Jack: Right.

Keith: Okay, I think I'm like 99% sure I have my skills here. I have got a one in force, a one in move, a three in contact, a two in both charm and lead, and then a one in investigate.

Austin: Sounds good.

Dre: I've also got mine.

Austin: Alright.

Dre: I have a three in force, a three in move, a two in tinker, a one in comprehend, and a one in empathize.

Austin: Alright. Jack, I think— Yeah, I think you're right Jack. Math looks good.

Jack: Sneak is one.

Austin: Mmhm.

Jack: Move, one. Tinker, one. Charm, one. Investigate, three. Comprehend, two. Empathize, one.

Austin: Okay. Nothing in calculate, despite it being a key skill.

Jack: I'm gonna, you know. There's lots of different ways to calculate and I've already got a ton of dice there.

Austin: Uh-huh. Fair enough.

Sylvi: You make your own key skills.

Austin: It's true.

[Jack laughs]

Austin: Speaking of key skills, Sylvi?

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: Tell me your skills.

Sylvi: I'm pretty sure I have my math right here. So I have two in move, one in contact, three in charm, one in lead, one in investigate, and two in empathize.

Austin: Alright. Like that spread of things. Big rocker energy. Alright, so that's that step. Next up is really fun. It's items. Some items can be useful to overcome trouble. Items give a bonus— So, trouble. Trouble is what you're rolling against in this game. Trouble can be a dog that's gotten off of its leash. It can be a locked gate that you're trying to get over or through. It can be a run amok AI that is [laughs] trying to capture you inside of the facility you've snuck inside of. It can be a fire or an oncoming car or it can be a really angry adult who is scolding you. Everything in between, is trouble.

To overcome trouble, what you do is you take your attribute, you take any relevant skill, you put that number together, you roll that many dice. If you get a six, you succeed, on any of those dice. If you get multiple successes, if you get multiple sixes, you can trade those extra sixes for extra effect based on what skill it is that you're rolling. If you don't have the skill you just roll the attribute straight. You can help each other, et cetera.

Austin (cont'd): Items are another way to get a bonus during this stuff. To get a bonus from an item it must be obvious how it is of use to you. A skateboard gives bonus to move when you're fleeing from [laughs] a bully in the street, but not when climbing a tree. The game master should disallow unreasonable attempts to use items. Most objects that you encounter during the mysteries are props: everyday things that are described to give atmosphere but that don't effect dice rolls. This can be a stick in the woods, a Coke bottle, or a notepad. The game master decides which objects are items that give a bonus and which are just props.

Iconic item. You start the game with one iconic item. It works just like other items, but it also says something about who you are. This item gives two bonus dice in a situation where it can be used to help you overcome trouble. The iconic item will not disappear or break, whatever happens, unless you want it to. If it gets stolen or lost, you'll find it before the end of the mystery. The iconic item cannot be used by other kids.

Austin (cont'd): You can build new items using various skills. They can give you bonuses, and again— Actually, between mysteries—we're only gonna do one mystery, but between mysteries, every item except for your iconic item is lost [laughs]. Inventions break, domestic hidden animals run away or die, the police collect your runaway robot. If you wanna keep an item, you can choose to replace your iconic item, but you cannot— You can only ever have one iconic item at a time. And so I believe everyone just starts with one single iconic item. There are suggestions in your type on your playbook, but you can also choose your own. So for example, the rocker's suggestion ones are boom box, electric guitar, or leather jacket.

[Dre laughs]

Austin: The hick's suggested ones are German Shepherd, crowbar, or tractor. The book worm's suggested ones are a dog named Tiny or Plutin, which I'm guessing is for the non-U.S. setting. I didn't know what Plutin means. Does Plutin probably just mean tiny? I don't know. An encyclopedia, or a magnifying glass. And then for the popular kid their suggested iconic items are pack of chewing gum, diary with juicy secrets, or hairspray bottle. [laughs]

[Dre laughs]

Austin: Different type of popular kid I think.

Sylvi: There's a lot of stuff in the popular kid playbook that just smacks of gender.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Sylvi: Still good, but, you know.

Austin: Mmhm.

Sylvi: I might just go with the electric guitar. I just feel like that's, like...integral here.

Austin: Yeah. That makes sense to me.

Jack: Similarly, I would like to go for the dog. Before I worked out that it was translating them into English, I thought that they were just saying that it was an extremely, extremely small dog.

[Dre laughs]

Keith: I also thought that, yeah.

Jack: As such.

Austin: I think it's like, depending on which setting you're in, the— So for instance, Olaf or Gary in my class was attacked.

Jack: Sure.

Austin: I think that's suggesting—

Jack: Are we in Boulder or...

Austin: Right, exactly. Exactly.

Jack: So this is—

Keith: I think the bookworm would have a small dog. That's my [laughs].

Jack: Yeah, this is a tiny dog. His name is Tiny. He is some sort of chihuahua. He's small for a chihuahua. He has very pale fur, almost white, which he sheds everywhere.

Austin: Oh my god.

Jack: And he is very snappy. He is a very mean-spirited dog. Sometimes even to me. I don't think it's like a thing where I'm the only person who can...who is treated well by him. I think this dog takes potshots at everybody, me included, but despite that we are best of friends and go everywhere together.

Keith: You're friends with the dog. The dog does not seem friends with you.

Jack: The dog loves me. I think the dog is like... I think the dog feels burdened by the child but also understands that the child is a source of warmth and of food and I think that probably in its weaker moments, the dog is like, "This is an alright life that I have."

[laughing]

Jack: "And now I have to go and bark at a bird on the other side of the window for fifteen minutes."

Austin: Mmhm. I've written here down: "Dog, tiny," in quotes. "Petty, transactional, still loves you."

Jack: Yeah. Irascible, also.

Austin: Irascible. Good one, yeah.

Sylvi: I love a dog with a Napoleon complex.

Austin: [laughs] Love it. Anyone else have theirs yet? Ronnie or Keith.

Dre: I have mine.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Dre: I made mine own up. It's a Leatherman multi tool.

Jack: Ohhh.

Austin: Love it.

Keith: It's a good one.

Austin: Yeah. Very useful. Keith?

Keith: Oooh, don't have one.

Sylvi: If you want, I have another detail of my one, which is that it's a second-hand Stratocaster that they got from like a yard sale.

Austin: [crosstalk] Oh, love it.

Keith: Squire?

Sylvi: Probably, yeah. For a kid—

Austin: Oh it's probably a Squire.

Sylvi: Yeah, definitely.

Jack: What color is it?

Sylvi: Um... Oh, I'm thinking like— It's like a, what's it called, a sunburst on it? Like, I'm thinking—

Austin: Yeah, totally.

Keith: Tobacco sunburst? That's one of the big ones.

Sylvi: I'm thinking, yeah. I think that's probably the one I'm thinking of, but like, I'm very vividly picturing like my first guitar?

Austin: Uh-huh.

Sylvi: So I'm trying to, like...

Jack: Oh, this looks great.

Sylvi: Yeah, yeah. It's, yeah. It is the tobacco—or, electric sunburst actually I think is what it says on this Amazon.com listing.

[1:00:00]

Sylvi: Which is like, starts with like a wood grain and goes into a darker color.

Austin: Yeah. That's fantastic.

Sylvi: There's duct tape on the head of it.

Austin: Good. Uh-huh.

Jack: This guitar is listed as "a perfect choice for beginners."

Sylvi: Yeah, it is!

Austin: Any thoughts yet, Keith?

Keith: Uh, I wasted all my time thinking of a name.

Austin: Okay, well what's your name?

Keith: Nolan Pearson.

Austin: Nolan Pearson. Alright.

Keith: Cool kid name.

Austin: That's a cool kid name. Let's go over names then, if other people have names. We knew Ronnie. Ronnie Lee Highsmith Jr. Sylvi, do you have one?

Sylvi: Yeah, so my character, her name is Corey Curtis, but her friends call her CC.

Austin: Love it.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: And then Jack, I'm guessing you're not there yet?

Jack: Um, no. I think my character is called Frankie Already.

Austin: Great.

Jack: But everybody calls her Frank.

Austin: Okay. [laughs] Alright. Next up. You have to pick a problem. Problems are...here we go. All kids have a problem. You may have kept yours to yourself or told the other kids. The problem is a part of everyday life. Something that worries you... I thought there'd be more to that sentence so I set it up with that rhythm, there isn't. During the game [laughs] the game master will use the problem to put you in trouble.

If you solve the problem, then you must pick a new one before the next mystery. You should choose a problem that you want to explore during the mysteries. It's a signal from you to the game master: put my kid in this kind of trouble! I think again there are some suggested ones here. So for instance the popular kid's suggested problem is like: mom or dad is having a secret love affair; your rival knows what you are trying to hide; your aunt lives in your basement and she is eccentric.

Austin (cont'd): The hick suggested ones are someone is poisoning our animals; mom or dad doesn't want to accept that they are sick; I seriously hurt someone by mistake. The book worm problems are—suggested ones, you can always make up your own: nobody tells me how my dad died; my sister is really sick; that weird man is following me. And rocker is: my parents are about to divorce; I steal money; or [laughing] unrequited love. "I steal money"—great problem.

Sylvi: It's really good.

Keith: I steal unrequited love.

Austin: I steal unrequited love. Ah, weirdo problems: I get bullied at school; my brother is doing weird things in his room; my father is a communist.

[Jack laughs]

Austin: Sounds like a solution to me, I don't know.

[laughing]

Jack: So [sighs]. I have a fairly weird one and I have a fairly normal one.

Austin: Mmhm?

Jack: And... 'Cause like, "That weird man is following me" could be normal but would be grim, or could be weird. That could be like, the sensation that something more otherworldly is happening?

Austin: Mmhm.

Jack: And so I have a similarly otherworldly one which is that I keep seeing myself in television adverts that I didn't record. I've never been on television.

Austin: [crosstalk] Ooh, I love that. That's good. That's fun.

Jack: If that's not too otherworldly, I would love to go with that one. But if you wanted a more mundane one, I was thinking of, like a lodger or like a family member came to visit and hasn't left.

Austin: Let's go the weirder one. We're only doing a one-shot.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: So let's— Give me something to play with, you know?

Jack: Okay! Late at night, flipping through the channels... There's a board game being advertised, it's like Hungry Hungry Hippos or something, and one of the children sitting at the table is me, and she looks right at the camera and she says, "Hungry Hungry Hippos! It's the game of 20...2035!"

Austin: [laughs] Uh-huh. "Back and better than ever!"

Jack: "Back and better than ever! This time, there's more hippos."

Austin: "These hippos haven't eaten since the 90s!"

[Jack laughs]

Austin: Thumbs up.

Keith: Is this... What season is it?

Jack: Winter.

Austin: Winter.

Keith: Winter...

Austin: Winter, yeah.

Keith: Okay, I have my iconic item, which is...

Austin: Mmhm.

Keith: An especially large, but not too large, rare marble.

[Sylvi and Dre laugh]

Jack: Ooh.

Austin: Love it. Fantastic.

Jack: Please tell us everything about this marble.

Keith: Uh. It is especially large, but not too large.

Jack: [crosstalk] —not too large.

Keith: [laughs] It's blue and it has an ornate inner design that is sort of like a cat's eye but not in a way that I've seen before. And not in a way that certainly the kids who cannot stop asking to look at my rare marble have seen before either.

Austin: Now we understand why Nolan Pearson is popular.

[laughing]

Jack: Is it rare?

Austin: Yeah, it's— Is it actually rare is what you're asking, Jack?

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: Yeah, it's rare. I mean, I don't think I could get three hundred dollars for it at a pawn shop.

Jack: [laughs] Okay.

[Austin laughs]

Keith: There was a brief period where at school we were playing this game where you flick them at each other. They're these little plastic figurines?

Jack: Oh.

Keith: And you would flick them.

Jack: Yeah. Aren't they kind of horrible figurines?

Sylvi: Oh!

Keith: Yes.

Jack: Aren't they like kind of grotesque?

Sylvi: What are— I— Funny Bones?

Jack: But they come incredible colors.

Keith: Funny Bones, yes, they're Funny Bones.

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: So, they were Gogo's Crazy Bones, that's what they're called.

[Dre laughs]

Keith: Gogo's Crazy Bones.

Jack: They're like glow-in-the-dark or like, metallic.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: Yeah, I had a glow-in-the-dark one.

Keith: And so this was temporarily a big thing at my school when I was a child. But they got, I believe they were banned from recess. And after they were banned from recess, there was a brief period where playing marbles was the fun cool thing to do at recess instead of playing catch or whatever.

Austin: Yeah, sure.

Jack: Did they fucking ban that too?

Keith: I don't think they did. I think that there's—

Austin: Hey how much do you think this marble is? I posted.

Keith: Um...

Austin: You can't search it.

Jack: I think that is six hundred dollars.

Austin: Sure. Any other guesses?

Keith: I think that's eighty dollars.

Austin: Okay, any other guesses?

Sylvi: Twenty dollar... No, it's—

Keith: It's either eighty or over a thousand.

Sylvi: Yeah, I'm going over a thousand actually, I changed my mind.

Austin: Ninety two hundred dollars.

Sylvi: Wow.

Jack: Woof.

Dre: Wow.

Jack: Is it cursed?

Austin: Uh, that is the um...Indian marble, quote unquote, sold at Morphy's 2.6 million dollar spring toy auction in 2008. The marble is notable for its contrasted colors: blue, white, yellow, black, and hints of purple. Sixty different bidders on the phone, live, and online competed to be

the proud owner of this marble. The bidding war resulted in the marble selling for more than twice its initial estimate. Like most other marbles of its time, this marble is one in nine sixteenth inches in diameter. It was one of the most expensive marbles sold during the auction. There are five other marbles that sold for over \$5,000, and many that sold for more.

Keith: So let's say this. Let's say this about my marble.

Austin: The most expensive one is actually gorgeous. I just wanna post this. The most expensive one that is on this list—

Keith: Oh, that is very pretty.

Austin: —is \$25,000.

[Dre whistles]

Jack: Oh, that's a beautiful marble.

Sylvi: Yeah, no, it...

Austin: It's a beautiful marble. It was estimated—

Sylvi: Looks like a jawbreaker.

Austin: Do you wanna describe it? Yeah, I would eat this marble.

[Keith laughs]

Austin: It was estimated at \$6,000. It ended up selling for triple that amount after a bidding war. These bidding wars are really driving the marble prices up!

Keith: It's got this one bit that looks—makes it—that's made out of bowling ball.

Austin: It totally does look like that.

[Keith laughs]

Austin: It was made by the Christiansen Agate company. Made by the company's—or, hm. Marbles made by this company are some of the most sought after and most expensive marbles around. It was founded in 1925. The company is defunct. It was Ohio-based. Today it remains a hit with marble-collectors who associate its products with the golden age of marbles. I'm just gonna post this whole list. These are great.

Keith: I'm going to say about my marble. I'm going to retcon that me, the player, does not know anything about marble prices, and neither does Nolan Pearson. All we know is that wow, I have the most interesting marble out of anyone in the grade. No one has seen a better marble than mine.

Austin: It's big. Yours is a big marble.

Keith: But not too big.

Jack: But not too big.

Keith: It is remarkable how big it is, but also remarkable how not-too-big it is.

[Dre laughs]

Austin: Incredible marble.

Keith: You'd think it would be too big, but it's actually not.

Austin: I thought it would be too big, but it's actually not.

Keith: It's actually exactly the right size.

Dre: Mmm.

Austin: This marble is actually the right size. Jack, did you link this ongoing Morphy's auction page? It says there's marbles here, but I don't see any marbles.

Jack: So this is the... This is the auction from September— Oh, let me link you the marbles. Let me link you the marbles. So this is the auction page from— You said Morphy spring toy auction and my eyes lit up.

Austin: Oh, here we go.

Jack: I wanted to see what they were selling, and some of these things that they're selling are spectacular. There's a section called "American Tin" and in it is a subsection called "Unique Art."

[Keith laughs]

Austin: This one's—honestly? This one's a steal.

Jack: Holy shit.

Austin: Large divided core-swirl marble? Only for three hundred something bucks? This is a beautiful marble right here.

[Sylvi laughs]

Keith: That's a beautiful marble.

Austin: That's a beautiful marble.

Jack: Look at the unique art.

Keith: A steal for three hundred bucks.

Austin: I would love to look at the unique art. Oh, look at that. That's some unique— This Lionel Standard Gauge Pre-War 3-Sectional Plot.

Keith: [crosstalk] Oh! Austin, the one that you linked. Look at the top view of this marble.

Austin: I know. It's incredible.

Keith: It's extremely good. It's a little rough around the edges.

Austin: It is. It's a beat-up marble.

Keith: It's a user—This is a user marble.

Austin: But I wanna use her. I'm here to play marbles. I'm here to play jacks—that's not— You don't do marbles with jacks, do you?

Keith: If you watch anyone who watches guitar videos online like me would know that if there's a guitar retailer that sells used guitars, they'll remark on a guitar that's like, "It's old, it's a player." And that means that the person who owned it, used it. [laughs] Which I always find funny.

Austin: It's got life in it. That's good to me.

Keith: It does, yeah. It's got, yeah— The lacquer on the fretboard's wearing out 'cause someone actually played this guitar.

Austin: I want that spirit of the player, you know?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: That's what I want.

Jack: So how— Can we get one of these marbles for the company?

[Keith laughs]

Austin: Yeah. Let's—

Dre: Who gets to hold onto it, though?

Austin: We'd pass it around.

Jack: We'd pass it around.

Dre: I don't wanna hold onto it. I don't want that pressure.

Jack: No, we're not gonna get one of the really expensive ones.

Austin: [crosstalk] Too bad! No, yeah, a few hundred dollars.

Dre: [laughing] Don't do this to me.

Austin: But, no, you have to hold the marble. That's the rule that we've voted it into our...

Jack: The operating agreement.

Austin: Into our constitution. Operating agreement. It's called a constitution now, we've also voted that. It's not called an operating a— We're a country now. [laughs]

[laughing]

Austin: Step one.

Jack: Some people get a marble and then they get fucking airs and graces.

[Dre laughs]

Austin: [laughs] It's a very nice marble, you know?

Jack: Step one, get a marble. Step two, we're a country now.

[laughing]

Keith: And this marble proves it!

Austin: [crosstalk] And instead of crown jewels, we got crown marbles. Yeah, exactly.

Keith: As long as the marble is moving...

Austin: [crosstalk] My divine right is proved by this three thousand year old marble.

Jack: You know, twenty minutes ago I thought to myself, "This kid has a marble. That's not enough to make them [laughs] a cool or popular kid."

Keith: Well—

Jack: And now I'm like, "I want a marble."

[Austin laughs]

Keith: How much m—

Austin: Also I said three thousand year old marble, I meant three thousand dollar marble.

[Jack laughs]

Austin: I actually think if you do have a three thousand year old marble, you do have—

Jack: World's oldest marble.

Austin: Oldest marble.

Keith: I th— Okay, so here's... How much more expensive would it be to in addition to printing a—or, to buying a marble as a sort of totem of our sovereignty, if we also mint a very small amount of currency.

Austin: Just a little bit.

Keith: Just a little bit.

Austin: Just a little bit!

Keith: If we each had fifty Friends at the Table dollars of actual backed currency.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: That wouldn't be so much.

Austin: That wouldn't be so bad.

Keith: And how much fun would that be?

Austin: It would be very fun.

Keith: To have FaTT coins?

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvi: Really trying to have FaTT coins.

Austin: We could [laughs]— I would love to have FaTT coins.

Keith: And also the additional cost of we would have to pay someone to design for us a flag.

Austin: [laughs] We're right there. We're basically at country already.

Keith: Barely more expensive. We're looking at six hundred dollars instead of three hundred dollars, I think. And that's what is that.

Jack: Three hundred dollars on the marble, and then three hundred dollars on the flag art?

Austin: On commissioning a flag.

Keith: And then fifty dollars each for currency, yeah.

Austin: For currency. You buy in, is what you're suggesting. Anyway, uh, looks like 2500 BCE. Yeah, uh-huh. So that's quite a long time. We can get some old marbles. We can get it going. Anyway, we should keep doing character creation.

Keith: I feel like this proves that my iconic item is good.

Jack: Absolutely.

Austin: Yeah. This worked out.

[Dre laughs]

Jack: Also, can I just read one sentence before we move on, because this is a doozy?

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: In 1503 the town council of Nuremburg, Germany, limited the playing of marble games to a meadow outside the town.

Austin: Get that shit out of the town.

Dre: Wow.

Keith: They're even more restrictive than my elementary school recess rules.

Austin: [crosstalk] You wanna play marbles? Get the marbles outside. [laughs]

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Are we good with iconic items now? I think so, right?

Keith: Yeah, I was the last one. We've been on problems.

Austin: We were at problems, alright. Who else—

Keith: So my tentative— I was thinking that my problem could be that I'm grounded.

Austin: Love it.

Jack: Oooh.

Austin: Love it.

Jack: Great problem.

Austin: You're a popular kid who's grounded. That's a rough one to have.

Keith: It's a rough one to have, especially because we're trying to solve a mystery.

Austin: You're trying to solve, a mystery. The—

Keith: Grounded, in quote... Grounded, quote, until further notice.

Austin: Nooo! You don't even have an ETA.

Keith: I don't even have an ETA.

Jack: What did you do?

Keith: I didn't do anything!

Jack: Oh, okay, uh-huh.

Keith: It's bullshit!

Sylvi: [laughing] You said a swearword.

[laughing]

Austin: Alright, Ronnie or CC, do y'all have your problems?

Dre: Yes. My problem is that dad is sick and does not want to admit it.

Jack: Ooh.

Austin: Great. Sad. "We're just up here visiting. Alright, Ronnie?"

Dre: "It's not that big a deal."

Austin: "It's not that big a deal. We're here to see your aunt for a little bit. I have to go, uh...go to the doctor a couple times, we should all go to the doctor. It's not a big deal." This isn't the voice. This isn't someone who's been selling cars in Appalachia. But I'll get there.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: He's not the car guy. That's— I keep getting those confused in my head.

[Dre laughs]

Jack: He's the car guy's kid, right?

Austin: He's the c— No, he's the car guy's son-in-law.

Dre: Yes.

Jack: Kid in law, yeah.

Austin: Yeah, kid in law. Yeah.

[1:15:00]

Jack: As they say.

Sylvi: So I'm torn between two. The first is just one of the pre-written ones which is my parents are about to divorce, which is, you know, just tough on a kid.

[1:15:00]

Austin: Sitting in your room playing the guitar, your parents are about to divorce.

Sylvi: Yeah. Look, I've been there. Um.

Austin: What's better than this, yeah.

Sylvi: But the other one I was thinking was that my family is about to move. Especially if we're doing a one-shot I think that could work.

Austin: Yeah, I like that a lot. And the tunnel's open, right. They could be like, moving moving.

Sylvi: Yeah, exactly. Okay, I'm putting this one down.

Austin: That's good. I love that one. And who knows, maybe they're moving to save the marriage.

Sylvi: Yeah, maybe. Who knows?

Austin: What we need is just a new perspective on life.

Sylvi: Never gone wrong.

Jack: Yeah, let's pick one of the least stressful things we can do. Let's move to a cursed city.

Austin: [laughs] Next up is drive. Your drive is the reason why you expose yourself to dangerous and difficult situations, to solve mysteries with your friends. It helps you understand your kid and makes it easy to start a new mystery. Whatever happens, the kids will want to figure it out. You may change your drive between mysteries. Again, some suggested ones. Book worm: I want to find answers to the big questions of life; I need something to brag about. Hick suggested ones: there is more to this world than what meets the eye; they need me. Popular kid: it's a relief to get away from the burden of popularity; or I hate secrets. And rocker: I'm doing it for love; hunger for everything in life. [laughs] Just a hedonistic mystery-solver. [laughs]

Dre: Um... I'm still brainstorming mine a little bit but the initial one I've written down is, I just want to make friends.

Austin: I just wanna make friends. That's good. That's a good drive. Yeah.

Jack: I want to be in a magazine.

Austin: But not on the TV at night.

Jack: No, but I do—

Austin: Or yes on the TV at night, but—

Jack: Yes on the TV—

Austin: Only if you got to do it.

Jack: Yeah, but yes on the TV at night when like...Michelangelo Biggs the newscaster says, "And here's a brave young kid from Bluffington Beach."

Austin: "Her name is Frankie Already, and she..."

Jack: "She discovered a—"

Austin: "She caught the biggest fish." Right. [laughs] Yeah.

Jack: Maybe I just wanna—

Austin: Yeah, so—

Jack: No, I wanna be in a magazine. 'Cause I like reading magazines, and I think that saying I want to be on TV is too close to my problem.

Austin: Yeah, I'm with you.

Jack: I want to be in a magazine.

Austin: Any other drives? Nolan or CC. And I'll read some other ones while y'all are thinking. Computer geek's suggested ones: I love puzzles; and peer pressure makes me do it. So that's a good twist on the old drive. Jock: I'm in it for the thrill; or it's the right thing to do.

Troublemaker's suggested drives: I'll do anything to get away from home; my friends and what we do is the only thing not broken in my life. And weirdo drives: they say I'm the most curious person alive; and drawn to anything different or strange.

Sylvi: I have one.

Austin: Mmhm?

Sylvi: And it's, I want my big brother to think I'm cool.

Austin: Love it. Good. Good drive.

Keith: Um, my friends in class love to hear stories about my outside friends.

Austin: Oh, I love that. That's good. Yeah. This is how you— You pump your popularity this way, right? You're out hanging out with the older kids.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: And that is where your popularity kind of comes from. I love that, it's good.

Sylvi: [laughs] This fucking clout chaser.

[Austin laughs]

Jack: This marble-loving clout chaser.

Keith: Oh, I have more clout-chasing for my pride.

Austin: Alright, well let's talk about prides. Every kid has a pride, something that makes you feel strong, important, and valuable. Pride may be well-known to the group or a secret. The game master should use the pride to put you in trouble by setting up scenes that highlight or threaten the pride. A classmate turns out to be as good or better than you at school, dad is losing his job at the fire station, an animal is tormented. Pride is also a tool for you to understand and play your kid. Problem and pride may interact, and pride can even become a problem, but it may also be two separate things.

You can change your pride between mysteries. Once per mystery you may check your pride to get one automatic success in a dice roll. You can check your pride after a failed roll or even after

a successful roll in order to get an extra success. You must explain how your pride helps you. If the mystery takes several sessions to play or if the group plays the mystery landscape, which we're not doing, pride may be checked once a session. So. There you go. So once a mystery for us you can check your pride. What's your pride, Nolan?

Keith: I know the fastest way to all the best spots in the neighbourhood.

Austin: Mm, I like that.

Jack: Wow.

Austin: Shortcut kid.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Secret routes and tunnels.

Keith: Yup.

Jack: [laughs] Very useful.

Austin: [laughs] Uh-huh. Any other prides?

Jack: Yeah. I was on Jeopardy.

Syvli: Damn!

[Dre and Austin laugh]

Austin: Speaking of clout-chasing, we got some real—

Dre: God!

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh. Who else? Ronnie, you have one.

Dre: Yeah. My pride is I ain't stupid.

Austin: Great pride.

Dre: Mhm.

Austin: Very applicable broadly. [laughs]

Sylvi: I'm just going with— I'm going with a pre-set one on this one, which is I can play guitar. That's...

Austin: That's a good one.

Sylvi: Yeah, you're twelve years old and you can play guitar, you're gonna be proud of it.

Austin: Damn right. Alright, your next one here is relationships. That's everybody's pride, right? We all got our prides in? Yeah, okay. You should define your relationships to the other kids in the group. This is best done together with the other players. If one kid has the relationship "older sister" to another kid, the players need to agree that the kids are in fact siblings.

[Dre laughs]

Austin: None of the kids should be enemies, but it's fun to have some tension in the group: love, envy, or mistrust. The relationships can be changed between mysteries, et cetera. You should also choose two relationships to NPCs. The NPCs that are mentioned in the type descriptions are part of the mystery landscape, which again we're not doing. If you want to write your own relationships with NPCs you need to do it together with the game master so the NPCs can be

easily connected to the locations, blah blah blah blah blah. We are doing a— Like, don't worry about the stuff around the mystery landscape, because it's... We just come up with the NPCs that matter to you and we can talk through it. It's also possible that the kids have two NPC relationship connections, duh duh duh duh duh, that's fine. So, connections to each other first.

Keith: One per?

Austin: One per, and then two NPCs basically.

Keith: Got it.

Austin: The way that these are written, just to be clear, here is like the... I believe there are examples again in here. Relationships to other kids are things like, book worm: they are my competitor; I will make them love me; we are siblings and friends. Hick suggested ones: they wouldn't survive one day in the woods; how can I show them how I really feel?; a reliable friends. Popular kid suggested ones: I know they love me; they are freaky but I like it.

[Dre laughs]

Austin: And [laughs] I didn't write this. They are useful. And rocker: I love them, we don't like each other, but they're part of the band; or, they rock!

Sylvi: God.

Austin: Other unrelated, or from other playbooks. From the computer geek: we are best friends; we are different but still friends; they treat me badly but I won't sink to the same level. [laughs]

Jock: I wonder if we can count on them; they know everything; annoying little sibling.

Troublemaker: they think they're better than the rest of us; I'll do anything for them; they know what I'm going through. And weirdo suggestions: they don't know it, but I love them; their parents let me live with them; or they don't like me, but I will prove them wrong. Big Jughead Jones energy on this one.

[Dre laughs]

Austin: I should catch up on Riverdale. I'm so far back.

Dre: Yeah, me too. I don't even know anything about the serial killer gene.

Sylvi: Oh my god, you are far back.

Austin: There's a serial killer gene?

Keith: Oh, I think I even know about the serial killer gene.

Austin: Alright, I have to catch up. Yeah. Mmhm.

Dre: Um... Jack. How often does your character correct my grammar and pronunciation?

Jack: I think that is such a shitty thing to do that I don't know that I would like to commit to playing a pedant in that way.

Dre: Yeah, fair enough.

Austin: Is there a flip on that that is more comfortable? One of the things here is like, your pride is that "I ain't stupid." Is there some version of this that is like, we go to study group together. Or, you know, Frankie always gives me, you know, pointers on something. Or, do you know what I mean?

Jack: Or like, I am teaching Frank to X.

Austin: Or vice versa. Right, exactly, right.

Dre: Ooh.

Austin: We flip that hick-book worm thing on its head.

Jack: I'm teaching Frank how to skateboard.

Dre: That would be fun.

Keith: Which one of you is most likely to have previously bullied me? But no longer.

Dre: Definitely not me.

Keith: If it's no one...

Jack: Also, I am just writing down, I don't care for Nolan but Tiny loves him.

Sylvi: Fucking great, oh my god.

[laughing]

Dre: Yeah, no, this is incredible.

Austin: I love this. That's fantastic. This I love.

Sylvi: I don't— Yeah, I haven't been thinking of my character as someone who'd like, bully a younger kid. Um...so I feel—

Keith: Okay, I can scrap this one. That's fine, I don't need it.

Sylvi: I was going to say maybe Frankie, we could be like... Like, our families could have been next door neighbours?

Keith: [crosstalk] This was minor bullying. This would have been...

Sylvi: Okay.

Keith: Normal older kid rudeness.

Sylvi: Okay then yeah, we could totally do that.

Keith: Okay.

Sylvi: But uh, Jack, I was thinking like, Frankie and CC's families could have like lived together since they were kids and that's how they know each other.

Jack: Oh that's a great idea yeah, where it's like going to birthday parties.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Jack: When we were both like two or whatever, we were at each other's birthday parties or whatever.

Sylvi: Walking to school together, shit like that, yeah.

Jack: Yeah.

Sylvi: Okay, cool.

Jack: Do our parents get along? Or is it sort of proximity?

Sylvi: Our moms get along.

[Jack and Dre laugh]

Austin: That's fun.

Jack: Oh, what's a fun thing that we could be building together, Dre? Like the first thing I wrote down was like, Ronnie and I are building a... Like, what's a— Like a den? Like a den in the woods, or like a...

Austin: Like a tree house or like a...

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: Oh, a tree house in winter is really good as well 'cause it's like, that's a great time to build because there's no leaves getting in the way, but it's cold and slippery so you've got like this risk. It's exciting.

Sylvi: I got a good one for Ronnie.

Austin: Go ahead.

Sylvi: Especially with that one sort of clicking it into place. It's, I'm worried that Ronnie's going to replace me. She's already worried about moving, right.

Austin: Ooh, yeah. That's good.

Jack: Oh, so I can play off that one with my relationship with CC which is, I think CC's going to be a star.

Sylvi: Aww!

[Austin laughs]

Sylvi: I love that.

Austin: But is that in the way of like, she's gonna move away and become a star?

Jack: I think it's a combo, right, 'cause it's like on the one hand it's like I've got faith in my friend. She's gonna be in magazines. But also she's better than this shitty town. She's gonna go off and, you know, be a cool rocker.

Dre: I've written down for Ronnie, Ronnie was the first person who didn't look at me funny because of my accent. Maybe because Ronnie—

Jack: Oh, do you mean Frankie?

Dre: Sorry, Frankie, yes.

Jack: You are Ronnie.

Dre: Gosh.

[Austin laughs]

Dre: What am I doing? Yes, Frankie. Because like, Frankie's been reading books, has probably read tons of books of people with like different accents and different ways of talking.

Jack: Mm.

Austin: That's fun.

Sylvi: I have one for Nolan, which I think is very simple and also is very much like, older kid hanging out with younger kid, which is just Nolan makes me laugh.

Keith: Mine was... I only have this first one written in, but mine was CC didn't like me but I'm really good at finding dropped picks.

Sylvi: That's really good.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: My original thought, but you have an electric guitar not an acoustic guitar. My first thought was that my hands can fit into—between the strings to get the picks out of the inside of the acoustic guitar body.

Sylvi: I've a—

Keith: Which is basically the worst thing that can happen in your life.

Sylvi: Oh, that's just your whole day.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: I've updated it a little to be, Nolan's annoying but he makes me laugh, just because I feel like, you know, that fits more with your thing a little bit too.

Austin: That fits. Yeah, that works.

Dre: What... Maybe I'm trying to learn an instrument to impress CC?

Jack: Oh, what is a...

Sylvi: Very good.

Austin: That's very fun.

Jack: What is the instrument?

Dre: Um, Austin and I had talked about like, my character living in a very cramped apartment because we're up here living with my aunt and uncle.

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Dre: And so the best instrument for my character to try to learn in a cramped apartment is obviously the drums.

Sylvi: Oh my god, I love it.

[Jack laughs]

Austin: Aw, miserable. Love it.

Jack: [laughs] It's not the drums—

Austin: "Why are you bothering learning to play the drums, you know I'm moving."

Jack: Oh, god. I— I have a trumpet and I have never learned it because the first time I tried...

[Dre laughs]

Jack: [laughing] One of my next door neighbours came out of his gate holding a watering can and blowing into it to mock me.

Sylvi: Oh my god!

[Dre laughs]

Austin: Wow...

Dre: God!

[1:30:00]

Austin: Real quick, I have to float it. Are we sure that Ronnie isn't learning the trumpet so that—

Sylvi: Ska band?

Austin: He can be in a ska band. [laughs]

Sylvi: Oh boy.

Dre: There we go. Deleting it and putting trumpet.

[Austin laughs]

Jack: They are so loud. A trumpet is so loud.

[1:30:00]

Jack: I mean, the drums are so loud as well, but you wouldn't think that something so small could make so much noise.

Dre: Yeah, we... When I lived with Jasmine in her old apartment for a couple months, there was a kid literally like five houses away from her that would practice trumpet outside and you could hear it inside Jasmine's apartment with all the windows closed.

Jack: Jesus. Did you go out with a watering can and go [makes trumpet noises].

Dre: Uh no, 'cause I'm not terrible. And also like, over the course of those couple months, the kid got pretty good.

Jack: This is the best.

Dre: Shout-out to the trumpet kid.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: If you're listening, trumpet-kid, you're gonna be a star.

Dre: Mmhm. Nolan, what's our deal?

Keith: Um...

Austin: That's a great relationship between other kids.

[Jack and Dre laugh]

Keith: What's our deal.

[Dre laughs]

Keith: Um... I don't know, what was your item and drive again?

Dre: My item is a Leatherman, or a multi tool.

Keith: Right.

Dre: And my drive is I just want to make friends.

Keith: Okay. Do you do... Your other stuff has been practicing drums in the apartment, but are you primarily an indoor kid or an outdoor kid?

Dre: Uh, outdoor kid.

Keith: Outdoor kid? Um... Here I could do...

Dre: Is Nolan the type of popular kid who plays sports or no?

Keith: No.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: Is marbles a sport?

Keith: Is m— [laughs] Is marbles— Is Crazy Bones a sport? Is Gogo's Crazy Bones a sport?

Jack: Yes.

[Austin and Dre laugh]

Keith: I'm Nolan. How's this sound? I'm willing to edit or change this if it doesn't fit. Ronnie is still outside when everyone else has gone in, so I can always go there.

Dre: Okay.

Jack: Yeah, it's good.

Keith: Okay. And then Jack, how does this sound for Frankie? For Christmas my grandma got me a subscription of encyclopedias and Frank likes to borrow them sometimes and sometimes trades me snacks for them.

[Sylvi laughs]

Jack: Yup. Absolutely.

Dre: That is also the most, like, the best way a kid would actually tell an adult about like their friend. [laughs]

[laughing]

Austin: Yeah. That's great.

Dre: What was your... Oh god, it's a marble, right. Um...

Austin: It's the marble.

Jack: I gotta say, I know this is Tales from the Loop, but this is a real fucking Fiasco cast that we're building.

[Austin laughs]

Dre: Yeah.

Keith: I think that's the best thing you can say about a game.

Dre: Mmhm.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Yes.

Keith: If it's not Fiasco but it feels like the characters could be in it.

Austin: Mmhm.

Dre: I don't think that like, Nolan wouldn't survive one day in the woods is right, but maybe there is something along the lines of... Since we're spending time together outside?

Keith: My view specifically of my, I know the fastest way to all the best spots in the neighbourhood, that is like going into the woods and like cutting through weird paths in the woods.

Dre: Okay. So maybe it's like, Nolan—

Keith: So you could mirror whatever your impulse was. What was it?

Dre: Maybe it's like, Nolan is teaching me the lay of the land.

Keith: I don't mind that.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: We're starting to get some NPC ones in also.

Dre: What's a good gym teacher name?

Austin: Good question.

Dre: Or is there a type of teacher we want to have, where maybe multiple of us have a teacher NPC relationship here? For good or for bad.

Austin: Definitely have a band teacher. We could definitely have a... I think a gym teacher makes sense. A history teacher who's like, has some sort of interest in local regional mysteries or history, you know what I mean? I'm just pitching things, like I don't have an answer for my side of this, right? An English teacher who loves folklore.

Sylvi: Kind of like the band teacher who doesn't like that I play like [laughs] shitty four-chord punk rock songs before class.

[Dre laughs]

Austin: I love that. I love that a lot, yeah. "This is jazz guitar, okay? Corey?"

Dre: God, I was just thinking, "This is jazz band, quit playing that." [laughs]

Austin: Yeah, a hundred percent. Yeah. This is jazz band.

Sylvi: I played drums in like, seventh and eighth grade, and when I quit the band that went at lunchtime, my teacher told me you're not allowed to use the cymbal anymore 'cause that's just for kids who are in the band.

Jack: Oh no!

[Austin laughs]

Sylvi: I know. I was really fucked up. He had a full kit and I could use the bass drum and the snare drum and that was it.

Austin: Damn.

Jack: Just you can't use the cymbal is such a fucking stupid thing to a kid sitting at a drum set.

Sylvi: Yeah, like I was practicing before class one day and she was just like, "No, stop doing that."

Keith: Well they're fragile, they're just big disks of metal, it's not like you can be hitting on them with sticks and think that it'll work.

Jack: [laughs] Oh, god. Okay, I think I have two NPC relationships.

Austin: Mmhm?

Jack: I think Pastor Hest has been replaced by a double.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: And Miss Maxwell, the librarian, keeps talking to me about interlibrary loans.

Austin: [laughs] What's— Why?

Dre: That's where the good books are.

Jack: She says she can get me books from elsewhere.

Austin: Mm. Okay.

Jack: And I don't—I don't think that—I have no reason to think that she interactions with the Tunnel Project? I think that she's just like, she can get me cool books from out of town!

Austin: Right.

Jack: Which might be true.

Austin: Band teacher's name is... James Garret.

Jack: James Garren?

Austin: Garret, Garet. G-A-R-R-E-T. James Garret.

Jack: Great band teacher name.

Austin: So you can— Band teacher, Mr. Garret.

Sylvi: I have mine. I'm still trying to land on a name for Corey's big brother. I thought it might be cute to have Corey and Rory, but it's a little silly.

Austin: Oh, that's fun.

Sylvi: But he's been sneaking out at night ever since Mom said we were moving. And then, Mr. Garret keeps calling my music noise.

[Austin and Dre laugh]

Austin: Great.

Sylvi: Those are mine.

Austin: Okay.

Dre: Uh, I'm gonna say Mr. Garret let me eat lunch in the band room before I made any friends.

Austin: Aw. That's nice.

Dre: I'm gonna make Mr. Garret a complex character here.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Let's add one more. Mr. Garret took my cassette player and is using it for himself.

[laughing]

Jack: That's good.

Austin: Wow!

Dre: Damn, maybe Mr. Garret only let me eat lunch in the band room so he could steal something from me. [laughs]

Jack: Wait, no, if we're all... Okay, I'm going to replace one of my relationships, 'cause—

Keith: No, I'm not tied to this being Mr. Garret that did this.

Jack: I think it's very funny if he did.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Yeah no, I think three of four... It's fine. Jack, it would be fine for you not to have Mr. Garret at all. Three of your friends having a relationship with someone and then one of the people in the party being like, "I don't know why you put up with Mr. Garret's bullshit," is a hundred percent good, you know?

Jack: Yeah, that's true. Like, we can still have a group that—

Austin: [crosstalk] You know, think about home movies. Home Movies, Jason is not on the soccer team. Because it's the same voice actor, so they can't do that.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: I mean, they could, but.

Jack: I'm sure Brendan— Not Brendan... Jason and McGuirk talk. They must.

Austin: Yeah, they do occasionally.

Keith: Yeah.

Dre: Alright, for keeping— If we're gonna make Mr. Garret an asshole I'm gonna change mine.

[Sylvi laughs]

Austin: No no no no no no, I like yours being there too. I do think that that's like a complex...you know.

Keith: Yeah. I mean, it's— Teachers confiscate things and it doesn't necessarily make them bad people. Technically, maybe.

Austin: Also, why would maybe Mr. Garret connect to the outsider from Appalachia more than these local kids, right? Like maybe there's a reason for that. Maybe Mr. Garret's also not originally from here, you know? Et cetera. There's reasons, you know, you can make those connections. Alright, do we have... Is everyone there?

Dre: Do we need two NPCs or one?

Keith: [crosstalk] I need one more NPC one.

Sylvi: Two.

Austin: Two NPCs.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: I guess maybe one of mine could be the aunt or uncle that I'm living with.

Austin: That makes a lot of sense to me. Or your father who's sick, right? Either of those make sense.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: You already have a connection obviously with your dad because of your problem. But if you wanted to connect to your aunt or uncle here, or to your mom, that would also make sense. Maybe your aunt or uncle works at the Tunnel Project or works at the tunnel, or works at some other big company nearby. The thing that we know has happened— I guess here's another setting thing based on the previous... Hold on a sec, let me pull it up. Based on the intros to the last arc, is a character— Or I guess, one of you could also could be connected to this other person who's probably in your age group named... I guess they don't have a name. They know someone named Ollie. They're talking to a friend named Ollie. And in those intros what happens is this kid is like— This kid finds a van outside of a Wawa and inside the van—I guess on the side of the van it has the Bluff City Studios logo, which is the old movie production company from the first Fiasco game and then the... It's sort of the Fiasco game and also the...I guess it's not actually the Fiasco game, it's just the movie studio game where we played Catch the Devil. Is that the name of that game?

Sylvi: I think so, yeah.

Austin: Dre, you were in that, right? Were you in it too, Sylvi?

Sylvi: Yeah, I was in that.

Austin: Yeah, so I think it's that. That game took place in a place called Bluff City Studios that exists in Bluffington. And that place, according to this last intro, was shut down after those events in Bluffington Beach. And also flooded, because remember that was happening. That flood happened in that game. And inside of that van the person who did the intro, who's another teenager, found like a comic book that was like...that was weird. That was about what was happening in that arc, the comic arc, the time traveling masks character arc of Capers.

But it keeps going. The single issue comic, every time you open it just adds to what was there already, which is weird. And so we know that there is like, the Bluff City Studios part of the map has been flooded and is filled with weird shit. [laughs] Because of its connection to the Tunnel Project. But presumably, the Tunnel Project itself continued, just not at Bluff City Studios. So that's another thing here, is what I guess I would say, is there's part of this map has been flooded and filled with weird shit from that kind of first attempt at building the Tunnel Project.

Dre: Um... I wrote mine as, aunt Josie has asked me to help me around the house more because their new job makes her work weird hours.

Austin: Ooh. That's good. I like that. I appreciate that as a GM 'cause I can just define a job there.

Dre: Mmhm.

Austin: You know? That's useful.

Keith: Alright, I've got my last NPC one.

Austin: Okay.

Keith: Oop, lost it. Okay. Old Ben at the pawn shop knows my mom and she said he'd call if anything cool came in, and if it's not fragile I can play with it, but sometimes he charges me a dollar.

[Sylvi laughs]

Austin: [laughs] Love it. Alright. All of these will go up. I'm gonna put all these sheets up on the map-maker tier so people can like read through it, and then at the beginning of the next session we'll go through all these relationships. But I don't wanna go through that twice in a row right this second, so [laughs] I think that's everyone has five, so we can move on.

Dre: Mhm.

Austin: After relationships is your anchor. All kids have an anchor—and this is another relationship in a real way—have an anchor, a person you can go to for support, comfort, and care. It can be a friend, a parent, a teacher, or a neighbour. It cannot be another kid. Meaning another—I believe that means another kid in the you know, another player kid. If you suffer from one or more conditions—conditions are kind of your HP in this game. You don't have HP, what you have is a set of five conditions that are things like, "Hey, I'm exhausted. Hey, I'm upset. I'm scared." The worst of those, the kind of really bad one, is broken.

If you have an anchor or you can go to your anchor, your anchor will take care of you and heal all conditions by spending a scene with them. There must be physical or mental closeness between you. The game master is not allowed to put you in trouble in that scene, and if you put yourself into trouble though, you cannot heal any conditions. Some anchor... See if there are anchor suggestions here so people can kind of have those.

You know, the book worm suggestions: mom or dad, a teacher, a local author. The hick suggestions: mom or dad, a fellow hunter, a riding instructor. The popular kid's anchor: an older sibling, mom or dad, a famous [laughing] friend of the family. Rocker suggested anchors: the music teacher, an older brother or sister, the guy at the music store. But this can be like, a school counselor, this can be another family member. This could be a friend's parent. This could be you know, someone you know online. This can be, you know, it can be anything.

[1:45:00]

Austin: Someone who... It could be the guy who works at the pawn shop, though you've already kind of listed your relationship with him, so. A coach. Not that any of you are jocks, but.

Keith: Ooh, it'd be funny to have the coach as your anchor and you don't play sports.

Austin: Yeah. That's Coach McGuirk. That's Jason takes Coach McGuirk.

Keith: Yeah. [laughs]

Austin: As his anchor.

Jack: Jason doesn't play sports because he likes sitting games that you play where you mostly sit down, right?

Austin: [laughing] Yeah. Yeah, that's right. That makes sense.

Jack: You know, I think I'm gonna go my mum. I think I'm gonna keep it simple. I like reading magazines, I like watching television, when I'm feeling low I can watch a... What's a eleven year old friendly box set to watch with your mum? They don't really make box sets for [laughing] eleven year olds.

Austin: I'm sure they do, right?

Jack: Or they do when they're like fifty six episodes long, right? It's like Adventure Time.

Austin: Right. It's like I watch Adventure Time or Avatar or...you know, She-Ra.

Dre: Or an older show. Golden Girls or Happy Days.

Austin: Right. Golden Girls. Right, totally. Totally.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Happy Days is fun.

Jack: Oh, Happy Days is really good.

Austin: Get Smart.

Jack: Yeah, watching Happy Days.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Which would now be, uh...

Austin: Very old. Seventy— Not seventy years old, but taking place seventy years— Or maybe it would be by then.

Keith: Is it sort of like the thing like when I was a kid— Because A Christmas Story is a thing, right? And I did not understand, and I guess Happy Days is sort of the same thing. Like, I did not understand that it was already a show about an old thing?

Austin: Right.

Keith: Like, when I'm—

Austin: You said Christmas Story, right, not—

Keith: Christmas Story and Happy Days is the same thing where it's from the 80s, but it's about the...something earlier, whatever.

Austin: 50s.

Keith: 50s.

Austin: Right, right right. Yeah, Happy Days starts in the 70s and is about the 50s and 60s I think?

Keith: Yeah, and so— But like, as a kid in the 90s— I couldn't tell.

Austin: It doesn't make— That's not necessarily clear.

Keith: [laughs] I couldn't tell, no. It's the same thing, to me.

Austin: Wonder Years was like that for me. Another similar thing, right, where it's like this is a show from the late 80s, early 90s, but is one hundred percent about the late 60s, early 70s, and except for the specific episodes that are about, like, JFK or Vietnam [laughs] it's not clear that it's not about today. I really liked the Wonder Years as a kid. Anyway, I like that idea, Jack.

Jack: I think it's also a show that I haven't seen, which I think is just fun. If it was something that I—

Austin: Yeah. Tell me everything that you know about Happy Days in the weird American accent. [laughs]

Jack: So, um... [laughs] In...

Austin: [laughs] You don't have to do that part. But that is the video I missed more than any other is everything I know about Grease in a weird American accent.

Jack: It's got the funny guy. The funny guy, he was in Arrested Development.

Austin: Uh-huh, which— Well, that's... Yeah, he was. That's true.

Keith: Yeah yeah yeah.

Austin: That's true. Yeah. Sorry, I was thinking about the other— I mean, there's two there, aren't there? [laughs] In a sense.

Jack: Again, I don't know the other guy.

Austin: You don't know the answer.

Keith: Oh, I also don't, 'cause I have also never seen Happy Days.

Austin: The narrator?

Jack: Oh, sure, right, he's the kid. He's the...

Austin: The narrator is the main character.

Keith: Oh, I did know that!

Austin: Yes. Richie Cunningham is played by Ron Howard, the director who does the narration in Arrested Development.

Jack: The other guy's called the Fonz, and he has a leather jacket, and he is—

Austin: What's his real name?

Keith: I know this one.

Jack: Alfred Fonzarelli.

Keith: Close.

Jack: Arthur Fonzarelli.

Austin: You're not that far— Arthur. Arthur Fonzarelli.

Dre: Aw, that's, yeah.

Austin: Arthur Herbert Fonzarelli.

Jack: He's really happy with his jacket, and with his hair.

Keith: Do you know how I know that his name's Arthur Fonzarelli? This is fun. The Adam Sandler Hannukah song.

Austin: Yeah, that makes sense.

Sylvi: Probably I think Family Guy for me.

Austin: Can anyone else name Happy Days characters. I've seen the most Happy Days of everyone here.

Dre: Uh... Potsy.

Keith: Yeah, I've never seen a single episode.

Sylvi: I've never seen a single episode of Happy Days.

Austin: Potsie, yes.

Jack: Fonzi.

Austin: Who is Potsie's friend? Who is the other one?

Dre: They don't remember 'cause they only ever told Potsie to sit on it.

Austin: Okay, but the other one has a great name.

Dre: Oh god, it is something goofy isn't it?

Austin: It rhymes.

Keith: Motzy.

Austin: If I give you the first name, I'm gonna see if you can get this. His first name is Ralph.

Sylvi: Oh, is this...

Jack: His surname rhymes with Ralph?

Sylvi: I feel like I've actually heard this name just through osmosis. Isn't this Ralph Malph?

Austin: It is Ralph Malph.

Dre: Aw, that's right.

Jack: [laughing] Incredible.

Dre: And they call him Malph, right?

Austin: Right, they do.

Jack: Aw, wow.

Keith: I—yeah. Everything I know from Happy Days comes from weird cultural osmosis and also from a trailer for a Happy Days box set actually, that was at the beginning at a Rugrats VHS that I used to watch when I was like seven years old.

Austin: [crosstalk] That adds up entirely to me.

Jack: Why are they happy? Are they successful? What are their—

Keith: They're happy 'cause it's old.

Austin: It's the 50s. It's before we had to confront all of the ills, the societal ills of America.

Jack: Okay.

Austin: It's bullshit fake nostalgia.

Dre: Yeah, and it's in Milwaukee so, it's all white people.

Austin: It's all white people, yeah.

Jack: Okay.

Austin: Uh-huh. Okay, here's an easy one. There's a spin-off show that has two characters.

Dre: Yeah, it's Laverne and Shirley.

Austin: Okay, there's two spin-off shows.

Dre: Oh, it's uh... It's something love Potsie.

Keith: Mork and Mindy.

Dre: Right?

Austin: It's not somethin' loves Potsie. It rhymes with Potsie.

Sylvi: I think I know this one again too. This is Joanie Loves Chachi. I don't know how I know this.

Austin: This is Joanie Loves Chachi.

Dre: Yes, because Joanie is the younger sister, and Chachi is like Fonz's like weird protegee that she falls in love with. Right?

Austin: Who shows up, yes. Chachi is a character who shows up, is a cousin of Fonzi.

Dre: That's right.

Austin: He shows up like, I wanna say season six, you know? Late season Happy Days. To freshen things up. You know, a new young hot star character, 'cause everyone else is getting old.

Keith: The other thing that I know is the idiom that the show spawned.

Dre: Yeah. Jump the shark.

Keith: Yeah. That's a fun one.

Jack: Because they actually did, right?

Dre: What's the name of the diner?

Keith: Yeah, it's literal. It's just a thing they literally did.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: What was the diner? Is it just like Al's? No, Al's the guy who works there. Fuck, what's the name of the diner?

Dre: [crosstalk] Maybe it was just Al's though.

Austin: Maybe it was called Al's.

Sylvi: They served cats there.

[laughing]

Keith: But not in season two, because it was too grim.

Jack: It was shut down by the health—

Austin: There's actually another big Happy Days spinoff that I always forget is a spinoff.

Keith: Charles in Charge.

Austin: No, but that one also works.

Jack: Is it to do with Ron Howard?

Austin: This is... No. There's another very famous star, though.

Sylvi: Okay, so it's not the animated British Happy Days then.

Dre: Is it—

Austin: It is n— [laughs]

Dre: Is it one of the parents?

Austin: It is not one of the parents.

Dre: Oh, god! Holy shit. Okay. Yeah.

Austin: Yeah? You get it?

Dre: Uh-huh.

Austin: Did you look it up or did you remember?

Dre: No, I looked it up, but I forgot that this, yeah.

Keith: Oh, was it one that—

Austin: It's bizarre.

Keith: Did I name this one already?

Dre: No.

Austin: No. I don't believe so.

Keith: Okay.

Dre: I have seen a lot of Happy Days and it took me having to look this up to remember that this was a thing.

Keith: Is it Mork and Mindy, 'cause that's what I was—

Austin: It is Mork and Mindy.

Sylvi: Oh.

Keith: I did name that already earlier.

Austin: Oh, did you? I missed it.

Keith: When we were trying to remember— You said, "Oh, there's another big spinoff." And Sylvi got uh... Joanie loves Chachi.

Austin: Oh, right right right. Yes.

Keith: I had said Mork and Mindy.

Austin: Mork and Mindy. Also a spinoff of Happy Days. Also something called Blanksy's Beauties? [laughs] Which sounds like a fake show that would only exist in Bluff City.

Keith: That's the Bluff City Banksy.

Austin: Canceled after thirteen episodes.

Dre: Oh, there was a Happy Days comic.

Austin: That makes sense.

Dre: That's like the most boring comic I could think of.

Austin: Happy Days X Archie.

Jack: What was the theme?

Austin: Of what?

Jack: Happy Days.

Austin: Happy Days? Have you not heard the...

Dre: [humming]

[Sylvi laughs]

Austin: So there's two— I believe there are two themes.

Dre: Oh, are there?

Austin: There's— I believe so. I thought there were. Maybe I'm wrong. Because the one of them is just Rock Around the Clock. Which is the one that's like, [singing] "One two three o'clock, four o'clock rock. Five, six, eleven o'clock, seven o'clock, eight o'clock, rock!" We just skipped a bunch.

Keith: All the n— They hit all of them.

Austin: They hit all— They go through— Well no, they don't do all of them.

Keith: Well, they hit all the ones that are on the clock.

Austin: [laughing] Yes.

Jack: God.

Austin: "Thirteen, fourteen, fifteen o'clock, seventeen o'clock, rock!"

[laughing]

Jack: "Eighteen, nineteen—"

Keith: "Three hundred twenty thousand o'clock!"

Austin: "Eighteen, nineteen, twenty o'clock, tonight!"

[laughing]

Keith: This is a fun sentence.

Austin: "Thirty six, thirty eight, thirty nine, forty."

Keith: Out of the Blue—

Austin: "Forty one, forty two—"

Keith: Out of the Blue is an American fantasy sitcom that aired on ABC during the fall of 1979. It is chiefly notable as having featured in Mork and Mindy crossover and for the controversy surrounding its status as a spinoff of Happy Days. Which is a very funny thing to be controversial, I think.

Austin: And then— Well, so the thing that's amazing to me is, the Rock Around the Clock gets replaced with a song that goes, "Sunday, Monday, Happy Days." [laughs]

Keith: That was one that was on the Rugrats tape.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Dre: That's the one I think of.

Sylvi: That was on my Ninja Turtles tapes as well.

Austin: [quietly] "Tuesday, Wednesday, Happy Days..."

Jack: And of course they—

Austin: Which is just they zoomed out. They zoomed out from hours to days, that's all they've done.

Jack: I was gonna say, they do all the days including the ones that aren't in the week.

Austin: They were gonna do it again, it was gonna be, "January, February, Happy Days."
[laughs]

Keith: [laughs] Yeah, in the first one, they're naming all of the hours that are in the Happy Days.

Austin: Right. And then they're listing all of the days that are in the Happy Days.

Keith: Right. Which, Saturday. I think.

Austin: That's the only happy day.

Keith: 'Cause it goes, "Saturday! Happy Day!"

Jack: Happy all week with you, or something, right?

Keith: Mmm....

Austin: Happy Days lyrics...

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: It says they updated the lyrics.

Dre: Or it's like, groovin' all week with you. Something like that.

Austin: "Saturday! What a day! Rockin' all week with you!" Yeah.

Keith: Yeah. So the Monday through Friday, those are not the Happy Days. The weekend is the Happy Days.

Austin: Yeah, they are. They're all there.

Dre: No, they're happy days too.

Austin: It's "Sunday, Monday, Happy Days. Tuesday, Wednesday, Happy Days. Thursday, Friday, Happy Days. Saturday, what a day! Rockin' all week for you!"

Keith: Oh, what a day.

Austin: Yeah, what a day. What a day.

Dre: You've been rocking all week to get to Saturday, the happiest of days, but the rest are also happy.

Austin: Mmhm. [singing] "Happy Days..."

Keith: So the controversy from Out of the Blue arises from the fact that the episode of the series was broadcast a little over one week prior to an episode of Happy Days featuring Jimmy Bogan as the character Random. Television observer and owner of Sitcoms Online, Tom Fuller, maintains that because quote "Chachi Sells his Soul" aired on September 18th, Random's appearance on Happy Days was a crossover. He goes on to postulate that Happy Days' episode was likely a promotional tool for Out of the Blue to make the character more known. Some other guy that owns a different TV website argues against this saying that making it a crossover would be basing things all on an odd bit of scheduling decades ago. The intent was spinoff. The tone of the Happy Days episode is that of a dry run on th— So it's basically, there's controversies— There's two warring TV review sites.

Austin: Oh my god.

Keith: One of which says that it's a crossover and one of which says no, it's a spinoff. [laughing] I don't know. It's—

Dre: Gotta call Happy Days.

Austin: Okay. Me: who cares, but also, you search for Happy Days lyrics, the automatic Google one suggests that the way that the hook goes is [singing], "These days aaaare..." And, [singing] "Won't you be mine, oh happy days." But it's clearly, "These days are ours". "These days are ellipsis" doesn't mean anything. It's [signing] "These days are ooours."

Jack: It could be, "These days are dot dot dot happy days."

Austin: But listen to it, Jack. Hit play on the thing in front of you.

Jack: Okay. Have you linked it?

Austin: 'Cause—It's in the—

Jack: What was the timestamp here?

Austin: Fifteen seconds or something. I guess there's no S.

Keith: No, it's very clearly "owww" sound. "Ooour."

Austin: It's a clearly an "ow" sound.

Keith: These days are our happy days.

Jack: Yeah, I think you're right.

Austin: That I believe more.

Jack: Yeah. These days are our happy days.

Austin: That I believe more.

Jack: Which is... That's a bad line, but.

Austin: But it's definitely an, "These days are our." It is definitely not "These days [singing] aaaare." Like. [laughs]

[laughing and singing]

Sylvi: I mean, that's for today.

Keith: 'Cause it's missing a syllable to, like... Adding a syllable there makes it coherent.

Austin: Yes. [laughs] Otherwise it's nothing.

Keith: [singing] "These days [singing like a church hymnal] aaaaaaaaare."

[Austin laughs]

Keith: [singing] "Happy days."

Austin: [singing in a deep voice] "Oh happy days."

Keith: Yeah, it's definitely "These days are our happy days", I think.

Dre: Oh right, Tom Bosley was the dad. Okay.

Austin: Mmhm.

Keith: From the hair? From the hair commercials?

Austin: Is that true?

Dre: I don't think so.

Keith: I think Bosley is a laser....

Austin: It is.

Keith: Not hair removal. It's like a—

Dre: I don't think those are related.

Keith: Giving you hair. What's the thing where they give you hair? Hair transplant?

Dre: It's like a surgery thing.

Keith: Yeah.

Dre: It's like a hair transplant thing, right? The Bosley hair thing.

Keith: Are we doing character creation?

Dre: Yeah. Let's do it.

Austin: No, wait a second. Yeah, but first I gotta link this.

[laughing]

Austin: This is super important. There we go. Eighteen hundred dollars.

Jack: Oh, I've heard of this.

Austin: For this Bosley Revitalizer, two hundred and seventy, two diode hair regrowth laser cap. Starting out hundred and fifty five dollars.

Keith: This is just— These are just LEDs, right, these are just like four cent LEDs in a hat?

Austin: Correct. Correct.

Dre: Probably.

Keith: I'll make— I'd just make that.

Austin: You can just make this hat. For less than eighteen hundred dollars.

Dre: What's worth more, this or the panama hats, Austin?

Austin: Panama hats. Definitely worth more.

[Dre laughs]

Keith: Not only are they worth more, they deserve more than this.

Austin: That they do.

Jack: Yeah, 'cause they're handmade by that man.

Austin: There's only one. Did you know there's only one?

Dre: They are handmade. [laughs]

Austin: They're handmade. Did you know there's really only one place to get a good panama hat?

Jack: What's that, Austin?

Austin: In the world. I think you'd have to— I don't wanna give that away for free.

Dre: Yeah, no. Listen, that's for the old heads.

Keith: [humming]

Austin: Panama hats to put on your old heads.

[Dre and Keith laugh]

Austin: It's bread black, but, you know. If you know, you know.

Dre: [laughing] If you know, you know.

Austin: Twenty five thousand dollars. For a straw hat?

Keith: [crosstalk] Only old heads can wear old hats.

Austin: Yes.

[2:00:00]

Austin: Are you serious? Yes. Is it made of gold? No. Straw. I'm not gonna do this bit again.

[Dre laughs]

Jack: God, it's such a good bit though.

Keith: I love—

Austin: Is it some sort of designer hat? Some bizarre looking piece of fluff that only a supermodel or a lunatic would wear?

[2:00:00]

Austin: All label, no hat? Just the opposite. A classic panama hat. Handwoven, hand-blocked and styled. Custom-sized. Made the old fashioned way, with hands. The price isn't about the label. It's about the labor.

Dre: God, please tell me you looked this up and you don't just remember this off the top of your head.

Austin: Oh I absolutely looked it up, a hundred percent, are you kidding me?

Dre: Whew. [laughs]

Austin: That would be... No, a hundred percent, no. I don't remember shit I said on a microphone yesterday, so.

Jack: Can you read the question and answer to the next question please? 'Cause I forgot that it's great.

Austin: Uh yeah. Yeah sure, here. Let me take a look here. The next one here... Where were we? Could I see the difference between a ten thousand dollar hat and a twenty five thousand dollar hat? I don't know. I can. I know an attorney in Houston who can.

[Jack laughs]

Sylvi: God.

Keith: I fuckin' remember that, oh my god! I know an attorney in Houston who can.

Austin: [laughing] I know an attorney in Houston who can.

Keith: It f— It— The memory of knowing that sentence has burst from my chest like the alien in Alien.

[laughing]

Dre: Oh, god.

Austin: Oh. Alright, we should get back on. Let's keep moving here. Did people have their anchors?

Sylvi: Yeah.

Dre: Yes.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: What are your anchors?

Dre: My dad.

Austin: Good. Love it.

Jack: My mum. I watch Happy Days.

Austin: You watch Happy Days.

Sylvi: Mine is the cool lady at the music store who lets me hang out there after school.

Jack: Aw.

Austin: She rules.

Jack: That's like the best person to have in a music store.

Sylvi: Mmhm.

Jack: Is a cool person who likes you. [laughs]

Austin: Nolan, do you have an anchor?

Keith: Uh, yes. Mine is going to be my cousin. My cousin George. Who is not a kid. Who's older. The oldest cousin.

Austin: Older cousin.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Do we think the cousin— What's up with the cousin? Has the cousin already done this bit before already in their life?

2:02:12

Before already in their life been this sort of like, local adventurer type?

Keith: Uh... No. I think George is fun but not an adventurer.

Austin: Okay.

Keith: Um. I think like, you know, was a ki— Puts up with me because we're cousins. You know, maybe has a good time, mostly remembers about being a kid and remembers about dealing with adults.

Austin: Mmhm. Alright. Anchors, check. Next up is... It's not conditions, that's not—

Keith: I have a thing that says description. What is it asking me to describe?

Sylvi: I think that's just like your look.

Austin: Your kid. Your look.

Keith: Oh, okay.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah. We did a— Names, descriptions, and song. That's all that's left. And then hideout. And then I have some questions for you.

Keith: I've got my song.

Austin: What's your song?

Keith: Possum Kingdom by Toadies. Or that vampire song.

Austin: Oh, Possum Kingdom by Toadies is a good

Dre: Yeah, that's a good one.

Austin: 90s. This is—

Keith: That song rules. I remember liking it as a kid and not knowing what it was called, but I remember that it sounded like it was a vampire. I think it's actually about a serial killer, but.

Austin: What's that? Toadies, Possum Kingdom.

Keith: Yeah. Yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Uh, mine is Chattahoochie by Allen Jackson.

Austin: Okay, let's take a look here.

Dre: I'll drop it here, don't worry about it.

Austin: You drop it in there. You got it ready to go.

Dre: If none of— If you haven't heard this song before, you're welcome.

Austin: Yeah, everyone should just open up here Chattahoochie. Take a listen for a second here, at least. Can you tell me where Chattahoochie is?

Dre: The Chattahoochie is a river in Tennessee.

Austin: There we go.

Dre: It's a place where you can learn a lot about livin' and a little bit about love.

Austin: Oh, I would love to learn about those things.

Dre: You can also play an acoustic guitar while tubing, if the music video is to be believed.

Keith: While in the background, someone's playing a telecaster on middle position.

Dre: Mhm.

Sylvi: This is great.

[Dre laughs]

Austin: This is fantastic. I'm, uh...

Jack: You see the bit where they stop because a turtle is crossing the road and then they all get out and feed it?

Dre: Uh-huh?

[Keith laughs]

Austin: That's good livin'.

Keith: I missed that.

[Dre laughs]

Austin: Yeah. They just hang out. That one lays all the way down on the highway to take a sip while feedin' that turtle.

Keith: Oh, that was a good— There's a really good shot where he's doing the... What is the name of the thing where you're riding behind a speedboat on the board?

Austin: Water-skiing? Oh, no, um...

Keith: It's like water-skiing but with a snowboard. Water-boarding?

Austin: Right.

Keith: No, it's not that. Anyway, he does a cool flip and you're like, "Ooh that's a cool flip," but then he wipes out on the landing. That was pretty good.

Austin: That's good. That's—

Dre: Oh my god, what is it? I know exactly what you're talking about though, Keith, and I can't remember it. Wake-boarding.

Austin: Wake-boarding.

Keith: No, wake-boarding is like— Oh, no, I think you're right. I think it is wake— Yeah, it's wake-boarding.

Dre: Yeah, 'cause you're—

Austin: I think wake-boarding could be either. 'Cause you could also wake-board by yourself, with like, you run along the shoreline and jump on the wake-board.

Keith: I think that's skim-boarding.

Austin: Is that skim-boarding?

Keith: Yeah. I have the same impulse to be like, no that's that thing. But I think that's skim-boarding. Which is really fun and not difficult, for anyone who...

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Who has access to a skim-board.

Austin: I've linked, just for fun, for a post listen here. I think this is really a Sylvi list more than anything. Maybe a Keith list too in some ways.

Keith: Oh yeah, I read this whole list a couple weeks ago I think.

Austin: It's a great list. This is from K. Thor Jensen from October, Top 50 Landfill Alternative Songs. Landfill alternative is like a fun genre name of music of kind of just like...

Keith: The unremarkable 90s sound.

Austin: Yeah, it's like... I wouldn't say indie but like, [sighs] God, how do you even—?

Keith: The flash-pan success of this genre and then the all of the things that only lasted a few years in the spotlight.

Austin: Totally. And it's like, it's alternative rock is what it is. But it's like alt-rock that is specifically of this sort that feels sort of like, I said grungier than the Brit-pop, Brit-rock stuff from the 90s, but not as grungy as the actual grunge movement from the early 90s, late 80s, right?

Keith: If— I'm sure everyone knows the song Inside Out by Eve Six.

Sylvi: Uh-huh.

Keith: It's the songs you don't remember that sound like that.

[Austin and Dre laugh]

Austin: But actually if you hit play on any of these, you go, "Oh yeah, this song."

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Especially if you're of a certain age group I guess is what I would say.

Dre: Oh, wow.

Keith: Some of them are great. Some of these songs are just absolute dogshit.

Austin: They're just [laughing] miserable.

[Keith laughs]

Austin: But I have a fondness for just about all of them. So, yeah.

Jack: Speaking of miserable dumb shit, I have my song.

Austin: Yeah?

Jack: It is uh... One Week by the Barenaked Ladies.

Keith: Oh, wow.

Austin: Fantastic.

Dre: Perfect.

Keith: That is a great pick.

Austin: Perfect. Perfect.

Jack: I'm eleven. I think this song is extremely cool.

Austin: It's so cool.

Keith: Can I—

Jack: He sings and then he raps.

Austin: [crosstalk] Has there ever been a cooler song? Yeah. Uh-huh.

Jack: And he's like rapping about the real, like the real stuff that your parents like...don't— Their music isn't like that. Like, the music from—

Austin: Yeah. They don't rap about the boom anime babes that make you think the wrong thing.

[Dre laughs]

Jack: No. I don't know what that means, but I think it's [laughs], I think the song sounds great.

Austin: I think it's great.

Keith: Really ahead of the curve, honestly.

Austin: Oh, [laughs] incredibly ahead of the curve.

Keith: Way, way ahead of the curve. Shout out to the Barenaked Ladies for being ahead of the curve.

Austin: [laughs] On getting horny about anime girls.

Keith: [laughs] And then following it up with Pinch Me.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Keith: A song that I probably still would like if I listened to it today.

Austin: [laughs] Is that the song with... I gotta look something up. Um... Yeah. That song used to come on in the gym a lot when I was like going to the gym as a teenager with my dad.

Keith: Which one, One Week or Pinch Me?

Austin: Pinch Me. I mean, both of them were in the rotation. But Pinch Me is not the sort of song you wanna be like, bench-pressing to.

Dre: No. [laughs]

Austin: Because it's so like—

Keith: It's sad.

Austin: I don't even mean that. I mean in terms of just like, you know... It's just like a very low energy [laughs] song.

Keith: Yeah.

[Jack laughs]

Austin: You know? Anyway.

Dre: They do the "I just made you say underwear" joke, you can't bench-press to that.

Austin: That's literally the bit that my dad and I laughed at every time where it's like, "How am I supposed— What am I doing? What are we doing?" And it is, it's in the middle of a sad verse about basically no one caring if you would disappear, but he does [laughing] say, "Maybe I could hide out under there." And then the immediate follow-up line is, "I just made you say underwear." [laughs] Which, bad. Anyway.

Keith: But great.

Austin: So we have one more left here. CC.

Sylvi: Yeah, so I've been thinking really hard about this.

Austin: Mhm.

Sylvi: I originally wrote Basket Case by Green Day.

Austin: Oh, sure.

Jack: Green Day is a good one.

Sylvi: I was thinking of instead going a different direction with sort of the early— Well, not early 90s, but early pop-punk in the 90s. And that's Blink-182's All The Small Things.

Keith: Oh, my god.

Austin: Yeah. Uh-huh.

Dre: Yeah.

Keith: A worse song from a worse band.

Sylvi: Oh, for sure! But also way easier to play when you're twelve years old and got a guitar like two years ago.

Keith: [laughs] And—

Austin: This is true.

Keith: And absolutely ubiquitous.

Austin: All over the place.

Keith: I mean, at least in Massachusetts, had way more radio play than Green Day ever did, unless you were talking about Good Riddance.

Austin: Mmhm.

Sylvi: It's like one of those things where it's like, "Why don't you think this—" Talking to their big brother like, "Why don't you think this band is cool, they all have spiked hair."

[Austin laughs]

Sylvi: It's fuckin' Blink-182.

Keith: They're all super saiyans.

Austin: It's true. Um... So here is mine. Here is— I'm just a GM, we're gonna go with Bell and Sebastian's We Rule the School off of their first album, Tiger Milk. The one before they got to be a very good band, but still has some bangers on it. So.

Jack: We got a real spread here.

Austin: We gotta represent it. We gotta. Alright. So now we need descriptions. But—

Keith: All these songs would be on the Golden Oldies station, right?

Austin: Probably. Yeah. I mean, I kind of think this is a vibe of like, we go late 2020s, then it's not quite the Golden Oldies station, it's the sort of station that doesn't exist quite yet. I guess it would be like... It would be... It's funny 'cause it's like I think the only— There's like alt-rock classic— The thing that's tough is like, there's classic rock channels that would play Blink at this point, but would not be playing 90s country or 90s indie or 90s.... Would not be playing the Barenaked Ladies, right?

Keith: Right.

Austin: Barenaked Ladies don't make that. Weirdly, I think hiphop might be the only thing that has done the work of like, coalescing old head shit across subgenres in that way? 'Cause you can definitely find like, old school hiphop channels that mix gangster rap and kind of like late 80s boom rap stuff.

Keith: You know, I'm—

Austin: And R&B crossovers.

Keith: I gotta say the classic rock—

Austin: Rock doesn't do it that way.

Keith: The classic rock stations are wild. They will absolutely play back to back Led Zepplin and then like, Jet. So.

Austin: Yeah. That they'll do. But it has to be that— But I always heard that stuff as being much more in that traditional rock vibe than the kind of pop crossover stuff.

You'll get a Third Eye Blind. You'll get either a Blink or a Green Day. But I don't know that you'll get... Do you get an Oasis on a classic rock channel yet?

Keith: Oh, yeah, for sure.

Austin: Maybe you do, maybe you do.

Dre: I will say there... I think—I don't know what it's called now, but there used to be a radio station here in Louisville that was just called The Mix and it would absolutely play all four of these songs.

Austin: Yes. That is it. That is what it is, yeah. It's the sort of like, yeah. Not even quite a Top 40 type station, but it's like— It has that vibe of like, "We just listen to music everyone loves."

Keith: Yeah.

Dre: Yes. A hundred percent.

Keith: Yeah, there is a station in Boston, I think it was WROR that would— It would just be like, "We play all the best music from the 60s, 70s, and 80s." And I think they added the 90s at some point.

Austin: Right. Yeah. So that's— I think what we would get is, "We play the best music from the 80s, 90s, and 2000s," is the station.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: That is popular here. And that's the station that's probably popular with your parents, is the other thing. Your parents or your grandparents, your older aunts and uncles, depending on your parents' age. That is part of why this vibe is like this here. You've heard this music in your

lives. Um. So next up here after song—we can come back to descriptions, basically—is defining the group's hideout.

The kids have a hideout together where they can be alone and safe. The players should agree on what their hideout is and where it's located. The game master may not let the NPCs find the hideout unless the kids show it to them. The game master may not put you in trouble when you're in the hideout, but you can put yourself in trouble there. For example, by arguing with another kid. You can heal your conditions in the hideout in the same way as using the anchor. This requires that two or more of the kids are present and they are physically or mentally close to each other. For example, hugging, telling secrets or stories, or comforting one another. If the kids put themselves in trouble during the same scene, they don't heal any conditions. All kids share the same hideout.

Austin (cont'd): We had this tree house going. And I can imagine that tree house could be in—I meant to say this before—in that big flooded area. That area could have been covered in new greenery since the flooding. Those kind of marshlands could have actually become a little denser and less...

[2:15:00]

Austin: Maybe as part of trying to make that land, you know, almost construction-worthy again, there could have been an effort to kind of fill in that area, pump out some of the water, plant a bunch of trees. And all that happened twenty years ago, twenty five years ago or something, so some of those trees and some of the trees they would have brought in would be big enough to do like a tree house. Maybe there's a grove there now or something, you know?

Jack: Yeah, what if it's like a little stand of trees or something, and we are slowly building a kind of modular tree house?

Austin: So like multiple tree houses connected to each other or something? Or modular how?

Jack: Well no, right now it's just one. But we want to make multiple tree houses connected. And like, we're gonna do it. Maybe when spring comes.

Keith: We're gonna expand the base.

Jack: We're gonna expand the base, and there's gonna be—

Austin: What if it's connected to like an old... Some building they didn't flatten during the production of all of this? Maybe it's like an old shed that's connected to, or that's nearby, or like something else that's like, from the old Bluff City Studios structures. A little theatre or like a... It doesn't even have to be— Maybe it's not even a place you go into, but it's a place that's like, you store shit there, or you...

Jack: What is a fun thing to be left over from a movie studio? A little theatre, a pool. Like, an empty pool for shooting water stuff.

Austin: Right.

Keith: Pool is... While we're on pool, we had a— This is winter, so I did have a tertiary idea which is that we use the sort of little rec area of the public pool that is empty because it's winter.

Austin: Oh that's fun. That's fun too.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: The thing there, is that's a public space. That would not be a hideout.

Keith: Well, it's a hideout if they don't use it from September to May.

Austin: Oh, if you like break into it is what you're thinking.

Keith: Yes. It's locked and we break into it.

Austin: Not a— I see. I see. I'm a little worried 'cause I would put that in trouble very quickly.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: That to me feels like a key place where like a security guard comes to see you or sees that you've been. The hideout should really be out of... Maybe a rec area in an unfinished housing complex or something like that. Where there's like... There isn't the expectation that this will be taken away from you sometime this year, you know? Something that is like, literally abandoned more than not in use.

Jack: What if it's like little set rooms where they would build like, interiors? And we've just dragged various things we've found in to make four different little spaces.

Keith: So we have a set basically.

Jack: This is the cowboy zone. This is space zone. This is... But it's kind of crappy 'cause it's winter.

Austin: What if it's— Let's go smaller. Let's go small— Can we go to like... It's a stock room. Someone already said like a prop room. What if it's like a building—a tiny, like smaller than a stage, but where, "Oh well we can't get rid of this stuff. We're under contract to— We explicitly were told we're not allowed to get rid of the space props, the cowboy props, and the heist movie props, or whatever, and we've put them all in a shed or in a..." Something like that, where it's like...

Jack: "And we've [unintelligible] [2:18:16] all of these props into—"

Austin: Into a little, yeah. And it's big for you, 'cause you're kids, right? It's big enough to be a hideout for you, and the treehouse is nearby, and you're moving stuff out of this place into whatever. You know?

Jack: Yeah, I think that's good.

Austin: And like once a month someone comes to check on it. And you just make sure you get the lock back on in time. But they're not checking— They're not doing an inventory, they're just kind of like [laughing] poking their heads in. There's still stuff in here, it's fine. Right?

Keith: Right. I like that.

Jack: Is the tentacled monster from Zebulon 5 still here? Yup, check.

Austin: Yeah. There's like three big things they're checking for, yeah.

Keith: Wasn't that over there? Whatever.

Austin: Whatever, yeah. Must have been a...

Jack: Was it wearing a hat? No.

Austin: [laughs] Exactly.

Keith: Or I'm a security guard who believes in ghosts and I just think it was a ghost.

Austin: I just believe it was a ghost. Sure, totally. I like that.

Jack: What percentage of security guards do you think believe in ghosts? Like night watchmen?

Keith: Twenty five. I think it's a quarter.

Austin: A quarter. Yeah, I like that. Alright. I have some questions for you. 'Cause after all players have created a kid, before the game starts, the game master will ask a number of questions of you. You should answer them as honestly as you can from the perspective of your kids.

Keith: I have an addendum. I do think that every security guard has a moment where they believe in ghosts.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: Sure. Where they go, "Ah, fuck. I was wrong." Yeah. Uh-huh. Alright, so I'm gonna ask each of you one of these questions and then I'm gonna ask the group a couple of questions also. Let's start with Frank. Frank Already. Let's see here. What's your room look like, Frank?

Jack: I have cut out magazine pages to make a collage on the walls. They are of soap operas, of plotlines in soap operas. There's somebody looking menacing, and it's like, you know, are they gonna kill Jess or something? But... And then next week we learn that they don't or whatever but I thought it was a good menacing picture. I have a standee of Darth Vader. And I have sort of like that lurid magazine pink and yellow bedspread. There are clothes on the floor, there are VHS tapes piled up on the walls. One of my walls has a corkboard on it and on the corkboard are facts.

Austin: Great.

Keith: Just lists of things and...

Austin: Just lists of facts. I love it.

Jack: Yeah. You gotta have 'em.

Keith: What kind of a fact might be on the board?

Dre: [crosstalk] It's all the facts you got right on Jeopardy?

Jack: Yeah, what's the capital of Poland? You know. When was Alexander the Great around?
And finally, what year did they go to the moon?

Austin: All the important ones. Got it. Nolan.

Keith: Yes. Same question?

Austin: What— No, different questions.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Each of you is gonna get a different one. What do you dream about at night? What sort of dreams does Nolan have?

Keith: Oh god, this is rough 'cause I very rarely remember my own dreams. Um... I...dream about... [pause] Uh. Okay. Um... What do you people dream about?

Austin: Anything. Things real and imagined.

Keith: Things real and imagined. I—

Austin: Two bad holiday dreams lately.

Keith: I have um... I have drea— The tone of my dreams, and I'm giving this to Nolan. The tone of my dreams is a lot of times like if you can imagine someone going like, "Well I guess this is happening." Where like even if something is like if I thought about it, it would be stressful, it really is too much in a whirlwind to even get caught up in and so you get someone— Like you get someone that doesn't look like your friend but you know it's them. You know who it is even

though it's someone different and they have something they need you to do and you go do it but someone's trying to stop you and you're trying to get away from them and then you— Like, it could be a scary dream but it isn't. It just is weird.

Austin: Yeah. Okay. Uh, CC. What's the furthest you've been away from home at this point? The furthest like, town or city or whatever you've been to. I ask since your problem is your family's about to move and I'm curious, have you been out of Bluff before?

Sylvi: Yeah, but not like very far. Like I think we might have gone to like... My big brother might have wanted to go to like some convention or something like a state over and my whole family went, 'cause he was too young to go on his own. But that's the furthest I think, she's spent most of her time in this town.

Austin: Okay. Uh, and then finally, Ronnie. What's your experience with robots?

Dre: [laughs] Um... That's a good question. Um... I probably saw some like, around the car plant? Probably never really had a chance to be close to any of them until moving to Bluff.

Austin: Okay. Yeah.

Dre: So—

Austin: You like 'em? You don't like 'em? What's your vibe?

Dre: I think they freak me out.

Austin: They freak you out. Okay, good to know. Good to know that.

Sylvi: Sorry, could I just clarify something really quick? Were we— I thought we were in Bluffington.

Dre: Oh, I'm sorry.

Austin: Bluffington, sorry. Yes yes yes. Bluffington.

Sylvi: I just wanted to make sure. 'Cause we also mentioned Bluffington.

Austin: I also think robots have started to make their way in. Like I think that of the weirdness, that style of like, labor robot, you know, is the sort of thing that's crossed over. And that no one—none of the adults in your life find particularly weird. "Oh yeah, automation, you know. More and more jobs every day."

We got automated card dealers, was like a big thing, you know, that I think a lot of people protested. There was a strike before most of you could remember, or before you knew what a strike really was. That's how you found out what a strike was. "Why are there so many people with signs on the boardwalk?" And the answer was because one of the casinos replaced their dealers with robot dealers. Card dealers. Can you all put those things in your notes section? The questions I just asked you. And then I'm gonna ask you some group questions also. I have two of them here. Mm, maybe more. What secrets do you have as a group? What's something that only your group of kids knows, or your group of friends knows?

Dre: Hm...

Jack: Is it that something like we know a way into a Tunnel Project building?

Austin: Oh, that's fun.

Jack: I'm thinking about the great bit in War in the pocket where he spends so much time just watching the docks from that position that he has. It ends up being consequential and it's like, "Oh yeah, we can get a view of something in the Tunnel Project."

Austin: I like this. There's a—specifically I like... You know, there had been a connection to the tunnel in the old Bluff City Studios space that had been cemented in but there is something, there is a grate that you know how to get to, or maybe something has drained enough at this point that you're able to kind of get in to the old part of the Tunnel Project that was connected here and is now connected somewhere else in Bluff City, so it's a little bit of a walk to get there, but you can get there.

Jack: And the adults don't know about it.

Austin: You end up in a little— The adults don't know about it. You end up in like office spaces that are far away. Too far away to make it your hideout, you know? But are like, office space and little windows overlooking the tunnel that literally just like, you're looking down at traffic passing by from a little oversight thing. And there is like, you know, old coffee cups and stuff still there, covered in dust. And then if you take the right turns, you can get to the actual, still in use part of the tunnels. You know? Where the water pipes are, the generator, stuff like that. But also this is like, miles and miles of tunnels. This is like the tunnel thing that runs in...to Virginia Beach. Where it's like seventeen miles of tunnels.

And for us it's question mark miles of tunnels. [laughs] Sometimes it feels like a very quick trip. Sometimes it doesn't. Here's another group question. When did you get to know each other? We got some band overlap but it's not complete, so. Maybe it starts there, but maybe someone knew someone else. What's the connection? Is it at a musical performance? Is it a... Do you connect— Is it a family thing? Your families know each other? Are you in the same building? Is there a block party you met at?

Jack: Is it like a... I kind of like the idea that our parents, our collective parents have also got another story together running alongside ours that we're just not seeing.

Austin: Oh that's fun.

Jack: And so it might be that like, our parents know each other. Like, we are the four families 'round here.

Austin: They do a holiday thing every year or something. I mean, you have this pastor. Do they go to the same church?

Jack: Maybe they do. I mean, I don't know. I don't know how religious...

Austin: Or an inter-faith thing? That way it's not as limited, do you know what I mean?

Jack: Right. I just, you know how in— Is it in Charlie Brown that the adults are always off screen and they're indistinct?

Austin: Yeah. [makes Charlie Brown adult speaking noises] Yeah.

Jack: It's like—

Austin: That's how they talk. That's not just me doing that.

Jack: [laughs] Doing an adult voice.

[Keith laughs]

Jack: It's like they also have their own adventuring party almost, except the adventures they are going on are very different to ours. And we have— And we as the players have no idea.

Austin: I don't think— They can't—

Jack: No, they're not—

Austin: They can't do that.

Jack: No, I mean—

Austin: Because of— No no no, I just mean, remember, the adults are out of touch. That is one of the principles.

Jack: Oh, but it's like their thing is like, we're going to PTA meeting. Or like, we're going to a—

Austin: Sure, yes.

Jack: I'm not talking about them putting on adventuring gear. It's like—

Austin: Okay. [laughs] You said adventure, what you meant was—

Jack: Now look. When you're forty five and—

Austin: Taxes.

Jack: —life isn't going the way you were expecting it to, you gotta make anything an adventure.

Austin: Yeah. I should add— Let me just read this thing, 'cause I think this is important, right? To actually read this text. It does not matter what you say, the adults neither listen nor understand. They live in their own world distinct from the kids. There is no point in asking them for help with problems, mysteries to be solved, or troubles that must be overcome. The kids are at the mercy of each other. The adults won't ever believe in all the strange things that the kids encounter.

[2:30:00]

Austin: The adults nag and whine and argue with each other. They are busy with themselves and their work. Moreover, they are ignorant. It's usually their mistakes that the kids need to fix.

Machines that run amok, experiments gone bad, aircraft that crash or explode. The worst of the adults who actually see the kids and want to exploit or harm them. Sometimes adults help, like when your dad comforts you or you call the police and they catch the burglars. But it never lasts and it often comes with a price. The police take all the glory, your stepmom wants you to mow the lawn all summer as payment for her help, or your teacher sees you as an ally and expects you to help her keep an eye on the bad guys in class. So that is the world we are living in.

Jack: Adults suck.

Keith: Yeah, that was one of my favorite bits of the book. I thought that was really well explained.

Austin: Mmhm.

Jack: The other thing that like...I think comes through in Stålenhag's books a lot, and he definitely talked about when I got to interview him, is that like, often adults are just sad. The reason that they sad is that like, they're having a really bad time. There's like a divorce that you can't comprehend, and they can barely comprehend.

Austin: Mmhm.

Jack: So it's not only like, they're willfully out of touch, they might just be out of touch because of like, miserable circumstance as well.

Austin: Yeah. So then yeah, are they on like a PTA subcommittee together and you all had to come along and meet each other?

Jack: "Say hi to X, they're gonna be living nearby?" "Oh, hi..."

Dre: Mmhm.

Austin: Right. Right, exactly. Alright. I like that. Is everyone good with that?

Keith: Yeah, I'm fine with that.

Sylvi: Yeah, I'm good with that.

Austin: Okay. Maybe it was like a subcommittee to try to get money for a band, because I like that's a thing that connects almost all of you. Frank, you're not in the band yet. Or, you're not in the band, but your parents love music and keep pushing you towards it. And like, got involved. Maybe one of your parents is tied to some sort of local band or plays in the church or something like that.

Jack: Gets on great with Mr. Garret.

[Music begins: [To Be Young Near the Shore](#) by Jack de Quidt.]

Austin: Yeah, exactly.

Jack: Is like the church organist or something.

Austin: Mmhm. Mmhm. Yeah. Um, alright. Well, that's character creation I believe. Outside of descriptions, but I'll let y'all do descriptions on your own time. We'll have them by the time we start. We'll go over everything at the start of next session. I think that that's it though.

[Music plays to end.]

[End of transcript].