

## Live at the Table: Dream Askew

Transcribed by Lyds @spiderangst until 38:08; Dooby @doobyous from 38:08 to 1:53:30;  
Daneran#6021 from 1:53:30 to finish.

AUSTIN: Welcome to Live at the Table, an actual play livestream focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterisation, and fun interaction between good friends. I am your host, Austin Walker. Joining me today: Ali Acampora:

ALI: Um, hi, you can find me @ali\_west on twitter.com.

AUSTIN: Andrew Lee Swan:

DRE: Hey, you can find me at twitter @Swandre3000.

AUSTIN: And Jack de Quidt:

JACK: Hi, you can find me on twitter @notquitereal, where you can buy any of the music featured on — no. Don't— don't worry. *[Laughs]*

AUSTIN: Uh-huh? What?

JACK: I screwed up the intro.

AUSTIN: Did you?

JACK: You can find me—

ALI: *[overlapping]* No....

JACK: You can find me on twitter @notquitereal...

AUSTIN: *[overlapping]* Oh, uh-huh.

JACK: *Or* you can go to notquitereal.bandcamp.com...

AUSTIN: *[overlapping]* There it is.

JACK: ...where you can find any of the music featured on the show. There, I did it.

AUSTIN: You did it. Follow me on twitter @austin\_walker. You can follow the show twitter.com/Friends\_Table, and thank you for supporting us by going to friendsatthetable.cash, where you— you— y'all have made it possible for us to do this livestream today. Today, we are playing a game that's currently in playtest, by Avery Adler, who— or Alder, not Adler— Avery Alder, whose other game, The Quiet Year, you might remember we played at the top of— Avery has a bunch of games. "Whose other games" is really underselling her incredible output. But—

but we played *The Quiet Year* at the top of Marielda, and we've been wanting to play something else by her for a long time, and we needed a game for this Live at the Table and I was like "oh wow, this is in playtest?". And I knew it was on kickstarter, because I think a few of us had backed it, but I did not know there was a playtest and I opened it up and it was a really cool game. So... I'm just gonna read the intro really quick... *[reading]* "Dream Askew gives us ruined buildings, haunted faces, strange new psychic powers, fierce queer love, and turbulent skies, asking '*what do you do next?*' Imagine that the collapse of civilization didn't happen everywhere at the same time. Instead, it's happening in waves. Every day, more people fall out of the society intact. We queers were always living in the margins of that society, finding solidarity, love, and meaning in the strangest of places. Apocalypse didn't come for us first, but it did come for us. Gangs roam the apocalyptic wasteland, and scarcity is becoming the norm. The world is getting scarier, and just beyond our everyday perception, howling and hungry, there exists a psychic maelstrom. We banded together to form a queer enclave — a place to live, sleep, and hopefully heal. More than ever before, each of us is responsible for the survival and fate of our community. What lies in the rubble? For this queer enclave, could it be utopia?" Um, so, briefly before we continue, the game does carry a content warning for violence, gangs, oppression, bigotry, and queer sexuality. Um, I think that we will probably play within our normal kind of... PG-13 vibes? I know we are looking to be especially...oppressive in our own play here. But I do think that some of those things could come up in play, and as always, also, everyone at the table should keep in mind all of the— the sort of techniques that we always keep in mind around veils, and especially in this game there's a really cleanly elaborated idea of pausing. That at any point anyone at the table can say, like "Hey, can we pause on this?" And we can have a discussion about what's going on, and-and there's really a fantastic breakdown of pausing almost as a narrative mechanic, where we can say, like, you know, let's say we're going in a direction and I can say "Pause, actually, can we just fade to black here?" Or I could say "Hey, I'm cool with this, I just want you all to know here's how it connects to something in my life, and that's why it's important that we take this carefully, but let's keep going forward." Or even, you know, the way the pause mechanic is kind of laid out here, the kind of pause... convention, it's like you could say "Hey, I'm cool with this betrayal happening, but it's important to me that we have a game where betrayals aren't just used as kind of dramatic....excitement? And I want that betrayal to be explored and revealed by the end of this game. Can we agree to that?" And I think that's a really fantastic mechanic, and a really fantastic way of phrasing and framing, and allowing for a type of narrative safety at the table, so.... That sound good to everybody?

*[Vague noises of agreement]*

AUSTIN: Awesome, cool. So.... to st— *[laughing]* How to play. Set— to set everything up, start by reading the overview. Next, randomly distribute the six character roles, which we've already kind of done, and six setting elements, and the— we go over those, and we pick which of those we want. We can start by looking at your character roles here, and— and maybe let's talk through the ones that we've already chosen, and then we'll go through choices and stuff after we've gone over the kind of high-level. So, Ali, would you like to introduce *The Hawker*?

ALI: Um, sure. Do you want me to read the...

AUSTIN: Yeah, just the italicised text, I think is actually enough, because the rest of that stuff you'll be making choices for.

ALI: Okay, yeah.

AUSTIN: Also, I'll bring it up onscreen. There we go.

ALI: Cool, so: *[reading]* "The market failed. The shops and restaurants and factories closed their doors. And into that void stepped the Hawker, hustling and working odd jobs, pulling a livelihood out of the rubble of apocalypse. The Hawker is an industrious individual. Their power is material, social, and contingent."

AUSTIN: Cool. Uh, next up... Jack, can you introduce The Arrival?

JACK: Uh, *[reading]* "When society shoves you out, you don't really have time to process. You need food, shelter, friends. The Arrival found their way to the enclave. Can they barter a measure of amnesty into a permanent home? The Arrival is an individual in flux. Their power is contingent, technical, and suspect."

AUSTIN: Next up... Dre, can you introduce the Stitcher?

DRE: Yeah... *[reading]* "Things break. Supplies run out, and bodies get wounded. The Stitcher is there - fixing, mending, making, repurposing. They have a workshop and an uncanny intuition. The Stitcher is a resourceful individual. Their power is technical, material, and reactive."

AUSTIN: Great... Dre, could you just make sure to speak into the microphone? You got a little quiet there for a second.

DRE: *[overlapping]* Yep! Sorry.

AUSTIN: No worries.... And then last, I will be playing— *[reading]* "Introducing the Torch: All routines and mundane knowledges crumble under the weight of apocalypse. But the Torch has answers. Are they ancient teachings, ecstatic fantasy, or a new faith dawning? Followers draw near to their warm glow. The Torch is a compelling individual. Their power is spiritual, social, and mystical." Um, okay, so... and shout-outs quickly to-to Avery for sending over a...slightly more uh, in depth kind of guide that she said we could-that we could read some small quotes from as we play. It's— uh, everything here is in playtest, or in beta, or an unfinished state, to be clear, so... so everything here is contingent on... on the future, like so many other things. All right, so we've gone around, we've introduced these characters.... And now, once they've been read aloud, everyone picks which one they're going to use, and then we create our characters. And to do that, we go down the middle column of the sheet, circling as prompted. *[reading]* "Encourage people to talk about their character as they go, weighing options, announcing choices, and fleshing out details about what they're imagining. Both dreams offer" — so there

are two. So, really briefly, there are two games that are kind of tied to the same mechanical systems here. There's *Dream Askew*, which is what we're playing today, and there's another game that's part of the same kickstarter and the same book called *Dream Apart*, which is, which takes place in a kind of Jewish mysticism and fantasy... which seems really really fascinating and interesting from what I've seen of it. But today we're playing *Dream Askew*. So, uh, I was just clarifying why the rules said "in both dreams." Um... I now have to find my place again. Here we go... [reading] "Encourage people to talk about their character as they go, weighing options, announcing choices, and fleshing out details about...what they're imagining. Both dreams offer a few resources for unfamiliar terms and concepts. You can turn to search engines or fellow players with any remaining uncertainties or make up your own definitions. Some of the prompts are shared among all the character roles, like choosing a name. Others are unique prompts reflecting uncommon skill or power or problems and predicaments within the character's community." We'll come to the relationships— ah, you know what, I'll read this first: [reading] "You'll be prompted to choose two relationships. Your choices will reveal more about your character's life, but they'll also help to define the community around them. You can choose to flesh out the minor characters mentioned in these relationships right away, or leave those details to be discovered through play." Um...okay. And then, and then also if you look at the bottom left of your thing, there's the "Play to Find Out" questions. [reading] "At the bottom of the column—" the far left column— "is a prompt to choose a question to ask the person—" Sorry, nevermind that's the middle one. That is the middle one. Choose to ask on the the left, sorry. "At the bottom of the column is a prompt to choose a question to ask of the person sitting to your left. Think about which question seems most interesting, but hold off on choosing for now – these questions will come up later, when you are filling in the community worksheet. Once everyone is finished, go around the circle and introduce your characters. To introduce your character, talk about the choices you circled for your character, adding in whatever details or explanations feel exciting to share. If you talked about your character as you were circling them earlier, it's still great to repeat information now that you have the undivided attention of the group. Answer any questions that pop up." Um... so we should now at this point, I think, go over our characters and-and if you want, you can also just write names down underneath— like in this, this empty space here. Names and pronouns.... Underneath the, the kind of "Introducing the Whatever" space if that makes sense. Um, but yeah, let's take a few minutes to just go through and make some choices. Do y'all know how to make, like, circles and stuff in roll20?

ALI: Hmmm.

DRE: Yeah...

AUSTIN: Sort of?

ALI: I'll figure it out.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: There's this thing that says "freehand", so...

AUSTIN: That works. You can also use “draw shape”, and if you hold ALT you’ll get a circle, which is nice.

[*thinking sounds, typing*]

ALI: You just want us to start...

AUSTIN: Yeah, we— let’s go in, and as people have thoughts or questions we can talk through stuff, obviously. I am on the wrong— the wrong layer. I was working on the map, which is not where to do stuff. [*to self*] Let’s get that nice, small circle. Also let’s do a, kind of a nice— there we go. Um, I wonder if I can add pictures, too. That’d be dope....

ALI: [*laughing*] How do you undo?

AUSTIN: Control-Z should work.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: It should. Let me know if it doesn’t?

ALI: Doesn’t. Sure doesn’t.

AUSTIN: You want me to go up there and—

DRE: [*overlapping*] If it’s a circle, you can—

AUSTIN: [*overlapping*] You can— you can also hit select, and then if you— see, I don’t know what your screen looks like. [*Ali laughing*]. Do you have just an arrow in the top left?

ALI: Yeah. Oh, select and move? Okay.

AUSTIN: [*overlapping*] You can just slide it around. You just, like, click it and slide it around.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: You might have to zoom in more sometimes? It’s such a— it can be a pain.

ALI: [*overlapping*] Yeah, fair. I was like, “Oh, I’m crossing out the thing that I wanted.” [*laughing*].

AUSTIN: Oop— I just made— Oh, see I’m making, I’m making just boxes all over the place.

JACK: Just making many squares?

AUSTIN: Just making as many squares as I can.

JACK: We can pick our own names, right?

AUSTIN: You can also pick your own names.

JACK: [overlapping] Rather than just from the list, or?

ALI: [overlapping] Yeah.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah, I believe so. I, you know, as the facilitator, I'm going to say yes, you're allowed to pick your own— your own...names.

JACK: [pleading] Can I choose my own name, Austin?

AUSTIN: You are allowed. I think that would be interesting and good.

JACK: [distant] All right, wait, how do I do that — I wasn't listening when you said—[*laughing*]

DRE: Wait, did you have to walk away to find a name? [*Ali and Dre laughing*] Are you looking for one in the cupboard?

JACK: Oh, no, I was leaning— [*everyone laughing*] I was looking for a name on my bookshelf. No, I was leaning over to my laptop where I've got roll20. [distant] I'm over here now.

ALI: [inaudible]

JACK: How do I do a circle? I hold down ALT?

AUSTIN: Hold ALT while making a shape.

[*silence*]

ALI: There we go....okay. [sighing] Damn, roll20 sucks— it doesn't, I'm sorry [*laughing*].

JACK: [distant] Wait— ah damn, I biffed it up again.

AUSTIN: You good?

JACK: No, not really, but like, it's fine. I'm just drawing a line through my choices.

AUSTIN: Oh, perfect.

ALI: Yeah, that's what I've been doing, and then I've been having to use the move thing to put the line underneath it [*laughing*].

AUSTIN: It's wild how hard it is to use the roll20 stuff sometimes.

ALI: Oh, yeah.

JACK: I have a pencil on my desk and I've already circled all these, and it was very easy. [*Everyone laughing*].

AUSTIN: A thing worth noting is you can change the size of your line, by— see where it says, like, regular.

ALI: Yeah.

DRE: Oh, yeah.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That can help.

ALI: Can I, like change it after the fact? Oh yeah I can.

AUSTIN: Yeah totally.

[*thinking sounds*]

ALI: [laughs] What great radio!

AUSTIN: Listen. That's why it's a livestream. You know?

ALI: This is true.

[*silence*]

AUSTIN: Love to—

ALI: [overlapping] Do we select—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Learn things about my own characters

ALI: Oh sorry.

AUSTIN: Hey no, sorry, no, no, what's up, what's up?

ALI: Do we select the— the like, second thing? The like "Earth" or "Psychic", or—

AUSTIN: We'll get there in a bit. In a bit.

ALI: Okay, okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Three things...boy howdy.

DRE: Oh, you get to choose three things?

AUSTIN: Damn.

ALI: Mm-hm. Oh! Do you— does everybody else not get three things they provide?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Three things?

ALI: [overlapping] I guess I'm a provider.

AUSTIN: You *are* a provider. I don't get to provide anything. [*Ali gasps*] I have rituals.

ALI: [overlapping] Well, ooh.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Which is cool. Ah, see, it's like that.

ALI: [overlapping] Love to have a ritual.

AUSTIN: Yeah. [*to self*] Do I really want beautiful— I don't want those.

ALI: Um....

AUSTIN: Oh... I've figured out how.

JACK: I've drawn many lines.

ALI: It's so hard to choose only a few things from such a list.

AUSTIN: Okay... All right, I think I'm good on mine... Are we all? Oh, nope, I need a name. I need to start googling for a name. One second. I had a good direction.

ALI: *God*. Mm...

AUSTIN: What's up?

ALI: Nothing, I'm looking at my one to two key relationships, and relationships are so important.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Oh, uh-huh [*Austin and Dre laugh*]. That's bigger than I intended... it works though [*Ali and Dre laugh*]. Okay...

ALI: [sighs loudly] These are so hard.

AUSTIN: They are... Do you want to start with— with someone else and we'll wrap around?

ALI: Um... Oh, did everybody already— oh, I'm sorry.

AUSTIN: Oh, no no no, there's no rush.

ALI: Okay. Yeah, we can start with somebody else.

AUSTIN: Okay, does anyone wanna start?

[*silence, Ali laughs*]



AUSTIN: I will start.

JACK: Uh...

AUSTIN: [inaudible].

DRE: I was gonna say, I think I can too.

AUSTIN: Oh, you— okay... So, my character is The Augur, Providence... they are a Torch, which means that they— they again are kind of... a, a— not a lore keeper, but you know... the, here's a touchstone: I've been watching a lot of Demon's Souls lately, and when you think— I really want to play the Maiden in Black or the Firekeeper or the Emerald Herald of a queer post-apocalypse. A sort of character who can provide guidance and information but whose...also sort of feels a little at remove. I think my character looks a lot like a— there's a, there's a queer theorist and a feminist— there's a feminist named Rebecca Walker, who's a, kind of a key third wave feminist...black— biracial— who I think she looks a lot like. Except also, she is a cyborg. She has flickering eyes, and they're kind of like LEDs that flicker— not quickly, they kind of flicker and it's almost like the warming and cooling of light bulbs, and her face is marked because it is—her face is marked and she has on kind of striking colours, and drawn sigils on her wardrobe, because she's like a reclaimed— or like, a, I think she's probably more android than cyborg? She's like a reclaimed robot from a pier on— on one of the kind of amusement piers? I should note, we're playing in post-apocalyptic Bluff City, I didn't say that out loud [*everyone laughs*]. But that is where we're playing, that is why Bluff City is up here. For people who have listened to Bluff City, this takes place after No Greater Love, by some question mark amount of time. But you know, things were going weird in No Greater Love, so. Anyway, she is... she's effectively a-an android or a cyborg, or I want to blur the line there. I think it's probably not clear whether she was made by basically a....a very pessimistic queer theorist and critical theorist, or is that person who has blended themselves with machinery? But it's someone, someone who studied the world, sat down and said "Well, this is gonna go bad. People are going to need someone to turn to who has knowledge," and either built themselves into the Augur, Providence, or built the Augur, Providence using reclaimed machinery from basically, like, an android clown that worked at one of the piers. Worked on one of the amusement piers—

JACK: [overlapping] Holy shit.

AUSTIN: — in Bluff City.... So, again my, my....my wardrobe styles are striking colours and drawn sigils, because she's literally wearing, like, a clown's getup. But like, I think it's probably tattered a little bit and turned— it's almost as if you cut the baggy, like, arms from a clown's, like, big shirt, and now they're hanging down so her, her like partially metallic, partially fleshy arms are showing, and the kind of tattered former sort of robe. And then on her body are sigils that are drawn, and I think they're probably like the marks of— they're the marks of having been an android, right? So it's like, you know, the factories where various parts are made in— you know, made it Palo Alto, made in China, made in whatever. It's a mix of them, because she's definitely put together from a bunch of different parts. And, and you know, barcodes, stuff like that. She

has two rituals she can read: the close reading of the holy texts and tripping the circuit. I think she has a lot of technical mastery? Like, the holy texts range from holy— the sort of like “Hey, what does a just society look like?” and like, “Hey, how do we speak to the digital god?” to “How do you turn on the lights? How does a microwave work?” Which is why she also has the tripping the circuit ritual, which is about literally keeping electricity on. And then I’ve decided what looming threat I alone understand and it’s that “Hope and mischief are fires that we must keep ever-burning, or we will face eternal darkness.” And then I have two key relationships: the students I must teach and the herbalist who distills my tinctures. Except here the herbalist who distills my tinctures I have in mind a character something like Cene Sixheart from COUNTER/Weight— someone who keeps my, my like... who, one, can actually keep me working, and two, can make the words and ideas I have understandable for other people. Like, the Augur, Providence was made by an academic. Not a lot of academics survived the apocalypse. And so it’s someone who like is almost like a translator and also a sort of mechanic...who is a minor character who someone else can play at some point. Or who could be one of you, you know, that’s also I think— I think allowed. So that is my— that is my character.... Who’s up next? And again, the Augur, Providence— she/her are my pronouns.

DRE: I can go.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: Um... So my Stitcher’s name is Robyn, they use they/them pronouns... they are agender. For their look I have appraising eyes and clean hands. Um, I just imagine that they are able to kind of find value in kind of whatever they’re looking at. Um, in like a good way.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah, yeah.

DRE: Not in a like a “what can I flip this for, for money”, [*Austin laughs*] but like, we’re in a post-apocalypse! So like you’ve got to figure out how to use shit and repurpose shit. And I like the idea of clean hands because, like, they do a lot of different stuff and they’re like “Okay, I don’t want to bring this oil from me working on something else into this other project.” Um, so whenever they’re done with whatever they’re working on they make sure to...to clean up. Um...for their wardrobe style, I chose fucked up hair and overalls.

AUSTIN: [*laughs*] Perfect.

DRE: I just- I just love, like— like overalls make sense. They’re very useful and functional. Um, for the fucked up hair, I imagine that they probably have, like very different hair from, like, day to day. Like they probably will have one day like a very, like nice, put back bun, and then like the next day they’ll have like, a very severe undercut, and they’re like:

DRE: [as Robyn] Well actually I found out that like, I needed some hair? As like a— like a strand to finish this project I was working on, so I just fucking cut off part of my hair.

Uh...so now I've got this undercut and now also I'm bald 'cause I found this other project, but now I've gotta grow it back out again...to use it again.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] It love it. I love that you're a stitcher who stitches things together with their hair. [*Ali laughs*]

DRE: [overlapping] Yeah. Only sometimes!

AUSTIN: Only sometimes. When you need it, right?

DRE: [*laughing*] Yeah, you just gotta do what you gotta do. Um... I have two workshop functions. The first one is broadcasting. Um, I think they have like a...I almost imagine like our enclave has like a fucking like college radio station.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's the best.

DRE: Where as long as, like, people are chill and follow the couple of guidelines, they can come in and have like their two to three hour, like, radio show, where they place, like, their favourite music or talk about, like the news or a topic they're passionate about. Or something like that.

AUSTIN: I love this so much, because...for a lot of reasons. But one of which is that— because we're setting it in Bluff City post-No Greater Love, There's No Greater Love, this is like a weird echo of Hector Hu. Um, who was the... the murdered radio host.

DRE: [overlapping] Oh, right.

AUSTIN [overlapping] Who kind of sets this entire— there's like an entire, ah, rebellion that explodes.

JACK: [overlapping] It's— It's not like we're in a situation that's Hector Hu's fault.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] No!

JACK: But we probably also wouldn't be here without Hector Hu.

AUSTIN. Yes, yeah, exactly. Uh, sorry, continue.

DRE: No, you're fine. Uh, and then the other function is woodworking... 'cause wordworking's cool.

AUSTIN: Woodworking is cool [*Dre laughs*]. And also, think about like, hey there's a boardwalk. There's gonna be— and there's driftwood. And there's like—

JACK: [*overlapping*] Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: There's a lot of wood around to work with.

DRE: Um, where I get the bulk of my supplies— people just bring me the weirdest shit [*Austin and Jack laugh*].

AUSTIN: Is that like, they bring you shit because they think you can do something cool with it? Or...like what's the—

DRE: [*overlapping*] I think that probably depends on the relationship.

AUSTIN: [*overlapping*] Okay.

DRE: Like I think there's definitely people who are like, "Oh I brought you this shit because I think you could do something— 'cause I like found this, I have no idea what it does, I think you could do something cool with it." There's probably also— like, they probably also bring them stuff because, like, it's kind of their job so they're like "Hey, can you fix this up for me, and I will give you this in return." Probably some of it is, like, "Hey, our enclave needs this, and I've got this, can you, like fix this for me or update it or like,"

AUSTIN: [*overlapping*] Yeah.

DRE: "refurb it or something?" So I think it just depends on the relationship. Um, but yeah, I think every once in a while someone's like "I dunno, I found this fucking thing. [*Austin laughs*] You do something with it."

AUSTIN: Awesome.

DRE: Ah, for my two key relationships I chose a ghost who haunts my workspace... um, I think the ghost's name is Knots? Um, and I discovered her because she....do you all ever watch those like ghost hunting shows? [*Ali giggles*]

AUSTIN: I mean... yeah.

DRE: Okay, good. You know how, like, they have like the spirit boxes or whatever, or they have like the white noise machines that, like, they say like lets spirits, like, talk to them through?

AUSTIN & ALI: Yeah.

DRE: Okay, so I think the ghost just started, like, fucking up the radio station one night, and that's how we found the ghost. Like, the ghost just started, like talking through the radio broadcast equipment.

AUSTIN: Ooh [*coughs*]. [*Hoarse*] I said "ooh" and then my whole voice disappeared because something caught in my throat.

JACK: The ghost!

DRE: [*laughing*] It was the ghost!

AUSTIN: It was the *ghost*! [*Everyone laughing*]

DRE: Um, yeah. Um— so yeah. I think, um, I think—

AUSTIN: [*overlapping*] Knots with a k? Did I write this correctly?

DRE: [*overlapping*] I think — yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: [*overlapping*] Okay.

DRE: Um, and I think it's 'cause she just knotted up all the equipment that night.

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

DRE: Um... And then the void kid who needs my maintenance to stay alive. I don't think I know what a void kid is yet...

AUSTIN: [*overlapping*] Me either.

DRE: But um... [*laughing*] We'll figure it out, I guess.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Sounds good. Uh, here's a question: are you also the person who maintains me?

DRE: Oh, maybe.

AUSTIN: And like translates for me? To be clear I'm not always speaking in like, code. Do you know what I mean? But—

DRE: [*overlapping*] Right.

AUSTIN: But I do think it's like, there are moments where I need someone to do that. I'm curious because of the combination of broadcasting and you maintaining the void kid... [*Dre laughs*] suggests that maybe— and being the stitcher in general, um... you know.

DRE: When you say code... do you mean, like, like actual software code?

AUSTIN: [*overlapping*] No, no, no. No, no, no, no.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Just like, hey, sometimes it's like hey, my finger fell off, I'm a robot. I need to... [*Dre laughs*] Or like, hey, my flesh finger fell off and I need a robot one now.

DRE: Sure.

AUSTIN: Or like, my hand is gone, I need some—it's Friends at the Table, my hand is gone?

DRE: *[overlapping]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: *[overlapping]* Uh, so can you give me something that's better *[Dre laughing]*— better than a hand, actually. I don't think I'm a—

DRE: *[overlapping]* I think so.

AUSTIN: *[overlapping]* To be clear, I don't think I'm a void kid. I think there's also void kids.

DRE: Right... I think, maybe... but I think that Robyn would not be the— she, like they could do it, but—

AUSTIN: *[overlapping]* Yeah.

DRE: They would not do the best job—

AUSTIN *[overlapping]* Okay.

DRE: *[overlapping]* — for you.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: Like I definitely think that, like— I chose woodworking 'cause I think that they are— they are good at doing stuff that is not... rough isn't the word because there is fine woodworking to be done... but it's a different kind of, like, level of... focus or, like touch than something like, you know, like welding something or like...

AUSTIN: *[overlapping]* Right, right. Or soldering something.

DRE: *[overlapping]* Putting together tech.

AUSTIN: *[overlapping]* Either way.

DRE: *[overlapping]* Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: *[overlapping]* The zoom in or the zoom out. Yeah, totally. That makes sense. Cool—

DRE: Like I think that they could give you a hand? But it probably couldn't function. It would be, like, a fucking, like, old pirate...like... wood hand.

AUSTIN: *[overlapping]* That sounds dope too... all right. I will probably then come up with a different herbalist here, name. Just because it should be someone— I imagine the Augur, Providence has someone that she can go to that is like actually good at that? So... I'll keep thinking about names *[Dre laughs]*. Anyway... uh, Jack or Ali, do you want to go next?

JACK: Uh...

ALI: *[overlapping]* I can— but if you want to.

JACK: No, no, go ahead.

ALI: *[laughs]* Okay. So um... so I'm going to be playing The Hawker, Samantha, who is she/her. My look is warm face and quick hands. Um, my gender is high femme. I think of... because we were saying that this was post-Bluff City, one of the, like, things I really wanted to push in Bluff City in the beginning was, like, the idea of the queer bar? And like, the safety and like, sort of like... relaxation that you get from a space in that, that you don't get in other, like, social areas?

AUSTIN: *[overlapping]* Yeah.

ALI: And I think that, like, having something like that, that like persists even through a— an apocalypse is really important.

AUSTIN: Totally.

[time: 30:07]

ALI: So my two—

AUSTIN: *[overlapping]* So this is a bar that existed before things fell apart.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or before they got to the point where they are at now.

ALI: Yeah, I think so.

AUSTIN: *[overlapping]* Love it.

ALI: Yeah. Uh, my wardrobe styles are a stained apron and stilettos. Um, as always I... want to push the idea that femininity is ridiculous or should be cast aside. The three things that I provide are easy food, companionship, and a thriving social scene? Um, I was, like, so torn between a venue and a social scene for a little bit? Because those are...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: ...two different things.

AUSTIN: They are!

ALI: But I think— there's overlap there, right?

AUSTIN: *[overlapping]* There is— they, they don't. I don't mean to interrupt, sorry.

ALI: No, it's okay. No, no, no.

AUSTIN: So the thing I was going to say was, they are... they can be the same space, but you'd be underlining what it's good at differently. *[Ali giggles]* Right?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, there are places I go to hear live music because I want to hear live music in a place that sounds good. And that, like, the draw is live music, and those are venues. But there are also places where you go to hear live music because of the social scene there. The music is a backdrop. It's maybe not that good, or maybe it's not that important for this scene. What's important is the people you meet there, and it seems like you want to focus on that.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Awesome.

ALI: Cool. Um, yeah, so my, um, my two desired currencies are protection and barter, and my one to two key relationships are my kids and a wasteland scavenger who brings in what I need.

AUSTIN: That's awesome.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Are those your— when you say kids, do you mean... like, actual children?

ALI: *[sighs thoughtfully]* I...

AUSTIN: Or— not, not children, but like, people you raised? Or are raising? Or do you mean more broadly than that?

ALI: I think I mean both.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: I was hesitant to choose kids because I don't know that I have like... you know, also developing her children in me right now?

AUSTIN: Sure.

ALI: But like, I still want that to be... you know, I think like a motherly presence is something interesting to provide here? And I— I'm gonna put the pen down, so to speak.

AUSTIN: Totally *[Ali laughs]*. I really love that “the pissy killjoy next door” is one of your potential relationships. All of your potential relationships. Everything here is so good. All the— for the people at home, who are, who are listening to this and not watching it, the gender choices are all really great. There's— there is a whole section in the—in the play test book about, uh, obviously there's lots of gender... terminology here that is, is absolutely real— or, you, know, I think it's actually all real— but is *current*. This here's from the last page of the playtest: *[reading]* “Some genders listed carry storied legacies from the real world, already infused with meaning... femme, you know, androgynous, bigender, genderfluid, and others. A few are tied to racial communities, positioning a character intersectionally, like two-spirit and stud. *[Delighted]* Others



are genders of the apocalypse. Ice femme and dagger daddy take existing queer identities and recast them in ways the real world has yet to experience. Gargoyle and raven emerge entirely new.” And I’m very happy with the “explosion of gender” here, which I think is actually how either in this book or either the, the kind of, the longer one that we— that Avery sent over to us— really leans into that notion of, like, “hey, let’s lean into gender as both historical and also *exploded* by post-apocalypse”, which is exciting. So... um, is that it for you, Ali?

ALI: I think so, yeah.

AUSTIN: Cool. Um....so The Arrival. Jack.

JACK: I’m going to be playing a character called Already.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Great, love it, so much. Thank you.

JACK: [overlapping] They use— they use they/them pronouns. They have a tired frame... I’m not quite sure how.... I think— what does a tired frame look like? I think it looks like... sagging shoulders.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: It looks like a body that is constantly looking for something to lean on, or lean against. You know, it’s — it’s one that isn’t used to sitting down, because that’s not necessarily something that’s offered to them very often? But they’ll find the crook of a wall or, you know, like a rail that they can lean over or something.

AUSTIN: Right...

JACK: They have gloved hands, their gender is ambiguous. Um... I sort of picture this character... like, short closely cropped— almost like a buzzcut, maybe slightly longer— dark hair, a very, like craggy face? Not like a sharp face, in that it’s sort of birdlike, but craggy... sort of like, um, heavy, and, and textured. Um... my two wardrobe styles are my old uniform, which is a, like a work crew’s overalls, I guess, from....ah, I used to work in the metro tunnels of Bluff City. I was one of the people who... you know sometimes when a metro train goes between the gaps between stations and you see lights briefly out of the window and you see a group of people who are like, looking at a box, or like working on an interchange or something. Already used to work on, on that. So I think I have that, but the, the overalls are undone at the top, and underneath are shoplifted club clothes? I’m not sure what these are, but I think there’s probably, like, sequins involved or something, or a crop top or something sheer. Uh, because I think that... [sighs] I don’t know if we know whether or not these were clothes that Already found and were like “yes”, or whether or not back when they were working their job they’d just have this stuff on under their overalls—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah...

JACK: [overlapping] So they could just come out of the tunnels at night, and just go clubbing.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] And just... blend in. Right, yeah yeah yeah. Immediately go clubbing, yeah.

JACK: Um... I have “decide how you knew the enclave existed”, and I used to drive an armoured grocery truck through the area every week. Which is some real state of decay bullshit that I’m way into.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, uh-huh [*Dre laughs*].

JACK: I don’t... I think that, um. I think that this was some sort of weird apocalyptic career move.

AUSTIN: This is like, yes. This is like, things are going bad, so to speak. Things are deteriorating. Society as it was is changing, and that’s when you started driving an armoured grocery truck.

JACK: Yeah. But also that, like, I can carry stuff through here. The Arrival fled from society, or was shoved out from society. So I think that they spent some time in the remnants, and part of what they did in the remnants was, like, someone was like “Look, Already, can you carry this from here to here? Go.” And I got into this sort of armoured— sort of like an APC, but like an improvised APC— and set off. I get to choose two things I brought with me when I fled, and I chose a phone that’s still got service [*laughter*], because if there’s one thing I’ve learnt from Friends at the Table recently, giving characters phones is great.

AUSTIN: Yep! [*Laughter in background*]

JACK: And I also picked my dog, because you can’t put a dog on a list [*laughs*] without someone choosing it! My dog was called Rocky, but I wrote that down and crossed it out, and my dog is now called Duke.

AUSTIN: Good name.

JACK: They are a... I think... let me just check this dog breed? [*typing noises*] I mean, that wasn’t the dog that I was... that’s a much bigger dog than I was going for [*laughs*].

AUSTIN: What were you— what type of dog breed was it?

JACK: I typed in English Mastiff?

AUSTIN: Those seem big.

JACK: But that’s...hm...

DRE: Those are big boys.

JACK: But I don’t want that big a dog. I kind of want like a....

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Oh look how big... What if it's a- a little English Mastiff puppy?

JACK: This is not a puppy, I wouldn't care for a puppy in this world, the poor thing! Why would I-? You know.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Fair, fair

DRE: Do you want like a- do you want like a Labrador?

JACK: No, I want like a- like a- like a small angry muscle-y dog. Like a- you know like those dogs where you walk past and you're like "wow that dog would like to have a fight with that paper bag"?

AUSTIN: Um...

JACK: [overlapping] Um...

AUSTIN: A pitbull?

DRE: Like a pitbull or like a bull terrier, or...

AUSTIN: What about, um, a French bulldog?

DRE: [overlapping] Boxer...

AUSTIN: this french bulldog seems like it might be the fit for you.

JACK: The french bulldog is, the fr- [laughing]

AUSTIN: [overlapping] [laughing] Is it too tiny.

JACK: No, I like how square this dog is.

[Dre and Austin laughing]

JACK: I'm into how square this dog is. Um... ah yeah, look at this. Im gonna link it- oh, that's a porcelain model. [laughing]

DRE: [laughing]

JACK: [overlapping] Thats- thats not an actual dog.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] That's not the- the real dog, that's gonna be a model of a dog.

JACK: Um... yeah it's- it is uh... he is a French bulldog called /Duke/. And I love him very much. He rode in the front-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Wait where did you put this link? Wait, did you not post the picture of this french-

JACK: [overlapping] The porcelain dog?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah!

JACK: no I got- [laughing] I got self-conscious, I'll find the porcelain dog for you.

AUSTIN: Thank you!

JACK: um... [laughing] it's very obviously porcelain, I will say that.

[laughing in the background]

JACK: im gonna send- im gonna put it in the... um... Ok there we go. uh... Duke rides-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] aw thats a good dog! thats a good... fake...

JACK: [overlapping] Duke rides up front in the uh- or rode up front in the armored grocery truck, um.

[Ali hums in the background]

AUSTIN: do you still have the truck?

JACK: I don't think so, no.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] ok

JACK: [contemplative] I don't think so.

[Austin laughing]

JACK: I think, i- ill tell you what, let's meet down the middle. I know where the truck is.

[Austin hums in agreement]

JACK: um, its not here, and I dont know if it works, but I- in the same way that you do in state of decay, you go like "aw man I crashed that people carrier down by the barn."

AUSTIN: right

JACK: im like, I know where the truck is.

[small pause]

JACK: um...

AUSTIN: thats good. is there- are there still-

JACK: [overlapping] and my-

AUSTIN: -groceries in it...?

JACK: -key relat- ...i don't- maybe there were when I left it.

[Austin hums in agreement]

JACK: um... uh, my two key relationships are... the people I fled from, uh, I don't quite know whats going on there. um, maybe i'm not willing to say?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] ok.

JACK: or, or maybe... it's society as it existed, but I dont quite know what shape that takes yet.

AUSTIN: I think we'll be discussing that shortly.

JACK: and also the first person to offer me a stiff drink. uh, this is the- Already is the character who rolled into town with their dog.

AUSTIN: mmhm

JACK: and someone was kind enough to go like "sit down, we've got something here for you".

[laughing in the background]

AUSTIN: Dog is good.

JACK: [overlapping] "can I pet your dog?"

[Dre and Austin laughing]

JACK: um, yeah. so that's me.

AUSTIN: great. um...

ALI: wait is that me? did I borrow you for dog pets?

[Austin and Jack oooh-ing]

ALI: [overlapping] [laughing]

AUSTIN: [overlapping] good call.

JACK: yeah I mean, like, well is it sort of a situation where it's like "i need a bar dog" or "i need like a pub dog"

[Ali continues laughing]

AUSTIN: sorry for putting this giant picture of my facecast here.

ALI: [overlapping] im not gonna take your dog!

JACK: and im like "that's my dog!"

[Dre and Ali laughing]

JACK: um-

ALI: "can I have 20 minutes with your therapy dog?" its not a therapy dog. it is right now.

JACK: duke is not a therapy dog!

AUSTIN: [overlapping] [laughing]

JACK: duke just ate a squirrel!

[everyone laughing]

AUSTIN: ok. um, so we've now introduced all of our characters, uh can we go over names one more time? Let's start again, Already? ...Jack, that's-

JACK: Uh, Already, they use they/them pronouns.

AUSTIN: Ok. Ali?

ALI: Um, Samantha, she/her.

AUSTIN: Ok. Dre?

DRE: Uh, Robyn, they/them.

AUSTIN: Um, and I am the Augur, Providence, she/her. Ok, um... let me go back to my notes. one second, I have to find my notes to do that, uh...

[laughing in the background]

AUSTIN: I closed a tab at some point, why- who gave me tabs? who let me have a tab?

ALI: you do have to find your notes to find your notes. [laughing]

AUSTIN: [overlapping] oh, wait, yup, here we go. there we go. okay. alright, so we've now talked about our characters, we've created our characters, um... we should now start talking about the setting elements. so, if we were at a table we would be randomly distributing these setting element pages, um of which there are- there are three pages, there are six setting elements. um, [reading] "Going around in a circle have everyone introduce the setting elements they're

holding by reading out the title and italicized flavor text. Just like with character roles it doesn't matter who introduces which one, once we've read aloud we'll then pick which ones we want to play." uh, but the rest of them, even the ones we don't choose, unlike character roles, those will stay in the game, they could still come up in play. so... um, who wants to start with one of these- one of these things? We'll just go around in a circle, maybe. who wants to start with the Varied Scarcities?

JACK: um, I will. uh, so [reading] "There's no postal service. No municipal waste treatment. No reservoir operations manager to treat your water. No ecological impact survey team. No police. No road maintenance crew, and that means no refrigerated trucks hauling groceries into the area." Aha!

ALI: [overlapping] [laughing]

AUSTIN: [overlapping] [laughing] There you go!

JACK: [reading] "No signal in the cell towers most days. The people who used to think about this stuff so you didn't have to? They're gone now."

AUSTIN: alright. um... Psychic Maelstrom. Ali, do you wanna do that one?

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

AUSTIN: no, no worries. ok, um... there's also the Society Intact. [reading] "For some reason we thought the collapse was going to hit everybody at the same time. But nothing happens like that: neatly, evenly. Civilization crumbles in waves, eroding at the peripheries of good society. Apocalypse is only a distant nightmare for the privileged, a cautionary tale about what might happen to them if they should fall from their master's clutches. You'd be surprised what one of those people would do to keep their society intact." Dre, do you wanna do the Digital Realm?

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

AUSTIN: uh, and now we are back to... Jack. To the Outlying Gangs.

JACK: [overlapping] Outlying Gangs?

AUSTIN: yeah, you got it.

JACK: [reading] "People had wildly differing ideas about what the collapse of law and order meant for their future. Some shuffled the mortal coil at the first sign of real danger. Others took to the hills, equipped with water purifiers and dried goji berries. But some people stayed right where they were, armed and alert. Ready to carve out an empire by whatever means necessary. Stop whatever you're doing. Crane your neck just a tiny bit. You can probably hear their roaring in the distance."

AUSTIN: And Ali. The Earth Itself.

ALI: [reading] "We built a new world upon its back, glass and steel stacked toward the heavens. We learned how to pull electricity out of every natural element, to mechanize, to automate. Some of us went whole days forgetting that anything existed outside our edifice. We wounded the earth. We alienated ourselves from its touch and its harmonies. We broke holes in the sky. When it tried to warn us, we didn't listen. What now? Will the acopaly-" I don't- I dunno how to say apoc- apocalypse!

DRE: [overlapping] there it is.

ALI: [reading while laughing] "Will the apocalypse cement that alienation for all eternity, or finally bring us home?"

AUSTIN: awesome. ok! so, at this point, we're each gonna pick one of these. And again, um, the rest of them stay on the table, because even if none of us pick the Earth Itself, it turns out the Earth Itself is gonna pick one of us. y'know?

[JACK and ALI laughing]

AUSTIN: you don't get to just shirk it that way, unfortunately. um... does anyone- do- do any of these jump out to- to anyone? As ones that they wanna start playing, because here's the other thing I'll note is you'll see that on each of these pages, there's a s- a prompt that says "give away when:" And that will, if that comes up, then another player will take over that element of the setting until the "give away when:" trigger happens again.

DRE: hm.

AUSTIN: um, same thing with "pick up when:" and "give away when:" as a- there's also a pick up, also. Sorry.

JACK: um, I'd quite like to take the Society Intact.

AUSTIN: ok, do you want to then, uh, I have to find it, one second, [laughing] there it is. [reading] "circle 2 desires" um, so, i'll read this again from the little doc that Avery sent over- also, Avery is in the chat! Thank you for coming to hang out for a little bit!

ALI: [laughing]



AUSTIN: um, [reading] "To flesh out a setting element, circle 2 things it desires from the list. What it means for a setting element to desire something is determined moment to moment during play. It might be expressed through the ambitions of minor characters or through strange developments in the landscape. Have everyone announce their choices." Um, so, so yeah, so what are the two things the Society Intact develop- or uh, desires?

JACK: uh, they desire "orthodoxy",

AUSTIN: ok, that makes sense.

JACK: and they desire "profit eternal".

AUSTIN: [audibly smiling] ah, of course! oh, oh you mean the Society Intact? oh, ok, yeah. of course! of course.

[DRE and JACK laughing]

JACK: you know, we're in Bluff City! the two things that Bluff City would like to cling onto are [laughing] "we would like- we'd like orthodoxy and we would like some money."

AUSTIN: [laughing]

JACK: much, much money. and yea, so that's -that's these two.

AUSTIN: perfect. um, does anyone else have one that jumps out at them [that] they'd like to pick up from the jump?

ALI: um, I think i'm gonna go for the Earth Itself.

AUSTIN: ok. What are the Earth Itself's two desires?

ALI: um, [laughing] how do you... r-res- [laughing] I don't know!

AUSTIN: uh, "reciprocity".

ALI: [overlapping] how do I not know how to- yeah! how do i-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] there it is.

ALI: [overlapping] ugh, sorry.

AUSTIN: that's not a word we say in most of our conversations, it turns out!

ALI: [laughing] Um, I- so that, and um... [sighs] these are all really good.

AUSTIN: mmhm.

ALI: [overlapping] it's a tough [noise of indecision]. Um... [sucking on teeth] I think "trembling awe"?

AUSTIN: oooh, interesting. ok.

ALI: [overlapping] yeah.

AUSTIN: uh, do you wanna underline those, or...?

ALI: [singsong] sure.

AUSTIN: ok. [short pause] ok! um... Dre, do you have one that jumps out?

DRE: yeah, I wanna do, uh, Varied Scarcities.

AUSTIN: ok. and those two desires?

DRE: I know I definitely want "scrappy DIY".

AUSTIN: [audibly smiling] ok. of course.

[Ali laughing]

DRE: yeah. um... hmm. [pause] and I think... I think i'm gonna do "suffering without" as the second one.

AUSTIN: ooh, interesting. um, and so then- how do you, how do *you* understand "suffering without", when you read that?

DRE: [inhale] I mean I think it is... um... things that we, like, take for granted that make things, like, easier?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] ok.

DRE: um, you know, now being gone. um, and that... like, i'm thinking about, like, what it would be like if suddenly my water stopped working and was never coming back?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] sure.

DRE: and like, the only way I could get water would be like- I live, like, down the street from, like, a creek?

AUSTIN: right.

DRE: but that creek is also, like, a sewer runoff? so like, I would have to go walk down to that creek, like, down the street, carry a bunch of empty containers to get water-

AUSTIN: right.

DRE: -then, like, boil and filter that water and then carry it back up a hill. um, and like, that wouldn't be the worst thing in the world, but it would also be kind of crappy. and like the first-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] literally!

DRE: [laughing] well, yeah. and the first time I would try to do it, like, I have a bad back so i'd like, fuck up my back and I would be literally physically suffering.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] right. which is where you can see that move- like one of the moves that you have now because you're in control of the Varied Scarcities, is "show someone acting foolishly out of need and desperation". so you could, when we go into a scene, or when we're talking about our- our community you could say "here is a thing that's happening" or "here is a thing that happens regularly" or whatever, and showing people who because they want something, um, that they are suffering without, uh... they're gonna act a fool, as it were. [laughing in the background] um, cool! uh, and I'm gonna take the Outlying Gangs. um, and I think what they want is... um... I think that they want... [pause] "territory"? This might be an easy one for me, actually. Um... and... "unspoken fealty". And the- I'm gonna just, like, underline that "unspoken" part. They're the sort of people that like... don't tell them that you're loyal to them, but you know the score.

ALI: [laughs]

AUSTIN: um, so that is- that is what i-

JACK: so these are multiple gangs that- that sort of are loose affiliation gangs?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] I think that- yeah, yeah, because- so here's the thing that I'm thinking a little bit of, and we're- we're getting to where we can start talking about the- the map and the world and all that, but I think that there- y'know. in some ways, one of the ways that the Outlying Gangs could exist is in a kind of buffer between the Society Intact and our kind of apocalyptic- y'know, wastes. Um, and they don't want the Society Intact to say "Oh, those," y'know, "those people out in Bluff City where the apocalypse has hit, those terrible- the queer enclave has- has aligned itself with the Outlying Gangs." because that would, in some instance, put the Outlying Gangs in the same bucket as us, right? And put a target on their backs a little bit. They want to be able to play in both spaces. Um... um, and I-I... Again, we're getting towards this map situation, but I kind of think they are literally between the mainland and the island that we're on. Um, they're in like the marshlands, they're in like the- the bay. Um, and are like- some of them are gangs, some of them are like, literal just like, y'know, loose affiliations of people, but I think it's a lot of like [laughs] it's almost like... gig economy companies? it's almost uber, the uber of this- of various spaces in here, so it's like a fishing company, um, that has a bunch of, uh, kind of independent contractors who all report up into this system who are allowed to- to fish in the back bays of Bluff City. um, its the group that runs the, um, the- I actually have a big picture of it here- the uh... what do you call it- the wind farm outside, right? so it's these, like, companies that are not big enough to have escaped the apocalypse, but who- like, they're- they were still kinda caught up in this wave of it? um, but, they want to retain a connection the society intact, uh and

so, they want *unspoken* fealty. they want the people here to know who they report to, but without any paperwork that would say that they are in good terms. if that makes sense. um, okay! So I think we know have figured out the setting stuff... um, or at least the- not the setting stuff but the setting- the setting, uh... roles. um, now we can talk about the Enclave worksheet. which is at the very top here, you can see I've put together very very very vague- I think this is actually probably the closest to a real map of this space that we've had, ever?

JACK: [laughs]

AUSTIN: honestly? um, so that's exciting. um, I'm gonna read from the- from the playtest book, here. [reading] "Now the whole group moves on to the Enclave worksheet. As the group chooses visuals, discuss the emerging landscape. you can even begin sketching if you want to." I've already began sketching. "Now, choose three forces that are in triangular conflict within your community. Define some details about how that conflict manifests and about what the factions involved are like. Is this a petty squabble between neighbors or a town divided by rival ideologies?" Um, I also just want to quickly, briefly here, look at the, the, um, the kind of in-development doc that Avery sent over, um, because there's some really good language in here too. [reading] "In Dream Askew, you'll start by circling a set of visuals that define the landscape and vibe of the community." So I think maybe we should each choose one of these. And then if we want a fifth one, we can, we can agree to a fifth one. So let's start with those visuals. What do we think? I guess I'll read them out loud for people at home who are, who are listening; an abandoned complex, individual homes, shanties and tents, a bustling market, glass and concrete, overgrowth, swamp, reclaimed green space, community gardens, tunnels, moldy tarps, rust, quietude, wreckage, wilds, blockades, squalor, heavy industry, outdoor kitchens, shrines, splendor, high rises, a train station, trailers, remnants of war, bonfires, the ocean, wastelands, scrub, flooding, mutant plants blooming, farmland, raging parties, piles of trash, eerie warning signs, running water, repurposed plastics, coarse fibers, and synanthropes, which I don't know what that word means.

ALI: [overlapping] [laughing]

AUSTIN: So I'm going to Google it, I wonder if I even said it right.

[pause while Austin Googles]

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah, okay. uh, "Synanthrope or a synanthrope [Austin pronounces "sign" for the former and "sin" for the latter] is a member of a species of wild animals and plants of various kinds that live near and benefit from association with humans and the somewhat artificial habitats that humans create around them." So, you know, raccoons and pigeons, presumably, and you know, things like that. Rats. Um, I'm gonna pick ocean? I'm gonna start with ocean? 'Cuz it's-

[Ali laughs, Dre "mmhm"s]

AUSTIN: -it's a pretty obvious one for us, right?

ALI: Um, I also have an obvious one, which is like glass and concrete?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah, I think that that's fair.

ALI: But the- the reason I kind of like it is like, if you think of Bluff City, like hotels and casinos-

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: -like sort of repurposed meeting rooms-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yes.

ALI: -that become like, uh, you know, lounges or like markets or-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Totally.

ALI: inns, or whatever. Um, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I like that a lot. do you think that those towers are still standing or do you think that there's like a, um, or is it a mix of them?

ALI: [exhales] I think it's a mix of them, I think of a lot of, like, I think of a lot of the, like, first floor open spaces being used for that kind of stuff, so it's probably like the first three floors are still remaining-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] mhm.

ALI: -but you probably don't wanna go too high up there.

AUSTIN: right.

ALI: the windows are broken, it gets kinda... y'know.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally. Uh, Jack, did you just mark something?

DRE: I did. I marked the train station.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. Cool. Um, does that have tracks that still lead out into, into the rest of the world or is it just the station itself? That's important.

DRE: Uh, I definitely think the track still work.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Okay.

DRE: I don't think like traditional old trains work. I think people have had to make, like, new vehicles that run on the track. So like somebody has like a car that they took the wheels off of and like figured out a way to make the car run on the track.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] right. [Ali ooooh's in the background] Love it.

DRE: And they've probably got like the old timey, like it. Western, like it's a handcart? Is that what it's called? Where you've got like the two people on either side and they're like pumping up and down on, like, the seesaw looking thing to make it go?

AUSTIN: I know-

JACK: [overlapping] Sort of a Tom and Jerry chase vehicle.

[Ali laughing in the background]

DRE: [laughs] Yeah. basically.

AUSTIN: That's what it's called, a Tom and J- that's it! You got it!

DRE: Yeah.

[Austin and Dre say "um" simultaneously]

AUSTIN: Cool.

DRE: But yeah, and then I think that there's like a train station, like in the middle, that's like a point of like-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah.

DRE: -commerce and meeting and everything.

AUSTIN: See that that's like in this section here? Do you say that's like- I'm marking it one second, like *boom*, train station? I'm going to do it again, but in like, uh, the way buildings are, instead one second! Draw shape.

[Dre laughing in the background]

AUSTIN: I am now going to go to the map. Um, like, *boom*.

DRE: I think that's good, yeah, 'cuz it's like central.

AUSTIN: I'll spin it.

ALI: [overlapping] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Real quick, too, though, one second, like, like, *boom*, like here.

DRE: Yeah. And I imagine that there is, I kind of want there to be a bridge that goes across the water-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah... yeah.

DRE: -but that bridge is like fucked up. You can't use it anymore.

AUSTIN: Love it. Uh, I'm gonna- you can, we can all just draw on this map by the way.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: But like, so you're say- oop, see some of us, like me, can just keep fucking up with it too.

[laughter in the background]

AUSTIN: So you're saying like there's a bridge there. Um, that's not good. That's a bad bridge.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I'm just going to make like an X on it. *Boom*. X. Um, do you think it's the only bridge you think there's also, so like, I know... here, I'm going to do some stuff real quick. I would just go in a free hand mode, so it's not as, as quick and- so I kind of think that there's like three ways in and out of bluff city- whoop! Not that one! That ain't it!

DRE: [overlapping] [laughing]

JACK: [overlapping] Oh my god!

AUSTIN: That's a weird highway. Isn't it? Uh, let's delete *that*-

JACK: It's just like, [wheezes] hmm!

AUSTIN: It didn't like go the way I wanted it to, um...

JACK: It's the Mark of the Erasure.

AUSTIN: [Laughs] There we go. And then I think a third one is like down here, which is like this, *boom*, if that makes sense.

JACK: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DRE: [overlapping] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, and I think that, that like the train one is this one for sure. Right? Is the middle one. Um... I'm gonna write "train". Whoop. Apparently I'm not. "Train station". We can also get, we can get like *way* in here on this map, which is great. Uh, I made it real big. "Train station". Um, in real Atlantic City, uh, these two big roads, the one that kinda goes into northern Atlantic City and the part that goes into southern Atlantic City are kind of eastern and western dependent-- or like, y'know, like northeastern and southwestern basically-- are called the White Horse and Black Horse Pikes? Um, and I love, I would love for those two roads to have something similar in terms of color or, y'know, "Oak" and, and, uh, another type of tree, you know? Or, um, you know, "Carp" and "Flounder" or something- you know what I mean?

[Dre laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh, but I don't have any. I don't have any names of those roads quite yet.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Um, here's a question. Um, uh we still need, we still need some more visuals.

JACK: [overlappign] Oh.

AUSTIN: Uh, Jack, do you have one?

JACK: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Uh, I want "raging parties".

AUSTIN: Oh, hell yeah.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: We out here.



JACK: You know, if earlier we, we, we, we perhaps took a, uh, justified, but a little cruel stab at Bluff City by saying that they wanted orthodoxy and profit, the *other* thing that you *know* would happen in Bluff City during an apocalypse is, uh, raging parties.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, definitely.

JACK: [overlapping] Um-

AUSTIN: So here's the question. Is it that parts of bluff city are-

JACK: No, no.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] -Deep in the apocalypse and parts aren't? Or is it-

JACK: [overlapping] I mean, there are parts that are-

ALI: [overlapping] [quiet] I think-

JACK: Oh, sorry, go ahead, Ali.

ALI: No, no. Um, I mean, I, I like it being kind of a mix because it, it seems... more honest to what would happen in New Jersey, I guess? I don't know.

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

ALI: Um, I-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] And, I- I- um- go on.

ALI: [overlapping] No, you go on.

AUSTIN: No, no, no you go on.

ALI: I was just gonna say, I like the idea of like smaller communities kind of having to, you know, depend on each other, right?

AUSTIN: Totally.

ALI: You know what I mean? Okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah-

JACK: [overlapping] Yeah.

AUSTIN: - and I think that that's, that's the thing for sure. Um-

JACK: And, and like, I think that there's sort of a... [short pause] I think there are places in the world that are less ruined than Bluff City-

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: -but I think within Bluff City, there are, yeah, there's strata of, of ruination. Um, a-and I think that still there are, there are parties happening. And I say that as though that there's something disingenuous there. I say that as though you'd have expected the parties to die out by now. People are people they'll find a-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] [laughing/sighing] Yeah.

JACK: -you know, like, Oh, we find a crate of beer. Or we found like, "Oh my god, we just, we just found a box that contains firecrackers! Oh my god!"

[Jack and Dre laugh]

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Um, or it's like "We found a functioning, um, foosball table." Um, people have parties, but these are also raging parties.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Right.

JACK: You know, there's like there is a, there is a, there is a building on the corner of two streets. It's just on fire. Um, and there's a building opposite that has lights and music coming out of the room.

AUSTIN: [thoughtfully] Mmm.

JACK: Um, and at nighttime in Bluff City, you can just hear, like, you can hear basses in the distance and you can hear like the sound of electronic music. You can hear the sound of all sorts of music.

AUSTIN: Right, right. Um, so here's a question. Where is... I mean, I might just start dividing up some stuff on this map a little bit then, because I think Ali, your point of like, it's honest that there are parts of the city that are just abandoned effectively, makes a lot of sense to me.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And also makes a lot of sense with, like, our canon for what this place is like. Um, so it sounds like the train station is a place where we want- I guess the train station is an important place. We actually- and based on what Dre has said, it is a place that's not working to its- to its, [laughs] uh, its old potential. Let's say. So, what if we just take a cut here and say that like... this kind of northern part here and then it is- is- uh, abandoned- or not abandoned- has been abandoned by the Societies Intact. Is- Is a community that is struggling to keep itself together, if that makes sense, right? That is like working in the apocalypse. Um, and then we know that like the casinos run this kind of.. switch to a- to a pointer. Um, ooh, I didn't mean to move, that don't move please! [Laughs] Um, but like towards the southeastern, this whole, like, line here is beaches and- and casinos. And then like, we get the casinos up to here that are still like, those are the ones that maybe we live in and, and stuff like that? And then it's residential and stuff like this and, and, and commercial that's been abandoned or is- people are living in it, but the Societies Intact have left it behind. Um, and then maybe a second community? Because of stuff again that happened with- in "No Greater Love" that is like, this southern tip here, uh, which is like where the rich folks live? And we know that that went bad for them. [Laughs] Um, so, like, it's kind of three districts? Do you remember we had like four districts before where it was like residential, um, uh- this is from that game- residential, like, downtown casinos, and then... rich folks.

ALI: Yeah, what was the fourth one? It was like-

AUSTIN: Mainland basi- or we did it as mainland-

ALI: [overlapping] Oh, okay yeah.

AUSTIN: -but it was like, uh, the burbs basically like the suburbs or something, right? Um, um, and so like, I think maybe it's like- here's what I'm proposing and I'm- again, I'm totally open to, to pushback or to, to other ideas, not to pushback, but, um, is like [typing noises] the Society Intact keeps this middle one under control stil? Um, and it's still a resort. It's still casinos that operate. Um, and you know, people arrive by, by plane, people- by sea plane. They arrive by boat, by helicopter. Um, and it's like, shitty rich folks going overseas to, to, uh- you know, to tropical islands and their tour guide say, "Oh, but just don't- whatever you do, don't go down this, this road too far. Uh, whatever you do, just stay on the resort." Um, Does that, does that seem again, like, I want to keep that honest feeling of like- yeah. I don't think the Society Intact would give up on casinos. Um-

JACK: [overlapping] [hum of agreement]

ALI: [overlapping] Yeah.

AUSTIN: -they would just leave the people who got hit by a flood... to suffer, you know?

[Ali and Dre give more somber agreements]

AUSTIN: Um-

ALI: Yeah. Also keeping the, like... the perception of like "the bad part of town" alive, right?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Right

DRE: [overlapping] Right.

AUSTIN: Totally. Um, um, I kind of like up *here* being also part of the Society Intact, which is like another very rich community? Um, that is like, if you work in the casinos that are still operated, if you're like an executive you could live up there and then, and then get your helicopter into work every day.

ALI: [overlapping] [laughing]

AUSTIN: Um, and they've just destroyed the bridges completely. There's just no way onto that landmass, you know? Um, at all. uh, I don't know what to put this land mass, and we don't need to answer that right now, but there's another one down here and I don't fucking know what it is!

[Ali and Dre laugh]

AUSTIN: So, um, any other, any other visual stuff here that we want to add? We have one more that we could select. I kind of like "community gardens", but-

ALI: Yeah. Yeah. I gonna say that-

DRE: [overlapping] Yeah, I do too.

ALI: Or, um, synanthropes, which I think tie into each other-

AUSTIN: [slightly overlapping] Yeah! I think that we can have both, we're allowed! [Laughs]

ALI: Yeah! [Laughs]

AUSTIN: You know!

DRE: We can treat ourselves!

ALI: Um-

AUSTIN: Whoop, I just drew a landmass!

DRE: [laughs]

AUSTIN: -over the gardens. Uh, yeah. It's like, um, you know, sometimes the squirrels come through to eat our stuff. 1:08:57

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like they do.

JACK: And then Duke eats them!

[Everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: Perfect.

ALI: [overlapping] Um-

[Short pause]

ALI: But yeah, I really love the idea of like- an old sign for like a car dealership- and then it's just like a big farm. [Laughs]

AUSTIN: Yes! Yes. A hundred percent. Totally.

ALI: Just like, "Oh, there was flat land here. Sick."

AUSTIN: So now that- yeah, so now we've, like, destroyed all the concrete and just turned it into a farm.

JACK: [overlapping] Yeah!

ALI: [overlapping] [laughing]

AUSTIN: Can we put that down somewhere in here? Let's put that down.

JACK: The image that you have at the bottom of this, Austin, is like a really, really great inspiration because it captures that- that uncanniness, that you get, especially around airports, I feel.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Mmhm.

JACK: Where it's like you have these huge tracts of, of green space that are so limited by the, the, the stuff that's around them. Um, and it's this really strange, um, dissonance. I remember sort of like sitting in a parked car at an airport and between me and the airport terminal was like a gigantic field with trees, it- it was very beautiful. But they were just, there was an airport terminal.

[Ali and Austin laugh]

JACK: I think that's what a lot of this looks like, right? These, these ruined spaces that have, that have grown over, but also just have a bunch of this weird apparatus around.

AUSTIN: Yeah! Um, where is your club at, Samantha?

ALI: Uh, um, I think like kind of... near-ish to the train station, but not... like in the in-between space over here, but like probably kinda close to the... coast, like right over there.

AUSTIN: Oh, cool. Awesome. So it's like a, like a bay side-

ALI: [overlapping] Yeah.

AUSTIN: -one. I'm going to get like a nice, cool color, I'm gonna make it like *boom*. I'm gonna make it *pop*.

ALI: Yeah, there we go. Who doesn't like a nice seaside-?

AUSTIN: Yeah, does it- is it like uh-

ALI: [overlapping] Hangout?

AUSTIN: Is it like, does it have like a deck like over the bay and stuff like that?

ALI: Yeah, I think it's, um, man. Should it just being a pier? Are piers too dangerous? [laughing]

AUSTIN: Piers are cool, piers tend to be on the other side over here, because-

ALI: [overlapping] I know, I know. I always want there to be a pier, but there's- [laughs]

AUSTIN: There *are* piers. I mean, but the piers are just on the eastern side instead of the western side. Cause it's like still water over- I mean, you could have a pier because you could have like uh, like a pier that like boats dock at and stuff, so yeah, it could be a pier.

ALI: Yeah. I- maybe more of a dock. I just think of when I, when I grew up in San Clemente, there was the pier here- there, and then there was like a restaurant that was on the start of it, which happens with a lot of piers.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Totally.

ALI: [inaudible] But I like it being kind of built over the sea.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Let's do it then. Let's make it a pier.

ALI: [overlapping] Yeah.

AUSTIN: And then, cause it could be, it could be like the reclaimed pier where... I- my character was from. Like, it could have been like, it used- it was just uh- or maybe it's like not the reclaimed one, even like it was... How about this, like, the fact that it's on this side of the town, um, lemme paint this picture really quick. Um, it is part- it was part of a redevelopment plan for the community that was like, "We need a pier of our own," Like, We need the Bluff City pier for residents of Bluff City where it's not about like, um, You know, uh, tourism and it's not, you know, it's, it's, it's a little bit more like a local carnival and, and, uh, like little shops and stuff for people *in* Bluff City to go to, instead of, for people who are coming down from *Trenton* or wherever, you know?

[Dre laughs]

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, I'm gonna, I'm gonna make the whole thing that cool color and also extend it out over the water a little bit.

ALI: cool

AUSTIN: Uh, so other things we need to place. I'm trying to think of other, like, important things. Also, do you have a name for it by any chance?

ALI: Um, not right now.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: [inaudible, laughing]

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's fine. Um...

[short pause, typing noises]

ALI: The Society Intact is a great name for a bar, FYI.

AUSTIN: It would be, it would-

ALI: Unfortunately! [laughing]

AUSTIN: Unfortunately! Unfortunately. Bigger than that, there we go. Line that up, *boop!* Cool.

Um, I'm trying to do if there's anything else that we need to, like, place, uh let's- let's keep going down-

DRE: should I put my workshop in?

AUSTIN: Yes, please. Yes.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Do you think that's near the pier or the club? You think it's like in this line of things that we're setting up? Like-

DRE: Yeah, I think it's probably closer to the train station?

AUSTIN: Okay. Yeah.

DRE: Um... let's see, how do I make it so that it fills in [inaudible] there we go. Um, [someone whistling] so maybe, I don't know, like here-ish?

AUSTIN: Cool. Yeah.

[clicking noises]

DRE: There we go.

AUSTIN: Rad. I'm going to move where it says train station so that it doesn't say it next to your thing. [Dre laughs] There we go. Do you want to write, like, "workshop" there or something?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Cool. Um, let's see what's next because we should, we should, uh, again we should talk about now the conflict that, uh, comes up here. Uh, you'll circle thr- circle three ideological or material forces that are in conflict with each other, a situation with no simple answers or stable solutions. As you circle things, talk about them and flesh them out. Discuss the scale of

the conflict. Is this a petty squabble or an entire town divided by rival ideologies? So our options here, this is for us in the enclave, its note, is the note. Not, not, you know, this isn't just like, "Oh yeah, the Society Intact hates us." Cuz like, no shit. [laughs] Um, this is about the people inside of, um, kind of, I'm going to say, like, this is our enclave, this northern one, maybe, you know? If that makes sense?

JACK: It makes sense, yeah.

AUSTIN: This kind of the Northern half of Bluff City um, [reading] "circle three things that are in conflict in the enclave: psychic privacy, gender abolition, spaces for women, religious customs, goddess cults, racial identity, indigenous land rights, revolutionary fervor, mutants, scarcity thinking, politics of the void, reckless hedonism, the need for purity, party culture, barriers to access, the use of violence, food justice, trauma, the limitless possibilities of queer sex, known abusers, or desiring return to society." Um, again, I just- this is like, that list alone should again, kind of be a really great content warning for the sorts of things that are at, at risk and in play in this game and are being taken seriously.

I think we say that a lot. Um, you know we, for Twilight Mirage, for instance, we talked about not using the term trauma for a Forged in the Dark, for Scum and Villainy 's system of stress, uh... not response to stress, uh- consequences. And so I wanted to be really clear here upfront, like, "Hey, here is what-" Here- this is a game in which trauma could come up. Um, in Twilight Mirage, we didn't think that it made sense to come up in that, with that term and- and use that term. But this is a game that's very clearly about things like trauma, things like sex, um, things like race, uh, and, and, and, you know, revolution and radicalism and queerness. And so, like, I think it's important to, to not try to make these, you know, somehow kind of sand, sand them down into something less potent. And instead I'd like to try to just like figure out which ones we- we're interested in exploring here. What's at conflict. Um, does anything pop out here for folks? [pause]

JACK: I'm interested in revolutionary fervor.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Um, I feel like we have already begun to depict a society that is- there are very clear divisions.

AUSTIN: Mmm. Mhm.

JACK: And I feel like, I feel like revolutionary fervor is both in character with Bluff City and seems to be in character with, with the place we are beginning to depict.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh, I'm good with that. If other people are.

DRE: Yeah.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, what else?



[pause]

ALI: Um, [pause, speaking slowly] I feel like, like this can be easily vetoed, but like "known abusers" is an interesting one [AUSTIN: Yeah.] in terms of, like, a suburban community, in terms of, like, someone who used to be a loan shark or like, [AUSTIN: Right.] um, you know, people who when society was at its height would willingly take advantage of people? And now also need some sort of...you know, safety net? Or like-

AUSTIN: Right. I mean, like, this is one of those things you see around natural disasters a lot, is like the, I mean, it's a thing that you- I read a story every time that there is something, uh, uh- Again, I think natural disasters is the one that you see a lot as like some journalist is like, "Oh, I wonder what the mafia has done to help people." After this has happened.

ALI: [laughing]

JACK: [overlapping] Right. I was thinking of like the shakedown guy, right?

AUSTIN: Yes, [ALI: Yeah.] yes, exactly. And it's like, well, okay. These are people who we know have hurt people. We know that. Um, uh, and yet here they are still part of the community. How do you deal with that? Um, that's interesting. And also we know the Bluff City, we- our Bluff City canon has its- its fair share of organized criminals in it. Let's say.

al and DRE: [simultaneously] Yeah.

JACK: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: I'm down with that. [ALI: Yeah.] I will circle it. Um, what is the third one? Um...

[pause]

AUSTIN: "Religious customs" is interesting. [ALI: Yeah.] Umm, [DRE: [overlapping] Yeah.] "desire to return to society" is interesting.

DRE: I'm bouncing between desiring a return to society and maybe "barriers to access" or "scarcity thinking"?

AUSTIN: Mmm.

DRE: I think those are kind of all like, kind of connected to me.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Can you, can you [ALI: Um.] go ahead, Ali.

ALI: I was just going to say I don't, I don't know that I love desiring return to society? Um, especially when like society is already so present. Like if somebody wanted to... they could try to, you know, [AUSTIN: Right.] go back into that space.

AUSTIN: So then maybe it's that other side of it, which is like, the- we go to where Dre said "scarcity thinking", which is like the, there could be, there could be kind of lines of people who are like, "You shouldn't be throwing parties anymore. We should be-" um, "We should be restrained. We should be-" almost pur- puritanical in thinking around, um- and I don't only mean that in terms of sex, morality, and religion, but also almost in terms of like a sort of, a sort of, a sort of puritanical survivalism? Right? Which is like, "Gender expression, sexuality, culture;

these are luxuries. We need food. We should be spending our time repairing the train lines."

Um, these aren't people who do want to go back to society, but they might be people who think that, who *do* think that femininity is frivolous, right.? [ALI: Yeah.] Or who do think that, that the sorts of, like, the things that we- and I think that that's even in conflict- that could even be in conflict among our own characters. And it doesn't have to be as fierce as what I just said, right? It can be just about prioritization of like, "Oh, actually, here's what I want to spend my time doing. Here's the project I want to work on." You know? [ALI: Yeah.] Does that work for people? Scarcity thinking?

ALI: Um, it does for me. Yeah.

DRE: Yeah. I'm good with that.

JACK: [overlapping] Mmhm.

AUSTIN: Cool. Alright. I'm going to circle it. . [inhale] Alright. So those are three things that are in conflict. Um, I've done some like other buildings and- these are casinos, these three ones that are abandoned and transformed into other things. Um, I'm gonna turn this this way.

There we go. Um, alright. So we've now- we have now made our, our community. Um, so I'm going to read- this is *such* an interesting thing. I know, Jack, you mentioned it to me before we started, while we were reading through all of this, there's this notion in this game called "idle dreaming". So we're going to keep asking questions. We're still going to keep- I'm gonna keep asking questions, and we're going to continue to use answers, but this is from a section called "Follow your curiosity". [reading] "As everyone defines the community, use the remainder of the worksheet to start sketching a map. Everyone can draw, though one person emerging as the de facto cartographer is fine too. Leave lots of empty space to fill in during play. Talk about where people sleep. Where they get their drinking water from. Where they seek quiet moments of reflection, prayer, and more. As the map is being sketched and the community is being fleshed out, you enter into a mode of play called 'idle dreaming'. This is a time for questions and curiosity, for tangents and musings. Talk about whatever interesting or unknown or scary or beautiful- talk about whatever *is* interesting or unknown or scary or beautiful about this place that you're building together. Make up details about the landscape, its history and its residence. Set up becomes play one flowing directly into the next. Um, "To get you started in the process of idle dreaming, each character role contains a short list of questions to ask the person to your left located at the bottom of the middle column. Answers can be short or simple- short and simple, or leading the conversations of their own. In the process of asking and answering, you may find

yourselves eager to plunge into a scene. Go for it. To get you started-" I just started that paragraph over again.

[Everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: Um-

JACK: One more time, let's go!

AUSTIN: One more time from the top! [Reading] "With everyone asking questions and excitedly contributing their vision, scene ideas will soon emerge. Maybe something seems especially poignant. Maybe the answer to a question is clouded by uncertainty, or just feels too big to make an arbitrary decision about. Maybe two players are figuring out why their characters recently broke up and it's like, 'Hey. This should totally be a scene. I want to witness this happening in real time. Maybe it happened by the river?' Idle dreaming stokes curiosity and excitement, and leads into scenes." I'm not going to finish reading the rest because, because, you know, buy the book. Um, but, uh, it's a really great setup, and I think that that is probably where we should, where we should go now, unless anyone wants to take a break before we continue and, and move this direction? Um-

JACK: I could take like a very quick break? I kind of want to just like stretch.

AUSTIN: Yes, definitely. Let's stretch, let's come back, let's go over a few more things on these sheets, and we'll slip into idle, idle dreaming. Cool?

JACK: Sounds good.

AUSTIN: We will- [hard cut] We're back, and I drew a boardwalk. [Laughs] Um, I added a boardwalk to this map because [ALI: Oh hell yeah.] boardwalks are important, to know, where they are. (ALI: [laughs]) Uh-

JACK: Oh, the boardwalk is that brown line?

AUSTIN: Yeah!

JACK: It runs the whole length (AUSTIN: Mmhm.) of the island?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Because it's like, you know, the main drag of Atlantic City, which Bluff City it is based on, is casinos and stuff. And it runs all the way there. But then like, it goes to the north and to the south. It goes even into other parts of- of the island, of Absecon Island, that are not Atlantic city. (JACK: Holy shit! I had no idea.) Because that's where you go to the beach. You walk up to the boardwalk or you bike down the boardwalk, you know? Like it's a big, long long long thing. (JACK: That's cool as hell!) It's pretty cool. I'm not gonna lie. Um, I think I want this to be a s- to be, we don't have to do this today, obviously, but I think this other little Island is maybe our like Ocean City equivalent? Which is like family friendly, much more, (JACK: [Laughs]) many more wides. Um, no alcohol, (JACK: Less casinos?) no

casinos. Yeah. (ALI: [Laughs]) Let me talk about- (JACK: Kid casinos!) K- [laughs] yeah, that's it! Yeah. Arcades. Yes, actually. Yes, 100%. Yes. (JACK: [overlapping] Oh, yes. Kid casinos. That's what they are.) (ALI: [Laughs]) That's the city- that's the city that like my dad and I used to go to arcades to every, every summer we would go down to the Ocean City casinos or- to the Ocean City arcades [laughs], the boardwalk, and we'd get *really* good pizza, and then we'd go to all of the, uh, the arcades looking for whatever, like the cool new arcade games were. Every- every year, so. (JACK: Wow.) Anyway, we're back. Uh, and we should- there's two things we need to go over. One is, uh, our individual character lures, L-U-R-E, that I can't, it keeps making- [sighs] it's killing me. It feels like there should be a different pronunciation between lure and lore? (DRE: "Ler"? "Ler"? But that- "*leeur*"? See, that sounds bad out of my mouth, I'm just going to saying "lore".

DRE: [Laughs]

JACK: Lore- lore, and lure. [tn: pronounced differently]

AUSTIN: No. (ALI: [thoughtfully] Lure... lure.) See, can't do that second one. (JACK: [Laughs]) That's not-

DRE: Lure. [pronounced "ler"]

AUSTIN: Lure. [pronounced "ler"] [1:26:12](#)

JACK: Lure. [pronounced "lee-ur"]

AUSTIN: [Plaintively] See? That doesn't sound right to me.

ALI: Wait, I had it before during the break. (JACK: Oh dear.) Whatever. Okay. It's fine

(AUSTIN: "Lee-ur". Yeah, I guess.) We just have to hang out with fishermen and then we'll get-

DRE: How do you say, how do you say allure? (AUSTIN: Allure. Allure. Allure.) Like A L L U R E? You are- yeah. Just take off the "A".

JACK: Allure. [pronounced "a-lee-ur"]

AUSTIN: That still just sounds like "lore" to me. (DRE: That's fair.) Lure allure. Anyway. Um, so each, each character role has a lure, which is how you give other characters, tokens. Um, they are- I'm just gonna see if there's like a thing in the playbook or in the, um, the quick start on like breaking down what those are. Um, I mean, I guess, I guess... the thing to explain here is that we all start with zero tokens, and tokens are how we do different types of moves. There's no dice in this game. This game has no dice. It has no MC, no master no, no game master. Instead it has strong moves, regular moves, and weak moves.

Um, and you'll note that on your sheet, you have some, some tips for how to play your character. Um, maybe we should read "tips" and "lure" out, uh, for each of these. Um, and,

uh, mechanically, the way it works is you can always do a regular move, and those regular moves are that- the list is in the middle. Uh, the "ask" thing is also one of your moves. You have strong moves. Um, and so those are really good, but to do a strong move, you have to spend a token. And the ways that you get tokens are either by doing one of your weak moves, which would give you a token, or by, um, uh, responding to someone else's lure. Uh, so Ali, do you want to start with your tips and your lure?

ALI: Sure. My tips are: "Look for opportunities to provide for others, but also hustle your wares" (AUSTIN: Mhm.) "Foolishly overextend yourself from time to time." (JACK and AUSTIN laugh) [laughs] Yeah, I- I'll manage it. (AUSTIN: [Laughs]) Um, "Make your character fallible and relatable", and then my- (AUSTIN: Again, you'll manage, you'll figure it out.) mhm, yeah! Um, and then my lure is, uh, "Whenever someone offers you a new gig or gets hooked on your supply, they gain a token." *They gain a token?* 1:28:19

AUSTIN: They gain a token. Yes. (ALI: *They gain a token...*) So other characters, if you want a scene where you get some tokens go, you know, offer, offer, uh, Samantha a new gig, uh, or get, get hooked on a, you know, her supply (ALI: Easy food!) of easy food, companionship, and a thriving social scene. Um, all right. Already? Do you want to talk to me about, about your tips and your lure?

JACK: So my tips are "Tell the other players the secrets of your character's past so they can help incorporate it into the story." "Discover the Enclave's implicit social rules through earnest trial and error." and "Make your character fallible and relatable."

AUSTIN: Great. And your lure?

JACK: [overlapping] And my lure is "Whenever someone gives you the opportunity to prove yourself to the community, they gain a token."

AUSTIN: Mmm. So anytime we're like, "Hey, come help," And, and that- I love the framing on that, the phrasing on that, because it's like... you know. It's an *opportunity* to prove yourself. (JACK: Yeah.) Who's knows that you actually manage to. Um, Robyn.

DRE: All right. My tips are "Establish meaningful, personal relationships with your tools, supplies, and workshop ephemera." (AUSTIN: Love it.) Uh, "Involve fellow players in brainstorming interesting risk or complications when you tinker with things," and "Make your character fallible and relatable." And my- Now, I'm feeling weird about saying it. My *lure* is whenever someone comes to you with something precious, that needs fixing, they gain a token. 1:29:46

AUSTIN: Interesting. Okay. Um, my tips are "Use your rituals to bring people closer together", "Make yourself valued and needed", and "Make your character fallible and

relatable". And my lure is "Whenever someone participates in one of your rituals for the first time they gain a token." Um, I am also quickly going to name my, um, herbalist, uh, because I saw a name on your sheet, Dre that you didn't use. That's another- another potential name that I *love*, which is "Depot". (DRE: Yeah.) So I think my herbalist is named Depot. My herbalist/mechanic/translator is named Depot. Um, Uh, I don't know what they look like yet. Um- actually I think I do. I think it's like, I think that he's like a, a black man with dreadlocks, um, and, uh, like a off white tee shirt and the old pair of jeans. And that t-shirt definitely used to just be a white T shirt, but now it's an off white tee shirt. [Someone snorts] Um, and I think, I think that he's almost like- not a rival of yours necessarily Robyn. Um, but sometimes, so it's like, if, if, if *he* was also a Stitcher, he would have, I would say like "metalworking" and... maybe also "broadcasting"? I think maybe that's what it is? Um, and so he is- there's like a degree of overlap there where y'all work on projects together sometimes, but also sometimes, sometimes y'all disagree about stuff or, or whatever. So he's another, another, like, tech person in this, in this space. So... um, alright. So now let's go back to the, let's go back to the top because we all have these questions to ask. Samantha, choose one to ask to your left, which based on the bottom of our screen, is to Jack-- um, to, to Already. What is your question?

ALI: Okay. Um... what do I regularly hook you up with?

JACK: Hm. ...I think what you regularly hook me up with is, uh, food scraps for Duke.

([Someone gasps] ALI: [Laughs] Of course it is.) Um, I think that, because we talk about this sort of the purity in, um, in the community in-- purity of survival (AUSTIN: Right.), there's definitely been some people in the community who have been like, "You have a dog, unless that dog is hunting for us, (AUSTIN: [Laughs]) what is the, you know, what is the dog for?" Um, "Is-- that, that dog is small. What what's that dog gonna do?" (ALI: [Laughs]) Um, and so while I probably could get food for Duke just by going to the food supply and, y'know, taking a little more, perhaps there is, there is something that feels illicit about that. (AUSTIN: Mhm.) So, um, I go see Samantha and, uh, yeah. What, what do you give me? What is like, what is the food scraps in a post apocalypse for small dog?

ALI: Um, that's tough. I think about how you have to, like, if you have like leftover vegetables and meat scraps and like fat and stuff, you can kind of... Boil it to make a stock. (AUSTIN: Mmm.) (JACK: Ooh!) And then like, maybe they, like, leftovers from that is like a, kind of a dog food sort of situation? [Laughs]

JACK: Sort of- so you've made post-apocalyptic dog soup?

ALI: Yes, I have. [au laughs] Well, the soup is for the people, but the leftovers, (JACK: Oh I see, alright.) (AUSTIN: The leftovers, right.) you strain out.

JACK: Some like gristle and like, (ALI: Yeah.) yeah, yeah, yeah. And--

ALI: Just some nice... vegetables and assorted proteins for this dog. [Laughs]

JACK: Yeah, I think I'm very grateful-- well, there's not enough, right? Duke isn't starving, but Duke is like-- Duke is a hungry dog. Duke not is not a well fed dog.

AUSTIN: Perfect. Um-

ALI: I give it to you in, like, empty peanut butter containers, like [j laughs] (AUSTIN: Oh, that's so good.) old, like Coke bottles- [laughs]

JACK: Many, many tiny containers.

ALI: [Laughs] Yes!

AUSTIN: [whispers] Fuck.

JACK: It's a sardine tin full of a small amount of- [Everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: Just a tiny- oh. It's a bunch of sardine tins, like rubber banded together. Oh, or like a-

JACK: "What's in that?" "Oh, slop"

AUSTIN: Like a- [au and al laugh] like a tiny, you know how, like in- I'm assuming children once used these like, book, like strapped together books, like, instead of a book bag, like an old cartoons (JACK: Oh, yeah yeah yeah.) kids would just have a bunch of books strapped together, like a book, whatever like that, but sardine tins, (JACK: [laughs] Oh my god.) each sardine tin filled with a single meals worth of, Oh, it's so good. Um... all right. Do you want to ask your question to- to, um, Robyn, Already?

JACK: Uh, sure. Why do you wish I had never arrived? [DRE: laughs] (AUSTIN: Oho!)

DRE: Um, hmm. Jack, why are you giving me the mean question?

JACK: I feel like it's less of a mean question and more of an opportunity for you to *be* mean.

1:35:04

DRE: [Laughs] Fair, fair. Um... [long pause] mmm. So... you- when you arrived, you did not- Already did not have their- their grocery truck with them still, right?

JACK: No, I did not have the truck when I arrived. I showed up without the truck.

DRE: Okay. Um...

JACK: But you've seen the truck before, because I drove it through here- you know, the reason I know about your community is that I drove the truck through it. So presumably that goes both ways, right?

DRE: Right. Um- oh, I know what it is. Um, you've got that phone that's- that's that's still got service.

JACK: I have, yeah.

DRE: And it makes my broadcasting- it threatens my broadcasting. (AUSTIN: Ooh.) Not in terms of like, (JACK: Oh shit.) like- there probably is like some people like, "Hey, can I, you still got Spotify that- that works on that phone?" (AUSTIN: [laughs]) But I think there's also, like, I think Robyn feels that there is something important to like... a community-led way of communication, where like, people get a space on the airwaves to like, say their peace to the community.

JACK: Yeah.

DRE: And if we all had cell phones again, that wouldn't happen anymore.

JACK: Huh.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: And how is that- that- was there an event that caused this or is this just sort of a, sort of a simmering resentment that you see me like talking to someone on my phone or like looking at it or something and you're like, [defeatedly] "Dammit."

DRE: I think, I think it's like, I think it is. I think it's sad. It's like, it's like, when you, when you showed up, somebody saw you had a phone and they came to Robyn and they're like, "Hey, do you think you could like throw me together, like, a phone? (au and JACK: Hmmmm.) Like, like what the new, what the new person has?"

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Do you think that there's a situation-? This is-- maybe this is too goofy, but like literally one of the things that Already does to get by is as-- for barter-- is, "Yeah I'll let you make a call." And the call is to a phone or maybe one of three phones in the entire enclave. Um, but it's, it's one of the only ways to contact someone at distance privately. Like, (JACK: Yeah.) like there is a phone at the community garden, there's a phone at the train station and there's a phone at the pier and club. And you can say like, "Yeah. Be by the-- by the peer phone at 3:00 PM or like around noon when the sun is like all the way up and I'll call you, I'll go, I'll go rent or borrow Already's phone for a call." Um, and actually get a call that way. Uh, and like, get that private communication.

JACK: I like this a lot because it, it opens the door to a lot of interesting scene framing for us, as well as being an evocative idea. I don't think it's too goofy.

AUSTIN: Okay. I'm happy with it. I'm excited about it. And then, yeah, also I'm guessing you could also talk to people from the Society Intact, right?



JACK: I can talk to any, any, you know, any of my contacts that I believe still has an active phone, I can call. I guess I like--

AUSTIN: [overlapping] But if you see like a-- if someone came up to you with a scrap of paper with what they thought was the phone number to someone from the Society Intact.

JACK: Oh yeah, absolutely.

AUSTIN: Could they borrow your phone to contact them?

JACK: Uh, well, I mean, now we're getting into-- but in theory, yes.

AUSTIN: Right. This is *almost* a scene here. Um, [DRE: (laughs)] I don't know if any of our characters would be the person making that call, but I, I-- I'm gonna file that away because that might be a scene I want to do before we wrap tonight. We'll see. Um, cool. Uh, Robyn, do you want to ask one of your questions to the left? Which would be to me.

DRE: Yeah. Um, what broken thing do you have that I could fix?

AUSTIN: Hmm. Um, I think it probably has something to do with broadcasting. Let's see. Let's think. Um, let me take a look at my sheet really quick. I wanna see some other rituals that I don't have access to, but *could*. Um... I think it is an old, um, so on the, on the pier, um, where I was a clown, um, there was an old tape. Like a, like a reel to reel? Um, that would, uh, that you could use to, to just like run the advertising for the pier where it's like, you know, um, "Make sure to try the dinner special down at--" you know, "--Bocelli's," or whatever, you know, and then the next one would be like, you know, "Hey kids the new rollercoaster opens up tonight. Make sure to have your parents come take you to--" whatever it is. You know what I mean? Um, but the-- my creator, um, she used that same reel to reel system to record, um, to record like personal notes. Um, that ranged from literally very personal things about her family, about her, um, her, her relationships, about her life, but also notes about her academic studies notes about her own hobbies notes about who she was as a person. 1:41:00 Um, and they have been demagnetized or corrupted or somehow-- or tangled, or the machine is broken. It's a mix of these things. I just have all of these old reel to reel-- reels, and a player and they don't work. Um, but, but you could fix them for me. Um, I don't think I've ever asked you to. Um, but I'm sure you've been in my, in my, you know, my sanctuary and you've seen them in the corner at some point and I've just never brought them up. Um, does that make sense? Does that work for you?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Cool. Um, so mine to ask to you, Samantha... why did we break up?

[DRE: chuckles, ALI: lets out a hee hee hee]

ALI: Oh, thank you for my *life*. (AUSTIN: [laughs]) Um, that's a good question. Um, I think the first answer in my mind is such an easy one, but like, a very familiar one, which is like, I think divided attention is really tough? (AUSTIN: Mmm.) And for someone who is like the stretched idea of like a bar mama. (AUSTIN: Right.) But like across an entire, like, failing community makes it hard to, like, focus on one person? (AUSTIN: Right.) Like that's well, I think that's... the way that I want to go here?

AUSTIN: (overlapping) No, well, I think that that's-- I like that. And I like it for two reasons. One, because it's just-- that's feels honest. (ALI: [laughs]) Two, because we are both people with tribes. We are both people with people, right? (ALI: Yeah.) You have the people of the, of the social scene and of the, of the club and bar. And I have the people who adhere to the faith. And I think a lot of those people probably overlap to some degree, right? Um, (ALI: Yeah.) I almost, I almost think-- maybe, could we have just broken up?

ALI: [very excited] Sure!

AUSTIN: Can we have this scene? Can we break up real quick?

ALI: [Cackles] Literally anytime.

AUSTIN: Great. Love it. [DRE: bursts into laughter] Um, so like maybe it's what's the inside of the bar look like?

ALI: Um, I think that it's kind of like... It's kind of like longer than it is back and like a place with like tall... like, um... like, f- you know. Like polished wood booths. (AUSTIN: Right.) Um, like a long bar against the back bar and then like, you know, like a space and then like some booths and, um, (AUSTIN: Uh-huh.) like windows, you know, those big, like, square windows on each side that like look out to the sea or to the (AUSTIN: Right.) you know. To the front of the street of whatever.

AUSTIN: [Overlapping, excited] Can the booths be reclaimed from a Ferris wheel?

ALI: [Laughs] Why not?

AUSTIN: [Whispers] Yesss. (DRE: [Laughs]) Good. Love it.

ALI: I mean, the Island is right there. It just floated on by.

AUSTIN: Floated over, right? I mean, we have, again, we have this pier here, so it could be a mix of shit who knows, um. (ALI: [Laughs]) Love it, um. Is-- do you have an office here?

ALI: Umm, I mean, I don't--

AUSTIN: Like, what's the private space? Is it the kitchen? Is it the--?

ALI: I think I have like a pantry and in the back of a pantry is like a folding table, you know? [laughs] (AUSTIN: Uh-huh.) And on that folding table, I have like a big binder and like, you know. A single filing cabinet. (AUSTIN: Right.) Um, and then also a couch, of course.

(AUSTIN: Great. Good.) [Laughs] Cause it can be equally, like, a hang out area and also like "I have to write some numbers down", unfortunately. (AUSTIN: Totally.) Um, yeah. AUSTIN: Um, all right, so I'm just going to read here again. One more time. "The first scenes emerged from idle dreaming when curiosity and excitement lead to a situation that people want to dive into and explore. Scenes can start with a line of dialogue, with a description of a seller stuffed with old potatoes and garlic braids, with action, whatever feels right. 1:45:04 Both dreams are flexible about how you frame your scenes. But as the scene unfolds, make sure to de-- make sure details emerge. Where's this taking place? Who's in the middle of the action and who's quietly watching on? What smells waft over from nearby kitchens? Is someone fiddling? Is it early in the evening, or have the clouds finally parted to make way for sunset? Scenes might take anywhere from two minutes to twenty. Some scenes will revolve around a conflict and others won't. They might stand alone or flow organically into one another. They end when it feels right for them to end. If a scene ends and it's not immediately clear what the next thing should be, you can always return to idle dreaming. Follow your curiosity. If there are still questions to be asked to the left, give people a chance to ask them. Scenes will soon emerge again." Um, A thing to note here, I just, I'm actually going to read one more little section here, which is the "Making moves" thing, which is, "Whenever your main character takes action, that's you making a move. Moves or how the story unfolds. By default, a lot of the moves you make are 'Take action, leaving yourself vulnerable', but anytime you're called upon to act, you can look at your list of moves and choose a different one to inspire narration. Making a move means taking the prompt and running with it, letting it guide what you say next and how you play your character.

The move might point towards an outcome, but know that what happens next may still surprise you. You don't always need to announce the move by name, but sometimes it can be helpful to do so because it will help ensure that other players are on the same page. Whenever you make a weak move, gain a token. Weak moves show us your character's vulnerability, folly, or even just plain rotten luck, but they can also-- but they also earn you that token, setting you up to shine in future moments."

Uh, I need to-- one second, I'm getting a call. I will be right, right, right, right, right back. Be right back.

ALI: [Through laughter] Okay.

DRE: [Laughs]

JACK: Hm.

ALI: Hm.

JACK: Hm.

ALI: Do you think this was a deliberate arrived (JACK: He broke up with you.) too early, you know... (DRE: [Laughs]) That's a breakup. "Hey, come to my pantry. You said you want to talk about our relationship?" "Hey, I have a call. I have to go."

DRE: [Laughs]

JACK: [Fake serious voice] Goodbye.

ALI: All right.

JACK: That's me.

ALI: See you later.

AUSTIN: Sorry. Listen. I-- I maybe-- (ALI: [wheeze laughs]) I maybe ordered dinner and they needed to know what I wanted to drink. It happens.

ALI: Mmhm.

[DRE and AUSTIN laugh]

AUSTIN: Listen! (DRE: Food's important!) (ALI: [still laughing in the background]) It's-- it's true. The other thing I just wanted to quickly quickly point out; one, again, everyone can play minor characters and we can always ask like, "Hey, can this character show up?" or "Hey, I'd love to play this character in the scene." The second thing is, um, we should all look at the setting elements really quick? Um, and look at the moves of the setting elements. Uh, and the "pickup when" of the setting elements. Um, uh, the-- if you're in control, you can do any of the moves. Like for instance, um, who's in control of the Society Intact again? Is that... Jack? (DRE: Is that Jack, I think?)

JACK: That's-- that's me.

AUSTIN: Can everybody put their name down on the one that they are?

JACK: Oh yeah. Sure. (DRE: Sure.)

AUSTIN: Thank you. I have to do the same. Um, so for instance, Jack, if you were like, "Oh actually a, um, a--" Where did it go-- an authority figure shows up, that could be a thing you-- I love that you're just handwriting Jack. (DRE: [laughs]) That's good. Um, so that just-- that's a move you could make. "When you're actively playing a setting element, use it, uh, it's tips to guide what you-- what you imagine and narrate. The third tip is always the same; ask compelling questions and build on the answers that others give. That's because world-building in these games as a collaborative process and it gains from power and curiosity and conversation. Setting elements have moves, prompts which can inspire narration. Just like with characters, none of the moves involve tokens. Setting elements

don't gain or spend tokens. But there are also these prompts. Each setting element has a prompt for when to pick it up and actively play it. This signals that it's time to prioritize narrating on behalf of the setting element, rather than your main character. For example, in *Dream Askew*, you pick up the Earth Itself whenever you want to describe the weather, mutation, beasts, or the natural world. Each setting element has a prompt for when to trade it away. You can also choose to trade it away at anytime-- anytime the demands of playing your main character are in conflict with the demands of playing the setting element. If there are spare spending-- setting elements in the center of the table, you can trade your element with one of those. Otherwise choose another player and trade your elements with them directly. You should always have exactly one setting element in front of you."

So, as-- [laughs] as Samantha and the Augur, Providence meet in the pantry, um, Jack, you'll be playing the Society Intact and Dre you'll be playing Varied Scarcities. Um, so I took a call. (ALI: [Snorts]) I think I took a call. I think I took a call and like, I'm late for-- I was like "We need to talk" and I'm late and you can probably see me out of, like, the window of the kitchen on the, (ALI: [Laughs]) on the pier, like taking this call and coming back up. And I also stop to talk to my, some of my adherents and look over some of the work that they are, that they've been doing. They're looking at the holy texts, which in this case are like, you know, um, some sort of technical manual, right? For, for, um, I think maybe it's like old-- 1:50:01 we like went through an Army Navy store and got like World War II or Vietnam era technical manuals for building, um, like, um, latrines and, and like various like water collectors and stuff like that. And we're looking over those, um-- the holy texts, of course (ALI: [Laughs])-- um, and like I stop there and then finally I make my way back through the kitchen and I stop and I briefly speak with whoever is on kitchen duty tonight. And then *finally* I make it to, to the pantry.

ALI: Cool. Um, I think it's like one of those really thin spaces, like I'm sitting at that table in the back, but like you standing in the middle of it, it's like blocking the light on me, you know how that works? And like-- (AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally.) Yeah.

AUSTIN [as Augur, Providence]: Hello.

ALI [as Samantha]: Hey! ...Is everything settled?

AUSTIN [as Augur, Providence]: So busy.

ALI [as Samantha]: [tired] Yeah.

AUSTIN [as Augur, Providence]: [sighs] How... has your day been?

ALI [as Samantha]: [A little awkwardly] Um, good, it's-- it's been, um, busier than usual, which is always good.

AUSTIN [as Augur, Providence]: New people or just more of the usuals?

ALI [as Samantha]: Um, a mix. More usuals than usual. [awkward laugh] But I, you know, it's good to see smiling faces, so.

AUSTIN [as Augur, Providence]: Always.

ALI [as Samantha]: Yeah.

AUSTIN [as Augur, Providence]: So much to smile about.

ALI [as Samantha]: Yeah.

AUSTIN [as AP]: Can I sit?

ALI [as Samantha]: Yeah, absolutely. [A little bitter] You said you wanted to talk.

AUSTIN [as AP]: ...Yes.

ALI: Sorry. [Laughs] The tone there was so-- but it's honest. (AUSTIN: It's honest. It's honest) [Laughs]

AUSTIN [as AP]: You can sit and-- you can speak and stand, but, uh, sitting, I feel allows for more... directness.

AUSTIN: And she sits on the couch just like next to you, I'm guessing? Are you on the couch or are you standing?

ALI: Um, I think that I'm at, like, a folding chair, (AUSTIN: Oh, okay.) but I think if you sit at the couch, I'll move next to you. Right? Like I (AUSTIN: Right, yeah.) fold the sheet that I'm on and close my binder and like, (au; Yeah.) you got called away. I allowed myself to be called away (AUSTIN: [Primly] Mmhm. Mmhm.) and now it's like [Laughs]

AUSTIN [as AP]: [Exhale] It is... it has been... we've done so much good for the people here. It's reassuring.

[Pause]

ALI [as Samantha]: [Inhale] Yeah. [Another pause] Yeah, it feels, um. ...It feels whole in a way that it doesn't look, you know? [Laughs]

AUSTIN [as AP]: [Laughs] ...Sometimes, I see it as more than whole. Over-whole. Fuller than... I have the capacity for. [1:53:30](#)

[1:53:13]

AUSTIN (as Augur, Providence): Do you know?

ALI (as Samantha): Hmm... [inhales sharply between teeth] I don't agree. [chuckles] Uhm. But...

AUSTIN (as Augur, Providence): Why not?

ALI (as Samantha): [exhales] You know, I just think of how much more can be done.  
[cross] I think, you know...

AUSTIN (as Augur, Providence): [cross] You would like... You would like more to be done.

ALI (as Samantha): I...

[pause]

ALI (as Samantha): Yeah! I want us to thrive! I don't know that we're thriving yet.

AUSTIN (as Augur, Providence): [softly chuckles, then sighs]

[ALI chuckles]

AUSTIN (as Augur, Providence): Thriving... feels away... away from here.

ALI (as Samantha): Hmm.

AUSTIN (as Augur, Providence): For now I'm content with... [sighs] vibrating. With exercise. With motion. With... instability, even. With surprise. I fear thriving... Thriving is... And the need for thriving is... You are not a collaborator. I don't mean it like *that*. But...

[ALI chuckles softly. Pause. ALI sighs, then chuckles]

ALI (as Samantha): I think we're talking about two different things. Um. And I think that...

[pause, ALI chuckles softly]

ALI (as Samantha): I don't know. I... You know. I... If you... if you feel like you can provide something...

AUSTIN (as Augur, Providence): [exhales]

ALI (as Samantha): I would want it to... you know, spread. And... That... You know. You love a full bar. You love a happy room.

AUSTIN: I am going to make a weak move and ostracize one of my followers.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN (as Augur, Providence): Samantha, the suits love a full bar.

[pause]

AUSTIN (as Augur, Providence): [sighs] We cannot... We *cannot* do, again — we have an opportunity. We... When I was... The woman who built me knew that things would fall and that we would need to be prepared to agitate in the rubble.

[pause]

AUSTIN (as Augur, Providence): We can't mistake community for... an opportunity for personal gain.

AUSTIN: I'm gonna take a token for making a real fucking weak move.

[ALI & others laugh]

AUSTIN: I'm just going to add some tokens up to the table just so we have them.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: They're down here in the token place.

[ALI chuckles uncomfortably]

ALI: Oh, okay. That's a... That's fine.

AUSTIN: [cross] Yep.

ALI: [cross] Uhm.

[long pause]

ALI: [laughing] Sorry, I'm watching you do this token...

AUSTIN: Sorry. You don't have to look at this.

ALI: [laughs] I was waiting for you to finish. Uhm... I... [chuckles]

ALI (as Samantha): It's so easy to not want to provide joy.

[AUSTIN chuckles]



ALI (as Samantha): And I'm not gonna fall into that.

[pause]

AUSTIN: Umm... I think I say... I stand up. I... No, I don't stand up. I...

[ALI chuckles uncomfortably]

AUSTIN: I place one hand on the folding table in front of us. Like, my right hand crosses over to be halfway between you and me, but on the table. And then I, like... I make... not effort, but you can see that I'm taking joy in spreading my fingers out and placing my palm flat on the table. And... I say:

AUSTIN (as Augur, Providence): We each have so much to give to everyone out there. Perhaps we have already given enough to each other.

[pause, then ALI chuckles uncomfortably]

AUSTIN: My food is here, I have to go get it.

[ALI bursts out laughing]

AUSTIN: I love doing live games! It's the best! Be right back.

[ALI laughs]

JACK: He broke up with you *again!*

[others snicker and laugh]

ALI: I said any time!

JACK: [cross] Yeah! And the answer was twice!

ALI: [cross] I mean, three times in one recording!

JACK: [from a distance] Three... Oh, no!

[pause]

JACK: Oh my god! I wonder what he ordered! I hope it was fucking worth it!

[others burst out laughing]

ALI: Let him be hungry! It's, like, ten! You know. I... [cross] I'm sure it was a...

JACK: [cross] That's true...

ALI: I'm sure it was, like, the good place was closing. And I don't want to have Domino's tonight. Sort of situation.

[pause]

ALI: Hi. [laughs]

AUSTIN: I'm back.

ALI: [cross] Hello!

JACK: [cross] Hello!

AUSTIN: Hi!

JACK: What did you get?

AUSTIN: [uncomfortably] I got some... some chicken wings. They're good.

ALI: Uhmmm!

JACK: Oh, nice! [chuckles]

AUSTIN: In any case... [chuckles]

[ALI chuckles, JACK laughs]

ALI: Center.

AUSTIN: There it is.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Normally that place takes like an hour to deliver...

ALI: [cross] Well...

AUSTIN: [cross] ... and it took, like, 30 minutes this time?

ALI: They were hot and ready.

AUSTIN: They were.

ALI: Uhm. [laughs] Um. All I say... Lemme... Okay. This is a scene. [chuckles] I think that I, like... I look at your hand instead of looking at you, you know?

AUSTIN: Uhum.

[ALI chuckles uncomfortably]

ALI (as Samantha): You... You could have just said that. This didn't have to be a debate about... what we do provide.

AUSTIN: [sighs] Um, I think I, like, one finger at a time — thumb index middle ring pinky — lift my hand off the table and, like, close into a light fist.

[ALI chuckles]

AUSTIN: And then put it back down on my knee. And then use it to push myself up. And I say:

AUSTIN (as Augur, Providence): I know. I think I just *wanted* one with you before... I left the pantry.

AUSTIN: And I smile at you.

[ALI semi-laughs in disbelief]

AUSTIN: And I think... because... [chuckles] we are out of time tonight...

[ALI chuckles uncomfortably]

AUSTIN: I think all the lights turn off.

ALI: Oh.

AUSTIN: There's like [imitates sound of powering down] booohw. And we lose power.

[pause]

AUSTIN: And my eyes flicker in the dark.

[pause]

AUSTIN: [sighs] And I say... um...

AUSTIN (as Augur, Providence): We tripped the circuit a month ago. It should not be time for the ritual yet.

[pause]

ALI (as Samantha): [chuckles in disbelief] I mean, we'll get to it. The people need light. Right?

[a brief pause]

AUSTIN (as Augur, Providence): People need light.

AUSTIN: Man, we need to come back to play this game *very* quickly!

[ALI laughs]

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: But Jack is in England...

ALI: [cross] Uh-huh...!

AUSTIN: [cross] And I have food. Uhm... [chuckles] What time is it there Jack?

ALI: I want to have chicken wings.

JACK: It is 03:01.

AUSTIN: [cross] That is...

JACK: [cross] So, actually we're doing... You know.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: For us! We're doin' alright.

JACK: Yeah!

DRE: [faintly] Oh, Jack...!

ALI: Oh, Jack!

AUSTIN: Oh, Jack. You're so far away! From us.

JACK: Oh, man!

AUSTIN: This game is really good! We should find...

JACK: [cross] It's fantastic!

AUSTIN: [cross] Imma look at a schedule and try to figure out how quickly we can get back.

[ALI giggles]

AUSTIN: Just...

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...because it's dope. I'm Austin Walker, you can follow me on twitter @austin\_walker. Where can people find you, Ali?

ALI: I'm over @ali\_west on twitter.com.

AUSTIN: How about you... Dre?

DRE: You can find me on twitter @swandre3000.

AUSTIN: And you, Jack?

JACK: I'm on twitter @notquitereal, or you can buy any of the music featured on the show at notquitereal.bandcamp.com.

AUSTIN: You can follow us on twitter.com/friends\_table. You can follow us also on Patreon, and support us at patreon.com/... I always do this the wrong way! Friends\_table. Or at friendsatthetable.cash. Um... This archive will be up on YouTube, obviously. If you're listening to the podcast version and want to see the map, there should be a youtube link already on the Patreon. So you can click that, and look at the... look at the cool map we've begun to put together. Um...

Is there anything else to... Oh, oh, oh! You can find out more about *Dream Askew* at... buriedwithoutceremony.com/dream-askew. I think... I suspect that if you just go to

buriedwithoutceremony.com, you'll find find... find it right at the very top. You can also do a start for kicks... or a search for Kickstarter: Dream Askew, and you'll find the Kickstarter for Dream Askew / Dream Apart. Thanks again to Avery for sending over that extra doc for some of those really useful tips! And... for hanging out in the chat a little bit! We should go to time.is, probably, huh?

ALI: [cross] Yeah!

JACK: [cross] Let's do it!

[pause]

AUSTIN: I'm super excited to get back to this!

[ALI chuckles]

DRE: Uhum...

JACK: 20?

AUSTIN: Yes.

[pause, then claps]

AUSTIN: It sounded really good on my side.

ALI: Okay!

AUSTIN: So... Alright! [mumbles while doing something] Alright. Have a good night, everybody!

ALI: Bye!

JACK: [cross] Bye!

ALI: [cross] Thanks for coming!

AUSTIN: Bye-bye-bye!

DRE: Bye!