

Bluff City 48: Give Way to Open Sky Pt. 4

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Recap

Jack (as **Already**): You need to tell me what we're going to face tomorrow. I need a prediction.

Austin (as **Providence**): I have not brought the texts.

[["Give Way to Open Sky"](#) by Jack de Quidt begins playing]

Already: Well, surely you can...surely you can figure it out.

Providence: I am not a prophet. I do not have the texts. [firmly] Go rest.

Already: [interrupting] That's not... That's not good enough. I'm not, I'm not prepared to— it was fine when it was just me. But we got a kid with us now.

Providence: I didn't invite the child.

Austin (as **Quincy**): I told her that we were good for it.

Dre (as **Robyn**): Do you know what that means?

Ali (as **Fwish dealer**): They better.

Austin (as **Quincy**): Yeah, I said that we got it covered.

[Ali chuckles]

Robyn: Do you know what that means?

Austin (as **Quincy**): I said it's not a problem.

Robyn: Do you know what that means?

Austin (as **Quincy**): I said we'd get you back.

Robyn: Do you know what that means?

Austin (as **Quincy**): It's all the stuff that you always say whenever anybody asks you for anything.

Providence: Put your hands out as far as they can go. Wrap them around the turbine.

Already: Okay.

Providence: I need you to touch my hands.

Austin: Which is impossible. It's impossible. This thing is—

Already: It's too far away!

Providence: I need you to touch my hands.

Already: I don't think, I don't think that I can do that. I'm sorry.

Providence: You said that you would... that you would make it right. I need you to reach out from where you are. And to touch my hands. I'm reaching too, Already.

Austin (as **Ka-Ching Floor Manager**): [semi-hushed] What are you doing here? I'm gonna have to... I'm gonna have to call security!

Robyn: [sighs deeply] Do you have to?

Ka-Ching Floor Manager: Yeah, it's my responsibility.

Robyn: No.

Ka-Ching Floor Manager: What's your name? What's your name? What's your name?

Robyn: Uh, Robbie.

Ka-Ching Floor Manager: All right, Robbie, what's your email?

[Ali giggles]

Robyn: [disappointed] Oh. Is it re... Does everybody have an email but me?

Ka-Ching Floor Manager: Robbie, no email.

Robyn: Mm-hmm. Do you want me to give you a once-over really quick?

Already: No, no. I don't think...

Robyn: Are you sure?

Already: Yeah.

Robyn: You got all your fingers and toes?

Already: Yep. Yep.

Robyn: You wiggle ‘em all for me? You still feel ‘em?

Already: Yep.

Jack: Holds them up.

Dre: “What have you lost forever?”

Dre: [singing] “Miss Mary Mack, Mack, Mack.”

Austin: [joining in] “Mack, Mack, Mack.”

Ali: [joining] Mack, Mack, Mack...

Austin: “All dressed in black, black, black.”

Dre: Black, black...

Austin: [with rising tempo] “With silver buttons, buttons, buttons / all down her back, back, back. [someone begins clapping rhythmically, both singing and clapping starts to fade out slowly] She asked her mother, mother, mother / For 50 cents, cents, cents / To see the elephants, elephants, elephants / Jump over the fence, fence, fence.” [singing and clapping faded out completely]

[“[Give Way to Open Sky](#)” by Jack de Quidt plays to conclusion]

Introduction [00:03:48]

Austin: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization and fun interaction between good friends. I am your host, Austin Walker. And joining me today, Andrew Lee Swan?

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

Austin: Jack de Quidt?

Jack: Hello! You can find me on Cohost at [JDQ](#), on Twitter [@notquitereal](#), and you can buy any of the music featured on the show at [notquitereal.bandcamp.com](#).

Ali: Um. Hi. I'm Ali, you can find me [@ali_west](#) on twitter, and you can find the show over [@friends_table](#).

Austin: Today we're continuing our game of [Dream Askew](#) by Avery Alder. We... have to get to a dentist's office. This is what I recall.

Dre: [overlapping] Mm-hm.

Austin: [overlapping] Is that where we're picking back up?

Dre: Yep.

Austin: Finished out work in the depths of the TriCity Tunnel. Helped to re... situate our good-good friend, Quincy.

Dre: Yep, Quincy's good to go.

Austin: Quincy's good to go! Um... [overlapping] People wanna go over...

Jack: [overlapping] The... the... the...

Austin: Yeah, go ahead.

Jack: The villainous... uhm... extra-Pokemon show that had been spliced into [overlapping] Quincy's... sort of, DNA. [chuckles] Got removed...

Austin: [overlapping] Uh-huh.

Dre: [overlapping] Uh-huh. Yup.

Austin: [overlapping] Cleared, yup!

Dre: Bees?!?

Austin: The bees attacked you. You hid from...

Ali: [overlapping] Ohh...!

Austin: [overlapping] Well, the bees helped you, really.

Dre: Yeah. The bees helped me.

Austin: Yeah.

[pause]

Jack: [overlapping] Those bees were terrifying.

Ali: [overlapping] But they aren't an antagonist.

Austin: I would say they are antagonistic at the very least. Yeah.

Ali: Yeah.

Dre: Yeah. For sure.

Austin: And by you we, of course, mean Robyn who is a Stitcher.

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: Who else we got?

Ali: Um. My name is... I was gonna say... Sabrina?

Austin: Mm-um! Um-um.

Ali: That's a Star Wars name. [overlapping] I'm still opening Roll20. I don't know why...

Austin: [overlapping] Sabrina?!? Sabrina is...!

Ali: Samantha.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: [overlapping] Sabrine... uh...

Austin: [overlapping] Oh, Sabrine!

Jack: [overlapping] Ohh! Sabrine!

Austin: [overlapping] Samantha... Sabrine is...

Ali: [overlapping] abrine is a Star Wars name.

Austin: Yea-yea-yeah. Sure.

Ali: Um...

Jack: [overlapping] Sabrina is a witch's name.

Ali: [overlapping] I'm a Hawker, my... My name is Samantha. Um. I own a bar. And I've been in a bad mood today.

Austin: Damn. I feel you.

[Jack & Ali chuckle]

Austin: [overlapping] Who else we got?

Jack: [overlapping] Like, on a road trip... [chuckles] With your... With your girlfriend...

[Ali laughs]

Austin: [overlapping] Eh, please.

Jack: [overlapping] With your ex-girlfriend, I suppose. Yeah.

Austin: Yeah. Uh-huh.

Jack: You know, sometimes you go on a road trip with...

[Austin chuckles]

Jack: ... with someone who you have an on-again off-again relationship with, and you're like: "you know what? Actually, I think we can make this work."

[Austin & Jack chuckle]

Jack: "There's something... There's something happening here." [laughs] And sometimes you go on a road trip and it's just rancid.

Austin: [overlapping] Mm-hm.

Jack: [overlapping] A-anyway! I'm playing Already. My pronouns are they/them. I am the Arrival. I have recently arrived to this community — I used to work for a group of predatory... gig economy drivers. I was not predatory. I mean, I suppose the drivers are on some level complicit. But I very much had a gun held to the back of my head — occasionally, literally!

Austin: [chuckles] Hm!

Jack: I have a dog called Duke. I have put the whole Enclave in jeopardy by... maintaining the use of a company-provided phone. And we have engaged in... what I am just now realizing is kind of *The Lord of the Rings*!

Austin: [overlapping] Yeah. Yeah. Mm-hm.

Jack: [overlapping] We're sort of The Fellowship of the Ring. To take the phone to a dentist's office marked with the logo of a heron or a crane, and destroy it or... or... Or get rid of it in some way, there. I'm also the distant transfigured ghost of a little girl called Frankie Already, who many, many years ago made a series of bad — but not

world-ending — decisions in this world. Contributing in some small way, like the beating of a butterfly's wings...

[Austin chuckles softly]

Jack: ...to the situation that it is in.

Austin: Uh. Dre, do you want to say more about Robyn or...

Dre: [overlapping, vocalizes ambiguity] Eh... Eh...

Austin: [overlapping] Was that kind of just like, shove that out there and I didn't really give you a chance to... to expand?

Dre: Yeah. Robyn's the Stitcher. I'm a... I'm a fix-it person.

Austin: Hm.

Dre: I specialize in vehicle repair and woodworking. Um... And, kind of what we were talking about earlier, I have a Void Kid named Quincy who I take care of, and... that's kinda been my whole impetus for being on this road trip.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Dre: Is that I needed to go to a... to a place on the way to the dentist office to take care of Quincy.

[pause]

Austin: That is... correct! I don't know why I sounded like a game show host there.

[Dre laughs]

Austin: [overlapping] Uh... I don't...

Jack: [overlapping, exaggerated] Let me just check my note here...!

Austin: The actual answer's because I was looking at notes for a thing.

Dre: [overlapping] Sure.

Austin: [overlapping] To make sure I got names and stuff right. And that threw me the fuck off! Ehm. I'm playing The Augur, Providence. Pronouns she/her. I am a Torch... as my playbook. Kind of a mystic, a guide... and someone who, I think, has lots of anxiety around that role — and I've said this before, but the kind of gender performance expectations around that role. Um...

But I am... I think I have had a bad day for the last 20 days and I'm doing my best to make this the one where it stops. I think a key thing from last episode for me was patching up, or trying to patch up the relationship — not with my ex! — [laughs] but with Already, who I was pretty rude to, because of how they... I don't know! I won't say why I was rude to them.

But I will say I was rude to them when they came to me for help and then insisted that I could provide them no help... tried to make good on that and in part by... by bringing them into my attempt to help repair something, so that... it would... That sense of helping to repair something might intersect with a sensation that I felt from them that they felt guilty for something much bigger than what they could ever take credit... [chuckles] harm so big it couldn't have all fallen on them. Despite the fact that perhaps they were aligned with a sort of *style* of being that did bring us trouble in a bigger way. Is that fair to say, Already?

Jack: Yeah!

Austin: Yeah. Uh...

Jack: But as far as your relationship with Samantha... You just, uh...? [chuckles]

Austin: Mm-hm. [overlapping] It's...

Jack: [overlapping] Does it need repairing?

Austin: Well! You know! It's where it's at right now! [chuckles]

Ali: Mm-hm!

Austin: Sometimes you're... you're hanging out with your ex on a walk through the abandoned... Or not abandoned, but the... ever-more-quiet TriCity Tunnel.

Introduction ends [00:10:45]

Austin: I kind of have this, just, image of us, like, walking... You know that there's like the walkways and some tunnels that, like, presumably maintenance crews must walk along the side of? And there's, like, a small rail that, like, theoretically protects them, and maybe they're up a little bit, so they'd be like not walking at... on the ground level? They'd be walking, like... You know, three feet higher than that?

Jack: Hm.

Austin: My opening image pitch for us is that we're walking South on that. So that we can, like, get to this... kind of land mass that will reconnect us with the main area. Does that make sense? Do you get kind of what I'm pitching... there? As an opening shot?

Jack: Yep.

Ali: Mm-hm.

Austin: I guess... What's our walking order? As we walk down this kind of narrow, thin... walkway, you know, down the side of the Tunnel Project? Or the Tunnel?

Jack: I think I am kind of striding ahead. Having had this...

Dre: Hm...

Jack: ...this breakdown in the... the actual holes of the Tunnel Project itself. And then having had that moment with The Augur, I am fairly resolved that... what needs to happen now is that the phone needs to go. You know, I have come around [chuckles] I

don't know if I've come around willingly — I think I have sort of gone kicking and screaming — but the part of me that held on to that phone, that time has gone.

So I am almost hustling ahead. There's a bit of, like, you know, that feeling of... [chuckles] Janine said it yesterday of, like: having put your shoes on... putting your shoes on and waiting for everybody else to come with? [overlapping] You know?

Austin: [overlapping] Hm. Mm-hm.

[Ali chuckles]

Jack: Like, heading off down the gantry, like: “come on, come on, let's go!”

Austin: Mm-hm. Who's next in line? Who is second... in line? I'm debating if it's me or not. It might be me. Yeah. I think The Augur, Providence is second, um, in that way that sometimes you have someone in a group who, like... they're the one who knows where you're going but they're refusing to walk in the front which is kind of annoying [chuckles] because they're the ones who should be guiding you directions...? You know? They should... be the ones... But now, because they're not up front they've, like: “no-no-no-no! We're gonna turn here! We're actually going to turn right here, actually.”

Ali: [laughs]

Austin: “Stop-stop-stop-stop-stop!”

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: “We gotta turn right here” [overlapping] So that stuff is...

Jack: [overlapping] Escort-mission-ass character.

Austin: [chuckling] Mm-hm! Mm-hm. I'm guessing, Robyn, you're keeping Quincy close to... close to you?

Dre: Oh yeah.

Austin: As close as they'll stay?

Dre: Yeah.

Ali: I think I'm calling dibs on the rear!

Austin: Makes sense.

Dre: [overlapping] Yeah, I think it...

Jack: [overlapping] What are you doing back there?

Dre: I think it makes sense for me and especially Quincy to be in the middle.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: Yeah.

Dre: More eyes on our rowdy child. Do you want to re-ask that question, Jack?

Ali: [overlapping] What am I doing, like...?

Jack: [overlapping] What are you doing back there?

[Ali laughs]

Jack: Yeah.

Ali: [uncertainly] Walking?!?

Austin: Mm.

Ali: What am I supposed to be doing?

[Dre bursts out laughing]

Ali: [chuckling] Keeping up with the crew!

Austin: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. Um...

Jack: Hm...

Austin: There's a point at which we hear the sound of cars. Um... Two of them. They're two distinct engines. One of them has that kind of... the electric engine sound, where it's just kind of, like, a high... a more, like... high frequency... Not a hum. But, like, a buzz? And then there's one that's, like, a deep, like, guttural [imitates low engine sound] Durdurdurdurdurdurdur. You know, one of those. And... Based on the sound of it, it's like you can tell that they're both idling next to one another. Um.

And maybe we see it. Maybe from the dis... We see in the distance... You know, if you take a look at the TriCity Tunnel, it kind of, like, has this kind of junction where the land mass is, right? Like, here. And I think that they're actually parked in the middle of the tunnel where the... on-ramp/off-ramps are to get back up onto the mainland, or onto the... You know, up from where the Tunnel is running... kind of under the water and stuff. Um.

And... it's clear that they're doing, like, the cop thing. I think it's one small, low... you know, *Drive-ass*... you know... synthwave, bounty-hunter-ass, *Night Rider* car. You know what I mean? And then the other one is a big hefty heavy... big wheels... Dom-Toretto-ass American muscle car. Um...

[00:15:07]

Austin: And it's two... It's two people leaning — we just barely make out the silhouettes — doing the thing that, like, cops do when they park facing opposite directions so they can talk to one another. You know what I'm talking about?

Jack: [overlapping] Mm-hm.

Austin: [overlapping] Or, like, one of them is facing east and one of them is facing west so they could both look at out their driver's side... windows and, like, chat? While they're parked in, like, a parking lot, or whatever? Have people seen this? Am I... Is this not a thing [overlapping] no one knows about? OK.

Dre: [overlapping] Yeah.

Jack: [overlapping] Yeah. Absolutely.

Austin: Um... And... [overlapping] You know what?

Jack: [overlapping] I've seen cops do it in the middle of the road.

[Ali chuckles]

Austin: Right, oh yeah! A hundred percent! [overlapping] I saw a co— [sighs irritatedly]

Jack: [overlapping] One person driving north, the other person driving south, and they're like: "time to pull up next to each other, [overlapping] roll down our windows and have a little chat!"

Austin: [overlapping] There was a mo... Yesterday, I was walking somewhere and an all-black van cut me off while I was walking by pulling into the fucking bike lane and then running a red light. And I was, like: "what the fu—" And it was cops. It was uniformed police in an unmarked black van...

[others sigh in commiseration]

Austin: Running a red light in the bike lane. And I was at... in, like, the middle of the day.

[Jack laughs]

Austin: You know what I mean?

Dre: [overlapping] Hmm...

Austin: [overlapping] This wasn't, like, dead streets, like, they moved into the bike lane so they could pass people in front of them. Uggh! Anyway! Fuck the police! Um... These two... [chuckles] These two police-for-hire are clearly... You know, trading notes or are... It's clear that they're communicating.

And I think the camera catches it in such a way there's a sort of, like, yellow glow of the fluorescent lights in this tunnel, the kind of sickly yellow... the way that they're looking around makes it clear that they're... they're conspiring. Right? They're looking for something, or they're sharing notes about maybe where they heard we might be.

And... Without another word they both drive back up the off/on-ramps to go back up the direction we're headed — in a way here I am using the Outlying Gangs move of “bring gossip in from the Wasteland.” And the gossip here is: we are walking into danger.

Jack: [overlapping] Hm... Actually...

Austin: [overlapping] The direction we are going is... is... They're already there.

Jack: Yeah. Could I get a bit more information there by spending a token, Austin?

Austin: [intrigued] Ohh...!

Jack: To use my Strong Move: “eavesdrop undetected on a conversation”?

Austin: What's that look like?

Dre: [intrigued] Ooh!

Jack: I think I have been walking ahead...

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: ... and... which means that I... I get within earshot faster...

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: ... than the rest of the party. Um. And so I think when — you know, there's, like, a little tiny bend in the Tunnel — and as the rest of the party comes down they, you know catch me, like — they, the party...

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Catch me, like, crouched on the catwalk. Crouched on the gangway.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: You know. In cover, listening quietly, and being, like... Oh, actually! By the time everybody else arrives they get the image that you described, right? Of these two cars pulling away?

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: But I am able to kind of reveal the... more specifically what I overheard from these people.

Austin: Right. Um. Here is what you overheard: they got some information from someone who sells fish, and that information was that a group of weirdos went West on the White Horse Pike towards the mainland. And then they heard a gun... Someone heard a gunshot by the Ka-Ching Casino Repair...

[Ali chuckles]

Austin: And that means... That was further confirmation. Then! Someone saw... or before that, around the same time someone saw the wind turbines shutting off and turning back on. There's all of this confirmation that we've been heading west. Um. And as such... here's what you... what you know absolutely is: they are putting...

One of them is going to go to where the orange circle is on our map. Right? The kind of the entrance to the mainland. The place that we are going where the dentist's office is somewhere right there. You know, obviously we're zoomed out very far on this map, but that bridge only comes out one place.

And the other one is going to the kind of... entrance to... back onto the city. Right? Basically, back to the... this kind of, like, just south of CaCing Casino Repair. I'll

put another circle there so that we know where those two places are. And they're... They're planning on basically boxing us in. Um.

Jack: Right.

Austin: And the last thing that they say is...

Austin (as **First Bounty Hunter**): Well, they could go north, try to get to... Bluff. And if they do that it's not our problem.

Austin: And the other one is, like,

Austin (as **Second Bounty Hunter**): Yeah, good luck making it, though! If it was that easy I would have done it a long time ago!

Austin: So...

Jack: [overlapping] Hm...

Austin: [overlapping] They seem to be driving cars that... [chuckles] They seem to be people who... On one hand, we are communicating mobility and speed and flexibility because they have cool cars. On the other hand, even they seem, like, they are afraid of trying to breach their way into Bluff City.

Dre: Hm.

Jack: [overlapping] Interesting.

Austin: [overlapping] Uh... Mm-hm.

Jack: And I don't want to just keep digging for information — I mean, your answer here can be: "let's find out" — but would our characters know anything about... Do we just know "oh, you can't really just get down that tunnel anymore." Or are there stories about what... why that is dangerous or prohibitive?

Austin: Um. Is that a thing that... Do you think that the thing Already knows, or do you think that's a thing Already is curious about what we should talk about? I'm happy for it to be either.

Jack: [overlapping] I don't...

Austin: [overlapping] Because you're in a unique position as someone who is quote "not from here." You know? [chuckles] Um...

Jack: Right.

Austin: You... Of us, you're the one who is most tied to outside places. I think we... Maybe we could all answer this in different ways given our expertise? So maybe that's... that's maybe worth worth thinking about. But for you... Yeah, wouldn't you have gone *there* instead of to our little shitty Enclave? If you could get away that easy?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Or is there something special about us that made you decide to come to us instead? Or trying that.

Jack: Uh. Convenience.

Austin: Hm.

Jack: I think: proximity. I think: fear of Potato Potat.to.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: It's one thing to flee 30 feet to a place that... [bewildered at what they just said] 30 feet! You know what I mean.

Austin: Yeah, I do.

Jack: To flee a short distance to a place you believe will take you in...

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: And another thing to try and make this... this transformative journey.

Austin: Right.

Jack: And this fear that even... You know, this short journey that we've taken has been extremely dangerous.

Austin: Right.

Jack: And there's the sensation that if I tried to make it to Bluff...

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: They'd probably just get me.

Austin: I mean, this is the... I think that it's probably worth saying... Maybe in your time as a Potato Potat.to driver this is one of those constant topics that would come up, where you'd have the person who says: "You know what, man? I'm saving up money. I'm gonna move to Bluff. I'm gonna move to Bluff City. That's... That's where all the good stuff is! I watch that stuff on TV! I can't wait to get out there."

That sort of stuff happens. And then that person goes and you never hear from them again. And the answer has never been clear. Is that because they made it and said "Screw you, losers! [chuckles] I'm in a better place now!"

[Jack chuckles]

Austin: ... or because they didn't make it. Or they wound up somewhere else. Right? Maybe you even know. You heard a story. You know? "Did you hear what... did you hear what happened to... to Shelley? Shelley tried to go to Bluff, but got... Somehow got... you know, turned around or caught the wrong... She caught the wrong bus! She wound up in Blough City! You know?"

"Oh, Blough City, eh? What a dump that place is!"

“Yeah, you actually didn’t have the bus fare to get back, so I hear she’s, you know, waiting tables at some... at some dive!” You know? That style of story gets told a lot. Right?

Jack: [overlapping] Right.

Austin: [overlapping] There are not very many “I made it to the other side, I made it to paradise.” Every now and then maybe a postcard shows up from someone but... who knows. You can buy postcards on the internet. You know? [chuckles]

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: So... I think that's the sort of... If I have an answer for *you* specifically for that, I think that's that's what it is. [pauses] For me, I think... The Augur has lost people to it.

Jack: Hm...!

Austin: You know? An aspect of The Augur I haven't played much, I have all these moves about... of my followers? [chuckles] Which is fun.

Jack: Yeah!

Austin: And doubly fun to think about in the... You know, the Black Maiden from *Demon Souls* way? Where it's, like: “Oh yeah. I have... I have PCs. I have... I have adventurers...”

[Ali laughs]

Austin: ... who go out for me and do these... you know, and go collect... you know, the Demon Souls or whatever. Right? Who go off and, like, bring back information and bring back loot. And I imagine much of that gets passed on to, like, Robyn, right? Like, to extend this metaphor a little bit: Robyn, people will be coming to you with some wild shit, and you're, like: [overlapping] Yeah, I can turn that into some cool gear for you! You know!

Dre: [overlapping] Oh, yeah! Mm-hm!

[Jack laughs]

Austin: So maybe you and I actually both know this. And I think actually, maybe — you know, these are also the people who come and hang out in Snoopy's and tell stories — is sometimes someone says: "I'm gonna be the one who does it."

[Jack chuckles]

Austin: "I'm gonna go through the tunnel." And then they don't come back. You know? The people who are smart don't do that. They go into the ruins. They go out of the marshes. Maybe they get a boat — it's safe to go get a boat! It's safer to try to break into the Society Intact and do a heist than it is to go to Bluffing... to go to Bluff proper. Um. That is... that has been... an ongoing... It's a classic... It's, like, a rookie mistake, you know? So. I think that's my answer to that, if that's... if that's acceptable, Jack.

Jack: Yeah. Totally. Absolutely.

Austin: But then we all roll up on you and... how... Do you let us know about this snare we're potentially walking towards?

Jack: Yeah... Yeah! I spell it out. And... I think I... float the idea of trying to make it to Bluff? Just being, like... [chuckles softly] It's so funny that you just said it's a rookie error, and now here's Already trying to make it...!

[Austin chuckles]

Jack: If ever that was the case, right? Um... But I don't think my heart's in it.

Austin: [overlapping] Hmmm!

Jack: [overlapping] You know, I think it's one of these things where I'm asking it defensively. As though I know what people are gonna say. But I suppose I would be curious to hear all of y'all's... You know, I think Already says:

Already: Yeah. You know... I mean, we're... we're still in the Tunnel! We could just... We could just keep going, right? I heard them say that it wouldn't be their problem anymore if we made it to Bluff and I have to believe that. You know, I always heard the Potato Potat.to hadn't got any contracts out there.

Providence: [slow, emphasized words] You're asking us to leave... our home.

Already: Whell... Okay. Robyn? Samantha?

Robyn: So you're asking us to leave our home.

Samantha: Yeah.

Jack: Okay. Well... [overlapping] No I'm not asking to leave...

Austin (as **Quincy**): [overlapping, shouting from a distance] I'll go!

[Jack chuckles]

Robyn: No, Quincy, you can't go.

Already: [overlapping] No! No, Quincy, no... Quincy...

Austin (as **Quincy**): [overlapping] I wanna know...! Why?

Already: It's fine. It's fine. I just thought I'd float it as an option. "How would you feel...?" and I'll say... I'll put it this way! How do you feel about getting me to the door, and then I can go. Problem solved! I've gone; the phone's gone. This is, like, a b-plan as far as I'm concerned but I would feel bad if I didn't say it. But it sounds, like, I'm not getting good feedback or rather I'm not getting good... You know what I mean.

Providence: [overlapping] You're not...

Samantha: [overlapping] Do you want to go?

Already: Well, it's Bluff City, right? And, you know... We're close enough, and I feel, like I've... I feel, like, I've brought enough trouble to your door, anyway. So... [sighs] I'm just floating it as an option.

Samantha: But the... but that's what this whole, like... We're here to help you.

Already: Are you? Or are you here to get rid of the phone?

Samantha: That... Is that not helping you? I'm sorry?

Already: Well, yeah. But I mean it's also kind of helping... Kind of helping you!

Robyn: That's, like, saying that you stabbed me and then by putting a bandage on it I'm helping myself instead of you.

Already: OK. I feel like we're all kind of getting into the weeds here... I...

[Dre laughs]

Already: We don't have to go to Bluff City!

Providence: It doesn't matter: your metaphor is broken. It's not a door. If it was easy as walking someone to the door and opening it for them and letting them go we would do it all the time. It's a *hallway*. And at some point you realize you look back and you can't see the way you came in anymore.

Already: God, you'll get weird about Bluff City!

Robyn: Uh...

[Ali chuckles]

Robyn: Less existential question... Is your old boss the kind of person who if we just say: "Well! Yeah, they left!" This old tater-tot gonna just leave us alone?

Austin: [chuckling] I crack a... I do crack a smile in character!

[Ali laughs]

[pause]

Jack: Um. [half-chuckling] I do the opposite — this makes me defensive!

Austin: [overlapping] Mm-hm!

Jack: [overlapping] Because it's, like, you're making light of the suit... [chuckles]

[Austin laughs]

Jack: ... when you say that!

Already: Well... Uh, no. I mean... I mean, yeah! This is why I'm saying it's a b-plan. The a-plan is... The a-plan as we get rid of the phone at the bird dentist's, like we planned. And then we just hope they don't come knocking! I don't know!

Providence: Sam! She...

Austin: Sorry, do you like Samantha or do you like Sam? Like, what's the... what's your character... prefer?

Ali: Oh, I think either-or [overlapping] is fine!

Austin: [overlapping] OK.

Ali: Yeah. That's... That's not... Yeah. [overlapping] Um...

Austin: [overlapping] When... I, like, interrupt this to ask you a question. And I say:

Providence: When did you know that running Snoopy's was the right thing for you?

Samantha: Oh, I mean that's... That's before... any of *this*, I guess! It just, you know... I was good at it! And people were happy. And...

Austin: And I nod. And I say:

Providence: Robyn, what made you open a workshop?

Robyn: Um... A lot of stuff is broke. And/or continues to break.

Providence: And I look at you, Already and... Jack, I want to know: “how could I deepen your character’s sense of belonging and purpose to this place?”

[Ali giggles]

Jack: [overlapping] Ooooh...!

Austin: [overlapping] One of my normal move questions.

Jack: This is a great question! I don't know that Already knows... [overlapping] Not necessarily in, like, a spiritual sense. I think a very practical...

Austin: [overlapping] I'm not asking Already. I'm asking Jack. I'm asking *you* how I could deepen your characters... Yes.

Jack: [overlapping] Ohhh! “How can I deepen *your character’s* sense...”

Austin: Correct. Already doesn't need to know the answer.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: You do.

Jack: No! And, I mean, this is the same way that... This is the same way to get into it, right?

Austin: Mm-hm, Mm-hm.

Jack: Which is that... Already doesn't know what happens to them once they get rid of the phone. They don't know what their role in the community is outside of being that driver who showed up...

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: ... first, with a bunch of supplies from the ransacked Potato Potat.to truck, and then with a phone that is bringing the company down.

Austin: Hm.

[00:30:00]

Jack: Bringing the company down *onto* the Enclave. So...

Austin: [laughs] Right! Not bringing them down, like, defeating them!

[Jack laughs]

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: [chuckling] I feel you! Tater-tot is getting real sad about it.

[Austin & Jack chuckles]

Jack: Logan Roy out there, just grumbling. Sad face at his birthday party. Um. So, I think what would deepen Already's sense of belonging and purpose in this place would be some sort of assurance or some sort of place for them.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Guarantee that there would be a place for them whether that is social or generative [half-chuckles] or productive or whatever. Post getting rid of the phone and making it back to the Enclave.

[pause]

Austin: [sighs] Um... I think Providence says...

Providence: And Already, no one can find you. Your bar, or your workshop. But I promise you there are things that need doing. You said... You said that you were... You wondered if we were helping you or just trying to protect us: you're us.

And whether that means that you stay on the grocery business, by helping in the garden, or you use those navigational skills of yours to find your way to the old ruins of the city and bring us back things that we can use — there's no doubt in my mind that you will find use for yourself. And you will find a way to... You'll find a way to... replace that phone with something a little more... concrete. [pointing the way out] It's the left up here.

Jack: Yeah! Alright. Alright, I'm sorry... I didn't mean to... I got weird there about...

Austin: I just walk past you [laughs] and take the left!

[Ali laughs]

Samantha: It's okay.

Already: [overlapping] Yeah.

Samantha: [overlapping] Come on. It's been a long morning.

Already: Yeah. Absolutely.

Austin: Um, do I need to... Because I was... Let me see something. Um. I am going to spend a token... here to have done what I did and make it stick a little bit? Which is “soothe someone's pain or duress”.

Jack: Ummm! Yeah!

Austin: Which, I think, makes it stickier in some way? You know?

Jack: Yeah! Absolutely! I'm happy to play it that way!

End of the tunnel scene [00:32:17]

Austin: What do we see when we pop our heads out of this exit and find ourselves on this, like, last little piece of land before we hit the final bridge? I'm imagining we popped up on, like, this place. You know what I'm saying? Like, this. I'm pinging. I don't know if people can see. But... There's sort of, like, one last little island that we could pop up on before we hit the bridge that takes us to the mainland.

Ali: Hmm.

Austin: What time of day is it when we finally pop our heads back up here?
[half-chuckling] Noting that we've walked through the Tunnel and it could be [chuckles] any time! You know! The Tunnel fucks with you in some ways.

Ali: I guess we... We got up super early.

Austin: We did.

Ali: So, maybe it's, like... maybe it's, like, sunsetty time?

Austin: Oooh! I like that! That's good. To me, that's good.

Ali: Yeah. So it looks cool and we're, like, just as... or disoriented enough to be like: "we weren't in there for that long, were we?"

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Um. Also it's a bummer to come out of a tunnel to the sun setting. Because then you're, like: "oh, man!" [laughs]

Austin: "I missed the whole day!" Yeah.

Dre: [overlapping] Mm-hm.

Ali: [overlapping] I could have been... Yeah! I could have been in the sun all day!

Austin: It was a nice day out! [chuckles] We didn't get to enjoy it! [laughs] We had to be having panic attacks in various tunnels and hallways!

Ali: Yeah... Well...

Dre: You know...

Austin: That's how it goes!

Jack: "Panic Attacks in Various Tunnels and Hallways" is the first Sangfielle arc.

Austin: [laughs] Hah!

[Ali chuckles]

Austin: It's true! Um...

Jack: I think that this is, like, a large... I don't know if you have an image of this bridge, Austin. But in my mind it is...

[Austin chuckles very softly]

Jack: ... like, a large ironwork bridge. Of course you have [chuckles, overlapping] an image of this bridge in your mind! As you like...!

Austin: [overlapping, meekly] I mean, this is the problem...! [with more zest] The damn problem!

Jack: [chuckling] What does this bridge look like, Austin?

Austin: No! You tell me! I...

[Ali laughs]

Austin: You know, I don't know about *the future*! Um. I mean, it is very funny to think about... It is... I mean, like... Truly, it is very funny to think about how fucked up the world of this setting is because... I mean, the rotation here is wrong. Right? Um, you

have to rotate this a little bit, right? You have to... But we are on... [chuckles] Do you see where it says Venice Park? Kind of in the middle of this?

Jack: It's loading.

Austin: Yeah. Well, you'll get there.

Jack: Oh, yeah. Yea-yea-yeah.

Austin: We're, like, in *those*. Do you see, like, all those little land masses and shit? Those weird-ass...

Jack: Yeah.

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: We're, like, passing...

Ali: [overlapping] Ohhh...!

Austin: [overlapping] This is what we're passing through right now. And in effect where we're headed towards is, like... Let me, let me zoom in a little bit. We're heading... I'm gonna... This is very fun. I've never done this before in a *Bluff City*. Uh... Check this shit out!

Jack: Are we going to go to Google Street View?

Austin: [half-chuckling] I'm gonna screen share!

[Ali gasps]

Jack: Whoa!

Dre: Whooaa!

Austin: Alright. Do you see this map? [chuckles]

Jack: Austin has turned on [overlapping] his webcam. He's in Atlantic City.

Austin: [overlapping] Is it working? Do you have to click something?

Ali: Yea-yea-yeah. But there's, like, a echo.

Austin: There's an echo? What?

Dre: There was for a weird second but I feel like it's gone now.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Okay.

Ali: I heard Jack's voice [overlapping] like it was coming through your...

Jack: [overlapping] Oh... Yeah...

Austin: [overlapping] Me too! It, like, fucked me up a little bit, actually!

[Ali laughs]

Jack: That's very weird! [overlapping] I'm sorry. I...

Dre: [overlapping] Oh no, Jack went back in the hallway!

Austin: Well you said it in the exact cadence of the last intro, of the "from the pier I watched the bay, the rain is falling, the water ripples".

[Jack laughs]

Austin: You said "he's in Atlantic City" in *exactly* [chuckles] the way! And I was, like, [vocalizes disturbance]. I felt haunted for a moment! Anyway! Basically, the place we're going... I'll pop us through The Vibes here really quick. Oh boy!

Dre: Oohh!

Austin: Atlantic City, baby! Here we go!

Jack: Oh, this is...

Ali: [overlapping] Here we go!

Jack: [overlapping] This is very...

Austin: [overlapping] There they are! What did I say!?!

Jack: [overlapping] ... close to what I'm imagining.

Austin: [overlapping] What did I say!?! There's the wind turbines.

Jack: [overlapping] Wind turbines, there they are.

Austin: Alright. So let's jump further...

Jack: On, like, a little access road or something.

Dre: [overlapping] Oh god, all the traffic!

Austin: [overlapping] Let's... Yeah. I mean this is... I know. All the traffic. One second. We go back to... How do I go back to the big view? Here, expand. Okay, here we go.

Jack: Oh, pretty! Look at that! [overlapping] Autumn leaves!

Austin: [overlapping] I mean, that area's pretty, yeah. So these are the types of bridges we're... bridges we're talking about. Right? So, like... Almost, like you said, almost... you know... access road-y. Like you said. But eventually, and again, through the marshes lots of big billboards... This is new. This wasn't here the last time I was here. This, like, storage facility! That's fun. [overlapping] OK.

Ali: [overlapping] Hm...

Austin: [overlapping] It's a slarge... large storage unit.

Austin: [overlapping] Yes. Mm-hm.

Dre: [overlapping] Oohhh!

Jack: [overlapping] It's a big Garden State signed Clayton's self storage.

Austin: And eventually, all these marshes give way — I'll jump ahead a bunch — to... And again, like, this *goes* and *goes* and goes, as you can see. But eventually, it does become... like, a little suburban neighborhood up here. Which is basically where we're headed. Right?

Jack: [overlapping] Ohh!

Austin: [overlapping] You can see that at this point this road here is going to go to Atlantic City, very far away. You can just see.

Jack: [overlapping] And it's just... two lanes.

Austin: [overlapping] Atlantic City on the horizon. Right? Tiny little two two-lane thing, right? But!

[Dre chuckles]

Austin: The other way, just past all the marshlands...

[Jack chuckles]

Austin: There's that. One second. Let me make sure I'm not missing something, too. Uh... Making sure that... Yeah. Okay. So! Generally, actually the place... the place that we're kind of coming out is, like, is in this vicinity, or... I'm kind of more imagining it up... [overlapping] in this area...

Dre: [overlapping] Oh, by the Home Depot!

Austin: Yeah. The Home Depot is kind of the spot, frankly. Um... [chuckles]

[Jack chuckles]

Austin: This type of vibe was what it would have been [overlapping] you know, 20 years ago.

Jack: [overlapping] Yeah...

Austin: Or a hundred year... You know. [overlapping] Describe what I'm showing!

Jack: [overlapping] So Austin is showing, like, and east-coast suburban... or, like, waterside...

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: ... community. Uh... The houses look pretty fancy here, Austin!

Austin: This area is pretty fucking fancy! Right? Um... Where it's not is... [overlapping] Mm-hm.

Jack: [overlapping] Big shrubs and trees in their gardens...

Austin: Mm-hm. And even some of these places are, like, this is... It's nice, but it's not fancy. Right?

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: These are...

Jack: Oh, yeah!

Austin: You know...

Jack: Like, several detached houses...

Austin: Exactly. Yes. Exactly. This is...

Jack: [overlapping] A FedEx truck... It's like...

Austin: [overlapping] This is... One of the neighborhoods I grew up in.

Jack: It's, like... bright east-coast blue sky...

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: ... now it's overcast because how Google Maps Works.

Austin: Yes, exactly. Um...

[Dre laughs]

Austin: And there are some places that are, like... [overlapping] I mean, like, this is it! Boom! This is it!

Jack: [overlapping] Ooh, look! A ruined building. Yeah.

Austin: Here we are!

Jack: [overlapping] Look at this! Ah, this is cool!

Dre: [overlapping] Oohh!

Jack: [overlapping] I drove past this all the fucking time as a kid!

Dre: [overlapping] This is a cool building!

Austin: Let me tell you something!

Ali: Wow...!

Austin: It's been like this since I was 12!

[Ali laughs]

Dre: [overlapping] Ahw, man!

Jack: [overlapping] This place is... looks like a gas station, maybe? What does that say? It says Studebaker!

Austin: [overlapping] It does!

Dre: [overlapping] It says Studebaker.

Jack: [overlapping] It looks like a car sales place. Um... Oh, Austin has got caps lock on!

Austin: [overlapping] I do.

Jack: [overlapping] So he's typing [mock-shouts] STUDEBAKER PLEASANTVILLE!
[chuckles]

Austin: There's a story for this place. Yeah.

Jack: [overlapping] Oh, wow!

Ali: [overlapping] It is... It has, like, a Mission-esque vibe.

Austin: Uh-huh!

Dre: Yeah!

Jack: It does, doesn't it!?!

Austin: Look at this.

Jack: So this is a... Yeah. It's a Mission-esque building with two *huge* arched windows, one big rectangular window, and then one, two, three, four, five, six little *tiny* arched windows. This is a beautiful building.

Austin: [overlapping] Stained and beveled glass!

Ali: [overlapping] Someone went off in the Sims on this one!

[Austin laughs]

Dre: Mm-hm.

Jack: [laughs] They truly did!

Austin: Is there not a... Yeah. I don't. It's very weird that this is just here. Um. Anyway! This is Pleasantville. I grew up in Pleasantville briefly; I grew up in Northfield briefly; I grew up all... all around this area. But these are the types of... This is The Vibe. Right? Like, a hund... Like, to the degree that I'm, like: let's say this is the block we're headed towards! You know?

Jack: Yeah. Totally. [overlapping] That makes sense to me!

Austin: [overlapping] Um... It's, like, old trucks parked that have been parked there for way too long... You know, semi-commercial... There's an old fire... quote unquote "West Atlantic City" fire department. All sorts of stuff like that. This is... This, to me, is The Vibe... effectively. Right? Um. So, yeah. So this is... I'll stop sharing now.

But... that's in the distance. Right? So for us right now, actually — again, I would say that we're more in a place like this. Or lemme get that bridge back. That was good. One of these bridges. Right? It's not a long bridge but just it keeps hopping between... Because it's just the Back Bay. Right? Like, this is... This is the part of the ocean! [chuckles] You know what I mean? And so all through this area you're just constantly going over these little bridges.

And so I think we're headed towards, basically, the last big one of those. Or inbetween. You know, we're on... We're effectively on *this* exact land mass, basically. You know? Crossing towards... where I was showing y'all before. Love to do a tabletop game set... I actually just got flooded by a memory! Which is that I used to run a *Vampire: The Masquerade* game set in the Atlantic City area when I was in high school. I *forgot* about this until this moment!

Jack: Wow! Proto-*Bluff-City*!

Austin: Truly Proto-*Bluff-City*!

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: Running the vampire game in your neck of the woods is, like, the thing you do with *Vampire*. You know? With any of the White Wolf games. You go, like: “ooh...! What’s the local vampire scene? What are the werewolves up to in the woods near here?” You know? That’s, like, that’s the whole thing. Anyway!

End of scene setting [00:40:39]

Austin: So, that’s... That’s the sort of way it feels. And it’s sunset.

Jack: [overlapping] Are the...?

Austin: [overlapping] I wish Google Maps had a thing where just, like: “make it sunset! Give me a sunset version of this picture!”

Jack: At the end of the bridge is... Distantly. The figure of a woman... wearing a coat. And she gets out of her cool *Night Rider*-style car... Which is still idling with that weird sort of, like, high electronic sound. And she opens the trunk [chuckles] and you can tell that what she’s doing is putting out a line of orange cones...

Austin: Hm.

Jack: ... at the end of the bridge. And then once she’s put this line of orange cones out, she sits on the roof... [bewildered at what they just said] Is it on the roof? Yeah! She sits on the roof! I was gonna say she sits on the hood. This is a low car!

Austin: [overlapping] Yeah.

Jack: [overlapping] This woman has hopped up and she’s sitting on the roof of her car, cradling some sort of weapon... in her hands. Visible at the end of the bridge. This is a full-scale police blockade. Well, in that it’s one lady. But she’s blocking it very efficiently.

Austin: Mm-hm.

[pause]

Austin: [sighs] Um.

[pause]

Austin: I don't... Actually, you know what? I don't say anything. I'm not used to taking action in moments like this. Who does take the lead here?

[pause]

Austin: Jack, you have truly put a gun in someone's hand, huh?

[Ali laughs]

Jack: I have! And I don't want to take the lead! Because I've been very Already-focused for the last couple of scenes.

Austin: Yeah...

Jack: So what I've done is I've given you [laughs] a horrible cop and then said "good luck"!

Ali: I have a Weak Move "walk into a situation unarmed and underprepared".
[overlapping] Unprepared. Underprepared.

Austin: [overlapping] Oh boy!

Jack: [overlapping] Shit!

Austin: Do you do this?

Jack: You want a token? And what's your pitch for how you enter that situation?

[Ali and then Jack chuckle]

Ali: How are we... How are we, like, approaching the scene, again?

Austin: [overlapping] Great question!

Ali: [overlapping] We're on... We're on the...

Austin: We're just on the road now. We're just on the road, headed west towards [overlapping] a thing that we know is scary. Right?

Jack: [overlapping] Yeah, let's say... We are walking in, like, a rain ditch?

Austin: [overlapping] Hm. Mm-hm.

Jack: [overlapping] Or, like, a drainage ditch? To the side of the road, so we're a little less exposed. And when we come up to the edge of the bridge and we sort of have to — the ditch ends, and we have to enter the bridge proper — we poke our heads up to see the cop. We keep saying cop. I think she's a mercenary who has... gives off Cop Vibes.

Austin: [overlapping] Mm-hm.

Jack: [overlapping] Like, many mercenaries. Putting up the cones...

Austin: [overlapping] I think she has those gla... She has a... She has a car, but she's wearing a motorcycle cop outfit, right? She's wearing the leathers of a motorcycle cop. She's wearing the glasses with the mirrored shades. And she has, like, the big — you know — helmet. You know, the big white helmet!

Jack: That's fucking spooky!

Austin: [overlapping] Yeah. Mm-hm.

Jack: [overlapping] Yeah. I really like that. But she's fully in a car.

Austin: Yeah. Well, on a car in this moment, right? On the roof? Sitting on the roof?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: With a gun in her hand? Or a weapon in her hand? I guess we don't know it's a gun, you didn't say a gun, technically.

Ali: Um. Yeah. I guess if there's this sort of, like... this, like, junction spot before where we're, like: "oh, let's be on the bridge." Maybe, like, the other characters, like, pause for a second — checking gear, or like, distracted by Quincy for a second, or whatever — and I'm just, like: "oh I'll scope out! I could scope things out!" [laughs]

[someone chuckles softly]

Ali: To go up onto the bridge to be, like: "oh, well, you know"

Austin: [sighing] Oh.

Ali: "Hey. Let me... Let me keep an eye out over here!" And it's just the thing of, like... accidentally making eye contact with this person?

[others vocalize discomfort]

Ali: And what do you do then? [half-chuckling] You know, like... [laughs] You've been acknowledged. The, like... *Metal Gear Solid*-like...

[Austin laughs]

Ali: ... exclamation point is above this person's head. And...

Austin: [laugh-sighs in commiseration] Ohhh...!

Ali: I am now in this situation. Um...

Jack: Wow! OK.

Austin: What is... Jack, you've introduced this person. I feel like you should play her.

Jack: [overlapping] Yeah...

Austin: [overlapping] What's her response just seeing Sam out there?

Jack: I think she points at you and she says:

Bounty Hunter: Hey! What are you doing?!

Samantha: Oh, hi!

Bounty Hunter: [overlapping] Come down here!

Ali: [overlapping] I'm tryi... [chuckles briefly] I'm trying to throw my voice it up, that, like, everybody else knows something is going on. But... If I'm asked to approach... I don't have a gun.

[Austin vocalizes commiseration]

Ali: I'm a visibly very non-threatening person. I'm wearing heels with a bunch of mud on them.

[00:45:01]

[Austin chuckles]

Ali: And I think I still have one of those... What did I say? I had one of those, like, handkerchiefs?

Austin: [half-chuckling] Mm-hm.

Ali: Tied around my... my chin. Like, I'm in an episode of *I Love Lucy*. [chuckles]

Austin: Right. Yes! Perfect!

[Dre laughs]

Austin: Perfect image!

[Ali laughs]

Bounty Hunter: Keep those hands where I can see them! Come down here!

Jack: Still on the roof of the car.

Samantha: Sure. Yeah. I don't... I don't want any trouble!

[pause]

Bounty Hunter: What are you doing in these parts?

Samantha: Oh, you know just a... Going for a walk.

Bounty Hunter: Cross the bridge at sunset?

Samantha: Um, well, yeah. I figured if I could get to the other side of the bridge before the sun sets... it's just kind of a straight shot in the dark [overlapping] from the other si...

Bounty Hunter: [overlapping] To where?

Samantha: Well, you know. Out.

Bounty Hunter: You got family out there?

Samantha: I hope so!

Bounty Hunter: What are you talking about?

[Austin and then Ali chuckle]

Samantha: Well, I'm just, you know, sometimes you... just gotta... You know, one of those people's gotta get out of where I... What are you doing out here?

Bounty Hunter: We got word that there's a party of... four adults and a child crossing this way. You wouldn't have to know anything about that would you?

Samantha: Who would bring a *child* out here?!?

[others chuckle]

Jack: Uh. And she opens her... She flips up her... helmet. Like, the visor on her motorcycle helmet as if to be able to look at you, like, dead in the eyes — and there's just nothing in there. There's just... Completely dark, empty helmet on the inside. And she says:

Bounty Hunter: Who would bring a child out?

Austin: I am next to you, Sam.

Ali: [overlapping, surprised] Ohh!

Austin: [overlapping] I broke out in a sharp fast walk the second you called out. And I look at the empty face with a... a degree of fierceness you have not seen from me in a little while now. And I say:

Providence: Demon, this place is not yours. Return to where you come from.
And let us pass.

Austin: And I am “threatening someone or something far too powerful”, a Weak Move.

[Jack laughs]

Austin: Making me make the threat more more serious:

Providence: Before I call my followers down on you.

Jack: Two bright points of light appear in... underneath the helmet... where the eyes would be. And the demon cocks her head to one side and says:

Bounty Hunter: You'll have to try harder than that, witch.

[Ali chuckles]

Austin: I open my umbrella. And I say:

Providence: Go with the others.

Austin: And I begin to spin my umbrella in a sort of hypnotic spin. Now, remember it's only a prop umbrella so I don't know how long this will last. I am “taking action, leaving myself vulnerable”. And... You see now on the umbrella at some point during this... I'm now relying on something that is so not a move! But you'll note my Wardrobe Styles include “drawn sigils”!

Ali: [overlapping] Ooohh!

Austin: [overlapping] I have put sigils... a sort of um a sigil of... not hypnosis or mesmerism but of, like... God, there's another... What's the other word I'm looking for here? Um... Like, fascination or something? Like, a... an enchant... like a draw. You know what I mean? Like, a sort of... I'm *beguiling* you with these sigils — not you, but the demon — to just keep you looking at me and at the umbrella, which I'm holding up in front of me so that you can't look me in the eye.

And so I'm putting myself... I'm “taking action, leaving myself vulnerable”. I have to stay behind to hold the demon back... with this sigil while you advance with the others.

Jack: [overlapping] OK.

Austin: [overlapping] Who I don't know if they've moved up at this point, but...

Ali: Yeah. Can I... So I have... some interesting moves here. Which is that I can either... And as, like, an Assist — this game doesn't have Assist...

Austin: [overlapping] Mm-hm.

Ali: [overlapping] ... but we can think about it as an Assist — I can either do the Strong Move of, like, for instance “get out of harm's way”.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: Or... I guess “draw a weapon before anyone can react.” But I do have a Weak Move — and I just want to put this on the table — “accidentally open your brain to the world's Psychic Maelstrom”.

Austin: Oh my God!

Dre: Ooh!

[Jack chuckles briefly]

Dre: That's fun!

Austin: Like...

Ali: And I don't know if this is like a Sailor Moon, like, [overlapping] lend you my...

Austin: [overlapping] Right. Mm-hm!

[Ali laughs]

Austin: Instead of going, you go: “I'm gonna help you in this moment.”

Ali: [overlapping] Right.

Austin: [overlapping] By sort of joining in on this attempt to ho... Maybe do more than hold it at bay! But...

Ali: Mm-hm.

Austin: You tell me! That sounds fun! I think those are two big different character beats!

[Ali laughs]

Austin: You know?!?

Ali: That's fair. That's fair. [overlapping] That's fair.

Austin: [overlapping] I think you pick the one that feels right, though! I don't know!

Ali: Yeah. Um... I would be... I would be remiss to let this game not have, like, a...

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: ... a magical energy exchange...

Austin: Yeah. I agree with this.

Ali: ... between exes? [chuckles]

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Yeah. Sure. [overlapping] Yeah. Uh-huh.

Austin: [overlapping] One of... Some of the most most magical of all energy there is, in...

[Ali laughs]

Austin: I don't mean magical as a complimentary... I don't mean as a pejorative! It's just...

[Ali laughs]

Austin: ... there is a lot of something there! Um... Who's picking... I guess, Dre, can you pick up the Psychic Maelstrom?

Dre: Yeah. Sure! Uh-huh!

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: [overlapping] What...? Yeah, please!

Jack: [overlapping] Let me describe what the demon is do... The demon's response to your... thing.

Austin: [overlapping] Mm-hm.

Jack: [overlapping] This demon has one of the names from the 70 demons from The Book of Solomon. But I do not know what it is and I would rather...

Austin: Yeah, fair.

Jack: ... be sure that I got a cool name of a hunter demon, or, like, with specific and deliberate in my choice...

Austin: Mm-hm...

Jack: ... than just picking one. Especially since the last demon we met was the legendary librarian, Amy.

Austin: [chuckling] Mm-hm!

[pause]

Ali: [chuckles] Yeah?

Austin: [overlapping] Yea-yea-yeah...!

Jack: [overlapping] And this second... this is a... is two points of light inside a helmet. And, actually, what is happening is that the points of light are growing. And they grow outside of the helmet — but not out at the front, like, fire: it's as though the two circular discs of the points of light expand expand out out of the helmet occluding it, like, they're clipping through it, these two massive dishes of, like, red-white fire. Um.

And there's heat pouring off them, as the demon's eyes, you know, grow bigger than her head, and then bigger than her torso: two massive circles of fire, like Catherine wheels. And they begin to mirroring the circling of your umbrella, turn and move towards you, and you can see hot sparks begin to land on the paper of this prop umbrella.

[pause]

Austin: Nightmares. So what's the magic... look, like, and then what's... the Psychic Maelstrom doing in response to it? What's the... Sorry. What is, Sam, your...

“accidentally open your brain to the world's Psychic Maelstrom” by trying to, like, boost my power look like; [half-chuckling] and then, Dre, what does the Psychic Maelstrom do... [overlapping] to that accidental...

Dre: [overlapping] Mm-hm.

Austin: And also we still only circled one Psychic Maelstrom desire.

Dre: [overlapping] Oh, yeah.

Austin: [overlapping] So it might be time for you to circle another one as you make a decision.

Ali: Um. I do think it's legitimately... accidental. I think that, like in... being, like, a human...

[Austin chuckles softly]

Ali: ... and, like, not... the stat base for... in this interaction...

Austin: Yes.

Ali: I think, like, being in the crosshairs of this and, like, thinking... “oh, what can I do to help Sam in this moment” is enough to, like, make me vulnerable [overlapping] to, like...

Austin: [overlapping] Riiight...!

Ali: ... whatever, you know, is in the air.

Austin: Right, right.

Ali: [chuckles] So to speak! Um... And...

Austin: There's a way in which this is, like, an extension of that previous conversation of, like: “are you go...” Like: “are we, and us as a collective, as an Enclave, or are we a

group of individuals who are looking out for ourselves?” And, like, Samantha was given the opportunity to be the latter.

Ali: [overlapping] Right.

Austin: [overlapping] And *instinctively* felt a camaraderie with the person who was trying to protect her. And so...

Ali: [overlapping] Right. Yeah. Exactly.

Austin: [overlapping] Also, therefore, opened herself up to being caught in the crossfire.

Ali: Um. And I don't know, like, visually if it's the, like, classic... You know...

Austin: [overlapping] Hm. Mm-hm.

Ali: [overlapping] ... trance sort of thing. Maybe my eyes start glowing like the demon's do. And it's, like: “Oh no! She gonna get...”

Austin: Mmmm...

Ali: “She being taken by the demon...!” Or, like: “What's happening here?!?” Um... But I do think, like, the influence of... The Augur is sort of grounding in that way and that's why, like... I don't feel like my soul is at threat. [overlapping] Or whatever. Right?

Austin: [overlapping] Mm-hm.

Ali: There's, like, a... There's, like, a magnetism. Because I'm, like, doing this action with you.

Austin: Right.

Ali: You know. *Bluff City!* [chuckles]

Austin: *Bluff City!*

Dre: [overlapping] Mm-hm.

Ali: [overlapping] My my soul is under... My *soul* is under threat but in this moment...

Austin: Ah, you know...!

[Ali laughs]

Austin: *Bluff City* is a lot of things! I think in this moment of, like, the overlap between the *Bluff City* that is a cyberpunk racing game, and the *Bluff City* that is a...

Ali: Mm-hm.

Austin: ... magical girl anime, and the *Bluff City* that is a superhero show, and the Bluff City that is a sort of surreal or magical realist drama, and... Like, all of that is here. You know? The Simon Stålenhag... you know... post-apocalyptic story, the... All that shit! Is all... It's all mixing together. [chuckles] Trust the process! What's the Psychic Maelstrom do in response to this moment of great vulnerability?

Dre: [sighs] Huaahhh...!

Austin: Talk through the process here, Dre. Where's your head at?

Dre: Yeah. Like, I feel like... Since you are opening here... Since Sam is opening herself up... like, in connection with Providence... I feel like then... I'm trying to think of what the... So if the visual of the demon is, like, the pillar — the light in their eyes turning into a pillar — I'm trying to think of, like, what the *opposing*...

Austin: Hm.

Dre: ... force representation would be from Sam and Providence.

Austin: It might not be oppo... It might be... That we don't have to think about them as being... We don't have to get to, like, the *Dragon Ball Z* beam battle. Do you know what I mean?

Dre: Sure. Yeah.

Austin: We might... We might be fine thinking about it as these two things... The side of it on our side could truly be an umbrella spinning with some sigils and a pair of hands on the... on the thing. Or... a glow comi... You know what I mean? It doesn't have to necessarily be... a hard cou... I mean in some ways it feels, like, the demon is countering *us*. [chuckles] You know?

Dre: Yeah. Yea-yea-yeah. 'Cause, again, I do... Hmm. Hm-hm-hm-hmm.
Hm-hm-hm-hmm.

[pause]

Austin: Maybe this is a moment to pick one of these other desires and see if that could be a good prompt for us.

Dre: [overlapping] Yeah!

Austin: [overlapping] Because right now what we have is “human dependence” is one of the things that it desires. What is the other thing the Mael... the Psychic Maelstrom — this sort of force that connects everyone but also is a threat...? I think about the... in the *Tales From The Loop* game, do you remember there was the moment where... [sighs] something was weird with the clouds or something outside...? You know? Maybe it felt, like, the clouds got staticky or something like that — as being a Psychic Maelstrom moment in that game. You know, it can be just the world's weird...

Dre: Mm-hm...

Austin: ... surreal effects around us! What's the other thing that it desires? And also let me peek in the book and see if there's, like, more guidance on it.

Dre: Yeah, the two... I'm leaning towards one of the last two.

Austin: Okay.

Dre: Um. Which is either “to be ushered into the world forever” or “fervent intimacy”.

Austin: Mm...!

Dre: Which I am drawn to, because of this being two exes who are...

Austin: [chuckles] Mm-hm.

Dre: ... [laughing] psychically opening themselves up together!

Austin: I think that that's... I also think that generally what have we been taught... What is this game... has this game been about? It has been about connections between people.

Dre: [overlapping] Yeah.

Austin: [overlapping] It has been about small moments of intimacy both positive and negative. You know, I think that two exes holding a magical umbrella to try to... you know... entrance a demon so that their friends can get away is as intimate a moment as someone... welding another person who is trying to kill them into a car. I think those are different types of intimacy! But they're both intimacy!

Dre: [overlapping] Sure!

Austin: [overlapping] They're both fervent! I think, you know, going on a journey to help a child who you're caring for is this... you know, is about a sort of intimacy with them — seeing them slip away, preparing food for them so that they... or it wasn't... What was the thing that you... that someone prepared to keep Quincy, like, out of pain? What was the... Was it a piece of...

Dre: I think that was Already!

Austin: But what was the actual *thing*? It was, like, not a wa... It was, like, some sort of... Was it food? Or was it, like, gear? Or was it, like, a piece of fashion, or something?

Ali: [overlapping] I gave...

Austin: [overlapping] There's... Someone made something.

Ali: ... them a peppermints, and...

Austin: You gave them a peppermint.

Dre: Hm...

Austin: But...

Ali: I feel like there was another thing though, right?

Dre: No...! [overlapping] Maybe I did...!

Austin: [overlapping] You did! You did! You did.

Dre: Yea-yea-yeah.

Austin: [overlapping] That's what you got parts for from the...

Dre: [overlapping] Yeah, I used the "ease somebody's pain."

Austin: Yes

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: And you got parts from the... Ka-Ching Casino Repair.

Dre: [overlapping] Yeah.

Austin: [overlapping] To build something that was going to help them. So, like...

Dre: Yeh. Oh, right! I did something out of, like, a old fucked-up modem. [overlapping] That's what it was.

Austin: [overlapping] Yes! You... Yes, exactly. And so, like, to me the idea of, like: "I'm gonna go walk into guards...! [chuckles] A guarded... place that has... Boston Dynamics robo... killer drones and face that down so I can build something to help someone be in less pain" is a type of "fervent intimacy". So I feel, like, that's has... And

of course we all know the most intimate thing in the world is two people playing *Magic* against each other.

Dre: [overlapping] Of course. Yea-yea-yeah.

Ali: [overlapping] Mm-hm.

Austin: [overlapping] As Sylvi would say: “that's Yuri to me.” And...

Ali: [overlapping] Hm...

[Dre laughs]

Austin: This is... I think that has been at the heart of the game the whole time. So...

Dre: Oh, the heart of the cards?

Austin: The heart of the card... [chuckles] Sorry, yes. The heart of the cards the whole time. So... from there what does the Psychic Maelstrom... Since now we know what it likes is “human dependence” and “fervent intimacy” how does that visualize and affect [overlapping] this sudden exchange?

Dre: [overlapping] Hmm...

[01:00:00]

Dre: Um. OK. Sam and Providence, what is it, like, to be able to suddenly read each other's minds wholly and completely?

Austin: [disgruntled] Ooaaghh!

[Ali laughs]

Austin: [somewhat tinny, from the distance] What is it like! [pauses] I mean it's not like anything else. [sounding regular] Um...

[pause]

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: It's...! It's tru...! In a world of mundane... [chuckles] You know, there's still weird days you have sometimes but fundamentally... You know, I started this entire game by being like: “we're in a real rut, Sam!” [chuckles] Even doing weird rituals! Even doing the thing earlier where I touched Already's hands across a space that I couldn't have done — this is still 30 000 times more weird an experience than that, right?

Ali: [overlapping] I...

Austin: [overlapping] Or for me, anyway.

Ali: Sure. Sure. Mm-hmm... [pauses] And I think for me it's, like... It's, it's... [sighs] It's tough because it's also this, like, whole other version... of experiencing the world, [overlapping] right?

Austin: [overlapping] Yes.

Ali: Like, there's... It's one thing to be able to read somebody's mind suddenly. It's another thing to, like... you know, do that when there's this, like, incredible language gap.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah.

Ali: [overlapping] What...

Austin: [overlapping] All sorts of anxieties and... and joys and ways and perspectives are suddenly shared. There's a real, like, “glass half full glass half empty”...

[Ali laughs]

Austin: ... thing of like: “oh, I get it now! The glass is half empty” Or “is half full!” Not that it's as reducible... Not that our relationship is as reducible as that, Sam. But you know what I mean. Right?

Ali: Right. Yeah. No, absolutely. There's, like... You know. The assumption. Would be that this would be an action that, like, would bring you closer to a person.

Jack: [overlapping] Hm.

Austin: [overlapping] Right.

Ali: But, like, when you've *been* close to a person, already decided...

Austin: [overlapping] Yeah...

Ali: [overlapping] Maybe not to be so close to somebody. That, like... Either the, like... You know, it's just as familiar as it is... you know, confirming, in some ways?

Austin: [overlapping] Hm. Mm-hm.

Ali: Like, I don't... You know. It's not, like, we're immediately, like: "Oh, yeah! We should definitely be in love with each other!"

Austin: Right.

Ali: It's, like: "oh no! Like, I have a different perspective of, like... you know, things I did not have a perspective of when we were going through them at the time."

Austin: [overlapping] Mm-hm.

Ali: But, like... You know, the, like... shock of knowing all of that immediately does not change... what happened?

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: Um... Or does not make us, like, immediately agree with each other in situations where we weren... wouldn't. Um...

Austin: I... There's... I have two things, like, burning in my head. And...

[Ali chuckles]

Austin: And the first is: I think The Augur has — and this is a meta feeling, this is not an active feeling about... The first one is a meta feeling. The second one is a particular feeling. The first meta feeling is: I pretend to do this every day.

[Jack sighs uncomfortably]

Austin: People come to me and they say: “oh, Augur! Let me tell you what I learned! Let me show you what I found!” Um. “Interpret this for me! Be...” You know... This is, like, again, the classic thing of, like... God! [half-chuckling] What are the four things the Emerald Herald says over and over in *Dark Souls 2*? Um... That's, like... It's exactly this.

I'm gonna get the exact quote because... because I need people who've never fuck with these games to understand what I'm trying to evoke here. When you... When you talk to the Emerald Herald, basically for the *whole* game... Uh... she says... Actually, is it not her. Who is it who is the one who is, like... Maybe it is the Maiden in Black. Uh... Sorry. I'm dragging here. Show dialogue please, Demon Souls Wiki!

[Ali laughs]

Austin: [overlapping] It is...

Jack: [overlapping] Now we've got to play *Demon Souls*!

Austin: Oh, we fucking do have to play *Demon Souls*! [chuckles] [reading wiki heading] “After beating Phalanx”...

Jack: And the old one! Not this new shit!

Austin: Uh... You know I... Yeah. I do think the original [overlapping] is a little bit better... I don't know.

Jack: [overlapping] I'm just being sour. I think the new game's fine. It's a lot of impressive work!

Austin: [overlapping] It's very pretty in places! But it's also very frustrating in its design. Alright. Um... She sai... she says: "Thou seeketh soul power, dost thou not? Then touch the Demon inside me." Right? And is constantly saying things, like: "Soul of the mind, key to life's ether. Soul of the lost, withdrone..." [corrects himself] "withdrawn from its vessel. Let strength be granted, so the world might be mended. So the world might be mended." And is constantly performing this sort of... *performing* this sort of fervent intimacy! Right?

And... It's a performance. It's fundamentally a performance. That's my read of those characters — in many cases at least that, like, they are performing a sort of role to get the player character to do things. My character feels like she needs to perform those roles to get player... [surprised at what he just said] To get players...! To get characters to, like, go bring back wires so that Robyn can keep the lights working in our little Enclave. To come back with seed packages, right? So that we can grow new things in the garden.

That there's a *literal, actual, theoretical* emotional labor — like, in the actual sense [chuckles] of what that word... what that phrase means academically — happening. And so, this thing that I'm actually experiencing in this moment is the real version... the *impossible* version of that. Right? The second thing that I experience is that I understand why you like to pour drinks for people. I've *never* understood it.

[Ali laughs]

Austin: And I get it in my *bones*. I want to lift a bottle and pour it for someone; I want to carefully slide it across the table to them; I want to notice that their glass is getting empty and ask them — not because I'm trying to sell them another drink — but ask them if they want another one, because I think they might enjoy it, and I think that that might be something I can bring to them tonight.

And holding those two feelings is impossible. [chuckles] And... irresolvable. But I... Those are the two. Right? Is... "oh my god! I'm performing this all the time and it's fake!" and also "oh my God you do it! When you pour someone a drink and care

about them in that way... you're connecting to them in a way that I am never connecting to them as I go through the Tome, and as I speak the magic words, and as I ask them to connect to me in that way — because you just have a different relation to other people.”

Or at least that's the anxiety I'm feeling. I don't know that... Austin doesn't know that that's true. But that is the feeling that Providence has in this moment is: “you do my job better than I do because you... you aren't... faking it.” Which is, again, that might not be true! But that is how The Augur is experiencing this because...

[Ali chuckles]

Austin: ...She has never felt good about helping someone... [chuckles] in her life...! Classic anxieties to have! [overlapping] Anyway!

Ali: [overlapping] Hmm...

Austin: [half-chuckling] Any other thoughts here? What's... From Sam? Before we talk about demon reactions?

Ali: Um... [sighs]

[Dre laughs]

Ali: No. I think... I feel like that about covers it! I feel like the... Yeah. I... There's overlaps there, [overlapping] right? There's... [laughs]

Austin: [overlapping] Yes. Yeah.

Ali: [chuckling] We've discussed the overlap.

Jack: What do you think your shared goal is as a sort of entity with this...

Austin: Hm. Hm! Mm-hm...

Jack: And! Are you able to... I mean, I want to honor the... the strong move. But... in a sort of controlled sense.

Austin: [overlapping] Wait, who made a Strong Move?

Jack: [overlapping] I'm able to marshall... No, I... That is not a Strong Move.

Austin: [overlapping] Yeah!

[Ali chuckles]

Jack: I meant strong move in the sense of, like, a move has been... or rather...

Austin: Right. I see.

Jack: ... mechanization in the game has been made and I want to honor that.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: But do you take advantage of this moment of connection? And if so, what is your goal? Even if you don't take advantage of it what is your goal individually?

[pause]

Austin: I do think this is a moment of... for... Providence... genuinely trying to protect these people. Um... And I do think it comes from a place of... [pauses] I don't know. I think the action is: help these people get to where they're going. Does that overlap with Sam?

Ali: I think so, yeah. I mean, there's definitely the... like, the primary... objection here is to, like, do the damn thing. [overlapping] Right?

Austin: [overlapping] Right, right. Right.

Ali: [overlapping] And to get out of danger and to... you know. Act in concert. [chuckles]

Austin: Right. [pauses] Yeah, you know, I think, again, to color it, the thing that has changed — which, again, does not repair a relationship — is that when I entered the scene I was acting out of obligation... and now with this added perspective, or this

blending of perspectives — which is very scary and I would never want to happen in real life —

[Ali laughs]

Austin: ... I think that there is now a degree of... desire? Instead of just obligation. There's a degree of “/...” “I *want* this because it is good” to... It is not good because it's an obligation; it's not good because it lets us survive together; it's not good because it's what a community does — it's good because it's good: to protect this child, this traveler, and this friend.

And maybe that helps produce an overlap between Samantha and Providence that... *individually* in this scene they would not have had an overlap there before? But maybe I'm reading too much into Samantha there. Maybe Samantha is...

Ali: In terms of...?

Austin: Obligation versus... The degree to which obligation is part of why you are... you help people with things.

Ali: Oh, sure! I... I think that there's... And I think this is some of the interesting thing about, like, what the... where the overlaps are because, like, I think what brought her up to the... top of the bridge or whatever was the sort of obligation.

Austin: [overlapping] Riiight...!

Ali: [overlapping] Of the sort of, like, “oh, I'm not pulling my weight” sort of thing.

Austin: [overlapping] Hmmm... Mm-hm!

Ali: And I think if there's, like... If there's an anxiety that is, like, rooted inside of Samantha, it's the sort of thing of, like: “is everything I do superficial?”

Austin: Right.

Ali: I... You know. I try to be a community leader but there's not... we're not... that's not what we're doing. That's not the structure that we've built in the place that we have.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: And... But I do think, like, the turn from, like “oh I'm on the top of the bridge dealing with the situation alone” to “I'm no longer alone but, like, someone has... sort of stuck their neck out for me” ... then it's like “oh then we're in this together.” Um. So.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: Yeah. It's complicated.

Austin: Mm-hm!

Jack: Yeah. I think that the spinning eyes of the demon... the fire eyes of the demon sort of bear down and... touch the umbrella. And pass through it very quickly! And pass through your bodies. And there's this rush of heat, like, you get from standing next to, like, a... a grill on a hot day. That you feel sort of sweep past you. But at the same time it's not the inferno that you would expect to sort of... to cook you. And... when the flame passes... back where the demons stood — with her helmet and her car — it is gone. All that's left is a line of the orange cones.

[Austin chuckles gently]

Jack: And then [half-chuckling] your umbrella catches fire! And... It just it catches fire like a... [imitates the sound of flames] Boof! A perfect little flame, burns down the handle to the point where you have to drop it. But when you drop it, both of you notice that... on the back of your left hand, Augur, and on the back of your right hand, Sam, is — still smoldering, lightly — the sign of the demon. When we talk about these signs we're talking about the, like... stylized sigils from the... *Ars Goetia*. And this is the Sigil of Agarath. Who is a lesser demon. Who... “teaches language, stops and retrieves runaway persons, causes earthquakes and grants noble titles.”

Austin: Hhmm...!

Jack: And you bear its seal on your opposite hands, such that were your palms to touch, the seal would meet.

[Ali half-chuckles]

Austin: [calmly] Great. Perfect. Perfect and good, actually. [vehemently] I drop the umbrella to the ground!

Jack: It just molders! It's just... It's, like, the saddest little fire compared to, like, this roaring inferno! [chuckles] It looks, like, the kind of thing that you would expect for a practical fire effect on a CW Show.

Austin: [overlapping] Hm... Yeah... Yeah...

Jack: [overlapping] Where, you know, it's happening in camera but it's not terribly impressive. And you can tell that as soon as they shout "cut" someone's gonna come on with a fire extinguisher go [imitates sound of pressurized valve opening] Bheaaww!

Austin: And I say:

Providence: It was only a prop umbrella.

Jack: [amused] Did the trick though, didn't it?

[Ali chuckles]

Samantha: Right... right. Yeah.

Austin: [half-chuckling] Do we talk about it? Um...

Jack: Is it still happening?

Austin: "What does your character think of me?" [half-chuckling] is a question I have, and should have asked when our minds were connected.

Ali: [overlapping] Ohhh!

Austin: [overlapping] But instead I'll ask it *now*, where I didn't think... I couldn't think to ask you that, when we were literally connected. [chuckles] And so now I have to ask it to you afterwards.

Ali: Right. Yeah. [laughs] That's great! My question is "how have I earned your character's ire?"

[Austin bursts out laughing, Jack laughs]

Ali: [overlapping] Which is something you could also pick up in a mindmeld, I bet!

Austin: [overlapping, groans] Oooohhh... Yeah...! Uh-huh.

[Ali laughs]

Austin: [agonizing] Ummmm...

Ali: Uuum... Am I answering this out of character or in character?

Austin: You're answering out of character, but my character will know it in character.

Ali: [overlapping] Sure-sure-sure-sure... OK, yeah.

Austin: [overlapping] And you could answer an in-character! You could... but it's an abstraction. Right? Like, I could ask you... So, I should actually explain how I'm determining...

[01:15:02]

Austin: Or we don't have to! Because we did! We did the mindmeld.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: That is how we know these things. Right?

Ali: This is not a question that Augur is verbally saying, though.

Austin: No. Correct

Ali: Is...

Austin: Yeah. I think that this is... I'm thinking about it now. I think in the quiet moment both of our Weak Move... Ali and I have both read our Weak Move questions just now.

[Ali chuckles]

Austin: I think that is, in some ways, like, what we focused on here, [overlapping] in that moment. Right?

Ali: [overlapping] Uh-huh. Mm-hm, mm-hm. Or at least when you... retreat to the moment of yourself, right? You touch...

Austin: [overlapping] Right.

Ali: ... you touch the hot spot that you would not have... [overlapping] in this... in the moment... in the space.

Austin: [overlapping] Correct. Yes. Yeahhh, yeah! [agonizing] Ohhh...! That's the worst!

[Ali and then Dre laugh]

Austin: I've... You've hung up the phone or the Discord call or you've gotten on the train, and you and immediately your brain goes to all the worst shit?

Ali: Uh-huh...

Austin: You know?

Ali: Uh-huh. Um, anyway, what is... what does my character think of yours?

Austin: Yeah. What's your character think of... me? Yeah. Of The Augur, Providence?

Ali: I think in heart of hearts she feels badly that... Providence has to put so much effort into things?

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: Like, I think... you know, if the experience that... Providence got looking at Samantha was, like: “oh, you know, the... things that feel, like... they're insignificant or, like, easy, is actually something that that's, like, this really meaningful ritual.”

Austin: Mm-hm.

Ali: The... the fact that, like, there's none of that smoothness, or there's none of the, like, second nature about some of that stuff around what Providence makes herself do.

Austin: Mm-hm. Um... I think my answer... I'm partly already gave an answer, which is a sort of... Actually, you know? I'm not... I'm gonna separate this. I don't think the sort of jealousy I talked about before is part of why you earned my ire. Because that's new. Right? I did not have that sort of jealousy about what I perceive as your ability to genuinely connect to other people. Right? Um...

Ali: Mm-hm. That whole time you were just, like: “why did she spend so much time with us?”

Austin: Yeah. Yeah. Right? Because... Because I think the actual thing was... there is... — and I think this is already booked in to this to some degree — which is, like, I come across in a way... I think this character's always come across in a way — going back four years or whatever — that thinks that you aren't taking this shit seriously. Right?

Ali: Hm...

Austin: Where I'm, like: “look at the soldiers walking around on the table!” [chuckles]

Ali: Mm-hm...

Austin: “They're telling us we have to fucking do some stuff!” You know, I think there's probably a particular moment, I don't know exactly what it was, where it's, like... some small thing breaks and you fix it. And then it breaks again, and you fix it again. And you

never go, like... “why does it keep breaking?” I don't know what that was. I don't know if it's a light that keeps popping, I don't know... You know. Because... The reason you don't do it is because, you know... you *know* what you have to do to fix it. And the thing you have to do to fix it is, like, impossible to do given the amount of time and energy and everything else...

You know, it's like a door that gets stuck. Right? There's a door to the pantry. And every summer it gets humid. And when it gets humid — and it's already humid here because we're in the fucking Back Bay all year, anyway — but it gets extra humid in the summer and it expands a little bit. And that means it gets stuck and you have to put a little force into it to open it. And I'm, like: “why don't you rebuild the doorframe?” And you're, like: “it gets stuck a little bit, it's not a big deal [chuckles] to open it!”

[Ali laughs]

Austin: And there's a degree to which that sort... And I'm not saying that that's *exactly* the thing, you know what I mean? ‘Cause I don't want to tell you what character... what characteristic... what was the thing that you decided was fine to leave sort of broken, but not really. But it was something *like* that. And... that's sort of, like... “I'm gonna make the best with how things are instead of trying to, like, radically change everything” is the heart of our characters’ original disconnect.

And so I think that is still in there, fundamentally. Right? I think that is why you earned my character's ire to begin with. Um... And I think there's, like, lots of ways that what I could do is in this moment try to be, like [in a meek voice] “but also you felt how I was change... my relationship changed when we joined our mind...”

[Ali chuckles]

Austin: [in a regular voice] But, you know, that's not what your question is. Your question is “how have I earned your character’s ire?”

Ali: Mm-hm

Austin: And I think it's, like, sometimes I think you're a fundamentally unserious person.

Ali: Wow...!

Austin: Right? And that's not... nice. That's... a shitty way to think about another person. And I think it's a way that you've known I felt in the past but there's a difference between knowing it... and feeling it.

Ali: Mm-hm.

Ali: You know? Um... But also! An important thing is we both know these answers from the other perspective. In a weird way, now, also.

Jack: Oh, right! Yeah!

Ali: Mm-hm!

Austin: [overlapping] So.

Jack: [overlapping] Yeah, you have the backwards side of it too... or the...

Austin: [overlapping] Uh-huh.

Jack: Oh, dear!

Austin: Umm... Mm-hm.

Jack: Um... One of my favorite things about the Netflix TV show *Dark*...

Austin: Hm.

Jack: ... which is about time travel, is that it asks the question... what would happen if people figured out how to do time travel resoundingly with the answer: it would mess everybody up irreparably, forever. [chuckles] And I feel like...

[Ali chuckles]

Jack: What would happen if I suddenly knew every single thing that the person I was closest to thought and vice versa... It's like, that's... Ooh! That's a dangerous path to go down!

Ali: [giggles] Mm-hm!

Austin: I am looking at my notes. Or not my notes. I'm looking at my tokens, I'm looking at my Moves. And what I could do in this moment is spend a token to “soothe someone's pain or duress”, again. But what I'm going to do is to “take action and leave myself vulnerable”, a regular move. Now what I'm going to do is say, breaking the silence:

Providence: I'm sorry that I hurt you. I'm sorry that I wasn't... You... spent a lot of effort to make me happy. For a long time. And I did not thank you for that. So. Thank you. And I am sorry.

Samantha: Right. Yeah. No, I, um... I was happy to. So.

Austin: I get a very small smile. And I say:

Providence: You were. [chuckles]

Austin: As if it *is* surpri... Like, as if that's new information to me.

[Ali chuckles]

Austin: That it wasn't work for you. That it *was* something you enjoyed. And then I say:

Providence: When we walk past, don't touch the cones!

Austin: Nodding at the orange traffic cones in front of us.

Samantha: Oh, yeah. Got it. Yeah. Thanks... for having a handle on... on the stuff.

Providence: It's what I was built to do!

Samantha: Hm.

Austin: Which of course is the other thing of this, right? It's, like, you know my earliest memories now are, like, waking up on a table?

Ali: Yeah. [overlapping] Not ideal!

Austin: [overlapping] Right? Not a ideal! Not ideal!

[Ali chuckles]

Austin: The rest of y'all catch up? At this point?

Jack: Yeah.

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: Um. And this time I take the lead and do walk in the front. And then I repeat myself... Turning to look back and calling back and saying:

Providence: Don't touch the cones when you walk past.

Jack: [overlapping] The cones...

Austin: [overlapping] And I don't walk so fast that I walk away from the group for once. Sorry, go ahead!

Jack: The cones are very... They are... They appear completely benign. Which is... no... Something I've been thinking about a lot with the demons in *Bluff City*...

Austin: Hm. Mm-hm...

Jack: ... is that they are... regularly deeply weird. In the case of Miss Amy just being, like [half-chuckling] "yep, ghosts are real and I'm gonna tell these children about them!"

Austin: [half-chuckling] Mm-hm!

Jack: And then in the case of the hunter demon just, like, big balls of... You know, moving in a much more classically demon space: an empty helmet, burning fire. But these road cones that she laid out as part of a police blockade are just... As far as you can tell... flat, empty, benign road cones — which I think makes The Augur... Already, you know, looks at them very suspiciously...

[Austin giggles]

Jack: ... as they pass forwards.

End of bridge scene [01:23:50]

Jack: And from here it's a pretty straight shot into the block, right? Where the...

Austin: Yeah.... Yeah. I mean, I... Frankly? I think we make it! And I can describe exactly what it is we're looking at. And it was that cool building before. [chuckles] Except...

Jack: Oh, the Studebaker...

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: ... in Pleasantville.

Austin: Yeah. Except that... It only has one of the two big archways now. It's, like, the building was cut in half. Or, actually, it's, like, the building was *extended*. Is actually the way to do it. It's, like... it has... the second archway, like, the right archway has been cut in half, and the roof has been lowered, and replaced with a garage. Like, an auto garage.

And instead of saying, right, "I told you!" I told Already that they should go to — I'm just double checking my notes here, because I did write it down this time — to Jeff Brown Dentistry. Because that's what the book... That's what the old Yellow Pages told us to go to. But now it says Jeff Brown Jr dentistry and auto repair. Um.

And it's empty. It's been abandoned for some time, or at least the... you know, there's no one working here. You know what I mean? The door is locked but the big windows out front have been broken for years [chuckles] so we can kind of climb through there. Um... There is a car in the garage — I don't know what type of car it is I want someone else to decide what that is — um... and it is a... like, the front of a dentist office that has, like, you know, pictures on the wall of people smiling... all sorts of, like... I imagine this place went out of business during the *Tales From The Loop* era. Right?

And so, like, near-future stuff. I'm going through Invisalign, currently, so whatever the next Invisalign is. Maybe this time they won't put little buttons on your teeth! Which is a thing that they don't tell you about Invisalign, everybody! Research it!

Ali: [very softly] Yeah...

Austin: It's weird! Um... So. [chuckles] Whatever that is. There is a... photo behind the desk... of three people. They are three men, who are... of a generation apart each. The youngest is low 30s. White... a white, you know, dentist's coat on. You know? With a... with a light blue button-up shirt. And has a name tag that says Jeff Brown, Jr. Right? He's smiling, his teeth are... clean and white and perfect, and his arms are around two other men.

One of them is a generation older than him. Big beard, big bushy beard. Glasses, slumped face. Is... Someone's *begged* him to smile. And the other person is much older. You know, it's his grandfather, probably pushing 90 or something. And... is giving a big thumbs up. He has no hair, has no teeth: big empty mouth smile! [chuckles] But *huge* grin, big thumbs up. And it says... underneath on a little on a... little, like — not a nametag, but you know, like, a little plaque, there's, like, a little... What do you call those? Like, not an etching but, like... you know, like, a little metal tag.

Jack: Yea-yea-yeah.

Austin: Um...

Jack: Engraving! Uh...

Austin: Yeah. Yeah...

Jack: A plate.

Austin: Yeah. It says... [sighs] It says... Let me make sure I get this exactly right. "Serving Bluffington Beach, since it's very start." And this is the... I mean, this is Jeff Brown Jr, it is Jeff Brown, and it is... someone we don't know. Right? Where we can assume that the other Jeff Bro... the slightly older figure, the... is the father figure is Jeff Brown. And, presumably, it is another... maybe the generation above that. And the story the photo tells is... I don't know. It's hard to say. Right? Exactly...

Maybe there's another clue here that can, like, just give it to us. Um.... Should I think if there's, like... You know, maybe our newspaper clippings, right? Maybe there's a, you know, that classic thing if you go into a place and it just has the, like, a story from the local press hung up?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: And I don't know who's reading it. I don't know who's, like, perusing this place... But the story that you learn very quickly is that this person is... the Jeff Brown Jr is related to the Bluff family! He's, like, the great-great grandson of Julian H. Bluff or something, who was the... you might recall, was the movie studio executive from...

Jack: Huh.

Austin: ... our movie studio game? Or, you know, something like that. Great-great grandson or great... you know, or a great-great grand nephew. Whatever the relation, whatever the... I don't remember Julian Bluff had kids when we played. And Julian Bluff took the name of his own... great grandmother... Alexander... or not Alexander, Alexandra Hughes, who went by A. H. Bluff. That was her pen name. And Alexandra Hughes showed up back in our *Capers* game as a sort of disaffected socialite who had somehow in the 1920s been to all three Bluffington, Bluff and Blough. Um.

[01:30:04]

Austin: And... So what the what the newspaper story basically says is that the... that the original Jeff Brown dentist changed his name from Bluff to Brown because he wanted to distance himself from the history of the Bluff family. In Bluffington Beach, in Atlantic City. Um...

But that his son or his his grandson whatever, however this breaks down, the youngest one here... is proud of the connection that his family has had to this... place for centuries, and is hoping that by adding an auto repair shop to the... [chuckles] dentistry business he can speak to the long automotive history [chuckles] of south Jersey and the Atlantic City area.

It's a... You know, it's a wild experiment but it might just work! You know, there's all sorts of quotes that are, like, you know: [half-chuckling] "both of us use drills! Both of us have some... we all have toolbelts! You know, in a way we're very similar! There's lots of overlaps, you know, between teeth and engines."

Jack: I think the person reading this... newspaper clipping is Quincy.

Austin: [overlapping] Ah! Of course!

Jack: [overlapping] Who turns around and announces:

Jack (as **Quincy**): These dentists fix cars!

[Austin & Ali chuckle]

Jack (as **Quincy**): You fix the car's teeth, and then when you... while they're fixing the car's teeth other dentists fix *your* teeth!

[Austin laughs tiredly]

Jack: This is... tremendously exciting for Quincy.

Jack (as **Quincy**): Do you think they have, like, car dentists and regular... person tooth dentists? Or do you think it's two separate trained groups of people who...

work in tandem? Robyn? Do you think...? Maybe you didn't hear! Do you think they have regular human dentists and car dentists, the dentists for cars...

Robyn: [overlapping] Ohhhh...!

Jack (as **Quincy**): [overlapping] ... or they trained them both and they, like, they collaborate together, across the building?

Robyn: Hmmmm... It's probably two different licensing boards, huh?

Jack (as **Quincy**): You're a mechanic, right? You do car stuff, right? [overlapping] You put that man in the car and then sealed it up!

Robyn: [overlapping] Yeah. Sure.

Jack (as **Quincy**): What is he doing?

Robyn: [as if mumbling "I don't know."] Uh-a-oh.

Jack (as **Quincy**): What's he up to?

Robyn: I...

Austin: Great question.

Robyn: This is a good question! I don't know!

Austin: Smash cut: he is driving that truck now!

Jack: [laughs] Just, like... Like when the [overlapping] demon motorcyclist in uh *Raising Arizona* is introduced.

Austin: [overlapping] Mm-hm.

Dre: [overlapping] "Oh, fuck, I left the keys in the glove compartment!"

Austin: [overlapping] Uh-huh, yes! Exactly! God!

Jack: [overlapping, chuckling] I'm going screaming by.

Austin: I hadn't thought about *Raising Arizona* as a *Bluff*-ass movie, but it kind of is!

[Dre laughs]

Austin: Um...

Jack: [chuckling] It fully is!

Austin: Mm-hm!

Jack: [from a slight distance] Um... Yeah. God.

Austin: Anyway!

Jack: [in a regular voice] Already is turning this place upside down. They are looking for the reason that they were sent here. They've got their phone in their left hand...

Austin: [overlapping] Hmm.

Jack: [overlapping] ... and in their right hand they are just opening drawers, opening cabinets, you know, peering into all these various rooms to be, like: "why here? Why with the phone?"

Austin: Is this a move?

[pause]

Jack: [long exhale] I think it's a regular move [overlapping] if it is a move.

Austin: [overlapping] Mm-hm. OK.

Jack: Um...

[pause]

Austin: It could, like... It truly could always be “take action, leaving yourself vulnerable”. Right? [overlapping] Like, that's the nicest thing about that Move...

Jack: [overlapping] Right, I think this is “take action, leaving yourself vulnerable” in terms of looking for a... trying to piece together why I was here? How am I leaving myself vulnerable?

Austin: [overlapping] Mm-hm.

Jack: [overlapping] I'm making a lot of noise in the combined dentist office mechanics. A building full of things to make lots of noise with.

Austin: You find something. [pauses] Um, you find a pair of keys on a keyring. One of them is clearly a car key and it's, like... You know... You know the car keys for, like, fancy cars from 2006? Like, a slightly bigger, thicker...

Jack: Yes.

Austin: Um. You know what I'm talking about?

Jack: [overlapping] Yes I do.

Austin: [overlapping] I have a very goofy... in many ways... reference point for this. Which is... the ones that sort of look, like, Riku's *Kingdom Hearts 3* Keyblade?!?
[laughs]

[Dre laughs]

Jack: [half-chuckling] I'm gonna need an image.

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh, I'm on it. Don't worry. Uh... Whoops! I put that in all of Bluff City... I meant to put that here. [chuckles] You know! You know what I'm saying?!?

Jack: That is a keyblade. But yes. Yes. [overlapping] Absolutely.

Austin: [overlapping] You get what I'm saying, right? That style of, like... big black hefty key fob and then... the key itself is this, like, thick thing with the, like, the little spotted indentations, etc. Um...

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: The... So that is... That is one of the keys. The other key is, like, an *old* in, like... a key from the 1800s. [chuckles] And it's just on this key fob.

Dre: [intrigued] Mm-hmhhh!

Austin: Um... And they... It has their two... There're two, like, keychain accessories on the keychain. The first is one of those 1980s, like, keychain fobs that... or a keychain accessory type things that you would see that it's, like... it's, like, a card. Like, almost, like, a business card but maybe smaller, like, a little square, that has been set in resin. And, like, a thick heavy resin or plastic — do you know what I'm talking about? Like, um...

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: You might get one of these from a hotel or a tourist trap. You know what I mean? And it would say “Dinosaurs”! And there'd be a dinosaur. You know what I mean? Kind of vibe?

Jack: Yeah, absolutely.

Austin: And it is a picture of a rose... and it says “Blossom Deliveries and Investigations”. And there's a phone number. And it says “calls only acceptable in Bluff City”. Or, like “only receives calls in Bluff City” or “from Bluff City”. Right? The second thing is a metal keychain accessory — like, a little fob thing — that is just a big lighthouse? Like, it's a big metal... Like, you hol... It's, like, a heavy you know... Like, a lead figurine. It has heft to it. And *it* says “Bluffington Beach Lighthouse — established 1882”. I think that number is right. I'm going to double check the number.

Jack: So it's keyblade key... [overlapping] what's the second key...?

Austin: [overlapping] Eight... Sorry. It's 1855.

Jack: Whoa!

Austin: Mm-hm.

Dre: Hmm...!

Austin: The second key is... You know! Maybe it's to that old lighthouse!

Jack: Hmm.

Austin: Keyblade key is key to car in... garage.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: Um. You took a move leaving yourself vulnerable.

Jack: I sure did!

Austin: Um... We have talked a lot about the Outlying Gangs being... these gig economy workers. Right? And we've talked a lot about the Earth Itself being "strange new forms". What we haven't thought about is how... the gig economy would try to weaponize the strange new forms.

And so there's a howl in the air. They don't just have robot Boston Dynamics dogs. They have... other types of creatures out there. And those stick to the mainland. They've only... they don't have a... Maybe they don't have approval to use them so close to the Society Intact — maybe there's some sort of law that's, like "no, we don't use those near the Society Intact. It's too... It's too risky. Some of them could get into where 'real' people live." Um.

And I'm using the Move here... "abruptly storm", but it's not a storm, like, a weather storm. It's the sound of hundreds of paws on the ground, rushing through the nearby... kind of coastal forest, through the ruins of the suburbs, through the overgrown

parks, and jumping through Windows that have been closed but broken for a hundred years. They are coming for *us*.

[pause]

Jack: Okay. I'm gonna hold the keys up, and say:

Already: Is this it? Is this what we're looking for? It doesn't seem to be anything else here! There's a car! We could... We could get into the car!

[pause]

Already: Augur?

[pause]

Providence: Ah— That seems... possible.

[pause]

Providence: I only knew that we needed to come here.

[pause]

Providence: But...

Already: The...

Providence: ... the Tome might not always have... It can't tell us what to do when we get here! And there have been cases...

Austin: An excitement in my voice that's new.

Providence: There have been times when I've sent someone somewhere and they've been taken somewhere else, and it's the second place that's the destination.

[pause]

Jack: This is, on some level, frustrating! This is, again, the sort of the... But you've gotta... you've got to make good with the... with the information that you get. And so Already... uh... you know, runs into the mechanic's side [chuckles] of the dentistry...! And... you know, tries the key in the car. What does this car look like? It's a...

Austin: [overlapping] I don't know. Is it?

Jack: [overlapping] It's a muscle car. It's a... Yeah, I'm... Well! I'm thinking about what kind of a car would this key open.

Austin: I don't know.

Dre: Chunky.

Austin: Chunky car.

[pause]

Jack: It's a chunky car, [overlapping] it's a four-wheel...

Austin: [overlapping] Quincy says:

Austin (as Quincy): That's a *chunky* car!

[Jack laughs]

Jack: Um... I beep the thing and the batteries have gone in the beeper, so it doesn't work...

Austin: [overlapping]

Jack: [overlapping] ... so I unlock the car with the... thing, and the central locking does work. I don't... You know. Cars. Um...

Austin: Does the car itself work? Is the car... What condition is this car in?

[pause]

Austin: Do we need to fix this car? Do we need to give it a jump? Do we need to...

Dre: Yeah, do I need to fix this car?

Austin: [overlapping] I... I wond...

Jack: [overlapping] I think I start it.

Austin: [overlapping] Mm-hm.

Jack: And... the engine turns over and then just fully stops. Smash cut two, like, 300 dogs of different... like, breeds... [chuckles] and things that only barely... Some of them only barely resemble dogs, and some of them fully do just look like [overlapping] “this is a terrier that you have seen.”

Austin: [overlapping] Mm-hm.

Jack: Just *pouring* down, you know, the street. We do — you know, our characters don't know this — but they're, you know, three blocks away.

[Austin chuckles tiredly]

Austin: Joined by a stream of other dogs. You know, there's a basset hound. There's a bloodhound. There's two rottweilers. There's something that has, like, both more and fewer limbs than it should... and it's blinking darkly... as it... you know, bounds through a ruined living room. Um. Yeah. And I think Already says:

Already: Robyn! We got— We have to move!

Robyn: [in a haste] Right! Um, OK! Hold on! Um... Can you pop the hood?
There should be a button in there that pops the hood.

Jack: Quincy gets it before I do. And says:

[Austin giggles]

Jack (as **Quincy**): Popcorn!

[Dre & Austin laugh]

Robyn: Yep! Popcorn. Okay. Um... When I say go, turn the key, but don't do it until I say go!

Dre: I'm going to use one of my regular moves to... "fix something shoddily"

Austin: [sighs] Uh! Love it!

Dre: Uuummm... Man, I don't know enough about cars to be able to say what I do...
[overlapping] But I do... Sure!

Austin: [overlapping] Well, it's a car from ?? years in the future.¹ It's a cartoon 20xdx.
Like...! [chuckles]

Dre: Right! Um...

Austin: So you make it up!

Dre: Sure. Yeah. I tie two tubes together that probably shouldn't go together.

[Austin laughs]

Dre: But it'll work for now!

[Austin sighs]

Robyn: Okay! Okay, you can go! For... And we'll go for some... time...!

Providence: [overlapping] Everybody get in!

Already: [overlapping] Alright, everybody in!

Austin: [laughs] Yeah.

¹ He pronounces it as "question mark question mark years in the future".

Dre: Sure.

Austin: This is, presumably... Is this a tight fit? Is this, like a...

Dre: I don't know, we said it's a chunky car!

Austin: I guess we did say it's a chunky car. So it's maybe not a tight fit.

Jack: But there are quite a lot of us.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: [overlapping] Sure.

Jack: [overlapping] There's a dog. A person.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Another person. A child. Another person. And a... [chuckles] carnival toy. Like, a carnival game.

[Austin chuckles softly, pause]

Jack: Mm-hmm... And I think, you know, Already is a driver. They put the car in gear — it... it rumbles, it splutters, it's clear it's not gonna work for very long — and they pull forward for a second and then they, leaving the engine running, get out of the car really quickly. And they pull a hammer from the mechanics' stall, and drop the Potato Potat.to phone on the ground, and hit it with the hammer until it is broken shards of glass and plastic...

Austin: [overlapping] Hmm...!

Jack: [overlapping] ... and green Potato Potat.to logo. The chip inside is broken. The phone has been brought to the dentist's office and... destroyed [chuckles] in their combination mechanics — as Das Racist sung about — the combination dentist's... [overlapping] car mechanics.

Austin: [overlapping, laughs] Auto repair shop!

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Um... I tell... I say:

Providence: Good. Bring the pieces with us!

Jack: Scoops them up — little, you know, splinters — grabs them. Puts them into, like, a pocket in my... the... like, flight suit bottoms that I'm wearing.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: Gets into the car, goes screaming out of the thing — as, you know...

[Austin chuckles]

Jack: [with intensity] ... 700 dogs pouring down the street behind us.

Austin: [half-chuckling] They've doubled in number and size!

Jack: Well, they've been joined by...

Austin: [overlapping] Right.

Jack: [overlapping] Oh, some of them have some of them are fully doubled in size. The ones you've really got to watch out for, Austin, are the ones that have *halved* in size. Because the...

Austin: [overlapping] Oh, no!

Dre: [overlapping] Aahh...

Austin: [overlapping] Oh, my god!

Jack: [overlapping] The areas that they couldn't get through before they now can. But here's the thing: their teeth are as big as they've ever been.

[01:45:02]

[other vocalize dislike]

Jack: Does this do something fucked up to how their head looks? Yes!

Austin: Absolutely! [chuckles]

End of dentist scene [01:45:07]

Austin: And I think we got ourselves a car chase! Slash dog chase! I think we're being chased by these dogs.

[Ali chuckles]

Austin: [overlapping] And it's not our...

Jack: [overlapping] Screeching of breaks! And Ketchle also joins the chase?!

Austin: [overlapping] Yeah. Right. It's... Right. Yes.

Jack: [overlapping] It's 1200 dogs [laughs] and...

Austin: And the other big muscle car that was waiting for us... Or it's ahead of us. Right? It has somehow... Ketchle has come... You know, we went... North and then West. Ketchle went Southwest North to catch up to where we are and try to cut us off at the pass, right? And Ketchle has... What's the car that you welded... welded them into?

Dre: It was a hover racer!

Austin: It was... [chuckles] So Ketchle has a beat-up hover ra... How far along was... the repair on that thing?

Dre: Oh, not very...!

Austin: Okay, so also a fucked up...

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah. Great. Great!

Jack: How high does the hover racer hover?

Dre: Oh, it's supposed to be, like, at least two feet? This one's probably eight inches.

[Austin & Jack laugh]

Jack: OK! [overlapping] It's like a fuckin'... air hockey puck!

Austin: [overlapping] So just occasionally sparks...

Dre: [overlapping] Yeah.

Austin: ... as it hits the ground on the hard turns or, you know... potholes...! This whole area has not been kept up... And, like, someone is looking at us from their window! And being, like...

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: ... you know, "what the..." Because this place is ruined, much like ours is, but is still inhabited by people who... their family is here. You know? They're... taking care of a cousin. They're... they don't want to move from their house. They don't have the money to leave. You know? Um, this place is ruined *and* inhabited. You know? Um... So...

Jack: Watching the most *Bluff City*-ass chase between...

Austin: Mm-hm!

Jack: ... five people and a dog in... a car...

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: ... a man in a beat up hover-car; someone in a muscle car — who, I want to be clear, despite working with the hunter demon [overlapping] is just a guy from Bluffington Beach who had teamed up, like... an assassin, you know, like, a hunter...

Austin: [overlapping] Just a guy. Yeah. Right-right-right. Right.

Jack: ... but it was a team of one demon from hell and a regular guy —; and three thousand dogs. [laughs]

Austin: [half-chuckling] I think I know the car... [chuckles] that we're in.

Jack: [overlapping] What car are we in?

Austin: [overlapping] It could only be one car, right?

Jack: [overlapping] Well, shit, what...?

Austin: [overlapping] We're further on in the future than we were in... You've been in this car before, Already. It used to be a taxi.

Jack: [overlapping] Wait, shit... Whose... Oh my god! Oh my god...!

[Dre starts laughing]

Jack: It's got a built-in coffee machine?!

[Ali gasps in surprise]

Austin: [laughing] Yes...! Exactly! Right?

Dre: Yeah. And Quincy's fucking with it right now.

Austin: Yeah! Uh-huh! Cameron Kisses... Cameron Castle's old car! [laughing] Castle's Cars and Coffee! Ohhh...!

Jack: What I remember about this guy...

Austin: Uh-huh?

Jack: ... is that he was, like, extremely [laughs] pro-... dangerous, like, adventures for children...

Austin: Yeah, mm-hm.

Austin: ... but extremely anti- things, like, them not wearing their seat belts, [chuckling] then drinking too much coffee in a car... You know...

Austin: That's exactly right. That's exac...

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: I want to say it was, like, a Lincoln town car or someth... You know what I mean? Like...

Dre: That is a chunky car!

Austin: It's a chunky car! Exactly! I'm double checking...! I'm double checking... Shout outs to the incredible... [transcription team](#) who allows us to make very funny things, like, this possible. Uh... [clears his throat, reads from the transcript of "[To Be Young Near The Shore pt.2](#)"] "And you know he's already pulling out, but as he pulls out of the press place, a black town car pulls in, and you see..." Yeah. This is... Yeah. Uh-huh! Yep! I believe this is... Yeah. So it's a big black town car that has been kept up for...! I mean, that was... I guess, that was pre-gravity-racers timeline, right? So, somehow it has been updated through the gravity racers timeline...

Dre: [overlapping] Sure.

Austin: [overlapping] Or period of time.

Dre: Important question.

Austin: Yes.

Dre: Are we talking, like, 80s town car or early 2000s town car?

Austin: Well, we're talking... Great question. Let me see [overlapping] if I have a description.

Dre: [overlapping] I just mean shape-wise, because the 80s is, like... a bo...

Austin: [overlapping] Yeah, can you describe this for the listener?

Dre: [overlapping] 80s is very boxy.

Austin: [overlapping] Right. Right.

Dre: [overlapping] It is long... It is just a *boat* with a very boxy, like, roof. Whereas in the 2000s it looks... Like, it it looks, like, a, like, a modern...er car.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Dre: Because, like, the... Almost said "the canopy."

[Austin chuckles]

Dre: [overlapping] That's not what you fucking call that part of the car. But, like...

[Austin sighs]

Dre: It's curved. You know?

Austin: [overlapping] Yeah.

Dre: [overlapping] It looks... It looks like every other, like, sedan profile. Whereas the older ones, again, are just, like... They are a box.

Austin: Right.

Dre: With another box on top.

Austin: Um... I think it's... God, the boxy is fun, but is it more true to the time period that it would be rounded 'cause that's the era that that guy was driving in? You know? [overlapping] What's your —

Dre: [overlapping] They're still kind of boxy in the 90s, if we want to cut it in the middle.

Austin: That makes sense. Let's do that, then!

Dre: Okay.

Austin: Cut it in the middle. Aaahhh...! No. Let's not cut it. Let's... We gotta make... We gotta make a decision. Is it boxy as hell or is it big and rounded?

[pause]

Ali: Hmm...

Dre: Hm... I like boxy.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Then it's boxy.

[pause]

What Duke's been up to [01:50:29]

Jack: Duke has two paws out of a back window and is just barking his head off.

Austin: Oh, Duke's been here! We haven't had Duke in this whole... session so far!

Jack: Well, you know why: he's a good dog.

Austin: Aw, he's a good dog. Yeah.

Jack: He has been acting as you would expect him to act in each scene.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: He was very restrained when it came to the demon.

[Austin chuckles]

Jack: He has let himself go now. And Already will be having words with him later.

[Austin chuckles]

Jack: But two paws out of the back window, barking at the... you know... the tidal wave of dogs

Austin: 1500 [bursts out laughing] dogs that are following us now!

Jack: Well, 'cause these are all the... whatever has happened, it's pulling in stray dogs. And there are a lot of stray dogs.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: And, presumably, somewhere there's something making dogs. The dream.

[Austin chuckles softly]

Jack: Um...

Austin: [chuckles softly] What's... How do we mechanize this chase?

Jack: Well...

Dre: We just describe scenes from it? Do we want to make some Moves?

Jack: Sam has a Move that is "get a weapon from nowhere"... [laughs] Right?

Ali: I... believe... so!

Jack: Oh, it's "draw a weapon before anyone could react". That's true.

Ali: Uh-huh...!

Jack: I had thought it was “reveal a hidden...” [chuckles] “reveal a hidden weapon”.

Ali: Well, it's the same thing, right? I got a...

Austin: Right!

Ali: And I have the token for it.

Austin: And we're in a car. We don't know what's in this car! [bursts out laughing]

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: [overlapping] What... Go ahead.

Ali: [overlapping] You know, the... The glove box is a classic place for a gun to be.

Austin: [overlapping, laughing] It truly is!

Jack: [overlapping] Oh my god! What is in the glove box? And is it a gun?

[Ali laughs]

[pause]

Austin: I think it's... First, we all put one thing in the glove box.

Dre: [overlapping] Sure.

Jack: [overlapping] OK. We'll put it in the chat and we'll press enter at the same time.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Dre: In the... Roll20 chat?

Austin: [overlapping] Yes.

Dre: [overlapping] OK.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: I'm typing mine! [pauses] Alright, I'm ready.

Ali: I'm ready.

Jack: OK.

Dre: Ready.

Jack: [overlapping] Three...

Austin: [overlapping] Three, two, one, go. [laughing] So, no to the gun!

[Jack laughs]

Ali: [overlapping] There's...

Dre: [overlapping] I mean, if you need a gun I've got a gun!

[Ali & Austin laugh]

Austin: What do we got here? [reads his own from chat] "A bunch of loose wires that if you connect them right, the headlights actually work." Right now they are not working.

Jack: "Bag of cashews!"

[Austin chuckles]

Dre: "A perfectly preserved hash brown..."

[Austin laughs]

Dre: "... from McDonald's, somehow still kind of warm."

Ali: And I wrote "flares".

Jack: [chuckling] Ooohuhuhoo...!

Austin: [sighs painfully] Well, it's nighttime now, right? The sun is setting! The sun has set.

Jack: [overlapping] I can't see where I'm driving!

Austin: [overlapping] When we peel away. Right? You cannot see where you're driving. But we do have flares and we do have wires. Where... Okay, very important question: who is sitting in what *seat*?

Dre: [overlapping] Uhhh...

Jack: [overlapping] Already: driver's seat. Nice and easy.

Dre: Passenger seat.

Austin: Back... left.

Ali: [half-chuckling] Back right, then!

Austin: [overlapping] Quincy's in the middle...!

Jack: [overlapping] Samantha reaching forward to open the glove compartment.

Dre: [overlapping] Quincy's in... Yeah.

Austin: And Duke is also, presumably, back here with us.

Jack: Yes. Yes. Quincy is saying:

Jack (as **Quincy**): Get inside, dog! Get in the window! Get in!

Jack: And pulling at Duke to, like...

Austin: [overlapping, half-sighing] Ahwww...!

Jack: [overlapping] ... drag him back in through the window that he's got his little paws out of.

[Austin chuckles softly]

Jack: Duke's fine.

Dre: Alright, who's asking for a gun?

Austin: [baffled] Samantha...!

Jack: Well, but do you have an idea for these flares?

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Ummm... Funny enough, I wrote “flare gun” and then deleted it because I didn't want to be the person [laughs] who suggested a gun! So I was, like: “oh, the sort of flares that you throw on the floor! Like, you would keep in a car.”

Dre: [laughing] On the floor?!?

Austin: On the ground! I know...

[others vocalize agreement with this]

Ali: [overlapping] The ground, yeah!

Dre: [overlapping] No, I know! I know!

Ali: [overlapping] The Earth's floor!

[general disarray]

Dre: [overlapping] I just imagine, like, somebody in their house throwing a flare on the carpet.

[others laugh]

Jack: The sky is the Earth's ceiling.

[Ali bursts out laughing]

Dre: Time to get a midnight snack, [overlapping] let me just throw a flare in the ol' kitchen!

Austin: [overlapping, laughs] A flare! I gotta see where I'm going.

[Ali laughs]

Austin: Uh... Well, do you have any non-flare gun related flare ideas? As we're being chased?

Ali: I mean, it'd still work as, like... It'd probably work as a distraction for...

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: ... all of those dogs, right?

Austin: Probably!

Ali: Because it's, like... Okay... put... you know, putin' in our favor our car isn't bright.

Austin: True!

Ali: Our car isn't... I guess it has backlights right?

Austin: It does have backlights.

Ali: But you can throw the flares out as, like, a distraction. It's like throwing a coin [overlapping] in a video game and the enemies around towards it.

Austin: Uh-huh. Is this also "take action, leaving yourself vulnerable"? Do we have a stronger... I guess this could be "draw a weapon", technically. But seems...

Ali: Yeah, this is a "get out of harm's way", [overlapping] this is "bring out supplies nobody knew you had".

Austin: [overlapping] "Get out of harm's way"! Yeah. Those. Yeh. Totally. Perfect.

Ali: So I'm gonna let me go of one of my... Did somebody give me a third token...?
[overlapping] Oh, it's because you asked me to... OK.

Austin: [overlapping] I did because you asked me... It's 'cause... you asked me... the Weak Move question. So I just put one there.

Ali: [overlapping] Shu-shu-sure...

Austin: Unless you also had already done that but I don't think you had.

Ali: [yawns] No-no-no.

Austin: Um. So that gets rid of the dogs. We still have Vincent Ketchle from "Ketch all..." whatevers. "Ketch all capture and retrieval and return." Uh... behind us in...

Jack: [nonplussed] It gets rid of the dogs?!? I mean, I'm happy to follow the fiction but that's so optimistic! [overlapping] That's 2000 dogs!

Austin: [overlapping] Well, Ali spent a token!

Jack: Yeah!

Austin: Oh, there's more than one flare, Jack! This is...

Jack: [overlapping] Oh, I see.

Austin: [overlapping] In my mind Samantha is [in a somewhat rote tone] lighting a flare, throwing it out the window...

[Ali laughs]

Austin: ... lighting a flare, throwing it out the window.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Right?

Jack: It's... five dogs per flare and we have 200 of them.

[Austin & Ali laugh]

Austin: They're very bright, and... OK, here's what they're actually doing. Let me pitch this: it's frightening the geese up. And the hares, and the rabbits, and the frogs. And *those* are what the dogs are now chasing.

Dre: Aahhh...!

Austin: Right?

Jack: Yes.

Austin: Suddenly, the rest of the Earth wakes. And they are more appealing than the fast car we are in.

Jack: Yeah. Dogs love to chase a car but they *love* to chase the geese, the frogs, the hares. The...

Austin: They will catch a goose!

Jack: Maybe not these geese! [overlapping] With the... you know...

Austin: [overlapping, chuckling] None of these geese! [laughs]

Jack: These geese coming from the same school of that dog that got smaller but its teeth stayed the same size.

Austin: [laughs] The goose teeth: very big! [chuckles] Um...

Jack: Extremely big!

Austin: So this leaves us with one Bounty Hunter behind us and one in front of us. Uh... [overlapping] What else do we have in this car?

Jack: [overlapping] On the horizon, the lighthouse... the light from the lighthouse is... on.

Austin: [overlapping] Yes. Oh, is it on. Hmmm...

Jack: Yes. It is, like, the massive Fresnel lens at the top of the lighthouse. The lighthouse is usually on, but I think in the same way that we're told stories about people who go up to Bluff City, mostly kids tell each other stories about the lighthouse?

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Um, and that was... You know. When I was a kid, I was playing *Super Smash Brothers* with my friends in the ruins of Bluff City Studios.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: So I don't know lighthouse rumors! But the light is... you know, is going.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And it's... I'm heading the car in that direction?

Austin: Okay.

Jack: But we are still being pursued.

Austin: I start... I start to talk to... to Robyn. Um. And I'm... going to ask you to use the wires in the... glove box to signal forward. To signal... you know, as we're going over these bridges into... people in the city... should be able to see us crossing towards the city. Right? And I'm basically telling you, like... a Morse-code style thing. Um. And I'm spending a token to "incite my followers into violent action" [chuckles]

Jack: Whoa!

Austin: Um. I and I'm sending a message that's basically... You know. What I'm... saying is someone is blocking our route forward. Take them out. But what I'm actually

saying, what the words, or the signal that I'm asking you to use the wires to send this message forward, is... much more akin to, like... [in a grave tone] "The path from the sea to the to the deep land is blocked by... a beast, who would draw our blood. Use its as fuel to keep the lantern lit." Right? Something like that. Um...

Jack: Marlon-Styx-ass prediction.

Austin: Yeah. A hundred percent, right? But... you know. If you can... I'm imagining you're able to do it. I'm spreading the token to do it, but I'm not the one sitting there... [chuckles] So I think... This doesn't seem like a hard thing to do, right?

Dre: [overlapping] No, yeah.

Austin: [overlapping] To, like, hit two wires together so I don't know that you have to spend a thing — but I'm basically, like, [chuckling] spelling this message out to you. Slowly. And it's just ridiculous! Yeah... Marlin-Styx-ass message! Nostradamus-ass message! That I'm slowly spelling out that makes no fucking sense — but then we get the shots, right? Of the people who... You know, these are people who look, like, they're in, you know, a different story altogether. Uh. They're wearing, you know, a poncho made out of old ShopRite... you know, bags. Old canvas grocery bags. They are wielding, you know, sharpened...

[02:00:00]

Austin: You know, they're wielding a bicycle wheel where the rubber wheel has been replaced by metal that has been sharpened to a sharp edge. You know? Like, they're in... post-apocalyptic *Dark Souls*. And they begin to move in on the person who is blocking our path forward? And they're not gonna kill... I mean...! I don't know! [chuckles] I think the boss meter... The boss health meter appears from them! [chuckles] But they're mostly distracting this person, right? They're mostly driving whoever this other Bounty Hunter away to clear our route forward. Which only leaves us with Ketchle behind us. And the lighthouse in front.

Jack: Could you ping the lighthouse on the map? [overlapping] We can get there narratively very easily, but...

Austin: [overlapping] It says lighthouse. It's right here!

Jack: Oh, yeah, yeah!

Dre: Hmmm...

Jack: [overlapping] Straight shot!

Austin: [overlapping] It's always been there. In fact, if you take a look at... [mumbles while searching] buh-buh-buh-buh... *Tales From The Loop* map... you can see it, in fact, is inside of the area that is marked as Bluffington Beach. Which we have established a long time ago as... What if there was a part of Atlantic City that was, like, almost a subdivision... You know... It was founded alongside of Atlantic City and it was subsumed into it. And maybe at some point in the future it gets that designation back or something, but it's part of what we've designated as the Bluffington Beach part of Atlantic City. Um.

So, yeah. It's kind of a straight shot for us. Presumably, cutting through... I mean, it's a straight shot except of course we are in a post-apocalyptic moment: the world is devastated; there are people chasing us, presumably; some of these roads are blocked and you'll have to find routes through; maybe even becomes kind of maze-like at a certain point, you know... And it's dark and we don't have headlights that are per... I guess, at this point, presumably, you could fix the headlights. Or hold them on together yourself, Robyn?

Dre: Sure. Yeah.

Jack: And by spelling a message that says [in a mock-grave tone] "lighting the path forward the electricity will allow me to..." And then in doing so you just get to see the road.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Um...

Austin: I'm spreading a token. I should get rid of one of my tokens. I did that. There we go.

Jack: I love that one of my Regular Moves is “offer someone a cigarette” Which a thing that is just a...

[Austin chuckles]

Jack: I think we all have that move. Do we all have that move?

Austin: No, we don't all have that move.

Dre: No.

Austin: We all have “take action, leaving yourself vulnerable”, I think! But everything else...

Jack: Yea-yea-yeah.

Austin: And “get out of harm's way”, I want to say we all have. And maybe... No. That's it, I think.

Jack: Yeah. I've not been in a position to offer people a cigarette but it's good to know that that's there.

Austin: [half-chuckling] Mm-hm!

[pause]

Jack: Hell, I'll do it! There's a cigarette in the...! [chuckles] There's a... pack of old cigarettes in the glove compartment, additionally. No, they're in the driver's side door.

Austin: [overlapping] They're... Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Mm-hm.

Jack: [overlapping] We've established what's in the glove compartment. We can't...

Dre: Sure.

Jack: It's important to... [half-chuckling] follow the rules. And... You know, sort of I wordlessly first offer the cigarette to Robyn.

Robyn: Yeah! Sure!

Jack: And then turn in my seat, I'm on a straight bit of road — it's very dangerous. And I think Quincy says:

Jack (as **Quincy**): It's very dangerous!

Austin: [chuckles] Owhh...!

Jack: I'll turn in my seat and offer the people in the back seat a cigarette from this beaten-up ol' pack.

[pause]

Austin: Do I smoke? [pauses] I think I say:

Providence: I'll hold it, but I can't.

Austin: And take it from you. And hold it in a way that's very attractive. But, you know, I'm, like, a robot person? So.

Jack: Yeah. [overlapping] Sam?

Dre: [overlapping] Oh, yeah.

Ali: Ummm... Yeah.

Jack: Quincy?

[Ali chuckles]

Robyn: No!

Samantha: Hey!

Providence: Stop it!

Austin (as **Quincy**): Yes!

Samantha: What's wrong with you?

Robyn: [overlapping] Nooo.

Austin (as **Quincy**): [overlapping] I'll just hold it, too!

Already: Okay!

Robyn: You promise?

Austin (as **Quincy**): No...

Samantha: No!

Robyn: Okay.

Austin: [chuckling] They say no when you ask them, anyway. So...

[Dre laughs]

Austin: Kind of slumped down and just pet...

Austin (as **Quincy**): Can Duke have one?

Robyn: No.

Jack: Yeah. Duke has one and just eats [imitates loud chewing] hrawrawraw!

[Austin laughs]

Dre: Oh God!

Austin: [laughing] Oh, no! [half-sighs] Aohhh...!

Dre: That's gonna be a very sick dog.

Jack: That dog is a tough dog. That dog has... It's the post-apocalypse. [overlapping]
That dog has eaten way worse things than one old cigarette.

Dre: [overlapping] That's... You know what? That's true.

[Austin chuckles]

Jack: Um. Yeah. There's a moment where, you know, we have to do that cool thing in the car chase where we... have to pull over to... like, hide in a ditch... in a drainage ditch as cars pile over the [overlapping] bridge above us or something.

Austin: [overlapping] Right, yes.

Jack: Um...

Austin: What is... I'm trying to think about our *Gravity RIP* game! This... The car that was brought in to be fixed has some sort of weapon on it. What is it? What sort of fucked up future race car weapon... It's, like, an illegal modded weapon, you know? It's not supposed to have this weapon, because *Gravity RIP* you're not allowed to *purposefully* try to kill somebody — but it's on there! Uh... What is it? What's the weapon that Ketchle is about to use... try to use on us?

Dre: Ummmm...!

Austin: Like, a harpoon gun? Is that too basic?

Dre: I was literally just about to say grappling gun.

[Austin murmurs in agreement]

Dre: So...

Austin: Maybe it's a... Alright. Ready? Here we go.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: It's a... It's a very... weird weapon. It shoots two harpoons that... have electromagnets in them. And it tries to... What it tries to do is attach one to the left side of a vehicle and one to the right side of the vehicle and then it repels. You're using the two electromagnets... to produce opposite... you know, polarity to try to rip the thing apart.

Dre: [overlapping, horrified] Wuhhh... Yeah.

Austin: [overlapping] So it's, like, it attach...! You know what I mean? It, like, attaches opposite sides and then, like, *pushes* away. Um... Which is a very silly weapon, but that's what it is!

Dre: Sure. I've seen *Too Fast Too Furious*.

Austin: Right! Exac... I mean, yeah. Basically, yes. And he... Vincent Ketchle is trying to line this shot up for us. Or on us. You know? Something inside of our car beeps the way a jet does when [chuckles] someone's locked onto it!

[Dre laughs]

Jack: God! Yeah. The... A voice in the car says:

Jack (as **Car PA System**): Contact.

[Austin bursts out laughing]

Robyn: Oh, that's weird.

Providence: Someone do something.

Jack: [deflated] Ohhhh...

Dre: I'm going to "take action, leaving myself vulnerable".

Austin: Hmmm...!

Dre: [overlapping] Ummm...

Austin: [overlapping] What's that look like?

[pause]

Dre: Boy! Um... Just gonna lean out the side of the car and shoot Ketchle's gun back at him! But I still don't know how to use a gun so I'm still holding it upside down.

Austin: Upside down. Right. Uh-huh! Um...

Dre: And I... Well...! Hmm. [pauses] Hold on. I'm gonna change this into "tinkering with an object leaving it volatile or broken."

Austin: Interesting!

Dre: Because I shoot it once and I'm holding it wrong, so it kicks and it flies out of my hand hits the ground and just smashes.

Austin: Amazing! Great which... Okay, so maybe what you've done is, like, knocked out... I was imagining this not as a gun that Ketchle was holding but it was, like, built into the front of the car like a James Bond weapon. You know what I mean? Like, a car gun.

Dre: [overlapping] Ohh!

Austin: [overlapping] But if you've *knocked* one of them... Because it's a... you know, it's a future car. It's, like, one of those... yeah, it's, like... You know, "the spikes pop out the side of the wheels" type of thing, but it's a hovercar. So, yes.

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Austin: But I think maybe you shoot one of the harpoon guns off. You know?

Dre: [overlapping] Yeah.

Austin: [overlapping] So it does... It can't do the tear us apart thing, but even one of these harpoons in us would be pretty bad. And you've lost the gun. Um... Quincy turns to look out the back window and he's, like, doing pretend:

Austin (as **Quincy**): [imitates sound of gun] Bang! Bang!

Austin: As if... to help. You know?

Dre: Sure. Yeah.

Austin: Do I have anything to help here?

Dre: I mean, I could do something else, too!

Austin: Whoever wants to do something here! I feel, like, we're just... figuring out a way through... [overlapping] this big final thing.

Dre: [overlapping] Yeah. Um... I mean, I will... I will do another "take action, leaving myself vulnerable". Um. I, like... kind of crawl across the car...

[Austin snickers in disbelief]

Dre: ... so I crawl over Already, and lean out the window, and start trying to, like, just... using, like, a wrench or a crowbar — a crowbar that I have — just trying to, like, pry the other harpoon off.

Austin: Oh I had...! Okay, yeah! I hadn't even thought it had shot that one yet. But, yeah. Okay, sure! That's more fun — is that the second one does hit us, and does... Yeah, it's starting to pull the car. So yeah, you're now crowbarring it off. Um. Already pulls the car... the *Gravity RIP* car closer and closer at that point so that you're hanging out the window as Already... Or sorry, as Ketchle is trying to, like... ram the car into you? Do you know what I mean?

Dre: [overlapping] Yeah.

Austin: [overlapping] Like, slam into our sides while you're hanging out of it? And is, like...

Austin (as **Vincent Ketchle**): [as if shouting] You welded me into this thing, you piece of shit! I'm gonna kill you with it!

Robyn: You'll still be stuck in there!

Vincent Ketchle: [as if shouting] It's... Their windows! I'll just bust out the windows!

Robyn: [half-shouting] Why don't you do that in the first place?

Vincent Ketchle: [as if shouting] Because it's useful to have...! [trailing off into the distance]

[Dre chuckles softly]

Austin: And [chuckles] tries to slam it into you as hard as he can.

Jack: [chuckles] "You welded me into this shit, now I'm gonna kill you with it" is the most Stephen King line [laughing] we've put in this show...!

[others laugh raucously]

Austin: [softly] Oh, my god...!

Jack: [half-chuckling] The Shockmeister!

Austin: Mm-hm!

[others sigh as they recover from the laughter]

Jack: Okay. [overlapping] I mean, of course we can...

Austin: [overlapping] You're gonna get hit. Unless... I mean, yeah. We have to get... First of all, we have to... We're very clo...! We are as close as finishing this little mini-encounter, I think. Right?

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: Right. I mean, the question is do we actually want the climax to be at... pulling up to the lighthouse? You know?

Austin: Oh, sure!

Jack: Because, I'm just saying, that there's a cliffside.

Austin: True. Bluffington. Bluff... Well...! Yeah.

Jack: A lighthouse is generally mounted on some sort of a promontory, right?

Austin: Yeah! Yeah.

[long pause]

Jack: Yeah, okay! I'll "take action and leave myself vulnerable"! I want to... lure... We're tearing up towards this lighthouse the... Well, now, I want to be honest to you here, Austin: if I can't knock this guy off a cliff into the ocean... [half-chuckling] I know Atlantic City is quite flat on the edge.

Austin: [overlapping] It is.

Jack: [overlapping] And I don't want to suddenly start describing a cliff...

Austin: Well...!

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah. I mean, what there is though is a multi-tiered city from the future that we're driving through. Right? That, presumably, didn't... It didn't go from being the place

where there was a hover... there wasn't a hover-boardwalk to then suddenly there was a hover-boardwalk and there was no in between. Right?

So I imagine what we have is... roads that are... that almost, like, L.A.-style elevated highways that have been built throughout the city. And around the city. And elevated, like, walkways and stuff. Right? That there's now a hover-boardwalk but for some time there was a boardwalk that was, like, at floor 10. And maybe we're literally driving around *that* fucking thing. Do you know what I mean? [chuckles]

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Or at... you know... As high as the current casinos are — there was then a boardwalk... that was made between all the buildings. Like, what if... You know, there's, like, the skybridges but, like, what if it's sort of a skybridge there was a skyboardwalk.

And then 50 years after that there was the hoverboard walk that we gestured at in *Gravity RIP*. Right? That's even *higher* up in the sky. True goofy *Blade Runner* future of sci-fi shit. Right? And so we're in that middle area where, like... Almost, like... This is the moment it was very clear that it was done for for people in Atlantic City...

Jack: Huhh...

Austin: ... that even if you were... You know, people were warning about this 50 years prior to this it which are just regular ass problems that we are currently living with. But, like, at this point, the point which they built a boardwalk that regular people couldn't afford to visit because it was, you know, 20 stories in the sky...? It was done for for this fucking city! And then it kept going. [chuckles] So now we're, like... We can be... That's a fun place to have gotten to in a goofy way is the now abandoned mid-level boardwalk [overlapping] that is not fancy enough...

[Ali chuckles]

Jack: [overlapping] That these cars are...

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: ... screaming down.

Austin: They're screaming down! And it's not built for cars! It's built for people walking around! And so there's boards... you know... breaking... and old metal railings breaking, and we're driving past the, like, 15th floor of a casino that has been abandoned for 50 years? And then we're driving past one where, like, that floor is still being used: it's the cheapest room in the building and... it's the new "floor one", quote-unquote, and you don't enter on floor 1, you enter on floor 20, which is really floor 60...? You know?

[Jack chuckles]

Austin: Also...

Jack: Yeah...

Austin: And we're just tearing through this place. So that is as high of a cliff as you could need.

Jack: Yeah. And, I mean, I think a couple of things happen at once.

Austin: [overlapping] Hmmmm!

Jack: [overlapping] I think the first thing that happens is that... So, did you manage to detach the thing, but...

Austin: [overlapping] Yeah.

Jack: [overlapping] Robyn?

Austin: I think so. Right? [overlapping] Dre, you used that move, right?

Dre: [overlapping] Sure. Yea-yea-yeah.

Austin: [overlapping] Mm-hm.

Jack: Yea-yea-yeah. So... But he is... We are now driving, like, neck and neck, you know?

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: He's... And Already... you know, like, takes a dangerous evasive maneuver! Like, a handbrake turn, almost — to try and lure... Ketchle towards the edge. And then as that happens the front tires of the car... of our car, go out. Or this front suspension, or something. You know, like, this is the shoddy fix-job...

Austin: Hmm...!

Jack: ... that Robyn managed to do finally kind of kicking in. So the car just, like, lurches forward. The front of it drops and everybody inside, you know, screams, like, they're on a roller coaster. Maybe even The Augur — I don't know if your mask... if your mask of... you know... [chuckles]

Austin: [overlapping] My clown face... My clown robot face.

Jack: [overlapping] ... composure cracks as the car...

Austin: Oh, yeah. I think so.

Jack: [overlapping] ... as the car drops forward.

Austin: [overlapping] I think I opened my mouth to scream and the scream comes from a part of me where sound doesn't normally come from? Like, deeper...

Ali: [overlapping] Right.

Jack: [overlapping] Yeah! [chuckles]

Austin: [overlapping] Like, deeper in? Do you know what I mean? And it's like... It didn't... It doesn't reach through the pipes to get out of my mouth right, it just plays in my chest.

[02:15:03]

Austin: [overlapping] Don't ask how.

Jack: [overlapping] And the cars... Both cars spin the first car, Ketchle's car goes off over the edge. And as it goes off over the edge, the harpoon fires again and catches the back of our car and drags it, sparks flying, as we, you know, just *scramble*, pouring out of this car as quickly as we can down towards the edge. And then this taxi cab... [chuckles] RIP to this taxi cab! You did well in *Bluff City*! Disappears over the edge of this mid-tier boardwalk... attached by a magnetic grapple to the falling car of the Bounty Hunter Ketchle.

Robyn: Oh, my hashbrown!

Austin: RIP.

Jack: [laughs] Oh no! [overlapping] A bag of cashews!

Austin: [overlapping] RIP to the hashbrowns.

Providence: We'll get you more.

Jack: I "took action, leaving myself vulnerable" and in doing so we lost our car...

Austin: [overlapping] Yeah. It makes sense.

Jack: [overlapping] And I think we had, like... a rough scrape to get out of the car in time. You know, cuts and bruises, I think. But Ketchle is... Ketchle is gone!

End of car scene [02:16:07]

And now I think we can... We have... It's not an easy shot but I think through a combination of entering that casino at floor 1, and it being this deeply weird experience...

Austin: Mm-hm...

Jack: ... finding the remaining functioning elevator or whatever. We can take it down through these abandoned buildings and... start to head out towards this lighthouse!

Austin: So! I'm gonna describe some fun things here, briefly. One is: earlier you asked me... Earlier I had to come up with a year for when the lighthouse... was built. And I said, like... late 1800s and I was, like, “oh, wait! No!”

And I looked at my notes and my notes say that... My notes say a number which is 1854 which is when Atlantic City was genuinely founded and... incorporated as Atlantic City. There had been some people — I mean, you know the Lenape Native Americans had been there for ages — but settlers... you know, colonizers came... and came to this part of New Jersey well after Philadelphia, for instance, had been built. Um... The...

Atlantic City was founded and was supposed to be a sort of health resort in the mid-1850s. There was a train... a train service began... from Camden, I want to say, and the whole thing was to bring people from Philadelphia to Atlantic City to, like, hang out by the beach and... do some, like, walking constitutionals. You know, that style of 1800s resorts. Where you're, like: “oh...!”

Jack: Get the air!

Austin: “Go get the salt air!” You know? And... It took years. You know, it wasn't until the 1870s, I want to say, before... maybe... yeah, 1870 was the first boardwalk, period. Right? Before that it was just hotels [half-chuckles] and the boardwalk gets built to help keep sand out of the lobbies — because otherwise people would be just walking in the sand then coming in with shoes [chuckles] filled with sand.

But! I was, like: “oh 1856 is when the was when the... the lighthouse was built. And that's true.

The Absecon Lighthouse — which, again, Absecon is a... you know, a loose trans... not translation, but... it's based on the Absegami, which is another uh Native American tribe from the area, and the actual Island Atlantic City is on is Absecon Island,

the town I went to high school in is Absecon, New Jersey — but the Absecon Lighthouse was truly really founded... construction began in 1854 and... it was truly, actually, finished and the first... It was first lit January 15 1857.

So it's literally, those are the years. It has a giant Fresnel lens that is still there for people to go look at. Um. In Real History this lighthouse was designed by a Union... Civil War General... [chuckles] Which is a wild thing to know! Uh... [overlapping] He defeated...

Jack: [overlapping] So, post-war. He defeated the Confederacy...

Austin: [overlapping] He defeated the Confederacy...

Jack: [overlapping] ... then was, like: “time to build a lighthouse!”

Austin: He literally... He fought many of the key battles in the Eastern theater and defeated the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia led by Robert E Lee at the battles of... Battle of Gettysburg.

Jack: [overlapping] Whoa! Shit!

Austin: [overlapping] That guy then came and said “and I'm going to build a lighthouse!”

Jack: [overlapping] “In Atlantic City!” The burgeoning Atlantic...

Austin: [overlapping] It was designed by him, it's... In Atlantic City. “I'm gonna go take a weekend constitutional in Atlantic City [chuckles]. I'm gonna build a lighthouse.” Now. That's the truth of Absecon Lighthouse. That's real.

In our world someone else built it. One of the rare ways in which our Atlantic City and Bluffington Beach is in fact slightly different than reality. I mean, maybe he collaborated! Maybe that's the truth! What's this... This guy shows up and he goes [chuckles] “I think this is a great place for a lighthouse! I don't know from lighthouses. How do I build a lighthouse? Someone help me.”

And the person he goes to is someone named Alexander Blaufelden. Which is where we get the name Bluffington Beach from. It's a mistranslation of Blaufelden — someone on Ellis Island went “Bluffington! Got it!” And... he founds this kind of Bluffington Beach Enclave in the northern part of what is now Atlantic City. And his house, I think I've mentioned very briefly in an intro — I want to say, the intro to whatever came before *Capers*? [chuckles] Because it's Alexandra Hughes talking... And god! Who even knows...! *Capers* came out [bursts out laughing] so long ago at this point!

Ali: Mm-hm...! Yup.

Austin: Um... “The Moving Pictures”! It was “The Moving Pictures” was this intro. I described... a woman who when she was a girl went into her grandfather's basement and found there something very strange. A machine. Um... And that machine... is where we're going to end up.

Because... Who has the key? Who opens the one door this key is for? There's, like, a back door on the house attached to the lighthouse. Like, on... the bigger... you know, it's, like, a big... three-story estate-style house that's attached to it. And it's been abandoned, too. But the key... The key doesn't work on the front door the key doesn't work in the side door — I think it's, like, a cellar door key. Who opens that door and goes down there first? Also, presumably, we're all just here. And we're, like, this is what we're doing now — is we're gonna finish this.

Jack: Is it Quincy? Have I tossed Quincy the key because they wanted to lock the car up? Use the... central locking? Have that fun experience?

Austin: Have that... Yeah. And is, like, turning it and turning it and turning it. As, like, that fun feel of, like, [overlapping] click... Oh, wait! Didn't you lose the car?

Jack: [overlapping] The wall going [imitates] clunk.

Austin: We lost the car. [overlapping] Did we have to pick those keys out of the ruins of the car?

Jack: [overlapping] We lost the...

Austin: Out of the... [overlapping] Or did you take it?

Jack: [overlapping] Uh... We... No. Because the ruins...

Austin: [overlapping] OK. OK.

Jack: [overlapping] I grabbed them as they... as we were being...

Dre: Yea-yea-yeah.

Austin: [overlapping] Of course! Whew!

Jack: [overlapping] ... basically pulled out of this car. Quincy grabbed them — that's the way to do it.

Austin: [overlapping] Quincy's grabbed them!

Jack: [overlapping] Quincy grabbed the keys!

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: It's Quincy's hero moment! Well, they're all Quincy's [overlapping] moments have been hero moments.

Austin: [overlapping] They're all hero moments.

Dre: [overlapping] Oh, yeah, yeah.

Austin: And so... They're, like:

Austin (as **Quincy**): I bet it goes to the front door!

Austin: And they go up and they try it in the front door. And they say:

Austin (as **Quincy**): [contemplatively] Well, it doesn't work on the front door!

[Dre laughs]

Austin: [overlapping] And I'm just...

Jack (as **Quincy**): [overlapping] How many doors does a house tend to have?

Austin: This house seems to have many. [chuckles] And we tried them all and it... they don't work. But! Quincy spots a cellar door. And... slides this old key in and opens it up, and there's an old dusty stairwell downwards. And... I... stepping into this place... light a flare and throw it on the floor. [chuckles] So that we can see by it! The last of the flares, dropped on the floor of the car, [chuckles] before...

Dre: Finally!

Austin: Before Sam could throw it. And so by the light of a flare, of a road flare, we see a machine. [pauses] I don't know what this machine looks like! My notes are... [pauses] My notes are... I'm going to read from my notes:

“1854. Atlantic City founded. Alexander Blaudenfeld is a reclusive tycoon who takes over a small beach on the northern end of what would become Atlantic City, and builds a mansion there. He's an occultist whose grand vision is about blurring lines between dimensions and tapping into quote “The Eternal Engine” which he believes will be a power source that can conquer the world. On his land he builds a strange machine to extract that power and it manages to. But it costs more power than it produces. People call him a phony. As he builds it, he sees strange dreams of other places and times, other visions of the beach he lives on. He is haunted by these dreams for the rest of his life and becomes a recluse.

“1900. Descendant granddaughter Alexandra Hughes née Blaudenfeld finds her grandfather's infernal machine when he... when she is 10, and over the decades that follow she draws on the visions it gives her, crafting horror stories under the pen name A. H. Bluff. Her work inspires others and there is briefly a wave of works in the quote ‘New Atlantic Style’. With the proceeds of those sales she begins the work of

buying up more territory nearby, expanding Bluffington Beach. In time she disappears, visiting the other cities and making one of them her home.”

And then I have: “2010s. Her great grandson, the child actor Julian H Bluff came back to Atlantic City in his 20s to invest in real estate. While looking over his assets he learned that he'd been left his great grandmother's old home. There, he found the machine and had an idea. He just needed money. Money he got from the Nevada family.” Actually, is it the Nebraska family? [overlapping] My notes, I think, are wrong. I think I meant the Nebraskas, right?

Jack: [overlapping] Uh, it's the Nebraska family. Yeah.

Austin: These are notes from... four years ago? [chuckles] Or something?

[Ali chuckles]

Austin: Five years ago? These are my Bluff City season 2 notes first written... I don't know when. Fore... *Forever* ago. And then we are here... And we know what happened with Julian Bluff and Bluff City Studios... Julian helped build the... Julian pitched into Tunnel Project as a way of trying to draw on the fictional energies or, like, the fantastical energies of Bluff and Blough, to make movies [chuckles] cheaply!

[Jack chuckles]

Austin: And it went bad. As we may recall. Um... And now here we are. In the house, looking at the infernal machine. The machine that first let... A. H. Bluff, AKA Alexandra Hughes slip into Blough City, where we... we actually met her in that *Capers* game — she's a character back then.

And... also where Blauden... or Blaufelden originally... built it, trying to tap into... these other... these other worlds as a source of energy. During, you know, the big... whatever, the big, you know, oil boom... during early industrialization. Or, I guess, late industrialization. Um.

And so... I don't know what this looks like! I'm so curious: what does the first machine... What's the machine that opened a door between... Bluffington Beach AKA Atlantic City, Bluff City — a world of expansive imagination, and dreams, and freedom, and... you know, a place that changes constantly, a place that's, you know, exists only when the camera is on it, a place where no... there's no block that looks the same week to week, because imagination rewrites it thus — and Blough City — a place where everything is standardized and straightforward and, frankly, kind of tyrannical, [chuckles softly] where everything follows the rules of a harsher genre... and all of that.

What's the machine that first made this... or brought this series of cities into alignment look like? Because, truly, I don't have a sketch of it. Maybe I did in 2019 when I first made this document! I certainly don't now! [half-chuckling] Four years later.

Jack: Mmmmy... Oh! Wait! There's a specific piece of art that I'm thinking of.

Austin: Hm!

Jack: And now I have to look for it. I was about to be, like: “oh it's kind of, like, that piece where...” And I was, like: “oh I should actually just find that piece of art.”

Austin: Sure.

Jack: Okay. The piece of art I am thinking of is by a... I think, British artist called Cornelia Parker... and it is from 1991 and is called “[Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View](#)”. Its medium is wood, metal, plastic, ceramic, paper, textile, and wire. Its dimensions are unconfirmed. And it comprises a garden shed and its contents that the artist Cornelia Parker asked to be blown up by the British army... and then she took a series of high resolution photographs of it in the moment of being exploded, and then — using, I guess, like, height tensile wire and lights — recreated the shed in its moment of explosion. And I cannot help but picture, like... a machine like that. Uh... Just connected in all sorts of remarkable weird ways. It looks like a building, or an ideology, or a city, or a person's house that has been exploded, [overlapping] but it's...

Austin: [overlapping] By the British government!

Jack: By the British government! [laughs] Upon request!

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: [overlapping] And it's...

Dre: [overlapping, in a teacherly tone] With permission!

Austin: [overlapping] Right. Sure.

Jack: And it's casting all these *remarkable* shadows. It has a point of light in the center of it, [overlapping] so it is throwing...

Austin: [overlapping] Except! In this moment there's a second point of light, Jack. The flare on the ground.

Jack: Hm!

Austin: And it's created another shadow. I'm spending a token — my last token — to have... you know, unintentionally, perhaps... In fact, do I not even need to do this! I don't even need to do this! I think I can just “commence a ritual” by mistake and Trip the Circuit, effectively. We have Tripped the Circuit together. Um... The shadow... The natural shadows dance around the entire place. Right? You can't make sense of them. But the flare in the right position... it — you know, I tossed it to —

[02:30:00]

Austin: ... creates one set of shadows that coheres. And forms the clean clear silhouette of a door. And I say:

Providence: I was wrong. There is a door.

Austin: And we all have an opportunity here: do we return to the Enclave and recommence our roles — Arrival, and Hawker, and Stitcher, and Torch [pauses] and

Quincy, and Duke —; or do we choose in this moment to travel where we will — Bluff or Blough [pauses] or somewhere else that we haven't invented yet.

[pause]

Austin: Or, do we... What do we do with this thing? That we now have a route from where we live to these other places? Secure, secret. Seemingly stable.

Jack: Uh... The door — is it a material door? Or it's [overlapping] a spiritual door. I mean... You know what I mean.

Austin: [overlapping] It's a... materia... The shadow seems to solidify.

Jack: Okay. Um. Let's complicate this! I would like to open the door. I'm not going to step through it...

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: ... but in the same way as you stand outside a living room door and can open it into... you know, a bedroom or something.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: I want to open the door and see what's on the other side!

Austin: You tell me! What... Where are you trying to go? It's, actually... The way this works is where are you trying to go? And I have a rule for this. I'm not saying what it is. We can interpret the rule after you say where you're trying to go. I'll say what it is after you say where you're trying to go. You know?

Jack: [overlapping] Where is...

Ali: [overlapping] Not to, like, speak for Already here...

Jack: No, I would appreciate it!

Ali: But...

[Austin & Ali chuckle]

Ali: But, like, some of the hesitation Jack is speaking to is just, like: “I want to know what's past there”...?

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: I wouldn't know what, like, options are open to me and not...

Austin: It is not that way! [overlapping] It doesn't work that way!

Jack: [overlapping] Ain't that the way, though! That's... That's just...

[Ali laughs]

Austin: You open the door with an image in your head.

Jack: Yeah...

Austin: What is the image in your head? Or what is the word in your head? Or what is the... It is not a... It will produce something based on what you are thinking or feeling as you open the door. And I'm not... Again, I will tell you how that rule works when you open the door after you explain what the thing is that moves through your body or your mind or your soul or your heart as you open the door.

Jack: Yeah. Uh...

Austin: Because what I don't want is for you to *game* it! [overlapping] You know what I mean? Not that you would, but...

Jack: [overlapping] No! Already wants to be *done* with this. Already wants to... Like, I destroyed the phone.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: I went on this... We should be... You know. I had this clarifying prickly transformative moment...

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: ... by realizing that I can be a part of this place...

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: And now I have been given the opportunity to leave it — seemingly consequence-free... Well, I mean. You know.

Austin: Yehhh.

Jack: [chuckles] Seemingly...! I can go through the door.

Austin: Right.

Jack: I won't be hunted through hunters through the door. And I didn't think I wanted to leave. I... I had been talked around — genuinely! — to: “let's go home, there is a space...” You know. I can't remember if it was Augur or Samantha who said... this is a... you know... “are we just doing this to protect us? You are part of...” you know: “You are us.” Um. And I think that they were fully ready to have internalized that and now they've got this door out. And they've opened it.

Austin: I think I know what it is, then! But I will tell you what the rule is, still. Um. If it is a place that you have a foggy memory of, if it is a feeling of a desire to return to something safe and stable and simple... and a false feeling — right? That sense of, like “the way things used to be”. Can't we just go back to the boardwalk when... you know.

One of the intros to this season is... I believe it's Absolute Pluperfect saying we need to make Atlantic City back to... bring it back to the days when it was America's Playground, or something like that. Right? And setting up the “America's Playground” game by talking about an olden time — that would actually take you to Blough City. Right? This staid old place... a place that is... completely safe and stable.

If the person who opens this door... *feels* novelty, or imagine something that is not real, that they could not go to — that place is created in Bluff City in that moment

and they go there. They've changed it, they've added to it, the way Bluff City works. And our... you know, effectively transported there as they move to the door. But what you've done is, I think, opened the door to Snoopy's. [chuckles]

Jack: This is exactly what I was thinking!

[Ali giggle-laugh]

Jack: I think I have opened the door to Snoopy's. Um...

Ali: Let's fucking go!

Jack: And I didn't... I didn't want to pitch it, because I didn't know if the machine would do this.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Um... [pauses] Because I think that this is genuine! This isn't a naive... You know! If, for example I'd been thinking "oh, I just want to go back to some mistaken time when I felt comfortable, or whatever. [overlapping] And things were safe. You know...

Austin: [overlapping] Right. Yep. That's exactly what I... Yeah.

Jack: I've... I've experienced a transformative moment on the road with a group of weirdos and gone, like...

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: "Well, shit! I don't know if this is going to be pleasant but I think I've got a home there."

Austin: [overlapping] Mm-hm.

Jack: [overlapping] Or "I've got a place to be there." Uh, and I think I [chuckles] open the door and go:

Already: Shit! It's Snoopy's!

Austin (as **Quincy**): Stop cursing!

[Ali laughs]

Already: Fuck, it's Snoopy's! It's Snoopy's!

Austin (as **Quincy**): Eh! That was worse!

Samantha: Yeah! That's an upgrade! That's, like, a Tier 3 curse!

Already: This... How high do they go? Don't! Don't answer that! [half-chuckling]
Don't answer that!

Austin (as **Quincy**): Can...

Austin: Quincy is... On the moment of correcting you for cursing... does not say the thing that they normally say which is, like "my mom always says..." What they say instead is:

Austin (as **Quincy**): Can that door go anywhere?

[pause]

Already: I don't... It seems to be going to Snoopy's.

Jack: Close the door and open the door again and it's Snoopy's again.

Already: I don't... I don't know. Maybe? Augur? I don't know. This seems like...

[pause]

Providence: I've never seen this in my life! Do you want to open the door, Quincy? [softly] I don't know if it works like that. It's probably just gonna be Snoopy's again, actually.

Robyn: Ehh! It's worth a shot!

Austin: Quincy opens the door. And it is a paved schoolyard. Like, a parking lot that does double duty. It's where kids play recess, but it's also where people park to go to the nearby... you know, stores, or pick up and drop off their kids. And there's a bookbag. It's, like... up against a fence. And there's, like, a little Tamagotchi tied to one of the zippers. Um. And they say:

Austin (as **Quincy**): My mom's always late after school to pick me up.

Jack: [commiserating] Uffff...

Austin: And they're, like, not sure if they should walk through this or not.

Jack: Oh, man! It's so sad, but it's also... it's real! That's a real place! And their mom is probably there.

Austin: Is it Bluff or is it Blough? I don't think we know.

Jack: [overlapping] Based off...

Austin: [overlapping] It's shot in the way where we can't... Yeah, go ahead!

Jack: But we know about Quincy!

Austin: Yeah. [pauses] Yeah. We know that where Quincy came from was Bluff. So is this a way back for them?

Jack: Or are we just sending... [chuckles]

Austin: But is this also... But is this them having the feeling of "I wish things were stable. I wish things were the way they used to be when everything was good and easy and simple"?

[pause]

Austin: And they don't know that rule. We know that rule. Right?

Jack: I'm glad I opened the door first.

Austin: Mmm! Mm-hm!

Jack: And we established the rule. Or rather, we learned the rule.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Before happily [chuckling] sending Quincy oh... [sighs loudly] And, I mean... there's not a dich... Well, on some level there is a dichotomy here. I think that day-to-day life for a certain kind of person in Blough City is worse than day-to-day life for a certain kind of person in Bluff City. But at the same time we know that Bluff City is very ready to, as we've seen with Quincy, discard, not just people, but whole... whole cloth, [overlapping] you know, imaginations...

Austin: [overlapping] Mm-hm.

Jack: ... if they... if they are tired of them. [overlapping] I'm not saying...

Austin: [overlapping] And, you know, has also grown in size and scale since we last saw it, right? Like, I guess we haven't... We haven't put the camera on Bluff City in a long time. Right? Um...

[a brief pause]

Jack: [overlapping] But I really wanna make sure...

Austin: [overlapping] And maybe I won't talk about it — until we do. So...

Jack: Yeah. I wanna make sure — and I know we're not — but I want to make clear to The Listener that we're not, like, hitting, like, a Bioshock choice of, like...

Austin: [overlapping] U-um! [chuckles softly]

Jack: [overlapping] ... send the kid to the good place or send the kid to the bad place.

Austin: No.

Jack: You know, the nice imaginative city [chuckles] or the cruel city. Um... Even though they are in their own way imaginative and cruel.

Austin: Mm-hm. Imagination can be cruel is part of the undercurrent to this. Right? Is that, like, the Bluff impulse... is not without its edge... [pauses] Also. So.

And I don't know that we get to make the choice! I mean we do — we as authors do. You know, Quincy is not a person: Quincy's a character that we're playing. Um. But I don't know if our *characters* get to make the choice... The characters could make the choice. The characters can say “no, Quincy, close the door!” and they'd close the door and Quincy might resent them forever. You know what I mean? We could... So we are completely agents across [chuckles] all... all different tiers. Like you're saying, we can't.

Uh, Quincy will have made a choice in their head and then how that... what happens after that is... what's interesting. My instinct is that Quincy will want to walk through this, but is very scared of doing that? And I don't mean that as a way of cueing us to give Quincy a big optimistic speech...

Jack: Like, a pep talk.

Austin: Right. [overlapping] I don't know.

Dre: [overlapping] Hmm...

Austin: I don't know. I don't have a... This is not another final boss fight! You know what I mean? This isn't a, like, find the elemental weakness! There's no approach system here, [chuckles] you know?

Jack: We already did the boss fight and it was versus 3 000 dogs and two people in... [chuckles]

Austin: [chuckles] Yes!

Jack: ... in souped up racing cars!

Austin: And the approach, we learned, was that flares beat dogs. So...

Ali: Mm-hm...

Dre: Mm-hm.

Jack: Yeah.

Robyn: Quincy, do you want someone to walk through with you?

Austin (as **Quincy**): Um...

Austin: They look up at you and are just, like, welling up. And they just give you a little nod, and they go:

Austin (as **Quincy**): You would?

Robyn: [flippantly] Yeah! Why not?

Austin: Um. I think The Augur says:

Providence: Robyn, what if the door closes? What if you can't come back?

Robyn: Why not?

Providence: [sighs] Why not.

Robyn: Come on! You ever fixed the door? Fixing a door is easy. Just kind of, like, pop the hinges off, grease them up a little bit... You know. Maybe level something.

Austin: Quincy reaches up to take your hand.

Dre: Yeah. I grab Quincy's hand.

Austin: Quincy let's go. Let's go and then goes over and hu... begins to hug everybody, and says... Uhm. How does Quincy thank everybody? Quincy says... I think Quincy just

says... Oh god, it's so hard to get in this character's head sometimes! Very easy to be funny.

[Ali giggles]

Austin: Very hard to, like, find the way you say goodbye and thank you as a child, again. I don't think they say anything. I have been this child. They... You say... Quincy says:

Austin (as **Quincy**): I love you!

Austin: Like, like you say on the phone before handing it back to your parent.

[Jack sighs]

Austin: And then it goes over to Duke and says:

Austin (as **Quincy**): You have to stop barking at night! It's making Already mad.

Austin: And then comes over and grabs your hand again, Robyn.

Austin (as **Quincy**): I'm ready!

Austin: And they, like, wipe away tears a little bit as if to be, like "alright!" Like "I'm gonna be brave".

[pause]

Austin: Any final words for Robyn? To or from?

Dre: Hmmmm...

Austin: Sorry I said "final"! [chuckles] But there ain't no walking back out the door that easily!

Dre: Yeah, sure. Um... Oh!

Robyn: Um. When you all get home will somebody tell Knots what happened?

Already: Yeah. But you... You know. I'll hold the door open. I'm not... I'm not too worried.

Robyn: Oh! No. I know. It's just that, like, you know. Knots gets bored. They... they have to stay there all the time. They like stories.

Already: [overlapping] OK!

Providence: [overlapping] What kind of stories do they like?

Robyn: [sighs] Uuummm... Ironically? Hate ghost stories. So don't... [overlapping] do that.

Providence: [overlapping] No ghost stories.

Robyn: Mm-hmmmm... Documentaries?

Providence: Biographies, documentaries.

Robyn: Mm-hm.

Providence: Yeah. [pauses] I have a lot of books. I'll find something.

Robyn: [softly] God, I hope he hasn't just thrown everything everywhere. [in a regular tone] If he did you don't have to clean it up.

Already: Okay! Alright.

Austin: Then you walk through?

Dre: Mm-hm.

Season coda [02:44:27]

Austin: And you're there in the parking lot. And I think the camera shot is this: we are inside the room with the machine looking through the open door. Already, you're holding the door open, we can see through into the day — it's day wherever it is — the... a car pulls up... And... Quincy picks up their backpack — it's a little JanSport, it's a little red JanSport, with a pink Tamagotchi hanging from one of the zippers —

[02:45:00]

Austin: ... and they heft it up. It's so filled with books! Too much homework. And they hug you, Robyn. And then they wave to the to the car that's pulled up — we can't see the person who's driving the car, they're they're out of focus, they stand up their head is cut off from the frame, it's too high up. They're... You know, Quincy is still still there. Quincy, we can see in the frame getting, you know, falling out of focus, growing blurrier — but pointing between you, Robyn, and the person who got out the car... The sound is... gone now. We can't hear from inside of the room, we can only see what we see. And at some point you turn to look *back*.

[“[spectogram](#)” by Fog Lake starts playing]

Austin: And... We see you looking towards us. But we can't tell if you're making eye contact with the people in the room, or if you're looking at where a door used to be but isn't anymore.

[“spectogram” continues]

Austin: The second season of *Bluff City* was conceived and performed by Alicia Akampura, Keith J Carberry, Sylvie Bullet, Jack de Quidt, Janine Hawkins, Art Martinez-Tebbel, Andrew Lee Swan, and Austin Walker. It was produced by Alicia Akampura, with music by Jack de Quidt. The art was by Craig Sheldon. The games played were *Fiasco* by Jason Morningstar; *Catch the Devil* by Sage LaTorra; *Capers* by Craig Campbell; *Tales From The Loop* by Nils Hintze and Simon Stålenhag; *Mall Kids*

by Matthew Gravelyn; *Gravity RIP* by Luke Westaway and *Dream Askew* by Avery Alder. The song you are hearing is “[spectrogram](#)” by Fog Lake.

[“spectrogram” plays to end]

Austin: Bluff City will return.

[the sound of a thud, but grainy and echoey, as if coming from a tape recorder played in an empty hallway]