

Bluff City 23: The Moving Pictures Pt 1

Transcribed by Lucy (@battlestarvalk) [0:00:00 - 0:42:33]

Zoey (@zoeylectric) [0:42:34 - 1:41:14]

Note: TW content as outlined in the notes of the episode (discussions of drowning, car crashes, and sports injuries) begin at the 0:37:50 mark.

[Arrangement of "Claire de Lune" plays - [notes on Patreon](#)]

AUSTIN [as Alexandra Hughes]: It was the eve of the turn of the century, when I first saw the second shore, and I was but a child... though I do suspect that such a transit would infantilize even the most veteran of travellers. My father, a newspaperman, and a vocal proponent of the restorative properties of the seaside spas that then dotted this beach town, brought me, at only age 10, along on his holiday. At the time I was eager, interpreting my accompaniment as an example of his turn in mood— from indifferent father to... doting dad. With the benefit of wisdom, I now believe it was simply a matter of budget. My grandfather had by then cut him off from his endowment, and as a widower, child-rearing comes with a price tag. And so it ought not to have been a surprise that my desire for recreation would butt up against his for requiescence... which is why, day after day, he sequestered me in that mansion while he walked the boards in search of relief and, a certain sort of quiet, available only under the sound of gulls. Now, 20-odd years later, I find myself grateful for his daily abandonment. Only through this uniquely familial disservice did I discover the machine, locked in a room below the undercroft of my grandfather's terrible manse... and waiting, for me, to uncover its impossible... geometries... and what sights it showed me! Moving pictures so real, that soon enough... they contained me in them. I celebrated the centennial by subsuming myself in a second world, and a decade later, I would find a third. Each disproportionate to reality, singular in their vicissitudinal character, each a well worth tapping... but what, Diary, I saw last night... terrifies me.

It was not a constitutional to another world, but a premonition of my own. And for the first time in my life, I fear what is to come.

[Music ends]

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterisation, and fun interactions between good friends. I'm your host Austin Walker, joining me today... Janine Hawkins.

JANINE: Hey, I'm Janine Hawkins, I'm @bleatingheart on twitter.

AUSTIN: Andrew Lee Swan

DRE: Hey, you can find me on twitter @swandre3000

AUSTIN: And Sylvia¹ Clare!

¹ The name in the audio recording is no longer in use, hence the audio/transcript discrepancy.

Sylvia: Hey, I'm Sylvia, you can find me on Twitter @captaintrash, and you can listen to my other show 'EmojiDrome' wherever you get your podcasts.

AUSTIN: Alright! Today we're picking up- or we're starting our second game of our second season of Bluff City, and that game is [Catch the Devil](#) - a game of suspense in the late Anthropocene by Sage LaTorra. Sage LaTorra of course being one of the two authors of Dungeon World, the game we have played *the most* [chuckles] on Friends at the Table... this is a game- I was really happy to meet Sage at GenCon, and he gave me a copy of the game there, so shout-outs to Sage for that. I had forgotten about it for quite some time, I had forgotten about it for like, a month- it was just in my bag, and one day I was on the subway and was like 'Let's read this', and I did, and I was like oh wow, let's play this. So let me introduce the game, and then introduce the set up a little bit- um- just really broad still. I think between this session and the next one, I'm gonna take a break to actually hammer out some more stuff before we get too deep into this. I'm also feeling a little oogy right now, so I think we might just do character creation this session, if that's okay.

So, what is *Catch the Devil*? I'll read from the book-

This is the late Anthropocene, the current geological age where human activity is the dominant influence on the world around us. Humanity has had a good run, but it is winding down now. The late Anthropocene is the world around you right now. This is a game you are going to play with your friends, you all take part in a world in the last sputtering coughs of the human age. You'll see how their lives play out when something pulls into the dark inner workings of the world we see every day by having a conversation about who they are, what they're doing, and why they're doing it. These rules will guide that conversation to keep it on track and add an element of the unknown. The characters you play will be normal people like you and me. Just like we don't have control over some aspects of who we are, your character won't be made entirely by you - think of someone pulled from the phone book. And just as we aren't always completely in control of our emotions or our responses to them, sometimes you won't have complete control over your character. The world our characters inhabit is like our own, but with our darkest fears for what society may do made concrete and let run wild. Your characters will face the same things you fear, but made more real than real. The rules will tend to mean that things do not turn out well for our characters. The future is always ungiven, but they may face the widening gyre of the late Anthropocene. May someone have mercy on their souls.

So, this is the first game where all of- or at least my plan is for all of- to take in Bluffington Beach, in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in the real world... if you finished- [laughing] if you didn't finish the first season of Bluff City, I'm sorry, I spoiled it for you... um, but, that was one of the big finale bits, right? Where Hector Hu had found a way in to a world that was neither the explosion of creativity and chaos of unlimited emotional and empathetic potential that was Bluff City, nor the regressive dystopian sprawl of Blough² City, but was this other place - Bluffington City- or Bluffington Beach, which was part of New Jersey, where Atlantic City is. I have since tempered that a little bit, and I believe it is specifically one part of what

² Pronounced "Blue"

we know as Atlantic City. It is the real world. And so, for the first time, we are playing characters who have not, for instance, lived in a world where there are superheroes. Have not, for instance, lived in a world where monsters roam the night- where there is explicitly a world of censorship that controls what type of buildings can be designed by pulling from a list of twelve established building types. These are regular people, who have regular jobs, and regular concerns. None of which is to say that those things are not- does not mean that any of their lives have not been cast in struggle, have not been up against strange things before- we have all had strange, uncanny experiences. The fact that I am putting a camera on Bluffington Beach, in Atlantic City, means something is changing there. As *Catch the Devil* says that the world around you is getting worse, the world around you is getting stranger, and as time progresses, we will see how characters facing that react to it.

So we're saying that it's a game- the influences that *Catch the Devil* takes includes *True Detective*, *Get Out*, *Stranger Things*, *Twilight Zone*, *It Follows*, stuff like that. It is a horror game, in at least a couple of ways- to the degree that I don't even want to start naming things in the GM part of the playbook, in terms of 'what am I prepping'. For now, what I want to talk about is the basic setup, and then who your characters are- who you'll be playing in a game of *Catch the Devil*.

AUSTIN: The basic structure of what I have here is actually influenced greatly by our own recording history. Excuse me. People who have listened to the Live At The Table games will know that we ran- *two* sessions? Sylvia and Dre? Of Primetime Adventures- is that right?

AN: Uh, yeah, I think so. I think it was two.

AUSTIN: Okay. So... then we didn't. I think by the time this goes out, we will have done a third one [chuckles], and hopefully closed off the first episode of Primetime Adventures. If that's true, then good job us! If it's not, then *whoops* [laughs] Regardless, what we thought about was- what if it's the case that Primetime Adventures actually did go on hiatus? What if our game of *Aliens in the Outfield* didn't finish because it didn't finish. Also- wait- Dre, you weren't in that?

DRE: [overlapping] No...

AUSTIN: I always think you're in that game, I always do...

DRE: [overlapping] This is my favourite ongoing bit though [laughs]

AUSTIN: That's not even a bit, I just always think you were in that game when you never- you just aren't. I think it's the baseball association, for some reason? Like, Dre is definitely in the baseball game.

DRE: I *hate* baseball! [laughs]

AUSTIN: I don't know! I don't know what it is, I don't know what it is. Anyway... thank you Sylvia, for confirming [Sylvia makes a mumble of confirmation]. And so, it's like- what

happened there? Why did they go on a break? And what I think is true is this - there is a movie studio/television studio in the Bluffington Beach part of Atlantic City. This is not a real thing, this is a thing that exists in our game world [chuckles] this is a - I guess what I'll tell you, as i've done more prep than I'll say out loud, is that there a - there was a child actor named Julian H Bluff, who came back home to Atlantic City in his twenties to invest in real estate- to invest in the town. It's a real true thing to say that Atlantic City has been in some rough places over the last two decades, partially as new casinos open in nearby states, partially as things like online sports betting and online gambling in general took off, especially in the mid-to-late 2000's. A lot less people went to Atlantic City, so there really has been a hard time in AC for a while. I think that this guy - Julian H Bluff, was a child actor, came home, and bought some land, and on a whim- maybe had a good script, maybe had a friend who encouraged him to do this- he started a film company- a production company called Bluff City Studios which by- at this point has different sub brands on top of the studios, there's also Bluefield Productions and New Atlantic Pictures, and between the three of them they do regular film work, they do tv work - Bluefield Productions does tv works and New Atlantic Pictures is sort of like our Blum- Blumhouse- what's it called- Blumhouse equivalent, like our horror sub brand? And they have been really successful. They have a big lot, in an inland part of the city, they have a bunch of like... extra investment coming in, they've had a couple of big hits and so... all said, it seems like there's been a big success story.

But there's currently been a big strike ongoing. You are all people, despite the strike happening, who are involved in the day to day at the studio. I think it's a writer's strike, is what we all talked about? In relation to *Aliens In The Outfield*... so it is not like, like- if one of you wants to be a security officer at the- at the facility... everyone else is still there, everyone else is still employed- in fact, it's a little weird how much activity is still going on, given that film production has stopped. So- that is all I really have in terms of setup that I'd like to share at this point, because that is not what this is. I'm not just going to be like [laughing] "And here's the rest of the plot that I had figured out!" [Dre laughs in background].

So, let me see what I can read from- so! Should I explain what these character sheets that you're looking at mean? I mean, it's a Powered by the Apocalypse game- unsurprisingly, given that it's by Sage- um... there are four key stats, four key moves, and that's the kind of big big *big* picture stuff. Those stats are- Quick, which affect your character's ability to move quickly and decisively, Steady, which measures your composure under duress, Sharp, which measures your attention and reasoning, and Tough, which measures your physical strength and endurance. I will use those as judgement to guide you a little bit here? But that's kind of it. And to come up with your characters... one, we should have a discussion as to if you have any ideas, and then two- you'll kind of come up with a history, you'll come up with a- I'll ask you some questions about what you've been through before, and then we'll talk about how your characters already know each other, and the degree to which you're already bonded. Are there any questions about those basic things so far?

[pause, some non-committal murmuring]

AUSTIN: Alright! So... let's just get into character creation, if that's okay? I have three sheets in front of you, you should see three sheets in the- I hope? [Dre confirms] Alright, feel free to

claim one of them each. Ah... character creation gives you a chance to create a character in circumstances beyond their control by rolling randomly for some parts of the character. If any question is too personal, or if you don't feel like you can portray a certain result, you can choose instead of rolling. I'll note now that there are elements that are like "hey, sit down and roll dice to determine your character's pronouns, to determine the faith of your parents" This is very much trying to do- it's very much like hitting 'Random' on- what is that website called, Janine? The random person generator?

JANINE: I just had it open a second ago-

AUSTIN: [overlapping, in background] I know- I know...

JANINE: [continuing] It is... fakenamegenerator.com

AUSTIN: [amused] Yes, it's very good...

JANINE: A website I am still not sure if it's for benevolent or nefarious purposes. [Sylvia laughs]

AUSTIN: It's definitely nefarious, because it's the most real shit... [Janine laughing] Like, its fake Social Security numbers...

JANINE: [crosstalk] [laughing] Fake UPS tracking numbers! Like... why that specifically? Okay...

AUSTIN: Sometimes you need to know... sometimes you just need to know that Ann-Marie Taylor, who lives at 4611 Losh Lane in Portland, Pennsylvania, drives a blue 2006 Honda Element.

JANINE: Ooh! I just generated someone who lives in Bluffton.

SYLVIA: Really?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Wow! You gotta send me a screenshot of that person [Janine laughs]

[0:15:00]

SYLVIA: I like that there's- there's a full visa card here that I could just read out, down to the CVV. [laughs]

AUSTIN: [overlapping] I know! But it... it must be fake?! Right?!

SYLVIA: I *hope* so!

AUSTIN: I hope so!

JANINE: The thing- okay, so the thing that I was thinking about this today- so- the- the visa number must be fake. But the Social Security number thing, it has X's, and then there's a thing blow that says 'You should click here to find out if your SSN is online'. And I haven't done that, 'cause I don't have one-

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: [continuing] but I imagine if you have- are you supposed to just type in your Social Security number and be like-

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Just type it in- it's safe, don't worry about it.

JANINE: [continuing, laughing] here you go, is it online?

AUSTIN: Just- don't worry about it- yeah.

JANINE: Eurghh.

AUSTIN: I recently- what was the thing I was listening to that has an interesting historical thing about the social security number... probably like a- I know what it was, I think I was somewhere where I had no internet connection, so I was listening to *Old Planet Money*. A podcast I haven't listened to in a long time, but I had a bunch downloaded, and they did a history of the social security number, and the person who has social security number 000-000-001, I believe that's what the number was? And a fun fact about that is, when a wallet company needed to show, like- needed to put something in... the wallets, like- here's- here's just like your placeholder thing. And... the... I need to find the exact thing, because I don't think it was the 000-000-001 person, but... here we go... [pause] There was a- so, in 1938, a wallet manufacturer in Rockport, New York, decided to promote its product by showing how a social security card would fit into the wallet. But, instead of putting some random number on a piece of paper, the head of the company decided to use a very realistic number - he used the number of his secretary, Hilda Schrader Witcher [Sylvia gasps]. Which they then printed thousands of copies of her social security number, and then sold thousands of wallets at a Woolworths... And this is- this is the very best bit... a lot of people, when they got the card, starting using it as their own number. [dramatic pause] Because, this was the era when social security cards in America were new. And people didn't... get... how you got a card [laughs] or a number... so they were like, this is my number, I got it in this wallet.

JANINE: Oh, god.

AUSTIN: [still laughing] It's so funny... 5755 people using the number, like, in the 1940's. As late as 1977, twelve people were still trying to use that number. [DRE laughs in the background]

JANINE: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: I love it. Anyway, um... So! Let's open this up to the floor- does anyone have broad ideas for their characters, at this point?

JANINE: Yes.

SYLVIA: No.

AUSTIN: Do you want to- No? No... okay, well then Janine, do you wanna be our North Star here?

JANINE: Uh-huh, so... I decided- like, my broad idea is basically... a vague idea and a hobby for this character.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: [continuing] I basically want to play as a woman who runs one of those recipe blogs that is extremely anecdotal?

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: [continuing] and that's my justification for wanting this to also be Steady? Whatever points are available, I want to put into Steady.

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

JANINE: [continuing] 'cause I want her to be looking at her life experiences saying- how can I frame a brownie recipe with this?

AUSTIN: [giggles] Perfect. Steady, of course, is-

JANINE: [crosstalk] And that of course requires steadiness.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I can see that definitely see that- of these four, of Quick, Steady, Sharp, and Tough - yeah... you think that's Steady? You think that's Steady more than Sharp?

JANINE: Yeah!

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Okay.

JANINE: [continuing] Because I think... Steady. I think Steady requires you to look at a crisis as an opportunity.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh, that makes sense.

JANINE: Whereas like, that's different than using-

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah, yeah- she isn't surrounded by books.

JANINE: [continuing] That's different from- she's- she's not using the crisis *in* the crisis. She's using the crisis as a thing to use later. It doesn't mean she's going to be good *in* the crisis.

AUSTIN: Mm, totally. Well... so, that is my point. Because...

JANINE: [overlapping] No, I mean like... be good in the crisis in terms of "I know the thing I need to do right now!". Which to me, is sharpness.

AUSTIN: Totally, okay... Not sharpness...

JANINE: [crosstalk] Or would that be Quickness?

AUSTIN: It would be- so- so... Tough- I'll use a real example. You look at this screen in front of you- there are four moves in this game. Take a risk, suffer harm, keep it together, and study. Um... which... [chuckles] that's kind of it, and those get modified in interesting ways, and we'll get in to that in a moment. But... uh... Keep It Together is Steady, when you're confronted with the supernatural, horrendous, or mind-shattering, roll +Steady. Or Study, when you carefully observe a person, thing, or situation, roll Sharp. Take a Risk uses everything, and that is the difference between Sharp and Study- uh, Steady are- Sharp if it requires mental acuity, Steady if it requires emotional fortitude and nerves. So, if it's like, keeping it together in a crisis? That would be Steady. If it is, ah- thinking of an answer in a crisis? That would be Sharp. Quick is decisive action, if it's like- alright, I'm going to do the damn thing- then it's Quick, and then Tough is physical power or resilience. I think it could go either way for her for sure?

JANINE: [overlapping] Yeah, I think it would be Steady. Because again, it's not about her- I don't think it makes her more useful in that moment.

AUSTIN: Okay. But it does make her... [trails off into crosstalk]

JANINE: [crosstalk] But it just makes her more, calms her down, and is like- anything bad that happens I can turn into a good story.

AUSTIN: Totally. Yeah. I like that a lot. So then, so then- so... I mean, we can build right from that for you, because the first- the very first question for creating character is... that all of your stats start from 0. You choose one to increase by 1, and if you'd like to, you can choose another one to decrease and another stat to increase by 1. So, 0-0-0-0, then you would raise Steady to 1, and then if you *want* to, you can put something at negative 1, and increase something else to- by another 1. [pause] So you can have 2 Steady if you have a -1 elsewhere, basically. Or you could have 1 Steady and 1 Sharp, or... you know.

JANINE: ...Yeah. I think... let's see... I really... yeah, I think I want to take a -1 in Quick so I can have 2 in Steady.

AUSTIN: Sounds good. Wanna just add those to the sheet, if you can?

JANINE: Yeah, I should've just taken a smaller pen... [Austin laughs]

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Eh... it's... it's legible.

JANINE: [continuing] Or just used the Text Tool.

AUSTIN: Eh... it's fine. Cool. So you have a 0 in Tough and a 0 in Sharp. At this point, do you- do Dre and Sylvia, do either of you have any thoughts on your stats?

DRE: Mm...

AUSTIN: We can always wait and come back around on this stuff, there's so much cool stuff to do here that if your character idea gets changed, or if you want to come back to stats, that's fine.

SYLVIA: I might cycle back on it, but for now I... I kinda have an idea?

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: I might run through that or, or we can wait.

AUSTIN: Ah... what is your broad idea?

SYLVIA: I'm just thinking it might be fun to... sort of... one in Sharp, at least, and then either -1 in Tough and then 1 in Steady and 0 in Quick, or-

AUSTIN: Ok!

SYLVIA: [continuing] -switch those two depending on how those things sorta shake out on the rolls?

AUSTIN: [distracted] Yeah... [beat] Sorry, Janine was drawing a face [Sylvia laughs] in her Tough and Sharp.

JANINE: [giggles, Dre laughs] Yeah, I didn't want to...

DRE: [in background] Oh, god!

JANINE: [continuing] I didn't want to draw 0's, and then I put dots in them, and then I was like 'people are going to think those are boobs', so then I made them eyes.

AUSTIN: Sylvia, can you- and Dre- can you roll 'Keep It Together'- when you are confronted by the horrendous [Sylvia, Dre laugh] supernatural, or mind-shattering [Janine laughs]. Um... yeah, I like that, I think those stats are probably fine, Sylvia, and we'll go through them again at the end, as if it's a video game character creator, we'll all go 'Wait a second, are we sure? Do we wanna double-check?' [pause] So... Janine, let's stay with you because your stats are set and you're sure of those.

[reading] Two: Choose another player whose character your character is connected to in some way. That player chooses how they're are connected.

So, do you want to be connected to Sylvia or Dre?

JANINE: I- I don't know anything about either of them?

AUSTIN: That is how is the game works. You should not yet know anything about either of them.

JANINE: Okay... um...

AUSTIN: Do you just wanna do it clockwise- let me know if you wanna do it... [trails off]

JANINE: Uh... I'll go with Sylvia.

AUSTIN: Okay! So... Sylvia, you choose how you are connected to Janine. Are you biologically family, found family/friends, or coworkers?

SYLVIA: [deliberates] I think just friends, would work for this?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So, at the end of character creation, Janine will say what important history you share. [pause] There are different outcomes depending on which connection you have.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: [continuing] So maybe... draw a little line between the two of your sheets- Sylvia, you're on the far left, I'm guessing?

SYLVIA: Yes, I am. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay! So draw a line between the two of y'all and say 'Friends'. [pause] You can then... everyone can either choose or roll for pronouns... I'm happy with either... we talked a lot on a recent Tips episode about the... you know, there can be some interesting value in going out of your comfort zone, or experimenting and exploring identity through games... So, definitely interested in anything and everything that someone wants to do here. Everyone's written them down? Let's go left to right... Sylvia? Pronouns for the character?

SYLVIA: So, my pronouns are gonna be she/her, and I... I'm still thinking of a last name?

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: No- actually, I think I got it. My generator that I was clicking on landed on one I liked.

AUSTIN: [giggles] Okay.

SYLVIA: [continuing] So I'm going to be playing a character named Eve Whitaker.

AUSTIN: Good name. Great name. I should note- I noted this to you all before we started here, the names we use should feel like, real names? Maybe like, a little aestheticised, maybe a little like 'oh, cool name', you met a person with a cool name. Instead of like, Bluff City names, which are like... *Bluff City names*. Because we're not in Bluff City, right?

JANINE: Yeah, there's a difference between like, a cool name, and a straight-up lyrical name.

AUSTIN: Exactly.

JANINE: [continuing] Bluff names tends to be very lyrical.

AUSTIN: Yeah, definitely. Janine, name and pronouns?

JANINE: Caitlin Paul. Pronouns are she/her.

AUSTIN: Great. And I see you've noted down 'anecdote-heavy recipe blogger', great.

JANINE: I can tell you what car she drives. [Sylvia laughs in the background]

AUSTIN: ...Tell me what car she drives, add to the history please.

JANINE: She drives a 2006 Acura TCS, it's probably her first car if you look at the timing on it.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yeah that- that adds up. Dre, tell me about your name and your pronouns, and you've written some physical here- some history here [laughing] the first word on your history is 'physical', it's why I said 'some physical'.

DRE: Yeah! I'm- Bartholemew Asher, more popularly known as Dr Bart.

AUSTIN: Okay...

DRE: I'm a physical therapist turned talk show guest.

AUSTIN: Fantastic. Um... [laughs] ah... the... let's- let's go back and talk about the bonds between Sylvia and Dre, now we got a little bit more going on. Sylvia- how- who is Eve connected to, and... and... I guess now, you...

SYLVIA: [overlapping] I figured we'd do it so it's kind of clockwise now.

AUSTIN: Yeah, let's do that.

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] If that's cool?

AUSTIN: Yeah... then what is your connection to Dre, then?

SYLVIA: [beat] Doesn't Dre pick that?

AUSTIN: Or would you pick... yes, you're right, you're connected to Dre. So Dre, yes... what is your connection to Eve Whitaker? Biological family, found family or friends, or coworker?

DRE: Um... [pauses] Sylvia, do you have a job or anything for Eve yet?

SYLVIA: I haven't rolled it yet-

DRE: Okay

SYLVIA: [continuing] I figured we'd wait until we get to that segment to do that.

DRE: Um... let's say biological family.

AUSTIN: Cool, okay, so that means the two of you will share the role that will come in questions four and five, or make choices from the options in questions four and five.

SYLVIA: Okay

AUSTIN: Which can be fun... Janine, how do you know Dre?

JANINE: Um...

AUSTIN: Sorry, how do you know Doctor Bartholemew "Dr Bart" Asher?

DRE: Please, it's just Dr Bart

AUSTIN: Okay, how do you know Dr Bart?

JANINE: How old's- what's- what's the age neighbourhood of Dr Bart?

DRE: Like- like 40's.

JANINE: Okay, I think we're cousins

AUSTIN: So you're also biological family?

JANINE: Yeah. Specifically cousins.

AUSTIN: So that means-

SYLVIA: We're all related.

AUSTIN: [continuing] Okay. [laughter from everyone] We're all related- we're all cousins. Three cousins. That actually is... great. That's exactly the situation that, like, hey, we have a cousin who's on TV, he said he'd show us around the...

JANINE: It's always cousins too.

AUSTIN: Totally. Love it. So then... so then- yeah, because you're family, everyone here is going to end up having- oh wait! Oh wow, so that's weird, so- it's interesting that Caitlin and Eve said they were friends, but now there's a double familial relationship? So is it almost a situation where... where... Eve and Dr Bart know each other as cousins, like *know* each other as cousins, likewise, Bart and Caitlin know each other as cousins. But Caitlin and Eve are like, tight enough that they're friends. They're not *just* cousins, they're also actually friends.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I like that.

AUSTIN: Do you know what I mean?

SYLVIA: Yeah, yeah I know exactly what you mean.

JANINE: Yeah... or we could do like, a second cousin, third cousin...

AUSTIN: Yeah...

DRE: Like, twice removed or something?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah- maybe like Eve and Caitlin are tight enough where it's to like- first cousin status-

JANINE: There's also the option of like, step- step family, step-

AUSTIN: Ohhhhhh... yeah...

JANINE: Like step- remarriage, like there's a biological cousin vs cousin by marriage-

AUSTIN: Right...

JANINE: -and it's like, well- we're like friends. It feels weird saying cousin, I don't know.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that makes sense too- we could chart all this out, it doesn't really matter [Janine chuckles], you're all related. Caitlin- Janine, your character- we said Caitlin, we did say the name out loud? This is not me saying it for the first time-

JANINE: [crosstalk] Yes

AUSTIN: Okay, great. Yes, I am a little out of it- Caitlin and Eve have spent time together. Whereas- real time, like they're friends- anyway, anyway, everyone gets it. Alright- so- name and pronouns checked- parent's faith. Choose one from the list or from faiths you know, or roll two dice and add them. Your character's relationship to your parent's faith is up to you. Um- this is just an interesting detail to have here? Because- I wanna be clear, there's no like- there are- there are... ten specific options, I wanna say? And then one that's also like, other... one of these that is not one of these other major religions. And... the- there's not like a thing at the back of the book that's like "If they've rolled for Christianity, this is the thing-" [laughs, Sylvia laughs in the background]. It's just more like- hey, this world is full of people, we're not defaulting to 'everyone is Christian'.

[0:30:00]

But also we're not, like, pushing- we're not like, trying to like, gamify faith in that specific way. I do wonder if there is a typo here- which is interesting, because one of these is repeated, and I can think of one very clear omission? I'll message Sage about it afterwards. But yeah- do y'all feel like answering this? Do you all have a feeling about this that- about who you are, as people? [pause] I say this because Dre and Sylvia are- because you're cousins, you've chosen the family thing- like a shared heritage thing where this is all one big choice.

DRE: I mean, if we're gonna have a sprawling, and also uncertain family lineage?

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh

DRE: Probably the most accurate one is saying that our parents are Catholic. [Sylvia laughs in the background]

AUSTIN: [deadpan] Yeah. Fair.

DRE: [crosstalk] I say this, as a Catholic family.

JANINE: I was also thinking a Catholic family, to be honest.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Uh, yeah, uh-huh. Same? Same...

SYLVIA: I mean, if we're gonna have divorces in there too? Yeah, Catholic.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Love it. Love to be at home. [background laughter] Love to get a call from my Mom at 11pm on a Sunday like, "I found out, that your great-grandma," and I'm like "Alright Ma, yeah, yeah that adds up, uh-huh" [laughter in background] And then, country of birth-choose a country that you know, or roll one die. If you like, also roll for your parents. Are you- if you all asked your parents, would they be all "Oh yeah, I'm American!" Or are your families more recent immigrants?

[pause]

SYLVIA: I wanna roll for one of my parents

AUSTIN: Okay!

JANINE: I kinda do too... like, I think it's kind of interesting to have- there's the parent we know, which is like- the Catholic, maybe like born and bred in the area, super rooted. And then the x-factor of like, what else is going on?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally. I'll note again, I'll message Sage about this again because the numbers on this chart go 7-8-9-10-11-12. [Dre laughs in the background]

SYLVIA: Okay, so-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] We can map them 1-6, so-

SYLVIA: [continuing] Okay, so I rolled a three, which is India-

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

SYLVIA: [continuing] So... I'm gonna flip a coin for which parent that- I didn't decide which parent it was, so-

AUSTIN: Yeah, sure!

SYLVIA: One is Mom, Dad is two.

AUSTIN: Okay

SYLVIA: [beat] Her dad is from India.

AUSTIN: Cool... Dre.

DRE: Well, I rolled a nine, which also corresponds to India on the actual list.

AUSTIN: On the actual list, yes. You also rolled- you could've just rolled 1d6- but also, this could just be...

DRE: Well, I kind of like the serendipity of it

AUSTIN: Me too, me too. Yeah... that helps explain where that familial connection is, too. Janine, are you rolling, or are you good?

JANINE: I almost feel like I shouldn't roll, because it feels a little... [trails off] I don't know, I have such mixed feelings about the randomising of...

AUSTIN: Yeah

JANINE: [continuing] ... certain traits, feels like if all of us do it, it feels like it's a little... uh... I don't know how to describe what I mean... but like... not arbitrary, but like- it feels like it means more if not everyone does it?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I feel you. I would love to talk to Sage about what went into deciding what should go into this stuff? Not that it shouldn't be here? Because I do think there's a degree to which like, hey, there's now two characters of Indian descent in this game. We probably would not have had previously, right?

JANINE: There's also so- so little variety.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yep, totally

JANINE: It's such a small list of countries.

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Yeah, there's a lot of countries.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm, so yeah... anyway, we can keep moving. So the next thing, is- job. Roll two dice and read them left-to-right as they land on the table below. What place you perform that job is up to you- and it's up to me. I basically where you're are working, either at or around. I guess you could get some detail there. You could also choose this stuff, but I am, as always- procedurally generated stories are fun, I wonder if there's a way to roll for this and tie it in, you know?

DRE: Yeah, I'm- I'm gonna roll.

AUSTIN: Janine, as always, thank you for filling in more details about your character, including their favourite colour.

JANINE: Why does this go all the way up to 66?

AUSTIN: Because you're reading from left to right. You're not rolling a tot- you're rolling 2d6.

JANINE: [overlapping] OH! Okay, sure.

DRE: One is the tens and the other is the ones.

JANINE: Yeah. Anyway, yes, I'm a Libra with a Mastercard.

AUSTIN: I see that [laughs].

JANINE: It's a good website!

AUSTIN: It is a good website. Give me 2d6.

DRE: I already rolled mine earlier and got 26.

AUSTIN: Oh- okay!

DRE: [continuing] And got physical therapist.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Oh, okay! That's where you got physical therapist from. Gotcha!

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So, that's where you got physical therapist, turned talk show guest. That makes sense. Love it. Are you- when you say talk show guest, are you like, a recurring guest? Like Dr. Oz?

DRE: [overlapping] Yeah, like Dr- like Dr. Oz. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah - gotcha. Dr. Bart comes on the talk show like once a week, to give- blahblahblah- or once a day.

DRE: Did you know, there's new research that shows- [Austin giggles in background] it's actually okay for you to drink one glass of white wine every night.

AUSTIN: Ohh... okay! Janine, you got a 12, a one and a two, so- I kind of love this? I don't know how you feel about it?

JANINE: It had to- that was the thing... Recipe blogger, I don't think can be...

AUSTIN: No...

JANINE: Her- your- job- [sighs] it's some people's jobs, and those people are like, huge landowners and stuff, in addition to... yeah, so- anything on this list, I would've been happy with.

AUSTIN: Yeah...

JANINE: [continuing] frankly...

AUSTIN: So you got... Accountant. Which is great. I love- accountant by day, anecdote-heavy recipe blogger by night. [Janine chuckles]. And then... your cousin-slash-good friend [Sylvia chuckles] Eve- what did you get?

SYLVIA: [laughing] I'm a farmer!

AUSTIN: [laughing] You're a farmer! I love it... I actually do love it, I can work with that- I can *super* work with that, believe it or not... What type of farmer are you?

SYLVIA: I don't know [giggles] What type of farmers... are there...?

AUSTIN: I'll send you some links about New Jersey farms. Uh... tomatoes are big in Jersey? We can go broader than farm- you know, I don't think "fisher" is on here but, if you wanted to have a fishing venture... you could do that...

DRE: Doesn't New Jersey have a lot of cranberry bogs?

AUSTIN: It does... less near the shore, like this?

JANINE: New Jersey is among the leading producers of cranberries and blueberries in the country.

AUSTIN: True... true... Dre, do you want to just read the thing you posted in the chat? Because it's so good.

DRE: [laughing] I said I love the accidental synergy of a recipe blogger with the good friend farmer... so many 15 paragraph stories about going to Eve's farm and being in love with Fall before your recipe for pumpkin squash soup.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Uh-huh!

JANINE: I bet all those stories are actually like, those recipes conveniently do not mention that it's someone else's farm... it's just like... here's a picture of a rustic old door turned into a table with a basket of apples on it.

DRE: [crosstalk] Yeah.

AUSTIN: [laughing, crosstalk] Uh-huh...

DRE: "Down on the farm today"... never saying "my", but never *not* saying "my".

JANINE: Was out picking apples... on the... on the acreage... here's the dog... whose name I know...

AUSTIN: [laughing, crosstalk] Yep... so good...

SYLVIA: Oh, I gotta name a dog now.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yeah, uh-huh.

JANINE: Gotta have that farm dog.

[0:37:50— TW begins: discussion of drowning, car crashes, and sports injuries]

AUSTIN: Yep, start thinking about that farm dog. Alright- so... uh... just double checking things here... alright, uh- so there's one more step, here, for character creation. And that is- I have three questions to ask each of you, and just let me know if any of these are yeses. Has your character ever been in a life or death situation? Anyone?

DRE: Um... is this life or death for us?

AUSTIN: What do you mean, "for us?"

DRE: Well, like- um...

JANINE: Life or death like pulling someone out of a car, or life or death like being in the car yourself?

DRE: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: Um... I think... it's life or death for you.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: I think it has to be, based on the next- the second thing I'm gonna tell you is. So like-

JANINE: [overlapping] I'm going to say yes, then.

AUSTIN: Okay, so you're gonna say yes?

JANINE: Yes.

AUSTIN: Okay, so- I'll show the other part of this hand- I'm gonna make Sylvia and Dre decide too.

DRE: No, yes- sure... um... no.

AUSTIN: Okay. Eve?

SYLVIA: Ah... yes?

AUSTIN: Can you tell me what those life-and-death situations were?

JANINE: Yes.

SYLVIA: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Okay, tell me- tell me about them.

JANINE: I think that... when... Caitlin was in high school, she was in track and field, and she was- like- running, doing a practice run on the road-

AUSTIN: [in background] Like you do-

JANINE: And it was probably like 7 or 8- so like, in that half- not quite dark, but not super sunny- and I think she got hit by a car, and was like- it was probably like a hit and run? And... yeah

AUSTIN: Okay... cool.

JANINE: Well... [laughs]

AUSTIN: Not cool, sucks. Uh... Eve.

SYLVIA: I think Eve had a drowning scare when she was a kid.

AUSTIN: [breathes in] Okay.

SYLVIA: Like she hurt herself when they were- I don't- New Jersey's by the water, right?

AUSTIN: Oh, 100%.

SYLVIA: Yeah, so she probably like- hurt herself while swimming [some laughter in background]- look, geography isn't my thing, alright? She hurt herself while she was swimming, and went under for a while, and lost consciousness for a bit.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: So... yeah.

AUSTIN: Are these things that- have those experiences stuck with you?

SYLVIA: She's very afraid of water, so... yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Caitlin?

JANINE: What?

AUSTIN: I know this is a weird question, but has- has the experience of being hit and run stuck with you as you've grown.

JANINE: Oh, almost certainly, yes. Certainly.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: Sorry, I was- I was thinking about how amazing it would be if, right early on, in Season Two of Bluff, you're like- yeah, no the Boardwalk's been in a field this whole time.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Yeah, just a pool in the middle I guess?

SYLVIA: Well, you know...

AUSTIN: So... because...

JANINE: [overlapping] Masterwork.

AUSTIN: [continuing] because you have both have been in life or death situations, I need you both to roll the wounded version of "Take a Risk". I'll explain what that means- so right now, everyone has the same four moves- one of those moves is Take a Risk. When you do something risky, roll. The GM will tell you to add- 'tough' if it requires physical power or resilience, 'quick' if it requires sharp decisive action- sorry, 'quick decisive action', 'sharp' if it requires mental acuity, 'steady' if it requires emotional fortitude or nerves. On a 10+, that goes well as could be hoped. On a 7-9, there is a complication, the GM will give you a tough choice. On 6 or under, the risk turns out bad, the GM will describe how. But- you have been in a life or death situation, you do not have 'take a risk'. You have a special, wounded take a risk. Each of you roll one d6. [pause] Alright! Janine, so- you see below 'take a risk'?

JANINE: Mm-hm

AUSTIN: You see 'Wounded take a risk'? That is the version of 'take a risk' you'll have, and what I'm about to tell you is the difference. So- I don't know how you wanna write this out but, when you attempt something risky, roll. The GM may tell you to add either, 'tough', or 'quick minus one', or 'sharp minus one', or 'steady'.

[00:42:33]

AUSTIN: So basically, when you have to do something quick or something sharp under— when you're taking a risk, you have a -1 to doing either of those.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Sylvia, you rolled a 6?

SYLVIA: Yep.

AUSTIN: Alright, when you attempt something risky, roll. The GM may tell you to add tough, quick +1, sharp, or steady.

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Oh, okay!

AUSTIN: So you get a plus +1 to quick things when this happens: when you're in a life or death situation. To explain what... is happening... there— uh, let me read from the book again. [thinking noise] Ba-ba-ba-bah! [pause] There is a specific, like, breakdown of what this is. Um, so, each of these things has a wounded variant. Wounded versions of Take a Risk typically give a penalty to one or more stats, but some people, under pressure, shine. So, whatever happened with the water back then, that experience has made you like, "Nope! I have to take quick decisive action." Like maybe it was- maybe you were thinking back on- maybe over time in thinking back on that you developed such a quick reaction time to it, where maybe it's not about staying calm, but it's about taking action even as you're not in a good place, you know.

SYLVIA: Okay, yeah.

AUSTIN: I like to think about this in terms of like, Darkest Dungeon, where in Darkest Dungeon you can come to a crisis moment, and sometimes your character has a breakthrough instead of having a breakdown, and that is very interesting. [enthusiastically] Alright! There's two more questions for me to ask. Now you understand maybe what the stakes are here, in as good of an example of that as possible. Because we got the good one. So, here are the other two. Um- [thinking noise] ba-ba-bah. The next one is a very similar one. Uh- here it is, okay. [picking up] Has your character ever had a life-threatening injury? At this point I think we can only talk about Eve and Caitlin, because I think Dr. Bart would have been in a life-or-death situation previously if he had suffered a life-threatening injury, right.

DRE: So, I mean... yes. [AUSTIN makes an affirming noise] But I also think of the difference there being like: you can suffer a life-threatening injury and then it, like, removes you from the situation?

AUSTIN: Right, sure. That's possible! Yeah.

DRE: [crosstalk] Cause I don't, maybe I don't, maybe this isn't—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah cause, I think you're totally right. No, I think you're totally right, right?

[0:45:00]

Because the first one is about being in that situation— whereas like... [pause] and like being aware of it and needing to react to it? I can imagine a situation I guess where you wouldn't call it a life-or-death situation. The other half of it is like, "have you ever had a life-threatening injury," yes but, you had access immediately to emergency medical care or something, I don't know.

DRE: [crosstalk] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Regardless, has anyone here had a life-threatening injury.

DRE: [crosstalk] ...Yes.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] If yes, you will be rolling your wounded version of Suffer Harm now. [pause] Um, so yes to Bart— to Dr. Bart. Caitlin? Eve?

SYLVIA: [unsure] Yeah, I don't know with mine specifically.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] You think that the drowning thing was more like, oh my god this is— there was no...

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, okay. And then Caitlin?

JANINE: [crosstalk] I'm trying to think with the... hit and run...

AUSTIN: I don't think it necessitates it if that's the question.

JANINE: [crosstalk] No to me the danger was more in the like, isolation of like—

AUSTIN: Yeah...

JANINE: [pause] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that makes sense. It could have broken bad, right? [crosstalk] Someone else couldn't have shown up.

JANINE: [crosstalk] Yeah it was one of those things where like, she probably had to limp back, and that's a really vulnerable situation to be in.

AUSTIN: Yeah definitely. In the woods somewhere, out on a run like— you know, not in the woods but you know, not near— in the suburbs but you know, [laughs] a wooded part.
[crosstalk] Alright!

JANINE: Like getting clipped and tossed in a ditch and having to [AUSTIN sighs] make your way to a fucking gas station to call your mom, cause it's [sighs] 2002 and she wouldn't give you a cell phone, [imitating mom] "cause kids don't need cell phones it's 2002."

AUSTIN: [amused] Exactly. Dre, can you roll 1d6?

DRE: Yeah.

[A pause, the clacking of a keyboard]

AUSTIN: That is a 4, so, the regular version of Suffer Harm says, "When you suffer harm the GM will describe it and tell you a number of damage, roll +Tough minus Damage. On a 10+ you tough it out. On a 7-9 it's not too bad yet, take a -1 to Suffer Harm until you receive medical attention or spend a few days recuperating." It's a good thing one of y'all's a doctor.
[amused] That's a good... [laugh] nice work!

[DRE chuckles, JANINE makes an uncomfortable sound]

AUSTIN: "On a 4-6 your injuries will catch up to you, the GM will wound one of your moves. On a 3-... er, under 3, its life-threatening, the GM will wound two of your moves. If you don't have two unwounded moves, you are dying." So your moves are also your HP in a sense here.

DRE: [crosstalk] Gotcha.

AUSTIN: With a 4, Dre, you have a modified version of this move, which is, "When you suffer harm, the GM will describe it and tell you a number of damage," so far, same. "On a 10+ you take a -1 the next time you suffer harm. On a 7-9 you choose a move to wound, but as long as the move is wounded you take +1 to it."

DRE: Hmm.

AUSTIN: "On a 6 or lower, you are dying. The GM will tell you when you're dead." So... it's rough. You don't want to— for what it's worth, once you get wounded- once you get Suffer

Harm wounded, Suffer Harm becomes a really dangerous thing to roll. But! The thing that's kind of... cool here for you, is you're getting a +1 whenever you wound a move going forward, basically.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: So it's not great, it's still gonna be a rough one, right? Uh, if you want to I can just copy and paste that text so you can figure out to [crosstalk] summarize it? There you go.

DRE: [crosstalk] Yeah... also was I supposed to roll 1d6 or 2d6 with that?

AUSTIN: 1! 1d6... 1d6. There's 6 different wounded versions basically.

DRE: Okay, gotcha.

AUSTIN: Um... so, so yeah, the gist of it here, you take a -1... even when you succeed on your Suffer Harm, you're gonna take a -1 on the next Suffer Harm that you do.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: So it's like, harder to stay, like... unharmed basically.

DRE: [crosstalk] Gotcha.

AUSTIN: The last of these three questions: has your character ever been in the presence of something horrendous? [pause] We can understand that as broadly as you want, or as, you know, we can talk through what that might mean.

[pause]

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] This—

DRE: [crosstalk] Uh I'm gonna yes to that as well.

AUSTIN: Is that also about- is that... what is the horrendous thing? Also, what was the... wait a second, what was the physical injury? That, the life-or-death injury? [crosstalk] ...or life-threatening injury.

DRE: Um, I think uh- Bart played college football.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: And I think during a practice or something— at like a smaller school, not like a Division 1 big-time school, I think like a smaller private liberal arts college-type school—, and I think had a really, really nasty lower-compound fracture [crosstalk] or something.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] [sucks in air through teeth] Okay...

DRE: Um, I think that's also why he became a physical therapist.

AUSTIN: [eagerly] Okay.

DRE: Like, had to do a lot of PT.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah.

DRE: And like, was inspired by that.

AUSTIN: Cool. Um, give me a 1d6, uh, unless does anyone else also have, have they seen something horrendous.

[pause]

AUSTIN: ...Sounds like no. Okay, so yeah, give me a 1d6 Dre.

[pause]

AUSTIN: Alright, Keep It Together, by default, says, "When you are confronted by the horrendous, supernatural, or mind-shattering roll +Steady. On a 10+ you are in control, you can do as you please. On a 7-9 you choose which to from the list below. On a 6 or lower, the GM chooses for you and you wound the move," you wound Keep It Together. And those choices are "scream in panic, lash out violently, beg and plead, or curl up and shut down." "No matter the roll take -1 to Keep It Together until you have a few hours to calm down." That is the default version of Keep It Together.

The wounded version is, "When you are confronted by the horrendous," er, the wounded version you just rolled, is "When you are confronted by the horrendous, supernatural, mind-shattering roll +Steady. On a 10+ you take -1 the next time you Keep It Together." So that's just like the Suffer Harm one. It's harder to keep it together after Keep It Together is wounded. But also, "on a 7-9, you decrease your Sharp by 1 until you leave here, wherever here is. On a 6 or lower you black out, the GM will describe what unfortunate circumstances you wake up in." I've posted that in the chat. So basically, uh, even on a 10+ it becomes harder to consecutively Keep It Together until you're able to calm down. On a 7-9 you're

Sharpness goes down by 1 until you get out of the place that you are in. Um, so... uh on a 6 under, whoof, don't roll under a 7 with Keep It Together... or you know, be with friends who can help. [DRE chuckles]

So that is character creation. Are there any other thoughts or questions about the circumstances here? What brings you all to this place in this moment? I guess, Janine, you probably work here as an accountant? Caitlin is like an accountant at the movie studio?

JANINE: That makes sense, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that yeah, that does, yeah I think that's a good one. And then, Dr. Bart, is this a situation where your show is still shooting because the writer's strike doesn't really affect... or it does affect it, but they've definitely brought on scabs or having like, producers do the work of writing?

DRE: [breathes] Yeah, and I think it's also the guest quality has gone... way down.

AUSTIN: [excitedly] Aw man, is it a situation where like, you used to be a once-a-week guest but you're every [exhaling and chuckling] episode? [DRE laughs] Because they're just like filling?

DRE: [crosstalk] Yep! Uh huh. Yep!

AUSTIN: [amused] They're like, "well we need [exhales] Dr. Barts... Health Minute..." Love it. Um... so then, Eve, are you here as a guest? What brought you, what's bringing you to Bluff City Studios?

SYLVIA: I think yeah, I think probably that she's there as a guest.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah.

SYLVIA: Probably coming... maybe- yeah she's definitely coming to visit Caitlin, [giggling] but her parents probably also want her to say hi to Dr. Bart.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Um... I kind of like thinking of, she's there on a trip. Like, the orchard that her family has might be like a little bit out of town.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] So it's like a big— well not like a big deal, but it is like a whole day thing... whenever Eve comes to town.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Totally!

AUSTIN: Hey, here's a new thing for us. You don't have to be from this area, at all.

SYLVIA: Mm-hmm!

AUSTIN: It's the real world! You could be from, this whole thing could be anywhere else, you know what I mean?

SYLVIA: Oh man... yeah.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] [chuckling] Which is wild! 'Cause Bluff City has always been constricting in that way. Which is fun. Um... uh, you have a Rat Terrier named Peaches, I see. [JANINE chuckles]

SYLVIA: Yeah! It's the one thing we don't grow, so there's no confusion.

AUSTIN: [amused] ...Great. [AUSTIN and DRE laugh] Perfect. Um, alright! So then, I think that's enough for me to go from this to building out a little bit more.

[long pause]

AUSTIN: So! Um, I think I know... how this starts. We talked last time about how, the kind of pitch was that everyone was coming to kind of hang out and visit. That Eve was in from out-of-town. Caitlin, you work in the accounting department here. Uh, at Bluff City Studios? Which is uh... a recently— I mean, I guess I'm gonna give you a little background in a second, but basically, Caitlin as this movie studio/TV studio. Dr. Bart we've established that you show up to do this kind of live morning show segment, all of which we can talk a bit more about when we get there. [chuckles] This is happening on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. Um, that is why you are in town to hang out, Eve. I know it's ironic we have two Canadians on the call [DRE and SYLVIA laugh] and your Thanksgiving is over already, but, the American Thanksgiving is in late November, so this is the Wednesday before the Thursday Thanksgiving. And so, it's a situation I think where you were like, you know, Caitlin and Dr. Bart were like, "Oh come through the studio! It'll be great to see you, we can show you around before you know, you get all settled in. Just come right here, you know, there's uh- there's a tour bus that comes through every, you know such-and-such," um, uh, and that is the kind of like set up, for getting everyone in the same place.

Um, let me say just a little bit about- about Bluff City Studios, which I mentioned some of this before but just to remind everyone. Bluff City Studios is a fairly new movie production and

television production company. Uh, It exists in a place called Bluffington Beach, which is a part of what we would think of as Atlantic City. Uh, it actually is, like this is in Bluffington, the real-world Atlantic City, not in Bluff City. The studio is called Bluff City Studios— you'll have to get into why that is, I'm sure you can begin to make some educated guesses— and it is the brainchild of the, uh the former child-star-turned-kind-of-auteur-film-director and entrepreneur Julian H. Bluff who left Atlantic City as a kid to go to Hollywood, who came back with a lot of money, and who... basically turned the entire kind of north-eastern end of AC, of Atlantic City, into a different township called Bluffington Beach. Part of that is because his family seemed to have owned some old assets; part of that was through acquisitions and deals with the local and state governments. This an area that historically had- uh, been the location of housing projects, of some... uh, nature reserves... of some like failed casinos. It is the very end of the boardwalk all the way to the north north-east of the island that Atlantic City is on. Um, and he did this a few years ago. I'd say he's probably 25, 26 now, he did it in his very low twenties. Just like dumped, like tens of millions of dollars into buying this- this area up. Um, and got it at a way lower rate than he should have gotten it and has continued to buy it up. His pitch to the city and the state was that he would produce a boom to an ailing Atlantic City economy. Atlantic City has suffered in real life over the last couple of decades as casinos have popped up in other places... in the kind of mid-Atlantic region of America, as online gambling has hit, as there's other opportunities to do sports betting, etc... and horse betting. Um, I guess sports betting has actually just come into AC now as an attempt to address this, heh, believe it or not. Anyway, um... his thing was let's turn it into, um... "I can, with my connection, make movies here. And I can make it a destination where we can shoot films on the cheap," um, in a similar way to- to what's happened to New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

DRE: Mmm.

AUSTIN: A bunch of movie— I don't know if y'all know this, but a bunch of movie stars were like, "We can just shoot stuff here! That'll help eject money into the economy! And [chuckling] it'll be way cheaper than doing it elsewhere." And it's like—

DRE: Yeah. There's like an abandoned Six Flags that gets used a lot in movies in New Orleans.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yes, yes. A hundred percent. So imagine like- if you scroll down on this by the way first you'll see like, the kind of map of Bluff City Studios, like, the campus. If you scroll past that, uh, there is a map of the area, and uh, imagine— so there's a brown line on this map that is the boardwalk. There are absolutely piers on that boardwalk with like- you know, um, that are just shooting locations. You know there's like, if you're down near the rest of the casinos and you like you'd be like, "Oh cool! There must be some sort of family pier up there," but actually that pier is closed only for- only in use for shoots, you know. Stuff like that. It has gone... pretty well! For Julian Bluff. Until, there was a writer's strike. That writer's strike has now lasted for months and months. I think it probably started at like the beginning of this year, uhh- uh, and is ongoing. The strike fund is running low. Which is to say the writers are being forced to negotiate from a weaker position. And... importantly the news

reports that Julian H. Bluff is not particularly, like, shook? He seems so confident that this will all shake out in his favor. Part of that is off the success of some recent films. I imagine that—that, [chuckles] you can kind of, like, slide the Blumhouse Productions oeuvre over into— into the Bluff City Studios catalog?

[1:00:00]

There's particular— there's specifically a sub-label called New Atlantic Pictures that does horror films in the model of like Blumhouse: kind of cheap, cheaply produced, but the actor gets paid really well if something really takes off, um, and they end up taking big risks. They do a lot of schlocky stuff, but they're also the sort of people who would produce something, just like Blumhouse, like *Get Out*, and take that style of risk, because they know they're working with someone really impressive. They also have a television production studio, and that's where you, you know, primarily work, called Bluefield Productions, and that is their TV production house that mostly does kind of very cheap reality TV stuff; they're dipping into prestige TV, or that— their plan was to dip into prestige TV, but that never really happened because of the strike. Um, so that is like... the-the gist of it. Does anyone have questions about stuff that you would know? I guess what I'll say is if you have questions about that stuff, feel free to bring that stuff up because, especially for Dr. Bart and uh... for Caitlin, you work here? [amused exhale] You know stuff? Core setting stuff shouldn't feel like a mystery. Uh, so— so feel free to ask me that stuff. I'm gonna take a sip of this seltzer.

[pause, satisfied noise, sound of screwing a lid]

Um... so... I think we're starting pretty early in the day. Um, I have a pretty good idea of how this all kicks off. It is a cloudy morning, um, I know, I think we see... Eve, you are on a bus coming down the, uh, like... where are you— are you from... some other— are you like out— out in the county somewhere? Like..

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Yeah...

AUSTIN: Is your farm in New Jersey still?

SYLVIA: Yeah sure! I'm not—

AUSTIN: I know, you're not— how many hours away... [crosstalk] are you?

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] A couple hours away for sure.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Okay cool.

SYLVIA: Probably... 3 hours away...?

AUSTIN: Gotcha. So you- can we get you just like- are you driving down? Are you on a bus? Are you...

SYLVIA: Uh, I pictured her driving, honestly.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Okay, cool.

SYLVIA: Especially if she's bringing the dog, that's a lot easier.

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah, that definitely makes more sense.

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Um...

AUSTIN: So then we get you... in the car... and there's the first droplets of rain. And you know, there's... you know you're further north than Atlantic City, but you definitely get the, like, flash flood warning! On your phone, or if you're listening to the radio a thing [chuckles] very few people actually do. Though maybe Eve does- is Eve a radio person? Or is Eve a Bluetooth-connected-to-a-phone person?

SYLVIA: I think Eve... would normally be that, but I'm going with she forgot her charger—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Oh, mwa! Love it, thank you.

SYLVIA: —so she's like, stuck with the radio.

AUSTIN: So yeah, so then you have the radio on, and... uh, you know, you have some local DJ basically saying, you know, it's pretty early while you're driving down and it's like:

AUSTIN (as DJ): Looks like it's gonna be a gloomy kickoff to the holiday season! Uh.. all the weather- all the meteorologists are calling for rain today, uh a little bit later in the day, so make sure you get any Thanksgiving shopping done before things get too much... too much wetter out here, and with that, let's go to The Boss.

AUSTIN: And some Bruce Springsteen starts playing, and we see you drive. We see the Atlantic City skyline come into view as you go onto the expressway and begin your kind of last approach down into towards- um... where the studio is. The studio itself by the way is like off the actual island; it's on like another little island where the kind of marshes run into kind of sandbars, and you know there's one kind of bigger area that's has uh- a like kind of sturdier landmass, and that's where the actual studio campus is. Um... uh... Caitlin! What is your morning like? What is your average [chuckle] regular old morning like, especially in a

short week like this, where you know you're gonna get Thursday-Friday off? What is it like when you're- wh- what does it mean to be an accountant as a movie studio?

JANINE: Um... it means... probably a smoothie in a shaker bottle.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] [chuckling] Okay...

JANINE: Like a breakfast-on-the-go kind of situation.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: You know it's probably like: weekends you're gonna do a smoothie bowl, you're gonna do the full set-up, you're gonna do the pictures and everything.

AUSTIN: Mm hmm.

JANINE: You're gonna do the berries that you freeze for the specific amount of time, so they get that nice white cast on them.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Okay, sure.

JANINE: But on a workday, you're just gonna put everything in the blender and you're just kinda gonna go. Um... [AUSTIN laughs] get your spirulina powder and whatnot.

AUSTIN: Are you... [JANINE laughs] Are you the sort of person who shows up early for work? Or like, if it's a 9 am office, are you there at 9 am?

JANINE: ...Probably quarter to 9.

AUSTIN: Okay... so I think you, we get like, the shots of you arriving and actually beating some of the protesters there. Uh... there are- you know, there is a strike. You have to cross a picket line to go into this office. Uh, you know, it is not... it is not rare that people do. This has been happening for you literally all year. And.. as someone in the accounting department, that probably- they definitely give you some side-eye on your way in, but there aren't that many people, so you're able to kind of like, get in, without any incident. Um... Dr. Bart, you have, you're here for the morning show, which means that must be pretty early also, huh?

DRE: Mm-hmm.

AUSTIN: Um... I think you have like a- you have like a 9:30 call time, um, so I think we get you coming in next. Are you driving in? By yourself? Do you take a bus here...? I actually

suspect that this place does the like, will drive a bus filled with employees in past the strikers if that's where it's gotten to, because that's the sort of thing Julian H. Bluff would do.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Cause he kind of, sucks, as I'm- signaling.

DRE: Mm-hmm.

AUSTIN: Would you be on a bus like that?

DRE: [breathes] Hohhh... probably.

AUSTIN: Yeah? Um... so I'm gonna say, we get a shot of you in this bus with like, tinted windows, and you're seated next to a guy... how old are you? How old are all of you actually? Can I get ages?

DRE: Um... Dr. Bart is in his, like, mid-to-late 40s.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: Um...

AUSTIN: Caitlin and Eve?

SYLVIA: I have Eve still like, kind of living with her parents, but like being okay with it.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: So I think sort of like, twentyfo... like mid-twentyish?

AUSTIN: Mid-20s, yeah, sure.

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Like... you know.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Caitlin?

JANINE: Um... I have Caitlin pegged at about 30.

AUSTIN: Okay. Sounds good. Good age range here. Uh, Dr. Bart you're seated next to a 22-year-old black dude who you know, uh... is Deshaun, uh... Deshaun Willaims, who is a

security guard here. And he is some who... has probably annoyed you a bunch over the years. [DRE wheezes] Um... because he does not- it's not that he doesn't have a sense of boundaries, it's that... he thinks y'all are tight.

DRE: Mmm.

AUSTIN: And maybe you are, but like, not like that- you know what I mean?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um... so when, you know- as you're kind of pulling into the compound, he is like:

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): Yo, Dr. Bart. Um... could we? Could we get some time today? I really got some questions I wanna... I wanna go over. I really appreciate your advice- you're just like [crosstalk] I see you on TV, and...

DRE: [crosstalk] Oh... This is awkward cause I've got like, my eyes closed and my AirPods are in.

AUSTIN: [amused] And it's just him talking to you, and then like, what are you listening to?

DRE: Oh, I don't know... probably some like, morning MPR-style podcast like, broadcast-thing.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Like, catch up on the news, [crosstalk] like, morning-thing

DRE: [crosstalk] Yeah! Yeah...

AUSTIN: He's like:

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): Dr. Bart! Yo, Bartholomew! [sighs] D.B.! ...D—

AUSTIN: He shakes you. [crosstalk] Do you just—

DRE: I like [crosstalk] look at him and like, raise my eyebrows

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): I'm sorry, I know you need your morning chill, but... this is important.

DRE (as Dr. Bart): Okay...

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): And I know, I know I've said that before, but... I... I'm thinking of quitting, but I wanna run it by someone who I trust. And you give so many people good advice on TV. And like, you know I talk to my Ma about it, and she was like, [chuckling] you should talk to somebody else. [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): So... I thought, you know, like- after you do your shoot today if you have— for real, 10 minutes! 10 minutes I gotta run this by you, but that is it.

DRE (as Dr. Bart): Yeah, yeah... that- yeah, sounds good.

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): Alright, that's right. That's real, I knew I could trust you D.B.

AUSTIN: Uh... I he like reaches out to give you a handshake

DRE: Yeah! Sure, I- I mean I shake his hand, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay, well that's, he's like- okay, that's... a way to shake someone's hand I guess.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: And he's like... you know, makes a fist and and like, kinda like, "Yeah good. I worked up my courage, I talked to the doctor."

[DRE chuckles]

AUSTIN: And the... the bus pulls in. And... I think we kinda get montage shots a little bit of like: you going on to the TV set. You're on a morning show called... uh... It's called "I'm A.M., Are You?"

[SYLVIA laughs loud, JANINE also laughs, DRE sighs]

AUSTIN: Um.. so a lot of people called it "I'm am," because..."I'm Am, Are You?" It's the letter—

[SYLVIA continues to laugh]

DRE: [crosstalk] A mam.

AUSTIN: A-a mam! Are you?

DRE: A mamaroo.

AUSTIN: Y... Y-yeah, exactly! [laughing] A mamaroo... Uh... and that is hosted by Kelly Ferrari who is a C-List celebrity actress, and Brad “The Bulldozer” Callahan who is a former linebacker for the Eagles. Um... uh, it is a bad... it is not good. It is like... not good, uh... by any means? Like, even inside of the subcategory of TV morning shows that are like- cause this is... [sighs] I suspect this gets like syndicated, but this gets syndicated to like TBS, do you know I mean?

DRE: Mm-hmm.

AUSTIN: Like, this is not an ABC morning show. This is like a cable morning show? But it's like- it's shot like it's... like, Today, you know what I mean? Or Good Morning America, but it's going out to a cable audience. Um... and it has gotten dire, in all the ways we talked about. It's harder to get guests, a lot of talent will not cross the picket line, and more and more it's like, “stretch for time.” What is the segment- in fact, actually before you... One: tell me what your segment is gonna be today.

DRE: Oh...

AUSTIN: What are you supposed to come on set to talk about.

DRE: Coc... coconut aminos.

AUSTIN: [incredulous] What's that mean?

DRE: Uh... so coconut aminos are like, uh... they're like a sauce kind of.

AUSTIN: [incredulous] Okay...

DRE: It's like a- it's like a soy sauce replacement.

AUSTIN: Great... coconut aminos, sounds great. Um... oh this is a real thing, huh.

DRE: It is a real thing!

AUSTIN: Okay! I see that now.

DRE: Listen, you say “anything aminos—”

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] It's gonna be real.

DRE: [crosstalk] —somebody is blogging about how it's great for you.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Fair! Um... you're in a... dressing room. Do you have a dressing room at this point? Or is a situation where you've like, taken over what should have been a rotating dressing room? Because there are so few guests at this point?

DRE: Yeah... like, Dr. Bart did not have his own dressing room—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah...

DRE: —but now that there's a space that's not his dressing room but no one uses it.

AUSTIN: Okay. [crosstalk] Uh, so I'm gonna...

DRE: [crosstalk] That's just where he goes.

AUSTIN: I'm gonna say that it is- if you scroll down a little bit you can see this map of this campus, you see there's kind of like this road in and then, you know, I'll just describe this as broadly as I can. It's like a long rectangle horizontally, you kind of drive in the middle, and then right in front of you there's a big, like, welcome center and museum about the [laughing] five-year-old movie studio.

[DRE laughs as AUSTIN talks]

AUSTIN: Behind that is a smaller building that is where, like, craft services is. Behind that is an unused soundstage, Stage 2, that is where movies would have been being shot but have not been being shot for the last year, during the strike. Um... there's a big parking lot. I think it's probably like a parking lot plus they probably have some like, it's probably like a two or three floor tall lot, you know. Over to the west, like the left side of the rectangle, there's a big long stage in the kind of northwest, and there's broadcast operations which is like the big antenna, plus a ground level, you know, broadcast booth, and stuff like that. That's where like, you send out the signals. Um... just kind of a little park over in that area too, and then on the right side it is, like on the east on side of th- well it's not the east side of the map because where it is on the actual Bluff City map, but on the right side of this rectangle [chuckle] inside of this campus [breathes] there's just like, offices? It's where the executive offices are, the CEO's office, you know, a café and rec room, and you know- your office, Caitlin, is in the uh in that building. Below that is a theater, like a screening theater, called the Hughes Theater, and below that is a big warehouse, the long-term storage warehouse. Uh... Dre, Dr. Bart's thing- uh Dr. Bart's... um... uh... what do you call it... [thinking noise] Ba-ba-ba-ba-ba... I said the word moments ago!

DRE: Segment?

AUSTIN: Nope! I wanna say locker room, [crosstalk] and that is wrong.

DRE: [crosstalk] Oh, yeah yeah yeah, dressing room.

AUSTIN: Dressing room! Is in the top right of the Stage 1 building. [clears throat] To your- it has a... it has a window? That, uh, I'm guessing you probably keep the shades drawn on. I guess that's up to you, do you keep the shades drawn normally, or do you keep them open?

DRE: Um... I mean, if I'm like, changing or doing something—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yes.

DRE: —I'll keep them drawn, but otherwise I'll keep them open.

AUSTIN: Get some natural light in there.

DRE: Yeah!

AUSTIN: You know there's a mirror, there's a place you can sit down, there's like a couch, there's like a TV where you can watch the segment that's going on now, all that stuff. You know, you get your 10-minute knock that's like, "Uh, need you at the set in 10 minutes." Um, and about 30 seconds after that, um, from outside, you hear a loud bang. Not the bang of machinery, the bang of a gunshot. Have you ever heard a gunshot before?

DRE: Probably.

AUSTIN: Okay. [crosstalk] Well—

DRE: [crosstalk] Probably at a shooting range or like, going hunting with somebody or something.

AUSTIN: Totally. So you hear the sound of a rifle being shot outside. Um, uh... what do you do?

DRE: Uh, can I see anything out this window?

AUSTIN: Yeah... so there's like marshland, uh, above this like- beyond the... the campus? And you can see a couple of people in security outfits. So- so there's different types of security at this- on this campus. Deshaun works at like, the welcome center and museum, and there is like, the security that works on the stages, right?

DRE: Okay.

[1:15:00]

AUSTIN: Um... Deshaun wears like a grey and blue uniform, and then like, stage security is like- wears black with white text. And you see... um... [thinking noises] tch-tch-tchhh... I have a name here somewhere... where did I put it...

[long pause, clicking noises]

...I do not have it written down. Uh! You see a security- like the head of security with two other people walking out into the marshes. One of them has a rifle, like, slung over their shoulder? Um... uh... and you can see some movement in the marshes, as if something that has been injured, someone or something, is moving still. Um, and, uh, Gary is the head of security, and is kind of pointing for his subordinates to run out further and like- do something.

DRE: [pause] Um... I think I'm gonna try and— I guess I'm gonna go over there cause like, I'm a doctor so if someone is hurt or something...

AUSTIN: So you like leave your, leave your dressing room? And like...

DRE: [crosstalk] Yeah...

AUSTIN: ...start heading out there?

DRE: Yeah...

AUSTIN: Um, alright I think like, on the way out there is a, um... you run into Tabor? Tabor Lawrence? Who is the executive producer of- of TV Productions, with a focus in like- the reality TV and talk show stuff? And Tabor sees you like, heading towards an exit of the building so that you can get outside? And Tabor's like...

AUSTIN (as Tabor): Bartholomew! Where are you- where are you headed? What's going on? [DRE tries to interrupt] You're on in like 10 minutes!

DRE (as Dr. Bart): Yeah did you not hear? [crosstalk] That gunshot?

AUSTIN (as Tabor): [crosstalk] Hear what? I-it's a movie studio. What do you want? [crosstalk] Come on.

DRE (as Dr. Bart): [crosstalk] Yeah but there was a gunshot, and then there was a security walking by with a rifle. They don't even carry tasers!

AUSTIN (as Tabor): Y-you know, if security was out there then it sounds like we're all safe and sound in here, huh?

DRE (as Dr. Bart): Yeah but, if like, somebody's hurt...

AUSTIN (as Tabor): Then, they'll go to the hospital! [crosstalk] You're not even that kind of doctor!

DRE (as Dr. Bart): [crosstalk] Listen, they're just right outside... Okay, listen, are you any kind of doctor?

AUSTIN (as Tabor): No, I'm an executive producer, and that means I sign your check. [crosstalk] Do you want to be on the episode today or not?

DRE (as Dr. Bart): [crosstalk] I'll be back in— Yeah! I'll be back in 5 minutes. If it's nothing then, I'm gonna be right back, right?

AUSTIN (as Tabor): ...Yeah, alright.

AUSTIN: Um... and you head out the door. Let's swing over to Caitlin. Uh... Caitlin? I have no idea what it's like to be an accountant for a company that has like- half of its um... [chuckling] half of its- more than half of its productions seemingly freeze over night? Um... but I imagine you actually ended up with like— a lot of free time at the office in some ways?

JANINE: Yeah...

AUSTIN: Um... what do you do to pass the time? Is this- do you work on your blog stuff? Do you work on your...

JANINE: Um...

AUSTIN: Do you ever let that slip in [crosstalk] or are you pretty, on- on board?

JANINE: [crosstalk] [laughing] I bet... so... I bet that she is a little too paranoid about someone looking at her browser history or whatever?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: So I don't think she like- works on the blog in the sense that like, when you say, "she's working on her blog," you would expect her to be like logged into to something doing stuff like that, but I think she absolutely has like- a... one of those little memo pads with the magnetic closure?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Um... in her purse. Like a little notebook with a little pencil-holder strap thing on it.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Um, and I think she pulls that out and then— cause that's an easy thing you can just flip that closed, the magnet will make sure it snaps shut if someone comes by. [AUSTIN laughs] Um...

AUSTIN: And there's always a reason to be writing notes, right? Like, who knows what you were writing, it's totally okay.

JANINE: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Um... so I think um... there's a moment where you've- you've- you know, maybe you're working on something in terms of accounting? Maybe you're trying to figure out a-an idea, and you hit like a roadblock. You hit like a... like "[sighs] I don't know- I don't know how to crack this thing, let me go and get some coffee." Um... and when you go in the like little- do you go into the cafeteria for that? Or do you just use the- [amused] I'm gonna give you two options. Important GM decision here. Do you go to the cafeteria outside? That is the like, nice- well not outside, but in the other part of the building? Where you can get like a- a fancy coffee drink? Or do you just go to the coffee machine that is like, in your, like, little cubicle area.

JANINE: Um... Hm... Wait, wh- describe the coffee machine in the cafeteria?

AUSTIN: It's not a coffee machine [crosstalk] It's like a barista.

JANINE: [crosstalk] Oh the... okay.

AUSTIN: The cafeteria is like a nice coffee place, where you can get like... a hand-made latte, you know? Whereas the machine in the... in the offices is like—

JANINE: Yeah...

AUSTIN: You know, a machine that goes like [imitating coffee machine noises] Chhhhhngh-mum-bum-bum-bum-bum-bum- [JANINE laughs] psssssssssh- kwoooooo-kh.

JANINE: So you're saying it doesn't froth the milk.

AUSTIN: It does not froth the milk. [DRE laughs] Well, there's a button that says it froths the milk. I wouldn't trust it.

JANINE: [chuckling] Okay...

AUSTIN: It's more it like fraths the milk? It got the vowel wrong somehow? Not great.

JANINE: Great... um...

AUSTIN: But it's fine! Like, as a person who's had this style of thing— "I can walk 5 minutes to go to the nice coffee place, or get the free coffee in my office 3 steps away," I've taken the office coffee plenty of times.

JANINE: But I mean she's not doing anything.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Fair! [crosstalk] Yeah, yeah-yeah-yeah.

JANINE: [crosstalk] You know it's like one of things where like, sometimes you want the walk as much as anything else.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

JANINE: So I think she'd go for the, like, barista experience.

AUSTIN: Okay. So yeah, you're, you're there. The cafeteria is kind of dead, which is not surprising. This is one of those weeks where like, people end up taking the whole week off because they already have Thursday-Friday, so they've saved up some vacation time, they're out of town, they're going to see they're family for Thanksgiving, maybe they're going on like- a pre-winter vacation. Um, and so I think it is surprising to you that there is uh... a couple people in front of you waiting for... the-]to get something made at the café. Um... doubly so because you get that moment of like, "Oh, fuck, I really wanted to just like go over, put in my order, and have this done in 45 seconds." You get up from your desk and you're like, "I bet I can get back to my desk within 3 minutes." [JANINE chuckles] And now it is very clear that this is like, a 10-15-minute trip? Um, uh... and a person- a person shows up behind you, adding to the line. Um- uh... she is a Latino lady, um, who you don't recognize... with frizzy brown hair— I just realized we should get descriptions of all of you, also. So, once

I'm done with this, I wanna know what you look like and what you're wearing. Um... and she just goes like,

AUSTIN (as lady): Wow, I didn't expect a line!

AUSTIN: Um... what are you- what are you wearing? Tell me about who Caitlin- what Caitlin Paul looks like and dresses like.

JANINE: So I realize that this is the first Bluff that we've done since... um... since thispersondoesnotexist.com became known?

AUSTIN: Oh wow... you're totally right!

JANINE: So, I just generated Caitlin.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JANINE: I just- I just- that's what my regular clicking for the past little while was, was me generating a Caitlin. [crosstalk] Which I just have now.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Do you want to explain what "This Person Does Not Exist" is and how terrifying it is?

JANINE: So "This Person Does Not Exist" is a site that's just like, AI-generated, like, it uses like a bajillion reference photos, and just like, tries to paste them together in a smart way, and...

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm.

JANINE: It is still very confused by hats and hearings.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Mm-hmm.

JANINE: ...And also extremely confused by— sometimes there's a face out of frame that looks like a little [laughing] shrunken raisin-head person? [SYLVIA laughs] Because it does not know what to do to put other people in the frame? They also have a cat version? [AUSTIN makes a horrified noise] And that one does not work as well either. It's fun though. So um... so yeah, you can just generate a relative- most- often, sometimes, relatively convincing picture. Sometimes someone will just have a hole in their head? Um... but usually it works okay, and you can just make a random person.

AUSTIN: Well that's a person right there!

JANINE: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Oh wow I clicked cats and these cats are not good you're right [crosstalk] this is a nightmare. Okay...

JANINE: [shaking head noise] Mm-mm. It's cause they're doing the full body! And that's harder [crosstalk] to- yeah.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah that's not what you wanna do. Um... so like brown hair, um...

JANINE: Yeah she's probably like- she's probably like lightened her hair just a little bit. Like, she probably in college probably did the- did the blond sort of thing, [AUSTIN makes an affirming noise] but now she just lightens it to like a red kind of tone and is happy with that because it feels more mature.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Um... pretty like understated make-up. Probably most of the attention goes on the eyeliner and stuff, and the foundation layer, but you know, lips and everything is pretty... pretty natural-looking tones.

AUSTIN: Yeah! Cool, what do you wear, what's your fashion sense?

JANINE: I think she is very much the like, she's got an infinity scarf.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Uh huh.

JANINE: You've got an infinity scarf for every season. Summer it's a lighter scarf; Winter it's a heavier scarf. You layer that with like, you know, you got your jeans and your like, expensive t-shirt? Like a t-shirt that's very high quality [AUSTIN chuckles] and tailored and like- not tailored but like- you know it's like a sturdy material. It's not just like a Gildan, you know?

AUSTIN: [affirming] Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

JANINE: Um... and probably like boots. She probably loves books, ankle boots especially.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Cool! So I think this woman, who we know her name- the character's name is Angie. Again, Angie was like,

AUSTIN (as Angie): I didn't expect a line!

JANINE (as Caitlin): Yeah me either honestly, I was kinda hoping to like, just uh... [chuckling] you know, grab and go!

AUSTIN (as Angie): Yeah totally, especially today! With you know, the holiday and all that. You decided to stick around for one more day before Thanksgiving?

JANINE (as Caitlin): Yeah you know, everyone's kinda... it's not like I have to travel. You know, it's pretty... it's a pretty local affair. Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Angie): Yeah, I getcha, I getcha, my family is from around here to. [crosstalk] You know...

JANINE (as Caitlin): Yeah...

AUSTIN (as Angie): Hey do you know anything about the shoot? The night shoot?

JANINE (as Caitlin): The what?

AUSTIN (as Angie): The night shoot! Um, you know the... you know they're shooting some stuff at night, I- this is- I heard... I'm just curious, it's not my department, so...

JANINE (as Caitlin): Oh, it's not really mine either. I don't know... I...

AUSTIN (as Angie): Damn... I was just curious, you know- cause I- you know I was just like... I love all the movies, you know. It's cool to work here, but I don't do the movie-stuff so much, and I know it hasn't happened in a while, so I was like, "Well if they're gonna start doing the movies maybe I could talk to some people and get involved, and, you know." But if you don't know anything, then that's- that's fine. Um... anyway it was- you know, I'll let you stand in line. I don't wanna bug you.

JANINE (as Caitlin): [laughs] No, it's okay. Just, you know- I'm a very- I keep my head down. I don't really... Um...

AUSTIN (as Angie): Yeah! Yeah- yeah- yeah, I got you. It's just! It's just- it's just... wild, right? Cause I feel like- it must cost more to shoot at night, for sure.

JANINE (as Caitlin): I guess? I guess I've never really thought about it.

AUSTIN (as Angie): Yeah... okay well!

JANINE (as Caitlin): Cause like the lights? I don't know.

AUSTIN (as Angie): Yeah-yeah-yeah! Um... alright!

AUSTIN: And pulls out her phone, like,

AUSTIN (as Angie): Let me just check some stuff. I hope you have a good day!

JANINE (as Caitlin): Yeah-

AUSTIN (as Angie): [crosstalk] Still in line! [JANINE laughs] Still gonna get a coffee. Sorry this just got awkward.

AUSTIN: Um... [clears throat], and the camera cuts! Um... uh... Eve!

SYLVIA: Hm!

AUSTIN: By the time you pull up, there is a pretty sizable crowd of striking Writer's Guild members out front. You know there's a big rat, a big inflatable rat, [chuckles] you know. The whole fucking thing is happening out there. And uh... um... I don't- did you expect this? Were you prepared?

SYLVIA: I think I was warned that there was... like some stuff going on. I feel like, this is the sort of thing where your parents tell you about it, where it's like, "Yeah there's some drama happening at cousin Caitlin's work, you might need to deal with that," [AUSTIN laughs] you know?

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

SYLVIA: Like they don't get into the details but they tell you to expect something.

AUSTIN: [affirming] Mm-hmm.

SYLVIA: Um... and I think it's one of those situations. I think there's a lot of calming peaches down, [AUSTIN makes an affirming noise] cause Peaches is specifically like, their job on the farm is to hunt rats.

AUSTIN: Right... right. [DRE laughs] There's a big giant one here.

SYLVIA: [amused] Yeah!

AUSTIN: And also there's, in some ways... you're being turned into one.

SYLVIA: Uh huh!

AUSTIN: Um... and so there's people who are like- who are booing you as you pull up, who are yelling at you. Lots of people have um... you know, placards that say things like, "Fair Wages Now," and you know, "No Bluff City Without People," and you know, "Money Not People, People Not Corporations," etc. There's some stuff that's like, um... "Bring Back the Inlet," or, um... you know, "Atlantic City for the Locals," stuff like that. But eventually you're able to make your way in. You're directed to parking, and- and the parking thing has like uh-kind of like a direct walkway into the Welcome Center and Museum? Uh, I should add that to the map. But you can imagine right? There is like, a little connecting pathway— [pause] whoop! That's not what I wanted at all, that's bad. [chuckling] Let me fix that. Uh... go to Map, go to Draw Shape, reverse those two— that connects the parking lot with the Welcome Center and stuff. Um, and that is uh... goes right to security where you... see... Deshaun Williams [chuckles] who had previously been on the bus with Dr. Bart, and who was like,

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): Come on up! Was not expecting many guests today. Uh... can I get you to sign in? Who are you here for?

SYLVIA (as Eve): Oh yeah! Um... so I'm here to see- I gotta see a couple of people actually. I'm mostly here to see Caitlin? Caitlin Paul, an accountant?

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): Caitlin Paul...

AUSTIN: Da-da-da-da-daa, type-type-type-type-type...

SYLVIA (as Eve): Uh... [crosstalk]

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): [crosstalk] Uh huh?

SYLVIA (as Eve): But I also have to- my mom would be really mad if I didn't stop by and say hi— my cousin Bart? He's on TV a couple times... [crosstalk] Bart Asher?

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): [crosstalk] Dr. Bart! You're cousins with Dr. Bart?

SYLVIA (as Eve): Oh yeah! You know him!

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): Ohh yeah, I was just talking to Dr. Bart! Dr Bart- D.B. and me, we go back, alright?

SYLVIA (as Eve): Ohhhh! [crosstalk] Aw man! I didn't expect- but I should have expected to run into his friends.

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): [crosstalk] Yeah! Yeah-yeah-yeah! We got a- We've got a meeting on the books today, actually, me and D.B.

SYLVIA (as Eve): Oh!

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): And, you know, we're gonna hang out, and just you know, chop it up. You know. [crosstalk] Anyway...

SYLVIA (as Eve): [crosstalk] Alright well, I'll try not to keep him from that.

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): Yeah now, that's- listen. Family first, that's what my mom always says, so... um...uh- the point is, I'm gonna need your ID. I'm gonna need, just uh- a phone number to reach you at, uh- in case there's anything, we keep all that stuff here. No... uh actually, [SYLVIA sucks in air through teeth]

[1:30:00]

I'm gonna need to actually take the phone from you and disable your camera. We have a special SIM card we do... thing.

SYLVIA (as Eve): Oh-oh, go ahead. It's been dead for like an hour, anyway.

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): [crosstalk] Oh...

SYLVIA (as Eve): You don't have a USB-C cable anywhere, [crosstalk] do you?

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): Yeah-yeah-yeah-yeah! I got you! I'll charge it.

SYLVIA (as Eve): Awesome.

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): I'll charge it up here and when you leave just come through.

SYLVIA (as Eve): Thank you!

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): And uh... other stuff, other stuff... I'm gonna need you to walk through the metal detector. [dismissing noise] You know, America-shit. But um... I'll call ahead and let them know that you are here to see them.

SYLVIA (as Eve): Awesome, thank you so much!

AUSTIN: Um... uh... [laughing] in the chat, Janine says, “D.B. and Me is the afternoon show,” [laughing more] and Dre says, “Deshaun wants to quit his job to pitch a podcast project with Dr. B [crosstalk] with that title.”

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] It's a booming market!

AUSTIN: It is a boom- listen, let me tell you about podcasts, they're alright.

SYLVIA: It's the new form- it's the new entertainment for a modern era!

AUSTIN: For uh- that's what I- [laughing hard] that's what I've heard! [laughing]

DRE: D.B.! We just gotta get that underwear ad!

AUSTIN: We gotta get them MeUndies! [laughing] Listen, if you're not hawking MeUndies on I Am... er- I A.M.— Mm- “I'm A.M., Are You?” then what are you doing? Uh, Eve, can you help me with also like, what you look like, what are you wearing, etc.

SYLVIA: Yeah! So... I- her style I've already got down pretty simple into sort of just like soft farmer butch. She's wearing like [crosstalk] a denim jacket...

AUSTIN: Hell yeah.

SYLVIA: Um... I think she's wearing, like, a retro New Jersey Mets t-shirt?

AUSTIN: Love it.

SYLVIA: And a pair of jeans, uh... her hair is tied back in a ponytail. She's just- she's like about 5'10", South Asian, specifically Indian woman. She takes after her dad, she resembles him more than her mom. Um, uh...

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

SYLVIA: Yeah, and...

AUSTIN: With the Mets jersey, I think Deshaun is also like,

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): What do you think, K.D., gonna be back, what do you think? Do you think this gonna be the year for the- for the- for the Mets?

SYLVIA (as Eve): I mean... it- yeah! I mean, first of all, we're the only team in New York now, and...

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): Wooooow! Wooooooow!

SYLVIA (as Eve): Like, let's be real. Let's be real!

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): Goddamn! Goddman, you're gonna do the Knicks dirty like that! Like, I don't know, I'm a Sixers guy [crosstalk] but like, phew, alright.

SYLVIA (as Eve): [dismissing] Ehhhh... alright.

AUSTIN (as Deshaun): Listen! Listen, listen- I'm a South Jersey kid. I know... I know other people in Jersey, they go to New York, I don't have any hate for that. That's fine. [SYLVIA laughs] Uh, but anyway, I'm holding you up too long, I'll charge your phone. It was good to meet you, tell D.B. that I'm really looking forward to the meeting. I called! No one picked up yet. Uh, just you wait here for a few minutes I'm sure they'll come through and pick you up. Um...

SYLVIA (as Eve): Alright.

AUSTIN: And at this point we get the phones ringing both on Caitlin's desk, where Caitlin is being distracted at the café, and also in Dr. Bart's dressing room, where Dr. Bart has left, and we get the phone ringing, the camera kind of moves upwards, and we reveal Dr. Bart now moving outside into the marshes towards where security is. Let's go back there! Dr. Bart, what do you look like, and what are you wearing?

DRE: Um... I think Dr. Bart is probably just, let's see, what's- what's a good like... Fall look? Probably some... uh, some salmon khakis.

AUSTIN: Mm! Mm-hmm.

DRE: Some, uh, some oxblood shoes. Some sort of like shirt that is rolled-up at the cuffs, and the cuffs have a like different pattern on the inside than is on the outside of the shirt?

AUSTIN: Yeah... Um...

DRE: Pretty standard. Pretty, like, basic.

[pause, clicking noises]

AUSTIN: Uh... cool! Sorry I had to make a note of something— that had nothing to do with your! With your description there- just [DRE and SYLVIA laugh] uh... you can see by the way— I just realized, Caitlin— like now that you're in this kind of entry area where guests are entered where- you know, into the Welcome Center/Museum, there is just like a list of all of their biggest hits from Bluff City Studios? Um... and, you know, it's like, you're looking at sci-fi... posters from sci-fi movies, and stuff from like... uh... you know, what do you call— like props, and set pieces from stuff. Lights from uh... you know, big fake casino sets, and weird on-location stuff for a post-apocalyptic thing! And it's all sorts of shit, right?

JANINE: Did you mean Eve?

AUSTIN: Who did I- who did I say?

JANINE: You said Caitlin.

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Oh!

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] I said- sorry I did mean Eve, my bad- my bad. Eve, yes. Yes- yes- yes. Though I bet that stuff is all through the café too. The cafeteria is definitely decorated in like [JANINE sighs] props hanging from the ceiling, you know what I mean? There's like a UFO hanging from the ceiling. There's all sorts of other shit. Um, uh... anyway, let's quickly hop back to Dr. Bart. You're going outside. You can see the people, um... the three security officers in the kind of like tall grass. Something makes a loud noise, and then the grass starts moving, and... you see one of the security officers jump back, and another level their gun again and pull the trigger, and there's another loud bang. And... there is no sound of anything responding after that shot. What do you do?

DRE: So are all of the security officers in the marsh?

AUSTIN: Three of them are! There's three of them now- and all three of th- yes! The three who went outside, yes.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Gary and then two others who... whose names I don't know yet!

DRE: Yeah. Um...

AUSTIN: Gary, James, and Michael.

[pause, sound of typing]

DRE: I think I'm gonna kinda, hang by the door, and just kinda watch?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: I'm almost wondering if he takes his phone out, not to take a picture, but as an attempt at a binoculars type of thing. [crosstalk] Like, using the zoom on his camera to see better.

AUSTIN: That sounds like you are carefully observing a person, thing, or situation... to me.

DRE: Sure! Yeah!

AUSTIN: Roll some dice in this game. "When you carefully observe a person, thing, or situation, roll +Sharp. On a 10+ you may ask the GM any one question about the subject. On a 7-9 you may ask the GM one question from the list below. On a 6 or under, ask one from the list, and the GM will add a complication." Um... what are you uh, what are you- roll your- what is your Sharp? zero?

DRE: It's zero, yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright, yeah. Give me your, give me your Sharp.

DRE: [clack] Oh, that's a 4!

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Ooooh, that's a 4 right there. Uh, so you can still ask one of these questions: "What here should I be worried about? What here might be useful to me? And what is about to happen?"

DRE: Oooh, what's about to happen?

AUSTIN: Um... one, you see movement coming from— you see what they don't see, which is, there is movement in the grass from behind them, and something in the grass is moving towards them at speed. Um... but I get to add a complication, which is: Gary turns and begins to walk towards you, and is like,

AUSTIN (as Gary): Hey put the phone down! Put down the phone! Hey, what are you doing!

DRE: Uh...

AUSTIN: He's— go ahead.

DRE: Uh, no I think like- I do, like- I drop, I hold- I think I *drop* the phone, and then I just point and say,

DRE (as Dr. Bart): Behind! Behind!

AUSTIN: Give me a... [thinking noises] Drr-dr-dr-dr-dr... 'Take a Risk,' I think this might be. Which is Quick, this requires sharp, decisive action.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: And your Quick is 1. So 2d6+1. [pause] Hey, 11!

DRE: Heyyyy.

AUSTIN: "On a 10+ it goes as well as could be hoped," which, what a great phrase that is. [DRE laughs] What great leeway to leave for the GM, for a game that is up against horror, the fact that like, hey, listen, sometimes as well as hoped can still not be perfect. In this case it's okay. You see, um... as you shout, one of the other security guys, Michael, turns and sees something coming towards him? Uh, and responds by diving out of the way, and in a, uh... what I can only describe as a deeply surreal moment, you see a lion... leap into the air... lunge at where Michael was standing, and then disappear into the tall grass again.

[Arrangement of "Claire de Lune" plays until the end]