# Bluff City 19: Messy Business Pt 4

Transcribed by lucy @battlestarvalk
t/n: The first 20 minutes or so involves a recap of plot and character stats - the story continues on page 14, or at 00;22;40.

> ALI: Agent Ryder/Christine Andrews [Bluff City 05/06: There Is No Greater Love]
> JACK: Agent Page/Florence Slowly [Bluff City 05/06: There Is No Greater Love]
> JANINE: Agent Seals/Maggie Darcy [Bluff City 01/02: A Bowling Alley, A Boxer, and A Bird]
> KEITH: Agent Heard/Robber Twig [Created for Messy Business]

## 00;00;00 - 00;03;30

[Intro music starts - notes on the track here. Further notes on the Patreon description]

> AUSTIN [as Specialist Corson]: Specialist Corson, start record - article intake number 8553. Object: Police evidence lot BB-2019-22, it is a little blue box with a bunch of plastic baggies with various... things. Well, I did ask for ephemera. Description: Let's see, there's like a- like a lighter in here? Some forks and knives... what is this, a keno ticket? Okay... there's a plate, with some sort of symbol on it, let's see- I think it's like a- yeah- it's a- it's a pair of dice wearing crowns- did someone eat off this plate? Oh my- oh my god, this bag has scrambled eggs in it, gross! What is-! Is this from a *casino buffet*? Fuck! [scoffs] Alright... mark it as Bluff City, I guess. Jesus, half of this stuff is burnt, what happened to- [sighs] right, there's a- there's a wallet in here, let me get the tweezers.
>
> Alright, sub description: Wallet contents. ID - burned, validated parking ticket - mostly burned, Eat Fresh loyalty card-? - okay, that is somehow totally fine. Um... and... this is one of those electric key cards for a hotel room. I don't- I don't know this hotel... Mammona, did a new place open up in Bluff City recently? Or is this... some sort of exclusive-
>
> [Door knocking sound]
>
> AUSTIN [as Specialist Corson]: [away from mic] One second!
>
> [Door knocking]
>
> AUSTIN [as Specialist Corson]: [away from mic] One second-! Uh- Hey! What are you- No, you can't come in... Okay, woah, slow down... It's not- Jesus! He- Hey- [recording abruptly stops]

[Intro music continues until fading out to a dial tone and wind noise]

# 00;03;30 - 00;05;55

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterisation, and fun interactions between good friends. I am your host, Austin Walker, and you can find me on twitter @austin_walker, and- today we are continuing our game of Lacuna by Jared Sorensen. Joining me today... Janine Hawkins.

JANINE: Hey! You can find me on twitter @bleatingheart.

AUSTIN: Ali Acampora.

ALI: Hi! You can find me [giggles] on twitter @ali_west.

AUSTIN: Jack de Quidt.

JACK: Hi! You can find me on twitter @notquitereal, and buy any of the music featured on the show at notquitereal.bandcamp.com.

AUSTIN: And Keith J Carberry.

KEITH: Hi, my name is Keith J Carberry, you can find me on twitter @KeithJCarberry, you can find the let's plays that I do at youtube.com/RunButton.

AUSTIN: As I said, we are continuing our game of Lacuna, including some elements of TechNoir by Jeremy Keller. My agenda today is to make Blough[1] City feel frighteni- seem frightening, and also feel afraid, to fill the player character's lives with intrigue and mystery, and to play to find out what happens. It has been a little bit since we recorded the last episode, which ended at a *very* high stakes moment... so, before we start, I just wanna look over the- the chart here, the- the corkboard with all of our conspiracy connections, and go over what happened so far in this investigation. I think I went through after our last recording and tightened some of this up, and added some colour, to note things that are- connections that we know exist, but are not like... quote unquote official in the- in thing, you know what I mean? Does that make sense?

JACK: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: So what I have done, is I have written down here for instance that Agent Seals is protective of Finnegan Hands, but that's not part of the mystery- that's just part of the relationship that you have that's important there, so that's in red instead of black.

JACK: Mm-hm.

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[1] "Blough" is pronounced "Blue", in accordance with the Lacuna playbook, which is set in Blue City. In the fiction, this is explained as Blough being a fake word, with no "real" spelling.

AUSTIN: [pause] Can somebody else continue this summary as I continue to cough and wait for this cough syrup to hopefully kick in soon? And talk about what happened last session.

ALI: Um.. sure! I mean, I just go over the notes that I gave everybody-

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] That would be great.

ALI: [continuing] And people can kind of interject, and ask questions? Because I kind of fast-forward, a little bit... But basically, so we're all here... we should look at the dossier actually...

AUSTIN: You should look at the dossier.

# 00;05;55 - 00;18;13

KEITH: We're at the- at the Festival right now.

ALI: We are at the Film Festival right now, yeah.

AUSTIN: You're in- [trails off]

ALI: We were sent here to find... we weren't sent here to find him, because he's dead, but we were sent here to figure out who killed Blake Blossom, find the tape that was missing, and also bring his killer to justice.

AUSTIN: Yep. You got it.

ALI: We've been investigating it... we- first went to a film festival and was like "oh, the movie's gonna play here', then it isn't, then it is... then we went to the scene of the crime, and there was a guy there...

AUSTIN: But you called the guy there, right?

ALI: Yeah, yeah yeah. [pauses]

KEITH: That's when we learned that the Teardrop Coupe was at the scene of the crime.

ALI: Yes.

AUSTIN: Yep.

KEITH: And... what was the other, big thing that we learned- oh! We learned about the... the fingers guy.

AUSTIN: The Curator.

KEITH: The Curator!

AUSTIN: [continuing] Who was the monster made out of hands...

JACK: [crosstalk] Oh, yeah! That awful...

AUSTIN: [continuing] Who killed Blake Blossom.

KEITH: Yes, The Curator killed Blake Blossom... The Curator is a fingers monster... uh.... [trails off]

ALI: [crosstalk] The weird thing about The Curator is... [giggles] sorry, it's also like a proper noun? Like it's a creature that we know, it's in our dossier, and it like- seems to be like, in cahoots with the cultural exchange? Like, it's a being that we know has it's own... like,

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Agenda.

ALI: [continuing] it doesn't appear to attack people in the night, right? Like it was targeting Blake Blossom.

AUSTIN: Yeah, like it isn't a monster in the sense of like- it isn't a rabid wolf, right?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: What it does is... it operates in the same sort of marketplace that... Mr- *Mr Bee- L E** works in? The person who kinda like, moves ideas between Bluff and Blough, and is kind of like, a fixer, and a- an informant, and a shadow broker type of character. The- the Curator works in those same kind of spaces, that same kind of grey area, except instead of being a wheeler and a dealer, is someone who takes things. And so, you know- you don't know, necessarily- all you know is that the Curator was doing that, and also that the agent that you ended up... killing was there taking photos. God, what was that guy's name?

ALI: [beat] Ohhh... no clue [giggles] Wish I knew.

AUSTIN: Wish I knew, too. I completely forget his name.

ALI: Um...

AUSTIN: It was another agent. Um... [pause] that's okay.

KEITH: I- I remember- [sniggers] I remember what he looks like! [Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, same! Big same! But now he's dead, so... [coughs]

JACK: [crosstalk] That guy was a real- was a real piece of shit, right?

ALI: Yeah.

JACK: [continuing] He was like a... he was...

KEITH: Yeah, he tried to kill... you?

JACK: Yeah! He did... and he had...

KEITH: [crosstalk] Or was it Ali?

JACK: [continuing] He tried to kill both of us, I think. But he was gonna go take a swing at me... and by "take a swing" I mean [giggles] shoot me with a gun. [Ali laughs]

KEITH: Right.

JACK: He... [pauses]

KEITH: Take a swing at the trigger of a gun.

JACK: He had an incredible car, that couldn't decide whether or not it wanted to be a car or a film... developing darkroom?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: [continuing] I previously thought he just had a darkroom in the trunk of his car, but it was like, legitimately connected to the backseat of his car or whatever? Via a little tube?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Oh right, like films printed out into the backseat- [laughs]

JACK: [overlapping] into the backseat of the car! Which was very good, it's the best- the best place for a photobooth.

ALI: I think another important thing to note about his photos specifically is that he had like, a *ton* of Blake.

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: He... I don't remember how the like, there was like a house in the distance that was the *only* house in the area. And like, there was specifically films of the moment of death that he had taken, and that also been following Blake for months and months, and these photos revealed that.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Also- also a person who showed up there was Mike Truk, who is-

ALI: [giggles] Oh, right.

AUSTIN: [continuing] Who is a- Agent Heard, one of Agent Heard's connections here? Who lived- lived, uh, seemingly lives right nearby in an unfinished house? That is slowly finishing?

JACK: [crosstalking] Like in a really weird unfinished house, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: It's like- it's like a sort of doll's house kind of situation. [sniggers]

AUSTIN: Yeah, he's like building it one room at a time, but is already living inside- building it to *completion*, one room at a time. Y'know?

JACK: Like a perfectly finished living room, completely unfinished kitchen and dining area!

AUSTIN: Yes, exactly... and he's just seeming to be kind of weird? Static increased and he has begun to pop up in ways that are... weird. [pause] What else? [pause] Y'all met up with Achilles Apollo.

ALI: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Two of you did- two of you went to meet up with Achilles Apollo, two of you went to one of the Cultural Trusts... I forget who was the pairings on those- I think it was-

JACK: Uh, Keith and I went to the Cultural Trust.

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: Yeah, and me and Janine... [trails off]

AUSTIN: You and Janine went to Achilles Apollo... In the Cultural Trust, you found- you made the connection that like, Blake, Hector, and Gale were all working together as filmmaking collaborators... and then, I think with- I don't think- I don't know that, Keith- I don't know if Heard found the Hector stuff, I think you found the Blake side of it, right?

JACK: Yeah, like I went off-piste at that point, right? To be like - I'm going to try and find Hector.

KEITH: To try and find Hector's stuff? Yeah.

JACK: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Mm. And then... Seals- Seals and Ryder, you two- talked to Achilles Apollo, and then, are going to try to get... both him and Finnegan Hands out?

ALI: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: [continuing] I forget the- was that the promise made?

ALI: [whining slightly] Mm-mm. [giggles] Mm-hm. Eventually.

JANINE: Yeah.

ALI: Initially we were like, we're gonna pretend to beat you up and tell these people we stole the tape.

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: And then it was like- 'oh! If you're talented at the thing you do, you should just come home with us, and we'll figure it out', and then we phoned Finnegan and was like, 'hey, can you help us get Apollo out?' [giggles] And Finnegan was immediately like... 'I would like to go!' [laughs, Jack laughs]

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: To which Chris was like 'Yeah, sure'. Ah... and that's the shoe that's gonna drop...

AUSTIN: And then, another shoe dropped, which- before that one, you all went to meet up at the film festival, and... while you were there, you- I guess Ryder, Ali? Your character, handed off the Blossom to Gale Green, and she announced that Hector Hu was here, and he would- he would show the film- Blossom's final film, which was called 'The Tunnel'. And... they did. And Hector ended up being on the same veranda you were in, you were sitting in- looking over this festival. Where everyone, by the way, it's been hailing? There are loud, like, trumpets and horns as holiday carols are played from this roaming huge parade that's been picking up steam. And, the film played and revealed a third place- a place called Bluffington, or Bluffington Beach- which seems to be a place, you know, more material, and cynical, and grimy than Bluff City, and one freer, and more chaotic, and more alive than Blough City. It is a place that Hector Hu was describing as 'the real world'. And... everyone here saw that, and it is causing a stir. And I think that was... basically where we left off, right?

ALI: Yeah. [pause] I think the only last thing to mention, and really like underline and explain, is that all the tension that is here between these characters at this point?

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: Because I think it started with, like, [sighs] Jack and my characters having like, this affection, and this relationship, and this history with Hector, and wanting to go in and find something of him, as well as doing the mission. Whereas Keith's character has this thing where it's like... if you find him, you should kill him or bring him in.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Yeah- he- also, I technically know him better than anyone else here [Ali laughs]

ALI: Yeah.

KEITH: He was my mentor.

ALI: Yeah.

KEITH: And I'm basically on a trial probation to make sure I can handle being a real agent while also my mentor is like, wanted. [Ali giggles]

AUSTIN: Right. You're basically on probation senior agent duty, and if you succeed here, Agent Ward has told you that you will get a- a promotion. So if you bring in- if you do the things you're supposed to do, keep this thing on track, you will become a permanent senior agent, which is a big, big deal.

ALI: And whilst...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Any questions about that?

ALI: [continuing] one more thing, and whilst Seals isn't super involved in the Hector thing, there is tension between y'all and Keith's character because of the whole "Should we kill this guy?" argument. [giggles]

AUSTIN/JANINE: Yeah.

ALI: [continuing] That was also a place, like a lot of static occurred, and was like 'We definitely shouldn't do that', and Keith has the authority and was like 'No, I do this all the time.'

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: [continuing] 'If he was trying to kill us, we'd be dead now'....

AUSTIN: So much so that no-one remembers his name.

[Ali giggles]

KEITH: Pa- part of the static.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah, you know what? No-one remembers his name. Part of the static- static does that shit sometimes. We should note static- static is at fifteen, which is high. I will remind

everyone that once things his ten- ten to twenty, that's like medium static, and things start to get... tricky? Once you hit twenty, things get altogether truly wild, truly off the beaten path...

KEITH: Well, the good news is, I almost can't do anything useful, anymore.

AUSTIN: Good! Why's that true?

KEITH: Ah... well, because... two- two of the agents [Ali laughs] have been working against me?

AUSTIN: Yeah!

KEITH: I decided to-

JANINE: [crosstalk] You decided to think hard about that envelope until your heart rate starting through your chest. [laughs]

KEITH: Yeah, that's- that's pretty much what is was.

AUSTIN: Oh, right.

KEITH: I was very suspicious until- until I couldn't breathe- about the envelope that Ryder was handing to- to- um, who was the Curator? Not the Curator, but-

JACK: [crosstalk] Gale Green?

ALI: [crosstalk] Oh, Gale Green.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] It's Gale Green.

KEITH: [continuing] Yes- the curator in a different sense. [Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, not the monster Curator! The curator of this film festival.

KEITH: Right, exactly.

JACK: And what was in that envelope?

AUSTIN: The- the Blake Blossom tape.

KEITH: [crosstalk] The tape that we're not supposed to show.

JACK: Okay, okay right- in my head I was picturing- I was picturing a paper envelope, rather than like, a packet, so I was confused.

KEITH: It's like- yeah, yeah. The tapes were like- if I had gotten it, we could have left and won.

[Jack laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh, there's all sorts of ways to win.

JACK: [crosstalk] Now look- it's- it's a little victory.

KEITH: But Agent- Agent Heard's way of winning is by doing the mission.

AUSTIN: Right. That is definitely how he- how he thinks. You are now at 183 heart rate, your maximum is at 190. [Janine laughs] Which means, you are not only past your- your ideal zone, your target zone, but you are nearing your maximum.

KEITH: I have one more successful roll before I... before I can't make any more non-risky rolls.

AUSTIN: Right, because you have to roll eleven or greater before you can succeed at any given action. And you are... less than eleven away from your maximum heart rate.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: The thing that is happening when you max out your heart rate again, is that is makes physical rolls, basically- Force or Instinct rolls, I believe, into risky rolls. And when you fail a risky roll, it reduces the relevant stat by one.

KEITH: Got it.

AUSTIN: So a risky roll- you know, we can always have risky rolls- combat, high speed chases, you know, falling off of a building, you know, electricity, fire, stuff like that. Those are all risky things. But once you're at your maximum heart rate, even small things become risky in that way. So... except for Access! Access rolls are not that... Force and Instinct rolls are automatically risky.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And you don't get to roll extra dice anymore, which is an important thing.

KEITH: Yep.

# 00;18;13 - 00;22;41

AUSTIN: [pause] Let's go over everybody else's heart rate right now, so we have a good sense of how stressed everyone is, in this world. [pause] Agent Ryder?

ALI: Yeah, so my current is- wait, is that true?

AUSTIN: Uh-oh!

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Is that true? Did you max out on this?

KEITH: I did that- I did that to you, yeah.

AUSTIN: Jesus Christ...

JACK: Mmm... interesting.

KEITH: Also- so- just so we remember how this all works-

JACK: It's like a game of chicken, right?!

KEITH: [continuing] I... yeah, yeah, so basically I can challenge, and try to figure out what's going on [Jack laughs] And I can double down...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: [continuing] And you can decline to double down- you can decline my rechallenge, and just forfeit, so you don't have to reroll... but you didn't do that, and we just kept rolling, until you were at maximum heart rate, and I decided enough is enough.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

[Ali giggles]

KEITH: I guess I didn't notice the thing I wanted to notice.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yikes, Agent Ryder!

[Jack exhales pointedly]

ALI: [giggles] My current is 184, my maximum is 184...

AUSTIN: Great!

ALI: And then while we're on it, I have a Force of two, and Instinct of four, and Access of three, and I have four commendation points!

AUSTIN: And your talent is Intuition!

ALI: [laughs] My talent is Caller.

AUSTIN: Great... Or- I thought it was... [trails off]

ALI: [crosstalk] Oh, I thought you meant the technique...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah- yeah.

ALI: [crosstalk] Yeah, my *Technique* is Caller.

AUSTIN: Let's talk about Agent Seals, aka Maggie Darcy.

JANINE: Alright! So my current heart rate is 133, I think? I don't know why I didn't just delete that 72... My... maximum is 183, so I'm doing pretty good, I've got some room there.

AUSTIN: And you're within your target, your target is 138, so...

JANINE: [crosstalk] Still- yeah, still in my target area. My Force is three, my Instinct is three, my Access is three, my Talent is Investigation, my Techniques are Meditation and Judge.

AUSTIN: Which means you can reduce your heart rate if you need to breathe.

JANINE: [overlapping] Yeah, and I can also smell out *fuckin' liars*.

AUSTIN: Right, Judge means that you can always tell when it's a liar, is that what it is?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Do you still have to spend something for that, or does it just happen?

JANINE: I have to spend a point for it, I think?

AUSTIN: Oh- okay, 'The Agent is required to spend a Commendation point', yep. Um... Heard, do you want to give me your stats real quick, as we already did your heart rate.

KEITH: Yeah, sure... I'm threes- in all three-

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

KEITH: And... my Techniques are- my Technique is Endurance, and-

AUSTIN: [interrupting] You took Identity, also?

KEITH: Identity, yeah.

AUSTIN: That's how you have Mike Truk, you- you have a name, you have an identity here.

KEITH: Yeah- yeah. Are we going over anything else?

AUSTIN: Yep, you know what- Talent- which is hard to see, as it is falling off of your sheet in a truly Blough City fashion-

KEITH: Oh, Strategy is my talent!

AUSTIN: [crosstalk, reading from screen] *stra-... stra-teh-jeeee-*

KEITH: Yea.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

KEITH: I- I did some changes today, based on how I'm feeling about where we're at.

AUSTIN: You've written the word "Squire" down in big italics, and it says "Still gone."

KEITH: [crosstalk] It was right- regular sized, I just made it really big.

AUSTIN: Good... And finally, Agent Page, aka Florence Slowly.

JACK: My maximum heart rate is 170-

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: And I currently have 128.

AUSTIN: You're *just* past your target, which ended at 127?

JACK: Yeah. But I still have a ways to go before stuff starts to get *really* dicey, just a bit dicey.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: And you could meditate right? So you could get that back down into the target if you wanted.

JACK: [laughing] Yeah- I could- I could meditate at this Film Festival.

JANINE: [crosstalk] Meditation raises static though.

JACK: Yeah, it does also raise static. We've seen Florence meditate before, and she just closes her eyes and takes a deep breath, as though she's very exasperated by what's happening around her. [beat] I have Force four, my Talent is Aggression, I have Instinct three, and Access two. I have an additional talent which is +1 gun. [laughter in background]

AUSTIN: [in background] You do have that gun, yeah.

JACK: The gun that I took from... the- the man whose name we can't remember.

AUSTIN: [in background] Cannot remember.

JACK: [continuing] And maybe never knew?

AUSTIN: He must have introduced himself... I can imagine... [trails off]

JACK: [crosstalk] Oh sure, no, I'm saying-

KEITH: [crosstalk] We knew he had his name.

JACK: [continuing] I know we had his name-

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Oh, yeah, okay.

JACK: [continuing] *We* had his name, but I don't think we ever *knew* his name.

AUSTIN: Right, fair.

JACK: I don't know that Heard knows I have this gun?

KEITH: [overlapping] Was it- was it Sleeves?

ALI: It was Sleeves.

JACK: [crosstalk] Oh, shit, it was Sleeves!

AUSTIN: That's a great name.

KEITH: It was Agent Sleeves. [Janine laughs]

AUSTIN: Good name.

KEITH: We don't remember that.

JACK/AUSTIN: No! [Ali laughs]

JACK: I have two techniques, Meditation and Documents- two Techniques that I, Jack de Quidt, do not possess... and my Contact is Gale Green, whom I feel respectful towards.

# 00;22;41 - 00;25;50

AUSTIN: Great! So... where do we wanna pick up?

KEITH: Well, we just saw-

AUSTIN: The movie- and- and Hector!

KEITH: [continuing] Hector. No, we just saw Hector.

AUSTIN: Both.

KEITH: We- well yeah, we saw the movie and then we turned towards Hector, who is in the back. And I think that's where you faded out, on- just like, we all look at Hector.

AUSTIN: I just- I just listened to this, and I already don't remember.

KEITH: Did he say anything?

JACK: No, Hector didn't- [Ali sniggers in background] Hector didn't say anything, I don't think. I think- I think we just have this shot of him, standing there and smiling looking at what it is that he has done?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: He's not in the projection booth, I don't think? I think he's like, in the back of the- the cinema.

AUSTIN: He's in the same veranda place as you are in.

JACK: Oh, sure.

KEITH: Wh- did we recap just now and I missed it- what he has just done?

AUSTIN: Played the movie- he's played the movie.

JACK: [crosstalk] He's played the tape-

KEITH: Oh, but like- what the movie was.

AUSTIN: Oh, yep yep. That is-

JACK: [crosstalk] Yeah, so he-

AUSTIN: Oh, go ahead.

JACK: So he puts the tape into the- the camera- Nope, the projector. The reverse camera. And the camera starts crawling with these bugs, right, Austin?

AUSTIN: It's like- the sound of bugs moving, yeah.

JACK: And I think we get this image of- sort of them crawling over the image that is being projected- and then we pass through a very, very long tunnel- a very long, dark tunnel, with this spot of light kinda gradually grows? And then we find ourselves on a- on a boardwalk- and Hector goes "Welcome to Bluffington Beach!" and calls it the real word. And then we get this shot of Hector wearing dark glasses and being like- Yep, great.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: [giggling] This is all going according to plan.

AUSTIN: All going according to plan. Yeah.

JACK: Oh, and I think that other thing that- I don't know if we mentioned in the recap? Maybe we didn't- if I missed it, I'm sorry if so- was that... Ryder and I clocked that specifically that what's happening with this parade is kind of like the Infinite Love movement, but for-

ALI: Oh, yeah yeah.

JACK: [continuing] But for Blough City. It's like- we looked at it and was like, oh shit, this is what Hector's- Hector's done it here as well.

AUSTIN: Yes-

KEITH: [interrupting] Wasn't it the Endless Jubilee?

AUSTIN: That is what it was called. It was called the Endless Jubilee.

KEITH: [muttering] Endless Jubile...

AUSTIN: The symbol was a Ram's horn, with an infinity symbol inside of it... So, y'all are all on this elevated- you're on the second outside balcony of this church, which has become the makeshift VIP section for this- for this festival. Hector is right there, people are- I think, still aghast at this moment. I don't think it goes all Rite of Spring, I think it goes- brawls in the crowd, necessarily? But people are leaving, some people are shouting-

AUSTIN [imitating crowd]: Play it again! P- PLAY IT AGAIN!

AUSTIN: Like very- matter of fact demand- demands? And... there's just like this very intense energy in this moment? As if people have seen a crime on stage, you know? What are you all... doing?

# 00;25;50 - 00;29;55

KEITH: I go to Hector. I don't know what I'm doing... yet. But I'm going to Hector.

AUSTIN: Alright. Everybody else- what are you- you get like the shot, of what everybody is doing in this second.

KEITH: Alright. Quick-walking.

ALI: I'm... following. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yep.

JANINE: ...Same.

JACK: Yea- Yeah [laughs] Is what we get- do we get, uh, [muttering] Keith's character is called Heard- [talking normally] do we get Heard just like, very focused quick-walking towards Hector, and these shared glances between the three other agents who just like, fall into step behind him- and start walking towards Hector?

AUSTIN: Yeah, probably... Yeah, I like that- I think Hector is like-

> AUSTIN [as Hector]: So, what do you think?

JACK: Uh... can I... can you remind me real quick what the specific criteria is for- if I disobey a direct order, does static go up? Or...

AUSTIN: Static goes up for a lot of reasons. Ah- so...

JACK: [interrupts] It's one to do with Authority, right? With...

AUSTIN: There's a bunch of them, so-

JACK: [crosstalk] Oh, cool. [laughs, Janine laughs]

AUSTIN: [continuing] So I'll go over them for you really quick.

JACK: [laughing] I wanna- [trails off]

AUSTIN: When you fail a roll- the first time you fail a roll when attempting an action, it's when you use a technique, except for seniority, which reduces static- it's when you are insubordinate to the lead agent, or fail to perform an order. Then, more comes when you come into conflict with each other, and when you encounter one or more crab-men. And then there are- there are some additional ones. So like- disobeying your- your overall goals as assigned to you by the Concern, also inquiring into unrelated personalities or agents- so like, digging around in about Hector Hu, for instance. And then anything that puts your identity as an Agent at risk- so revealing your own real name, or talking about Bluff City to people from Blough City- all raises static.

JACK: [laughs] Oh yeah, I fell for that one, didn't I?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, yeah.

ALI: Can we- just before things start in earnest- like what am I... I'm trying to find this in the book, but this book sucks- well, it doesn't suck but- now that my heart rate is maximum, like what can I- can I and can I not do? Like...

AUSTIN: So- so, everything you would- the thing I'm going to advise is that everybody look at the sheet that's in the sidebar [ALI: Okay], because that just has everything in it, basically. So, you have- once your heart rate enters- maxes out... is it when it exceeds it or when it matches it?

KEITH: It hits- no, it hits it and stays there.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: So, my max is 190, and once I get to- like, I'm at 183, but if I roll fifteen, or whatever, then it'll hit 190 and stay there.

AUSTIN: Okay. So... you are always considered to be performing a risky action. Which means that- failing on a risky action reduces the related die or stat by one die. [ALI: Mmm] If that hits zero... If Force hits zero, you must hit an emergency Access roll to eject from Blough City or else not come back at all- the way the book writes it is 'Die on the slab'... If an Agent's Instinct drops to zero, you must immediately make an emergency Access roll to eject, or suffer severe trauma and be forced to retire from this line of work. The Access is not a risky roll, so that thankfully does not- it doesn't like, double down in that way? But, basically anything that you're rolling for at this point is- is extremely rough.

ALI: Okay. I just wanted to make sure how far the, like, how far I am away from ejection.

AUSTIN: From- yeah, yeah yeah. The big thing to remember is that, as those stats go down, it becomes harder and harder for you to actually even [Ali giggles] succeed, you know what I mean? Like... rolling, rolling Force is already hard for you to get a success on, because you only have two dice, you know?

ALI: Yeah. Well... I already did a thing to impress my hero, so I'm fine. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, fair. Fair.

JACK: [sighs] Okay...

# 00;29;55 - 00;33;30

AUSTIN: Yeah, so Hector's like...

AUSTIN [as Hector]: So, what'd you think?

JACK: Can I just... as we're approaching him... shout- Hector, run?

AUSTIN: ... Sure. You can get- yes, of course you can do that.

JACK: I feel like, this is, I've been thinking about the phrasing of this?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: I feel like we're probably looking at a one static situation here.

AUSTIN: Saying that is absolutely a static.

JACK: I don't think it's more than one static, I'm not disobeying a direct order, um-

AUSTIN: Mm-hm, you're not in conflict-

JACK: [continuing] Nor am I being insubordinate.

KEITH: [overlapping] I would disagree that this is not a direct order.

JANINE: [crosstalk] It's a direct order for you.

JACK: [crosstalk] I feel like- I've not been given a *direct order*. Direct order would have been- [trails off]

JANINE: [crosstalk] Yeah, that's privileged info.

AUSTIN: Yeah- that- that is your direct order, Heard. The distinction is, I think the distinction here is like, the- this is disobeying- this is that third category we talked about [JACK: Mmm] which is, refusing to bring in a target and acquiring- blah blah blah-

JACK: It is, yeah. [laughs]

AUSTIN: That's one static. What would make it more is if- is if it became a conflict between people, but- [trails off]

JACK: [crosstalk] Or if I said my name! I considered saying "It's Florence, run", but then that's... you know.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh. So yeah, if you shout that- then yeah, I think we get- in my mind, there's lots of close-ups on just, eyes here?

JACK: [crosstalk] Yeah, yeah. Absolutely.

AUSTIN: Just lots of eyes catching each other, and like- what I want is almost- I want Florence's eyes, and then you go 'Hector, run!', and then... we get this sudden, sharp zoom out to see the entire scene. And, I think- [exhales] oh, man. Does he run?

JACK: Oh, did we add the static?

AUSTIN: No we didn't, I'll do that now, because we have to decide what happens with that too. So that's sixteen static, which is not good... I think as soon as you do that, there is just like, the ringing of a- two dozen telephones, spread across the place? Wait- there are like waiters, who arrive, with phones on plates [Jack laughs] down below... there's like, a cacophony of ringing phones. And... I don't think in- I don't think it's in his nature to do it, so for you to convince him to run would be a roll. Would be an instinct roll.

JACK: [takes a deep breath] What's my Instinct? My Instinct is three.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] He knows the four of you. Do you know what I mean?

JACK: He does.

AUSTIN: He thinks he is in control of- who knows? I don't know that he even knows that he's in control of this situation. He's done the thing, you know?

JACK: And also, the version- the CAP was the one- of Hector - was like, [imitating Hector] 'They're coming for me, I'm a big conspiracy man - I gotta watch my back', like-

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah, yeah, although also part of that is who he is for real, you know? Like...

JACK: Sure- I don't know quite if-

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] But yes, you're not wrong.

JACK: [continuing] If three people walk towards me, who I recognised, and one person who I didn't, and one of the people who I recognised shouted 'Jack, run'...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: I'd probably run. But I'll make the roll... I'll make a roll to- to try and convince him.

AUSTIN: I- I... yeah, I think you have to. He is this fucking... secret agent, you know what I mean?

JACK: Yeah, totally!

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] He doesn't recognise you, though. You don't- you don't have the relationship with- you don't have the relationship with him, right? I mean you do, obviously... but that's not like your contact.

JACK: [crosstalk] No.

# 00;33;30 - 00;36;56

KEITH: What if I say not to run? [Ali laughs]

JACK: That's so good.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Then it's one-for-one?

JANINE: [crosstalk] [laughing] Wouldn't that encourage him to run more, honestly?!

JACK: [laughing] That's very funny, of two- two secrets agents being like, 'Run away!', 'Do not run.'

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Well, here's the thing, it would very quickly become a contested roll.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Which... we can go through, if that's where this is going, but like... [sighs]

KEITH: I don't think I can- if I can literally go through that.

JACK: Also, there's probably more interesting conflict rather than [AUSTIN: Yeah] debating in front of someone if they should run away?

AUSTIN: -if they should run away, exactly.

KEITH: I'm not gonna roll or contest it, but I am saying- 'No, Hector, don't run' [Ali, Jack laugh]

AUSTIN: I think what he does is like, the most Hector thing? Which is- says like- um...

> AUSTIN [as Hector]: I hope you enjoyed it.

AUSTIN: Finishes his drink, turns around, and then quick-walks down the stairs [Jack laughs]

JACK: [laughing] It's like the slower version-

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Not running, but...

JACK: [starting over, still laughing] It's like the slower version of that great moment in-

KEITH: [interrupting] What stairs? I thought we were outside.

AUSTIN: You're on the second floor of a church. On the veranda overlooking the- the people who are watching, basically.

KEITH: Oh, okay.

ALI: Yeah-

KEITH: [crosstalk] Why did I think we were in a park?

ALI: [continuing] -the film festival is like, outside, yeah.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah, you are. The church is in a park- the film festival is outside-

KEITH: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: [continuing] Gale's office was downstairs, in a church- she lead you up here, to watch the film from here, it's like a VIP section, basically. [pause] So yeah, that is- that is what he does.

JACK: Just vanishes down some stairs? Like... not on a run, but like-

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah, like moves past some people.

JACK: [continuing] intently.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. I think we get a shot of like him, picking and hanging up a phone from a plate- from a waiter plate trays? [Jack laughs] He like, picks up a phone and hands it back down on- on the receiver, like hangs it back up.

JACK: Yeah, it has like a real- Spider-Verse action movie vibe for me? Like, the strange cuts and like, people moving in different directions, breaking the line of action- all sorts of weird stuff. [mutters] Hang on...

KEITH: I'm- I'm following.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

KEITH: I wanna try- I'm gonna try to like, [pause] we- what were- what were we talking about... about sor- the Sorkin walk-and-talks, what were we... [trails off]

AUSTIN: God, what were we talking about with that?

ALI: We were talking about... [giggles] Hieron.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] It's a thing that...

JACK: [crosstalk] In... during...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk, continuing] It's a Hieron thing.

JACK: [continuing] ...under the island.

AUSTIN: Yes.

KEITH: So- I haven't- I haven't seen a lot of Sorkin, do they ever do those- are those ever under duress?

AUSTIN: Su-s- sure? There's a long...

KEITH: [crosstalk] Is anyone walking... and talking... [trails off]

AUSTIN: [continuing] there's been a lot of shit, you know?
KEITH: But can you im- I'm not- I'm not like, threatening to hurt anybody, but I definitely am like, grabbing his shoulder and like, walking fast, and talking, and grabbing his shoulder.

AUSTIN: Yeah, give me- I think this is an Instinct to keep up with him, and to not lose him in the crowd, you know?

KEITH: Okay... this is my last roll, I need this.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh! So what is your Instinct? Your Instinct is... three?

KEITH: Three.

AUSTIN: Um... yeah, I think this is Instinct. Unless you're- mm...

KEITH: Ten.

AUSTIN: [exhales] Ooh, buddy. Raise your- raise your static. Raise your heart rate. Cap that out. [pause] Yeah, unless you wanna re-roll this, also- one, static goes up again, because you failed that roll. Ah... the- the, you're gonna lose him in the crowd. He's- he's just gonna disappear into it. The chaos of having shown that film is just too much, um-

KEITH: [interrupting] Fourteen.

# 00;36;56 - 00;40;03

AUSTIN: [beat] Al... alright. So... good job having not failed that one. Alright, so then you push through- hold up, hold up, so now static's at seventeen- so the thing that happens when static is at seventeen, is that... they do that, what people downstairs were yelling about- they do start to play the film again. And this time, whoever's running the projector, has like, broadened the lens, or

pulled it back, so that it's not projecting on the screen, it's projecting on the buildings [KEITH: Yep] that line the... the avenue that separate it from the park. As you- as you- so you move it- you move through the crowd, you keep up with him, you catch up with him as he's walking down an all- walking into the- walking down into the avenue to try and disappear into the night. But let's go back to the veranda, what are the rest of you doing as this is happening? [pause] Are you all giving chase, also? Are you- dispersing?

ALI: Yeah, I was- wanted to give someone a space there- but I kinda of wanna like, get lost in the crowd to, like, not leave Heard and... Hector alone, but any means. But to be like, far away enough that I can intervene with Heard thinking that's he's alone, you know?

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: If that makes sense?

AUSTIN: So I think that he is- he- Hector is moving through the crowd and then cutting out through the park to get back to an avenue where... I guess the parade is still happening [chuckles] out there actually? And so the movie is actually also displaying outside on these giant floats. And, is like, out on the avenue side now... so, yeah, I'm going to say you can go out in that general direction but... staying hidden, at this point, would be- staying hidden but within range would need to be a roll, I think. It would be an Instinct check.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: I'll note that you have... what do you have on Instinct? [beat] Alright! That's- that's your thing right there.

ALI: [crosstalk] Should I have rolled 3d6 or is it minus one of the result?

AUSTIN: It's- it's neither of those. 4d6.

ALI: Oh.

AUSTIN: The thing is if that if you fail, you lose Instinct.

ALI: [gasps] Oh! I get it, okay.

AUSTIN: [continuing] Permanently. It'll drop to three.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: [beat] but you don't fail! Nice work! So, that's a twelve... so yeah, you're able to keep up with them, and- I'll say that like, if Agents Seal and Page- if you wanna stay with Ryder on this, you can do that. This can be a group roll to stay together and like, keep up basically? But if you- if you wanna do something else, you can do something else.

JANINE: Um... I'm fine following. I think for, I think for me at this point, it's a big thing of like... You know, Maggie doesn't have a particular attachment to Hector Hu? Her attachment here is- is like a sense of rightness? [AUSTIN: Mm-hm]. So I think it makes the most sense for her to follow a lead, rather than really, really leap in and make big calls.

AUSTIN: Good call. And... Page?

# 00;40;03 - 00;44;04

JACK: [sighs, pauses] As- as a player, I'm interested in... do we have a copy of the film?

AUSTIN: No. The copy is the one that's playing.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: -as far as you know, that's the copy, of- of the Blossom tape. Of The Tunnel.

JACK: Sure. Sure. Um... Hm. No, I think-

ALI: [crosstalk] And like, to the point that it was like... stolen, and someone was murdered over it, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah, there's not like, a secret one somewhere else. It's important for it to be the one.

JACK: Right, right. Yeah, I think in as much as I would be interested in acquiring that copy...

AUSTIN: Mm-hm

JACK: I think it would be dishonest to her character to be like, 'Well I warned Hector, I did my bit- time to try, to try and steal this film again-' [Jack, Austin laugh] '-that's playing'. Um... so no, I think I'm- I think I'm joining.

AUSTIN: So yeah, I think you manage then... we get the shot of the three- the three of you coming out of the park, seeing... Agent Heard kind of grab Hector by the shoulder and kind of, spin him around. The Infinite Jubi- the Endless Jubilee is happening right next to you, right? Like... and there are people coming out into the streets. Some of whom are watching the movie and some of whom are watching the parade, and the parade music is incredibly loud... so Hector turns around and is like...

> AUSTIN [as Hector]: Heard! [sighs] Everything's fine... you can tell- you can tell them the mission was a success.
>
> KEITH [as Heard]: ...How can I tell them that?

AUSTIN [as Hector]: [sighs, deliberates] I- I got away? Y- you solved the crime!

KEITH [as Heard]: That was- that was... I honestly think that is, less than a third of what they wanted.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: [soft tone] They always want more, Heard.

KEITH [as Heard]: Is that place real?

AUSTIN [as Hector]: [soft tone] The most. Nothing realer.

AUSTIN: I sort of imagine that we're actually- we're probably not doing whisper-voices as there's loud music playing? Like...

AUSTIN [as Hector]: [mock-yelling] Nothing realer!

[Keith, Ali chuckles in background. Pause]

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Do you wanna go?

KEITH [as Heard]: I don't... know... what else to do about knowing?

AUSTIN [as Hector]: [chuckles] Me either. That's why all of this. It was the only thing that made sense. I couldn't keep it to myself.

KEITH [as Heard]: How do you get there?

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Let's go. It's a short drive.

KEITH [as Heard]: It's a *drive*?

AUSTIN [as Hector]: It's a tunnel.

KEITH [as Heard]: You can drive there?

AUSTIN: He nods.

KEITH [as Heard]: [deep inhale] Alright, let's go.

AUSTIN: I think he turns and looks at you- the rest of you.

[Ali laughs]

KEITH [as Heard]: They're coming.

[Pause]

ALI: Yeah, at this... not being violent, or like [giggles] being the altercation that Chris feared. I think she's fine to like... approach the group now? And not be hidden in the shadows of an alley?

AUSTIN: [laughs] Yeah. He looks at the rest of you, and he goes...

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Good to see you. And Seals, I've heard good things about your work.

JANINE: [laughs] I don't-! I think... I think Maggie just like, stares? I don't think she knows... [AUSTIN: Mm-hm] I think she knows what to do with that, in the context of like, her sitting in someone else's office and they're putting stamps on stuff or whatever. I don't think she knows what to do with that right now, I think she stares at, like... wider than normal eyes.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: We're gonna need a- a car.

[someone giggles in an exhale]

# 00;44;04 - 00;48;03

KEITH: Did we steal that guy's car?

JANINE: I thought we did.

ALI: We split up, yeah. One of us took the ride home and the other... group took the car, I think.

AUSTIN: Right. Alright, so we have- [trails off]

KEITH: [crosstalk] We have a photo lab we can take. [Jack laughs]

AUSTIN: Ah... he's like-

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Sleeves?

AUSTIN: But you can't hear what he says. It just bleeps out. Or it doesn't! The sound of the- the trombone plays too loud for you to hear what he says. [chuckles]

JANINE: ...oh right, the Parade! [laughs] I was like... what? [Ali laughs]

KEITH: I knew- I knew what he meant- I know what he means.

AUSTIN: Yeah... um... so yeah, you can go to the car.

JACK: Is it just everybody- is it just us three piled in the backseat, and Heard and Hector Hu are up in the front?

AUSTIN: ...I guess?

KEITH: Yep.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's tight! I'm also raising static, because Heard is disobeying a direct order. [laughs] And this is about as direct as it can get! [Ali laughs] Thing that happens is- there is a new- a new float in the Parade. And nobody seems to notice it but you. It's not just in one Parade, it's in all of the Parades. It is a... an amalgam of countless hands. Fingers intertwining with each other, connected by strings, held by members of the Parade. And wherever you go, it begins to follow. Um... and it's writhing up there, in the sky. The Curator is coming for you.

ALI [as Chris]: Are they gonna be okay?

[Pause]

AUSTIN: They- [cuts off]

ALI [as Chris]: The city?

AUSTIN: Oh, you're asking Hector?

ALI: Yeah, I'm asking in character.

AUSTIN: He's like...

AUSTIN [as Hector]: They're gonna be better than they've ever been!

ALI [as Chris]: [unsettled] ...Right

ALI: And I think that she immediately relaxes. [giggles]

KEITH: Does he see The Curator?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah.

KEITH: I figured.

AUSTIN: Hector Hu always sees The Curator [laughs, Ali laughs]

KEITH: Yeah! [Jack laughs] Well, I knew he- he didn't come in here with us, but he's... been here.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. So you're in the car. If people wanna meditate... he's starting to drive. [Jack exhales in a sigh] Hector's behind the wheel- actually, no he isn't- he's going to direct you on where to go. He's getting in the other- the other- the passenger side, and I imagine he's working on something? Like... I imagine he's like... what's a hand thing you could be doing? I don't know if he's typing, or like...

ALI: [laughs] He could have one of those like, weirdo pocket compact stenographers that I have?

AUSTIN: Yeah.... [Ali laughs] I want it to be something more... craftsy? It's not folding origami, but like... it's the sort of motion you make while rolling a cigarette, do you know what I mean?

JACK: [crosstalk] Crochet! He's doing a little bit of crochet...

AUSTIN: Maybe doing a little bit of crochet... [Ali giggles]

KEITH: [crosstalk] Maybe it's one of those hand fortune tellers.

AUSTIN: He- but he's making one. That's what he's doing. It's one of those, but he's making it very complex.

KEITH: [overlapping] Folds- he's doing the folds?

AUSTIN: [continuing] -and like, writing out things on it... and then like, doing it? [KEITH: Mmm] And then being like, 'Mm, no' and tearing it [Jack, Janine laugh in background] up, and does another one, you know?

JANINE: [crosstalk] I'm just picturing it, like-

JACK: [crosstalk] I remember hearing- [trails off]

JANINE: [continuing] him like, 'You will talk... to your crush... at lunch."

AUSTIN: ...yeah! [all laugh] Perfect... perfect.

JACK: I remember hearing a story that- uh- it's almost certainly apocryphal, that Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the British structural engineer- the Victorian structural engineer- could draw a perfect circle in the back of a horse-drawn carriage? [Austin laughs] Um... I love that he's making folds like this. [AUSTIN: Yeah] Like I imagine that he's discarding these things- but he's not discarding them because of sloppy folds, he's discarding them because he disagrees with what he wrote in one of them? [AUSTIN: Yes! Yeah] In the little pocket, or whatever... [laughs]

KEITH: 'Well, that one's wrong, but-'

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Exactly.

JACK: He like, folded it perfectly.

KEITH: [crosstalk] I wrote all the right words, but I put 'em on the wrong fold... gotta make a different one.

JACK: [crosstalk] Yeah! 'Ugh, trash that one.' [Ali laughs]

# 00;48;03 - 00;53;02

AUSTIN: Um... and he's directing you out to the Thicket. If people want to do other things, like now is the time to start bringing things up. [pause] Also, if you want to meditate while on the backseat.

JACK: I mean, I- but there's- but there's *static* involved with that!

AUSTIN: There is!

JACK: And we're in a real bad way now, Austin!

AUSTIN: That is- yeah, I noticed.

[Ali giggles]

AUSTIN: Also like, Seals does not need to meditate, particularly badly, so... Neither of you desperately need to, so- that's probably fair, Seals or Page.

JANINE: I think Seals has just spoken.

KEITH: Also, the two that can meditate are the two that don't really need to.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yes! [all laugh] So, Seals is smoking...

ALI: [crosstalk] Can I...

AUSTIN: Mm-hm?

ALI: I just wanna ask like, you probably shouldn't tell us yet- but are we going to be interacting with static when we're at the... place we're going to? Do we think we will, as characters?

AUSTIN: Who could say?

ALI: Okay. [laughs]

KEITH [as Heard]: Did you see your trial?

AUSTIN [as Hector]: ...no. Heard about it. They'll find any excuse. Ah- turn left, up here.

KEITH [as Heard]: It was...

[Keith makes indicator sound]

[Janine laughs]

AUSTIN: Any- any sound! He can do any sound.

[Keith laughs]

AUSTIN: He's guiding you towards the highway, basically.

KEITH [as Heard]: It was a convincing trial.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: [exhale] It always is, with them. They've been known to... change the laws so they'll win their cases.

KEITH [as Heard]: Almost everyone you even looked at is gone. [pause] Or demoted, or-

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Except you. You're up for a promotion.

KEITH [as Heard]: Yeah. Well, I told them I'd bring you back.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Is that where we're going? Or are we going to Bluffington?

KEITH [as Heard]: Bluffington... I turned left, you said turn left!

AUSTIN [as Hector]: You turned left... [sighs] How's my nail doing?

AUSTIN: He looks back at the backseat. He's referring to the kind of... the kind of alternate version of him? The radio host he left behind.

KEITH: Oh, I thought you said mail. [laughs]

AUSTIN [as Hector]: 'Oh, how's my mail? Did you get my mail?' [laughter in background]

JACK [as Florence]: I did! I do get the mail.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Yeah...

JACK [as Florence]: Oh! Uh... It's- it's not so good, Hector.

KEITH [as Heard]: Dead. Nail's dead.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Right! But- but, he was a good one? Convincing?

KEITH [as Heard]: Oh! Uh... yeah.

JACK [as Florence]: ...Ryder?

ALI [as Chris]: I... Nail?

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Oh, the host. The DJ- the radio host.

ALI [as Chris]: That's you?

AUSTIN [as Hector]: ...must've been a good one.

ALI [as Chris]: Mmm.

JACK: He's *so* unperturbed about... I suppose I'm gonna ask him.

JACK [as Florence]: Doesn't bother you, that you died? You were murdered!

AUSTIN [as Hector]: I- I was murdered there, so I wouldn't be murdered here.

JACK [as Florence]: Oh- okay. I- I thought you died, Hector?

ALI [as Chris]: We all did.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Ah... are you looking for an apology?

JACK [as Florence]: [sighs] You know, maybe.

ALI [as Chris]: ...no.

JANINE [as Maggie]: What? No!

ALI [as Chris]: It just wasn't easy, is all. But we're fine. In the other city.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Yeah. Once I- if you come with me, to this place, I- I don't know that you can go back.

KEITH [as Heard]: You came back!?

AUSTIN [as Hector]: I came back... here. I don't know if they'll let *any* of you back.

ALI [as Chris]: We can't go back home?

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Not if you come to Bluffington. I don't know! Why would they want you back?

ALI [as Chris]: Who would stop us?

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Them! You... they'll send more. And while... Heard's loyalty is compromised, they'll send someone-

KEITH [as Heard]: [interrupting] Hey! Who's-

[Jack laughs]

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Not to me, to them! [pause] I'm not so sure that the next person they send after us will be the same. If they know we go there, they will not be rolling the red carpet out for y'all.

JACK [as Florence]: Do they know that this place exists?

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Of course.

ALI [as Chris]: They do?!

JACK [as Florence]: How long have they known for?

AUSTIN [as Hector]: [exhales] Ah- [beat] Florence... I think they're from there! Not you, not me- but... top level? We're echoes of this place. Of Bluffington. They're the water dropping in the pond.

JACK [as Florence]: Is it far?

AUSTIN [as Hector]: It's the furthest place there is. About fourty-five minutes.

[All laugh]

JANINE: Oh, so we're in Europe.

AUSTIN: Yeah!

[Ali, Jack laugh]

# 00;53;02 - 00;56;59

AUSTIN: Um... and he's like-

> AUSTIN [as Hector]: Ye-- uh-- exit- exit seven.

AUSTIN: To like, direct you, Heard to drive to exit seven.

KEITH: I take it.

AUSTIN: And he's like... driving you out towards the Thicket, basically, and is directing you down a bunch of- basically, you're gonna end up driving past a bunch of suburban- ah- you know, complexes, and out deeper and deeper into the Thicket where there starts to be a little bit of water again- this kind of place where desert meets the wetland. [pause] Does anyone else have things to do before we get to this tunnel?

JACK: Um...

KEITH: Can someone meditate... for me? [Austin, Ali laugh]

AUSTIN: Ha! If only that's how it worked... that would be a good high level thing, like group meditation technique...

KEITH: It is a thing, I think.

AUSTIN: It must be, right? A senior technique.

KEITH: [crosstalk] That's what- that's what y- so, a senior technique- there's a senior move that does that, but you said I couldn't have it.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] That's right... well, it does something else which is raises your personal static... no-

KEITH: [crosstalk] ...personal static, right, yeah.

AUSTIN: No, I think that one reduces static? I think that one reduces static, I'm pretty sure.

KEITH: Oh, I think it does both? But I could just be...

AUSTIN: Mmm, maybe.

ALI: Um... I guess... I think there's a really long time of silence, because I don't think Chris is like, super comfortable talking right now. But I think that... when it's getting closer and closer to them getting to the city, and they're like [giggling] less and less sure that they're like, gonna get back - like that's setting in [AUSTIN: Mm-hm] - I think that she's like-

> ALI [as Chris]: Um... do you.... Do you have any contacts back in- back in Blough, that you trust, that we can- that we can get in touch with?

AUSTIN [as Hector]: I think you've moved through my circle already. Gale... Achilles... Finnegan...

ALI [as Chris]: [chuckles] I made the two of them a promise to bring them home.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: [sucks in breath] Oh... Ooh... You did?

ALI [as Chris]: They wanna go back!

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Oh, fair! This place is terrible... They wanna go *back*... what day is it- wait-

AUSTIN: And he looks down at the fortune teller he made? [Austin, Jack chuckle] And he's sat there like- *dah-dah-dah-dah-dah*...

AUSTIN [as Hector]: They wanna go back... are you bringing them? Or do they need to go alone?

ALI [as Chris]: You told me we- we can't go back? And if that's true...

AUSTIN [as Hector]: [crosstalk] No... you could take them to the door? Or you could... it's not too late, we could stop the car, I could get you a ride back to them... You could go back. But not... after.

ALI [as Chris]: And not... and not go with you?

AUSTIN [as Hector]: I- I'm just putting the options... on the table, Chris.

JACK [as Florence]: I'll take them back.

ALI [as Chris]: [quickly] We'll take them back.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: You wan-... okay.

JACK [as Florence]: I have a daughter?

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Right- right, of course.

JACK [as Florence]: I'm not gonna... there are a lot of ways where I haven't been the best... mother. [sighs] Our basement was haunted for a long time.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Pu-pull up on over, by the canal.

JACK [as Florence]: [continuing] But I will not- ah, uh- you know- if I don't know if I... can't come back, I'm not gonna... not gonna go. I'm sorry.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: N- no apology necessary. I was surprised you wanted to come to begin with.

JACK [as Florence]: Well, you know- I haven't been the best mother.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: You said that.

JACK [as Florence]: Right.

[pause]

AUSTIN: So- ah- do you pull up on the canal, Heard?

KEITH: Yeah, I pull over.

# 00;56;59 - 01;01;30

AUSTIN: So there is like a, like a canal that has been dug out. It's like, how the LA river has been dug out, you know what I mean?

JACK: [chuckling] Sure.

AUSTIN: It's like- pavement, and huge...

JACK: Be-beautiful river, it's a beautiful river.

AUSTIN: Beau- oh, beautiful river... so here's the thing, where you're at here... it's almost like it's the sea, more than a river or a canal? It's like, lapping up against the pavement, at a certain point? Like.. with waves. And he's like...

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Alright, I'm gonna make this call, I'll get you back into the city. Anyone who wants to go with me can stay here. Anyone else... can go back with the two of you. Heard, Seals.... You just let me know.

AUSTIN: And... he says-

AUSTIN [as Hector]: I-! Ah, you know- oh! There's a phone in the dash, right...

AUSTIN: And he picks up the phone and makes a call. And he's- he says something in coded language, you know? Like...

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Two or three doves... near the windsock. Alright.

AUSTIN: And he hangs up.

ALI: Chris definitely feels a responsibility to go back, but also really doesn't want to. And if there's like... [giggles] it's that moment, like- if a character's able to recognise that, and be like 'No, it's okay', then that's fine - but if no-one's making that choice then, um...

> JACK [as Florence]: I mean, I could... you don't need to come. With me. You could stay here.

JANINE: Um... I think Seals like, looks at Page, like... they're still wearing the veils but like, over her glasses. Through- through the veil to be like-

> JANINE [as Maggie]: Are you gonna take care of Finnegan?
>
> JACK [as Florence]: [sighs] I'm gonna try! I'm gonna- I'm gonna try... You know, none of us wanna be here. I don't wanna stay here in Blough City, I know Finnegan doesn't...
>
> JANINE [as Maggie]: Just say 'Yeah'.
>
> JACK [as Florence]: Right. Yeah.
>
> JANINE [as Maggie]: Okay.
>
> JACK [as Florence]: Yeah.

JANINE: And I think she just like... settles back in the backseat.

AUSTIN: Hm. [Ali laughs]

JANINE: Lights up another cigarette.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Maggie Darcy ain't give a fuck.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm [Ali, Jack laugh]

> AUSTIN [as Hector]: You should get your story straight. Before you all leave, or before- before we all separate.
>
> KEITH [as Heard] Tell- tell the Curator guy about us.
>
> JACK [as Florence]: W- will they be able to corroborate that?
>
> KEITH [as Heard] It's- it's believable.
>
> AUSTIN [as Hector]: It's believable.

JACK [as Florence]: I can do that.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: We could lay low, and... I mean, the big picture... the Concern can't be the only people who do this stuff, anymore. There's gotta be someone else, who can... move between these places eventually and... start shifting things. And we gotta look into Bluffington, we gotta know what that place really is. So... that's what I'm gonna be doing. And, those of you staying here, I would love your help. Gale's on board. Blake... was on board.

JACK [as Florence]: [sighs]

ALI [as Chris]: Florence, do you think you can do this safely?

JACK [as Florence]: No! [Austin laughs] No, not at all! But I can try... I have a gun. Um... I know that-

AUSTIN [as Hector]: [interrupting] Oh! Let me see that...

JACK: I just hand it over, just like [chuckles] matter-of-factly.

AUSTIN: He like, ejects the clip and tosses it into the canal. And takes one of his own and like, adds it back? Ejects the one bullet, loads it and hands it back to you. This doesn't change anything, stats aren't changed... but it's his bullets, instead of Sleeves' bullets.

JACK [as Florence]: Thank you. I know how to... oh, I suppose I don't. Hector, how did you- how do I...

[Keith laughs]

JANINE: Please don't say what I think you're gonna say.

# 01;01;30 - 01;06;05

JACK: No-

JANINE: Okay. [giggles]

JACK [as Florence]: How do I contact... Bluff City?

AUSTIN: Oh, you know how to do that. Oh! You mean like... do it... how do you mean this?

JACK: I wanna be able to talk to my daughter.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: If-if- if I'm- if what Hector is saying is true- physically getting me back is gonna be really hard...

AUSTIN: You going back...

ALI: I think that's only if you go to Bluffington.

AUSTIN: ... Yeah.

JACK: [crosstalk] Oh really? Because I thought it was like... [trails off]

AUSTIN: [continuing] The thing is, if you go to Bluffington it will be very hard, because they will know you've gone to Bluffington, and you'll be able to [unintelligible]

JACK: [crosstalk] Sure, it'll just mean that they'll be able to... in the same way that it's like, you know, if you open up an iPod and Apple will be 'oh! Someone opened this up, so we're not gonna give you any help'.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

JACK: Okay! So, I suppose...

> JACK [as Florence]: Do you think you'll be able to contact us?
>
> AUSTIN [as Hector]: Yeah. Paper only. Writing... only. No calls. Calls are bad.
>
> JACK [as Florence]: From Bluffington?
>
> AUSTIN [as Hector]: Oh! I can get between here and Bluffington, no big deal... it's a tunnel, you drive the tunnel.
>
> JACK [as Florence]: [deep breath] Okay...
>
> KEITH [as Heard] Why- why is Bluffington closer to Blough?
>
> AUSTIN [as Hector]: So here's the thing... I think it's just as close to Bluff, we just haven't found it yet... Or, the Concern certainly has.
>
> KEITH [as Heard] Yeah.
>
> AUSTIN [as Hector]: But I found it here, and I'm here now.
>
> KEITH [as Heard] Mm. Like a streetlight casting two shadows?

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Yeah. And I- you know, maybe I shouldn't have gone, maybe I should have... found the tunnel and come home, and reported it, and gone about my business. But I've always been one to ask... questions. I don't like it when people hide things. Big things, especially.

ALI [as Chris]: Hector, it was nice meeting you.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: You're going?

ALI [as Chris]: I- I made a promise to those two. And... you should call me, if you can.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: I can't call.

ALI [as Chris]: [continuing] If you ever get the chance.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: I can- I can write you. I'll write you.

ALI [as Chris]: Okay... okay. Okay. Okay, it was nice meeting you.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: It would help a lot, if you stayed. Just think about it- go, go help them. But before you leave... you call me.

ALI: I think she like, taps her watch-

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: [continuing, giggles] and then opens the door to her car.

JACK [as Florence]: Okay, Hector. Thank you for the help.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Be safe.

JACK [as Florence]: [continuing] I'll be in touch. Heard?

KEITH [as Heard] Yeah.

JACK [as Florence]: I'll... see you around.

KEITH [as Heard] Later.

JACK [as Florence]: Seals... it was good to meet you... um... [slight pause] Well, that's about that.

KEITH [as Heard] You should- you should quit, by the way.

JACK [as Florence]: What?

KEITH [as Heard] The Concern. I just wanted to make sure- you should quit.

JANINE [as Maggie]: They really love quitters.

JACK [as Florence]: Oh! Oh... no, I'm not doing this anymore...

KEITH [as Heard] Yeah. I thought-

JACK [as Florence]: [continuing] No.

KEITH [as Heard] I thought, but I just wanted to be explicit about it. You should quit.

JACK [as Florence]: I'm gonna go into plumbing or something. I'm gonna go into carpentry. You ever look at these things like 'I don't fucking know how a toilet works?'. I'm gonna be the person who learns.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: It's not that hard- it's a- it's a great skill.

KEITH [as Heard] Which one?

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Carpentry and plumbing. It's basically the same- don't worry about it.

[Keith laughs in background]

JANINE [as Maggie]: Trade skills, they're really recession-proof.

JACK [as Florence]: Alright, well... Good luck.

AUSTIN: And at that moment, there is like, the sound of a fan- a loud fan, and like a buzzing. And a... like a riverboat, like a- like a- not a hovercraft, but like a swamp boat [Jack laughs] pulls up.

JACK: OH! With one of the big fans at the back?

AUSTIN: With one of the big fans at the back- pulls up to the edge of this canal- doesn't come all the way up, because it doesn't have the- there isn't enough depth in the water, but it comes up and you can like, wade out to it. And there is just like, a woman with bright orange hair tied back and like, a- a pair of overalls and like a- like a, you know, a red checkered shirt on underneath, and she like, waves to y'all.

JACK: [crosstalk] Oh my god, it's Sunder Havelton!

[Austin, Ali laugh]

AUSTIN: It's her! She showed up! Um... yeah.

# 01;06;05 - 01;08;24

JACK: Okay... Yeah, and I think Florence just like, takes off? Just takes off towards the boat.

AUSTIN: [chuckles] Just walks with her hands right into the... right into the water.

JACK: [crosstalk] Yeah! Just like... just goes splashing into the water, taking a moment to steady herself against the waves. Like- reaches up to grab the hand of the lady on the boat, getting a leg up to like, hoist herself on.

AUSTIN: Lemme real quick- I think Hector hugs you both, before you go.

JACK: Is it- does he get out of the car, is it like a full hug?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah yeah yeah!

JACK: [continuing] Or is this like, a car hug?

AUSTIN: I think most of this conversation happens out of the car, actually, as you wait for this boat to show up.

JACK: I think we definitely got a bit of the awkward conversation of the people in the front of the car talking to people in the back, which is great.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. [Ali giggles].

JACK: [continuing] And then we were like 'Nah, fuck this'.

AUSTIN: I think at some point, Hector's like 'Ah, I think it'll be here soon', and then it was not there soon- I think that was him getting out of the car? But anyway...

JACK: [crosstalk] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um... yeah, and Ryder - you go too, right?

ALI: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Okay.... You two head back down with this riverboat driver... down back into the city, and again you can see- you can see all the parade floats, including all of the various Curator floats all throughout... you know, he's told this person to- to drop you off wherever you need. I think you had said that Achilles and Finnegan should meet up, right? Are you meeting up at Finnegan's apartment, or something?

ALI: Yeah, like the specific thing was that Finnegan was helping Achilles hide-

AUSTIN: Right, right right.

ALI: [continuing] And then we were gonna pick him up, but Finnegan was like 'Okay, but take me!' [giggles] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Oh, right, okay. Well then like- I think appropriately- Finnegan's being working as like, a chauffeur, right? Is that what I wrote down...

JACK: No, a Santa, right?

AUSTIN: A Santa! A Santa, right- not a chauffeur. God, you're gonna have to- fuck- I think you're gonna have to go to his apartment. I think that makes the most sense, I think you're gonna be like- dropped off near a bus that will take you towards his apartment, basically. So we just get like, you know- we're gonna get a montage of y'all being on that boat, and then getting to the bus station- or the bus pickup. But for- but for Heard and Seals, you get back in the car. [pause]

# 01;08;24 - 01;11;56

AUSTIN: And he says like-

> AUSTIN [as Hector]: Alright, are you ready?
>
> KEITH [as Heard] Yeah.
>
> AUSTIN [as Hector]: Drive us into the canal.
>
> KEITH [as Heard] Into the- [stops suddenly]
>
> AUSTIN [as Hector]: Yeah.
>
> KEITH [as Heard] Into the water?
>
> AUSTIN [as Hector]: Mm-hm.
>
> KEITH [as Heard] Of the canal?
>
> AUSTIN [as Hector]: Mm-hm.
>
> KEITH [as Heard] With the car?
>
> AUSTIN [as Hector]: Mm-hm.
>
> KEITH [as Heard] Got it.

KEITH: And I do it.

AUSTIN: And he directs you to drive behind and under the boat, he's like-

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Ah, roll up all the windows.

KEITH: [pause] I- I roll them up, and they're manual windows [giggles]

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah- [laughs]

KEITH: [continuing] So I have to like, crank 'em. [Jack laughs]

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yeah, and he's like-

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Seals, can you- get the back left? Okay- thanks.

AUSTIN: And the car sinks, and drives forward, and you can see that there is a tunnel here. And you're like, underwater for fifteen seconds. And then it's like, you pass through the water and you're in the tunnel, and it is fine. You're driving down a long, dark tunnel that has like, flickering fluorescent lights and like, those white tiles that have been all chipped away and haven't been kept up- and it is dark, and scary. And you're driving through. [pause] Where do we wanna go? Who wants to see what's on the other end of this shit first?

--- 01;09;39 ---
KEITH: I would like to see.

AUSTIN: Alright. So you pass through the tunnel. And you emerge- you kind of like, emerge from this little tunnel, and you're on the highway, and you- the highway, you're on like- like an on-ramp, to a highway? And you get on the highway and you like, there's New Jersey licence plates, and... cars that you, Keith, and you, Janine, and everyone on this call and I are familiar with. And... you're outside on-

KEITH: [interrupting] Oh hey, it's a Nissan Ultima! [Ali giggles]

AUSTIN: [continuing, not changing his tone at all] It's a Nissan Ultima, exactly. It's a Honda Civic... And, you're in this old, weird thing that's like, now- it's 'Oh yeah, it's a Lincoln town car!'. It wouldn't have been that inside- inside of Blough...

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: And there's casinos, and there's some like, shops, and you merge with traffic, and there's like a stoplight... And there's like some tourists walking around with bags, from like the Nike store... and there's a big fountain, and some people eating ice cream, it's like a sunny day... and it's- it's Bluffington Beach, which is- for all intents and purposes, Atlantic City. And like... I think- I think Hector's like-

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Ah- you're gonna- you're gonna need- drive up, there's a casino up here- that one-

AUSTIN: He points.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Go- go get parking tickets, we'll go walk around.

AUSTIN: And he's just directing you to a parking lot?! Like one of those- one of those stand-up ones, you know what I'm talking about? Like-

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, ten-floor ones that are attached to a hotel or a casino?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah- like a par- like a garage?

AUSTIN: Yeah! And he- and he does, he directs you there and... you know, it takes a bit of time of find a spot- you find a spot... it's kind of like dusty, and dirty- but you can hear traffic outside, and you can smell the ocean- the saltwater, and you can hear the seagulls...

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Where do you wanna go first?

KEITH [as Heard] I could eat.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: This place has a good buffet.

KEITH [as Heard] It has *a* good buffet?

AUSTIN [as Hector]: It has... *a* good buffet. Surprisingly good.

KEITH [as Heard] Okay. Yeah, let's go to a buffet.

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Alright.

# 01;11;56 - 01;16;10

AUSTIN: And yeah, I think we just like, cut from there, back to the boat. The boat drops you off- you know, you get on the bus- the bus drops you off outside Finnegan Hands' apartment, which is like a fourth floor walk-up? You know... Or, actually, no it's not- because this is more like Los Angeles than New York- I think it's like, a tiny, like- ranch house, out- not at quite the Thicket, but kind of like, more tight-cramped suburbs? And like... it drops you off not quite out front, and the two of you- we just get the two of you like, at the door. What do you do?

JACK: Have I met Finnegan?

AUSTIN: ...no. Neither of you have, right?

JACK: [overlapping] I also haven't met Achilles?

AUSTIN: No, neither of you have met Finnegan.

ALI: Yeah... I've met Achilles.

AUSTIN: You've met Achilles, you've promised Finnegan this thing.

ALI: Mm-hm.

JACK: So can I... just for the sake of narrative, call Ryder 'Chris' at this point, or would that incur static? [laughs]

AUSTIN: I think at this point... I'm gonna say it's fine? [Ali giggles] But like... there are things that will still happen, like... we are- we are in eighteen static right now...

JACK: Sure.

AUSTIN: That eighteen is going to become nineteen and twenty because of like... things happening, probably.

JACK: I just wanna make sure that I don't... it's not... [laughs]

AUSTIN: Don't stumble into anything, yeah-yeah, I get you.

JACK: [continuing, still laughing] That I don't stumble into it, and you're like 'Oh, shit'

AUSTIN: No, I think- I think part of this is, you're a little off the grid now?

JACK: Yeah, totally!

AUSTIN: You've split into two... Heard is gone... they've lost you in the Thicket, well not literally the Thicket [Ali giggles] but yeah...

JACK: I think, presumably, the handlers- you know, in whatever capacity that they can monitor active agents, are like- "What the fuck is going on?"

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Totally. [Ali giggles] Totally.

JACK [as Florence]: Okay, Chris.

AUSTIN: Also! I think you're like so far- you're so far gone, that saying the word Chris isn't like- A-ha! We got you know! Don't use your real names- use your secret agent names! [Jack laughs]

JACK: Yeah, exactly.

AUSTIN: No, like they know that shit is going on, and they're probably-[JACK: That's- that's-] probably trying to activate some things- yeah, go ahead.

JACK: There's... yeah, okay.

> JACK [as Florence]: [deep exhale] Okay Chris, what are we doing?
>
> ALI [as Chris]: Um.... I.... it's- it's fine... Apollo knows this man, who- helped him... but he also wants to leave, so- two birds, one stone.
>
> JACK [as Florence]: Okay! Are we gonna get them both out?
>
> ALI [as Chris]: Yeah, yeah! I mean, Apollo's a great guy, he... you know, moves between people, he gets jobs done... I figured he would be good for the Concern, but at least... I mean, home is enough.
>
> JACK [as Florence]: Right... right.

ALI: And I think she just knocks on the door. [laughs]

AUSTIN: And I think you get Finnegan Hands like, opening the door- peeking through, opening the door with the chains on it- and is like-

> AUSTIN [as Finnegan]: Ahh... I expected Maggie.

AUSTIN: Also, he's absolutely in Santa costume, minus the beard [Jack, Ali laugh]. And the hat.

ALI: Do I even know the name Maggie? I don't think that I do...

AUSTIN: No...

JACK: This is so good, it's the first time and you're just like 'Oh, fuck' [laughs]

ALI: I think Chris is still like...

> ALI [as Chris]: Um... the other agents are still preoccupied. My name is Agent Ryder, it's nice to meet you.

AUSTIN: He like, snakes a hand out through the op- the chained door, to shake your hand, and then brings it back in.

JACK [as Florence]: I'm Agent Page.

AUSTIN [as Finnegan]: Ry- Ryder and Page...

AUSTIN: He closes the door, and is like-

AUSTIN [as Finnegan]: [slightly off mic] Yo, Ryder? Page?

AUSTIN: And Apollo is like...

AUSTIN [as Achilles]: Y-yeah. Yeah, Ry- Ryder's good.

AUSTIN: And then you hear the chain unlock, and I think you heard him re-bolt the door when he closed it, too [Jack, Ali laugh]. Three bolts, *clunkclunkclunk*, *euuurch,* open-open-open, open the door, and he's like-

AUSTIN [as Finnegan]: Uh, come on in.

AUSTIN: Jack, what's Finnegan Hands' place look like?

# 01;16;10 - 01;20;20

JACK: Oh, God... um... it's like, fine- you know, I use 'fine' like... I've lived in a lot of places that are the sort of 'fine' that I'm talking about here? Right? Where it's just like... [sighs] it's messy, but it's the mess that has accumulated through effort that is being spent elsewhere, rather than negligence.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: There is like, a lot of... takeaway containers. But there's also evidence of cooking like, you- you know, it's like Finnegan has been trying to cook... but hasn't had the time, or hasn't felt like it.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: There is a record player, and there are sixteen records, some of which are duplicates. Just like- multiple copies of like, [laughs] I don't know fictional bands! Of like, multiple copies of like... you know, a C-tier Joni Mitchell record, or something. There is a desk, there is a Santa costume in a plastic bag on the floor... it's one of those 'sit down anywhere' sort of rooms, you know when you walk in, and the person's first instruction is like 'sit down anywhere'?

AUSTIN: Mm.

JACK: It's one of those.

AUSTIN: And I think that's exactly what he does! He's like-

AUSTIN [as Finnegan]: Um, sit down anywhere.

AUSTIN: And Achilles is like-

AUSTIN [as Achilles]: So, um- what's- what's the plan? How're we getting out of here?

ALI [as Chris]: There's a door, Agents use a lot of ways, but... there's a door, and [sighs] I mean, you'll have to lay low, on the other side, for a little bit. But... for all intents and purposes, you'll be home.

AUSTIN [as Achilles]: Alright! When do we go? I'm- I'm- I'm ready, you know, we had a big meal.

AUSTIN: And Finnegan's like-

AUSTIN [as Finnegan]: I made- I made fish- I made fish and chips!

AUSTIN [as Achilles]: Yeah he- he fried some. It was good.

AUSTIN: And Finnegan's like-

AUSTIN [as Finnegan]: Let me just-! Ah- just finish packing a few things- and then I'll be ready!

AUSTIN: And then like, hurries into his bedroom, and...

JACK [as Florence]: What are you packing?

AUSTIN [as Finnegan]: Clothes? Ah- ah-

AUSTIN: What- what are the five things he cares about? Clothes, [Ali sniggers] he has like... a little bowling trophy? Which- unrelated, he just started bowling again here- there's a bowling league trophy here, and it just says 'Bowling League Trophy'. Ah... what else? A portable- one of those portable fishing rods, that you keep on your belt in a pouch, you know what I'm talking about? Like- garbage made on tv type of thing?

JACK: Yeah, totally! It's like- 'Do you want to fish *anywhere*?!'

AUSTIN: Exactly! [laughs]

JACK: And for just one moment, you're like- holy *shit*, yes I want to fish anywhere! [Austin laughs] And that's how they get you.

AUSTIN: Yeah! Well, here's the difference - for Finnegan, that was not one moment.

JACK: [laughing] No! No, Fi- Finnegan-

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] That was many moments.

JACK: [laughing] Finnegan committed hard to fishing *anywhere*! [Ali giggles]

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] He saw the ads- he thought about it- yeah, exactly. Those are probably the three big things. He has like, a brown suitcase- like a hard suitcase. [pause] And he's changed into a suit, but kind of like a raggedy old suit? [pause] Achilles does not have anything with him. He is very much of the mind that he will find what he needs on the other side.

ALI: Yeah. I think Chris says like-

> ALI [as Chris]: Pack light. You don't know how things change in the transfer.
>
> AUSTIN [as Finnegan]: Got it.

AUSTIN: Says Finnegan, holding his suitcase [Ali giggles] So I think what I need from y'all is an Access roll, to find your way out.

# 01;20;20 - 01;25;38

JACK: [deep exhale] Okay. Which of us has the best Access?

AUSTIN: Chris, but she's also at- at maximum heart rate.

JACK: Mmm!

AUSTIN: But, you know what, you can't- you can't lose Access.

ALI: Oh!

AUSTIN: You can't lose Access on a- it's not a risky roll.

ALI: Yeah! If you maybe want to pick up some of these rolls in the future [laughing], I'll do the Access one.

JACK: Yeah, no, totally - 100%. I- I like this a lot, because we've got this image of these- these acquaintances, one of whom is like, panicking- or- or at least, your heart is really going, and- and it feels like this very natural brokering of responsibility? [Ali giggles throughout] To be like- 'Oh fuck right, I'll do this- I'll do this. Let me- let me do something in future'. Also I love how the- you talked in the last episode, Ali, about how you were metering Chris' voice because of where she comes from? I realised that the side-effect of this is that you sound like a fucking Silent Hill 2 NPC? [AUSTIN: Oh my God] I love it, it's so good.

AUSTIN: That is true, God.

JACK: Finnegan is like 'Get out!' and you're all like 'There is a door' [laughs] Which is like yeah, sure, okay.

AUSTIN: God... um... So, you failed, you got a nine.

ALI: Mm.

AUSTIN: Which is not good.

ALI: Sorry.

JACK: And this system doesn't have aid/interfere in quite the same way, does it?

AUSTIN: No. We tried to be like-

JACK: Hacked in? Yeah...

AUSTIN: I am... going to make sure that... one second, let's see- alright, so...

KEITH: Isn't there a way to add a die to a roll by spending a commendation point?

AUSTIN: That's a- that's a good question.

ALI: I would hope so. [giggles]

AUSTIN: Yeah, I bet you would hope so. I think that... it uses- [reading] Commendation Points- techniques, influences... [pause] Every Commendation Point, spend this- yeah, absolutely, with Access, so... [reading] Every Commendation Point in this manner adds +1 to any Access-Logistics or Access-Intelligence roll for that Agent, this bonus may be applied after the dice are rolled, it is not added to the Agent's heart rate. [stops reading] So yes, you may use a Commendation Point to add one more roll, or one more die.

ALI: Okay, so I-

KEITH: Glad I remembered that.

AUSTIN: Yeah, me-fucking-too.

ALI: 1d6, right?

AUSTIN: Yep.

ALI: And then we'll just add it to the roll?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: And that is enough! That's a three... [Jack sighs in relief] that goes from a nine to a twelve.

KEITH: Just barely, right?

AUSTIN: Exactly. Exactly just barely- I think what this looks like is like, you know, you basically have to call in to get this request, and your static is really high? But you basically make special requests to Control, who are your handler. All handlers are referred to as Control, but also every Agent has their own Control operative, right? So spending a Commendation Point in this way is being like- 'Listen, c'mon, you know I'm good' like, you know I'm good for it, do me this solid- so this is like, someone back at home, popping bubblegum at an old CRT monitor like 'Fine, fine, fine', and like, sends you the location.

ALI: It's- it's Agent Duke, who is the specific-

AUSTIN: Yes!

ALI: He's my mentor, and his specific bio is like- he used to do this shit, and then something fucked up and now he's just like- like a-

AUSTIN: It's like- Cursor Mnemonic Exploration-

ALI: [laughs] Yes-

AUSTIN: He's like- he's just like a scout, and a Control operative- like a support aft, basically. And he likes doing support work! He doesn't want to be here anymore. He doesn't wanna be in Blough City anymore, So yeah, that's exactly it. He pops his bubblegum, and is like-

AUSTIN [as the Duke]: Shit! Yeah, um- yeah-

AUSTIN: And he's like- go to such-and-such a street, in- I think is like the financial district, actually? Which has a cool name, is like a cool place- what was that place actually? Ah- Counting House? Or- *d-d-duh*- I'll find it. I'll find it. [pause] Counting House, yeah, Counting House. He's like-

AUSTIN [as the Duke]: Yeah, go to the- go to the top floor of-

AUSTIN: Such-and-such- uh, yeah-

AUSTIN [as the Duke]: 222 Counting House.

AUSTIN: He's like-

> AUSTIN [as the Duke]: Go to the top floor, open the door, turn around, leave, come back, open the door again. And that's- that's your way back.

AUSTIN: And... you're able to get in the car- in the car with... the two of them. I think they just have Finnegan's car? Which is just this old beater, you know? [Jack laughs] Rounded- rounded everything, and then add some dense to the roundness? And you find yourself- as you drive- you find yourself being followed by police, but then they break off every time you go near the Parade. And it's a long drive, because the Parade route has now spiralled out into a million other things. But finally, you make it, and we get this shot of 222 Counting House. And it's this super tall building, like this old-model skyscraper, you know- like 40 flights up, hard concrete, you know- blue windows, rotating door out front with a doorman- and you have to park like, down the road and walk to it, because- because of the Parade. You have to cross- we get this like- you have to cross the Parade, and then you get inside... and you see that like, officers are behind you, keeping- keeping a tight watch. Hey, back in Bluffington!

# 01;25;28 - 01;29;53

AUSTIN: You're at the buffet.

KEITH: Yep. What kind of grub is this?

AUSTIN: Ah- it's... it's like- have you ever been to a casino buffet?

KEITH: [considered pause] No.

AUSTIN: No? It's like a particular thing... a lot of casinos...

KEITH: [interrupts] So it's got like, baked ziti?

AUSTIN: It has... everything that there is.

KEITH: Chicken fingers and [scalloped] potatoes?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Chicken fingers... yeah, 100%

JACK: Oh, in the same way that the Cheesecake Factory menu [AUSTIN: Yes!] isn't so much a menu as a list of foods that humans have invented? [Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yes, totally.

KEITH: But there's like a shitty... chicken, uh, *shit*- I'm trying to think of... different... [trails off]

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] Chicken parm, yeah, it's all there, yeah yeah. There's sushi, right next to pizza, right next to... crab legs, y'know?

KEITH: Chicken piccata! That's what I was- chicken piccata, a really shitty chicken piccata.

AUSTIN: Absolutely. And Hector has it all on his plate - he has ribs, next to spaghetti, next to- like, some chow mein- it's a- it's a mess.

KEITH: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: It's all like... passable? It's all pretty good! It's not as good as like, Bluff City food- but it's *way* better than Blough City food!

KEITH: *And* it's a buffet!

AUSTIN: It's a buffet, yeah.

KEITH: They got a really nice restaurant, as a casino buffet.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally!

KEITH: We're at an- at an old country buffet.

AUSTIN: Yeah... And so he like, I think he takes the outside- it's like a booth, half a booth, you know what I'm talking about? It's like...

KEITH: Like two booth seats and two chairs?

AUSTIN: Yeah, like two booth seats and two chairs, exactly that. And he takes one of the chairs.

KEITH: I take a booth.

JANINE: Ahh.... [deliberates]

AUSTIN: Big choice.

JANINE: Yeah, it is a big choice! I take a chair.

AUSTIN: There it is! Alright, so Mike Truk takes the other booth seat.

KEITH: [makes some kind of groaning/surprise/shock noise??? 01;27;25]

AUSTIN: He like, slides in with a plate.

> KEITH [as Heard] [surprised and concerned] Hey, Mike Truk!
>
> AUSTIN [as Mike]: Hey there, Robber!

KEITH [as Heard] Mmmm.

AUSTIN: And Hector looks at the two of you...

AUSTIN [as Hector]: [murmuring] Is he a personality - what's happening?

KEITH: Are you whispering?

AUSTIN: [same murmur tone] Yeah, he's whispering. [normal tone] And Mike Truk's just like, spinning up some- spinning up some spaghetti!

[Janine, Jack laugh]

KEITH [as Heard] What brings you Mike-

JACK: [interrupting] Oh, I see- I see, right. I was confused by the verb there but I- I got it.

AUSTIN: Oh, really? [laughs] He's like, uh-

AUSTIN [as Mike]: I hear the food here's great!

KEITH [as Heard] I heard that too- first time.

AUSTIN: He's like...

AUSTIN [as Mike]: I thought you'd be staying in town a little longer, I thought we could hang around a little bit, see the new house, so I felt like I should just come see- see what's going on over here!

KEITH [as Heard] [suspicious] Yeah...

AUSTIN: Hector is like, he's like, tapping his fingers on the table? As like, a sort of signal? But it's not necessarily super clear what he's trying to point out.

KEITH: Hmm...

JANINE: Is there any way... [pause] Is there any way to make that clearer? That like... ah...

AUSTIN: You could make a- you could make some sort of check, some sort of Instinct check?

JANINE: I'd make that check.

AUSTIN: Some sort of Instinct-Investigation check, yeah.

JANINE: [laughs] I feel like that's a thing that- that Maggie would notice immediately, but be like... [trails off]

AUSTIN: 100%! Go ahead and give me a- give me a check... you have three dice.

JANINE: 3d6?

AUSTIN: So, as a reminder, you can roll as many dice as you want, because you're in your target heart rate.

JANINE: Yeah, and I gotta lot of room to breathe here, we're kinda getting down to the end of it here, so... [pause] You know, um, [laughs] mmm... mmm... I would like to get this signal right, so...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: [laughs] So I'm trying to not be over-cautious... I still have that Investigation, so maybe I'll go with...

KEITH: And you still got- you could always do the Commendation Point thing...

JACK: This feels like- [trails off]

AUSTIN: You can't on this- because this is not Access, this is Instinct.

KEITH: Oh, yeah.

JACK: This feels like an important thing to get, right?

JANINE: Yeah! I'm deciding if I want to do 4d6 or 5d6... 5d6 almost feels like overkill, is the thing. [laughs]

JACK: Ohh.

AUSTIN: You could probably get 30 on a 5d6-

JACK: [crosstalk] I love this mechanic.

AUSTIN: [continuing] you probably won't, but you could.

JANINE: [crosstalk] Yeah... and also,

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Imagine! [giggles]

JANINE: [continuing] But also, I have this Investigation roll, so I can just throw an extra one in there, so...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] True, yeah. So let's do four... four probably seems smart.

JANINE: Okay, that's a thirteen.

AUSTIN: Thirteen, perfect! [pauses]

# 01;29;52 - 01;32;36

AUSTIN: It's the most obvious signal there is! He wants you to look at Mike Truk's hands... and you do, and you realise- you cannot count how many fingers he has.

JANINE: [disgusted] Oh!

AUSTIN: There is always another one.

JANINE: ...that's not normal...

AUSTIN: And he is spinning up that spaghetti.

JANINE: With his fingers?

AUSTIN: With his- with a fork [Ali giggles]. And his fingers, maybe.

JANINE: Eurgh.

AUSTIN: Gettin' all looped up in there... The Curator has followed you to Bluffington.

JACK: This is like, fucked for several reasons, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, dog!

JACK: Because, as far as I can tell... based on the way we're talking about Bluffington, as in- the world?

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: ...magic... isn't here.

AUSTIN: No. The first bit of magic that went on is... new matter was made when you entered the world. Which has never happened, since- matter existed.

JACK: Well, it's happened once, right? Which was Hector arriving.

AUSTIN: Hector- right- that's what I mean. Anytime someone comes here, as far as we know, that just doesn't happen.

JACK: So- so like, just so we're clear- so I'm imagining this right, like- [stumbles, deliberates]

AUSTIN: Did you- No- [trails off]

JACK: [continues] This would be the equivalent of... a fucking monster from *Annihilation*, the movie *Annihilation*, showing up in... the lobby of the cinema where you've just seen *Annihilation*.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: Okay, cool. [giggles]

AUSTIN: For people who have seen *Twin Peaks,* this place should feel... you know how in- God- there was this moment in *Twin Peaks: The Return*, where it goes to like, this diner. And it is like, this diner which is unlike what we are used to? And it is like... deeply normal. And I guess a similar thing happens in *Fire Walk With Me*, but I that one that I'm thinking of-

KEITH: [interrupts] Wait, is this- is it the back in time diner?

AUSTIN: It's a diner from a different- it's a different diner? It's a diner in the final episode, Keith. [pause] Do you remember the final- did you see *The Return*?

KEITH: Yeah, I saw- I watched the whole thing, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's like that diner they go to- there, towards the end-

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: And it's just like, 'Oh, this is just a diner'.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's just- the whole thing feels like that? Right... like... people buy clothes from Old Navy here.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Like... removed from the feeling of the world.

AUSTIN: You know what I mean? Like... people pay their taxes, and they hate it here, you know. We're never gonna have the tax- well, the IRS was the first episode- the thing in the first game, but- [Ali, Jack laugh] but what they were doing was trying to [laughing] *bust an underground bird-boxing ring*! Whereas here, what they do is... audit you. And- and, that is this place, like- the bathrooms are grosser here. And so- except, they're not as gross as they could get, you know?

KEITH: Right.

# 01;32;36 - 01;34;38

AUSTIN: So now there is a person here, who has infinite fingers... and is, seemingly curious about all this. And also is... definitely scary and magic. Maybe? Maybe? Like, I don't know!

KE; Maybe magic, definitely malicious!

AUSTIN: Certainly malicious, maybe- mm-

KEITH: Malevolent?

AUSTIN: Mm- Malevolent more than malicious.

KEITH: Malevolent *more* than malicious?

AUSTIN: I know that it makes them seem worse, and it is! [Jack laughs] But malevolence feels passive in a way that maliciousness can't be, you know what I mean? Like- malevolence- a general malevolent force. Like, it would be bad if he was here. But like, I don't know if he's about to grab a knife, in this moment. Because-

JANINE: [interrupting] Can I get up and go to the bathroom?

AUSTIN: Absolutely!

JANINE: [chuckles] Okay. Maggie excuses herself.

AUSTIN: Yeah he- yeah.

KEITH: I- I'm... I'm feeling the difference between malevolent and malicious.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: But I don't know that there really is one. But I know what you mean.

AUSTIN: You know what I mean, right?!

KEITH: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like... I think about malevolent as being... almost like... an underlying wish or desire or mode? Whereas maliciousness...

KEITH: Is an active malevolence?

AUSTIN: Yeah... [sighs] this is bullshit, the thing I'm talking about is bullshit, I understand that, but malevolence- [trails off]

KEITH: Yeah, but if we're going- if we're going basic dictionary, we're saying 'having or showing a wish to do evil' versus 'intending or intended to do harm.'

AUSTIN: Yes, yes- so I think that's the difference! Evil is broader than harm.

KEITH: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: I think the Curator is evil. And happens to do harm sometimes! In pursuit of... it's evil... you know.

KEITH: Right. Yeah. [pause] Although [chuckles] Malevolent: having or showing a wish to do evil, synonyms - malicious [laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh yes, of course, totally.

KEITH: But yes, they are different - and then the next one is spiteful, which is very different

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

KEITH: So, you know - dictionaries, don't really know.

AUSTIN: Dictionaries!

KEITH: Dictionaries, yeah.

# 01;34;38 - 01;36;21

AUSTIN: Um... yeah. Maggie, what are you-

KEITH: [interrupting] And this is the worst possible dictionary, the Google search dictionary.

AUSTIN: Yeah, fuck that one.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Yeah, that's awful.

AUSTIN: Maggie, what are you doing in the bathroom? You getting your head straight? Are you-

JANINE: I'm getting a can of air freshener... spray?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Okay.

JACK: Mmmm! [Ali giggles]

AUSTIN: [continuing] Mm, great, *muah*, love it!

JACK: Wow...

AUSTIN: You find it in like, a janitor closet somewhere?

JANINE: I mean, it's the ladies' room, so they might just have... one... like, that's just a thing in a bathroom sometimes? Doesn't have to be in a closet.

--01;35;01--

AUSTIN: Sure, yeah. Yeah, okay, you find some, no real big deal. We see that, and then just cut right back into Blough City.

You've crossed the street, you've gone up the elevator- the elevator's definitely playing a holiday... like, it's the same song playing outside, and it's on- it's in time, like we lose the audio of the outside parade song, which is... what's it- what's it right now, what's a good Christmas song we haven't used yet...

KEITH: Well, it's now in- we're now in Bluffington, right?

AUSTIN: No, I'm talking about Blough, we're back in Blough City.

KEITH: Blough? Okay, okay yeah- got it.

AUSTIN: What was the Parade- it was like, what was it...

JACK: Oh, we played Silent Night...

AUSTIN: We did-

KEITH: O Tannenbaum was one.

AUSTIN: Yeah, we had that...

JACK: O Tannenbaum was played- oh, what if it's like, that fucking- um.. that... Carol of the Bells?

AUSTIN: Did we not have that one yet?

JACK: Did we do Carol of the Bells?

ALI: No, we haven't that one yet.

AUSTIN: Yeah, well we do that- and it's being performed by the band outside, and dips away as you go into the lobby, and it picks back up at exactly the right moment. But it's like, the muzak

version? And... you go up to the top floor. And the four of you are like- get your *Mass Effect* elevator ride, you know?

[Pause. Ali, Jack laugh]

# 01;36;21 - 01;39;32

AUSTIN: And actually, what- the second the elevator door closes, your communicator rings, Chris.

ALI: Oh! Great! I don't know that it has caller ID, so I think I just answer it.

AUSTIN: Yeah...

> AUSTIN [as Leslie][2]: This is Agent Ward... when you reach the top, simply wait for my arrival. Do you understand?
>
> ALI [as Chris]: Is there a problem?
>
> AUSTIN [as Leslie]: This is a direct order. Simply wait for my arrival. Do you understand?
>
> JACK [as Florence]: What's going on?
>
> ALI [as Chris]: I understand.
>
> AUSTIN [as Leslie]: Good.
>
> JACK [as Florence]: What are they saying?

AUSTIN: *Click*.

> JACK [as Florence]: Who was that?

KEITH: It was Orson Welles [Keith, Ali laugh]

JACK: Yeah, fuckin' Orson Welles showed up. [chuckles] That's amazing!

AUSTIN: This was Leslie Strada, this was Agent Ward.

ALI: Yeah, yeah, right.

JACK: Right. Who we've both met before? [giggling]

AUSTIN: Yes, 100%. Yeah.

---

[2] Leslie Strada, AKA Agent Ward, introduced Bluff City 05/06: There is No Greater Love

ALI: I think Chris says...

> ALI [as Chris]: It was Ward... she wants us to wait for her, but... if you guys go through the door, I'll wait.
>
> JACK [as Florence]: [deep exhale] Is that safe?
>
> ALI [as Chris]: If it isn't...
>
> JACK [as Florence]: Chris...
>
> ALI [as Chris]: It probably is... but, I- I have less to worry about.
>
> JACK [as Florence]: [quickly] Bullshit, you have less to worry about!
>
> AUSTIN [as Finnegan]: What's- what's happening? I'm sorry... what's happening?

AUSTIN: It's Finnegan.

> AUSTIN [as Finnegan]: Who's Ward?
>
> JACK [as Florence]: Oh...

AUSTIN: Achilles like, puts his hand on Finnegan's shoulder and is like...

> AUSTIN [as Achilles]: Don't worry about it. It's agency... stuff.
>
> ALI [as Chris]: Yeah, it's just my... supervisor. Noth- no big concern.
>
> JACK [as Florence]: [snorts in a laugh/disbelief]
>
> ALI [as Chris]: You know...
>
> AUSTIN [as Achilles]: Fifteenth floor!
>
> ALI [as Chris]: ...bosses...

AUSTIN: And you're on the fifteenth floor of this office building, and there's like- you know, the fire escape thing, or the signage- the thing that's like 'Stairs, This Way!' that lead you right up to the roof. And they take you to a long stairwell that takes you from one side of the building to another, like it's a low, sloping staircase, do you know?

JACK: Mm! [laughs]

AUSTIN: It's like, a hundred steps to go up one floor. This low, long, awkward, weird staircase, that goes to a door on a roof, that like- you know, you open the door and you'll be outside. And you climb it, I'm guessing?

JACK: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Those are your motivations, at this point?

JACK: Like, hand on- hand on holster.

AUSTIN: So yeah, you open the door- and you're on the roof! And you can look all around here, and you can see- I think at this point, you can see that the Curator balloons are gone, but the Parade is bigger than ever, and is beginning to link up... in- in- you know, I think you can see the lights of the Parade... I think maybe the hailing has stopped at this point, and there are spotlights on sections of the Parade, and you can see that it has... it has made the symbol of Infinity in the streets below. And, the door has closed. And you have decisions to make. [Ali giggles]

# 01;39;32 - 01;42;12

JACK: Wha- what is the view of Bluff Ci- sorry, what is the view of Blough City from this altitude?

AUSTIN: You can see all these distinct, like- neighbourhoods very clearly? But they also seem to go, you can see- you can see the Boardwalk go into the horizon. You know- on the Western shore- as far North as you can see, even as it becomes sand and, you know, beach community, so to speak - the Boardwalk keeps going forever. And- and like, likewise, it's a fractal city. You can see into Counting House, the district you are in, and you would never stop counting building, but you can also see higher, and look past it forever. And into the next district, where the Thickets are, and similarly there- it you start tracing any given street, it might go forever. And the other thing is like- it's the same. It's the same hundred buildings over and over and over again, the same dozen buildings repeated over and over and over again, you know?

JACK: Like when a crowd is duplicated?

AUSTIN: Yes! Exactly that- and you can see that here. And it's the same thing with the Parade, right? It's the same repeated Parade, it's the same video game asset plopped down again and again and again.

JACK: Okay...

> JACK [as Florence]: Chris.
>
> ALI [as Chris]: I think that you all... you all should go. She said that I should wait-
>
> JACK [as Florence]: She's gonna...

ALI [as Chris]: And if it's a problem... it'll be my problem

JACK [as Florence]: She's gonna kill you?!

ALI [as Chris]: You don't know that.

JACK [as Florence]: *Pfft*. She's gonna kill you. Do you want my gun?

ALI [as Chris]: Yeah.

JACK [as Florence]: Okay, I mean- I'm prepared to give you my gun, but I- I don't think you should stay.

ALI [as Chris]: Well... she shouldn't kill the four of us, if that's what you think.

JACK [as Florence]: No, God no! I think we should all go through this door.

ALI [as Chris]: I'm not doing that yet.

JACK [as Florence]: Why?

ALI [as Chris]: I'm going to try and find the tunnel. I- I didn't deserve to be in that car if I left this to you. And once you're safe, you're safe.

JACK [as Florence]: And then you're gonna go *back*? And- and try and make your way to Bluffington?

ALI [as Chris]: If I can? Or I can keep... I can keep Ward from finding them, or- or whatever else.

JACK [as Florence]: How are you gonna get off the roof?

AUSTIN: Ah, you know that this is a window of time, and in an hour, this door will just be a door back downstairs.

JACK: Sure.

ALI: Yeah.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Also, there's probably like a window-cleaner thing, an elevator, like... you know. [Ali laughs]

JACK: Yeah, like- like a...fuck, what are those things called, like a Boson's cradle?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

# 01;42;12 - 01;44;38

JACK: Okay...

> JACK [as Florence]: Okay, if I go through this door, and take these two back with me... I won't be able to contact you, other than by writing... which will take a while. So I won't know what... happens, on this roof, in the next... 45 minutes, right?
>
> ALI [as Chris]: Um... if I can go home, I'll find you. Immediately. I'll always try to go back.
>
> JACK [as Florence]: And if you can't?
>
> ALI [as Chris]: Then I'll keep trying!
>
> JACK [as Florence]: Ha. Okay... okay.

JACK: And I hand her my gun.

> JACK [as Florence]: Anybody you want me to talk to? Any messages that you want, you know, passed on?
>
> ALI [as Chris]: Um... listen to the radio... if you can- [sighs] If you can get online, um, tell everyone else to, too. And... I think that's it. Tell your daughter I said hi.
>
> JACK [as Florence]: Okay... okay. Well, stay safe. Keep your eyes on the prize, I might see you someday.

JACK: And I open the door.

AUSTIN: There is a stairwell that is incredibly deep. You know, it's only going- it's going from the top of this building to the bottom of this building. But it's doing it straight? So it's almost a ladder.

> JACK [as Florence]: Jesus Christ! Chris?!

AUSTIN: Uh- but a lower building than it was before.

> JACK [as Florence]: Fuck! Uh....

AUSTIN: But it's still like, a ten floor ladder.

> JACK [as Florence]: Okay... you good with this, Finnegan?!

AUSTIN [as Finnegan]: Is it home?

JACK [as Florence]: Yeah, I mea- I think so, if we can get down to the bottom of this.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] He slides past you and starts going down.

JACK [as Florence]: Right... After you, Apollo.

AUSTIN: Apollo follows... and so do you, and the door closes. And then the door opens, and Leslie Strada in her peacoat steps out.

ALI: [laughing] Chris is standing there with her gun, and her... scarf... and her weird knitted dress uniform. Um... and... seems calm.

# 01;44;38 - 01;46;50

ALI [as Chris]: Agent Ward! I waited.

AUSTIN [as Leslie]: Where are the others?

ALI [as Chris]: They're on their way.

AUSTIN [as Leslie]: Are they? Who are?

ALI [as Chris]: Does it matter?

AUSTIN [as Leslie]: Yes... very much. The border is not something to play with.

ALI [as Chris]: Um... it's Florence. It's Florence and Apollo.

AUSTIN [as Leslie]: Apollo? Achilles Apollo? The Whitaker boy?

ALI [as Chris]: Yeah, I've heard he's- he's gone back and forth, so I didn't think... I'm sorry.

AUSTIN [as Leslie]: There are special dispensations for that... paperwork. You- you do not have the- where is Agent Heard?

ALI [as Chris]: Uh- um... he's... um... he's- he's pursuing the- um... the tape!

[pause]

AUSTIN: This is a lie.

ALI: It is such a lie! [Ali, Jack laugh]

AUSTIN: Give me the roll- give me the Instinct roll. This is Risky. Four dice. [beat, Ali starts laughing]

AUSTIN/JACK: Oh!

AUSTIN: Oh, my God!

ALI: [laughing] That's such a failure.

JACK/KEITH: Wow...

AUSTIN: Hwoah!

[Ali continues to laugh]

AUSTIN: That's a seven...

JACK: That's a fucking seven!

AUSTIN: That's a failure!

ALI: God...

AUSTIN: Static goes up... You say 'he's pursuing the tape' and then... all at once, across the city- the tape starts playing, on more walls. Everywhere. Which is impossible, because there is one tape. But, you know- maybe you built a device that can spread that thing further away.

JANINE: [crosstalk] Napster...

AUSTIN: Maybe you brought home something... huh?

JANINE: I said Napster. [Ali giggles]

AUSTIN: You built Napster. Hector Hu's solution to Blough City is Napster.

JANINE: *Hec*stor...

AUSTIN: It's Hexstor! You got it! That's a witch's version of Napster. So you can- wait, wait-

KEITH: [crosstalk] You can't own a movie, man!

AUSTIN: You have Intuition... I'm gonna let you use that here, to lie. Unless there's a better one for what that would be.

# 01;46;50 - 01;49;11

KEITH: And is that a- is that a- another- a second static?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] And that's one die... no, no no- it would be one die to add to this. So you can roll 1d6 to see if you can fail or succeed.

ALI: Oh, okay.

KEITH: Wait! So you've gotta get a six? There's no other... it has to be a six?

AUSTIN: A five would do it- no, no no- she's at seven-

KEITH: Oh! It's twelve..

AUSTIN: Eleven, eleven is the number.

ALI/KEITH: Oh, eleven is the number.

AUSTIN: Eleven is the number, yeah.

KEITH: Oh, I thought it was twelve.

AUSTIN: No, a four will be fine, yeah yeah- go ahead and roll.

ALI: Okay...

AUSTIN: Four, five, or six- that's a three. [Ali giggles]

KEITH: That's a three though. [laughs]

AUSTIN: That's a three! Which means your Intuition thing drops to two, because it's Risky.

ALI: Oh, I dropped it from four to three- last time I failed.

AUSTIN: Oh! Like, just now- like a second ago?

ALI: Yes.

AUSTIN: *Yeahyeahyeah*- You're fine- yeah, that's fine- um, she sees right through you. She's like-

> AUSTIN [as Leslie]: He isn't pursuing the tape, is he?

AUSTIN: And she like, closes the door behind her.

> AUSTIN [as Leslie]: You were always a risky agent, Ryder. I should've never brought you on board.

AUSTIN: And she goes to reach for her we- she goes to reach for the inside of her jacket.

ALI: [deliberates] Yeah, I think if Chris is gonna fail anywhere, it's gonna be [laughing] on the top of this building with the video- like, around her. But I think she just, raises the gun, right? As like...

> ALI [as Chris]: You knew my priorities the day we met. I wanted to do good work with the Concern but... I'm still going to do *good*.
>
> AUSTIN [as Leslie]: You're not coming back.

AUSTIN: And she pulls out a pistol, and takes aim. What do you do?

ALI: Are we just pointing our guns at each other, at this point? [giggles]

AUSTIN: Yeah- if you haven't reacted, then yea- yes.

ALI: Okay, um...

AUSTIN: She is going to pull her trigger, this is- I'm giving you a window before she shoots you.

JANINE: She's aiming, but you've already aimed.

AUSTIN: Right, yeah.

ALI: Right, yeah yeah yeah- ooh... um... I mean, I'm going to roll to try to shoot her, I don't know.

AUSTIN: Okay!

ALI: I don't know if I'm going to.

AUSTIN: Okay, I didn't know if you were going to try to flee, [Ali laughs] I don't- I don't know, I'm giving you an option to like, you have space to do stuff, but...

JACK: Didn't the last time we fought - quote-unquote - fought Leslie Strada, it begin with her crashing her car into us?

AUSTIN: Yes, it did.

ALI: Yes- yea-yea.

JACK: Okay, cool, so this is like, a little more stagey- [Ali giggles] like, this is an improvement- one step of improvement.

AUSTIN: In some ways, yeah. In some ways. Absolutely...

ALI: But yeah, I- yeah...

AUSTIN: This is a tough roll to make.

# 01;49;11 - 01;51;07

ALI: Force?

AUSTIN: It's Force, which is two. You have to get eleven on two...

JACK: You have my gun, you get a +1?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Oh right! You have a gun, you get plus one, so it's 3d6.

ALI: Okay. Can I...

JACK: Does the fact that these are- oh sorry, go ahead Ali.

ALI: Can I just put in a Commendation to make it 4d6?

AUSTIN: You cannot, that only works on Access rolls.

ALI: Okay, okay.

AUSTIN: I'm pretty sure. I'm going to double-check again [Ali giggles] just to make- just to be 100% sure...

ALI: Again, if I get shot here- this doesn't go well, I am so fine with it, I just wanna make sure...

AUSTIN: Yeah, I got you... [reading] Commendation: You may spend Commendation Points to push the requests for equipment while in Blough City, every Commendation Point adds +1 to any Access: Logistics or Access: Intelligence roll, *blahblahblahblahblah*. Um... yeah, unfortunately.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Unfortunately that is not the case.

JACK: Is the fact that these Hector's bullets instead of Sleeves', does that have any effect?

AUSTIN: No, I already said it didn't have any mechanical effect... As much as I-

JACK: Oh, I just thought- okay. Fair.

AUSTIN: Wha-?

JACK: I don't think you said mechanical effect.

JANINE: [crosstalk] You said no *stat* change.

KEITH: You said it didn't add a stat change, yeah.

AUSTIN: Right, but that would be this.

JACK: Sure.

AUSTIN: That would be this.

JACK: [crosstalk] Right, okay. I didn't know if this was a silver bullet situation... [chuckles]

AUSTIN: [sighs] You know...

JANINE: I didn't- I don't understand why he- did it, [chuckles] to be honest.

JACK: [crosstalk] Also, there's a way of doing this, right?

JANINE: I don't understand why he...

JACK: [laughing] Because he's a fuckin' weirdo, right?

AUSTIN: Because he's a weirdo, why was he doing any of this shit?

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: [continuing] Don't trust the bullets from a different Agent, right?

ALI: Yeah.

JACK: There is- there's like a way we could play this, right, where Christine buys really hard- or bought really hard into the Infinite Love thing? And I think the idea of having a gun loaded with bullets...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Hector Hu... yeah.

JACK: belonging to the voice [Ali giggles] on the radio is good? Just be-

AUSTIN: [interrupting] There's a- there's a world in which it didn't give any mechanical effect - to *Florence*. To Chris, it does.

JACK: Yeah, totally!

AUSTIN: These are *Hector's* bullets. [Ali giggles]

JACK: Well, it's that great image, right! Of that Orthodox priest giving blessing to the tankard of holy water?

AUSTIN: Yes. Yeah.

JACK: In that these are bullets from radio personality Hector Hu. [Ali giggles]

AUSTIN: [beat] Yeah, I like it. 4d6.

ALI: [laughing] Okay.

# 01;51;07 - 01;52;12

AUSTIN: And if you miss? God damn, do you... do you miss. [Jack laughs]

ALI: [sighs] Yeah... we're gonna see... that's an eighteen.

AUSTIN: Eighteen! You didn't even *need it*!

JACK: Wowee! [giggles]

AUSTIN: *Jesus Christ....*

JACK: Of course you didn't even need it! They're fucking bullets! [Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: [giggling] They're bullets! They're regular bullets! They're not special bullets!

JACK: It's just metal... from a gun!

[Ali chuckling]

AUSTIN: Oh my God... And you shoot her. And that's it. We're not getting into a gun fight on the roof. There's a loud bang... and Static hits twenty...

JANINE: [laughs] Great...

JACK: Why does Static hit twenty? Because...

AUSTIN: You *killed* an *Agent*? [Ali laughs]

JACK: Ah, fuck! [laughs]

ALI: Wh- [is laughing too hard]

KEITH: A fairly important one!

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?!

[Jack laughs]

AUSTIN: And your phone starts ringing again, obviously.

ALI: [still giggling] I guess I answer it?

AUSTIN: Do you?!

ALI: I guess it depends on who it's from? Do I know who it's from?

JANINE: [giggling] You don't have caller ID!

AUSTIN: You answer it... and what you hear is... what's about to happen.

# 01;52;12 - 01;54;48

AUSTIN: So you have the air freshener. What do you do?

JANINE: So, uh... I think Maggie takes a second in the bathroom, I think she unbuttons the top of her- I've been imagining her in like, one of those really nice- I think I might have mentioned it before, but totally like, *His Girl Friday*-style skirt-suit combo, with like a nice jacket- and a shirt, with the- I guess I said she had a pussy-bow blouse? [pause] So maybe she... nah, I don't want her to untie that, that's too cool... [Ali giggles] I think she just takes the... uh... she has the air freshener, and she carries it kind of like a... kind of like in *Hitman*, when you have a gun, and you're just like... sliding past someone who might notice it?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: So just kinda like, sorta- carrying it on the side of her body as she walks back... I think she lights a cigarette- like she puts a cigarette between her lips-

AUSTIN: [sighs] Mm-hm?!

JANINE: Pulls out her lighter, and lights it. This is probably a no-smoking establishment- well, it's attached to a casino... I don't know what American casino indoor smoking rules are at this stage in time.

AUSTIN: They've... changed.

KEITH: I know that a few used to... a few years ago you used to be able to smoke inside of Mohican Sun, which is a casino that I'm relatively close to.

JANINE: It... mostly doesn't matter, 'cause she's doing it if there's a sign up or not.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] I think it's allowed? Yeah... yeah.

JANINE: So she sort of, walks back to the table- she's got this cigarette hanging between her lips, uh- and then she pulls up the air freshener can and pulls up the lighter... and... I'm gonna roll to see what happens to Mike Truk I guess? [laughing, Ali laughs] Because she's...

AUSTIN: I don't think so? Because we're not in Blough City or Bluff City anymore...

JANINE: [laughing] No?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] What do you think happens...

JACK: IRL, this is like, murder, right? This is attempted murder?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: [chuckling] ...*look.*

AUSTIN: You're an Agent, you know how to do this, you do it. What is the conversation at the table- we actually just get, you getting the- you- getting the canister, cutting back to Mike Truk-

JANINE: [crosstalk] This is *The Nice Guys* cut of this, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, 100%. Heard... and Hector, eating food and talking, as you're walking through the background, slowly getting closer and closer... Not slowly in a menacing way, slowly as in... the bathroom is at the far end, so you moving past a busboy and all that, as the camera's like-

JANINE: [interrupting, crosstalk] Bumping into- into- jostling their tray of dirty dishes, being like 'Oh I'm so sorry.'

AUSTIN: Exactly!

JANINE: 'Excuse me.'

AUSTIN: Exactly...

# 01;54;48 - 01;56;55

AUSTIN: So Mike Truk is like... you know, is like-

AUSTIN [as Mike]: Spaghetti and ice cream in the same place! Huh! ...huh!

AUSTIN: And Hector is like...

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Yeah... yeah, you don't see that every day, do you Heard?

KEITH [as Heard] Yeah, and bread pudding too!

AUSTIN [as Hector]: Ye- yeah, and bread pudding too!

AUSTIN: And then agent- then Maggie is here! And... that happens.

JANINE: *These Boots Are Made For Walking* is on the fuckin' radio.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh! [Ali giggles] Yeah... God... and then people are screaming... and then a fire alarm goes off, and it's... you know, chaos, no one understands what's happening. Hector jumps up- I don't know if we see it, right? We just get a cut to black. And then when we cut back up... where are you all?

KEITH: A different casino? [laughs, Janine laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: [laughing] And yet, we are still hungry.

JANINE: Mm...

AUSTIN: I'm not!

JANINE: [laughing] I don't think anyone would be hungry...

KEITH: No?

JANINE: There's an episode of *Sawbones*, that's about the *Home Alone* movies, and the medical realities of them? A thing they mention is that scene where one of the guys gets a blow torch to the head? If you sustain that for a few seconds, as happens in that movie- technically, the skull is supposed to melt, which is not a thing I thought bone could do?

AUSTIN: Eurgh...

JANINE: I thought it just like... dusted?

ALI: Mm.

JACK: Wow, hey! Listeners, isn't it cool how the last fifteen of the podcast was just silence? [Janine laughs] There was just no audio in the last fifteen seconds! That's like, wild, and you don't need to worry about it!

AUSTIN: Yeah...

JACK: I'm sorry, please continue.

JANINE: [crosstalk, laughing] I'm just saying that no-one wants more short ribs, okay.

AUSTIN: No... [chuckles] no!

KEITH: Is... is... I don't think- I think a blow torch is a lot hotter than a lighter-

AUSTIN/JANINE: [crosstalk] Sure, sure!

JACK: [crosstalk] It's gone quiet again!

AUSTIN: Wow, I can't hear anything! [Janine laughs] Jack- Jack, it's so nice to have you on the podcast! How are you doing today?

JACK: [laughing] Hi, Austin. I'm good, thank you.

AUSTIN: How are you today? I heard that on another podcast I really like. [laughs]

KEITH: Does the Curator... melt or burn like a person, like a real person?

JACK: [laughing] Fucking hell!

AUSTIN: The Curator... is dead. The Curator here, is a person. And they are dead.

KEITH: Okay.

JACK: Person with weird fucking hands but, a dead person.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah! Totally.

# 01;56;55 - 01;59;57

AUSTIN: [pause] And... you- like, presumably just find your way out of this casino? There's probably tape of this thing happening? I don't think you *Hitman*-ed the fucking... VCR tape on the way out... but yeah, we just get you at... slots, at a different casino. And there's just like, loud rackets of the slots hitting in the casino- on the casino floor, and... Hector is definitely smoking at this point, too. And is like...

> AUSTIN [as Hector]: [sounding shaky] Alright, well... welcome to Bluffington, I guess... this is gonna be alright. Three of us, we can build something.

AUSTIN: Chris? You can find your way downstairs?

ALI: ...yeah!

AUSTIN: I think we get like, we get a lot of what follows from a long driving sequence, of you getting back to the canal, and you can hear all the conversations this way. You're just permanently listening to them on your device, at this point? And like... you find your way back to- to the canal, and you're like, trying to figure out where they went to. And you can see... there's something that must have floated out of the back of the car, like a photo, from the photo booth, you know? Or something... and then like, you can see the tire tracks. From when he turned around into the canal. And you can see like- 'Alright'- and we can just see you raising your windows and driving underwater. [Ali giggles]

And then I think we cut back one last time to Heard and Maggie and Hector at the slot machines, and he pulls out one of those flip top notepads with lined paper and the spiral binding at the top. And he flicks it open - and you see he has a bunch of pages of various potential hierarchies all drawn out.

Different versions of the new organisation he might build. And in one motion, he rips them all them out. And on a fresh page, he draws a new one. With four names at the top - Hector. Heard. Maggie. Gale. Drawing a line under each, as if they all run a different division.

And then his pen pauses, and he taps it on the notebook once, twice- before dragging it back to the top. And writing one more name, out of faith - or hope. Chris.

And then the camera slides back over the notebook, like it's being pulled away on a dolly. Down the casino hall, into the elevator. Down the stairs, out onto the bustling Boardwalk as people walk past it.

[Guitar intro starts] Down a ramp, into the streets, past someone handing out fliers- down into a shopping center... then, still going backwards, going up the side of a hill, as a familiar car emerges from a tunnel.

And there it is. Bluffington Beach, Atlantic City, New Jersey. In all its grime, and glory.

[Main song starts - Juanitos - Del Carnaval. Notes on usage rights from the Patreon post]

# 01;59;57 - 02;01;56

--02;00;11--
AUSTIN: The first season of Bluff City was conceived and performed by Alicia Acampora, Keith J Carberry, Sylvia[3] Clare, Jack de Quidt, Janine Hawkins, Art Martinez-Tebbel, Darcy Swan,[4] and Austin Walker.

--02;00;23--
AUSTIN: It was produced by Alicia Acampora, with music by Jack de Quidt. The art was by Craig Sheldon.

--02;00;51--
AUSTIN: The games played were Fiasco by Jason Morningstar, Inspectres by Jared Sorensen, Noirlandia by Evan Rowland, Action Movie World by Ian Williams, World Wide Wrestling RPG by Nathan D Paoletta, Masks by Brendan G Conway, and Lacuna, also by Jared Sorensen, with additional mechanics from TechNoir, by Jeremy Keller.

--02;01;14--
AUSTIN: Bluff City will return.

[3] The name in the audio recording is no longer in use, hence the audio/transcript discrepancy.
[4] The name in the audio recording is no longer in use, hence the audio/transcript discrepancy.