

TAZ: Steeplechase - Episode 0: Setup

Published on September 29th, 2022

Listen here at themcelroy.family

Justin:

Hello, everyone, and welcome to The Adventure Zone: Steeplechase, a fanta— A Justin McElroy fantasy.

Travis:

A Justin McElroy joint.

Clint:

[laughs]

Justin:

My name is Justin McElroy, and I will be your, uh, game master for this adventure.

Travis:

I'm Travis McElroy.

Griffin:

Like Captain N— Are we all supposed to introduce ourselves?

Justin:

I don't know what's happening.

Griffin:

Probably not.

Travis:

Justin—

Justin:

It's an adve— Why wouldn't you introduce yourselves at the beginning of a, of a program? This is, this is de rigueur. My name is Justin McElroy.

Someone's starting right now, right? Like, they're starting... They heard about this podcast.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

From their friends.

Travis:

Yeah.

Justin:

Got into it 'cause...

Travis:

Uh-huh.

Justin:

... they've been waitin' for, for the J man—

Travis:

For you.

Justin:

... to take the rudder, and now I'm here.

Travis:

Oh, I see.

Justin:

And my name is Justin McElroy. They know that 'cause it's mainly the J heads here.

Griffin:

That are—

Justin:

So you— So you guys please.

Griffin:

J head sounds like a derogative term for people who are, who do, uh, possess a, an addiction to... I don't know what a J... But I guess...

Travis:

Jumping?

Griffin:

Uh, jumping? Anyway, this is Griffin McElroy.

Justin:

Perfect.

Griffin:

And I also love to jump.

Justin:

Thanks, thanks. Just the name is good. Travis. Oh, I actually ruined yours. Uh, old man, what's your name?

Clint:

I am Clint McElroy. You mean me, not my character, right?

Justin:

Yeah, not your character. Oh, uh, just a brief note. A couple things before we start. Um, Dad, if I see you put another bite of food in your mouth while we're recording, I will jump through the screen and kill you. That's the first one. I'm a little on edge, so just, like...

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

Just don't eat on the podcast anymore. That's, like, the thing...

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

Thing two.

Griffin:

I know... We know that you did just wake up at 9:30 in the morning, and so your body probably does need caloric intake to function, but...

Travis:

It's so wild now, just to be in the inversion of, like, Dad sleeping in and me and Justin and Griffin having to wake up early with kids. It makes me mad at you, our father.

Justin:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Well, he's earned it.

Justin:

That's not fair. It's not fair.

Travis:

It's not fair.

Clint:

I went through many years...

Griffin:

Okay.

Clint:

... of leaving early!

Justin:

Welcome to the world of Steeplechase, as you're, as... I've been working on this for many months now. I've written this. I'm not nervous. I wrote an introduction.

Travis:

[laughs]

Griffin:

[laughs]

Travis:

Okay.

Justin:

And I wrote an introduction—

Travis:

Very believable.

Justin:

... of... from all my work, so I'd like to begin the table setting.

Griffin:

And let's just say no goofs until Justin gets— Until Justin—

Travis:

Yeah, Justin, Justin needs to focus, Dad.

Justin:

So there, uh, so there are knights.

Travis:

Let's take a second run at this. Um...

Griffin:

[laughs]

Justin:

There are many knights—

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

... and other wizards, and they are all are fighting.

Griffin:

[laughs]

Justin:

And you're...

Travis:

Oh, sorry. It was K, K knights. Okay, sorry. Go on.

Justin:

You are the children of knights and wizards and they're combined. You're knight wizards, and welcome to the Court of the Knight Wizards of Justin McElroy.

Travis:

Sorry, one more time. Is it K knight, or is it just N night? I'm so confused.

Justin:

You're half knight, half wizard. You have both, the powers of both and the weaknesses of neither.

Griffin:

Right. Armor and sword, but magic.

Travis:

But what if I'm a wizard who goes out in the daytime?

Griffin:

This is not anything.

Clint:

So we really went off that no goof rule real quick.

Travis:

This is all serious.

Justin:

Mine was serious.

Griffin:

Once it hits serious mode, though, the goofs will come to a complete stop.

Clint:

You think so, huh?

Justin:

Okay, welcome, welcome, welcome to Steeplechase. Uh, I would like to first tell you a little bit... Uh, here's what we're gonna do. This is session zero and we're just starting. I am, uh, wildly uncomfortable because I haven't done this before, and my brothers and dad are gonna help me through it. We're all gonna do this as a family. It's a team-building exercise, um, not a podcast. [laughs] It's a team-building exercise.

Griffin:

[laughs] We're gonna do some trust falls, some low ropes courses.

Justin:

Uh, we are gonna be playing the game Blades in the Dark, uh, and I'm gonna tell you more about that right after, uh, I tell you a little bit about this, this world. Um, it is set in the future, um, not like a thousand years, maybe couple hundred from now. Uh, and our story takes place... Well, let me, let me... You know, I'm get ahead of myself.

Carmine Denton was a farmer's son in rural Georgia. This is the story everybody knows. He always wanted to be an entertainer, a storyteller, someone who would lift us up with these incredible stories and bring us together with valuable lessons. Carmine, as soon as he could scrape

together the money, founded a company that we now know today as Dentonic, the first name in entertainment.

Denton started small. He was operating a string of traveling carnivals and state fairs, and they evolved into the regional theme parks throughout the US. Uh, think like a chain of Six Flags or, you know, Busch Gardens, those parks. Eventually, like, Denton was— He had all these ideas and dreams, but he was fighting municipalities and state local governments, uh, at every turn.

Every time he wanted to expand or change something or do something different, he was constantly having to fight with these groups. So he did something very dramatic. In 2030, he grew tired of fighting and he disassembled the parks. And he sold the land to Chinese multinationals, this would've been in 2030, and he focused all his time into just one: Steeplechase.

It was nestled into a big expanse of the same rural countryside in Georgia that he once called home. Steeplechase started like the other parks. You know, top-notch roller coasters, decent food. Nothing to write home about. But then rather than sell the previous parks piecemeal, he brought them to Steeplechase and he started organizing them and building them up and taking all these different mechanical parts, all these different worlds into, uh, a real, like, epicenter of entertainment. And he could've stopped there. But as we all know, Denton's motto is that he never knew when to stop dreaming.

He expanded Steeplechase in 2040 with a second gate, a satellite park if you will, the Kingdom of Ephemera. Now, Ephemera, this kingdom is different. It was not just a theme park. It was immersive. It was a world where you could go and live out your, uh, fantasies, uh, as long as they were of the knights and wizards variety.

Uh, you... And this was wildly successful. We'll learn more about the Kingdom of Ephemera in a bit, but you should know that he continued to, uh, grow these parks and expand these new gates, and the Denton family

continued to grow these parks. And when they ran out of land, they went the only direction they could: up.

So now these lands, these layers as they're called, are these immersive worlds for the rich to come and experience their, uh, deepest fantasies, and you three work there. You are employees of Dentonic. You are employees of, uh, Steeplechase, and you are going to find your fortune there in the cracks between the fantasy, there where people are, uh, misguided. They're looking over here. While they're having this magical family moment, you'll be the ones with your hands in the pockets.

And we're gonna meet you, uh, but we are gonna talk about this game first, Blades in the Dark. Now this is—

Griffin:

This is going great, so you're do— You're crushing it so far.

Travis:

You're doing a wonderful job.

Griffin:

I don't know if you need, I don't know if you need the massaging...

Justin:

Oh, you guys—

Griffin:

But if you are, I'll put—

Justin:

Rule— Uh, massage anytime. If anything's even palatable, just, like...

Clint:

I'm entranced.

Griffin:

Oh, it's... I'm, I'm in.

Clint:

I'm entranced.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

Um, so let me read this exact— I'm gonna read this exact text for attribution purposes, and then we'll talk more about. Uh, this work is based on *Blades in the Dark*, which can be found at bladesinthedark.com. It's a product of One Seven Design, developed and authored by John Harper and licensed for our use under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license, one of my favorite licenses.

Griffin:

[laughs]

Justin:

What a thrill it is. Um, I will just say that that is the— And you will see this system... Um, I will say about this book very quickly. It is the best—

Griffin:

It's rad.

Justin:

... hands down, the best one of these I've ever written. It never gets bogged down in mechanics. It's always bringing you back to practical application. It's so well written.

Um, there's a great thing that he says, uh, that John Harper says at the beginning of his games that he, he attributes to a friend of his named, uh, Avery, and I wanted to, uh, say that now. It is, the number one rule is to play your characters like you're driving a stolen car. And I really like that metaphor, and that is what we're going to be doing. *Blades in the Dark* is a game about bad people doing bad things.

Travis:

Hey, Justin.

Justin:

Yeah?

Travis:

I'm so sorry. I built my whole character using Beyblades in the dark. I—
That's my...

Griffin:

Yeah...

Travis:

I am so sorry.

Justin:

Okay. Yeah, I expected something like this. Uh—

Travis:

I am so sorry.

Justin:

That is fine, Travis. We can—

Griffin:

If you just let him get one out of his system— Travis, if you can just give us
a little time to rip.

Justin:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Like, let him get it out of his system.

Travis:

Oh, oh. Griffin, by saying the word Beyblades, I have used up all of my
Beyblade knowledge.

Griffin:

Oh, okay.

Travis:

[laughs] I have now, uh, used it all up. And Justin, you may continue.

Justin:

Uh, okay. So it's a game about scoundrels doin' crimes. There's different kinds of criminals and bad people, uh, but the core of the game, the metaphor of the game, is that it is in terms of scores or heists or, uh, that, like, crimes. You know you're gonna do crimes.

Travis:

Yeah.

Justin:

Um, you're gonna do crimes in this world. Uh, we're gonna talk mechanics. You're gonna be part of a crew, criminal crew. You're each gonna have your own criminal background and your own, uh, criminal skills that you're gonna bring to this, uh, little group that you have.

We're gonna pick a type of character class here. You're also gonna pick a crew. Uh, and that crew is gonna have different, uh, relationships with the world, different ways that they focus on interacting with the world. Um, and we were still kinda hammering this part out, so, uh, that is something I think we can come to a consensus on once we've met all of our characters.

Um, so with that all being said, and boys please feel free to— If there's questions or you wanna stop me or I missed something or... I mean, and if you just feel like interrupting, you know, keep that to your, to yourself. But if you have something real good, then please, by all means.

Travis:

But how can we tell if it's good or not until we say it out loud, Justin?

Justin:

The Travis McElroy story. Um...

Travis:

Yeah.

Griffin:

[laughs]

Justin:

The... Okay. [laughs] Um. So—

Travis:

[laughs]

Justin:

Let's, uh, let's start with, uh... You know what, Travis? Let's...

Travis:

What?

Justin:

Let's pan to you. The camera pans to you. Let's meet your scoundrel.

Travis:

Uh, I am playing Beef Punchley.

Griffin:

But wait, wait. Hold on, wait. Did you change the surname?

Travis:

What, what was it?

Griffin:

I thought it was Beef Strongley.

Travis:

Oh.

Justin:

Know what?

Travis:

No, it's always been Punchley, but I was at—

Justin:

No, Beef Punchley's extremely good.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Travis:

Now which is better, Beef Punchley or Beef Punchkins?

Justin:

Mm.

Griffin:

Not Beef Punch— Beef Punchkins feels too cute.

Travis:

Okay, yeah. Beef Punchley. But that's not his real name.

Clint:

It sounds like a Smurf name.

Travis:

Right. He is a Cutter, um, which in this game system is a dangerous and intimidating fighter.

Justin:

Okay.

Travis:

Um, he is a very large man, a very, as his name might, uh, imply, uh, very beefy. A former, like, heavyweight boxer. But this is not his real name. Beef Punchley is his alias. His real name is Linden Julius.

Justin:

Uh, Lin—

Griffin:

I will never... I want, I want you to know...

Travis:

Never.

Griffin:

... at the top I will never use that name.

Travis:

No, everyone calls him Beef. It's fine to call him Beef. Uh...

Griffin:

Okay, good.

Travis:

But that is, that is more of his nickname than it is his real name. Uh, but as I said, he's a cutter, uh, primarily focused in, uh, like, hand-to-hand fighting and grappling and that kinda thing, uh, but he is, uh, far more intelligent and gentle than he appears. But still, he is... And I have taken the special ability Not to be Trifled With, uh, which means that he can push himself to do one of the following: perform a feat of physical force that verges on the superhuman or engage a small gang on equal footing in close combat.

Justin:

Alright.

Travis:

How much do you wanna know about Beef, Justin?

Justin:

Uh, I would like to know if, uh... Basically, with heritage and background, which is... Uh, a lot of Blades in the Dark is really narrative, which is, uh,

you know, you might... some people might say dismissively, but when you're making a narrative podcast is [kisses] chef's kiss. So...

Travis:

Yeah, it's so good.

Justin:

Um, I'm sorry that I made the chef's kiss noise and also did a chef's kiss. I don't know that I said the words chef's kiss.

Travis:

[laughs]

Griffin:

I appreciated it. Yeah.

Justin:

Okay. Um, I would like to know... Basically, for heritage and background, I'd like to know your relationship with, um, the park and the company. Like, what, what is your, what's your deal? What's your background with, with, uh, Dentonic and Steeplechase?

Travis:

Uh, so he, uh, grew up in a small town and he, uh, hit, like, puberty growth spurt pretty late. He was like a small, somewhat, like nerdy gentle boy, uh, like the, you know, Wells for Boys kinda guy. Uh, but then...

Justin:

This is too long. You—

Travis:

Okay.

Justin:

I just wanna know about your relationship to the park.

Travis:

I'm getting there.

Justin:

You wanna leave something on the bone—

Travis:

You said narrative.

Justin:

You wanna leave something on the bone there, Trav.

Travis:

Uh...

Justin:

What if somebody's like, "I bet you were always a strong kid," and then... This is from me to you. "If you were always a strong kid." And then you're like, "Actually, I wasn't. Lemme take you inside." I don't need that dense...

Travis:

Hey, Justin. You're doing a great job GMing so far. Um...

Justin:

Thank you so much, Travis.

Griffin:

I think so too.

Travis:

And so, uh, basically he then was a heavyweight boxer for a while. Then there was some issues.

Justin:

Okay.

Travis:

And he wasn't allowed to do that anymore, but he was very—

Justin:

That's good. I love that shit. That's good.

Travis:

Yeah, thank you.

Justin:

You just put that little Chekhov's issue right there on the wall.

Travis:

Yeah.

Justin:

We'll come back to it.

Travis:

Um, and so he, like, had a name, right? Everybody was, you know, knew of Beef Punchley the boxer, but he needed work. And so he basically made a deal with, uh, Dentonic and Steeplechase to come and be, like, a, uh, representative, uh, of Beef Punchley. Um, and we talk about, like, that they work at some kind of arcade or there is some kind of, like, Punch-Out!!-esque game that it's like Beef Punchley's Punch-Out.

Justin:

Okay.

Travis:

And he's like the, "Hi, it's me. Fight me in my prime," kinda deal. So he's not quite a mascot, but that's the feel of him.

Justin:

[laughs] Sorry. But the idea of an arcade game with a picture of Beef Punchley, and there's like a balloon comin' out of his mouth that says, "Fight me in my prime."

Clint:

[laughs]

Travis:

Yeah.

Griffin:

[laughs]

Justin:

It's so, it's so dire.

Travis:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Oh, man.

Travis:

It's not, it's not a flattering or happy circumstance to be in.

Griffin:

You should know that my headcanon for Beef Punchley is already King Hippo from Punch-Out!!, which...

Travis:

Perfect.

Griffin:

...is very powerful.

Justin:

Lemme say real quick, actually, 'cause I should've established this. The layer that, uh, these three, uh, currently work in is called Ustaben. And Ustaben is a layer that is, uh, built around nostalgia.

It is the idea of, uh, taking the experiences that you thought that you would never have again and then bringing them directly to you for a very, uh, reasonable fee. Uh, and you all work in Ustaben. We will talk about... Travis mentioned the arcade that you all are, are working in, um, and we'll talk about that.

To give you an example, there's like, um... One of the attractions in Ustaben is called Super Slumber Party, where, uh, every night there is a gigantic parkwide slumber party where you can have your nails painted...

Clint:

[laughs]

Justin:

... and you can eat huge piles of wood fire oven pizza for 13 dollars and absolutely toss an entire 12-ounce Mountain Dew that you get to keep all for yourself. You don't share with your brother. No problem. Um, but that is like the kind of experience that Ustaben traffics in. It is about, um, the feelings that you... It's not just, like, selling you, like, Funkos, uh, with The Greatest American Hero on them. Although Funko Pop, please, uh, any of my characters are open for licensing for a very reasonable fee. Come at me. Love to get some of those Funkos goin'.

Anyway, um, but that's Ustaben. It's, it's not just about, like, retro. It's not retro, right? Retro has that, like, clanging sort of obvious shilling. This is designed to, like, actually give you the feelings of being young again or the feelings of being young in an age that you never got to experience but always seemed very, very pleasant. So Beef Punchley works at an arcade. Former, uh, puncher. Maybe still a puncher. We'll have to see.

Travis:

Well, he's still a puncher. He was a boxer. There's a term for it.

Justin:

Oh. So you, uh, you really have done your homework. Uh...

Travis:

Hmm.

Justin:

Uh, Dad, let's go over to you. Clinton McElroy, tell me about your character.

Clint:

I am playing, um, Emerich Dreadway.

Travis:

Ooh, I like that.

Griffin:

That's fucking good, Dad.

Justin:

That's good, Dad.

Griffin:

Yikes, that's good.

Clint:

Emerich Dreadway is a Whisper, and...

Justin:

Ooh, okay.

Clint:

... in this game, um, it's about as close as we get to magician, would you say?

Justin:

Yeah.

Clint:

Wizard? Um...

Justin:

Someone who deals in the, in the fantastic.

Travis:

Ooh.

Clint:

Um, Emerich is, um, slim, uh, waspish is kind of the word I was using. I'm picturing—

Griffin:

What is waspish? What is... what does—

Travis:

You mean, like, White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, not like he has a stinger.

Clint:

No, I mean—

Griffin:

[crosstalk]

Clint:

I mean slim and, um... Think Vincent Price. I'm—

Justin:

Okay.

Clint:

I really was thinking like Vincent Price.

Travis:

I don't... When I think of Vincent Price, I don't normally think, "What a waspish fellow," but okay.

Griffin:

Okay.

Justin:

But he is waspish in the WASPy... in the, like, WASP sense.

Travis:

Yeah, if you mean, like, literal...

Griffin:

[laughs]

Travis:

Yeah, literal WASP. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Clint:

Uh, he is a, um, a creationeer. Is that the word you're— Um, or what—

Justin:

That's a fucking great word, Mack. It's... Write it down, baby.

Clint:

Okay. He—

Justin:

Creationeer.

Clint:

He, uh, is one of those people who has... He's older. He's been with, uh, with Dentonics for quite a while, and one of the things that is a key in the newest iteration of, uh, attractions and stuff at, uh, at, uh, Steeplechase are these hard light constructs. Do we wanna talk about the hard light constructs...

Justin:

Yeah. Um—

Clint:

... here?

Justin:

And Dad, since you're sorta the expert in hard light, I think I will be sort of, like, hopefully collaborating with you on, like, the specifics of this technology. But the basic idea is I didn't want to have magic as we would think about it in, in this, but there is a supernatural element to Blades in the Dark. So I started thinking about that, like, uh, sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic, the Carl Sagan thing.

So, uh, the big, like, secret to the success of Dentonic and the reason that they've been able to expand at the s-... and evolve at the speed they have is this technology called hard light, which is, uh, basically solid holograms, uh, holograms that have shape and form and, uh, a physicality to them, which the, uh, applications of that technology are, you know, just as wide reaching as you can imagine, to the point where, uh, we might think of them as magic.

And we are, for this, like, sorta Whisper purpose, is that it is a, it is so advanced, it is basically like a supernatural thing. You are one of the few people who have the, like, prowess to shape and, you know, rejigger hard light, uh, constructions. So, that...

Travis:

And not just magic, right? Because one of the things in Blades in the Dark is ghosts, right?

Justin:

Right, yes.

Travis:

So hard light is... Yeah, yeah, yeah. Hard light holograms are standing in for ghosts in this world.

Justin:

Yeah.

Griffin:

And when you first described the sort of, like, Disney World analog of animatronics...

Justin:

Yeah.

Griffin:

... and, uh, this being that, like hard light, like, living— living, in quotation marks, figures.

Justin:

Mm-hmm. Um, so yeah, that's hard light.

Clint:

I kind of ran with that and kind of the background was that Emerich was, if not the main guy that first came up with the hard light constructs, um, at least he was one of the first innovators with it...

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Clint:

... seen as the, the father of hard light. And other people in the company have taken credit for it and...

Travis:

Ooh. Spicy.

Clint:

Emerich is not a very forceful person, but found himself demoted, found himself pushed to the side while other people benefited from his genius. And, uh, it wrecked his life.

I mean, he still works for them, but it's in this very... You know, he's been pushed back to, uh, to Ustaben. Um, instead of being one of the innovators, now he's, like, practically just a maintenance guy who...

Justin:

Um—

Clint:

... who keeps the machines working.

Justin:

I love this, Dad. Uh, what is, uh, what is the special move that you took? We'll get more into, like, some of these different, uh, character classes, but, like, what's your special move that you, that you went with?

Clint:

I think Compel, the... In the special ability?

Justin:

Yeah.

Clint:

Right?

Justin:

So yeah, the special ability. Which of the special abilities did, does Emerich have?

Clint:

Yeah, I think Compel. He, uh, uh, can Attune to a ghost field for, but we'll say...

Griffin:

Hard light.

Clint:

A hard light field.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Clint:

And, and force a nearby ghost to appear before you and obey a command you give it. Um, and, uh, you know, it... This will allow him to, to use even hard light constructs that he hasn't created.

Griffin:

Mm-hmm.

Clint:

He will be able to control, uh...

Justin:

Dad, do you feel like hard light is projected from a source, or hard light is, uh, you know, made by a bunch of tiny nano machines? Like, how do you think hard light works?

Clint:

I would say that instead of a whole bunch of nanites, I would say there is one...

Justin:

One source.

Clint:

... nucleus.

Justin:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Clint:

One, one device that projects out...

Travis:

Like a little bee.

Justin:

Yeah, okay.

Clint:

Yeah, yeah. That, that you would have a little, a little—

Griffin:

Did you say bee or bead?

Travis:

Well, I said bee because I'm literally thinking of... There's a, uh, a hard light projection in Red Dwarf, and it's like a little capsule that, like, projects Rimmer whenever they leave the ship.

Clint:

Oh, I thought you, I thought you said bean.

Travis:

Sure.

Justin:

So we're all havin' a lot of fun here with words that sound like other words.

Griffin:

[laughs]

Justin:

Uh—

Clint:

Uh, it, it... I think there was some kind of small device that projects outward and, and creates these, uh, constructs.

Justin:

So maybe to, maybe you... To make that sort of work, you need to find some sort of projection source in the world, something that's doing something else that you can repurpose in that way.

Clint:

Right.

Justin:

Maybe have some with you. I don't know. We'll figure it out. Uh...

Travis:

Uh, Justin, I had a quick question about...

Justin:

Yeah, anything, Travis.

Travis:

... this world.

Justin:

Yes.

Travis:

Uh, so we talked about, like... So far, both Dad and I have mentioned, like, that Beef ended up having to get a job there and that Emerich was, like, demoted but still works there.

Justin:

Uh-huh.

Travis:

How much of, like, a ubiquitous employer is Dentonic in this world? Is it like at some point, everybody ends up working there, or is it like a much smaller... Like, how influential... You know what I mean?

Justin:

Uh, so it's the kind of place where you live. It's the kinda place where, um, you, you post up there. I'm thinking about, like, um, people who do, like, a tour, you know, on a... or, uh, on a, on a cruise ship maybe. That sorta metaphor, where you're, like, living there and what have you. Um, a lot of the people...

Clint:

So like a campus.

Justin:

Sort of yes. Uh, but a lot of the people who are there are there for the money, but really, money's not that important because they live there. Um, there's this idea of coin in Blades in the Dark, and coin are big chunks of cash. Like, it's, uh... a coin is like a lot of, a lot of money.

Um, uh, running around money, you don't really track, right? So, like, do I have the money to get a sandwich? Yes, you have sandwich money. It's just assumed, right? It's not that... It's like on...

Griffin:

Uh, I got a hack. I got a life hack.

Justin:

It's like on... Uh, you, remember watching episode of CSI where they're like, "And I'm gonna get a cup of coffee. Oh, no. I don't have any money for coffee. Let's do a scene of me going back to get some money for coffee from an ATM," right?

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

You just have money for coffee.

Griffin:

I just want you to know my first action in the game is going to be buying a hundred sandwiches for nothing and then selling them in bulk for coin.

Clint:

[laughs]

Justin:

[laughs] Well, Griffin, if you buy them in bulk, it's gonna cost you coin. We don't have coin. What we have, and this is kinda a slangy thing but, um, people call 'em suites. So, uh, rather than coin, you have suites because it is the equivalent cost of a deluxe two-bedroom suite in the layer of your choice.

Justin:

So a lot of people who are here are there to try to get enough to stay there in one of these layers that is a fantasy of theirs. So they are both the clients, but also the, uh, employees. So, uh, it's sorta like... Imagine, like, an employee discount.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

Okay? So, um, imagine though if it's like, uh, basically the only thing that brought any pleasure or joy was, was your company, so like that's how deep most of these people are. In fact, we have this idea of factions from... also from Blades in the Dark.

And for me, um, for, for Steeplechase, these factions are gonna be represented by different groups within the company, but also denizens of different layers. Because we've been divorced from a space or a region, a physical geography that we are living in, we're inherently tribal creatures, right? So we are drawn to creating these tribes to form our identity. And for these people, their identity is where they work, right?

Travis:

Yeah.

Justin:

They're not just a maintenance man. They are part of the Cogs and Gears, which is the faction of maintenance people, because that's how deeply they identify with that and how much that means to them. If you are...

Travis:

I remember working at Best Buy and for whatever reason, we decided our store had a rivalry with another store. Who the fuck cares? But, like, that was a thing and then we, like, went to a conference and, like, chanted at them. It was horrifying. Anyways...

Clint:

[laughs]

Travis:

I can really relate to this.

Justin:

If you are, if you are an employee, uh, if you are a cast member, let's say, uh, of the, uh, of Infinitum, which is the sci-fi layer, uh, and was the second layer that Dentonic built, but if you're, uh, an employee of Infinitum, then

you are a member of the Sidereal Age, which is your faction of people that are from the sci-fi world. So you need to stay on the good side— And you might encounter people from these other layers. That is a possibility, even though travel between the two is not that, uh, not that common when you're, uh, an employee, uh, or a guest.

Griffin:

Is the endgame us trying to reach the Heaviside Layer? 'Cause if so, I need...

Travis:

Good question.

Griffin:

... to know now 'cause I'm gonna change my character dramatically if that's the case.

Justin:

A great point, Griffin. Let me just take my book of all the things I was going to do for the next few months and okay, it's in the trash because you already guessed...

Clint:

I get to be Old Deuteronomy.

Justin:

Uh, yes, it's purgatory.

Travis:

You can't just call that, Dad.

Griffin:

[laughs]

Justin:

Steeplechase is purgatory. You win. Okay. Anyway.

Clint:

[laughs]

Justin:

Does that answer your question, Travis?

Travis:

Yes, it does. How big of an employer in this world is Dentonic?

Clint:

Yeah.

Justin:

Well, what do you think?

Travis:

Um, I mean, it kinda feels like, to compare it to, and I hope past session zero we can not compare it to Disney constantly, but to think about that you have Disney World, right? Like, the Disney World, Disney Land, uh, Euro Disney, right? You have the Disney parks, but then you have the Disney television and you have Disney movies and you have Disney stores...

Griffin:

Cruise lines and yeah.

Travis:

... is it like...?

Justin:

Right. So imagine that if all that was boiled down into the parks business, right? And you can start to get an idea of the scope of this, the sweep of this.

Travis:

Got it.

Justin:

Dentonic does not produce outside media, right? They are not, like, in the movie business.

Travis:

Okay.

Justin:

They're not... They are in this business.

Travis:

Okay. Got it.

Justin:

Because no experience that you would have on the outside, no movie, no TV show, no book, nothing would, like, equal what you are, um, doing there. In fact, that's a little bit of the charm, is that, like, you don't exactly know what you're going to be getting into when you're there, right? So it's, it... that helps it make it seem more immersive too. Because if you're seeing a bunch of characters that you already know, it's like, oh...

Travis:

Yeah.

Justin:

... you're just pretending to be this guy. Okay.

Travis:

Got it.

Justin:

Um, Griffin, I believe that leaves you. Tell me about your character.

Griffin:

I will be playing... Uh, Montrose Pretty is his name and, uh...

Justin:

And it's a fine name.

Griffin:

Montrose Pretty is a Slide, is the Blades in the Dark playbook I am using.

Travis:

Whee! [laughs]

Griffin:

Whee! Yay! Uh, he loves goin' down those diagonal things. Uh...

Travis:

Oh, I thought people could get on him and slide down him.

Griffin:

Yes. He is 15 feet long.

Travis:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Uh, no. He is... Uh, uh, a Slide is a subtle manipulator and spy, according to the, uh, the playbook here. Uh, there are a few sort of adjacent roles that he does not exactly fit into. There's a playbook called the Spider, which is all about sort of leveraging influence and connections and stuff like... That's not really him. Uh, there's also a Lurk, which is about being incredibly sneaky and dexterous. That is also not him. He is more of a, uh, a, a salesman, uh, sort of impresario type. Um...

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

His... I think his place in the Deltonic... Is that it?

Justin:

Dentonic.

Travis:

Pentatonix.

Justin:

Nope.

Griffin:

And the Pentatonix is, uh...

Justin:

Incorrect.

Griffin:

He, uh, he was a... I think just a sort of cast member, like a, um... I don't know if there are mascots here, but if there are...

Justin:

Oh, God.

Griffin:

... mascots here, he would fill that role sort of begrudgingly. Um...

Justin:

There are. We'll meet 'em.

Griffin:

While on the side, uh, Montrose had a connection to the underworld, to the seedy belly of crime that happened here. Was part of a crew, not a very important part that crew, uh, and to leave some spaces on the map blank, uh, left that crew on bad terms—

Justin:

All right.

Griffin:

... and now, uh, has this different role working with, uh, working with the others at this arcade, or at least that is what we have talked about so far, although it seems like that might be subject to change. Um, he is, I would

say, a charismatic opportunist, and I think he sees a lot of potential in the skills that Fist Meatly and, um...

Travis:

That is not my name. It's Beef Punchley.

Justin:

Please don't make this get more confusing. There's a lot of...

Griffin:

Beef—

Travis:

... proper nouns here.

Griffin:

That Beef and Emerich, uh, bring to the table. And so that is, uh, I think why he is teamed up with them. Um...

Justin:

Okay.

Griffin:

So yeah, former scoundrel in the traditional sense.

Justin:

You... It's worth noting, and I don't know if this is the way this is gonna swing, but it is worth noting that characters in Blades in the Dark are not meant to be permanent. They can die. They... It is not that wild to think of. There is... They can retire. They can leave the game. They can—

Travis:

They can be arrested.

Justin:

They can be arrested and sent to prison. Like...

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

This, this has real actual stakes, uh, and that is all I will say, is that I, I think—

Travis:

Well, not real actual stakes, Justin, 'cause it's all make-believe. It won't hurt me, Travis McElroy...

Justin:

Well, but Travis, if people—

Travis:

... in real life.

Justin:

If people have a fun time listening to it, that's, that's real.

Griffin:

Wow.

Travis:

I guess that's true. Oh my God.

Justin:

Yeah—

Travis:

I need a minute. I'm gonna...

Justin:

So—

Griffin:

My... Can I say my special ability?

Justin:

I'd love that, Griffin.

Griffin:

Uh, I've taken an ability called Cloak & Dagger. One of the, uh, items that Slides get access to is a fine disguise kit. It's sort of integral to the thing. And I have this vision in my mind of a... He's always wearing a mask, um, like a, uh, a hard light mask.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

Uh, I'm envisioning sort of like Hexadecimal from ReBoot...

Justin:

Right. Yeah.

Griffin:

... where the face just kind of, like, changes to display certain emotions.

Justin:

Okay.

Griffin:

Cloak & Dagger allows you to use a disguise or other form of covert misdirection, and then you get bonuses to a roll to confuse or deflect suspicion. When you throw off your disguise, the resulting surprise gives you the initiative in the situation.

Justin:

Um, now are you... Uh, so this is a... Is this a mask you're always wearing?

Griffin:

I think so.

Justin:

Hmm. How does that figure into your, like, day-to-day life as... Like, what's your...

Griffin:

I take it off to eat spaghetti. Uh—

Justin:

[laughs]

Griffin:

When I eat my spaghetti, I take it off so I don't get the mask all dirty and messy.

Justin:

Right, but what is your day job?

Griffin:

Uh, I mean, we work at this arcade, right? Uh, that...

Justin:

So you're the guy who— "Oh, have you met... have you ever heard of Montrose Pretty?"

"Yeah, he's a very charismatic guy."

"Yeah, he is. It is weird that he works in an arcade and is always wearing this mask." [laughs]

Griffin:

Yeah.

Travis:

Well, it doesn't look like a mask, I assume. Right?

Griffin:

Uh, no. I mean... I don't think it's photorealistic. I think it looks like a mask. I think when Mr. Pretty rolls up, like, you are ensorcelled, but you know what? He's into that. He's okay with being...

Clint:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... being memorable.

Justin:

A fucking creepazoid. But you're...

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

But it's also... But it... I just wanna really... I'm really trying to drive into this, Griffin.

Griffin:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Justin:

I really wanna drill down. You're a character that is defined by their ability to sway other people. And on the other hand, you're also a super creep who's always wearing a mask. Like, it's very... I'm trying to align the two in my head.

Travis:

I have to know what, what does the mask look like 'cause right now, I'm picturing, like, one of those completely neutral, like, just white masks that, like, that one dance troupe, I think it's Jabbawoogie, wears. It's terrifying. What does it actually look like? Please, Griffin.

Griffin:

Uh, it's Guy Fawkes. I'm a revolutionary— No, it's not a Guy Fawkes mask. Uh, I think it just... it looks like a— Looks like a human face but slightly exaggerated.

Travis:

No.

Clint:

[laughs]

Justin:

Okay, so like the, so like the clear mask that they wear in Heist, like, just to hide your— Okay, perfect. Um, if you have a constant—

Travis:

If you have an open mask, something that's... I don't want a valley, an uncanny valley here, Griffin. I am scared [crosstalk].

Griffin:

I think it is an uncanny valley situation, but it's, uh, it's beautiful.

Justin:

Now, uh, just as long as we're havin' fun, I'm lookin' at Griffin's character sheet and I see that Griffin has given himself four items that are completely without purpose 'cause we are not doing a heist right now. But Griffin just made a note that he's got some weird stuff in his pockets.

Griffin:

Oh, those are load free. So I was like, "Yeah."

Justin:

Yeah, yeah. I've got all those, for sure.

Griffin:

I've got a life hack. For sure.

[Max Fun ad]

Hal:

Hi, I'm Hal Lublin.

Mark:

And I'm Mark Gagliardi.

Hal:

And we're the hosts of We Got This with Mark and Hal, the weekly show where we settle the debates that are most important to you.

Mark:

That's right. What arguments are you and your friends having that you just can't settle?

Hal:

Apples or oranges?

Mark:

Marvel or DC?

Hal:

Fork versus spoon.

Mark:

Chocolate or vanilla?

Hal:

Best bagel. What's the best Disney song? We Got This with Mark and Hal every week on Maximum Fun. We do the arguing so you don't have to.

Mark:

Oh, all answers are final for all people for all time.

Speaker:

We got this!

[Max Fun ad]

J. Keith:

Most game shows quiz contestants about topics they don't even care about.

Helen:

But for more than 100 episodes, the Go Fact Yourself podcast has asked celebrity guests trivia about topics they choose for themselves.

J. Keith:

And introduce them to some of their personal heroes along the way.

Speaker 1:

Oh my gosh.

Speaker 2:

Shut up.

Speaker 3:

Oh, I feel like I'm gonna cry.

Speaker 4:

Oh, my stars. [laughs]

J. Keith:

Join me, J. Keith van Straaten.

Helen:

And me, Helen Hong, along with guests like DJ Jazzy Jeff, Yeadley Smith, Roxane Gay and so many more on the trivia game show podcast Go Fact Yourself.

J. Keith:

Twice a month every month on Maximum Fun.

[Max Fun ads end]

Justin:

Okay, so those were our three characters. Next, we are going to make a crew. And this part is a little more... less, like, defined at this point.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

Well, let me talk first about the different types of characters. Next, we are going to make a crew. And this part is a little more... less, like, defined at this point.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

Well, let me talk first about the different types of crews that we have very briefly. So...

Griffin:

We've never, we've never played a game that had this particular...

Justin:

Right.

Griffin:

... element in it where, like, the organization is just as much a game mechanic as the individual characters are.

Justin:

The crew is a character. Think of it that way. And actually, if you wanna be particular about it, the crew is the constant.

Travis:

Yeah.

Justin:

These cats can come and go, but the crew... And, you know, we can even, like, find some— If there's another person who wants to join. I mean, eventually this crew is going to be, I mean God willing that the creek don't rise, uh, have a lot of people other than you all, right? It will be an expansive criminal empire if all goes according to plan.

So, uh, we have, uh, several different crew types that you can choose from. Uh, we've got, hold on, uh, assassins which, I mean, does what it says right on the tin there. Uh, kill for hire.

Travis:

I mean, why play in the game what we already do in real life? That doesn't seem fun.

Griffin:

No, Travis.

Justin:

Mercenaries—

Griffin:

Don't tell them. Shh, shh, shh, shh.

Justin:

Mercenaries and thugs are bravos. If you're a bravo crew, then you start battles, extortion, sabotage, smash and grabs. Burly, burly criminals. Uh, cult is, uh, acolytes of a god. In this case, I'm not exactly sure what the analog would be, but I'm sure we can have some fun with it. Uh, hawkers sell vice. They sell vice items, uh, or different types of vice. Shadows are thieves and spies who do burglaries and espionage and robberies and sabotage, and then smugglers transport contraband. Uh, they execute clandestine deliveries, territory control, and expeditions outside the city.

So, uh, those are the ones we have to choose from. What are you all... Uh, we had talked about hawkers. How are you, how are we feeling about that right now?

Griffin:

Uh, based on what you have told us about this world, I think that owning a small business is a fun idea, uh, from a gameplay perspective. You'd also talked about how these layers are separated. Um...

Justin:

Yes.

Griffin:

And, and so smugglers also seems like it would be, uh, you know, uh, a... Narratively, it would, it would fit. I worry that it... the jobs would get a little bit samey if it's just get this thing from one place to another. But hawkers is what we had discussed before this episode.

Justin:

Yeah. Um—

Travis:

Yeah, I like the... I think, uh, I can also see how, in this world, how hawkers has the most, like, uh, growth potential as a business goes, uh, where I can see the... Especially as you talk about, like, the L-A-Y-E-R layers, expanding through those. Instead of it being like everybody has to come to us to get the jobs done, we're trying to expand our influence of being able to sell this stuff or, uh, offer whatever our goods and services are.

Clint:

I think that's good. I'm kinda interested in bravos.

Travis:

Hmm.

Clint:

Because that also sounds like a lot of flexibility. Battles, extortion, sabotage, smash and grabs.

Justin:

I will say, Dad, I think that the, the, the only thing I would push back against bravos is that it sounds like you have two people who are physically not super threatening. So that for a crew that is built around, like, physical violence and physical actions, bravos may not...

Clint:

Okay.

Justin:

... be the best fit 'cause you don't have the, the... a lot of the muscle. It—

Travis:

I also would worry, 'cause I thought about bravos, too, because Beef would do well there. But I also worry that in a park like this and a setting like this, I worry that being too, uh, aggressive and, like, smash and grab kinda thing is gonna draw a lot of attention from... Like, potentially, we could get fired.

Justin:

Right.

Travis:

Which isn't, like, a thing that would happen if we were just, like, playing in a New York City, you know, kinda place where it's just like ah, we gotta go underground for a while. But if somebody's like, "Yeah, Beef broke that window," Beef is fired.

Griffin:

He didn't show up to work the next day. Yeah. Uh, it also seems like if we have this hard light pioneer and this, you know, famous boxer and this, this charismatic salesman, like, it seems like those align with hawkers really well.

Clint:

Yeah. And that kinda...

Griffin:

The question is, what do we hawk? Uh...

Clint:

And that kinda eliminates shadows too.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Clint:

Because...

Griffin:

Yeah.

Clint:

... it'd be a lot harder to be a spy if everybody knows who you are.

Travis:

"Hey, that's Beef. I love him." [crosstalk].

Griffin:

Hawkers are... Yeah. Hawkerc are feisty—

Clint:

Well, let's go with hawkers.

Travis:

Yeah.

Clint:

You wanna stick with hawkers?

Justin:

Okay.

Griffin:

Yeah. Juice, can you describe vice in, like, a short way? 'Cause I feel like that will inform what, what we hawk. Because vice...

Clint:

Hawk.

Griffin:

... is a mechanic in the game.

Justin:

Right. Yes. Uh, lemme search for vice real quick.

Griffin:

Yeah, let's mention the Blades in the Dark website.

Travis:

Ooh, yeah.

Griffin:

Is a... If you are curious about this game, you should buy it and get the book and read it 'cause it's, uh, one of the coolest, like, RPG books I've ever read. But there is also this online resources with which you can, like, look up anything we talk about. Very useful. BladesInTheDark.com.

Justin:

So vice is, vice is something that you would use to, uh, blow off some steam and...

Travis:

Which is an actual mechanic in the game [crosstalk].

Justin:

Yes. They call it, they call it stress. But, uh, that is what vice is. It is what you do to cope with the stress of what you do in your day-to-day, uh, your day-to-day lives. Which could be gambling. It could be luxury. It could be, uh...

Travis:

Religion.

Justin:

Religion. Uh...

Griffin:

Faith. Yeah.

Justin:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Obligation is one of them.

Justin:

Weird is a good one. Weird.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

Oh, obligation is interesting. So vice is not just a metaphor for drugs and alcohol, right? It, uh, you could have an obligation to your family, which is your vice. Like...

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

Your vice is that I have these two rotten kids that I have to take care of.

Griffin:

[laughs]

Justin:

I mean, that could be your vice. Yeah.

Travis:

If you think about it in the Fast and the Furious terms...

Griffin:

Yeah.

Travis:

... it's like, oh, I, you know, I would do anything for family, even, like get myself in trouble. That kinda thing.

Justin:

Right. Exactly. You can overindulge in vices, which has bad consequences but...

Griffin:

Uh, pleasure and stupor are the other two vices that we haven't mentioned yet.

Justin:

Um...

Griffin:

I feel like we are missing a trick if we do not focus what our, like, hawker business is around the fact that we employ a famous boxer and a hard light pioneer. I have an idea.

Justin:

Okay.

Griffin:

Uh, and I think that this could fit in really well with what Ustaben kinda represents, but taking it to this, like, extreme that would not be approved by the, you know, the higher-ups. What if we could use your intellect, Beef, and your hard light skills, Emerich, and create moments you can spend with the dead that we recreate based on your description of some past person, and then you can spend time with them? Uh...

Justin:

That's like, that's tough 'cause, like, there's several places in Ustaben that do that. Like, that, that is a big part of the service they offer. I am interested in the fact that they... Dentonic is peddling— Like, they are dealing vice. Like, they're dealing, like, the immersive fantasy experiences. So, like, I don't want something that overlaps with that because they are peddling vice. Like, you know?

Griffin:

Right, right.

Justin:

So it's like at a certain point, it's like redundant. You know what I mean? Like, you can't operate within that.

Clint:

Then one way to think about it is, you know, if they are very, very, very strict about keeping the different layers separated, right?

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Clint:

Insulated from each other, correct?

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Clint:

That is the key to what we do if we're going to have an illegal... uh, a reason for our illegal existence, right?

Justin:

Okay, I have a, I have a thought that I wanna hit you guys with.

Griffin:

Hit us.

Justin:

What if you are smugglers, but what you are doing is smuggling... You're basically peddling to, uh, Dentonic fans on the outside. So, like, what you're doing is you are stealing things from the-

Clint:

Oh.

Justin:

From Steeplechase that you can then-=...

Clint:

Knock-offs.

Justin:

... sell to... No, no, no.

Clint:

[laughs]

Justin:

The real shit.

Griffin:

The real deal.

Justin:

The real deal.

Clint:

Yeah, but I mean—

Justin:

You're— Yeah, you're buying— You are stealing things from Steeplechase that you can sell to collectors on the outside.

Clint:

Oh, I like that.

Justin:

How does that grab you guys?

Clint:

I like that a lot. That gives us a lot of reasons to go to the different layers.

Justin:

Travis, Griffin, what... Griffin, you— You seem unmoved.

Griffin:

I mean, I'm trying to think of how that would complement our characters.

Travis:

Um—

Griffin:

Like—

Travis:

One thing I wanted throw out that I thought of as a vice that we had not considered. Luxury, but for employees. So you talk about the suites, right? This luxury experience that everyone's trying to earn money for, right? So, like, the toiletries, towels, a manicure experience like they get... you were talking about at the slumber parties or these kinds of, like, uh, luxury experiences, but we are hawking them to employees that the employee can pay for the same kind of luxury experience that a guest would have.

Justin:

That's interesting, because what you're talking about is... Yes. I like that a lot because it... you aren't relying on guests to fund the venture. You're peddling to... Whether or not it's luxury, I feel like that's the angle, right? It's like what is the vice that people who work there... I mean, the idea of luxury—

Travis:

Any vice that a guest would want.

Justin:

I like the luxury idea, but, like, what does it look in a concrete state? Like, what is, like, the practical application of what you're talking about? Do you have a hotel? Do you have a spa behind the arcade? I mean, what is it that you're—

Griffin:

What if it's—

Travis:

I think—

Griffin:

What if it's is... this is how we leverage the hard light thing? What if it is like a hidden in plain sight, like the mirage, and it is a place that employees know where it is and we are able to cloak it with, uh, with Emerich's, like, hard light capabilities?

Travis:

Or the, the other way around, is the hard light is what creates the, like, spa experience.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Travis:

And otherwise, it's an empty room, right? So it is a thing we can take with us when we go to different layers of, like, we take the mirage with us and offer this luxury experience...

Justin:

Or you, or you have... Okay, okay. Building on both of these ideas, what do, what do you think about this? So what you're stealing, what you're stealing is the... or what you're trying to accumulate are hard light programs...

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Justin:

... that you don't have? Like, you're going to the other layers to find elements that you can use in the mirage and make the mirage, which could be on the different layers? There could be hidden mirages, you know, throughout as you expand, right? To the, the different layers to have mirages on each one. And you're basically, like, improving the experience for employees.

Travis:

You know what it's like?

Justin:

That's very thematically, for what I'm thinking about for the arc, thematically very satisfying. But go ahead, Trav.

Travis:

It's also... What it reminds me of is, like, when we worked at a ware— When I worked in the Best Buy warehouse and it was literally like there was space between these two refrigerators back to back if you wanna go just, like, lay down. And you can't see it on camera and, like, you can, like, lay down back there and the bosses won't know where you are. Right? This—

Clint:

We did the same thing.

Travis:

Yeah.

Clint:

Yeah.

Travis:

Taking a break on company time.

Clint:

We did the same thing when I, when I worked at Bartram Brothers. And back in the stockroom, we used to build gigantic forts out of, uh, paper towel and toilet paper boxes...

Justin:

Mm.

Clint:

... that the bosses didn't know about, and we'd sneak back there for breaks.

Griffin:

What about, like, the liminal room, like the space between layers that we can, we... that fulfills this role for...

Justin:

That's occu— it's occupied.

Griffin:

The liminal layer is occupied?

Justin:

Yeah. Uh, so we'll... We should have, um...

Clint:

[laughs]

Justin:

We should have a, a... Okay, so I don't know what you have heard from what we have been discussing for the past 20 minutes.

Griffin:

Yeah. [laughs]

Justin:

Rachel's probably—

Travis:

You might've just heard a big record scratch.

Justin:

Yeah.

Clint:

[laughs]

Justin:

Uh, so, uh, guys, talk to me about where we're at. Let's, let's recap this, this hawkers. What are you all, what are you all selling, where are you doing it, et cetera?

Travis:

So here is what we're looking at, right? We ran through the different vices that a hawker could hawk, and what we realized was any vice that a guest would want is already being catered to by the park, right? Whatever the experience is. And that means that the opportunity that the market is employees.

So what we offer is a luxury experience in that it is basically like a, uh, hard light break room, a hard light, uh, sneak away, take a nap on the company dime kind of experience for employees where we have a hard light projector that we can set up in an empty room or whatever to be this luxury experience for them, and then breaks down in an instant and we can carry it with us.

And so we are trying to expand this idea to have more of these programs, to have more of these projectors so we can have these, like, kind of secret break rooms, uh, generating money for us. If you've ever seen, like... It's, uh... There is, like, um, rent by, like, 15 minute nap rooms...

Justin:

Yeah, for sure.

Travis:

... in airports sometimes. It's kinda like that. That's what we wanna set up.

Justin:

So we... So let's... Mirages seems like a really cool way to refer to these things. Where are you, uh... Yeah. Where are you— Time has forgotten who came up with it. Um, the, uh—

Travis:

It was Griffin, ten minutes ago.

Justin:

Uh, you know, it's so hard.

Griffin:

There was a season of Friends at the Table called the Twilight Mirage, uh, that was sort of about...

Travis:

They stole it from us in the past?

Griffin:

... a holographic— No. Like, holographic, uh, uh, like...

Justin:

Okay, so we'll try not to call it mirage.

Griffin:

... space.

Justin:

But it's like it's basically, like, what it is— I mean...

Griffin:

It is a mirage.

Justin:

It's like such a good name. I mean, that's... there's a reason they used that, because it's like...

Travis:

Yeah.

Justin:

It's like the best thing to, to call it.

Griffin:

A cha— The charade.

Justin:

Ooh.

Griffin:

The, fa— Fa...

Travis:

Twilight room.

Justin:

It doesn't matter.

Travis:

Twilight room. Uh, mira- mir-

Griffin:

Nirvan— Nirvana.

Clint:

We'll come up with something.

Justin:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. You, you all go into weird dictionaries and come up with something good. Where do you operate out of? What's, like, your home base?

Travis:

So right now, 'cause I wanna stick with the arcade so bad, I think we're just right now operating in the back room of an arcade that the, that the maybe kindly old boss let's us use that room. Uh...

Justin:

So there's a kindly old boss.

Travis:

I think so.

Griffin:

There's a kindly old boss who does not, uh—

Justin:

What's his name?

Travis:

Poppy.

Clint:

Mervin.

Griffin:

Mervin Poppy.

Justin:

Poppy Mervin? Perfect.

Travis:

Poppy Mervin.

Justin:

[laughs] See? That's all it takes sometimes. That's... Uh, you guys said this would be easy. I had no idea how easy.

Travis:

Yeah, I told you.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

Just wait for two people to say things, squish 'em together and you got a new character named Poppy Mervin.

Clint:

[laughs]

Justin:

Poppy Mervin. And he runs this arcade which is called.

Travis:

Poppy's Place.

Justin:

It's called Poppy's Place. What kinda games do they have at Poppy's Place?

Travis:

So I think it is a, like, Skee-Ball and air— I think it's like full-blown—

Griffin:

Boardwalk arcade.

Travis:

Yeah, boardwalk arcade.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

Okay.

Clint:

Well, your Punch-Out!! game needs to be in there, too, right?

Travis:

Oh, yeah.

Griffin:

Well, but they have those, uh... They have those, like, speed bag games at this type of establishment, I feel like. So instead of it being like a—

Travis:

Oh, it's a... Maybe it's also like an arm wrestling one of those where it's like the fake arm is up...

Griffin:

Fuck, yes.

Travis:

... and it's, like, Beef's arm.

Justin:

Yeah.

Griffin:

I wanna see a bunch of, of, uh, like, plastic Beefs...

Travis:

Okay, Beef wasn't a boxer. He was a professional arm wrestler.

Justin:

Really? Okay, great.

Travis:

Yeah.

Clint:

Uh, Whac-A-Vole.

Justin:

So the—

Clint:

Where you have to whack when a vole pops up outta the ground.

Griffin:

That's fun.

Justin:

So the Punchley part was more of a threat. Like, if the arm wrestling doesn't go good, I know my last name... Well, no. I'm sorry. It's just his last—

Clint:

Well, it could be, it could be snakes.

Justin:

It's just his last name. [laughs].

Travis:

Just his last name. I don't know what to tell you.

Justin:

[laughs] It has nothing to do with punching.

Travis:

Yeah. Beef Leverage is a different guy. We don't talk about Beef Leverage.

Clint:

[laughs]

Justin:

I hope that you guys know that the more kindly you make Poppy Mervin, the higher the likelihood that you will have to kill him. Like...

Griffin:

Yeah.

Clint:

Yeah.

Justin:

... I'm just telling you now. Uh, okay. So your crew is starting out at Poppy's Place. Um, we are going to choose... Uh, you are Tier 0, which means that you're barely even a thing. Uh, you have a strong hold, which means that you're pretty tight on your, on your place that you're in. Uh, you have two coin to use to, uh, further your ambitions and zero reputation.

Uh, you just formed. You got your home base. Uh, given what you've done, what kind of, uh, reputation do you feel like, if any, do you think that you have with, uh, the rest of Steeplechase?

Travis:

The rest of Steeplechase? Not much.

Griffin:

Nothing. Yeah.

Travis:

I think because it, it just depends on how much crossover there is. Like, you know, maintenance people that maybe move from park to park or layer to layer? Maybe there's like one or two of those who have been to our break room and have, like, gone other things and mentioned it to other people. But I...

Justin:

This would also be how you boost your reputation, is how you advance your crew. So if you think about the kinds of things that you would like to be perceived, right? That would increase this reputation, the sorts of...

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

... actions you'd like to take.

Griffin:

And this is a thing we are choosing off of a list.

Justin:

Yeah, so there's a list—

Griffin:

Can I read the reputations?

Travis:

Yeah.

Justin:

Ambitious— Ambitious, brutal, daring, honorable, professional, savvy, subtle, or strange.

Travis:

Okay, so I think... Oh, maybe it's subtle, this idea of, like, you're not gonna get in trouble. Like, your, your secret is safe if you use this thing.

Justin:

Mm.

Travis:

Like, if you go take a break on the company dime or whatever, your secret is safe. They know how to keep their lips shut.

Justin:

Okay. Dad, how do you feel about that?

Clint:

Yeah.

Justin:

Yeah?

Clint:

I like that.

Justin:

Okay.

Travis:

That also helps in the big scheme when people are like, "Hey, I've heard that discretion is like your strong suit. I have another job for you—"

Justin:

Yeah.

Travis:

"... that requires that." Right? So, like, I think that that... it's a good balance of doing the job and doing our goal and how those, uh, grow each other's influence?

Justin:

You guys know yourselves, right? Like, you know...

Clint:

[laughs]

Justin:

... the way that this has all gone before, right?

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

And you understand what I'm... What you are saying to me, the facilitator of your fantasies, is that what you wanna do this time, the watchword is subtlety.

Travis:

Yeah.

Clint:

[laughs]

Justin:

That this is what you're sayin'. This...

Travis:

We're trying something new.

Justin:

... is how you all are gonna... You know I will not advance you as a crew if you're like, [laughs] "Yeah, we blew up the whole building."

Travis:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Well, no that's— As long as we don't track that dookie back home, right?

Clint:

[laughs]

Griffin:

So that they... That's fine. As long as we don't bring that noise down on our clients.

Justin:

No, sir. You said subtle. Subtle. Subtlety. [laughs] You're tasteful, subtle operators. Okay, so you're subtle. Uh...

Clint:

Okay.

Justin:

I am not gonna establish a hunting ground specifically right now, um, because that is not a mechanic that I am, uh, needing to deal with this exact moment, and I wanna leave some room to find out about it.

Choose a special ability. There is a list here of special abilities. I'm not gonna read 'em off... all because it would be a long time. But is there one that appeals to one or more of you? If you look at that special abilities box there in gray.

Travis:

Um, I mean I know it's the first one, but Silver Tongue.

Griffin:

I like Silver Tongues. I also kinda like Ghost Market, but that brings up questions for Jus like do hard light people come...

Travis:

Oh.

Griffin:

... to our thing? We do not discriminate. They do not pay in coin. What do they pay with?

Travis:

I mean, we could do the goods stuff since we have a pioneer of hard light in our crew.

Clint:

And isn't that what we're offering our customers, is high quality, I mean, good stuff? I mean, they're there to get the best of the best.

Griffin:

I— Silver Tongues is appealing to me because that is very much the character I am playing.

Travis:

And if we're playing subtle, right? If we're playing subtle, I think the three of us being good at, like, talking to people is a safe bet, right?

Griffin:

Also, I don't think any of us have Command.

Travis:

I do. I have one in Command.

Griffin:

It seems like having more Command... Like, being able to make people— I can convince people of anything. I think, uh, if we do this one, I'd, I would have three points in Sway.

Travis:

I mean, if you take that one, like, you can put it in one of those three.

Griffin:

Yes.

Clint:

This is one special ability for the whole crew, correct?

Travis:

Correct.

Griffin:

Yes.

Travis:

I think that's the way to go. Uh, as much as I like...

Clint:

Yeah, yeah.

Travis:

... the goods stuff, I think... Okay, so Justin, here's what we've decided. Uh, since—

Justin:

Okay.

Travis:

... as you have said the watchword is subtlety, we are going to choose Silver Tongues as our special ability as a crew.

Justin:

All right, so you all are taking Silver Tongues.

Travis:

Yeah, we're taking...

Griffin:

Yes.

Travis:

... Silver Tongues, and so we each get to add one to Command, Consort or Sway. Now, uh... Oh, I can't see Dad or Griffin's character sheets, but, uh, I already have one in Command, and Command is, uh, basically to intimidate or threaten, lead an action with one of the crew's gangs, uh, command obedience with your force of personality. I think I'm gonna take that.

Griffin:

Yes.

Travis:

Another point in there to have two points in Command.

Griffin:

Uh, I have two in Sway. I might actually take one in Consort because if we are trying to peddle our wares to other...

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

... like...

Justin:

Yeah.

Griffin:

... organizations with the park, it seems like being able to talk to them on a sort of broad scale... Sway is more like convincing someone of something or using deception. Uh, Consort is like hitting the streets and, like, having contacts.

Justin:

Yeah.

Griffin:

And I think that that would be much more valuable for Montrose Pretty.

Justin:

Uh.

Griffin:

Um.

Clint:

So I need to add one to...

Justin:

You can choose.

Clint:

Command, Consort or Sway?

Griffin:

Command, Consate, Consort or Sway. I have two in Consort and Sway. Trav has two in Command. So.

Travis:

Do you have any right now, Dad?

Clint:

Well, Sway would sure help me in trying to influence hard light structures, wouldn't it?

Justin:

It wouldn't. No. Sway would be... You would use Attune for that, like, 'cause Sway would be someone who has independent will, which the hard light construction would not. So you couldn't convince a computer of anything, right? It would just be...

Travis:

Now, I think it would make sense that if you said that, uh, Emerich, because of his former career as a creationeer, has contacts in, you know, maintenance or contacts in that kind of thing for Consort. That would make a lot of sense to me.

Justin:

Yeah, like people you know, Dad, like previously.

Clint:

Right.

Justin:

Like, might be a good one. It's up to you though.

Clint:

Okay. I'll put it in Consort.

Justin:

Okay. Um...

Clint:

All right.

Justin:

Let's see. What's next for us? Uh...

Griffin:

We need to pick up two upgrades.

Justin:

Two upgrades. We're not gonna read this list. Just tell me what two upgrades you guys want.

Griffin:

There's a lot. Uh, it feels like Hidden would be great for us.

Travis:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Hidden is an upgrade. Your lair has a secret location and is disguised to hide it from view. If your lair is discovered, use two downtime activities and pay coin equal to your Tier to relocate it and hide once again.

Travis:

Yeah, yeah. I agree.

Justin:

Okay, so you're gonna take Hidden and then one more. The, the ones up at the top in the gray box are, like, kinda recommended, so I don't know if any of those look interesting to you all. Um...

Travis:

Oh, man. I like Hawker's Rigging because I like being able to conceal things. Oh.

Justin:

It seemed like it would be up Dad's alley, too, but I didn't know if, if that looked good to you guys.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Clint:

I think that that would aid especially in field operations.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Travis:

Yeah.

Justin:

Perfect. Um, that's also gonna be good for you all 'cause you'll be traveling away from your home base a lot. So.

Travis:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

It makes sense.

Travis:

And especially if we take our projector thing with us, if we're taking technology with us...

Justin:

Yeah, [inaudible 01:04:37].

Travis:

... we don't want our shit to get confiscated or else.

Clint:

Uh-huh.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

So here's what I'd like to do very briefly. If you could look at the map that I have, uh, made for you of Ustaben, if you could load that up. Um, obviously the people at home can't see this, and I don't want to, like, go over all the different areas of Ustaben. This is sort of like your neck of the woods. This doesn't encompass the entirety of the park, this map, um, but it is...

Clint:

Oh, that's very pretty, Justin.

Justin:

Uh, thank you, Dad. I will give, uh, five adventure points, which is, by the way, a currency that I've invented for my arc.

Clint:

[laughs]

Justin:

When you do something good, you can earn adventure points that are redeemable for prizes at the end of the arc. So five adventure points to the first person that could tell me what this is a map of.

Travis:

It's Camden Park.

Justin:

Nope.

Travis:

No? Damn it.

Justin:

Nope.

Clint:

Is it Cedar Point?

Justin:

No. The roller coaster...

Griffin:

King—

Justin:

... is your big hint.

Griffin:

Kings Island.

Justin:

Which part?

Travis:

Oh, yeah.

Griffin:

The Racer? I mean, that's the roller coaster.

Justin:

That's the Racer. Exactly.

Travis:

It's the boardwalk.

Clint:

Coney Island?

Justin:

Yeah, this is the Coney Island area from, like, mid-'70s.

Travis:

Oh, wow. Okay.

Justin:

Anyway.

Griffin:

That's rad.

Justin:

Um, there's a map of all the different, uh, nostalgic experiences. Um, uh, we're not talkin' about Prize Palace today, but are there any others that you are interested in or would like to hear more about or you feel like... So here's what I'm thinking. You do not have a lot of expansive context outside of Ustaben for the moment. We will blow that out once things start.

But right now, in place of, like, Steeplechase-wide factions, I'd like to think of these, like, different stores and restaurants, uh, of Ustaben as like little factions just for this first outing. Um, so is there any that you, like, have a relationship with, any that you feel like we wanna establish some narrative hooks with, like something that you have a history with or ones that you wanted to, like, know more about, uh, very briefly?

Travis:

Uh, Whittle Around, you had mentioned, was hard light based of, like, you know, there's grandpa.

Justin:

Whittle Around is, uh... Have you ever seen, like, an old-timey TV show or movie and you see an old grandpa, and he's, like, sittin' on the porch and he's whittlin'?

Travis:

Yeah.

Justin:

I've never actually seen anybody do that in real life, and most people who—

Clint:

I have.

Travis:

I do it, but...

Justin:

Well, you're not a denizen of this futuristic world, Dad, so, um, you... Th-... It's like—

Griffin:

Not yet.

Clint:

Yet?

Justin:

It just gives you that experience of whittling around. Now, for a, uh, uh, exorbitant fee, they will take images, videos, details about your own grandpa and, uh, recreate him as a very basic hard light projection. I mean, he's not going to, like, have great memories of your lives together. But if you wanna pretend, you can have your grandpa in there for a price. That's Whittle Around.

Griffin:

What about the Anachroknickknacks?

Justin:

Anachroknickknacks is a store that sells physical objects that are no longer produced. There are, um, like, handles for uh, rolling up and down car windows. If you ever wanted to experience that, you can. They have, uh, rotary phones in there. They have, uh, different devices... They have, uh, like, record players, cassette players, all the, like, outdated technology. Things that shouldn't exist anymore, but they have, uh, found.

Travis:

Uh, and what is Backseat Blast?

Justin:

Backseat Blast is a great... That's an actually an extremely popular attraction in Ustaben. In Backseat Blast, you have the experience of, uh, sitting in the backseat of your parents car and it's raining a little bit outside. And it's the evening and you've just been at a party. And, um, you're listening to your Discman, but you have the volume quiet enough that you can listen to your parents talking in the front seat, uh, as the window, uh, windshield wipers move back and forth and you listen to your music. And you know with complete certainty that you are as safe as you will ever be. Uh—

Travis:

Woo!

Justin:

And that's Backseat Blast. And it's just 20...

Griffin:

Woo.

Justin:

Uh, yeah. And yeah, it's actually very affordable. It's 20 bucks for a spin on Backseat Blast. Um, if you want the parents to look like your parents, they do have some, like, free standard parents that you can go with. But that's...

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

... that's up to you.

Griffin:

Are they huge too? Are the cars big to make you feel small?

Justin:

Exactly.

Griffin:

Okay. I like that.

Justin:

Yes, Griffin. They're very big cars.

Travis:

Uh, what about All Mixed Up?

Justin:

All Mixed Up is a store where there are 30 radios playing to different, uh, uh, AI-generated stations, and you are given a cassette where you have to dash from radio to radio to create a mixtape of songs that you, uh, that you love.

Travis:

Okay.

Griffin:

I like, I like the idea of our crew contact being somebody who is a higher up at one of these places who uses our services and...

Clint:

How 'bout a former co-worker of Emerich's?

Justin:

Hmm.

Clint:

Who stayed in good favor. Maybe... [laughs] Maybe somebody that was instrumental in getting Emerich pushed out, but Emerich doesn't know it.

Justin:

Okay. Well, yeah. It doesn't need to be too complex 'cause we're gonna be out of here pretty quickly, but, like, if you wanna say, like, a former... Where do they work, Dad?

Clint:

Personally, I would like him to work at, uh, Infinitem 'cause I wanna go there.

Justin:

Oh, I know— But we're... Right now, we're just staying in Ustaben. It's just stuff for this first, like, little chunk.

Travis:

I would say, uh, the two that sound the most hard-lighty to me are Whittle Around and Backseat Blast, right? That they would require programmers, right? People who would program grandpas and program parents.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

So I think it would make sense that if the connection is, like, somebody who worked with Emerich, that either Whittle Around or Backseat Blast would make the most sense.

Justin:

Dad, do you have a preference?

Clint:

I have an odd thought.

Justin:

Okay.

Clint:

What if the, the basic grandpa, uh, hard light construct is one of Emerich's earliest creations, and he considers him to be his friend?

Griffin:

Oh, shit. So instead of it being...

Justin:

Yeah, that's fun.

Griffin:

Yeah. So our contact...

Justin:

That's fun.

Griffin:

... is a hard light person.

Justin:

Dad, what is your, what is your, um, what is your hard light grandpa friend's name?

Clint:

Uh...

Justin:

What's your imaginary grandpa friend? What's his name?

Clint:

Eustace, E-U-S-T-A-C-E.

Griffin:

Eustace Ben?

Clint:

Eustace, uh, Shabon.

Justin:

He has a last name? I mean, he... Okay. Uh, um, Eustace Shabon.

Clint:

[crosstalk]

Justin:

The hologram. [laughs] Uh, hold on. Let me make a quick note about who he is.

Clint:

[laughs]

Justin:

'Cause I will, I will remember, but you guys may not. Uh, he is a hard light grandpa.

Clint:

Yeah, and the fact that he's been...

Justin:

Really important to remember that, that hard light— hard light constructs are AI. They are not people. I wanna make this really clear going in.

Clint:

I know.

Justin:

Okay.

Clint:

I know.

Justin:

All right.

Clint:

But that, but that's the world that Emerich lives in.

Justin:

Okay.

Clint:

I mean, he... And I think Eustace, is, uh... Because he's been reprogrammed so many times, you know, and changed form so many times, he has a very bad memory.

Justin:

Okay. Um, all right, so you have a, you have a friend there over at the, uh, Whittle Around who is a hard light grandpa. Uh...

Griffin:

Eustace Shabon, the first grandpa sounds like a, like a FromSoftware boss.

Justin:

[laughs] Uh, all right. Now, this is a plus one you have with him. One... Uh, I need somebody else to come up with somebody you hate in Ustaben.

Travis:

Uh, oh. You know what? I'm gonna say, uh, the, the proprietor of Anachroknickknacks.

Justin:

Oh, okay.

Travis:

... we've had to deal with to, like get parts for things. Um...

Justin:

What is the— What is their name, Griffin?

Griffin:

I don't know. Tell me more about them, Travis.

Travis:

Well, they're a real company person...

Justin:

Mm.

Travis:

... and so we have to be really careful about how we ask for the pieces. And they're really nosy and they are trying to figure out what we're doing.

Griffin:

Hmm.

Justin:

I like... Okay, I really like the... Uh, first off, I've just discovered that I have no idea how to spell the word proprietor. Here we are. Uh, I like the idea that there are some hard light things that aren't worth programming and it's just easier to get things from Anachroknickknacks. Like...

Travis:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

It's just too... Have you ever tried to model a, you know, whatever it is, the wax cylinder on a Victrola.

Griffin:

Right.

Justin:

It's easier to just get the fuckin' thing.

Travis:

Well, and we, uh, we... There's not like a RadioShack for us to go to, to get technology. You can only take apart so many machines before people start to notice. So sometimes you have to, like, buy, you know.

Griffin:

Uh...

Travis:

Old-timey stuff to use in place of other things.

Griffin:

And just like that, I have the name. His name is Victrola Gold.

Justin:

Victrola Gold.

Travis:

[laughs]

Justin:

Okay, great. Fantastic. Um, okay. So we have, uh, established, um, uh, someone you don't like, someone you do like. Uh, that's all very well and good.

Uh, the, the last thing I wanted to, to touch on real quick, uh, in terms of sort of, like, red lines or things that we feel are sort of out of bounds for this and we're setting some, like, parameters, which is something we've tried to be better about modeling even though, you know, it's the four of us. We know each other pretty well, so there's not as much discomfort. But, you know, I do think it's an important thing to, to sort of establish. Uh, so for me, I... one of the things that I don't enjoy, and will not be part of this arc, is violence against kids.

Travis:

Yep. Agree.

Justin:

Um, I don't, I don't love it and I don't like, I don't, like, hang out there. Um, I would also just...

Griffin:

I mean, how many kids... Uh, related question. Like, how many kids are here, right? 'Cause this does not sound like a child-friendly experience necessarily in the sense that it is like a nostalgia play for...

Justin:

I'll say this. You don't... Well, you don't see a lot of kids in Ustaben, for sure.

Griffin:

Okay.

Justin:

That is about what you know, I think.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Justin:

You don't see a lot of kids in your neck of the woods 'cause, like, they're living the dream. I mean, they're creating the nostalgia. That's where they make it, you know, childhood.

Travis:

I also think... I mean, I think it's important just to establish as a baseline, too, 'cause we're talking about, like, vice and, uh, fantasy and stuff. And anything related human trafficking or, like, sex trafficking... like, is off the table I think.

Griffin:

There being a distinction between sex work and human trafficking.

Travis:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Of course.

Justin:

Anything else that anybody doesn't... I mean, I will not be... Uh, uh, protracted torture. Not, not... I mean, I know we're nasty, nasty characters but, uh...

Griffin:

That's a little too nasty. Yeah.

Justin:

It's a little too nasty for me.

Clint:

Yeah, and I think it... The level of violence or at least the...

Justin:

High.

Clint:

Yeah, high violence, but I think alm... I mean, in all seriousness, I think almost to the, like, Deadpool level. You know what I mean? So it's still—

Griffin:

Fun. Fun violence.

Justin:

Yeah, fun violence.

Clint:

I, uh... Yeah.

Justin:

Yeah.

Clint:

That's what I do—

Justin:

And Dad, I... you should know by this point everything I do in my creative endeavors, I strive to be like Deadpool.

Clint:

Yeah.

Justin:

So he is, he is something of an icon and a hero for me.

Clint:

Um...

Justin:

So we will aim for Deadpool.

Clint:

Well, okay. But I, but I mean, there's a subtle difference between a James Bond movie where he's mowin' down people left and right.

Justin:

If it's important to you personally, okay? That there be... I need you to be specific about this 'cause it is something that, like... This will be... This is a violent game. This is a... This can be a nasty game. So, like, I want... If there's specific things that you want to avoid, like, I... That's the kinda thing we're talking about here.

Clint:

I love it all. I don't have any problem with it.

Justin:

Okay, great.

Clint:

So I mean...

Justin:

My dad's a nasty dog who loves murder.

Griffin:

[laughs]

Travis:

Well, this is where I think we can get into, like, the X card and the red, yellow...

Justin:

Yeah.

Travis:

... and green.

Justin:

So we have a verbal X card, uh, on... because we're an audio medium and it's just easier that way 'cause who knows what you'll be looking at? If you say, "Hey bud," then that means I'm gonna stop and we're gonna talk about what's happening.

Griffin:

Well, that's not a ma— It's not a magic catchphrase. We would say like, "Hey, bud. I'm uncomfortable with this," 'cause there might be times where our characters say, "Hey bud," and we don't wanna—

Justin:

No, they can't.

Griffin:

Oh.

Justin:

They better not.

Griffin:

Oh, okay.

Justin:

'Cause it's a secret...

Clint:

[laughs]

Justin:

It's the verbal X card that I have esta— Tell me something, Griffin, that will be a good verbal X card that you... that I could say with certainty that you will not be saying.

Griffin:

Uh, Parcheesi.

Justin:

Parcheesi? It's not a sexual safe word.

Clint:

Afghanistan Bananastan.

Justin:

Okay, okay. We're... What we're gonna go with is hey bud. So it somethin' is, is uncomfortable, you just say, "Hey bud," and we'll, we'll talk through it. Uh...

Griffin:

Okay.

Justin:

And that will either be on mic or it won't. Okay, so now, uh, I'd like to close. Um, it is, hmm, time isn't that important here. But for simplicity's sake let's call it, uh, 1:00PM at, uh, over at, uh, Poppy's. What, uh, uh, Emerich, what do I find you doin'?

Clint:

Um, tinkering. I just came off my lunch break. I... Very sad. You know, I had a little cucumber sandwich and I ate it in the back in a corner. Um, and then I go back to tinkering on a... I still have a few minutes left in my lunch...

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Clint:

... break, so I'm workin' on a personal project.

Justin:

Montrose?

Griffin:

There's a new hire here, uh, who works at the, um, concession stand. Uh, and I'm trying to sort of gauge subtly their interest in our product.

Justin:

Okay. And Beef.

Travis:

Uh, Beef is arm wrestling the machine and, like, loudly proclaiming like, "So realistic. Just like the real thing. Me in my prime," and, like, trying to get attention to it. Uh, and I don't know, he's probably not that convincing.

Justin:

At that exact moment, it was 1:03PM, there was a loud sort of, uh, uh, crack, an unworldly, uh, impossibly, impossibly loud, uh, the sound of a crack outside above you. What would you all do? Don't overthink it, guys.

Travis:

Yeah, I'm gonna peek outside cautiously.

Justin:

Okay. Pun—... Uh, uh, Emerich? Are you gonna take a look?

Clint:

Um, I, I think, uh, take a look, but kinda position myself behind Beef.

Justin:

Okay. And then, uh, Montrose.

Griffin:

I don't wanna break my stride here, so I'm just gonna kinda keep an eye on the other two and, uh...

Clint:

[crosstalk].

Griffin:

... what their reactions' like before I decide.

Justin:

So you're standing in relative proximity. The sky in Ustaben is, during the daytime at least, always the same. It's the way the sky looks on a snow day, where you wake up and it's brighter than it should be. It's impossibly bright because the sunlight is being reflected off the drifts of snow. It's always that color in Ustaben, except for right now.

At this exact moment, you hear another crack and you see above you a break in the sky. It looks to be maybe a thousand feet across. And then it cracks more, and you see that it's starting to crack into something that, uh, approximates a rectangle, a gigantic, thousands of feet wide rectangle. And then the sky starts falling.

But as it falls, what you realize is that it is not a thousand feet of sky. It's maybe six or seven. It's six or seven feet of sky that th- thousands of feet of sky have been projected onto. Above it is only blackness, and you see the metal, the projection screen that was just above you a moment ago careen down towards the ground and you see a woman on it.

Justin:

She's wearing a black trench coat. She's got, uh, three knives sticking out from back behind her. Her face is covered in soot, and she's got a balaclava pulled down just, uh, to her forehead and she is falling. She is falling, and the piece of ground, piece of sky, now ground, smashes below her, but she does not smash. She is hanging.

You realize she is hanging six feet off the ground, suspended by a wire from a hole in the sky. And she looks at you and she says, "Well, fuck!" And that's where we'll start.

Clint:

[laughs]

Travis:

[laughs]

[theme music plays]

MaximumFun.org.

Comedy and culture.

Artist owned.

Audience supported.