

I. Statements of Core Player Fantasy, Tone and Theme

Core Player Fantasy: To allow the player to feel powerful, controlling a mysterious power. *Larkin, the playable character, learns to control the dark power that resides within him at the beginning of the game.*

Tone: Gritty, post-apocalyptic, moody, science fantasy. *Larkin is brooding and troubled by a past he doesn't understand, surrounded by the desperation of forgotten people clinging to meager survival. Thanks to biotech giant STAIRWAY and advanced technology developed in response to a catastrophic global crisis, this underground way of life persists.*

Themes: Humanity, survival, technology, familial relationships and “duty”, forging your own path

II. Complete Story Summary

Hélène Dupont, the brilliant mind behind STAIRWAY, gained fame for her company's vital role in the global emergency response to the Calamity (a territory battle between deities that collapsed society and uprooted the earth itself). Her ultra-rapid prototyping method proved invaluable to adapt large-scale responses to the trading of divine blows. However, she quickly fell out of the public eye despite being lauded for essential contributions to humanity's survival. Governments dropped funding from STAIRWAY's operations almost instantaneously. Ever since Earth's battlefields rang quiet, few mention STAIRWAY, and fewer still have any clue of its ongoing mission. Dupont's single-minded goal is to produce man-made divinity, capable of harnessing godlike power and fighting on the side of humanity in a divine war. An explosive first attempt at deification (the “Ascension” of prototype v1) using living gods had a victims list numbering in the hundreds. Along with the loss of several important political figures, STAIRWAY lost most of its credibility, all its financial backing, and was forced to move operations to a clandestine underground location (Bastion - think NGE GeoFront). Dupont is now convinced she *can* deify a human. All she needs are more prototypes...

Orphaned by the Calamity, brothers Larkin and Wren fight to eke out an existence in the aftermath. Larkin falls deathly ill from exposure to remnants of slain gods; Wren, weak and reliant on his older brother, offers “anything” to powerful biotech

corporation STAIRWAY in a last-ditch attempt bring his brother back. Wren is taken as a test subject in exchange for Dupont's efforts in reviving Larkin. Despite some effort on her part, Larkin cannot be saved and his body dies; Dupont takes this opportunity to imbibe his body with more divine residue of slain gods to bring... *some* version of him back as Ascension attempt v2. But now he's haunted by a power he can't understand or control. (Due to some extra precautions but mostly a consequence of mass layoffs from funding cuts, the death toll of this second Ascension is *only* in the double digits!) This still isn't the success Dupont was hoping for — using fragments of true gods, dead or alive, is simply too volatile. Dupont takes on a godless approach with Wren by enhancing his body with technology. v3 proves much more stable than previous attempts, but takes such a heavy toll on Wren's frail disposition that he's essentially a pure defensive unit with crazy regenerative abilities. (To be fair, it's impressive how much of a beating he can take.) Upon completing the second prototype, Dupont has set up everything she needs to run the cornerstone of the Dupont Ultra-Rapid Prototyping Process: **combat trials!!!**

Huge flaw in this setup: *really* hard to get proper, all-out combat data from two unwilling combatants. Dupont's solution is to aggravate Larkin's god residue to scramble his brain, and force him to reacquaint with the god residue which strengthens his control over his powers. (Meanwhile, his physical body continues to disintegrate.) She chucks Larkin as far away as physically possible into Bastiontown so that her remaining employees aren't driven insane by god residue exposure while strengthening Wren's tech.

events at beginning of game: Larkin wakes up in Bastiontown, once again taken in by fatherly Wazoo (who does not recall encountering Larkin in the past). Larkin experiences hostility from the townsfolk who see him as a bad omen. He is determined to return to the surface and reunite with his brother; he leaves Bastiontown and sets off for STAIRWAY's central elevator column that holds the only exit from Bastion. In order to access the Outer Compound, Larkin must assist Lia Moretti (an ex-STAIRWAY scientist plagued by chronic pain and brain fog) in her whistleblowing operation to expose STAIRWAY's coverup of unauthorized human experimentation. Through information he gathers, he learns he is the v2 Ascension attempt that caused her

life-altering exposure to god residue, which Lia also realizes. He gains access to the inner compound and navigates a maze of interconnected buildings to reach the central elevator access point. At its base is a steel-winged angel hooked up to all sorts of tubes and electronic monitors – like it or not, this is Wren, and he's not supposed to let anyone through. Unstoppable force meets immovable object.

This time around, Larkin's bond with his god residue is powerful enough to make a dent in the system keeping Wren controlled; the brothers make way for the surface. Dupont has been busy incorporating the recent combat test into V4, her magnum opus. She permanently fuses herself into its machinery — she goes on a huge power trip, sheds her corporeal form to Ascend, and becomes the first mortal to achieve divinity. This destroys a large part of the elevator shaft, eventually bringing the fight to the surface. Through the power of friendship brotherhood (Larkin's combative strength and Wren's regenerative/defensive abilities), they defeat Dupont and finally are able to reunite properly; Wren uses his regenerative powers to ward off Larkin's necrosis.

(epilogue bit: Larkin and Wren work to restore the supply chain of resources/electricity into Bastiontown, for Towners like Wazoo that want to continue living there; Moretti and many other employees decide to move topside; Wren's restorative abilities ease some of Moretti's pain. The two brothers, despite so much change and so much time apart, fall easily into a familiar flavour of brotherhood.)

III. Character Briefs

Player character: Larkin (v2)

A withdrawn, haunted young man. In a past life, he embraced the role of “protector”; now, an outsider plagued by remnants of gods slain in calamitous war. He radiates an overwhelming dark aura, often heard speaking to no one in particular. He clings to memories of life on the surface, before he awoke battered and bruised in Bastiontown.

Physical description: shorter than average, stocky build. Short brown hair that sticks up at the top. Dresses for utility, preferring to blend into the shadows (of which Bastion has many): black, brown, deep mahogany tones. His clothes are scrappy and patchwork, and tell a silent story of past conflicts that Larkin himself can't recall. Tied around his upper left arm is a crimson scarf, a memento from his brother. His extremities are tinged with grey/black like a messy charcoal artist.

As the player moves through regions, Larkin is better able to control his powers and use his abilities to manipulate the environment or gain access to information. The dark tinge to his hands becomes more prevalent as the player advances in story/power: necrosis of his organic body.

Once the provider/caretaker for his younger brother Wren, now an undead lab rat artificially imbued with divine power who's unknowingly fighting his reason for living in a cycle of data collection. He rejects the otherworldly powers of the gods residing in him, unaware that they are the sole force sustaining a post-mortem host. Larkin is learning how to carry on, burdened by vengeful angry spirits whispering in his ear, confusion about his memories, a disintegrating body, and no brother by his side.

Main antagonist: Hélène Dupont (V4)

Founder and acting director of biotech company STAIRWAY; a brilliant engineer and entrepreneur in her mid-30s who girlbossed too close to the sun. Has a single-minded obsession with creating a man-made god. She turned her biotechnology startup STAIRWAY into a lucrative success with her ultra-rapid prototyping method, and was also the one to run it into the ground with an ambitious experiment.

For general vibe and fall-from-grace story, think Elizabeth Holmes of Theranos fame: the kind of charisma that gets you a TED Talk, the obsessive drive that makes you break every ethics code in the book, the hollow stare that says you're a stepping stone.

NPC: Wren (v3)

An angel who walks the Earth. A healer archetype, with an encyclopedic knowledge of wild plants and natural remedies. In flashbacks to the past, Wren is a frail beanpole with wobbly knees like a fawn. Universally loved, armed with infectious optimism, wouldn't harm a soul – he'll only fight to defend the things most vital to him. (Think Alphonse from Fullmetal Alchemist.)

Physical description: gorgeous flowing locks of tawny-brown hair. In flashbacks, he is shorter than Larkin. When appearing as the penultimate boss: notably taller than Larkin, enhanced with all manner of techy implants that make him nigh unrecognizable. Underneath all that strange cyborg scifi, he's still the same sweet soul, only now he's got scifi trauma.

NPC: Wazoo

A fatherly oddball handyman who works tirelessly to keep Bastiontown up and running. A master of DIY who exemplifies the mindset required for surviving underground; he's the kind of dad you'd be mortified to have when you're a teenager, but once you hit your late 20s appreciation and awe start to sink in.

Physical description: Man in his late 40s, big ol' eyebags with a sparkle in his eye. Short choppy reddish-brown hair, a distinctive purple and green coat smothered with grease and oil stains. Generally greasy and sooty; he's a working man.

NPC: Lia Moretti

An ex-STAIRWAY scientist who worked on Ascension v2 (Larkin) and fell chronically ill after exposure to god residue. Although confined to her house on the outskirts of the Outer Compound, she's never lost her empathy or drive to do the right thing.

Physical description: A round-faced, tan-skinned woman with short brown curly hair and librarian glasses. She's seen better days.

IV. Setting Briefs

Hell: Bastiontown, a community cobbled together with corrugated iron and a dream. Bastiontown reeks of desperation and cutting corners, but each and every resident stays hard at work to keep this giant machine running. At first seedy and hostile, the town reveals itself to be an incredibly resourceful and tight-knit community. (They just really don't like Larkin.) The city is built on the waste management facilities meant to service the entirety of the cavern; Bastiontown's infrastructure houses surprisingly advanced technology that makes it possible to survive with no direct surface access. Unfortunately they haven't had professional maintenance in a number of years, so things don't work smooth like they used to. Life here is not comfortable; those who chose to remain underground in Bastiontown had nowhere else to go, or no life left to return to. Despite the criminals, exiles, and forgotten souls who band together in this place, it truly is a heartfelt corner of existence.

Visually: red floodlights that really drive home this feeling of "hell". Grungy neon signs, flickering incandescent bulbs if you're lucky. Rust is a constant. Everything is jury-rigged. Patchy and desaturated, dimly lit. Structures made of simple exposed materials, neutral/earth tones.

Purgatory: STAIRWAY Outer Compound + surrounding fields of wild brush. Made up of endless paperwork, middle management, and abandoned facilities. A testament to what STAIRWAY once was, the Outer Compound was practically a small city housing R&D facilities, manufacturing plants, and thousands of employees + families. Now, the mighty city lies in ruin. Researchers and employees still mill about the buildings to manufacture parts, run boring small-scale tests, or scrap old machinery and haul parts back to the Central Compound. STAIRWAY's goals are still nebulous throughout this region, but gathering information from multiple smaller "daughter" facilities starts to paint a bigger picture.

Lia Moretti's house is located on the outskirts of the Outer Compound. In order to access the Central Compound, the player must travel to three key sub-areas of the Outer Compound and access three computer terminals at Moretti's request. STAIRWAY employees will alert others if they detect Larkin, and become hostile if the player is too close.

Visually: very grey, concrete, heavy. Brutalist in nature. Artificial trees and plants mark long-forgotten streets, but they do nothing to liven the place up. Almost skeletal in nature, like a rebar ribcage of some giant high-rise beast.

Basically Heaven: STAIRWAY's Central Compound + the elevator shaft leading to the surface.

The Central Compound elevator shaft is a striking visual point of interest, visible from all parts of the map. It should be apparent that this is the Big Deal final objective of the game. A shining golden beacon reminiscent of the Space Needle extends into the ceiling of the Bastion cavern, standing high above the rusty roofs of Bastiontown houses and dust-covered Outer Compound buildings.

Visually: Utopian, clean, futuristic. Eternally basked in a warm heavenly glow. White and gold, organic shapes juxtaposed with sharp angles that make a striking silhouette. Heavy on angelic imagery.

Inside the Compound is a maze of security checkpoints and interconnected buildings. Plenty of STAIRWAY employees are roaming around, and it seems like they're deep in crunch time. The overall architecture is much more grandiose, with a level of fancy tech not seen in previous areas. Unimaginable amounts of time and money have been spent here. *This* is where big things happen.

A series of observation decks and supply rooms feed into a large central chamber (which doesn't hide that it's a well-used battle arena). Wren's "test chamber" is located at — or rather, it *is* — the base of the Space Needle. In order to ascend to the surface, passage through Wren's chamber is inevitable. The atmosphere is otherworldly, bathing the room in blue and purple light. Dozens of pipes and wires run into the forsaken metal angel at the room's centre. No highly esteemed deed is commemorated here.

The final boss chamber is near the top of the Space Needle structure and is much like Wren's, except bigger and pristine. It lacks an observation area; there is no space for teamwork. This is a workshop for one woman's self-experimental pursuit.

V. Opening Cutscene Script

A patchy, panicked dream. Ideally this would be shown in first-person POV (Larkin's).

INT. RUN-DOWN SHACK

Larkin pushes open a creaky door to a dilapidated wooden shack, bathing Wren in daylight as he kneels on the ground. Larkin holds up his prize kill by its hind legs: a plump rabbit, which dangles limp in his grasp. His knuckles are scratched and smeared with blood, some of it his own.

LARKIN

Ding-a-ling. Lunch service.

Wren holds up a sprig of herbs, tied neatly with twine.

WREN

The patch of rosemary by the bog is much healthier this year. I think you'll like this blend.

LARKIN

Come on up and we'll see about that.

Larkin helps him to his feet and supports him gently as they head outside.

INT. DILAPIDATED TOWNHOME

Larkin and Wren are slightly older. Wren looks bored as he roasts two pigeons in the remnants of a range oven, while Larkin sifts through rubble. The entire house is covered in a thick layer of dust. Outside the broken window, a black miasma seeps through a huge rift in the asphalt.

LARKIN

This place is picked clean. Someone's already done the rounds.

WREN

Damn.

LARKIN

Ah--

WREN

Everything good?

LARKIN

Cut my finger on some goddamn glass.

Larkin picks up a shattered photo frame, now smeared with his blood. He stares at it for a moment, then lays it to rest on a crumpled bookshelf.

LARKIN (cont.)

... Nice little family photo. Hope their family made it out of this place before it all fell apart. Both the parents... and their two boys.

WREN

Yeah. I hope so too.

There's silence, punctuated by pops and hisses from the roasting pigeons, as Larkin sucks his bleeding finger. Wren rummages through his satchel, takes out a fresh green leaf, chews it into a paste, and spits it into a small strip of cloth.

WREN (cont.)

C'mere, let me disinfect and pack up that cut for you.

Larkin doesn't move. Wren brandishes a cooked pigeon at him.

WREN (cont.)

Ready to eat?

EXT. COLLAPSED INDUSTRIAL CITY OUTSKIRTS

Several years have passed. Wren looks weaker than ever, yet he's running through the streets and pushing himself forward through his physical and mental anguish. He drags Larkin behind him in a makeshift wagon that catches on every piece of rubble. Larkin is in a horrible state but looks all too peaceful: eyes shut, lips slightly parted, apparently indifferent to the bumpiness. Bundles of medicinal wild plants are tied to a nasty blackened gash on Larkin's left forearm, clearly Wren's handiwork. Others are bottled haphazardly in all manner of jars. A wisp of black miasma curls into the air from Larkin's wound. The world starts to fade, creeping in from the edges of Larkin's vision like tiny black capillaries.

WREN

We're almost there. They'll be able to help. Please, hold on, just a little bit longer, please...

MONTAGE: LARKIN'S SUPERHUMAN UPGRADES

VISUAL		constant VO track
A view of a hospital ceiling from the operating table.		WREN (V.O.) Please, he's all I have left.
	→ Hope drains from the eyes of the medical team. A puff of black smoke wafts towards the ceiling; the remaining colour leaves their faces.	WREN (V.O.) You're the only hope we've got.
A sheet is pulled over our eyes – a body sheet covering a corpse.		DUPONT (V.O.) He's practically gone already. I'm telling you there's nothing my doctors can do.
On the observer side of a human-sized compartment filled with blue gel, a small team of lab coats shake their heads and walk off. One woman, who looks more important than the rest – Dupont – stays behind, peering intently at us.		WREN (V.O.) You... you <u>have</u> to try! DUPONT (V.O.) <i>(she laughs.)</i>
In a different operating room, reminiscent of a workshop. Dupont, in HAZMAT gear, mutters to herself and works on something just out of view.		DUPONT (V.O.) You don't get to my spot by handing out freebies to everyone who comes begging.
Several teams of scientists watch from peripheral observation rooms. The head scientist gives the go-ahead; a syringe of black liquid passes into view. The plunger is depressed. Moments after it empties, a violent explosion of black miasma shatters the observation windows. Chaos ensues, amid hazard containment procedures.		DUPONT (V.O.) But I'm willing to strike a deal with you. WREN (V.O.) Yes. As long as you bring-- as long as you try your best to bring him back.
A huge elevator shaft continues up and out of view. A humanoid with heavy cybernetic modifications kneels piously at the center of a large chamber. The face is obscured by a tangle of tubes snaking towards the ceiling. They're shaped like wings. He's framed like a fallen angel.		DUPONT (V.O.) Hm. And for my help, you'll give me--

	→ Purple light courses through the tubes, pouring into the figure's body. Its head snaps back. The top half of the face is obscured behind a visor, but a glint of rosy golden light sparkles where its eye <i>should</i> be. A single tear rolls down Wren's cheek.	WREN (V.O.) <u>Anything!</u>
--	--	--

INT. CRUSTY OLD SHACK

Larkin wakes up with a sharp gasp, bolting upright in bed. Through a rust-eaten gap in the corrugated metal roof of his bedroom shed, he sees a glorious slender tower that scrapes the rocky ceiling of the Bastion cavern basking in a warm glow. The top of the tower glints a rosy golden light into his eye. It's a stark contrast from the buzzy white lights outside his room and the red lamps that illuminate Bastiontown's edge.

In-Game Dialogue: First playable sequence (tutorial)

Larkin has just awoken from this opening memory-dream sequence. The player gains control of the character.

LARKIN: Sounds like Wazoo's already working the shop...

LARKIN: I can't get back to sleep with all this noise. Might as well start my daily duties.

Audio and visual cues (trail of oil on the ground, mechanical sfx) guide the player out the bedroom, around the corner, and into the shop.

Trigger	Speaker	Line/Action
<i>Player spends a while inside room / attempts to leave immediate area</i>	Larkin	The shop sounds busy. Wazoo could use a hand.
	Larkin	<i>"Flakers lose favour."</i> I think the towners might leave me to starve if I don't go in for my duties. ...Not like they don't already want to.
<i>Player enters workshop</i>	Larkin	Morning, Wazoo! Wazoo?
<i>Player approaches Wazoo</i>	Wazoo	<i>Wazoo notices player. Player control <u>limited</u>.</i>

LARKIN: Morning.

WAZOO: Mornin', kid. You look like sewer sludge. I wake you up?

LARKIN: I dreamt of the sky again.

WAZOO: Yeah, with the missing brother, hey. I hear ya. I know you're sleepin' rough. Lotta tickets to get through today, but I'll keep it light on ya. Promise. Check the bulletin board out front. I put aside three tickets for you to take care of, all 'round town. Gotta make sure you get out sometimes, yea?

*Player regains control of PC. **Quest navigation/item interaction tutorial.***

LARKIN: Chimmi, Beck (ugh)... Errrr, this last one's just a scribble. (to Wazoo) Hey, what's a messy spiral with a long tail supposed to mean?

WAZOO: That's Leelo's signature. Lanky guy who works the waste processor? He already dropped off his heating module, but he doesn't know reading or writing, so all you gotta do's chat with him and see what's the problem he needs fixed. He'll be near the composter pit — but don't worry. You'll know him when you smell 'im.

WAZOO: Other two, the usual. Find 'em, pick up their broken, bring 'em back here for fixins. Take your time, hey? Get some fresh air. And say hi to Chimmi for me.

LARKIN: On it, boss.

Player regains full control of PC. Quest direction indicates for player to leave the shop.

WAZOO: *(as player leaves shop area)* What'd I say about callin' me- ... Ehh, whatever.

LARKIN: Okay, who's first... let's check the map. ***Inventory/equippable tutorial.***

To complete this quest, three NPCs must be interacted with, in any order. The player can explore Bastiontown freely, except when a quest NPC encounter has been initiated.

Beck is the closest NPC to the workshop, likely the first quest NPC encountered.

Trigger	Speaker	Line/Action
<i>Idle: player outside Beck's detection boundary</i>	Beck	<i>Beck plays I-Spy with her two young children.</i> I spy, with my little eye... something starting with "L" / "S" / "G".
	Children	'Lectric-line! / Supply dock!! / Generator!!!
<i>Player approaches Beck's household</i>	Beck	Kids, go inside. <i>Beck shoos her kids into her home, blocking the front door with her body.</i>
<i>Player continues approaching Beck</i>	Beck	You here on Wazoo business?
	Larkin	Yes. I've got your ticket here, if you want proof—
	Beck	That's fine. You're plenty close enough. Please wait there while I get my screw gun. <i>Beck enters her house for several seconds.</i>
<i>Player stays at distance from house; occurs passively</i>	Beck	I'll leave this screw gun over here. You can pick it up once I'm back on my porch. <i>Beck gives PC a wide berth, puts the <u>SCREW GUN</u> down on the ground, and returns to the porch.</i>
<i>→ Player makes significant approach to house; triggered on approach</i>	Beck	How can I make more clear it's only on Wazoo's respect that I let you set foot on my soil?! You back off or I do what I should've done when you first came to this town like a bad omen. <i>Beck brandishes a metal pipe: a threat. After a few moments she enters her house to get the screw gun.</i>
<i>Player picks up <u>SCREW GUN</u></i>	Beck	You best bring that back to me in one fixed-up piece. Seven families on just this block here are relying on me n' that puppy there to patch up the holes in their houses so the kids sleep warm at night. You hear?

Chimmi is located on the south side of town, in a zone called “water treatment plant”.

Trigger	Speaker	Line/Action
<i>PC approaches Chimmi</i>	Chimmi	Hey, Larkin, over here!
<i>Player control <u>limited</u>. Walk-n'-talk as Chimmi guides us through the maze that is Bastiontown's water treatment facility.</i>	Larkin	Said on your ticket you had an issue with the filtration now? Just one thing after another, huh...
	Chimmi	Yep. That darn pump's been giving me grief, so now that Waz finally got it running again, it's the filter that gives. (laughs) Such is life.
	Larkin	Oh, Waz– Wazoo told me to pass on a message:
	Larkin	“Hi.”
	Chimmi	Real eloquent with words, that guy. Mad smart though. Bastion's original water filtration system was built to tide over during short-term emergencies, but Waz's modifications have let it hold out for eight years now.
<i>Reach the destination.</i>	Chimmi	<i>Chimmi extracts a cubic section of pipe: <u>FILTER UNIT</u>. Anyway, here's the little bastard.</i>
<i>Upon acquiring the <u>FILTER UNIT</u></i>	Chimmi	In the meantime while Waz is <i>fixin'</i> , we'll only be able to use water for crops, not drinking.
	Chimmi	Well, thanks, boy. Bring 'er back once she's ready and willing. And tell Waz to give you a break once in a while, hey? Got you running like a broken pipe as of late.
	Larkin	Heh, will do. I'm sure the other Towners won't be happy to see me catch a break.
	Chimmi	Oh, screw 'em. Working dogs like you and me? We see each other's struggles. Don't let them get to your head.

Leelo is located on the northeastern side of town, a little isolated from the rest of the townspeople (probably due to the smell).

Trigger	Speaker	Line/Action
<i>Idle</i>	Leelo	<i>Leelo hums merrily, pushing a cart of rotting plant matter.</i>
<i>PC approaches Leelo</i>	Larkin	(sniff) ...What a smell. This'd better be Leelo, 'cause I don't know if I've got the guts for something <i>more</i> pungent.

<i>Formatted as selectable dialogue options; serves as the tutorial/intro to multi-choice dialogue.</i>	Larkin	Leelo? / Are you Leelo?
	Leelo	<i>Leelo's cart grinds to a halt. He turns to face the player.</i> The newcomer workshop boy! You saw my ticket?
	Larkin	And we got your delivery. / Could I get the details on what the issue is?
	Leelo	Ahh, yes, yes! I'm getting problems with the heater in the compost chamber, it's taking too long to get up to temp. I think it's in the heater coil wiring, but that's all I know. Better if I don't touch the mechanicals.
<i>Player tries to leave (the first time)</i>	Leelo	When's it gonna be done by?
	Larkin	We've got a lot of tickets to catch up on, so... / It could be a while. Wazoo's got plenty of urgent fixes to take care of.
	Leelo	Please, have mercy, the farmboys're hounding me about it. It's slowed turnaround time for new soil. Even if it's not a tomorrow-hurting, it'll be hurting a hella lot more in six weeks when lost harvest would be ready for picking.
	Larkin	...I, uh, I'll see what I can do.
<i>Player tries to leave (the second time)</i>	Leelo	See ya, workshop boy! Come back soon before the farmboys get me! <i>Leelo continues rolling his cart toward the outside of town.</i>

VII. Boss Barks

After the two brothers reunite, they pass through several rooms of readables and lore documents to reach the central elevator. Wren's in a sorry state after the battle; he's moving slow and sloppy, but nobody's coming to stop their escape. It's all too easy. A cutscene plays: the elevator reaches the top of its track to reveal a Bigger and Sexier version of the boss arena the brothers just fought in, complete with the Biggest and Sexiest biblically accurate mech suit (V4). Hélène Dupont stands beside it, uploading the latest combat data into its programming. They're staring right at the two brothers with their (combined) twenty-six terrible eyes, and oh God, they all blink at once.

Trigger	Speaker	Line/Action
<i>After cutscene ends</i>	Dupont	<i>Dupont climbs into the mech suit and closes the compartment. She is visible inside the suit.</i> Oh, no, I can't let you <i>leave</i> . Your existence is confidential information... not to mention you're both STAIRWAY property.
<i>Back to player control. Begin boss fight.</i>	Dupont	<i>Dupont activates the mech suit; it lights up and stands to its full height.</i> Witness... the herald of a new era!
<i>Phase one of boss fight. Wren is recuperating from the brother-battle, and needs some time to heal himself; Larkin must keep Dupont busy for the time being.</i>		
<i>The following lines occur as dialogue exchange during battle.</i>	Dupont	<i>Dupont starts to attack the player, testing out her range of motion while the suit is attached to wires and tubes.</i> It's beautiful how everything comes full circle, isn't it? I created you, I made you what you are. I, as a mere human, gave you divinity beyond mortal comprehension...
		<i>Dupont charges forth with an unexpected new combat technique.</i> And now with the power you helped me find, I will be the one to destroy you.
		Don't you see the beauty in it all?
<i>QTE: dodge a large item (i.e. fridge) being thrown.</i>	Larkin	<i>Larkin successfully avoids the fridge, in a cool way.</i> ...No?

		<i>Larkin does not avoid the fridge. (pained) Ow. Can't– can't say I do.</i>
	Dupont	Perhaps only the enlightened of the new age of man are able to see it. It's a pity you are trapped with remnants of the past.
		Burdened by thoughts of bloodshed, vengeance, and spite.
	Larkin	Don't give me that!
		You were the one who bound angry dead gods to my body. I never asked for this--
	Dupont	<i>Dupont gets up close and personal, making eye contact from inside the V4 mech compartment.</i> Your brother asked, <i>begged</i> . Would you rather I let you die, and leave him to fend for himself?
	Wren	She's right. I brought this on both of us...
	Larkin	<i>(Directed at both of them)</i> Oh, shut it.
<i>~8s after the exchange ends:</i>	Wren	<i>(satisfied)</i> Ah! <i>Wren finishes healing up.</i>
<i>Dupont scores her first hit:</i>	Dupont	Less satisfying than I thought. I've watched you take hundreds of hits. It's nothing new to me.
<i>After a certain amount of time has elapsed, and player is still alive:</i>	Dupont	You truly are persistent. An admirable quality, well-suited for iterative development and repeated combat trials.
	Larkin	<i>(A lot of evasive maneuvers are happening. Larkin is audibly getting tired but tries to play it off.)</i> Been a pleasure being your second-prize guinea pig for three years. What's another round in the ring?
	Dupont	My prototyping is complete. I no longer have need for your persistence. Besides...
		<i>Dupont winds up to hit a home run.</i> ...I doubt your body could take another round.
<i>Phase two of the boss battle begins: player control is temporarily revoked, and shows the progress of Larkin's necrosis on his body. He doubles over, incapacitated by the pain;</i>		

Dupont is still limited by the mech's attached cables and tubes, so she goes for a ranged attack. Wren heroically leaps to Larkin's aid, to parry. v3 joins the battle!

<i>Phase two begins.</i>	Wren	The cavalry has arrived.
	Larkin	Yeah, yeah.
	Dupont	<i>Dupont yanks free of the cables hooked up to the mech suit.</i> Two failed gods are no match for me.
	Larkin	I'm <i>noticing</i> that you really like pointing out my imperfections.
	Dupont	It is not a bad thing to have imperfections in a system. Flaws are the lifeblood of my ultra-rapid prototyping method.
		When there are flaws, there is room to learn, room to explore. There is something more that can be teased out, with a clever approach. <i>Dupont lunges at the player and sweeps the floor with the mech's giant wings.</i>
	Wren	Larkin, watch your feet!
	Dupont	Acknowledging imperfections as they are is the first step to eliminating them. Subpar relics of the past must be understood and then systematically destroyed, to make way for the new order.
<i>Player at <30% health</i>	Wren	Got your back.
		Reckless as always, hey?
		<i>(to Dupont)</i> He's not going down while I'm here.
<i>Player takes HEAVY hit</i>	Larkin	Wren, a little help please...
<i>Boss at 50% health</i>	Dupont	(frustrated growl and sounds of buttons being slammed)
<i>Boss at 25% health</i>	Wren	Oh, she's looking rough now.
	Dupont	<i>(expressing frustration with the mech suit)</i> Why won't you <u>work</u> with me!
<i>Boss phase two</i>	Dupont	Imperfections will always hold us back... but I must

<i>complete</i>		rise above the flaws that drag humanity down.
<i>Phase three of the boss battle indicates Dupont's transformation/assimilation into the V4 mech suit; Dupont's human form can no longer be seen through the compartment window. The compartment appears to be filled with a swirling, glittering liquid. Dupont's voice becomes inescapable and brutally metallic in tone.</i>		
<i>Phase three begin</i>	V4	<i>(maniacal laughing through the pain)</i> Oh, the sweet light of Heaven!
<i>V4 launches attack</i>	V4	You are witnessing history in the making...
<i>After V4 takes a hit</i>	V4	(inhuman metal-on-metal screech)
		Your fall will be swift.

VIII. Found Narrative

This is a clipping from a newspaper article pinned to a breakroom corkboard, located inside an Outer Compound staff building. It is a fragment of an interview with H       Dupont, when she was regarded as humanity's shining star. Someone circled passages with a purple glitter gel pen and treated H      's words as gospel.

Q: You are so young, yet so accomplished – a Harvard graduate at 19, founder of your own start-up by the time you were 22, and now at 27 you're recognized as one of the greatest minds of our time. What drives you?

A: From a very young age, I was recognized by my teachers and tutors as a seed of great potential. They opened the door to many opportunities, and pushed me to seize them. I never stopped moving, never stopped searching for something greater to apply myself to. With STAIRWAY's resounding impact, I know that I've finally found my place. I was always told it'd be a shame to waste a brain like mine, so I believe it's my duty to put it to good use.

Q: Ah, so it feels like a burden?

A: No, it never felt like a burden. It felt more like... a calling. There are a select few who possess the wisdom required to lead humanity towards a glorious future, and I take pride in being one of those leaders. It's one of those things you only understand when you're living it. But no, it's never been something negative.

Q: What do you and STAIRWAY have in store for the future?

A: Oh. *(laughs)* I have some ambitious work already underway. We are STAIRWAY have worked tirelessly to establish a solid working relationship with experts and policymakers across the globe. After seeing the success of the underground bunker project — or, as most call them, the Bastions — we're eager to contribute to the war effort and use the support we've earned to make real strides. And I want to take this opportunity to highlight everyone who's been a part of this with me. I owe my success to each and every employee of STAIRWAY, those whose faces are not broadcasted on televisions or printed alongside the feature article in the paper, but on ID cards clipped to their suits and lab coats. **It is the silent, underappreciated work of many hands behind the scenes that has lifted me to unknowable heights.**

Audio log found within the Inner Compound, in one of the satellite observation decks near Wren's chamber. This discussion is happening post-v2, pre-v3 between Dupont and a STAIRWAY scientist, deciding Wren's fate.

- He's barely a man— no, he still is a boy. Ma'am, we cannot in good conscience use him as a--
- The *boy* is willing. Have you not spoken with him yourself? Watched him sign the contract? He offered himself up for experimentation. I followed through on my end of the deal. ...A pity the older boy could not be saved, but he is proving useful nonetheless.
- Ah, ma'am, I would say the contract was signed under duress... even though the ethics board is no more, I.... He is simply too volatile. He is too young--
- Think of the greater good. Besides, the older boy was an incredible investment, since he is still able to fight. All that's left is to create an opponent.

A written record of supplies delivered to Bastiontown, found inside a "guardpost" building on the Outer Compound's edge: After a certain date (a few months before the current time), the check marks stop — STAIRWAY has neglected to follow through on their end of the deal in providing essential non-renewable goods.

FOR DELIVERY OF GOODS TO NATIVE RESIDENTS OF BASTION:

- Ongoing: Limited connection to STAIRWAY central power supply, routine maintenance on overground power line to occur every 12 weeks.
- Every 6 months: water filtration substrate 25kg. Super Gro LED replacement strips 750 m. Misc. construction materials: corrugated iron, fasteners, support beams, pipes and tubing. Combustion engine (medium), 1 unit. Major emergency care medical kit, 1 unit. Misc. electrical supplies: insulated wiring, bare copper wire spools, protective gear, light bulbs (assorted), essential circuit components. Heavy duty tarp, 15 units. Breathable fabric for wear, 1 jumbo roll.
- Every 3 months: Dietary supplements (all-in-one STAIRWAY formulated Underground vitamin mix), 1 pallet. HyperSister graft shoots (maize-bean-squash STAIRWAY patented botanical chimera): 24 units @ budding stage. Minor medical (First Aid) kit, 1 unit. Emergency ration high-calorie biscuit, 192 servings.