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Hello everybody and welcome to chapter select a seasonal podcast where we bounce back and forth between a series exploring their evolution design and legacy

For season two we are back and we are talking about God of War specifically God of War Ragnarok

My name is Max Roberts, and I am joined as always by Logan Moore. Hi Logan

time-traveling snakes

Are real hmm. They are real but just like we thought but it does not

Happen like it does in Norse myth it wasn't so much Loki Loki and angry Bona coming together

That's not how he time travels

No creation by a hammer real hard. Yes, but the birth of the snake was not the the Norse birth

As it were but I didn't want to see

toddlers make it

I

I didn't either. It was- I was very curious how they were gonna handle that and they handled it, uh, fairly cleverly.

But maybe they didn't do so well with the rest of Norse myth.

You're already hatin'. You're already getting off- so, okay. I'm gonna take over right now.

This has been a long time coming for us to do this episode.

It has!

We did a whole season of God of War.

Yeah.

We talked about Rockin' Rock a lot.

I brought you into the fold.

Well, kind of.

I had only not played Ghost of Sparta and

Ascension was really only to end played I played it exactly you hadn't played the best games. I hadn't played Ghost of Sparta is a good game

So yeah, this is obviously we did season 2 of God of War in what 2021 yep

This episode is being recorded in December 2022 so Ragnarok has been out for a little over a month now

We've played the game. I played the game like two months ago almost because I reviewed it and we talked we had a lot of

Lead up obviously to Ragnarok because we played all those games last year

We did a whole predictions episode

And I actually did pretty good on that predictions episode if you go back and listen to it in some ways

I did better than you though because you

You thought a lot of things with Freya that I thought would happen you thought the total opposite

Yes.

Which did not happen.

We'll talk about all the story stuff with this game.

Obviously up front, story spoilers for Ragnarok, we have a lot to go through.

And Max, I don't think you like the game, but we'll get to that in a second.

We've got complex-

We've intentionally not talked in too much detail about the game together to save it for the show.

I actually just read Logan's review tonight when we're recording this.

I hadn't even read his review yet.

So we've-

- Then you're more familiar with what I said than I am.

'Cause I wrote that a month or two ago

and I haven't looked at it since then.

- Yeah, so we went from talking about Ragnarok every day to lead up until Logan got his code for review to like not talking about it for two months.

And so we've been kind of marinating and soaking it in.

We didn't really necessarily want to rush this out.

There were some holidays in between.

I played the game in like a week

because I had to beat it before traveling for Thanksgiving.

And so-- - Well, and I assume spoilers as well was something you were conscious of.

- If I didn't have travel, I probably wouldn't have been as aggressive of a speedy playthrough, but I definitely played in a condensed period and then haven't touched it since.

I actually booted it up tonight, waiting for you to go find, to do a side quest for Tear.

So that was one of the things I decided

is to kind of see before recording tonight. So that's kind of where we're at coming into this game in this discussion. All right, let's do the rundown and then we'll get into more of our feelings because I think we're going to have a very complex discussion in a lot of ways. We both have strange feelings about this game, which we've made clear to one another,

but we haven't gotten into the nitty gritty of why we feel those ways. God more Ragnarok

Came out on November 9th, 2022 for both PS5 and PS4.

It was developed once again by Sony Santa Monica Studio.

The game director this time around was Eric Williams.

Cory Barlog was not in the director's chair for the sequel.

The producers on the game were Elizabeth "Dom" Wong.

She was a senior staff producer on 2018.

She was a senior staff producer this time around.

The game had a lot of other producers though,

Which you've noted here including Eric Fong Ariel in Angel Odey in Gil Odey

Jeff Kachem

Kate Marlin and Trey Fitzgerald to go along with there's a whole nother line with Mike Teller her Marty Stu

Studi van and Lee sparks the combat designers were Mahir chef and Danny yay

And the composer on the game was once again Bear McCreery

Maxis game was very well received in a time where I don't think people were expecting this game to be as well received as it was

I think that's kind of one of the most interesting things about this game is that

It was one of the most highly anticipated games. I feel like over the past

Five years and it met those expectations for both fans and critics. It has a 94 out of 100 on Metacritic, which is the same

Metacritic scored that God of War 2018 got

which is a

Pretty impressive to say the least that's for the ps5 version there are no reviews for the ps4 version

Or there's two, but there's not enough for an average

really

You have to get four further to be an average. There's only two ps4 reviews I

Just looked at it. I didn't even look up the ps4 version

I just assumed everyone reviewed the ps5 version, but that's if you look out. I mean it's a

10 out of 10 on both of them, so

So there you go perfect score on the perfect 100 out of 100 for two reviews on the ps4 version

Alright, so how did where do you want to start here? We both established that we've got complicated feelings oh

Actually, let me start because I reviewed the game

So I think it's easier for me to kind of if you want to know my feelings my review is out there

I have a full like 2,000 plus word review

In a video you can go check that out if you're listening to this it's I read it

It'll be in the show notes comicbook.com. I put a lot of work into that so you can go check that out

I will say I gave the game a four point five out of five on our scale

So I think the game is really really really good. I have complex feelings

I guess I don't have complex feelings about this game as a

Game if that makes any sense like as a as it's in its merits of like

Storytelling, performances, music, combat, graphics, art direction, like across the board I think it is stellar

I think it is one of the best games of the year

I think Santa Monica Studios is one of the best developers in the world. Like I have nothing bad to say about the game

when it comes to those aspects. The stuff that is

complex for me is where the game goes in terms of

story

And it's not even that I have this is this is what's weird for me

I don't even have problems with the story that this game tells or where it

Takes things because I think it's really good, and I think Kratos has a fantastic character arc in this game

And it's really satisfying I like how his storyline ends

I like how Atreus's storyline ends, and you're already making faces and I think in some things

I'm just thinking I think for me in you, and this is why I wanted to touch on this up front

You and I hypothesized and theorized about this game so much

drastically more than the average person who played this game. And I think that

Warped our perception of what this game would be and I'm curious if you feel the same way because I had a lot of

expectations and ideas for what I thought this game would be and

A lot of those did not come to pass and that's not a bad thing

But I just had my extra expectations subverted by the game we got instead I

Yeah, we definitely we talked about

This game all the time

Every day practically leading up to its release especially coming off of playing every God of War game the year prior

so we were in the Kratos zone and

We both read Neil Gaiman's Norse mythology book like we were we were in the weeds man and

we were super stoked to play this game and

See how they would portray the events of Ragnarok so many pieces were set up in 2018

It's like how do we get to Ragnarok and how does that how do those dominoes fall?

and

But I did go into the game

Because I really wasn't watching the trailers or reading too much or anything outside of just conversation with friends

You watched one trailer because I nagged you to basically. Yeah, so I

was I did go into the game fully willing to accept whatever narrative they wanted to tell and oh

The narrative they tell is good. I just don't think it necessarily works that well

in a video game. I'm sure it will make a fine season of TV someday.

I don't know if it works. I think my biggest problem is that it doesn't work

that well as a Ragnarok story.

This is... When you invoke

Ragnarok in Norse mythology, my

brain immediately starts running rampant with

big, big ideas of what's gonna happen.

And things are gonna hit the wall

and it's gonna be, like I was in a lot of ways

expecting this game to be like 30 hours of chaos.

And they can't keep up that pace and I understand that.

But what it really was at the end of the day,

and this is why I'm not upset with the game or mad at it

because I think it's my own expectations that let me down.

This is very much a sequel to God of War.

Like duh, duh.

Like this is what I would say.

The first game felt very small in scope, had limited characters, and broadened the number of characters involved in the game.

But they at all times keep Ragnarok character-driven, character-focused, and about smaller, intimate

moments rather than the grand Norse world around Kratos and Atreus.

that sense I feel like it's a smart move that they went in with this game and it is very much a sequel

to 2018's God of War. So I can't, I think I was expecting this to be more like God of War 3 levels

of craziness. Like that was the expectation I had coming into this and it's not and that's fine

but I was expecting a larger scale and then and like and the thing is like this game still has

some of the craziest moments I've ever seen in any video game. Like it's a... I... Does it? I mean,

yeah, the Thor opening, that opening boss fight is one of the greatest boss fights I think in the

history of video games, if I'm being honest. It is... it's awesome. It's so good. Mechanically,

yeah, it's good, and they do some really great creative stuff. They go some Hideo Kojima level,

just breaking immersion type things. Well, he throws Kratos out in the middle of the lake,

and then he has to call his axe, so he's like the first whole phase of the fight. All he has is his

fists and he's fighting Thor and he's waiting for the Zaks to get to him and

then it eventually skyrockets into his hands. It's so cool. It's a great start.

And then they never get back to that. They never catch up to their

initial momentum. They try so hard to fight every expectation of both Ragnarok itself as a event in Norse mythology and their own pedigree as a studio and their the shadow of their previous games looming over them with God of War 3 specifically I think and just if we're gonna bring it all down we can't do that how do we elevate and mature that and they fight it actively the whole way and I don't think they win that fight in the end. And it's not that I would have preferred this game to be bonkers balls to the wall the entire time. It's more I think they just miscalculated where to take it narratively and gameplay wise. I think there's a huge disjointedness there. A lot of this does not match up and I think it falls flat.

I would disagree with that and this is where I think our expectations were the problem is because a lot of the things you're saying like

The game doesn't match up with the story like with the storytelling and things like that

Dude, Kratos doesn't want any of this to happen in the game, and that is you are reminded of that constantly

He does not want to warn. He does not want Ragnarok. He says all right

He does he is not trying to engross himself in this stuff

He's trying to protect his kid

and he's trying to make sure they're safe and he doesn't want anything else to come to pass where he cannot help it and

And then he goes on and kills

everyone not really like he pretty has to he

He's always like I've been put in this situation where I have to kill people

He is not doing it. He is not doing it from a the difference is his motivation

He's not doing it from a god of war three place of crater

He's like I want to tear down the pantheon. Yeah, I want to kill you all. You're all corrupt. You all need to die

You're gonna die at my hand. It's a totally different thing. He's thrust into these situations against his will and it's like well

What's he gonna do? Of course? I mean he gets attacked by

Yes, by Heimdall. Of course. He's gonna fight back. Of course. He's gonna like and then I think that is a huge huge

issue

I mean that's like in- Heimdall? The Heimdall situation? No, no, no, just Kratos the whole

We don't want Ragnarok to happen. We're masters of our own fate and then Ragnarok happens

And they're not masters of their own fate until the very end of the game after Ragnarok has happened

After Atreus leaves and then it's the adventures of Kratos and Freya

Which is actually where the narrative and the gameplay aligned for the first time in the entire game

To like I know coming from me this is gonna sound

Like of course so obvious but like there is a lunar narrative dissonance here

We're just like I don't want to kill anyone and then you go kill everyone. Yeah, it's it's like

The whole game it's kind of like a Loy in horizon. Oh, I have no friends

I'm a loner and then she has all these friends and she's mean to them and it's just like I

don't like this

version of

Kratos paired with this gameplay because it's like well, I guess I gotta go over here and do that

Even though I'm actively saying I'm fighting fate and I do make my own decisions and then every decision they make leads to the fate

That was predicted

What how many instances in this game are there where Kratos I guess is going out of his way

To be the aggressor. I'd say it's almost non-existent

He's always though he's always on his back foot like and he's the one getting attacked and he just has to defend himself

Like, there are not instances where he has old Kratos in this game and he's going at people, necessarily.

That's not the problem, it's just more the gameplay side of it.

It's just like, well, guess we gotta kill everybody, but he's just talking about how

he doesn't want to kill anybody or go to war.

And by the end of the game he's a general again.

It's just, they kinda, it's like they just beat you over the head with "he doesn't want this, he doesn't want this, now for 30 hours go and do this."

And I'm just not feeling it until the end of the game.

You sound like me with The Last of Us Part II.

In a weird way.

Because those two games are very similar mechanically of what they're trying to do with you play

as these characters and now are you in their shoes.

The only time it lines up is at the end where it's him and Freya going off saving the realm

and saving the people and actually being good gods. Gods that people look up to and like Odin

said in the speech after you get the spear, you know, a god that people pray to and worship and

things like that. Like Kratos can do good for people. That's when it lines up because suddenly, well, these bad guys are in this realm and I've got to clear this out to save these people in the realm or put this part of the realm back together. Suddenly everything lines up as soon as the conflict is removed from "Oh my gosh, how do we avoid fate?" It's when Kratos, which he has this good arc of, realizing that he can be something different, and that is a good god. Which, I mean, arguably he was that in the last game, but he just didn't realize that for himself. He hadn't forgiven himself for what he'd done.

Sure. And this game, I think, is about him, if the

The last game was about verifying that his character is now different.

This game is about him learning to accept that for himself and forgive himself and realize that he is different from who he used to be.

I want to tug on one thematic thread throughout this game, which is fate.

We've talked about this a couple times.

This would be the one element of the game that I did have problems with for multiple reasons.

One reason would be that it does really beat you over the head with this idea constantly.

fate fate fate like the whole game is hinges on this largely because of what happened at the end at the last game with Kratos seeing

his own death and then Atreus seeing his death and so like and that's kind of a weird part in this game too where

Atreus is freaked out by something that Kratos already knows

but us as the player know that he knows and it's like can we just get everybody on the

Same page here and like eventually that happens, but that's kind of a strange point for me as a player because you have

Knowledge of what each of these characters have knowledge of but they don't know that themselves

Mm-hmm, but the fate thing for me was something they already

Maybe not to the degree that they do in this game obviously

But it's something that's touched on a lot throughout God of War 2 and Kratos

Invokes it a couple times most noticeably when they go to find the fates of the Norse realm

Because he's like well

"I've found fates before, let's just do that again."

And he has a couple moments like that throughout the game where he's like,

"Well, you know, I don't care what fate says, I've defied fate before."

He mentions it periodically, but it really was, for this game to be all about

just that three line thread of "our fate is what we make it,"

it's like, "Okay, but we've kind of done this God of War arc before,

we've touched on a lot of this stuff with Kratos,

and now it's just like we're bringing Atreus through these same things that

that Kratos already learned.

And like even today I sent you a article from

I forget who it was from, I think maybe Washington Post and Eric Williams was interviewed and asked about

if it was ever even considered that they would kill Kratos in this game. He's like, "Oh no, that was nothing that was ever even close to being on the table."

And it's like so, with that in mind they really are just

this idea of fate being something that Kratos can

upend and like he has a say in his own destiny is really just

ground that they've already tread within this series and I get that that was ground that was

Tread 15 years ago and a lot of people like you and I aren't as familiar with that

so and that since I think it's fine, but

Us having briefly God of War 2 last year. I think it stood out to me a little bit more is

something we had already been through and I felt like it was rehashing something that we had already kind of

Gone through with Kratos

It's like an episode of that so Raven where they saw their future and they actively try to fight it

and in the end they get to it anyway and

Well you have to I think

That's the problem with this game as a whole - it's literally called

God of war ragdoll and the whole game is them like we can't have Ragnarok happen

It's like well, I know Ragnarok is gonna happen because it's on the title of the box

Yeah, and I will touch on I think the event of Ragnarok within the game as well, but the

this whole the game starts with like

We gotta like find tear to like figure out what to do and how do we change fate or whatever and then they find a new?

Prophecy like a trace is how you're finding prophecies

I was like, ah, look we have a different version of fate where we win and yes, it's like

Well, why do we keep chasing the thing that we say we don't?

Need that actually has no control over our life. I did like the prophecy of him

Ending up aligning with Odin. I like that

Because that freaked him out a lot less so of him being the champion of the army of armies or whatever

He's like, I think this is me. I like I like the idea when he goes and helps out him

Yeah where he goes to help out because that's like classic nor stuff - it's like he has no family left

So he goes and he lives with the Asgardians.

I like that a lot.

- That's the other part of the fate

that this game really struggles with,

is dealing with the Norse pedigree

and how do they subvert those expectations.

Because we have things like Loki and Odin

having some sort of relationship, Loki and Thor.

The way they do Loki and Thor

is actually super smart and great.

That's awesome. - I really like it, yeah.

- That's wonderful parents.

- Sending them on little adventures.

it was exactly like the old Norse stories that we read.

And so you have those expectations and fate itself of how do we do this? There's some really cool

subversions with mythology there and I think that was more engaging than subverting the idea that

you know Kratos has to go kill all these gods. It was more interesting to me like how do they take

Is it Seder? No. Who's the fire dude?

- Sertur. - Sertur.

I knew it was something like that.

Like having Sertur become Ragnarok,

that was an interesting, really cool way they used that

to subvert that part of the prophecy.

That was fun.

And the things with freeing Freya,
Odin looking for things, it's just,
they had more fun, I think,
manipulating the north side of it
than actually manipulating their own studio
and God of War previous expectations over it.
And it just, I think the game really struggles
and it's disjointed in a lot of places that way,
narratively speaking.

The one thing narratively we really haven't touched on
is Atreus.

- Well, okay, so this is what I wanna do.

I wanna go down the full cast of characters
in this game. - Oh my gosh.

- And briefly talk about each of their arcs.

Not all of them, like again, because I feel like this is just the easiest way to touch on the
narrative threads.

And let's just start with Kratos, because duh, and we've talked about Kratos a lot.

Is there anything else you want to say with him? Because I feel like...

I love where he ends this game. I think his ending of this game is so well earned.

It's one of the best moments of either of these games.

For all my problems with this game, I do truly love the final 30 minutes of this game.

It's excellent and that final scene with him and Atreus and Loki will go Atreus will stay and
points to himself like it's so

Powerful and good and him having the final moment where he sees the final prophecy and he
realizes like oh my god

Which is painted by fine wife

Yes, which was painted by his wife like it comes full circle, and it's so

Masterfully done. It's so good. I

Love how they in Kratos

Like as far as like expect expectations being subverted

They didn't do anything with Kratos in this game that I didn't expect like I did not think he would die. I thought

scave like

Them setting up a trace to be the new protagonist another get like a lot of these things I expected in some ways

but I'm totally fine with how they set it all up and Kratos is here now and

He's they can use him whenever they want him to get want to again like and I like that and I don't know

I don't know what they do with him moving forward or maybe we can talk about this at the end

Like where does the series go from him? You're broad strokes stuff

But yeah, D. I don't know how much you have to say about Kratos

No Kratos

The end is definitely earned. I think

there's

Him learning

To be a dad to a man like a young man instead of the father to a boy

I think is a very good

Arc for him personally and those moments do pay off because there are different moments in the story into gameplay where?

you know he tries to do something the way he would have done it in 2018 or even in previous god of war games and

That doesn't necessarily work

And so it's learning to adjust and how to be a better father a better general a better friend

Learning how to trust his son. Yeah trust his son, trust people around him, earn forgiveness and trust amongst his own peers

That elevates him to the status of general. I think those things do end up paying off personally for Kratos

He's definitely

The strongest character in the game and that makes sense. He's the lead character. He's the main person so you

Kratos

Earned good boy Kratos good job other other scene that stands out two best scenes at the game the end scene

Obviously the opening scene with Thor and Odin and all them is great, too

but was like emotional impact moments that when they're on in hell after dealing with Fenrir the wolf and then they're talking there and

They're talking after it's the first time they've come together after a trace has run off the Asgard

Yes, and he comes back and they finally get a moment to talk and Kratos is like basically

"I'm sorry for what I did. Kind of pushed you out and made you run off." And he's like,

"Don't be sorry, Dad. Just be better." It's like, "Oh, it's so good! It's so perfect!"

And even Kratos thinks it's perfect too because he looks over and he smiles at him. He's like,

"I taught him that. I know that. I know where you got that from."

- And that section of gameplay where they do come back together,

which does feel really good because you've spent so long with Atreus. Oh my god. That moment is

probably my favorite in the game where it is we're gonna try it my way dad which

is kind of the first half of the game is we're gonna do everything Atreus says

and then when that fails Kratos is like now we're gonna do it my way and then

when that fails it's like they come together to come up with the solution

that is the that is my favorite part honestly of the whole game that whole

section with Fenrir and it pays off the beginning of the game too with the dog

death like having that actually be the way Fenrir is big boy is great so that

actually that whole section has a lot of payoff well it makes the ending that

much more impactful too when you do see them split apart like to agree to like

a trace is like I gotta go I got to do my own thing now cuz it's like oh we've

just had this resolution and you guys have come back together and you know how

to work together now better than you ever have before and so it's like it does feel painful to like see Atreus go away even though he'll get his own game where he's turning into a wolf boy running around everywhere. Let's talk about Atreus a little more obviously and I want to talk about let's talk about him on a gameplay front too in addition to his arc. There's a there's so much to touch on here. First thing I'll say is Sunny Soljek does a great job in this game. I think his performance is way better in this game than even the last one he's really coming to his own it is an actor do you disagree I didn't like it really I didn't think it was better I thought he did really really good honestly yeah I have a lot of beef with the trace in this game actually I want to ask this this is kind of the thing that I think well he's headstrong he's a teenager like I I think a lot of his motivations in his headstrongness in this game makes sense the one thing that I think I struggled with the most is them justifying the reason to their decision to make him Loki because when that it was it was revealed at the end of the last game that brought a lot with it and you immediately have a lot of ideas in your head of what this means what this will look like and I think they'll still explore what that looks like for him in future games which he'll clearly be in but I did not get there's There's, there was, I was waiting in this game for there to be a God of Mischief moment with him.

And that really never comes to pass in any sort of way.

Like I kept thinking about this, like okay, if he's Loki, Loki's like, Loki's the God of Mischief, Loki's gonna screw things up, Loki's a liar, Loki's playing all sides, Loki's, and his only real connection to Loki is he turns into Animal Boy.

That's about it in a lot of ways and then some of the other things we talked about like him

Going on adventures of Thor and being tied to the Asgardians, but even the way they tie him to the Asgardians is kind of in a weird

Roundabout way where Odin's yeah Odin's trying to use him for his own gain, so it's like and it's different

But I wanted I wanted some of those classic core character elements of Loki to be more present in Atreus

And that never really happened so by the end of the game. I was like okay. Well. Why did they? make him Loki within this Norse realm? I don't know. I don't know if they really justified it within this game, that decision at the end of the first game.

I think it's just for cool effect. Atreus is so, I think, one note. I don't think Atreus is any different from the start of the game to the end of the game. The only thing that's different for him is he actually has to face the consequence of some of his choices, which mostly reveals itself in his relationship with arguably his best friend, Sindri, completely being dissolved. But Atreus, beyond that, I don't think Atreus really changes all that much, grows all that much. He kind of gets off every mistake he makes except for the Sindri stuff. He has a little girlfriend by the end. He gets to go off and find and save the Giants. He was buddies with Thor for a little bit. He is really no consequence for his relationship with Odin or sneaking off and doing any of that stuff. There was no confrontation with Heimdall for him. His dad ended up dealing with that. Atreus just makes his own decisions from the very beginning of the game and just gets the happy ending minus one friend. Two friends I guess for Brock. I will say Atreus plays a key role in sort of mending the relationship between Freya and Kratos and Freya and himself. Like he him sneaking off to go to speak to her not that that ends well in the moment like she separates the two of them and He has to end up going back to Brock and Sindri's house afterwards, but he kind of sets into motion...

Sure, sets it into motion.

Sure.

I'll give him that.

Sets it into motion, then becoming peaceful with Freya once again, which obviously becomes hugely important because she's even more pivotal in this game than she was in the first game.

So I just...

So you've got all that.

Plus his just boyish tendencies of just bull rushing into things, which I suppose young men do.

But then you take all of that narratively, which I'm just not super a fan of, and then you pair it with, I don't know, ten plus hours of gameplay just as Atreus, and it's like - So let's talk about that.

Did you - It's so - at first I was like, "Aw, this is cool."

This was the Ellie and Winter moment of like, "Aw, cool, I get to play as the other character.

is fun it's the first time that's ever happened in the whole series that you've

played as a different character mm-hmm you have never played as another

character I mean it's cool at start and then you're like oh these sections are

kind of long oh his combats just not as good the one that is the one absolutely

overstays its welcome is Ironwood Ironwood and I think what's it the climb

up to Asgard I think is I get it bad I was like nails on a chalkboard he just

I didn't see that's like only like a 15-minute section I feel like oh he does

keep talking it felt like an hour he was like oh it's so tall oh I hope I don't

fall oh here Raven help me I don't know I was like dude you've got to stop and

this wasn't like Nathan Drake making a joke this was like you've got to shut up

kid I can't take it anymore he's just his sections were far too long and I

think take up too much and it's you know in games where you play as a different

character Metal Gear Solid 2 the Last of Us part 2 which are probably the most

prevalent recent examples those are either all the way or like halfway

through the game the thing with the trace is they keep inserting them and

And there's even a part as they have to his I mean his moments are key to the game like I get it

but it's just so

They're too long like there the ironwood is lengthy

but they have to establish angry Bota as a character in his relationship with her and have him learn more about the

Giants and all like there are like I get it

But did I need to sit on the back of a yak for 30 minutes getting fruit?

Yeah, that's you know, no, but that's like care that I need to climb the wall could Odin have just teleported me up there

I like climbing the wall

So I don't have as much of an issue with that one

The wall was important because that established later on like the little the townspeople down below and when Odin starts to destroy

Who cares about the townspeople the mid guardians at the base of Asgard Wow

You are Kratos circa God of War 3 right now.

Oh my gosh, who like, what do they do narratively?

Atreus learns to curse?

This is the callback.

Establish how bad of a guy Odin is so his granddaughter understands?

They pull the Fast and Furious I'm an evil villain card.

It's just like they can be entirely cut out.

Goodbye.

What they were was the representation of denizens of Asgard that were not fleshed out as much

within the Greek God of War games.

Because in the Greek God of War games, I mean you run across everyday people and you see them--

And then you murder them and get orbs from them.

The most in God of War 1, I know, for sure.

But in God of War 3 you're killing people, I mean you're destroying the whole pantheon

and the whole realm.

You're giving the people free will.

Arguably Kratos does more for the people in God of War 3 than he does here.

I don't know when he kicks uh when he kicks

when he kills a Poseidon and then he kicks him down to the base of the of the

The Mount Olympus so that he floods the whole area. I don't know about that one

Or when he kills Helios and the Sun goes dark

Ah, oh the night they now have free will but it's dark forever here

Remember when he put the Sun back in Chains of Olympus good times good times

It's I have a trace. I just was sick of by the end. I was happy to see him go

I was the father who was ready for the kid to leave to go to college

So what you're saying is you're not excited for Cory bar logs a trace the college years video game. I

am not

Eager to play as a trace again. No because I think his combat is far shallower

They need to do a lot more with him combat wise he doesn't have

The heft the impact he just doesn't feel I don't mind that I don't mind them having him feel

completely different from Kratos because he should the problem is just that

bow and arrow combat in a game that's primarily

Centered around hand to hand or yeah, melee combat just does not it didn't feel work

It just did not feel good the whole game the whole game was designed obviously this game was based off of

the same

Groundwork is the previous Scott of War game, so they didn't like up-end everything drastically with this from a combat level, so it was still on that

Basis that they made the first time and they're like well, we'll make Atreus a playable character, and he's primarily a

Bow-boy, and yeah, it's just

Unfortunate yeah, I'm not a fan of Atreus. Okay, let's shift from talking about protagonist to

Antagonist and I want to start with Thor

Because I think Thor might be the best character in the game other than Kratos rip the best arc

Huh, rip the real one. Yeah

rip the oh

That's that's the biggest

There's there's lots of unpack with Thor and I can't separate it from how he dies

I don't know if you feel the same way because he gets such a good arc in this game and then just boom gone and

That's part of the viciousness of Odin that they're trying to establish but at the same time

Like, it's just too quick.

I think they waste it at the end.

They build, they build, they build, they get to it.

And then they just waste it.

It's just gone.

And then he's just gone.

There's no resolution.

It's like, "Aha, I will stand dead."

Yeah, I thought he would at least get a moment where he tried to fight, like throw blows with Odin or something like that.

Or maybe he's the ally temporarily for the fight.

And then he dies in the middle of battle.

Sure, I'm fine with Thor dying. I'm not fine with him dying immediately after being realizing,

"Oh, I can be a good dad." He basically has the God of War 2018 arc of How to Be a Dad.

No, he has the God of War 2 arc of I Have Daddy Issues and I Don't Know How to Deal with Them. Yeah. So Thor, wonderful performance, great charisma, character, weight in combat,

It's all there.

Both of his boss fights among the best in the game, if not the best in the game.

First one's the best in the game, for sure.

The second one I'm cooler off.

Second one's a little rehash, but everything that are saint.

Those boss fights are amplified by everything him and Kratos are screaming at each other the whole time, which makes them so much better.

I do think the Kratos, or the Thor in Atreus Adventures, while cool narratively and just fun to experience, mechanically I think Thor is pretty lackluster there as an ally, even though he's not technically your ally there, he's just using you to find this mask thing. Yeah, they don't want to make it to where he's just, you know, voiced and everything, and yes.

But I think he could have done a little bit more and also having him smash the wall all the time is just like, all right, I get it. Like you break things for me. Like what end of day, they got to go into video gamey territory, which kind of, yeah, but they do a good job with him, with Magne and Modi and the doubt they out. What do you call it? The consequences

of that where, you know, he beat a Modi, I think, I think Modi is the one that he beats within an inch of his life because they failed to kill Kratos. And then his daughter...

Threwd.

Threwd. I knew it was a th. That's an interesting relationship, although Threwd I'm not as thrilled about just her little thing of "I'm gonna be a Valkyrie."

And yeah, I feel like she doesn't get a lot of depth other than "I want to be a Valkyrie,

I want to prove to my mom and dad I can fight." I think Threwd is more interesting as a character

based on how Thor and Sif view her rather than her herself if that makes any sense because yeah

it's more the people around through to then through herself yeah because through to them represents

uh another opportunity to not yeah second chance an opportunity not to fail weird weird like Atreus

is the second chance for Kratos. Whoa. So that's cool. I like Sif in Thor's dynamic

and like the story bits you pick up while being in Asgard about how they're gonna quit drinking and stuff and then you see Thor backslide and that's has a narrative heft and weight to it. Like those... The whole bar sequence is great. The bar fight is pretty awesome.

So all in all Thor's cool but I feel like he's underused.

Not enough screen time.

Yeah Thor's at the beginning of the game and the end of the game with like a cameo in the middle.

He gets in it a lot when you know Atreus is running around Asgard.

That's kind of the same for all of the Asgardians though.

They're not in it.

Like even Odin has the one sequence where he shows up like you mentioned after Thor gets the spear and then he pops in there and that's about really the only time you see him other than the instances where Atreus is actively going to Asgard to interact with them.

Yes.

So it's just a bit of a bummer that he's just not in it as much as you would have hoped.

And that, this is where I'll admit an expectation definitely let me down.

I think Thor and Kratos needed to interact more than twice.

- Yeah. - Absolutely.

- Well, the whole reason that first scene is so good in the game is not even because, I mean, the writing's great and the performances are great, but it's just the tension around all of them being in the same room. - I've got need.

- Yeah, it's, yes, the reason that sequence is good is because that's the only real time they're all together the entire game until the very end.

- And the whole game, there's a huge visual reminder of your fight with him at the start with the frozen lightning bolt.

- It's awesome. - And then you don't see him until the end of the game.

And it's just kind of a letdown.

And then that fight itself is a letdown

'cause it is a rehash, an easier rehash of the first fight.

- Here's the thing I will say,

If Kratos and him cross paths too often throughout this game, I don't think they could have made

Thor as good a character as they did.

Like I think a lot of his character arc does hinge on him being separated from Kratos and somewhat isolated, and then you've seen how he's abused by Odin as well.

So in that sense, the way that he is presented in the game and the way his character comes across I think is it was kind of necessary in some ways but but it's all

happening off the controller like there's no yeah it's all just cutscenes

with him and they take him to a good spot but it just feels like I want a bit

more tension the whole the whole 2018 they talk about Thor the whole game and

and then you fight him twice. Like there should have been a third fight or something. Just...

Ugh.

Here's what I'm thinking in my head is

what if they would have, and they weren't going to undo this because it was a big pillar of the last game,

but what-- I think they were kind of limited

with what they could present because they were tied to this idea of no-cut camera. Like, okay,

what if we abandoned that and like, you see a cutscene with Kratos and Tracius and then it says like, "Meanwhile, over in Asgard,

You cut to see different cutscenes of different characters in different parts of this realm and you get to see what's happening

like you're only ever presented what is happening through the eyes of Atreus or Kratos and

That's it

And in some ways that makes them more impactful as characters because you're only following their journeys

But that's that's the same problem though of it not happening in gameplay. Like yeah, I guess

and do I really care that Thor is at the bar drinking or

running around killing people

Like, no, that's not progressing things.

So for his character, at least, the time he makes progress is when he's with Atreus.

So I just, I, Thor just felt partially like a missed opportunity.

Mostly not enough screen time, but when he is there, it's great.

And he definitely is, life was cut too short.

By Odin, which we need to also talk about.

We've talked about Odin here a little bit.

I like Odin a lot in this game. I like his performance a ton.

I think he actually steals just about every scene he's in.

I think Odin's performance by, uh, it's Richard Schiff, I believe.

I think he steals virtually every scene he's in in this game.

I don't like Odin's motivation, which is just, "I need this mask!

I need this MacGuffin item! Please go get this mask!"

It's like, "Well, what does this mask do?"

I don't know!

I just wanted!

"It gives me knowledge of everything."

"To control my fate."

He thinks that's what it does, he doesn't even really know.

He's just like, there's this tear, there's this thing, yeah, he had the one peak and it messed up his eye.

So like, he has an idea, but he doesn't know.

So you're like, chasing this item, which will do a mysterious thing which isn't really contextualized.

Again, it's kinda like Fast and Furious there.

It's like, "We gotta prevent them from getting this weapon!"

It's like, "Well, what does the weapon do?"

I don't know!

But, they can't have it!

And so and then the mask is based off of the mask

like the whole is

The best piece that's the best tidbit in all of Ragnarok is that it is wholly inspired by Jim Carrey's the mask

Which is very crazy

everything everything involving the mask I

Just did not I like I and I think I think Odin's character motivations make sense like where do we go once we die?

What happens to us like there has to be something beyond like he's?

he he's plateaued within the Asgardian Pantheon and he's

concerned about what's after and

He's not concerned with the same things that everybody else is concerned about it's like as a character

I think it makes sense for him, but it's just too tied to this boring

MacGuffin which is the mask and his obsession with that and

That that was my main issue with Odin everything else with Odin. I think is

He's so cunning he said you really do like I don't know about you

But when you were doing the Asgardian sections of this game as a trace was it starting to go through your head like is

Odin really no bad like chance it was it was for me like like has

He been properly

conveyed to us? Has Mimir been lying? Like, what if Frey is all- and at the end of the day I knew,

like, no, that can't be true, but like, he is- he's a convincing liar in this game, I will say.

He is the one character that is most bound by Norse mythology here and expectation. There's

No chance for him necessarily to break outside of,

I am Odin, I seek all knowledge,

I will hurt and manipulate anyone to get said knowledge,

and that's all I care about.

Like in Norse myth, everything Odin does

from hanging himself to the eye thing to like transforming,

all is about seeking knowledge

about how to prevent his death or ascend beyond that

in the case of this game.

So that's the one thing that they don't really break.

Now they put their own flare on it with Richard

and the performance and then this mask concept

and things like that and the combat and things.

But he's the most bound by it.

And I think that,

I think it doesn't leave a lot of opportunity

for his character to have like a gripping arc.

I kind of fairly early in the game knew what Atreus and Kratos were going to do

with Odin at the end of the game. I did not call Sindri becoming a cracked

villain and totally smashing him which is fantastic and totally shocking.

We need to talk about them. We'll get to them but I knew at the end of

the game, I knew fairly early because all of this talk of we control

fate and we don't want to kill all the gods." It's like, "All right, they're going to make

the choice to spare Odin." So I knew they were going to come up with a way to spare him but also

contain him. It's actually, I know you haven't seen the show, but it's very reminiscent of Avatar The Last Airbender and the solution that they come up with in that show to deal with the main antagonist. And so I knew, I, that was, I was like okay, cool. I guess that was also part of the thing was I knew that was where they were gonna go, so I was already bound by the fate of their decision. Well a lot of things in this game like we talked earlier about the whole Fenris sequence, it's like oh no, I forget what the wolf's name is before. Grey something or garbage or something. There's a G. Yeah, yeah. It's on the tip of my tongue, maybe I'll think of it. Grom or Gram, I don't know, something like that. Anyway, like that whole section too, it's like, oh, I know what's gonna happen here, they're gonna put the soul of Fenrir, Garm. Like as soon as Fenrir died, Garm, that's it, thank you. Yeah, as soon as Garm shows up and they're like, oh no, we don't know how to kill this thing, it's like, well, I mean, even before that, it was like, as soon as Fenrir died at the beginning and you see the soul flight flow down, it's like, well, that will be relevant And then you meet a giant is the only one that sees it yeah, and then you meet a giant wolf And you're like well, I think I know how this will be relevant once again, so big boy There's a lot of things that there was a lot of things that were obvious in this game

Not only because of just how the story was being told and you could easily guess what was going to happen

but then there is the weight of like you and I read a lot of

Norse myths, and it's like okay. Well

This is things that have to happen here like

Like even when I was talking to when I was talking to you as you were playing the game

You're like I think I'm ready for Ragnarok. I'm like well

What things have you not done yet that are key to Ragnarok you're like I haven't seen Surtur yet, and I'm like

You have to do that

Yeah, like like there are things that need to happen in this game in order for Ragnarok to come to pass and for

This story to be told and I mean Odin's death and whatever containing him like you said is not one of those things necessarily

But there is a lot of stuff in this game. That's like well

It just has to happen I guess if they're telling the Ragnarok story

So but that is actually the other part of Odin's character that I figured out not fairly early

But not super close necessarily to the incident itself, but the great twist

which is that he is tear the entire time and

Don't worry tears alive somewhere though. No my gosh. We'll talk about oh my god, but the the idea was

We haven't seen Odin transform yet. And that is that's a pillar of his characters that he travels as the pillar is him having Ravens

Yes, so he like transforms and takes on the appearance of other people and when you go through the cast of characters

You're like, well, it doesn't leave a lot of options for who he would actually be actually there's only one option which is tear

Which was the outset of the game which was planted firmly in Atreus's head by

Odin and so it didn't yeah, I was like oh, okay, so when that twist happens

The reveal I wasn't surprised. I was has Brock dies well

Yeah, I Brock dying was more shocking than the fact that Tyr was Odin. Well somebody had to die and it wasn't gonna be Kratos

Yeah, and it wasn't gonna be a trace. So so that that was definitely a

situation where

burying ourselves in Norse mythology

Bit us a little bit for shock and surprise. So yeah, like can we can we act let's actually we were talking about it now

Let's talk about Brock's death because I think that is my biggest problem with it. Is that

Ragnarok has to happen. So of course the stakes have to be raised. So it's like well people have to die

But they kill off the most expendable characters on the cast Brock dies

I don't want to and that's not me selling Brock short. I think they do it Brock and Sindri

They give so much characterization in this game like the threefold compared to the last game honestly. They do a lot with them

So they they are firmly in the spotlight throughout this game and Brock specifically the whole Section with the mermaid and stuff and getting the spear made they do a great job

With his character arc in this game so him dying is not something. That's like. I don't want to say I don't care about

But he is compared to the likes of you know

Freya or Kratos or Atreus or like the core main

Mimir I feel like like there are some people that you just feel like

We're never on the table to die because like well. We can't kill Kratos. He's the main protagonist

Well, we can't kill Atreus because he has to get his own spin-off games

Well, we can't kill Freya because she has to take over as the sidekick for Atreus once we write him out

Well, we can't kill Mimir. He contextualizes the whole world that you're in. It's like

It just felt like no one was ever really on the table to die of like the core four or five characters because they were

Too integral and so they're like well who's a little expendable Brock

Freya, I guess we'll kill him too. We haven't talked about him

We'll just like then another dwarf so they can make your armor and stuff. Yes. Yeah, exactly

So I think that's the only thing that sucks about

The Brock's death is that it just felt like yeah. Okay sad he died. Okay, but I

Don't know. He is the most expendable person in the cast that they could have killed for shock value, I guess

Yes, I'll say this though. It is a payoff. I think that

Comes to pass that they set up well before 2018 came out with they had a little podcast series

Telling different nor stories and one of them was about a dwarf dwarf brothers

one of them died and one brother went into the well of souls and

Found only three of the four parts and that's why this one brother is blue

And so if you listen to that before 2018 you realize that that's Brock and Sindri and that's really cool. And then that

specific interaction of not getting all of the soul pieces back is integral to their little plot and

Fenrir and other stuff and so that actually is a pretty nice long payoff that I think works and they do they really

Give Brock like a killer moment

what's fascinating about that is

When and we found out about this later again, we're doing this a month or so after the games come out. So a lot of

A lot of information from Santa Monica studio has come out that was the one

Aspect of the three things of one of three things that Cory Barlock demanded had to happen in this game was that Brock has to

Die so when you talk about them setting that up a long time ago

Very much, so like that was

Like what were the three things he said there Brock dies Ragnarok happens in the crazy way dose yeah

so like that's

Brock being the one to die though. It's a little surprising but again, like you said they set that up that story in motion

Long long time ago would have been four or five years ago. So make sense while we're talking about the dwarf brothers

Let's talk about sundry as well

Dude gets cracked

Yeah, he does. What a performance honestly

Like he should have been nominated at the game awards because his transformation

is

Incredible and scary frightening

The character model his eyes. Yeah, I don't believe you've done it yet, but there is a funeral scene for Brock

That's kind of the games like true ending little side quest kind of like they did before

Obviously century shows up there

Man

What a performance. He's the die-hard man of this game it is

it's so good and

him showing up during Ragnarok both to break the wall and when he shows up

alone out of the Svarlheim gate it's like no more dwarves are dying for this

it's like yeah my gosh what up I mean I'm getting chills just talking about it

and then when he teleports out of nowhere and just smashes Odin's little

orb my dang man he's brutal I think the thing that's most shocking with him too

One of the moments we're not talking about is when after Brock does die you have that section where Kratos and Atreus go

To try to track him down and I don't know about you, but for me, I'm like, okay

So they're gonna you know, talk him down. They're gonna get him back on their side

They're gonna get him back to come back to the house and get him on board and okay. Well, we'll avenge Brock now

Well, and now he's like get away from me. I don't want to deal with you guys like and eventually he agrees to help

but it's not but it's because he knows it's for the larger good of

The Norse realm and not because he's trying to help Kratos or Atreus

He has nothing that he wants to do with them anymore

It's rough. It is rough and it's they do a really

Another it's another thing that's earned because early in the game when you're playing as Atreus for the first time or two

Sindri is your partner and it's established that the two of them have built a

really solid friendship in the intervening years and it's just

they really elevate Sindri and Atreus's relationship and so that is the one consequence Atreus has which is a

Atreus's decision led to the death of Brock and Sindri will never forgive him for that and

It's one of the most earned arcs and it's

Nuts and I loved it

Let's touch on Freya before we do I want to touch on Amir briefly because I don't think there's a lot to say other than

Just I love my mirror. I think he's maybe my favorite character in this entire game

I mean here's the best he's the best by far, and and I think they give him so many

They give him so many great moments in this game in ways that you wouldn't expect

I think of his whole side quests where it deals with him chaining up the whale like thing in the dwarven realm

Spartle time I think yeah like that's a great quest for him that flushes him out, and he kind of finds I

Think Kratos finds that him and Mimir are more

alike than he

Previously thought which makes them closer together and just the constant relationship between Kratos and me like they have a total bromance throughout this whole

game Kratos and Mimir

And Kratos a lot of its unspoken on Kratos his behalf

But when you read some of like I one of my favorite notes in the whole game

And I we talked about this when you first are playing it

But all of the journal entries in the game are written from the perspective of the character that you're playing as in that given moment

so like if you're playing is

Trey I saw the journal entries are written from like a trace wrote them and same with Kratos when you're playing as him and one

of the

Entry for Mimir from Kratos his perspective says something like he calls me brother and he is one of the only true people that I would like

Call but he's one of the only people that I would recognize as a brother or something like that's like oh

Cradles loves me here, dude like they are they're real tight in this game

And I love that mm-hmm, and I just think they have great rapport with one another

I just like everything everything that Mamere does and the role that he serves in this game

I know he is very much. Just like a traveling

Encyclopedia the talking head yeah, he is he's a talking encyclopedia that doles out knowledge of the North's realm

But he's so good and I forget his

Who plays him but his his performance is?

Fantastic I mean all the performances across the board like I said earlier

Alastair Duncan yes, Alastair Duncan. I yeah, I just wanted to say that I love

Mamere, and I don't know if you have anything else you want to add about him

Well apparently he's the voice of Alfred and quite a few Batman animated films interesting

Huh, no, I'm down this rabbit hole. Mimir's great. I just

You know, I could listen to him talk all the time

he is what he is like he doesn't do anything drastically new or different in this game, but I

Still he's one of my favorites a phrase the last character

I think that's I mean unless we want to talk about tear level more in a second

But phrase the last character that I think is really kind of important to discuss here briefly because she

Yeah, Queen of the Valkyries is the lack and she's

How did you feel about her resolution with Kratos and Atreus Freya is the best

We I'm curious about this for you because this is the one thing we I mentioned earlier that when we did our predictions episode

I was like, oh I think she'll eventually come around and realize that what Kratos did when I was like, nah, she'll never forgive, right?

Yeah, you're like she'll never forgive him she'll line with Odin she'll go against them to the death

And I'm like I don't think so like she hates

Odin more than she hates Kratos

So she'll find a common the the enemy of my enemy is my friend or whatever so she'll line with Kratos for those reasons

And that's kind of exactly what happens in there their relationship develops from that point

Obviously the point that by the end of the game they are

on very good terms and are friends essentially again,
despite what they're doing.

- They're like partners, not in the romantic sense,
but like true allies and partners in their quest
to save the realm.

Freya's arc is awesome, I love it.

From the very opening of the game to the middle
when you're in Alfheim and you're freeing her
from Odin's scraps, what a great gameplay section
and just segment of questing together and then fighting the kneadhog thing and freeing
the roots from the tree and then you do the side quest for her and the stuff from their
wedding day and those ornaments. Truly some of the best stuff. I texted you during that
part of the game and was like, "More Adventures of Kratos and Freya, please." And guess
what?

The post game is the adventures of Kratos and Freya.

That is where I think truly the narrative and the gameplay align and things are, it's
back to that 2018 lineup of just everything is going together and pushing toward the same
direction.

So the Freya Kratos combo of just being allies and her story there and her resolution, you
know to the point of giving up being in charge of generals her redeeming or
meeting with the Valkyries saving the people of her realm and of the Aesir and
the Vanir all good stuff Freya yes more please. I think the thing I like the most
about Frey and this is maybe this is selling her as a character short but I

I like how she plays off of Kratos as well because Kratos out of all characters in the game
Other than maybe Mimir. Freya is the only person that Kratos feels
like he can be vulnerable with to a degree and to be open with like he that whole section and
And what is the realm that they're on?

Vanahigh. Yeah, the whole section in Vanahigh where he's basically just opening up to her and be like, "I had a brother,

I had a former wife and a daughter, and I killed them." Like he tells her everything and he's never told anybody

these things in it. I mean, he doesn't even told Atreus and stuff. He may have told Mimir. He may have told Mimir, yeah.

That's what I said. Atreus definitely doesn't know that he has a dead sister. Yes, yeah, exactly.

And so like he, and it's been, he tells her these things because

He sees himself in her in a lot of ways and he feels like they've been on similar

Paths cradle sees himself in a lot of people in this game for two, but he empathizes with where?

Frey is at in the moment and he knows where she's at

He's been knows exactly where she's at and she's yeah, cuz that's the whole point. She's like you could never know

It's like that lose a child. He's like, oh, yes I could

And it's worse than what you're dealing with she's like what

So like he's I like I love how they play off of one another and I think that's what makes

Her stronger as a character in Kratos stronger as a character is that relationship and how in

How it ties the two of them together and how like you said by the end of the game

It does feel very earned when their partners and when they are

Going to be the new

Asgard the new Norse duo that's running around and rebuilding the realm together. Yeah, it's earned. It's great

She has a wonderful arc

in both games and it's total payoff and I'm so glad that she is the sidekick by

the end of it and it's fun man it's exactly what I wanted from the midpoint

of the game that's kind of what I was hoping we would get at some point and

I'm glad that it's basically though the postgame it's honestly save as many side

quests for the end as possible because then you can just hear dialogue between

Freyja and Kratos the entire time instead of...

Wow you're a Treyas hater.

I kinda am.

You're very much a Treyas hater.

a trans hater in Ragnarok I

love

It's a good thing you had daughters a daughter. I should say daughter a daughter one daughter

Another one on the way

To make on this podcast tonight. No to go along with Freya though. I briefly we've kind of done the rundown of all the characters

Maybe we'll touch on tears the only other one. I want to maybe flush out a little bit more and talk about before we do that

though I

think

All of the van aheim

Allies are so there yeah, but the cool one is the dude who jumps off and like takes to

Dragging down with him that guy rules. Yeah, did you do the quest for him? I?

Think so cuz he's alive. Oh, I did not do it then he survives and you save him

Okay, then that's free sick actually that the one it's the pig one follow the pig and she leads you to where he is

Okay, and it opens up Vannaheim has a whole open area

Like a whole I'm tired a lot. Yeah, I haven't gone back to Vannaheim yet. Okay

Yes, you follow the pig and you will cuz he's alive and it's a great quest and he's it's so funny when you get to

Him, it's great. No, that guy's cool

Frayer is just kind of frayers whatever there. Yeah, I don't know. I hate the dark elephant light elf

They're just the the proof that those yeah two species can live together. I like that too. I like that as a

Conceptual thing more than I think I like them as Carol I can tell you their names. Yeah, this is like oh cool

Okay, so as we do see that they the elves can coexist. Yeah

Freya is the big one that is pushed this front and center, but I feel like he does nothing in the game other than to

Freya only exists to

to die and to

Bring her back bring about resolutions for Freya's own character arcs that she goes through in this game

And that's about it. I'm fine with them using him. Everything else you're told about Freya is just you know

Mimir stories and things like that. Oh, I also love that the sword is his the talking sword is his. Oh, yeah

Yeah, that's like a fun little ah

Ingrid

That was his

And then other than that, there's the pig man

Which is a cool callback. I told you that that's one of the funniest. Oh, yes, I played man

I told you I told you this before I played the game and

That was the funniest thing is like obviously I was not spoiling the game for you because I had played it before you

But the one thing I did say is I ah the most important character in the game is the pig from the last

God of War game you're like oh wow

I can't wait to see that and then when you finally got to that point where he shows up

You're like oh my god. He is in this game

That was very fun. That was a good. That was a good

Got a moment type thing like he totally tricked me with that

Here's the final character, and I know this is the one you have a big goal rant plan for something all right

We can keep it condensed. It's not a big rant

I just... this is one of those things where I don't... and I understand the whole point

of it was that you were supposed to be surprised by Odin, but I don't like how all of the

marketing in this game is centered around Tyr.

It's the same way I don't like how PlayStation marketed The Last of Us 2 and they put fake Joel clips in parts of the game that he's not even in.

They're like "Oh yeah, here he is in Seattle."

It's like what no he's playing game. It's like dead spoilers for last was -

Like like they create fake cutscenes they create fake cutscenes for that game

They didn't do that go to that extent here with okay Ragnarok. Yeah

No, they didn't use actually there

But they put tier front and center and a lot of the early trailers for this game and like, you know

That that's gonna be a big huge pillar of the game up front

Like, when we did our predictions at podcasts, we were like, "Oh, well, we know, like, that's gonna be the first thing you do in the game, is you're gonna have to go get Tear."

And I was so excited to get him and then see how his character would evolve over the course of the game, especially when you first meet him, and he's like, "Nope, I'm a pacifist now.

I can't do this."

And it's like, "Okay, well, but I know that won't stay this way the whole game."

And it does.

- What if it did?

- But it only does that because he's Odin, which, again, makes sense, but I would say

I was... you put the carrot there and you dangle it in front of me and I thought there was gonna be a cool character arc for Tyr over the course of 15 to 20 hours and there wasn't.

And then it's just this twist of "Oh, I was never Tyr!" and then they come back around later "Oh, but the real Tyr is alive!"

It's like "Oh my god, I can't... there's nothing... what is there to explore with him now?"

And there is nothing to really explore, just in a couple scenes that you can come across.

And so it was, I felt like we were so robbed of having another great character in this

game that would have, because okay, I know you have so many of the same problems as me

that I'm expressing here, but if they would have done the thing we were expecting where Tyr is in the game and he comes out at first and he's like "No, I'm a pacifist, I'm not leading the armies into Ragnarok, blah blah blah blah blah." "

And then over the course of 15 to 20 hours he does get to that point where he's like "Nope, I realize I have to take up arms against Odin and Asgard and we march." "

Like, would you not have been like, "Yeah, let's go!" "

Like, it would've been great, it would've been awesome.

-Yeah, it would've been... -Would it have not?

-It would've been great. It would've been cool. -It's so good.

Especially because he's so... he is... he is like one of the biggest characters in the previous game, but you never see him.

So when you finally see him, you have all of these ideas and...

Like, "Oh my god, this is Tyr. I've heard so much about him." "

It's just... he's not that guy. Because he's literally not that guy.

But that's what sucks is like you wanted to meet the guy you've heard so much about.

Again, it just felt like total bait.

And it was like it was almost like an Iron Man 3 situation where all again all the marketing,

"The Mandarin's in this! The Mandarin! The Mandarin!" And I know you love that movie.

I was gonna say Iron Man 3 is actually a good movie.

But I guess that's similar to how I felt. It's like everything that was presented and

Like when you say Tyr is going to be in this game, Tyr was such a big part of the previous game.

Like again, you never met him, but he was invoked constantly. We knew so much about him from that game. And...

- Yeah. I...

So I've had a problem with Tyr from before this game came out. Because in God of War 2018, it is implied that Tyr is dead the entire time. And then the very first bit of marketing for this game is "Tyr's actually alive and we're gonna go find him!" I'm like, there

was no evidence to-

That's an easy thing to-

Sure.

That's an easy thing to- I will say it's an easy thing for them to handwave because even

Mimir says like, "Well who's the person who said Tyr's dead? Odin."

Odin.

"Well what do we know about Odin?" He's a big liar.

He's a liar. I get it.

So it's like-

After 25, 30 hours of Tyr is dead,

and the first thing is, "Psych, Tyr's alive.

"We're gonna go find him,

"and then we're gonna take on Ragnarok."

It's like, "Ah, okay, whatever."

And then for him to just flatline the entire game

as a pacifist soup maker, I'm like,

"Well, what a waste of a comeback."

And then the realization, "Oh, this is Odin,"

robs it even again.

It's like, "Ah, Tyr is dead."

And then you find out after you beat the game,

Tiers alive he was in this prison in Niflheim and

Then he pulls a princess peach from Super Mario Odyssey and just wanders the realms

like oh

Hello, I am tear. I'm my point. I don't even care that he's alive exactly

You know it's like it's like it's like because like I said like we want to get to know

That version of him, but he's not going to be in any of the cutscenes

He's not going to be like he'll just have little moments where he's like hello blah blah blah. Goodbye

That's like it. So it's such a it's such a waste. It's such a bummer

Let down it stings. They could have done something else with Odin. I think as if they wanted to make his

Transformative powers be in the game in some capacity. They still could have done that. I just don't think as

Tier. Making it tier, I'm curious at what point in development

They came up with the idea one not only to put tier in the game

It feels I guess what I'm saying is it feels like it was a late decision made by them

Like they got like half or two-thirds of way through development. They're like, hey

What if we did this with tier instead? Oh, that's a good idea

And then they like kind of work backward from there and revise or no, it seems pretty integral to the plot

It does

Pretty much up front. Yeah, they probably think more tier being actually alive was more of an afterthought

Yeah, perhaps because it because it is an afterthought in the game

so there's just so much they could have done if

Real tear was in this game a lot because I know I remember our discussion we had in our predictions episode where we're like

Oh tears gonna know who Kratos is tear has traveled the route is implied by the way

And it is and he still says that stuff to him when they first meet no

No, I'm saying like you rescue him from the prison

He's like I know you from somewhere and so I'm I assume that's peeled back as you visit him through the realms

Because he's like I'll remember it eventually well, but when I when I'm what but that's what I'm talking about is like he would have

He would have absolutely known who Kratos is and he would have had a reason to fear him

And like a lot of tears initial character traits when you first meet him in the game, and you don't know that he is Odin

Would have still stayed the same, but then they would have been more interesting to see expanded on if that was really

him

And that's what sucks

It's like you could have had if you could have had a version of Tyr

That knew Kratos as this that new Kratos was this god killer this evil person that destroyed the whole Greek world the world that he's visited

Before because he traveled between the realms and things like that and then he eventually

Realizes that no no this is a different person and like I was talking to you when the one trailer came out and hit that

scene of him and Kratos like

Dapping each other off. I was like yeah like that's what I wanted to see I wanted to see I wanted to see a

Got duo God of War tag team team up it Ragnarok

And never got that yeah, I think that's where your expectations definitely let you down a little bit. Yes

Well, didn't you think that too like oh my gosh, we're gonna have double God of Wars on the same team

No, but remember I was I was already bummed that he was being brought back to life from the outside

You did yeah, so I was never really like let's go tear. I think they could have done a lot of

interesting things between

tear there because to take Kratos being the god of war in the Greek pantheon was always a closely associated with

violence and chaos and like even when he was like I think about and just in in war like I like very I know that's

Goofy sounding, but I mean Kratos when he was the God of War that started God of War - he's sitting around as Spartan armies and

Destroying different Greek parts of the Greek world and stuff like that

Tyr was not like that as the God of War like he fought when he needed to and he would he led their armies when he

Needed to but he was not this

They they both had very different

Duties and they both carried out their duties as the god of war completely differently from one another and it would have been interesting to see

them kind of their

Ideologies and one is a former ideology for Kratos, but I I don't know just a lot of lost

Opportunities there I think between them

Ragnarok

What I talked about Ragnarok as event it felt rushed yeah, what a rushed

letdown of

of an entire segment. Just an absolute...

You might as well have not done it, because the whole game you talked about not wanting to do it anyway,

and it felt like you're like, "Well, I guess we gotta do it."

And it felt by the numbers. Like, kind of the things like, "What are the things we need to do in order for Ragnarok to happen?"

"Well, we gotta activate Surtur, we gotta blow the horn, there's a snake that's gotta fight a man with the hammer."

It's just like, "Did we do it? Check. Did we do it? Check. Did we do it? Check."

No, but then they don't but then they don't do certain things like I was shocked like where's Fenrir?

Fenrir is a huge part of Ragnarok. Why is it he attacking Odin? Like guess what? I'm angry Boden

I ride a wolf around like

it's

It was cool. The coolest look the coolest part of Ragnarok was actually

Activating Surtur and then fighting two Valkyries at once like that was the coolest part

I think the fight with Thor was and I think the fight with Odin

Was also pretty

And that was pretty good. It was a easy pretty good pretty basic not too different from Thor

Didn't have a dodge the aoes

When no where nowhere nowhere close to the same level of like holy crap moments with the Baldur fight though because that Baldur fight had

Like three or four different phases yeah start up on one level you're falling through the sky a trace of shooting arrows

I set him in the middle of sky. There's a giant there's a giant coming to life that's being reanimated

It was like there's a lot

Trace calls us trace calls a giant snake out of nowhere to come attack the giant cradle says good job boy

Like there's a lot more going on at the end of the last game that felt like and yeah like those

Like how does just a mono a monitor isn't that mono a mono but like how does this is one conflict with a lone?

Asgardian God at the end of the game feel more like crazy than Ragnarok itself happening.

I know how they could have improved the end.

You could have had time traveled with a snake?

That would have been fairly different.

That's the other thing.

You and I thought that there was going to be time travel in this game 100% and instead the whole everything with Jormungandr was just bonk time travel and that was it.

and they're like, oh, well, okay.

Like it's cool when you see it,

but then you realize that's all there is.

- Ah, I know what just happened.

- Yeah, it's cool to see it finally come to fruition,

but when it happens and then it's over,

you're like, oh, that's all it was.

Because again, you and I theorize forever,

like, oh, well the snake has to time travel back in time

and somebody blew the horn before,

but we don't know who did that.

And there's been time traveling

and we got a war series before.

We still know who blew the horn.

What a bummer. Speaking of blowing the horn, I think another part of Ragnarok, just the event itself, was the gap or the pace to get to said event.

Like you kill Heimdall and then there is just a huge gap until you actually do the thing and blow the horn and then activate Surtur.

Like the events leading up to it feel so far out.

And I feel like they still don't actually want to do it like that's the thing

I get it. I get it. I'm trying to find ways like it's not until Brock actually dies that they're like well

Guess we got to do it like yeah, I just feel like that paid the build-up pace

because it's

Like you said earlier. It's on the box. It's going to happen. So why beat around the bush?

Yeah, why not have that ramp build a bit more?

steadily. I guess for me it's more of a question of why not make it longer and

more of a drawn-out thing and something that is happening like I get that

Ragnarok is something that happens within Asgard but like Fimbulwinter like

throughout the whole game you're traveling to all the different realms

too and you're seeing how Fimbulwinter affects the realms and things like that

and it's like wow this is something that like the Norse realm heading towards

Ragnarok is something that is having far-reaching effects on every single area of the Norse world

and then Ragnarok itself is just this event tied to only Asgard and everybody kind of pours in from

the different realms like yeah I don't know having Ragnarok itself be a 45 minute event or whatever

it just big disappointment I but I'm trying to think of what else they could have done

Not make it a single mission. Like how do you drag Ragnarok?

I like I'm not wanting Ragnarok to take place over the course of ten hours or something because then there are no

There has to be a fine balance because then you get into a situation where I've talked about this before with like Mass Effect 3

One of my biggest problems with that game is that that game is entirely centered around

The main villains of that series are I know you don't you kind of know this but maybe not the main villains of that game

Series or whatever. Yeah, the Reapers. Yeah, and the Reapers their entire goal is to eradicate all of humanity throughout the entire galaxy

Well, guess what that takes a bit to accomplish. So the whole game you're seeing these giant things

slowly

destroy everything all life across different planets and it

Simultaneously feels like a really high-stakes thing is happening

But also like we got time, you know

It takes a long time for them to eradicate all life across the across the whole universe like so there's

Raised like it's a really climatic thing that's happening in that game. But also the stakes are lowered

I guess what my point is is how do you make Ragnarok something that feels?

Climatic and huge in this major moment of the game

without making it a lone mission and something that you could have dragged out a little bit more while still making it feel constantly

climatic and not

Smaller but like not like the stakes are lowered if that makes any sense

Because if you stew in it too long, it's like what's this really an event?

We should be fearing like is this big fire guy really gonna do anything. He's just been standing there for 10 hours

He's not gonna. Is he actually gonna destroy Asgard so I

don't know if that makes any sense, but

Do you have anything else that you want to say about Ragnarok as an event?

Or the end of the game? One thing I do want to say about Ragnarok in particular though, and this can segue into another one of our big topics,

and I think this is something you'll agree with, is the best part of Ragnarok,

by a mile in my opinion,

Bear McCreary goes hard.

Bear McCreary goes very hard at the end of this game. This man kicks it up a notch, and this whole soundtrack

I feel like was kicked up a notch compared to the last one and then he's like nah boys you ain't seen nothing yet

the final hour of this game

Bear goes nutty bear goes Sindri mode on the soundtrack at the end of this game

I

Think I think this this soundtrack I wrote this in my review, but like I loved the previous God of War soundtrack

I think this soundtrack is like twice as good

Honestly, a lot of it's because the main themes have already been, you know, created for the last game

and he can kind of expand and do new things with them here in this game, but

he does a- he- Ragnarok is really amplified quite a bit

thanks to his music that he does near the end of the game.

I don't know if this is just my lack of

I don't listen to a ton of music in general, but I was just like this sounds like God of War and it was really good

I don't mean that in a dismissive way, but I just was like I know this music

I know this music and so I think it mostly just faded in the background for me. I was more distracted by

The things on screen and the things I was doing mechanically and the music was there elevating those moments in height

But I couldn't tell you one song from the soundtrack. I haven't listened to the soundtrack outside of the game

like I have with 2018

but

It's just it's good, but you have it on vinyl. I

Don't oh, I do have the seven-inch. Yes, but I haven't listened to that also

Not a fan of the blood on the snow song

With her. Yeah, I think everyone was like super stoked that that was at the Game Awards this year alive

And I was like that song I will say is the worst song on the same

I'm glad it was in the credits only. I don't like Hosier so yeah. I don't know that is that someone

You probably know that you know that take me to church that song that you've hired it you

Absolutely heard it. You've said this a lot in the past and I've surprised you with my lack of true, but that song was played

Everywhere a couple years ago like you could not escape it

So we'll convene after the show

I just so the only thing I wrote down in my notes was Bear's goat like Bear McCreary

does great stuff the way he weaves the themes but I couldn't call out a specific moment or instance where the music like

stood out to me specifically not like

when you get in a boat with Athena and

Some Greek stuff starts coming in and you're like, oh my god, here we go

That didn't come out to me

this time around

But I blame myself more than the game bears the goat. He's he's he's up there. He's one of the best

I think around and uh, if they keep making these games, I hope he

Sticks around for a very very long time. One thing we have not talked about too much is the combat

There's a lot we could get into on this front. I know we've already been going a long time

So I feel like this is going to be a condensed combat discussion. There are a few things I want to bring up though

To kind of bring us through this one. This is a conversation you and I have already had so there's probably not a lot

To discuss here, but I'll put a different spin on it with a little bit more distance

Are you fine that mule near is not a weapon you could use in the game? No
this I

Was thinking about this more today because I knew we were recording this this is

Arguably

the biggest

- Blunder of Eric Williams directorial direction?

- This is the biggest goof I think they made.

And in interviews and stuff they were like,

"No, it's too much like the ax."

And we just felt it was too-- - I agree with that though.

- It is.

And they've said, "It's too obvious.

"We didn't wanna just do what everyone thought

"we were going to do."

All this stuff.

And I think their goal to not do what people think,

almost sort of a hipster sort of approach,

- You wanted to subvert fate.

- Is their mistake.

And maybe, so if the desire is not to have it

be the third primary weapon, I'm fine with that.

Because it is mechanically the same as the axe.

- Well, and his, Eric's narrative purposes for this too,

he's like, all of Kratos' weapons

things that were

Given to him like the axe was given to him is by his wife the blades of chaos. He got from Ares

From yeah from Ares like these were things that were like bestowed upon him same with the
spear in the game spear

He got earned the spear and the spear stems from his own blood and so like and then and then not only that but like

The axe was created by the dwarves as a counter to Mjolnir. So like there's a lot of things like, okay, it makes sense

Sure, it makes great sense, but you still should have had it

Here's the thing. I'll say it did not need to be a primary weapon. That's what I'm saying

but the biggest mistake in the whole game is after Thor dies you'll just go shooting off and like

Back like how could you not like I could I if you would if you were to pause the game

For me after Thor died and said how much would you like to wager that you will use Mjolnir in the upcoming fight with Odin?

I would have bet like a hundred thousand dollars that that was gonna happen the next ten minutes of the game

and it didn't and that is exactly when it needed to happen and

It is obvious and it is it felt like the thing they were gonna do

But that would have been even for even for Thor even for Thor that I think this is the thing that drives

It bothers me a little bit more the thing the more I think about it Thor gets no

Chance to

Go against his father at the end of the game because his dad just kills him if you would have been able to whoop Odin's

ass with Thor's own weapon as

Kratos like it could have been some like

Strange resolution for Thor's well like Thor died

but you still used his own weapon to beat him his dad down with and

And but again, I know I

Know that the Odin doesn't die and but like you still could have used it to whoop on Odin and it would have been like

It would have it would have been a good narrative moment for Thor to have some sort of revenge even though he's dead

It's like okay. Well, his weapon is still here and Kratos is using it. I think that would have been good

it would have been great and it's exactly when it should have been done and
they didn't do it because it was obvious and easy and
sometimes the obvious and easy thing is the best thing for
Yeah, the player and the game it can just be that one segment
It's totally fine to not use it and pick it up after that
You know, it's I think I told it to you like this
It'd be like if watching Avengers endgame
You're at the end. You see me old me only or fly across the screen into Captain America's hand
It's like ah great. This is exactly what we've been waiting for for
ten years like 20 movies and then he just puts it down or
When everyone shows up in that movie and Captain America's there with it if he just said let's
go
Everybody knew what was gonna happen in in-game before
anyone saw the movie and so sometimes you just have to lean into that and I think it is a I
Think it's a mistake. I think it's arguably the biggest mistake besides maybe chunky
Long a tray of segments of the game of Ragnarok not wielding the hammer. It is mainly just
because it goes on appointment
Mainly, I mean that's again. That's the thing that bothers me the most is it just goes flying off
into the void
It's like where to go
What happened to it? Well, I mean Odin through it
Well, it does I know I know that but like it didn't just like I didn't just like skitter off on its own
I know I know he tossed it away. I
I'll say this too and this might in case people are yelling
What so we have not we have not done the postgame stuff in case Mjolnir does show back up
and I'm sorry
I'm inside question. I see but I don't think it does I looked up and
No, yeah, I don't think it does either and it sucks too because twice in that fight with Thor
Kratos grabs the hammer

There's one time where you literally stick the blades of chaos in the handle and swing it

For in a cutscene. It's not even a gameplay mechanic and then Kratos

You know just stops it from flying away and pushes it back actively which is just again

Building - I'm going to wield the hammer and then they never go there. Yeah

I I I would love to know what the discussions were like behind the scenes about this because clearly the people

Vouching for mjolnir didn't go hard enough because I was gonna say because you have to know

That this was a divisive thing and Eric had the final call on what they decided to do with it

But you have to know there were people internally like yeah, bro. Like this is a

There's a million dollar idea. We got a deal like we got to do this and again with with

Like I said before with some distance from the game

I think not making it one of the three primary weapons was the that is the right that is the right call

I'm not here arguing for that

Vinyl boss fight though. Yes, Sydney had to happen. Yeah

We just needed to wield it once that's all you needed to do

Yeah, anybody and instead of it's just like this lingering angst that it didn't happen like

The great thing about it is it's mechanically like the axe

So in that final fight immediately know how to use it. You didn't need a tutorial tutorial wise it at all. Yep

That's what's great about it. You would have just immediately had it. They could have given you two

baller abilities. So like you didn't even have to worry about slotting out your skill tree or

whatever. It's just default. Go. Here's these great things that you could do and you get nothing from it. And it's a letdown and it's going to be the shadow that looms over this game for its entire

life. They could have just had it be the exact, they could have just had the combos work in the exact same way as the axe to some degree with how he swings it. It's a huge, huge letdown,

biggest in the game. Alright, also on the combat front, drop near spear, yes or no?

Oh yeah, from the moment you pick it up, it's fantastic. It's so good. I love that it's a callback to the Greek games once again, Ghost of Sparta in particular. I love that they utilize drop near in a very interesting manner. You're telling me I just get unlimited spheres to chuck at people and I can always crack another one back into my hand at any given point?

Cool. Yeah, that's dope. It's really really awesome and it also, the thing I was thinking of as the game went on, I was like okay well I they're gonna give me another weapon at some point but

I'm like where does Kratos keep another weapon? He's already got some blades on his back, he's

got this axe on his back too, where would he put another weapon? Like on his hip or something and he's got a head there and it's like, "Nope, they just put a ring on this fan's finger and he's good to go." So it's very light to travel with.

Yeah, it's a great weapon and it leads to a great fight with Heimdall.

Yes. So that's one of the best boss fights of the game too, for sure.

It's my favorite boss fight in the game. More so than the Thor fight?

Yeah, I think the Heimdall fight is fantastic. So, I love the spear. I love how it weaves in with the blades and the axe and the combos you can create. And it takes a bit to learn how to switch

between all three of them, but like, and that's why I think the Odin fight is pretty good near the end is because it really does make you rotate between all three of them and once you start doing

that it's like, okay, this feels good to be swapping a lot here. Yeah, it's a great tool,

it's a great weapon. I'm excited to do more of the postgame and have the full arsenal and weave those all together.

But dropping your spears is great. I love it. I'm glad they found a weapon that could complement two iconic weapons

and very bold of them to do it right after creating the Leviathan Axe, which alone was the replacement for the Blades of Chaos for like half a game

and advertised as like "the replacement" so it's it's very bold of them to do the weapon then again

but it is in line with the God of War series to have multiple weapons for Kratos and so I'm glad that they went that route and designed a sweet sweet spear. Contextually like for the character of Kratos and like for the story itself too like it made like when you think about the weapons he uses in the game. Okay, he knows how to use the axe because he's been using the axe for a long

time. By the time, maybe not a long time, but he's familiar with the axe by the time first God of War

begins. So it's like, okay, he doesn't, we don't need to explain how he knows this weapon and is

used to it. Same with the blades. He's used them for longer than he would like. And then with the

spear, when he gets this, there's no learning curve. It's the first weapon a Spartan learns.

So it's like, contextually all this stuff makes sense and it's not like the older games where it's a little goofy like,

"Now I have giant Hercules gauntlets that I'll punch people with!"

It's like, "What?" And that's great, and I love that, but it is silly.

They contextualize why he has all these weapons and why he's proficient with them as well.

Which I- which I- 'cause you could give- you could give somebody- you could give me a pair of nunchucks right now.

It's not like I'm gonna- and they're like, "Defeat this man with nunchucks!"

I don't know what I'm doing with these so it's like you have to know

how to handle the weapons you're using and Kratos knows how to

Knows his way around all three of his primary weapons. Yeah, I don't know if there's anything else you want to say

About the game broadly. I mean we've kind of touched on some of the side quests that we think stand out and are good

We've talked about you know the different allies and how they work. There's a lot of like systemic and mechanical things

I think we could get into the very nitty-gritty and talk about with this game

I still don't like the gear system.

In fact, I think they, how did they make it worse?

- They've made it more complicated and more daunting.

- How did they do that?

I don't even understand.

- It's too, it's so overwhelming.

- There are so many menus. - I'm actively scared

to go into the pause menu and deal with it.

So I didn't engage with it. - That was one of the big

things I, that was one of the big things I mentioned

in my review, wasn't it?

You read it recently. - Yes, you were talking

about it.

- Yeah, the menus are not great.

And the systems is just so complicated and so many facets.

It's just like all these lights, buttons, and dials.

Well, there's a lot of things they stack on one another in this game.

Some of which I think are like you can level up the moves individually

and once you use the moves a certain time, then they rank up

and then you unlock stat modifiers for them or whatever.

like oh use this ability 10 times okay use it 30 times and once you do it 30

times then you can use your experience points to add a modifier to it which

will increase your damage by 10% or something like that and some of that

stuff I think is cool because it encourages you to use all of the

different moves and abilities that are in the game but yeah it's just there's a

lot to get through in the game when it comes to the system because then there's

a whole list of challenges and stuff and like it's it's cool that this stuff is all there but

there are just rpg elements of this that i don't think they complicate too much yeah they overly

complicate the game too much and i think maybe i'll come to appreciate that stuff a little bit more as i enter the post game and start to you know i feel like that's where you're really going to start to rank up your weapons and you'll start to feel a sense of progression once i try to start defeating these Valkyries and the different Berserkers and things like that and they're gonna wail on me and then i'll come back and i'll be stronger and then i'll wail on them and like that's kind of how the Valkyrie fights were in the first game too it's like wow this thing just kicked my butt and then you come back five hours later you've got way better gear

and you wail on them in return so no i feel like it's gonna go the same way it did in 2018 in the sense i'm already maxed out weapon wise like everything's maxed out so i'm not really oh yeah

Every skip--my skill trees were maxed out before the end of the game.

Oh, you mean like with the skill trees. I thought you meant like with the levels for the weapons themselves.

No, just the skill trees.

Like you can upgrade them at the--

Yeah, and i mean they're close maxed out, weapon-wise.

But i'm just gonna Google "best armor God of War Ragnarok" and go get it and then...

[laughs]

Like, because it's so daunting and overwhelming that i don't want to filter through it.

i actively avoided it for most of the game.

And so i'm just going to look up the best option,

go do whatever those tasks are,

which i'm sure are difficult,

and then again not have to deal with it

because i actively don't want to participate

in these systems.

So i'm disappointed that they went in the opposite direction

and added more and made it more complicated.

- That's what's weird is that this was a common complaint of the previous game too.

- And they just doubled down.

- So to see them essentially, yeah,

Double Down'd make it even more overly complex was weird to say the least.

Anything you want to say about this game's art direction or the character or you've got something, what?

I think there are more puzzles in this game and I appreciate it.

There are, yeah. They add some, I think of like the axe, the things that bounce off the axe.

Or the axe that you can ricochet.

Yeah, there's a bit more old God of War puzzle stuff without feeling too cumbersome and I appreciate that because I thought puzzles were a missing element from 2018 and they brought a lot of that back and I enjoy it and there's a really cool

You know Zelda 10 a moment of when you get the spear and you realize you can throw it in those holes that have been

All over the nine realms. It's like ah now I can get everything that I couldn't before so I did enjoy that quite a bit

visually like you were talking about it's God of War 2018 just

Yeah, PS 5 wise they didn't feel like it really pushed the hardware with it visual no because it's it

It was always a ps4 game, and they just beefed it up

So I'm excited to see what they can do natively on ps5. Yeah only on ps5

we seem to

Sort of kind of maybe finally leaving the cross-gen part of at least first-party PlayStation games

Spider-man 2's PS5 only and that's out next fall

We're still getting so many new games that are announced that are cross-gen and like game awards last week

And I was still seeing so much

PS4 and Xbox one stuff on games coming out next year. I was like us

This sucks man. Like I get it cuz sales but

it's a bummer, so

looking forward to the future of

Sony

studio PlayStation Studios

PS5 only games

The last thing I wanted to say

As far as gameplay goes and then we'll wrap up. I know we've gone very long here

But I feel like this was expected that we would do this to some degree

Which is why we probably kept pushing this back a little bit

I think the one other thing about the game that is different would be the open areas

with the doggies that you can run around with or the

Sand doggies if you're in other areas, how'd you feel about those? Did you have any strong feelings about?

Running around and stopping at little areas and going off and doing quick tasks and then coming

I mean, it's similar to the boat in some senses, but it is different at the same time.

It's more cumbersome than the boat because you have to get off of the dog sled to interact with the treasure or the thing.

Yeah.

I think some of the spaces are a bit big for big sake and not necessarily easy to navigate. Actually that open area in

Vanaheim that I was telling you about. That doesn't have dogs. That's a lot of walking, but it's disjointed and it's not easy to...

It is actually

Frustratingly difficult to get to some areas and the map is essentially useless because you can't zoom in on the map at all

Yeah in any real useful manner

so I think some of the areas are big for big sake and

the dogs are just

Boat on land. So yeah, it's fine. It's whatever but it did make the game feel a bit

Bloated in some spaces. It's a lot like it's a lot like how Gears 5

Approach their semi open-world structure, and I know you haven't played that game, but it reminded me a lot of Gears 5

Good video game you should play it my quote is on the box

Thank you, so we got to do legacy

But before we do you want to do legacy first like I said I do want to talk about the future of the series and

Just some broad. I think that's part of legacy

Is what's next yeah? I think that's part of it

Yeah, well, I mean this game's legacy now is that it nor stuff is over but is it

there's more to it than that a per usual but

yeah, it's

The legacy of the game I think is quite a few things

It's Eric Williams directorial debut continuing the trend of new director every game

Even after having worked on every single got awarded. Yes in the series

Yeah, there are some unique stories that we didn't really touch on

Surrounding the development of this game, you know, like when Corey said that he quit and Christopher judge also quit like that's a really

Powerful story quit and Corey just said that he wasn't gonna direct it then cry but Chris did quit. I'm sorry

Yes, you know so that that's always interesting that stuff surrounding it

Chris Chris

Did quit

he

He he did briefly quit and then Corey talked him into it

And then the other thing I was gonna say is Chris also blamed himself for this game getting delayed

Which I don't think is true her as you had this back

Yeah, he had he had to get surgery and that put him out of commission for a month for a while

So he blamed himself, but also this game launched near supposed to come out in 2021 and it launched November 2022

So, I mean there was clearly more causing delays behind the scenes than just that

But I think overall like Ragnarok is a game of two halves that were mashed together to try and make one game

yes was

They said let's not do three games. Let's do it in two

which I think I agree with because you and I were talking before the show about how currently

Naughty Dog's rumors rumors say they're working on last was part three and I was

I'm talking about how upset that makes me because I'll be 40 by the time they make a new IP if that's true and

so

in that sense

I am glad this is two games for the Norse series because I don't want to be 35 when God of War

God of War Valhalla comes out or whatever it would be called like like I am glad that they tried to condense this because

Making video games is such a lengthy process now. So like on this triple-A scale it is. Absolutely

Yeah, yeah. And I, you know, it's ambitious and bold of them to do that, but in the end,

I think the dissonance between the gameplay and the story proves too great for Sony Santa

Marquez ambitions though. And the final product is like a crammed into a state of disjointedness.

And ultimately the gameplay and narrative just don't align until after you beat the main story and that I think that fractal presentation takes me out of it into a kind of a letdown state. Let me ask you this, has this game's acclaim led you to believe that you are wrong with what you're saying right now? Like in the back of your mind are you thinking like maybe I need to replay this with fresh eyes in

12 to 18 months and see if I feel differently about it.

Like are you viewing it that way?

Are you just like, nope, this is how I feel and I'm--

- I'm right and everyone else is wrong.

I think anyone, I think any critic that gave this game

a 10 out of 10, something's wrong because--

- That was never considered for me at any point.

- I do understand that for you, but like the Atreus alone,

the Atreus sections were just so long

and frustrating and dull at points,

that that alone would ruin a perfect score for me.

Not that I believe in scores to begin with.

I think giving a number to a game is not--

- Yeah, yeah, yeah. - Necessarily helpful.

And then just the other nitpicks and complaints

like this game is, they tried so hard

but there are pieces of this that are broken

and don't line up and it's a fault.

I think 2018 is the better game out of the two.

It's tighter, everything you do is,

goes into the direction of father and son

and that arc for Kratos and it works out better.

They tried, it's really bold of them,

but they didn't stick the landing.

So I'm right and everyone else is wrong.

- I will say the one thing,

as somebody who reviewed this game,

I was baffled that the scores were as high as they were.

And that does not mean I thought it was gonna be in like,

land in the 70s, or I thought it would be like high 80s,

is where I was expecting the Metacritic score to be.

94, I would never have guessed.

Because I played this game alongside two other people

at my job who played it before review embargo as well.

And we were all talking about,

and we all had like the same criticisms,

like the pacing grinds to a halt at some point.

Some of these areas are way too long.

Like I still gave the game a very high score

for all the reasons I said at the top.

I think it is top tier when it comes to combat

and performances and writing and storytelling.

And I have fewer issues, like I like,

I like a, a lot of your issues involve Atreus

and I think Atreus' arc in this game is fine.

I think Sunny's performance is good and things like that.

So we differ on Atreus.

But I still think there are like huge pacing problems

and then the problems with the gameplay systems and things like that and the item management.

But still, the good outweighs the bad in this game by a large, large amount for me.

But still, I was blown away when I saw how many Tins across the board it got and people

saying "One of the best PlayStation games ever made, it's way better than the last game."

I was like, "Wow!"

I really genuinely thought that this game was going to come in much lower.

So I guess in some senses that would be this game's legacy to me in this moment is that it lived up to expectations of what people have for it. And to be honest, I feel like you and I are a little bit on

the outs when it comes to

like having these sort of criticisms with it.

Maybe we're just, I will say I don't pay attention to fandom conversations as much anymore as I used to and I don't really talk to

anybody about this stuff except for you. So there's that.

- We're in our isolated bubble.

- Yeah, maybe people have more nitpicks

in the same way that you and I do than I'm aware of.

That being said, I have been,

I think that's this game's legacy for the moment

is that it went pound for pound with the first game

is if you just look at critical reception

and fan reception and this is the best selling game

in the history of PlayStation.

- Yes.

- Like this game did not disappoint on any level for--

best launch sales? Yeah best launch sales, I mean, well that's all we have. I didn't

want everyone to think it's already surpassed God of War 2018. Oh no no no. It's only 20

million. Best launch sales ever in the history of PlayStation. I'm sure it will go on to

be the best selling PlayStation game ever. I have no doubt about that. Yeah, so, that's

as game- Especially when it comes to PC next year. Yeah, and when it becomes a TV show

and then people go back and buy, "Oh, well, what's this? Let me buy this." So yeah, that

is this game's legacy for now to me, is that it somehow lived up to the hype that people

had for it in a very general sense, I think. And that's impressive. And I do think Santa...

Would you say anything bad about... Do you still think Santa Monica Studios is one of

of us studios in the world after this game?

- I mean, they sure know how to make a game.

Really, it just comes down to--

- A lot of your biggest issues sound like they just involve story.

Like, if you just separate the story--

- If you take the story away from the game, this makes a great TV show.

This makes a great movie, this makes a great book.

But when it comes to being a video game, and the idea of putting you in the shoes of these characters and telling the story through gameplay, which is absolutely what they were doing in 2018, this falters and it misses the step.

And so I think as a game, as a narrative video game, it fumbles and that's the, my, is the problem is those two elements not lining up like they did previously

or like other top tier PlayStation games, and me specifically, like The Last of Us and The Last of Us Part II are definitely prime examples of that.

And I know I have a Naughty Dog bias, like I'm not, that's not really where this is necessarily coming from, but it's just more 2018 was so good about everything feeding back into this one relationship

and this plot leading a certain place.

and this game is just too much and the gameplay doesn't line up with the narrative at all, so.

What's next?

Atreus goes to college. Considering Sony's trend lately...

We're gonna get God of War Miles Morales?

Exactly. God of War The Lost Legacy. Like there is going... I've... you know...

If the trend continues, there's going to be some sort of spin-off game here for God of War.

Makes total sense, especially with a TV show in production.

So, you know, in a year or two, we'll see an Atreus God of War game.

And that'll be totally set in the Norse Pantheon still.

Like, you have to imagine.

He's gotta do giant stuff.

And Kratos will be dormant for a bit, but...

Eventually Kratos will return.

He makes too much money for them not to and Sony Santa Monica tries

They might have never been able to escape the shadow of Kratos not since his debut

And so eventually there will be a new God of War game with Kratos

But the franchise cannot carry the series forward on his own and that's why he'll live in the spin-off realm

Well, I think they're gonna try I think they're gonna try and well

If he doesn't if he doesn't carry it by himself. Well, I'll say this

He's not gonna try to carry the God of War mantle because Kratos is still left alive

And yeah Kratos will obviously continue to carry the banner of this series on his own shoulders

He is the character that everybody wants to play as I do think they will try to do more with Atreus

Other than just a lone spin-off though. I think they might try to make multiple Atreus games

I would not be shocked and see that come about like make it its whole

If we got God of War here's God of mischief God of mischief, and we're gonna have

Three or four games centered entirely around Atreus and I would be totally open to that

I think that would be cool

But they got to flesh out his gameplay mechanics a little bit more and do some more interesting things with him on that front

Which I think they could if they built the game up like from the ground up with that in mind as for Kratos, I

Think I am really struggling

To figure out what they do with him next because the common idea has you know, everybody's been like, oh well

Now he goes to Egypt and he fights

Ra and stuff like this. It's like well. Did you play this game? He does not want to fight people anymore

He's not his goal as a person is not I'm gonna travel the world and take on every pantheon until they're all

Raised to the ground and only I remain that's not him. He does not want to do this stuff anymore

He's not going to get embroiled with this stuff anymore. I mean this is just not him so I'm trying to figure out

how they pull him into another conflict that he gets tied to against his will once again.

He's like, "Crap, I'm getting too old for this!"

And then he gets pulled into another conflict where he has to pull out his blades and go back to battle

because his character is in such a place where he should not want to do that stuff ever again.

So what does it look like to put him in the central role of another God of War game

where he has to deal with another massive conflict on his hands

and he has to go to war. And I don't know what that looks like. Having him just travel

the Egypt and battle new gods and a new pantheon does not make much sense based on where his

character is at now. And I also don't know how they expand on where his character is at now

because his character feels like it is in a pur- like if they never wanted to touch Kratos ever

again, they could do that. But you're gonna be totally, perfectly fine and I don't want that

because I do continue to want more games with this and they won't do that because, as you said, money.

They will continue to go back to Kratos because he's a cash cow at this point.

So we're gonna get more God of War games with Kratos, but I- I-

They could really stop here if they wanted to.

And so I don't know what they do.

I- I propose an idea to you that they could go back to the Greek realm and if he's gonna be Kratos the Rebuilder,

maybe he rebuilds the Norse pantheon and now he's like,

I should go rebuild the Greek Pantheon and then you go back there.

And I think that can make sense but I don't know what that looks like.

That's the narrative corner they've painted themselves into

and they have probably a decade to figure that out.

So good luck. We'll be 40

when it comes out. That and Naughty Dog's new IP.

The two of those will... That's a weird thing to say out loud. A little bit.

Eloise will be in high school when the next God of War game

Before 40 she'll be in middle school. I guess 12 years. Yeah, she'll be in middle school

See, that's a little scary

And on that note I have one final question for you max. Oh wait

Well, then I'm gonna read one final thing before we wrap up officially

Obviously, this is gonna be the final show in this God of War season 2 feed for a bit but

But do we do more episodes when the Cadaver TV show is out?

That is...

Which will be in like what, two or three years probably?

Are we doing stuff for the Last of Us TV show?

I don't know, that seems like something to discuss off you.

Or the Resident Evil TV show?

Yeah, we gotta do all this stuff.

You're starting to set expectations here.

Uh oh, the Paper Mario TV show?

Oh my gosh, please.

That's entirely stop animation?

That'd be cool. You should make it sound really good. On that note, I think that does it for

God of War, Ragnarok. Thank you so much for listening. If you'd like, you can follow the show on Twitter @ChapterSelect. You can follow Logan on Twitter @moremantwelv and his writing

over at ComicBook.com. You can follow myself on Twitter @MaxRoberts143 and my writing over

at MaxFrequency.net. And until next time, adios.

Chapter Select is a max frequency production.

This episode was research produced and edited by me, Max Roberts.

Season 2 is hosted by Logan Moore and myself, and it's all about God of War.

For more on this season, go to chapterselect.com/season2.

To check out previous seasons, go to chapterselect.com.

I feel like this generation is going to be elongated more than normal unless we have some big breakthroughs.

Well the last one was also elongated and so was the one before that.

Well I feel like this one is going to be even longer because of, I mean this is a whole different discussion, but just because of how supply has been over the past two years since the new consoles launched.

Like people still can't even buy a PS5.

So it's like why would they abandon this gen within what, six to eight years?

if two years into the life cycle,

they can't even get them into people's hands

in a natural way. - I disagree with that.

I could go buy a PS5 right now.

I bet I can just buy one right now.

- Right now? - At retail.

At retail.

- At a local store?

- I'm not talking about going into the store.

I'm just saying no one buys--

- If you want a PS5 by now, you can get one.

You just gotta pay close attention

and know what you're looking for.

- I don't think that.

I think you could go to PlayStation Direct right now

buy one I bet I can I'm pulling it up right now

PlayStation if you can all right I could sign in to get a psv r2 shop I can buy

the God of War PlayStation 5 bundle right this second I can buy just a

PlayStation 5 if I sign in to buy it I can buy the God of War bundle right now

You should do that. Make someone's holiday. No, not this Christmas.