**Podcast #98: Seize My Silky Rails**

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## Intro [00:00:00]

[funky intro music]

**Matt**: Hello, and welcome to the very 98th podcast of the Shut Up & Sit Down podcast, the podcast all about board games, people who love board games, and the board games that love them. My name’s Matt Lees, joined, as ever, by Quintin Smith-

**Quinns**: Hallo, Matt Lees!

**Matt**: -and we’ve got a treat for you today, because we’re gonna be talking… about some board games.

**Quinns**: It’s a revolutionary new idea that’s taking the internet by storm. The board games we’re going to be talking today about are: The Taverns of Tiefan Thal, a tavern simulator from the designer of Quacks of Quedlinburg. We’re going to be talking about Stefan Feld’s Carpe Diem, a game about Romans trying to put their houses in the right place and failing. We’re gonna talk about Luxor, a game of egyptologists going round a pyramid and swearing. We’re gonna be talking about Silk! Matt, how would you describe Silk?

**Matt**: It’s a bizarre, hellish pastel-y game of eating your friends’ worms in a world that doesn't quite make sense.

**Quinns**: Lovely stuff! I’m gonna be talking about Rail Pass, a cooperative real-time game about passing actual physical trains with actual cubes on to your friends without the cubes falling off, because then that counts as lost cargo. [Matt laughing] Look forward to that.

**Matt**: Gosh!

**Quinns**: It’s even more ridiculous and fun than I-

**Matt**: That’s exactly how trains work in real life. [nervous conductor voice] “Don’t drop the train, Kenneth!”

**Quinns**: This whole podcast is just gonna be me rushing through everything [Matt laughing] to get to talking about Rail Pass, because it’s a heck of a thing. We’re going to be talking, as well, a little bit about some of our reviews that have just gone up: Crokinole, Pipeline, and soon to be Too Many Bones! And then we’ve got a reader question, in which Stefan from Germany is going to ask: If you could play any board game with the director commentary from the designer, [Matt gasps] what would it be and why?

**Matt** [excited]: Ooooooooooohh!

**Quinns**: Ooooh! Aaaah!

**Matt**: Let’s get back to that one later!

**Quinns**: For the people at home, Matt’s face just lit up at how good that question was.

**Matt**: That’s a great question.

## Taverns of Tiefan Thal [00:01:51]

**Quinns**: Well, should we get this pod-ball rolling by talking a little bit about Taverns of Tiefan Thal?

**Matt**: Taverns of Tiefan Thal. Following on from Quacks of Quedlinbuhbuh, and it will follow on in the fact that I already have forgotten what the name of the place is. We’re just gonna call it Taverns.

**Quinns**: Yeah, no, I think that’s a relatable experience that a lot of people will go through.

**Matt**: Yeah, yeah. I’ve had a fantastic time with this, but I think, to begin with, what I’ll say is I found it really interesting in the fact that this is another game by Wolfgang Warsch, who is somebody who, as a designer, I’ve become so enamored with their work that I’ve played a lot of it. In a way that I haven’t really ever done before with a designer, of just being like, “I’m gonna play everything this person is doing, [**Quinns**: Yeah!] and check it all out.”

**Quinns**: Which is interesting with Wolfgang, because it’s quite a broad church, right?

**Matt**: Yes, it is.

**Quinns**: We have the push-your-luck game Quacks of Quedlinburg, we have The Mind, right? Which is a party game. We have the very mathematical roll-and-write game Pretty Darn-

**Matt**: Ganz Schön Clever?

**Quinns**: Yeah, Pretty Darn Clever.

**Matt and Quinns together**: And then…

**Matt**: Oh, soon to be Wavelength.

**Quinns**: Wavelength, yes. And other games that we’ve temporarily forgotten. But yeah, so now, this is interesting, right? Because you were saying that this was a designer you’d become so familiar with, we sat down to play Taverns, which is a tremendously inventive game, and you could see his work in it?

**Matt**: Yeah, you really can. That’s what’s so fascinating, is you just look at it and you go, “Oh, I can see the design processes that led you here,” because it feels very much like a cross between Quacks of Quedlinburg and Ganz Schön Clever. It feels like there’s elements of both of these games there, and you sort of realize as you’re playing it, you’re like, “Oh, you’ve kind of just taken the core premise of Quacks, and then made it a little bit less random, a little bit less luck-based, and a lot more…”

**Quinns**: Bitty.

**Matt**: “...bitty and gritty, and a lot more gamey.”

**Quinns**: Yeah, so where Quacks was just a light simple game of putting ingredients in a potion and hoping it doesn't explode, Taverns has you running a pub. Everyone gets their own pub, and you have -- just like Quacks -- something like eight or nine days in order to amass the most victory points, which in this game are mostly going to be coming from royal patrons. So to being with -- and this is lovely -- your pub, which is a big… An interesting cardboard jigsaw. And we’re seeing more of this these days, with punchboard cardboard that jigsaws together in a way that we haven’t seen much in previous years, and you were saying -- and I love this idea -- maybe it’s because the cutting technology has gotten better?

**Matt**: Yeah, I mean, it could just be that people have the flow down in terms of their communication with China and the production of being able to insure that when you get that cardboard punched out, it’s gonna be right. Because it used to be -- do you remember? -- we had years and years of coins in games that would just be really off.

**Quinns**: Yeah, yeah, a circle within a circle that was just not even.

**Matt**: Yeah, you think, “They weren’t even close there with the punching that out on the board.” But this requires- Because it’s a modular jigsaw-y thing that has your bar, with all the different parts of the bar, some of which are on the edge and some of which are in the middle of it, or inside of it, are little bits you can pop out or flip over to upgrade.

**Quinns**: Yeah, so if you make a fair bit of money, then there’s a little sleepy dog in the corner of everyone’s bar. You can pay, and then flip that dog over, and it becomes a waitress.

**Matt**: Yes.

**Quinns**: Because you’ve kicked the dog out and now you’ve got another employee. Or, what else have we got?

**Matt**: You can turn your little wooden chest that held your money into a cash register.

**Quinns**: Oh yeah!

**Matt**: Which is all the more efficient. You could upgrade more tables.

**Quinns**: That bit in the back room which was just empty stone, you can flip it and it becomes a dishwasher.

**Matt**: Uh-huh.

**Quinns**: So what all of these different employees do every turn is… This is interesting because, okay, you’ve got this flipping jigsaw thing. That’s just a *fraction* of the game. You also have a deck which represents not just your personal bar’s regular customers, but also your staff. So a day begins with you seeing who has shown up that night. So you deal cards off your personal deck. “Oh, it’s a customer, they go to the table. Oh, it’s another customer, they go to a table. Oh, thank god, it’s the waitress, I really needed them to show up tonight,” because the waitress will let you roll more dice later. And you keep drawing from your deck until all of your tables are full. I hope you bought enough tables, Matthew.

**Matt**: Yeah, well that’s the thing, and it’s funny because you can then be adding to your deck. So in a way, if you’ve played Quacks of Quedlinburg, a game where you have a bag, you pull things out of a bag, you swear because the things you pulled out were the wrong things, but then you can buy more things to put into your bag to make it better-

**Quinns**: Theoretically!

**Matt**: -theoretically. But in this, you’re drawing from a deck of cards, so there’s always going to be an air of randomness, but at the same time, there’s also an air of a hundred percent predictability. And when you buy new things from the shop -- and they might be special patrons who are gonna come in and be more useful to you, or maybe additional tables, so you can keep drawing from your cards more frequently more often, or upgrades for your bar -- they will go straight onto the top of your deck, so it means you *know* that you might never see them again [**Quinns**: Oh yes.] after that, but you know that next round, you’re gonna get that stuff. Which is really a massive change from Quacks, really.

**Quinns**: Yeah, yeah. I mean, it’s funny because you can see so much of the DNA of Quacks of Quedlinburg, but also, tonally, it’s such a different game. Within that deck that we were just talking about, I loved how on one day you might earn enough money or beer that you attract a really good customer. Oh Matt! They’re gonna show up. If you can make sure they get served, they’re gonna pay so much money! And also, these are pictures of people, you know? So to begin with, you’ve just got a couple of old people who are eating a bowl of soup, which pays nothing. But eventually if you play well, then you’re gonna get customers like oh the woodcutter, and oh the merchant, and then your bar has all these wealthy people who show up and you go, [enthusiastic innkeeper voice] “Oh it’s great to see you again!”

**Matt**: Or the shady-looking guy with the big scar who just gets rid of other customers.

**Quinns**: Oh, I love that, yeah.

**Matt**: It’s brill.

**Quinns**: A really beefy man who, when he enters your deck, you can remove anyone else. So it’s the idea that, yeah, that guy’s drinking here, which means some of your older, more infirm elderly customers just don’t show up at your bar anymore.

**Matt**: They don’t wanna come anymore.

**Quinns**: And that’s great!

**Matt**: Yeah, it’s really good, because they’ve got no money.

**Quinns**: They didn’t tip, yeah.

**Matt**: Yeah, so it’s a fascinating thing of basically push-your-luck again, of drawing and sometimes having these wonderful rounds where you just keep drawing out the little dwarf chaps that help you pull beer into your cellar, and then the dishwasher, and then your waitresses turn up, and all of these things -- basically all of the upgrades -- allow you to do things with dice, and that’s where we get into the bit that’s a bit…

**Quinns**: Yeah, we haven’t mentioned the dice yet.

**Matt**: Yeah, exactly. This is where it becomes a bit Ganz Schön Clever-y, because once you’ve drawn all of these cards, and that’s your bar for the night, you then roll a bunch of dice, [chuckling] put them on these very cool beer mats, which basically are your dice mats, and then you choose a dice and then you draft dice. All of the different players’ sets of dice on these little coasters get shuffled around clockwise as everyone just takes one, and then shuffles them around in a circle until everyone has four dice.

**Quinns**: Yes, and this is where the management of your bar comes in, because that deck card-flipping mechanic that we just described -- believe it or not -- is not the game.

**Matt**: No! No no no no.

**Quinns** [raspy nearly-French voice]: No no no no no!

**Matt**: No no no, of course not!

**Quinns**: That just creates your pub, and then it’s when you get dice- Because everyone’s gonna get four dice, and this is what waitresses do: They give you additional dice of your own color that you can roll. And then you play something like a dice placement/worker placement game, if you’ve played that before. So, those nice customers I was describing before? The woodsman, who just is an amazing tipper? He needs you to place a four on him if he’s gonna cough up the cash. If you’ve got tons of beer guys, but they’re only gonna pour beer into your cellar- I made that sound weird, like he’s just upending a swimming pool of beer into your-

**Matt**: Sounds great!

**Quinns**: Undermining your flat. Your house. What am I talking about? The point is that if you don’t have the dice, you can’t actually activate all these valuable areas of your pub.

**Matt**: No, and that’s it. So you’re basically trying to then build a deck that then can react properly to the distribution of dice rolls? Particularly as it’s things like, ones and sixes are always great for making beer, and they’re not superb for making beer, but you can always work with ones and sixes. But then anything in between is a range of things that you can do all sorts of different things with, some of which are arguably better than others. But if you have four customers in your deck that all require a three on the dice, that’s a gamble. [Quinns laughing] Because you’re relying on, not just that *you* want to have lots of threes, but that other people *don’t*. And it’s funny. I think it’s safe to say that this game we found fascinating.

**Quinns** [hesitantly]: Yeesss.

**Matt**: But I’m not sure how much we really loved it. I really want to play it again. It left me very much wanting to play it again, and I feel like an element that in the first time we played it we didn’t really grok was how reliant you’re gonna be on what other people are making in their things, in terms of, if you see somebody buy a person that requires a three, [**Quinns**: Yes.] then you might not want to… You know, depending on-

**Quinns**: Oh, I see what you mean, yeah.

**Matt**: Because it’s always going clockwise, you have that thing that you have in Container, safe to say (?), of like -- it’s not as much of that, but -- knowing what the person before you -- particularly -- is doing, is going to be quite important.

**Quinns**: Do we not draft- I feel like we might have drafted the other way at like halfway through, like it does the reverse.

**Matt**: I actually don’t recall.

**Quinns**: I don’t remember, but I prefer if it was what you say, because then I only have to watch one person’s pub, the person clockwise from me or whatever.

**Matt**: Yeah, but it just means that there was definitely a point for being like… Because if other people don’t need fours, then you’re just gonna be able to have loads of them, because no one’s gonna take them. Whereas the thing is, when you start the game, threes and fours are just useless, pretty much. I think. I can’t remember if those are the numbers.

**Quinns**: No, I think that’s about right.

**Matt**: But as you go on, they can become valuable to some players and not others. It was a really interesting thing, and as you say, it was so many games within games. You kind of had this slight obfuscation of your deck, in it being partially shuffled but partially reliable, and then you have the flipboards, and then you have all of the different things that can come out.

**Quinns**: You know, he’s such an inventive designer, and ordinarily when I play Wolfgang Warsch games, I get really excited because he gives me an idea, and he executes really well. Not saying Taverns of Tiefan Thal *isn’t* that, but for me it felt like he’s got *sssoooo* many ideas in here, lots of which are from his other games. But that leant the game -- to me -- an element of like a Rube Goldberg machine where like, “Oh, pull the stick to lower the weight to hit the duck. The duck will scare the dog to-” Because you’ve got, you know, cards that let you- And the cards don’t even do anything, they just manipulate how you use the dice. The dice you may or may not have, because of X Y Z. The upgrades that you buy may or may not be useful. It was very, very, very interesting.

**Matt**: Yeah. And there was some interesting stuff with… Because the game had a bunch of different modules with it, for playing different versions.

**Quinns**: Yes, it comes with five mini expansions, which I thought was really generous when I first heard of the game. “Oh, five little expansions out of the box, great!” Once we played it, I think I realized it’s more like it’s just got so many ideas that it wants to *gate off* those ideas. [Matt laughing] Because you’ll naturally play the beginner game first, but that has so much going on that you really want to know that before you introduce jesters, schnapps, the guest book, like all these other things that you get.

**Matt**: Yeah. And it seemed like schnapps were basically the same… No, there was another mechanic which involved… Was it the monks that saw you moving around the monk board and unlocking monk bonuses?

**Quinns**: Yes.

**Matt**: Which was basically exactly the same idea as the droplet moving around in Quacks to unlock things.

**Quinns**: Yup!

**Matt**: It’s really interesting. It’s one of those things that kind of shifts me into an unhelpful nerd zone of going, I wonder what the order of this was? I wonder if he made a game like Quacks, and then thought, “Let’s try and make something a bit more gamer-y with the same ideas,” or whether he was working on this and then decided to just run off and do the Quacks thing using just one idea from this game because it was not coming together. I think that the problem we had was that we felt that, when we were playing it, we couldn’t really see why you wouldn’t want to just get loads of tables in the bar. And it’s one of those things where you need to play the game more to get a sense for it, but…

**Quinns**: Yeah, no, I agree. Just to end on a positive, because I think we do-

**Matt**: Oh no, I really liked it, and I want to play it again.

**Quinns**: I did really like it as well, yeah. I think it’s just, it’s extremely rare that we’re… Not lost for words, but we played this at Zomerspel, a Belgian convention who took wonderful care of us. If you ever get the chance to go to Zomerspel-

**Matt**: Mmm.

**Quinns**: Goodness! Go. But we got back to the hotel room that night, and we were just still thinking, still talking about it, going, “But how…?” And it’s rare that we’re sort of knocked for six like that.

**Matt**: Yeah. I think I was really excited to play more of it. I think I just wanna see how well it holds up to repeat hammering.

**Quinns**: No, very excited. So that was Taverns of Tiefan Thal. Of course if you don’t know how to spell any of these games, you’ll always find them in the podcast description.

## Carpe Diem [00:13:48]

**Quinns**: Let’s move on to something a little simpler.

**Matt**: Mmhm.

**Quinns**: Let’s move on to Stefan Feld’s Carpe Diem. [Matt laughing] AKA… [chuckles] Before we get into my performance, shall we say, of Carpe Diem, this is a Stefan Feld game. Stefan Feld produces a lot of resource management, conflict-free, what are called eurogames by the industry. We haven’t played a lot of them, because my goodness, there are so many, and they’re not always described as great. The Shut Up & Sit Down review of a Stefan Feld game you might have seen is Castles of Burgundy, which we love -- really looking forward to the new edition of that coming out later -- and Trajan, which is interesting, but we didn’t love as much as some of the more classic board gamers who were alive in the nineties and noughties? And of course now all tragically killed. [Matt laughing]

**Matt**: In the eurobus accident.

**Quinns**: I was gonna say the Essen Quake [Matt laughing] of 2003.

**Matt**: Well of course, the Essen Quake did *cause* the eurobus to go off [Quinns laughing] that ravine.

**Quinns**: I was looking forward to play Carpe Diem, because I believe it’s nominated for the Kennerspiel Des Jahres, the big German critics’ prize of the year. No, the connoisseurs’ prize.

**Matt** [singing]: When you’re buildin’ fields of Rome!

**Quinns**: So yeah, do you wanna describe…?

**Matt**: Oh, gosh.

**Quinns**: I can have a crack.

**Matt**: No, no. So this is a game of building your little villa within ancient Rome. And you do that by zigging around a pentagram of property deals with your little meeple, and it’s just taking in turns to move to one of two locations you can go to from where you currently are on this strange star.

**Quinns**: Six-pointed star.

**Matt**: Yeah. I think it’s a bad. (?) I don’t know. But anyway, you can go left or right, basically, and then you go off and you go, “Ooh, I’m gonna have *this* building,” and some of the buildings are just things that you pop on the board, and you immediately get a bonus, and it has that classic that you have on tile placement games. You can only build out contiguously. You can only build out based on things you’ve already built.

**Quinns**: Yeah, so you’ve got this what, eight-by-eight grid maybe?

**Matt**: Something like that. Maybe more. I don’t remember. But when you cover up things, you’re gonna get bonuses, so it’s good to cover up stuff. But at the same time, some things you buy and you just place and it has an immediate effect and it does something. Other things are kind of buildings in progress, that you have to either combine two of the same, or, maybe more, to make a bigger thing. And then when you finish it, you get a bonus. But, [Quinns laughing] the thing that’s brutal about this is, your board is also surrounded with this modular clip-on edge which is really nice because it actually does something that a lot of these tile-laying games don’t do, in the fact that it actually gives you a sense of space within where you’re building. It gives you a little bit of greenery around the edge of your plot to make you feel like it’s not just like, “This is the edge of the universe,” but being like, “No, this is the edge of the place where I live.”

**Quinns**: This is the land you have to work with.

**Matt**: But within this, it has some scoring lines. It’s like mad, bonus point ley lines [Quinns laughing] of being like, “Okay, well if you can get a golden house to be cut in half by this line, for every golden house that this line does…”

**Quinns**: Golden house being like...

**Matt**: One of the types.

**Quinns**: ...a bakery or a bank.

**Matt**: Yeah. We’ll come back to theming later. [laughs] To be brutal. Or a grey one! And then you’ll get this many points. But then there’s quite a lot of them around the edge of the board, so you really have this very interesting conceptual puzzle of being like, “How many green buildings can I get in a line on this bit so I get the most points there, whilst also adhering to the rule of orange buildings going the other way here?”

**Quinns**: Yeah, [sputtering]. The people at home can’t see that Matt is doing a lot of sort of-

**Matt**: Horizontal, vertical.

**Quinns**: -vogueing with his hands right now, yeah.

**Matt**: It becomes… yeah. I think, basically, and we might as well get to theming now, because really, it’s the least ancient Rome-y thing in the world, and actually it looks like you could just be building sheds in Norfolk, or something.

**Quinns**: I mean you could be building sheds in Norfolk with changing almost none of the art assets [laughing] in the game.

**Matt**: Yeah, exactly, that’s what I mean. [laughing] Without changing any assets, it could be anything. You know, it’s all more like you’re an architect and you’re trying to build a village, but you’re trying to build a village, and actually you worship demons and [laughing] you’re trying to build a village in a way that’s going to please some sort of underground, like, you know… Properly aligned with burial grounds that’s gonna cause the worst problems or something.

**Quinns**: It reminds me of being the architect of someone like Nero, who’s just crazy. It’s like, [shrieking maniac voice] “The vineyards have to be here!”

**Matt**: Yeah, that makes more sense.

**Quinns**: And you’re thinking, [flatly] “Why. You know what, don’t ask, don’t ask.”

**Matt**: Doesn't matter! Doesn't matter! It’s not even like, “Put all of these buildings here.” It’s such a specific, strange system. But it’s a lot of fun!

**Quinns**: Yes! So immediately, it’s a comparatively very simple game, especially for a Feld. You just take a piece, you put it down, that’s your turn. If you finished a building, then you get the bonus, whether that might be *a grape*, or a bread. The thing that threw me- I mean, I was being thrown left and right. I was like a heel in a wrestling match, just being catapulted around by this game, because I was very tired. I wanna describe my performance as like a cry for help. It was awful. Still had a great time, that’s the important thing. [Matt laughing] But one of the things that really threw me is you have all these objective cards that are laid out in a grid to one side of the board.

**Matt**: Oh it’s brutal, absolutely brutal.

**Quinns**: This is quite a cool mechanic as I understood it initially. It’s even better than what I thought it was. Whenever you finish a round, whoever has the most of these papery scrolls gets to place their token overlapping some of these cards. So I might put it between *those* two, you might put yours between *these* two. Those are the two objectives you have to fulfill. And you actually *have* to do this.

**Matt**: Yeah. Yeah.

**Quinns**: I got that part right. So if you put your disc down over a thing that’s like, “Have a fountain,” you *must* have a fountain. Otherwise, the points it would give you instead become *negative*, which is crazy. And you don’t have the option of, “I’ll put this token down.” You *have* to say, “Okay, I’m going to have three grapes.”

**Matt**: Yeah, at the end of each round, you have to put a token down on a space which allows you to fulfill *at least* two, maybe three objectives.

**Quinns**: Now here’s what I missed. Here’s what I missed. I missed that you have to fulfill those objectives *when you put that token down*! I thought we were claiming objectives that were for the end of the game. It’s not true. And I love this, because suddenly now, we have a eurogame where you’re not just trying to complete objectives, you’re trying to complete objectives at these- What are they called? The points in the race where you have to get to flag A now, and then within another ten minutes, you have to be at flag B. And that really threw me, because I didn’t realize I had to have fishes ready now, oh I’m sorry, please don’t break my legs boss!

**Matt**: That’s it. You’re gonna feel like, “Oh, it’s going alright, it’s going alright.” And then it’s like, “You need something now.” And then particularly with going first. I really shafted you a couple of times just because I got slightly more scrolls than you did, so I got to go first.

**Quinns**: Oh yeah, I remember that.

**Matt**: And I was just a bit more flexible, and I thought, “Well, I’m just gonna take the spot that you so blatantly need, [Quinns laughing] knowing that then you’re gonna earn four points, but then lose four points.” Yeah, it’s just unbelievably harsh. The person who taught us the game came over, and I think in the first round we’re both like, “Well, I think I got *two* points.” [Both laughing]

**Quinns**: Yeah, if you build a bakery, I believe you get, what, one bread, or two bread maybe?

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: There’s something else that you can do that gets you *one* bread. And these are buildings that take multiple turns and a lot of attention to finish, especially if you want to get them cut in half by those ley lines. And if you get *four bread*, if memory serves...

**Matt**: I think it was at three bread, and you get a mulligan. You get a freebie.

**Quinns**: Yeah, three bread is you can complete an objective for free. Which is like… It’s just the idea that you work so hard, you have to dedicatedly collect multiple bakeries, and all that really is is kicking the can down the road of saying like, “Yeah, I’ll just do all this so I don’t have to play the game.”

**Matt**: Yes.

**Quinns**: But that felt nice, in a way, you know?

**Matt**: Yeah, and also you got the fear as you went on of knowing… Because you have these discs that you put on- I realize I said “a mulligan” and it’s not the right term for anyone who’s in the comments, it’s just I like the word mulligan, that’s it.

**Quinns**: It’s a lovely word.

**Matt**: It’s a lovely word. But you have a set number of discs, and by the end of the game, *all* of the slots, pretty much, bar a couple, are full of these discs.

**Quinns**: Oh, you mean for the objective cards.

**Matt**: For the objective cards. The objective cards are set out in this tableau, and there are different connections, so, you know, you can get this and this one, this and this one. But on each of the north, south, east, west edge of them, you can place a disc, but it means as the game goes on, not only are you still each round having to fulfill objectives, but the objectives you can fulfill are getting tighter and tighter, until it’s like, “Well I *have* to get a fountain.” And if there’s no fountains, then you just think, [long frustrated sigh].

**Quinns**: The best, simplest example of this is your house, because your villa is the only building on the estate that can be of any size? So the villa tiles might just- Initially you start a villa, but then you might get a T junction, and then a corner, and a T junction, so you build this massive sprawling house, and at the end of the game, the bigger it is, the more points it’s worth. [pregnant pause] Assuming you finish it.

**Matt**: Yeah. [laughs]

**Quinns**: It’s this lovely, simple push-your-luck thing of like, you know, you’ve got a three-round game. Round one, build the villa. Round two, maybe start thinking about finishing the villa. And even then going into round three, being like, “I need to find the cap that I can slip on the end of my villa to finish it.” I got the fear, because that was like nine victory points that you could just get zero for instead.

**Matt**: Yup. And the thing that really gets you and becomes very interesting, is you start off the game with these six little spaces that you can dart between, but not in any way you want, you have limited options of where you can move to. There’s four different tiles on each of them, but as soon as two tiles are taken from a space-

**Quinns**: Oh, this was the two-player game.

**Matt**: Oh, in the two-player game, which was really satisfyingly chunky -- I mean in four it wouldn’t matter, it’d be the same anyway, things would just go -- but in a two-player game, just like, “Two are gone, the rest are gone,” so it meant that the decisions you made were so brutal, because you’d look at an area and go, “Ohh, that’s amazing, that,” but then you think, “Well no, I can only have like one from that.” And you would end up basically taking moves where you were looking ahead, being like, “Is it possible, now, for the other player to get to that area before I get there?” and looking at it. And something really interesting that somebody came over and pointed out to us was that they said, “Look, this weird little star thing,” where you can move to the opposite side of the board either to the left or right, but then you have to keep bouncing around… They said, “Oh, have you heard about the controversy about this, because you know, actually, it’s kind of not real. It doesn't do anything.”

**Quinns**: Yeah, so this sounded like a joke, right?

**Matt**: Yeah, right?

**Quinns**: Because you’re playing a game where you slide along these lines, and then someone comes up and goes, “You know, it’s not real.” [Matt laughing] And we just couldn’t figure out what they were saying.

**Matt**: Yeah. Until they pointed out that what they meant was, it functionally is the same as it being a circle. So really, at any point, you can go either left or right, and one of the directions is the direction you just came from. So with that in mind, the fact that you are zigging and zagging and darting left and right across it-

**Quinns**: Yes, the fact that you can’t go to the spaces to the left and right, but instead have to dash to the two spaces opposite you.

**Matt**: Yeah. Because of that, basically, people said they’re annoyed, because there’s no point. Why isn’t it just a circle? It’s a gimmick that doesn't do anything. And it was really interesting, because I completely disagree with that, because it’s functionally the same, [**Quinns**: Yes.] but the act of playing the game, of darting your eyes back and forth in a weird [Quinns laughing] spirograph fashion, trying to be like, “How many moves is it going to take me to get over there?” -- going *bum bum bum bum bum bum bum bum* -- was so intense and satisfying!

**Quinns**: When most of the tiles are gone- And the rule is if the tiles are all gone from one of these sixes spaces, you slide to it, and then slide to another space. When most of the tiles are gone, the manual thing you are doing with your hand is like moving a piece on a ouija board, because you go across, across, across, across, across, like you’re drawing multiple triangles, almost like a spirograph? And it feels unbelievably satisfying.

**Matt**: Yeah. *Bum bum bum bum bum bum*. And so it’s really funny how some people would look at it and go, “Yeah, but it’s functionally exactly the same as a game in which you move around left or right in a circle, which lots of games have, so it’s not actually anything new.” But I find that really fascinating and completely wrong-headed, because so much of good game design is about taking something that already exists and framing it differently, in a way that feels different. It’s like when we talk about how card sizes matter. Like are your cards small, or big, or oversized? It’s like, no it doesn't make a difference, but yes, it does! And this is like a mental aesthetics thing.

**Quinns**: Yeah! One hundred percent. It’s psychology. But what’s really depressing is that… Well not *really* depressing, you know. Stuff like…

**Matt**: We’re gonna be alright, right? [Quinns laughing]

**Quinns**: Yeah, no one’s dying. But the publishers have caved.

**Matt** [miffed]: What?

**Quinns**: Under pressure from- This is what we were told, I believe. The first edition of Carpe Diem has the cool zigzagging thing that you and I like, whereas with later editions, once it was pointed out this is the same as moving left or right -- maybe because it’s simpler? -- later editions of Carpe Diem, I believe, have been changed so that you just move left and right on a circle.

**Matt**: Never cave in on your zigzag dreams. [Quinns stammering] You heard it hear first.

**Quinns**: Shut Up & Sit Down has finally found some political view we will stand for, [Matt laughing] and it’s, “Put the triangles back in!”

**Matt** [rhythmic chanting]: Tri-ang-les!

**Matt and Quinns** [rhythmic chanting]: Tri-ang-les! Tri-ang-les!

**Quinns**: Put them back in. That’s Carpe Diem.

**Matt**: Carpe Diem!

**Quinns**: By… Car… Carpe…

**Matt**: Seize the triangles!

**Quinns**: Carpe Diem. Uhhhh. Hey! We played one more thing at Zomerspel that we had a lovely time with.

**Matt**: KLASK!

**Quinns**: Uh, oh, let’s not talk about KLASK, because it can only look weak and frail in the shadow of my Crokinole review.

**Matt**: I don’t know, man. Crokinole is something, but KLASK, oh boy!

**Quinns**: I don’t wanna talk about KLASK because you beat me at it.

**Matt** [laughing]: You were real bad at KLASK!

**Quinns**: Whoooaaa! Let’s talk about Luxor-

**Matt**: Okay, sure.

**Quinns**: -and leave KLASK behind in… in the dirt-

**Matt**: See me after KLASK!

**Quinns** [laughing]: -where it belongs.

## Luxor [00:26:47]

**Quinns**: So Luxor is a game about an [sic] pyramid. Okay?

**Matt**: Uh-huh?

**Quinns**: This is a family game from Queen Games that has done quite well. They’ve got an expansion on the way.

**Matt**: Mmhm?

**Quinns**: And what you’re doing in Luxor is you’ve got a spiraling pyramid. So you’re archaeologists. All the players are going to enter in one corner of the board. They’re gonna go round in a sort of square spiral -- I don’t know if there’s a word for that in maths, there probably is, leave a comment -- and then eventually you arrive at the middle where all the really big rich treasure is. Now, to do this, on your turn-

**Matt**: That’s an archaeological term.

**Quinns**: Rich treasure!

**Matt**: The big rich treasure.

**Quinns**: The big rich treasure. That’s-

**Matt** [spunky sidekick voice]: Holy hell Dr. Jones! This is some big rich treasure!

**Quinns**: It’s that line from Indiana Jones! “This big rich treasure belongs in a museum.”

**Matt** [high-pitched]: Yeah, I guess, yeah.

**Quinns**: So, players all have a hand of cards and not one playing piece but multiple. You have a couple of archaeologists, and even more you’ll unlock later, but we’ll get to that. On your turn you’re going to play a card from your hand which has a movement value, and you’re going to move one of your archaeologists that many spaces. So you play a three from your hand, the archaeologist walks three spaces, and whatever they land on, if it’s treasure, you grab that treasure. If it’s like an extra special movement card, you get that! If you get a key that will let you unlock the Pharaoh’s Tomb at the end, great. So what you’re doing here is you’re just collecting fun trinkets and toys every turn. Probably.

**Matt**: Mmmm.

**Quinns**: Now there’s two catches here…

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: ...the first of which is that often, a lot of the treasure requires not *one* of your archaeologists, but two or even three of them.

**Matt**: Yeah, it’s not just big rich, it’s *massive* rich.

**Quinns**: So, if you have a hand of cards that’s like, “Move one, move two, move one, move four, move three,” you have to play them in a way that ensures those two archaeologists end up on that space, *and also*, that another player doesn't take that treasure out from under your feet, which can happen. The other problem, and a cool- Because Matt’s going nuts because I haven’t described the cool hook yet.

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: The cards in your hand cannot be played in any order.

**Matt**: He’s buried the lede! The way it works is you can only ever -- and I hope I get this right now [Quinns laughing] -- but you have five cards in hand-

**Quinns**: No pressure, Matthew.

**Matt**: -and you can only play the cards on the left or the right side of it, you can never play the cards in the middle.

**Quinns**: Yes, that’s correct. So you play either the left-most or right-most card in your hand. You can never reorder your cards, so you play a card on your turn, which takes you down to four cards, and then the new card that you draw -- *phthoop*! -- goes in the middle.

**Matt**: In the middle!

**Quinns**: Between the… two sets of two cards, yeah. I thought I was getting some of that wrong, but…

**Matt**: Which means, interestingly… Because it’s always going in the middle, and never one side or the other, it means if there is a card that’s to the right-hand side of the middle, and you want to get to it, if you just keep drawing from the left instead, you’re never gonna get to it. You have to eventually, at some point, start using the cards on the left and right if you want to actually get access to all of them.

**Quinns**: Wait, that’s not true, no! I was worried about maths, that’s not true.

**Matt**: Hang on, no.

**Quinns**: If you’ve got five cards and you play…

**Matt**: No, I’m wrong!

**Quinns**: Yeah.

**Matt**: I can’t do maths in my head.

**Quinns**: No, it’s weird right? Because when I was explaining the rules, I had the same fear that this card- Anyway the point is, it’s cool.

**Matt**: It is cool.

**Quinns**: It’s really… Having to drill down to cards in the middle of your hand is kind of cute. It means that… [Sigh] I played Herbaceous recently, which is a card game in which you do not hold hands of cards, and it made me realize how much of the joy in card games is just holding cards.

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: Luxor taught me, that can actually be even elevated if you’re holding the cards-

**Matt**: You have to grip them!

**Quinns**: You sort of have to grip them and they’re a puzzle that is distinct from the puzzle on the board?

**Matt**: Yes.

**Quinns**: It was very cool.

**Matt**: Yeah, no, really cool, of being like, “Well I can use this, then this, then this, and then this,” and then being able to land and get special unlockable cards from these piles of better cards that you just get to use once, and then they go into the main deck and get shuffled, and then everyone can keep getting them.

**Quinns**: Oh yeah, that was a cool mechanic, yeah!

**Matt**: Which was a cool, spicy mechanic, of being like, “Yeah, I can move five!” And then a few turns later being like, [singsong voice] “Hey Quinns! Look what I got! [Quinns laughing] It’s the card you bought and now it’s mine for a go.”

**Quinns**: Yeah, you know, overall in Luxor, not only is it that when players get cool movement cards they eventually get shuffled through the discard pile back to the deck, but also, as players take treasure, you replace the treasure that’s taken with new and novel tiles, like a trapdoor that leads actually deeper into the pyramid, or whatever. But it means there’s this nice mechanic where as archaeologists initially run in and start grabbing handfuls of sarcophagi or pots or whatever, the archaeologists who come in later, who show up because they were having breakfast and they arrive late, they end up traversing a different pyramid.

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: Because there’s now spaces that give you little movement boosts like you’re playing F-Zero.

**Matt**: Yeah, so basically some archaeologist on the team turns up late, because as you move through you unlock new archaeologists who start at the entrance again, and then you can either choose, “Well, do I want to just push ahead with my main team of two people and just get to the center of the tomb and get the treasure, or do I want to try and get everyone together as a team and start lugging away really big heavy artifacts?”

**Quinns**: Yes, because there’s some fun stuff about when the game ends. Usually, you know, I don’t like games that allow players to- I say don’t like, that’s probably a strong term.

**Matt**: Talking (?) of like where you can end the game?

**Quinns**: Yeah, when someone’s like, “Oh, I’m just gonna really rush the end of the game,” and then I’m fine if that player loses...

**Matt**: Yeah. Often they don’t.

**Quinns**: Often they don’t, yeah. But Luxor just, I don’t know, it had that nice mechanic that you just-

**Matt**: It made sense. There was always that element of greed, of being like, you know, “Yeah, you could take your time and get all this cool treasure,” but *really*, you’re trying to get to the big, special treasure that belongs in a museum, and that made sense. And I did like the way it felt very Indiana Jones-y, in the way that the hard work you’d done would kind of be piggybacked by other people. And it reminded me of that thing of like, [heroic archaeologist voice] “Ahh! We’ve translated it!” and then someone shouts down a hole, [evil fop voice] “Thank you for the translation! [Quinns laughing] We’ll see you in Athens, Indiana Jones!” and you go, “Ohhh, blast it!”

**Quinns**: You know, it’s slightly weird, isn’t it? Because as a game, it’s almost an abstract.

**Matt**: Yeah!

**Quinns**: You’re moving onto squares, and then trying to get multiple pieces on the squares by playing numbers. And yet? You know, I’m not gonna say that the exploring-a-pyramid theme doesn't work really well? You know?

**Matt**: Yeah! I liked it a lot.

**Quinns**: So that was Luxor. I’m pretty excited to play more, especially with the expansion they just Kickstarted in January called Luxor: The Mummy’s Curse.

**Matt**: Oh, what does that do?

**Quinns**: Well, it adds -- in the style of all Queen Games expansions -- it adds like a gajillion small modules [Matt laughing] that are all a bit underwhelming. But one of them, module one, is… The Mummy!

**Matt** [mock surprise]: What?!

**Quinns**: It comes with… a mummy!

**Matt** [mock surprise]: What?!

**Quinns**: Who’s gonna be walking, I guess. Oh, in fact I looked this up, it’s gonna-

**Matt** [utterly confused]: Who’s mummy?

**Quinns** [mock frustration]: The mummy that lives in the pyramid who’s annoyed you’re stealing all their… stuff!

**Matt**: All of her son’s stuff?

**Quinns**: Uhhhh… This mummy in question could be a male mummy. #NotAllMummies.

**Matt**: Yeah, sure.

**Quinns**: Then, so, yeah. [pause] Makes you think.

**Matt**: It *does* make me think.

[funky sting]

## Silk [00:33:13]

**Matt**: So I’ve been playing a little game called Silk, and it really is a little game. It comes in a little box and it’s very colorful and it has a picture of a man and a picture of something that sort of looks like a dog, [Quinns laughing] and some gigantic creatures, creepy-crawlies that are silkworms. [quiet suspenseful voice] But oh no. What’s that on the background of the box? [whispers] Is it a little monster? [regular voice] Yes Quinns! It’s a little monster! So Silk is a game-

**Quinns**: I didn’t say anything.

**Matt**: You did. I heard. You whispered it. So. It’s a game of farming silkworm. [*Ed: Matt uses “silkworm” as the plural for “silkworm” throughout.*] So the way this works is you have a little tableau of five-by-six little cardboard squares, and you get your friends to set them up on the table, and then you have to correct them and say, “No, actually, there should be gaps between all of them” -- which is unusual for games like this -- because you need to leave room for fences. But you also need to leave room for hatcheries that are going to let you grow new silkworm.

**Quinns**: I’m pretty excited so far.

**Matt**: So the way the game works is, you have a bunch of silkworm, and you can move them around the board, but obviously silkworm, they don’t move themselves. And especially in this slightly odd fantasy realm in which the silkworm are bloody massive. [Quinns laughing] There’s this hierarchy of how things react to other things. So you’ve got… Shepherds, for example, can move the dog things. They’re kind of dogs, kind of rams. It’s a weird fantasy thing. Shepherds can move the dogs. Dogs can move the silkworm. And shepherds can move the silkworm as well.

**Quinns**: Okay.

**Matt**: Shepherds can jump over fences. But no one else can. Dogs can’t get through fences. [Quinns laughing] Nothing else can get through fences apart from shepherds.

**Quinns**: Okay.

**Matt**: Then, you’ve got the dogs. Obviously, dogs can chase off things, but they also can stop the monster from moving into that space.

**Quinns** [laughing]: Okay?

**Matt**: So the dog cannot chase off the monster, I don’t think. Actually, maybe it can. Maybe the dog can chase off- Yeah the dog can chase off the monster.

**Quinns**: Just from how you’re describing this, I think any of our listeners will forgive you for getting one part of this wrong.

**Matt**: No, but what’s amazing about it, really, is it’s a bizarrely abstract game.

**Quinns**: Okay.

**Matt**: But there’s a couple of elements where you start to scratch off a little bit, and you realize it’s an abstract game. But other than that, the theme [chuckles] is so… kind of just works so much that it doesn't feel as abstract as it blatantly is.

**Quinns**: I mean, that’s really nice.

**Matt**: It is. It’s really interesting in the fact that it’s like: Okay, well then the monster can chase off the shepherds, and it will also, Not necessarily *eat* the silkworm, but it will take the silkworm off to its lair, which lives on another little board, [Quinns laughing] and you just pile them up there. Which means they’re not eaten yet, but it’s implied that they are going to be eaten at the end of the game.

**Quinns**: So is this like a management game? Players presumably have their own shepherd?

**Matt**: Yep! So everyone has their own shepherd and their own dog.

**Quinns**: Okay.

**Matt**: And then the way it works, basically, and this is where it gets a little bit interesting…

**Quinns**: It was pretty interesting already, I dare say.

**Matt**: Yeah, yeah. Actually no, it’s really interesting. The whole thing is just slightly bizarre. It’s an odd game, but I do like it. Each turn you roll two dice, and there are six different actions you can do, and depending on what dice you get, those are the actions you can do. So there are six actions 1-6. You get a four and a three? Hey! You can do action number three and action number four on your turn.

**Quinns**: Okay.

**Matt**: Except! At the start of your turn, you can then change the numbers on those die, but it costs you one victory point for each point you change. And one and six loop around. So you can turn a six to a one for a point, or you could turn a four to a six for two points.

**Quinns**: Okay?

**Matt**: So whatever you roll, you *can do* whatever you want on your turn, but it’s a question of whether or not it’s worth it. So it becomes this thing of being like, “Okay, this is what I’ve rolled. It’s either perfect or it’s really not ideal. What do I do with it?” So rather than being like, “Well look, I could spend six points to just completely change both my die,” but it might be that you think, “Well, no. I can kind of nudge that one this way, and I can kind of do this.”

**Quinns**: That’s interesting! If you roll what you don’t want, then can you see a way- Actually this makes sense, because I have watched you play this once, and it was slow, but that makes sense if it was slow if players roll dice and go, “Am I gonna do this? Or what are the other actions I could take?”

**Matt**: Yeah, I mean, it was slow the first time we played it, but we played it at a con and we were pretty tired, and I’ve played it a few times since and it’s a lot faster, actually.

**Quinns**: Oh, great.

**Matt**: It does whip around. But it does mean, occasionally you have to ask yourself questions of being like, “Is it worth it?” A lot of it comes down to the fact that the way you score the big points in the game -- and it’s really nice -- is you get your silkworm to graze on the tiles. And the different types of tiles have different types of values, and you multiply them. It’s basically like, “How many of your silkworm are on that space? Times that by the value of the grass.”

**Quinns**: So do players have their own silkworms as well?

**Matt**: Yeah. Everyone has their own silkworm. There can only be three silkworm on each space, which means if someone else puts one of their silkworm on your silkworm space, it’s really annoying, [Quinns laughing] because you want to have three of yours on a space, because then you can munch the grass. And if you get on the good grass, three worms on the good grass, and use the munch action…! A thing that I like about this game, it reminds me of when we did the documentary about Twilight Imperium -- which you can watch on Youtube if you’ve not seen it, it’s a lot of fun -- in the fact that Christian T. Petersen talked about how much he loved the fact that when people play TI, they start to kind of act out the roles of the aliens, and he said that’s, for him, a real sign that you’ve done something right with the game design, when people are getting into it and making noises and stuff. Every time I’ve played this, people have just gone, [eating noise] *nom nom nom nom nom* [Quinns laughing] as they pick up their silkworm and flip over the tile to be like, “I’ve eaten that grass now.” But you get nine points! However, the thing is, maybe you really want to do it this turn, but then it’s gonna cost you three points to do it. And then you think, “Well, I’m only gonna get six points.” Or maybe you’re not even getting nine points, and maybe it’s only gonna be worth six points! But then if you spend three points so you can do it, ehhh is it worth three points? You should probably wait until next turn and do it then. But maybe there’s a monster nearby, and maybe you think, “Oh, I’ve gotta do it now, because somebody’s gonna eat me with the monster.” Because here’s the thing! The monster is one of the actions. On a six, you move the monster a space. So everyone controls the monster, or no one controls the monster. The first time I played this game, people were moving the monster *all* the bloody time, and it ate up so many worms. [Quinns laughing] Second time, it didn’t move for like *half* the game! And then it did and it ate a lot of worms.

**Quinns**: Are players incentivized to use the monster to eat one another’s worms, beyond just taking worms away from a player?

**Matt**: Yeah, at the end of the game, you lose a point for every worm in the cave, basically. So if somebody’s doing well, then eating their worms is a good idea, because partially, they’re gonna lose points, but also, they can’t keep shuffling their worms around and eating up all the good grass forever. However, it gets interesting in the fact that you’ve got this tight little board and the way it describes it in the manual is bumping.

**Quinns**: Okay?

**Matt**: So you bump things. So you go, “Alright, well this shepherd is gonna bump these silkworm.” So what happens is you move a shepherd into a space with silkworm, and then they get bumped. And they can get bumped back to where the shepherd just was, but, you, the bump*er*… [Quinns laughing] It is the bumper, not the bumpee, that gets to decide where things get shuffled.

**Quinns**: I love that I get to ask this question, but: Is bumping mandatory?

**Matt**: Yes. You cannot have things existing in the same space.

**Quinns**: Oh really! Okay!

**Matt**: Which means things have to bump. [Quinns laughing] And! I know what you’re thinking! You can chainbump! Which means-

**Quinns**: Right.

**Matt**: -you can have a shepherd which moves into a space with a dog, and then the dog moves into a space with the monster, and then the monster moves into a space with some silkworm and eats them. So you can go *bump bump bump bump*.

**Quinns**: What’s the interaction between your shepherd and other people’s dogs?

**Matt**: Cannot. Nothing.

**Quinns**: The dog is taboooo!

**Matt**: Oh actually… Mmm, I don’t remember exactly, but I remember that you can’t move a dog into a space with another dog, or a shepherd into another space with a shepherd. There are some rules that you can’t do it, and obviously fences -- one of the actions, you can build fences -- they change things substantially.

**Quinns**: Yeah!

**Matt**: Yeah, basically, the way it works is, once you’ve got all of your hatcheries out, you gain the ability to reflip -- to unflip -- tiles that have been munched on by the silkworm. Which means again, it’s a slight element of a memory game here, because they gradually all get flipped over [**Quinns**: Oh gods!] to all look the same, and then you kind of just have to remember in your head, “That tile was the really good one.” And then it means that you can then, instead of building new hatcheries, you can flip a tile. So the ideal scenario, right? Is you can build a bunch of fences, and then you can have an area which the monster can’t get into, no one else’s worms can get into, and you can just keep moving your shepherd round in a circle to circle your worms around and keep refreshing the land and eating the land, and you can get loads and loads of points.

**Quinns**: It sounds-

**Matt**: But!

**Quinns**: Ooh, ooh, ooh.

**Matt**: Well it’s the thing is like…! [sigh] It incentivizes you with this idea of being able to have your own perfect little worm farm... but the board’s bloody tiny!!! [Quinns laughing] And there’s loads of stuff going on, and it’s messy, and also -- this is the point where you kind of go, “Hang on, this is an abstract game” -- is the world is circular. Right?

**Quinns**: Okay.

**Matt**: Which means you move off the left-hand side, or the north, or whatever, and you just then come back on the other side. Which means basically it’s a grid, but the grid doesn't have edges. You move around in a full-

**Quinns**: Right, so all players are actually as close to each other as-

**Matt**: So everyone’s as close to each other, but! The exception is: Everything moves around the world, apart from silkworm, who get -- and I’m doing this with air quotes with my fingers -- “lost in the mountains.” [Both laughing] So basically if silkworm ever go off the edge, they just go back to the player’s supply.

**Quinns**: But why would you- Wouldn’t that mean you… Okay.

**Matt**: Because you only get to put a new one on the board every turn, which means basically, getting rid of other people’s silkworm by, not having them eaten, but getting them lost in the mountains happens a lot.

**Quinns**: Oh no! I was just wondering, “Why would you ever go round the world?” because it would mean- But if you’re going around the world to bump a worm into a mountain… Nooooooo!

**Matt**: Well that’s it. You can just be like, “Ahh!” And you get to choose the distribution of it, and you just be like, “Oh, I move into this space and *my* silkworm is gonna go over here, but yours, oh no! They got lost in the mountains.” [Quinns laughing]

**Quinns**: If people haven’t seen this, by the way, it’s definitely worth googling “silk,” or “silk board game,” because one of the reasons Matt and I are so enamored of this is just how nice it looks?

**Matt**: Well this is the thing, and this is I guess why I really like it. It’s the fact that it’s this wonderful pastel-y game, and it has beautiful little wooden components, and it comes in a very small tidy box, but it’s a game that looks so nice! It’s a game of beautifully-colored wooden bits and film (?). And, “Yay, I’m gonna farm some silkworm and have a nice time!” But then you play the game, [Quinns laughing] and it’s like, [shitty bully voice] “Ah I ate your silkworm. Ah your silkworm got lost in the mountains, oh dear, how did that happen, oh no you fell over!” [Quinns laughing] And then even the manual! The art is wonderful in the fact that it’s like… It’s kind of icky! In the fiction of this world, the silkworms are massive, but it means that the silkworm hatcheries are massive, and you just have this art of loads of eggs, and it’s all kind of covered in this slime, and I really, really love the fact that it’s this very strange little colorful game which is both cute, but also has teeth. And what I found that I really liked about it was, I was playing a game at a little game night that they do in Somerset House where I work on Wednesdays in the bar nearby, and I was playing with three other people, two of whom didn’t really play games that often, and I basically just got a bunch of boxes out and said, “Which of these do you want to play?” And it was funny, we were there with a couple of women who don’t play a lot of games, and they were like, “Oh, I wanna play that one.” They didn’t want to play Res Arcana, weirdly. [Quinns laughing] Don’t know why this super-

**Quinns**: They did not want to enter a realm of witches and wizardry.

**Matt** [wizard voice]: But there are wizards! And… wizard fighters. [Quinns laughing] Are you sure you do not want to *tame the dragons*? [regular voice] And they were like, “No. Actually, *that* one looks really nice.” And I was like, “Okay.” But what was wonderful is, that was the one that people who hadn’t played games much thought, “Oh! That looks fun! Silkworm farming!” But then actually when we played it, they were the ones who were having the most fun going around just eating *all* of my worms with the monster. And they didn’t win, but they didn’t care, because they were just like, “I’m gonna eat all your worms!” [laughing]

**Quinns**: It’s so, so important to play board games with non-gamers from time to time, you know, just for a head check in the hobby, and to remind you how people who aren’t drenched in board games react to themes, or react to stuff like… One of the reasons Monopoly is popular is you get to watch people get put in jail! People love that!

**Matt**: I think you have to remember that. There’s often a real condescending tone when it comes to people who don’t play a lot of games, this idea that they just want to play cute, nice, happy, cooperative things.

**Quinns**: No!

**Matt**: And it’s not true! But that’s the thing, is aesthetics sometimes, there is a thing. (?) And you look at something you think, “Oh, I don’t want to play that, that looks really trad nerdy,” but then they think, “Oh that looks nice and colorful!” But then, when you play the colorful game, if it’s all about, you know- Like, we loved -- well, I particularly loved -- was it Pie Town?

**Quinns**: Oh yeah, Renegade’s-

**Matt** [laughing and talking over Quinns]: Renegade’s Pie Town!

**Quinns**: -worker placement pie creation game.

**Matt**: And I think that’s the sort of thing where if you don’t know what you’re doing, you might think, “This is perfect for nongamers! Look, we’re all just making pies!” But then even in that, actually, that’s not a good example, because it had the whole thing of, [quiet evil chef voice] “I’m gonna steal your pie recipe.” [Quinns laughing] Which is wonderful!

**Quinns**: Yes, people eavesdropping on interns in a forest, yeah.

**Matt**: That’s what it’s about! I think sometimes people look at people who aren’t big into nerdy scene stuff, and they do gravitate to stuff with a softer art style, because they just think it might be less like, eugh. But then actually within those games, they *do* wanna do the mean stuff! Because the mean stuff is fun.

**Quinns**: Yeah. I mean I think this is actually true of a lot of Shut Up & Sit Down’s favorite comedy games, is that it just doesn't look quite what it is? So I’m thinking about Suburbia, I’m thinking about Food Chain Magnate, and I’m think about… I don’t know, even Alchemists, the way that a game can have a quaint theme and it actually improves it if there’s a secret little mean cutthroat side.

**Matt**: It’s really odd. I’m looking forward to playing more of it. I think it’s an oddity, and I think I enjoy how strange it is. And there’s some really interesting elements in the fact that like, building fences, you can build fences quite quickly, and it means all it would take is maybe a couple of players to be like…

**Quinns**: Could you fence someone in?

**Matt**: You can fence the monster in.

**Quinns**: Oh! Oh, could you fence someone’s dog in?

**Matt**: Yeah. [Both laughing] Like, you could! You could fence whatever you want in! But it’s just the fact that the monster, in the games I’ve played, has been such an overwhelmingly terrifying force, but if a couple of people decide they’re gonna do it, you can just make it so the monster just can’t do anything for the whole game, which is like… That’s really interesting!

**Quinns**: I mean yeah! Especially in a twenty minute or thirty minute game, or however long it takes.

**Matt**: Yeah, it’s probably about forty-five minutes, an hour. So an hour of a monster going, [deep bored monster sigh]. [Both laughing] But that was Silk! Which we might be- I’m gonna play some more of it, I think, and it may be one that you see popping up again in the future.

**Quinns**: Yeah, it’s one to show off on camera, for sure.

**Matt**: Absolutely.

## Pandemic: Rapid Response [00:47:29]

**Quinns**: I’ve played a couple of real-time co-op games, one of which I’m not gonna talk about much, and the other of which I’m gonna talk about a bunch because I think it’s amazing. The one I don’t like very much is called Pandemic: Rapid Response. So, this is a real-time Pandemic dice game, not to be confused with all the other Pandemic spin-offs that Asmodee are churning out like they’re worried that they’re gonna lose the Pandemic license? I don’t know what’s happening there. They’ve created the Pandemic expanded universe and no one seems-

**Matt**: There is already a Pandemic dice game, isn’t there? I’ve played that.

**Quinns**: Yeah, it’s called Pandemic: The Cure, I believe?

**Matt**: Yeah. That’s quite fun.

**Quinns**: I think there’s one where you play the disease? It’s *wild*, Matthew.

**Matt**: People have gone mad… for Pandemic.

**Quinns**: Rapid Response is interesting because… [laughs] Tell me at what point this theme stops making sense for you, okay? In Pandemic: Rapid Response, all the players are a crew of a rapid response plane [**Matt**: Right.] that’s gonna fly to hotspots around the world and give them things they need, okay?

**Matt**: Right.

**Quinns**: Think this makes sense?

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: So, you’re gonna be making vaccines, someone’s gonna be making vaccines in that room. You might be making… what’s the word…

**Matt**: Sandwiches!

**Quinns**: Synthesized vaccines. Oh, vaccines, oh bandages in another room. Fresh drinking water. Yeah, you’re gonna be purifying water on the plane, that’s a room. There’s also a kitchen where- Oh Matt, you’re frowning! This doesn't seem to make a lot of sense! So.

**Matt**: Why’s there a kitchen? For making sandwiches? Did I get that right?

**Quinns**: Yes.

**Matt**: You can make them sandwiches?

**Quinns**: It’s a bubbling pot of stew, as depicted on the board. But the idea is that what do people need?

**Matt** [bewildered]: What?!

**Quinns**: They need -- I’ve remembered it now -- they need medical supplies, electricity, food, and water. You are responsible for all four. So it’s this mad thing that like, “Oh, we need to get to South Af- South Africa needs three food and a battery!” And so someone runs to the kitchen and starts rolling dice panic-ly [sic] to make stew.

**Matt**: This is insane!

**Quinns**: Here’s the thing! I was playing it with Kylie, and she was saying, “Wouldn’t this just be better if it was rethemed as just cabin crew, and you were just running around a plane giving people meals and stuff.” And immediately, I was like, “Yeah.” Now that would just make this better and more thematically coherent and more accessible. Anyway that was fine. I wouldn’t recommend anyone buys Pandemic: Rapid Response, though I didn’t have a bad time with it, I just thought it was like, maybe probably not worth paying for.

## Rail Pass [00:49:37]

**Quinns**: What I *did* have a great time with is something people are gonna have to wait for. So this is a game called Rail Pass. This is from Mercury Games, who people may remember from our review of Container: Jumbo Edition. They make interesting games. So- [laughs]

**Matt**: They make interesting games that are often too big.

**Quinns**: Yes. So Rail Pass is a small box. I have no idea what the recommended retail price is gonna be, but it does have a lot of three-dimensional- Of plastic trains, okay? So this is a game for between two and six players. It’s a game about trains delivering cargo to where it needs to be. Let’s say that- I played it with three, I think the sweet spot would be four or five. You divide the six cities in the game -- which are little sheets -- between all of your players. So if they’re playing it with four people, then most people will have one city, a couple people will have two. These cities also then are covered in cargo cubes that have to be delivered to different-colored cities, and two trains, a big one and a short one. The trains also have conductors, which are pegs. So Matt, let’s say you have one city.

**Matt**: Is this like The Game of Life?

**Quinns**: Yeah! The peg lives in a vehicle, yeah, so, exactly.

**Matt**: I like putting pegs in vehicles.

**Quinns**: Yeah, well you’re gonna be doing a lot of it, and you’re gonna be sometimes realizing you don’t have pegs. We’ll get back to this. So let’s say you’re just in charge of Red City, Matthew, okay?

**Matt**: Okay!

**Quinns**: You’ve got two trains. You’ve got three red engineers, one of which is in each train. I love when I describe this -- for the people at home -- Matt closes his eyes so he can better visualize a game.

**Matt**: Peeking into a world of trains.

**Quinns**: So, each of your trains will have one red peg in, and there’s also one more red peg in your hotel. You also have a ton of cubes, none of which are red, all of which have to be delivered to different cities.

**Matt**: Cor.

**Quinns**: Now! There are paths between all different cities, mostly in a circular fashion, because you’re sat around a table, right? So Matt, let’s say I’m sat to the left of you, and I’ve got Green City with my green engineers and all my cubes that have to go to other cities, and then you’ve got someone else to your right. So, immediately, here’s what you’re gonna do Matt. You’re gonna start filling your trains with cargo that is coming off the conveyor belt. So let’s say, oh, there’s a green cube! You’re gonna put that onto one of your trains.

**Matt**: Mmhm!

**Quinns**: You’re then going to physically pick up that plastic train that now has plastic cubes on it, and pass it to me. Once a train is lifted off the board and in your hand, it is what’s known as “riding the rails,” [Matt laughing] in air quotes, okay? So anytime anyone picks up a train, the idea is that train is on the move. So, you then have to pass that train to me. I will take it. Also, we’re not allowed to pass trains back and forth without us- You have to say, “Toot toot.” And then when I take the train off you, I have to say, “Toot toot.” That train is now in my hand and in my possession. I wanna put it down in my green city and take the cubes off it, right? But Matt! Every city starts the game with two trains on it already, so it’s full.

**Matt**: Mmmmm.

**Quinns**: So I then have to pick up one of my trains and put your train in it.

**Matt**: And then you have to work out where that train’s gonna go.

**Quinns**: Well no, because what I could do is- Because the green train that I’ve picked up, I can unload the green cubes off you, pick your train back up, say “Toot toot,” hand that train back to you, and put my train back down in the city.

**Matt**: Sure.

**Quinns**: Okay? What- [laughs] The reason this gets tricky is… Let’s start with the fact that that colored peg, the peg that shows a red engineer’s driving that train- The engineers don’t want to get too far away from their friends and family, okay? If an engineer is ever found more than one city away from where they live, [Matt laughing] they instantly quit? [Matt laughing] They leave the job and you have to take that peg out -- so now you’ve got a train with no driver, sat in a train station somewhere -- and the peg goes in the middle. Also, if a cube ever falls off a train because you’re holding these things in your hand… And by the way! You can hold two trains! You can have a train in each hand and be trying to move cargo-

**Matt**: Can you hold more than that if you think you can?

**Quinns**: No. [Matt laughing] Here’s what we realized, right? You can only ever hold a train in each hand, each of which have cubes on. But the game doesn't say, “And while you’ve got a train in each hand, you can’t unload cargo cubes or swap out engineers.” So you could have a train in each hand, and you’re holding the train between little finger and thumb, and then using your index finger and ring finger to pick up cubes on the player mat without tilting the train so the cubes fall off? Because if a cube ever falls off a train that you’re holding, those cubes are considered- They’ve fallen off the train. They’ll never get to where they were gonna go.

**Matt**: They’re off the rails.

**Quinns**: Also, if you ever drop a train? It’s a train crash, and you lose all the cubes, the train, and the driver. [Matt laughing] But so-

**Matt**: You’d be like, “Can I have my train back?” “Uhhhhhhhh…! [Quinns laughing] I *crashed* it!”

**Quinns**: What you get is, let’s say you start playing and immediately you send out your two trains.

**Matt**: Right.

**Quinns**: You’ve then got no trains. If other players don’t send trains your way, you start having to say things like, “I need someone’s train.” And then you get into the… The engineers already hold everything back, because if you’ve got- Let’s say your red train has got a black cube. The black cube has to go three cities away. What players will have to do is, “Toot toot.” You pass it to me. I will put it in one of my cities, swap the driver out, pick it up back, “Toot toot.” and send it down the line with another driver. That next player will have to do the same thing, because engineers can never get too far from their home, but what that can mean, if players aren’t careful, is all of your red engineers are in other people’s hotels, sleeping the night away. It’s absolutely-

**Matt**: Just send them back.

**Quinns**: Yeah. It’s *awesome*!

**Matt**: It sounds great.

**Quinns**: You know what? It’s a ten minute game, you have a ten minute timer to deliver as many cubes as possible and then you get a score, which has to be of at least a hundred? And that’s actually really clean. This is boring now, but the way it does score is not “Count up how much cargo you delivered,” because that would take ages. Instead, you find out which two cities had the least cargo, and multiply them together.

**Matt**: Huh!

**Quinns**: So immediately it’s like, you have to do a third as much algebra to figure out your score.

**Matt**: Perfect.

**Quinns**: Almost. I got that algebra wrong actually.

**Matt**: Still.

**Quinns**: Anyway, yeah, it’s just cute. There’s also stuff like there are little tunnel tokens, like tiny little U-shaped tunnels that are on the table, so if there’s a tunnel between you and one of your players, you have to push the train through the tunnel and go, “Toot toot!” You can’t just pass it to them, it has to go through a bridge piece or a tunnel, [Matt laughing] which is like a 3D thing. Usually…

**Matt**: That sounds like a lot of fun.

**Quinns**: It’s great. Usually, with real-time cooperative games -- like Escape: The Curse of the Temple or Zombie 15 or any of the other ones -- Space Alert, I guess -- I don’t like them because they’re- Well not that I don’t like them. I love them! But they are often quite stressful in a way that means I don’t get them off my shelves very often? Rail Pass is a little bit more like Magic Maze, in that it’s equal parts thinking *and* stress?

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: Because you’re doing the puzzle, but also trying to do the physical task.

**Matt**: And you don’t get that thing you often get of the franticness-

**Quinns**: Yeah!

**Matt**: -because you can’t be moving really quickly, because you’re gonna drop all your cubes from the train.

**Quinns**: Yeah, it’s kind of a little more leisurely. It’s equal parts cerebral and physical. It’s an amazing thing to show people because it’s absolutely hilarious. [Matt laughing] Even weird negotiation, like let’s say you send your- [laughs] The thing that happened in our game more than once is I was having the white and yellow cities, because it was a three-player game. I would send my yellow engineer pegs to another city. That player would then accidentally drive them too far and they’d quit, which means- It’s not like *they’re* penalized, it’s just *me* that doesn't have any engineers anymore!

**Matt**: Yeah, yeah. Like, [high-pitched goofus voice] “Where’s my person?”

**Quinns**: “Where’s my person?” “Oh they quit.” “Why?!” “Oh, I sent them to Scotland.”

**Matt**: So is it just that you find you have on your thing colors that you should not find there.

**Quinns**: Yeah, it’s technically an illegal move, and the response to the illegal move is-

**Matt**: But is there like a little card telling you which colors you’re not allowed to have where you are, or something?

**Quinns**: No, you have to look. So if I sent you a train with a red engineer, you have to go, “Oh, where do they come from?” You look at the table…

**Matt**: Oh, okay, you look at the table.

**Quinns**: ...you see the red city and go, “Ohhhh, I can’t send them any further.”

**Matt**: So how many people *can* you play this with?

**Quinns**: Six.

**Matt** [chuckling]: I was gonna say, because-

**Quinns**: So you always play with six cities. So if you play a two-player game, you’ve got three cities each, at which point… it’s super hard!

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: Or, I would love to try it with six, because…

**Matt**: Six sounds like it would be ridiculous.

**Quinns**: That’s what we were saying. We were laughing just *imagining* playing it with six. I think- Rail Pass is not out yet, and it won’t be out for a while, but in terms of a game that’s really funny, really thought-provoking, it reminds me so much of Magic Maze as it’s a game you break out, it takes like ten minutes, and everyone walks away having fun and thinking about it? It’s not necessarily a game that you play multiple times in a row? It falls more towards novelty than true puzzle to me, but I don’t think that’s necessarily a bad thing.

**Matt**: No!

**Quinns**: I mean, if the price is alright, if it’s like thirty pounds-dollars…

**Matt**: If it’s a small box and it’s lovely…

**Quinns**: And it’s lots of fun, yeah! It’s a heck of a thing.

**Matt**: That sounds amazing. That sounds amazing. Can I ask a simple rules question?

**Quinns**: Yes.

**Matt**: Why do you say, “Toot toot” and not “Choo choo”?

**Quinns**: Oooo.

**Matt**: Is that a mistake? Is it a typo in the manual?

**Quinns**: Uhhhhh. These sort of errors happen a lot in board games.

**Matt**: Yeah, because I just feel like they should probably rectify that before they go to print.

**Quinns**: I’m gonna really stick my neck out here and say: I disagree, I think “Toot toot” is a funnier noise? If people are all saying “Choo choo” then it’s like… It’s like in our Ticket To Ride review, we had the famous line:

**Matt** [talking over Quinns]: You know, you’re right.

**Quinns** [dramatic “cool” voice] : “Choo choo, baby.”

**Matt** [dramatic “cool” voice]: Choo choo.

**Quinns**: But “Toot toot” is so dumb. [laughs]

**Matt**: Toot toot!

**Quinns**: Toot toot! Yeah, you can’t say it in a…

**Matt**: Toot toot! I think it’s also like, “Choo choo” could be: [speaking very quickly and intensely] “Choo-choo! Choo-choo! Choo-choo! [Marlon Brando as Don Corleone maybe?] You come to me! Wit’ dis train!”

**Quinns**: Oh, that has reminded me, somehow, of the best thing that can happen in Rail Pass, which is, let’s say you’re holding a train. You’ve got a train in one hand, you’re looking down at your puzzle, and then the players to your left and right [chuckling] simultaneously go, “Toot toot!” Because there’s two trains that are waiting to be delivered. [chuckling] You already have a train in your hand so you can’t actually accept both. God, I haven’t mentioned that. Yeah, that’s the last thing I’ll say on Rail Pass. It’s the funny thing of… In Magic Maze or other real-time games, everyone has their thing, but because of just, if by happenstance, players all decide to send their trains to one person or to the same two people, those people literally do not have enough hands, so there’s a really fun thing of, some players can just be sat laughing at two players who are struggling to deal with all the trains that have just arrived? Heck of a thing, heck of a thing.

**Matt**: Ahhh, I’d like an expansion with a conductor which comes with a little pad of paper, so whenever you crash a train or lose cargo, you have to go and tell the conductor about it and he has to write you out a-

**Quinns**: What, like a…

**Matt**: -a form. [laughs]

**Quinns**: He has to do a- Although, you know…

**Matt**: Before you can play!

**Quinns**: You know in Captain-

**Matt**: No, it’s a good idea already.

**Quinns**: You know in Captain Sonar where you have to draw a line around the submarine?

**Matt**: Yeah yeah yeah yeah. It’d be like that. It’d be like, “What color was the cargo? Red, okay fine. What color- Where was it going, what was it going to, where was it going?” Yeah.

**Quinns** [talking over Matt]: What city was it lost near, yeah.

**Quinns**: Who was responsible for the accident?

**Matt** [talking over Quinns]: Yeah, who was responsible [unintelligible], right.

**Quinns**: What was the color of the conductor driving.

**Matt**: Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah. Just be like, fill in the paperwork.

**Quinns**: Oh my gosh. That’s our game, we’ve designed it, we need to quit Shut Up & Sit Down and just make it. It’s Advanced Paperwork Simulator [Matt laughing] 2019.

## Crokinole [00:59:33]

**Quinns**: Let’s talk a little bit just about the reviews we’ve been working on recently.

**Matt**: Mmm! Yeah!

**Quinns**: So a few weeks ago I put out a review of -- finally -- stupid big dexterity game Crokinole!

**Matt**: Crokinole.

**Quinns**: And let me tell you…

**Matt**: It’s no KLASK! [both laughing]

**Quinns**: Uh, actually…

**Matt**: No, Crokinole is pretty wonderful.

**Quinns**: Crokinole is a lovely dexterity game about flicking discs. The boards can be found for as cheap as a hundred bucks, or as expensive as three hundred bucks! And you might think that’s crazy for a wooden circle that you flick discs on, but if you want to watch me talk for *eighteen* minutes about why it’s -- for some people -- worth the money, you can look for my video review of Crokinole.

**Matt**: Yeah, it’s an amazing thing. We played a ton of it, again, when we were at Somerspel [sic] -- Zomerspel, spelt with a Z -- in Belgium. We kept playing it every day because you were reviewing it, but it was kind of a secret, because it was the third game in “Chronicles Month.”

**Quinns** [laughing]: Yeah.

**Matt**: Because it’s just a stupid joke. So people kept coming over and saying, “Hey! You’re sure playing a lot of Crokinole!” And we were like, “Yeeaahhh!” But I found it to be a lot like pool.

**Quinns**: Yeah!

**Matt**: In a good way.

**Quinns**: You mentioned that to me, and I used that in the video, mentioning that- The analogy I use is: Unlike pool, in which a table, you have to sink *time* into pool [**Matt**: Exactly.] before you can start sinking balls-

**Matt**: Well also, it takes up a *huge* amount of room.

**Quinns**: Yeah.

**Matt**: So really, people think, “Oh, it’s expensive for a little thing that then takes up space,” but it’s the same experience for me of having a pool table, but it’s much more affordable and spatially kind. But it’s no KLASK!

**Quinns**: It’s no KLASK.

## Pipeline [01:00:58]

**Quinns**: I’m gonna ask you now. What’s better, Matt? Crokinole? Or your latest video review that went up last week: Pipeline?

**Matt**: I’d have to- They’re very similar games, obviously!

**Quinns**: I know, yeah.

**Matt**: So Pipeline is a game of oil, and producing oil. But thematically, it’s not.

**Quinns**: I was gonna say, couldn’t you retheme Pipeline as like, making pizzas?

**Matt**: Well, yeah, and if you watch the video, you might see some gags to that degree. But yeah, Pipeline I think is a fantastic design. It’s just a wonderful little machine-y puzzle to come to grips with. It reminds me a lot of Food Chain Magnate in some ways, of having a… It’s less asymmetrical and wild and people going off in different directions, but there’s very much a degree of, hey, start the game. There’s a bunch of different things you can do. Everybody's gonna get an interesting good start of some type or the other, and then you just go.

**Quinns**: Do you start Pipeline with the upgrade that lets you... do... something? Sorry, I was just trying to parse what you said.

**Matt**: Oh no, so basically, the way it works is, it’s set up in a way so that there are upgrades you can get, or there are loans. Basically the way it works is, there might be a first turn that *you* want to do, but even if you’re the fourth player in a four-player game, there’s four really good things you can do at the start of the game.

**Quinns**: Oh, and that will define how you play for…

**Matt**: It will define your start, and it might define how you move forward with that, but it’s not like, “Oh, they did a thing, now I get the bad option.”

**Quinns**: Oh, of course!

**Matt**: There are no bad options on this show.

**Quinns**: No, that’s exactly what Food Chain Magnate does.

**Matt**: Yes.

**Quinns**: You might want to be the soft drinks guy, but if someone else takes that bonus, then you can be the first person to make pizza, and I guess you’re the pizza guy now!

**Matt**: Yeah. So it’s not quite as defined as that? In the end, you are just all making oil and selling oil, [Quinns laughing] but it’s like, “Oh, I might go and get an upgrade.” “Oh fine, okay, well I’m gonna go and get a loan, and I’ll take these good contracts which will make me fast cash easier.” “Okay fine, I’ll go and eat up all the best government pipes.” And then, “Okay fine, well I’ll go and do this. I’ll go to the crude oil place and buy all of the cheap oil straightaway.” It means whatever you do, no one has a bad first turn unless you are really stupid. [Both laughing] In which case it’s still very possible, I’m sorry. But then after that, it is one of those brutal economic games of you being like, [old man voice] “I need one more d- If only I had one more dollar!” And then, suddenly at the very end of the game you just explode and start making tremendous amounts of money, and the game just shifts gear. But I really, really like it. It’s a really satisfying puzzle. Thematically, it really could be anything. The fact that it’s about oil is like, there’s no politics in the game whatsoever, which is kind of insane. [Quinns laughing] There’s not even any elements of like bribing people or whatever.

**Quinns**: I mean it’s called Pipeline, but there’s no mechanics to do with like, where you run your pipeline.

**Matt**: No! No no no! Or getting permits or anything! [Quinns laughing] You just build pipes! And it’s basically a nice cross between a complex abstract tile-laying puzzle of trying to make a cool Pipe Dream pipe that will go around and be really long and be really efficient and have crossover in interesting ways and slotting things together in a way that feels colorful and exciting, but then that is the side dish of another complicated, evolving economic puzzle. But it’s interesting in the fact that there’s so much randomization in terms of how the game is set up that it’s always just a case of you playing a game in which you’ve got to adapt. You’ve got to look at it. And it reminds me a bit of Food Chain Magnate, and a bit of Container, but in a less brutal way, of having a game whereby you’ve gotta look at it and go, “What’s the best thing I can do to make money right now?” And it’s not as simple as being like, “Well it’s great to make grey oil! Or orange oil! Because-”

**Quinns**: Yeah, that! [Both laughing] Can we talk for a second about…

**Matt**: ...the three flavors of oil!

**Quinns**: Orange, grey, and bl- green? Blue?

**Matt**: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, exactly. Exactly. But… [Both chuckling] it’s oil! You make oil, and you do have to look around the table, and you do actually look at what people are doing, because if everybody else is doing loads of mad stuff with orange oil, it doesn't matter that it’s the most profitable in this current game, it might be worth just doing something else. And it’s really fun, it’s really satisfying. With three or four, it’s a chunkier game. With two, it’s faster. It’s real fast, and you just make tons of money. I ended the game with like nine hundred and fifty dollars!

**Quinns**: Oh, I saw your Instagram post saying that, and I was like, “Oh my god, Matt’s gotten so good,” because I’ve only played it with four. But you make more money in the two-player game.

**Matt**: I think you must, but I don’t know. I think also I had a really good game. It was one of those things where, again like Food Chain Magnate, it has that rocket boost effect of being like, you’re not gonna make any money, you’re not gonna make any money, you’re not gonna make any money, now you’re making *so much money*. [Quinns laughing] And if you can hit that point *four* rounds before the end of the game, versus two, then the money you make is just insane.

**Quinns**: Must be tricky to design a board game. Because A Feast For Odin is another sort of example of that, where… It’s difficult to design a game with enough room that if you’re making two dollars a turn, and spending that, that’s interesting, and if you’re making -- in the same game -- thirty dollars a turn, you still have to spend on it and it doesn't feel like the game gets wobbly?

**Matt**: Yeah, absolutely. I think, you know, it maybe does wobble, but it’s that explosion wobble of being like, “The game’s ending anyway.”

**Quinns**: Yeah, like a rocket taking off.

**Matt**: Yeah, it is exactly like that. But also the fact that you have got these upgrade cards, but there aren’t that many of them, and they’re kind of locked away in a way that means that they’re very powerful, very game-breaking, and the kind of things where you go, “What does that do?” And you go, “Whhoaaa!”

**Quinns**: Oh the upgrades are *nuts*!

**Matt**: But! There’s not so many of them that you can’t remember what people have, and for a game that really does spill across your table in a bizarre, noodly way, you really can watch what other people are doing and adapt. And also, I don’t know why, and I think maybe it’s a good thing that it’s not really cutthroat, but every game I’ve played -- maybe it’s the kind of people I play with -- everyone’s always very appreciative of what other people are doing. [Quinns laughing] “That’s really cool! Wow! You did that! That’s great!” And it’s very exciting in the fact that it’s not worker placement in a traditional sense, you can’t block people from doing things, but, you know, when you’re watching something and you think, “I need that bit of pipe. I need *that* bit of pipe!” [Quinns laughing] And you’re just waiting for your turn so you can buy it and hoping that no one else does, it’s very exciting. So yeah, it’s a very positive review. It’s also a brilliantly bright and colorful and lovely thing to look at.

**Quinns**: The game, or your review?

**Matt**: Uh pbfthh, hopefully the review as well. But no, the game. And it’s a very fun, stupid review. It’s got lots of… It’s very silly.

**Quinns**: Oh, well I’m looking forward to that.

**Matt**: But yeah. Check that out. It’s a fun game. Pipeline.

## Too Many Bones [01:06:54]

**Quinns**: And then coming up in a couple days -- just two sweet little days! Or possibly three - after we release this podcast will be my review of Too Many Bones.

**Matt**: Mmmmm.

**Quinns**: A game which -- we’ve been joking in the Shut Up & Sit Down Slack -- in fact has the correct number of bones. [Matt laughing] This is a roleplaying game which, really, I was expecting to be good, and was kind of shocked that it’s great, basically.

**Matt**: A roleplaying game, then!

**Quinns**: Well, only “role” in the sense that you’re rolling dice. That’s my joke, not the game’s.

**Matt**: Oh, okay. Got it.

**Quinns**: But what you’re doing is- Lots of game like Descent or Gloomhaven have you doing a big campaign? Too Many Bones is, out of the gate, pretty interesting, because you’re gonna go kill a villain, and that’s gonna take between two and four hours.

**Matt**: Wow!

**Quinns**: And then you’re just done. So you start with a character who is -- this is gonna sound weird and hopefully it’ll just encourage you to watch the review -- your character is a mousemat. Okay? They’ve used the same printing techniques. It’s a mousemat full of holes in which you can socket dice.

**Matt**: I’ve seen this, yeah.

**Quinns**: Yeah. So as you level up, your character has about twenty different custom dice. So you might level up and go, “Okay, I’m gonna take this dice, which is a more powerful defense dice.” Whatever. Or this dice, which is a kind of grenade. But all the characters are unique, and they all have -- even within that -- tons of unique ways to build them. And then in battle, you decide which of your dice you’re gonna roll, so it’s like… Imagine that about halfway through the campaign you might have five or six custom dice, and you go into combat, and then looking down at your dice is kind of like Batman looking down at the utility belt and being like, “Okay, oooh, I really wanna do tons of damage, but I’m worried about this, so I’m gonna use this this and this dice!” But of course, they’re dice. So it’s not like you unlock it. I’m thinking about, let’s say, the grenade, right? So the grenade will hit a space, and then do a ton of damage, but also do splash damage to all adjacent spaces. So even within these cool skills that you’ve unlocked, you don’t fully have control over the one in six chance the grenade just won’t work?

**Matt**: Mmhm.

**Quinns**: Or it might do a bit, or loads of damage!

**Matt**: Will it hurt you?

**Quinns**: It might. Well no, but in our game Chris Bratt sure hurt *me* a lot, because-

**Matt**: That’s nice.

**Quinns**: Yeahhhh. But no, it’s colorful, it’s inventive, and one of the side points I have in my review is that it made me realize- Because you know how much I complain about publishers putting fantasy themes on games?

**Matt**: Uh-huh?

**Quinns**: They just put an orc on it. It’s like wallpaper, it’s boring.

**Matt** [very strong accent of some type]: [unintelligible] sure to put an orc on it.

**Quinns**: But Too Many Bones made me realize, no! I *love* fantasy! I just don’t love it when developers kind of thoughtlessly use fantasy tropes. Too Many Bones is just this new world. You all play these weird gremlin things, that have color and personality, and the world has humor, and I loved inhabiting the fantasy world of Too Many Bones.

**Matt**: Oh yeah yeah. Well I found the same thing with Gloomhaven.

**Quinns**: Exactly.

**Matt**: It’s like, if it’s interesting, and it’s different, and it’s not just like, [wizard voice] “You! Are a white, human male in a land of interesting races of other things that are different! But sometimes, just humans, but with bigger ears.”

**Quinns**: Yeah. The fact, out of the gate, that it’s like… Too Many Bones, exactly the same as Gloomhaven actually, there is no option to be a normal human. The question you ask in Too Many Bones is, “Do you want to be this weird gremlin with grenades?” And your friend might be like, [disgust] “No!” And you go, “Okay. Do you want to be this weird gremlin with anger management issues?” [Matt laughing] “No!” “Do you want to be this weird gremlin whose weapon is a big shield and nothing else?”

**Matt**: It’s like, “Do you have anything that isn’t gremlins?” Absolutely not, no. [Quinns laughing]

**Quinns**: If you buy one of the expansions, there’s a robot, but like…

**Matt**: I like that stuff. And actually it’s a video game recommendation, something I’ve been playing an awful lot of recently, and it’s reminded me that video games can be interesting and fascinating and different and worth your time, but I’ve been playing a game called Outer Wilds.

**Quinns**: Oh, yeah.

**Matt**: And again, it’s a game of exploring space. But again, it’s like, a game of exploring space and finding weird alien things, but the character you play as is a weird aliens and you’re from a planet of weird aliens. Because it’s like, no they don’t look like humans. They’ve got loads of eyes. They’re just weird.

**Quinns**: Yup.

**Matt**: And it’s like, cool! Good!

**Quinns**: I mean, yeah, that’s the number one thing about exploration games, right? If your player is going to be exploring something, then make what is out their *worth* exploring?

**Matt**: Yeah. And also, why do *you* have to be boring? Why can’t you be weird? Everyone should be weird.

**Quinns**: I couldn’t agree more.

## Mailbag [01:10:50]

*Mailbag jingle: Ohhh, put your hand in my mailbag. Find me a letter!*

**Matt**: It’s time once again for me to delve my hand into the mailbag to find the specific… Because the thing is, we know what question we’re going to ask! So, I’ve got find the actual-

**Quinns**: Oh no, that’s a nightmare!

**Matt**: I know! Because there’s so many… [rustling] so many in here! Why did you put it back in after we’d found it?

**Quinns**: Well I knew you had to reach into the mailbag, because that’s tradition, but...

**Matt**: I know. We’ve got the jingle. Alright, I’ve found it.

**Quinns**: Ayyyyyy!

**Matt**: I’ve found it. Here you go. Reach into the thing to find the *specific* question.

**Quinns**: This is from Stefan, from Nuremberg, Germany. Thanks Stefan! And thanks for sending in a paper letter as well. Stefan writes, “Hi there! If you could play a board game or card game with its designer, and they would talk you through its design process while playing it -- kind of like an audio commentary -- which game would you choose, and why? Love the show.” Thanks Stefan.

**Matt**: Thanks Stefan. That’s a genuinely great question in a sea of questions that often are the same question asked slightly different ways. This is a fascinating one as well, because I’ve had a few different angles with this. You think, “Well what do you wanna do? Do you wanna go for something that’s like a fascinating sprawling thing?” Like my mind immediately jumps to something like Gloomhaven, something new, lean, and strange. But then I’ve met Isaac, and he’s lovely, but…

**Quinns**: In fact, Isaac Childres is doing a talk at SHUX-

**Matt**: He is.

**Quinns**: -about Gloomhaven?

**Matt**: We haven’t confirmed that yet.

**Quinns**: Okay.

**Matt**: We’re hoping that he’s gonna do that, [Quinns laughing] but Isaac *is* coming!

**Quinns**: Put your wishes out into the world, Matthew.

**Matt**: Yeah, I really really want him to do that. I really want him to do a talk about Gloomhaven, so in a way, this is a question that’s like, well I hope that we can actually get to have him… talk.

**Quinns**: Have him actually do that, yeah.

**Matt**: And me to ask him some questions, and I’ll play some more Gloomhaven over the summer to get back into it.

**Quinns**: Oh, lovely.

**Matt**: But, I’m thinking like really, if I’m going to be playing something and having somebody talking to me about the game a lot whilst I’m playing it, do I want somebody terrifyingly sharp and insightful, or do I want someone bombastic and fun, because I’m fundamentally a child, [Quinns laughing] that wants to be-

**Quinns**: Oh, you mean you want to be entertained?

**Matt**: [chuckling] I want to be entertained! So I do want to sit there- And I can’t decide, and it’s a real toss-up. Because part of me thinks, maybe I just wanna have a game described to me and talked to me about by Alan Gerding or Asger, just because I know that they will tell me about the process, and I’ll just be enwrapped the whole time. I could listen to Alan Gerding talking about anything for ages.

**Quinns**: Yeah. No, he is great. I actually think that’s a very logical crossroads to have found yourself at. For me, I thought about Vlaada Chvátil, my favorite designer, but then I thought, no, I kind of… Probably the reason Vlaada resonates so much with me is I kind of get it? Like…

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: When he designs things, I *get* why he’s done the thing he’s done. So, I thought, “That’s not going to be as informative.” Instead, I thought, Dr. Reiner Knizia, whose designs are so alien to me that like… That’s… That… When we get in where math meets game design in a way that I feel completely out of my depth, I choose Reiner Knizia explaining Tigris & Euphrates to me.

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: And like, why does this work? Why is this fun? Because that’s his masterpiece, right?

**Matt**: Yeah, and I feel like also it’s a bit of a cheat, but I definitely would listen to Geoff Engelstein just talking about his games.

**Quinns**: Oh, but that’s because, yeah Geoff-

**Matt**: Because the science behind it is just fascinating.

**Quinns**: We’ve recommended Geoff Engelstein’s book GameTek before.

**Matt**: That’s kind of cheating, because it’s like, I just like listening to him.

**Quinns**: I mean, I’ll buy you a copy of GameTek. It’s great. That’s spelt, one word, Game T-E-K. GameTek.

**Matt** [chanting/singing]: GameTek. GameTek. DihduhluhduhDUHduh. [regular] So yeah, I’d like to listen to the inventor of Snap. The card game Snap.

**Quinns**: I would have a great time listening to the inventor of Twister talking about [Matt laughing] the design-

**Matt**: Talking about the lawsuits?

**Quinns**: Well, talking about… I wonder if the inventor of Twister knew their game-

**Matt**: Was gonna be sexy?

**Quinns**: -would be part of a sexual revolution, you know?

**Matt**: That’s a really good question.

**Quinns**: Because the answer’s probably *no*.

**Matt**: I mean it’s hard to say, isn’t it? It could have just been somebody incredibly straight-laced and nerdy going, “Of course it’s a physically difficult task,” [Quinns laughing] and then just watching it and some big exec going, “We’re gonna make so much money.” [both laughing] No that’s a good question, I would love to know if Twister was designed to be naughty.

**Quinns**: Uhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh. I mean, if it’s not, that’s interesting to talk to the designer, and if it is, that’s interesting and skeevy, so, yeah.

**Matt**: Yeah, there’s all sorts of things like that. I’d love to know a lot of the stories of lots of games. Especially actually, I think, when you go back to childhood games like Cluedo and Mousetrap, it’s like, were they just supposed to be a bit gimmicky?

**Quinns**: Yeah!

**Matt**: Because you can imagine, because you’ve heard conversations about how these things happen, you can imagine [big inhale and sigh] something like Cluedo with these little- Did Cluedo have physical little props as well, that went in the rooms?

**Quinns**: Oh yeah, what-

**Matt**: Little metal bars…

**Quinns**: -didn’t it have a little metal wrench?

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: But hang on, what were those for? Because they weren’t your player pieces.

**Matt**: They sat on the rooms. I think.

**Quinns**: Oh yeah! Because you randomized where the different murder weapons were found, or something, and then, yeah.

**Matt**: So it’s like, you can kind of see that maybe that could have happened just because somebody went, “Well people like the little metal hat and the metal dog in Monopoly. What game can we do little metal bits for?”

**Quinns**: Oh, this came up just recently because I found out that the racecar is the most popular playing piece in Monopoly. Which is interesting-

**Matt**: Whaaat?! It’s the dog in the hat!

**Quinns**: No. Wha- The dog *in* the hat?

**Matt**: Yeah, you take both straightaway. You say, “I’m playing as-”

**Quinns**: First off-

**Matt**: “-the dog, in the hat!”

**Quinns**: -that’s a house rule. Second off, that’s genius.

**Matt**: Yeah!

**Quinns**: But no, the racecar’s the most popular, but, it’s also the only one that makes thematic sense.

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: So is the racecar popular because it’s a cool car from the 20s-

**Matt**: Because you’re driving around town.

**Quinns**: -or is it popular because it’s the on- yeah, because you’re in a car driving around, parking on hotels, and actually-

**Matt**: Rather than walking a dog, or walking a hat.

**Quinns**: Or being a hat?

**Matt**: Or being a hat… with a dog inside of it.

**Quinns**: This came up… [laughs] with a friend recently, and I was saying, “God who chooses to be the iron?” And then I realized, as an adult, I would quite like to be the iron.

**Matt**: The iron’s quite satisfying to move around.

**Quinns**: Yeah, because it’s got- As an actual playing piece, it’s got the nice… It’s got a hole in it.

**Matt**: Yeah, I’m waiting for the ironing board game where you can, yeah, move irons around.

**Quinns**: But yeah, you’ve got to wonder if like- Because those players make absolutely no sense. Did whichever installment of Monopoly first include those, did it include them because someone had a job lot on a thousand tiny metal hats?

**Matt**: You know, I just think those stories are fascinating. It’s not a games thing, but there was a thing to do with He-Man, I think, recently?

**Quinns**: Oh!

**Matt**: With the tiger.

**Quinns**: The tiger? Yeah, this went viral on Twitter, yeah.

**Matt**: Yeah, and it was just basically them talking about how they were like just… They had to come up with a toy that could be something that He-Man would ride?

**Quinns**: Yeah.

**Matt**: And they realized that the tooling cost for making new 3D shapes was gonna be too expensive, so they just found a tool they already had, which was for a tiger, and his colleague said, “Oh we can’t just do this, we can’t just use this tiger.” and was like, “Ah, I’m gonna make it so he doesn't want to use it,” so he just basically mocked up this tiger that was three times the size and like ridiculous green and blue, being like, “He’s gonna come in and be like, ‘No it looks stupid.’” And he’s like, “Great! Done! [Quinns laughing] That’s it!” And so it’s like, the only reason that that exists is because they didn’t have the money to make a new thing, so they just scaled up a tiger that he could sit on. So in a way, as much as I would like to pick the brains of modern designers, I think I’m more interested in stories of the old stuff, where it’s like, things that came about because people either didn’t care or didn’t have the money. And I think those are more fascinating, of seeing what culturally stuck, and what seems important now, but at the time, just wasn’t.

**Quinns**: Yeah, yeah, no, that’s a great answer. If you’ve got a great question you want to… You know, obviously, mailbag, full of a lot of paper questions, but *some people* choose to send us questions via email. You can do that at contact at shut up and sit down dot com.

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: That goes straight to me.

**Matt**: Yeah, and just between you and us, there’s a weird magical maybe curse on the mailbag in which sometimes emails actually find their way into the bag [**Quinns**: Yes.] as pieces of paper.

**Quinns**: I didn’t realize we were gonna share that particular phenomenon on the podcast, but yeah, that does happen.

**Matt**: Well I kind of felt like we’ve been hiding this magical secret for a while, and the fact that you’re encouraging people to send emails whilst we’re only ever bringing questions out of a physical paper bag…

**Quinns**: It’s unusual.

**Matt**: I felt like maybe we had to let people know that, [Quinns laughing] otherwise they might stop sending us emails.

**Quinns**: I mean, as long as we don’t talk about some of the other attributes of the mailbag, like the slick rim that kind of keeps itself wet, [**Matt**: Mmhm.] or the way that it *seems* deeper on the inside than it is on the outside.

**Matt**: Yeah. No.

**Quinns**: But if we don’t just sort of-

**Matt**: We don’t tell them about that, we just tell them about the fact that it’s magical and emails end up in there.

**Quinns**: Okay, and we remove this bit from the podcast.

**Matt**: Sure.

**Quinns**: Okay, great.

**Matt**: Cool.

## Outro [01:19:12]

**Quinns**: Thank you very much for listening to the Shut Up & Sit Down podcast! This has been a podcast all about board games. Uhhh, what do we usually say at the end of the podcast? Thank you very very much to Mr. Steve Davit for his lovely saxophone stylings, and also thank you very much to you, because without you this podcast wouldn’t exist.

**Matt**: Mmm! And also, actually, while I remember, a thank-you to Tom Brewster (sp?), who did a very short internship with us for a couple of weeks. He came and sat with me in London and did some stuff, and you may have seen appearing in the Pipeline review. He was very funny, very talented, and I’m very disappointed in myself that I only got him in for a couple of weeks as an intern, but I’m going to be keeping in touch with him and you may see him again in the future, because he’s quite a lovely lad.

**Quinns**: There’s a fair few talented people in the UK-

**Matt**: There are.

**Quinns**: -who our audience are-

**Matt**: At least four!

**Quinns**: -gonna be enjoying. And we’ve found at least two of them.

**Matt**: Yeah, right?

**Quinns**: Lovely stuff! We will be back in about a month with some more board games that we think are good.

**Matt**: Or bad.

**Quinns**: And that. Goodbye everybody!

**Matt**: Bye!

[funky outro music]