## Intro [00:00:00]

[funky intro music]

**Matt**: Hello and welcome to the very 96th episode of the Shut Up & Sit Down podcast, a podcast all about board games, board games, and the people who love them. I’m Matt Lees, joined by Quintin Smith.

**Quinns**: Hallo Matt Lees!

**Matt**: Hello Quintin Smith.

**Quinns**: I’m so excited to talk about board games! It’s been a while…

**Matt**: I can tell. [Quinns audibly flummoxed] I can tell both that it’s been a while and that you’re excited.

**Quinns**: I will not be dismissed, Matthew.

**Matt**: No, I’m not dismissing you. You are here.

**Quinns**: You’re a parent looking down at their kid who’s [**Matt**: No.] excited to talk about Minecraft or whatever.

**Matt**: No, no, no.

**Quinns**: Fortnite.

**Matt**: I’m with you. It’s Fortnite now, they’ve changed it. It used to be Minecraft, now it’s Fortnite. We are in my domain of games. You can see the games spread around the room like… It’s like that Cave of Wonders from Agrabah, fictional land -- that it definitely is not Arabia -- in Aladdin. I’m doing Aladdin chat! It’s a podcast about board games and Disney’s Aladdin?

**Quinns**: Ooh! I was gonna say, “When’s the next Disney board game?”, but then I remembered that Disney’s Villainous exists and it’s allllllll-[**Matt**: It’s fine.]-llllllright!

**Matt**: It’s absolutely fine. You know what’s better than fine?

**Quinns**: The games we’re going to be talking about today?

**Matt**: Hopefully.

**Quinns**: We’re going to be talking about Res Arcana, the new tableau-building game where you’re gonna turn magic into other kinds of magic. We’re gonna be talking about Dice Throne, a game of rolling dice and doing damage, which, frankly, is the kind of classic design we don’t get to talk about enough in this modern era of board games. We’re gonna be talking about the Insider, a hidden role game where everybody’s trying to work out a puzzle, but one of you already knows the answer.

**Matt**: Mmmmm.

**Quinns**: We’re going to be talking -- at long last -- about Three Kingdoms Redux, [big sigh from Matt] an incredibly- What are you-

**Matt**: It’s just been so long. Why, why is it only now?

**Quinns**: It was just really intimidating. I hadn’t read the manual. Matthew, I panicked! I’ve been carrying around my review copy of heavy game Three Kingdoms Redux for years, and finally now, I’ve played it, and do you know what?

**Matt**: What?

**Quinns**: It’s alright.

**Matt**: It’s fine.

**Quinns**: It’s fine. We’re gonna be talking about Isle of Skye: The Druids expansion!

**Matt**: Good gosh, are they ever going to stop throwing expansions of this game at you?

**Quinns**: I hope not, because it’s one of my favorite games ever. We’re gonna be talking about a game that’s got a lot of people excited: It’s Batman: Gotham City Chronicles, the one hundred and thirty five dollar Batman miniatures game that contains everything Batman.

**Matt**: Everything a batman could need.

**Quinns**: And finally, we’re gonna be talking a tiny bit about Chronicles of Crime, because Matthew’s review has just gone live.

**Matt**: Mmmm!

**Quinns**: Imagine such a thing.

## Res Arcana [00:02:38]

**Quinns**: Do you want to start by telling everybody about Res Arcana?

**Matt**: So Res Arcana is, as you say, a tableaaauuuu builder! Tableau baby. It’s kind of a game where you turn cubes into other kinds of cubes. It’s a little bit like a eurogame, German-style economy builders. However! You have a process at the start of the game that involves you drafting the cards that then build up your slow tableau machine.

**Quinns**: Well, that’s an optional expert variant.

**Matt**: I don’t know, I think that’s the way you play it after you’ve learnt how to play it. Maybe I misread the manual, but I thought the intention was, just play a game like this, and then do your drafting.

**Quinns**: Well, we’ll get to that later.

**Matt**: Okay, sure.

**Quinns**: I’ve got some thoughts on that.

**Matt**: Okay. Well basically, yeah. So you have a deck of stuff. You get some cards. And then you basically slowly build up a machine of things that turns one type of magic into other kinds of magic...

**Quinns**: So you’re wizards.

**Matt**: ...or gold. So yeah, you’re wizards. But you’re different *kinds* of wizards, doing different kinds of things. You have different kinds of aspirations. Maybe, for example, I want to build a beautiful castle in the sky, and maybe you want to build a Hellforge, or something. So we have a choice of things that everyone can try and build and buy in the middle, which are these big expensive trophy pieces that are gonna unlock amazing powers, or just loads of victory points, and it’s the first person to get ten victory points. So really, it’s actually a fairly dry little thing with some 1970s-style fantasy wizard-y art. So everything’s high fantasy, everything’s very shiny, all of the people are quite thin, [Quinns laughing] and you know, it’s all slightly fey in a fun way, and that’s something that I really enjoy, but admittedly is trad as hell. But really, I think what I like about it is, it has some really pleasing feels to it, in terms of the components, the fact that the different types of magic are different shapes of wood.

**Quinns**: Yes, you referred to them as cubes earlier, but we’ve left that behind.

**Matt**: They’re not cubes.

**Quinns**: Your life magic is like a green leaf, and your fire magic is a little flame.

**Matt**: Yeah. So you’ve got these little different shapes of wood that you store up and you build up, and they’re very pleasing to pick up and move around, AND -- I really like this -- in the box -- because it’s a little small box game -- the divider collector container thing you have, which holds all of these magic bits, is split up into the five shapes of the five different elements in this fantasy realm. And it sits in the middle of the table, just out the box, there’s all your five different types of magic, help yourself! It’s like one of those things you get with chips and dips, or for Doritos [Quinns laughing] or with three different types of salsa or sour cream.

**Quinns**: I’m gonna… as much…

**Matt**: I know, I know that doesn't sound like a thing that should be brought up, but there’s something about this. What I like about it is, it’s very quick to get out, the art’s really cool, it’s very fun and quick to play, and it kind of plays to me like a quick little eurogame, where you have a bit of interaction between each other, a bit of trying to stop other people from doing things that you want to do, et cetera, and I really like it! You weren’t as hot on it, you thought it was okay, but I want to play more of it, because I really liked it.

**Quinns**: Well, yeah! We let you go home with the copy. I’m gonna explain a little bit about more like what your turn looks like, because I don’t know if-

**Matt**: Yeah, I maybe didn’t do that very well.

**Quinns** [earnestly]: It’s okay!

[awkward pause]

[Matt and Quinns laughing]

**Quinns**: So, what you do on your turn is, you’re gonna have a very small deck of cards, of which you draw a hand. Everyone’s deck is ten unique magical objects or spells that you have. Once you put those in front of you, you start building a tiny little engine. So maybe you have a duellist who turns life energy into death energy and money. Or maybe you have a magic jar that if you can afford to put a little magic into it, then it’ll have *more* magic next turn. So everyone’s trying to spin up these awkward little engines of getting a little bit of magic, and then turning it into different kinds of magic, and finally funneling it all into these big projects that actually generate victory points. But, like you say, yeah, it’s got this small box, and that’s nice. It’s also pretty simple to teach, that’s really nice. The art is nice. The fact that it’s over in like forty-five minutes is really nice. And actually, I was thinking about this on my way here. We were a bit disappointed by Wingspan, which exists in a similarly complicated space. Wingspan, of course, being the game of *bird* management that everyone’s gone crazy for recently, that’s absolutely beautiful, a truly stunning box. However, Res Arcana felt more successful to me -- and a more affordable game, what’s more -- in providing a forty-five minute tableau-building game. So I liked it more than Wingspan, it’s got that going for it, and I like that everyone has their own unique deck, but you know, to me, it just felt a tiny bit slow and fiddly. The custom wooden shapes that you were talking about, that exist in those little yogurt-pot dip sections in the box, hey, we can all like that! But you know why things tend to be cubes? [Matt laughing] It’s because cubes are easier to pick up.

**Matt** [concedingly]: Yeah!

**Quinns**: Look, I’m aware this is the pettiest thing in the world, but I found a weird source of friction in trying to pick up things that just tended to lay flat on the table?

**Matt**: Yeah. I mean you’ve classically got bad hands. [Quinns laughing] It’s the thing that everyone in the industry always says about you behind your back, you know, “He’s great, very talented critic, but man, those hands! Doesn't know what he’s doing with them.”

**Quinns**: It’s like five sausages trying to-

**Matt**: Yeah, it’s like the dexterity equivalent of demanding you have the bumpers up for bowling every time you go.

**Quinns**: Yeah, the amount of times I’ve broken nails from mashing my hands against the table.

**Matt**: It’s just unbelievable, yeah. So, you know, I think that’s an understandable criticism. I think I like how neat and smart and small and quick it is, and I like the fact that it’s a game where yeah, you have a deck of cards that you can play, but your deck is like- I think it’s eight cards at the start, of being like, you know, “These are your eight cards.”

**Quinns**: Yeah, your deck is eight, maybe ten cards? Yeah.

**Matt**: Yeah. I found that it really popped to life and became really interesting for me after it’s like, “Okay we get the basics now.” And then to have you draft. Because in the game, in the box, you get a deck of maybe sixty cards, fifty cards… You know, this isn’t a review, I can’t remember. So even in a two or three player, you’re not even gonna be seeing all of the cards. And then the fact that you shuffle it and then shuffle some stuff in. I do like the kind of engine-builder thing of just beginning drafting, looking at some cards, and not knowing what the other cards around you are, of being like, “What am I gonna try and do?” So rather than having a thing of like- You know, with having such a small deck, knowing the whole time what you’re trying to do, and being given at the start a character type that you choose, you’re like, “Okay, this is my plan-”

**Quinns**: Yup.

**Matt**: -and then just working through a little plan where… It kind of felt like an interesting idea, even if the actual theme and conception and lots of the other stuff wasn’t that interesting, of having a kind of euro-y-style thing, whereby you’re trying to build up an engine, but right from the start of the game it’s not like, “I’m gonna just build whatever engine makes sense and see what happens.” You’ve drafted to build an engine, and then you’ve just got to try and get it going, and you know what you’re doing the whole time.

**Quinns**: Yeah, it’s very small and manageable, and that’s unusual. I think the reason I kicked up a fuss about drafting is… So drafting, if you’re not aware, is the process where rather than being dealt cards at random, everyone draws a hand of cards, and you take the card you want, and then you pass that hand of card [sic] around the table. So by doing this ten times, everyone will have ten cards that are their own, cards that they’ve denied to other players, all of this good stuff. The reason that I’m not -- that’s a variant you can play Res Arcana with -- the reason I’m not 100% sold on it is because it elongates the game that much more?

**Matt** [noncommittal]: Mm.

**Quinns**: And also, it resulted in, rather than me drawing a hand of cards and being like, “Oh, this is random, let’s see what I can hang together,” it made me feel like I was making really important decisions in the opening fifteen-minute draft phase, that then were holding me back or limiting my surprise. I think it’s a cool variant in the box, and it definitely makes the game more involved, I just think I like it more as a quick random thing. Like a quick forty-five-minute thing, as opposed to a more tricky hour-and-fifteen-minute thing.

**Matt** [not convinced]: Yeah. Maybe.

**Quinns**: It’s just how I feel.

**Matt**: Yeah, no, you and your bad hands are entitled to all sorts.

**Quinns**: Me and my bad hands *and* my bad opinions!

**Matt**: [laughs] No, I don’t know. I think it’s fine, and I think it’s one of those things of being like- Because we have similar taste in things, and it’s pretty rare that we both play something and go, “Ehh, you know, fine,” and have one of us being actually excited about it. But annoyingly, what I tend to find is I’ll check something out, and you’ll be like, [clear disinterest] “Yeah, hrm,” and then I’ll go, “No, I really like it!” And I’ll check it out more and I end up on exactly the same page as you. So I’ll be interested to see-

**Quinns**: That is infuriating, yeah.

**Matt**: It does happen quite a lot. I’m like, “No, I think I like it!” And then I play it more and I’m like, “No, actually, I don’t like it for all the same reasons that Quinns said. Nevermind!”

**Quinns**: Hey, play it some more!

**Matt**: No, I’m gonna play it some more, especially because [**Quinns**: Play it some more.] we played it a couple of times, two or three times, I think when we played with the drafting, we played it as a two-player game, and I think with three or four it could be more interesting, particularly when you have cards that are offensive or defensive, and if you realize quite early on in drafting, you’re like, “I’m just gonna go mad offensive,” and if other people, you know-

**Quinns**: Can’t protect-

**Matt**: -if you snap up all the defensive cards, then you can just be stealing their magic like mad.

**Quinns**: [clears throat] It’s a really interesting game, and I want you to play it some more.

**Matt**: Well, maybe I won’t. [Matt and Quinns laughing] Ha? [Matt laughing]

**Quinns**: So that’s Res Arcana, spelt R-E-S.

**Matt**: Yeah, Res Arcana. It’s a very small box thing, it’s pretty neat. I’m gonna check it out some more.

**Quinns**: Yup. But if you’re looking for how to spell any of these names, if you want to google them, you’ll find them all in the description of this podcast.

## Dice Throne [00:11:50]

**Quinns**: Speaking of games that are almost good enough, I’ve been playing a fair bit of Dice Throne recently.

**Matt**: Mmmmm!

**Quinns**: More specifically, Dice Throne Season 2, which you remember as something you played with me when we were both supremely jetlagged.

**Matt**: Yeah, I was jetlagged and tired. I’ve gotta say actually, this was one of those games that you were like, “I think this is really neat!” and I didn’t really… I was quite disinterested in it, really.

**Quinns**: Yeah, well as far as us both ending up on the same page, I’ve ended up kind of sort of disinterested?

**Matt**: I mean, the production quality was phenomenal.

**Quinns**: Yes.

**Matt**: And it was really beautiful and smart.

**Quinns**: So, season one of Dice Throne was eight characters who are eight different characters you can buy or play, and then you can compete in what’s primarily a two-player game, but it’s pretty fun with three or four players as well. Dice Throne Season 2 got picked up by Roxley Games and Kickstarted, and Roxley Games made it look like one of the most beautiful board games in the world. It’s shockingly beautiful, and all the characters come in these cute little boxes, and you open the box, and they accordion out, and then you put them on the table. Every character has their own dice. So if, Matt, you and me were playing, the way it would work is you’d pick your character out of all the Dice Throne characters you bought, so maybe you’re the Seraph, who’s like an angel. And maybe I’m a cool vampire.

**Matt**: Or a cowboy.

**Quinns**: Or a cowboy, or a samurai, or a tactician who uses-

**Matt**: It’s kind of like Overwatch dice.

**Quinns**: -tanks. Overwatch d-

**Matt**: If you’re familiar with popular culture video games.

**Quinns**: Yeah, that’s a good- [high-pitched] I like that, pretty good, that’s pretty, pretty good.

**Matt** [talking over Quinns]: I mean I think that’s kind of what they intended to do, probably.

**Quinns**: Maybe.

**Matt**: Almost definitely.

**Quinns**: Okay- [laughs] So, the way it then works is Matt and I will take turns. The meat of the game is rolling dice and trying to create sets as if you were playing uhhhhhhh King of Tokyo? Is not a bad example.

**Matt**: Yeah! Yeah.

**Quinns**: On your character board in front of you, you have all these different possible things you could roll on your custom dice. So as the vampire, if you roll… Half of the sides of your dice are little *scratch*, like claw things. So if you roll five dice and use your rerolls -- because a big part of this game is figuring out what you’re gonna try and get, and then nudging the dice -- and then I get five claws, then I go, “Scratch scratch scratch scratch scratch!” and I do a bunch of damage, and we’re gonna lower Matthew’s Seraph angel person’s health. Alternatively, I could roll the dice and realize I’ve got one of the blood drops, which is the equivalent of rolling a six. I could then nudge my dice, rerolling everything that isn’t a blood drop to try and get something like, if I roll five blood drops then I get to do my Super! There’s also things like small straights and large straights, where if you roll 1-2-3-4-5-6… All of this stuff. But! Where the tactics comes from is, while there’s better and worse attacks, first off, if you don’t roll any of them, you do *nothing* on your turn, which is *awful*. So if you go for something risky and don’t get it, oof! That’s bad. But where a lot of the tactics comes in is from these sort of status effects that people equip. I remember the cowboy, who’s one of the beginner characters, just shoots people and then they fall over.

**Matt**: Yeah. It’s classic cowboy.

**Quinns**: Whereas the samurai causes people to become honorable or dishonorable.

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: Then you’re also rolling sets of dice to try and take these tokens off you, for example? So there’s lots of interesting play there. And then on top of that, sitting perfectly atop the game, you have some card play, where both players also have a hand of cards from a deck that is unique to their character, because my goodness, this game can’t stop being generous. So let’s say you draw a card which is like, “Okay you can spend one of your card points to remove a status token. From *either* character.”

**Matt**: Mmm.

**Quinns**: So then you’re trying to weigh out, “Well, what token do I want to remove?” There’s lots of fiddly stuff there. I say fiddly, I mean fun to fiddle with.

**Matt**: Yeah! I remember. You’ve got this power gauge that you can spend just on cards.

**Quinns**: Yes.

**Matt**: So you have got this hand, but you can’t just build up a huge hand and then go *pow pow pow pow pow pow pow*! You know, you have to choose when and what to do. So there is a strategy element to it.

**Quinns**: Yeah, absolutely! Or, with the vampire, the really difficult choice I had is… The game is largely about building up a lot of blood power, and you can spend all of your blood power at once, if you’ve maxed it out, Matthew.

**Matt**: That’s classic vampire. Vampires are to amassing blood as cowboys are to making people fall over.

**Quinns**: Exactly.

**Matt**: It’s just realism.

**Quinns**: I’m glad you understand this.

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: But as the vampire you have a power whereby you can spend all of your blood at once, and then if you do that, that attack you do this turn, however much damage it does, causes however much life your opponent lost, you get it back.

**Matt** [flatly]: No way.

**Quinns**: I know. But it’s actually really neat in a push-your-luck dice game, because let’s say you max out your blood power and you do an attack that’s alright?

**Matt**: Mmhm.

**Quinns**: Matthew, are you gonna spend all that blood power?

**Matt**: [deep breath] Uhhhhhhhh I mean yeah.

**Quinns**: Yeah, that’s probably the right decision. But it might not be! You might do-

**Matt**: Yeah, because you might think, “Oh, I’m gonna do a better one next time.” But maybe you won’t.

**Quinns**: You know, so that’s kinda Dice Throne. It is a really pretty solid-

**Matt**: Head-to-head push-your-luck with some strategy elements? I just didn’t really click with it, and admittedly, yeah, I was jetlagged, but being jetlagged hasn’t really stopped me clicking with all sorts of things at conventions before.

**Quinns**: Yeah.

**Matt**: I felt like the strategy layer around it was just- It boiled down too much to just rolling dice and hoping. And that’s, weirdly, I’m fine with that in most, if not all, genres of games.

**Quinns**: I mean yeah, you were fine with it in Quacks of Quedlinburg.

**Matt**: In like, everything.

**Quinns**: Yeah.

**Matt**: But I think it was this tableau of things of being like, “Ahhh, well if you’d rolled four of these, you would have done two damage, but then something slightly different.” It was like all these different moves you could do, and a lot of it wasn’t that- But I only played with the starter stuff, so maybe it gets really wacky.

**Quinns**: You know, it doesn't, really. And this is the thing. I started this by talking about games that aren’t quite good enough. Every time I play Dice Throne, I really want to enjoy it, because Roxley games have done such a beautiful job with the production, and rolling custom dice is just fun! As is- Some of the cards that you can spend cards to play are actually upgrades, which then… The card is designed to look like your character board, so when you play the card, you actually put it on your character board. It covers up one of the dice sets you can roll, and if you manage to roll that, you now have an upgraded version of it. So it’s cards that sit on your character board. It’s clever, it’s neat, it’s tactile, I love rolling dice, I love push-your-luck, but… I… it just didn’t stick.

**Matt**: But I don’t think it is like Quacks, is the thing. The thing about this that’s interesting is you can use a card to upgrade a power, so hey if I roll four exclamation marks, it’s gonna do twice as much damage, et cetera. But there’s no way I can really -- apart from maybe playing another card to turn a dice over -- adjust my odds throughout the game of rolling that more? Whereas the whole thing with Quacks is you are literally changing the odds of your bag in a way that you try and keep track of by memory. Whereas in this, the odds remain fairly constant. And that’s it!

**Quinns**: I mean, I’m not gonna argue with you, because like I say, it’s not quite there? Every time I’ve played it, I’ve finished it and looked at the person across the table-

**Matt**: I had the same thing of being like, when we saw it and I really wanted to love it, because the production quality and the detail and the thought is just phenomenal. I just didn’t find it exciting at all.

**Quinns**: Well here’s the good news. I realized, because we got sent the big collector’s set with like eight characters in it, they actually mostly sell it as little one-on-one sets, so it’s like cowboy vs. samurai. So actually, if you do that, it’s quite affordable? So if people want to give Dice Throne a shot, if they like the sound of custom dice and playing cards, if you wanna like it, just like Matt and I wanna like it, then you know what? It’s not too expensive to find out if Dice Throne Season 2 is for you?

**Matt**: Yeah!

**Quinns**: But yeah, do so with the caveat that everyone I’ve shown it to, including Matt and Kylie and a couple of other people -- our friend Clark -- have come away being like, “Yeah it’s alright.”

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: But yes, that still puts it in the same category as Wingspan, for me. Just a light bit of fun that for me is alright, and a lot of people really like Wingspan! So if you’re looking for something simple, really, *really* pretty, and dicey and random, Dice Throne Season 2 might be for you!

**Matt**: Hey yeah! I mean I guess if you’re the sort of person where you roll five dice and get a really good result and you feel like you’ve somehow achieved that… [laughing]

**Quinns**: But that’s me!

**Matt**: No I don’t know! It’s always like, “Wow, that’s cool!” but I never… I think the difficulty of having core (?) like that is, yeah, it’s weird. If you’re hoping for luck, rather than hoping to avoid bad luck, it’s, yeah, there’s something... Yeah, I don’t know what it is, there’s something about that whole game, the whole design, that makes me feel like there’s not the approach. You know, if Geoff Engelstein was here right now, I’d be like, [whispering] “Geoff! What’s the deal? Geoff! Please! Whisper into my ear!” He’ll know. Geoff would know! But he’s not here, Quinns!

**Quinns**: Good ol’ Geoff.

**Matt**: So we have to move on.

**Quinns**: If you’re Geoff Engelstein, write in!

**Matt**: Just secretly. We won’t tell anyone what you said. [whisper] Just let us know.

[funky sting]

## Insider [00:20:10]

**Matt**: So another game we played recently was a game called the Insider, which is a very small-box game from Oink, a games publisher who make beautiful little boxes that frankly just cost way too much money and it’s just not on. Anyway. So it’s a game where one person knows a secret word, and is gonna be asked questions by everyone else, and they have to answer yes or no.

**Quinns**: So for example, if the word was “carrot-”

**Matt**: Carrot.

**Quinns**: -then that one player around the table knows that the word is “carrot.”

**Matt**: I could say, “Does it have hair?”

**Quinns**: No. [pause] Yeah- Mm- well- sometimes.

**Matt**: Yeah, see this is where it gets interesting, because then you’re like, “Well hang on a minute. What the hell sometimes has hair but also you’d find in the ground?!” [Quinns laughing] Basically, the way it works is everyone has to ask questions, and you’ve got a little sand timer, and when that runs out, if you didn’t guess it, oh no, you didn’t guess what the word was. However! There is somebody who is an imposter, somebody who is pretending to be clueless but literally *knows* what the word is.

**Quinns**: Yeah, so let’s lay this out completely. Let’s say it’s a six-player game. You’ve got one person who’s answering all the questions, playing essentially what is Twenty Questions, or as we call it in the UK, Animal Mineral or Vegetable.

**Matt**: Do we?

**Quinns**: That’s what my- yeah, I thought so.

**Matt**: Is this just your weird friends?

**Quinns**: My weird family, maybe. [Matt laughing] So let’s move on as fast as humanly possible.

**Matt**: No, I mean, I think I have heard that before. I can’t sass you twice in two different ways in the same podcast.

**Quinns**: So in this group of five people who are all asking questions, going, “Is it a vegetable?” or “Is it bigger than a breadbox?” or whatever…

**Matt**: Is it bigger than a vegetable? [Quinns laughing]

**Quinns**: Then you have one of these players, who are asking questions, but is only *pretending* to not know.

**Matt**: Yeah, so they’re pretending to be clueless, so it’s their job to effectively guide the discussion and guide everyone else to the correct answer, but doing so in a way that doesn't let on to everyone else that they’re the person who knew. And depending on what the word is, it can be either really easy or really hard.

**Quinns**: Yeah, so when Matt was the insider, your word was-

**Matt**: “Commercial.”

**Quinns**: Or “commercialism?”

**Matt**: It was “commercial.”

**Quinns**: Okay.

**Matt**: Which became very difficult, because “commercial” obviously means, like, an advert, and also means the concept of something is commercial, which means people got very confused, [**Quinns**: It was the funniest.] because it meant like, “Can it be this?” and like, “Yeah.” “But is it this?” “Yeah.” I was the person who was trying to get it, so I was like, “So it’s both a physical thing, *and* a concept?” “Yes.” And it’s just like, “That’s about all I can do without anyone else saying something.”

**Quinns**: Well no Matthew, it wasn’t all you could do, [Matt laughing] because as there were about ten grains of sand in the sand timer-

**Matt**: It was gonna run out.

**Quinns**: No! You did the correct thing! But the whole group was going, “So it’s a concept. Is it politics? Is it…” And then with five grains of sand left in the sand timer, Matt went, “Ahh, is it commercialism?” Or sorry, “Is it commercial?”

**Matt**: “Is it commercial?” And it’s like, “Yes!” And then everyone just looked at me, and it’s like, yeah. And it was that thing, they were like, “Okay, now everyone has a minute to decide.” It was like, “Look, there’s no point. Everybody knows it’s me.”

**Quinns**: Yeah, because then you have to vote, and the Insider only wins if the group gets the word and then everybody thinks that someone else was the Insider.

**Matt**: So you have to try and lead them without anybody -- well basically without the majority of the group -- realizing that it was you that was leading people. Which is really, really hard! And a really fun challenge. It turns out, when you know what something is, and you’re trying to invent questions that might elicit that, it’s really tough to then both come up with questions that are subtle enough that they follow the thread of what other people are saying, in a way that makes sense, and also when you’re trying to just ask questions that are stupid, and wrong, to not just be really stupid? It’s such a difficult mental thing.

**Quinns**: But the worst is that my word- I think my word was tree?

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: Which is unbelievably simple. The group was gonna get it in about fift- I think our group actually ended up getting it in about five seconds. The first question was, “Is it alive?” “Yes.” “Is it made of wood?” “Yes.” “Is it a tree?” “Yes.” And it was done within seconds. But as the Insider-

**Matt**: And that was mainly because I was just gonna ask the question, “Is it made of wood?” as a joke, regardless-

**Quinns**: Referencing…

**Matt**: -referencing something we’d done before. And then when they said “Yes,” and someone said, “Is it a tree?”, everyone then looked at me, and I’m like, “No! It was a joke! I didn’t think it was gonna be made of wood!”

**Quinns**: Well this is the thing! The stupid thing about being the Insider is that, because everyone’s so committed to getting the word, if you have a really easy word like “tree,” as the Insider, you could just sit there in silence, but then the group would be like, “Well why didn’t you say anything?” And that’s kind of its own clue? So you have to exist in this space of asking questions, asking the right questions, or maybe asking -- I guess -- the wrong ones? If you think the word-

**Matt**: Yeah, but asking the wrong questions in a way that isn’t like, “What are you doing?”

**Quinns**: You know…

**Matt**: Like, “I can’t fly the plane and save us because I’m running up and down the aisle waving my arms around!”

**Quinns**: It was good, wasn’t it?

**Matt**: It was really good. I really enjoyed it as a little… It’s funny how much in these games that feature a secret person or a betrayer that you do get so invested at the end of being like, “It’s *them*! *Them*!” Because often they’re built on a narrative of, “They’re the baddie and they’re gonna get away with it,” but in this it’s such mild deception. There was a game where I knew you were lying, [Quinns laughing] and in the end everyone was like, “Mm no, I think it’s someone else.” And I was like, “Look, just for the record. Quinns is lying. I know he’s lying. I don’t really have any good reason why, but I just know he’s lying. And you don’t have to pick him, but for the record, it’s him.” And then people didn’t pick him, and it was like, “It’s Quinns.” And I was like, “I knew it was you! I knew you were lying.”

**Quinns**: Yup. You do have an uncanny ability to do that.

**Matt**: Yeah, I really enjoyed it as a- But the stress of doing it was unlike anything. It’s stressful to pretend that you’re not a werewolf, but to sit and do that whilst also trying to keep up with the conversation that you are basically being in on on a fictional basis? It’s an interesting mental puzzle.

**Quinns**: It’s just a mechanic I haven’t seen before. We’re so used to hidden roles, meaning, “Oh, there’s one player who’s trying to screw things up for everybody.” Whereas the Insider is, “Oh no, there’s one player who’s-”

**Matt**: Trying to help us.

**Quinns**: But he’s cheating?

**Matt**: Yeah. Yeah.

**Quinns**: I say “he” because I’m looking at Matt, not because the Insider has to be a man.

**Matt**: Yeah. I mean also you could do it, I suppose, just by quickly hammering loads of questions at the start just to write off loads of stuff.

**Quinns**: I don’t know, I don’t know. Certainly there’s a lot of game packed into a small box, but I think we get more grumpy about Oink games and their tiny beautiful little boxes than most people, because here in the UK, the import duties on them is just ridiculous.

**Matt**: Oh, they’re just so expensive. And it’s one of those things where, you know, on a very basic level, as a company, it’s like, bully for them! Good for them! They make these tiny little things and they charge well for them and they’re interesting fun games and people love them. But just from the perspective of what we do, it’s like, “Come *on*! *Come on!*”

**Quinns**: “We can’t recommend this! It’s too expensive!”

**Matt**: It’s so expensive.

**Quinns**: But if you were going to treat yourself to one cute little Oink game, I think the Shut Up & Sit Down favorite is A Fake Artist Goes To New York.

**Matt**: Yeah, I think that’s still the best.

**Quinns**: Yeah, so give that a google if you’re interested.

## Three Kingdoms Redux [00:26:56]

**Quinns**: Speaking of stuff that comes from the far east -- because, you know, Oink Games, Japanese company -- I’ve played a game from a Singaporean design studio. Oh boy, I hadn’t looked at these names until we started recording. Do I dare. Okay, I’m gonna… [nervous noise] Christina Ng Zhen Wei and Yeo Keng Leong are the designers of Three Kingdoms Redux. So what we have here is a German-style management game. Visualize this in your head, Matthew.

**Matt**: I’m closing my eyes.

**Quinns**: And I’m going to try and express to you why it took me four or five years to play this. First off-

**Matt**: I’m just getting underneath the duvet in my mind palace.

**Quinns**: Matthew, you’re going to fall asleep. I can tell. I’ve worked with you for long enough that… I think he’s already asleep ladies and gents. [quietly] Yeah, he’s asleep, he’s asleep. [shouting] Matthew!!! [loud clap]

**Matt** [startled]: Huh?!

**Quinns**: Okay, so, what you’ve got here. Imagine a very heavy- This is not gonna help.

**Matt** [disoriented]: Where am I? [Quinns laughing]

**Quinns**: Okay, let’s just start the podcast again.

**Matt**: Okay, right.

**Quinns**: No, it’s a heavy game with a really thick manual, okay? So, very complicated rules.

**Matt**: Yep.

**Quinns**: It is for three players *only*.

**Matt**: What?

**Quinns**: Okay, *and*, it is based around Romance of the Three Kingdoms, the Chinese quasi-historical epic. Kind of like, if you have to-

**Matt**: It’s a novel based on the Dynasty Warriors series, right?

**Quinns**: The Dynasty Warriors video games, yes.

**Matt**: Yeah, that’s it, yeah.

**Quinns**: The closest comparison in English history is King Arthur, whereby it’s kind of maybe partially real?

**Matt**: But not.

**Quinns**: But not? I mean I think the percentage I saw on Wikipedia is that Romance of the Three Kingdoms is *forty* percent real.

**Matt**: That’s not bad!

**Quinns**: I thought so! So there’s not really a comparison in European history.

**Matt**: I’m thinking, the only comparison I have is sausages, of being like, it’s 40% meat, you know? It’s not great. It’s not terrible!

**Quinns**: Go with that, yeah. So, what you’ve got here is a game where each of you control one of the three kingdoms in Chinese history/folklore. And it’s a game about trying to get points? [Matt laughing] What you have in the middle of the board is… Essentially it’s a worker placement game, okay?

**Matt**: I thought you were gonna say it’s one of those plastic dip things.

**Quinns**: Oh god no.

**Matt**: Love them!

**Quinns**: Stop talking about dips!

**Matt**: I keep thinking about dips.

**Quinns**: I will buy you dips after the podcast.

**Matt**: Okay.

**Quinns**: So. It’s a worker placement game, essentially. One of the spaces on the board might be, you know, “get some armies,” and then another space- By worker placement, it’s a principle where you can try and claim a space, and then once you’ve claimed that action, like “get an army,” no one else can do it. So it’s a combination of deciding what you want with what you want to deny your opponents. So I might get an army, then another turn I might do the space that lets me train the army. On another turn I might get some horses, and now I’ve got a trained army and horses in my pile of stuff that I’m amassing in front of me. That means, I can do an action sending that horse army with one of my generals to go to war with you, Matt, because you’re sat next to me because it’s a three-player game.

**Matt**: Mmm.

**Quinns**: So each player has a series of battlefields between them and the players to their left and right. And where a lot of your points come from in the game is, every time you... In the same way you’d pick a space with a worker in the middle of the board, you can pick a space, one of the battlefields between your two opponents and send an army to fight there. Now. Except this isn’t quite a worker placement game. Rather it’s a bit more like an auction, because -- and this is where we start getting into the real crunch of Romance of the Three Kingdoms -- every worker, quote unquote, “worker” you have is a general from Romance of the Three Kingdoms, so famous people like Lü Bu-

**Matt**: Lü Bu, yeah.

**Quinns** [laughing]: Was your head also going to Lü Bu?

**Matt**: Yeah, I’m trying to remember another one.

**Quinns**: I can’t remember.

**Matt**: Zhang Su?

**Quinns**: Zhang Le?

**Matt**: Mmm, no.

**Quinns**: Anyway, so all of your workers have different stats, based on their administration or war skills, right?

**Matt**: Lü Bu’s fast, isn’t he?

**Quinns**: I mean, they all have different-

**Matt**: And he does a jump on a stick.

**Quinns**: All of these guys have custom art in the game. If you want to have art of Romance of the Three Kingdoms people, my goodness, this is the game for you.

**Matt**: Okay.

**Quinns**: So you have four or five generals, and when you send one of your generals to go and sit on the space which is “get me an army,” other people can send *better* generals, or generals buffed with little plus one tokens, to knock you off that space. And here’s the thing, you don’t then get that general back. So if you go, “Oh I’m gonna train an army,” and I go, “I’m actually gonna send a *better* general to train an army,” you’ve then just lost that space for that turn. So, it’s pretty mean. But now I’ve taught you how that works-

**Matt**: You don’t even get to go home and go somewhere else again?

**Quinns** [clipped, funny voice]: Nope! Nope! [**Matt**: Wow.] Nope! [**Matt**: Wow.] Nope! [normal voice] So here’s the neat thing. All those mechanics of jostling for spaces are exactly how wars work. Because if you send a general onto a battlefield with an army, and then I send a better general with a better army, I’ve then won that little war for that battlefield space. So, it’s a worker placement game where the spaces are about twelve spaces in the middle of the board, where you get your resources from, and then all of the other spaces, which are little battlefields that you can claim.

**Matt**: That sounds really cool!

**Quinns**: You know……… A lot of people think so. A lot of people cons- [Matt laughing, Quinns laughing] A lot of people consider this one of the best eurogames ever made, right?

**Matt**: Uh-huh.

**Quinns**: And it does have some *super* interesting stuff, like if you do win that battlefield, you’ve claimed that territory, Matthew! It’s yours! But the catch is, the general you send with the army, because they won that territory, they now live there. So the good news is, every battlefield you control gives you a victory point or two every single turn. If you, out of the gate, turn one, get an army, send it to me, you’ve got a victory point every turn for the rest of the game. That’s huge!

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: But you have one less worker than everybody else.

**Matt**: He’s never coming back.

**Quinns**: Yup. So it’s a risk- Not risk/reward thing, but it’s how much can you afford to throw away your economy on these victory point-generating spaces.

**Matt**: Yeah, you see, when you frame it like that, it sounds a lot less interesting, because it just becomes like a usual euro thing of being like, “Is it worth losing some production to get victory points at the end of the game?” which is always a decision which is like, “[sigh] Probably I should do it, but it’s not fun?”

**Quinns**: The other reason that people like it is that every single general/worker that you’re sending to spaces has a special rule that is Three Kingdoms themed? I mean, every side in this fight has -- I want to say -- thirty or so generals that they might hire over the course of the game. Every single general -- of which you might have seven or eight by the end of the game -- all have unique rules?

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: So it’s unbelievably slow and fiddly. Basically, me explaining this game is gonna be alternating between, “Here’s why it’s crunchy and slow and awkward,” and “Here’s a really cool idea!” One of the cool ideas is that for the two people who are basically second and third, so who aren’t winning, they form an automatic alliance. And all this means is that at the start of each round, you can pick any space in all the resource-claiming spaces in the middle, like “get armies” or “tax” or “get food,” and then that is a space you can share. So always, the players in second and third place can pick any one space like the -- I don’t know -- “train armies” space, and then they can both go there. More than that, the values of their generals there is added together? [Matt inhales] So basically if you’re first, every single round there’s gonna be a space that the other players can choose that you *cannot* go to.

**Matt**: Mmm.

**Quinns**: So yeah! I don’t really want to talk about it much more than that, because I was hoping this would be something I could really recommend. It is absolutely not. If you’re super into Romance of the Three Kingdoms, first off, you probably own this game already, but if you don’t, I think you should absolutely look into it, because having a game where- It’s a ridiculous love letter. Can you imagine a eurogame where every single one of the workers was a card with its own special rule within this novel?

**Matt**: This is Kevin. He only likes wood.

**Quinns**: It’s *that*! It’s, “Oh no, this is the guy who rescued a baby belonging to this other character, which means that if you use him on this space, you get plus one victory point?”

**Matt**: Yeah. Yeah.

**Quinns**: Which, if you’re into the theme, is like, oh my goodness. If, like me, you have never read and will probably never read Romance of the Three Kingdoms, it’s *insane*!

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: Because it’s a parade of characters you have absolutely no relation to.

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: So yeah, that’s all I’ll really say about it. It’s -- for me -- *way* too heavy and difficult to get to the table. While we were playing it, we didn’t even enjoy it an enormous amount. Although, if you’re into interesting, heavy stuff, and especially if you’re into the theming, by all means pick it up. But Shut Up & Sit Down does not recommend Three Kingdoms Redux.

**Matt**: ‘Kay.

**Quinns**: And I hate that, because the only people who were gonna… All of our audience-

**Matt**: No one’s gonna care.

**Quinns**: No one’s gonna care.

**Matt**: Apart from people who love it.

**Quinns**: Apart from people who love it, who are gonna be so angry and disappointed in me.

**Matt**: Yeah, they’re gonna be annoyed. But that’s fine! Not everything is for everyone. And that is fine.

**Quinns**: Thanks, Matt.

[chime]

**Quinns**: Hallo everybody! This is Quinns from the future. I was just sat here editing this podcast and I thought, hey! You know what? If you like the sound of Three Kingdoms Redux, there’s actually a game that we can recommend instead, and that game is Lancaster. We published a review of this on shutupandsitdown.com, so if you google Shut Up & Sit Down Lancaster you’ll definitely find it, and it’s a lovely, playable, robust, entertaining game of medieval knights in England dislodging each other from spaces, turning the whole game into a cross between castle management and a constant ongoing auction. Your knights can go to France and then you maybe have to ransom them back. They can be killed. Oh! It’s lovely, and very tactile. The knights are really big chunky pieces of wood with little stickers on. Lovely stuff! So that game we recommend instead is Lancaster.

## That’s Not Lemonade (Revisited) [00:36:15]

**Quinns**: And actually, while I’m here, I’m just gonna chuck in a quick correction about the last podcast when Matt and I talked about a game called That’s Not Lemonade, a little box from Tuesday Knight Games about children trying not to -- and failing not to -- drink pee. But here’s the thing. Alan Gerding from Tuesday Knight Games got in touch with us after that podcast to say that we’ve been playing a little bit wrong. You see, we compared it to blackjack as a push-your-luck card game. But Alan pointed out that unlike blackjack -- and we didn’t know this -- players can actually come back in and accept more cards after they have passed. Which opens the game up to more interesting decisions and more *wrong* decisions, as players do well, and then pass, and then pass again, and then think, [strained] “Ahhh, you know what, I’ll just maybe take one more card,” and then drink pee and they’re out of the round. Which strikes me as really funny, and certainly a bit of extra spice that we were absolutely missing when we reviewed it. So I think, I might be keeping that game in my collection as a silly little thing. Anyway! On with the show.

[funky sting]

## Isle of Skye: Druids [00:37:21]

**Quinns**: Hey Matt. Don’t you love Isle of Skye?

**Matt** [slightly stepping on the word “Skye”]: Yes.

[Quinns laughing strongly, Matt joining with some soft chuckles]

**Quinns**: Wow, that was… That really threw me. For the people at home, we decided what game we would talk about during that jingle, [Matt laughing] and then I thought Matt would help me build up something, but instead, he sort of pulled the rug out from under me.

**Matt** [still chortling]: Pulled the pin out of the Quintin grenade.

**Quinns**: You know what, screw you, I’m not gonna let you talk, I’m gonna take control of this.

**Matt**: Okay!

**Quinns**: Isle of Skye is a really lovely tile-laying game. It is a game we’ve talked about a lot on the site before. It’s fabulous. It’s a game where everyone’s trying to build up their own Scottish island in a manner very similar to Carcassonne, if you’ve ever played that, but the difference is players each receive three tiles every round, and of those tiles, you have to price them. So you might say, “Oh, this is a good tile. I’m gonna price it at four coins.” If someone buys it, you get four coins, but if nobody buys it, you have to pay the price that you assigned to it. It’s a lovely tricky thing. We talked about the Journeyman expansion recently, which came out of absolutely nowhere-

**Matt**: Yeah! Little man that walks around your island.

**Quinns**: But with a tech tree?

**Matt**: Yeah!

**Quinns**: Suddenly? And it takes what was previously a breezy forty-five minute game and turns it into this hour-and-a-half long gamers’ game? So very quickly, Matthew, I have played the next expansion after Journeyman. It is called… Druids.

**Matt**: Druids!

**Quinns**: What do you think Druids adds?

**Matt**: Bears that turn into wizards.

**Quinns**: No, see, for this joke to work, I need you to give me the honest answer. What do you think Druids adds?

**Matt**: Uh, Stonehenge.

**Quinns**: No.

**Matt**: Old fusty men.

**Quinns**: No.

**Matt**: Ummmm. Uhhhhhhhhh. Cloaks.

**Quinns**: No. All of these would have been sensible things to include in the Druids expansion! Doesn't add any of that.

**Matt**: Mmkay.

**Quinns**: This is… In some ways it’s kind of a failure? Because Journeyman took a game that was a bit thematic and added more theme, with a guy walking around your island and roads and bridges. Druids just adds this… What I can only describe as a druid shop?

**Matt**: Right?

**Quinns**: So, what’s exciting about Druids is it means there are now more tiles in the game. Everyone’s islands are gonna be bigger, because in between every round, people can take their money and go to a very overpriced druid shop and pay for special tiles that provide multipliers for your island.

**Matt**: Right, okay.

**Quinns**: The reason this is good is, first off, it means you have more tiles, everyone’s building bigger islands, it’s exciting, but also, the reason it’s really quite nice and I like it a lot, is it adds a money *sink* to the game. Because Isle of Skye has a lot of faucets with players having more money all the time, which means pricing tiles gets really difficult towards the end, because suddenly you’re not selling things for four, you’re selling things for like nineteen or twenty coins?

**Matt**: Yeah, yeah.

**Quinns**: Which makes the game really hard and fuzzy? Whereas now, with Druids, all those players who have a lot of money kicking around…

**Matt**: It leaves the game.

**Quinns**: Yeah, it leaves the game, but also it means that if you got dicked over in previous rounds because everyone bought your tiles and now you have a small island?

**Matt**: Mmhm.

**Quinns**: You can go to the Druids shop and say, “Hey! I wanna buy this cool tile-”

**Matt**: “I wanna buy revenge on my friends.”

**Quinns**: Yes, you can do exactly that.

**Matt**: “What kind of potion can you do? I want them to hurt real bad.”

**Quinns**: Oh my god Matt, there’s one tile that makes them hurt real bad.

**Matt**: Really?!

**Quinns**: Yeah, there’s a Druid tile you can get which means whenever you buy tiles from other players, you pay less.

**Matt**: Is this actually like magic druids?

**Quinns**: No! No! It’s *genuinely* infuriating. All the tiles are are little tiles with extra rules printed on them.

**Matt**: But are you buying them from a magic druid?

**Quinns**: Not really! The shop sits to one side of the board.

**Matt**: It’s just a guy who calls himself a druid.

**Quinns**: No, it’s a box that calls itself druid. There’s no druids in the game, there’s no druid-related content, there’s no magic or mystery of any kind.

**Matt**: Not even like a magical staff?

**Quinns**: On the cover of the box there’s a man with a magical staff. You go, “I love men. I love staffs. I’m gonna buy this.”

**Matt**: Yeah!

**Quinns**: You take it home. You know what? No staffs in the box.

**Matt**: I’m calling consumer watchdog agency. This is an outrage.

**Quinns**: You know, I’m being silly, but also… [Matt laughing] The base game and the first expansion, you know, there’s theme! You’re in Scotland! There’s a guy walking around!

**Matt** [partially talking over Quinns]: Yeah! Second one, Journeyman. It’s a man going on a journey, he’s pottering about. Druids: Where’s the wizards?

**Quinns**: There’s no druids in Druids.

**Matt** [whispering]: Where’s the wizards?

**Quinns**: So it’s a less exciting and less thematic expansion. Here’s the thing.

**Matt**: Still like it.

**Quinns**: I still like it.

**Matt**: I mean, yeah, it’s a great game, and you could probably do an awful lot of weird things to that game. Even if you do forget to put wizards in the box, it’s probably still going to be quite fun.

**Quinns**: Here’s hoping that the third expansion remembers to have a little bit of theme.

**Matt**: Do you need it? Do you need it. Because I think Journeyman- I know you’re a big fan of it, and I think me and you are starting to see things differently about expansions. I think your perfect expansion is something which changes the game and makes a different experience, whereas I think actually, the more and more I’ve played those, the more and more I don’t like them? I like a box to be like, “This is what this is.”

**Quinns**: I think you’ve been soured by playing Kemet and realized-

**Matt**: Well, I think Kemet is interesting, and I will come back to that in a video form at some point, but I think even with that, with Journeyman, it’s like, “This is cool, but I think I prefer the base game, and if I was going to play something of this complexity, I’m not sure if I’d play this?”

**Quinns**: Yeahhh.

**Matt**: You know what I mean?

**Quinns**: Yeah no, I totally hear you. I don’t think anyone needs Druids, but, you know, I am absolutely keeping it, and I’m absolutely gonna consider playing with it whenever I play Isle of Skye?

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: And also, if you play it with Journeyman, then your boards, you know, your islands, are going to be so big, and that’s exciting. [Matt laughing] Uhhhhhhhhhhh maybe we’ll have to play this one on a stream at some point.

**Matt**: I just love the sincerity of that.

**Quinns** [talking over Matt]: You’re gonna have a big islands!

**Matt** [talking over Quinns]: Your island’s gonna be so big!

**Quinns**: Can you- AUGH it’s so exciting!

**Matt**: Can we do a Galaxy Trucker-style expansion, so you build a big island and then meteors destroy it.

**Quinns**: Ohhh, that would be good.

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: We should do Galaxy Trucker on the stream at some point.

**Matt**: Yeah, we should. It’s just silly.

## Batman: Gotham City Chronicles [00:42:47]

**Quinns**: Okay, speaking of silly things.

**Matt**: Yup.

**Quinns**: We are about to publish a video review of this, but let’s just get a couple of early thoughts on Batman: Gotham City Chronicles.

**Matt** [starts singing old Batman theme, Quinns quickly joins in]: Na na na na na na na na na na na na na na na na

**Quinns** [continuing the tune]: It’s…

**Matt and Quinns** [continuing the tune]: ...fiiiiiine.

**Quinns**: Oh my god!

**Matt**: Yeah, it’s fine.

**Quinns**: We’ve been spending too much time together.

**Matt**: I played this very briefly. I had a little mission of this, and then you went off and continued your Batman adventures. And I don’t know how you got there, but I would say, we actually had the favor -- we could perhaps say this (?) -- the amazing time of getting to play this with Mr. Trey Parker.

**Quinns**: Yes, responsible for South Park, Team America: World Police-

**Matt**: The Book of Mormon.

**Quinns**: The Book of Mormon!

**Matt**: Yeah, wonderful guy. He was in London and is a fan of board games and basically asked, “Do you want to meet up? Play a game?” We did. It was lovely! So we played some Batman with him!

**Quinns**: Yeah, he said some very kind words about our storytelling and jokes, which, coming from him-

**Matt**: Which is frankly bizarre.

**Quinns**: My heart is beating faster just thinking about it.

**Matt**: Awww!

**Quinns**: So Trey if you’re listening to this, thank you very very much, for-

**Matt**: Yeah, it was a real rollercoaster brilliant day, and then I went home, and the next day I did loads of admin and spellchecking, and it really grounded me. [Quinns laughing] Anyway. So.

**Quinns**: Batman: Gotham City Chronicles is the 130-dollar Kickstarter extravaganza.

**Matt**: It is. And it is a game which... isn’t... as good as I would have wanted it to be.

**Quinns**: Yeah.

**Matt**: Especially not for that much money. It’s interesting in the fact that it really does -- from what little I played -- treat Batman as the whole package. Being like, “What is Batman? Batman. He’s a detective. He has gadgets. He fights. He can fly around.”

**Quinns**: Who does he fight? Well he fights-

**Matt**: Everybody.

**Quinns**: Yeah. So there’s some crazy number of miniatures in this game, and the Kickstarter went… I don’t say this much in the review, so I’ll keep it on the podcast: I think this is a game that is made worse by the fact that it is a Kickstarter game, because some of my problems in the review- For a start, the fact that the base game is *two* boxes, right? The reason why is because they need a storage solution for the hundreds of- Maybe not hundreds, maybe one hundo miniatures in the game.

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: The stretch goals mean that there are like thirty playable heroes. There are dozens of villains. There are so many sculpts of different bad guys.

**Matt**: Yeah! I mean, you brought to London to play- You just brought what you needed just to play one scenario, [**Quinns**: Yeah!] and it was a bigger box than a lot of full games.

**Quinns**: In order to just transport this game, I had to… You know, I don’t know if any of our listeners are playing Red Dead Redemption, but there’s an animation in that video game where when you gut an animal, you kneel down and you have to open up the thing. That’s what I had to do with Batman: Gotham City Chronicles, I had to open it up, remove all the pieces I didn’t need, put everything into one box, just so I could have something that I could carry with me.

**Matt**: Yeah. Yeah. And we played it, and we had to stop a thing in a bank and there were some computers and a computer virus, and it was all fun stupid Batman stuff. “There’s some villains in a bank. Batman and Robin are outside. We need to get past the goons. We need to deactivate these computers before the bad villains do viruses.” All good! We had some fun gadgets. And it was basically- It’s designed by the same people who did Conan, and it plays a lot like that, in terms of it’s very fast.

**Quinns**: Uh, yes, the Conan miniatures game that we reviewed a few years ago.

**Matt**: Yeah, it’s very fast. As the baddies, you get to play with this fun little river tableau of cards that you can flip along and cycle through all the enemies that get to move around. Meanwhile, the heroes can just basically run around and do as much stuff as they want, and really exhaust themselves, or take it easy and kick back and get some back. Basically has a really interesting flow to it.

**Quinns**: Yeah.

**Matt**: However. The thing that’s really fun about the Batman game is the same thing that was really fun about Conan, which is running up to things and hurting them.

**Quinns**: Yup. You know, I’m kind of annoyed, because I’ve written the review script, and that could… There’s definitely long paragraphs in the script I could just crunch down into-

**Matt**: When you get home, you can give it a tweak. [Quinns laughing] Give a little thing.

**Quinns**: Honestly, Conan was a game about running up to things and hurting them.

**Matt**: Yeah!

**Quinns**: And Batman is a game about running up to things and hurting them. But! Now they’ve changed it a bit so that that’s no longer the game.

**Matt**: No. So that was the thing we did. When we played it, we failed the mission, and we failed the mission basically because we were having fun.

**Quinns**: Yes.

**Matt**: We were being Batman and Robin. The miniatures: Wonderful. Beautiful little Batman and Robins. Running in, I was Robin, and obviously I wasn’t the Caped Crusader, so I wasn’t going to be doing the prime, primo roughing up people with my fists, otherwise I would have been doing that. I was just throwing batarangs, because I’d just got a box of batarangs that I’d obviously borrowed from Batman, [Quinns laughing] and I was really good at ranged stuff, so I was just throwing batarangs at people, and I kept missing and whatever. And then there was a point where a big bad enemy appeared.

**Quinns**: It was none other than Clayface.

**Matt**: Mr. Clayface himself! And this miniature’s *huge*! And I was like, “Screw this, I’m gonna go and get him.” And I leapt through a door, chucked a smoke grenade behind me to stop goons from following us, and then ran through another door and hurled an explosive batarang at him, and it *hit*, and it did so much damage it almost wiped him out completely in one hit.

**Quinns**: It was the coolest moment.

**Matt**: It was so cool, and we could really visualize it, and then, you know, it didn’t quite kill him, and he grabbed Batman, it was great, but… this didn’t matter, because we had to get the objective done, and *really*, to get the objective done, we should have chosen gadgets that were suitable for the mission, and we should have had a very strict plan about how to do it.

**Quinns**: Yup.

**Matt**: And it’s just like, “What is this?” I just played that one mission, but it felt more like a tactical SWAT game, and it’s like, that’s not what being Batman is about.

**Quinns**: Yeah, that’s almost exactly what I say in my review, you know? You’ve got to compare it to Conan, you have to compare it to Imperial Assault or Descent, all of which are games where you have to… They’re games with combat and fighting, but where you have an objective to do, but those things are sort of in sync, you know?

**Matt**: Yeah!

**Quinns**: When I played campaigns of Descent for years and years, a lot of those levels and missions are about movement.

**Matt**: Yeah!

**Quinns**: But often it’s only really one person who has to move, so Descent becomes, “Okay, yes, we do have to cross this room before the end of next turn, but that’s okay, because I’m gonna fight this guy and then you can do it, because you’re the movement person!” Whereas Batman is *so* hamstrung by… There is no opportunity for you to have fun. In order to complete the missions, you have to do everything by the book.

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: There is no *room* for fun, Matthew! There’s no room for throwing smoke grenades or blowing holes in walls.

**Matt**: And you know what? I’m sure if Batman himself was here, he’d agree with that, and he’s like, “Yeah, that’s what being Batman is about. There’s no time for fun. You’ve gotta choose your angle, only fight when you need to.” But that’s not what it’s about pretending to be Batman! It’s about pretending you’re a six-year-old, running into a bank that’s been burgled, and thinking, “Which of these two corridors am I going to run down and *biff pow* everybody in them? Which is the optimal *biff pow* route?”

**Quinns**: I can’t see how it got through playtesting, because what you did is what everyone’s gonna do, you know? You’re outside that bank- And to clarify, there are loads of scenarios in this, just the one Matt played happened to be-

**Matt**: A bank.

**Quinns**: -a bank robbery thing. But what you did is what all playtesters would do, which is run up, beat up some guys, maybe try and push into the building a bit deeper. Have some fun, do things because you’re Batman.

**Matt**: You blew up a wall and jumped through it.

**Quinns**: It was great! But any playtesting session in the world, you would have looked at that and realized, “Well, okay, hang on, what players are doing is actually not what they need to do.”

**Matt**: You know, and I’ve gotta say, I actually haven’t -- before this -- haven’t really talked to you about your further experiences with Batman or the review. I’m gonna have some eyes on it before we do it and help you out with some bits, but it’s fascinating, the thing I found that was so frustrating is it’s like, the main criticism of Conan was the fact that it’s like, hey, the core of this is really cool. Yeah, the characters, it could have been cool if the characters you had available were fleshed out a bit more, so it wasn’t just, Conan’s fun and everyone else is just there.

**Quinns**: Yeah.

**Matt**: But the main problem was like, yeah, the missions themselves kind of weren’t tight enough. They could have been better. And to see this coming with thirty playable characters is just like, oh man. There’s a lot more going on in terms of rules and remembering stuff, and each character having unique little things they’re slightly better at, which is just kind of fiddly? And it just would have been so much better to see them really take on board that main criticism of the game, and just be like, “Okay, we’re gonna use a very small number of playable characters, and we’re gonna make a really tight campaign.”

**Quinns**: You know, it’s impossible for me not to be cynical, because everything that’s in it is great -- which is the range of characters, the sculpts, the user interface, what the boards look like, all the promised rules and mechanics -- all of those things in the game are great. But those are the things you need to sell a Kickstarter. And they did! They sold this on Kickstarter. They did a great job. But the things that are so much more important if you’re just making a product, which is balance, which is players’ drive being in line with what they’re supposed to do in the game, which is usability. Holy crap! Batman: Gotham City Chronicles is a usability nightmare!

**Matt**: It is.

**Quinns**: You had the amazing point that like, “Oh, they’ve made all the boards and the interface look like Wayne Tech computers from the movie!” [**Matt** [laughing]: Yeah.] And then you pointed out to me, “But those interfaces in the movie are *awful*!”

**Matt**: Yeah, they made it look like a sci fi film sci fi interface, but they’re just there to look good. If you imagine a world in which computers actually look like sci fi computers, it would be awful and hell, with big floating hexagons. And they’ve even done that in the stylistic choice that you’ve got lots of little things. They could have made it bigger! They got like, you know, they could’ve-

**Quinns**: Oh, you mean the icons.

**Matt**: There’s a lot of dead space on the art. Even the thing that sits in front of you, with the icons, they could have been bigger, there could have been more information, OR, they could have made the picture art of the character bigger! But instead, there’s just a lot of dead space. And the fact that you then have to look up in the manual what all of these specific skills *are*, when on the back you have another piece of art of the character, *and* a biography in both English *and* French, it’s just like, you haven’t thought about this!

**Quinns**: Yeah.

**Matt**: The graphic design is great. The design, in terms of what it looks like, it pops. The player boards are beautiful. It’s a fantastic production. But I just feel like, [sputtering] it’s just a bit of an annoying mess.

**Quinns**: Yeah, it’s the gulf betw- And I wish I wasn’t saying this, and I know -- you know, because Monolith are very defensive about their work -- that they’re going to deny this, but it’s not my job to humor them as a critic. The gulf between everything that they needed to do to sell the Kickstarter, versus everything they needed to do to make this a playable game is *huge*. They have so knocked out of the park everything that is aesthetical, and so failed everything that is concrete and difficult, that it’s difficult for me not to see this as them just trying to get the Kickstarter out the door.

**Matt**: I mean, that’s… [sigh] It’s such a shame, because Conan was so close to being genuinely really, really great, but wasn’t quite there, and it sounds like this is something which, again, is either the same or we could recommend less?

**Quinns**: Yeah, it’s so frustrating. I mean, they have taken on some of the criticisms from Conan, for sure. The presentation of women in this game is completely fine now. I mean, as far as I could notice. Conan was an embarrassment to put in front of women. This is not! Conan didn’t have enough scenarios. This does! But they’ve just made so many other mistakes in the process.

**Matt**: Just so many things, by the sounds of it.

**Quinns**: So yeah, but do watch the review we’ve got coming out of this shortly, because...

**Matt**: Yeah?

**Quinns**: First off, I’ve had a lot of fun, there’s some really fun props and jokes in the video, but also just going into a bit more detail, and also, my goodness, you should watch the Shut Up & Sit Down video review of Batman: Gotham City Chronicles because it’s just a hell of a thing to look at.

**Matt**: Mmm.

**Quinns**: Wait until you see the Batmobile! Holy crap!

**Matt**: Yeah, it doesn't need to be that big. I’ve been saying that for years.

[funky sting]

## Chronicles of Crime (Revisited) [00:54:10]

**Matt**: So, a few podcasts ago we did talk about Chronicles of Crime briefly, and we were really impressed by the core design of a game which basically pit you as not like a serious, notepad-taking-style detective, but more of a daytime TV detective, of looking at people’s faces and going, “It was them! This person did that with this,” and having a tableau of faces, rather than a pile of written information. And that came off the back of us playing Detective: A Modern Crime Board Game? -- is that…?

**Quinns**: Yup! Yup!

**Matt**: Wow-

**Quinns**: You crushed it.

**Matt**: -okay, I got it right -- and finding it to be the opposite, and being like, “This is so much more fun.” Anyway. I played some more of it for a review, and it was really interesting, in the fact that it was incredibly inconsistent, and the writing was not good, sometimes in ways which were just basically a bit unpleasant and obnoxious, but mostly just in ways that were just laughable? And I found -- overall -- it to be a really interesting rollercoaster of silliness.

**Quinns**: But Matt, what if I want to hear more of your thoughts on Chronicles of Crime?

**Matt**: Well you should definitely check out my review, because it’s a really interesting video review, in the fact that the game is interesting, but it has problems, and it’s like, how much can you forgive these problems, or should you forgive these problems? And then also we go to look at the expansion which came out, which is called Noir, which honestly is just a bit of a hot mess. It’s boring, and it just sort of digs up loads of weird old-school 1940s misogynistic tropes in a way that you’re like “Why? Why would you do this?” Anyway, I think it’s a really interesting video, and I think it ends up being quite a simple game to talk about, but then there’s a lot of stuff to talk about in terms of broader stuff around it, and about the history of noir. I think it’s an interesting video, and I think people should check it out.

**Quinns**: I think you did an amazing job. And if people want to check it out, they can go to Youtube and search for Shut Up & Sit Down Chronicles of Crime!

**Matt**: Thank you.

## Mailbag [00:55:48]

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

**Matt**: It is time now to dive into the mailbag.

[rustling sounds]

**Matt** [strained]: And… I think I’ve got one… just… nyeuhh… actually, it’s a bit further down. Could you just hold onto one of my ankles?

**Quinns**: Yup, hang on. Matt. Matt, you’re going- You’re in too deep!

**Matt** [deep in the mailbag]: No it’s fine! I got one!

**Quinns** [under his breath]: Matthew Lees.

**Matt**: Gaaauuhh!

**Quinns**: One of these days Matt, you’re not gonna be lucky.

**Matt**: Okay, here you go.

**Quinns**: Thank you very much. Ooh! This is from- Oh I thought his name was Proud Donor, but it’s Ian. [Matt laughing] It’s Ian the proud donor.

**Matt**: Proud -- and apologizing if I say this wrong -- Proud Deunah.

**Quinns**: [laughs] From Mr. Prood Dihnàr writes, “Hello Shut Up & Sit Down. If you could force the metaphysical entirety of board gamers into a room and make them play a game that you think is phenomenal, but doesn't get enough love, what would it be?”

**Matt**: Ahhhh!

**Quinns**: “Thanks, I love the site and the continued efforts at inclusivity, and broadening the scope of the critical discourse of board games into political, ethical, and moral waters!”

**Matt**: Wow! That was a sentence.

**Quinns**: Ian making us sound like a cool politician there, but we’re just two dudes.

**Matt**: We’re just two dudes. That’s basically it. That’s an interesting question. I kind of had an answer until the final line, which is “that doesn't get enough attention.”

**Quinns**: Oh, well let’s ignore that.

**Matt**: I’ve got two answers.

**Quinns**: Oh, okay.

**Matt**: I think the one that doesn't get enough love is probably Flamme Rouge, actually, out of all things, because lots of people just look at it and see the components of the design and go, “Well there’s nothing there.” Or they think they get it, but there’s slightly more to it than they think. And it’s a bit like with Skull, of being like, “But there’s no rules,” and it’s like-

**Quinns**: Flamme Rouge definitely does have a lot in common with Skull.

**Matt**: Yeah, it does, it really does, of being like, there’s more to this than it appears. But I think the game I’d just love everybody who plays games to play -- and if I could force it on them in a nice way -- would probably be Twilight Imperium.

**Quinns** [gentle surprise]: Really.

**Matt**: Well it’s amazing how many people I meet who you talk to about TI -- Twilight Imperium -- who basically go, “Oh yeah, but it’s just so big and crazy.” I think I was the same. I think you look at it and you’re like, “It just looks so complicated.” You think, “I can’t do that kind of game. It’s too heavy.” And it isn’t, basically. It isn’t. And it’s just such an experience. It’s such an interesting thing that I think it’s something everyone should play. And it always makes me sad when I have people who go, “Oh yeah, I’d really like to try it, but I don’t know, maybe, mmm, maybe.” It’s like, just try it. Have you got a friend who’s got it? And most of the time people say, “Oh, I’d kinda like to try it maybe one time.” You ask people about it and they’re like, “I’ve got a friend who keeps trying to get me to play,” and it’s like, do it then! Just do it.

**Quinns**: Yeah, I’m really proud of my line in my review of the fourth edition where- Because Twilight Imperium is known as the game that’s big, but the line I have in the review is: But it’s not just- You don’t get four editions from being a big game, you get four editions and you save a company if you’re really big *and really good*!

**Matt**: Yeah, it’s fantastic. I’ve ended up going from having never played it to I think in the past six months I’ve played it three times.

**Quinns**: Oh really.

**Matt**: Which is pretty crazy for a game that big, of just having different groups of people who are like, “Hey! You wanna play TI?” And I’m like, “Yeah. Yeah I do.”

**Quinns**: You know… Because so many board games in the 80s used to be this kind of like, “Oh take territory!” and having a light diplomatic layer over the top of it. And Twilight Imperium seems to be one of the few really popular ones that’s survived. I am going to…

**Matt**: I keep thinking about buying it. It feels a bit stupid to buy it, because you’ve got a copy, and if I ever really wanted it, I could just borrow it, but it seems to be increasingly filling a place in my heart that it just might have to be something that I find a place for to live in my house somewhere.

**Quinns**: Yeah, and in terms of us trying to find something that’s similar, there was a board game going around a while back called Mega Civilization, part of this series of civilization games. Nothing to do with the Civilization video games, by the way.

**Matt**: No.

**Quinns**: But Mega Civilization, this big eighteen-player ancient civilization-running thing… That’s not being reprinted, as far as I know, but it is getting a new version this year, even better, even more updated, called Western Empires?

**Matt**: Mmm!

**Quinns**: Which is for five to nine players, lasting about three to eight hours, so it’s exactly in that Twilight Imperium spot? Supposedly it’s excellent, so you’d better believe that I’m gonna be getting my hands on a copy of Western Empires as soon as it comes out later this year.

**Matt**: Who’s gonna have the biggest cowboy empire?

**Quinns**: Uhhh… no it’s not wild west, it’s-

**Matt**: I know, I was doing a bad joke, but it was so bad that it just came across as idiocy.

**Quinns**: No, you’ve managed to rankle me in the way that we usually rankle Star Wars fans. [Matt laughing] But it turns out if you get *historical* things wrong-

**Matt**: Oh wow.

**Quinns**: -then I leap on you.

**Matt**: Have I just found the back door to Quintin?

**Quinns**: Oh no, no, don’t get history things wrong.

**Matt**: This is gonna be great.

**Quinns** [distraught]: NOOOO!!!

**Matt**: I’ve got the next five years of my personal happiness absolutely in the bag.

**Quinns**: I hate that this has happened.

**Matt**: And that’s another episode of the Shut Up & Sit Down podcast-

**Quinns**: I didn’t answer the question!

**Matt**: -in the bag! Alright, answer the question.

**Quinns**: I want everybody to play a megagame.

**Matt**: Yeah, no, that’s good.

**Quinns**: I think there’s so much... Megagames if you’re not aware are something that Shut Up & Sit Down has covered a bit in the past. They’re getting more and more popular now. They’re mostly closely related, maybe, to a model UN, where there are sort of board game elements, but players will walk around on their feet. You know, these games will often feature ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty people. It’s half board game, half roleplaying, I guess, but importantly, as Matt has talked about in the past, you’re not roleplaying a person, you’re roleplaying a job, which makes the game very accessible. You’re not this person who’s just lost their wife, you are somebody who maybe works as the scientist for Germany.

**Matt**: Yeah, you’re just trying to do some research for Germany. Gah! Won’t everyone leave you alone! Yeah, I mean, honestly this is one of the few things I could happily say- It’s a shonky video in many ways now, but if you’re interested in megagames and you’ve never seen it, if you google Shut Up & Sit Down megagame, you will find- We’ve done two videos of two different megagame days. The second one is better produced, but the first one is probably the one that is still just the best. It’s basically a little mini forty-minute video of our day playing a megagame, and it’s just… I think it’s a wonderful fun video, and it’s just a wonderful glimpse into a world that if you don’t know about, it’s a good way to find about it. And gosh, it is weird and strange and wonderful.

**Quinns**: Yeah, it certainly is. And the sheer number of different megagames being developed all over the world now shows how much wealth there is within that design space, so I would love for board gamers to play it because there’s a whole new genre of games waiting to be developed, or being developed, I should say, by megagame societies all over the world.

**Matt**: Mmmm.

**Quinns**: I’m gonna do an ending now. Now we’ve both answered the mailbag question!

**Matt**: Okay.

## Outro [01:02:10]

**Quinns**: Thank you very much for listening to the Shut Up & Sit Down podcast everybody. I’ve been Quintin Smith, and I’ve been joined by Matt Lees.

**Matt**: Alright, I’m Matt Lees. Time for you to get back in your bag, Quinns.

**Quinns**: No, I don’t want to get back in the bag.

**Matt**: You’ve got to get back in the bag!

**Quinns**: Don’t put me in the bag!

**Matt** [hushed]: Get in the bag.

**Quinns**: If you’re not aware -- because we’re trying to drop more and more and more and more and more hints -- Shut Up & Sit Down is not just a podcast. There are some Americans who like to drive around listening to us. Did you know, Americans, we have written articles on shutupandsitdown.com-

**Matt**: Yup!

**Quinns**: -we have a bunch of video content on Youtube…

**Matt**: Oh boy!

**Quinns**: Every other week, we do a little playthrough of a board game on Twitch!

**Matt**: We do! And that’s a lot of fun!

**Quinns**: If you go to twitch.tv/shutupandsitdown, you’ll see a big poster saying when the next stream is, and you’ll be able to click *Follow*, which means you’ll get an email whenever we start streaming.

**Matt**: And hey! If you live in either Canada or the North America area, we are doing our convention again. For two years we’ve run SHUX, the Shut Up & Sit Down convention in sunny Vancouver, and we’re going to our third year, and it’s gonna be very exciting. We’ve got some cool plans, and we’ve got a room that has carpets, which is really nice. We try to make it a really cozy, fun thing. So hey! If you live nearby-ish and you fancy a little weekend holiday with friends or family -- or just fancy coming along and making some new friends -- then SHUX is gonna be really, really cool. And you can find out more about that at shux.show.

**Quinns**: Yeah. But it’s basically one and a half thousand people playing board games for three days.

**Matt**: Yeah, and we do some dumb live shows, and it’s pretty fun.

**Quinns** [laughing]: It’s really fun! It’s like the best thing I do all year!

**Matt**: And everyone’s so nice!

**Quinns**: Auughh, it’s so good!

**Matt**: It’s almost weird, I feel like it’s a catfish thing. I feel like everyone’s gonna turn around and have too many teeth.

**Quinns**: Like one year we’ll eventually show up and there’ll be no one there, and we’ll walk into the hall and there’ll just be a big banner saying, “SIKE!”

**Matt**: Yeah, I look forward to that.

**Quinns**: I don’t.

**Matt**: Thanks for listening. Bye!

**Quinns**: Goodbye.

[funky outro music]