

## **Drawing Maps 26: The Candle Factory — May 2021**

Transcriber: robotchangeling

**Austin:** Welcome to Drawing Maps, I guess an RPG podcast focused on critical questions, hopefully smart answers, and fun interactions between good friends. That's still the Tips at the Table intro, even though this is Drawing Maps now. I'm Austin Walker. Joining me today, Sylvia Clare.

**Sylvia:** [audio quiet] Hi, I'm Sylvi. You can find me on Twitter at @sylvibullet and listen to my other show *Emojidrome* wherever you get podcasts.

**Austin:** Sylvi, can you boost yourself just a little bit?

**Sylvia:** [normal volume] Oh, okay. Yep, there we go.

**Austin:** Thank you.

**Sylvia:** I was clipping a second ago, and now I'm—

**Austin:** It's a whole thing.

**Sylvia:** Hopefully I'm good.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Uh, also joining us, Andrew Lee Swan.

**Dre:** Hey, you can find me on Twitter at @swandre3000.

**Austin:** Ali Acampora.

**Ali:** Um, hi. You can find me over at @ali\_west on Twitter. You can find the show over at @friends\_table.

**Austin:** And Janine Hawkins.

**Janine:** Hi, you can find me at @bleatingheart on Twitter.

**Austin:** We are doing a Drawing Maps for...this is May 2021. Which is not so...it's August now that we're doing this. It's mid-August.

**Dre:** Hey, that's only three off.

**Austin:** It's only three off. And listen. The episodes we're talking about came out in June. So, it's kind of lining up. We're getting there. We're getting there.

**Dre:** Yeah. [Janine laughs]

**Austin:** "The Candle Factory" was the— is the arc we're gonna talk about today of Sangfielle. If you've not done— if you've not listened to a Drawing Maps episode before, then please know that there will be spoilers for everything up through "The Candle Factory." We'll do our best not to talk about spoilers for anything that comes after that, if possible. Which should be pretty easy, because the only thing I think for y'all that we've done is the intros to Sapodilla and then the downtime episode which we just recorded two days ago, basically, right?

**Dre:** Okay.

**Austin:** So, just don't talk about that stuff. Ideally— none of the questions hit anything that I think comes up with the intro to Sapodilla, so I think we'll be okay. But if we're going to end up talking about something that is already out, that came out after this episode, just let's try to give a spoiler warning. Beyond that, in general, the way Drawing Maps works is we go over the episodes, via your questions. If there's anything anyone wants to bring up that doesn't get hit by a question, then we can just do that also, or at the end, or now. And in general, just know that like, you know, we intend the show to kind of be an overview of what the arc is, but we're not looking to talk about story like explainer stuff, more about the way the game is going, thoughts about character decisions, insight into prep. Where it's not about like, what's the way this works? and is more about, you know, themes and ideas and et cetera. So. I really like the questions today. We got really great questions, so I'm very excited about that. With that said, um, is there anything that anyone who uh, you know, wanted to bring up about this arc that did not come in on any of the questions that we've picked up here? I don't know if people had a chance to look through them or not. But just general thoughts maybe about this arc and anything that like jumps to mind. Was an interesting one for me, and we'll get there. One of the questions talks about a thing that I said during the last Drawing Maps, which is that I wasn't really happy with the opening of this arc, which is still true. I'm not really happy with it, but I was really happy with it by the time we finished it. And that's, you know, that's how it goes sometimes, I think.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** I thought we ended up with some really nice places and some interesting like character interaction stuff. And I think we probably already have like a really good season— a couple season fave characters for me, in Rana the cool witch on the kind of stilted temple of Kaitankro and then also Bucho who I think has just such a large personality that it's fun too...fun to say the word Bucho and to have Bucho there, you know?

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Dre:** It is.

**Sylvia:** He's actually just called Big Bucho because of the size of his personality.

**Austin:** That's—

**Sylvia:** He's like three feet tall. [Ali laughs]

**Janine:** Mm.

**Austin:** Yeah. Uh huh. Absolutely.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm. [Austin laughs]

**Janine:** I still— I remember I— I don't know if this made it into the episode, but I, for the first five times you said the name Bucho, I thought you were saying Puchao like the Japanese candy.

**Austin:** Ah. No. No.

**Janine:** And now in my head I still just associate Big Bucho with like a...with like a superior iteration on Hi-Chew. [someone snorts]

**Austin:** Sure, got it. Apparently Bucho, in Japanese, means the head of a section or a department, which is interesting.

**Ali:** Mmm.

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Austin:** That's fun. I was pulling it from the...the main anta— uh, pulling it from. I had— the word Bucho came to mind. I was like, what is the name of this person? And I was like, Bucho.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** And then I went, what's that mean in another language? Is it okay for me to use that? [Ali laughs softly] And the villain of *Desperado* is named Bucho. *Desperado*, the 1995 Antonio Banderas thing. But I will say that Bucho, I believe, has some other meanings, and I was like, you know what? It's fine. I'm just gonna let that roll. [Ali laughs] So, people can look those up on their own time. Um, but apparently it's also Japanese. It means the head of a section or head of a department, which I think actually works pretty well. Anyway. Yeah, I think that— I think that the...Janine, sorry, what did you just say? I had something to say to that, and now I've lost it.

**Janine:** I was just saying the candy thing.

**Austin:** Oh, the Puchao thing. Yeah, uh huh. Yeah.

**Janine:** Candy. Puchao.

**Austin:** Puchao. Yeah. I think that there was a—

**Janine:** They're good. They have little gummy bits.

**Austin:** They are good. I'm a fan. [Ali laughs softly]

**Dre:** I don't think I've ever had one of those before.

**Janine:** Highly recommend.

**Austin:** But other than that, I feel like just general thoughts on that arc. One of the things I think ended up being interesting was the ways in which y'all solved the...or like, situation. You know, we left a lot on the table, as we always do, which I'm totally fine with. But there were a number of like, stealth infiltration moments throughout that arc at the end? [Ali chuckles] And you used everything in your disposal to get through it, including Marn being little.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** Including Virtue being able to walk in and out of the Residuum, [Ali and Sylvia laugh softly] lead people throughout. And including dragging Bucho through farmland. [laughs] So, I feel like that was...

**Dre:** Oh, yeah.

**Austin:** There was some fun stuff around that. I'm trying to think if there's anything else on my side that I have written down here, and nothing else comes to mind in terms of big things. But let's just get into questions, and if someone...if anyone ends up having another thought that isn't carried here or that this reminds you of something else you wanted to talk on, we can just hit it. I'll read this first one from Annie, who writes in and says:

I have been listening to *Just King Things*—

**Austin:** A fantastic podcast, I'll editorialize here.

And I recently read *Salem's Lot*, and it seemed like there can be a line drawn from Dracula (vampires are frightening, but modernity will triumph) to *Salem's Lot* (the frightening thing is modernity failing when faced with a vampire) to the Yellowfield arc (modernity is the frightening thing that the vampire is just a conduit for). Vampires also

just loom large in the horror genre in general. How do you go about including one here and deciding where you want it to be in conversation with other portrayals and ideas and where to break off and do your own thing?

**Austin:** I knew I wanted there to be a vampire, because there hadn't been a vampire. [chuckles]

**Dre:** Fair.

**Austin:** And I think, Sylvi, did I message you and say if running into other vampires was a thing you were interested in?

**Sylvia:** I know it came up, but I don't remember if it was like a thing we mentioned after this arc or before this arc.

**Austin:** Right. Okay.

**Sylvia:** But it's definitely a conversation we've had about like wanting to have more vampire stuff on screen.

**Austin:** Yeah, it was one of those, like— one of the things that's been interesting this season has been, okay, the party, the player characters are all tied to very interesting backgrounds. How and when do I want to bring those backgrounds on screen? What's the best way to get them framed up in a way where like you can see the divergence of— you can see that the character themselves is not the only thing from that background, that they're not a monolith, et cetera. Right? And so, for me, vampires are one of the easier ones to do that with, because vampirism we defined in such a big broad way, right? Like, Sylvi, you came to the table, from going back to the original Drawing Maps conversation we had—

**Sylvia:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** And you were like, a vampire is something that takes— that extends its life through diminishing something else's, basically, right?

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** And that...from that, you could do a lot of different things. And so I felt like getting a different vampire on screen would be, you know. It was time to do it, and also I bet we could do it in a pretty fun way, because that gives me a lot of wiggle room. Whereas I feel like I had to work pretty hard to get into the...in this arc, for instance, Bucho, distinct in flavor from Pickman, right? Bucho was like so...they're both Shape Knights, but Bucho is loud and boisterous, and Pickman is kind of like a pot about to over boil, you know what I mean, in the worst way? [Sylvia laughs] So, I felt like that was a...there's like a key difference there. Whereas like, with Alaway, I got to just kind of play a very traditional kind of vampire, the like manipulative local lord vampire. And, you know, he was barely on screen, honestly, you know? But I'm curious for you, what you

thought of the wax vampire and how that fits into vampirism, and— from like the player position, if that was something that worked for you, Sylvi.

**Sylvia:** I loved it, personally. Because, well like, one of the things that I really liked about this was the contrast between the way Virtue goes about her shit and the way Alaway goes about, uh, their shit.

**Austin:** Yeah.

[0:10:00]

**Sylvia:** Which is like, it's...it was one of the first times where I felt the like, oh, she's from a different era type thing, because this guy is like...like disrupting vampirism, basically? [laughs]

**Austin:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** But it's like a much more modern approach. Like, it's like having someone from the pre-industrial era meet, like someone— like, pre-industrial rich person meeting post-industrial like baron type thing.

**Austin:** Right. I mean, this is the thing that I— one of the things I really wanted to get to with this was for...I wanted to introduce the idea that other vampires did not stop existing just 'cause you had been knocked out for a while and that part of what they would be doing is thinking about how to make quality of life better for themselves.

**Sylvia:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** They're people who have a great deal of power but also a very clear— or at least the ones who are tied to sunlight, which Alaway was along with you. If they are— if they need to mostly move in the dark, then that's something that— why would they ever not try to stop that or improve what that life looks like, in some way? And so that was kind of the engine of the entire arc, was like, okay, where's the— what's interesting? Where's the interesting place to put that? Oh, it would be cool if a vampire worked at a candle factory, because a candle factory— because candlelight would be very important to vampires. I guess if they can't see in the dark, which maybe vampires could just see in the dark, and that's whatever. But like—

**Sylvia:** I mean, I needed to get a fallout to be able to do that, so.

**Austin:** This is true. This is true. [laughs]

**Sylvia:** But then again, I also have been— I'm an ex-vampire at this point, so like...

**Austin:** That's true.

**Sylvia:** It's a gray area.

**Austin:** But yeah, from there, that core idea which I think Annie hits on here in a fun reading, that modernity is the frightening thing with vampires just a conduit for. But the other half of that was I wanted that core pitch to be...I think it's very interesting that, Dre, Chine was the one to intercede the vision of the future, or the vision of a future, the kind of city of lights, the sort of like imagined world in which Alaway has decided that like we could build to a place where like, we didn't have to go to sleep as early and that we could have electric— a thing called electric lights, in hospitals and in libraries and in city streets. And then I think it's interesting because you rejected it completely.

**Dre:** Oh, yeah.

**Austin:** But I do wonder...that was not like written for Chine to find, do you know what I mean?

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** And the thing that I like about it is that it is the double bind of like, yeah, this is actually— this might be a net good for everyone, but it doesn't mean that those who are already preying on people will also use it to prey on people more effectively, you know?

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** So, I'm very curious what would have happened if Virtue was the one who would have seen that vision instead, but we don't live in that world, I guess. I'm trying to think if there's any other answers to this in terms of— I'm now looking at this prep, but it's the stuff that I...it's the stuff that I already said basically, so, you know. And also, a thing I've been doing a lot this season—I think this is tied to the sort of episodic monster honey, monster of the week style stuff that we've been doing—is that just like, the first thing I had for Alaway was the bit about...was them basically saying “They're all me.” “You can't kill me. They're all me,” was the line that I'd written down, which I don't know if Regan said that exactly or not, but having that in mind as the like trump card to be produced at death was always there.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** And so a lot of that comes out of that. And then also like, you know, candles, Blackwick, Slumbous. Playing in that space, corrupting that space, was very fun, so. This next one, uh...speaking of [chuckles] Slumbous and corruptions. Janine, can you read this one from Faye(???)?

**Janine:** Yeah. Faye(???) says:

Hi. This is mostly a GM storybuilding question for Austin, but I'd be curious to hear player perspectives too. When you're coming up with sneaky wordplay-based clues—like

Subsolum being an anagram of Slumbous, or the letters in the townspeople's names all being drawn from the letters in Regan Alaway—how do you think about what level of subtlety to aim for? Is your goal primarily for the players to have a fun “oh” moment in hindsight, or do you expect there's a reasonable chance they'll figure something out in advance? How do you feel about the ways this rests a little more on the players riddle solving skills and less on the characters' skills? Thanks, Faye.

**Austin:** I'm mostly curious about what y'all think about it, because— or like, how it hits for you when that stuff gets revealed, because I know what my expectations are, and I'm more curious about if that stuff...what is the feeling of when that stuff happens in these games?

**Ali:** I mostly—

**Austin:** It's not all the time, but it's sometimes. Anyway. Go ahead, Ali.

**Ali:** I mean, I feel like, specifically in this case, or at least Regan's case, it feels like it's mostly characterization?

**Austin:** Mmm.

**Ali:** In terms of like, being like, yeah, this is how self important this person feels about themselves—

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Mmm.

**Ali:** —or about what they're doing in this action that they're taking against these people. So that's good. I'm always like, that's neat! [Austin and Ali laugh] So, that's what hits me.

**Austin:** Yeah. Yeah, I think that that was definitely the engine for why I did that. That was the motivation, for sure, was like, this is someone who can only see a world as like cut into little pieces of them, right?

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** And that's about it. So, having that as like the jumping off point was really fun. I don't ever...that was never gonna be the way they solved this. Like, it wasn't a puzzle for me in the sense that— or a riddle in the way that like, “solve my riddles three,” you know, to advance. [Ali and Sylvia laugh] What are the three...what are the three puns hidden in this city? Or three anagrams or whatever.

**Ali:** Ooh.



**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Like, it's just not what it was. But, as a GM, I like the tension that at any point, someone could have put that together. Because, I don't know, you coughed and looked at the word Subsolum, and you're like, "Oh, I thought that said Slumbous," and then you go, "Wait a second. Those are all the same letters of Slumbous." But that's not like— it's not built around that. Do you know what I mean?

**Dre:** Right, yeah. 'Cause even if we figured it out, it also doesn't help us then be like, Okay, well, how do we...

**Austin:** Yes. Yes.

**Dre:** ...kill this thing or whatever? [Ali laughs]

**Austin:** Yes. In— again, I will not spoil specifics, but like, there's another arc this season in which someone figures some stuff out, and it's like, okay, well, what do you do with it? Like, it's cool that you have that connection, but there— you need— That isn't a powerful magic word that solves the quest. [chuckles] You know what I mean?

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Which—

**Ali:** And it could easily have been that it wasn't a solution at all, right? Like—

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** We went into that place knowing like, okay, there's some sort of...these people have their own kind of religious order-y thing that they're...they're kind of on their own doing some doing some religion-y things. So we were like braced for like, this is gonna be a weird community. Right?

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Like, I think we probably—most of us, at least—went in there being like, yeah, this is gonna be a little bit weird, and... [Sylvia laughs]

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Ali:** So the idea of like, maybe they decided to just name themselves anagrams of stuff, like—

**Austin:** Yeah, who could fuckin' say?

**Janine:** People have done weirder stuff, you know?

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** Yeah, exactly. [chuckles]

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Exactly. I will say that when I, on a whim, looked up if there were any anagrams of Slumbous and got Subsolum, which is a real word word about like the layer underneath the soil or whatever—

**Dre:** Oh, really?

**Austin:** I was like, oh, that's fucking sick. Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's all— it's only ever used in like extremely jargony, you know, science papers and shit. But like, “a system for classifying subsolum geological substrates as a basis for describing soil formation.” Like, I was like, oh, sick.

**Dre:** That's cool.

**Austin:** Yeah. Let's roll. Like, that's... [Janine and Ali laugh] That's so perfect for this little agricultural cult vampire community, you know? [chuckles] Yeah. So, I think that that's probably...does anyone else have any thoughts on this?

**Sylvia:** I just thought it was fun. Yeah, I don't know.

**Austin:** Okay. Yeah. [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Like, it was just like a fun little thing to put together and like click towards the end of like, before that reveal.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Like, this stuff's cool.

**Austin:** I think that there's a degree to which I really like...the thing that I liked about it, the thing that I like about it is—specifically the Slumbous Subsolum thing—is the attempt to profane

something that we all care about, which is Slumbous. It...we've done this in past seasons, but there is...when you know people are invested in a thing, even if it's an out of character— you shouldn't ignore out of character investment. Like, I think the gut thing is to avoid metagaming and be like, what would the characters care about? But when your whole table is like, “Aw, that character rules!” you should lean into it. And even if their characters don't think that a character rules, like putting that character in threat or creating a villain that the table hates—even if the player characters don't necessarily do—means that you're investing in that social layer where when someone gets the good hit on the shitty villain, everyone at the table is like invested in that hit, right? And so there's no reason to like...there's no reason to just be like, well, none of these characters give a shit about Slumbous, so why should I threaten Slumbous in some way? It's 'cause the table— the characters— or, the players care. [Dre laughs] And when I go like, “Oh, it's actually this is a corruption of an important Slumbous temple,” and Ali goes [gasps] it's like, ah, got her. [Ali laughs] Got her. [Janine laughs softly] Nailed it, you know? That's buy-in, baby. So. [Ali laughs] So yeah, that's a fun one.

[0:20:19]

Alright. This is a long one. I'm gonna read this, just 'cause it's a long one. I was gonna pass it around, but this is a two pager, so let me take the work on. [Ali laughs softly] Alex writes in and says:

I am currently considering adopting *Heart's* Resistance System for a tabletop game I'm writing with a much lighter tone, and I'm not sure if it will work. My question for you all is about the connection between the mechanics of a tabletop system and the tone of the story told using that system. A couple of previous episodes of Drawing Maps have mentioned how *Heart's* mechanics help to create a sense of tension that's appropriate for a horror story. In their resistance toolbox for adapting the Resistance System to other games, Grant Howitt and Chris Taylor say that the Resistance System is, quote, “about losing things rather than gaining them. And by things, we mean equipment, resources, parts of yourself, and people. If you are interested in a game about getting lots of stuff and keeping hold of it, the Resistance System might not be the best fit for you.” Several systems previously used in *Friends at the Table*, like *Powered by the Apocalypse* and *Forged in the Dark* have been framed in a similar way by their authors. Mechanical tension, uncertainty, or loss are felt by those authors to be conducive to telling harrowing desperate stories, even though the systems themselves have been generalized and adapted into games with a wide variety of tones and subject matter.

The thing is, I'm not convinced that the tense mechanics of the Resistance System or other systems necessarily tend towards grim stories or stories about loss. Instead, as has come up before on Drawing Maps, the resistance mechanic makes, quote, “getting lots of stuff and keeping hold of it,” AKA the Lye Lychen maneuver, important. Getting and losing resources, marking and recovering from fallout, is a language by which the conversation of the game is conducted. It's a medium of currency the GM and players can lean on in different ways to produce different narratives and tones. My question for

the cast is: how have you experienced the relationship between mechanics and tone in play? Do you think mechanical tension necessarily leads to grimmer stories or loss-focused stories? As far as actual play or tabletop are concerned, what is the difference for you between tension in a horror story and tension in other kinds of stories? I thought Janine's idea of positive fallout on a critical success was amazing. If you were trying to use the Resistance System or another of the systems you're familiar with to tell, say, a chill slice of life story without removing narrative stakes, what would you change? Thanks, Alex.

**Austin:** It's a big question. I don't know that we can hit all of it, obviously.

**Dre:** Mmm.

**Austin:** But just generally speaking, does anything jump to mind for folks here in terms of the way the mechanics of this game either limit or could be, you know, rearranged or could address these ideas? Or just generally, do you have thoughts?

**Janine:** This came up—

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Janine:** This came up in, you know, in the downtime that we just recorded recently, where I was, you know, I'm sort of feeling a bit of tension in terms of expanding resources to, you know, cure things.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** [laughs softly] Effects and things like that, like, because for me, you know, I think maybe this is a side effect of the types of games that we usually play, actually. For me, things that are in my character's inventory become part of their backstory, right? They become this is, you know, this is my bag of silk coins that I hang on to for an entire season from the moth village that we went to like right at the start.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** Like, things like that. [Dre chuckles] Where...so, you know, it's hard for me to part with items like that. It's also hard for me to view them as currency, even when they're literally currency, because my habit is to sort of want to hoard them and not trade them back. And I think, for me, that's where a lot of...there's a lot of...a lot of the like stress of *Heart*, like, you know, when I take fallout, the first thing I think, truly the first thing I think—

**Austin:** Mmm.

**Janine:** —is oh my god, I'm gonna have to get rid of my little whistle that I've never used to get rid of this. [Sylvia chuckles] 'Cause I don't wanna, you know? [Janine and Dre laugh]

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Janine:** So I feel like, you know, if I was gonna adapt *Heart* to like, something a little bit softer, I would find an answer to that. Where...I don't know what that answer is, but...and, you know, maybe again, this is just a very— this is very particular to me as a player, but when you give me a bunch of stuff, and like, I'm defining my character and their experiences by that stuff, it's inherently hard to see it as a commodity to be expended or as a, you know—

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** —as a checkbox, as, you know, something like that. And it kind of takes me...it kind of takes me out of it, because I just start dreading, you know? I just start being kind of bummed about like, I'm gonna have to give something up to deal with this or else just live with it and it'll just get worse, and...

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Austin:** The irony is that I could help solve that by giving out worse, less interesting, cool loot, right? Like... [Dre and Ali laugh]

**Janine:** But that sucks too.

**Austin:** Yeah, I know. That's what I'm— that's why I said irony.

**Janine:** [overlapping] But the thing is there, I'm not gonna pick it up, right? Like... [chuckles] I wouldn't pick it up, which I already—

**Austin:** Yeah. Well, you will, because I'll say, here's— I mean, I could be like, here— oh yeah, you found some coins from Sapodilla. And it's like, okay, well, those are meant to be spent. Do you know what I mean?

**Janine:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Austin:** I could go the equivalent of vendor trash, right?

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Austin:** But that's not interesting, because...part of the story I'm trying— I want to tell is that dread of giving up things that you like.

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Right? But I— I do think that it's worth saying that like the dread you feel there is not the dread of horror, that's the dread of losing part of your sense of who your character is, and I think that's an important distinction.

**Janine:** Yes. Yeah.

**Austin:** My big question for Alex is what appeals to you about *Heart* and about the Resistance System specifically, if it is not the loss and the material focus, the focus on trading resources, the focus on escalating consequences that become increasingly real. Not because you should...if it's just the core dice mechanic, right? If it's just you have a skill, a domain, and one die, and then someone can help you or you can get mastery, above a five is a success, below a five is a hard fail, six to seven is you take stress, eight to nine is success, 10 is a whatever crit or whatever, then you could just take that, right? and start building something else around that. Obviously, you can learn lots of lessons here. But I think the second you start getting into fallout and start getting into the way stress is calculated...like, obviously, there are ways to change to make stress less stressful. You could do the thing that I think a lot of people do with this game, because it's not— it's an easy misunderstanding to make and roll stress versus each individual track instead of the total track. And that would make it a lighter game. But I think that there is something in the system that is about struggle fundamentally, which I mean, it comes out of *Spire* is the first game that uses it. That's not a horror game. That's a game about revolution and is similarly a game about having resources and spending them to eke towards success. And I think that's— it's pretty firmly woven, I think, in the game, which is part of why Keith is playing such a little acorn hoarder this season. [Austin and Ali laugh] Like, I think it comes from the mechanics of the game and so many of Keith's moves being about spending a thing, you know, in order...you know, *Dre*, *Chine* is the same way. *Chine* has to eat stuff, right?

**Dre:** Yeah, but I think in that...

**Austin:** I've also— I also literally in this conversation, *Dre*, I just realized I shouldn't have let you do lots of things in the last session we recorded. [someone snorts]

**Dre:** Which is fun.

**Dre:** Yep. No, same. Yeah.

**Austin:** So. Actual play, baby! [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** It's resources. It's not anything.

**Dre:** Yeah. But like, I think the resource thing is actually— I feel like that helps me express a thing about Chine is that they're a vagrant, like, they are not necessarily tied to anywhere?

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Dre:** And thus, like, Chine also doesn't care about like, holding onto resources.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Dre:** It's like, yeah, no, I'll fuckin' eat this. I'll use this.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Dre:** Like, I don't have...you know, it's the anti of what Janine is talking about. I don't have any sort of attachment to any of these things I carry.

**Austin:** Damn. It do be like that sometimes.

**Dre:** Except, you know, except that egg.

**Austin:** Except that egg!

**Dre:** But that's not a— but that's not a resource.

**Austin:** But that's like one of—

**Dre:** Or I guess—

**Austin:** That's why I was so happy when you took that egg. It literally is a resource. I made you add it to your sheet as a resource.

**Dre:** Yeah, no, that's true. Yeah, it is a resource, but...

**Austin:** Because I wanted something on that sheet—

**Dre:** I'm not gonna eat the egg. [Ali laughs softly]

**Austin:** —that your eyes would fall on to be like, this is in the mix. And like, you never will do it, but it's there. And at some point, it might be the only thing you have under the resource list, and you're gonna have to say, no, I'm gonna keep this resource.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** And that is— that it goes back to what— you know, that's characterization. You know, that's...

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** That's a vehicle for that, you know? It makes me curious about, Janine, if you were playing...like, would Thisbe use resources in a different way than Es does?

**Janine:** Yes.

**Austin:** Right?

**Janine:** Yeah, no, absolutely.

**Austin:** So it is about Es in a real way.

**Janine:** I mean— Yeah, yeah. The, you know, part of this is because our ancestry items are resources for us.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** And those are explicitly like things that are about a character, like one of the resources that Es has is a bone whistle, and I remember explaining that like the reason she has this whistle is because there are some skills that go with the heritrix.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm. Right.

**Janine:** And so she can...you know, she can play the whistle even though Syntyche— um, spoilers actually, whoops. [laughs]

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**[0:30:00]**

**Janine:** [laughs] Well, you know, it was gonna happen eventually.

**Austin:** No, no, that's out there.

**Janine:** Even though—

**Austin:** Is that not out there? Was that not in the last— oh, that— you know what?

**Janine:** Oh, yeah, yeah, that was—



**Austin:** It wasn't.

**Janine:** Well, it's—

**Austin:** I cut that. It wasn't in the actual intro. That's not in the actual...

**Janine:** Damn. Okay.

**Austin:** Oh, wait, maybe it is.

**Janine:** Well, uh...

**Austin:** Maybe it is. Maybe it is. I think it is. I think it is. I think it is. It is. It's in the actual... [quiet laughter]

**Janine:** No, I think it is.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Janine:** But it's not from Yellowfield.

**Austin:** No, that's fine. That's fine.

**Janine:** So it's, you know, a little bit, eh.

**Austin:** Yeah, a little bit of spoil.

**Janine:** Yeah, it's not the end of the world, but um, you know, her original host could not play the whistle. So, something like that is hard to give up, because it feels like a really strong component of that character. Whereas when you look at a character like Thisbe, Thisbe is a lot more self contained, right?

**Austin:** Right. Yep.

**Janine:** Thisbe's primary asset is herself.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** And like, primarily her abilities come from within herself. Like, she isn't...she can use guns and stuff, but it's kinda...the attachment's different, right?

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Janine:** Like, she's built to be an all-in-one kind of thing.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Janine:** So it's kind of different in that way. I also— I just wanted to mention here that like... [sighs] *Heart* is a really...the idea of adapting *Heart* to a lighter tone is really...I, you know, I don't know— I admire anyone who's taking it on. I don't know that I could do it. And the number one reason that I don't know that I could do it personally is because all of those top tier moves, except for one, are fatal or are like, banishing or, like...

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** You know? Like, the whole game is... [sighs] You know, a lot of games are about someone undertaking a foolish journey that's like, "Well, you'll die if you go on that, if you do that!" [Austin chuckles] And it's like, "We'll see about that!" And then, you know, you leave town, and you come back six months later, and you've got armor made of gold. But *Heart* is, you know, the things that you're building towards are not like, you raise your— well. [Janine and Austin chuckle] Okay. They're not like, you raise your sword into the sky, and your god imbues it with fire, and you sweep your foe to hell or whatever. They're like that, but then it's like, and you explode into a cloud of dust and stop existing.

**Austin:** [laughs] Yeah.

**Janine:** Right?

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Janine:** So, it's like—

**Austin:** Well, you could get rid of those. You— like, so I would...

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Austin:** I would tell Alex to go read *Ascendancy*, which is the kind of psychic cyberpunk anime-inspired game that is more positive in tone as a potential starting place. But that is still a game that's fundamentally...that is not a slice of life chill story. That is a game about, uh...

**Janine:** *Heart* is about marching towards the end.

**Austin:** Yes, yes. And *Ascendancy* is a game about being...I'm just gonna read from the thing here. "You are an Ascended—a psychic cyborg given extraordinary powers by the Empire and forced to act as their weapons. But now that they're gone, the Ascended are scattered," blah, blah, blah, blah. So like, even that, which I think is a much lighter tone, is still interested in struggle, exchange, violence, like politicized violence, et cetera. I don't know that you can get

away from that when the core mechanic is about the character being acted upon and having things taken away from them, which is what fallout is, you know?

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Austin:** In a codified way. Ali and I were just talking— was that today, Ali? That was today, right? We talked about this game, about *Heart*.

**Ali:** I think so.

**Austin:** This morning.

**Ali:** Yeah. Yes, yes, yes.

**Austin:** About the ways in which fallout differs from consequences in PBTA or uh, *Blades in the Dark*, Forged in the Dark games, in which Forged in the Dark games have stress in a similar way, and the player has a lot of control over whether that stress goes up or down or if they accept certain outcomes from negative— you know, to their character or to the world based on whether or not they want to resist them. And then PBTA games give a lot of leeway in both— in a lot of directions, to me as a GM, in terms of someone failed a roll. Either a move will have a hard failure thing, where like, oh, if they fail, they take damage, right? But sometimes it's make a move as hard as I want, which can be a move as easy as I want also, right, as light as I want. And it could be something that is— or it could be something as big as major fallout is here, even if I haven't already stuck the minor fallout on it. I mean, you kind of do that in terms of the, quote unquote, "show the barrel of the gun," right? Or you want to tease something. But there's not that same hard mechanic, you know, mechanism the way it is here, where fallout is a specific list of things. I know I could break off of those and do my own, but I'm at the place where I'm still running this and I don't have those memorized or internalized in a good enough way, where I feel comfortable introducing my own fallout yet, my own untested fallout at this point. Which, I think again, speaks to mostly like, how few games of this we've run. We're only on...each side has done two games at this point. [chuckles] We've been doing this game now for most of the year, but we're only two games, you know, on each side through basically. And so, I think that it's hard for me to understand how you would extricate the core of *Heart*—which to me is the dice system plus fallout—without retaining...which also, to be clear, is not me saying that it has to be a grim story. But I do think it's a story about loss, or like I said, I think the mechanics...the mechanics lean in that direction. I'm curious, from Sylvi, Ali, and Dre, who haven't hit on this yet, even more broadly, either talking about *Heart* but also more broadly. We've now played...we've been doing this for seven years. We have played so many systems. To what degree do you feel, in your experience, the mechanics of games shaping or limiting or pressuring tone? Tone and theme and all that other stuff?

**Ali:** I feel like, especially with tone and like the way— 'cause like the way that we experience the systems in a game isn't by looking at a chart that says like, four minus two equals two.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** And then you have two, right?

**Austin:** Yeah, yeah.

**Ali:** But like, it's experienced by saying like, oh, well you have stress, and then you do this thing, and then you, you know, you don't have stress anymore, or whatever else. So like, I feel like tone drives it that way, because it just...it focuses the way that you're gonna think about something, even if the thing that you're thinking about is numbers or resources or how many times can I do X before Y.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** Or whatever else. But like, in the same system, like, the way in *Heart* that I think about, like, oh, I have three items right now. I have two wounds.

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** I have to figure out what's gonna go for what.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** And how I'm going to figure this out. Could just as easily be like, I have three chips, [laughs] and I want to take two actions. Or like, I have three hours of the day, and I want to accomplish whatever these things are. So like, I feel like there's...there's a way to unweave that, if you like really try to find like what the skeleton of the system is, but like, just in terms of being a player and having to read the book and how you experience learning about these systems, that's how tone is driven.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm. Sylvia or Dre, do either you have feelings on this stuff?

**Sylvia:** I think that like...just thinking about the Resistance System specifically, it kind of affects that more than other ones we've played in the past, I think. Specifically because you're...there's so much more like...it feels scarier to roll in this game, you know? [Ali and Dre laugh] Like, just straight up, like, every time I have to roll, I'm like, do I really want to do this?

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Because like, it's one of those games that can spiral really quickly. And I think that's cool. Like, I think that it is...it is like a direct way that like game mechanics can affect the tone of things, both like...without even like, even if this was like a different setting with like...like, if we were doing like Resistance System stuff in like PARTIZAN for example.

**Austin:** Right.

**Sylvia:** It would still be really stressful, but the tone would be a little different. It would be like war stressful as opposed to like, spooky stressful.

**Austin:** Mmm.

**Sylvia:** I hope that makes sense, you know?

**Austin:** Yeah, I getcha.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** Yeah. War stressful, spooky stressful.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Spice stressful, uh, sporty stressful. These are the stressfuls. I gotcha. [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** Yeah. No, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Sylvia:** Baby stressful was always my favorite.

**Austin:** Baby stressful, yeah, uh huh.

**Ali:** [laughs] We've all been there.

**Dre:** Jesus. [laughs]

**Austin:** It's a Spice Girls joke. It's fine.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm. No, I got...no, I got... [Sylvia laughs]

**Austin:** Posh. Posh stressful.

**Janine:** I heard ginger stressful is an ambassador now.

**Austin:** Oh, okay.

**Ali:** Ooh.

**Austin:** Wow.

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Anyway, yeah. Dre, do you have any thoughts?

**Dre:** Uhh. I guess the thing to me is the thing that I always feel like dictates tone more than anything is like the...this is how you get XP.

**Austin:** Mmm.

**Dre:** Or...I guess or like, it's either that or this is how you work towards like the ultimate goal.

**Austin:** Right.

**Dre:** So like, in Beam Saber, that was the stuff around like...oh, I forget the name of it, but it's bas—

**Austin:** Drive.

**Dre:** Yeah, Drive, and like earning Drive points, and then having enough Drive points that you can say, no, I just fucking— I do this big thing.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Dre:** So, to me, that's where a lot of that tone comes from, because then that's the thing that says, okay, well, in order to get these points, I have to fail rolls. I have to put myself in bad situations and things like that.

**[0:40:01]**

**Austin:** Right. Right. You have to keep—

**Janine:** That's a good point.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm. Totally.

**Janine:** I mean...ugh. I think that point's so good it might have actually changed my mind. [someone laughs] I feel like I was being a little harsh initially, and I was regretting that. But that's a good point, is that like the...you know, it's not quite— the feats in *Heart*—

**Austin:** Or beats? The beat system?

**Janine:** Beats, right, the beats. [laughs]

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Janine:** The beats and the feats.

**Dre:** We got the feats.

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** Those are...the tone on the, like... [sighs] I hadn't actually put my finger on how different I feel as a player when I'm considering what beats to pick, versus when I'm doing anything else in that game, right?

**Austin:** Mmm.

**Janine:** When I'm sitting down and saying like, I want Es to save some asshole's life, I think that'd be fun.

**Austin:** Right.

**Janine:** Like, part of that, I think, is also that I'm in that adventure or whatever it is.

**Austin:** Yeah. That calling.

**Janine:** Sort of thing, which a lot of that is [laughs] is like in that tone.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Janine:** But, um, a lot of that stuff maybe goes a longer way than I was giving it credit for in terms of like, stuff you could lean into if you did want to tell a lighter story. Focusing on that system a little more than...

**Austin:** That'd be huge.

**Janine:** Like, the resistance stuff is is tough. But if you made the emphasis more on...on beats and things like that, because those, if you have the right set of beats that you're picking from, really feel like you're kind of picking off a storytelling menu, and you can, you know. The adventure stuff, it feels...I think what it is is that it feels like a way for me to guarantee that at least one fun thing happens. [laughs softly]

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** Even when stuff is like really bleak and like spooky and creepy and stuff. It's like, well, okay, maybe we're gonna go into a town with a candle vampire or whatever, but if I put this thing

here, then at some point, Austin is probably gonna try and help me get a drink named after Es or whatever.

**Austin:** Right. Right. Yeah.

**Janine:** Like, [laughs softly] and that goes a long way.

**Austin:** The...yeah, I think— I actually really like the beat system. The beat system to me is...we were saying earlier that in *Forged in the Dark* games, the beat the ability to decide “No, that doesn't happen, I just take stress instead,” by resisting a thing lets players have a degree of authorship. I think the beat system is, in many ways— it's such a different thing, but it feels so much in line with that goal of giving—

**Janine:** Mmm.

**Austin:** —of being an explicit place where every player at the table takes authorship.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** And I think it's extremely important in a game like *Heart*, for the reason you just said, Janine, which is like, this is gonna be a brutal episode or a brutal session. But, you know, it's my job as GM to try to line up a thing where you can charm somebody, 'cause you said you wanted to do that, you know?

**Janine:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** And that gives you some real buy-in in terms of— or not buy-in, but some real control over the general tone, as long as the GM is doing it right, you know?

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Austin:** I think—

**Dre:** You saying that, Austin—

**Austin:** Go ahead.

**Dre:** —makes me remember all the times, like on old *Tips at the Table* episodes where we'd talk about like, hey, like, just talk with your table about what they want.

**Austin:** Yes. [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** And I never thought about it this way, but it is very cool that the beat system just makes that conversation like built into the game.



**Austin:** Yes.

**Dre:** In like just explicit, in the most literal terms.

**Austin:** Yeah, the beat system says you're not gonna do that, unless we fucking make you.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** And even there, like I'm in the Rowan, Rook and Decard Discord server, and like, even there, what I will say is like other— I've seen other GMs complain that their players don't go after their beats, and they don't tell them what beats they're interested in, and they don't like— they just want to show up and do the dungeon delve thing. So even there, you know, it can be hard—

**Dre:** Mmm.

**Austin:** —to get players to engage in that way if they're just not in that space.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** But I do think making it more explicit is huge. I think I'm still fundamentally skeptical about it, but that's because I'm a very big believer in the ways in which mechanics shape tone and theme. I think that the...think about like *Technoir*. If you go back to thinking about *Technoir*, one of my favorite games we played. We played it only for two or three sessions, or two or three arcs. I think it was two arcs. Mmm, it was three. It was three. But the way that that system works is that you have to spend a certain resource to make things permanent. And the only way to get that resource is for me to hurt you and make things permanent on you first, and when I do that, you get the resource I spent to do that. And over the course of an arc, that becomes an increasingly available resource for you to then come back at me and make things change in the world. And that is a thematic argument about in the game— in that game, you have to get hurt to change the world. You have to take one, you know, on the chin to then get up and change things. And that can be in a cyberpunk game or that could be in a fantasy game. If you made *Technoir* but fantasy, that that would still be a core truth about the world. And so I think that in— as written at least, *Heart* being so focused on the ways in which you need resources to pull yourself away from whatever fallout you've gotten? It's huge. Like, you know, there are people, there are player characters who have fallout now from multiple arcs, because they just like don't have what they need to get rid of it. Or because they've now decided, well, that's just a thing I'm gonna fucking live with now. [chuckles] You have player characters who can heal fallout at a risk, but it's a risk. And I think contrast that with something like, you know, any of the PBTA games we've played, basically, where like, health was just HP, you know?

**Dre:** Mmm.

**Austin:** If you go back to Hieron, where like, you know, *maybe* a player character got like a minus one to dexterity for a little while, but like, oh yeah, I can live without seven HP. That's such a different thing—

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** —than trying to live with, you know, you can't use blood protection, or you can't use your domains, you know?

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** That's such a huge different consequence. And you can try to adjust the fallout to be different, but that core rhythm of I'm taking something away from you until you spend a resource to address it, is a different...I think that there is content in that play that's hard to shake loose from. And I think that largely because I've seen the difference in going from...I think a really great illustration of this is how Twilight Mirage changes between *Scum and Villainy* and *The Veil*. And it changes in pacing in a big way, obviously, when we go from *The Veil* to *Scum and Villainy*, but it also changes in how close are we to the interiority of those characters? How interesting are the action sequences? How easy is it for us to do stuff at different scales? And we could have— I mean, you can zoom in on specific sequences in *The Veil* that that are— like, specifically action sequences and feel the difference in how that game's tone exists compared to stuff that happens midway through *Scum and Villainy*. And I still think Twilight Mirage has a tone that is of itself, but I don't think...I think it's hard to ignore the— and obviously *The Veil* is a very high concept game that's really leaning in with a lot of that stuff. But I think...but I think that that would be true even if...even if that wasn't a game about emotions, and instead...if instead of being like, anger, sadness, whatever the fuck, I don't remember the chart, unfortunately. If that was strength, dex, charisma, wisdom, et cetera, intelligence, the other one, the one I've forgotten, constitution. Even then, there would still be that slow check of like, okay, am I using the right one? As long as the system...as long as the system said you could use whatever one you want, think about what one...think about if it makes sense for your character in the situation, we would still have that rhythm of it. And that's built into the mechanics, and I think rhythm...it's like music. Like, rhythm has character. Rhythm has content in it. And you can do a lot with it, you can stretch it and bend it and change it, but like, a funeral march is a funeral march. Like, it's gonna have that tone and that tenor in it. And it's not that *Heart* is a funeral march—I think you can do a lot of stuff with it—but I am...I would say I'm very interested and curious to see how this experiment would go, because I think you could stretch it pretty far, but I'm curious if you can get away from that core feeling of struggle and exchange like fundamentally. Anyway, really good answers.

**Ali:** Um...

**Austin:** Yeah. Go ahead.

**Ali:** I just wanted to say... [laughs] Just in terms of like, 'cause I remember we had gotten a question that was like, how do you feel with regards to like, *Heart* versus horror and like how it creates the horror that you like.

**Austin:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Ali:** And it's something that I've been thinking about a lot, because the thing that I've been thinking of is like, does *Heart's* system seem really harsh because the consequences seem really sudden because I haven't like internalized the system yet?

**Austin:** Mmm.

**Ali:** Or just because it's a truth of the system?

**Austin:** Mm-hmm. [Ali and Dre laugh]

**Ali:** And the thing that I realized is like, the moments in horror that I appreciate the most are either the ones where like, you're sort of seeing the scene for what it is, you're dreading what the next beat is gonna be because you kind of know where it's going, and it's that sort of like, please don't do this thing even though I understand why you are.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** And like, the thing of being like, oh god, I know that I have this stress, I know that I had to take an action, and I know that like, if this happens, I might suddenly be covered in eyeballs or whatever—

[0:50:10]

**Austin:** Mm-hmm. [Dre laughs]

**Ali:** —is like, stressful, in like a real way. [laughs] And then the flip side of that is the...the other horror elements that I really like is like when something is so shocking and sort of off-putting that it ends up being like sort of funny.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** The like, this guy's gotten his head cut off, but I'm like laughing about it, because it's just, I'm so shocked by this.

**Austin:** What the fuck else am I supposed to do except laugh in this moment? [Ali laugh] Yeah. Yeah. Uh huh.

**Ali:** It's that sort of thing is like, the surprise of that also hits with *Heart*, because it can be just, you know, something as simple as like, trying to sneak across a room, and then like, you're covered in strange bruises that don't...

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** You know, that try to make words or whatever, and it's like, what? Aaaah. That's really bad.

**Austin:** Laughing nervously, like, yeah. Yeah. [Ali laughs]

**Ali:** So, I think *Heart* does like an incredibly good job of that. And like, it's not like so dissimilar from getting like a critical fail in a different game and then being like, oh shit, the consequence is like a real consequence.

**Austin:** [laughs] Right.

**Ali:** But with *Heart*, the consequences being so organized and like so...often, [laughs] I guess I would say, really leads to that, like, "Oh shit, this just happened to me" sort of feeling or the thing of being like, [whiny] "I'm already hurt. I don't want to do more things." [laughs]

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Ali:** So.

**Austin:** Also, there's just been a real asymmetry in who's gotten hurt. [Ali laughs] Like, fundamentally, some people have gotten very hurt and gotten lots of fallout. Through this arc, I think, Dre, you and Keith, through Candle Factory, neither of you had gotten fallout yet.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** And that's wild, because that's just such a different experience of the game than Ali or Sylvi or Janine, or especially Art. [Ali chuckles] Jack's had a mix, but.

**Janine:** I wasn't that bad off.

**Austin:** Right.

**Janine:** Like, I've...I got two different...I've had minor fallout and major fallout, but the minor fallout I had was, like, temporary, right? It was like a...I fucked up my shoe, and the thing that—

**Austin:** Right, right.

**Janine:** I basically traded my shoes to fix my— to get rid of my shoes. Like, to get rid of that fallout was like, I got rid of those shoes, and uh...

**Austin:** [laughs] Right.

**Janine:** Like, that's not a big deal. [laughs] In the grand scheme of things.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Janine:** Fucking up your shoes on a hill is such a whatever. [Ali laughs]

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Janine:** And the other one that I got was that I was— I just looked kinda wet. [Ali, Sylvia, and Janine laugh]

**Austin:**

Well, you decided— okay, wait, wait, wait. That was your interpretation of that one.

**Janine:** Yes. Sure.

**Austin:** Because you made it a thing that you liked, which was like, what if I'm just dewy?  
[Janine laughs] But what was the actual— that was an echo fallout, right? That was a— was that a major?

**Janine:** Yeah. I think it—

**Austin:** That was a major echo fallout, wasn't it?

**Janine:** Yeah, it's...I don't remember the one specifically, but...

**Austin:** Yeah, okay. It's written as...I think it's...mmm, you know what? No, that wasn't Blooded. You were something else. I don't remember what you were.

**Janine:** It was Blooded.

**Austin:** It was blooded?

**Janine:** Yes.

**Austin:** So, as written, "You show some mark of the heart in your physical form: twisting fragile antlers of bone, fingernails that curve in fractal sharp patterns, bioluminescent veins, additional joints in your limbs, and so on." So. [Janine laughs] "But your frail mortal form is not designed to be used as such a canvas. When you mark stress to blood, roll two dice and pick the higher." So, that's the thing.

**Janine:** Right, yeah.

**Austin:** You felt that as oh, I was only a little dewy, because you didn't get into a fight during that.

**Janine:** Yes, yeah.

**Austin:** If you had gotten into a fight—

**Janine:** If I'd gotten into a fight, it would have been rough.

**Austin:** Yeah, yeah.

**Janine:** But also, I'm gonna defend the dewiness, because it was eyeball dew, like it's not... [someone snorts]

**Dre:** Yeah, you know.

**Janine:** You know.

**Dre:** It's just eyeball dew.

**Janine:** It just happened and sometimes—

**Austin:** Yeah, but you said— but a moment ago, you said that you only felt a little wet, and that's nothing. That's not a bad...

**Janine:** No, but I mean, that's what I mean, is that like relative to—

**Austin:** Yes, yes.

**Janine:** —some of the other fallout that other people have gone through, like I would not put myself—

**Austin:** Relative to you can't use your domains.

**Janine:** Yeah. I would not put myself in— I would put myself in the middle in terms of...have had a bad time with fallout.

**Austin:** Yeah, that's— I'd put you in the middle, for sure. For sure. I think Art, easily the worst. Poor Art.

**Janine:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. [Ali laughs]

**Austin:** And that's just—

**Dre:** Well, gotta get good.

**Austin:** Uh huh. [chuckles] I'm sorry that not everyone has Chine's "I have free armor wherever I am" ability.

**Dre:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** Across all of my resistances.

**Dre:** Uh, yeah. [makes "I don't know" sound]

**Sylvia:** They really gotta nerf Chine in the next patch. [Ali laughs]

**Austin:** I'm doing it as we speak. [Sylvia laughs]

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** The place Chine is is tier one. [Sylvia laughs] I thought about making it tier zero to be like, nah, but it's tier one.

**Sylvia:** Wait, we should...should we slow down with that?

**Austin:** That's all I'm saying.

**Sylvia:** [laughs] Okay.

**Janine:** Mmm.

**Austin:** No, 'cause the end of that arc, the end of that last episode— yeah, it's fine. [Ali laughs] Chine is currently in a tier one place is all I'm saying. Alright. Um, next question. Ali, can you read this in from David?

**Ali:** Oh, sure. It says:

Hey y'all, loving this season so far. But I have to say the twist of this arc hit me in a particularly great way. I've been thinking about why, and I think the small scale self contained nature of this arc was what made my heart sink when the nature of Vicar Alaway was finally revealed. Anyways, my question is: how do you think the episodic nature of the arc so far has affected the horror of each situation slash the reaction to it, especially after a season that had such apparent overarching plot like PARTIZAN? Both definitely have their advantages, but I'd love to hear your thought on it.

**Austin:** Um, I'm curious— again, I'm curious from y'all, because you are playing through it. Also, it's a little unfair in the sense that there are threads starting to come together at this point, but you've done— each of you have done two of these now, and I'm curious if you feel like the episodic stuff is hitting for you.

**Janine:** Um, for—

**Austin:** Or if it even feels like that. Yeah.

**Janine:** Yeah. I mean, for me, I think it's...it's a lot easier, because I think...so, I think overarching plot stuff is easy to follow when you're keeping up on the episodes and you're in the audience. When you're a player, and it's like, okay, well, we're recording these two arcs—

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** —and then we're gonna record this third arc that's gonna be affected by the stuff that happened in the second arc, but you weren't in that second arc, and also those episodes aren't even out, or if they are—

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** —it's like six or seven hours of content to listen through. And like, you got a job and stuff and also have to record these next things, and like...that stuff can...it feels like it can run away from you really fast in a way where it gets a little bit scary. It can be a little bit scary when there's like a really big, overarching high stakes thing. And it's like, I'm not a hundred percent sure what went on last week.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** But there's this new person here that three people in my party are very upset about.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Janine:** And I'm gonna just roll with their feeling, 'cause they're probably right. They probably know. So, these slightly more self contained things are reassuring in that sense, right? Where like, as a player, who, you know, the way I catch up tends to be like in big batches, usually like at the middle of a season or something. Not having that pressure and that feeling of like, oh, I'm fuck— I'm missing so much. I have no idea who that person is, and I don't know what's going on here. That stuff has been a lot less this season. And like, there is continuity.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** But it's continuity that's been a lot easier to keep up with and a lot easier to catch up on, because it's not as predominant, right? Like, to explain who a character is, you don't need to



explain an entire, you know, political faction. You can be like, he was a guy at a house, and his house was in a bad—

**Austin:** Right. Right.

**Janine:** —was in a bad situation, and we helped him with his house, and he owns a market. [Austin chuckles] That's like, okay, cool. I feel like I understand what's going on there. So, as a player, I think I prefer the sort of...the more compartmentalised storytelling, the sort of monster of the week kind of thing. I think it takes a lot of that pressure off. I think if I was purely in the audience, though, I might feel the opposite, 'cause I tend to favor longer continuity. So, there's a little bit of like, you know, I feel two ways about it, in some sense.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Janine:** But yeah, I think generally, also, when you have...when you don't have to stress too much about that long view, the immediate consequences are a lot easier to feel, like to actually feel, to be like, oh, there's bad things going on here. Versus when you have to say, okay, this is bad. How bad is it? What's this faction again? I don't know how— how many arcs was I in with them? I don't think I was in any of their arcs, but, you know. When you have to kind of work through it in that way, it's a little harder to connect. Even if you do like it.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** Like, even if you enjoy what's happening, it's hard to feel it as much in your like, heart, in your emotions, and to have those sort of knee jerk reactions. For me, anyway. I don't want to speak for anyone else.

**Dre:** Nope, I was just gonna say thank you, Janine, for making me feel very valid. [Austin, Ali, and Janine laugh]

**Austin:** I'm curious for Ali and Sylvia, if they...it's such a different thing. And also, I think, thinking about the most— both the most recent arc— or sorry, the most recent season before this, that like when I think about your two characters, they both had big really fulfilling arcs over the course of that, that...like, if I'm speaking for myself, one of the things that I'm very much struggling with is like, I don't know that I have a good handle on y'all this season in terms of like, what motivates most of you. [Sylvia laughs] Or that, what, like...and that's a me and prep and everything else thing as much as anything else. But I do think the episodic structure makes it...it's not the episodic structure. I'll wrap back around to what I...to this in a bigger way in a second. Go ahead, Sylvi.

**[1:00:19]**

**Sylvia:** I was just gonna say it's not just a you thing, 'cause I'm also having a lot of trouble getting a grip on what like Virtue's deal, in like a big picture sense, is.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** I don't know if that has— is directly tied to the episodic structure or not. Like, I think it's more related to me [chuckles] playing a character that like...is really shitty, and it's [Ali chuckles] kinda hard for me to get into the like...

**Austin:** Mmm.

**Sylvia:** I'm going to like [chuckles] be the worst I can.

**Dre:** Girlboss mindset. [Ali laugh]

**Sylvia:** Yeah, I'm not there yet, you know?

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** But...yeah, I don't know. I feel like the...that, more than anything, has actually affected like the horror, just to talk about like, some of the text of the question.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Like, my reaction to it is also like, if...am I like, worried for this character if she dies? Not really. I kind of built her to be the opposite of that.

**Austin:** Right.

**Sylvia:** Um...and like what would be left unfinished if she...like, if her story ended here. And those are kind of like the two big like, axes of—

**Austin:** Right.

**Sylvia:** —worry when it comes to like, tabletop characters for me. And it's like not...they're not hitting quite as much with her, and I think I'm starting to get a better handle on like, what I want to do going forward. I think that like some of the stuff in the Sapodilla interviews, that you can go listen to now and I won't mention anymore of. [Ali laughs]

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** I think that like recording that kind of helped figure out a bit more of that, and like I've slowly been crystallizing things a bit more. But this is like...because we were like, we wanted something kind of episodic, I think I went in with a, like...I had like a character concept, but I didn't really have like a character history like I had—

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** —for like Milli or like Echo, for example. Like I have...I had way more of an idea of where they came from and what they'd been through, as opposed to like...this fucking like Dio Brando with a great rack.

**Austin:** Uh huh. [laughs]

**Sylvia:** Just appearing. [Ali and Dre laugh]

**Austin:** Yeah. [laughter continues]

**Sylvia:** It's hard to— it's a little harder for me to just like, immediately nail that, but I've gotten more of that now.

**Austin:** First of all, what are you saying about Dio Brando's rack? [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** Hmm.

**Sylvia:** You know what? I said it, and I was like, I shouldn't really like... [Austin laughs] Dio Brando with a different type of great rack.

**Austin:** Different type of great rack. Yeah, uh huh. [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Austin:** Uh huh, uh huh, uh huh. I feel you, though.

**Sylvia:** But yeah, no, it's just— that's sort of why I...where I've been like standing with the sort of like horror stuff as well as the like formatting stuff, but I think it— I don't think it's like been detrimental. I think it's just been a thing to adapt to.

**Austin:** Yeah. I...Ali, do you have...do you want to jump in on this? Sorry.

**Ali:** Yeah. I'm in a similar place, 'cause I've definitely been struggling with Marn, just in terms of like...I feel like when we built Marn, they're [laughs] just like, tonally, is just like a sidestep from the rest of the party.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** And as much as that was like intentional, it just has made...like, it's been hard to get Marn's goals on screen as much as it's been hard to think of Marn's goals as like an engine through the story, right?

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** When like, [laughs] Chine's going through his shit. Like, Virtue gets to be a cool vampire or whatever. And it's like, yeah, I feel comfortable with Marn being almost like a side character in that way, but like...

**Austin:** Mm-hmm. But...

**Ali:** Yeah, that's also... [laughs]

**Austin:** Yeah, (??? 1:04:06)

**Ali:** [laughs] (???) thing.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** So, yeah, there's a little bit of that and just like getting into the character. I don't know that the like episodic nature of that like affects too much.

**Austin:** I think it's super does, 'cause like, here's the thing: what is your goal? What is Chi— or, what is, uh, Marn's goal? [Ali laughs] Yeah, good, great Freudian slip.

**Ali:** It's to create a homemade cure for curses.

**Austin:** What if there was a plague that had been affecting Sangfielle over the course of the last five episodes?

**Ali:** [laughs softly] Sure.

**Austin:** Suddenly, you have a very clear goal that is not as broad and hard to grapple with. And for me, to tell the story that makes that thing particular is to not think in the episodic— and you can do both, obviously. And in fact, we're in the middle of making that transition as we start seeing stuff that builds over both the wax— the Candle Factory arc. The wax house, baby arc. [Ali laughs] And the next arc, the following one, of which I forget— the Bell Metal Station, What Happened at Bell Metal Station arc, we start to get a little bit more metaplot and like, hey, things are going and things are moving. And I think that's the thing that I would like to speak to on this, is that like, they have their advantages. And I think the fun thing about doing it with horror is that I can come to the table and go, what is the thing that I am afraid of? Or what is a thing that I think is interesting to frame in a horror context? What is the skeleton that I can pull on in different ways until there is suddenly a strange different sort of skeleton in front of us, where its bones are structured such that it incites fright? And that's a fun process to not have to think, and then how does this connect to *blank*?

A great example of this is PARTIZAN, one of the first things I did—and you can go back and listen these Drawing Map episodes—is I said, okay, there are these five factions. Kesh is about time. Orion is about space. You know, et cetera, right? Apostolos is about motion. And having those— sorry, Kesh isn't about time. Kesh is about past. I was like, I'm missing something here. Kesh is about past, Apostolos is about motion, Orion is about space, Columnar is about future, and Nideo is about the present. And so everything from there, everything grows from that, in terms of NPCs you interacted with, in terms of enemies you fought against, in terms of mech designs. Why is it that Nideo has a cool camera mech? Because they're present. They're about capturing the present. Why is it that Kesh has ancient mechs from past seasons? 'Cause they're about the past. Why is it that Orion ends up in many of the situations just to have like, a lot of control of a lot of space? 'Cause space. And so, that is like, everything grows from that. I don't do that this season, right? Why is there a wax vampire? I don't— 'cause like, that's a fun...I thought about what an interesting thing, and I thought about candles and the move into modernity, and we were talking about modernity a lot and talking about unsettling future pasts, and blah, blah, blah, and it's not grounded in that way. And so for me, it's a harder thing to do, because I don't have the wonderful power of a bounding box that keeps me inside of something or propels me through something. Without that structure, it's been very...it's been very freeing to be able to be like, here's a one off about a haunted house, and there's a weird plant monster in there. Here's a one off about a, you know, a book, a hymn that you go into, and it doesn't have to build into anything else. That hymn can just be its own story. Be, you know, start, middle, and end and we don't ever, like— those people still exist in the world. We saw more of those during our first downtime, but we didn't need to...they don't need to build into something else, necessarily. Though, of course, because of the connection to the egg, there is still some loose connection there, right? The egg clearly a throughline metaplot thing.

But the other hand of that is it's so hard for me to get the same...you do all that prep ahead of time. You go back and look at the Drawing Maps prep I did for PARTIZAN, and it's a lot like doing prep for Forged in the Dark heists or Forged in the Dark scores in general, where you've built the machine and then you attend to it. I know who's in the world in PARTIZAN. I know what the factions are. And if you say you need someone to sell a mech to, I can quickly look over at the other screen and be like, uhhh, okay, this person is there. This is an interesting person. Here's a character, here's a scene we can have, et cetera. I just don't have that here. If you're playing *Heart*, you sort of have that, because *Heart*, like in its natural setting, has dozens of places already written. You can just— I can just open this up and be like, uhh, yeah, y'all are doing a mission and you're going to the Ghastling Plain. It's a desolate domain, D6 stress. There's a communal long hut with a roaring fire and excellent, quote unquote, "seafood." D8 blood, D8 mind recovery. [Sylvia laughs softly] Oh, you know, what's there? Well, there's ink dust harvested from land squid and a vaguely fishlike animal with too many eyes and bleached bones the size of a full-grown drow for construction purposes. D6, desolate, awkward. And here are some plots that are there. And here are some people that are there. And here's a special rule. And all of that's already written in the book for that. I just don't have that for the entire Sangfielle. I'm inventing that as we go through it, which I think is diff— has made it difficult to feel like I can quickly pick— and it's also just not the type of game, right? It's not the sort of

game as PARTIZAN is where I can start tying big ideas together across sessions in the same way, or it hasn't been like that.

[1:10:00]

And so, because of that, one, it can— I feel like it's a much more hit and miss season episode to episode or recording to recording, because it really...it really means for, on my end of the bargain, I have to do the work to the same degree every time. Whereas in PARTIZAN, I did the work well to begin with, and then the machine functioned. And it was my job, like I said, to oversee it, to direct it. But like, I'd built an engine, and the engine worked well. Here, I'm building new engines every time. I'm building little windup dolls every time. And I don't build 'em right every time. [laughs] It's really hard to do that every time. It's not mass mass production in the same way. Or, it's not a mass production thing where like, here's the model, it works every time. And the second more important thing is, it can be really hard for me to understand stakes and to play with stakes in this way. And this is a storytelling priority— not priority, but like skillset thing. I think there are lots of people who are really good at seeing a character—and let's stay on Marn, in this instance, because I think we're already talking about who Marn is—who could tell lots of little stories about Marn's particular worldview and skill set, where each time there's a little— not a moral, but it closes off at the end, where like, and then here's how Maren fit into this really nicely. And there are ways that Marn could, you know, be involved in different— if the team composition was different, maybe we would have seen more Marn making big decisions at this place or that place or whatever, or more of the core enlightenment drive type thing. But, for me, the way that I naturally move towards plotting stuff is in that big picture way. That's where I'm skilled at it. And so, not having that on the table from the jump has meant that, for someone like Marn, it's been hard for me to conceptualize.

It's not hard for me to conceptualize. [Ali chuckles] It's hard...I don't naturally begin to conceptualize the big time story hook. I look at the beats I'm given, and I go, can I hit these? Yeah, I can hit these by this and this and this. Whereas, when we're in PARTIZAN, when we were back in Hieron, it was so easy for me to be like, aha, here, Hella, let me tell you. [Ali laughs] I got it plotted. 'Cause it's not plotted, I know the characters who Hella's connected to. I know who Broun is connected to. I know who Aria is connected to. I know what their motivations are for how they want to affect the world in this big particular way. And I can start dropping...I can start dropping various kind of landmarks in on that journey, to come back to *Heart*. I can fill that in. And it's just a different thing, when it's every episode is a haunted house instead of a vast theme park, you know? And so, I think that that's...it's a skill I'm working on. I'm getting better at it. But I think that it has meant that there's more freedom in this in the horror stuff and the character design and more freedom in that way, but it's meant everything has to be built custom in a way. Not that the other stuff wasn't built custom, but it was built...I built a bunch of models to then build inside of, or I built a bunch of tools and then had the tools, whereas here I'm building the tools every episode, if that makes sense. So, it's different. It's a different thing, and it's weird. And I like that we're doing the experiment. I don't know...I suspect we're coming to the point at which a larger metaplot will erupt and be clearer. Sorry to Janine and Dre. [Austin and Ali chuckle]

**Dre:** Mmm.

**Austin:** But hopefully, it'll be— what it won't be is, here are the five main factions, and here are the 40 squads you have to think about and 30 named NPCs. [Ali laughs]

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Austin:** It's just like not that world, right? Or it is, but it's out there, and this— the metaplot that's emerging has nothing to do with that. It's very much a...it's very much the metaplot emerging inside of a season of a horror adventure show. And like, oh, there's a big bad, you know? That that sort of thing. So. Alright.

**Janine:** I'm wondering...I'm interested to see like, once that has happened...

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Janine:** My instinct right now is that I'm going to feel more grounded by having had this time where it was a little more—

**Austin:** I hope so.

**Janine:** —time for people to get used to the world sort of thing.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** And then once you understand the world and how it works, then you, you know, can zoom out and look at these broader things. But I might not feel that way. Like, I don't know how I'm actually gonna feel when we get to that point.

**Austin:** We'll see, right? Yeah.

**Janine:** So, we'll see. It's a learning experience.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. We will see. Alright, next question. Uh, Dre, can you read this?

**Dre:** Yeah, is this the one from Claire?

**Austin:** It is.

**Dre:** Okay.

In the last Drawing Maps, Austin mentions that he was unhappy with the beginning of the Candle Factory arc. I first want to dedicate the start of this question to ask Austin, could you go into that more, please? I'm particularly curious about the answer to this, because in the latter half of this arc, it felt like there was a higher than normal level of exposition based on the current information gathered. Particularly, connecting the dots near the end was really helpful as a listener, but I remember it sounded like Austin was hesitant at first about how much to give. Were these related at all? Were there plot beats you really wanted to connect, no matter how things unfolded? Generally, how have you found the desire to unravel a mystery influences how the plot plays out, when player actions inevitably take a turn for the unexpected? Cheers, Claire.

**Austin:** I was like totally fine with all the way the mystery stuff played out. Like, that has nothing to do with what I— in fact, like, that was the stuff that I think worked well. I don't mind...at this point, I don't mind unfolding the thing for the audience and the players, even if their characters haven't gotten all of the pieces. Or having a...like, what I saw, the moment that I think this most connects to is, Dre, when you ate the lightbulb, and I was like, ah, I can do a bunch of exposition! You can ask me any questions you want now. [chuckles] Right? There's that moment when I literally said ask me any three questions you want, because you're connected to something, you know, incredibly powerful that has a very unique perspective.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** And you used it to ask about the egg. And the...that stuff was all totally fine. I always wish I could...you know, I always wish that there was a subtle and easy way of unfolding the mystery, "Hahaha," and like, "Oooh, and you figure it out, you witness through the window as Alaway da-da-da-da-da," whatever the fuck. Like, that's just not how...it's bumper cars out there. You know what I mean? Like it is what it is. Like, it's not a race track. We're out there bumping into each other, and we hope— I hope it's a fun time for everybody. And I made peace with that a long time ago, that it's not— if I wanted smooth, like, perfectly paced exposition, I'd write a book, right? It's a different thing. The thing that I was frustrated with was the opening...the first, the pre-Yellowfield stuff, was the on the way to Yellowfield stuff, which felt so dry and railroady, and like, first, you come up the mountain, and ope! It's the toll collectors are here. And that...the conversations that you brought to that stuff was fine, but it didn't feel like you had any authority over where you were going. And then you're on your way south across the mountains. You can go above the mountains, or you can go below them, you can go into them. And then there's a hill, and it runs downwards, and then there's a big hippo creature, and then you get to the witch.

And it's like, all that stuff is like...I...okay, years ago now, we ran a game that I think lots of other people like playing in, *Golden Sky Stories*, that you may recall I hated running. Because it's the thing I just said. Alright, first you come to this. I have all of these little beats already plotted out. You come to it, you resolve it, you move on. And it's fun to see you resolve it, but it's...the structure is linear. It's built to be linear. *Heart* is nowhere near as claustrophobic in that way as *Golden Sky Stories* was. *Golden Sky Stories* was like, literally, write your seven plot beats, and then get them in front of those plot beats, and then they do the plot beat or they



witness the plot beat happening. That is it. There is no way to break away from it. *Heart* is not as tight as that. But the fundamental way I think I ran that delve made me not like the GMing mode I was in, because I didn't think it was fun or interesting or like that we got anything particularly good out of that journey. And that meant that like it needed to be more evocative if it was going to be as scripted as that, and I didn't do the work to make it particularly evocative.

Alternatively, it could have felt more open and more interesting somehow, or we could have found a way to skip through it more quickly. It could have been shorter. But that doesn't feel honest to the setting or the world. And so this is the trickiest thing about all this. Sometimes you get a great interaction during a delve where you're crossing from place to place. Sometimes it just feels dry, and that felt really dry to me. It felt really locked in place. There were a couple of things that I was trying to hit in terms of character beats that didn't happen on the way there, where I felt like I...I need to get better at saying, "You could do your beat here." So like, Dre, we came across that big hippo creature.

**Dre:** Mmm.

**Austin:** Do you remember what your beat was?

**Dre:** Uhh...was it...oh gosh. Nope, I don't. I don't.

**Austin:** Uh, it was, um...let's see. It's on this page. It was something like, you know, befriend a creature of the heart.

**Dre:** Oh. Yeah, totally.

**Austin:** And I was like, alright, here we go. Here we go. I got this creature of the heart all lined up. But I just didn't signal enough that that's what I expected. And I should have just said, "Don't you have a...don't you have a beat that's something about a creature from the heart?"

**Dre:** Mmm.

**Austin:** And like, all I had to do was do that.

**Dre:** Then I got this cool egg, so—

**Austin:** I mean, eventually you got that cool—

**Dre:** It worked out.

**[1:19:51]**

**Austin:** Right. Well, 'cause it was like, okay, well, I guess you got that cool egg. You could have gotten that anyway, but yes. But it was one of those things where it was like, you're

throwing...sometimes GMing is like throwing a pitch you want to...you want to put right across the plate, you know what I mean? And you're like, I'm throwing nothing but balls today. I'm just all over the fucking place. And it's— I'm walking the batter. They're still getting on base, you know? [chuckles] But I'm trying to throw this game. I'm trying to throw it right over the plate, so that I get a home run. And it's on me to make that stuff as clear as possible and to make it as, like, exciting as possible. And instead it felt like we were doing homework on the way to the adve— it felt like, you know, eat your peas before you get your dessert, and the dessert was a wax vampire and the peas were walking through a mountain, you know? So, that's the bit. That's how it is, so. In terms of that second question of like, how I've found the desire to unravel a mystery influences how the plot plays out, um...I tend to go with the...there's an interesting pressure between do I tell them the thing now or do I not? Do I...do I give it to them because they got a successful roll even though it's early on in the arc? You can go back and listen to the Roseroot Hall episode where I talk about whether or not I give Keith that there is a second— Keith and Janine were both doing investigative rolls in that arc, and it was like too many successes in a row for me to keep a secret anymore about where the shrine was in Roseroot Hall. And I was like, I'd have to give it to you now. Like, I wanted to extend this, but it is the thing it is. It'll be fine. And it was fine. So in general, I tend to want to give people the answer if the dice say they have it, which maybe also goes back to that question about puns and and stuff like that, which is like, if you want to roll the dice, you can roll the dice. And that is how we resolve your character knows a thing, even if you don't, you know? Um, Sylvi. Can you read Simon's question?

**Sylvia:** Absolutely. Just making sure I wasn't muted. [laughs]

**Austin:** No, you're good. You got it.

**Sylvia:** Hey all, obviously things did not happen this way and the party compositions were chosen for a reason, but I'm struck by how in an arc that heavily features fields of flowers as well as wax that we did not have the presence of bees. I know a lot of party composition stuff has historically been done because of scheduling availability. I'm curious, Austin, if Duvall's presence in this part of the setting was something you thought about or pushed for? For the rest of the crew, do you ever hear the other side of the game and wish your character was there just because of how you would have gotten to interact with the setting elements there? As an aside, Austin mentions rapeseed but then switches to referring to the flowers as canola, which is a term that is a portmanteau slash acronym meaning "Canadian oil, low acid" that was developed largely because of health scares around erucic acid in the 1970s. What does canola stand for in the world of Sangfielle? [Austin and Dre laugh] Canton oil, low acid? Candle oil, lightbulb arcana? Cheers, Simon.

**Austin:** [laughs] I think canola just has to have a different meaning, right?

**Sylvia:** Name of a minor deity. Just make another one.

**Austin:** You know, I don't want to say rapeseed over and over. Like, I know it doesn't mean that. I know that it comes from the Latin for turnip, but that's not how it hits the ear. And we are in a verbal medium, you know? [Ali laughs] So. So, yeah, I don't know. We could come up with a fun thing. I don't think— the thing that I don't think it is, is I don't think it's a portmanteau. I don't think it's like a...I think it's a word, like Aldominan or whatever. Do you know what I mean? I don't think it's, uh...Canadian oil, low acid. I think that it's...it's canola.

**Sylvia:** Unless Aldomina is actually Canada, and that's the big reveal.

**Austin:** In which case it's, yeah, uh huh.

**Ali:** Mmm.

**Dre:** Oh shit.

**Austin:** I feel like—

**Janine:** Kinda checks out.

**Austin:** Yeah. Yeah. [Sylvia laughs] Adds up. Anyway. Uh...it's just— I'm curious from y'all. My guess is yes, this happens probably all the time, right, where you're like, ah, I wish I was in that— I wish I was on that side of the game. Not just this season, just like—

**Dre:** Oh, yeah, a hundred percent.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** It's tough. It's tough, because like, you build a plot around characters, but you don't...you don't always know where the resonances are going to end up being. It's like...god, what is it like? It's happening right now. We can't— I don't want to spoil what's happening right now, but I fully believe that characters are on...that players are on the wrong side of an upcoming recording arc. But there's no reason for them not to be. [Ali chuckles] There's no reason for those things to be switched based on what happened. Like...and this happened in the past before, I'm sure. I'm certain that it would have made sense for Ephrim to go here instead of there, but like, it just didn't play out that way. And it can be really frustrating as a GM, because I want it to just be the thing, and I can't see the path to there. And also, also because it is sometimes about scheduling. I don't think it's been that this season yet. This season, it's mostly been people— me going, okay, here are our two arcs. We have a haunted house arc. And then...how did I pitch this arc to y'all? I don't remember. I guess that this would have been the— Bell Metal would have been the other side of it. So it would not have been...

**Ali:** I think it was either people wanting to travel to Sapodilla.

**Austin:** Right. It was the Sapodilla thing. Yes.

**Ali:** Or people wanting to investigate the egg.

**Austin:** Right, right.

**Ali:** And for some of us, it was like, oh, well, we just did the Mother-Beast stuff, so...

**Austin:** So let's go.

**Ali:** It's sort of interesting going here. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Austin:** Right. Right. Well, that was what? That's you and Sylvi...and Dre. Y'all were all together on all three of those.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Okay. Or on both of those, rather. Yeah. Okay.

**Ali:** [laughs softly] In terms of regrets about this, let me tell you about the session of PARTIZAN I wasn't on.

**Austin:** Huh.

**Ali:** Because... [laughs]

**Dre:** Huh. [Ali laughs harder] [feigning ignorance] Yeah, which one?

**Ali:** Mmm. [Sylvia laughs] Listen to PARTIZAN.

**Austin:** Go listen to PARTIZAN.

**Ali:** I'm sure you can figure it out.

**Austin:** Mmm. I mean, you could have been on that episode. I DMed you at the end. [Ali laughs] I know what you—

**Dre:** Wow.

**Ali:** I was originally on that episode and then was like, [Austin chuckles] "I wanna do the other arc, because I wanna be in an episode with Sylvi."

**Austin:** It was the right call. I think it was actually the— yeah.

**Ali:** And then it ended up being a scheduling thing as well as that, so.

**Austin:** I think it was the right call. I think the things that happened [Ali laughs] in PARTIZAN during that arc were perfect. It was ideal. We got so many good scenes out of it! Ah!

**Ali:** Sure.

**Austin:** And Janine has to talk to you. It's so good! It's so good. [Ali and Dre laugh] Anyway. Um, the...yeah, I don't know. I feel like, this season, it's not been scheduling things. But that doesn't mean that there can't be disconnects, you know? I wish it was...I wish I was perfect at it. I wish I could like, figure out the hooks better. But sometimes you make a— you write a hook, and you're like, oh, this will get the player character in because X. I guess I— let's think about the arcs that have already come out, that we're already talking about. If you think about Roseroot Hall and Mother-Beast, it's very easy to imagine that any of the characters from either side could have gotten something cool from the other side. You know, if we had sent Marn to Roseroot Hall instead, that could have been a fun thing where...as a reminder, something was supposed to happen in that that didn't happen, was that Mr. Kenson the butler was supposed to be like, pulled away into the basement by the resin creatures.

**Ali:** Mmm.

**Austin:** Or, sorry, the turpentine creatures. I always say resin when I mean turpentine. [Ali laughs] They're like, it's the actual like, the turpentine from the wall treatments, the wood treatment, came out and became people. Anyway. Another example of a thing that like, doesn't have to connect to anything bigger, it was just like, oh this is sick and matches some miniature themes for this episode. And if that had happened, maybe we would have gotten some fun stuff around Marn trying to like, rescue and and heal Mr. Kenson, you know? Because of this weird...what these weird creatures had done. It's so easy to imagine Lye Lychen in "The Hymn of the Mother-Beast" doing wild shit in that abbey, right? [Ali laughs] And it would have been a much different introduction to Lyke, a much different one, right? Likewise, it's very easy to imagine Es in the abbey. You just don't know. You just don't know what those exchanges are going to look like and what those...where an episode might go or where a session might go in terms of where is the bulk of this thing going to be, you know? It's like...go ahead, what were you gonna say?

**Ali:** Well, it's just like, the knife always cuts in both ways, right?

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Is that like, you know, you always...hindsight is 50/50.

**Austin:** Yep.

**Ali:** [laughs] And like, as much as it would have been interesting if Marn was there to help Mr. Kenson, Bucho would have been in a much rougher place if like Marn wasn't there, for instance.

**Austin:** Right. True.

**Ali:** Or like, we don't know that for sure. But...

**Austin:** We don't, right. Lyke would have been like, "I have spider web hands."

**Ali:** [laughs] Right. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Austin:** Or whatever, you know? Virtue would have been like, "Do you want to become a vampire real quick?" Right? That would not have happened. Virtue would never help a person.  
[Sylvia and Ali laugh]

**Sylvia:** Thank you.

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Ali:** It more feels like when we're switching characters like this or like when we're changing up the parties, it's more of like...like a palette change. And like, it just depends on...it affects how that arc is gonna end up like blossoming or the ways that it's gonna...

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** Turn left instead of right or whatever. But like...the possibilities of what could happen there are the same on both sides for every character for every arc, always.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** You know? [laughs] So it...

**Austin:** Yeah. Totally.

**Ali:** You know, we can't always be seven people. We would we would hate doing this.

**Austin:** It would be impossible. Like, I... [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** The downtimes are a nightmare this season. Like, I...ugh. Anyway. To the other question here, if Duvall's presence in this part of the setting was something that I thought about or pushed for, no. The candle stuff here comes from a completely different place, which is...uh...I forget the exact order of operations here. I was talking to Jack about why there were...I was talking to Jack about violence in this season, basically, and like the struggle I was having with making interesting— sorry, I searched for blood in the conversation with me and Jack, and let

me tell you, it comes up more than you'd think. [Ali and Dre laugh] Just have like a whole other thing we're working on that's like blood, blood, blood. You know?

**Ali:** Oh, yeah.

[1:29:45]

**Austin:** Here's just— here's a little preview of a thing that doesn't...that doesn't exist yet. “Four notes in the scale. Phlegm, yellow bile, black bile, blood.” That's all. That's a little taste of something that who knows if that'll ever get finished? [Ali chuckles]

**Janine:** Oh, I thought you were teasing a podcast that you were gonna be doing with Jack about that old anime *Blood*.

**Austin:** *Blood*. Yeah, we're doing the *Blood*— the vampire series.

**Ali:** Ooh.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Bloodcast.

**Austin:** Bloodcast.

**Janine:** Was it about vampires? I don't even remember.

**Austin:** Well, maybe that's a different...the OAV or the movie was definitely a vampire thing. Anyway, I was talking at some point with Jack that was like, I don't know how to do violence this season, because, like, I'm so worried about scaring people off with descriptions of monsters hurting people in ways that are gruesome. And what are ways that I can...what are ways that I can evoke that? And before Jack even said anything, I was like, “Ah, I got it. Nevermind.” ‘Cause I was like, I was like, I don't want to...I wanted...there's a moment in this arc where someone cuts Alaway in half, and then his body made of wax is just like, you know, fumbling around a little bit, right? And that is...the thing that it hit for me was like, I wanted— I had that image in my head very early on in figuring out wax vampire stuff. It was I knew I wanted there to be a vampire. But then also, I knew I wanted to push harder on body horror and on bodies getting fucked up. The reason there had been so many flower and plant monsters—and I said this during the last Drawing Maps—is “you fight a plant” does not turn many stomachs. And I wanted to get closer to stomach churning without it being a detailed description of flesh and bone, right? And it was one of those great instances of like, I didn't even have to have the conversation with Jack, it was just like, I raised it for a split second. I was talking to Jack about it, because Jack was not in this side of the game, so I knew I could like, if we did end up having a longer talk about it, Jack would not be— would not have been spoiled of something that they were gonna actually play through. But the, you know, within a second, I was like, ah, it's wax. It's

wax. It's a hundred— like, that's the thing, is that seeing a wax person like fucked up physically will still be kind of gross. And I think it's gross the way y'all dealt with Alaway in the end, by the way. [Austin and Ali chuckle] It's a gross one out there. So, I feel like that's the thing there, and that was well before I thought about beeswax or anything else. It was the candle stuff.

**Janine:** I have a question for you. And we don't have to get into this here. I just want a yes or no answer, and we can move on.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** Do you know about corpse wax?

**Austin:** I'm googling it. No. [Ali laughs]

**Janine:** Oh, you don't— oh, okay, don't google it.

**Austin:** I'll be fine. I'll be fine.

**Janine:** I just— okay. I just wanted to know if you knew about that, 'cause that—

**Austin:** No. Sure.

**Janine:** The idea of a wax-based vampire—

**Austin:** Mmm.

**Janine:** —is maybe possibly grosser than you were aware of. [laughs softly]

**Austin:** That's pretty gross.

**Janine:** Yeah, uh...

**Austin:** Yeah, but like, you get what I'm getting to, right?

**Janine:** Okay.

**Austin:** Which is like—

**Janine:** Yeah, yeah. I just was wondering like—

**Austin:** The listener is going to think...

**Janine:** I had kind of assumed that was the—



**Austin:** Nope, not at all.

**Janine:** —that was the thing, was like you had thought about...

**Austin:** I'm mad that I can't fucking find...

**Janine:** I don't know why I thought that the thing that you were doing was thinking about corpse wax idly on a Sunday, [Ali chuckles] so that's on me. [laughs]

**Austin:** I mean, that's the job at this point.

**Janine:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Austin:** You know? So. God, I'm mad I can't...I'm mad I can't find this exchange, but it is what it is. The thing is, I didn't type to Jack, "Oh, it's wax." I think I typed like, "Oh, I got it. Nevermind." And I can't find— [chuckles] I can't find that. So yeah, that's the answer on that. Um, one's quick. It's from Kate. Kate says:

Was the vicar always a vampire or did Virtue's question make Austin decide "Sure, why not?"

**Austin:** Vicar was always a vampire in this case. This was not a undead pirates situation, unfortunately.

**Sylvia:** I can take credit, though, if you think that would be like a cool story. [Ali laughs]

**Austin:** Yeah, we can just go back and lie. [Janine laughs]

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** And be like, wow, *Friends at the Table*, so innovative. [Sylvia laughs] It wasn't gonna be a vampire, and then da da da da da.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

**Austin:** We already have that story, you know? We already— it was undead, too, so it's not like— it would be the same thing!

**Sylvia:** It would be identical.

**Austin:** [chuckles] Exactly. Uh, Janine, can you read this from Arp?

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Actually, you can— you specifically should read this, 'cause you've answered it already. This is for everybody else who has not answered this question yet.

**Janine:** Oh. [Ali laughs] Alright, well, good luck to everyone who has to answer this question now. [Sylvia laughs] Artp asks:

Austin gets to describe NPCs all the time (thank you for the food), but PCs don't get don't get the convenience of fresh introductions to prompt visual details. Now that y'all have had more time playing them, if you were describing your character for the first time, would anything be different or new? And yes, I am a fanartist fishing for details, sorry, but I'm not at all asking for complete descriptions that would ruin the joy of character design for anybody, just a little material to work with if there is any.

**Janine:** Right, this is the— this is the question where I was like, sexy, sexy eye.

**Austin:** Sexy eye, yeah. You said sexy eye. [Ali laughs]

**Janine:** I remember this, yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** I have kind of one that I just haven't like been able to bring up a little bit.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** It's more of like a costuming thing. Um, I thought it would be a nice idea for Virtue to have like little pouches of like perfumes and like nice smelling things—

**Austin:** Hmm.

**Sylvia:** —like hanging off of her like belt and shit.

**Janine:** Oh, uh...pomanders? Is that what those are called?

**Sylvia:** Yeah. I don't know the actual term for it. But I got it from just when I was like reading that like, revolutionary Fronce— France. Fronce? [Austin laughs] France manga that I couldn't like—

**Janine:** [laughs] Canada.

**Dre:** Hon hon.

**Sylvia:** Yeah. Ugh. [Ali laughs] Yeah, this is basically the same thing. And I was like, well, she's decaying, so she probably needs something to sorta like make her not smell like that.

**Austin:** I love that. That's very good.

**Sylvia:** And I think that's a cool little thing. Yeah.

**Austin:** That's very good. Good detail.

**Janine:** Oh, I found one that opens into slices, and each slice has a compartment for a different scent.

**Sylvia:** Ooh.

**Janine:** This is amazing! [Ali laughs] This is so cool!

**Sylvia:** This is a pomander-cast now.

**Janine:** I've never seen a cooler object in my life. Yes.

**Dre:** I'm good with this.

**Janine:** This is in the Wartski collection. I don't know what that is. Um. [laughs softly]

**Sylvia:** [laughs] What— ooh!

**Janine:** It's a pomander German 16th century silver and silver gilt, and it pops open like a Terry's chocolate orange.

**Ali:** Oh, wow.

**Janine:** It's got little compartments labeled like cinnamon—

**Dre:** Ooh!

**Austin:** Oh. Yeah, sure.

**Janine:** —and other stuff I don't know the words for.

**Austin:** Sure.

**Janine:** It's sick.

**Ali:** Bernstein.

[brief pause, Austin chuckles]

**Janine:** Anyway, sorry. [laughs]

**Ali:** Rosamarin. [laughs]

**Sylvia:** No, I very...I'm into this. She has this one.

**Janine:** Ooh, Schlag, a composite of ambergris, musk, and civet.

**Austin:** [grossed out] Ugh. Great.

**Dre:** Love it.

**Janine:** I love to open my pomander and smell my Schlag and Bernstein.

**Austin:** Mmm. Mmm.

**Ali:** Love it.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** Those are my favorite *Legend of Galactic Heroes* characters, Schlag and Bernstein.

**Janine:** My favorite— I was going with *Dark Souls*, but okay. [laughs]

**Austin:** Yeah, okay, yeah. Schlag and— yeah, Schlag and— [chuckles] that's actually...

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Austin:** That is actually *Dark Souls* characters. [Janine laughs] Ali?

**Ali:** I feel like...yeah. I feel like this is one of those questions I don't want to answer here, 'cause it's like...

**Austin:** Yeah, I gotcha.

**Ali:** What should be on the page should be on the page.

**Austin:** Ah, absolutely get it.

**Ali:** [laughs] But I will...I will...there is one thing [laughs] that I like... [laughs harder]

**Austin:** 6'3".

**Ali:** I've felt like I wanted to—

**Austin:** Marn is six foot three, actually she's really tall. [Ali laughs] Has always been tall.

**Ali:** No, no, no. I recently watched all seven seasons of *The Nanny*, and this was something I like was debating— [laughs]

**Janine:** Oh.

**Dre:** [uncertain] Alright.

**Ali:** —bringing up in the first episode—

**Janine:** Uh huh?

**Ali:** But then it like would have been a more lengthy description and...like, Marn has a lot of like, like Italian vibes, and like Italian American is such a different thing, so I didn't...I was like, should I do this? But, so, as you can watch the first episode of *The Nanny* for this. You don't have to dig far. But her— [laughs] her former fiance always wears these like incredible like silk button downs. Like, in the first episode specifically, he's wearing like a black one with like, [laughs] different colored polka dots. And like, [laughs] ever since I saw that, I was like, this should actually be the vibe for Marn, but I didn't like...flesh that out fully.

**Janine:** This isn't the direction I thought you were gonna go. [Ali laughs] This is better. This is better, but...

**Austin:** This is exactly the direction I thought you were gonna go. [Ali laughs] I swear to God, I was like, are you going to make Marn more Italian? So. [Janine and Ali laugh] I did not think about the dress.

**Janine:** I was thinking like leopard print or shoulder pads or both.

**Austin:** Mmm.

**Ali:** Oh, I...well, but yeah, I...yeah.

**Austin:** Marn has suspenders on, though. You know what I mean?

**Janine:** Mmm. That's true.

**Ali:** Right, exactly.

**Janine:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Ali:** Danny...his name is Danny.

**Janine:** (??? 1:39:30)

**Austin:** Danny Imperiali? [Ali laughs] Oh, I fucking love you. This is the best. [Ali laughs] Look at this motherfucker right here. I got it. I got the whole situation. I'll bring it over.

**Ali:** Okay, yeah.

**Austin:** Pull it up. That's just...that's just... [Ali laughs] I think it's this one.

**Dre:** Oh, wow!

**Janine:** Ooh!

**Austin:** Sorry to Arp's question, but I'm just dropping some pictures of this motherfucker in here. Oh, wow, this one over here! One second. Oh, look at this one! [Ali laughs] Y'all have to open the stream real quick.

**Sylvia:** Oh my god. [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** Yeah, no, I'm there. Don't worry. Wow!

**[1:40:01]**

**Austin:** Oh my— that's Marn, right there! That's Marn, baby.

**Ali:** See, like a little bit, yeah.

**Janine:** Oh, man. [Ali and Sylvia laugh]

**Austin:** I get it.

**Janine:** Remember when berets were tall? Remember when berets had volume like that? [Ali laughs] They don't do a beret like that anymore.

**Austin:** Ugh. It's so good.

**Sylvia:** So Dan Flashes exists in, uh, Sangfielle.

**Janine:** Like a little chef hat.

**Austin:** Yeah. Have you thought about going all the way...just all the way to Christopher from *The Sopranos* in which [Ali laughs] you have both—

**Dre:** Okay.

**Austin:** —the fancy silk shirt and jacket combo on deck, but also the dirtbag boyfriend tracksuit look on deck. [Ali laughs]

**Sylvia:** Oh my god, please.

**Dre:** Okay. Okay!

**Sylvia:** Marn in a tracksuit.

**Austin:** Oh, I got a good one. Ready? Here we go. Can we get this but Marn? Here.

**Ali:** Yeah. [laughs] I think that's possible.

**Janine:** Oh my god. [Sylvia laughs]

**Austin:** The lifting a single small dumbbell, smoking a cigarette? Yeah? I love...I love Christopher. I love *The Sopranos*. Anyway. [laughs] Welcome to my vision board. [Ali laughs] Ah. Here we go, season seven *Friends at the Table*, finally.

**Sylvia:** [softly] God.

**Austin:** Um. Chine? Is there any Chine info?

**Dre:** I don't know. Make them make 'em look rougher.

**Austin:** Rougher. [Sylvia laughs] Too soft out there right now?

**Dre:** Just—

**Austin:** Too nice looking?

**Dre:** Not even...not...yeah, not in like a “ah, he's big and mean!” but like a, you know. I have weird dreams when I sleep. I don't sleep good. You know? Like.

**Austin:** Yeah, I get you. Bags under the eyes.

**Dre:** Yeah, yeah. Chine does a lot of...Chine does not have a skincare routine. Let's just—

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Let's just say that.

**Austin:** Yeah. Love it.

**Dre:** Or if he does, it's probably not good, and I don't want to describe it.

**Austin:** I gotcha. Yeah, that makes sense. [chuckles] Sorry, I made it fullscreen, and I laughed a lot at myself. [all laugh] Oh, it's so funny. This is someone's desktop wallpaper.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** Oh my god.

**Austin:** Arp says, "Like, smelly?" about Chine.

**Dre:** This could be...this could be *your* desktop wallpaper.

**Austin:** This could be my desktop wallpaper. [Ali laughs] Yeah, uh huh.

**Dre:** I mean, the unfortunate answer is probably yes.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Chine probably does not smell good.

**Sylvia:** Start referring to Chine exclusively by the name Stinky.

**Dre:** Is that— hey, is that why Virtue is always hanging out with Chine? Because Chine just stinks worse?

**Austin:** Hides the stink. [Ali laughs]

**Janine:** Eugh.

**Sylvia:** No, it's him, actually. Yeah, no, I'm good.

**Dre:** Yeah, no, won't work on me.

**Sylvia:** They're the one who's...

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Sylvia:** They're the stinker.

**Austin:** Ahh.



**Sylvia:** And Chine's like, "Stop blaming it on the dog!" And then that's the scene.

**Dre:** I sure am. I'm the stinker!

**Austin:** God. Alright, that is gonna do it for us. You can send your questions [tipsatthetable@gmail.com](mailto:tipsatthetable@gmail.com). We've already started getting in questions for the Bell Metal arc. I would love to do that one soon. I don't know if that's feasible. I gotta look at a schedule real quick if there's a window or it's gonna have to wait a little while for reasons. I think it has to wait a little while for reasons. Yeah, so it won't be...the Bell Metal Drawing Maps won't be until probably September or late late August at this point. Because there just isn't...there just isn't...Jack is out of— is unavailable for a little while starting like now. So, so yeah, so we'll do another one of these in a couple weeks. Ali, is there any stuff for people to look forward to in the feeds?

**Ali:** Um...

**Austin:** I need to get up on Mapmaker stuff. I need to catch up on a lot of that.

**Ali:** Yeah. There should be a new Pusher thing this Friday.

**Austin:** Okay.

**Janine:** There's a new Live in the pipes.

**Austin:** Oh!

**Ali:** Ooh, that's true.

**Janine:** Remember that we...it's another recorded Live that I'm editing.

**Austin:** Right. Right.

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Janine:** My goal...you know, my goal is to have that done sooner rather than later. I don't want to give a hard date, but, you know.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** My goal would be this week.

**Ali:** Mmm.

**Austin:** That'd be great.

**Janine:** I'm saying it. I'm saying it now. I'm putting it in the universe. [Ali laughs]

**Austin:** Love it. I love that it's out there.

**Ali:** I'm excited to get that out there.

**Austin:** I'm very excited for it. I have not heard it or seen it yet, and I would like to do both.

**Ali:** Mmm.

**Janine:** It's a very...it's a very...it's a very special one. So, I hope people like it.

**Ali:** It's very unique.

**Janine:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** Yeah, I'm excited for it. Alright, well, again, [tipsatthetable@gmail.com](mailto:tipsatthetable@gmail.com), [friendsatthetable.cash](http://friendsatthetable.cash). I think that that's it. I think that those are all the things to talk about. Thanks for joining us. We'll be back soon with more stuff. Until then, have a good night and week and everything else.