

Pakunoda's Choice - Hunter x Hunter ep. 55-58: Media Club

Plus S01E18

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Pre-Intro Updates	1
Introduction [00:01:34]	2
Bullet Points and Summary [00:04:49]	4
Episode 55 [00:13:29]	9
Episode 56 [1:11:25]	46
Episode 57 [1:56:34]	79
Episode 58 [02:29:38]	103

Pre-Intro Updates

Keith: Hey everyone, it's Keith, just got a couple bits of news. The first episode of the *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure* bonus episodes are up. We're covering six total episodes from season three, which is part four, Diamonds Are Unbreakable. The first episode covers season three episodes three, four, and five, the "Nijimura Brothers" parts 1, 2, and 3. It was a ton of fun, the episodes are really good, and then next month we'll have the second set of episodes that we're gonna cover for *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure*. I had a ton of fun, and then it was so good I even went and watched that whole season. You can find that episode and our other bonus episodes and our future bonus episodes at friendsatthetable.cash. The other bit of news is that there's merch in the Friends at the Table shop. If you haven't seen it there's uh, a Marielda shirt and poster that's awesome, a Hieron tote bag, a Hieron notebook, a Hieron glass. I love the glass, glass is ama— just go see some of the art, it's so good. Friendsatthetable.shop. We have Sangfielle stickers, we have a Slumbos candle from Sangfielle with a prayer on it, a Slumbos prayer candle. The merch is great, go check out the shop if you haven't been in a while, there's a bunch of awesome stuff there.

[["The Boy In Green"](#) by Jack de Quidt begins playing]

Introduction [00:01:34]

Keith: Welcome to Media Club Plus, a podcast about diving into the media that interests us and the stories that excite us. As always we are brought to you by Friends at the Table. This season we're watching 2011's *Hunter X Hunter*, based on the manga by Yoshihiro Togashi. My name is Keith Carberry, you can find me on [X](#) and [Cohost @KeithJCarberry](#). You can find the Let's Plays that I do at youtube.com/RunRutton, you can find more Friends at the Table stuff on [Twitch](#) and [Youtube @Friendsatthetable](#). And, uh, you can find, um, what else? What else do we do? Oh, you can find our Patreon for the show at friendsatthetable.cash. [Sylvi laughs] With me as always—

Sylvia: Yeah, more bonus stuff coming soon!

Keith: Yeah, Sylvi would you like to do your stuff?

Sylvia: Yeah sure, I jumped in rudely so I'll introduce myself.

Keith: No no, I mean it was extremely rude, but also it's fine.

Sylvia: It was a— Listen, it was a podcast faux pas. It was a faux pod. I understand.

Keith: It was a faux pod. Yep.

Sylvia: Uh, hey. I'm Sylvia. You can find me everywhere [@SYLVIBULLET](#). That's S-Y-L-V-I, bullet. Like the things you put in a gun. Um, also—

Keith: Some bullets today.

Sylvia: Oh, many of them.

Keith: Some extremely important bullets today.

Sylvia: Yeah! Uh, my people. Also, hey, just to shout out something that started recently on the Twitch channel, Keith and I started playing 999 from the Zero Escape series. And I don't know how much we've— I don't know if we've played more of that since, uh, by the time this airs, but look at the Twitch and the YouTube for that.

Keith: Oh, I'm sure we'll have played more.

Sylvia: I sure fuckin' hope so. I loved that. It was so much fun.

Keith: Uh, oh, my order changed. Uh, Jack de Quidt. [Sylvi laughs]

Jack: Hi, I'm Jack. I was thrown by the order change. I was like, I have to talk into *this* microphone? The only one on my desk?

Sylvia: Yep.

Keith: What day is it? [Sylvi laughs]

Jack: Who am I? I'm Jack, you can find me on Cohost [@jdg](#), you can get any of the music on the show at notquitereal.bandcamp.com.

Keith: Andrew Lee Swan.

Dre: Hey, you can find me on Twitter [@Swandre3000](#).

Jack: A professional. A consummate professional.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: No messing about, ready to speak.

Keith: Yep. No faffing.

Sylvia: Nailed it.

Dre: Normally I plug Media Club Plus, and I don't have to do that here. You're here!

Keith: [cross] That's true, you're already here.

Dre: [cross] I don't gotta plug.

Jack: We are here. We are all here on Media Club Plus. Um, gosh it's exciting.

Keith: I know, it actually has been a while since we've recorded. These are a wild few episodes to come back on. This is like, the most kind of set 'em up, knock 'em down episodes that I think we've had, like, episode, uh, the first episode. Episode 55, is like, fully just putting the pins up for the next three episodes in a way that is maybe more clear than it's ever been that that's what's happening. Like, almost nothing happens in that episode that isn't 'we need to tell everyone this information so that everything else that happens makes sense.'

Sylvia: Mhm!

Keith: And then, the next three episodes are Kurapika's plan to, uh, attack the Phantom Troupe, and it's just like, plot stuff plot stuff plot stuff.

Sylvia: It's so good!

Bullet Points and Summary [00:04:49]

Keith: It's just like, constant. It's constant. And then, I was writing the intro and I was like, I don't even know what to say because there's, there's so much like, uh, y'know, there's so many bullet points, but also that's what we're about to talk about and it just felt weird, it just felt like, so dense trying to summarize it. So instead, what I want to say is, these are things that are really important to me about these episodes. Factioning within the Phantom Troupe, what Chrollo does and doesn't believe about his allies, what Gon and Killua really want from helping Kurapika, and, how's Kurapika holding up?
[Sylvi giggles]

Jack: Yeah. Yeah. I think that is a really good, um, like you said Keith, this is past the first episode which is, um, it's not wheel spinning. In fact it's quite the opposite of wheel spinning. It really is just—

Keith: It's engine revving.

Jack: It is engine revving.

Sylvia: They're tuning their instruments, y'know? [**Jack:** Yeah.] Like, they're getting ready to start shredding, and then "Chain Bastard"'s gonna kick in for the next three episodes.

Keith: They're packing their bags for the "Chain Bastard" vacation.

Sylvia: Yeah!

Jack: And then it begins, and it doesn't really stop. I think that it is worth saying off the top that we will run into some major trouble if we try and tell you everything that happens in these episodes. [**Keith:** Yes!] As joyful as that will be, we will be here for hours. [Sylvi laughs] Now, you might think that we make long podcasts, we go at pace here in a way that would mean we would be talking about this chunk of episodes, y'know, until the cows come out.

Sylvia: I love that you're saying this, because no matter what our runtime is it's gonna end up being funny. [Sylvi and Keith laugh]

Jack: Yes! I'm writing a check that is gonna be cashed in a funny way. However...

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: But I think it's worth kind of focusing in on those points you made, Keith. And also that what emerges really quickly is that this is a little mini arc about a hostage situation. [**Keith:** Right, yeah.] A hostage situation develops. What starts out as a plan to take out the Phantom Troupe from Kurapika rapidly develops into a plan to take out Pakunoda, the Phantom Troupe's sort of touch-memory reader. Because Kurapika correctly identifies in a sort of dawning horror that the game would be up if they don't get rid of Pakunoda as quickly as possible.

Keith: Right, something they've been setting up for like eight episodes ever since Gon and Killua were abducted by the Phantom Troupe briefly and were cleared of suspicion by Pakunoda, only for Killua to realize "oh fuck, I know who the Chain User is, if they ever read me again, that's it."

Jack: Yes.

Sylvia: Yep.

Jack: And, and now, y'know, it's time to pay the piper there. And so, Kurapika sort of re-maneuvers his plan, to be like well, let's take out Pakunoda instead. This goes wrong in a really interesting way and instead of taking out Pakunoda, what happens is that the Phantom Troupe gain two hostages in Gon and Killua, and Kurapika and Leorio and Melody, who is now sort of a, an honorary member of the main four, gain a hostage, terrifyingly, in Chrollo. Kurapika manages to kidnap the leader of the Phantom Troupe. And what could be a sort of open and shut case, y'know, Kurapika makes a Nen contract on the leader of the Phantom Troupe, kills him in the same way we saw him do with Uvo, um, turns into a really tense and interesting game of, how much risk am I prepared to put my friends in? What am I willing to sacrifice to get the revenge that I want? What turns this arc into something kind of extraordinary, um, is that, y'know, any time there is a, like a mutual hostage exchange, there are gonna be interesting parallels. Y'know, where people on either side of the hostage exchange might want different things, might have different ways of thinking about the hostage situation. What Togashi has done here is amazing, because it rapidly transpires that both sides are essentially dealing with the same, like, emotive concerns, you know? How much risk do we want to put our friends in? Does it matter that my friends have told me they will sacrifice themselves for the sake of y'know, the collective? And so what you get is Togashi playing themes and variations on, what does it mean to do revenge? What does it mean to be stuck in a hostage situation? And, the stakes are exceptionally high because rather than pissing about with some lesser member of the Phantom Troupe, y'know, if this was, y'know, shout out to Shizuku, I love Shizuku but she's no Chrollo. This is Chrollo—

Sylvia: Nah, she sure ain't! She sure ain't. [Dre laughs]

Jack: And so, the stake— and of course, it's Gon and Killua on the other side. And so, we just focus in again and again on these questions of, how do you respond to a situation that has gone wrong in this way, and what does it mean when our heroes and

villains are essentially operating by a very similar playbook. There are these eerie mirrors over and over again of like, both sides of the equation are thinking the same thing, are working through the same ideas. There's this great moment in episode three, I don't want to jump too far ahead but I'm saying this as an example, where both sides independently start worrying that the, that the opposing side's hostages are being controlled by Manipulator Nen users.

Keith: And what a great deployment of like, how invisible Nen can be and how powerful a tool. And when you know your Nen stuff, like, oh, I'm seeing now threats everywhere. [cross] And it's terrifying.

Jack: [cross] Yeah.

Sylvia: Really fantastic, like, adding to the dread of Nen in these few episodes, I guess is a way to put it?

Dre: Mhm.

Keith: There's some stuff in episode 58 that's like, really dreadful.

Sylvia: I think that like, this arc in particular is paying off so much of what we kind of were a little bored of in Heaven's Arena, [Dre chuckles] like all the setup. Where, y'know we were learning about the four core tenets of Nen and how it can kinda get a little wacky but here we see this is what it's like when people who are very skilled at this have, like, are battling with people who are equally skilled with it in ways that aren't just 1v1 in an arena. Like, and all the different factors that come into it.

Keith: Another interesting thing, this is going back a little bit. Jack you were saying, you were talking about how like, originally they were targeting Pakunoda and they end up with Chrollo and it's a much bigger bite of the apple. But the sort of nimble maneuvering of the writing and how these characters operate, specifically the Phantom Troupe, is that like, Chrollo becomes the only viable hostage because he's the only one that can dive this wedge into the very specific Spider ideology of like, y'know lose a limb we don't care. Nobunaga was the weak link with Uvo, but everyone else knew the score. **[Sylvia:**

Yeah—] But as soon as it's Chrollo, it becomes a game of like, we can negotiate this hostage exchange because even though some of them are willing to lose the head, not all of them are willing to lose the head. And that's the only thing that keeps Gon and Killua alive.

Sylvia: And who can blame them, y'know?

Jack and Keith: Who can blame them?

Sylvia: Not me! [Keith chuckles] I understand their motivations very well. [**Dre:** Mhm, mhm.]

Jack: We get into some Spider ideology as this goes. But I think—

Sylvia: Spideology.

Jack: Spidey ideology. Spideology.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: But the place I'd actually like to start, y'know, I know we said we wouldn't go through this beat by beat but we come in at a really interesting place.

Sylvia: Do we have, sorry I just wanted to check, Keith do you have an overarching summary for this week that we should do before we get into stuff or did Jack sort of do enough?

Keith: These are so dense that I opted—

Sylvia: No worries!

Keith: I opted to just have my handful of things to look out for as we go through this.

[**Sylvia:** Cool.] The summary was, uh, insane—

Sylvia: I thought Jack did a good job, so.

Keith: —the way that I was writing it. I think that Jack did a great job of doing an impromptu further summary.

Sylvia: I mostly just wanted to check in case you put a bunch of time into that.

Keith: No no, I don't have any, I don't have anything more.

Sylvia: Cool.

Jack: Keith, could you put those topics that you would like to kind of revolve the discussion around in the doc?

Keith: Yes.

Episode 55 [00:13:29]

Jack: Because I think that, that...

Sylvia: That would be very helpful.

Jack: They lined up pretty much exactly with what I wanted to talk about. But I think the place to begin is I'd like to talk a little bit about tone.

Keith: Yeah. That's in there now.

Jack: This is a very odd series of episodes and I want to shout out the way you segmented this, Keith, because...it comes together in like a perfect way. And I think that if we had had like a trailing episode from the last group into this or if we had, uh, left this little chunk of episodes one episode early, the overall effect would have been very different. Because after the sort of explosive orgiastic ritual violence of the Phantom Troupe's assault in the last, y'know, sort of chunk. What this ends up being is kind of subdued and sad and frightening. Y'know, any hostage situation is a tense hostage situation but I feel like in fiction you see the like, almost like Christopher Nolan-esque ramping up of the tension of, oh god we have to get the hostages out. There's very little, um, people are, people care for the hostages here and that's what drives the episodes

but a lot of the time the hostages are just staying impassively where they are. Nobody is really afraid except in a few critical moments that their captors are going to kill them. And instead it's just this like, clammy, quiet, weird exploration of the hostage dynamic. Which is such a contrast to the chunk of episodes we had beforehand.

Keith: Yeah, it, it's interesting that they set it up in a way that the, the Spiders are really only ever concerned with the other faction within the Spider, the faction that wants to save Chrollo and the faction that thinks that they should, y'know, lose everything that they need to lose in order to get revenge, is basically what it is. Like, kill the boss, let everyone who's going to die, die, as long as we kill the Chain User. Those two factions are way more concerned with each other than they ever are with Kurapika. [chuckles] Because they, I think that they're both confident that either side will work. They think they can get the boss back if that's what they choose to do, and they think that they can sacrifice themselves in order to save the boss, if that's what they— wait no. Sacrifice themselves in order to kill the Chain User if that's what they wanna do. And so it ends up being like, more about this tension within the Phantom Troupe than, like, their concern for Chrollo or their disregard for Chrollo.

Jack: Although that is kind of a pivot point for this faction [**Keith:** It is, yeah.] that emerges. But the place—

Keith: But the place we come in on is the...sorry Jack, did you have something else?

Jack: Oh, I was gonna say exactly what you just said.

Keith: The place we come in on is where we left off last time where, uh, Hisoka has to explain himself because he has set up a scenario where he's chosen to reveal an alternate version of his hand. He knows—

Sylvia: This is great.

Keith: He knows that he's the traitor, and so in order to shunt suspicion off of himself, he freely volunteers his fortune that he has changed to make him look guilty in a slightly different kind of way.

Sylvia: I — this had like — go ahead.

Keith: Hisoka had been working with Kurapika, they exchanged some information.

Hisoka actually, in his lie, says that what he did was worse than what he actually did.

[**Sylvia:** Yeah.] He reveals that he only ever gave the Kurapika two member's powers. In his limited hangout, Texture Surprise version of his fortune, he says, oh yeah, I said everything that I knew. [chuckles] Which is so funny.

Jack: He says eight members. [cross] He says he gave eight members powers.

Keith: Oh, he says eight members.

Sylvia: I have the list of who he said he— he said Chrollo, Uvo, Shizuku, Machi, Franklin, Pakunoda, Shalnark, and himself are the ones that he claimed to tell Kurapika. And...

Jack: [chuckling] Not true.

Keith: Not true at all.

Sylvia: Not true at all. What I love...there are multiple things I love about this. The big one is it does still feel like Hisoka's like, gambit here is like, well if it doesn't work out I'm probably gonna get to fight one of these guys, at least.

Keith: Yeah. [Jack chuckles]

Sylvia: But like, the fact that he does sort of confirm some suspicions but in a way that isn't necessarily— isn't what actually is going on, is just like, oh, yeah, this is him doing sleight of hand. This is him being a magician...

Keith: Yeah, because if he knew, if he...if he revealed that he only revealed two people's powers, then that would be suspicious, because if this guy had something over on you, and was able to force you into revealing powers, why wouldn't you have had to tell him everything that you knew?

Sylvia: Uh huh.

Keith: And then it gets to, y'know, they have to buy this. And so it becomes this whole thing of like, Hisoka's like, banking on Chrollo— who he thinks is smart and talented—to figure this like, weird puzzle out, and then Chrollo of course is able to surmise pretty accurately exactly what Kurapika's powers are?

Sylvia: It's great.

Jack: Yeah. This is real, um, Chrollo...I talked a lot in the sort of early stages of Chrollo arriving about, how do you make this character work, y'know? How do you make this character scary, how do you make this character interesting? Y'know, part of the answer that Togashi has begun to reveal is that, like, Chrollo is scary but as soon as Togashi started making the Phantom Troupe protagonists, y'know, Chrollo didn't need to be as scary as Hisoka because he's the head of the Phantom Troupe, y'know? He's a creepy guy, but he's going to be taking on a protagonist role so it's just as interesting that he is compelling to watch, that he asks and answers interesting questions, that he moves through the story in a way that is compelling. [cross] You know, he doesn't need to be...

Keith: [cross] He has his creepiest moment in these episodes though. Actually, two of his—

Sylvia: Oh yeah, he does.

Jack: He has two *really* creepy moments.

Keith: —two really creepy moments.

Jack: To the point where, in those moments, I was like, oh. This is what it would be like if Togashi was only interested in playing the Troupe as villains. This would be the only Chrollo we see.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Instead we see this Chrollo, where he immediately starts functionally interrogating Hisoka.

Keith: Yeah, he plays detective! He plays detect— he's playing detective a lot, that's actually mostly what Chrollo does.

Jack: He just asks people questions and listens to the responses and we get the little Chrollo inner voice as he, y'know, figures it out very shonen style as a, y'know, character's inner voice is like, oh well that means X. And then we get Chrollo impassively feeding it back to the, to the Troupe.

Sylvia: And Hisoka moaning about it. [Sylvi and Dre chuckle]

Jack: It's so good. So he says, what do secrets mean? Y'know, the riddle talks about secrets. He doesn't say it like that, he just says, what does the riddle mean by secrets? And Hisoka says, the power of eight Spiders. Because Hisoka is answering very freely, he's answering very quickly. Hisoka has to be very confident in this bluff in order for people to buy it. And then Hisoka reveals he can't answer a bunch of questions. He can't reveal who the Chain User is, he can't answer what the Chain User's power is, he can't answer what the Chain User's relationship to Hisoka is. And Chrollo deduces, correctly, that— not correctly, Chrollo buys the bluff.

Keith: Right, Chrollo deduces what Hisoka meant for him to deduce correctly.

Dre: Yeah.

Sylvia: Yes. He's able to figure out like, a couple of Kurapika's powers, right? Or is it just the Judgment Chain that he's able to solve?

Keith: Uh...

Jack: Mostly just the Judgment Chain.

Keith: Yeah, mostly that.

Sylvia: Okay.

Jack: He has figured out that Kurapika has put some kind of a Nen contract on Hisoka, ensuring that he can't answer. And this is hilariously prescient, because while we've

seen Nen contracts be used on Uvo to sort of compel truth-telling and/or act as a sort of method of execution, um, this is Hisoka sort of speaking out into the world something that will become critically important here in these episodes which is: Nen contracts that prohibit kinds of speech or prohibit sharing kinds of information. And it is so cool that the first real time that the first kind of prohibitive Nen contracts emerge are in a lie that Hisoka tells. When they're gonna form the back part of this whole chunk of episodes. And are going to be, um, I mean there's a kind of dramatic irony here for the viewer, like, this is going to shape Chrollo's arc immensely, presumably.

Keith: Yeah, this is something that *Hunter X Hunter* is so good at, is like, I talked about this episode as setting up pins and like, *Hunter X Hunter* is constantly setting up pins and you just never know when they're gonna get knocked down. Sometimes it's two minutes, sometimes it's ten episodes, sometimes it's thirty episodes, like who knows? Like, later on we see, uh, it's introduced that Kortopi has, [**Jack:** Oh yeah...] that his copies count as En and then like five minutes later that becomes like a crucial part of the plan. And that sort of maneuver is happening constantly in this show, where you learn something and then a little while down the line they pull it and twist it in a new way, and then use it and be like, look, this thing that you learned about! I mean it's like, the silliest example is the, um, what is that fuckin', the stupid auction type?

Jack: [cross] Oh, conditional auctions?

Sylvia: [cross] Conditional auctioning, yeah!

Keith: Yeah like that's like, that is the version of this that isn't working because it was more funny than anything else. [Keith and Sylvi laugh] Uh, y'know, it's fine, but it was just like...conditional auction? What?

Jack: And then it becomes rapidly...it's extra sad here because, it's worth saying, by the end of this arc Chrollo would have been separated from his Troupe so utterly that if he communicates with them the Nen dagger in his heart will fire and kill him.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: And he's also prohibited from using Nen. Y'know, Chrollo is kind of cut off from things that are important to him so tremendously as a result of Nen contracts that there's a kind of, it's sleight of hand. It's like a magician's joke that, the first time that is really talked about is in a lie Hisoka tells about something that has happened to him. It's great.

Keith: Right. Which then comes around and bites Hisoka in the ass completely.

Jack: Oh, in the funniest joke so far. [Dre laughs]

Keith: It's so funny. Weirdly, I know all of this stuff happened to Chrollo but in a way it feels like Hisoka's the one who's lost the biggest.

Jack: [cross] It's so funny.

Dre: [cross] Oh yeah, sure.

Sylvia: And that's why it's even better.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Before Chrollo's little interrogation sequence there's a moment that I really want to touch on where Nobunaga is threatening to kill Hisoka. I love Nobunaga.

Keith: Yeah, me too.

Jack: Nobunaga is both, um, really really funny. He's a really funny character. He is scary in a way you never quite know how short his fuse is. He is extremely capable. He cares very deeply for Uvo, and in times in this little arc when Chrollo is out of action, demonstrates himself pretty capably to be able to like, think on behalf of the Troupe.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: But, it is funny how No—

Keith: Franklin too. Franklin does a good job.

Jack: Yeah, Franklin has a really great moment.

Sylvia: They're both founding members too, right?

Keith: [cross] Yeah, they are.

Jack: [cross] They are founding members, yes.

Sylvia: Yeah. I think that's like a really important thing to draw on is the, like...the way the different founding members sort of step up during this sequence.

Keith: That's like, the...like, emotional core of these episodes is that Pakunoda, Feitan, Franklin, Machi, Nobunaga, and, uh, Uvo—

Jack: Phinks and Shalnark.

Keith: And Phinks and Shalnark, they're all founding members and they have all found themselves on opposite sides of this thing. They have like, they have spent years together both developing totally separate understandings of how the Spider moves.

Dre: Mhm.

Jack: Yeah. Um.

Sylvia: Um. Really quickly, while we're talking about how that's sort of the emotional core of a lot of these episodes, have we talked about the new segment in the opening animations at all? The difference? There's like a little Phantom Troupe roll call, and the "You can smile" part is Uvo smiling now.

Keith and Dre: Aww.

Sylvia: And I think that's like, really crucial to some of the, both the way that the anime team and Togashi have been changing who the focal point characters are of this arc, uh, between Kurapika and Gon and Killua and, um, the Phantom Troupe. Sorry Leorio, you were always kind of a supporting cast here. [Jack and Keith chuckle] But like, we still love you man.

Keith: Hey, Leorio has one of the best moments of the show in this, in these episodes.

Sylvia: Oh, absolutely! Don't get me wrong...

Keith: It's so good.

Sylvia: Keith, Keith, Keith, what does my, what do my notes say?

Keith: Uh, it says, "this is now a Leorio respect zone."

Sylvia: Yeah. I know. [Dre and Jack laugh] I know that Leorio does some fantastic stuff.

Keith: He falters only once.

Sylvia: Uh huh!

Keith: Only once ever does Leorio falter.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Keith: Uh, uh, and we've seen it already.

Sylvia: I've forgiven him for it, I've forgiven him. [cross] To Leorio, you have been absolved. The gay community has forgiven Leorio. [Dre laughs]

Keith: [cross] I don't know if this comes up, I don't know if this comes up, but it's much less creepy and transphobic in the manga.

Sylvia: Yes, I think we talked about that, 'cause I remember—

Dre: Yeah, that sounds right.

Sylvia: — I remember looking at every different version of that. [chuckles]

Jack: Oh yes, yeah. Yeah you went, you uh, you printed out all the different copies and held them up next to each other.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Keith: I should say, as we're getting into these episodes, um, y'know, just to illustrate how, like, effective the narrative around the Phantom Troupe stuff is, I'm, I'm not a media crier, like I don't watch things and cry, but I have like, I have two distinct moments of like, kind of misty eyed welling up in part of these episodes.

Sylvia: Oh!

Keith: Two moments. Two and a half moments, one and—

Jack: I think I know one.

Keith: One in 55 and two in 58.

Dre: Mm.

Jack: So Nobunaga immediately tries to kill Hisoka. And he actually goes to fight Hisoka and then says, "you're too much of a pain to fight."

Sylvia: Well, doesn't—

Jack: Backs down and turns away. And then, suddenly.

Sylvia: Okay, yeah. [breathy laugh]

Jack: Turns back and lunges. Saying, "as if that would stop me!" And—

Sylvia: And then Chrollo teleports him!

Jack: [cross] Chrollo teleports him away.

Keith: [cross] Ah, it's so good.

Jack: Chrollo's Nen power being any Nen power that he has sort of gained is extremely funny, because you don't know what he's gonna pull from the book, and it— there's a great line where, uh, Nobunaga says, "did the boss do that?" And someone else says, "probably." [Keith laughs]

Sylvia: It's so good.

Keith: It just, it's like, who knows what could be in his bag of tricks at any time. Like that's such a powerful thing for a writer, is, I've built in this thing, it could be anything.

Sylvia: And I think like, the fact that the Troupe don't even know everything he's got in there is like, kinda clutch? Or like, kinda crucial to they dynamic. Like, Chrollo is a step above these guys so much that they don't even know all his powers.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Which in the sort of Nen calculus, that's about as good as it gets. Y'know? We even say this in Heaven's Arena where it's like, whoa, what's his power? And then it reveals itself. So for Chrollo to have this seemingly limitless book. But I think Nobunaga backing down and then it being a trick and then lunging is such a nice illustration in the difference between how Hisoka and Nobunaga see like, worthwhile fights. Y'know, Hisoka has that ridiculous game he plays that I'm now sick of where he's like, you have to be good enough to fight me, and Nobunaga is like, I'm gonna cut your head off with a katana, because y'know, you betrayed the Troupe or whatever and it's only Chrollo's intervention... Something about this Hisoka fabrication that I really liked is that between the fortunes and between, y'know, the way that this has sort of been paced, the Mr Bones' wild ride that we've been on with the Troupe's assault on Yorknew City, I was trying to remember how much of this was true. Y'know, I could tell that not all of it was true, but I was there being like, where is Hisoka lying and where isn't Hisoka lying? I can see in your notes, Dre, you wrote, "does Hisoka have some weird Nen curse on him or is he bluffing?" And I think that that sort of understanding that the viewer might now have full a grasp on this as Hisoka does is super deliberate in this scene.

Keith: Yeah, it's um, there was like, one major giveaway for me and I think we went over it at the end of the very last episode when they read his fortune. But I don't have the text... But I remember when I first watched it there was something that he said that tipped me off like, oh this whole thing is a lie. They also kind of show him, like, reading it and it's different, and then he like folds the paper and then gives it, and that's like—

Jack: Oh yeah yeah, no it was pretty clear that there was some kind of a lie going on. I just spent the scene going like, where is he lying and where is he telling the truth.

Keith: Yeah. And it's subtle, 'cause it really is partially true. He did meet with Kurapika. It was Hisoka's idea, that's part of the lie. He wasn't forced to anything, that's part of the lie. And then the whole thing about like, if you leave your hideout half of the Spiders will die.

Jack: Right, So Hisoka— oh, go on.

Sylvia: I was just gonna say, I think that aspect is the main reason Hisoka as a character works. Right? Like, this is just, if you don't have the, um, constant doubting or like, if the audience isn't unsure of what's true and what isn't with Hisoka then I don't think he lands nearly as well.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: I agree. Yeah, I agree.

Keith: The other thing is—

Sylvi: Especially as like — oh, go ahead.

Keith: Is how well they construct his lies. Y'know, we watch Chrollo sort of figuring out all the Kurapika stuff based off of Hisoka's lies, and it's, y'know. This is really impressive, but then the unstated undercurrent of that is that it's actually Hisoka like, y'know, making this path for Chrollo while also protecting himself while also setting up a scenario where he gets to fight Chrollo. Which is like...sort of terrifying gymnastics that he's able to do to try to get his way. Which he ultimately doesn't get, but it was kind of only by chance and by not fully understanding Kurapika's plan.

Dre: I don't know, and I don't remember anything about this thing that I'm about to posit, so I don't think I'm spoiling anything because I don't remember anything about this. There's just a part of me that feels like, I don't know man. Maybe Chrollo did know that Hisoka was like, lying about the things that Hisoka was lying about.

Sylvia: Yeah, maybe.

Keith: I agree— Yeah, I also don't know. But there is something to that.

Jack: What makes you think that Chrollo's just, on the ball so much?

Keith: Just his eyes, the way he looks at Hisoka.

Dre: Yeah, 'cause it's Chrollo! Also. Like, I don't know. I don't know.

Jack: Well, the way there is—

Dre: You saw the link that Chrollo had to go to be put like, out of control and how much control he still had when that happens. So part of me is just like, I dunno, I bet he fuckin' knows.

Keith: There is one big hole in Hisoka's story, which is that his poem doesn't line up with anyone else's poem in what they're supposed to do in order to survive. [**Dre:** Sure.] [**Jack:** Yep.] Everyone else's poems says "you need to get out of here, go east, that's the only way." Hisoka's poem says, "don't seek revenge on the Chain User, that will kill you. But also, stay at the hideout. If you leave the hideout, you're dead."

Sylvi: Yeah. I think—

Keith: And like, it's one versus seven or whatever.

Sylvia: Yeah, I think Chrollo's is the only one who specifically says to go east, though. I think everyone else's is a little more vague, but Chrollo's, the go eastward thing is kind of crucial to remember is just for Chrollo, especially at the end of the episodes. Because I think that's his last line, right?

Jack: It is. Hisoka really wants the Troupe to stay in Yorknew City, and — this isn't said explicitly, but my read, my understanding which i think is correct, is that there is that thing which is that when the Phantom Troupe disbands, Chrollo disappears and no one knows where he goes.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: And so I think Hisoka thinks if they go back to Meteor City, I just won't find this guy. And it's been a long time since the Phantom Troupe all sort of convened. So this is his moment. But yeah, the Phantom Troupe are not helped by Hisoka lying. Locked in a series of complicated fortunes. The show doesn't really spend any time beyond the initial couple of reads of the fortunes reminding you of the fortune's conditions or of sort of facets within them. So the overall impression if you haven't seen the show before is that they are sort of standing frozen in a sort of very dangerous maze. I have these weird shattered memories of like, you can't be alone in the same place, you can't leave your hideout, you can't pursue the Chain User, you can't answer the phone at a certain time. But I can never quite remember like, when they trigger or to whom. And I think that's fine. I don't think that the show is necessarily asking me, y'know, remember these fortunes one to one. So much as get this awful feeling to mirror what the Troupe are feeling, right? Of like, any move we make might, y'know, really screw us up.

Keith: Yeah. And I think that you can feel a little bit of that, like how they kind of don't feel used to feeling trapped like that. [chuckles] Kind of the burden of knowing the future—

Jack: No the Troupe is bummed out for a lot of this, [overlapping]

Keith: They what?

Jack: The Troupe is bummed out for a lot of this.

Keith: They are, yeah yeah.

Dre: Yeah.

Keith: We've gotta move on or we will be mired in this forever.

Sylvia: Us? Never.

Keith: Us. Yeah. Okay, so we cut back to, uh, oh. One more thing, Shalnark delivers a Powerpoint about Conjurers versus Manipulators because of Kurapika's chains just sort of reinforcing how important that part of Kurapika's kit is.

Sylvia: Yeah. I think this is important because Conjurers kinda felt like punks when we first got their early descriptions of them, like, well you can make a really good sword, but why wouldn't you just buy one? That type of thing. And so like, this kind of like recontextualizing them as a threat I think is really important.

Keith: Yeah. Just 'cause this comes back again later, Machi brings up Gon and Killua again, Nobunaga's excited about it, and then Chrollo sort of takes her hunches very seriously, just sort of reinforcing Machi's, not just her Nen threads but her plot threads.

Sylvia: They've all been right, by the way. [cross] Her hunches have all been correct.

Keith: [cross] They've all been right. She's 100% correct.

Dre: Oh yeah. She's 100%.

Keith: Okay, so now we're back with Gon and Killua, who have to quickly remind us that the auction is still going on, and then Gon sort of makes a promise to Killua, but also kind of to the audience, don't worry don't worry, I've got a plan for Greed Island. We can ignore it for now. And then they... [laughs]

Sylvia: There's a really good bit where Killua's like, "how sure are you about this plan?" And Gon's like, "Uh, 70%? Maybe more like 60?" And then Killua's like, 'oh, that means it's a 50/50 shot."

Keith: Yeah. Doesn't reveal the plan, but they both are— sorry, they both go to Kurapika, but Gon really wants to go offer Kurapika help. Killua is like begging with his eyes for Kurapika to not accept Gon's help, but he does.

Sylvia: Fantastic internal monologue from Killua during all this stuff, where it's like, Gon's asking like, "we wanna help" And Killua's like, "say no....say no..." [Dre and Keith

laugh] And then Kurapika's like, "it's really dangerous, you could risk your life." And Killua's like, you know you're just fanning the flames with that one. What are you doing?

Jack: It's great.

Keith: So they — oh, go ahead.

Jack: Kurapika gives a little Powerpoint that we know already about how the Judgment Chains work.

Keith: [cross] Well, why does he do that though?

Sylvia: [cross] There's some new information here that's important.

Jack: Well, Gon says...[wheeze] it's great. Gon says, "can you use the Nen condition dagger on my heart?" And Leorio immediately says, "look, Killua, we are gonna leave the room so Gon and Kurapika can have a talk."

Sylvia: Well there's, there's a crucial line before that that I do wanna point out. Where I think someone points out, well he can only use that on the Spiders. And then they leave when Kurapika's like, I'm gonna explain it more. Because Gon's like, well if you can only use it on the Spiders how come you have a Judgment Chain on yourself? And that's when—

Keith: It's a great question.

Sylvia: It's a fantastic question. And then—

Dre: Nen genius Gon.

Sylvia: Kurapika goes into the sort of explanation about stuff, where it's kind of revealed that, um...is it just Judgment Chain that's the one that can only be used on the Spiders, or is it Chain Jail as well?

Keith: No, Chain Jail can only be used on the Spiders. Judgment Chain can be used by anyone.

Sylvia: Okay. Right, okay. But Judgement can—

Keith: But his eyes have to be scarlet in order to use it. And this is a lie. This is a reveal that he lied earlier, uh, because he said that he could only use it on the Spiders and it just ends up not being true because he was worried that if he used it only on the Spiders, that by setting that condition, would break the condition and immediately kill him.

Sylvia: Yes.

Jack: This is a bit like when you spec out a really interesting character in an RPG that allows for a lot of really expressive player design, and you find that the spec that you've made instantaneously kills you. [Keith laughs]

Sylvia: Oh yeah yeah yeah yeah. [laughs]

Jack: This won't work, I need to go back here, I've built a build that just destroys me instantly.

Keith: Yeah. You've—

Sylvia: Kurapika can roll three sixes? [Dre laughs]

Keith: I've equipped explosive gloves that does 1000 points of exploding damage to everyone I punch. But oops!

Dre: Oops, I tripped.

Keith: The exploding damage also explodes on me.

Jack: Yeah yeah yeah. Yeah. And Gon's response to this is great, he says, I'm not sure what that all means. He asks Kurapika to set a rule on his heart, I think just making explicit a lot of the ways we have talked and thought about Gon's heart as like a transformative, powerful entity. You know, everybody's hearts are really important in this show, and especially with Nen contracts, but here is Gon saying, set a rule on my heart.

Let's make a vow against my own heart, or with my own heart. And then Leorio and Killua say, we would also like, y'know, our own daggers. They've been listening in—

Keith: They were hiding behind the couch. It was very funny.

Sylvia: It's so funny that they're like, let's leave, and then they just end up behind the couch. Like did y'all...Leorio doesn't know Zetsu yet, how did he get there without them noticing?

Jack: Killua taught him Zetsu in 46 minutes under duress.

Sylvia: I think there's another, one thing I made a note of in this scene before the explanation was that Kurapika admits, I think he admits...I have a note here. Again, the recording schedule on this was a little messy so I did a rewatch on these, but it was less attentive than the first time I watched through. But Kurapika admits that he would risk the lives of his friends for his mission, which eventually we find out isn't true. But in the moment, I thought was kinda chilling.

Jack: Yeah.

Sylvia: And I think like, a good setup for the way things end up going where you're like, oh shit, is this going to happen? Is Kurapika going to give up his friends for the mission? Spoilers, no. [laughs]

Keith: [cross] I thought that actually what happens in these episodes—

Dre: [cross] Well, but yes.

Keith: Is that Kurapika says, I thought that I would do that. But actually, he has the line where he says, y'know, I thought that I'd do anything for revenge, y'know, but actually I was blessed with good friends and so I'm actually going to not do that.

Sylvia: [cross] Okay. I must've misread that.

Keith: [cross] New song here, by the way.

Sylvia: I was gonna say, new banger alert.

Keith: “The Eyes of Burning Scarlet¹.”

[a few seconds of “The Eyes Burning with Scarlet” plays]

Sylvia: God yeah!

Dre: It’s good.

Sylvia: You know that there’s like, some nightcore remix of this that goes hard as hell.

[Dre and Jack laugh]

Keith: Right after that it goes into like intense electric guitar power chords.

Sylvia: Yeah, well still, any DJ’s out there who dress like Killua please do a remix of that song.

Dre: Oh hell yeah. Are we talking about Killua drip now?

Sylvia: I mean, there’s some Killua drip. I wrote down in my notes that Killua dresses like a transmasc DJ, and I stand by it.

Keith: Oh, it’s true.

Sylvia: It’s, like, so true. I love all his outfits, I say that as a compliment to Killua. Just to be clear to all the, the tboy DJs listening. [chuckles]

Keith: The other thing, the other thing that we have, this isn’t a new song but it’s the first time that I think we’ve played it. We’ve talked about it I think, but “The Eyes Burning with Scarlet” is what plays when Kurapika is explaining his powers, and explaining how they’re gonna do their plan. Oh, we didn’t say his plan, by the way. Killua’s gonna be the lookout to find Pakunoda, Leorio’s gonna be the driver, Kurapika’s gonna be dressed like a beatnik for some reason, [Keith and Dre chuckle] and Gon is there to create a diversion of at least one half of a second to give...

¹ The official soundtrack translates the track name to “Eyes Burning with Scarlet”

Jack: Sure. It's a plan-ass plan. [**Keith:** It is a plan-ass plan.] Y'know, it's like Austin saying, "what are you going to do," and we spend, y'know, 46 minutes and come up with "climb through the window?" [Keith and Jack chuckle] That's the beginning and end of it.

Keith: But after the "I've been blessed with good friends" we get, uh, the theme song—or not the theme song, *our*, the Media Club Plus theme song, [Sylvi laughs] but with strings.

[a few seconds of "Departure for Strings" plays]

Sylvia: Ugh... This arrangement, [**Keith:** It's good, I like it.] is maybe my favorite in the show so far? Like, it genuinely makes my heart feel happy when I hear it.

Jack: [cross] A different arrangement is mine.

Keith: [cross] —this is a half-tear, I give this one half of a tear.

Sylvia: I was wondering if this was the tear up moment.

Jack: Yeah, actually I wanna, I wanna, I wanna dial into that line. Kurapika says, "you're making a big mistake," although it's great because Kurapika is now... Kurapika's in a really great place. He has committed to asking for help here, he's committed to involving his friends in his quest for revenge. Which was, y'know, the, the, that was the question towards the end of the last little chunk of episodes and now he is committed to it, but he is still kind of resigned to saying, "you are making a bad idea." And I kind of like the trust and resignation that comes with saying, I'm glad you're here, I'm glad that we're together, I think you're making a bad mistake but I am not gonna stop you.

Keith: There's a slightly alternate take on this from Melody in the next episode though, [**Jack:** Oh, yes.] where she says, "Kurapika asked me for help, he must be getting pretty desperate. He's usually doing this on his own."

Jack: I think this is a misread of Kurapika's character.

Sylvia: I agree. I think that it is Melody not realizing that she is now someone who Kurapika really trusts.

Keith: Yeah. And we get a confirmation of that a little bit later on, where Gon talks about, y'know, Kurapika being different now and thinking back to the moment where he says he's been blessed with good friends, where something changed then that was, it was, it's not the same Kurapika that Melody knew.

Jack: Kurapika says I've been blessed with good friends, and then discussing the risks that he's sort of, um, that he is going to have to face, Gon says the pressure of risking my life isn't nearly as bad as letting down a friend. Which is just the thesis statement for the hostage situation.

Sylvia: The thesis statement for Gon Freeccs too, honestly.

Keith: Yeah we sort of papered over this. Gon's own desire to have the, to be Judgment Chained is absurd. It's outrageous.

Sylvia: Oh yeah.

Jack: And Kurapika doesn't do it. At least as far as we can see. [cross] They talk about it, but nobody gets Judgment Chained.

Keith: [cross] Right, they talk about it but they don't do it, yeah.

Sylvia: Yeah, and, to none of them. To, not to Killua or Leorio either. It'd be really funny if he just did it to Leorio [Keith laughs] but y'know, Kurapika's not doing this for bits the way I would be.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Great Killua gag. Gon and Killua, sorry, Gon and Kurapika are laughing along at some kind of a joke, Leorio starts laughing, and then Killua starts laughing, and in his internal monologue he says, "this is not funny at all."

Sylvia: I think it's after the um, it's, it's, Kurapika says, "oh, that's what I was hoping for" after Gon says the disappointment of letting down a friend is worse than dying. It's like shortly after that line, so they're tangentially related in some way.

Jack: I mean it's sad, it's a scary moment, it's up there with, y'know, every time Killua has been faced with Gon's sort of blythe obstinacy and going, "oh god!" But it is very funny to see Killua laughing along and going "this isn't funny at all."

Keith: Yeah. We mentioned his raincoat, right?

Jack: Uh, not yet.

Sylvia: No we did not.

Keith: Oh okay.

Sylvia: 'Cause we're not there yet.

Keith: It's, actually it's right after the "I've been blessed with good friends" scene, it's at the end of 55.

Dre: Mhm, yeah.

Sylvia: Okay.

Keith: So we're about, we transition into Killua sort of scouting out, wearing a...anybody catch what his \$1800 Techwear raincoat says on the collar?

Jack: Yes. It's great.

Sylvia: I did not see what it said.

Jack: Killua is wearing a...what did I write down in my notes? Killua, in an extremely cool raincoat, is staking out a hideout. [Sylvi laughs] It's like a, it's like a parka that he has like pulled the cord on the hood so that it fits really tightly around his face, he's got a sort of almost like Feitan-esque flap covering his chin, and written on the flap is ABC, CBA. [Dre laughs]

Keith: Which of course stands for “all bastard cops, cops bastard all.”

Jack: Yes. Yeah yeah yeah.

Sylvia: Oh okay...

Dre: Mhm.

Jack: Briefly before this, I’m only getting into this to sort of illustrate the, the psychic hell that knowing their fortunes has put the Phantom Troupe in. Chrollo attempts to sort of solve the, uh, the wheat, the chicken and the fox, uh, constraints that are being put on him, the sort of, that riddle of like, [cross] y’know, move the fox over here...

Keith: [cross] Oh right, yeah, the chicken eats the wheat, the fox eats the chicken.

Sylvia: Yeah. He’s doing Professor Layton puzzles.

Jack: He’s doing, Chrollo does a Professor Layton puzzle. This is extremely funny because it is meaningless. Events are about to transpire that means that all of Chrollo’s hard work about this gets undone in about a moment, but Chrollo says, “for the next few weeks the Spiders are going to be split into groups and nobody is going to be alone.” And then he goes down the list, y’know? Togashi really sells that this is going to be, um, significant. **[Sylvia:** Yeah.] And it breaks immediately. He says Shizuku—

Keith: Yeah, what I love about *Hunter X Hunter*, it’s a show that’s not afraid to throw out a bunch of work.

Jack: Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah. Shizuku, Pakunoda, Machi work together. Kortopi, Phinks, Feitan work together. Bonolenov, Franklin, Hisoka work together. Nobunaga, Shalnark, and then Chrollo says “I’ll go with you.”

Sylvi: I like that —

Keith: It’s sort of like the echoes of setting up all these tournaments just to be like, nah, we’re actually not really gonna do that, or if we do do it we’re not gonna show it. We’ve

set up all these stakes and then they just get thrown away for something else, something different comes along, some new shiny thing. [chuckles]

Sylvia: The Bonolenov-Franklin-Hisoka trio has such Dark Universe vibes. [Keith laughs]

Jack: I don't know shit about Bonolenov.

Keith: He barely has said anything!

Jack: That's not quite true. Here is what I will say. I don't hunt down *Hunter X Hunter* spoilers, and I've been really lucky not to have anything absolutely gigantic spoiled for me ever.

Sylvia: Thank god.

Jack: Very occasionally, and I want to keep it that way, very occasionally I will just see a completely contextless screenshot from *Hunter X Hunter* in some like, image compilation or something, and I saw an image of Bonolenov and a load of like, really sad faced emojis [Sylvi and Dre laugh] which is one of the funniest context-free spoilers to get, because it's like either something really moving is gonna happen with Bonolenov and I'm gonna be there, or this person cares deeply about this mummy. So that's exciting.

Sylvia: You know... [Keith chuckles]

Jack: That is the only thing I know about Bonolenov. I've seen an image of him and then a bunch of people responding with crying emojis. Which is, that's funny to me. Um, Machi tells Chrollo about Gon and Killua, Nobunaga, or one of Nobunaga's two games, Nobunaga actually has three games. Nobunaga game one: I'm going to kill the person who killed Uvo. Game two: I'm gonna fight anybody at the smallest moment's notice because I'm high strung, but I'm also kind of funny about it. Game three: we should recruit Gon and Killua [chuckling] Those are his three conversations.

Sylvia: I was talking about this recently with my girlfriend who I've been going through the show with, about how Nobunaga like, Nobunaga's grief is so...it's like, always present in these episodes in a way that like the specific grief of other Phantom Troupe members isn't necessarily there. Where like, he wants to have a little Uvo again. He wants to have Gon in so he can bring him up to be his new bestie. Um, or like because he reminds him of his dead best friend and it is really heartbreaking!

Jack: Yeah. I love Nobunaga. Nobunaga is really great. I'm glad Nobunaga has made it out of this little arc.

Sylvia: Is he your favorite Phantom Troupe member, Jack?

Jack: No, Chrollo is my favorite Phantom Troupe member.

Sylvia: *YEAH!!!* [Dre laughs]

Jack: But Nobunaga is my—

Keith: It's funny because, I don't know about anybody else—

Dre: Hold on, just really quick, can we check on Sylvi's mic? Did it explode? [Dre and Jack laugh]

Sylvia: I backed up enough, I didn't even clip.

Keith: Sylvi for some reason is the only person on Friends at the Table that gets ducked by Discord for me, whenever she gets loud the mic just cuts out. And so—

Sylvia: [cross] That's so funny.

Dre: [cross] Yeah, that's what happened to me too! [laughs]

Keith: No one else this happens for.

Sylvia: Wait, really?

Keith: Yeah. It's only you.

Sylvia: Oh that's great! I love that.

Keith: And so I can hear the very start of a scream and then it— I heard you go [throaty goblin noise] and then immediately it turns into a tiny little whisper of noise.

Jack: [cross] Discord ducking.

Sylvia: [cross] I'm turning off noise suppression so you guys get my sounds.

Jack: Chrollo's my favorite 'cause he's great. My favorite of the legs is Nobu.

Sylvia: Oh, you got a nickname for him!

Jack: Then, yeah yeah. It's the, uh, uh, I'm just following on the Shal, Paku, y'know.

[Sylvia: Yeah yeah yeah!] I'm familiar that way. And then I really do like, I think Machi is great, um, Phinks comes out really well in these episodes.

Sylvia: I was, this is something I also really, like, this watchthrough I didn't really put together how much Phinks has like, got a place in my heart? [laughs]

Keith: Yeah, I love him.

Jack: Yeah, there's work done to develop Phinks, and we'll get there, Phinks' development kind of happens in two or three moments including some of the funniest phone business I've seen— [Dre laughs]

Sylvia: [cross] Oh my god!

Keith: [cross] It's so funny!

Dre: It's probably my favorite parts of these episodes as far as just like, comic relief.

Jack: It's great. Phinks manages to screw up using a phone in every way you could use a phone across three separate calls and two separate phones.

Keith: There's nothing, there's nothing...there's only one thing that's even close to as funny as Phinks answering the phone and immediately having to give the phone to someone else and being so mad about it, and it's another Phinks moment.

Jack: Yeah. So, Machi speaks about her hunch again, something's wrong here, and Chrollo says "your instincts are too reliable to ignore." Part of the reason that Chrollo is a good leader is that he's very aware of what the legs, what the other Spiders can provide for him that he can't. This is actually an argument for me that Chrollo couldn't tell that Hisoka was bluffing. He might have, Chrollo might have been counter-bluffing, y'know, Chrollo might been making Hisoka think, 'does he know?' But I think Chrollo has got people like Pakunoda and Machi in the Troupe—

Keith: So he doesn't have to worry?

Jack: —to account for this. Y'know?

Sylvia: Yeah!

Dre: Mhm.

Jack: And I think that's really cool. It's also so fun to see so much weight is put on Pakunoda as the kind of, um, the Phantom Troupe has got all aspects covered. They've got the past covered in Pakunoda. They've got the future covered in Chrollo's fortune telling via Miss Neon, and then they've got sort of vague guesses about the present covered in Machi. Which is nice.

Keith: I do have a slight— I have a slightly alternate theory about Chrollo and Hisoka and 'does Chrollo know?' Which is that...

Sylvia: Does he know?

Keith: I don't— does he know?

Jack: Does he know? We know...[chuckling] but we know...

Keith: [chuckles] I think that these episodes demonstrate that Chrollo has a desire to win and for him winning means surviving. But then his overall motive is for the Spiders to survive. And I think that if he had a hunch that Hisoka was only in the Spiders to kill Chrollo, that that would be fine. [cross] Because he either could or he couldn't.

Jack: [cross] Yeah, 'cause he could be like, I'll kill Chrollo or he could— yeah, they'll get a new head. Yep.

Keith: Either— yeah. Either he could do it or he couldn't do it, and either way is acceptable, or maybe it doesn't happen and maybe I'm just thinking crazy and it'll be fine.

Sylvia: I gotta be honest, I think if Chrollo and Hisoka fight Hisoka would get fuckin' dogwalked. Like, I don't think he stands a chance. Well, until the end of the arc.

Jack: I'm so excited to see them fight. It's so funny. Um, okay. As part of his Professor Layton puzzle, Chrollo asks Kortopi to make ten dummy hideouts. This is another rapid escalation of Nen. Y'know, I've now just given up on the sort of upper limit of what Nen can do. [Dre laughs] We've seen Kortopi copy things, and now Kortopi, Chrollo says 'make ten hideouts' and Kortopi says 'I'll make you fifty.' And they all act as En, anyone who enters them will be seen.

Keith: Yeah, Kortopi instantly makes a fake city.

Jack: And it's great. It's such a beautiful set, and it really guides us. So Killua on the rooftop in his 'all bastard cops, cops bastard all' raincoat, [Keith laughs] looks out at this sort of, um, god, it's like a surrealist painting.

Sylvia: It looks like Meteor City. To me at least. [cross] Like that is the way—

Jack: [cross] Ooh hoo hoo, it does look like Meteor City!

Dre: [cross] Oh, it super does!

Sylvia: Yeah, like, that I think is, I don't know. There's a lot of, I have a lot of Meteor City thoughts percolating because of this arc, not just because they talk about how like the mafia doesn't wanna like, piss off Meteor City, but also like...there's a moment earlier where some of the, I think Phinks is the one who mentions that some of them didn't have all the data needed to do the fortunes.

Keith: Yeah, I was thinking about that, I was like, they must not know their birthdays.

Sylvia: Yes! That is, and like I think that, again, is...

Jack: Oh, I hadn't noticed that. That's great.

Sylvia: Really ties to where they come from, and the conditions that molded them into the Phantom Troupe, right?

Keith: Yeah, I mean they're perfectly at home in this dilapidated church.

Jack: I was just thinking of the, um, fake... [pause] Yeah, it's the quote that is attributed to the Spanish anarchist Durruti, but was probably written by a Dutch writer called Pierre van Paassen who fabricated an interview with him, nonetheless it's a fantastic line in which Durruti is quoted as saying "we are not at all afraid of ruins." Y'know, with the implication being, y'know, we have spent our lives in ruins, ruins that have been constructed by the bourgeoisie, literal ruins of conflict, if you think that we are scared of a little ruin, of bringing things to a little ruin, of inhabiting ruin, you've got another thing coming. Yeah, the Phantom Troupe are in this dilapidated church, not because that's the only place they can be, but because they're like, this is where we're from.

Keith: Clearly not, we see them all over the place.

Jack: In fancy suits, in, y'know, [Keith: Yeah.] they're, they're very happy with this.

Keith: Oh, another thing just on this real quick is um, we only get it as sort of conjecture from Melody, sort of extrapolating— [Jack: Conjecture.] —extrapolating like why would they call off the hunt for the Phantom Troupe. And, uh, in the last episode we recorded—

Jack: Oh, it's not true!

Keith: Right, well, her sort of imagining that oh, well I guess probably the mafia doesn't wanna piss off relationships with Meteor City because they're from there and the Troupe is from there, and who knows how much of that makes sense as a guess, it seems like people don't know about Meteor City unless they're from there, but I do kinda like the idea that Meteor City is out there like, rooting for the Phantom Troupe. Like yeah, fucking get 'em! [laughs]

Sylvia: I mean like, if I was from the city that society forgot, I would probably root for the super strong fuckers from here.

Keith: Yeah, well one of the first things that we learn about the Phantom Troupe is that they're known for their philanthropy.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Dre: Yeah.

Keith: And the only thing to me that makes sense is that they like, oh they just like funnel huge amounts of money back to Meteor City.

Jack: Hey, the Phantom Troupe's fuckin' incredible, how did you get the first chunk of this show, Media Club Plus, without being like, "I wanna talk about the Phantom Troupe."

Sylvia: Jack. Jack.

Keith: [laughs] It's hard!

Sylvia: White knuckling. That's how. [Jack and Keith laugh]

Dre: It's so hard Jack.

Keith: Well, also, by the way, we talked about them every chance we got, which were few and far between, but we did, y'know, we did.

Sylvia: Oh yeah.

Jack: Any time there was a hint of the Phantom Troupe showing up you were like “yeah, the Phantom Troupe’s here!” And you were able to say Chrollo’s name, y’know, I’d seen pictures of them, but yeah, god! They’re great.

Sylvia: I’m so glad I was able to say Chrollo’s name because of the screenshot stream. That woulda killed me.

Jack: Worth saying, does Kurapika know Chrollo’s name? Kurapika calls him ‘the leader’ and I can’t tell whether that’s Kurapika’s way of speaking or if he has actually extracted the name from Uvo.

Sylvia: [cross] I don’t think he has. ‘Cause Uvo didn’t give him any info.

Keith: [cross] He could’ve gotten it from Hisoka.

Dre: No, yeah.

Jack: Sorry, what did you say Keith?

Keith: He could’ve gotten it from Hisoka at any time, really.

Sylvia: That’s true.

Jack: Oh that’s true. Yeah.

Sylvia: Yeah, good point.

Jack: But yeah, I can’t tell. Kurapika is exactly the kind of weirdo who would be call him ‘the leader.’ I love the way the Troupe call him ‘boss,’ they don’t use his name.

Sylvia: Yeah, *dancho*.

Jack: It’s great.

Keith: Nobunaga especially puts, like, a lot of energy into calling him 'boss.' He just has this special kinda 'boss' delivery.

Dre: Yeah, it's great in the dub as well.

Keith: Yeah. Oh yeah, that's actually, I watched almost every other arc primarily in the subs, in this arc I watched mostly in the dubs because I like...

Sylvia: Oh really?

Keith: Yeah, well partially I think that a lot of the Phantom Troupe VO is excellent in the dub, and also because it's just been a lot easier to take notes without having to pause constantly.

Sylvia: I prefer Chrollo's Japanese voice so I stuck to the subtitle version.

Jack: I was gonna ask about this, I asked about Chrollo's English VA a little bit, it was before we had heard him talk in Japanese a lot. Does he still have this kind of like, pale, light affect in English?

Sylvia: Yes.

Keith: Yeah. Oh, totally.

Dre: Yes.

Sylvia: It, to me, it comes across—

Jack: Similar to Feitan, but a little less cruel.

Sylvia: Yeah, it's a little, it feels a little more pronounced in the dub to me but that also be because I'm an English speaker and I'm able to parse the nuances of the like, linguistic things they're doing easier than when I'm listening to Japanese voice acting, you know?

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Sure. Um, the Hunterpedia this week, that's the end of the episode, is Killua in his raincoat looking out at all the copies of the hideout and going, shit, okay. This is going to be trickier than I'd thought. [Dre laughs] The Hunterpedia is Feitan. Killua says, 'his hobby is to torture, which is pretty awesome.' That's really, y'know, this is again the way I think of these like papercraft Hunterpedia figures as sort of being like the larger than life expressions of their characters and here we have Killua as this assassin child being like, 'his hobby's to torture, that's pretty awesome!' When in fact in the show, Killua is like, I would prefer not to fight or kill anybody I don't have to, that's miserable, my family come from torturers and I hate them all. Gon does a Feitan impression, I don't remember what he does but I think he like...

Sylvia: He...

Dre: Like pulls his, uh, he puts his uh, why am I forgetting the name? Of.

Sylvia: His like, collar...

Keith: Pulls his jacket up, just makes a fake collar, yeah.

Dre: Yeah, he pulls his collar up over his mouth, yeah.

Sylvia: [monotoned like Feitan] He talks like this for a little bit...I can't do a Feitan very well either. Killua also is like, 'that's a terrible impression!' [Dre laughs] And I'm like, yeah. Killua would get my ass too.

Jack: We get a little bit here, something that I love about the Hunterpedias is their willingness to A) give us information about characters who have just died, as though they are still alive, and B) give us information, um, that hasn't come through in the episode at all. Feitan is apparently interested in Greed Island. And that's interesting.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Keith: Yeah, that is interesting.

Jack: 'Cause, this is my first hint that, y'know, obviously we're gonna see the Troupe outside of their arc here, you don't write characters this good and then just jettison them at the end of one arc. [Sylvi laughs] But this is sort of the first hint of how that might get woven back in, y'know, if Feitan is also interested in Greed Island, then he might be a player in the Greed Island arc. Like a literal player. Y'know, we'll see.

Sylvia: Yeah, I don't know if it's necessarily a spoiler to say that the Phantom Troupe cast a very long shadow over this show.

Jack: Yeah yeah yeah! Do you think that when...how much of a planner is Togashi?

Keith: I don't know.

Sylvia: I genuinely don't know.

Dre: I don't know either. It seems like at least like, an arc or two ahead.

Keith: It would be...from watching the show, what I gather is a lot of planning. But it's hard to know because this is also the kind of second run of the show, and so a lot of the manga's been written and so it's easier to put the...

Jack: And this is the adaptive work from the anime team.

Keith: Like, um, oh I'm blanking on her name. The cool butler with the staff?

Sylvia and Jack: Canary.

Keith: Canary, right. Um, Canary, who actually we took a chance to talk a lot about Meteor City based on one line about Meteor City... [Dre and Sylvi laugh]

Sylvia: Yeah...

Keith: They put that stuff in the show, that wasn't in the manga or in the '99 version. Like a lot of that information...oh, maybe I'm wrong, maybe I'm misremembering that it's actually the flashback...I can't remember now, which is the part that's in the manga and

which isn't? The flashback of like, trying to make friends with Killua. I think that's manga canon, but the backstory about Meteor City and the Phantom Troupe—

Sylvia: Is anime canon?

Keith: —is anime canon.

Sylvia: Okay. 'Cause we do have that flashback of Killua and Canary trying to be friends in the show. We do have that.

Keith: Yeah, yeah they're both in the anime, but only one of them is in the manga.

Sylvia: Oh that's what you mean, okay.

Keith: Yeah, yeah yeah.

Sylvia: Um, yeah. There's...there's stuff that happens in this arc that is still paying off in the manga.

Keith: Oh yeah. Definitely. I know about some of that stuff.

Sylvia: And so that, that leads me to believe Togashi does plan significant stuff out ahead, but I don't know if that means everything is.

Keith: Yeah, who knows.

Sylvia: Especially if you're writing a serialized work that, y'know, had such a grueling publishing schedule that it gave him permanent health problems...

Keith: Hey, he's got four endings already, so.

Sylvia: Yeah. [chuckles] Yeah, exactly.

Keith: Maybe that says something about how much planning he's doing.

Jack: Yeah.

Sylvia: I think especially when you spend so much of your life working on one specific story, you have to like, have some level of ideas of where you want it to go.

Jack: Yeah, otherwise you're just flying blind and...

Sylvia: Exactly.

Jack: And that is, y'know, I have a great deal of respect for people who are able to work without an outline, or are able to work with their intuition in terms of where a story would go, but I think if you're are working on something of this scale, and like Sylvi said for such a long time, it becomes exhausting. Y'know, even to not have an outline, even setting aside, is the story good? Is the story working? I think to work on something of this scale without like, much of a sense of where you are moving would just tire you out. And, I mean, that is kind of what happened to Togashi. But I was thinking about Togashi writing the early stuff on Whale Island and thinking to himself, I'm gonna introduce thirteen nightmares [Keith and Dre laugh] then I'm kill one of 'em really quickly. You'd better wait and see. It makes me think, y'know, we've talked about Togashi's dear love for freaks. F-R-E-A-K-S.

Sylvia: And, y'know...

Keith: He has a love for freaks and Freecss.

Jack: Yeah.

Sylvia: Yeah!

Dre: Mhm. Mhm.

Jack: The Phantom Troupe are his dearest freaks, right? We're never gonna meet any freaks that he loves more than the Phantom Troupe.

Keith: [cooly] I dunno. It's hard to say!

Sylvia: I actually think, you mentioning that, the early Whale Island stuff, the thing that we have mentioned that is cut from the 2011 anime but is in the first chapter of the manga I think speaks to Togashi definitely having a long view of things, actually.

Keith: Oh yeah. Oh yeah! Oh, that's a phenomenal...yes, absolutely!

Sylvia: I didn't put that together until Jack mentioned Whale Island. And we won't be able to bring it up for another arc.

Keith: Jeez...that is like a, that is like a fucking kilometer sniper shot through the entire series. Holy shit.

Sylvia: Yes. That is Babe Ruth calling his shot. Like, that is, he is going to make that home run, you know?

Dre: Can one of you all...

Sylvia: I'll message you.

Dre: DM me with...okay.

Keith: And yeah, while you write that message, I will say, y'know, Jack, the thing about Whale Island and the Hunter Exam and being like, like one day I'm gonna introduce so many freaks and they're gonna murder each other and it's gonna be crazy. Something that I wrote in the working doc, y'know, weeks and weeks ago based off of listening to us have a conversation that I was editing for an episode that was going up. You had written, um, or you had said in the episode, ah, where is it, this is a big block of text, I should edit this down... [Sylvi and Dre chuckle] Oh, you also did guess early on, 'I think the Phantom Troupe are a one in, one out gang of murderers,' that was a pretty good guess. [Jack laughs]

Sylvia: Yeah!

Dre: Mhm.

Sylvia: Jack has Machi-like hunches sometimes.

Jack: Yeah yeah yeah.

Keith: Here it goes, “there’s something flattening in the way that all the—” This is from the beginning of learning about Nen. “—flattening in the way that all the magic in the world that appear in the Hunter Exam is this outlandish, regularly deeply surprising maneuvering first gets boiled down into Nen then gets further boiled down into six Pokémon types. If the ways that I’m being guided to think and talk about this world are, if I’m being pushed towards ‘oh right this person is an Enhancer’ rather than ‘oh this is Gon and Gon behaves this way or whatever,’ I feel like I’m walking into mirrors in a mirror maze.” Did you talk about mirror mazes earlier too, today?

Jack: I talked about a dangerous maze.

Keith: [chuckling] Oh, okay.

Jack: I just like mazes. [Sylvi and Dre laugh]

Keith: One thing, one thing I wish— oh, uh, that’s the end of what you were talking about, and I wrote that one thing I wish I said here to Jack is that it’s okay to never stop having a soft spot for the Hunter Exam, and that’s why for me it’s a vital part of my enjoyment of the show as a whole. The way that the world kind of opens up and complicates, like, I think it does generate a nostalgia for the simpler version of the show, [Jack laughs] and that is like, textual about the show. I think, like, that it’s—

Jack: Looking back with fondness to the squid game.

Keith: Yeah, I think it’s like, there’s a part of the show that’s like, wow I wish that Gon could just be living in that time, back before Nen, back when the Hunter Exam was just like, an obvious first step to finding his dad before he was like, being like, ‘Kurapika, shoot a fucking magic dagger into my heart right now and make me swear on my death to help you.’ [Jack and Dre laugh]

Episode 56 [1:11:25]

Jack: Um, let’s move onto 56.

Keith: Okay. We talked a little bit about this beginning stuff with Kortopi, and the...

Jack: Yeah, the first note I have here is that Killua has a line where he says, he's looking out across the copied city, and he says, 'I have no idea what I'd do if I heard one of them behind me. My heart is already pounding.' And I love how the Phantom Troupe has opened up Killua to fear as far as the audience can see it.

Sylvia: Yeah. Well, Illumi did. [laughs]

Jack: That's true. Illumi did first, and then...because, you know, in a lot of the Hunter Exam, yes. But even post-Illumi, there's stuff with like—

Sylvia: It's important that you bring this up. I agree with you, by the way. Like...

Jack: There's stuff with, um, oh, what's Killua's brother called the computer hacker?

Sylvia: Milluki.

Jack: Milluki. Yeah. There's stuff with Milluki torturing him where it becomes clear that Killua is not, [chuckling] is not scared of this at all. I don't think that Illumi has sort of like, um, maybe on some level Illumi has asked Killua to recontextualize how he thinks about fear. But the Troupe, from the off, Killua has been saying, do not mess with them. They are stronger than us. They will kill us.

Sylvia: It's linked to me, right? Because we have that moment last, in our last set of episodes, right? I think it's the last set of episodes where this happens, where they're captured by Nobunaga? And Killua is going to try and be like, he wants to fight to get out. But he has that vision of, like it basically feels like Illumi directly speaking to him in the moment, being like, don't fight an opponent that is stronger than you. Don't fight anyone who can kill you.

Keith: That was two episodes ago, by the way.

Sylvia: That was two episodes ago? Okay. I watched that episode pretty recently again. [chuckles] So that's why it's in my head.

Keith: But yeah, you're right, I think that Killua, who's introduced as kind of a terror, and there was a point, Jack where you were like, 'I don't know of anyone in the world who's stronger than Killua.'

Jack: Thirteen people here are stronger than Killua.

Sylvia: At least!

Keith: But Killua is like, compared to Gon is so cautious. Like, with Illumi, with Hisoka, and then now with the whole Phantom Troupe, I think that he's realistic about his chances in a way that, and his skill versus other people's skill...when compared to Gon. And when we see that, that part at the beginning of Heaven's Arena where he ranks, um, everyone on the scale and he puts himself way above Gon but then puts Hisoka and, uh, Hanzo way above himself. I think it shows that maybe he's even a little too cautious? Y'know, maybe I'm wrong here misinterpreting, but I feel like Hanzo ain't shit.

Sylvia: Yeah. I mean...yeah.

Keith: Like, I feel like, I feel like Killua could've beaten Hanzo then.

Dre: At that point, compared to Killua, yeah, probably.

Sylvia: At this point, yeah. And also, I do think that Killua could, but I think, I mean, given what happened at the end of that arc, right? With Killua being mind controlled by Illumi and killing someone and stuff like that.

Keith: Well, potentially mind controlled.

Sylvia: Potentially mind controlled, yeah. I think that like him, I dunno. Something about that ties together to me that I'm not necessarily putting into words right now.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: No, I think I, I think I see where you're coming from. Brief Hanzo aside, Hanzo, and I realized this the other day, is actually fairly high on my list for potential Spiders, potential Spider replacements.

Sylvia: Oh!

Keith: Interesting.

Keith: You don't think his, uh, his, y'know, ethics or whatever would prevent him from being a Spider?

Sylvia: For some reason I thought you were gonna say his bald head.

Dre: Damn.

Jack: Is anybody bald in the Spiders? Bonolenov might be bald.

Sylvia: Bonolenov, potentially, yeah.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Anyway.

Sylvia: Sorry. [Sylvi and Dre laugh]

Jack: Uh, oh, oh, to Killua's fear, something that is notable is Silva and Zeno are not scared of the Phantom Troupe. This is great. They are older professionals. They are, y'know, Killua is a trained assassin, but he is also a twelve year old trained assassin. Silva and Zeno are like—

Keith: They're annoyed by the Phantom Troupe.

Sylvia: Yes.

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: They're annoyed by the Phantom Troupe, and—

Keith: Ugh, what a chore, what a pain, these guys.

Sylvia: Was it 'not worth the trouble?' Was that what Silva said?

Keith: Yeah, yeah.

Jack: Yeah.

Sylvia: He's not, it wasn't worth the trouble to take the contract on them?

Keith: Killua says that's the highest compliment that he ever pays a target, which is a great line.

Jack: They get the impression that they are, um, that they see them as worthy opponents in the sense— not in a Hisoka sense of worthy, like a sort of psychosexual, uh, qualification, but in the sense of like, they'll put up a fight and I'm gonna have to work hard. And we see this when Silva does that, no, Zeno does that incredible dragon move on Chrollo. [chuckling]

Keith: Oh yeah.

Jack: That was so cool. Um, yeah.

Keith: Are we in the car?

Sylvia: Are we?

Jack: Not quite.

Sylvia: Okay.

Jack: I wanna skip to the car, there's just, um, Chrollo does some more detective work.

Keith: Oh, you're right, yes.

Jack: Chrollo figures out why, why, um, Neon is at the auction, and then sort of works out why Kurapika is hunting him. This takes him longer than it might have taken me but I have, the...

Keith: You've been watching.

Jack: I can see the show, yeah. I can see all the different parts.

Sylvia: This combined with the way that Kortopi, like the way they talk about Kortopi's En, I feel like is like such a big like, oh the roller coaster is cresting the top of its rise moment for these episodes?

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: Yeah. This is what we talked about earlier where when they're making the fake city, uh, as a, to hide their hideout, Kortopi's like, yeah the buildings function as my En so if they're walking through it I'll be able to tell there's intruders coming. And then they now reuse that ability for, 'hey, Kortopi, we just realized that we have those Scarlet Eyes, and we know about, that the Phantom— the Chain User also was interested in Scarlet Eyes, why don't you find the Scarlet Eyes, touch them, and then it'll bring us to where their hideout is.' And this be—

Sylvia: We get like a really good shot of them like, digging through crates trying to find the Scarlet Eyes.

Jack: That's great. They are overwhelmed by their own loot.

Keith: Oh yeah, tons— there's tons of loot.

Sylvia: The, um, the visual of Kortopi using his En is so cool. I like, love the way that they animate this.

Jack: Yeah, you wanna describe what this looks like? I wrote down, 'Kortopi vision.'

Sylvia: It's just like, it's sort of like is it— would you say wireframe? I don't really know how to describe the actual...

Jack: Yeah, it's a bit like the, um, the beginning of *Escape From New York*. [Dre laughs]

Sylvia: Yeah, there's like, some, there's like this representation of the city, and then the red eyes just like, floating in the darkness basically of it? And I like that it's just the position of the eyes that you get. Like, there are limitations in this. It's not necessarily

like, Kortopi can tell how many people are in the same room as the eyes, he can just tell, 'oh they're moving this way and someone has them.'

Dre: Mhm.

Sylvia: Which I think is like, great for the tension of these episodes, especially since Squala, who is there with the eyes, tries to leave with them...

Keith: Oh, Squala.

Sylvia: Oh Squala. All those death flags finally came home to roost.

Keith: Yeah, the one last job cliché finally took its toll.

Dre: It was his last day before retirement!

Sylvia: Literally, we get the, the him telepathically communicating with his girlfriend in the last episode, where it's like, I'm going out now! And it's like, okay, I'll see you soon!

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvia: I'll be fine 'cause I have my dogs! No. No, you won't.

Keith: Oh, that one little dog is so cute!

Dre: And when he gets out of the car he lets the dogs run away...[sad groan]

Keith: And they all know to go...

Sylvia: I do like Squala.

Keith: Yeah. Poor Squala.

Dre: I like his dogs. I don't know how I feel about him.

Sylvia: No, I like him. I like him!

Keith: Well his dogs like him, which means that...

Sylvia: He's a wife guy!

Dre: That's true.

Keith: He is a wife guy, yeah.

Jack: Two things. The floating red eyes in the kind of wireframe city as Kortopi sees it sort of literalizes the way the Troupe views the Chain User, as sort of, as they learn, someone possessed of a pair of scarlet eyes hunting them down, you know?

Keith and Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: Like single mindedly loose in the city.

Keith: We get a new song here, by the way.

Sylvia: Ooh.

Keith: This song—

Jack: Oh is this...? There's a great song in this chunk of episodes and I'm so curious—

Keith: It's called "Holding a Card File."

Sylvia: Oh.

[a few seconds of "Holding a Card File" plays]

Sylvia: Ooh! I can see the river dancers in my mind.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Holding the Card File...

Keith: That song will play a lot next season.

Jack: It's a good, it's a good track. It's got some movement to it. I think that, um, the composers here are great and I don't mean this as like a broader dig at the composers.

I think that they have ended up in a situation where throughout the Phantom Troupe arc a lot of the Troupe's themes, and a lot of Killua's theme kinda moves quite sedately. ["Requiem Aranea" faintly plays] It's very sad, it's very melancholy, but it's very sort of gentle, it's one tempo, it's not syncopated.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: The "Chain Bastard" is syncopated and is high tempo. ["Chain Bastard" faintly plays] Thank you. But, um...

Sylvia: Thank you so much. Yeah!

Jack: But that plays in kind of specific moments. So it was really nice to get, um, I think about the wonderful arrangement of Hisoka's theme in Heaven's Arena where it's the full sort of flamenco band coming in to play Hisoka's theme with this great syncopation, and so it was really nice to hear that.

Keith: That hasn't played tonight's soundboard. I'll make sure to have that on the board.

Jack: It's one of my favorite cues so far, in a show full of great cues.

Keith: It's great. I like both of Hisoka's songs. I like the like, the Spanish guitar sort of solo version and then the more ornate version from Heaven's Arena.

Jack: They've only written one theme for him which is...funny.

Keith: Oh sorry, it's the same theme but it's two, it's like two big variations.

Jack: It's two arrangements, yeah yeah yeah.

Keith: It's also, y'know, you don't hear all the instruments until you know about Nen. It's so good!

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah it's great.

Dre: Ohh...

Jack: Isn't that good? Isn't that good?

Keith: You don't get the whole picture, you just get the sorta vibe of it. It's excellent.

Jack: Something that I really want to make sure I note here as Chrollo puts together why Neon is at the auction. Chrollo has been so focused on her ability to see the future and the sort of role that would give her in the mafia that he neglects to sort of the obvious thing, which is, she cares about...flesh goods?

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: She cares about evil, uh...and she's come to the auction to bid. And this is sort of the first domino that lets Chrollo work out really quickly what the Chain User wants and how the Chain User thinks.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvia: It's so good.

Jack: And I wrote down here, this might be a weakness of Chrollo's. This like, focus on ability or procedure, neglecting the kind of obvious, uh, other things that are in play. And, and this is a weakness of Chrollo's. This—

Sylvia: It's the thief's mentality, right? Like, Chrollo is so focuses on what they're there to steal, not necessarily on the people around it. And I think that that, again ties into his Nen ability, ties into the Phantom Troupe's MO entirely.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: And it is Chrollo's blind spot.

Sylvia: Yes, absolutely.

Jack: Chrollo makes, in these next couple of episodes, Chrollo makes a colossal misreading. And it is wonderful, seeing a character who we, who we know is incredibly

smart, is incredibly good at reading people. Chrollo makes a mistake, or has a misapprehension about how the Troupe, how his own Phantom Troupe works. And I really love this little tease of this in Chrollo explicitly saying, 'maybe I overlooked what was obvious.' In figuring out, you know, why Neon was here. I thought that was really nice.

Keith: Do you think, maybe this is a question for later, but I'm almost positive that I'll forget it, so I'm gonna say it now, which is like...there's two kind of ways that Chrollo makes the mistake that he does. Which is, thinking that the Troupe are going to treat him like a replaceable head, the way that he sees himself. Is it that he's so confident in his order to them to treat him that way, um, or is it something like, that he doesn't understand how influential of a leader, is he overestimating or underestimating his power over them?

Jack: I think it's the latter.

Sylvia: I think it might be the latter, yeah. I think it's...

Jack: I don't think he believes that these people are his friends. I think he respects them—

Sylvia: Oh, I disagree with that.

Keith: Well, but you have to.

Dre: Hmm...

Sylvia: I do, yes.

Jack: I suppose what I mean is, hmm. It's the, ugh. It's a mirror of Kurapika, which is wonderful. I don't think he believes that these people care about him in such a way that they would risk the Troupe to save his life.

Sylvia: Yeah. I mean, hey, guess what, Sylvi had the most sympathetic read of this, shocking. [all laugh] The way it came through for me is like, he doesn't want them to do this 'cause he would rather hindi than lose more members of the Troupe.

Dre: Sure.

Sylvia: Like, he would rather be replaced than have, like, Paku go or...

Dre: And I don't, I don't think those are necessarily like, I think those can coexist.

Sylvia: Yeah. Probably. I would hope so.

Dre: I think it can both be true that that is what he wants and that he doesn't also fully understand that that would make him and the Phantom Troupe [chuckling] friends with each other, that care about each other.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Keith: The question is, why does he care about the survival of the Troupe, or of the Spider, if the Spider doesn't necessarily mean any, like...he's basically like, the Spiders are a ship of Theseus, it doesn't matter how many parts get replaced as long as the ship is still intact. But why does he think that? I don't— And then he gets an opportunity to answer that question, and fully doesn't. He says some insane shit that doesn't make any sense.

Sylvia: Does this come back to, I have that written down.

Keith: Yeah, me too.

Sylvia: Of course I do. Um, does this come back to like, us not having, like the full picture of the Troupe maybe? Does this come back to Meteor City, does this come back to like, their origins?

Keith: Yeah, it totally does.

Jack: Yes.

Sylvia: 'Cause it, it has to, right?

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah. I think that there is, um, Chrollo ideology and Phantom Troupe ideology are a Venn diagram, I think. I think that what Chrollo believes the function of the Phantom Troupe is, and what the Phantom Troupe as an entity has sort of been constructed to do, are things that have a degree of similarity and a degree of difference. And so, I think...there's a great Chrollo moment later where he begins to express this ideology and then stops himself, and I think that this is something that we just don't have a full picture of yet.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: And I know that a lot of post-anime manga is spent on, what is the Phantom Troupe's deal? Which is really really interesting. [Dre chuckles] But yeah, I think that there is something going on there. I think that, um, I think that Chrollo has a consistent internal belief for why the Phantom Troupe should be allowed to continue. Why it's important that they continue as a sort of ship of Theseus. The Phantom Troupe. Chrollo is like, fine. We're on the move. We're gonna get the thing. And this is great. They go, Chrollo quickly switches some groups around, to, he does a little Professor Layton very quickly.

Keith: Yeah. [Dre laughs]

Jack: And goes stalking out, into the city.

Sylvia: We need to talk about the c— we've skipped the car, we need to talk about what's going on in the car because here's my first note for this episode, in our chat...

Jack: [cross] When you say the car you mean the, uh, Melody, Leorio, and Kurapika.

Sylvia: [cross] I mean, our dear fr— Kurapika, yes. 'Cause, uhh, hey guys—

Keith: Or, Gon, Leorio, and Kurapika. Melody is out with Killua.

Dre: Mm.

Sylvia: When I saw Kurapika dressed as a girl, I stood up and started clapping at my TV, like, uh... [Dre laughs]

Keith: This isn't even the most *girl* that Kurapika... [laughs]

Sylvia: It's not! It's not! But like, these entire— these whole episodes, I was like, standing up and clapping like a dude watching the Super Bowl. [Dre and Jack laugh] I was like, this— [yelling like a dude watching the Super Bowl] Yeah! YEAH! Like, I was losing my shit. [laughs]

Jack: Go Kurapika.

Keith: This is funny because I wrote in two different places what Kurapika was dressed like. The first note that I have is, of the episode is 'beatnik Kurapika.'

Sylvia: Yeah.

Keith: And then later on I have 'Kurapika dressed like old Joni Mitchell.' [all laugh]

Jack: He's seen clouds from both sides now. This is lovely. Kurapika looks, Kurapika looks great dressed as a girl.

Sylvia: Kurapika looks great.

Jack: It was great.

Sylvia: Hey, I wonder why, I wonder why I had so much trouble, uh, referring to Kurapika with he/him pronouns at the beginning of the show. [Sylvi and Dre laugh]

Jack: I know. He's got like, he's got like nice nails.

Sylvia: Oh yeah, nah. I'm just saying. I'm just saying.

Jack: It looks great.

Sylvia: I'm pushing a agenda, but y'know I freely admit to it.

Dre: Sure.

Jack: [chuckles] It's Sylvi's two part agenda.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: Part one, girl Kurapika, part two, Chrollo! exclamation mark.

Sylvia: Yeah! Yeah. Yes.

Jack: Yes. [Sylvi laughs] As the Phantom Troupe leave, the episode moves into a really cool phase, which is like, the villains stalking through the city and our heroes alternately tracking them and trying to figure out what's going on. People on our side, by which I mean Kurapika's side, immediately get freaked out when they're like, why are they on the move? What are they doing? Y'know, they think they found the Chain User and we don't think they actually have found Kurapika, but they're probably going to the hotel. Killua and Gon start tracking them. And in the middle of all of this, we get these lovely shots of— oh, it's worth saying a rainstorm has rolled in at the beginning of the last episode and it has just been raining nonstop the whole time.

Dre: Mhm.

Sylvia: Yes.

Jack: It looks so cool. The city just drenched in this like, grey, miserable rain shimmer, rain, sort of like mist rising from all the surfaces as the Troupe stalks through it. And we get lots of city establishing shots. I remember earlier in Media Club Plus I was actually kind of bemoaning the fact that we didn't actually see a lot of Yorknew City on street level, and Yorknew City is all over these episodes. People riding the train, people in traffic jams, people putting up umbrellas to protect them from the rain, people walking around outside of stations. Y'know, part of the way Togashi and the anime team sell, isn't it terrifying that the Phantom Troupe is on the move, is that they situate them in a city full of normal people. There's a great moment where the Phantom Troupe suddenly

break into a run, and I can't tell if it's just dramatic license from the camera, but they seem to be like, running on a wall? Or running on a ceiling?

Keith: Oh yeah, they're totally running on the wall. Yeah.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: And there are these great reaction shots from just regular people looking and going, what the fuck is going on?

Sylvia: I have a note here about how Chrollo runs, which is that he's doing the John Lennon walk at three times speed. [Dre laughs]

Jack: Yeah, why does he do that?

Sylvia: It's so funny.

Jack: This guy is so cool, why is he doing that?

Sylvia: I think it's just gotta do with the outfit, honestly.

Dre: Probably.

Sylvia: I feel like, y'know, he's wearing those big boots, it's hard to run— As someone who has knee-high boots, it's kinda hard to run in those.

Keith: I did not pick up on the John Lennon walk.

Jack: Does he have his hands in his pockets when he runs? What's he...?

Sylvia: I don't know. I don't think he does.

Jack: The note that I wrote about Chrollo's outfit here actually, is that, y'know, we get to see Chrollo's shirt for the first time. Y'know, in clear light rather than in—

Sylvia: [shouting distantly] Take it off! [Jack and Dre laugh] Sorry.

Dre: Who was that? That was weird.

Jack: He wears a shirt—

Sylvia: Yeah, I don't know where— I don't know!

Jack: He wears a shirt with a spiderweb on it, which is great.

Sylvia: Uh huh!

Jack: He's the leader of the Spiders. Um, Melody is holding her hat down in the wind, lots of really good detail of the weather.

Dre: Mhm.

Sylvia: I love Melody in these episodes. Melody and Killua's little team up in these sets of episodes is great.

Dre: Ugh, it's the best!

Keith: Yeah.

Dre: Just like, Melody being the nice aunt who is like, telling Killua like, 'wow, you have the nicest footsteps I've ever heard.' [Dre and Keith laugh]

Sylvia: They're so quiet! Yeah, I really adore just like— 'Cause like, early on in the arc, I remember the first time watching this the two characters I didn't think like, would really— I wouldn't have thought Killua and Melody would do much interacting this arc, y'know?

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvia: And then we get like a couple really nice moments of it. And it's just— I love when they do that, y'know?

Jack: Yeah.

Sylvia: It is definitely the most like, fandom brained shit I have about the show, like oh I love seeing these two characters I like interact. But they do it well, so. Y'know. I'm allowed.

Jack: Yeah, this is where we get Melody's line about, y'know Kurapika must be really desperate if he's brought friends in. We spoke a bit about, y'know, Melody's read on that line, but something I like is that this strikes Killua, this affects Killua hearing this, because it is at the intersection of all Killua's anxieties. He's worried about Gon, he's worried about Gon's broader obstinacy and his desire to help even when it puts him in danger, he's worried about Kurapika's single-mindedness, and he wants to prove himself. Killua, y'know, wants to prove himself as capable and independent.

Keith: He's definitely come like, full circle on the version of himself that was like, annoyed with Gon for waiting for waiting up for Leorio at the start of the Hunter Exam.

Jack: Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah.

Keith: He's like, he's not upset about having to help Kurapika, he's just worried about Gon, who takes things too far.

Jack: Oh yeah.

Keith: He's worried about not being able to help Kurapika. It's like a full 180.

Jack: Yeah. But I liked seeing his little reaction. Seeing that what Melody had said had kinda struck him precisely because it was the laundry list of Killua's anxieties all being talked about at once. This scene also ends with one of Killua's great non sequiturs. Killua, later in this episode Killua talks about Gon, he says, 'I'm so glad I'm friends with someone who doesn't shy away from asking questions.' Because Gon, y'know, just like will butt in with a question whereas Killua will try and keep quiet but will actually secretly want to know the answer to the question. But I think something Killua does really well and is often played as a kind of weird humor is that Killua will be very blunt and open about what he feels very suddenly, even if he is almost answering a question that hasn't been asked, or following on from a sentence that hasn't been said. The example here

that I really like is after Melody compliments Killua's footsteps, he says, 'I guess I'm in the habit of moving silently.' And then she compliments his technique, and Killua's response to this is, 'I'm not too thrilled about all of this.' [Keith and Dre laugh] Where he's sort of like, y'know, we can talk about my technique here but really what this comes down to is that we're doing something that I'm not excited about and I'm afraid of.

Sylvia: Much like me Killua is a habitual toe-stepper. [Jack laughs] Always has to tiptoe around, hates making noise, uh, respect.

Jack: Killua telephones in to Kurapika to let him know that the group is moving, and he mentions Chrollo. He says their leader is with them. This is the first time any of our characters have seen Chrollo, correct?

Sylvia: I believe so?

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvia: Yeah. Yeah.

Jack: And a new music track plays here. Do you have it?

Keith: I don't, I don't, I...don't know that a new music track does play.

Jack: Oh. I'll need to listen back to this, it was notable to me at the time but I might just have been wrong.

Keith: So the tracks that I have playing around here are "A Field in Spring" from Whale Island, and "Dirge from the Dark Side." And then "As For Those Outlaws, Unrivaled Strength," which is like, another Spider song plays a little bit after that. That's accounted for all music that happens from, uh, yeah there's no gaps here. For the whole episode, basically. There's three minutes between 15:44 and 18:09 that are like, don't have music, but that seems believable to me.

Jack: Yeah. You shouldn't soundtrack something all the way through unless it's like a ballet or something.

Keith: Yeah. [Dre chuckles]

Jack: Squala, little, y'know, man about to face his death, scenes intercut here, something that is very funny is we get to see Squala's Nen being applied to the dogs for the first time.

Sylvia: What the fuck?

Jack: This is such a funny gag. [Dre and Jack chuckle] Someone knocks on the door...

Keith: We gotta make this guy do something ridiculous before he dies.

Jack: Yeah, someone knocks on the door to bring room service, and it's great. Y'know, this is classic like, oh are these the killers? But it's not. And Squala commands one of his dogs with Nen to go and bring in the room service. The dog stands up like a man, walks over to the door, opens it, wheels in the cart like a man, and lifts the cloche off the food. This is just Togashi having a little joke with us, right? Because like... [chuckles] We've known he can control dogs the whole time. And we've seen him use his Nen power on the dogs. The dogs have attacked, they've sort of run around, they've scouted, and so in Squala's last moments to reveal that he can also command them to act like fancy little men [Keith laughs] is so funny.

Sylvia: He shoulda been like, doing a Vegas variety show with these dogs instead of being a bodyguard.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvia: He coulda, like, he really coulda had this way safer lifestyle. Instead...y'know

Jack: As the Troupe split up and make for the hotel, Kurapika's plan just falls apart completely. This is the Nadir of Kurapika's planning, first Gon, Gon and Killua start chasing the Troupe, and then Kurapika starts chasing the Troupe, and then Killua says, 'what's wrong with these people? It's like they do whatever they want.'

Keith: It's so funny! [Keith and Dre laugh]

Jack: This coming from...

Keith: I also had that written down. Yeah.

Jack: ...The spoiled boy, rich assassin is so funny. Killua genuinely does have, y'know, struggles with and his plotline is often about the kind of discipline he has, but it is so funny to see him, to see Killua, being the one who's like—

Keith: Of all people.

Jack: — These fuckin' idiots. [chuckles]

Keith: Yeah, the guy that we know has canonically spent tens of thousands of dollars on candy.

Jack: Being like, they get to do whatever they want all the time. And then the hostage situation sort of emerges. In order to save Kurapika's life and sort of prevent him from acting rashly, Gon and then Killua offer themselves up as hostages.

Sylvia and Keith: Yeah.

Jack: They don't do this explicitly, they just play the line of like, we didn't know the bounty was canceled and we were following you again!

Keith: I looked it up by the way, the song I think that you're talking about, Jack, is, it is a guitar-y song? Heavy guitar song?

Jack: Possibly. It's syncopated, it's got a really good percussion part.

Keith: Yeah, I believe that that is "As For Those Outlaws, Unrivaled Strength." Which is one of the Spider songs that's played a few times.

Sylvia: Okay.

Jack: Oh, cool. And the Troupe, uh, the Troupe take Gon and Killua hostage. The storm continues, as Gon asks—

Dre: Can I pop in really quick?

Jack: Oh yeah.

Dre: Um, gosh, I forget exactly what we were talking about, but we were talking about like, this being Kurapika having that transformation fo Kurapika believing in episode 55 that he would endanger his friends in order to move the mission forward, and then that changing like Kurapika basically learning about himself that he would not do that.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Dre: And to me, like, that's, that is this moment, textually for me. It's when Kurapika is getting ready to fight, and then Gon basically like jumps in line in front of him and Kurapika is just like, well shit. I can't do anything now, because I don't wanna pull Gon into this fight.

Jack: Yeah. Yeah. I think you're right, and it's sort of the first instance of both teams of hostage takers seeing their own members trap them in a situation. You know?

Dre: Mhm.

Jack: Y'know, sort of force their hand and go, how do we resolve this? There's no way out of this that I can see clearly. Um, Gon is really caught up on the Troupe's morality.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: Or, the Troupe's, uh, or things that Gon ascribes to feelings that only moral people feel. That is to say care for your friends, that is to say grieving when you lose your friends. Gon is really trying to figure out, y'know, why is it that people I consider evil also have these feelings? How do they justify those feelings? Is it even true? What does that mean? And so he takes this opportunity to ask Chrollo, he sort of just like blurts out, y'know, 'how can you kill people who have nothing to do with you?' And at that point, lightning strikes the city and all the power goes out.

Sylvia: Can I, can I read the Chrollo quote?

Jack: Yeah, it's so good!

Sylvia: "Why, I wonder. It might be because they have nothing—" He— sorry, Gon specifically asks 'how can you kill people that have nothing to do with you.' That's the important part of this. "Why, I wonder. It might be because they have nothing to do with us. No, on second thought, it isn't that simple. I don't like to talk about my motives, but surprisingly enough, or rather, as I expected, the reason is the key to understanding myself." And then I wrote, 'he's sooo cryptic! Wow!' [all chuckle]

Dre: He's just like, sooo deep.

Sylvia: Oh my godddd!

Jack: This is, on some level, just write a check as the author that you are going to cash later.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: I want the, y'know, I'm gonna write a nice mystery in here, I'm gonna have the character say, 'ah, in order to know the answer to that question, you have to know something about me.' And then be like, I will not reveal that.

Keith: This is one of the creepy moments—

Jack: It's great.

Sylvia: Yes.

Jack: Chrollo is illuminated by lightning, we're looking up at him from Gon's perspective.

Sylvia: Uh huh.

Jack: It's great.

Sylvia: It's so good...

Jack: This is Chrollo in villain mode again.

Keith: It does sort of, it does sort of remind me of the, uh, Danny DeVito 'you unzipped me' thing from *Always Sunny*. [shockingly good Danny DeVito voice] "I don't like it! I don't like to think about it!" [Sylvi and Jack laugh]

Sylvia: That's who they shoulda got to do his English voice. [Keith laughs]

Keith: Imagine everything exactly the same but Danny DeVito is Chrollo.

Sylvia: Oh my god.

Jack: Oh my god. He's a good actor, I don't think he's—

Keith: He's a really good actor! I mean, that scene, that's some of the best acting that he did in his whole career, is that scene.

Jack: Here's what's going on. I don't have all the information here. Here's what's happening. Chrollo, in Meteor City, as a child...suffered an immense loss. Even beyond the loss that Meteor City demands of its residents. He made a bargain, a sort of Faustian pact? This isn't me doing Demon World Theory, I promise I'm genuinely trying to— this is the, I'm making the call.

Sylvia: Okay.

Keith: This is a metaphorical Faustian pact, now a literal Faustian pact.

Jack: Chrollo made a sacrifice that got him the book. Maybe actually getting the book is what caused him to lose, you know? He, he, his um, reach exceeded his grasp. And to get the thing that made him Chrollo he lost a huge amount of, y'know, stuff that was important to him. And he assembled the Phantom Troupe as a kind of...and I don't even know if I would like this to be the case, this is what I think it is. As a kind of like, um, Robin Hood, sort of redistributive entity who will go out and will make right for the damage that has been done to Meteor City. And over time the Phantom Troupe gradually, you know, in the same way that Kurapika's quest for revenge began to take

him to darker and darker places, that we've seen him sort of pull out of that, that nosedive. The Phantom Troupe was asked to act in ways that, that they felt less and less sure about and the way that they defended themselves against that was that they turned inward. Was that they strengthened their bonds with each other, that they furthered the care that they had for each other, and they became this sort of extremely tight unit with an extremely, um, thorough care for each other. And that's what Chrollo is talking about when he says, 'I don't really like to think about this.' Because what he, what it invites him to do is view the path from, I suffered a great loss and I built a unit that would help sort of redistribute that pain. Two, we walked down this path so hard that the only people that we can care about, the only people that we can love, are, y'know, in this kind of dread pact. That's what I think.

Keith: I wouldn't be shocked if I never learn. If they just never say what happened, what Chrollo's about. I always got the vibe that they were just some gang, they were just like a nor—I don't know like, y'know, he's a Specialist, y'know, something, they imply that something's gotta happen to you to make you a Specialist.

Jack: He's a Specialist who has the book when he's a kid, remember?

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Jack: We saw that tiny flicker of them running in Meteor City. Well actually, he was dreaming, that was a dream of Chrollo's, we saw him wake up from that so that's actually not necessarily true. He might not have had the book.

Keith: Right. It may not have had special powers then. It may just be that he used an object from his normal life that was important to him as the vehicle for his Specialist ability. I kind of always understood...y'know, like, just a gang of friends and it's like, like, man I fuckin' hate this town. [Jack and Dre chuckle] But the town like really sucks 'cause it's Meteor City. And, y'know, it just gets out of control. I think it just gets out of control. Because it's such a, it's such a, it reminds me, and I think this is not fair because of what we do know about Meteor City, but the like, uh, like, fuck this town, I

wanna get out and start a murder gang thing reminds me of such like, suburban malaise kind of thing?

Jack: Yeah, I love John Darnielle. [Keith laughs] Yeah, I mean I wanna be clear that when I say all that, I'm not saying this is what I want Chrollo's story to be, or even what I think Chrollo's story to be. One of the really nice things about doing a project like this is that we can, especially me who doesn't know what's happening, I can say things into a microphone and then listen back to them later and go, it's almost like I'm saying 'marker!' and then I'm writing down a little...y'know? [Sylvi chuckles]

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Here's what the story, here's what I think the story is saying. But yeah, I don't know, I don't know. It's a really distinctive moment, and I think that, um, it is just cryptic enough that I would be irritated by it if Chrollo wasn't such an interesting character and if the scene wasn't shot so well with the, y'know, Gon kind of coming to this crisis point, blurting out the question, the power going out, and then Chrollo being illuminated by lightning. It's not even that he's illuminated by lightning so much as like, the whole street is dark and you're only seeing bits of his face as he speaks, it's really really good. Um, then Squala dies.

Sylvia: Yeah. This whole scene rules.

Keith: It's sad, I felt like no one there really wanted to kill Squala.

Dre: I don't know...

Sylvia: No, I mean like, he died because, uh...no, y'know, I feel like Nobunaga was fine with it.

Keith: [cross] I think Nobunaga was like—

Dre: [cross] Yeah. Uh huh. Yep.

Keith: Nobunaga's on a short fuse, he warned him several times, he was sort of pleading— not, y'know, pleading is too strong of a word but he was like, man, I'm telling you, don't move! And...

Jack: It's make my day. You know? It's like, uh, do it punk, make my day.

Dre: Yeah.

Keith: No, 'cause make my day is like I dare you to move. I don't think Nobunaga was daring him to...

Dre: I, yeah, I don't think Nobunaga was daring him to kill him, but I don't think Nobunaga cares at all about killing him.

Keith: My, the vibe— no, well, cares is too strong also. I think that like, they all feel like we could've gotten out of this without killing you. Why did you, why didn't you just listen? It reminds me of the scene where they're talking about Feitan torturing people and they kind of all go like, man those people are unlucky, that sucks. Like, I think that there's this like, recognition that when people run into the Phantom Troupe it's not a nice thing for them. And that probably Squala could've gotten away without dying. But also, y'know, the flipside of it is, like, he really didn't move them much. [chuckles] Y'know?

Sylvia: No. He just kinda got a little mad.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvia: Right? Am I remembering that correctly?

Keith: Nobunaga cuts his head off and he's like, I told you not to move! Maybe it's the, maybe it's the dub giving it a little bit of flavor that felt like, y'know, they could have not killed him but he was too scared to be still.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Keith: Too scared and angry about Eliza, his girlfriend.

Jack: Yeah, Pakunoda does a really nasty piece of work.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: It's nice to get the occasional reminder that despite being extremely fun sort of secondary protagonists, the Phantom Troupe are just cruel murderers to a person.

Keith: Yeah.

Dre: Uh huh.

Sylvia: Yeah!

Jack: Pakunoda starts interrogating Squala with her sort of game without revealing exactly how her game works. So, she, she sort of tries to dial in on how much Squala knows about the Chain User and again, I was trying to remember how much *does* Squala know about the Chain User? How cooked are we? The answer is, extremely cooked.

Sylvia: Yup.

Jack: But we don't learn that quite yet. Instead, Squala says okay, I've got everything I need to know. I have one more question for you. Is there you anyone you care or love? Care for or love. And Squala says no, and Pakunoda says you're lying. Her name is Eliza, she's very beautiful. And then he yells and Nobunaga decapitates him, and then in the mall, Eliza just turns and looks round in the sort of, y'know, something has gone wrong.

Sylvia: The like, way...there is like a moment after, um, Nobunaga decapitates him where we see Squala's head thump off the hood of the top of the car and flop to the side.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvia: And it is just like, so unceremonious and Nobunaga's being like, I told him not to move or whatever afterwards? And it's, like, such a nice touch. Again, makes the

Phantom Tr— Reminds you that the Phantom Troupe are not just a funny samurai who gets mad and like, his friends and stuff. Y'know?

Dre: Mhm.

Sylvia: Like, oh, yeah, these guys are murderers.

Jack: But we need to see the other side of the equation to make the fact they care very deeply for each other and they care extremely about Chrollo work, right?

Sylvia: Mhm!

Jack: Y'know, if, if this episode had really just been focusing on, hey the Phantom Troupe are friends, it wouldn't be half as compelling if we weren't also seeing them act like this. And yeah, to the head bouncing off the, the um, hood of the car, the show is, is often sort of abstractedly violent, y'know? People are flinging Nen at each other and bouncing around and punching the shit out of each other, our heroes regularly hit each other, but there are times when the show is really quite explicitly violent, and—

Keith: The Phantom Troupe regularly decapitates people. [chuckles]

Keith: Yeah.

Dre: Yeah.

Keith: It's like the main thing we see them do.

Dre: Or like, breaks their neck in such a way that people's heads do a 720.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: The violence when they play their hand, not just the Troupe but generally I think about the great scene where Uvo bit the guy's face off.

Keith: Oh yeah.

Jack: ...is really embodied, is really visceral, and is almost always on camera. Y'know, when the anime team commits to one of these moments of violence, they don't cut away from it. And I like that, y'know, if we want to sell that this world is fundamentally violent and thirteen of our protagonists deal this violence regularly, I think it makes sense that the violence remains shocking when it happens. But, I mean, time for another incredible moment of violence as Pakunoda starts loading her pistol.

Keith: We actually get a good, another new song that I can't tell you, well not I can't, I won't tell you the title of this one because it's, it actually becomes a variation, it becomes a theme of a character that we haven't met yet.

Jack: The spoiler that Keith's not telling me is that this title actually is called "Pakunoda x Nen Freedom x Reunited with the Troupe." [Keith and Sylvi laugh]

Keith: Yeah, that's a real, that is Jack's best called shot yet. [Jack chuckles] But no, during the whole scene where Pakunoda has, uh, Squala in an armlock and then also the memory stuff that we're about to talk about, it plays this song. [A few seconds of "Who's the Bomber²" plays]

Sylvia: Ooh!

Jack: Oh, it's good!

Jack: This is sort of like a 60's French sort of mystery theme going on here. [Jack and Dre chuckle]

Keith: It is a little bit noir-y, which is funny for what it ends up being used for. It definitely fits better here.

Jack: Pakunoda is kind of noir-y.

Sylvia: Oh, she's very...

Jack: She, she thinks about people's memories, she has a revolver.

² Greed Island spoiler in the song title!

Sylvia: She's the...

Keith: Yeah, there's a lot of detective stuff going on in this one, people are trying to figure out the location of everything. But it becomes, it does not... This is much more noir-y than what it gets used for eventually. [Sylvi chuckles] They replace the strings with a guitar and it's odd. Odd choice.

Jack: So, no use beating around the bush. Pakunoda can shoot her memories into people for as long as she has bullets, using a Nen power called *Memory Bomb*.

Keith: *Recollection Bullet: Memory Bomb*.

Sylvia: It's so fuckin' killer! It's so cool!

Dre: It's so cool.

Sylvia: I love Nen.

Jack: It's great. It's great. Y'know, what you need to do when you're coming up with a Nen power is you need to get a big sheet of paper and you need to write the numbers one to ten on the left hand side. And then you need to think of how the Nen power would be executed, but very calmly, and write that down as number one. Y'know, Pakunoda touches you on the shoulder and transfers the memory to you. And then for each one down, you need to write it slightly more outré, until you hit number ten and then you circle that and go with it. You need to go through that process of making it stupider and stupider until you get to; Pakunoda's gun catches fire, she loads bullets, shouts 'Memory Bomb' and shoots her friends in the head.

Keith: It's so funny that the way that she gets the memories *is* by touching you gently on the shoulder.

Jack: Yes, the way that she—

Keith: But then, in order to give them, you have to shoot, load a revolver with Memory Bullets, sorry Recollection Bullets.

Jack: Right, because it's— and I'm turning over my binder of high school critical reading— It's because the Phantom Troupe can only act through, y'know, they can receive things passively but if they want to put things out into the world it has to be a violent action.

Keith: Mm.

Jack: Mm. [chuckling] Mhm.

Sylvia: I'm nodding and stroking my chin. [Dre chuckles]

Jack: [sagely] Mm. I'm nodding and stroking *my* chin and I said it. [all laugh] Because, because now we see Squala *did* know about Kurapika. In fact Squala knew quite a lot about Kurapika, as Nobunaga starts laughing and says, 'So that's what you look like, Mr. Kurapika,' as the guitars play for the episode to end. It's great.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Keith: It's really good.

Sylvia: It's really good. Hunterpedia this week, Nobunaga for that episode. There's like a bit in Hunterpedia where they have like—

Keith: We've had two insane Hunterpedias in a row, honestly.

Sylvia: Yeah!

Dre: Mhm.

Sylvia: [cross] I don't— what is—

Keith: [cross] This is a weird — is Hisoka directing Hunterpedias now? [Dre laughs]

Sylvia: I wouldn't be shocked.

Jack: No, this one isn't, this one isn't super weird. Fifty...fifty...

Sylvia: Are you sure? Doesn't this—

Jack: [cross] Fifty...six?

Keith: [cross] Oh, am I thinking of 57 and 58?

Dre: [cross] Which one is 56?

Keith: Is that what I'm thinking?

Jack: I think 57 and 58 are the weird ones.

Keith: Oh. Which one's this one?

Dre: I know 57 is the weird one, I don't remember...

Jack: 56 is, uh, they are talking about Nobunaga, who can take out foes with one strike.

Keith: Oh, okay.

Jack: And then they briefly become Chrollo inside an En radius.

Sylvia: That was the thing—! Yeah, that was the thing where I was like, what's the deal with these Chrollo rings?

Keith: Yeah, I don't understand the Chrollo rings, but yeah, I was misremembering.

Sylvia: Do we want to take our little five minute break before getting into the next couple episodes?

Keith: Please.

Jack: Let's do it.

[whistle blows]

Episode 57 [1:56:34]

Jack: Okay, listen up everybody. If we keep going at this pace, [Sylvi laughs] the fortune that I wrote for myself as Miss Neon... So. We're gonna move through some stuff a little quickly. All of this is great, and it's worth saying that the pace of the episodes themselves alternate between stultifyingly slow, frightening conversations between three people, and characters just going leaping off in directions to do stuff.

Sylvia: Yeah, I, hey. I just wanna say to people who aren't watching along, even if you don't, didn't watch all the episodes up to this point, I would recommend watching these four episodes.

Jack: Yes.

Sylvia: Especially these last two.

Keith: Ditto but for the last, like, twelve episodes. [chuckles]

Sylvia: I mean yeah, just, just, y'know. Just watch the show.

Keith: Okay, so, just right off the bat, this episode we talk a lot about the Phantom Troupe, and I wanna point out an interesting discrepancy between the sub and the dub. The English dub consistently refers to the Phantom Troupe as the Spiders.

Sylvia: Yes.

Keith: But in the dub— sorry, yeah the dub. But in the sub they call themselves the Spider as a sort of collective noun. Which is a very interesting...

Sylvia: Ooh.

Dre: Mm.

Jack: It's much cooler. I've heard them—

Keith: It's much cooler and it's much more descriptive of what's happening. And why there's an argument here.

Jack: Yeah, I've heard them called the Spider— sorry, I've heard them called the Spiders in the Japanese a couple of times, but they start calling themselves, the Troupe, the Spider here. Chrollo heads back to the hotel with his hostages, Gon and Killua. Killua figures that Kurapika should now switch targets. It makes no sense to go for Pakunoda now because they know that the game is up. And, in the hotel, and I'm just gonna go through this quickly and then we can, we can dig into this 'cause this bit's great. Leorio is there and makes a play. Secretly communicates to Gon and Killua that the power is gonna go out and that's the time for an attack.

Sylvia: How does he do this, Jack?

Jack: He does this by making an extremely loud phone call and then calling into a local radio station to request the closing theme of *Hunter X Hunter*. [Keith laughs]

Sylvia: The first closing theme, specifically.

Dre: Mhm.

Keith: The original closing theme, yeah.

Sylvia: The one that I really like.

Keith: Leorio makes a total ass of himself, it's so funny.

Sylvia: It's perfect. He's playing to his strengths, y'know?

Keith: He, they, the Phantom Troupe almost kills him. For being annoying.

Sylvia: They, and then they're like, this guy's just a blowhard, like, whatever.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvia: And I think that's like, yeah! That's Leorio right there. That's how he flies under the radar.

Keith: Imagine a, imagine like, Chrollo having to stoop to saying 'just ignore him.' [all laugh]

Jack: Does Chrollo actually say 'just ignore him' about Leorio?

Keith: He does, yeah! [Jack laughs]

Sylvia: Yeah.

Dre: Yeah, that sounds right.

Jack: Chrollo has spent his whole life trying to ensure that he doesn't have to interact with people like Leorio and he is dragging himself by his fingernails to deign to say, just don't.

Keith: Don't engage.

Jack: Don't pay him any time.

Keith: This is where Nobunaga, Pakunoda, and, um, who's the third that shows back up? Is it Machi?

Jack: Machi.

Keith: Machi.

Sylvia: Machi, yeah.

Keith: They show up with their new knowledge of, of who the Chain User is. Killua's like, they keep cutting back to Killua being afraid because, I don't know, Gon's probably too busy being annoyed by the Spiders to be afraid.

Sylvia: Yeah, he's got Nobunaga to deal with.

Keith: Yeah.

Dre: Mhm.

Keith: And uh, Chrollo's just like, he's in full suspicion mode and does the worst thing that he could do, which is ask Pakunoda to scan them again.

Jack: Yes.

Keith: Which is so funny because it's like, like, we know how it works, theoretically it should be bulletproof.

Sylvia: Well.

Keith: Well.

Jack: So, Killua is terrified of getting scanned again and is trying to bluff to stall. Pakunoda has some great dialogue here. Pakunoda in villain mode.

Dre: Mhm.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: She says, 'I extract the purest memories that are beneath your consciousness.' She's sort of saying, there is a kind of objective truth that I am able to reach that you cannot hide from me. She asks what they're hiding, and she gasps at what she discovers as the lights go out.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: You said this was a mistake by Chrollo, do you want to talk a bit about that?

Keith: Did I?

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: You said it was, he, he did the worst thing he could possibly do. Ask Pakunoda to scan.

Keith: Oh! From Killua's perspective.

Jack: Oh, right I see. I was like, why does, this is, actually seems like sound logic from...

Keith: Yeah yeah yeah. From Killua's perspective, worst thing. Oh, we do get a brief, we get a good moment of uh, Nobunaga finally gets to pitch Gon and Killua to Chrollo.

Jack: Yeah, what's Chrollo's take? I don't remember what he says.

Keith: Chrollo's like, [unsure] yeah, seems kind of interesting I guess. But Machi, I don't know if Machi's like, protecting these kids or, because Machi doesn't seem as insane as some of the Troupe. [Sylvi laughs] Or maybe she just doesn't care about them?

Jack: She puppeteers those mafiosos.

Keith: I didn't say she wasn't horrifying. She's definitely horrifying.

Jack: [chuckling] Okay, sure.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Dre: Yeah. We're grading on a curve here.

Sylvia: She's not as oafish.

Keith: She kind of— she walks this line that's kind of interesting of like, she thinks that they have to do with the Phantom Tr— with the Chain User, but she also doesn't want them in the Phantom Troupe. And she doesn't wanna kill them either. So it kinda feels like she's pitching to just be like, can we please just not kill these two kids?

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: But it's pretty subtle. It's pretty subtle, and um, but Chrollo wants to keep them around based on Machi's previous, uh, gut feelings about them. And she says something that's kind of weird, which is like, ah, y'know, my hunches aren't that great. Which is like, an odd thing to do when I don't think she believes that. But I could be wrong. I don't know. Maybe. But anyway, they shut their eyes, they're like, we're so mad

about the Phantom Troupe that we won't even look at you. Which is, uh, Gon's, or, was it Killua or Gon's idea?

Jack: It's Killua. And then Gon realizes.

Keith: Yeah, so they both do this in order to like, shield their eyes to get ready for the darkness basically. Which is great.

Jack: And in the dark, they launch an assault. It broadly fails. Killua stabs Machi with his sharpened hand, but Machi, Machi's like, muscles lock his hand into her.

Keith: 'My hand! She trapped it with her muscles!'

Jack: Everybody gets captured again.

Dre: Mhm.

Jack: Gon lunges for Killua to rescue him but is grabbed by Nobunaga. It seems like this has gone very badly until someone tosses a dagger at Nobunaga with a message on it. And, uh, just as Pakunoda is about to reveal what she learned from the kids, presumably, the full extent to their connections to Kurapika, Kurapika's connections to the Kurta clan, Kurapika's Nen contract ability, and the way that all these people have genuine care and love for each other and are prepared to, y'know, sacrifice their goals for their friends safety. Pakunoda says that this a, sorry, Nobunaga says that this is a message for Pakunoda. And now we just get into full scale ransom note territory. And from this point on, the episodes basically become an exploration of how fucked up a ransom note can get. Sort of abstractly.

Keith: Right.

Jack: The first note says, 'discuss their memories and I will kill him.' Kurapika has kidnapped Chrollo. This is extremely exciting and not what I thought was going to happen.

Keith: What did you think was gonna happen?

Jack: I dunno! I thought that the, um, where this arc was going was going to be that... A sort of *Final Destination*-style series of events would produce the unfavorable fortunes for the Troupe, and Kurapika would be able to start picking off Troupe members. I mean, I knew the Troupe was going to stick around, so I knew it wasn't gonna go quite as badly wrong as Neon thought, but I thought we were going to go into a sort of tense... Put it this way. If Kurapika's first strike against the Troupe was this pristine, flawless furious execution of Uvo, I thought that the way this arc was going to wrap up was in like a panicked, violent, Rube GOLDBERG machine of assaults against the Troupe following a failed kidnap attempt.

Keith: Togashi's fatal flaw is that so many of his ideas are so good that there's a million avenues to go down and explore and spend hours playing with ideas like that, but that's just not where it goes. [chuckles] And it's like, that stuff all could have been cool.

Jack: Well no, but what he does actually end up doing is, he dials into Nen contracts. And, and, he ends up putting everybody in a really nasty place through a really simple series of Nen contracts because Chrollo, uh, in the car... So, Nobunaga immediately assumes leadership and says, alright, Pakunoda, do not speak. And there's some slight rumblings in the Troupe at this point. It hasn't quite reached the nightmarish boiling point, but the rumblings are less Nobunaga shouldn't be the leader and more, we should just go out and hunt the captain. You know? Why are we messing around with any of this ransom note, let's go. This is where we get a really crucial flashback to Chrollo that we sort of discussed earlier, Chrollo's sort of ideology about how the Spider works. He says, 'I am the head of the Spider and you are the legs. Natural law dictates the legs must follow wherever the head goes, but this is just the chain of command. It doesn't apply to my life or death. My orders are priority, but my life and death are not. What's key is the survival of the whole, not the individual. Never forget that.' And so much of the tension of these next episodes comes from Chrollo...hoping? That his Spiders will embody this philosophy.

Keith: Mhm.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: And ultimately they don't.

Keith: And he's so confident about that they will.

Dre: Mhm.

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: And this ties back to like, is it because he's so confident in his leadership or because he doesn't understand what he means to some of them? I don't know, it's very, it's a very interesting thing where it's like, only the two extremes make sense. We also get, uh, young Uvo with an afro, pre-Frankenstien Franklin, short hair, Machi, and conservatively dressed Pakunoda.

Sylvia: Also just busted haircut Chrollo.

Dre: Ugh,yeah.

Sylvia: I'm so glad he had a glow up because my god, he looks like shit.

Keith: I think that he still has that haircut.

Sylvia: No. No.

Dre: No...

Keith: It's the same haircut minus the headband. And, uh, he sort of has a center part now.

Sylvia: He's got, yeah. No, it's the eboy center part that ties it all together.

Keith: Okay.

Sylvia: I, listen. I'm looking at the Chrollo on my desk right now, it's not the same haircut. It's longer.

Keith: It is longer, yeah. [Sylvi laughs] The uh, anyway, that's a great scene. I love the flashback of, it's all so... It's such a crazy thing to say to your friends. What an insane thing to say. [Dre laughs]

Jack: Well I think this is like, founding document zone. These are the founding members, y'know, this is Chrollo speaking that ideology out into the world. Pakunoda is essentially trapped. Whether the Spiders are ready to sacrifice Chrollo becomes the pinch point. The Troupe missed the boss. I can't remember who it is, I think it was Pakunoda who says, we need you back, even if this means betraying the Spiders.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: It was so cool to sort of see in this moment, oh, this is where this is going. The Spiders aren't actually as committed to their ship of Theseus ideology as Chrollo thinks they are, which is wonderful.

Keith: There's this great moment with Pakunoda where sort of like, analysis paralysis, what do I do, do I betray the Spider by saving Chrollo or do I, or the idea of the Spider by saving Chrollo, or do I betray Chrollo by sticking to the ideas of the Spider? And Nobunaga is like, reassures her, is like, don't talk. I read the thing, don't talk. And then and then she feels better for a minute after the flashback she's doing the same thing again, she's caught in the same loop, and then this time it's Machi who says the same thing. Which is interesting because Machi and Nobunaga have been at odds this whole season. Have been just sort of lightly disagreeing on everything, but the chips are down. Cards are down? What's down in that? Chips are down.

Sylvia: It's, the, the, chips are down. Yeah?

Keith: Chips are down. And, Machi's like, no no no, I wasn't in it for Uvo the way that you were, but now it's the boss. Yeah, we gotta save the boss.

Sylvia: It definitely speaks to the, um, founding member bond that kinda came up earlier, right?

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvia: That this is a discussion happening between three of the like, we were here since day one for this.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvia: We've been with Chrollo since the start.

Keith: So were Phinks and Feitan, right? No. Phinks? [cross] Yep, Phinks was.

Sylvia: [cross] I don't know if Phinks was. Okay, yeah.

Jack: [cross] Phinks and Feitan were.

Dre: Oh okay.

Keith: And they're like the main players on the other side.

Sylvia: Yeah, again, I think... Again, I just, you know, yeah.

Jack: It's a different interpretation of the, or rather it's a more ready to take what Chrollo said seriously. Oh, you might be wondering, listener, how does Kurapika's team...

Keith: Ah, the wondering listener.

Jack: *The wondering listener.*

Keith: [whispering] The wondering listener.

Jack: How does Kurapika's team know if Pakunoda will speak? They have made it clear that they have Melody.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: They have been explicit about it, but Melody is—

Keith: Which is a bluff, actually.

Jack: Yes, Melody is extremely powerful and can hear, but may not be, probably isn't close enough to be able to hear.

Keith: I would say unequivocally too far, but they don't know where Melody is.

Jack: No.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Keith: So she could be anywhere, is the threat. Which is a great threat.

Jack: Melody, MVP here.

Keith: Yes, yeah.

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: Melody actively, or inactively, is making a lot of this plan work.

Keith: Oh, you mean the goblin?

Jack: Now listen. [Keith laughs] I wanna go on record, and I think I...

Dre: Jeez.

Jack: I'm inviting the listener to look to my output on the rest of the work that we've all made together as colleagues. When I say that someone is the goblin, it's far from pejorative. [Keith laughs]

Sylvia: Yeah, it's, y'know. You're reclaiming the G-word.

Keith: Yeah. [Jack and Keith laugh]

Dre: God.

Keith: I think that's it, I think I'm good for that whole section.

Sylvia: Is this where we get the little phone call with Phinks or am I jumping ahead?

Jack: No, no, we get a bit of Chrollo being a villain in a car, this is lovely.

Sylvia: Oh yeah!

Keith: Right, we get girl Kurapika number two.

Sylvia: Yeah we do.

Jack: Yes, this is girl Kurapika number two.

Keith: This is like, secretary Kurapika instead of Joni Mitchell Kurapika.

Jack: He's taken his hat off. He's got great hair. And, uh...

Sylvia: He's dressed as the receptionist of the hotel.

Jack: Oh! Right!

Dre: Oh...

Sylvia: I believe, is what this is supposed to be. I think that was, I think that's what the reveal is supposed to be here.

Keith: Yeah. yeah yeah yeah yeah. Yeah.

Jack: And, uh, Chrollo says, I didn't think the Chain User would be a woman. It's so funny.

Sylvia: That's right, the transgender agenda is here! I didn't expect the Chain User to be a woman!

Jack: And then he takes off his wig and he says, 'Who says I am?' [Jack and Keith laugh]

Sylvia: The only mafia that's in charge of Yorknew City is the alphabet mafia. [Jack and Dre laugh]

Dre: Oh do you mean, the community?

Jack: Yeah, the alphabet mafia community.

Sylvia: It's all comin' together. Sylvi's plan.

Jack: Chrollo is betting that Kurapika won't sacrifice his friends. He bets this aloud, essentially.

Keith: And is right.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: And Kurapika, angry, "Chain Bastard" rises up. And Chrollo— ["Chain Bastard" plays faintly] yeah! Figures out in this moment, this is the Chain User's weakness.

Sylvia: Yes.

Jack: Is his, is his care for his friend. This is where the direct hostage situation mirror started appearing so beautiful to me, where it's like, Chrollo. You are in the same dilemma, and you don't realize it.

Sylvia: It's fantastic.

Keith: There's such a great moment of misunderstanding. This is Chrollo's mistake. [Jack chuckles] Of misunderstanding how the fortunes work, because he gives this really amazing speech about, or— part of is internal, part of it is external, where he's got this fortune, the fortune doesn't say anything about this. And so, this is a non-event. As far as the fortunes go, this doesn't matter. I think he says it's calming, it might as well be a walk in the park, or something like that.

Jack: Yeah, he's in full, um, affectless villain mode here.

Keith: Yeah, this is creepy mode number two. Is uh, are these speeches about it not mattering if he's alive or dead, and, y'know, his heartbeat is so insane that Melodu can't even listen to it. [laughing hard] Which is so funny!

Jack: It's great. It's, Melody says, make it stop! It's actually, it's a really good line. But yeah.

Keith: He, uh, he sees the fortunes as a process that they can intercede in, and then can use the fortunes to their advantage and change the future outcomes, but doesn't see how the rest of the world also can do that. And, and also how their own intercession will then change how fortunes play out. So there's—

Jack: Yeah, I think he's right. We talked about this last time, I think he's right that Neon's fortunes aren't, what did we call them, fixed? But, he hasn't... This is Chrollo's mistake, he's doing the thing again, right?

Keith: Right, he acts as if they're fixed in this moment.

Jack: Yeah. And, this is also really fun because something Melody— ugh, Melody. Something Neon said over and over again to the point where in Neon's scenes where she was talking about her fortune telling, it sort of became a hallmark, is that she doesn't really know how the fortune telling works.

Keith: Right.

Sylvia: Yeah, Demon World Theory.

Jack: So, why would Chrollo? [chuckling] It's Demon World Theory. We know how they work.

Keith: Right, we know how they work.

Jack: But why would Chrollo know, you know? He has the same information that Neon does. So it makes sense that he has also sort of misunderstood this. This is where we get another really good Chrollo villain line, where Melody says, what are you? What are you people? And Chrollo looks out the window, and we see his face reflected in the window, and he says, 'we're the Spiders.' And it's nice.

Sylvia: Yeah...

Jack: In part because the line would be kind of, uh, passé if he followed it directly off of Melody's line. But there's this little moment as he looks out of the window and thinks as though, you know, he lets the silence kind of speak for itself for a moment before he speaks, it's great delivery from that actor.

Keith: He had to think about how good the, how cool the Spiders are. He's like, damn we're fuckin' sick, huh?

Jack: It's the only thing he knows—

Sylvia: Yeah, I tend to pause like that too whenever I'm thinking about the Phantom Troupe. I do the exact same thing.

Jack: Yeah. Yeah.

Sylvia: I just go, wow. They're so cool.

Jack: They are. They are so cool.

Keith: Who wants to talk about how funny Phinks is all of a sudden?

Jack: Oh my god. [Dre laughs]

Sylvia: I adore this scene soooooo much.

Jack: So much control over the tone, to be able to say, we're gonna have like four laugh lines back to back and it's not gonna compromise the feel of this thing.

Sylvia: They're, so, what happens is Kurapika calls and, um, does Phinks initially pick up?

Jack: Yep.

Keith: Yeah. Or, whoever picks up, Phinks asks for the phone, I think.

Sylvia: Okay. And then, Kurapika starts laying out terms, where it's like if you harm the hostages, I'll kill him. And Phinks is like, oh? Is that so? We've already broken some of their limbs. And Kurapika's like, okay. And hangs up?

Dre: Hangs up! [laughs]

Jack: Says, we're done here.

Keith: He gets this shit-eating grin because they haven't broken their bones. He's like, giving himself the excuse to be able to torture them a little bit.

Sylvia: And then immediately calls back and goes, 'uhh, sorry, I was lying. Uh...'

Keith: [laughing hard] It's so funny!

Jack: It's so funny.

Keith: Tail between his legs...

Sylvia: It's great.

Jack: His line is, his line is, 'sorry, I was lying, both of them are okay.' [all laugh] I wrote down in all caps: A BAD OPENER FROM PHINKS!

Sylvia: And then, uh, doesn't Kurapika go like, give the phone to someone else and don't put him back on?

Jack: Yeah yeah yeah!

Keith: Yeah, then it shows I think Machi punching him in the head for being stupid. [Dre laughs]

Jack: Yeah, in the background. I just wanna bounce back to the, um, car conversation in case there are listeners like, whoa, why didn't they mention this? Kind of an undercurrent of this conversation in the car with Chrollo and Kurapika, is Chrollo trying to manipulate Kurapika into lashing out?

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: Chrollo understands and believes firmly that his life has no value as a hostage.

Sylvia: He keeps saying that.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvia: Literally that line exactly, I have no value to you as a hostage.

Jack: And he identifies that Kurapika's weakness is both his care for his friends and sort of the knife edge that that puts him on, right?

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: The, the, the, he has to balance his vengeance with his care for his friends and Chrollo is trying to exploit this. It doesn't work. It is from that tense, upsetting scene that we go straight into Mr. Phinks's very bad series of phone calls. [Keith laughs] And here is when the Nen contracts sort of begin. Kurapika starts to make demands over the phone. Do not pursue us, do not harm the hostages. He talks to Pakunoda and forbids all communication with the others. And he does it really, um, really intensely. And this is such a fun thing to do to a character in a show where people are constantly talking about the information they've gained. He says, no talking, no gestures, no writing, no signals, no eye contact. Again, using Melody as the bluff here. Y'know, if you do any of this, we're done. And he tells her to come alone to a place he designates, then he puts Nobunaga on the phone and sort of feeds back most of the information he gave to Pakunoda. He says Pakunoda is going to come, all other members must return to the hideout. And in this moment, Chrollo is thinking, don't hesitate. Bring everyone, y'know?

Dre: Mhm.

Jack: The phone call ends and all hell breaks loose among the Spiders. What started out as a kind of bubbling sense of disagreement now starts to move towards potential actual fighting.

Keith: Yeah, with the sides being Pakunoda, Nobunaga, Machi, and Kortopi on one side. Oh, and Shizuku has sort of switched sides. And then Shalnark, Phinks and Feitan on the other.

Jack: At one point they say, Troupe members settle disagreements through a coin and every goes, shut up! [giggles] The coin is not good enough right now. Nobunaga and Phinks square up for a fight, Shalnark, taking on his role as the Phantom Troupe's Kurapika, points out that Pakunoda leaving opens them up to a negative outcome from a fortune because Phantom Troupe members are not supposed to be alone. And, then Shizuku, despite being on Nobunaga's side, knocks him out.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Because, uh, because, uh, she is looking out for the sort of broader stability of the Spiders.

Keith: Mhm.

Jack: And at this point... Maybe it's a little later, actually. It's in the next episode where Franklin has a really great line. When Franklin intervenes? That's in the next episode, right?

Sylvia: I think so?

Dre: That sounds right...yeah.

Jack: Yes, it is.

Keith: Yeah.

Dre: Yeah.

Sylvia: We could just talk about the, like, deliberation process. Because it's going on concurrently with all this stuff.

Keith: 'Cause this is the very end of the episode, right? The only thing left is...

Jack: Hisoka's little maneuver.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Keith: Hisoka calling Illumi.

Sylvia: Yeah, which is a great reveal. Just like, the shot of Illumi sorta like, standing over the skyline, right?

Keith: Does anyone remember why Illumi agrees to help Hisoka trick the Troupe?

Jack: Oh yeah, it's so funny. He says, sure alright, I've known you a little longer than Chrollo.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: It's the same, ah, fine, what if I just kill them all attitude from the Hunter Exam.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvia: Most toxic throuple in the world.

Keith: The idea that he would not do this because he doesn't want to, like doesn't really even enter into it. It's like, well I have to, I'm being asked to be part of this. Who have I known longer? Like, that's such a weird, like. My own desires have nothing to do with this, I'll help the person who I met first.

Jack: He is, so far, based on the information that we've seen, the weirdest of the Zoldycks. And his mother is Kikyo, and she's pretty weird.

Keith: Oh, she might be the weirdest.

Sylvia: I don't know, y'know.

Keith: Although she's kind of just like, a boy mom. [Sylvi and Jack laugh]

Jack: I love my assassin boys.

Dre: God she really is just a boy mom Keith, holy shit.

Sylvia: Yeah. Nah, you nailed it. She's got a crazy minivan with gatling guns on it I bet.
[Keith laughs]

Jack: So, it's worth saying Hisoka is kind of taking his moment because he's like, this is the perfect moment to fight the boss! Hisoka doesn't give a shit about any of this stuff, he's like, if I can just get this right... Oh, in order to make what happens in the next episode make sense to the listener, if you haven't been following along, the show really starts digging into like, this is Hisoka's moment. And it is frightening that Hisoka has decided to make this call now, it's frightening that in the midst of all this extremely high-stakes negotiation, Hisoka is like, it's time for me to kill Chrollo. And yeah, so he calls in Illumi for a reason that is not terribly clear. I didn't really understand what was happening here until it was revealed, which was lovely.

Keith: Right.

Jack: Something about Illumi that I had forgotten. I mostly thought of Illumi as a murderous weirdo instead of another kind of weirdo. Oh, Kurapika has Killua handed the phone. He says put one of the hostages on, and Killua immediately tells Kurapika that the Troupe is arguing about whether to follow Paku. This is lovely. Killua kind of intuits that they sort of have the upper hand right now and really doesn't mind just kind of spelling out what is going on inside the Troupe headquarters despite Phinks sort of snarling at him about it.

Keith: I've changed my mind, I think the Franklin thing is in 57.

Jack: No, it's not.

Keith: It's not?

Jack: I wrote it down specifically, it is in 58. Yeah.

Keith: Hm. Okay yeah here it is, I see it now.

Jack: The Hunterpedia for this as we sort of leave, and this episode just sort of ends. I mean, it ends on Illumi, which is a nice cliffhanger.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: It ends on, Hisoka is getting Illumi involved. But we are no closer to resolving this hostage situation and it has in fact worsened. Because now the Phantom Troupe is violently bickering with each other. The Hunterpedia is Pakunoda. Gon and Killua just get memories of each other learning how to use the toilet and blush.

Sylvia: Yeah, they... Memories of them poopin' and peepin'.

Dre: Mhm?

Sylvia: It's really funny!

Jack: Yeah! I don't know why they do this. It's 'cause they're twelve year olds reading each other's memories.

Sylvia: It's such a classic, like, yeah it's such a classic little like, here's a little out of character gag! They're little goofballs! These are great for defusing things after these episodes, honestly.

Jack: It's especially funny when, let me find the line again. I want to find the exact line. She says... 'I extract the purest memories that are beneath your consciousness.' [Keith laughs]

Keith: It is, uh, it is weird to have a sort of like, cheeky toilet thing happening in a show where there's like, a murder clown who wants to like sexually murder them, and to have them with their pants off is weird.

Jack: It is weird, at the same time, I think that the show is a kind of kaleidoscope of tone. Mostly for better, sometimes for worse. I don't think it's out of character with the show, it might be out of tone with what it is trying to do in its main episodes, but this is a show where all kinds of shit is, y'know. Keith, ten episodes ago we were like, we have to

solve the puzzle box to get the PS2 memory card, and then Killua has to go to the shop to get a PS2. [Keith and Dre chuckle] And now we're in like, this is a high stakes hostage situation in which the fate of the entire Phantom Troupe and their leader and our protagonists is at stake. Is this a shonen thing? Playing with tone, just as fast and loose as this?

Keith: No. No, this fuckin', this show's weird as hell.

Jack: It is, it goes for this in a way that, does *Jojo* do this, Sylvi? [Sylvi and Dre laugh]

Sylvia: Yeah. Yeah *Jojo* does this a lot.

Jack: Where it's like, they are going to sell one type of tone as genuinely—

Keith: No, that's *Dragon Ball Z*.

Jack: —and as hard as possible and then, they— hey! [chuckling] I know who that is. You can't pull the wool over my eyes.

Sylvia: *Jojo* will be like, super deathly serious about something and then also will have an episode where like, two guys are magnetically stuck together and the entire time they're just making jokes about how it looks like they're doing gay stuff in public.

Jack: [laughing] Sure, okay.

Sylvia: Like, it's, *Jojo*'s all over the place with tone. I don't know if it's like, that's an Araki thing as much as an anime thing. I don't really like to prescribe it to the whole genre. I do think that things, like, it is not uncommon to have sort of like, slight, like, deflationary release valves to break the tension a bit. But I think that, um, yeah I dunno. I think it varies from author to author.

Keith: I think that the, like, the Phinks gags with the phone, that stuff is more common.

Sylvia and Dre: Yeah.

Keith: Having like, gags interspersed in between like, serious stuff. And that goes back, y'know, decades. But... I feel like *Hunter X Hunter* takes it further than most people, or most shows. Not most people. And, will have like, longer periods of that, where it'll just like, cut to, like earlier this season where it cut to Gon and Killua shopping and scamming at the—

Jack: In the middle of an extr— [trails off laughing] [Dre chuckles]

Keith: [laughing] In the middle of, yeah! In the middle of the Chain Bastard arc.

Jack: So funny. Remember the bit in *Dragon Ball* when they went on a full forty or fifty second explanation of what sunglasses were and how they worked? [Keith laughs]

Keith: Yeah... [Jack laughs] This is the first episode that we've recorded since Akira Toriyama died. I know it came up earlier, but I didn't realize. [all sadly exclaim]

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Sylvia: Yeah, rest in peace king.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: God.

Keith: That was horrible.

Sylvia: It's so sad.

Keith: He was really young too.

Jack: Yeah.

Dre: Yeah.

Keith: How old was he, 64?

Sylvia: He was 68, I believe. Still.

Jack: My god.

Keith: Still young.

Jack: I'm so grateful that I got to experience *Dragon Ball* in advance of hearing about Akira Toriyama's passing. In the sense that I was able to see the news of his passing and have a much more sort of rounded feel of like, oh my god this guy ruled.

Keith and Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: I know what he was doing and it's great.

Keith: We should do, we'll do more.

Sylvia: But now you have a better picture of the titanic figure, the shadow that he cast on everything.

Jack: Yeah. Absolutely.

Keith: We'll do more *Dragon Ball*, *Dragon Ball Z* stuff too.

Sylvia: We have to.

Keith: There's stuff, there's stuff that's impossible not to experience from *Dragon Ball Z*.

Sylvia: I think we— the Toriyama, even without the Toriyama news, we'd have to do some Z at some point.

Dre: Sure, yeah yeah yeah.

Jack: I gotta meet Piccolo.

Keith: For sure, it's been absolutely in the plan to do Cell.

Sylvia: Fiddle dee dee.

Jack: Sadly, fiddle dee dee.

Episode 58 [02:29:38]

Sylvia: Let's get back to the anime we are watching, though.

Keith: Right. And hey, we're making good time. Look at that. [Sylvi laughs]

Jack: Pakunoda is at the meeting. This is, um...

Sylvia: Hey, shout out to how Kurapika's got Chrollo chained up. Just, uh... [Jack laughs] Good job, buddy.

Keith: They've paid such careful attention to how his hair has fallen in his face.

Sylvia: Uh huh!

Keith: It's, it is impossible to describe—

Sylvia: It's for me!

Keith: It is impossible to describe Chrollo tied up in anything other than lovingly drawn.

Jack: Yeah. [Dre laughs] They've chained his mouth too, right? For some reason?

Keith: Yep, they chained his mouth.

Sylvia: Yes. That is what I'm shouting at specifically.

Jack: Yep.

Sylvia: I have a picture of Kurapika—

Keith: It seems that it, in the fiction Kurapika must have done.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: His Nen chains are...he didn't do it by hand.

Sylvia: Hey. Maybe he did.

Jack: Ah, maybe he did.

Sylvia: That's how I would. [Dre and Jack chuckle]

Jack: What was I gonna say? I was gonna say...

Keith: Well you don't have Nen. [Sylvi laughs]

Jack: Yeah, yeah.

Sylvia: We all have Nen, we just don't know how to use it. Everybody has aura.

Dre: Yeah, read a fuckin' book.

Sylvia: Yeah. Pay attention to what Master Wing says.

Jack: Chrollo is not the type of character where it's like, if he speaks you're in trouble.

Sylvia: No.

Jack: Do you know what I mean?

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: He's charming and he's very articulate in terms of talking to his friends and his enemies, but y'know, I've seen those sort of like, fiction hostage situations where it's like, oh keep the mage's mouth covered otherwise, y'know, they'll speak. Or Hannibal Lecter wears the bite mask. Or whatever, you know? So I do think chaining Chrollo's mouth is more of a gesture than anything else. I also think that Kurapika wants to minimize the amount of people talking in this— all of Kurapika's stuff here is so precise.

Sylvia: Yes.

Jack: It's so beautifully animated because you can see that he is just bubbling and burning with this kind of—

Keith: The attention to detail of a serial killer.

Jack: [chuckles] Yes! Yes. But he has worked this out completely. They are in airships, they are in, yes, they're in one airship. Pakunoda has arrived sort of for the negotiation. Because...it's really clever. He didn't just ask for a hostage swap straight away. Kurapika wants to do something. And I don't know if he has planned— It's Kurapika, he has. I don't know if he worked this out in the moment. He planned this as soon as the plan went awry, he made a new plan. Right?

Keith: Yeah, that's what I think. Because you can see him still struggling with what the plan is during Pakunoda on the ship already.

Jack: Yeah. So Pakunoda is on an airship, *Hunter X Hunter* absolutely refuses to introduce a plane. Have we seen any planes?

Keith: I don't think so.

Sylvia: No, we've only seen dirigibles, I believe.

Keith: Yeah. There's a great moment where like, Chrollo and Melody are kind of saying the same thing to Pakunoda and Kurapika, like, mentally wishing them to see what's going on. They both, they both see the same weakness in each other.

Jack: Yeah, it's lovely.

Keith: Where Melody, or Chrollo has figured out Pakunoda. 'He's concerned about more his friends and killing me to satisfy his revenge. That is the Chain User's weakness.' Meanwhile, Melody is thinking, 'Kurapika, in the back of your mind, you sense something is amiss. You're curious as to why Pakudoa came alone. If the Troupe were as merciless as we expected them to be, this hostage exchange would be impossible. Their rules are ironclad and their boss accepts them without question. But what about the others? This one appears to be different. This woman who you despise with your whole being is driven, certainly, by the very same motive that drives you. She wishes to save her boss, save her friends.'

Jack: Just speak the text into the show, please.

Sylvia: But it's like, the fact that like, usually when people do the like, speaking the text into the show I'm less into it, but this like, Togashi's just hitting home run after home run and then being like hey. Hey. Check out those dingers I just hit.

Keith: I don't know, I don't know why it works.

Jack: It's a show for children.

Keith: I don't know why he can just say everything.

Sylvia: Well, it's what Jack said. Shonen is, the target audience for this is still younger, like young preteens, right?

Keith: But it doesn't always work that well.

Sylvia: No, absolutely not.

Jack: I think there's two things happening here. To me. The first is that it's for children, and both Togashi and the adapters have a real keen sense of, of that. And they know that this point, that this kind of mirror hostage situation is such a beautiful idea that has been set up so nicely that they just want to look straight down the camera. They want to just deliver both barrels as cleanly as possible to make sure that if we haven't picked up on it, we can pick up on it now. I think the other reason it works for me is that Melody and Pakunoda are doubles. They are both capable of, through different purposes and with different levels of success, ascertaining the truth.

Sylvia: Mhm.

Jack: And so this little moment of speaking the subtext right into the text kind of gains a fun extra resonance because it's almost like, um, it's like it's rhyming. You know? It's like you're seeing these two characters spell out the same thing in the same way having got to it from the same place.

Keith: Because the interesting thing is that Chrollo is trying to mentally deliver this message to Pakunoda, who fully understands that the fact that this is Kurapika's

weakness is what she's taking advantage of in order to secure Chrollo. It's just that she has a different motive than him.

Jack: Yeah. So the line works for me specifically because it is these characters. I have in my notes, 'Melody is acting as a kind of opposite truth-teller. Kurapika is making his own Phantom Troupe.' [Keith laughs]

Sylvia: Interesting. Hmm.

Jack: He's got his own Pakunoda now. Shout out to Melody.

Sylvia: Shout out to Melody. Shout out to the goblin.

Jack: Okay. [Sylvi and Dre chuckle] Kurapika begins to set Nen conditions. First, on Chrollo. The first condition he sets, and when we say Nen conditions, again this is the thing where Kurapika stabs your heart with a little chain dagger...

Keith: Right, middle finger armor.

Sylvia: So good.

Jack: Yeah, it does like a, if/then condition on you. Usually the then is death.

Keith: Right.

Jack: The first Nen condition is that he forbids Chrollo from using Nen. This is big.

Keith: This is an outrageously powerful thing.

Jack: Well his eyes are red. He's in, he's in, what's it called, Sorcerer Time?

Sylvia: Did we mention that he— Emperor Time.

Keith: Emperor Time.

Sylvia: Sorcerer Time is really good. Did we mention that Kurapika can do this at will now?

Jack: Oh, I think we did in the last episode.

Sylvia: Okay, good.

Jack: I think we learned that he can actually do it at will. It's so good.

Sylvia: Yeah. Which is, again, shout out Toriyama. We got a transformation. We got Super Saiyan.

Keith: Yeah, Kurapika spent time in the hyperbolic time chamber and now can be 24/7 Super Saiyan.

Jack: And, it means that there has to be a cost for going Sorcerer Time. Because, if he can do it whenever he wants, y'know. What, what is the debt that needs to be paid here, y'know?

Keith: Well, I know that for *Dragon Ball Z* The only cost to being Super Saiyan is sometimes you need to become Super Saiyan II.

Jack: Oh, yeah yeah yeah. That's true. And then what do you do?

Keith: Super Saiyan III.

Sylvia: Well, there is something that is what it means to go beyond Super Saiyan II.

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: Wow.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: What would happen to a normal person if they go Super Saiyan II?

Sylvia: Well, a normal person couldn't go Super Saiyan II 'cause they're not a Saiyan.

Keith: A normal *Saiyan* could go Super Saiyan II.

Dre: Maybe. Debatable.

Jack: I see. The Saiyans are aliens, right?

Sylvia: Yeah.

Dre: Yes.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Are there normal aliens on their planet? Is there just like a butcher?

Keith: There were, but they exterminated them.

Sylvia: There were, yeah.

Jack: Who's the they?

Keith: The Tuffles? The Tupples? What are they called?

Sylvia: Oh, the Tuffles, yeah.

Keith: The Tuffles, yeah.

Jack: Oh so all that's left is the sort of super powered, yeah.

Keith: There's a couple—

Sylvia: There's a couple Tuffles left.

Keith: The Tuffles were really important for GT so Sylvi knows all about all about the Tuffles.

Sylvia: The Tuffles, the Tuffles—

Keith: The Tuffles are scientific geniuses and they built a super powered robot that, um...

Sylvia: Do you mean the Neo Machine Mutant Baby?

Keith: Yeah, the Neo Machine Mutant Baby, and then Baby acts as a sort of vehicle for revenge against the Tuffles, against the Saiyans, absorbing and infecting the, uh, the protagonists and trying to take over Earth.

Dre and Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: No one like him, Akira Toriyama.

Dre: Thus we get a bunch of wiki, yeah. We get a bunch of wiki pages about Baby Vegeta, and Baby Gohan.

Sylvia: Listen. Baby is one of the best *Dragon Ball* villains, okay? No Baby disrespect here.

Dre: Oh agreed. I think the Baby arc in GT is great.

Sylvia: It's fantastic.

Keith: There's a concept that I've never forgotten which is that, is it android Gero who build— who's the android that builds Baby?

Dre: Oh, Gero.

Keith: Is it Gero?

Sylvia: No...

Dre: Oh, nonono. Gero's the one who makes the other androids.

Keith: Yeah, but I thought that maybe they brought him back.

Dre: No, hold on. I'm gonna look this up.

Keith: I can't remember his name, but anyway, there's a—

Sylvia: Baby was made by Doctor Myuu.

Dre: Yeah. Who was a Tuffle.

Keith: Doctor Myuu, okay. So, Doctor Myuu makes Baby and then like, when Baby starts to turn on Myuu, Myuu is like hey! I fuckin' made you, you can't kill me! And then Baby reveals like, no! Like, I made you. I made you... to make you make me.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: Whoa...a twist...

Keith: He like, infected Gero and gave him the knowledge to invent him.

Jack: Okay, sure.

Keith: Or something like that? It's something like that, it's crazy. It's a ton of fun.

Sylvia: Hey, we should watch *Dragon Ball GT* instead of *Z*. That's not, we shouldn't.

Keith: No we shouldn't.

Sylvia: But hey...

Dre: Media Club Plus *Dragon Ball GT*?

Keith: But I will put an image of Baby. There's...

Sylvia: I got you with the Baby image. Little goop freak. Looks like toothpaste.

Jack: Kurapika is shook. He gets halfway through setting this first Nen condition and then he, the sort of, the, the dilemma hits Kurapika hard. It's hit the viewer before, but he really is in this moment of like, I have to make a decision. You know, I could kill Chrollo in this moment. I could kill Pakunoda in this moment. Y'know? I would, um, I would strike a real blow. But he says, y'know, Chrollo is right. The Spider can live without a head. He is confident that he would not be able to take the kind of perfect revenge that he was wanting and it would cost the lives of his friends. He can't see a way out of this bind and he says this is what I have to do. And you get images of him thinking of Gon and Killua and then another boy dressed in a Kurta robe.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: And he says, I've lost too many people already. And this is great because it kind of synthesizes his, his... This is not just about, or rather, deciding not to kill Chrollo and sacrifice Gon and Killua is not just about the loss of Gon and Killua. It is about a kind of disavowal of losing people close to you, right?

Sylvia: Yeah...

Jack: It's not just because it's Gon and Killua, it is like, I can't stand to see any more people that I care about lost.

Sylvia: Like, I can't go through this again. I can't lose the people I love in my life a second time in the past, like... 'Cause the Kurta clan massacre was less than a decade ago.

Keith: I think it's like five years?

Sylvia: It was pretty recent. Yeah. It's still pretty fresh. Like, I think that like, I don't know. I love this bit. This bit makes, like, Kurapika work as a character for me.

Jack: Because it's, it is distinct from, it is a different thing than, I don't want Gon and Killua to die. Right?

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: It, it, it broadens it out ideologically.

Keith: Yeah. But it is bringing forward the, I've been blessed with good friends thing.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: Totally.

Keith: It's just saying, I've been blessed with good friends twice.

Jack: Yeah. You get the impression that, y'know, this is a generous reading, I don't think that this is necessarily what was being said in the show, but it's like... Maybe Kurapika feels that becoming friends with Gon and Killua and Leorio was sort of an accident,

y'know? Sort of something that just happened to you rather than the kind of connection he had with his community before they were massacres, you know? When his community were massacred, he sort of thought, well that's it for connection. You know? No coming back from that.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: And my connections with Gon and Killua and Leorio, well that's sort of, y'know. Hey, it's nice to make some acquaintances or whatever. But by linking these two together, by saying it is still possible for me to exist in a world, in community with other people, and that can be something that motivates me just as strong as my desire for revenge. Really elegant writing.

Keith: And now we're back with the Phantom Troupe, kind of still debating...

Jack: Oh no, not quite. Time for more Nen conditions. Chrollo's heart—

Keith: Oh, you've only said the first one. Got it.

Jack: Yeah. First Nen condition on Chrollo: No Nen. Second Nen condition on Chrollo: No contact with any members of the Troupe. Presumably after Pakunoda leaves. Chrollo's heart is set with these conditions...did you have something?

Sylvia: Oh no, I was just gonna say, I don't think he speaks to Pakunoda like, regardless of while she's there. I think that does still work with like, yeah.

Jack: I think Kurapika's line is that he forbids all contact. And I didn't know if being in a room with her...

Sylvia: Ohh. Yeah that's fair.

Jack: Chrollo just sits impassive and disappointed as Pakunoda sort of accepts these conditions. Then, Nen conditions for Pakunoda. Release Gon and Killua, condition one. Don't tell the Troupe any more information about Kurapika, condition two. She accepts and her heart is shackled. And then Kurapika says, there's something I want to say to

you. And as he starts to speak, we lose audio and hear his heartbeat as Melody sort of reads that there is loyalty within the Troupe, that she wants to save Chrollo. I can't tell whether the next lines we hear Kurapika speak as he sort of says goodbye, we're done here, here's how the hostage handoff is gonna work is what he said in that moment, or if Kurapika's little speech to the Troupe was being obscured. We were consciously not given that.

Keith: I don't know.

Sylvia: I'm not sure. I don't remember. Now do we wanna get back to the Phantom Troupe?

Jack: Yeah yeah yeah. Back to the Troupe.

Sylvia: This is when, is this when Paku comes back?

Jack: Yep. Pakunoda keeps back and keeps her mouth closed. Phinks is not happy about this. My note here just says 'major disagreement among the Troupe. Everybody gets ready for a fight.'

Sylvia: Can we get the, this is the really good, I have enough bullets for the founding members, right?

Jack: No, uh, no.

Sylvia: This is later? Okay.

Dre: No, that's later, yeah.

Jack: That's later. What we get here is the beginning of what we discussed earlier as both sides are now beginning to suspect, not without reason, but not necessarily based on how we know this is going, that the hostages are being controlled by Manipulators. Both people are like, what if they're under the Chain User's control? Feitan assumes that Pakunoda, Machi and Kortopi are somehow under the Chain User's control rather

than vulnerable in their care for Chrollo. This is kind of Chrollo's blind spot being laid out extremely clearly.

Keith: Yeah. Feitan is really like, the mini, like the worse Chrollo.

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: They sound similar, they're both kinda goth. They...

Sylvia: It's real like, oh you can tell this kid really worships Chrollo vibes to me.

Keith: Yeah, he's also way shorter. [Jack chuckles]

Sylvia: Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah.

Jack: Gon of course can see what's going on.

Keith: Oh this is great, where he stands up for Paku.

Jack: He is so furious, he says, they wanna save their friend for danger! And Phinks says, you're only saying that because you wanna be free. And Gon just effortlessly breaks his chains and stands up. You know, I said this earlier, but Gon is so stuck on this idea, you know?

Keith and Sylvi: Yeah.

Jack: Gon is so stuck on the idea of the transformative power of friendship and the realization that quote unquote evil people can feel these feelings legitimately. He just can't stop himself...

Keith: As much as he doesn't get how they can care about each other but not have empathy for the hundreds of people that they've killed, even more he doesn't understand how Feitan and Phinks can not even care about each other.

Sylvia: I know, he hates when people do friendship wrong.

Keith: Yeah.

Dre: Mhm.

Jack: He does, and who decides who does friendship right? Gon Freecss.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvia: Gon Freecss does, of course! [Jack chuckles] This little twelve year old who is only now discovering the wide world.

Jack: It's so funny.

Keith: And who never even had a friend!

Jack: No! No, but he...

Sylvia: Get a load of friendless loser over here!

Jack: [chuckles] He's figuring it out.

Sylvia: He's doing his best.

Jack: It's so funny. Killua resigned. He says 'yare yare' and breaks his chains.

Keith: Yeah he also just, I guess we're breaking our chains. [laughs]

Jack: He's like, this fucking guy.

Keith: Yeah. They're briefly surprised that they broke the chains, then I tink they remembered like, oh yeah. They're Nen users...

Sylvia: They're Nen users, like they told them that.

Dre: Oh right, I wanted to recruit you to the Phantom Troupe. That's right. [chuckles]

Jack: It's just, Killua's resignation of like, chain breaking time I guess, is so funny.

Keith: Yeah, Gon's doing his like, his Gon's Mistake move of, I think it's Phinks that's like, if you take one step I'll kill you, and he's like, then I won't move! [chuckles]

Jack: What an idiot.

Keith: I'll just stand here, and he just hung out. Yeah. And I think, this is where they're gonna come to blows again, is this Franklin's synthesis?

Jack: Gon has a little line where he's like, no matter how much Kurapika hates someone, he won't break and kill them out of anger! Kurapika just sort of speaking out into the world why they can trust this hostage exchange. And then, y'know, it comes to blows again. It's great. Something that I love in arguments in fiction that i think is representative of the way arguments can sometimes can go in real life is they way it sort of ebbs and flows sometimes. Y'know, the argument will come to a point of understanding or come to a moment where tension is released, and then will begin to turn again. And you get to see these characters go over essentially the same ideas that they're stuck on over and over again in these little different sort of variations. As yes, this argument rises up again. And Franklin says, you know. Look. He speaks with a real confidence and a real sort of authority. He says, the worst case scenario, says this to the Troupe, says, well the worst case scenario would be that they kill Chrollo and then we have to sort out a new leader. You know?

Keith: And the kids escape, and...

Jack: And the kids escape. Frank says, that is not the worst case scenario, you children. The worst case scenario is that everybody dies and the Spider perishes. Keep bickering like this and it might just happen. If Paku and the boss don't return— this is such a great line from Franklin. If Paku and the boss don't return, we will kill the members who are being controlled and rebuild the Spider.

Sylvia: Gotta be real, at this point, Franklin's probably gonna be... If they needed a new head of the Spider, I'd vote for Franklin.

Dre: Oh yeah. Franklin's the VP for sure.

Keith: It's such a great thought, it's like a solution that never would have occurred to me if I was in this position as a Spider, that it's not just the people that wanna save Chrollo

that are valuing him too highly, but also the people who are trying to discard him. It's just a different part of him that they're valuing too highly.

Jack: He is taking a genuinely pragmatic middle ground here that, in theory, allows for everybody's position. Y'know? If, let's let Pakunoda go out to get the boss, if they don't come back here's what we do. That must mean that Machi, Pakunoda, and who's the third one? Kortopi? Are being controlled.

Sylvia: Yes, that is the three.

Jack: And so we'll kill them, and then we make the Spider again. It is, keeping the sort of unity of the Spider as like a single ravaging entity is so important to the sort of Spider ideology and Franklin has laid out a way that they can do that. Especially because we know that they've had to replace members before.

Sylvia: Yeah. Shizuku's a new member. Hisoka's a new member. Like, we have two of them that have clearly replaced someone.

Keith: Who wants to talk about more phone business?

Jack: I'll take this one because it's fucking great. Kurapika phones Shalnark on Chrollo's phone, I think? That's how he's gotten that number.

Keith: No, it's— oh right, yeah.

Sylvia: No, it is.

Keith: Takes Chrollo's phone and calls Shalnark's phone. Right, yeah.

Sylvia: Yeah, 'cause it's, they have caller ID and they're like, it's from the boss's phone.

Jack: What's Chrollo's phone background?

Sylvia: Me. His loving girlfriend. [Keith laughs]

Jack: Oh, I see!

Sylvia: Yeah, duh.

Jack: Kurapika, I don't know if Kurapika says put Phinks on, but Phinks needs to go on the phone.

Keith: Oh no, Phinks asks for the phone. Phinks is like, give it to me.

Jack: Phinks is trying to be the good phone boy. The problem is, [chuckling] he is not. He talks for a bit and then asks for the phone to be passed to someone else.

Keith: To the hostages.

Jack: Phinks just throws Shalnark's extremely powerful phone and Shalnark is just like, don't break it. Don't do that.

Keith: To Killua.

Jack: No, to Phinks.

Keith: No no no, Phinks throws the phone to Killua.

Jack: Yes, and Shalnark reprimands him, and then Killua throws it back to Phinks, and Shalnark reprimands him. [Keith laughs] It's such a good bit. And it's great because it's not, y'know, Killua is also getting scolded here, the A bit of the joke is Shalnark is precious about his phone but the B bit of the joke is that every time Phinks has picked up a phone in this episode he has botches it somehow.

Keith: He's botched it, someone's yelled at him, he's made something harder, yeah. He can't get the phone thing right. He keeps answering it because he want to be in charge of the hostage thing but Kurapika keeps asking for someone else. [laughs] It's so funny! He just grunts and hands it. [laughs again]

Jack: All of this in combination with where Phinks gets by the end of this episode, which is a kind of place of insofar as the Phantom Troupe can, understanding—

Keith: Unbelievable. It's so good.

Jack: Really sells me on Phinks. Two episodes and I'm like, Phinks is fucking great.

Sylvia: Yeah, he's shot up my power rankings a lot on this watch through.

Jack: It's time for the hostage negotiation. Rain falls near-silently as Pakunoda approaches with the hostages and with them here comes Hisoka calling Kurapika and saying, I'm gonna fight Chrollo.

Keith: Has already been told by Illumi, hey hurry up, 'cause I can only hold this form for four to five hours with no needles. And then we see, flickering, kind of jittery looking, he's Rattly No-Pin Man. As Hisoka.

Dre: Uh huh.

Jack: Yes. They've been using Illumi as a double. It's very funny, the show has sort of spent its Gittarackur card very early, now Gittarackur's trick has been revealed. The show can't pull the same trick twice, because if we see a guy with needles in his face...

Keith: We know it's Illumi.

Sylvia: Yeah, we know.

Jack: That's Illumi. So they have to sort of awkwardly say, well I can only do this for a bit 'cause I can't have my needles and I can't have my needles 'cause otherwise you'll know it's know it's me.

Keith: Hey, we got like, sixteen, seventeen good episodes of Rattly Pin Man.

Jack: [chuckles] We did. It's great. I love Gittarackur. I wanna see Gittarackur again. I would love a little Gittarackur reprise for some reason. Hisoka basically says, let me go ahead with this plan to kill Chrollo. I want to ride on the airship with Pakunoda. The way this is gonna work is, the two airships fly off to a neutral location and y'know, they do like a classic sort of *Bridge of Spies* hostage switch. And he bluffs that he's gonna kill Gon and Killua if Kurapika doesn't let him.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Preying on the fact that Kurapika is in this real heightened state of like, I'm working to keep Gon and Killua alive. I'm sticking with the plan, I feel confident about this.

Keith: Meanwhile, Kurapika knows that there's no fuckin' reason that he shouldn't let Hisoka on the ship, because Chrollo's already Nenless.

Jack: Although, I hadn't put that together yet.

Keith: Oh, okay. [laughs]

Jack: I was setting up for a fight. I was setting up for a really exciting fight.

Keith: It is kinda subtle, I can see how you could not add those two numbers up from the way that they show it.

Jack: Yes. This hostage exchange is lovely and it plays out exactly the way you think it does. The people impassively walk next to each other and then at the very end Gon and Killua give Leorio a high five. [Jack and Dre chuckle] Chrollo makes no eye contact with Pakunoda. Doesn't speak to her. And then in voiceover, we get sort of the culmination of Kurapika's plan tonight. He says, if you make contact with a Troupe member you'll die. Now you'll know the pain of losing your home. And this is a real, y'know, Kurapika has gotten a kind of W here. He has figured out a different kind of revenge to exact. Y'know, previously his revenge was, I'm going to kill the Phantom Troupe one by one. But, boxed into a situation where he couldn't easily kill the Phantom Troupe, he kind of elegantly worked his way around to another kind of revenge.

Keith: Yeah, it's a very satisfying alternative to just killing them.

Jack: It's great. It's really good. I was briefly confused about, I thought Pakunoda had been forbidden from making contact with the Troupe, I thought he'd also exiled Pakunoda, and I didn't understand why she hadn't died when she went back to get the hostages, but now I've reread through the main contracts, that makes sense.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: It's time. For the great match. Hisoka vs. Chrollo. Chrollo sort of intuit's that something is going on as Hisoka takes his shirt off and then peels the Phantom Troupe tattoo off his back. Hisoka is going all in. Hisoka is like, going undercover in the Phantom Troupe, that's done. This is it. Here is the fight.

Sylvia: Yeah. This was the goal, right? This was always the goal.

Keith: Right.

Sylvia: Was to fight Chrollo. That's why he joined the Phantom Troupe.

Keith: And this is the, this is what he has in his mind when he enlists Kurapika way back at the very end of the Hunter Exam.

Jack: This is also a kind of demonstration of the apotheosis that he wants, you know? This is what Hisoka sees as the end goal of his kind of pervert plan.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Right? Is this kind of like, highly orchestrated ultimate fight. And we're getting to see that— we saw it with Kastro, I suppose, we saw him do that once before. And Chrollo says, well look, fine, since you're not a Troupe member we can talk, this is fine. Here's the deal. I am simply not worth the trouble. I can't use Nen anymore without dying, so I am not a fair fight. And, [chuckling] we get this shot of Hisoka's face. Hisoka is like, extremely, he's psyched up, he's ready to go. And then when Chrollo reveals this, he just like, turns into this impassive, sheepish black and white manga drawing of Hisoka. Let me tell you, this is the hardest I have laughed at the show. [Keith laughs]

Keith: Yeah I think it may be, there's like a goofy sound effect, it's like, fully, it's a gag. Like a *boing!*

Jack: The thing is, it's not even a goofy sound effect, it's just a single drum beat.

Keith: Oh is that it, really?

Jack: Part of the reason it works so well is that it's just this single big drum, and Hisoka's entire demeanor changes. It's so funny. Stunned Hisoka, I wrote down, the showdown failed, he just leaves.

Keith: He just leaves.

Jack: Ah. He says, I have no interest in broken toys.

Sylvia: I do.

Jack: It's so funny— [laughs]

Sylvia: I can fix him.

Jack: I feel like Hisoka saying 'I have no interest in broken toys' and trying to get his little pervert game going again here is some real, I'm not owned move from him.

Dre: Yeah, a hundred percent! Yeah.

Sylvia: Oh, absolutely.

Keith: I have an addendum to this, to the Hisoka black and white manga drawing thing. There is the big drum beat and what follows is a half second of silence and then like, the wind that you would associate with a tumbleweed.

Jack: [laughs] That's great.

Keith: It just kinda goes like, *wheeeeew*. Very funny. You can hear him deflate. [laughs]

Sylvia: It's good. It's what he deserves.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: It's so funny. It is what he deserves. And it's so great that like, even in this moment of absolute abject weakness, of, of being removed of all his power, of being isolated from all his friends, Chrollo is able to get one over on Hisoka without even trying.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Because what would happen would be, Chrollo would die in that fight as it stands, right? Either he would try and fight Hisoka hand to hand with no Nen and Hisoka would kill him, reluctantly. Or he would use his Nen and die immediately thanks to the Nen contract.

Keith: Mhm.

Jack: And all of this is a fight that Hisoka doesn't want to do, because not a sicko enough for him.

Keith: Right, he's now, now he's sort of de facto committed to getting Chrollo his Nen back.

Sylvia and Dre: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah, he is. He says, it's so funny. This is kind of like an inverse of, I have to become strong enough to fight Hisoka, Hisoka now wants Chrollo to get his Nen back so he can fight him. He reveals his true fortune to Pakunoda, and again sort of speaks to the facts with a little more understanding of how the fortunes work than Chrollo. He says that fate is changing, you know? His fortune said—

Keith: It's kind of a weirdly reassuring thing that he did.

Jack: That, what? That...

Keith: That Hisoka did. 'Cause Hisoka's like, hey, y'know, a bunch more of you were supposed to die, so nice job.

Jack: Yeah. His exact words were something like, I was supposed to have a date with the boss on Tuesday, not gonna happen, and by the time he left, the Troupe's numbers would be cut in half. And they weren't. Pakunoda walks quietly back to the Phantom Troupe headquarters. As a quick reminder, Pakunoda's Nen contract is that she has to return Gon and Killua, which she's done, and she can't communicate to the Troupe

anything more about the Chain User. A white cat kind of slinks out of the wreckage in the rain and meows at Pakunoda and she meows back at this cat.

Sylvia: I love it...

Jack: It's kind of a sad, sad little moment. I didn't know exactly what Pakunoda was going to do, but I knew more or less what was going to happen. Y'know, the writing is on the wall for her. And just having this little moment of connection with the cat was really nice.

Keith: I don't think I saw this coming the first time. I kind of like, wasn't sure what was gonna happen.

Jack: I didn't see... okay, so here's what happens.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Pakunoda says, 'I can only shoot six bullets at once.' Obviously she could shoot more bullets if she could reload her gun, but she knows that what she's about to do means that she's not going to reload her gun.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: She chooses the six founding members, this is lovely. We get confirmation on who the six founding members are. We've said it before in the episode, but I'm gonna say it here just in case. Feitan, Phinks, Machi, Nobunaga, Shalnark, Franklin, and then presumably Pakunoda and...

Sylvia: Chrollo.

Jack: Chrollo. And Uvo.

Sylvia: Yes.

Keith: Right.

Sylvia: RIP big man.

Jack: And there's a kind of moment on the, she says trust me to the Phantom Troupe. She says, 'all my memories, my soul, I give you anything.' She shoots them, the Nen contract pierces her heart, and as she dies she says 'please let me be the last.' And y'know, we just get a flash of everything that she saw and Pakunoda was in a position to see a lot over these last few episodes. And Phinks says, 'now we know, she did this because...' and then he trails off. And I wrote down, y'know, because of her care for the boss, of her love for her friends, the fact that she knew there was only one way out of this that would let the Spiders kind of continue to work with latitude or with leverage. And it required her to die, because she saw this as a way to prevent other Spider death. I love that we don't get Phinks's answer to this and it helps sell Phinks's understanding. This is a moment where, where we actually, we would lose out if we saw the character spell out exactly what we learned.

Keith: Mhm.

Jack: Y'know, by seeing Phinks realize this in silence, by seeing him sort of come to this conclusion in his own head, it sells Phinks as a character who comes to his own conclusions. You know, who learns things.

Keith: Yeah. I guess sorta, this is the moment I got sorta misty over this, they do such a good job.

Sylvia: It's really well done.

Keith: It's really well done. And just the, y'know, the line 'all my memories, my heart and soul, I give you everything...'

Sylvia: Fuckin' impeccable.

Keith: It's impeccable, and there's just this like, real beauty to the idea of giving someone exactly what you thought and felt about things. Like, y'know, something that is a total fantasy. No one could ever do that in life, and to do it to these, y'know, these characters, they've been lifelong friends, they've been fighting all day, high stakes situation, they're all worried about the boss and the Troupe in their own way, and to

have, simultaneously been able to perfectly, y'know, sci-fi perfect, communicate your perspective but at the cost of your own life. It's like, oh, it's so sad!

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: It's horrible, but it was really good.

Jack: I don't know if you remember, Dre, we did this in the Dream Askew game. At the end of Bluff City. We had a similar— not with a death, I'm not spoiling something. [Sylvi chuckles] We, we had a similar arc about like, what would it be like if you could communicate perfectly, absolutely perfectly, with people you cared about. And in much the same way as it is here, it was immediately sad and extremely heavy to have to deal with. It opens you up to a lot of problems and concerns that weren't there necessarily beforehand.

Keith: Mhm.

Jack: But yeah, Pakunoda falls. And almost immediately the sun comes out in Yorknew City. The show is so good at moving towards the end of an arc in the micro level. Y'know, its pacing is generally brilliant, and there's a lovely sense of rising action and then falling action, as we come to the end of an arc at like an episode level. But literally in the last episodes of each of these arcs, the last, y'know, five minutes have been paced so beautifully just to like, ease you out of one arc and into another. And you know, the sun coming out on Yorknew City here, Gon and Killua are eating snacks...

Keith: Killua's dressed like me in 2001. [Jack and Sylvi laugh]

Keith: Cargo shirts and a t-shirt, and like a button down t-shirt over that t-shirt.

Sylvia: There's, we get this line from Gon where he's like, I'm kinda glad, I hope Kurapika's fever never goes away 'cause I don't want him to be a murderer? And I'm like bro, talk to Uvo about it. [all laugh]

Jack: [cross] Yeah, it may be a little late for this.

Sylvia: [cross] It's very cute.

Dre: Hey, that's self defense.

Keith: You could murder a little bit.

Sylvia: Yeah, that one didn't count. Everybody gets one.

Jack: Everyone gets one— that's not true.

Sylvia: That's not true. By the way, if you're listening— that's not actionable advice, don't do that, not everybody gets one, it's—

Keith: To be fair, Uvo was out there killing hundreds of people.

Jack: Often onscreen.

Keith: And Killua— not Killua, Kurapika was there for that. It's hard to call it self defense, but it is, uh, it was definitely more fair than kidnapping Chrollo and then, y'know, doing whatever.

Jack: Oh yeah. There's a nice little bit of line— of dialogue where...there's a nice little bit of line. I'm so tired.

Keith: Nice little bit of line in this one.

Sylvia: No worries. We're, it's 11:15 PM while this we're recording this, so sorry if we're a little fuzzy and also a little rushed. Sylvi and Dre chuckle]

Jack: Gon says, y'know, he sort of thinks, Kurapika chose his abilities for more than one reason. Y'know, if all he wanted to get was revenge, then he would've taken different abilities. And Killua says, I don't think that's the case. I think his, his ability was created solely for revenge. You know? And specifically for the kind of revenge that he wanted to execute. The implication being, if he just wanted to execute on a kind of immediate murderous revenge, he would have chosen one kind of Nen ability. But instead, he sort of in a very Kurapika way, sort of built himself out a toolset for revenge.

Keith: Mhm.

Jack: And where Gon's argument is, well he chose those abilities for things other than just revenge. Killua says, no no no no. He wanted the full palette, y'know? He wanted top to toe, comprehensive revenge.

Keith: Right, he wanted a menu of revenge.

Jack: And something that would let him think his way through the kinds of binds that he knew he would get put in. It's um, it's very Kurapika to develop an extremely complex...

Keith: Interlocking set.

Jack: [chuckling] ...Interlocking set of abilities.

Sylvia: You need a PowerPoint presentation for them, you know? That's exactly it.

Keith: Yeah. And then to give yourself a condition based on, like, oh I can only do it when my eyes are red. And then to like, then teach yourself how to make your eyes red, sort of overcoming the self-imposed limitation. That's great. It's so good.

Jack: Gon and Killua go to the auction dressed up in fancy clothes.

Keith: Yeah, they're wearin' a tux.

Jack: Gon's plan hasn't been revealed yet to us, but it has to Killua.

Sylvia: No, not yet.

Keith: No. Killua called it realistic and sound. Which is hilarious.

Sylvia: It's an eighty percent chance now!

Keith: Eighty percent chance.

Dre: Mhm.

Sylvia: It's gone up thirty percent! And Zepile's there as well with them.

Jack: Yeah! Hell yeah.

Keith: Zepile's there, Leorio's there, right?

Jack: No, no. Just Zepile.

Sylvia: Y... I don't know if, I don't remember seeing Leorio. And then we get...

Keith: Who do they run into?

Sylvia: Oh my god, it's so fucking funny.

Keith: It's so funny.

Sylvia: They are just like, walking down the staircase to like, their seat presumably. And they look—

Jack: No, they take their seat and they look...

Sylvia: Oh, they take their seat, okay. They look next to them and there's Feitan and Phinks wearing suits. Feitan wearing the same—

Jack: It's so funny.

Sylvia: Wearing the same thing he killed all those people in with Franklin, [Keith laughs] wearing the same suit! And they look at them and just bolt. They just fuckin' run.

Keith: Yeah. This is comedy, they're doing more comedy.

Sylvia: It's so funny!

Keith: They chase— Phinks and Feitan chase after them like Looney Tunes.

Sylvia: They do! Both, like, every— the animation on this section is really well done, the running around. And we get this really good confrontation in the hallway where, I think it's Phinks who assures them like, we're not here to hurt you, we're not gonna kill Kurapika, because—

Keith: They can't kill Kurapika.

Sylvia: I have the quote.

Keith: Oh, please.

Sylvia: Nen doesn't—

Keith: Oh wait hold on, let me press this button too, while you do it.

Sylvia: Please. I would love to talk over some music. ["Latent Power" begins playing]
'Nen doesn't necessarily disappear when you die. Nen that's driven by hatred and regret can persist a long time after death. That Nen will direct itself toward the target of those emotions. Residual Nen can be quite fearsome. That's why we can't kill the Chain User.' So like, I cut out a little bit in the middle there, but that's the important stuff.

Dre: Hmm!

Sylvia: And residu— this is I think, like, the first time residual Nen has really been a thing?

Keith: Yeah. For sure.

Sylvia: We kind of, we had like a hinting, not necessarily a hinting at it, we had something similar to it with the snake incident? Honestly, it was immediately what I thought of.

Jack: Oh, we did!

Keith: Oh, the snake incident, right. Oh my god!

Dre: Oh yeah!

Sylvia: Forever ago? It's, it's just that but on a bigger scale, right? Where it's like, Nen can have, your aura can be implanted in something so powerfully and so deeply especially when tied to these strong emotions like he said, that it can go on after your death or have unforeseen circumstances after the user's death.

Keith: Squala's dogs pushing food carts around, after he dies.

Sylvia: Exactly. The one having human eyes in the back of the car looking sadly at him. That, I love this because it brings, it turns Nen into ghost stories in a lot of ways, right? Nen can have unfinished business.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvia: And, and can hang around because of that.

Keith: I wonder if there's a theory that accounts for that.

Sylvia: I wonder! [Keith laughs] Maybe some sort of like, Ghost World Theory or something.

Jack: I think Nen having unfinished business is actually a much more elegant and kind of expressive way of thinking about it than Demon World Theory. The idea of like, it actually being a sort of, yeah. It's unfinished business. It's an expression of a ghost, is, I can see how Demon World Theory does actually dovetail with this, but, and I also thought I was gonna be like, this is a moment of Demon World Theory! But I do think that your framing of it, as almost like a haunting is much cooler.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvia: Yes. Thank you.

Jack: I have some questions about this.

Sylvia: Uh huh!

Jack: And I love this idea, I think it's really really fun and I, y'know, this is clearly gonna be consequential. We're going somewhere with this. But, wouldn't have this been a problem if they killed the Chain User earlier?

Keith: No because no one was under... Oh.

Sylvia: No, it wouldn't have been.

Keith: It wouldn't have been because they wouldn't have cared if the boss died.

Jack: No, it's— so my read of this was the pain the regret was Kurapika's pain and regret, right?

Keith: Right. Yeah.

Sylvia: I think Kurapika's pain and regret would have still been present, right?

Keith: But he would've needed to cast some bit of Nen to carry on.

Sylvia: Sure, that is, that is correct.

Keith: And so the thing that they're worried about, is what Pink says, is uh, 'Since the boss can't use Nen himself anymore, he's all the more vulnerable to that kind of assault. Scary, that residual Nen. That's why we can't kill the Chain User.' So, the worry is that if they kill the Chain User, instead of the Nen dagger disappearing, it would actually activate.

Jack: And would, right. Would kill Chrollo. And we are to sort of read that Phinks and Feitan have come around on not killing Chrollo now because of the sort of, and this is very Gon-like, the sort of transformative power of Machi's... of Machi's. Of Pakunoda's memory.

Keith and Sylvi: Yeah.

Jack: They have essentially been brought around to, we care about this guy.

Keith: This flashback is great, I love this.

Sylvia: The flashback is incredible, of Pa—

Keith: Teared up again at this one.

Sylvia: Yeah, this is one of my favorite moments of this arc, is Pakunoda marching, or like walking with Gon and Killua to like, bring them back to Kurapika. And it's like, y'know, we could just run. I think Killua says that, right? And she's like...

Keith: Pakunoda says, why don't you run? With my injuries, you could escape easily. And Gon and Killua both go, well why would we do that? That would make Kurapika have to kill Chrollo, we'd rather get out of this with the exchange if we can.

Sylvia: Yes, right, thank you.

Jack: They say, we don't want to turn him into a murderer.

Sylvia: Yeah, again, talk to Uvo about it. [Keith and Jack chuckle]

Keith: Which is great, and then so now Phinks has this memory which gives him this perspective of like, oh they really, they were nice, and they kinda saved Chrollo, like on purpose.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah, and so he says, Paku was very thankful to you both.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvia: Right, 'cause he would have seen this, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: You can see him being kind of moved and also kind of confused by his feelings towards them now?

Dre: Yeah.

Keith: It's very strange.

Jack: And it has transformed the Phantom Troupe.

Keith: It has.

Jack: Or it's transformed the Spiders, a kind of ideological object, right? In that, they no longer have this kind of ship of Theseus out in the way that they did before. And, if they

feel that way about Chrollo, they probably feel that way about other Troupe members, too.

Sylvia: Mhm.

Jack: And so there has been a real, through Pakunoda's sacrifice, there has been a real sea change in, I think how the Troupe is gonna think of themselves going forward. And I think that's part of what Pakunoda was saying when she said, 'please let me be the last,' as she died. She was talking about the fortunes, she was talking about the deaths of the Troupe, but I think she was also saying, y'know, can we have a Phantom Troupe that, that doesn't just take out its own members for...

Keith: Stop being a Phantom Troupe and start being a Family Troupe.

Dre: Mm...

Sylvia: Wowww...

Jack: Whoa....wow.

["Chasing After a Dream" plays] [Dre laughs, Sylvi loses it]

Dre: This motherfucker. [Jack giggles]

Sylvia: Well done Keith!

Keith: [laughing] Thank you...

Sylvia: That was masterful.

Jack: And, y'know, on some level, I'm like, this is a kind of stable resting place. I'm a little disappointed that the, that the ball has stopped rolling as it were. Y'know, hearing the Phantom Troupe say, we're not gonna kill the Chain User right now, and we have no quarrel with you, Gon and Killua. I'm sort of like, but you're the Phantom Troupe! Y'know, come on!

Sylvia: Yeah.

You gotta be in here in the story causing a ruckus and putting our heroes in nightmarish situation after nightmarish situation. But, this is Togashi, y'know. I don't think that Togashi is short of ways to trap his characters in interesting, in interesting problems. And, it makes for a good ending of an arc. Y'know?

Sylvia: Yeah!

Jack: Having this kind of resting point come, having the Phantom Troupe and everybody come to a sort of disagreement... ugh, a disagreement. Come to a sort of stillness and agreement. I think it's good. The only bit of me that rankles a little is the one going, ah I wanna see the Phantom Troupe kicking the shit out of people and causing problems for our heroes.

Sylvia: Yeah... I get you.

Keith: That's the end of the episode.

Sylvia: [cross] Oh, it ends with the—

Keith: [cross] The only thing left is the announce— what's that?

Sylvia: The narrator saying, 'Next time, the Greed Island arc begins!'

Jack: It's so funny.

Keith: Yeah, that's the, that's what I was gonna say, the only thing left is the announcer announcing the next arc.

Jack: The announcer has suddenly remembered that he is under contract with the producers of *Hunter X Hunter*. Usually he's like, I have a fun question about what Gon might be thinking! And then he's like, shit! The next arc! So yeah, he explicitly says it's time for the next arc. I think I said off mic that I was sure we were getting ready for ants. But no.

Sylvia: No...

Jack: We got Greed Island to do.

Sylvia: We gotta do, be gamers first.

Jack: Yeah, we gotta be gamers. Feitan and Phinks say that they're there to enjoy the auction, and we know from the Hunterpedia that Feitan is also interested in Greed Island, so I think that they might have some problems with the bidding.

Sylvia: Hmm...

Jack: The Hunterpedia is Chrollo, who wields, despite no longer— oh, no, oh we missed something important. Chrollo, standing in a wasteland, says, 'Time for me to head east.'

Sylvia: East, huh?

Jack: Yeah. What did Chrollo's fortune say? It said...

Keith: It said he would find a friend in the east.

Sylvia: Yeah. Or it was like, the one you seek lies in the east. I think it depends on the translation.

Jack: Yeah, it's Hanzo. To join the Phantom Troupe.

Sylvia: You nailed it.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: [chuckles] It's cool! Hanzo said, if you're ever in the east, y'know, look for me and we'll meet again. And I think if Gon and Killua do head east for some reason. Chrollo says, 'east, huh?' with a kind of resignation, and a kind of resigned confidence, right? Of like, well, this is the way we're going.

Keith and Sylvia: Mhm.

Jack: And I can't tell whether that's because he knows something about the east or whether he is like, all I have to go on now is the fortune.

Sylvia: I, I think, y'know, a mix of both, right?

Jack: Can Chrollo open his book—

Dre: Yeah. More the latter, but.

Sylvia: No, Chrollo can't use Nen.

Jack: Can Chrollo open his book?

Sylvia: I think the book is part of, like, I think that would count. I think that would be trying to use Nen.

Dre: Yeah.

Sylvia: I don't think he could do it.

Keith: I think that the book is real, and that he could open it and it would be fine.

Jack: He has to sort of cast a spell, as it were.

Keith: That's what I think. But I think it's open, obviously it's open to interpretation.

Jack: Ah, something that's really cool about seeing the Nen contracts fire on two separate people is that it kills you instantly.

Sylvia: Yes.

Jack: The stakes of, if Chrollo uses Nen, he's done. Oh, it's worth saying that as a addition to the residual Nen, Nen with unfinished business, Phinks sort of intimates that very few people can actually remove Nen from somebody.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: So there's a way so we can maybe sort of angle our way out of this situation, that's something people can do. But other than that, I think that's all I have to talk about for these.

Sylvia: Yeah!

Jack: This was *such* an episode chunk, Keith.

Dre: Yeah.

Keith: Yeah, yeah.

Sylvia: And, just, ugh. Well done with the pacing, [Keith: Thank you.] and also, I'm just so happy that we've watched this and I can freely talk about the Phantom Troupe arc with my friends.

Dre: Mhm!

Keith: I know, you're, you're, you're unbound.

Sylvia: I'm unbound!

Keith: Unlike Chrollo, you are unbound.

Dre: Unlike Chrollo, yeah. [laughs]

Sylvia: Yeah yeah yeah. It's fine. He's heading east to Canada to find me.

Jack: It really does have everything Sylvi likes in it.

Sylvia: Yeah!

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvia: No, this is, like I said, this is probably my favorite arc. I'm wondering if that'll hold up after we watch through the rest of the show, but I love the Phantom Troupe arc.

Keith: This is a lot of people's favorite arc. There are people who, we just watched the best, y'know, fifteen episodes of the show.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: Ah, joke's on them though. I'm watching this whole thing, because I'm invested in it and I'm being paid to.

Sylvia: Hell yeah!

Jack: And both of those are real powerful motivators.

Keith: Next time, we're watching another four. Another four...

Sylvia: Whoa!

Jack: Keith, when are you gonna free us?

Keith: Uh, after the next—

Sylvia: Soon.

Keith: After the next next one. So we're watching four, and then four again, and then we're back to threes.

Jack: Okay.

Sylvia: Okay. Fine by me.

Jack: I mean I trust you, I think your pacing is—

Sylvia: More *Hunter X Hunter*? Oh no.

Jack: —[chuckles] your pacing is good.

Dre: Oh no, what are we gonna do.

Keith: I'm gonna take a look at the next season just to make sure everything is good, like I do for every season. The only season that so far has been a problem was this recent one. So just to make sure that I'm not wrong and that four, and then four and then three is true.

Jack: I wonder if we're gonna get an interlude.

Sylvia: Before we go, I would just like to do two bits of business. The first—

Keith: Okay. Can I say the names of the episodes we're watching?

Sylvia: Oh! Actually, I forgot, yeah, do that, it's important.

Keith: "Bid x And x Haste," "End x and x Beginning," "Invitation x and x Friend" and "Reality? x And x Raw."

Jack: Ooh.

Sylvia: Whoa. Alright.

Keith: What's your biz?

Sylvia: My biz is related to Apple podcast reviews, which you should go leave us a five star one and I will read it on the show like the one I'm about to. Only doing one this week because it's very late and I wanna go to bed.

Keith: Mhm.

Sylvia: There's a cute one that I'm gonna save for when we're not in a rush. But also, I need to apologize to people who aren't in Canada, [Dre laughs] 'cause it turns out I was only looking at the Canadian reviews for this podcast?

Jack: It's so funny.

Sylvia: So shout out to all my fellow canucks, and also we need more of you to be reviewing the show. We've only got like fifty something on there, let's, c'mon. Step it up.

Keith: It's funny 'cause the same thing happened to me like, three months ago or something when I realized I was only looking—

Sylvia: Yeah. Because of a VPN, right?

Keith: —'Cause of a VPN, yeah.

Sylvia: And, the review for this week that I'm gonna read is a five star review from wipayners, I think is how you read that.

Jack: One more time?

Sylvia: Wipayners? W-I-P-A-Y-N-E-R-S?

Dre: It's probably like, Wisconsin payners?

Sylvia: Sure!

Dre: 'Cause WI is the abbreviation for Wisconsin.

Sylvia: Oh okay.

Keith: What's a payner?

Sylvia: Guys, we don't have time. I'm sorry, I'm puttin' my foot down.

Dre: Someone who payns.

Sylvia: This review is titled Revolving Gorillas. 'The cast does a great job of breaking down and reviewing everything that makes *Hunter X Hunter* work. The cast has also cursed a member with the knowledge of a gorilla which slowly rotates through that cast member's mind, appearing when you least expect it.' [all laugh]

Keith: It's true, it is true!

Sylvia: Yeah, it is.

Jack: I'm gonna be so excited when we see that guy.

Sylvia: Yeah, so if you—

Keith: Yeah, Jack has no clue—

Sylvia: We're gettin' closer.

Keith: If you had to guess, how many episodes till we see the gorilla?

Jack: I couldn't guess. I couldn't guess. Or well, uh...

Sylvia: At this point, I don't know if we could make Jack guess.

Jack: Let's see, okay. It's not Greed Island because Greed Island is primarily gonna take place inside a video game, and... Well, I don't know. Uh...

Sylvia: Yeah, that's, no, y'know.

Jack: You know what I think Greed Island is?

Sylvia and Keith: What do you think Greed Island is?

Sylvia: Let's do, what's up.

Dre: Yeah, let's do this.

Keith: It's late, but this is important.

Jack: Okay. 'Cause we're about to learn. Greed Island is... okay, two things. Greed Island is Togashi's funny little game. We're gonna go in and we're going to play a sort of bizarro video game on the equivalent of the 3D model from Yoshi's Island, y'know?

Sylvia: Okay...

Jack: You know when you select levels on Yoshi's Island [**Sylvia:** Yeah!] you get that little rotating 3D model, Greed Island is gonna be this like, this like, um, it's gonna be a RPG city block. It's going to be, it's Togashi, so it's gonna be extensive and there's

gonna be lots of cool stuff hidden in it, but it's gonna be this little area that you go into. Greed Island, in actuality, is a trap.

Sylvia: Oh...

Jack: It is something built to entice Hunters and fuckin' get them for some purpose. Lure them into a game...

Keith: Like a Venus flytrap. But for Hunters.

Jack: It is a Nen Venus flytrap. Who made it? I don't know, but they have fell intent. [Sylvi laughs] What is it? It is a puzzle box. It's like a puzzle box level of a video game.

Sylvia: Sure.

Dre: Now, what else do we know about other media franchises where puzzle boxes show up?

Sylvia: I...Dre, what are you driving at, I'm impatient.

Dre: This, you're right. This is just a joke about *Hellraiser* and Demon World Theory.

Sylvia: [cross] Oh! Okay, yeah yeah yeah. [Jack chuckles]

Keith: [cross] Oh okay.

Sylvia: Demon World Theory, they're gonna solve the Lament Configuration.

Keith: I was like, I think Dre is plugging the 999 Twitch streams. [chuckles]

Sylvia: Oh, also that. Yeah.

Jack: Thank you for your reviews, and thank you for reading them Sylvi.

Sylvia: Yes, thank you so much! Please leave more, I promise I will read more next time, this was just a almost four hour recording session for us.

Dre: Oh for sure, yeah.

Jack: We're doing great. [chuckles]

Sylvia: Remember what Jack said at the beginning of this episode? We nailed it.

Keith: Hey, we did get it, we almost hit 11:30. It's 11:33.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Keith: So we got really close to ending by 11:30.

Sylvia: We got really close!

Jack: Have a good night, everybody.

Sylvia: Thanks so much for listening everybody.

Keith: Yeah, goodnight.

Dre: Bye!

Jack: Thank you for listening.

Sylvia: Goodbye!

[["The Boy In Green"](#) by Jack de Quidt begins playing]