

Gathering Information 12: Your Pretty Wings

Transcriber: norveir

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[00:00:00] Introduction / Drink Girlies

Ali: Hello, everybody, and welcome to Gathering Information, your behind the scenes look at setting the table for Friends at the Table. I'm your host, Ali Acampora. I'm joined today by Janine Hawkins.

Janine: Hi, I'm Janine Hawkins. I'm here.

Ali: And Sylvi Bullet.

Sylvi: Hello, I'm Sylvia. Nice to meet you? I don't know why 'nice to meet you' [all laughing] is the intro that came to mind. [cross] Nice to meet you, everyone. My debut.

Janine: [cross] Nice to meet you.

Ali: [cross] Oh... okay. We're... Yeah.

Janine: Please, treat me kindly.

Sylvi: Yeah. They don't know that this is the first thing I've — I'm ever recording for the show, and it's just been in the vault for a decade. [Janine laughs]

Ali: I know. [cross] What a weird idea I had, I bet. [laughs]

Sylvi: [cross] What a weird... You mean right now, in... in 2015?

Ali: Right, right, right. I'm just doing that for kayfabe. [laughing continues]

Sylvi: Yeah, absolutely. [laughing]

Janine: So, let's talk about Ephrim.

Sylvi: Oh, my God.

Ali: Yeah, let's talk about it. [**Sylvi:** Yeah!] What's Ephrim doing these days?

Sylvi: Uh... gar— gardening, I think?

Ali: Sure, yeah... I guess we'll—

Sylvi: We are gonna go back to that eventually, aren't we? [cross] We have, like, a thing we need to do still.

Ali: [cross] We are gonna go back to finish... yeah.

Janine: [cross] We promised. Yeah.

Ali: Um, actually, I wanna do a quick Drink Girlies, 'cuz we have all the drink girlies here. [laughing]

Sylvi: Oh!

Janine: Oh, true. Well, Keith is also a drink girlie. But.

Ali: [cross] This is true, Keith is not here.

Sylvi: [cross] Isn't Jack also one?

Janine: Yes, Jack also, I think.

Ali: Oh, true. I have a Trader Joe's ginger-lemon flavored, probiotic, sparkling beverage.

[**Sylvi:** Oh.] 'Cuz I didn't have anything else in my fridge, and I was like, 'this is gonna be too challenging [Sylvi laughs] of a drink for a, like, recording drink.'

Janine: Yeah. How do you get the probiotic in the carbonated? Is that...

Ali: I mean, they've had those, right? [cans begin to open in the background]

Janine: Aren't probiotics, like, alive?

Ali: Yeah, but...

Janine: Are they cool, like, with that situation? [Ali laughs]

Sylvi: Living bubbles. [laughs]

Ali: I don't know.

Sylvi: Did anybody ask? Are they cool with this? [cross] Is this allowed?

Janine: I mean I guess kombucha, right? I guess kombucha's carbonated and stuff.

Ali: Right. Is it carbonated? I guess I don't know.

Janine: Yeah, it's like, fizzy, old tea.

Ali: The bubbles don't seem very large, so maybe that...

Sylvi: That's probably, yeah, the probiotics [**Janine:** Yeah.] are fighting a brutal war against them.

Ali: That's alright, I mean, that's okay.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: That's fine.

Sylvi: The conflict makes it taste better.

Ali: [laughs] I feel like there's... I don't have to do a live review, I guess. [Sylvi laughs] I feel like the citrus is a little weird. [**Sylvi:** Okay.] I probably wouldn't buy it again, but... There you go, there's your review. [Janine and Ali laugh]

Sylvi: You're not gonna, like, throw it out, right? You know, it's like — that's a middle-of-the-road...

Ali: No, I'm probably gonna con— I probably will be continuing to sip it as we talk today. Any drinks y'all [cross] wanna go around about?

Sylvi: I'm sippin' on a Monster Energy, like the fuckin' goblin I am.

Ali: Wow... A 2 PM Monster Energy...

Sylvi: That's not out of the ordinary for me.

Ali: Yeah. I feel like that's the time to imbibe.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Janine: Yeah. Yeah.

Ali: ... That's your siesta Monster. [all laugh]

Janine: [cross] That's what they call me.

Sylvi: [cross] And thank you for the new term that I'm gonna be using. [laughter continues and winds down]

Janine: That's so funny, oh my God. Uh, I have a watered-down fountain Coke Zero, [cross] 'cuz I forgot to make a coffee.

Ali: [cross] Oh...

Sylvi: [cross] Hell yes. Listen, I fuck heavy with a watered-down fountain Coke Zero, honestly.

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: [cross] It's not my go-to.

Sylvi: [cross] I'm one of those people who thinks watered-down fountain soda is better than regular soda.

Ali: [cross] It's... yeah.

Janine: [cross] Oh, have you tried the, um... There's a — I don't know if this is everywhere, I don't know if we're the last people in the world to get this, it could be either — Canada's weird...

Sylvi: Yeah, that's kinda how it is here.

Janine: ... We're either a test market or we're the last people that — we get, like, a thing five years after everyone else has it. Um... Raspberry Spiced Coke.

Sylvi: Ah, you know what, I think I have heard of this.

Ali: Raspberry Spiced Coke.

Janine: Yeah. It's [sic] mostly says "spiced" on it, but the spice is, like, pink, so it's like raspberry and then also some spice.

Sylvi: Okay.

Janine: It's nice. I'm not mad at it. I thought it was gonna be worse than it was. [Ali chuckles]

Sylvi: Yeah I always... I hesitate with spice in my beverages a lot of the time.

Janine: Well, were you... [sighs] Were you of an age where you could have holiday spice Pepsi?

Sylvi: I don't know if I ever have had it. I might be of that age, but I just don't know if I have, you know?

Janine: Holiday spice Pepsi was so good. It was around when I was in high school,

[Sylvi: Okay.] for like two years it happened, and then it never happened again, [Sylvi:

Oh...] and I loved it so much. It was really — it's like, like... I mean, you know, it's kinda operating in the same spaces as like Dr. Pepper and stuff, but it's different and it's nice.

Sylvi: I feel like Pepsi is one of those soda brands that constantly would get rid of the variants I loved of them and leaving me with the subpar standard edition.

Janine and Ali: Yeah.

Sylvi: Um, Pepsi Twist? Goated. I miss Pepsi Twist.

Ali: Pepsi Twist? Wait, what was the twist?

Sylvi: Lemon.

Ali: Oh... [Ali and Janine laugh]

Sylvi: Yeah. No, that shit...

Janine: They did a lime... I feel like the lime one was around for a little longer.

Sylvi: The lime one was around; let me tell you, not as good.

Ali: [cross] Oh, okay.

Janine: [cross] No, it's not as good. Lime's more bitter.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: Sure.

Sylvi: The only place I could find Pepsi Twist in recent years was at a fake Coke freestyle machine, like a fake — like a Pepsi freestyle [Janine and Ali laugh] — at the Subway in my hometown. [cross] Yeah, it wasn't as good. You can never go back.

Ali: [cross] Woah. Okay. Did you guys get any of the gamer Cokes? Did you get Coke Pixel or any of that?

Sylvi: Coke Pixel!?

Ali: Yeah. [laughs]

Sylvi: No. [cross] What an interesting name.

Ali: [cross] I never had it but it's Coke Pixel.

Sylvi: Oh.

Janine: Is that like when they did, like, the outer space one and stuff?

Ali: [reading] "I tried the Pixel flavored Coke and it bytes," with a Y. Wow, okay. [laughs]

Sylvi: [cross] Mm, tastes like Xbox Live.

Ali: [cross] Damn, *The Verge*. [laughs]

Janine: I never want to go back to journalism [Ali erupts with laughter] — quote-unquote "journalism."

Ali: Sure, yeah.

Sylvi: Yeah, don't worry, society doesn't, either.

Janine: Yeah. Woof.

Ali: Well, [Sylvi laughs] that was our drink minute.

Sylvi: Yeah. [Ali laughs] A little bonus for you on your bonus content. [Janine laughs]

Ali: Yeah, yeah, yes, indeed. So, hi! We're here to talk about PALISADE today. We're a little bit pre-finale, technically. We're...

Sylvi: We're like, mid-finale, in terms of us.

Ali: [taken aback] Mid!? [laughs]

Sylvi: Okay, it's not mid, don't get me — Hey, it's peak finale, but we've started it.

Janine: We're mid-way through peak finale.

Sylvi: Thank you, Janine.

Ali: We're not even through one round.

Sylvi: Whatever, we're in it. That counts.

Ali: Okay, that's phase one to me, but okay, it could be mid to other people. [laughing]

Sylvi: Oh, okay. I didn't know we were doing phases. We're in a waxing finale, it's gonna be waning at some point.

Ali: I'm glad you went moons and not Marvel there. [cross] That was... I appreciate that.

Sylvi: [cross] Oh, my God, yeah, no, I'm always gonna go astrology before I go to fuckin' comic books.

Ali: Yeah, thank you, thank you for that.

Sylvi: Yeah. Oh, yeah, I got you.

Ali: [laughing] Um, but yeah, how are you feeling? How are we... we have stuff to talk about.

Sylvi: We do.

[00:07:27] Transformations

Ali: My theme for today was going to be transformations.

Sylvi: Oh, perfect, I've done a lot of those this season.

Ali: Uh huh, I think that that covers the current events with Thisbe and Cori [Sylvi laughs] in this moment. But let's do a vibe check. How are you... how's it going?

Sylvi: Oh, I'm having a great time! I loved PALISADE. I don't know if that's come through with the giddy excitement I have constantly on that show, but it's been one of my favorite seasons.

Ali: It's been fun to do, that's true, yeah.

Janine: Yeah, it's been... it's been a wild one. I really have ended up in such a different place than I thought I would at the outset.

Sylvi: God, I bet.

Janine: Yeah, I just had a moment — I hadn't really done that math in my head, but I just had a moment where I thought about the beginning of the season, and it felt like a different season. [Ali laughs] Like, it felt... it felt like, 'oh, that probably happened in PARTIZAN, right?' No.

Sylvi: No.

Ali: Yeah, I mean, with the... you've really taken to the Integrity stuff in a way that's been cool and not shy. [laughs]

Sylvi: Oh, yeah, it's been so much fun, just like... just like listening to it, [Janine laughs] not even interacting with it, just like, 'oh, this rules,' and then I'm like, 'oh wait, yeah, I get to play, too.' [All laugh]

Janine: And like, it's, you know, a thing I, at one point, basically promised not to do. Like, the promise with Thisbe out of the gate was that Thisbe was not going to be divine in any way. My goal wasn't to reveal that she was divine or to have her adopt some form of divinity and I was like, 'this is always going to be the thing, I don't want to do a story where, like, the robot learns to feel, or whatever.' And I think the last part of it I've stayed true to. I think the thing that Thisbe has learned has been, like, self-actualization, I guess, or autonomy, [**Sylvi:** Yeah!] confidence. Like, she's — what's happened is she's learned about personhood. She hasn't learned about, you know, how to... she doesn't have a boyfriend, or whatever, [**Sylvi and Ali** laugh] you know, it's none of that shit. But it's, you know, specifically, she's learned, like, 'oh, right, I'm a person. I do, in fact, have my own thoughts and opinions. I have things that I want that maybe other people don't, or don't care about in the same way, and I need to pursue that.' And, sometimes, that leads you to a god spine, [Ali laughs] that you never thought you would... [chuckles]

Sylvi: God spine...

Janine: Yeah.

Sylvi: What a — That's such a *Elden Ring* way to describe it.

Ali and Janine: Yeah.

Sylvi: [low voice] "The great God Spine, wielded by Godfrey." [Janine laughs] Thank you.

Ali: [laughing continues] Incredible.

Sylvi: Yeah, no worries. George R. R. Martin writes a lot of my dialogue, too. [Ali and Janine laugh] No, that's not true. I don't say 'what would you have me do?' in the...

Ali: Wow... you should, though. [cross] I think that would be...

Sylvi: [cross] I should. I mean, next season.

Ali: Oh, sure, okay, yeah. We can't drop too many clues on that.

Sylvi: Nah, that's just a little, a little tease for the real ones.

Janine: Cori hasn't had enough arranged marriages to be a George R. R. Martin character.

Sylvi: No...

Ali: Wow! [laughter continues]

Sylvi: That... [laughing] I mean, listen, with her dad, that coulda happened.

Janine: Yeah.

Sylvi: And it really depends on how you look at the whole Elle situation. [laughs]

Ali: Oh, sure, yeah, talk more about that. [laughs]

Sylvi: I mean, arranged marriage, maybe not, right? Arranged, um... uh... what's the best way to put this?

Janine: Codependence? I don't know. [laughs]

Sylvi: Codependence works, yeah. I was gonna say, like... psychosexual obsession. [laughs]

Ali: Sure. Yeah. Normal stuff.

Sylvi: Yeah, normal stuff.

Janine: Normal stuff for a dad to arrange.

Sylvi: Yeah. [laughing] I mean, he arranged it by dying. [Ali laughs]

Janine: Yeah.

Sylvi: I feel really bad. I remember people being kind of upset when he died, and I'm like, it's just a joke to me at this point. I just like making fun of Giesel Sunset's fail death. [mixture of laughter]

Ali: [cross] Well, he's just some guy.

Janine: [cross] Well, it is, like... it's a moment of horror, **[Sylvi:** It is, absolutely.] for sure, like the moment of, like you swing your thing and your dad is dead on the end of it, and you're like, 'uh oh, oopsie.' [Ali laughs] Like that's... that's like, a really intense visual, especially considering, like... we frame PARTIZAN and PALISADE in a very specific, like, anime language, and a lot of the anime that we pull on will show that stuff. **[Sylvi:** Yeah.] So, it's easy to picture that in a way where, like, if that happened in Hieron, I think it would be harder, because Hieron doesn't have the same visual language that big robots have. [cross] It has a...

Sylvi: [cross] Yeah, I mean, like, that's kinda the benefit of doing sci-fi stuff is we get — there's like a... Not necessarily to say that you can't do super like, maximalist or like, super melodramatic stuff with fantasy — in fact, it's quite the opposite. It just gives us

like, a whole different like, palette to play with when it comes to that stuff, and like... the war story in addition to that adds, I think, a very effective backdrop to Cori's defining trauma. [all chuckle, Ali laughs]

Ali: Yeah, that's the interesting thing about Giesel is that, like, I... looking back on the season, like... it's not like he would have been out of place if he stayed [**Sylvi:** No.] for the whole time. But, in a way, he was kind of a character designed to die, right? [laughing]

Sylvi: Lil' bit, lil' bit. I mean, I'm not gonna lie, I think, like, [**Janine:** Yeah.] no matter where the season went, I kind of pictured it going down similarly, it just might have been differently intended, you know?

Ali: Uh huh. Yeah, you really lucked out with that accidental death, though. [laughing] [cross] The accidental patricide.

Sylvi: [cross] Oh, yeah, no, absolutely. My hands are soooo clean. Not a single drop of blood on these hands. [chuckles] Everyone's always saying that about Cori.

Ali: What was your... what's your 'bloody hand something-something,' [cross] what is it that you call it? [laughing]

Sylvi: [cross] Oh yeah, my bloody hand — my bloody hands must break the wheel.

Ali: [cross] Yeah. Normal stuff. Clean hands. [laughing]

Sylvi: [cross] No, but like, it's like metaph — my squeaky clean, soapy hands must break the wheel. My recently sanitized hands, et cetera, et cetera.

Ali: Mmhm. Mmhm, mmhm. What's going on with Cori? How's Cori? The Perennial stuff is hilarious to me because I keep thinking about that one time you suggested that Cori reach out to Clem, [**Sylvi:** Yeah.] and we were all like, 'No!!!'

Sylvi: Well, to be fair, Clem was the problem there.

Ali: Yes, uh huh, uh huh. It's really — yeah, I really appreciate that you were able to get there, [laughing] is I guess what I'm trying to say.

Sylvi: Yeah, I think — I am, too, because I think it ended up working out a lot better given all that, right? 'Cuz like, not to say 'oh, it's so great that Figure died.' [Sylvi and Ali laugh] However, the, like, through-line of the person who convinced Cori not to do this, like, very dangerous thing for very selfish reasons, dying, and then Cori getting the same, like, both the power that sort of damned them and the power that saved them as like her own to get revenge and stuff, I think works, like, perfectly for the arc that she's been on. It was very exciting when I realized I could do that, you know?

Ali: [laughing] Yeah, it's one of those things where, like, you know, you don't always get the cue up, like, mechanically and fictionally at the same time, [**Sylvi:** Yeah.] and I feel like that happened for you, which is fantastic.

Sylvi: It's great. I joke about playing to win, but this... sometimes this season I really felt like I was. [Ali and Janine laughing]

Janine: Well, but, your win conditions are a little bit different than [cross] most traditional win conditions.

Sylvi: [cross] Oh, yeah. Yeah, my win conditions are 'how toxic can this yuri get?' and 'how much trauma can I fit in my player character?' [Ali laughs]

Janine: It's very, like, compare your win conditions to Keith's win conditions, and yours are like Keith's loss conditions.

Sylvi: Yeah. But I think that's why it works so well, right?

Janine: Yes. Yep. A hundred percent.

Sylvi: I'm trying to, I'm trying to, trying to squeeze the juice out of this pathetic little meow-meow [Ali and Janine laugh] as opposed to like, making sure they get through it all.

Ali: Yeah, yeah. I — I've... How... How's... [Sylvi quietly laughs] We're s— [Ali laughs] hey, what? [stops laughing suddenly] We're so early in Questlandia that it's, like, a little difficult to talk about how we're feeling about that so far.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: But, I guess, like, how did it feel with, like, the quote unquote, like, character creation process, like... it feels like we moved into the finale in a really abrupt [laughs] way...

Sylvi: We did, but it, you know.

Ali: ... in a way that, like, made sense for the circumstance, I guess. But I was wondering how it felt for y'all, coming to Questlandia. Any first reactions? Any thorns and roses?

Sylvi: I feel like I've been yapping a lot, Janine. Do you have anything? Or...

Janine: I think coming to Questlandia was interesting, because it gave me an opportunity to kind of, like, revise Thisbe, like revise what she's after and what she... I mean, in general, what she's after and like how even just the language of the game like looks at her, being able to say, that, you know, 'well, she's this class, and she wants this stuff, and that stuff is so wildly different than anything that she wanted at the beginning of the season or that she wanted last season,' was sort of a helpful creative exercise, I think, to help me pivot into finale mode, specifically, rather than just being like, I don't know, stumbling into playing her the way I've been playing her forever. So, I'm feeling pretty good about that side of things.

Sylvi: Yeah, I agree. So, the timing kind of lined up interestingly for me, because if we weren't doing Questlandia, I would have had to change my playbook. And so I was in the middle of doing that, when we decided like, 'you know what, we're just going into the finale.' And so, like, I took, like, a [sic] some of the stuff that I was using — like, the, um, belief we mentioned earlier that I used in Questlandia, was just one of the perspective beliefs Cori was going to have on her new playbook, she — the "bloody hands" one.

Ali: Oh!

Sylvi: And so, like, it ended up feeling like a way more organic process, I think, than, like, it might have for other people, just because I was already, like, she's already going through a major shift in motivations, like the thing I've been trying to hit is that she's, like, kind of figured out what she wants to fight for now. And then, on top of that, there's like a huge mechanical shift, [Ali laughs] and I'm able to just... I don't have to worry about, like, kitting out a build anymore, I just get to be like, 'she's a cool witch, and here's all the character stuff about it.' It's great, honestly. It's been really fun and it's kind of the vibe you want to bring into the finale, too, of just like... invigorated by your character in a lot of ways, just, like, ready to see what trouble you can get into.

Ali: [laughing] For sure. When you were building for the Witch, did it have, like... does it have a similar tenet system as the... [cross] Paragon — Paradigm did?

Sylvi: [cross] No, actually. Let me... let me... the Paragon, yeah. Or, is it Paradigm? [Ali laughs] I think it's Paradigm. It is Paradigm. Paragon is Mass Effect.

Ali: [cross] Paragon is... yeah.

Sylvi: Yeah, yeah, yeah, and Cori is absolutely a Renegade. No, so, it doesn't have... it just has Hooks, like other playbooks. The big thing that — I don't know if it's gonna — Austin and I talked about it maybe coming up during Questlandia in some shape or form, just more fictionally than mechanically, the Boon system that comes with the Witch, which is like, [Ali: Oh...] your Patron offers you Boons, but they can, um... affect your rolls or attempt to make you do something, like, very much the leaning in to the sort of pact between the Patron and the Witch. And so that's the thing that I wanna kinda get in more when we record more, but for now, it's a lot of just taking the flavor of that playbook and trying to bring it into what she's got going on now.

[pause]

Sylvi: It was weird, because like we said, the Paradigm doesn't — has a very different sort of set up for the beliefs and hooks and stuff, and being able to just be like, 'well,

what does Cori actually believe ideologically?’ [Ali and Janine laugh] It was like a really fun little experiment to do. [**Janine:** Yeah.] ‘Cuz, to be honest, this entire season has kind of been her figuring out what ideology is, in some ways, so it’s nice to finally be like, ‘oh, she’s got a worldview now, good for her!’

Ali: [cross] Oh, yeah, that is good for her... [laughs]

Janine: [cross] So, you’re saying, Cori’s deconstructing?

[00:21:05] Deconstructing

Content Warning: Discussion of Cori’s arc in the context of real-world religious - specifically Christian/Catholic - upbringing, trauma, and United States/Canadian politics and militarism. Warning will end at [00:27:45].

Sylvi: Oh, my God. Um... we’ve done a... someone — Finally, somebody’s deconstructed some mecha-fiction, it’s like about time. [Ali and Janine laughing]

Ali: Yeah, I’m, yeah.

Sylvi: I know *Gundam* was just so gung-ho about being like, ‘Amuro, you’re so cool for getting in that robot, nothing’s going wrong because you’re doing this.’

Janine: It’s a... it’s a big thing... this is sort of a tangent — there’s like, a huge... a huge thing that I find really interesting is that, sort of, twenty years after the big Bush-era Christianity boom, that was not a boom that had been building up, or whatever — you know what I mean.

Sylvi: It kind of reached critical mass.

Janine: Yeah, a lot of things sort of becoming issue again, in a way that they hadn’t since the ‘70s. A thing that’s been really interesting is seeing kids who were raised in that time becoming adults and deconstructing.

Sylvi: [quietly] Yes.

Janine: And, like, deconstructing becoming a movement, and becoming like, this whole thing of, like... [chuckles] There's like, deconstruction — Christian deconstruction influencers, who like, [**Sylvi:** Oh, God.] the thing they do is talk about their deconstruction and stuff, [Ali groans] it's really fascinating and, like, it gives me some hope, 'cause, like, you know, it's nice to see — it's nice to see people coming out of that, and being like, 'actually, wait,' [**Sylvi:** Yeah.] because it felt so overwhelming, and still, sometimes, does feel really overwhelming. But, I kind of... Cori kind of fits into that in my brain, where it's like, okay, well, you've believed this stuff for so long, but, like, it's been under the yolk of parental authority and church authority and, like, the thing that feeds on your blood...

Sylvi: Yeah.

Janine: You know, if you start fiddling with that — if you start changing those relationships, or removing them altogether, what does that mean? What does that do for the things you quote unquote “believe?”

Sylvi: Janine, I'm so happy right now. [Ali and Janine laugh] 'Cuz, like, not gonna lie, this is very much what the shit I was aiming for. Like, Cori was very much inspired by kids I knew growing up who, like... I mean, I think I'm a little older than the Christian influencers you mentioned, but I do remember, like — and I'm in Canada, seeing kids being, like, radicalized by shit going on in the States, and joining the military [**Janine:** Yeah.] to go to Afghanistan, because they're like... for, like, “religious reasons,” quote, or, just, you know, the less-hidden reality of being racist little shits. [muttering] Cori's not racist, by the way. [Ali and Janine laugh] Just to be clear, I didn't steal that bit. But the, like, sort of like... we — there was this production line, almost, of taking people around my age and, like, shuffling them into the military, and I was just thinkin' about that a lot when we started PALISADE, and, surprisingly, given the current events in the world, have not stopped thinking about that much, lately.

Sylvi: (cont.) But, yeah, that's kinda — that was always... well, not always, maybe, but, like, that was something I was really hoping I get to do, is be like, what happens when — I mean, like, I guess I didn't really hide that I wanted Cori to break her tenets

throughout the series, but like, I was really excited to get there, so I could be like, ‘well, what does she have left after all that’s stripped away?’ After the, like, religious fervor is something that she has to like, consider herself, as opposed to just be told about it.
[cross] It’s been very enjoyable.

Ali: Yeah, I remember in the beginning, you saying that, like, you didn’t want the Church itself to be the problem.

Sylvi: Yeah. Well s—

Ali: Like, the, y’kn— not representing, like, a problem with devotion. [chuckles] [cross] Devot— lowercase D — ‘devotion.’ [Janine laughs]

Sylvi: [cross] Yeah, you know, I — Listen, I made it very hard to talk about with the Divine name. Yeah, the... something I always kinda wanna be wary of is less about the actual faith itself being the evil thing, and more the... way that it’s institutionalized and, like, wielded by people being the problem with it, and, like, I think Austin, with the — when I, like, told that to Austin, I was expecting him to hit a home run, and then he did with the ‘there’s a secret second Devotion that’s been, like, imprisoned and replaced with a fake one.’ I’m like, yeah, that is kinda how it feels when you see the Pope up there. It’s like, ‘you’re not... what are you doing, man? Where’s the real — where’s real people who can speak to God that you’ve got chained up somewhere?’ That’s not true, those don’t exist, but when I was twelve I thought that. [Ali and Sylvi laughing] Anyway, my point being — sorry, it’s middle of the day, I’m really amped up today.

Ali: Yeah, this is perfect, this is what the people wanna hear.

Janine: The siesta’s kicking in. [Ali erupts with laughter]

Sylvi: The siesta’s kicking in. Hold on, let me just take another siesta-sip. [Sylvi sips on drink audibly, Ali giggles in response] Thank you, I tried to make that audible, but I was like, ‘that’s probably gross.’ [Janine laughs]

Ali: It was perfect.

Sylvi: Okay, cool. But, yeah, I just know a lot of people who — the problem with wanting to... I don't know, this is like a problem I thought of, and I don't know if anyone brought it up. But it's always just the thing in my head, where it's like, the problem with doing stuff with evil religions is that it can be really easy to misinterpret as which religion I'm critiquing. And, it's Friends at the Table. [**Janine:** Yeah.] Me and Austin are on it. [Ali and Janine laugh] It's Catholicism, just to be clear. But, like, I was really worried that people would be like, 'oh, religious extremist, like... blah blah blah,' and I'm like, yeah, I don't wanna just make it be 'there's an evil god that these people worship,' because that kind of would go against all the theming that I wanted, or at least a lot of it. And so, like, I think that having Devotion be a thing that you could still believe in and, like, have a positive relationship with. Like we've talked about how there's people who... like, Cori's family isn't just her shitty dad and her brothers who are in the military. We've talked about how, like, her mom left and stuff, and, like, there was kind of a — hey, just to lean into the Catholicism stuff more, there was a bit of a schism, [Ali laughs] like, between people who wanted to militarize Devotion's energy, and people who didn't, right?

Ali: [cross] You don't say...

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[00:27:45]

Janine: [cross] People have got long screeds written up against Devotion 2. [Ali laughs]

Sylvi: Yeah, yeah. I'm trying to think of what a funny Martin Luther King, like... [Ali laughs] well, Martin Luther, not Martin Luther King... [sighs] I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Martin Future, there it is. I need to lay off the siesta for a bit, I think.

Ali: Apologies to Martin Luther King. [continues laughing]

Sylvi: Sincerest apologies. I don't know who you would be in PALISADE.

Janine: I mean, this is all... I'm — ooh, actually...

Sylvi: Yeah!? [Sylvi and Ali laugh]

Janine: Okay, I'm gonna say a thing, but then I'm gonna immediately qualify why I'm saying the thing.

Ali: Okay, please.

Sylvi: [laughing] Okay!?

Janine: Gur Sevraq, but because of the way that Gur Sevraq [**Sylvi:** Oh...] gets manipulated after the fact.

Ali: [cross] Sure, yes, yeah.

Sylvi: [cross] Gur Sevraq is what white people think Martin Luther King, Jr. was. That I agree with.

Janine: [cross] This is what I mean, right? Just... when they pivot and he's like, 'you cannot — It's good to colonize, actually. Nonviolence.' [Ali laughs]

Sylvi: Yeah. You're not wrong.

Ali: You should always peacefully protest, that's the only way to do it.

Janine: If you're going to protest at all, you don't have to protest.

Ali: Uh huh, yeah.

Sylvi: [cross] Just tell people you're upset and it'll be fine. Vote!

Janine: [cross] You could just stay home. You could just try and make change a different ways like voting.

Sylvi: Yeah. Vote the Principality away.

Janine: Yeah, this is... some of this reminds me a lot of, like, when I was playing Signet, because a big thing I wanted to do with Signet was, like, you know, we've depicted a lot of the old religions, at that time, we depicted even — we depicted a lot of evil religions, we've depicted even more now. But, there is a simple truth of, like, good

people are in religions sometimes. **[Sylvi: Yeah!]** People with good motivations. And, like, even — I'm not a religious person. I have never been in a church as anything other than a tourist or a wedding or funeral guest. I've never, like, attended a service, you know? So, this comes from a very specific position, but, like, when I look at religion, I see a lot of stories told to make people feel safer and better, and a lot of that gets really warped and fucked up, but the heart of it of just wanting to understand why you exist, and, like, and answer big questions, like, 'well, if someone dies, do I get to see them again?' Like, things like that, I think come from a good place of, like, wanting people to feel better and to feel like they have a place, and, like, the way that that stuff gets warped, is the problem, but, like, there's still a kernel there that's like, worth... at least **[Sylvi: Yeah.]** looking at with some compassion.

Sylvi: Absolutely. Like, faith is a powerful thing in all its forms, right? Like, faith doesn't just necessarily mean religion, right? But, like, that's... I don't know. I don't know, it just feels like an important thing to keep in mind when telling these stories, that it's like, not necessarily the basis of people's belief that is the problem, it is the way that that belief is manipulated by figureheads and by, like, the... both the hand of, like, empire, and just, like, power in general.

Ali: Yeah, and I mean, it's like, interesting, it's an interesting thread to needle while you're quote unquote "playing," **[Sylvi: Yeah.]** or, like, performing, because, you know, even with Tender — Tender was somebody who was, like, harmed by her experience as a nun, or whatever... but whatever. **[all laugh]** But, like... I'm not gonna get into what Tender's deal is here.

Sylvi: Yeah. A whole other episode.

Ali: Uh huh. But, like, you know, there is a thing where, even if you are doing the Church is evil, whatever, like there's the line that you have to draw where, like, you have to respect the character's relationship to it, or opinions on it, which is always really fun to do. And then, there's also the stuff, like, the way that I think about Signet is like, Signet was a member of a community, right? Like, she was providing, like, a public service to people. So, like, when you think about, just like, person-to-person

relationships in that way, like it's hard to always be really cynical about that, like, mode of interaction, [starts laughing] I guess I'm saying — that's what I'm... yeah.

Sylvi: Yeah, absolutely.

All: So, yeah, I think Cori's been really successful. I know Austin's said this, but, like, it has been really fun to have, like, the little flavor of the Twilight Mirage, like, in the party. [laughs]

Sylvi: I'm glad. I was so nervous about that, 'cause I'll be real, Twilight Mirage is not a season I remember super great.

Ali: Yeah, sure, uh huh.

Sylvi: Long time ago, interesting time in my life. Huge affection for it, don't get me wrong, it's just, also, every time I was like, 'fuck, I really hope I'm not, like, fuckin' up the vibe of this shit.' [Ali laughs] I don't think I did. But, you know.

Janine: No.

Ali: I think all of us were thinking that at the same time during Twilight Mirage, probably.

Sylvi: Yeah, probably. Cool-ass season, but oh my God.

Ali: 'I hope I'm not the one fucking this up today,' is what everyone thought except Keith, apparently. [laughs]

Sylvi: [laughing] It's fine. That's good. We need that. We need that Keith energy. Like...

Ali: If only. Yeah. I'm jealous of Keith's mind sometimes. [laughs]

Sylvi: [laughing] Yeah, no, I feel that. But then I remember my extremely high cube score, and I'm like, yeah get fucked.

Ali: Oh, that's true. [cross] I didn't get the cube score.

Sylvi: [cross] Yeah. Yeah.

Ali: It's fine. It's fine. I do fine without it. What else did I want to say? I guess that's the other question about Cori, it's like... how much have you been thinking about her, like, return to home? What're some things that's... [laughs]

Sylvi: I... Was there like... This might be a bit of a... This might be something we haven't really gotten into yet on the finale, but I... one of the reasons why I wanted to give her the drive that would lead her less into the Mirage and more in fighting against the Principality was like, a fear of going back home. There's that sort of double, like, double-edged thing of 'yeah, this is like a thing I believe in and really want to fight for, and also if I don't go home I don't have to tell my mom I killed my dad.' [Ali cackles] You know?

Ali: Yeah. [laughing]

Janine: Yeah. [cross] Well, that's so relatable. Such a relatable teen issue.

Sylvi: [cross] Well, she probably wouldn't mind, they're divorced. Yeah. Well, also, like, it's scary, right? Especially with the way that time moves within the Twilight Mirage, it's like... is this going to be one of those things where it's like, 'oh, my baby cousin is now older than me because of time dilation,' or whatever? [Ali: Oh, sure, yeah.] I think I might have the directions time moves mixed up.

Janine: I was gonna say, it would be the opposite. [cross] Your baby cousin could still be a baby, or something.

Sylvi: [cross] It'd be the opposite, right? Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think I do have that backwards, so...

Ali: Oh, that's right.

Sylvi: Yeah. [cross] Man, that's gonna be... Huh.

Janine: [cross] You'd actually be... 'cuz there's half of it, where it's like, 'oh, that could be comforting,' because you, like, go there and it's like, 'oh, yeah, Mom looks just like I remember.' But then, depending on the kind of mom you have, it could be like... not...

like, 'oh, you're getting wrinkles,' like, I don't know. [all laugh, crosstalk] 'You used to be so cute.'

Sylvi: Oh, my God, [cross] if I wanted to be so evil I would give Cori like a southern debutante mom who cares about shit like that, but I don't think I'm going to. [cross] I don't think I could do that to her.

Janine: [cross] 'What happened to... what happened to your pretty wings, honey? [Sylvi and Ali laugh] Why are they all like that? Oh, my God.'

Sylvi: [cross] Oh, my God! 'Aw, the natural color was so much nicer, why did you do that to them?'

Janine: 'Oh, when you were a baby, your wings were so light, aw...'

Sylvi: Oh, God.

Ali: Oh, God, that's so funny. [laughs] Good luck, Cori.

Sylvi: Yeah, she's gonna need it.

Ali: I do like that thematically, 'cause it, like, does feel like it slots in to like, the rest of the themes of Cori, but [mumbling] I dunno... [all laugh] Like, her having to go back home and, like, growing so much in the space, and then everyone being like, 'you should be two years older. I'm going to treat you like you're younger than you actually are.' [**Sylvi:** Yeah.] So, yeah, good luck with that, Cori.

Sylvi: I'm excited to do it if we get in there, you know? Like... right now, we're still on PALISADE. We're not in the rest of the Mirage, so I don't know...

Ali: Yeah, that's true. [laughs]

Sylvi: Yeah. But, it's something to look forward to, something to think about.

Ali: For sure.

Janine: Why am I now just picturing Cori's mom as Peg Bundy? [Ali laughs]

Sylvi: Oh, my God. Oh, my God.

Ali: 'Cuz you have good opinions.

Sylvi: Yeah, 'cuz you're — you have a huge fucking brain, Janine. [Ali and Janine laugh]

Ali: With this — or, I guess Peg Bundy is the other one. I was thinking of... who was I just thinking of? I was thinking of Peggy Hill, [cross] which is someone completely different. [Ali and Janine laugh]

Sylvi: [cross] Also really good. Oh, my God.

Ali: Completely different vibe! [laughing continues]

Sylvi: Need a Bobby Hill Cori edit right now.

Ali: [laughing] Yes! Oh, no.

Sylvi: [doing a Bobby Hill impression] But, Dad, I wanna pilot the mech!

Ali: Yeah, oh, God, you could do that with... if you just — if you made, like, a *King of the Hill* Bobby fan-cam and just put your voice over it, it — [all erupt with laughter]

Sylvi: [suddenly returns from laughter] What are you trying to say? [cross] Think I sound like Bobby Hill?

Ali: [cross] No, I mean like clips of Cori over — No, I just mean, like... you — the video... audio... [laughing] I'm just saying it's possible, you know.

Sylvi: [cross] Yeah, no. I get you. I get you. I just, you know. I saw an opportunity to make a joke, and I took it. [all laughing]

Ali: Ah, if we could all be more like, uh...

Sylvi: Bobby Hill?

Ali: Yeah. Um... [laughs]

Sylvi: He's on my vision board. [laughs]

Ali: Speaking of being out of place in time, how's [laughing] how's Thisbe doing in the Mirage?

Janine: Ah, good question. I mean, I think there's... I feel like there's a degree of stuff that just doesn't — like, the time dilation I don't think hit her brain the same way it's gonna hit everyone else, 'cuz like, she's already old. [cross] Time is already weird for her.

Sylvi: [cross] That's so true. I forget how old Thisbe is.

Janine: Yeah, and like, she doesn't — she also wasn't alive for a lot of that time, so the idea of, like, emerging — she's already been through that. She's already been through, 'Surprise! You're here! Everything is different!' So, like, I'm sure she's not eager to go through that again, but also she knows that, like, life goes on, like you pick up where you... you pick up where you find yourself and maybe it sucks, but, you know. Maybe it's a lateral move, maybe it's a vertical move. Who could say? So I think it's less scary for her than probably for most people.

Ali: Sure, yeah. I think [laughing] there's... Back to what we were talking about before, there's like a little bit with how you've been playing her, where it's almost like... like Thisbe got her groove back. [Ali and Janine laughing]

Sylvi: Oh, my God.

Ali: Or, like, I guess not even back, right? Like, I...

Janine: Yeah, I don't think Thisbe had groove.

Ali: [laughs, crosstalk] Fair.

Sylvi: [cross] Thisbe obtains groove.

Janine: [cross] Thisbe has... I mean, there's truly a part of it where Thisbe beginning to get a groove, was just, like, working with the Blue Channel in general, instead of being a agricultural service robot, who is, you know, considered one of a unit, and blah, blah, blah... Having — That was the first place, you know — Blue Channel's like the first place she got autonomy, even if she didn't recognize it, you know? Even if she didn't see it that way herself, that still lays the groundwork for, like, experiences to happen that can then shape her and help her realize shit about herself. So, I mean, I think there are elements of it that are — that moved very fast, but elements of it that have been in the works for a long time.

Ali: Yeah, uh huh. 'Cuz like I... it's funny, with the Integrity thing, I certainly didn't account for it — that wasn't something I was planning to do this season [laughs].

[00:41:19]

Janine: Yeah, I actually — I'm wondering, I don't think I ever asked, how did y'all feel when Thisbe was like, can I have it? [Ali and Janine laugh]

Sylvi: Oh, I was so excited, Janine. I'm sure you can hear it on the recording. I was so stoked. There's a lot of me just being the sort of studio audience for PALISADE this season.

Ali: It's perfect, it's so good, it's... [laughs]

Sylvi: I'm glad. I can't help it. Everybody's crushing it. And, yeah, nah, it was such a fun, just like... I mean, like, I didn't know that it was as spur-of-the-moment for you as it ended up being, [**Janine:** Yeah.] 'cuz didn't you say that it was kind of just an impulse decision?

Janine: Yeah, I hadn't thought about it at all. [Ali laughs] I hadn't even... I mean, obviously, I didn't know it was gonna be a discussion, I kind of forgot, honestly, that we had Integrity.

Sylvi: [holding back laughter] Many such cases. [Ali laughs]

Janine: And then, when we had that meeting, I kind of just, like... I didn't expect it to be a question, of just, like, 'so what are we gonna do with it?' I kind of — I don't know, I just... I just fully hadn't considered interacting with it in *any* way, or even having an opinion on it. And then being asked, like, 'what do we do with it?' and then there's a long pause, and I'm like, 'oh, shit.'

Ali: This is my time. This is... [laughs]

Janine: It was just like, I have to do this. I don't know if I've ever had a more spontaneous and, yet, more clear moment with a character than that.

Sylvi: [cross] It makes me so happy.

Ali: [cross] I... yeah, I am glad to hear this, because — I guess to say my side of this is that, like, I was really torn on what to do because I didn't want Brnine to just be the guy with two Divines. [Sylvi and Janine laugh] And my first idea was to give it to The Cause, or to, specifically, to August Righteousness, to like, spread out The Cause's strength a little bit, in that way, and to like, you know, get the cause more in the story a little bit. But, at that same time, we were just starting to do the, like, Thisbe is researching Divines, and, like, Cori was just starting to... What was the Divine of the week for Cori [Sylvi and Ali laugh] at that part? [cross] I guess that —

Sylvi: [cross] That had to do with... that was because of the other Devotion I got involved with that.

Ali: Oh, right, the other Devotion, and we had just gotten out of the Dust stuff, so it was like, [Sylvi: Yeah.] how much of this is real, you know, stuff like that. And then, I was like, if, you know, if Cori — or, if like, Janine and Sylvi, more specifically have these other threads, like, I at least want Brnine to acknowledge that and be like, I would like other people in the Blue Channel to be sort of involved in what this decision is, 'cuz I wasn't sure if, like, it would help with the [Ali and Janine laugh] Thisbe research stuff, or like, because it was specifically like, what are the relationships between two Divines? I was like, 'what if we keep them around and try to, you know, see how Asepsis and Integrity interact with each other.' That Thisbe was just like, 'well, I want it...' [Ali and

Janine laugh] I keep, you know, playing Brnine as someone who trusts Thisbe, like, implicably, that it was just like, [goofy imitation of Brnine] 'oh, well, like, if you want it, sure, okay Thisbe.' [all laughing]

Sylvi: [goofy voice] 'Uh, whatever you say, boss!'

Janine: And then there was that, like, the moment of actually taking it, where it felt like a game of chicken between me and Austin, [Sylvi and Ali laughing] where he was like, 'okay, it's gonna reach for you,' and I was like, 'okay, I'm reaching for it.' 'Okay, it's giving you these ideas about what it's gonna be like.' I'm like, 'okay, I'm gonna grab it,' and he's like, 'okay, you're... you're grabbing it.' [all laugh]

Ali: Were you waiting for like, the like, 'It bites you!' or something, or, like, 'Roll now to see!'

Janine: Yeah, I was waiting for him to be — yes, I was absolutely waiting — 'cuz this was like... or, no, this was before Ebullience, wasn't it?

Sylvi: [cross] I think so, yeah.

Janine: [cross] This had... would have had to be before Ebullience. But Ebullience was like a similar feeling of, like, 'okay, he's making me put my hand in this covered box, [Ali laughs] and maybe there's a piece of cake in here, or maybe there's a baby alligator, I don't know.' [Sylvi laughs] And he's really leaning on the baby alligator angle in his windup. It's both, right? Like, it is a piece of cake and also a baby alligator, it's not one or the other, but...

Ali: I guess, yeah, that's the important thing to keep in mind with Divines, is that it is both.

Janine: Yeah.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Janine: Especially Integrity, which ha— very... My impression of Integrity at the moment is very, like, Thisbe feels more Divine than Integrity in some ways. Like, Integrity feels like the scared and unsure one, and Thisbe is the one that's like, 'no, I know what I'm doing. This is fine.'

Sylvi: That rules.

Janine: 'I got this. Relax.'

Ali: Yeah, I guess there's a thing there where it's like — was there something about Integrity that was especially appealing to you in that moment? Like, if it was like, a different sort of Divine, can you imagine a situation where you would be like, 'I'm good. [Ali laughs] I'm gonna pass on this, I guess.'

Janine: I mean, if it had been, like... If Brnine had been like, 'hey, I think we need to put Asepsis to work better,' I don't think I would have been like, 'oh, yeah, sign me up. [Ali and Sylvi laughing] I want that one in me.' Like, no. [cross] I don't think that would, like...

Ali: [cross] That's fair. [laughs]

Sylvi: [cross] I think that would be a bad time.

Janine: Yeah. There's definitely some... Yeah, I don't know... it's like... it's weird, because it's so spontaneous, it's hard to know what the line would have been. Like, we could list off a bunch of made-up Divines right now, and I — I don't know. Some of them would be an obvious yes, and some of them would be, like... yeah, either way.

Sylvi: [cross] But no 'no's.

Ali: [laughing, crosstalk] The Divine Dawn. The Divine Castle. The Divine Howl. [laughs]

Janine: [cross] Howl.

Sylvi: [cross] Are you just... The Divine Moving. And now we've got all of that movie's title as Divines. [all laughing]

Sylvi: Sorry, you said 'Howl' and 'Castle,' and I was like, 'wait a minute. Hold on.'

Ali: No, that's fair. I was looking around my desk. [laughing continues]

Sylvi: [cross] I love that. That is such a me move.

Janine: [cross] I mean, the thing is, there's already a Divine Moving, and they're not good, so...

Ali: Oh, right, Motion! [cross] Oh, that's so funny.

Sylvi: [cross] Yeah, no, the Divine Moving is... I got history with that Divine.

Ali: True. Oh, God.

Sylvi: That's so scary, by the way. We don't know where any of that's going, but all that's so scary to me.

Ali: I know. It's just out there. It's just still around. Jesset seems fine.

Sylvi: Super normal.

Ali: [laughing] Oh, Jesset. Oh, Jesset. I guess another... [chuckles] Austin isn't in on this episode, so I shouldn't speak for him, but I was talking to him the other day, and I had this thing of like... 'you're punishing me for trying to kill Brnine by having Gucci and Jesset around all the time,' and he was like, 'Yep. That's true.' [Ali and Janine laugh]

Sylvi: Oh, my God.

Ali: 'That is true, that is exactly what I did.' [cross] And I was like, 'okay, that's...'

Sylvi: [cross] That's my G.O.A.T. right there.

Janine: Well, I mean, that's his job.

Ali: It literally is. [laughs]

Janine: You presented a character who, you know, was in a certain place with certain things that you, as a player, had on the board, and it's absolutely his prerogative to be like, 'well, actually — you know, this character has a lot of things, and if you're gonna make this call, I want to ring as much from it as possible.'

Ali: [laughing] Yeah, let's think through this... it's been fantastic, I mean... [cross] pretty good season, i.m.o.

Sylvi: [cross] Oh, absolutely.

Janine: [cross] And also, it like... bringing those characters in more also gives Austin the opportunity to, like, talk you down [Janine chuckles, Ali bursts out laughing] from the ledge, if he thinks you're about to do something that you won't be happy with, with the character.

Ali: Sure. Yeah, sure, perhaps. Perhaps. [laughs] Yeah. Well, I — yeah, Brnine's in a weird place, but we're in the finale, so, it's all just like throwing an arrow into the wind, basically.

Sylvi: Oh, I like that. [Ali laughs]

Ali: Just, uh... There's like, there's something that's really — I don't know if either of you are feeling it, too — but, like, the thought that it's just three scenes is really... [laughs]

Sylvi: Let me tell you, it's been driving me crazy. It is — I've been like — so, hey, here's behind-the-scenes thing, [Ali: Please.] we're recording more of this tomorrow, and my scene's first. So, I've been thinking a *lot* about how to — about like what I wanna — order I wanna do things in, and then I was like, 'fuck it, I just gotta go big with all of them.' [cross] It's finale time, we're not playing, like, a normal Questlandia game. Yeah.

Janine: [cross] It's a — that game is also built... that game is built for you to go big, anyway, right? Like, there's specifically instruction to be like, don't make your scene about 'I wanna talk to the guard,' [Sylvi: Yeah, you will, yeah.] 'cuz like you're gonna make it higher stakes. Presume you will talk to the guard, then what?

Ali: Uh huh. Have you guys been feeling any of that pressure, though, in like, trying to... like... not think about a scene, but, like, think about an arc? Or, are you just like, 'I'll do my scene and then I'll see what the state of the world is?' Or are you just gonna... [laughs]

Sylvi: It depends. I got some stuff — like, there's a few things where I'm like, 'oh I should make sure I hit this, just to make the arc make sense.' And then there's a lot of stuff where I'm like, 'I'm just here to see where the fuck this goes,' [**Janine:** Yeah.] like a lot of the... We've got some, like, Clem-Cori, like, tension building and I don't have a plan for where that's gonna go, I'm just like, 'yeah, no, let's... these two hate each other, let's see what happens.'

Janine: Yeah, I think like, you know, maybe four seasons ago, or whatever, it might have been more tempting to make plans for things like that, but I think a lot of us, at least for me, I've gotten in a space where I'm a little more, like, 'okay, this is vaguely the direction I wanna explore,' but I don't want to get too married to any, like, potential outcomes or, like, ideas of, like, what the ending should look like, because that can often blind you to something better that's gonna come up along the way. Or, you know, you don't want to, like, force something in that just, like, feels weird when you have a more natural, more interesting alternative. So, for me with Thisbe, I'm like, I've got a general idea of the stuff I wanna do, it's a little tricky to make sure that it's gonna build up to a satisfying, like, what feels like a satisfying closeout on that arc for her. But, you know, it's like, I'm [chuckles] to an extent, here for the ride, right?

Ali: [laughing] Yeah, I do feel like, the good thing about Questlandia is that it is sort of built for, like, the fact that you're setting, like, a character goal up to the front, [**Janine:** Yeah.] it's like, you know, there's — it's like, you're walking toward something the entire time you're playing it, so at least you have that, like, through-line, and then we have this — just these, like... the, you know, the [laughs] — the spirit of the mind to get there, that, like, the fact that there's no boundaries around the actual scene creating in the play part of it is really fun, I think, 'cuz it, you know —

Janine: Yeah it's —

Ali: Go. [laughs]

Janine: Thinking — [chuckles] I was gonna say, thinking about, like, previous sci-fi season finales, there's usually been, like, 'here is the set scenario. Here is the challenge that you're working towards.' Having a more individualized, character-focused, and is not something we do too often, but is very interesting, especially for, like, in the context of PALISADE, where it's like... it feels like these characters, like, got together, converged at a point, but are now, sort of, going in opposite directions again, and, like, that's not a bad thing, in most cases — in some cases, it's not great. [Ali laughs] But, in most cases, it's a good thing.

Ali: In what case is it bad? That's interesting, that's a weird thing to say. [continues laughing]

Janine: I don't know, it kinda seems like Brnine gets another divorce under their belt every day, but... [Sylvi laughs]

Ali: Wow, what!?

Janine: I guess maybe that's not bad, maybe that's healthy [Ali laughs] for someone in the...

Sylvi: Yeah, you know.

Ali: Another divor— Well, you know, you have one fight with somebody, what is wrong with that? What are you talking about?

Janine: Oh, yeah, you've had — which one fight [Ali laughs] **[Sylvi:** One?] are we counting as one fight? With Gucci, for example.

[00:55:25]

Sylvi: It was just one fight, [cross] like movie night, and then there were others, but, like, on movie night there was just the one.

Ali: [cross] Yeah, one — yeah, one... there was just the one fight on movie night, right, yeah. Are you, perhaps, vaguely hinting at the upcoming Brnine and Thisbe breakup?

Sylvi: Oh, no.

Janine: They're not *married*. Ew. [Ali and Sylvi laugh]

Ali: This is true, yeah. This is true, that's not a divorce, [cross] you're completely correct about that.

Janine: [cross] They are, they are like... they are — Lazlo voice — 'my bro, my little guy, my homeslice,' whatever the fuck he says. [Ali laughs] What's that quote?

Ali: I don't know that quote. [laughing]

Sylvi: I have no idea.

Janine: She's... one second, I have to find it.

Ali: Please, take your time.

Janine: Here we go. [reading] "He's my best friend, he's my pal, he's my homeboy, my rotten soldier, my sweet cheese, my good time boy."

Sylvi: [Lazlo impression] My good time boy! [Ali laughs] That's my really bad Lazlo impression. Sorry, I didn't realize you meant that Lazlo. [cross] I love that guy.

Janine: [cross] Yeah, yeah yeah yeah. He's great.

Ali: [cross] Yeah, this is — this is how Brnine feels about Thisbe. [laughs]

Janine: Yeah.

Sylvi: I could see Brnine being played by Matt Berry.

Ali: Oh, yeah. [cross] Yeah, it wouldn't take that much, yeah. [laughs]

Janine: [cross] Oh that'd be so good.

Sylvi: No, it really wouldn't. He'd look great with the scouter, too.

Janine: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Ali: Um, but yeah, it's been— [laughs]

Sylvi: [Lazlo impression] Thisbe! Sorry.

Ali: Playing that through has been one of my favorite things this season. It's been fun, I'm glad we had Thisbe back, I'm glad we've been having that, like — 'Cuz, you know, it feels like, on PALISADE, more old characters have shown up than it feels like I thought would happen, but at the same time, like, having the Thisbe-Brnine connection, and for Janine a little bit, has been, like, oh, you know, the gang is here. Like, you know, there's a [sic] emotional through-line that seems satisfying.

Sylvi: It really helps to have the sort of, like, thread connecting the two seasons.

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: And I think, like, you know, to sort of revisit the idea of people moving in opposite directions again, like, I wanna underscore it's not like a bad thing. We joke about it because Thisbe and Brnine's relationship has been strained at different points this year. [Ali laughs] In my mind, it's be— got fixed. 'Got fixed,' quote unquote. But, like, it's still, you know, a thing that I'm aware of is that for Thisbe and Brnine to be super, super close, Thisbe's individuality has to be less, because Brnine is the person who, you know, acquired Thisbe and put her to work on the ship, and, like, was seen as, like, the head power for Thisbe's operation, in her mind, for a while. And so, to have a really, really close relationship with Brnine, still, I think would take, like, undermining some of the growth she's done. Like, for them to be friendly but distant is, I think, healthier [Ali laughs] from a Thisbe P.O.V., because she thinks — you know, that's her being like, 'I don't have to be glued to Brnine. I don't have to, like... Brnine will be there, and I will be here, and sometimes we'll be in the same spot and sometimes we won't, and that's okay.'

Ali: Yeah, I... That's part of the reason I asked about... In our first session, I asked about, like, the relationship things, in terms of, like, ending the relationship that we have right now, and then being able to start a new one, mechanically, in the game, because it feels like that's sort of the best version of this. When I came to, like, the... I think we had that, like, first relationship develop, and we're like, both of our — both of our, like... I guess yours wasn't, but [laughs] — Yours was like, 'I have to save Brnine,' and mine was like, 'I don't really fuck with Thisbe anymore.' [all laugh] Like, there was — I mean, like, it feels like it's been really satisfying, 'cuz it was very fun in the early season to, like, sort of play Brnine as reaching for Thisbe in this, like, emotional-social way, that like, Thisbe was not returning. Like, you know, Thisbe does not want to reminisce about the old days on Partizan, or whatever. [laughs] I feel like, you know, [**Sylvi:** Oh, my God.] it is a good growth thing for Brnine to, like, recognize that and accept that and be like, 'oh, okay, that's, you know, that's not the sort of relationship me and Thisbe are gonna have.' So, it feels like it's at, like, odds right now, or whatever, because there's, like, the shift in investment, I guess is the way that I was talking about it when that change happened, but, like, the idea that, like, you know — And, you know, you would hope that, like, actual relationships that you've had with people for decades in this way, is that like, you know, the version of the way that we communicated with each other is not helpful anymore, or, like, not where we are anymore. So, being able to develop this new understanding is something I hope that we can come to in Questlandia. I guess, it depends on mechanics a little bit, because there's some interesting stuff around that, but we'll see how it goes. But it's been really fun. [laughs]

Sylvi and Janine: Yeah.

Sylvi: The Brnine-Thisbe dynamic has been such a treat, [Ali laughs] this entire season.

Ali: It's good.

Sylvi: [cross] It's really good.

Ali: [cross] Thisbe's a great character. I love — I loved the Blue Channel.

Sylvi: Thank you.

Janine: I just realized the dynamic... There's some overlap with Hella and Adaire, but reversed. [Ali and Sylvi erupt with laughter]

Ali: Fair, yeah, yeah.

Janine: Big, simple, powerful, with small, schemy, squirmy.

Ali: It's a great pair, you know?

Sylvi: It's like, 'what if Adaire was 500 times sweatier?' [Ali and Janine laugh]

Ali: Yeah, I feel like — Yeah, it's tough to compare Adaire-Brine, because you can't, like, you can't lower Adaire to that level [Ali and Sylvi laugh], right? Like, there's just some... [continues laughing]

Janine: But also, like, Adaire would love to have control of something like Asepsis; **[Ali:** Oh...] I don't think Asepsis would care for Adaire.

Ali: [laughs] Sure, yeah.

Janine: I don't think that would be a good match.

Ali: No? You don't think so? You don't think — you don't believe in Daire's interest in cleansing?

Janine: No. [Ali and Janine laugh] Not particularly.

Ali: Damn. Wow, of all the Hieron characters to bring into our sci-fi, like, season-universe, I guess you could say, Daire is a crazy option. [laughs] Like, I think Adaire's now, like, my top 3 in that choice, [cross] if I had to make it.

Sylvi: [cross] Yeah.

Janine: [cross] I think she would do great, I don't think she'd be, necessarily, a friend, but I think she would do great.

Sylvi: Now I'm trying to think of who else would do well...

Ali: Please!

Sylvi: I feel like Red Jack could...

Ali: Okay, yeah. Yeah.

Janine: You could tell me that Red Jack had been to space, and I'd be like, 'yeah, of course, [Ali laughs] that sounds like [**Sylvi:** Yeah!] a thing Austin would decide is true. Yeah. Red Jack's been to space, it was always in their [sic] character.'

Ali: Wow. Do you think Red Jack has ever been to space?

Sylvi: [cross] Probably has.

Janine: [cross] Yes.

Ali: [cross] Now, I'm like, actually just thinking about it. [laughs]

Janine: Now I do. Now I'm 100% convinced and no one will convince me otherwise, Red Jack has been to space.

Ali: Uh huh, yeah, we're gonna have to make sure to include that in the [laughs] — the Hieron epilogue.

Sylvi: Oh, yeah.

Janine: So, they call him Red Jack because he's from Mars. He's from Mars!

Ali: Woah!

Sylvi: Woah.

Ali: And Mars exists!

Janine: Mars exists in Hieron universe.

Ali: [laughing, crosstalk] You've been in Hieron all along!

Sylvi: [cross] Austin seething because we're spoiling all his big reveals. [Janine laughs]

Ali: Yeah, he's gonna listen to this and be [cross] tearing paper out of notebooks.
[laughs]

Sylvi: [cross] Oh, he's gonna be steamed!

Ali: Oh, man. Man. Okay, so for the — we're gonna be winding up this episode in a second, but we keep — there's been... there's been a little buzz about next season.

Sylvi: Oh, yeah.

Ali: We haven't really... we haven't really said anything, we can't really say anything, and yet... [laughs] If each of you could just say a vibe... **Sylvi:** Oh...] a [sic] adjective...

Sylvi: For the season, or what we're thinking of doing, [cross] character wise? Okay.

Ali: [cross] Just what's on your mind right now, yeah. You can make it personally — [cross] if you haven't been thinking of a character...

Sylvi: [cross] I have a word that's been on my mind a lot for this upcoming season, and I guess I'll just say it, and everyone can live with it without me elaborating: Dragons.

Ali: Dragon... Okay.

Janine: My word that I've been thinking about for next season is: Insufferable.

Ali: [laughing] Uh oh!

Sylvi: Hell yeah. Oh, hell yeah.

Ali: Oh no! [Janine laughs] Wait, I think that — yeah, uh huh. I think that you recently practiced what that might be like in something people didn't —

Janine: I've been doing some explorations.

Sylvi: [cross] Yeah, you'll figure things out.

Ali: Yeah, listen to the Unincorporated stream [cross] on [Youtube](#) or on [Patreon](#), it's so good. [laughs]

Sylvi: [cross] God, please listen. It's so good.

Ali: That was a wild one. It's always fun to play games.

Janine: Surprise! We think it's fun to play games here at Friends at the Table.

Ali: I know, a shocker, this is a real behind-the-scenes reel on Gathering Information, but I think that it's fun and I enjoy doing it.

Janine: I have a deep dark secret, and that is — is that I like when I roll a dice and it's a six. Roll a die. Roll some dice and it's many sixes. Don't come for me in the comments, I fixed it.

Ali: Oh... Janine, Six-liker. [laughs]

Sylvi: I mean, yeah, Marielda was a great season.

Ali: Oh, true. True.

Sylvi: Can I just say, it feels so awkward having done all those Drake references now. Like, the bit with Aubrey, and that being named "The Six," and now every rapper in the world is like, 'I wanna murder this guy.'

Ali: That's f— I mean, everybody has always wanted to beat him to death with hammers.

Sylvi: Oh! I live in Toronto, I have a specific hammer set aside for him, but, you know, just saying.

Janine: Is it better or worse than all of the episodes, where the Kanye podcast is mentioned? [Janine and Ali laugh]

Sylvi: Yeah, you know what, I think I dodged a bullet, comparatively.

Janine: [cross] A thought experiment.

Ali: Yeah, if there are crosses to bear, I don't know that BBL Drake is the — [Ali and Janine laugh]

Sylvi: It's BBL Drizzy, get it right.

Ali: Oh, please. I'm so sorry, you're right. Yeah.

Sylvi: [cross] Respect Rick Ross's incredible wordplay.

Ali: [cross] I know. I — yeah, I'm gonna go listen to Teflon Don after this as forgiveness.

[**Sylvi:** Oh, hell yeah.] But, yeah, I... yeah. There's a lot of things, I bet, when you go back and listen to Friends at the Table, and you're like, 'wow, this was not recorded in [cross] 2024.'

Sylvi: It's almost like we've been doin' it ten years.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: It's almost as if we've been doing it for ten years, which is, uh...

Sylvi: Insane.

Janine: Remember that whole arc we did as a tribute to how Elon Musk was cool?

Sylvi: Shut the fuck up! [Janine and Ali laugh] Don't even joke about that! Oh, my God.

Janine: Look for it. Folks can relisten to every single episode we ever did, to try to find the 'Elon Musk is a cool guy' arc. Have fun!

Sylvi: Oh, yeah, no, this is a good way to get our numbers up. Yeah, [**Janine:** Yeah, yeah.] go check for that, it's definitely there.

Ali: And if you didn't hear, go listen again. [laughs]

Janine: Listen to all the episodes *backwards*.

Ali and Sylvi: Oh...

Ali: Yeah, secrets revealed.

Janine: [imitating reversed recording] E-Ion Musk. [Ali and Sylvi erupt with laughter]
That's how it would sound backwards. [laughing] I'm just helping.

Sylvi: [cross] That was great!

Ali: [cross] That was incredible! That was... wow!

Janine: I watched a lot of *Twin Peaks*.

Sylvi: Yeah, Janine spent some time in the red room.

Ali: [laughing] Incre— I, yeah. That's close to any sound. You can make any backward sounds.

Janine: Yep. [Ali laughs]

Sylvi: Take that, Keith.

Ali: Well, there's not — [cross] I don't want to assign a value to frontways or backwards sounds, I think that's a skill either way.

Sylvi: [cross] No, I'm joking. No. I just like antagonizing my friends.

Janine: I do think frontways sounds are a little more valuable.

Ali: [laughing] That's fair, you know, that's big of you to say, Janine.

Sylvi: Yeah. I'm proud of you for being able to admit that.

Ali: Okay, on that note, unless anybody else has anything else to add, I think that this has been a episode of Gathering Information. Thank you so much to both of you for joining me, I'm looking forward to seeing the end of PALISADE.

Sylvi: Yeah. [Ali and Janine laugh] Thanks for listening, everybody, it was nice meeting you.

[end of episode]