

Drawing Maps 28: At the Gates of Sapodilla - July 2021

Transcriber: robotchangeling

Austin: [muffled] But I have to...let me go live on here, and then I'll link you the YouTube and then I'll click here and hit Publish Now.

Ali: Did either of you deal with the weird thing that was happening on Twitter today?

Austin: Where it like logged you out but only sort of?

Ali: Uh huh.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah.

Jack: No. I didn't encounter this at all.

Ali: It like, every time you went to Twitter, it would like auto-redirect to the Logout screen? [Jack laughs]

Austin: How it should be.

Ali: Which is very nice of them.

Jack: Yeah, that's great.

Austin: That's right.

Ali: [laughs] When it went— the screen, it would be like, "You've run into a problem," and then it would either be like, Ignore or Logout.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: Mm. No, I did not encounter this. Maybe it was only in US stuff? I don't know.

Ali: Yeah, maybe. All I know is that it logged me out of...I can only be signed into one Twitter account at once.

Jack: Oh, god.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Oh, interesting. I have different...

Ali: It won't let me do all my stuff.

Austin: I have...on mobile, I think that would fuck me up. But on desktop, I've been able to stay logged in, because I have different Chrome users for different Twit— like, I—

Jack: Oh, interesting.

Ali: That's smart.

Austin: Like, I don't fuck— like, I can't access the Waypoint— I mean, I shouldn't be able to access the Waypoint one at all anymore, honestly. [Ali laughs] But like, the *Friends at the Table* one, I just have a *Friends at the Table* Google Chrome login.

Ali: Oh.

Austin: Where I'm just like, I'm in the *Friends at the Table* account now. That's where I do all the *Friends at the Table* Patreon stuff. That's where I do the YouTube stuff for that. That way I don't have to ever log out and log back in. You know what I mean? That way, like, it reduces the risk [Ali laughs] that I go live to my YouTube instead. You know what I mean? So.

Ali: Right. And that's how you don't accidentally watch like an hour of Kpop videos on the *Friends at the Table* account?

Austin: On the *Friends at the Table*. [Jack laughs] Uh, I've still done it a couple of times. [Ali laughs] You know where I actually do it more is Tips, the Tips account. I'll do that for some reason.

Ali: Oh, sure. [laughs]

Austin: And then like...what else? I feel like I've done on the Waypoint account before, when I used to have to access Waypoint stuff. I'd be like, "Oh, I'm on my Waypoint browser." Or what it was there was like, my austin@vice.com whatever email. I would go to the YouTube there to listen to music or watch something, and that—

Ali: Oh, sure.

Austin: —is the Waypoint official YouTube channel. [Austin and Ali laugh] So it was like, yep.

Jack: That's really funny.

Austin: Waypoint listening to three hours of ambient jazz today.

Jack: The Microphones.

Austin: Yeah, exactly. Yes, exactly.

Ali: Uh huh.

Jack: Hi, Keith!

Ali: Oh, hey.

Austin: Oh, is Keith joining us? Keith's able to join.

Keith: Hello.

Austin: Hi, Keith.

Jack: Hello!

Keith: Yeah, I gave Isaac a ride at uh,

Austin: Nice.

Keith: —6:15, but I just got back.

Austin: Oh, sick, sick, sick. All right. Well, guess what? I can fix this.

Jack: We are live, I think, Keith.

Austin: We are.

Keith: Oh, hello.

Jack: I just didn't— you know, you're famous for coming in hot and just getting straight to...

Keith: Yep.

Jack: ...libel.

Austin: I somehow missed—

Keith: I join, I list all the swear words I know.

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Keith: And then I, uh, take out my beef journal.

Austin: Uh huh. Right. [Jack chuckles]

Keith: And I clearly state every single fact of every single beef that I've got.

Ali: Right.

Keith: But it's all...it's all just to get it out of my system before we start, so that... [Ali laughs]

Austin: Right. Do you want us to go un-live so you can do that?

Keith: Uh...

Austin: Un-live.

Ali: Oh, don't forget how you have to read your credit card number.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: I do have to do that.

Austin: And address and SSN. [Ali and Jack laugh]

Keith: I have to read my credit card number. I just gotta make sure that I don't accidentally say it, so I just gotta get it out of the way beforehand. No, no, no. I think I'll be good. I think I'll be good.

Austin: You just have to read it with your eyes, you don't have to say it out loud. You just have to...

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Jack: [laughing] Try and order a pizza.

Keith: 4117 7...

Jack: He's doing it again!

Keith: Fuck! God damnit! [smacks something in feigned frustration] [Ali laughs] No, I'm good. I'm good.

Ali: Wait, okay.

Austin: Uh huh?

Ali: I guess this is just codes, and like, it's very simple...

Keith: We've all got 4117, yeah, we all...

Ali: [laughs] Right. But have you done the thing where you've like tried to put your credit card into a thing, and you do the first four numbers, then it's like, "I know what bank this is associated with."

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: Yes!

Keith: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, totally.

Ali: It's just like an area code thing. Like, it shouldn't be so like...

Jack: It does feel magical.

Ali: I shouldn't be taken aback by it, but yeah, it feels like...

Keith: Oh, is that how they do it? I wasn't sure how they did it. I knew that I had—

Austin: MasterCard's first digit is 5. Visa's is 4. Discover's is 6.

Ali: Ohh.

Keith: I've had four or five...

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Bank of America Visas.

Jack: It's just the first one?

Austin: No, um...3 is assigned to American Express, Diners Club and carte blanche. And then you have to keep going. 3 4 or 3 7 is American Express, et cetera.

Keith: Hmm.

Jack: I had no idea. Now I have to find out what my card number is, and I'm not gonna say it.

Austin: They shouldn't put this on the internet. This is how you get people...this is how I'm gonna get my credit card stolen. [Ali laughs]

Jack: I was reading a great interview with, uh...it was about the construction of passports.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: And it was about how the creation of a passport is kind of this weird paradox object, where you need to make an extremely ubiquitous object that is in most people's hands that most people have no idea how it is constructed.

Austin: Right.

Ali: Oh.

Jack: And like, basically—

Austin: And can't be reversed easy.

Jack: Yeah. People will not tell you the majority of ways passports are made, in the same way that they won't tell you how to build a bomb.

Austin: Right. Sure.

Jack: It's really interesting.

Austin: Sure, sure, sure, sure, sure.

Keith: Do you mean like what kind of paper and what kind of...

Jack: And like, what bits of it are plastic and what bits of it like weirdly metal?

Keith: Right. Okay.

Jack: There's like certain—

Keith: So the whole thing is like when they added the strip to the \$100 bill?

Jack: Yeah, except what if that was happening 50 times in one object?

Keith: Right. Right.

Austin: Right.

Keith: That's pretty cool. I've never had a passport. I don't really know what— I know what they are shaped like. I know what the cover, the outside cover. Like, I don't know what is inside of a little passport book.

Jack: Blank pages. One big ID card and a lot of blank pages.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Keith: What are the blank pages for?

Jack: Stamps.

Austin: To be like, "I've gone into this place. Stamp."

Keith: Wow, they like really...they really stamp it? [Ali laughs]

Jack: They stamp it, and then they write a thing on the stamp.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: Wow.

Austin: It's true.

Jack: It's true. [laughs] Speaking of, actually.

Austin: The thing that's weird is they don't do it when you go to Canada. Or they didn't for me, when I had...they didn't do it for me when I—

Keith: Ugh, they're embarrassed.

Austin: No. [Austin and Keith laugh] When I had a study visa, because— or a student visa, because it was just like, "Alright, yeah, you have a student visa, whatever." It was never whatever. it was always more than whatever but less than they stamp the thing.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: It was actually kind of whatever if I flew, and I only flew like once, but train and bus, especially bus, was never whatever. But they never stamped anything, so I had like this

passport that where like, very clearly was used a lot, but was not— did not bear the most common marking of it being used a lot which was stamps.

Jack: Huh.

Austin: So.

Jack: Interesting.

Austin: Anyway, yeah, speaking of passports and bullshit at borders, [Ali laughs] we should do a podcast.

Jack: [sighs] Should we do a clap?

Austin: Yeah, we should do a clap. Let's do a clap.

Ali: Sure.

Austin: Time.is is the address. Top of the minute?

Jack: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Mm.

[they clap]

Austin: Okay.

Keith: Got a, I would say, a top half, better than average quote.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Or at least quote giver.

Jack: Eh, it's fine, isn't it?

Austin: Yeah, I'm not mad at this.

Keith: There's so many busi— there's so many like weirdo business guys and self help weirdos and like old kings, that it's nice to have just like, [Ali and Jack laugh] “ah, this one's Carl Sagan. Great.”

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: The three categories.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Of business guy, actually. Those are all different types of business guy.

Jack: Uh huh.

Austin: So. Um, okay, are we good to jump into it?

Ali: Yeah, let's jump in.

Austin: Okay. Let me pop out notes. One second. Not that there's much on these, but it's useful for me anyway. Uh, and then let me blow this back up. Full screen, okay. Hello, and welcome to another edition of Drawing Maps. I am Austin Walker. Joining me today, Ali Acampora.

Ali: Hi. You can find me over at [@ali_west](#) on Twitter. You can find the show over at [@friends_table](#).

Austin: Jack de Quidt.

Jack: Hi. You can find me on Twitter at [@notquitereal](#) and buy any music featured on the show at [notquitereal.bandcamp.com](#).

Austin: And Keith Carberry.

Keith: Hi, my name is Keith J. Carberry. You can find me on Twitter at [@KeithJCarberry](#), and you can find the let's plays that I do at [youtube.com/runbutton](#).

Austin: I am really enjoying the *Metal Gear Solid 2* let's play, which is coming out currently.

Keith: Oh, great. Yeah, we're so close to being done with that, but we've...Kylie was sick the last like ten days, so.

Austin: Gotcha.

Keith: We have not quite wrapped it up.

Austin: I'm still before the first...not the first boss fight. I'm on the— I'm on Big Shell, but you haven't found a boss yet.

Jack: Mm.

Austin: So still pretty early Big Shell.

Keith: Yeah. Yeah.

Austin: Though you also, at one point, asked “Are we two thirds done the game?” which I fully understand why you would feel that way at that point.

Keith: Yep. [laughs]

Austin: But it's a weird game, so.

Keith: It is a really weird game. It's almost like two games.

Austin: It's almost like two games.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And it's one of my favorite let's play series y'all have done.

Keith: Yeah, I've really been liking the *Metal Gear* stuff. Just the game and then also doing the videos.

Austin: Yeah, like, the games are fucked up in places and like are not— are deeply imperfect, but in ways that generate...it's so weird to say the thing I'm about to say, because it's not true. [Jack laughs quietly] But it feels like Hideo Kojima makes outsider art, but like super, super big budget, super mainstream— [Jack and Keith laugh] and I say this because his view of the world comes from— feels like he's read half of 1000 books, like...

Keith: Yeah. [laughs] The middle half.

Austin: The middle!

Ali: Mm.

Keith: He forgot the beginning and the end of everything.

Austin: It's so— because like, he has a very particular worldview, but it's the sort of worldview that you arrive at by not understanding that other people have developed worldviews, [laughs] you know what I mean?

Keith: Right. Yeah, yeah.

Austin: He doesn't want to do—

Ali: Hmm.

Austin: Like, he just like believes he sees things that are true about the world, and that means he ends up making really...or like, those teams end up making games that have political thoughts that don't neatly fit into established paradigms?

Keith: Right. It's almost like the opposite problems that video games in general have, where they're like deeply ideological but claim that they're not.

Austin: Yes. Yes.

Keith: And like, his games like kind— he's like, “Oh, I've made these extremely ideological games.” It's like, actually, these are kind of not ideological.

Austin: You've kind of gone out of your way to take seven steps back a moment before saying something tremendous.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: But you didn't even— but I don't even know that you took those steps back. I think you just kept walking in a different direction. You just decided to loop back 'cause it was cool. And like, you didn't know what you were— it's weird. It's so— but anyway.

Keith: It's super weird.

Austin: My point is: if you haven't watched a Run Button let's play, you should watch the *Metal Gear Solid* 1 and 2 ones, because I feel like there's still a good deal of you and Kylie just like shooting the shit, but there's also— like, talking about *X-Files*, for instance, is a really good...
[Ali laughs softly]

Keith: It's a very *X-Files* series, too.

Austin: It is. It is. And I think that your perspectives on that are good. But also, it's more focused like side conversations, diversions, then like *Silent Hill*, where it's like, we're stuck in a school for eight hours.

Keith: Right.

Austin: We don't know where to go. Let's just talk about...sandwiches. You know?

Keith: Right, 'cause there's enough actual game happening.

Austin: Yes, yes, exactly. And it keeps focus.

Keith: Sorry, Ali.

Austin: Anyway, it's good.

Keith: Oh, also Jack. [Austin and Jack laugh]

Austin: *Silent Hill* fans are here to beat Keith's ass in the quote tweets. [Keith laughs] Just...

Jack: Talking about ideological games, sir.

Austin: Uh huh. [laughs softly]

Jack: Got some opinions, those games.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: I don't know what they are. [Austin and Ali laugh]

[0:11:32]

Austin: Anyway, you should go watch that. And as always, thanks for supporting. [Friendsatthetable.cash](https://www.patreon.com/Friendsatthetable) is where you go to support us. I know you already do that, so I won't give you the hard sell. And we are here today to talk about the Gates of Sapodilla, the kind of *Inhuman Conditions* lead mini— not really an arc, a kind of one-shot, a kind of one-off that preluded a downtime episode in Sapodilla. We are going to do our best to avoid spoilers about what happens after that, which is important, because both arcs that followed that had some pretty big things. One of those arcs isn't out at all yet, so—

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: I guess, Ali— is it Ali and Jack were in that one?

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: So let's, us, be very careful about that stuff. [Ali laughs] And then I think there are a couple questions here that maybe hint at Perpetual Oratorio kind of material, but I'm going to try to keep as much of that as possible in a dedicated Perpetual Oratorio episode. So this will mostly be about Gates of Sapodilla, and we'll try to keep our focus there. As always, Drawing Maps is a kind of show where we talk about our process here or behind the scenes. We also answer some questions. And those questions tend to be...the ones that we end up choosing tend to be less about, like, what it means or what the truth is about a thing. We're not trying to reveal things that are gonna come up in play, so you don't have to worry about future spoilers so much. And more, again, about process and about the ideas that inspired us and stuff like that. So, we'll try to stay in that space. It's obviously a lot of wiggle room. But thank you for everybody who sent in the questions. We did an initial call that like didn't get very much response, and then

I did a follow up call that was like, “Listen, we need questions,” and we were overwhelmed. I could not— there's no way I could add every question here. But we added as many as we could, and I tried to be representative in terms of what types of questions we included. Stuff that lots of people asked, I took one that was like representative of that stuff, so. Um. I guess, let me just, before we go to the first slide, ask to the three of you what you thought of this arc, both as like a thing that exists— or this episode, both as a thing that exists and like as a thing that, to make. What did y'all feel about it? [brief pause] Were you...like, do you even feel away about it? If that makes sense. Because I felt like, to some degree, it was a weird episode, because it like, we all went into our little vacuum one-on-ones, and then an episode got made that's like, for the listener, is a big holistic experience that is like not necessarily have the same...the same distance between each conversation that we all had, you know?

Keith: Yeah, it's weird. It was like, uh, it's one of the few times where, in order to figure out what happened in an episode I was in, I had to go like listen to it.

Austin: Right, right.

Keith: To see what happened.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: And I was like, oh, wow, we got up to some crazy stuff. [Austin laughs softly]

Jack: Yeah, like, we—

Keith: Uh—

Jack: Oh, sorry, go on.

Keith: Oh, no, no, no. It's okay. I was just gonna say that I— that the game was fun. I liked playing the game. But because of the way that it is, it really was like, uh, like...I was like pulling for one card— I had like a card that I was pulling for—

Austin: Ah.

Keith: —and a card that I wasn't, and then I sort of got the third card.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: And so I was like, ah, now I've got to play this.

Austin: You were patient robot, right? You got patient?

Keith: No, I was human.

Austin: Or, human. You wanted patient robot.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Right.

Keith: And so it like, for me, it felt like a total breeze. [Ali laughs softly]

Austin: Right. Right.

Keith: I wanted patient robot, but I was a human.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: So I was like, this was easy.

Austin: Which speaks to one of the things that was not in our control, which is we were using a toolset that lets you play this game online. I don't remember the name of it off the top— or like the URL off the top of my head. It is interrogation.ftwinston.com. And that is built like...it's a— it's like an automated system. You can't just go into it and be like, "Oh yeah, give me the role I want," you know? And so that's— that was a limit that we had, and so in some cases, we tried for like 10, 15 minutes to draw the right card, and that process took...

Keith: Yeah, I drew four times, and I was like... [Ali laughs] I drew violent. I think I drew violent robot two— maybe only three times, I guess. I drew violent robot twice, maybe patient robot once— or human once. And then I got human again, and I was like, "I'll just stick with human."

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Like, it's...it's not what I was looking to do, but it's also not beyond the realm of...like, it's not...wasn't weird to me—

Austin: Right.

Keith: —to think that like they are seeing Lyke in this way.

Austin: As a— in this way, right. Uh, Sylvi pulled 13 times before we got what she wanted. [Ali laughs]

Jack: Ha!

Keith: Wow!

Jack: Wow.

Austin: So.

Jack: That's amazing.

Austin: And that was a case where it was like, no, Sylvi knows the thing she wants, and we're gonna draw until we get it, you know?

Ali: Uh huh.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: So. Yeah.

Ali: At that point, were you like, "I know the score here,"?

Austin: I mean, I knew the score to begin with, with Virtue.

Ali: Right.

Austin: Right? And, and...

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: But that's part of the difficulty and interest— I mean, but also, did Virtue win? Yes. [Ali laughs] Right? It's like, so, I had to do my best to play it...play it despite the whatever I thought. But, you know, there's always the exception. There's always the chance that I don't understand the character the way the other player does, right?

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Or that someone's fucking with me. Art just let the chips fall where they may. Art just picked—

Keith: That was so good.

Austin: Art was just like—

Keith: Art got you so bad.

Austin: So bad. It fucking ruled so hard, and I was so happy about it. The...

Keith: Art got you the way that someone gets someone when they've been playing games for like a really, really long time.

Austin: Yeah. A hundred percent. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Exactly. Definitely. I don't even remember what the terms were that Art needed at this point, 'cause it's been so long.

Keith: Art needed to mention a specific place?

Austin: Right.

Keith: Like, "I did something in my office," or something.

Austin: Right, right, right.

Keith: It was that, and then there was one other one that I couldn't remember. I can't remember.

Austin: Yeah, they were— it was good. And it was like, yeah, it a hundred percent is like Art and I have known each other for long enough that we actually fell into a really easy rapport that got me by the end, you know? So, so yeah. Ali or Jack, do you have any thoughts just generally on the arc? Knowing that we have a bunch of questions that dig into the big stuff, you know?

Jack: Sometimes it felt a bit like when you watch a piece of fiction and as part of the fiction, they have to play a game, like they have to play— like, they have to shoot hoops or they have to play... [Austin laughs] I don't know, they're like—

Austin: Baccarat.

Jack: You know, playing jacks or—

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: Yeah, something that has a random element.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: You know, not like chess or something which you can script. Where, you know, we were...we were actively playing a game against each other.

Austin: Right.

Jack: And it was really interesting and challenging to try and play...I found it really interesting and challenging to try and play my character and play the game simultaneously. Where it's like, you know, I have an ideal outcome of this game, but we can't force it to go there. You know.

Austin: Right.

Jack: We just sort of both have to try and play it so that the game ends up that way, but I can't communicate to you what I'm trying to do.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: And that felt...that felt really fun. And so it felt like this really intense experience of making it and then, you know, like stepping back and looking at the bigger picture of this episode, where everybody had done that in their own little boxes was kind of overwhelming.

Austin: Yeah. Totally, totally. Ali, I'm curious for you, because like, I feel like our conversation was pretty straightforward, in contrast to many people's, you know?

Ali: Um, yeah, sure. I think with Marn, when I was going into the game, it was so hard to think of her as a deceptive person.

Austin: Right.

Ali: And that's like why I was leaning human or patient robot, 'cause it was just like, I couldn't think of her as someone who, you know...I mean, it's an uncomfortable situation either way, but not one that she would try to be like, manipulating. You know what I mean?

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: And that's like a privilege people feel when going through immigration all the time, right? Where it's like, "I have heightened anxiety about this, but like the sort of tension that can exist for other people doesn't for me," whether that's naivety—

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: —or like, the position that I'm in, or whatever else. So, that's how I came about it, sort of.

Austin: That makes sense. Yeah. And like, I think that that's...part of the thing that I think doesn't come across in the episode is that before—and this maybe speaks back to, Jack, you were saying it was kind of interesting to play the character and play the game—is before we get to the game, we had like 15 to 20 minutes of interview that eventually— and at this point, let me just jump in and say, read this question from Kate—

Jack: Mm, yeah.

[0:20:45]

Austin: —who says:

Hi, Friends. The editing on this episode was brilliant, both the early intercutting and the order of interrogations. I'd love to hear about the decisions and process that led to the episode as we heard it.

Austin: And it's worth saying that like, those interviews are like 15 to 20 minutes long. I guess 10 to 20 minutes long. The sort of like, what becomes the rapid cut montage intro begins with that 10 to 20 minute interview between each player and a different Macula agent than the one, the kind of wicker head candle cornucopia ones. And I think that that was interesting, because I could feel players start to settle into their character voices a little bit, in some cases more than they normally do. Ali, was it you [Ali laughs] who picked up a voice for Marn that like we'd never heard before?

Ali: I started using like a drawl, and then I was like, "I'm literally never gonna do this again. I have to stop doing it."

Austin: It was so good! It was really good. It was really good.

Ali: [laughs] Like, "I don't know what's happening, but I have to pull out of this."

Austin: That was the power of the Macula, revealing the truth of Marn Ancura.

Ali: Yeah.

Jack: You weren't intending to do it?

Ali: No.

Jack: God. Why do you think that was?

Ali: [laughs] I don't know.

Jack: Was it the focus was on your character's speech rather than like narrating their actions? Or...

Ali: I guess so.

Austin: Hmm.

Ali: I don't know. I guess it like felt right. Like, Marn is that person, but I can't play that person when we're like running a game for four hours. Do you know what I mean?

Jack: Yeah.

Ali: It's not like a staged show in that same way. [laughs]

Jack: No.

Austin: Right, right. But if we could, that is how Marn would sound.

Ali: Sure.

Austin: [laughs softly] To speak more broadly about like how this episode came to be or whatever. I know we kind of gesture at— or we kind of say it outright I think, at the beginning of the episode, is that like, Jack, you brought this game to Ali and me to play years ago now.

Jack: Mm.

Austin: And we played it in New York one day, right?

Jack: Yeah. And we immediately went...I think, like, pretty quickly, we were like, "Oh, this rules, and it would be fun to do something with." And I think it was also during that day that we figured out what you spent the next two years thinking over, right, Austin? Which is that like, this is a game as much about, uh...what's the word I'm looking for? Like, alignment to norms, alignment to, you know...how do you put it, Austin? There's a word that I'm missing here.

Austin: Uh, normativity? Or...I mean, I think it's—

Jack: It's a game about performing normativity or—

Austin: It is about performing normativity.

Jack: Or getting around normativity.

Austin: I explicitly think—and I said this on a Giant Beastcast years ago, like, we played this game, and then I talked about it on a Giant Beastcast episode—that like, I think it is explicitly about performing, like, neural...neural...wow.

Jack: Right.

Austin: Why am I stumbling over this world— bleh, word. But like, neural typicality or something, right? That like, you're about— it's about performing "being a person," quote, unquote, in a normative way in a social setting.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: And what that fundamentally is about is like, are you neurotypical? And, and there— I actually have like a bit of discomfort with the game, because sometimes it feels like the game is

not engaged in that to the degree that it is engaged with it, like, you know what I mean? Like, the framing around it as a party, as a fun party game, does not necessarily tap into directly this like deep vein of discomfort that's in the game—that I felt while playing the game—that specifically came from the fact that what robots are, what robots have is verbal tics, different ways of thinking, different ways of ordering information or accessing information, different emotional relationships to information than what human, quote unquote, “human” characters have. And, and I don't know that...I don't want to...I'm not like, “this game is ableist.” It's really that like, the designers hit something about the way these systems work, 'cause it fundamentally is critical of systems of authority that do this, to be clear, right? But it is also caught up in it in a way that I've always felt like, ooh, ah, mm, I want them to lean in and like address it a little bit more. But I also, to be clear, I said that at the time as somebody who like had not read the full book and had not like thought about the way the art and design work communicates the ways in which the police player, the interrogator is like a functionary of an authoritarian state, and you know, all that stuff. But also, again, as a game that's like inspired by *Blade Runner*. *Blade Runner* is already kind of doing a lot of that work. So if you know you're playing the *Blade Runner* game, and you know what *Blade Runner* is and how *Blade Runner* works, you should get from the jump that the interrogator is a baddie, you know?

Jack: Mm.

Austin: But that was a big part of it, and so it sat in my brain for a long time. I thought about using it in PARTIZAN.

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Austin: There's a point at which—

Keith: I sort of remember that.

Austin: Yeah, you all lose your citizenship, right? Light spoilers for PARTIZAN, there's a point at which major characters [Ali laughs softly] lose their citizenship because of acts they've done. And I thought an interesting way of representing that would be about like, what's it mean to— what's that mean in that world and in that setting? And so I wanted to...I thought about using it there, but [sighs] it felt at the time like that would be even more of a lift. I couldn't quite figure out the human/robot stuff. It felt like too abstracted from like what I actually wanted to do. And instead, what we ended up doing was stuff like, um, there's a sequence where an inspector comes to inspect a spaceship in PARTIZAN, where you had to prepare for that, knowing that you could get in trouble. And things like that started happening a little bit more. It was also by the— towards the end of the season, so it's like, we didn't have a lot of time to play out that role, but it's something that's front of mind when we go back— for when we go back to PARTIZAN, for sure. And then, yeah, I pitched the idea to everybody. I said, “Hey, let me know if this is, like, not something you're interested in for any reason, whether that is for thematic reasons, for personal safety, personal mental health, just not wanting to engage with adversarial gameplay. Any of those reasons, and we just like won't do it, and I'll figure out another way to communicate

this. But if you are interested, let me know.” And we talked through it, and everyone was basically— I mean, everyone was on board. There's not like an everyone— it's not like “basically,” like, I did not have to do any hard work [Austin and Ali laugh briefly] convincing every- anybody.

Jack: Sure.

Austin: That was me like qualifying it, the way you qualify a thing just because you naturally like want to give space for variability. But everybody was on board from the jump. We talked through why I wanted to do this and talked about the experience we had playing this game years ago, Ali and Jack. And then, yeah, we did them...I think, Jack, you and I did a game. We did a test game to remember how it worked. And then...

Jack: Mm.

Austin: So that we could think about how to hack it, which was like very light, and we pretty much knew what we wanted to do, but we did that. Then, we did all the sessions, all of the interviews plus the interrogations. Then, Jack, you and I then did another interview, for the— or not interview, another interrogation plus intro for the episode. That was the sort of like, hey, should we let—

Jack: Oh, yeah, we did a dummy one, didn't we?

Austin: Yeah, for— just to like, have the listener get comfortable with what the game was, understand our thinking, et cetera, so that we didn't throw them in the deep end. Which, I will say, is not what I think we would have done three or four years ago. I think...

Jack: Hmm.

Austin: I think Twilight Mirage era *Friends at the Table* would have been like, you hit play, and it's a weird episode. [Ali and Jack laugh] Where you...do you know what I mean? And I think that...I think that speaks a little bit to two things. One is that, like, Sangfielle is a horror season, and so front of mind has been about like, as we get into material that is challenging and scary, how do we prime the listener for what that is? And this is, for me, the opening of it being really a horror season. Like, I think there's stuff at Bell Metal Station that's...I think there's stuff that's spooky before this, but in terms of like drawing directly on stuff that I have found personally terrifying—

Keith: Mm.

Austin: —it is like, seeing—

Keith: First it was the skeletons.

Austin: First it was the skeletons, right?

Ali: Mm.

Austin: I do think skeletons are scary. It's true. I do think big plant monsters are scary. I do think that there's visuals we played on that are in the horror space, but in terms of like, I am drawing on an extended fear of mine, it has been my interactions with and my...my view— my like, like actual looking at the way border agents have treated people directly in front of me. People's bags being opened up, their stuff being rifled through. Women, you know, 60, 70 year old women going to see their families for a funeral being turned away at the border. You know, stuff like that that's like super front of mind and my experience going back and forth. And that was just from Canada to the States, [laughs softly] you know what I mean? And so those experiences very much were an engine for me, and I wanted to draw on that stuff. And so I think because of that, and then also because I know, Jack, you've dealt with border stuff for years now too, that like, for both of us, I thought it made sense for the two of us to get together and like have that conversation, to do the test game, to show what space we're going into. Which I think allowed us to more confidently go into it hard, if that makes sense.

Jack: Yeah. And I think not just with horror. You know, something I've been thinking a lot about with the music this season has been, you know, this is our first new season for a while in a completely new setting.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And so I think that there is definitely some distance between us and the listener that we need to do work to cross.

Austin: Right.

Jack: You know, I have soundtracked stuff that I might not necessarily have soundtracked before, because it's like, okay, this is an opportunity we have to say something about...about this world and about how we want to tell stories in it.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Don't get me wrong, I think it would be sick to just hit go and it be a weird episode. But sometimes what is sick is not necessarily the episode that is right to make, you know?

Austin: Yeah, and I think that there's also...it's a major, it's a major thing that...one of the conversations that's come out— you know, not come out. But one of the recurring conversations I've seen in our space is like, what is an actual play podcast?

Jack: Mm, mm-hmm.

Austin: And is it really truly the way they play, and blah blah blah, right? And my note to that is like, you can play the way we do the podcast. You're allowed to do this. Like, go play a weird game in the middle of your other game. Like, I would be doing this if we were just playing this for us, 'cause it's sick, and it's the way my brain is cursed. But two, I think that there's important ways in which doing actual play is not the same thing as doing a radio show or doing a television show. The television episode of this would have been, you know, a vignette, vignettes of seven interviews in a row, you know, cold open, hard end, just the back half of it, would have opened on the montage. Like, it's the stuff that's there, but it would not have had...you know, there would not have been an extended conversation up top about immigration rights or something. [Jack and Austin laugh briefly] Do you know what I mean?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Would not have been—

Jack: We're not a TV show.

Austin: We're not— but we're not a TV show. And I think on top of people listening being invested in...being invested in who the characters are, they're also invested in making sure that the people at the table are having an okay time and are not being put through the wringer in a way that they didn't anticipate. And so I think it was important for me to like, "Hey, I'm talking to someone who has deep personal feelings about this. We're both on the same page on this. Let's talk through the philosophy of what we're doing, and let's show what the limits of this thing are or at least an example of what this game does, so that you the listener can see what the...what play looks like here." So, I hope— I found that pretty instructive, and I hope people— like, doing it, I found it instructive, and I hope other people do too. And then, I cut the interviews down. I wanted to run the whole interviews, but they're just too long. And I was like, "What if we do a montage?" And so I just cut together a montage, and it...at first, I was like, I was like, "Jack, can you make music?" but then I was like, "Well, let me just see if it works with the theme," and it just totally worked with the theme. And so we just went with it, and I cut that stuff together, and that was fun, so. I don't know. I felt like that was a good...it's like a...I like this episode a lot. And it was like a lot of work scheduling, but the actual...the actual like what it is is not, was not that much work, and that is again why I'm like, people should do this stuff in their home campaigns. Because it's not a big budget production, you know what I mean? [laughs softly] Like, find yourself a cool little game and integrate it. Any other thoughts here, or should we move on to some more particular questions? [brief pause] All right. Ali, can you read this from Co(???)?

[0:33:40]

Ali: Um, yeah. Co writes:

In prepping for the *Inhuman Conditions* game, what did you expect your players to be? You touched a little bit in...you touched a little bit on in...in after—

Austin: I bet it's "on it in" is my guess.

Ali: Ah, there we go.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: [laughs] On it in—

Austin: Sorry, I normally catch those and fix those, but I missed this one. [Ali laughs]

Ali:

—in the after conversations, but what expectations did you have pre-interview? I'm interested to know what do you...what do you prep in games like this where prejudice is an obvious component?

Austin: Um, I expected...I expected— I didn't— hmm. I didn't have firm expectations for everybody. I expected Marn would be human. Is that the only one I was certain on? [Ali laughs softly] I expected...I expected Virtue to be violent robot. That's probably it. I think that that's probably it. I thought maybe Pickman human but not a hundred percent, especially post-Bell Metal. I guess I thought Lyke would be patient robot, but then Lyke wasn't, because of what we said before.

Keith: Couldn't get it.

Austin: 'Cause you couldn't get it.

Keith: Yeah. [Ali laughs softly]

Austin: But that was kinda— I had no idea.

Keith: And then I learned Sylvi tried so much harder than I did! [Austin and Jack laugh]

Jack: Was there a bit of you, Austin, that was like deliberately not peeking through your fingers? In that, like, was there a bit of your brain that was trying to figure it out before the game started that you turned off?

Austin: Mm...

Jack: Or was it just head empty, no thoughts?

Austin: No, I like genuinely couldn't be sure. Like, I was pretty sure about Marn because of how Marn...because we, you know, had conversations during Yellowfield about like, you know, monstrous eye creature, wereshrew ranger, and double undead vampire, and then a little guy, right? And so like, we— I'd already been conceptualizing Marn as sort of, you know, the...the,

quote, unquote, “most normative” one. And also just like, Marn helps people. Marn is someone who shows up and helps people, in a way that Sapodilla would recognize as being fundamentally useful and “good” in their own terminology. And so it was hard for me to even conceptualize Marn in a different way, but that's not to say Marn couldn't have been a patient or killer robot, right?

Ali: Yeah. It's something that I definitely thought about going into it, because I was either gonna take patient robot if it came up with it. I just happened to get human—

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: —when we played it the first time. But like, the way that that works for Marn otherwise is like, what...what version of discomfort that she would display during the interview would be perceived—

Austin: Yes.

Keith: Mm.

Ali: —as untrustworthy.

Austin: Exactly. Because this is not a game about identifying robots. I mean, this is the core...this is why I need it to be an analogy, is that there aren't patient robots, killer robots, and humans. There are only humans. Right? And systems decide you're a patient robot, you're a killer robot, you're a human. And this also answers the kind of prejudice prep, right? Which is like, I thought a lot. One is, I don't know that I've played a character who doesn't have some degree of prejudice, which is to say, a relationship to the categories of being and social categories that they're surrounded by, influenced by, what they've been taught inside of their culture. You know, when I played...when I played Brandish, Brandish had certain ideas about what the world outside of Nacre looked like that were not well informed, that were based on what he'd been told about— oh, you know, when you go back and play Gur Sevraq. Gur Sevraq has certain ideas about what the world beyond PARTIZAN looks like. All of my characters do have some element of this that's informed by a worldview and the limits on the parts of the world they've actually viewed. And so for this, it was very easy to think about Sapodilla in relation to these characters and think, what— and not just Sapodilla, but particularly the witch hunting arm of the cops. [Jack laughs] And the interrogative arm of that, of that arm, right? Like, the part that is about shutting people out, and think, “Okay, how would they respond?” and they would respond by looking at Marn and being like, “Ah, it's a little guy who can sharpen knives,” right? You fit into this model very cleanly. And that doesn't mean that I would have let Marn in no matter what those answers had been, but it— and in fact, one of my favorite interviews is the Marn one. There is a bit that's in the montage that I wish I could have played all of, which was Marn, before the interrogation starts, you mentioned that you wrote the Shape yourself. And the whole tenor of that conversation shifts.

Ali: [laughs] Uh huh.

Austin: Because that's this sudden...it's like telling a cop in the mid 80s that you're a Satanist, you know? You're like, "Excuse me? Wait, what?"

Jack: Ha!

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: "Wait a second. I've seen the news. I know you're not supposed to worship Satan [Ali laughs] and there's evil Satan cults running around right now," you know? I bet if you told a cop today that you were a Satanist, it wouldn't go much better, to be clear.

Ali: Yeah, sure.

Austin: But, but you know, at the height of the kind of anti-cult fervor, the anti-Satanism—

Keith: Right, it's not in the news every night.

Austin: Exactly. No one's tying it to serial killers in the way it was at the time.

Keith: Right. 'Cause it was all fake.

Austin: Right, right, because of how it was...it was pretty much all fake, yeah. [Jack laughs]

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Um, so yeah, like that's...I think...so I did, I tried my best to get in my head about that stuff and to think about what those...what those first blush perspectives are. But also, there are lots of characters, like both Es and Virtue, who are two extremely on— had been chased out of Sapodilla before, notably. Both of them seem like they are not supernatural people, right? Like, they are very finely dressed ladies who could be high society— members of high society if they wanted to be. And so, there are ways in which that also, I tried my best to let that also shade some of those interviews. Where like, Chine comes in, and Chine looks like Chine does, and so all the notions around...for the Macula, looking at some like Chine, immediate— and then, and also, Dre played Chine in the interview part of it just like, an— just like, yeah, I'm a fucking monster person, deal with it. [Ali laughs] Like, when did I last eat something cursed? Like, yesterday. I'm into it. Let's go. So, so there are ways in which it's like it lined itself up so that I could play with that. And part of that prep, again, is just having the conversation ahead of time to be like, alright, we know what the horror of this situation is, right? Like, we're— no one— I don't need to...no one needs to beat around the bush about what the Macula are. They fucking suck, and there are versions of them that exist for real across every, you know, marginalization that there is, that attempt to police and ostracize and gatekeep and kill, right? Like, these are not hard things to imagine. But the work of making them, of playing them honestly, is to do that

prep and get in that headspace, in the same way if you're writing a villain, you know? So. I hope that that answers that question. I'm gonna keep moving, 'cause we have so many questions that like, even though we could stay on this a little bit—

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: —we'll probably get there through something else.

Keith: This is sort of...this is sort of an aside, but it came up in the course of you answering that question, Austin.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Keith: I can't remember, were you— did you guess wrong only one time as— when it was your turn to like guess?

Austin: I belie— no. Well...I think that that's wrong. I think— let me think. Okay. I'm gonna look at a list of everyone on the podcast really quick.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Keith, you were human, and I said human. You got full access.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Sylvi killed me. [laughs softly]

Keith: Right.

Austin: Art killed me. Dre I got right.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Janine...I don't remember if Janine was a patient robot or a human. I think she picked human. She picked human, because—and she's spoken about this—that Es was able to draw on the experiences of the host, whose name comes up here, and I forget now what her name is off the top of my head. I have to look at notes. But, but they're able to pull on that, and so, and so Janine said, like, that's why that. So I think I got that...I think I got that right, because I gave full access. Jack is an interesting one. Ali, I got right. Jack, your— this is interesting for you, because we changed your outcome.

Jack: Mm.

Austin: Right? Which we'll talk— we should talk about. I guess maybe we should go back here and talk about this.

Keith: Was this not in the episode?

Austin: No, because we changed it after the fact and went back. We...Jack got limited access instead of full access. And I felt myself go easy on Jack in a way that I wish I hadn't and after the fact went back and changed it, because there's a moment where I was like, I did a bad job of playing the Macula here. And, and I didn't want to go all the way to no access, and this is part of why— and this is also part of the difficulty of trying to hack this thing. And there's a question that comes in later which is like, in the game, the GM— the Macula or the interrogator can either stamp robot or human. And what I realized after the fact was we needed a third stamp. Or, we had a third stamp, but I was conceptualizing it as patient robot, and I should have been conceptualize it as like, you know...

Keith: Suspicious human.

Austin: Suspicious human. Right, exactly. That's the thing, is I didn't stamp patient robot, because I was like, "Well, I don't think it's a patient robot, but I do think Jack is being a suspicious human." And I can even tell you the specific thing that I wish I had pushed back on or pushed harder on, which is: Jack, in Pickman's interrogation, we got into this whole back and forth about [Jack laughs] the difference between an ideal—

Jack: An ideal.

Austin: —and a, like a particular goal or something like that.

Jack: An objective.

Austin: An objective.

Jack: You kept asking Pickman what her ideals were—

Austin: Yes. Yes.

Jack: —and Pickman just kept giving you what Pickman thinks ideals are.

Keith: Was this...Jack, was it that you couldn't directly answer a question? Was that the...

Jack: Um, no, I could never express bad intentions.

Keith: Bad intentions, okay.

Jack: And Austin kept asking me about bad things that I'd done or been near.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And so I had to find ways to explain them without...

Keith: What was your other thing?

Jack: Uh, I was a patient robot, so it was...

Keith: No, no, isn't there two things you have to do? Or am I just getting that wrong?

Austin: No, a patient robot has a thing they cannot do. A dangerous robot has goals.

Keith: Has two things they have to do.

Austin: Two things they have to do or the third thing is they can do the...

Keith: Right. Right, right, right.

Austin: ...the penalty three times.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: So yeah, yours was that you couldn't...but that wasn't even the thing that got me, that got me...it was specifically this idea of ideals, right? And, at the time, I remember ending it being like, "Well, I think Jack did a good—" like, it's a complex feeling, and I think it's extra complex because of your history with...with borders. And I think that there's a degree to which I played soft in the moment, and then immediately we hung up, and I regretted it.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: And that was like, in many ways, unfair to then immediately hit you back up and be like, "Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait." [Ali and Jack laugh] I mean, the other half of this, which is like, we cannot release the game or the episode where—and the story that we want to tell isn't—that the Macula got it right, except for when they were killed by violent robots. That like, if the read I'm giving is, if the read that I want to, that like we're interested in is this is an authoritarian regime which arbitrarily decides who is and who isn't a robot...

Jack: Sometimes...

Austin: They have to get it wrong.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: They have to sometimes— or they have to, they have to impede people who have done nothing wrong. You had done nothing wrong. And yet, you should have— do you know what I mean? That there's a degree to which it wasn't about like winning that, that it was about ensuring that it was not: five people get in all the way because the Macula is like, “thumbs up, regular people—”

Jack: Mm.

Austin: “—and you monster motherfuckers, no.” You know what I mean?

Jack: Get the hell out of here.

Austin: Exactly. Um, I think the combination of those two things made us go back and rethink the end of that interview.

Jack: And there's not a bit of me that's like, um...I think when you have an opportunity to tell a story so clearly about something that you're struggling with personally, and you feel able to do it, sometimes it feels like a gift, right? 'Cause you're just like—

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: “Oh, fuck yeah, here we go. Right. We're gonna talk about this. We're gonna...we're gonna put this into the show in some way.” And that kind of after the fact alteration of like, “Um, actually, no—”

Austin: Totally.

Jack: —is something that I am very familiar with from real immigration authorities. And so that happening was just a real moment of like, huh, yeah, okay.

Austin: God.

Jack: Yep. In retrospect, we should have...we should have just really written it in that way, right? To like, “All right, you're all ready to go— ah, wait one second. Sorry. You didn't fill this out right,” you know? or...

Jack: The moment— we kind of— the closest we get which is just direct in my experience—

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: —is the bit when...I don't know if it makes it in, where Pickman, where we're joking about it, and we're like, you know, “You can make an appeal here.”

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: And then I go, “Oh, no, wait. It doesn't say you can make an appeal here. It says ‘There can be no appeals. [Austin laughs] In order to further your case—”

Austin: Yes.

Jack: “Please write to whatever.”

Austin: Yes.

Jack: Which is just, yeah.

Austin: Uh huh. Yeah.

Jack: I have those...I have those papers on my desk.

Austin: Yeah, exactly. Exactly. Um, so, so yeah, I think that was...and again, I want to reiterate, like, you can do this at home. Like, we've done it before and been open about these things, right? This is revealing too much information early in a COUNTER/Weight faction game episode. This is changing the very end of PARTIZAN 28, right? Which, by the way, someone did incredible—

Jack: Oh, it's so good.

Austin: —animatic today of— or released it today. I'm sure they did not do the whole thing today. [Jack and Ali laugh]

Jack: Extremely quickly.

Austin: Of the end of PARTIZAN 28 that is just like phenomenal. I'm gonna find it really quick so that I can shout out the actual person instead of just saying someone did this. Uh, where is it? Where did it— why can't I...Twitter, stop being bad. It is Myra, M-Y-R-D-R-O-T-T-N-I-N-G-E-N on Twitter, made a really great PARTIZAN episode 28 animatic. And so like, I've always like, the retcon is in your— should be in your game, right? Like, you should be willing to go back and do that when it feels appropriate to do it. So. Um, alright, next question. Jack, can you read this from Charlie?

[0:49:00]

Jack: Yeah, absolutely. Let me just get over to it. Charlie says:

One, did any one player/character surprise you during the interview? I personally found it super interesting how serious Lye took the whole thing, especially in contrast to other characters Keith played, e.g. Fero back at the university. Two, I suppose the whole point

of the game here was that, like, immigration laws are bullshit and the rules are cruel and don't make sense, but Austin, did you have any firm criteria for what kind of behavior/answers would get the characters how far into the city? Cheers, Charlie.

Austin: Keith, did you feel like you took it extra seriously?

Keith: Um...

Austin: I'm not saying you didn't. I'm just curious.

Keith: Yeah, I think I had my...I had like a little bit of a, you know, I was...it was like, uh...I guess I did a little bit of like, you know, talking to the cop that pulled you over thing, you know?

Austin: [laughs] Yes, yeah. Totally.

Keith: Like, like, yeah, I just tried to answer your weird questions and be like...brief about it, I guess?

Austin: Mm.

Keith: And not give too much information but also not make you mad. [Jack makes amused sound]

Austin: Fucking cops. Ugh. I feel like...I feel like Sylvi surprised me, because she introduced like background material to Virtue that I didn't expect with regards to her sister and like this particular NPC who I had not heard of before. Hmm, anybody else. I mean, obviously, Duvall killed me, but...and that's a sort of surprise, but it wasn't...that wasn't like...that was Art playing well. That wasn't like, "Ooh, I didn't expect this." It was like, as it was happening, I was like, "Oh, this is very...this is interesting for Duvall," but it wasn't like a shock. I think that that's probably about it. I was surprised that it felt like Marn felt kind of on the back foot in a way I didn't expect, but that was kind of interesting too. Especially given that Marn got through— you know what I mean? Like, I felt like there were bits where Marn was like, "This whole experience is stressful and weird." [Ali laughs] Which is appropriate, but like...and I'm not saying I expected you to play super confident necessarily, but like, there was a more back footed relationship there than I expected.

Ali: Mm.

Keith: I'll say that...uh, this is only sort of related, but I'll say that I was like totally not expecting the line of questioning I got? I know that that, you know, that tracks. [Ali laughs softly]

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Keith: But I wasn't expecting to be given like a series of hypotheticals about like this weird haunted town.

Ali: Uh huh.

Austin: Yeah, you both got haunted town hypotheticals, huh?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: I forgot about this. Lyke, you got... [sighs] What was yours? What was the...

Keith: I was...I was supposed to go on a train, and the train—

Austin: Oh, right.

Keith: —let me off at an abandoned town. Do I get off? And I said no, because it might be dangerous.

Austin: Right, right.

Keith: And then, like, I get sent back to the town, but now no one's there.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: And I'm like, I guess I get out and, uh, you know, I...you were trying to— you were trying to get me to say what I thought was the most dangerous thing.

Austin: Right.

Keith: And I kept basically telling you about like, that I would— that if I didn't get somewhere with food and water that I would, I would like die of thirst.

Austin: You would die, yeah, yeah, yeah. [Ali laughs] That it wasn't a person, it wasn't a whatever. I, you know—

Keith: Right. And then you hit me with the, like, the...the stumper that led me into actually almost doing my tell—

Austin: Mm.

Keith: —which was, like, how thirsty would I have to be to kill someone?

Austin: Right. Right.

Keith: And then I sort of— I sort of let myself almost lapse on the time kind of for fun.

Austin: Mm-hmm. I mean, the way that the clock works in this game is just so good. Like, the sense of like, are you stalling for...are you stalling to kill me, basically. It's just so good from the interrogator side.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: The effect there is great. I mean, that's the thing that was so cool about the Virtue and Duvall stuff, is...and Chine especially. Chine I could tell was about to kill me. And so when Dre started letting the clock go, it was like, oh shit. It's like hearing the door open in your house, you know? And you're like, "Ah!" [Ali laughs softly] And the way that that flipped the horror dynamic in that moment was just like incredible, so that was very fun. And that way, I felt...you know what? I would say Dre surprised me, because we had seen— we've seen Chine, you know, joyously adopt a, quote, unquote, a "monstrous form," but the...I did not expect Chine to be a violent robot going into it.

Keith: When you told me, before the episode was even like starting editing—

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: —that Chine was a violent robot, I was like very surprised.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah. It was— and I think with that one, it's, Dre goes like..., uh, like, "Oh, you'd probably be good at" something, and I realized that Dre had been complimenting me over and over again, throughout the entire thing, and I was like, "Oh, shit!" like. That's— uh oh! [Ali laughs]

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: You know what I mean? It's like you see the motion in the bushes, and you're like, "Aah, I'm being followed," like, [laughs softly] very, very like...great feeling. Great feeling like there is a tiger about to leap at you.

Keith: Yeah. I already knew, because I knew before the episode was out, but...

Austin: I know. I shouldn't've told...I shouldn't've told any of y'all, in retrospect. I should've let you experience it.

Keith: But I also...I had that as, when I was violent robot, that also was my thing.

Austin: Mm. Right.

Keith: So when I heard Dre doing that, I was like, oop, that's it. That's the thing.

Austin: That's the thing. [Ali laughs] Yeah, totally. Um, in terms of the behavior slash answers that would get characters how far into the city, the answer to that is like, I don't have the criteria, because I'm trying to play the game, and the game is an abstraction of that process, right? There's a version of this where we don't play a game at all, and we just do an interview, and then I have to come up with an internal kind of matrix of responses. I don't even want to say that there's like a code, because again, part of the point is that there's— that it's arbitrary, that people who sometimes...that if there were a set of rules, that sometimes people who broke the rules would get in because they presented a certain way and that sometimes people would not be allowed in because— and those rules would be stretched such to disallow them, because a boarder agent just doesn't like the look of them or is having a bad day or, you know, had got into a fight that morning and now they're carrying that energy with them. 'Cause like, that is how...that is how these institutions function. Or is racist, right? [laughs] Like.

Keith: Yeah, different agents can have their own different criteria.

Austin: Right! Exactly, exactly.

Keith: And do.

Austin: And a thing that is worth saying is that, like, I was not trying to be one agent throughout all of those things. I thought about doing that at first, and then I realized, like, oh wait, I can't do that, because what if one of them dies? [laughs] Then they cannot be that same person. So they have to be able to— so I have to play the game and let that level of abstraction represent what that...what an individual agent is doing, so. I did have things that were like triggers for harsher questioning, like, for instance, when a carpana tells you that they recently drew the Shape, but that's a different— [laughs] that's a different thing, in terms of like, do you get in or not. So.

Jack: Did you have character notes for the Macula agents in terms of their affect?

Austin: Uh, only for the pre-interviewer. Right, where I'm like, okay, this one—

Jack: Okay.

Austin: This is— I'm gonna play this character as kind of bubbly until there's a turn. I'm gonna play this character as kind of tired. I'm gonna play this in a— and none of that comes through, because all of that got cut for the montage, right? Or most of it does, you know?

Jack: But when it came to playing the game...

Austin: I did my best to just play the— well, because they are supposed to be a grim vessel, you know?

Jack: Yeah, definitely. And, you know, when we've played *Inhuman Conditions* in the past, I feel like we've all sort of ended up with the affect of the Macula, 'cause that's how fucking border guards talk, you know?

Austin: Yeah, yeah, exactly. I mean, you can do it different ways. You could do Colombo, you know? But it...but it feels wrong to do Colombo. It feels wrong to do charismatic border agent. Fuck that, you know? So. Keith, can you read this from—

Jack: They—

Austin: Oh, go ahead.

Jack: Ugh.

Austin: Uh huh?

Jack: I've met some charismatic border agents, and they aren't charismatic. It's weird. It's like watching an alien try and interpret human interaction.

Austin: Uh huh.

Keith: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Totally.

Jack: Okay, sorry. Carry on.

Keith: The friendly cop was a bizarre thing.

Austin: Yes. [imitating overly friendly] "Well, how you doing today?"

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Shut the fuck up. [Ali and Jack laugh]

Keith: I was...I had a car issue and got arrested a couple years ago, and the bubbly guy arresting me for essentially nothing at like 1 a.m. for like the 40 minute drive back to the station, while he's also texting while driving and on his stupid little cop laptop...

Austin: Oh my god.

Keith: Is just the absolute worst.

Austin: Get fucked. Yeah.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Can you read this one, Keith?

Keith: From Luke?

Austin: From Luke.

[0:58:30]

Keith:

Was there a plan if all the replicants had been caught?

Jack: Ha!

Austin: I don't have plans ever. No plans.

Keith: No plans. [Ali laughs softly]

Austin: I don't know, you do like a jailbreak? That'd be fun. We'd figure it out. You know? It's not...I don't introduce things like this 'cause I have a plan. [laughs softly] I introduce it because I think what will happen will force me to come up with a plan after, that would be more interesting than if we didn't do it. You know, like these things are always engines for new story. They're not...I would love if this had happened. I would love if it didn't. Like, I loved how it went with us. I think we got to some really good places because of the outcome of these games. But I think it's just worth saying that, like, it's just not how I tend to do my side of the story, you know? You know, and I should be clear that like, in that way, nothing that follows, neither the Perpetual Oratorio nor the arc that hasn't even started yet, were like considered before they got there. I guess I had a little tiny bit of Perpetual Oratorio in my head, but only the smallest amount. But...and then the other half like a hundred percent was not there yet. Or again, very tiny thing that didn't even come up in play, it turns out, on the other side of the game I had an idea for, and like, that didn't even come up. Basically, "heritrixes exist in the city" I guess came up, and so that was one small part. And so the...the idea that I would have a plan, like that just like doesn't...it's just not on the table because of how we do the show and the way I run the campaign, where like, most of that stuff gets generated based on what happens. It's not so much the like, how do I get players from one point to another point, you know? So. All right, this is a long one. I'm gonna read it, 'cause it's long. [laughs softly] Adrian(???) writes:

[1:00:27]

During my first listen, the whole interrogation scenario was very viscerally frightening to me. Listening to it back again, I realized that it was because of a lot of the questions, particularly Marn and Pickman's scenes, were based around things like theory of mind

and placing yourself in the perspective of other people. I have autism, and those are two things that I've been told I struggle with but never fully understood what people meant by that. During those scenes, the panic was coming from my realization that I could not answer these questions to pass as "human," quote, unquote. That is profoundly frightening to me. Obviously, the structure of the game is meant to evoke these worries about who is considered a person and how that is used by authority. However, it also brought up to me a question about accessibility in the tabletop roleplaying game space. I find that I don't engage with TTRPGs in quite the same way as my peers. I tend to play people more similar to myself and have a harder time adopting the perspective of extremely different people. I also struggle to think in scenarios where clarifying questions are not allowed, so the penalty that Virtue had was stressful to think about.

Austin: I don't remember off the top of my head what Virtue's was. Does anybody else? Um, I have the transcript now in front of me, so let me just very quickly check, so that I can...so that I can...we can be on the same page with it. Um...

Keith: Was it maybe not being able to...

Austin: Ask questions?

Keith: ...to respond to a question with a question?

Austin: Maybe. Maybe, maybe, maybe. That would make sense. Um...god. Uh, three goals. Obsessions were describe dealing with three different tragedies the same way, and then perform the penalty— oh, maybe it was the penalty. Maybe the penalty was you can't ask clarifying questions. That would make some sense to me.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Something like that. Uh, I'm just double checking. Yes, the the penalty was when you ask for clarification. So yes, literally, you're not allowed to ask for clarification. So, I'll repeat what Adrian wrote:

I also struggle in scenarios where clarifying questions are not allowed, so the penalty Virtue had was stressful to think about. I'm wondering, if you'd been doing these particular interrogation scenes, and a player had brought up their own inability to understand the questions, would you consider this to be an accessibility issue for the game? Or would you consider it to be an integral part of the game that there is a struggle to pass as human? I don't bring this up as a criticism of the game, since I think it took a very valuable— I took a very valuable lesson away from exploring the tension it provoked. I was just intrigued, because we often frame game accessibility in terms of physical differences and not necessarily how someone is able to understand and conceptualize a game system. Also, as people who've played so many different games, would you have any recommendations to people who design games on how to approach

accessibility in this broader way? Hope this is something thought provoking for you, thanks for making such a wonderful show. Adrian, he/they.

Austin: Thank you, Adrian. Um, obviously, if you've heard now the beginning of this episode, this is front of mind for why we even chose the game, because I think this sort of categorization of people into human and nonhuman and needing to pass in that way, it was front of mind for me. Not only in terms of kind of whether or not you're neurotypical, but also in other, you know, other axes of marginalization. When I talk to a cop, I am as code switched as I can possibly be into sounding as white as I possibly can be. When, when I'm— you know, that is a thing I was trained to do from youth, you know? And trained both formally and informally, that like, hearing my father put on a different voice for a cop was instructive. And so, and so that was all super front of mind. And to that end, I think before we played, I mean, I was very clear to the rest of the cast that this was a potential...this was part of what we were going to explore the tension of. And so I wanted to make sure, before anybody even got involved, that everyone was comfortable on that level.

The second thing was that people picked, like, I linked the...the rules to the game and linked all of the questions, and I said, "Hey, I'd love to know which of these categories of questions—" I guess, for people who don't know, *Inhuman Conditions* has it set up so that there are kind of like packets of interview. I should also note that you can go buy *Inhuman Conditions* by going to robots.management, and on robots.management you can also download print-and-play instructions and stuff. But the prompts for the investigator, the things that I asked, are— and the penalties and the patient and killer or whatever, violent robot, cards are all tied to categories like small talk or imagination or grief or body integration or hopes and dreams. And so before we started, I said, "Hey, you can go here and let me know which of the three you're most interested in for your character. I'd prefer if you don't read and study these things, but if it makes you feel safer or if you're especially curious or if you feel like the only way that you can do it is to go ahead and read through all of these, you know, go ahead and do that until you hit something that you think you'd be comfortable with." So, I think that was already part of it. I don't— I think maybe one or two people did a little bit of digging, but most people understood what I was trying to communicate around what this experience would be like. And that, I think, gave everybody the comfort to pick one and just go into it fresh. But I think those steps are important.

And then also on top of that, there was a degree to which, to answer the other part of this, which is that like, if someone started doing this, and they were like, "I'm uncomfortable here," like, all right, we pull the stop button, right? We hit the stop button right now, and we figure out something else. Either that means slowing down and getting rid of the time limit, and that way people— or finding a different penalty and starting over, or, you know, talking through if we can do this via text and then read the text. Like, there's all sorts of ways that we can go down the road. And if you decide at the end of the day, like, "You know what, I'm just not comfortable at this," all right, you're just not comfortable with it, and we'll ax it, and we'll come around to getting people into the city a different way. You know, maybe I'll be very descriptive, we'll do a long intro up top that talks about this process. Or we'll do two of these things with

players that are really excited about it as a sort of indicative, you know, example of what this looks like without needing to do one for everybody. Or we'll find some other way to communicate this aspect of world without putting someone into discomfort that they're not interested in being put into, do you know what I mean? That they're not interested in that tension, they're just uncomfortable. So I think that's— those are the two big answers there, in terms of...in terms of the how we did it. I'm curious if anybody felt uncomfortable during this process or felt like there was a step that we should have taken. Or like, you know, honestly, just like for notes going forward for things like this, if people at home want to do this, are there things that you wish we would have done that we didn't think of doing ahead of time? [brief pause] 'Cause I think it was pretty good, but I, you know?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: I might have my perspective, so.

Jack: I found playing dummy interviews helpful.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Helpful in the sense that...it was like getting the vehicle up to speed—

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: —before doing the actual thing. And also, you know, I took the dummy interview as an opportunity to play a character who was not like Pickman.

Austin: Right.

Jack: In a way that felt like it was reassuring myself that I was able to remain in control of the character's affect. Where I was, I was sort of...I was trying to comfort myself and be like, "Look, okay, I'm just sitting down, and I'm playing a game with my friend Austin. We're gonna try it once like this—"

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: "—and then we're gonna take a break, and now we're gonna try it once like that." And so I think, you know, maybe taking a few— taking a few cracks at it. If you're playing it as part of a campaign, you know.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: I think going over it with your GM and being like, "Hey, how does the game work? Let's practice."

Austin: Which I think maybe that's part of what the kind of design community can take away, is thinking about...and this is a small one maybe, but one of the things that I find super useful, not just as a GM but as a player, around mitigating my own stress and my own discomfort with a new game is having really well written, really detailed example play.

Jack: Mm, mm-hmm.

Austin: Which I don't...you know, listen, I'm not...I am not an expert on neurodivergency, so like I don't think my perspective...my perspective as like someone who has a bunch of ADHD-like symptoms but has never gotten diagnosed, because while I was being raised, it felt as if there was such a stigma around it that we just never got me tested. But who now, I'm in the vast...I'm in that vast pool of people that goes like, "Oh shit! [Keith and Austin laugh] External motivations, like, ah fuck, I do all this shit." And so like, that does not give me any degree of expertise, right? But when I think about the...what I think about the stuff that I, you know, have been diagnosed with, right? The stuff around my anxiety, the stuff around my depression and around the ways in which I can spiral around expectations and potential rejection? Having gameplay to read and familiarize myself with what this looks like can help me quite a bit, to have a model to kind of respond to or a model to kind of enact alongside. Going into rules like this without clear examples of what might happen can be— can really ratchet up the stress, especially for something that's so adversarial and 1V1 as this is, right? Like there's so much tension around trying to like not fuck it up, [amused breath] that seeing the examples of what winning and losing look like can help quite a bit. So, I'd say that that's a big thing.

But I don't have any other like keen insight, I don't think. Because I— another thing, the other half of that is like, I don't...I don't know that, like...I want this game— I think this game needs to be extremely clear about what it is and about like...or a game like this should be very clear about what it is and what it's doing. But what I would never want is for it to like put on the package or in the book that's like, you know, "Hey, neurodivergent people, you better be careful!" because it's like, very, like...people...trust people to know what their limits are and give them the honest information about what it is you're making, and don't kind of be a paternalistic creator who tells someone else what is good or bad for them. Instead, be honest about what the thing is you're making and give people the information they need to judge for themselves. So what I wouldn't want is for a version of this game to come out with like, a huge...like, I'm not saying don't have content warnings. They should have content warnings. But the thing that goes beyond a content warning that is like, you know, a directive or something would be, would be upsetting, I think. But yeah, I don't know. I don't know if anyone else has any thoughts on this. [brief pause] Okay. Uh, Jack, can you read this from Alexis?

[1:12:22]

Jack: Yes. Alexis says:

Hi. In the *Inhuman Conditions* base version, there are two stamps—human and robot—with no distinction with regards to if the robot is suspected to be violent or not.

How did you adapt this to what you wanted with the Gates episode? And what fueled the decision to have Chine get properly arrested rather than put in the Sunflower District? Cheers, Alexis.

Austin: The last bit's easy. It's 'cause they thought, "This motherfucker's about to kill us." [Ali laughs softly] And at that point, you think, okay, what's the Macula do? And the answer is arrest this person. Also they think, "Oh, this person has special powers. How do we use those for ourselves in some way? What can we get from, you know, jailing this person? What can they do for us?" And, and so that ends up being, I think, a key part of that answer. And we kind of hit the previous part, which is that like, in retrospect...I mean, part of what we— part of what I needed from the gameplay side of it was that, like, I knew that this was a stratified place, and I wanted that stratification to feel material and to like take something away or like introduce a little speed bump. And, you know, without spoiling stuff, this is not a thing that ended up being especially like, dangerous. It comes up a couple of times, but it does not end up being like a heavy decision in terms of what follows. But I do think that it's worth saying that like...or I do think that it was worth doing in this point, dividing it that way, because I think it added a lot of...a lot of tension, and it gave us a little bit more wiggle room in terms of what the outcomes could be.

In *Inhuman Conditions*, if you're a robot, patient or violent, the same outcome happens. Which like, narratively, we close the blinds and the robot gets taken away, you know? The robot gets taken away for like deprogramming or something else similarly gross, you know? And in that way, I think we just wanted a little more wiggle room on the— it's what we said before. Keith, you said like, what we ended up having was dangerous robot and then suspicious human and then unsuspecting human. Like, it's kind of what we were basically playing versus the alternative, so. So yeah, I think that makes sense. I don't think...you know, I thought like, oh, is there a world in which...is there a world in which Chine just leaves? In fact, we may have even like started there and then immediately walked that back at the moment that was like, "Wait, no, that's not right. Like, they would have fucking— they would have definitely just captured you. Why would you..." I can't quite remember how that played out, but like, the sense that like Chine was there to do violence to them, they would respond to that harshly, you know? Not so harshly that they like killed him on the spot, but they would definitely take them away and put them in a...in a creepy jail somewhere, so. Ali, do you want to read this from Anna?

[0:15:35]

Ali: Um, sure. Yeah, Anna writes:

Inhuman Conditions feels like a much more directly adversarial game than most you've used on the show. Not only are the two players explicitly trying to defeat each other, but the time limit turns into a game where you can't just stop play and talk through what's happening. Listening to it, the episode felt tense and electric in a way that's different from anything you've done before. For everybody, what was it like playing your characters in that situation, compared to something like *Heart*? Additionally, what type of

prep did you do for the game, individually or as a group, and was the decompression afterwards different from usual? Thanks, Anna.

Austin: This is a y'all question. [Ali laughs]

Keith: I've got...I've got something that I thought about a lot since doing this.

Austin: Mm-hmm?

Keith: This is maybe a different...different angle than I think the question is...is maybe asking, but I've I thought a lot about how this game would be with two agents and one interviewee.

Austin: Nightmare. [Ali laughs softly]

Keith: Yeah, it's...I mean, I think it might be really fun. [Ali and Austin laugh]

Austin: You just want it to jack up the tension even further. 'Cause—

Keith: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: But you're— I think that you're right in the sense that like, it's hard to be on the agent side sometimes, just like, "Uh, what the fuck am I about to ask?"

Keith: Right.

Austin: "I don't have a question ready to go, and I have to ask another question?"

Keith: Right. I just think...I just think like the like...you're...I just, I feel like one of the main things about cops is you're always outnumbered by them.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Which is like a thing they do because it's actually not true about the composition of anywhere.

Austin: [amused sound] Right. There are more of us than there are of—

Keith: There isn't really anywhere where there's more cops than people.

Austin: Right, exactly. Right.

Keith: But it's like, you know, you know, you get pulled over, and every time I get pulled over, there's nine cops there. And it's like, because what, my regi— I don't have a registr— my car's

like two months expired registration? So there's nine cops here? Are you kidding me? [Austin laughs] I get pulled over a lot.

Austin: I've noticed.

Keith: And, uh...so, so I thought that might be— and like just having two of the, you know, the villains able to sort of play off of each other and tag team on like, like catching...like, two people to say, you know, you're a robot when you're a human or, you know—

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Keith: —double the people to be like, “I think you're complimenting me too much.” You know, so.

Austin: God, that'd be hard. It'd be hard to...

Keith: Yeah, so my like main thought about the game is like, what if it was harder and there was more cops to deal with? [Austin and Keith laugh]

Austin: More realistic. That's interesting. That's really— I have this memory of like playing that or something like that recently with us?

Jack: I think—

Austin: What am I thinking of?

Jack: We...did we try it something like this? I feel like in your apartment...do you remember this, Ali? Did we try playing it with three people directly? [Austin sighs]

Ali: I feel like we might have.

Austin: I so imagine— I so remember the idea of like, [Ali laughs softly] waiting for someone else to ask their question while I prepped the next one. We must have tried it, in retrospect. We must have.

Jack: I mean—

Austin: But I also feel like we've done something else more recently that did this, and I can't find it in my brain. It's like it's been excised. Ugh, it's gonna...

Ali: You're thinking of *Among Us*.

Jack: Oh, you might be thinking of *Among Us*, Austin. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Ah, but I barely played *Among Us*. Also, I'm the real thing is, which makes me think it's a third thing entirely, is like, I feel like Art was there, and I feel like it was like either someone else and Art were interviewing me or Art and I were going after somebody else? I so have this in my brain. What the hell am I thinking about?

Keith: Is this a dream you had?

Austin: Maybe. It may have been.

Jack: I dreamt I went to Germany yesterday. Um...

Ali: [intrigued] Mm.

Austin: How was the border crossing?

Jack: [laughs softly] It was on a like a very, very large boat, and there were 100 vending machines— [Austin laughs]

Ali: Ooh.

Jack: —between when you get off the boat and when you enter Germany.

Austin: Incredible.

Jack: I got like a big snack shaped like a bear. You know, like you do.

Austin: Cool. Yeah, that sounds great.

Keith: I had a dream where the cast of *Friends at the Table* were going to the premiere of the remake of *Forrest Gump* starring Tom Cruise. [Jack and Ali laugh] And he drove us there in his car.

Austin: All of us?

Keith: Yeah, yeah, all of us. It was— [laughs]

Austin: Big car!

Keith: Yeah. [Ali and Keith laugh]

Jack: He's a little guy.

Austin: Oh, right. Fit in there real easy. How was it?

Keith: Uh, I don't...it ended up being a nightmare, because there was like an action scene in the real life of the dream on the way, where like, he set the car to autopilot—

Austin: Mm.

Keith: —and then like got out and did like a gun battle—

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Keith: —on the car while we were all in there.

Austin: That's Tom Cruise, ain't it?

Keith: And so that was rough.

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Austin: That's how that shit goes sometimes.

Keith: This was like four days ago, which is why I kind of remember it. [Ali and Keith laugh]

Austin: Yeah. Maybe it was You Can Check Out, But You Can't ever— You Can Never Leave? Was there a scene in that where two of us, like, tag team interviewed somebody?

Keith: Uh, there...

Ali: Now, I think so.

Keith: There was the scene where, um, me and you, I think—

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Keith: One of us was behind a door trying to get—

Austin: Yeah, but that was still only one-on-one.

Keith: It was still only one-on-one, but that like—

Austin: But that was a very Gates of Sapodilla *Inhuman Conditions* minigame. [Ali laughs] It was.

Keith: Yeah, it was.

Jack: Fuck.

Ali: You might be thinking of the scene where you and Keith were trying to convince me that the hotel was bad?

Keith: Oh, to leave.

Austin: Yeah...

Keith: To try and leave the hotel, right.

Austin: But I specifically have that feeling of like trying to catch someone in a lie and like doing the handoff.

Keith: Yeah, I think—

Jack: Oh, was it something in the Oratorio, maybe?

Keith: Ali was lying. That's what— yeah, Ali was lying, 'cause Ali was an employee.

Austin: Oh, maybe.

Jack: Oh.

Austin: Maybe that's what it was.

Ali: Oh.

Keith: But if it— but it's not the same kind of thing.

Austin: No.

Ali: Right, yeah.

Austin: No. And it wasn't something in the Oratorio, I don't think, Jack, unless you're remembering a particular thing that I'm not. But I don't think so.

Jack: Mm, no.

Austin: Nor do I think it was the arc after that.

Keith: Huh.

Austin: Weird!

Keith: Mystery.

Austin: Mystery game in my brain. [Ali laughs] Anyway, anybody else have thoughts about playing your characters in these situations?

Jack: It was scary that the speaking— that the speaking in character was the game. We're often used to rolling dice. I mean, we have consequential conversations between characters and NPCs a lot, but in order to effect like hard change on the world, we will regularly be able to go, you know, we'll be able to work with the dice on that. And so there was a bit of it that was kind of tense to be like, "Oh, I'm speaking and I'm having to listen to Austin and respond, and that's the game."

Austin: Yeah. Yeah.

Jack: Which isn't to say that we don't do that most of the time, but we don't generally set a five minute timer, and then, you know?

Austin: Yes. Right, to Anna's point.

Jack: Do it opposite each other.

Austin: Right, Anna is right that, like, normally that time— that timer really does change it.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: So.

Jack: And I think we've talked about the prep, in that like we did lots, and then talked about it for like—

Austin: Oh.

Jack: —weeks before and weeks afterward.

Austin: Right. And it's worth saying that part of the prep, in a way, also, was that I gave the questions for the interviews, the pre-interrogation interview, to everybody ahead of time, so they could prep answers for that stuff. And in my mind, that also helped. Part of that was about getting you even deeper into that character, so you could think a little bit more about biographically where you came from, so you could think about stuff you could reference if it came up in the interrogation, because so many of the questions do end up being like, "Where are you from? When's the last time you saw a family member? What would you do if a parent was sick?" right? And so like, I did want y'all to have some degree of thinking through, like, well, who are my parents? Where are they? What are their names? Et cetera. So like, I think— I hope that that came through and helped in some way. Also, that tow— go ahead, Ali. You go ahead.

Ali: Oh, yeah, I was just gonna say the questions did help like align myself such, because...

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: I think pre-recording I was just like filling out that doc, [laughs] just like in a notepad.

Austin: Sure.

Ali: The like, here are the...here's me thinking of Marn's parents' names for some reason.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Keith: I saw that question and noted it as like, "Oh, I should come up with that in case that question gets asked," and then forgot to do that. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Did not do that.

Keith: And I can't remember if it's actually in the episode or if it got cut, but you can hear me not have an answer to that in the moment, and it's very funny and I hated it. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Yeah. I don't think I would have put that— I don't think I would have— mm, I don't think I would put that in, 'cause I feel like that's a Keith— I think Lye Lychen probably knew the name. Well, maybe not, but if so, you would have played that different. You know what I mean?

Keith: Right, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: I wouldn't have included that. I was gonna say— this is unrelated to— this is going back to a thing we said and I forgot to say it, is that like, that town, the town that shows up sometimes in questions, the like— Keith had the version of it where like, I asked Lyke what the most dangerous thing there is. Ali, you had a version of a town that was like, there's a fountain— or, no, the fountain was Sylvi's version of it. Ali, you had the version where there's a crowd—

Ali: Oh, yeah.

Austin: —and someone telling jokes or something to the crowd, right?

Ali: I did not get that question at all. [laughs]

Austin: I mean, it's not a...it's a...it's a hypothetical that's meant to make you respond and be...and have your response...

Ali: Right.

Austin: It's a test to see if you can say...if you can, if you can say, "Oh, I talk to somebody else," 'cause some of the robots have rules that are like, "I can't say I talked to another person," you know?

Ali: Oh, sure, sure, sure.

Austin: That's like, from the cop side, that's what you're kind of testing for.

Ali: I just remember being like, "Oh, it sounds like there's some sort of stage show or a weird, hostile carnival."

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: And then I remember the interviewer— or you, but also the interviewer being like, "Do you really think that?" Wait a minute. [Ali, Austin, and Keith laugh]

Austin: Uh huh. No, what you specifically said was like...I think you said like, "It sounds like they're having a bad time," or something like that. [Ali and Keith laugh] And I was like, "Uh huh? Yeah, yeah, okay. Is that...?" [laughs softly] Sorry, I'm literally going to see...I'm finding it.

Ali: [laughs] Oh, sure.

Austin: Because I want— it was just a such a good line. God. "It doesn't look right to me, but I can't say for sure I know what's going on there. I'm sorry." [Ali and Jack laugh]

Ali: Yeah, you know.

Jack: Ah, shoutout to Marn.

Ali: Maybe it's just like the version of comedy, you know?

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: I don't know.

Austin: Oh, and the other one was: you come into a town and you step off the train. In the middle of town, there are people gathered around a stage, a person on the stage shouting things, insulting the people around him. What do you think is happening? [Ali laughs softly] And you go, "Some sort of entertainment?" which is such a great line, [Ali and Jack laugh] because it means that that's happening somewhere in...in Sangfielle, because Marn's like, "Yeah, I guess that adds up. That sounds like it's an entertainment thing, probably." [Ali laughs] And then there's also—

Keith: Insult comics.

Austin: It's insult comics, exactly.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: And then there's also a town that Virtue gets asked about where there's a fountain and a child with a boat in the fountain.

Keith: Oh.

Austin: In my mind, I have this town. This town exists in my mind. Like, every time I got to a question like this, "You come to a town where blah," it filled in in my mind, like the— I can tell you that the map— that the fountain where the little, where the kid had the boat, is like two blocks down from where the stage was, which is a block away or like a couple blocks away from the train station. Like, I have it. It's there, to the degree that like, we might go to that town at some point. It would be sick if we went to that town at some point.

Jack: Do you know where it is on the map?

Austin: I think it's west of the mountains, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think it's like northwestish, you know?

Jack: Huh.

Austin: It's like west of Vish.

Jack: West Vish.

Austin: West— uh, it's not West Vish. It's too far away from there, 'cause otherwise Ali would have recognized it, 'cause Ali's from Vish.

Ali: Mm.

Austin: 'Cause Marn's from fish.

Ali: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: But, anyway.

Jack: Vish is from the Ziishe school of *Friends at the Table* place names. [Ali laughs]

Austin: No, Vish is from the Grink school. [Austin and Jack laugh] Was the Vish there?

Jack: Was the Vish there?

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. So.

Jack: [laughing] The Grink school.

Austin: That's literally what happened!

Jack: Have to name it the Grink school.

Austin: I think I said Vish by mistake, and you made fun of me, and so now the name of the town is Vish. [Ali laughs] Anyway.

Ali: What a good name.

Austin: And I think the decompression stuff was...it's interesting, because I actually don't know that...in many cases, finishing these interviews did not feel particularly tense. They come across as tense because the concept is and because they're edited in the way they are, in terms of one coming right after another and the great musical stings that Jack provided at the top and bottom. But with rare...I don't think anyone...I don't feel like any of those felt more tense than a regular edition of *Heart* in terms of the, where the conversation was after we finished? Does that make sense? From my perspective, at least, there are games of *Heart* that end and you're like, "Phew, god damn," in a way that none of these really felt, because these were 20 minutes, you know?

Keith: Yeah, totally.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: Yeah, when I'm done with like a whole episode...

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: I mean, I just mostly feel like tired but not like, like sleep tired. Just like, uh, you know, "took a big test" tired, you know?

Austin: Yes.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Yes, exactly.

Keith: And this was just not long enough to do that.

Austin: Yeah, I feel you. Um, Jack, can you read this from Paige(???)?

Jack: I sure can.

Austin: Whoops, nope, I closed it.

Jack: Whoa.

Austin: There you go. You're back.

[1:29:33]

Jack:

Hey, gang!

Jack: Says Paige.

Gonna try and keep this short and sweet. Something that I thought was very interesting about At the Gates of Sapodilla was that, in many ways, the practices of the Glim Macula was determined and/or contradicted by the rules and roles in *Inhuman Conditions*. For example, in *Inhuman Conditions*, if Austin had read Es as a robot, that technically would have been wrong, despite the fact that the Macula are revealed later to be hunting heritrixes. What are some ways in which you all as storytellers were prepared to let the mechanics of *Inhuman Conditions* influence the worldbuilding of Sapodilla? What are some ways you knew ahead of time they wouldn't? Thanks, Paige.

Austin: I think an important thing goes back to what we were saying before, which is that like, they don't know—the thing that they have, fictionally, the thing that they have is something that like—this is the way we hand wave it—shakes something up in you, right? That doesn't actually reveal anything. Everyone has something inside of them that could be shaken up so that they respond in a way that is, you know, quote, unquote, “abnormal.” And not everyone is a heritrix or a Cleaver or a deadwalker or whatever, right? Or filled with bugs. It's important that Es could be a heritrix who doesn't get caught, because it's a bullshit thing they're doing. They don't have a magic way of determining who is good and who is bad, or who is, quote, unquote, past some supernatural limit or not. They have a way of like making you feel so uncomfortable that they can justify imprisoning you. Which is, again, a real thing, right? Like, technology— if you understand technology broadly. Maybe we say technologies and techniques, right, to make it a little more palatable to the ear. Police have these things. Interrogation techniques have been developed over, you know, a long period of time to get, to lead someone to an admission of false guilt, right? To get someone to confess to a crime they didn't commit, to pressure someone into accepting a plea that they shouldn't, right? Because it's fundamentally untrue. Those techniques are literally often tied to technologies, technologies like heat and cold, technologies like handcuffs or any sort of restraints, technologies like prison uniforms or jail uniforms that dehumanize you, the use of light and dark. The use of food, the absence or presence thereof,

the offer thereof. All of this stuff is tied to a system that actively— a system of control that actively is designed to push people to feeling like they aren't themselves and will say things that incriminate them. That's like a...this is what the police do all the time. And so like, the Macula do it by lighting someone's magic head candle on fire, and then it stuns you into saying some shit in a way you don't normally say it.

Keith: The bubbly cop does it by pretending he's a nice guy that you can just talk to.

Austin: Exactly. A hundred percent. [imitating friendliness] “Hey, just wanna ask you a couple questions really quick. I'll get out of your hair in a second,” right? I know this isn't a Friday, but it is Shut The Fuck Up Fridays. Do not talk to the police ever. [Keith laughs]

Jack: Shut The Fuck Up Fridays.

Austin: Like, if all— like, let me just, don't— just don't do— I actually rewatched, there's a great lecture on like never talking to the police that's worth watching. If you just do a search for “don't talk to the police,” you'll find a [laughs softly] 2012 lecture from a lawyer that is about don't ever— about why you should never talk to the police ever. It's worth...it's worth watching, because it lays all this out very cleanly. Not even the like abuse of power stuff, just the like, there's nothing you can— there is legally truly nothing you can say to the police that will help you, even if you are entirely innocent. Legally. Legally! You can— you know when they say, “Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law.”

Keith: Yeah, they mean it.

Austin: They mean it, and what they— what is not being said there is: literally nothing you can say can help you in a court of law. Because if the cop, if the lawyer says, “My client told the officer ABC thing that proves that they're not incriminated, that they're not guilty,” the police saying that to the jury will be stricken from the— will be stricken from the record, because that's hearsay. It's hearsay when the pol— when someone says, “Oh, I heard, they told me that *blank*.” That's hearsay, unless *blank* is that they're guilty. If they say, [laughs briefly] “They told me that they're guilty,” that's admissible. But if they say, “They told me things that prove they're innocent,” that is inadmissible. You cannot say anything to the cops that will ever help you. Don't talk to them.

Jack: Shut The Fuck Up Friday.

Austin: Shut The Fuck Up Fridays! [Austin and Ali laugh] Anyway. So, I think that there is a degree to which it was important that I— that there's an opp— that anybody who had the supernatural stuff here was able to get past. Like, the thing to understand is Art didn't just kill me. Art would have gotten full— Duvall would have gotten full access. Do you know what I mean? Like, Duvall was a moment from getting full access, and so the fact that Art happened to play a violent robot who got a kill instead should help indicate that like the Macula aren't always that good at this. [laughs softly] No one is. If you were, there wouldn't be mass abuse of power,

right? You would have the thing that the police pretend to be which is like perfect arbitrators of justice. So. I think it's important in many ways that those things don't line up perfectly. And I think that also answers the second part of this, right? Which is that like, that was the key for who the Macula were, and that had to influence how they were situated in society after that. So, after— kind of like, this is the first way you see them, and then from there, everything else kind of flows out of that. Otherwise, I feel like there isn't much in the way of...I guess the other thing is we did end up talking a lot in future arcs about like the gates being a hard thing to pass back and forth, back and forth through, and it made everyone hate the Macula in a way that would come to the front throughout the rest of these arcs, where like, no one was like willing to— not to spoil future shit, but like, “Fuck the Macula,” [Jack laughs softly] I think is pretty much a thing you all held in your hearts after this arc, right? Or after this episode.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Mm.

Austin: Even people who got full access were not like, “they seem to be doing an okay job,” you know what I mean? [Austin and Ali laugh] Like, there's no debate on that.

Keith: Yeah, these magic candle head cops seem to be...

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: ...doing a bang-up job.

Jack: I've never met a member of the Glim Macula that I've liked, and I've met one. [Austin laughs] I've met two, I think.

Austin: Yeah, well, yeah, uh huh. Hard to count sometimes. Macula switch it up on you sometimes. It's weird. [muffled laughter] Yeah, exactly. I think that that's...I think that's part of it. I think, yeah, I don't know. Um...

Keith: The other thing about this, though, is that like, what the Glim Macula says happens, right? Like, they're wrong, but they still say, “You're a robot. You can't come in.”

Austin: Oh, yeah, of course.

Keith: Right?

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Keith: And so...

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: So then, really what's happening is that the players are being given like a set of like rules about how they're going to behave, and it kind of doesn't really even matter if the card says human or a patient robot or violent robot. Like, they're gonna behave a certain way, and the Glim Macula is gonna say what they're gonna say. And then what they say happens, or they die.

Austin: Or they die, right.

Keith: Like.

Austin: Right. Which is like, it's interesting. There's another thing that's different here between the game as written, *Inhuman Conditions*, and this, which is, in *Inhuman Conditions*, the cop loses if they guess wrong.

Jack: Ha! Oh, yeah, we talked about this.

Austin: And I've always felt— yeah, I don't remember if that made it into the episode, but I hope it did, 'cause—

Jack: It made it into prep.

Keith: It did. It did. It was there.

Austin: Okay. 'Cause it's like, that's not how the world works. [laughs softly] The cop does not get— the cop is, in fact—

Keith: Right.

Austin: —deeply protected for when they make a mistake— from when they make a mistake.

Keith: There's a sense in which it, as a party game, you go like, the person playing the cop got it wrong.

Austin: Yes.

Keith: But that still doesn't really even describe...

Austin: Right.

Keith: ...what's happening in the game.

Austin: But like, we literally have a term for it, and it's qualified immunity, in the world. [Austin and Jack laugh] Like, it is...it is the cornerstone of ongoing debate about what to do with the police.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Debate that is often, uh, let's say, ignored and derailed by people who actually have the power to do anything by the police. So.

Jack: I think that, you know, in the same way as the police have that, a lot of immigration policy starts to make more sense if you work from the assumption that everybody on every level of immigration policy fundamentally does not want people to cross borders.

Austin: [laughs softly] Yes!

Jack: Like, their goal is...you need to start thinking of them as entities who don't want people to immigrate.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Rather than entities that are sort of like gatekeepers. It's like, we think we're looking at a gatekeeper, and we're actually watching someone hastily closing a door.

Keith: Right. It's actually the keymaster.

Jack: Yeah. [laughs softly]

Austin: Trying to build a wall if they could do it, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Like, if they could fucking do it, they'd brick this whole thing up.

Jack: So any, any inch they get from you—

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: —is a success, as far as they're concerned.

Austin: Well—

Jack: 'Cause they're like...you know, I've been seeing this a lot with like, COVID has shut down a lot of immigration movement.

Austin: Right.

Jack: And as far as immigration is concerned, it's like, we're in no hurry to remedy that.

Austin: Nope.

Jack: You know, they could set things up to speed it up, but why would we want to? Right now, nobody's immigrating, and we like that.

Austin: [quietly] Yeah. Yeah. Um, which is actually a thing that we did end up talking about, I think only in the prep, like the first dummy, the first like fake interview that we did, Jack, when we first like tested it out to see if it would work. One of the things that we talked about was that like, there are ways in which Sapodilla is not yet where we are, right? The fact that like, oh, all it takes to get in is an interview is...

Jack: [laughs] Oh, yeah.

Austin: You know, and maybe— I think we ended up having a little bit of this conversation that, again, didn't make it in 'cause of the way the interviews got cut, 'cause otherwise this would have been like a four hour long episode or whatever. Where like—

Jack: The idea of saying, "I want to go to Sapodilla next week—"

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: —is like laughable.

Austin: Yeah, absolutely. Or the idea that like, if you didn't get in, the fact that you would be able to like try to get in again in a week or a month or, you know, is absolutely outrageous. Like, try never. Try you never get to come back. That's the sort of territory that the real world immigration is in, you know? So, yeah, I...it is heavy, heavy and weird stuff, for sure. Uh, who hasn't read one? What's, where are we at in our order? Who hasn't read another one yet? Is it Keith?

Keith: Uh, I only read one.

Austin: Keith, give me this.

Keith: I only read Luke.

Austin: Give me this one from Eugene.

[1:41:11]

Keith: Okay. Eugene says:

Hi team. Loving this season. The decision for some characters to play as violent robots in the Gates of Sapodilla game has had substantial flow on effects, making Sapodilla a more hostile environment for the party. For those players, how did you approach that decision, and how have you felt about the results? For Austin, did you worry about narrative consequences punishing players for choices made in the context of a different set of mechanics, even when the consequences flowed naturally from those choices? Thanks, Eugene.

Austin: No, I didn't...I didn't worry about it. Because I don't think it's—

Keith: You kind of wanted it, right?

Austin: Yeah, right?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, I think that that's true, right? Is that like, um...you know, we're not playing *Mario Party*. This wasn't a little mini game. You know what I mean? Like, it's the same. It's the—pretzels is the same. Like, whatever game we're playing, we're playing Sangfielle.

Keith: Right. Right.

Austin: In the same way that in COUNTER/Weight—

Keith: Even if we're playing *Sonic Shuffle*.

Austin: Even if we're playing *Sonic Shuffle* and you get the Curse Opal, we're playing Sangfielle.

Keith: Great. [Ali laughs softly] Luckily, I've got a pocket Speederald.

Austin: Honest— [laughs] This is the thing. I think all of the gems in *Sonic Shuffle* could show up in Sangfielle, and I'd be like, "Yeah, uh huh. Yeah, these are all real." Whether you've got the Force March or the Barrier Amber or the Battle Ruby or the Carbuncle, or what did you say? The pocket Speederald? Yeah, that's in here.

Keith: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: If you got a Magnifire going on or a Packlite or a Preciousite or a Reducite or a Shield Quartz, you know? A Warp Crystal.

Jack: Those off the dome or are you reading a list, Austin?

Austin: I'm reading a list. Could you imagine if I was that person? [Ali and Keith laugh]

Keith: I was like...at some point, I had to go, "I don't know all these, which means that this cannot be happening." [Austin laughs]

Jack: Yeah, this was what I was... [laughs]

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, the only one I know is Curse Opal. That's the only one I know because I was at a...I was at a *Sonic Shuffle* game where the...

Keith: Everybody knows Speederald.

Austin: Right, everyone knows Speederald.

Ali: Mm.

Austin: And then Curse Opal, 'cause a Curse Opal prevents another player from moving, with five turns being the maximum. And it's a random spin, but I was at a game where—I was watching a game. I refused to play it. I was just watching other people play—where one player got hit with a Curse Opal like three or four times in a row. [Ali laughs]

Keith: Oof.

Austin: And each time it was four or five rounds. Ali, it was Matt— it was Matt Bloyce(???), our friend Matt Bloyce. Do you— wait.

Ali: Was this in the apartment that you had with Sean in Jersey?

Austin: No, this was...I want to say this was in AJ's apartment at the time in, um...

Ali: Oh, sure. [laughs]

Austin: ...in Greenpoint.

Ali: Okay.

Austin: Which was, you know, a decade ago. You know what I mean?

Ali: Uh huh.

Austin: This was *forever* ago. And Bloyce got hit with this. And again, let me be clear, it's not that you can't move certain spaces. It's that your turn gets skipped. And so like...and you know, these games are like, whatever, 50, 100 turns, but like, if you lose 20 turns...

Keith: Yeah. [laughs]

Austin: Why am I even playing the game, at that point? [Austin, Ali, and Keith laugh] You know what I mean? Like. It's like, are you fucking kidding me? I don't get to do anything?

Keith: [laughing] It's so brutal.

Austin: For five turns?

Keith: And so how do you...why...well, on what grounds did you refuse to play?

Austin: I had heard about the Curse Opal! [Austin, Keith, and Jack laugh] I was like, "Absolutely not. I'll watch, but no, absolutely not."

Keith: God.

Austin: So. Anyway, even if we're playing Sonic—

Keith: It's a shame. *Sonic Shuffle* deserved better.

Austin: *Sonic Shuffle* deserved better. I agree. Even if we were playing *Sonic Shuffle*, we'd be playing Sangfielle. Whenever we...whenever we integrate a game like this, the results of that game are treated seriously, in the same way that when we play *Kingdom* or play *Firebrands* or play whatever our modified bullshit mid-game thing is any season, we try to extrapolate truth for the fiction from that game. And I think this is similar, right? This is like...I wanted those knock-on effects. They're...I will say that Eugene has hit on something, which is I think they are broader than I thought they would be. Like, obviously— I think I went into it hoping for clear illustration of what the circumstances are in Sapodilla today. The sort of like, most determinant effect of what it feels like to be here under a magnifying glass, an attempt at dehumanization, an active set of processes which attempt to separate you from yourself and make you feel uncomfortable, make you feel under threat. All of that was the primary, but like, honestly, what happened is beyond my wildest dreams in terms of like where we ended up, because this did end up sparking a lot in terms of what followed. And so I'm excited for people to hear the other half of the arc. I'm excited for people to hear...if you haven't heard Perpetual Oratorio of Davia Pledge yet, I think it was a really fun arc that went a bunch of different places and ended in a really good place. And we probably don't get there without the lead-in here, partially because of particular events, but also because I think it opens the door to certain characters taking certain behaviors and leaning increasingly in certain directions. I can't say more without spoiling. So. Also, I will hold onto this question for the next one, because I will want to ask the first part of this, "For those players, how did you approach that decision?" to Duvall and Sylvi, or to Duvall and Virtue. To Art and Sylvi, that's who— those are their— that's real names, Art and Sylvi. [Ali laughs] Likewise, uh—

Ali: No, they have to answer in character.

Austin: In character? Okay. Interesting. [Ali and Jack laugh] Extremely interesting, given how things have shaken out. Alright, final question here. Ali, can you read this one from anonymous?

[1:47:08]

Ali: Anonymous writes:

Was Big Bucho a human, a nice, or a mean robot? Please explain your reasoning.

Austin: [laughs softly] It's a good question.

Keith: Rerelease the game with nice and mean robot. [Austin, Ali, and Jack laugh]

Austin: Rerelease the game but Bucho's there, IMO. I love Bucho.

Jack: God. Bucho's great. Did Bucho...Bucho told us that this was gonna suck shit, right?

Austin: Yeah, I think I said...so, another thing that doesn't make it into the episode is before we even get to the interviews that I cut out, there was like 15 minutes of me talking, giving you the setup of what we were about to do. And what I told everybody else was like, alright, Bucho'd meet you out front of the [Ali laughs softly] station before you go into the thing. Let me talk, let me...you have no idea how many times I described going into this place and there being a skylight and there being posters on the left wall, and on the right wall, maybe there's other like signage. And not everybody got the same one there. Then me talking about like the— all the drawers on the—

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Austin: —on the side— on your side of the kind of counter, the half counter with the glass, with the glass and...I had to repeat all of that intro for everybody each time. And so, part of that...I want to say for most people. Keith, I may have forgotten to tell you that Bucho told you this, but maybe I didn't. But also, you didn't know who Bucho was at that point probably, so. You certainly in character didn't know Bucho yet. So, anyway, but I do think I said Bucho's gonna— told you that these people like are gonna give you a hard time.

Keith: Yeah, I don't think I got this. I don't think I got an intro like that.

Austin: I gave you the...I gave you the lead in stuff, the like, what the room is like and stuff like that for sure, for sure.

Keith: Yes.

Austin: I may not have given you the Bucho part of it. But I didn't give you the like, "There are three districts in Sangfielle. There's Hibiscus, there's da-da-da-da-da."

Keith: Yeah, I got that, yeah, for sure.

Austin: And all of that came through Bucho, effectively. Bucho gave everybody the rundown on what's up with Sapodilla, even if I didn't say that to you. I think you may be the one person. I remember editing this and being like, "I didn't tell Keith about Bucho. That's a shame." Which is why you didn't get caught in the Bucho...the Bucho crackdown that ends up being in the montage, which is my favorite part of that little intro bit. [Ali and Jack laugh]

Jack: Oh, it's great.

Austin: Is everybody being like, "Bucho," "Bucho," "Bucho told me." [Austin, Keith, and Jack laugh] It's like...

Keith: [laughing] 'Cause at that point, I knew who Bucho was!

Austin: [laughing] Yes! And you knew what the consequences of everybody namedropping Bucho was. [Keith and Ali laugh] It's so funny. Like, and I didn't realize it at first. I only realized it...

Keith: Talk about knock-on effects.

Austin: Yeah, a hundred percent. I think I only noticed it when...I think maybe...I don't remember the order of these interviews, but I want to say Ali, you saying Bucho maybe— uh, maybe it wasn't. I don't remember.

Ali: It was a specific... 'cause like, a lot of what I was doing, Marn was like leaning on professionalism.

Austin: Yes. Sure.

Ali: So when I mentioned the Shape Knight thing, the interviewer was like, "Wait a minute, you fucking did that? Hold on, we have to talk about this." And then I immediately was like, "Well, I was under the supervision of a Shape Knight."

Austin: Yes. Yes.

Ali: 'Cause like, those are...that's the way that you speak to a police officer, [laughs softly] which is like—

Austin: Of course.

Ali: I was, you know, it was aboveboard. [Austin laughs softly] Sorry, Bucho.

Austin: Ah, it's so funny. Like, and I wish I could just drop in the way I— I didn't have time to do it. I would have sounded bad. Like, the way that we did the like, Virtue says, "I came through with Bucho," I believe, and then Janine's like, "Mr. Bucho?" and then Jack says, "Bucho," [Ali laughs] and then Ali says, "Uh, Bucho?" and then Dre says, "Some people call him Big Bucho, Two Step Bucho." [Austin, Ali, and Jack laugh] And I go, "Bucho, I see, I see." And the thing is, this— that exact just like cut was in my head by the second time someone said "Bucho," and so each time I heard someone say "Bucho," I progressively was like, [exaggerated] "Bucho, really? Huh, very interesting." [Jack and Ali laugh] 'Cause I knew that it would just like, ah, it was just so juicy to be able to think about the consequences of this being, you know, three hours later, the Glim Macula like, "I cannot believe we arrested a wereshrew and also two of our people are dead. And what— how do we connect all this?" and then looking through the notes and being like, [Austin and Ali laughing] "Well, seven people came through today that namedropped someone named Big Bucho."

Keith: Only six.

Austin: Only six. Uh, I think only five. It looks like...one, two, three, four, five. It looks like, I guess, Duvall also did not mention Bucho, which would make sense, 'cause Duvall didn't know Bucho. Right?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: But very funny. Anyway.

Keith: It's funny. You were talking earlier about, like, you know, is this really actual play, and it's funny because like, one person not like— realizing that one person didn't say the thing that got everyone else in trouble—

Austin: Uh huh.

Keith: —is like very actual—

Austin: Yes.

Keith: Like, letting that roll. But it only happening because you were going through and editing this thing together and being like, "Oh, Keith didn't mention Bucho."

Austin: Yeah! Uh huh. [Ali laughs]

Keith: Is like, it's just— it's just this weird thing where some things are like, uh...like, you can get actual play vibes from things that only come because it's a show, sometimes.

Austin: Because you sit down and do the work of editing it, yeah. But again, the second the second person said “Bucho,” I realized y’all had fallen into...

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: It's like, it's literally the thing that, again, that cops do, which is like separate people and see what information stays the same, right?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: If... ‘cause like, Keith, you— it is you and Duvall, you and Art both said, like, “Uh, I think I'm gonna find a hotel somewhere,” or something like that, when I asked where you were staying.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: And everybody else was like, “I think Bucho’s putting us up,” or “Bucho led us here,” or whatever. “Bucho taught me.” And so like, there's a degree to which— there was a degree to which I felt like a homicide life on the streets cop, being like, “Aha!” Like, there's the— [Ali laughs] Here is the way I'm gonna get ‘em. Here's the way in which they stumbled into something they didn't know they even stumbled into. Which, which...the other half of that also happens with the way that y'all— you know, again, specifically Duvall and Virtue ended up getting the wins, where like, one of my favorite things in TV cop stories is when someone like gets one over on the cops, right? Where like, there's a great sequence early on in *The Wire*—maybe it's in the middle of *The Wire*—where Bodie realizes that they...that they brought up guns or something before the...before he said anything about a gun, and he's, you know, they're like, “Well, where'd you get the gun? Bah blah blah blah,” and he's like, “I didn't say anything about a gun. I'm not saying shit.” Like, you lost— like, you just, whatever pressure you thought you had on me, I now see what you're trying to put on me, and it's done. And so I love it when that side of it happens too.

Anyway. It's interesting if...one, is I don't think Bucho had to go through this particular process during this time, because Bucho is a permanent resident of Sapodilla and probably already has the stamped passport, you know, visa situation taken care of. Two, I bet Bucho got special dispensation when all this happened as a Shape Knight. I bet the Shape Knights of Sapodilla got some sort of special, you know, “Hey, we're basically anti-supernatural cops too. Come— you know, send over someone, and we'll do a big interview together as a group, and we'll all get our cards taken care of.” But three, I think...I don't know what...I don't think Bucho would have been, would have chose— if I was playing Bucho and I had to like choose one of these things, I think I might end up choosing patient robot slash nice robot. Because there are parts of who Bucho is, the sort of like flair and flamboyance of Bucho, the ways and the parts of the world that Bucho is familiar with, the openness and compassion of Bucho and the sort of playfulness, the colloquial playfulness of Bucho, that would, in my mind, potentially make him seem suspicious to the police. His lack of discomfort, right? His refusal to turn the volume down

in the car when the cops pull him over. That could be that. But I do also think that the organizational bias of the Shape Knights being, you know, at this point, seeming allies to the Macula in Sapodilla means that there's a good chance that he gets graded as a human depending on what he says.

But again, the whole point of this is that it's arbitrary and that like you could get someone who just like doesn't like, you know, devils, and is like, "Oh, well, you're a devil? Well, guess what? You're, uh...you're not gonna get access to the Hibiscus District from me," you know? Which, you know, fuck the devils, so in this particular case, it's complicated, 'cause Aldominan devils did in fact rule this place back in the day after they colonized it. But, but those are the sorts of things that can happen here in this particular structure, so. Or, you know, someone who just doesn't like Shape Knights, you know, for whatever reason. Like, all that stuff can come up and shake loose what should be a simple or obvious answer to these things, so. Big Bucho rules. I hope we get more Big Bucho soon. Two Step Bucho. I had more names at some point for Bucho, but I never wrote them down, and now I regret it. I'll think on it. [Ali laughs softly]

Jack: What's this armor called? Baby Blue?

Austin: What?

Jack: Didn't he have armor called Baby Blue or something?

Austin: Oh, oh. I thought you said— Jack, I thought you said album, and I was like...

Keith: I also thought that. [Ali laughs]

Jack: What's his— hey, what's—

Keith: Two Step Bucho obviously has an album.

Austin: Obviously has an album. [Jack laughs softly] Does Bu— does— does he? He might. That rules.

Jack: I mean, they...I bet. I bet there's recorded music.

Austin: There is. There's the— [amused sound] there are the Pledge canisters. There are the like, the Pledge-ophones.

Jack: Oh shit. Yeah, there are.

Austin: That play...that play those, yeah, uh huh. Is it Baby Blue? Is that what it is? That's very good, if I said that. Did I say that? Is that a thing I said?

Jack: I think so. I think I saw it on a wiki the other day, and I was like— oh yeah, that is. It's during the Yellowfield arc when he's introduced.

Austin: Yeah, I'm checking to see if that's...

Keith: Baby Blue, AKA Blucho.

Austin: Blucho. [laughs softly] Blucho. Uh...god. I don't have it off the top my head. I just searched for the wrong thing. I searched for Drawing Maps when I should have searched for Bucho. Anyway, as I look this up, we should start our outros. As always, you can send questions for Drawing Maps to tipsatthetable@gmail.com. Use "Drawing Maps" as the subject. Our next one will be the the Perpetual Oratorio of Davia Pledge. Jack, you won't be on that. So do you want to...spoilers for Davia Pledge, the Davia Pledge arc right now.

Jack: Mm.

Austin: Since you won't be on that one, do you want to talk about the music you composed for that episode? Like now, instead of waiting for like the postmortem?

Jack: I can do it real quick, yeah.

Austin: Do you have any thoughts on it? Yeah.

Jack: So, we knew from the off— like, again, spoilers for the Perpetual Oratorio from now.

Austin: Spoilers from now for the end.

Jack: Thank you for listening.

Austin: Yep. Thank you so much. I hope you have a good week.

[1:58:52]

Jack: [laughs softly] We...I think one of the first things that you told me about that arc, Austin, was like, there's gonna be a huge machine made of like blood and people, [Austin laughs softly] and she's built a city-sized synthesizer underneath Sapodilla.

Austin: Uh huh.

Keith: And it's a god.

Jack: Yeah, which is like, I have to make music for a lot of weird stuff on the show, to the point where I just sort of go, "Uh huh, yeah. Okay."

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: But this one...this one was a puzzler.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: And you asked me how you— how I wanted it to sound before you described it. And I gave what I thought was a pretty good answer, based on like..I wasn't guessing, I was trying to think through how I wanted to write it, but I hadn't done any sound tests. Um, and then you... [laughs] You took what I had said, Austin, and you just went running off into the hills with it.

Austin: Sorry.

Jack: Um, it really is like, it's like those skits where one person— two people are trying to tell somebody a lie. And Person A sort of like ropes the person into a game, and Person B is like, "Yeah, and then your grandfather was there," [Austin and Keith laugh] and Person A is like, "I'm sorry, he was?" and Person B's like, "Yeah, and your aunt, and she's 15 feet tall," and you're just like, "Oh, okay." [Austin laughs softly] So, originally, I was thinking of putting music for the Oratorio earlier, when we hear about them in the concert hall itself. But then the focus, the sort of the emotional focus of that episode ended up being on the conversation with Lyke and Duvall about the Aterika'Kaal.

Austin: Right.

Jack: And you were like, "No, don't worry, they haven't even seen it yet."

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: So I tried...I looked to do that that scene later. And it was just a case of trying to find organic sounds that were unsettling and where it wasn't always clear where they were coming from. In PARTIZAN, for an organization called the Black Century, I did a track where the bass stayed on the same note throughout. It was just this sort of like lumbering.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: It didn't change at all. And that was a really fun challenge. And I wanted to do something similar but with rhythm here, so with a rhythm that established itself very quickly and just didn't let up really at any point. And so I looked at composers like Michael Nyman, who is a huge inspiration for Sangfielle. He's a, I think, British composer who did a lot of really interesting sort of modern classical music, did a lot of really good film scores. I recommend his soundtracks for *The Draughtsman's Contract*. And more specifically for Sangfielle, he did a soundtrack to a pretty adequate cannibal movie called *Ravenous* [Austin and Ali laugh softly] in which he— [laughs softly] in which he instructed his string players to play as though they didn't know how to play the violin. And hearing that was like the first time, I was like, oh my god, I think I know what

I want Sangfielle to sound like. So it was a lot of fun to more specifically try and homage Michael Nyman there. There's also a Scottish composer called Peter Maxwell Davies who did a lot of really interesting stuff with like discordant music around Scottish folk tunes.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: God, I think if you just search Peter Maxwell Davies Celebration of Scotland, there's a lot of really interesting compositions there. I just used like the sounds of things breathing, a big piano accordion pitched down several times, the clarinet pitched down a bunch of times. I sung with my [muffled] hand over my mouth like this.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: To try and like just mess things up [removes hand] into the microphone. And I played the clarinet, like, I over...I played the clarinet with bad technique, like I overblew the clarinet so that more air was passing through it—

Austin: Interesting.

Jack: —and the notes were kind of warping.

Austin: Huh.

Jack: It was a lot of fun. It was...it was really fun to do, and I think it's suitably..you know, I want every track to be a new different kind of frightening.

Austin: I think it's really interesting. One of the...there are two things that I want to say to add to this, which is, the first one is like, I didn't describe to you in detail exactly what the...what the instrument would look like, and what I should have done in retrospect is actually show you what my inspiration was, and I realize I didn't, which is that the Telharmonium. Do you know about the Telharmonium?

Jack: Oh. I think I might do. Send a link? I might be thinking of something else.

Austin: Uh, it is the world's first synthesizer. And I actually do hit on this briefly, when I talk about how...how there is no miniaturization happening. There's no, like—

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: And there's no amplification happening. It has to make the sound it makes. And the...one of the first synthesizers is this thing called the— or the kind of—

Jack: This is amazing.

Austin: The ancestor to the telharmonium, or to the synthesizer, is a thing called the Telharmonium which was designed in the late 1800s, like 1890s, and then made in the early 1900s. Where like, you know, there's a console for it that looks like a pipe— or not a pipe organ, it looks like a church organ or something. You know, all the pedals, multiple different keyboards, et cetera. But in the basement of that room in New York, as big as the room itself, are just these massive...I guess these are...what even are these? These are...these are banks of transformers by which the— I'm now reading from this 1907 issue of the *Scientific American*, a science magazine. [reading] "The banks of transformers, by which fundamental—"

Keith: Oh, this is huge.

Austin: "—and overtones are mixed in response to the manipulation of the keyboard."

Jack: That's incredible.

Keith: This thing's wild. This is—

Austin: And, wait, wait. This isn't even— there's one more part of this, which is you could call it on your phone [Jack laughs in surprise] and have it play music over a loudspeaker over the phone lines. And my understanding, I don't...I don't have the actual detail— the video that I watched about it, 'cause I went looking, I was like, "I know there's something here, I forget what it's called," or whatever, and I went looking. But like, it was...the amount of electricity it needed and the amount of...the amount of like, uh, phone like line that it took up effectively was astronomical, was like, it... [Jack laughs quietly]

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: You couldn't be allowed to do this. [laughs]

Keith: I mean, this thing is like a power plant.

Austin: Yeah, exactly. That is exactly right. It was like...

Keith: But in reverse.

Austin: Exactly. Which starts to get to some of the...what the Oratorio is and the conversations we ended up having a god and stuff, which we'll get into more when we do the full Oratorio one, but...

Keith: This is like, uh...so this is 1906, right?

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Keith: So this was invented like eight years or something before they invented the amplification circuit.

Austin: [laughs] Exactly.

Jack: Ha!

Keith: So this...I mean, it's literally...so, where does the sound come out? Is there even like a horn? Does it come out of a horn somewhere?

Austin: Well, the two places it comes out of are, yes, a horn upstairs, I believe.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: At the place.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Which, again, is...we think about Perpetual Oratorio, what's happening is literally people are up there. Which like, we didn't even get to. Like, ah, there's a whole thing that it would have looked like. But also, literally through your phone, through your phone horn.

Keith: Right. Through the phone lines.

Austin: Your phone line. Like, and you would just like hook that phone into a thing, I believe, that basically...yeah, here we go. [reading] "For instance, its sound output came in the form of connecting ordinary telephone receivers to large paper cones — [Austin and Jack laugh] a primitive form of the loudspeaker." It's unbelievable!

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: You have a room halfway across the city downstairs, going [imitating sound] *burr-BIM-burr*, and then—

Keith: Do you know what—

Austin: It's incredible! Then you have a phone with just like a snow cone cone attached to it, effectively.

Keith: Basically, yeah.

Austin: Being like, make it louder.

Keith: Those cones are amazing, though.

Austin: Yes, to be clear. I'm not— yeah, a hundred percent.

Keith: Those cones, like horn, speaker horns, are so effective at the thing that they do. And if you can't— if you're like, “A speaker horn? What are you even talking about?” Think of like a megaphone, right?

Austin: Right, right.

Keith: The like, that cone shape, like that helps with amplification, right? So it's just like acoustic amplification. Inside of still like most movie theaters, like you've either got like surround sound coming from a bunch of speakers all around, or you've got like a big fucking horn speaker sitting behind the screen, 'cause they're so loud because they take such little power to make. Like, you know, you could have this weird, gigantic calculator that played music through a horn, nothing but a horn.

Austin: Right.

Keith: Yeah. Horns are wild.

Austin: The thing, uh, the...continuing to read here on this particular instrument. The...wait, I lost the thing that I wanted to say. Fuck. Um, ba-ba-ba-ba...oh. I just, imagine this. Imagine it's 1907. [reading] “In addition, problems began to arise when telephone broadcasts of Telharmonium music were subject to crosstalk and unsuspecting telephone users would be interrupted by strange electronic music.” [Jack laughs] You've never heard a sine wave before in your life.

Keith: Magic.

Austin: You pick up the phone to call someone, to like, you know, to check on if the butcher is still open or whatever. I don't know, things that people do. And all of a sudden, you hear a sine wave for the first time, you know, performing some sort of composition of a sort you've never even conceptualized.

Keith: I'm not sure, did you...did you say what this guy Cahill, Thaddeus Cahill, what he called it?

Austin: What did he call it?

Keith: What he called the place where it was?

Austin: No, what did he call it?

Keith: He says, uh, [reading] “The music was generated live at what Cahill called the ‘music plant’—”

Austin: Ah.

Keith: “—which was located at Broadway and 39th Street. An entire floor of the building, which came to be known as Telharmonic Hall, was filled with 200 tons of machinery—”

Austin: [laughs] Exactly!

Keith: “—required to generate the Telharmonium’s tunes.”

Austin: It’s real! The Oratorio is a real machine. This is— this is it. Yeah, like, I learned all of this when I dec— when I was like, “Oh, we have to do this.” So. It’s...200 tons? [laughs] Is that what you said?

Keith: Yeah, 200 tons.

Austin: Incredible. Incredible.

Jack: Ahh.

Keith: That— it weighs as much— it weighs slightly more than the biggest ever blue whale.

Austin: Unbelievable. [Jack and Keith laugh] Unbelievable. People paid 20 cents an hour to listen to it, which is \$5.82.

Keith: Wow. A steal.

Austin: I would’ve done it! I don’t have mon— I wouldn’t have had 20 cents to my name in 1908 or whatever, but like...

Jack: I mean, here’s the thing, though. If someone said to me, “Jack, right now, pay me 5 dollars and 82 cents and I will connect you to a room in New York that weighs 200 tons and is playing music,” I’d be like, absolutely! Right now! Let’s do it!

Austin: The radio didn’t exist yet!

Keith: The guy— no, there couldn’t have!

Austin: This was the age of you need a piano and a person who can play the piano. [laughs]

Jack: Right.

Austin: If you want music.

Keith: This is essentially a...like, this is almost before circuits existed.

Austin: Right!

Keith: Right? So this guy basically made...remember the *Minecraft* video where a guy built a working computer—

Austin: Yes. [Austin and Jack laugh]

Keith: —a working processor in *Minecraft*. That is like...this is like the real life version of that.

Austin: Unbelievable. Anyway, that's the world that I...and like, in a real way, this is the sort of person who Alaway, Regan Alaway who's dreaming of the world of light is—

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: And, and the, you know, Wrights of the Seventh Sun. I'm drawing on these figures who like are desperate for this perfect new world, and like, and they're at their most effective and terrifying when you're like, "Damn, this motherfucker wanted people to listen to music over the phone? I want to listen to music over the phone!" [Jack chuckles] Like, that is a key thing, I think, for the sort of horror that we will continue to explore this season.

Keith: This guy was a lawyer. He was just a lawyer.

Austin: [sighs] You know?

Keith: Invented by lawyer Thaddeus Cahill.

Austin: Incredible. Incredible. Mark Twain went.

Keith: Sure.

Austin: [reading] "‘Every time I see or hear a new wonder like this, I have to postpone my death right off,’ he said, [Jack and Keith laugh softly] while sitting at the music plant’s keyboard console. ‘I couldn’t possibly leave the world until I’ve heard this again and again.’” What a review!

Keith: He had—

Austin: Can you imagine making something that Mark Twain said that about? Unbelievable.

Keith: Yeah. I have to not die so I can see what happens next. Apparently he had two players—a quote. “Apparently he had two players playing continuously, 24 hours a day.” That’s too much for two players.

Jack: [laughing] Yeah, that is too much for two players.

Austin: The *Times* reported—

Keith: “It was a sort of weird, nonstop eerie Telharmonium music, [Austin laughs] including lots of pieces that were composed just for the instrument.” “One’s first feeling upon hearing the new machine is one of utter incredulity.”

Austin: [laughs] “The *Times* reported that after the clock struck midnight in 1907, the first thing Twain did to usher in the year was, quote, ‘to glory in the fact that he would be able to rejoice over other dead people when he died in having been the first man to have Telharmonium music turned on in his house like gas.’” I can’t fucking wait till I’m dead and in heaven. I’m gonna tell all those motherfuckers I had radio— I had music in my telephone. No one else had that shit before me. Mark Twain said, I put you on that. [laughing] Mark Twain was like, y’all never heard this shit. I put you on that.

Jack: [laughs] Okay, I have a brief statistic, and then we should wrap it up.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: A Toyota Prius [Austin laughs] has 100— [laughs] has 120 horsepower.

Austin: [laughing] Thank you. I saw this math, but I couldn’t do it in my head. I need you to do it. Thank you.

Jack: The Telharmonium has 912 horsepower. [Austin and Keith laugh]

Austin: How? How?!

Keith: So, they actually probably would have saved a lot of money just getting 1000 horses to run.

Austin: [laughs] There are super cars with less horsepower than this. You have to get like—

Jack: Bugatti Veyron. What is the Bugatti Veyron’s horsepower?

Austin: What one?

Jack: The Bugatti Veyron.

Austin: Oh.

Jack: It's like a extremely powerful, uh...

Austin: I bet it's not even close.

Keith: Oh, I—

Austin: Okay, that's 1200.

Keith: I took this from the other side to be like, oh, they had 200 tons and they didn't even get to 1000 horsepower? [Austin and Jack laugh]

Austin: Right! Ahh. Anyway. Incredible.

Jack: Ah. I gotta go.

Austin: Yeah, same. I gotta eat dinner. Thank you for joining us. Remember that the world is terrifle— terrif— terrifle! Terrible and awful and beautiful, all at once.

Keith: I have...I have one more thing about this.

Austin: Okay. And then we're done.

Keith: Which is just to— just to keep in mind that, uh...that like the people who are famous for pioneering electronic music are like 70 years in the future from this. [Austin and Jack laugh]

Austin: Right. Yes. A hundred percent. And those people should get their due, too! They also did some dope shit.

Keith: Yeah, totally.

Austin: 100,000 percent.

Keith: No, no, I just mean like, from here to a usable instrument...

Austin: Yes.

Keith: Like, to get this 200 ton thing down to like one room was 70 years.

Austin: Incredible.

Jack: God.

Austin: All right, thank you so much for joining us. I hope everyone has a good night. You know where to follow us. I'm not gonna go through the whole shpiel. Thanks for hanging out. Talk to you soon. Bye, bye, bye.

Ali: Bye!

Keith: [yawning] Bye! Should we clap?

Austin: We should clap.

Keith: This thing's crazy. [Jack laughs] I can't believe it.

Austin: It's so good. All right. Uh, ready to clap?

Jack: Yeah.