

Tips at the Table: Pet Goku (March)

Transcribed by Max (pine#6681)

AUSTIN: Welcome to Tips at the Table, an RPG podcast focused on critical questions, hopefully smart answers and fun interaction between good friends. I'm your host, Austin Walker. Joining me today, Alicia Acampora.

ALI: Um hi, my name is Alicia Acampora. You can find me [@ali_west](#) on twitter.com.

AUSTIN: Sylvia¹ Clare.

SYLVIA: Hey, I'm Sylvia. You can find me on twitter [@CaptainTrash](#), and you can find my other show, [Emojidrome](#) on your podcast app of choice.

AUSTIN: Which one is it? Which one?

SYLVIA: Uh, the emoji this week? Uh...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: We just did the—

AUSTIN: I was going to say actually which podcast app, but yeah sure, emoji.

[ALI giggles]

SYLVIA: Like, any of them. Like any— Like, except Spotify. Any of them that wouldn't give us money.

AUSTIN: Oh, wow.

SYLVIA: That's what they're on. Um... and we just did the satellite.

ALI: Ooh.

¹ The name in the audio recording is no longer in use, hence the audio/transcript discrepancy.

SYLVIA: It's alright. It's an alright episode.

AUSTIN: Oh, like the satellite emoji.

SYLVIA: Yeah. Yeah, we barely talked about it.

AUSTIN: Why? It seems like it was— Not an interesting emoji?

SYLVIA: It was like— like, no. Like we talked about the emoji, it's just, we're also... really easily distracted.

[ALI giggles]

AUSTIN: Yeah, I getcha.

SYLVIA: Because it— It—

AUSTIN: Yeah, I know how podcasts go.

SYLVIA: It's one of those ones that didn't have enough variation to really like [AUSTIN: Yeah.] jump between that much.

ALI: Mmm.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: So like, [The Brave Little Toaster Goes to Mars](#) came up a couple times. (cross) Like, that's just how these things go.

ALI: (cross) Yeah.

AUSTIN: (cross) Okay, sure. I can see that. I saw the original but I didn't see... I didn't see—

SYLVIA: It's... It's a leap.

AUSTIN: For mankind. Um...

SYLVIA: For a lot of reasons.

AUSTIN: Okay, yeah, I fucking bet. Uh, alright. Andrew Lee Swan.

DRE: Hey, you can find me on twitter [@SwanDre3000](#). Uh, and I want to give a special shout out.

AUSTIN: Ooh.

DRE: If we have any listeners that are in the state of Kentucky, uh, like I am.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Um...

DRE: You should check out my partner's podcast.

AUSTIN: Ooh.

DRE: Uh, it's called [My Old Kentucky Politics Podcast](#). Um...

AUSTIN: Oh, wow, that sounds interesting.

DRE: Yeah, she and her good friend Robert do um, just a weekly kind of recap on like, Kentucky politics and what's going on. And we've had a pretty shitty legislative session the past couple weeks and they do a really good job of like explaining everything that's going on. Um, and her cohost and best friend, Robert, had some really rough personal life stuff that was also impacted by what was going on in the legislation.

AUSTIN: Mmm.

DRE: Kind of the silver lining is that because he and his wife have been very public about what's going on and how the legislation is affecting them, [AUSTIN: Mhm.] the show has kinda like blown up and thankfully it's been mostly good and supportive responses. But yeah, you should— you should check that out if you're in Kentucky.

AUSTIN: Awesome. What was— Can you say the name of it one more time.

DRE: Uh, My Old Kentucky Podcast.

AUSTIN: Love it.

DRE: Uh, it's [MyOldKYPod](#) on twitter.

AUSTIN: Awesome. Uh, you can find me on twitter [@austin_walker](#). You can find the show [@friends_table](#) and obviously, you can find us over on Patreon as well. [Patreon.com/friends_table](#) or [FriendsAtTheTable.cash](#), the URL that has worked out for us pretty well. Uh, I've been doing a lot of plugging the Patreon lately and if y'all are already at this level, you've already heard it, so I'm not going to repeat it but let your friends know about Bluff City and how good that outro— Or that— Or how the outro was, and how the finale was too. [ALI laughs] Let people know about the Road to Season 6 which has been really fucking good.

And again, if you're at this level and watching it live, um, or if you're watching it live, then I think you're also at the Mapmaker Level in which case there's already been one new Mapmaker update that included all of the sheets from uh, Lacuna. Um, though we'd already gotten the Mapmaker that had the dossier, the sort of like, um, setting playbook. What would be in TechNoir, called the transmission for Blough City. Um, and then the uh, the Mapmaker update from yesterday also included our plot map which was so fucking good. Um, it's just cool to look at how that story is connected. All the different characters and objects and places and things like that. It's just, it's like, so— I almost wish we had a like Procreate-style, "Watch it be drawn in, in real time," you know? Um, that's a lot of work and I have no idea how we would even do that other than redrawing it from the top in Procreate. So, we don't have that, but it would— Even on its own, it's really cool and so are the character sheets.

We'll have another Hieron, Spring in Hieron Mapmaker update later this week, that'll have everyone's updated character sheets with all of their bonds and if they have new gear and you know, any new moves spelled out. Um, Hella took some new moves that haven't been announced yet, but are in the— in the PDF image or the image in the Mapmaker Update and I get into why I'm really excited for both of those new moves [ALI giggles] and why she took them. Um, they're both really good. So look forward to that stuff. And if you're at the five dollar level, that's the stuff that kind of comes

with the Mapmaker updates that we are finally going to be caught up on.
[laughs]

Um, Ali is there any other announcement type stuff that we want to talk about here?

ALI: Um... I mean, I— I think we should make it explicit that Bluff City isn't ending.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, yes. Yes.

ALI: Um, there was a tweet that— [laughs]

AUSTIN: So both Jack and I tweeted about the end of Bluff City, and we both meant the end of Bluff City Season 1, and we— neither of us said it because we're fools. Bluff City will be back and it won't even be that long. Um, I think next month, we'll be doing a— Probably next month, Ali?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: What do you think? Probably? Okay. We'll be doing a livestream.

ALI: Yeah, next month? Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, end of this month, early next month, we'll be doing a Bluff City Livestream that is like, um, a Bluff City recap and a kind of map drawing thing. Like not a game, but like, slash-A Post Mortem. Maybe we'll answer some questions, maybe we'll pick like a handful of questions to answer and we'll draw in the map and we'll actually—

I kind of want to get down in my head what Bluff City looks like and kind of have some— have a better set of, "Alright, here are the most important NPCs, here are the names of some major streets." Um, you know, not a final map by any means, but just like, "Oh here are where this museum is, that popped up. Here are where the casinos are."

Just so we have like a backbone for future stuff. And also just a way for us to be like, "Oh, here's how this character— here's how this character that Jack first wrote about in an episode description ended up being one of

the most major characters in the season." You know? [ALI laughs] Stuff like that. And like laying some of that stuff out. So if you have questions about Bluff City, maybe send those in to TipsAtTheTable@gmail.com.

And also I want to say really quick—'cause I just said this in the fan discord, and it's worth saying here too—you will probably see on the Patreon we are within... within distance, within throwing distance, within like— it's a long throw, it's a javelin toss, it's like a real fucking... but it's not— but it's still within a range, of our 20,000 dollars a month goal at which right now, we are promised to do two Bluff City episodes. Before we get to there, we will probably change what that goal is, because one of the things we've learned by doing this for two years is that that would be inconceivable unless we were just cutting the currently kind of long episodes in half. But we just couldn't keep up the production on it. There's no way, without burning ourselves out.

It's one of those things that we definitely thought we would have the time to do, based on where our jobs were and where our lives were at the time, and I think most of our lives have gotten much busier as we've taken on more responsibilities or new relationships or new, you know, life goals. Like all of us are working on other things at this point. Maybe you launched a podcast about emoji. [ALI laughs] Maybe you launched [a podcast about Kingdom Hearts lore](#). Who could say? [ALI, SYLVIA laugh] Um... and so it ends up being like, it's just not a thing that I think is feasible for us right now without it really breaking us and making the quality way fucking worse.

Um, and so before, like this isn't an announcement. I don't think we're going to change that goal yet because we want to be able to change goals on the Patreon holistically and think through what a new set of goals would look like or what a new like, more reliable schedule for content looks like. Um, and I say that, with the note, and the only reason I think I'm able to say that confidently is I think we've been doing a pretty good job of putting out really great stuff. Like I love all the ephemera, I love the Mapmaker stuff, I love the Pusher updates and all the other stuff that we do.

But the thing that I'm most committed to is making really fantastic show and I say this with as much humility— Like, my favorite thing I've ever made on this show is Animal Out Of Context, Episode 27 of counter/WEIGHT.

Like, absolutely for me, the high point. It's the most beautiful thing I've ever touched in my life, like in terms of helping to make a thing.

But I think we're in a really fucking good moment as a show right now. I've been really, really thrilled with Spring in Hieron, Bluff City wrapped up in a really cool way and The Road to Season 6 has so much momentum and so much excitement and creativity, I feel so, like fulfilled as a creator and a storyteller right now, that I can say, like with hope that you'll understand, that if we're gonna rework some of the Patreon stuff, it's because we want to focus on telling really good stories, not because we like, want to do less for people or something like that. Um, it is one hundred percent because like, the part of this that I love doing, that people love, is us telling stories.

And so uh, again, this isn't an announcement and we haven't even like figured this out internally yet. [ALI laughs] We just started the conversation internally, like, "We should— This should—" But I want to put it on people's radars because what I don't want is for people to be like, "I'll up my pledge by twenty bucks a month so that we'll get two episodes of Bluff City *right now*." Um, so better for us to get ahead of it like that now than let it sneak out in two months or three months when we're even closer. Um, I think that that's it. I think that's all I have. We should get into some questions unless people have other announcements to make.

ALI: Soon. More Pusher updates soon, but besides that I think we're good to go.

AUSTIN: Yes, yes. Have to write a postcard tonight, still.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: I was supposed to do it and wrote Mapmaker updates instead. My bad. Um...

ALI: It's good. It's all good.

[0:09:26]

AUSTIN: It's all good. It is *all* good. Okay! [ALI giggles] Time for some questions. This one comes in from Zachary, who says, "You mention it at the

top of every episode, but one thing I think really makes your show shine is the fun interaction between good friends. There's no spotlight hogging or power gaming. Just fun times with people all hanging out. How did you all meet/become friends, especially as geographically scattered as you are? I say this as also a mid-twenties person who's living in a new city and wondering if you have any tips for meeting people. All of my best, Zachary."

That is a good question. Um, because I think we all have, like, even inside of this particular call [ALI laughs] we have a pretty big mix of like, "How did you meet." And also, like, Dre and I have never met in person, right?

DRE: Nope.

AUSTIN: I think you're the only person I've never met in person, Dre.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: In the world. I've met all other—

DRE: Everyone.

AUSTIN: All the other billions. I've done my tour of duty but not— not— I haven't seen you. Um, so what is the— I guess, for us, the common factor is streaming games together. Well even the like, but actually Sylvia, that's not even— Like we did probably stream once or twice together but you weren't even *in* that stream collective we were part of.

SYLVIA: I— I just annoyed y'all from the chat.

[ALI, SYLVIA laugh]

AUSTIN: That's true. You did do that. Annoyed is not the right word.

SYLVIA: Nah, I'm not. I just— That's how I met you guys through being a viewer.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: And then we talked outside of that, obviously.

ALI: Mhm.

SYLVIA: Um...

AUSTIN: Yeah. But how the fuck— Oh you know what the thing was, for me? This is— Have— It's the Counterweight's Angels video.

SYLVIA: Right, yeah!

AUSTIN: We should— Sylvia— They should be in our *show*.

[ALI, DRE laugh]

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um...

SYLVIA: I made like a fan video before— Right when after counter/WEIGHT got announced, like—

AUSTIN: How would you have known about the Counterweight's Angels?

SYLVIA: That's the thing, I made those up. Uh...

AUSTIN: Those are *yours*.

[ALI laughs]

SYLVIA: Uh. Those are the— That's the thing is.

AUSTIN: That's the thing.

SYLVIA: I did that thing, and then I sent it along to y'all and you were like, "Oh, this is cool. Would you like to be a part of this?" And I said, "Yes."

AUSTIN: Where...

SYLVIA: I'm— I'm looking for it. I think I have it Unlisted because uh. Like, full— Like this is me admitting like, 'cause this was before I like, took classes on how to do this. The way I made this video, I don't know if I've told you guys this story.

AUSTIN: No. Wait, you have to link us this video.

SYLVIA: I have to find the—

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: I'm trying to find it right now.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: I have like four YouTube accounts um, because it's a nightmare website. Um...

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: [amused] It a nightmare. It is a nightmare... website.

ALI: Didn't we watch it recently? I'm trying to see if that's where it is.

AUSTIN: I felt like— No, we watched— we watched um, [Magresta's really good trailer](#), uh, fan AMV —

ALI: Oh AMV. [laughs]

AUSTIN: They used the Zeta Gundam footage.

ALI: Oh, glad we have an AMV.

AUSTIN: Uh... I mean— We have two because— because he made [one for Twilight Mirage](#), also.

ALI: Oh yes.

AUSTIN: Um...

SYLVIA: How the— This— This website's terribly made, can I just say that really wquick?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

SYLVIA: Um...

AUSTIN: How do we not just have this on hand? I feel like a fool.

ALI: It—

AUSTIN: Oh, you know what? I bet I have it on like a Google Drive link or something.

SYLVIA: I hope I didn't like, get rid of it. I don't think I did.

ALI: I'm checking your um...

SYLVIA: It's— I think I have it Unlisted right now, because it's um, the music in it— And I'm gonna give it a shout out here, is from a band called [Infinity Shred](#) that I really like [AUSTIN: Good name.] and I don't know if I got a copyright claim on it or not.

AUSTIN: Oh...

SYLVIA: But I made it Unlisted just in case because I'd be like, I can link this to like people who know about the show and stuff [AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah.] but I don't want to, you know.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Um, I...

AUSTIN: It's not the end of the world if we can't find it.

SYLVIA: I *will* find it.

AUSTIN: Okay.

[ALI laughs]

SYLVIA: It's just I'm having a nightmare finding my video manager on YouTube.

AUSTIN: I totally understand. No worries. But you did that, which is like the example of the thing that not— It's not the thing not to do, because the thing to understand is like, we were already friendly/friends

SYLVIA: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Like you were already watching streams, in the audience, doing, you know, cross stream ridiculous events where we were like having seven people streaming at once, uh, on a call. Stuff like that was already part of the friendship with you, Sylvia. Um, whereas like, Ali, Dre and I were all streaming together pretty regularly at that point, right?

ALI: Yeah.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um...

ALI: Like for a year at least. Maybe two years?

AUSTIN: God, at least.

ALI: How long was stream—

DRE: Was it all so long ago.

ALI: I don't want to know. Don't tell me.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Long.

ALI: I know that it was a long time ago but I don't want to know how long I was doing it for. Um. [laughs] But yeah, it was mostly that. And then even among... Like we were doing StreamFriends but then there's like a deep— there's like the, you go to like the roots which is the Art-Austin roots and it comes from there —

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: — where it was like, you guys were friends with my brother, but we didn't really know each other.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: But we knew each other enough to like, when I— So it started, StreamFriends was just like you, and Janine doing some stuff. And then I was in the chat bothering you a bunch. And then I hopped on. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Right. Right. Right.

ALI: I just—

AUSTIN: Well, like that's— I mean, for what it's worth, we didn't start StreamFriends and Janine and I were doing the same thing, and bothering people who were already doing a thing together.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And then, it— That's how that thing grew, right? Was very much a like, "Oh, we are friends already, who are already doing some streaming. Also, by the way," [ALI: Yeah.] "We are now, blah, blah, blah." Like, "We are now going to stream together." Um, I found it, Sylvia.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I— I linked it in the Patreon chat too.

AUSTIN: Oh, dammit.

SYLVIA: I didn't want to interrupt, so I was waiting.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: No, you're fine. I thought I was real fucking slick. [DRE laughs]
What I realized is, if I did a search for, um... For your name and my name on twitter, and then clicked videos, it would be in there.

SYLVIA: Mmm.

ALI: Ooh.

AUSTIN: And so, I need you to know, there are two videos that show up if you do that. One of them is [WELCOME TO COUNTERWEIGHT by Sylvia Clare](#). Quote, "A little companion video I whipped up for Friends at The Table (friendsAtTheTable.net) Season 2. A little jankier than I'd like since I made it in Photoshop." You made it in *Photoshop*?

[ALI laughs]

SYLVIA: *I made it in Photoshop*, because my comput— This is the story. My computer was having so much trouble ren— 'Cause the material I used, 'cause I'm not a graphic designer, I just found like— I was on tumblr at the time, so I found just these gifs on tumblr from— I have the blogs from—

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's rekall. It's— It's—

SYLVIA: Yeah, it's uh...

AUSTIN: Uh, [rekall.tumblr.com](#). Is that— Is that Steve Gaynor's?

SYLVIA: I believe it is.

AUSTIN: Is rekall Steve Gaynor's?

SYLVIA: Yeah, um, and then, someone else's who I don't remember the name of. And the reason it's in Photoshop is because uh, I was trying to— I was trying it both Vegas and Premier, and they just weren't taking the files because uh, they weren't, you know, fully legal versions at the time. I pay for it now, Photoshop, okay.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

SYLVIA: Adobe, so don't... I *was* young.

AUSTIN: Stay off my back, Mr. Photoshop. Um...

SYLVIA: Stay off my back. Um, so I put— I made the whole thing in uh, Photoshop, in like a looping— in like a gif maker and then I exported that.

AUSTIN: Got you. And then you—

SYLVIA: To Windows Movie Maker.

AUSTIN: Wow.

SYLVIA: And put the music in.

ALI: Wow.

AUSTIN: Holy shit.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, I just need you to know. So one of the videos is this one. You know what, I'll tell you the other one is in a second, let's just take a look at this. Welcome to Counterweight, baby. [ALI laughs] That was me, Austin, not this video. God, it's so good!

DRE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: (reading quickly) "When I was young I wanted to build rigs! I loaded the gun that they're pointing at our heads!" [ALI laughs] "We were never meant to achieve divinity." Oh, it's so fucking good. Oh, the bells chime. This is still our image. If you go into roll20.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: If you go into Roll20 and look at our... Whoops, I didn't mean to— I almost just played a different thing. If you go into Roll20 and look at our like, list of games that we're all in...

ALI: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh...

ALI: It's the like, campaign logo.

AUSTIN: You will see the campaign art, yeah, is "When the bells chime, you're out of time." [ALI laughs] It's this specific thing. Um, Sylvia, can you like retweet this or something. Or we can it to like the description.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I'll— I'll put it on...

AUSTIN: I think at this point, it's just paying Infinity Shred this music at least.

SYLVIA: Yeah. I'm gonna—

AUSTIN: 'Cause at the bottom, it says...

SYLVIA: I'm gonna— It does do that now. I didn't know it had done that, so I'm glad...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Because when I did this at the time, I think they just had their stuff on like Bandcamp. And since then, they've put out like two LPs, both very good.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: I'm plugging them, because, you know, they kinda got me this gig. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh. Uh, the do you know what the other video you— That I— That comes up if you search for austin_walker, CaptainTrash, video —

SYLVIA: I can't— can't wait here.

AUSTIN: — and then click on videos?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Well, it's a little video. It says, "Well seconds after you sent this, @CaptainTrash sent me this, so yeah." It's a little video called, "[We're so cheesecake](#)," from the Cheese Cake Factory.

SYLVIA: [claps] (away from mic) Fuck yeah, it is!

AUSTIN: In which the Cheese Cake Factory does a parody version of Fancy by Iggy Azalea.

ALI: Mmm.

AUSTIN: With the— Have you not heard this, Ali?

ALI: Oh, wait. No, I remember this.

AUSTIN: It's so bad. Alright, we're gonna stop. So that's why we're friends. [ALI and SYLVIA giggle] To Ali's point, it does go back that far for like me and Art. Um, what I'll say is like, I guess the thing is like, there is no single origin point which is the way friend groups do develop sometimes. Like, yes, me and Art played roleplaying games in college together and it's easy to be like, "And that's the— the starting point of all— of all of Friends at the Table." But I was playing roleplaying games— I was playing online, like, MUCKs with Janine before that, you know? I knew Janine when I was in high school —

ALI: Oh...

AUSTIN: — so like that predates—

SYLVIA: Wow, dang.

AUSTIN: Did you not know that, Ali?

ALI: I didn't know that Janine predated Art, that's the thing.

AUSTIN: Oh my god. Yeah, by like years. Janine— Janine is like my oldest active friend, by far.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And Janine and I— And she wasn't part of the show at the launch, which is probably why, when we tell the Friends at the Table origin story, we focus on the Art-Austin one, because that was the beginning of that part of it. Like, that was the oldest person at the time. But Janine and I go back to like, when we were like fourteen or fifteen? Six-sixteen! 'Cause Zone of the Enders was out, is a thing I happen to know, for reasons.

ALI: Good, good. Good.

AUSTIN: That's— Who could say why I know based on that? Um...

ALI: And just, could just pull it, um...

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh-huh? Yup. Good to have interests. Um...

ALI: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: And then— And then Jack— Jack is an interesting one, 'cause Jack was also, like Sylvia, someone who was just kinda like, "I would like to be friends." Um, Jack like— Jack and I were like twitter mutuals? And one day, they were just like, "Austin we should— we should have a Skype call." And I was like, "We should. You seem cool."

And then we had a Skype call that was just looking at wikipedia for ninety minutes, and it was nice, and then we were friends. And then we started streaming games and then Friends at the Table. I just like, there is no one way to do this, which I think answers part of the second question, which is, "Being a mid-twenties person who's living in a new city," it's tough, and —

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: — you can't just count on those old social structures to provide a friend group. You have to kind of be a little more adventerous which is super

scary, especially like, if you are not a cis straight dude. Um, uh, so I know that that's true. Uh, Dre, it sounds like you have gone through this. The— With the kind of sighing 'Yeah,' you just said.

[ALI laughs]

DRE: A couple different times. Uh, I mean the worst one was the one when I moved to take a job in Pennsylvania and literally knew nobody. Um...

AUSTIN: Right, that was only a few years ago, right?

DRE: [sighs] Uh, god. Yeah, I guess. Like four or five years ago, I think. Maybe four?

AUSTIN: God, was it that long? Maybe.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: We've known each other for a while now, huh.

DRE: Yeah. Um...

AUSTIN: *Wow.*

DRE: Yeah, 'cause I knew you when I was still in the first time I went to Grad School.

[ALI and SYLVIA laugh]

AUSTIN: Yo, wild.

ALI: Oh, Dre.

DRE: Yeah, I think the biggest thing that's really hard is that especially that if you're in your mid-twenties and if you're a person who went to college, like making friends in college is relatively easy? Because there's like structures in place to like, push people together. And if you're just moving somewhere for a job, that structure doesn't really exist. Um, so I think the—

the biggest thing that you have to do to try to make friends if you're in a place where you don't know people is just to be extremely persistent.

AUSTIN: Mmm.

DRE: Like, people that live there, and have lived there for awhile, like have their kind of like friend group and their like, patterns down. And it's not that they don't want to hang out with you, it's just that you're like a new thing —

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: — to put into that pattern the way they go through their day-to-day. And you can get there, but like you have to— you have to work at it. You have to be persistent. And it's not like, you know, calling every day —

AUSTIN: No.

DRE: — to be like, "Hey, hey, hey, hey." But like, you're gonna have to be the person sometimes that's going to like make plans. Or find events. Or invite people to things. Or make things happen. Um, in a way that, you know, you are hanging people who you've known for a long time, you don't always have to do that.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: But when you're the new person you kinda have to do that.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Do you find that in... I mean like, what is it— What is the moment that you find where you're like, "Okay. We've now settled. I'm in the group." Is that just something that just, it's a matter of time?

DRE: Yeah, I mean I think, I don't know, I think it's different for everybody.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

DRE: Like, for some people, they would rather not have a group.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: For some people, being in a group is like the most important thing in the world. Um, I'm...

AUSTIN: Versus just having like a collection of people they want to spend time with.

DRE: Yeah, totally, like...

AUSTIN: In various configurations, yeah.

DRE: Like, I have a group, here, but more often than not, it's like, you know, it's we will all get together every once in awhile, but like, more often than not, it's like, "Okay, I see these two people when we run our Mask game."

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: "I see these two people when, like, there's an NBA game on that I want to go watch." You know, that kinda stuff.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Ali, it sounded like you had a little more there, too.

ALI: Um. I mean, it's always going to be tough. I think something to be said at least, learning from the show's experience is that like, there's always something in tending to the gardens that you've left, right? Like if —

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: — I hadn't, you know, sort of known Art and Austin, but unwilling to like pick up that relationship again or if like, Austin and Art had fallen out of contact or like... As, you know, we're super scattered but we have a good relationship, and just because you've moved away from friends that you were really close to doesn't mean that that has to stop. Um...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: So that's just the attachment to Dre's very good advice, which is like —

AUSTIN: No, that's— those are both really good...

ALI: — friends for everywhere, yeah.

DRE: For sure.

AUSTIN: Totally, totally. Um...

DRE: No, I mean, doing that, what Ali said, is basically like how I survived being in Pennsylvania, 'cause it was miserable.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: I couldn't make friends, I hated my job, it was super toxic and like... Yeah. If it wasn't for, like the friends that I had that weren't physically there, it would've been even more rough.

AUSTIN: I mean, that's why— I mean, the reason we— Friends at the Table exists is because we'd already been playing video games together and I wanted to start running a tabletop game with people, like yeah, why not record it, right? [ALI laughs] That wasn't because...

I mean, partially was because I wanted to introduce people to tabletop roleplaying games, um, my friends who hadn't played them. And that's why it was like, such a mix of new— complete newcomers and veterans when we first started the show. But it was also because I didn't have a friend group locally who I could run tabletop games with, right? [ALI laughs] Like the world that I felt like I had people who I was as close to as I was to y'all, would— I didn't have that group. And if I did, I would've just been running games from them, probably, right?

I think I ran maybe one one-shot with a group once and I was like, "[sharp inhale] Nah, this ain't it, [ALI laughs] like this is not— I'm not— [sighs] It's just not here." And that's not— I'm not dragging those people, those people were totally fine. We just didn't have fun interaction between good friends, we had like, a time running a game. It was way more like running a con game or running the sort of like pick-up games or like weekly

D&D session at your neighborhood shop where like the group changes— or Pathfinder game— where it changes from like week to week or whatever, um, than it was this thing that we do. Which is like— which is a thing that people—

This thing that we do now, feels like what I did when I was in college with my friends, so I'm— I want to be very clear, I'm not like, Friends at the Table... Like I— I come down in the category of, "I think what we do is Actual Play, even though it's produced and even though it does not look like con play or store play, because it *does* look like the sorts of tabletop games I was playing college with Art. It does look like the sort of characterization that Janine and I were doing when we were *fifteen* or whatever. [ALI, DRE laugh] Except better. We're better now than we were then, is what I will say. Um, alright. Sylvia, do you have anything here or do you want to move on?

SYLVIA: Uh...

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: No, I think I'm good. [ALI laughs] I'm— I'm in a weird place where I am also someone in their mid-twenties who is living in a new city.

AUSTIN: Sure.

SYLVIA: Like, I moved two weeks ago, so I'm also kinda dealing with this, so I'm mostly just taking notes. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Good, good.

SYLVIA: But, no yeah, like, I pretty much second everything you guys say, like, cherish the online relationships you have right now 'cause like, it'll help when you're struggling with— with like interpersonal stuff.

AUSTIN: Totally.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, before I move on, Dre, did you fucking see that in January, fucking [Wolfram von Funck](#) make fucking Cube World tweets again?

DRE: What?!

ALI: Mmm.

[AND laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, dog. He just dropped— He just dropped [DRE: God.] four tweets with new— "There are new features in Cube World!" Motherfucker, there aren't. You have that game. [ALI laughs] You're the only person who can play them. Don't tell me about how you need to activate shrines of life in order to be able to be resurrected there. Don't tell me—

DRE: January 26.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you look at the ones before that?

DRE: No, I don't, I—

AUSTIN: The one before that was from July 2017.

DRE: Why are you hurting me Austin?

AUSTIN: 'Cause I have to do this to myself. 'Cause I went to this page *today*, to be like, "I wonder if there's any new Cube World updates." Anyway.

ALI: Just download it and play it. Isn't there a version of Cube World—

AUSTIN: You can't! You can not! No! No!

DRE: It's gotta be floating around, like somewhere.

AUSTIN: They pulled it from the web. They deleted it.

ALI: They pulled it?

AUSTIN: Yes!

ALI: Oh, I forgot that part. Okay. I thought you were just waiting for...

AUSTIN: I'm pretty sure. Let me check the website, let's see if— Let's just, I'm just going to doublecheck.

DRE: Listen, I bet if you go on reddit, you can find some like mega upload links.

AUSTIN: I mean, oh absolutely.

ALI: God.

AUSTIN: Absolutely, you could. You absolutely could. Ugh, anyway.

ALI: Just play Echo.

AUSTIN: It's not the same. It's not the same.

ALI: I get yeah, there's no resurrection shrines.

AUSTIN: There's no resurrection shrines.

ALI: But we had a fine time, so it's great.

AUSTIN: It's not the same.

ALI: Uh...

AUSTIN: Uh, next question comes in from Rodrigo. I cut this down a little bit.

[ALI laughs]

DRE: God, there's flight points, what the fuck!

AUSTIN: There's flight points! [ALI, SYLVIA laugh] For context, Dre and I, along with Janine, actually played a lot of Cube World when we were streaming together um, and it was like— it was a *really* bad summer I was having and playing Cube World with them really made it a lot better.

ALI: I was there. I bought a mouse for the—

AUSTIN: Did you play with us?

ALI: Yeah. [AUSTIN: Oh, okay.] I bought a mouse for the first time to play that game with you guys... [laughs]

AUSTIN: Wait.

DRE: Hell yeah.

AUSTIN: Ali, for the first— Oh, 'cause you had laptops.

ALI: Not for the first time— I had been only using a laptop for a very long time —

AUSTIN: I gotcha.

ALI: — and was not a gamer like the rest of you are, but know, you know...

AUSTIN: (cross) But now you're a gamer.

DRE: (cross) Now, you're a true gamer.

ALI: Four or five years later, I'm recommending Echo to you. [laughs]

DRE: Number one gamer.

[0:28:30]

AUSTIN: This one comes in from Rodrigo who says, "How much do you let the media you're consuming influence your play? For instance, in the first arc with Scum and Villainy, Sylvia makes reference to Monster Hunter, I think. It's been awhile. Or, I've been playing Battletech and wanted to play something with more grounded mechs, et cetera."

Um, when Rodrigo wrote this in, it was while we were playing Scum and Villainy, and I think at the time, he, in the full version of this email, he was like um, "And I'm trying to hack Scum and Villainy, 'cause I want like a

realistic mech game, but there aren't that many out. Beam Saber seems pretty far away."

It has been enough time since then that now you can go buy a version for Beam Saber, so I'm going to suggest doing that, which seems pretty cool. Or check out any of the other stuff that we're going to be doing in Road to Season Six. Um, Armor Astir, um, and we're also going to look at All Systems Nominal. It looks like Lancer is in a pretty good place. So for that side question that you've asked, that.

But for the bigger question, I'm curious for y'all, um, you know, outside of us being like, "Hey, here's a Monster Hunter moment," how much do you let the media that you like and are currently consuming, influence your characters and the way you play? If anybody has like strong feelings here.

DRE: Thing I've actually had like the opposite effect [AUSTIN: Really?] where I feel like what I'm playing is effecting what I want.

AUSTIN: Mmm.

DRE: So like, growing up like, movies and TV and stuff like that was just not like a big like, part of kind of like, my growing up. Not because I didn't have like a TV or anything, but it wasn't— My parents weren't like movies people so like...

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: Um, like there's big, like very big movies that like, everybody has seen that I have not seen. Like, I haven't seen any of the Godfather movies. Uh, there's like a lot of like big, like cultural, like touchstone stuff that I just haven't seen.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: Uh... and so like, as we start a new thing and you all are throwing out like, you know movies or books or comics or anime or whatever, I'm like, "Okay, I should go— I should go look at that." [AUSTIN laughs] I mean, like, that's initially how I like got like, way deep into Gundam [AUSTIN: Right.]

was I think, just us starting up into counter/WEIGHT and me being like, "You know, I really watch— I really, really, like Gundam Wing. I should go watch some like other Gundam. And see why everybody who's really into Gundam thinks Gundam Wing isn't that cool." And now I learned.

AUSTIN: We— Okay. Well... It's complicated.

DRE: But Gundam Wing is very fucking cool. But it's different.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Yes.

ALI: Yes. Mhm.

AUSTIN: God, I'm thinking about rewatching it right now. I'm— I'm just about to finish 0083, ahead of The Great Gundam Season about it, or not season, but they're about to do it on The Great Gundam Project. People should go listen to that and support [@abnormalMapping](#), also on Patreon, which is on uh, the 0083 finale episode breakdown, so people should go listen to that. That's at [/abnormalMapping](#), that has a show called Great Gundam Project. Um, yeah my god, I kind of want to rewatch Wing. I kinda want to rewatch—

So for me, the answer is a lot, right? The media I'm consuming influences my play but I— but it is also a little of what you're saying, which is when I'm playing means I want to— I want to research stuff and I mean that in the broadest possible sense because on one hand, I want rewatch Gundam Wing before we get deeper into Season Six prep in Road to Season Six games but also I'm literally reading uh, a book about the thirty years war right now. [laughs]

And it's like, that is much more traditional research, right? Um, Wedgwood's The Thirty Years War is like a historic— A like a foundation— Not foundational but a seminal historical text and that's like, "Oh yeah, my— I'm gonna read this and try to understand what the you know, categories were for the breakdown of the, you know, semi— this federation empire, in Europe and the middle ages or whatever." But the, I guess the Renaissance era at that point. Anyway. But also it's like, I do want to see giant mechs and seeing that stuff is going to effect how I describe giant mechs in Season Six stuff.

Um, but it's also so much broader than that because it's... Think about something like Messy Business, the Bluff Finale, and how hard it would be for any of us to tell that story without having touchstones about what our characters— what types of actions our characters could do. I don't only mean that in terms of like, direct parallels like uh, one of the things that I talked about in the chat recently was Paprika is a very clear influence in Messy Business, down to like the parades and floats that are happening. Right, that's a pretty obvious one.

But there's a sequence for instance in Messy Business, this is not a spoiler because I'm not going to talk about what happens but there is like an object that shows up, which is a car with a photo develop— Almost like a—What do you call it? A uh... Like I'm blanking— Like a dark room, thank you, in the trunk. There's like a dark room in the trunk where you can like set up and develop photos. And that's not from anything. I didn't like, "Ah yes, this is from this thing." But it's the sort of thing that would appear in Twin Peaks season four, right?

Like it's the sort of strange thing that reflects a whole range of influences that I wanted to draw on. Some of which were things like David Lynch or Satoshi Kon, but also, definitely things um, in strange comics, things in uh, you know, absurd crime films, things in film noir. Like all of that stuff combines together for whatever we're doing. And I'm definitely the sort of person who like, before we ran Masks, I like read a bunch of comics I really loved and thought about the ways in which I wanted to talk about superheroes. Like, I have to do that stuff.

And I think that, for me, that just also reflects something I've been, ever since I've been a kid, which is, I go through these phases of like deep interest. I talked about this in a Waypoint Podcast recently, like when I was a kid, I would regularly go from like, "This is the six month period, or three month period, where I'm going to be super into samurai. The next three months after that, I'm going to be way into robots. The next three months after that, like I'm going to be way into music."

And like, that is, I— Those other things, obviously, never became things I wasn't interested in. Um, I'm way less interested in samurai now, let's say, than when I was throughout my teenage years, but even when I

wasn't in like a samurai mood or an ancient— or a feudal Japan mood, I would still thought samurai were dope and if there was like a documentary about them or if someone was going to you know, rent a Kurosawa film or something, I'd be excited about those still. But I would go through these almost fugue states.

Um and Friends at the Table and tabletop games in general are kind of that. Um, Ali is in a side chat in our Friends at the Table thing as a pro— as producer or the show, I subject Ali to my earliest thinkings about what future seasons might look like. And so Ali, I'm sorry, has been the subject to just me dumping tons of gifs and inspiration about various future, you know, season ideas. Not that she doesn't do it too.

[SYLVIA, DRE laugh]

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, but...

ALI: Well, that's the exchange is that you're like, super in this mode and then I'm like, "Hey Austin."

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: "While you're on there, here you go." Um...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. That's exactly what it is. [ALI laughs] Um, so... So yeah. So I will say to Rodrigo— And I'm happy to do that. This isn't— I don't think that that's a flaw. My only thing where it would become a flaw is if I thought it was limiting what I wanted to do.

And one of the things I like to do about, with this stuff is, take it in, and then be like, "Well what do I— What isn't sitting right with me here? What is it that I wish—not in a like, 'I would turn left where this turns right,' sort of way, but like..."

I think about something like Gundam which a lot of us love here and it's terrible job with women and queer characters. And then I look at something like counter/WEIGHT which is not a perfect work by any means,

with regard to gender or sexuality, but where I'm proud, I think and hopefully rightfully so, that like, we're better than Gundam in those spaces.

Um, we did our best to— to create a space and a show that wanted and cared about characters who were not just dudes, who were not just straight dudes, and wanted to think about those aspects of their selfhood, even the straight dudes. You know, I wanted to know about who they were. Like, Ibex's relationships matter so much more to who that character is, than a lot of other characters in the media that led me to create a character like Ibex. Like, inside of mecha fiction.

I guess that's the other thing is like, thankfully the other thing that we have the ability to do is im-import ideas that are not just from our direct influences. When, you know, when Ali is pitching a new character from something, she's not only pulling from like the most immediate stuff. Like, Tender Sky is not just like, just sci-fi character. There's a lot of other things in there, you know?

ALI: Right, yeah, I think, um... That's sort of the— the attachment to, I guess, the thing that you're saying is that like, I think at the start of a season, I think that when we're like setting up what we want to do, it's a good time to do the sort of like, research phase.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Um, but the thing that I like about the show, and I think that's a thing that's really strong about the show is that like, we tend to kind of pull influences from wherever. Um, I'm— I'm actually a little bit afraid of like, media consumption bleed right now because [AUSTIN: Mmm.] I am only watching like, police procedural and like [laughs] —

AUSTIN: Oh, interesting.

ALI: — a lot of NCSI, a lot Criminal Minds. A lot of Blue Bloods. And then we sat down to do that Live at the Table, and I was like, "Yeah, this character is the 88th, Law and Order." And I was like, "No this is —"

AUSTIN: That is a thing that happened. Uh-huh?

ALI: "— a nightmare." I can't ever live that—

AUSTIN: She rules, though. I had—

ALI: She rules. [laughs, claps]

AUSTIN: She fucking ruled. I mean, I haven't seen that show— Her arc in that show or her like, seasons of that show, since I was in college, probably? [AUSTIN, ALI laughs] But I remember that she ruled.

ALI: [sighs] Yeah. She's very good. I actually haven't seen her on a bunch of episodes. Maybe that's why I pulled her 'cause I was like, "Where's... whatever her name is?"

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: Um, but, yeah. So I have to be careful. [laughs] But I do think that it's like interesting that...

AUSTIN: I mean, can I just— can I just tag that to another question that we have coming?

ALI: Sure.

[0:38:48]

AUSTIN: Which, Eamon says, "Does who you cast as your character affect how you play them? Do you ever incorporate elements of that actor into your character?"

ALI: Do you want me to answer that now? [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, totally. I mean, it's the same— I mean, to expand on like, you just played this character who's like—

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, were you thinking of her, per, um... the way she acts and the way she expresses herself and the way she holds yourself, when you were playing Pigeon during that Live at the Table game?

ALI: No— Maybe? I mean, it's tough because it was a Live at the Table when it was like, "Oh, okay, I have to pull a character out of a hat."

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: Right? (cross) And like, that.

AUSTIN: (cross) Yeah, fair, fair, fair.

ALI: Like, I lean on that so much more in that situation than I do with Hella, obviously where she just— she could be anyone at this point.

AUSTIN: Right. Did you have a facecast for Hella when we started?

ALI: No...

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: No, I didn't, and that's the thing is why she can be so organic is because she didn't start with one, you know?

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: And that's weird— It's weird like, if a character is facecast, of course that happens a little bit.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: Um, that's why I facecasted them. But like, if I didn't, then I didn't, and if one comes later, then that's cool, right? But like...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: It is what it is, yeah, um....

AUSTIN: I hope that your procedural bleed... I mean, whatever. We can do a TV procedural game in Bluff, right? [ALI laughs] That's like one of the nice things about Bluff.

ALI: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: That's one of the nice things about both Bluff and Live for me is, they are release valves that have allowed me to stay focused on the main game, [ALI laughs] in way that has been hard, historically.

Like, I think a lot about Winter. I know people like Winter in Hieron. I've come around it a lot, but it's, of our seasons, it was the hardest one to make and it was the one that I... That's not true anymore, Twilight Mirage is the hardest one to make. Winter was hard in a different way. Winter was hard in that, I wanted to be making Twilight Mirage because the situation in the world was such that I desperately wanted to start swinging through and pushing through questions about dreaming about the future. And I knew it would be a messy season. It was even messier than I thought it would be.

Um, but Winter was just like *rough*. And part of that was I had all these ideas about Twilight Mirage and couldn't exorcise them, you know? Like from my body. Um, and I didn't want to do the thing where we over-prepare without producing something, where I'm just like writing down shit for, you know, seven months, before we actually get to the recording. I could tell that Winter still had some time left in it.

And now, having Lives and having Bluffs means like, oh, if we want to talk about superheroes for awhile, if I get into one of those superhero fugues, then we can just run a superhero game. Um, if I [ALI laughs] have ideas about giant robots, I can be like, "Oh, we're just going to do Road to Season Six now. Alright. I'm just deciding this. [DRE laughs] We're gonna do this." And it's gonna help make this, the Hieron stuff so much stronger because I will feel like, all the creative fulfillment from doing all these other things, you know? That's my personal thing there. Uh...

Sylvia and Dre do you have feelings here? I mean, Dre, you said like, you're actually coming at this the opposite direction. Has it happened to you yet, in terms of, like, maybe when you think about facecasting, like when

you think about someone like Sige where I can so readily call Mark Henry [DRE: Yeah...] to mind?

[ALI laughs]

DRE: Actually I think the most— the biggest one for me was uh, Dionne Gabbro and uh, that Bluff City.

AUSTIN: Oh, yes! Sure.

DRE: And Act— In Action Movie World? Is that what that was?

AUSTIN: Action Movie World, yeah.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh, how 'bout you, uh, Sylvia, in terms of facecasting. Or in terms of the media affecting your play?

SYLVIA: Yeah, um, with the facecasting one it's kind of weird 'cause I do that a lot, obviously, and it kind of varies on— from character to character. Uh, like with Ephrim it was very much like, I had a vibe that I knew I wanted to go for.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: And I think I mentioned like a specific picture of G-Dragon that I saw that made me go, "Oh, that's the exact vibe. I should just mention that off hand."

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

SYLVIA: And then it became like, "Oh, that's him."

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: And like, that worked really well, but it wasn't like a conscious like, "I'm making this character so he can look like this. It was like, "I've got this

idea for this fucking shitty prince, uh, and this guy is like perfectly hot enough to be this shitty prince."

AUSTIN: Mhm.

[DRE laughs]

SYLVIA: Uh, it was kind of like that, but then with um... With other stuff, like when I uh... I think I mentioned with Doyle in Bluff City that I kinda had a young Vincent D'Onofrio in mind.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: That was like immediate. Like I knew...

AUSTIN: Right.

[ALI laughs]

SYLVIA: I just kind of— I like, that influenced that a lot in terms of like, what type of a character do I want to see this guy play? I'll play that.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: Um, so it kind of varies from uh, time to time. Uh... And it, generally speaking, it is just like useful shorthand too, when I'm struggling with like— 'Cause that's always been my— one of my struggles as just a creative person in general is describing people.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

SYLVIA: Uh, so I'm much better at just being able to point at someone and be like, "That's them." That's—

AUSTIN: Which, fair.

SYLVIA: Like, yeah. It's just one of those things. Um...

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's— that's one of those things is I think this is a tool to use in the same way that, letting the media you're consuming influence your play and your interests and your games is. Like, uh, Lizzy in the chat, IceCreamJones in the chat says, "My current Blades character is a— is pretty heavily based on my brain fixating on super sentai currently." And like, that's dope. And one of the things that I think could— I think our show could come across sometimes as being like, "You have to do high art with roleplaying games, or else." And that is so not what uh, I actually think. And I also don't— One, I think sentai shows fucking rule, also. Um, but the... the um... It's fine for them to be outlets for those sorts of— for that sort of play. Ali?

ALI: Yeah?

AUSTIN: I love you. I can hear your birds.

ALI: [laughs] There's a lot of that. The freaks and geeks are out because it stopped, um...

AUSTIN: Oh! I didn't think— Sorry. Sorry, those are real birds.

ALI: You thought it was my birds video. [laughs]

AUSTIN: I thought it was your bird video.

[DRE laughs]

ALI: No, that's the real birds outside. Um...

AUSTIN: Okay. Then that's— Then that's fine.

ALI: The rain— [laughs]

AUSTIN: I was like, "Did something break in your microphone?" Is where it's routing the birds into your microphone.

ALI: [laughs] I don't even have a real bird video up. I just have these—

AUSTIN: Wow.

ALI: I have these birds outside. Um, yeah, I— It's been raining a lot in California, then it was really warm and everyone outside is like, "Hell yeah."

DRE: Birds included.

AUSTIN: Everyone outside, [laughing] birds included. [ALI laughs] Nice. God. Shoutouts to the birds, honestly.

ALI: Uh-huh.

[0:45:32]

AUSTIN: Um, alright. This other question, this question comes in— we're staying on this media question tip, right now. BYZANTIUM, all caps, says, "With several other actual play podcasts adapting their podcasts into other works, like the Adventure Zone's graphic novel, Critical Role's comics, art books and animated series, et cetera, uh, as well as When Justice is Done, focusing on simulating a comic in its presentation versus a film, as well as a question in your last tips, I was just curious if you ever were interested in adapting any of your works into comics or other media. If so, which season, arc or episode would you want adapted?"

"A more theoretical question, if there are no plans for any of the above, uh, what other types of media would you like to see work potentially adapted into, completely barring time, labor, money, resources in general? An anime? A movie? A musical? A novel? A stage play? An art installation? A dating sim? A video game, etc? How would you go about distilling the essence of what makes Friends at the Table what it is into any one of these things?"

Um, I'll note also that BYZANTIUM had another question which was like, I'll summarize it, it was basically like, "Will there ever be— Will there be more of Friends at the Table that is like, in the uh..." We do a lot of stuff that's like postcards and short fiction and microfiction in the form of episode description and Jack sometimes has songs that have lyrics that have kind of a narrative quality to it and Janine does some art. Like, is there more of that coming?

The answer is like, "Yeah, but I can't ever tell you like when or where." [ALI laughs] We kind of do that when it makes sense to do it. Sometimes it's like, "Oh, we need to fill a week," And like, "Oh, I'll write a short story for this sci-fi season or sometimes we'll get to a point and Jack will be like, "I think this is a vocal song. I think this song might have vocals. I think we need a song here where someone sings." Um, and that stuff that's just going to reflect where the seasons in question go.

Um, but the broader question of like, would we want to see Friends at the Table stuff in a different format like, yeah, absolutely. It turns out that takes a lot of work and a lot of money. [ALI, DRE laugh] Um, but if you're listening and you're like [ALI: Uh-huh.] "Oh yeah, I would love to— I would love for there to be a counter/WEIGHT anime." Like, yeah, same. Like, get in touch. We're right here. [ALI laughs] Um... Not to be flippant about it, obviously, right? I think that's...

ALI: Um, but yes please. [laughs]

AUSTIN: [laughs] Uh, and I think the real answer is that it takes a lot of work and it takes a lot of work that is hard to know? Like, I don't now that— I, certainly, before I was at Vice, right? Before I was in a room where like TV got made, I didn't know what went from— How do you go from ideation, from like, "Here's a thing that should exist," to making thing in that exact way, especially when we're talking about something like, live action or animation.

Like, how does it go from— How does the Expanse go from a book series, which I have a decent idea about how it goes from someone's mind onto a page into a publishing— you know, into the hands of a publisher and then out into the world. But how does it go from a book series into a TV show? Like, what are the mechanisms in place from taking something like the Expanse, a series of novels, and then getting it on TV? Who was making those purchases? Who is the company that airs it? Is it a production company? Is it, you know, an independent studio? Like, who is it?

And so, what I'll say is like, we are definitely like interested in that stuff. We're trying to figure it out, even, you know, as we speak in terms of what are— what are those opportunities? What are the ways that that would look like? And how do you convince people like, "Hey, you don't know us,

and we're *fairly small*. How— How would you like to give us a bunch of *money*. [DRE laughs] So that either we could make this or so that you could make this and we could advise. Or so that you could make it and we'll just hope it comes out okay." You know? Like all of those things are conversations that take a lot of time and a lot of them are based on like, who you know and the way the wind is blowing and who thinks what you have is good and it's— it's really hard. You know, I would say congrats to the people in this space who have managed to find a wider audience, because "Listen to these people roll dice for four hours," is a weird genre to be in, because the largest possible audience does not want to do that.

Um, and I think, what I'll say that I like a lot about our stories is um, I think that there're a lot there besides the dice rolling, but I— but I do love this format to tell those stories in, in the first place. Like, as someone who also writes prose fiction, like, I like doing that a lot. But I really love all of us gasping when the die comes up with a 6. That said, I'm curious for y'all what would you, if you could pick one thing to have adapted, what would it be and what would it look like?

SYLVIA: Uh, Marielda stop motion animation.

AUSTIN: Yooo...

ALI: Oooh...

AUSTIN: That'd be dope.

SYLVIA: Yup. That—

AUSTIN: That'd be good.

SYLVIA: I've been thinking about that since we started recording Marielda. [ALI laughs] I was like, "Oh, this world would look so cool if it was like stop motion."

AUSTIN: [sighs] That would look so cool.

ALI: Yeah.

DRE: Kind of fucked up that Sylvia had the best answer right away.

[AUSTIN laughs]

SYLVIA: Look, sorry. I just, can't help it.

ALI: Uh, well, I desperately want to do one of those like, Friends at the Table cafes. Like those limited run —

AUSTIN: Ooh.

ALI: — limited money and menu like, very specific —

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: — [lighting] cafes um...

AUSTIN: Yeah...

DRE: Tender's Bar.

ALI: I— Oh... [laughs] There's so many we could do, right?

AUSTIN: Wow we just— Yeah, you could do a lot.

ALI: Right, we could do Tender's Bar. We could just open a Constellation Coffee.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Um, we could just have a Hieron one with like a cool menu. Um, it could have a...

AUSTIN: Yeah, Emmanuel could come out and sit down at your table. It'd be great.

SYLVIA: (cross) Talk about his boyfriend trouble.

AUSTIN: (cross) It'd be a host club actually. Yeah, yeah.

[ALI, DRE laughs]

ALI: Emmanuel comes out and plays jenga with you. God. [AUSTIN laughs]
Um... Yeah, no, I would— I would, yeah, like that opportunity, [laughing]
so...

AUSTIN: Dre? I know we're just escalating at this point.

DRE: Yeah, no, yeah. I don't know what— [ALI laughs] (goofy voice) "I think
a book would be fun." [ALI, SYLVIA laugh] Like, what am I supposed to say
to that.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Do you want me to just like do the most
ridiculous one so it frees you up?

DRE: Yeah, go ahead.

AUSTIN: I think Frank Ocean should make a Twilight Mirage concept album.

DRE: Oh fuck.

ALI: Yeah. Yeah... Yeah.

AUSTIN: Hit us up. [laughs] Um, that's not my real answer but it's kind of
my real answer. [ALI, SYLVIA laugh] Like if it happened, I would be like,
"Tch, Alright, I don't have to do shit anymore. I made it."

Uh, my real answer is probably... Like one of the things about this kind
of thing is, whatever you do opens up different doors, right? Like, in some
ways, where— where if you make a really good animated show then like,
what people are going to want from you is more animated shows, right?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Unless you have something that's so wildly popular and successful
that you kind of get that black check, you know, in terms of... Like, I think
about something like Get Out, where you know, now he can kind of make—
Like, obviously Us is still going to be a Horror Film, and Twilight Zone is like

adjacent, but at this point Jordan Peele can make whatever the fuck he wants, you know? Not to put too fine a point on it, but that's how fucking good *Get Out* was.

And so right now, like, we could make the best Actual Play podcast in the world, bar none, and that wouldn't open those doors because not enough people give a fuck about Actual Play. So you need to pick something where like, you really have that huge crossover potential, if what you want to continue being experimental and doing different things.

Um, for me, probably of the stuff we've done, *counter/WEIGHT* is what I most want to translate into um, into another form or adapt. Um, and I think like, either animation or live action or comic would all work. I've thought a lot about how those different things would go. [ALI laughs] Ali and I have had meetings about how those different things would go theoretically, and have talked about, how do you plot out something that is eighty hours long into something that's a much, *much* smaller, more focused thing and it's been really fun to think about because it's like... There's so much. There's so much there and so much of that— so much of actual play is finding the thing in the middle of it. And so much of writing for comics and for television and knowing enough about what the thing is that you can start at the top with all of the puzzle pieces ready to kind of go in the right place.

Um, but yeah, I think *counter/WEIGHT* itself contained, it has four strong leads. It has great side characters, thanks to Dre and Sylvia here, and it has a pretty well realized world that we were very... adamant that we describe visually, so there's a lot of great material. It's the thing that I would, if I could snap my fingers and have the thing in front of me, that would be the thing. Um....

ALI: Yeah. I think if I could snap my fingers, I think that it would be like a *Bluff City* live action with an HBO show budget right?

AUSTIN: That'd be dope.

DRE: Yeah.

ALI: Just like—

AUSTIN: With like a rotating case so that we could do...

ALI: Yeah, yeah yeah...

AUSTIN: Yeah, that'd be really great, too.

ALI: [sighs] It's just every time we finish a Bluff City arc, I'm like, "We're the best. We did it."

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: "This is the best thing we've ever made." Um, so... Ugh, god, we're good at this.

SYLVIA: I have— I have one more.

AUSTIN: Yeah, what is it?

SYLVIA: I really wanted to quickly mention 'cause I just thought of it.

AUSTIN: Please.

SYLVIA: Okay, so you know the movie— the movies Paddington Bear and Paddington Bear 2, right?

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: Mmm. Mhm, mhm.

SYLVIA: Okay, what about Honey Heist but like that.

DRE: Oh fuck.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh. Yup, yup. That would be— That would be part of the Bluff HBO anthology.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And it would be by the Paddington Bear director, and it would be great. Yeah, I'd be down for it. See, Alton says counter/WEIGHT novels in the chat. I don't want to write counter/WEIGHT novels. Like, [sighs] that action is so visual in the way we described it, like, I'm— I'm interested in Twilight Mirage themed novels because those... Novels are *long*. Um, and Twilight Mirage is long. Uh, I—

I think counter/WEIGHT novels could be totally fine, but like when I'm thinking about what I would want to put that sort of deep thought into, it would have to be something where I felt the space afforded by novelization and by that format to work through complex ideas and paint very vivid, almost florid word pictures the way we did throughout Twilight Mirage, the novel would fit for me there, for sure. Um, so, so yeah.

Ian Urbina says, "counter/WEIGHT novels but like Tomino's Gundam novels where everything is way different and weird." I'd actually want all of these adaptations to be way different and weird. Um, I'm so much that person of like, even if I was involved, I would not want to recreate the work perfectly as it was because they're different formats and what would make— what would make a good counter/WEIGHT game— Oh, actually, I just realized something. I did— I was briefly working on a um... [sighs] kind of like a life sim, once, that was a sci-fi life sim. And I would like to pick that back up, but it'd be in the counter/WEIGHT world. That would also be the thing I would want.

ALI: Oh...

[DRE, ALI laugh]

AUSTIN: Anyway, um, alright. I'm going to advance. Unless Dre, did you ever get an answer.

DRE: Nah, I don't.

AUSTIN: Alright.

DRE: I think everything you all said. There.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Okay. Okay. Oh, I got another one really quick, which is, I want— I want a sports team to exist that actually hires someone named Memphis Longhand. Okay, moving on. Uh, Shay—

DRE: Not Keith Carberry?

AUSTIN: Not— Well, also that. Memphis Longhand, Keith Carberry, but who's an alien.

DRE: Okay.

[0:57:26]

AUSTIN: Shay says, "I run a weekly campaign in Monster of the Week and one problem I keep running into, that I've run into with other systems too, is that sessions will end without much of an idea of what players might be headed toward. While there are multiple threads that they could follow up on, I can't anticipate exactly what they're going to want to do next. I've asked in our discord what interested— what you wanted to do in the next few sessions and where do y'all think you're interested in going from here, but haven't really gotten a response. I don't want to make things too overtly structured and directed, but I also don't want to deliver an underprepared session because well— because ends were so open I didn't know what to write up. As a GM, how do you set up detailed plans without having much bearing on where a party may be going or what they plan to do?"

Uh, I think this is a good question because it's a hard one, but it's also one where there are a couple of key steps that would help me, and Dre, you're running a Masks game right now, which I image is also fairly open ended given [DRE: Mhm.] some of the way that game is designed.

DRE: Yeah, for sure.

AUSTIN: Um, you know, you're not going on D&D style adventures, you're in a city, right?

DRE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: So let's start with you, actually. I'm curious. How are you handling this in your Masks game right now?

DRE: Um... So we've only done that first session.

AUSTIN: Sure.

DRE: But I think that first session is going to be very different, from going forward. Because going into the first session, I didn't really know any— who anybody's characters was.

AUSTIN: Mmm.

DRE: Um, so I kinda just set up like, kind of like an opening scenario.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: And kind of like gave myself enough like... I think I knew one person was going to be a Legacy —

AUSTIN: Mhm.

DRE: — and so I was like, "Okay well, I— Like my in can be like their— whoever their previous generation legacy person is, like..."

AUSTIN: A Legacy is like, someone from a family of superheroes—

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or a, family understood broadly, but a family of superheroes, right?

DRE: Yeah. Um, so I was like, whoever their kind of like, mentor-father-mother-figure whatever, like, that'll be their in for like knowing this politician that's like the crux of this.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: Turns out that like, that Legacy character is basically like, "Fuck my dad?" Well okay, so then *that* doesn't work. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

DRE: But we still managed to swing it around, but I think going forward, um, it's going to be more of me kind of asking them, "Hey, where do you want to go?" But I think sometimes, like it's— Like some players don't want that.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: Like some players would rather just be like, "I don't know. Like, you handle the story and I react to it and that's like how I enjoy playing these games." And that's...

AUSTIN: Which is accept— Which is fine—

DRE: Yeah, totally.

AUSTIN: As that's— As long as those uh, expectations are very clear among people playing. And like, that's, I think part of the answer is like, have that conversation. Ask them— Instead of asking them what they want to do next, ask them whether they want this to be something that you direct or if they collaborate with you.

You might find that only one or two players are only really interested in that— that mode of play. That's totally okay. The other ones will probably roll with it, and maybe they'll see like, "Oh, this is actually kind of fun to have someone take the lead on this. I want to take the lead too." Um, it's fine to have that kind of mix among the players. Um...

I also think, asking them this question at the end of a session and giving yourself time to do that, versus asking in a discord, you know, the next day, is— is a big thing.

Um, and here's another one is that, cut your games off earlier. Um, instead of letting some of these things wrap up very quickly, cut your game off before the big final battle. Or before, in the middle of the big final battle, where there's still a lot like, at a key point in time.

I again think about Masks, during our game of Masks, we stopped the recording when we were in what felt like the very, very final moment of play. Where everyone was surrounding the primary antagonist and closing in. And I was like, "I think we're going to record for twenty-five minutes 'cause it's just going to be a quick fight and then he's going to get knocked the fuck out and that's going to be that." And instead we got this like big two hour finale episode out of it *because* we produced new momentum from playing. We all were aligned already on the previous momentum. And the previous stakes. And then the new stakes pulled cleanly from those old stakes.

I mean, the same thing actually happened in the previous episode of Masks where we came into it with like, some information to research, and I thought that would be a gimme, and it ended up being this kind of like long thing because from those initial well known stakes, players wanted to do their own things. Excuse me.

And so like, I think that's another solution to cut yourself off before you exhaust all the material, especially if you're finding this is a difficulty thing. I'm not saying this is a universal solution, I'm saying, given the situation where it feels like you don't know what's coming the next week, consider not exhausting all of your prep, if that makes sense, and trying to build very direct leads from what you already have, um, if that makes sense.

Uh, any other thoughts about this? In terms of like, how, I mean, not everyone here has GMed before but you've all played in games and I think, even in Friends at the Table, there's been a pretty good mix of things where, "[sharp inhale] I don't know what's gonna happen next week," [DRE, ALI laugh] versus "Here is exactly what I want to happen with my character," you know? Um...

ALI: [sighs] Yeah, I think what's been really helpful and I think that it— it works for us because we have two different parties and might be hard to kind of transfer over to a one party system is that sometimes you'll just be like, "Here's your two choices."

AUSTIN: Mhm. Right, right.

ALI: "I have to go prep this. I *need* this answer, so everybody has to give it to me by tonight and then um, [laughs, DRE laughs] this is what the answer's going to be." And it's um, a really good way to make people answer your questions. Um...

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that's totally— I mean that's— that's— With the note that like, even one of those things can kind of be pretty open ended, right? Like, we've had— We've an away game and a home game in this season in Spring. And we have— The away games have been all associated with these three things that I set up in the beginning of the season, of like, "Here are three interesting things on the map," for reasons, I'm not going to get into for spoiler sake, "Uh, but you definitely want to know about these."

You know, every time I say, "You don't have to go to those things, but they're interesting, right? You could tell me something else. I'm happy to prep for something else if you give me enough heads up."

But for the home game, I tend to be way more open ended, where it's like, I will... I came up with a list of like fifty things that could happen at home at the beginning of the season um, that one of Ephrim's moves could generate basically. Some of those are big important things like, "A mysterious tree appears." Some of them are, "A debate over what happened with Mortimer the duck," that are just background flair.

Um, but with the home stuff, having a combination of Fronts to drive the action in Dungeon World and this set of things that the Baron class that Sylvia is playing like, allows the home game to feel a little more open-ended, a little more like player driven. And part of what happening is, when players say they want to stay home, what they're actually telling me, "I have an agenda. I want to look into stuff." Ali recently, with Hella, a lot of the action, like the entire current arc comes from Hella being like, "I want to look into a character's journal to see if it can help me understand the current situation."

ALI: Mmm.

AUSTIN: Um, and, we wouldn't have any of the shit that happened without you saying that, right? [ALI laughs] Like, because you failing a roll during that is what let me tie a thing in from the Fronts that I'd already developed into the current moment. And let me like, "Oh, okay, this is where I can

show this barrel of this gun." And then later I can pull that trigger, again and again and again, um... and now we're where we are.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: But that doesn't happen without you saying you have an agenda. And that's why you want to stay in this kind of more open space. Um, which is nice, uh, for me. [ALI laughs]

I think also maybe the um... Another thing to think about is like, we've done this with uh, all of our— all the Forged in the Dark games that we've played have had this built in, but downtime episodes are a fun way to slowly—or like, sessions—are a fun way to slowly tease out what happens next. Let your characters hang out. The biggest lesson that I've learned, as a GM in the last, well the biggest lesson I've learned as a host of an Actual Play podcast but also as a GM is like, pump the breaks. Put your people on their ship together. Put them in their city together. Put them in the cafe together. And let them talk. And then let them find the fun in doing that because that will give you space and time to develop things a little more slowly. And also it will give you the um, the ability to like—What's the word I'm looking for?—But like gauge, I guess, their various interests in the world.

Um, and committing to like, not every episode needs to be a banger. Not every episode needs to have a fight scene. Not every episode or session, rather, needs to have high action or high adventure. You can do those sorts of downtime episodes—show— I keep saying episodes 'cause this is— 'cause I'm talking about a show 'cause that's us. You can do those sorts of sessions and they can be shorter. They don't have to be the, you know, extreme four hour session that you normally do every other weekend or whatever. They can just be like, "Oh yeah, come over for a couple hours. We'll go shopping in our tabletop roleplaying game. People can buy some stuff and we can talk about what you get up to between adventures basically." That is a fun way to kind of get players to think about their characters in that broader sense and maybe start to produce their own agendas and kind of show you what their flags are.

Um, any other thoughts here before we move on? I think the other really quick one is, as a GM, how do you set up good detailed plans without having too much bearing. I'm going to get to that in another question but

the long and short is build places and people and motivations, don't build a list of set pieces. Or, don't build a string of set pieces, build a list of set pieces maybe if you want to that you can pull from, but don't build like, "First they're gonna do this, then they're going to do this."

Think about places, the— the aspects of those places. The characters, the motivations of those characters and the capability of those characters and see how those things collide. That will— That will help you quite a bit. I know it's a very quick and dirty answer but again, I'll get there again in a moment.

Um, actually going to pass through these and come back to that question 'cause it's really long.

[1:08:03]

Uh, this one comes in from Wheeler who says, "How do you all feel about diceless game, like Dialect, Sundered Land, Doomed Pilgrim in the Ruins of the Future, or Quiet Year, where a given action doesn't require a random mechanism like dice, cards or a jenga tower to determine the outcome? How do those games differ from more traditional games in terms of the feel of playing/GMing them and the kinds of stories they produce. Have you considered running a season in one, one that was designed to support a campaign, I mean. Most, all, of the ones you have played on air have been built for one-shots."

Um, yeah, we've done a bunch of— of diceless games or games that don't have any sort of random mechanism, mostly for one shots or for like, story building, you know, world building purposes, like the Quiet Year. But the Quiet Year also has card drawing which means there is still like a random mechanism. Yeah, Dialect doesn't have any sort of randomness, right? I'm trying to think if there's any ones that might be...

SYLVIA: We did Microscope for...

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: The faction game.

AUSTIN: Yes. I mean, that's the closest we've gotten to a season built around that stuff —

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: — but even there, we did use Stars Without Number's faction system that did have lots of dice rolling, which is how we ended up getting some of the biggest, most interesting stuff that happened in that season.

SYLVIA: Yeah. True.

AUSTIN: And yeah, we've done Dream Eskew. I really want to return to that Dream Eskew game, which also has diceless kind of negotiated uh... me— What's the word I'm looking for? Like, results, basically. Resolution. Um, how do you all feel about this, as people who played a mix of these things, whether for Lives or you know, mid-season games?

SYLVIA: I really like them when they get rolling, but I do find that at the beginning, some of them can be kinda daunting to get used to because...

AUSTIN: Sure.

SYLVIA: But like, mechanics are structured but they're also vague, like a security blanket in a lot of ways because of that structure that they give you.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

SYLVIA: Like the like, you can always be like, "Well like, I'm not sure what's going to happen here so I'll roll the dice, —"

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

SYLVIA: "— and see what happens with my character for example." Um, but with like— with Microscope, like for example, just— Like all you have— all you're given is like the tone and I think like something about the scope of it, maybe. I'm trying to remember the exact rules there but it's something to do with the timeline. But you're given like two details from the rest to work off of. And it takes a lot of getting used to but when you do, it feels like freeing to just be able to create with your friends, basically? Like it becomes

like an improv thing almost except instead of trying to tell jokes, you're just like, "Okay, but what if this cool thing happened." And it— I think it also helps people feel engaged because you end up negotiating what happens more —

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: — as opposed to just letting— letting like numbers decide it. Like you have to kinda... It depends on the system obviously but like, negotiated stuff like that, you as players come to that conclusion together as like, a whole group as opposed to just letting it happen. And that's kind of my favorite part of them.

AUSTIN: Yeah, definitely. Um, I mean, I think about something like— Or, or, I think about ones where it's not even about a collaborative decision, it's about other types of mechanized negotiation or stakes setting and resolution for things like Firebrands? Right there's no rolling, or is there— There's— Every once in awhile there's like a coin flip in Firebrands, but my favorite stuff in Firebrands is stuff where you're asking for consent, like in the romantic scenes, or you're making demands, or giving up, making sacrifices, as in combat scenes. Those things are fantastic and I think the reason those work well for us is because we have a very good handle of what the stakes of those sequences are because we've spent so much time in those worlds by the time we get to them, if that makes sense.

We don't open seasons with these very often, with the exception of Marielda, which I think, worked really well. Marielda, the Quiet Year, to build that setting was fantastic and I don't regret that even a little bit. But I don't think we could start Season Six with Firebrands without it feeling like... really... lackluster for us? Or without playing in that game's default setting and just like treating— Like we could use Firebrands in a Road to Season Six Game, definitely, but I don't think that we could do it as a key element of the season that early on. Um...

ALI: Yeah, that's the thing attached to this question is I think like, at least as far as we do campaigns, doing a full campaign of one of these games would just be really tough. Um, just to keep it engaging for that long and I think, you know, following the drama via following the dice is really great, um, in example —

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: — like, the fail that I got last week that led to the whole arc of a bunch of weirdos, uh, coming for our place. Um, but um. [laughs] And I think that being able to say, "Oh yeah, I rolled a 6 and that fucked up and now it's falling through," is like a, you know, part of a thing that I enjoy most out of this, um, so like, I don't know if I could play the Quiet Year for two months or whatever, right? Um...

AUSTIN: Yeah. I mean, what I'll say is there are... there are more campaigned themed or campaign —

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: — leaning diceless games that are— that think about them just like regular games but those aren't— they still don't— What they don't have is the degree of randomness that can do what Sylvia was suggesting which was like, "I don't fucking know, let me roll some— I know what my character wants to do kind of, but I don't have a good idea for... [ALI laughs] I don't have a preference for if I succeed or fail, outside of, I like it when things go well for my character. But that does not lead— lend us to drama sometimes." Um, and so like, I do think that there are systems where it's like, "Point Buy System for success," or you have, you know, X number of successes to spend over the course of your— or session or whatever it is.

And that stuff could work, or like, I think we could do a really good micro season in Microscope or in one of the associated Microscope games. Even, I mean, Kingdom is by the same designer and we've done some good stuff with Kingdom, with the note that even that has the great moment of pulling the stones out of the cup to see whether or not you succeeded or failed.

And for us making a show, I want that tension. I want that tension a lot because I think it— Partially because it forces us to deal with choices as storytellers that we would not jump to ourselves. Um, we would— And we've seen this actually, and we saw that in Kingdom even. Like, someone recently in the Discord, we were talking about whether or not players have played, or could play or want to play villainous characters. And one of the things that I

have talked about, I think before, probably on the counter/WEIGHT Post-Mortem, is that when we were doing the Kingdom game, I eventually started playing as a character *because* it was hard to get people to lean into troublemaking with each other. And part of that was, "Alright everybody, you have to start caring about the stakes of these characters in a petty way, even though you've never played these characters before," because it was a character switch, basically, for that sub-game.

And, I think most of us as people, our instinct is to resolve conflict and to compromise because we make a show together which is a thing where you need to resolve conflict and make compromises and um, that's just who we are as people, generally. And so it was hard at the very beginning to get enough momentum as someone to be like, "And this person is gonna be fucking villainous as shit. This person is going to stir some shit."

By the end of that arc, we had it in spades, because the momentum finally started going that way, but I do worry that like, having systems that are— that don't have some degree of resource scarcity or randomness, would produce a game in which it was hard to become the one who first starts introducing problems, to the— And again, even the Quiet Year produces drama for you, because you draw the card that says, "You run out of water," or that someone got sick, you know? Um... Uh... not that we couldn't do it but like, it is— it is part of how our show has been successful has been about leaning into the ways in which these mechanics can produce drama for us, and then leveraging that to tell something really interesting, you know?

Um... Any other diceless thoughts here? Uh, if you're listening, write in the comment what your favorite diceless rpgs are. Like if you think there's stuff we don't know about, please let us know and we'll take a look at it, for sure, you know. Um... And also, as always, this is never like, "We'll never do it." It's just, oh yeah, this is why we haven't done it yet, you know? Um... Here's a— Here's a— You know, what I'm going to go back really quick. We're gonna save this one for last because it's really good.

[1:17:37]

This one comes in from Sam who says, "I started GMing a game of the Sprawl and one of the things that stuck with me, or one of the things that

struct me, is how easily the Missi— the Mission Directive system could be used to railroad. I was wondering if you have any advice on how to balance leaving things open for the players with this kind of built in mission structure. The sprawl also assumes you're playing an entire mission every session which definitely has not been the case for my group. Did y'all ever manage this? Thoughts on how to take things slower than intended without losing a lot of what those mechanics are trying to do. How does all of this compare to the structure of Forged in the Dark games?"

I mean, one thing is, I do— I'm with you. I think, when we were running the Sprawl, and Ali, correct me if I was wrong, but most of our sessions, most of our missions, took more than one recording session.

ALI: Yeah. Yeah, I think so.

AUSTIN: Like even like Gnosis, even like the Iron Choir stuff, was... You know, I know this because there's lots of intros and uh, if you hear an intro on an episode, it's because we've broken the recording. Almost always. Not always, but almost always, so like, if we record for four hours, or for three hours, you'll get two episodes out of that and you'll have one with an intro and one with a "last time on" and if the next one has an intro, it's because we've started a new recording.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Most of the time. Not always, but most of the time.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, and so like yeah, I think most of those, like you, Sam, we uh, running the Sprawl did not means getting through a whole mission in a single session. I don't know that the book really assumes that, or that the mechanics don't work for it. Um, I get where you're coming from with it, it's just— it means taking a lot of notes, is what I think it kind of means in terms of like, who has what Hold, and how many Mission Directives that you have left.

Um, I want to address it really quick with like actual stuff because I love the Sprawl and I've been thinking about the Sprawl a lot lately and so

here's what it says. I can see where you're coming from when you say that the Sprawl *could* lead to railroading, with a note that I think that a lot of systems could lead to railroading, uh, and a lot of books don't give you the tools to prevent yourself from railroading. By which we mean, the GM has a set of set pieces in mind, a set of fights, a set of whatever it is, and they're going to fucking go through those, you know, six things they've written down, goddammit, and that is it. Um, I think the Sprawl gives you enough stuff to not do that and uh, I'm gonna explain a little bit of why.

So the book says, "That the MC should decide what the main steps of the mission are and assign experience values to them. Those are what Mission Directives are." This is from 206 to 208 of the Sprawl. Um, "The first Directive is when you accept the mission, mark experience. The last Directive when the mission ends, you know, mark experience. But the Directives in between will vary according to the type of job it is. When the team collectively fulfills one of the Mission Directives for the first time, everyone on the team marks experience according to the Directive. As soon as the players get the job, the MC will show the players the Mission Directives. Those Directives should give a general shape of how the mission is conducted but should only use the information given to them by the employer."

The book ends up going into like, "Hey, if there's a double cross or a body double or something like that, you don't have to give a Directive that says, 'Figure out which one's the body double,' if they don't know yet that there's a body double," you know?

Um, but it continues to say, it goes on to say, "Mission Directives exist to help the players formulate a plan by guiding them towards subsidiary goals. If the players devise a workable plan that avoids even the general and open Mission Directives that you plan, you can adapt your existing Mission Directives or create new Mission Directives on the fly. Remember that it's okay to take a break during a session, think about the implications of character action."

So that's like number one 'cause it's so easy to like glaze over that stuff and be like, "Well I guess, like if they're not going to fucking do the mission that I gave them, then they're not going to get XP," so one is like, you can pause and be like, "Oh, that's a good thing. You know what, I had

given you the Mission Directive, break through the security grid, but you have come up with a plan in which you don't even touch the security grid but you still get the long-term thing. Let me replace the security grid Directive with a more um, open— with one that's in line with your plan."

The other way there is to think about these less in terms of specific um— specific particular things like get through the security grid, which references like a very particular thing, and think of it in broader senses. Things like, "Gain access to blank." Um, in this way, I think it's like fairly similar to Forged in the Dark games. It's part of the reason why moving from the Sprawl, right into Marielda felt so natural to me was because the way I was thinking about something like—I'll take the Gnosis Virus arc for example, 'cause I've been thinking about that a lot lately—the Gnosis Virus Arc required the team to locate the— to go into a facility where a computer was held that would track where this special computer virus was at any given moment. The virus moved around physical locations from day to day, and they needed to basically be both in the physical location it was at and at this other computer at the same time to kind of get it.

So already, I am railroading a little bit. Here are the things. You have a mission, and in games where you have missions, there's going to be some railroading. You have a mission, be at these two places at the same time, right? Now they could've said, "I want to figure out a way to not have to be at both of those places, I'm going to spend a lot of time researching a tool that let's me retrieve it from a single place," or "I'm going to see if it leaves any, you know, data ghosts behind in places it's previously been. Can I reconstitute it from a bunch of data ghosts?" And I would have to like, roll with that plan.

Um, what I should never do in that case is be like, "No, you can't do that." I should say, "You can roll for it and to see how hard it is and maybe you have to go through a bunch of steps that make it prohibitive or make it more difficult." Or the dice break in such way where I'm like, "That's actually a really cool plan. Let's go with that and I can move the fiction and the action to be about maybe someone trying to retrieve the data ghosts that they've stolen. That they're trying—" 'Data ghost' is a good phrase. Just say, 'Data ghost.' It's just— Mmm.

SYLVIA: Data ghost.

AUSTIN: See? Data ghost.

SYLVIA: It's good. It's really good.

AUSTIN: Uh, you know what else is a good phrase? Date a ghost.

ALI: Mmm.

AUSTIN: Good— Good phrases. Um, so that's— that's like— Directives should be flexible in a way. The other thing about all of this, which is what I was getting to in general is like, be general. Don't say, "Jump over the fence," say, "Get inside of the fence." Right? So if they want to dig under the fence, they should also get that Directive point.

Um, two is to think about what I said before. Places with obstacles, characters with motivations, not just a list of things that like— sequences you want to put on the table.

The other thing here is Personal Directives because missions in the Sprawl aren't just about um— they're not just about uh... Mission Directives, they're also about Personal Directives which is 143 and 144 in your textbooks, in the Sprawl books. [DRE laughs] In which every character has personal directives about what they believe in and who they relate to. So for instance, "Behavioral, describe your ethical code. When adhering to your code hinders the mission, mark experience. Compassionate, when you put your compassion for the powerless ahead of the mission, mark experience. Filial, when you put the advice of blank ahead of the mission, mark experience."

On one note, these are supposed to be able to— Like it's easy to read these and be like, "Okay, so I have to worry about Mission Directives, and also over here, Personal Directives. It's two different columns." Ideally, for me, I want those two things interacting and interfering with each other. I want you to throw a Mission Directive out the window *because* you're compassionate. I want you to decide to stick to the mission plan instead of being as compassionate as you normally are. Or for something like "Deceptive, when your lies about your identity or your past put the mission at risk, mark experience." I want that to show up in a way that creates

drama, but because the way the Personal Directives work, you still get that XP because the end goal is not checking boxes on Mission Directives, it's having a good time at the table. And what Personal Directives allow you to is completely flub one of your Mission Directives while still creating— creating and rewarding mechanically drama at the table by interweaving those behaviors and also those Personal Directives with the Mission Directives.

Um, so take a look at that part of the book, is like so easy for eyes go glaze over during this stuff but the heart of so many games is what is their reward structure? What is the thing that players are supposed to do to advance as characters in the game. And I— I often, the thing that's going to turn me off about a game the most is when I see a very limited reward structure that requires them to do something like kill NPCs. Um, and the thing that started making me more excited about a game is when I see that players get to describe to me what they want to do and get— and have some control over the kind of faucet of XP or whatever else there is. And the Sprawl does this really well, and so that is my— that is me marking out for the Sprawl for ten minutes and giving a little bit of tips on a game that I really like and that I really want to play again at some point.

They started teasing, I think it's coming soon, one of the first Sprawl Magic uh... updates. Not updates, what's the word I'm looking for?

SYLVIA: Expansions?

AUSTIN: Supplements?

SYLVIA: Or supplements.

AUSTIN: Yeah, expansions, expansions. Uh, the first one is called Touched, a darkening alley. And the blog post that Hamish wrote, is called, "[When Corporate Hell is not a Metaphor](#)." [ALI laughs] Which is very good. I'm very, yeah.

"It's 1985. Ever since Nixon privatised the Vietnam War, we've been on a downhill slide into corporate hell. We all thought that was a metaphor, but maybe we were too optimistic. A Darkening Alley is a low-magic, dark horror setting for The Sprawl. Rifts in the fabric of space are starting to crack, opening portals to strange new worlds filled with beings and energies far

beyond our understanding; humanity is beginning to feel the effects. Strange happenings are becoming more and more common. The street-side prophets are starting to sound a bit reasonable. The corporations smell power and have started pouring a lot of money into investigating and documenting these occurrences—that's where you come in."

Um, and there is a new Antiquarian playbook, there's a Trauma system, there's new magic abilities. I'm so here for it. Um, it's one of two or three upcoming um, uh... magic-y things I believe, so I'm excited for all of them. Um... Speaking of magic, unless, do either— Do any of you remember or want to talk about the Sprawl?

[DRE laughs]

SYLVIA: Uh, my one — I don't have anything to say about the Sprawl but just kind of like in general, about like —

AUSTIN: Yes.

SYLVIA: — if you're worried about railroading. Um, just as a player, I've found it really helpful when I'm reminded of like, out— Not out of left field, but different ways that I can use the tools I have —

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: — for my character? So like, try and encourage like —

AUSTIN: Yes.

SYLVIA: — outside-the-box thinking with like, things that the rolling or like, this move could work in a different way without anyone even like, thinking it could. Like uh, I don't have a specific example but like you could— If I'm remembering the Sprawl correctly, I haven't actually played it myself, but the— the like things you roll are vague enough in a way that you can kind of apply them— apply those stats to plenty of different things and like [AUSTIN: Mhm.] and like reword, not reword but reinterpret what the actual game is saying in a way that lets your players do things that you didn't account for.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: And that'll make it way more fun for you too because you'll have to adapt to whatever crazy shit they're pulling.

AUSTIN: A hundred percent. I think that's just like, my biggest take away is to encourage that sort of play and reward it because it will keep everything just a lot more exciting. The worst thing you want to— The worst thing if someone has an idea, you say, "No." And just like, "No," outright. Ask like— Ask them how they get there, ask them for more details, lay out a map of how they could get there and that is going to be a way to get them to continue being invested and continue like, why they have good time. And also, sometimes someone wants to be like, "I shoot them with my Smart Gun." Like alright, roll the fucking dice to shoot them with your Smart Gun. You know?

SYLVIA: Yeah. I mean like, how many times have we, on the show, been like, "I want to do this thing but I don't know how to get there."

AUSTIN: Yes.

SYLVIA: And then we have a conversation on the air about how we're doing that thing.

AUSTIN: Conversations.

SYLVIA: It's a real, like, that's not just because we're making a show, that's just 'cause that's a fun way to play tabletop games.

AUSTIN: (laughing) Exactly.

SYLVIA: Like...

[1:30:42]

AUSTIN: Totally. Um, does anyone else have thoughts on this sort of thing? Um... Okay. This one I'm going to need some help on. This one comes in from Kyle. Kyle says—this is our last one—"In Blades in the Dark, the Hound playbook has an ability, ghost hunter, where their hunting pet can become,

quote, 'Imbued with spirit energy.' I have two questions. One, what does this look like? Two, what is your pet of choice to imbue with spirit energy?"

ALI: Hmm.

DRE: Uh, it looks like Goku, and Goku.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: I don't think Go— I— Hm.

ALI: Hmm. Hmm. He does have a tail.

AUSTIN: He does— He does have a tail.

ALI: So...

AUSTIN: Hmm.

ALI: Score one on the pet theory.

SYLVIA: I mean, were you just talking about the spirit energy or were you calling Goku your pet? Kind of a —

AUSTIN: I think both.

SYLVIA: — what we're struggling with.

DRE: Both.

SYLVIA: Okay. Cool. Like just a little Saiyan man.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ALI: Hm.

SYLVIA: Okay. Nice.

ALI: Hmm...

DRE: I mean he has a spirit bomb.

ALI: Hmm...

SYLVIA: Yeah.

DRE: So...

SYLVIA: Well that's what I thought you were going for, but I didn't realize he was also your pet. I'd go with a possum, probably.

ALI: Ooh.

AUSTIN: Ooh. What's it look like with this? Because I want to be clear, my answer for this has to begin with, "It looks like whatever you fucking want it to."

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: There is no one answer. You could have everyone in your party take this move, which they should. You remember how in counter/WEIGHT, we were like, "Everybody has the piloting move 'cause this is a show about mechs, so everybody has to take the Pilot's move or the Driver's move?" Everyone in a game of Blades in the Dark should have ghost hunter where everyone gets a hunting pet imbued with spirit energy and it should look different from each of them. There should not be a single answer. Um, what do y'all... So it's an possum. Tell me about what the possum's...

SYLVIA: Yeah, the— So the mean reason I'm thinking of a possum is because I saw a really good picture of a possum recently but mostly —

ALI: Ooh.

SYLVIA: — the thing— the good thing about poss— I'll link it in a second, don't worry, I'm getting it.

AUSTIN: Yeah, please. Mhm.

SYLVIA: The good thing about possums is because, if they play dead, so why can't they also commune with it.

AUSTIN: Yo...

ALI: Mmm.

SYLVIA: I did not mean to send that counter/WEIGHT video in the Spring in Hieron chat, by the way.

AUSTIN: It's fine.

SYLVIA: I just realized I did that.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: It's fine. No worries, it's fine.

SYLVIA: Anyways, I put this one in the Patreon folder. Not folder, chat.

AUSTIN: Chat.

SYLVIA: So...

AUSTIN: Aww.

ALI: Aww.

AUSTIN: Look at this possum. Uh-huh.

SYLVIA: So that's my thing is like, if it's— if it's a spirit animal, everyone enjoy the possum, please. If it's a spirit animal, what if— I mean, Ali's brought up Jojo.

AUSTIN: An animal— An animal imbued with spirit energy, obviously.

[ALI laughs]

SYLVIA: Ali's brought up Jojo on the show —

ALI: Uh-huh.

SYLVIA: — and I was thinking like, what if my— what if my pet had a ghost that fought with it like a Stand.

ALI: Oh...

AUSTIN: Is the—

SYLVIA: Yeah. And I just— I like the face that possum's making.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh, here's what I love, is this picture that Dre just linked in the chat. Dre do you want to explain what I'm looking at?

DRE: Oh, so like, the third week we moved into our house, we had like a little screened in porch with a door, and that's where we kept our dog's food container outside. And uh, we forgot to close the porch door one night and then my dog starts going apeshit in the back door, and I look out and there's just this little possum, just like— just *going to town* on my dog's food container.

SYLVIA: And you'll know I was there because I told it to, so it could get powerful spirit energy from your dog's food.

DRE: Yeah, exactly.

ALI: Mmm.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

DRE: Uh, it was a very friendly possum, I felt bad about— about throwing it out. Like they never hissed, they never were mean or anything. They wouldn't leave? Like I like went outside and I like banged and like made lots of noise to try and like scare him off and like, the possum's just like, "Yeah,

okay, what the fuck ever," and just basically like dug further into the food.
[laughs]

AUSTIN: Wow.

DRE: So I eventually just had to take the container outside and like tip it over. And then it just kinda walked off.

AUSTIN: Uh, I didn't hear a word you said —

DRE: 'Cause you were looking at— yeah, these are good.

AUSTIN: — 'cause I'm looking at [@PossumEveryHour](#).

ALI: Wow.

SYLVIA: That's a great account.

AUSTIN: On twitter. Look at this one up on the door! [DRE sighs] Little snugglers.

SYLVIA: And that's another good choice for a possum too, is because they can be scary if they need to as well.

AUSTIN: Hey Sylvia.

SYLVIA: So they can like, be cute and tough and...

AUSTIN: Hey Sylvia, why did you put this selfie over here?

[DRE laughs]

SYLVIA: Oh that's—

AUSTIN: It's a possum eating pizza and [ALI laughs] drinking a bunch of coca cola, just hanging out.

SYLVIA: That's me from my crust punk phase. Uh, really listening to a lot of Johnny Hobo there.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Oh lord these are really cute.

[ALI laughs]

SYLVIA: They're a good animal.

AUSTIN: I'm all for these. People listening and not watching the stream, aww, look at this face. This little cute. Uh, they're all really cute, even the scary ones are really— Aww baby, look at you, rub your belly. Um... [DRE, SYLVIA laugh] They're really good! Uh, I think I have to change my answer to possum now —

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: — 'cause I just love all of them. I don't— It's the only animal that exists, in my opinion, now.

ALI: Hmm.

AUSTIN: Ali, do you have a non-possum answer?

ALI: [laughs] This question is tough for me because it's like very close to what Castille already did.

AUSTIN: Yes, it is.

ALI: Um, but her— her pet, instead of being a pet was like an expensive jewelry store item that she stole. Um...

AUSTIN: And became, right?

ALI: Right, and then became. Yes. Um... Which, you know, I feel like if I was going to imbue any pet with spiritual energy, I would steal it first, just, you know.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: For the points. The game.

AUSTIN: Mhm. Again, personal directives.

ALI: Yeah, recognized. Yeah, yeah. [laughs]

AUSTIN: My personal directive is stealing cool pets.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Uh, when it gets in the way of the mission —

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: — mark XP.

ALI: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Please don't spoil my Season Six character.

[AUSTIN, ALI laugh]

AUSTIN: God. [ALI sighs] Um, I'm with— I'm with Castille in the like, I actually think cats are my favorite pet animal. I would love some sort of like spirit imbued cat.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, and the way that looks is, it hangs out on my shoulder.

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: That's all. It's just like a cat but you can tell it's imbued with spirit energy 'cause it like follows me around. It's like the cat from Inside Llewyn Davis, which is just like —

DRE: Oh, that's a good cat.

AUSTIN: — that cat is imbued with spirit energy. Um, so...

SYLVIA: Yeah! It is!

AUSTIN: Yeah, it is!

SYLVIA: It *is*!

AUSTIN: So... [sighs] Animals are good.

ALI: Yeah.

DRE: Pretty good.

AUSTIN: Um, did everyone get to answer? Dre, did you— you didn't answer.

DRE: Uh, I said Goku.

AUSTIN: Oh. [ALI laughs] You answered *first*. [SYLVIA laughs] I just wanted to give you another opportunity. Still Goku?

DRE: What about —

AUSTIN: If you say Vegeta.

DRE: — a possum with Goku hair.

AUSTIN: Goddamnit. [sighs] Possums grow their tails back.

DRE: I don't know.

ALI: What? Back?

DRE: I don't want to find out.

AUSTIN: Some animals like—

ALI: What do you mean by back? Oh...

AUSTIN: Well like...

DRE: Like a lizard.

ALI: Oh...

AUSTIN: Like a lizard.

ALI: Oh back. Like, a second.

DRE: Or Goku's kid.

ALI: Like a replacement.

AUSTIN: What did you think I meant?

ALI: Well, I was like, do they— I thought you meant like a hair— I was still in the hair spikes and I thought you were like —

AUSTIN: Oh...

ALI: — "Do they— Can they grow their hair if it's towards their tail so it goes back?" [AUSTIN laughs] And I was like, "No? No they can't." Uh... [laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh my god. [sighs]

ALI: [laughs] That would be great if they could, though. That would solid.

AUSTIN: That's amazing. Uh, but no, I guess I was just thinking about lizards, right?

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Lizards grow their tails back. So you don't ever want a Goku lizard, 'cause the tail's dangerous.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

DRE: Yeah.

SYLVIA: 'Cause then he'd go from being a father to being a monkey and like, that would be much weirder to have as a pet.

ALI: What?

AUSTIN: Do you not know this about Goku?

ALI: I don't know a lot of Goku lore.

SYLVIA: 'Cause mon— Goku becomes a monkey when he sees the moon.

AUSTIN: Goku— Yeah. That's why Piccolo—

ALI: Oh...

DRE: A great ape.

AUSTIN: A great ape, this is why Piccolo destroys the moon in Dragon Ball Z.

ALI: Oh.

DRE: And is like the second person to do it. 'Cause like, doesn't Roshi do it in the original Dragon Ball.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that's true.

ALI: That's nice of them to do. For the— For Goku.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I mean in this case, he does it 'cause Gohan— 'cause Gohan has turned into a great ape 'cause Gohan has—

ALI: Yeah. That sounds, yeah... That sounds like Piccolo.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And so he's like, right, 'cause he's just like real dad.

ALI: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: And then he just fucking blows up the moon. Which— Like...

ALI: Did the moon have to be there? No.

DRE: Uh... Mmm. Hm...

AUSTIN: I guess not.

ALI: Did the moon have to be there? Apparently not, as long as he kept going.

DRE: As someone who lived on two coastal states, Ali...

ALI: Yeah, I do that too. Eh, you know, it just stops going up and down.

DRE: I mean, I would be alright if you blew up the moon. I don't know about you.

[ALI laughs]

SYLVIA: I mean, Vegeta made a fake one, at one point.

ALI: Yeah, see.

AUSTIN: Vegeta did make a— That's the fucking best moment in Dragon Ball Z.

SYLVIA: It's so good.

AUSTIN: Because, it's early on, I know, but Piccolo blows up the moon because Gohan can turn into a big uncontrollable great ape that's the size of a mountain that can shoot energy beams from its mouth, and that's dangerous to exist in the world. And so Piccolo's like, "Well I guess the moon's got to go for the betterment of me." [DRE laughs] Which is true. Vegeta shows up and there's a moment where they're like, "It's not gonna be a big deal. The Saiyans can't turn into great apes 'cause the moon is gone." And Vegeta's basically like, "What? You didn't think someone else tried to blow up the moon before?" And puts a fake like hologram moon in the sky, which I guess is still enough for their weird saiyan powers to allow them to turn into great apes.

DRE: Listen. Blutz Waves.

AUSTIN: It— Wait, what's that?

SYLVIA: What?

DRE: Blutz Waves.

AUSTIN: What are Blutz Waves?

DRE: Isn't that the thing in GT?

AUSTIN: Oh, I didn't see GT. I've never seen...

SYLVIA: Oh man. GT—

DRE: So like, Goku could go super saiyan four because he's Goku but Vegeta can't.

AUSTIN: Is it cause...

DRE: So then he had Bulma build him a machine —

SYLVIA: Yeah!

DRE: — that produces these things called Blutz Waves that like forces him to go Super Saiyan form.

AUSTIN: Why are they called Blutz Waves?

DRE: I don't know man.

SYLVIA: I feel like, I— [sighs]

DRE: That might not be what they're called.

AUSTIN: They are. I'm looking at the— the Dragon Ball Wiki.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I think that it had something to do— I remember it coming up during the baby arc, and this is where I reveal that I've watched Dragon Ball GT and genuinely like it quite a bit. Uh...

AUSTIN: Wow. So they do it—

SYLVIA: It's fine.

AUSTIN: Wait, wait, is that what they should do next for All Systems Goku, do you think?

SYLVIA: Honestly?

AUSTIN: It's kind of the one I want them to do...

SYLVIA: I kinda like...

AUSTIN: Because I'm so— so curious.

SYLVIA: I kinda like GT more than I like Super but that's just because Super—I don't— Part of that's nostalgia and part of that's also like, "Man, I'm really tired of every fight being about the stakes of an entire universe."

AUSTIN: Yeah, fair.

SYLVIA: Um, though then again, Dragon Ball GT, kinda gets there too very quickly. [laughs]

AUSTIN: I bet!

SYLVIA: Yeah. But I like— I like that because it's them flying through— It's basically Dragon Ball in space at the beginning —

ALI: Ooh.

SYLVIA: — is kinda what they're aiming for, because Goku becomes a kid again and it's the him...

AUSTIN: Who's this dragon?

SYLVIA: Which one?

ALI: Wait...

AUSTIN: This goofy looking smoke dragon.

DRE: Oh that's uh, that's one of the uh, Black Star Dragons.

AUSTIN: Uh...

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Why is it smoking a big cigar?

DRE: Yeah.

ALI: Wait, what?

AUSTIN: It's smoking a big cigar?

DRE: Yeah.

ALI: He likes to unwind.

AUSTIN: Dark Shenron? Okay.

DRE: Well there's— There's— They're all Shenrons, right?

AUSTIN: Oh my god this one is... [sighs]

DRE: It's like, Eis Shenron and Syn Shenron and Dark...

AUSTIN: This one's blowing out— This one's vaping.

DRE: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

[AUSTIN sighs]

DRE: That's still just the same one.

AUSTIN: It's *amazing*.

SYLVIA: I know Syn Shenron is the one that's in like the video games.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: He's the one that most people would recognize and the one that made me start watching Dragon Ball GT, 'cause I was like, "Who's this pointy guy?"

DRE: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Which in a show like Dragon Ball, could describe a lot of people.

AUSTIN: Oh my god.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Who is this pointy guy?

SYLVIA: He's really pointy, right?

AUSTIN: He's pointy all over. That guy's knees are dangerous.

DRE: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Yeah!

DRE: How different does he look as a Mega Shenron? I can't remember.

SYLVIA: I—

AUSTIN: A Mega Shenron?

ALI: Wait, come on, that's Pokemon.

AUSTIN: That's Pokemon.

DRE: Naw, man. There's...

ALI: You're trying to pull a fast one on all of us.

SYLVIA: This is from the 90s. Before Pokemon could be—

ALI: Mmm.

AUSTIN: No...

SYLVIA: I mean, that was a thing so, but this is from uh, a simpler time before the omega evolutions.

ALI: Okay fine.

AUSTIN: Oh wait, does he have a non-spiky version?

SYLVIA: I think his non-spiky version is like nice— nice dragon, if I'm remembering right?

DRE: Well no... There's—

SYLVIA: No.

DRE: You're thinking of a different one.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

DRE: But there is a nice dark dragon ball dragon.

AUSTIN: It's not Eis Dragon.

DRE: It's not Eis, it's uh...

AUSTIN: Oh, when you said Eis before I thought you meant I-C-E.

DRE: No, it's not.

SYLVIA: E-I-S, yeah.

AUSTIN: It's E-I-S.

DRE: Is he the nice one?

AUSTIN: No, he's eaten someone's foot over here.

DRE: I think Ocean Shenron might be the nice one.

AUSTIN: This is a shot. I'm looking at a lot of pictures right now, internet. Uh, whew, there's a lot going on in here. Uh, Nuova Shenron?

DRE: I think that might be like, the good guy one.

AUSTIN: Oh, I love how stretched out this one is. It's— Like the image on this wiki.

DRE: Yeah, yeah, yeah, it's the—

AUSTIN: Not the actual.

DRE: Oh wow. Yeah, that's stretched.

AUSTIN: Oh, look how bored he looks. God.

DRE: That's because he's the most noble one, Austin.

AUSTIN: 'Cause he's golden?

ALI: Mmm.

AUSTIN: Thank you for this tour of Dragon Ball universe. 'Cause there's shit I just don't know. I haven't seen any Super.

DRE: Some of Super is very good.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

DRE: And a lot of it is just mediocre.

SYLVIA: Also, isn't there a lot of it that's just been done in movie form, too?

DRE: Yeah, so like the first two arcs are just the Resurrection F movie and the —

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

DRE: — battle of the gods movie.

ALI: Oh.

DRE: The Trunks arc and the very last arc of Super are fucking great.

AUSTIN: Uh, I was on a bus two years ago now, maybe? Have I told this story on here? Is this a thing I've told.

ALI: I don't think so.

AUSTIN: Um, uh, I was on a car ride home to New Jersey, um and I was looking at twitter like I do, and an image of a giant robot, a Gundam, showed up and this dude who was next to me, who had been arguing with his girlfriend on the phone.

DRE: Good.

AUSTIN: Um, not his girlfriend. He actually told me, "Not my girlfriend, I just see her sometimes."

ALI: [sharp inhale] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh, they were arguing over dinner 'cause they were going to Atlantic City, and he was like, "When we get in, I really just want a Wawa sub," and she wanted to go out and it was a whole fight. He saw me scroll

past a Gundam and he said, "One second baby, let me call you back," and hung up. [ALI, DRE laugh] And was like, "Yo, was that Dragon Ball."

ALI: Mmm.

AUSTIN: I was like, "Oh no, that was Gundam." And for the next forty-five minutes, he showed me his favorite Dragon Ball Super fights, [ALI laughs] including some sort of Trunks Goku Fight or something? Uh, from Dragon Ball Super.

SYLVIA: Oh yeah.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I know who it really is, I don't want to say. I don't want to spoil Dragon Ball Super, but it seemed fucking dope. Um, uh, and that was a good ride. Just watching Dragon Ball Super fights and AMVs on the phone while his girlfriend texted him about various breads.

[ALI, SYLVIA laugh]

SYLVIA: Oh my god.

ALI: Can I say something?

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: That I believe is true and I'm just going to make it true by saying it out loud.

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: Is that I hope that the experience of like, really unwinding with you, coming down from that fight, sharing an experience with you, really gave that dude like the energy to like, have a nice welcome dinner with his girlfriend.

AUSTIN: I think so too.

ALI: I think so.

AUSTIN: Not his girlfriend, girl he spends time with sometimes.

ALI: Girl he spends time with, yeah, yeah, yeah. And it's good they were spending time together. [laughs]

AUSTIN: I hope, I guess so.

ALI: But yeah. I really hope that the like healing energy of Dragon Ball kinda like— sharing it...

AUSTIN: Me too. The bonding.

DRE: Yeah.

ALI: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: He was so hyped.

DRE: You gave him that relationship Senzu Beam.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: It was like, I've never have— I've been on so many buses. Like you know how many buses I've been on.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: And I've had some wild-ass experiences with like bus neighbors, but I've never had someone be like, "Alright hold up. I know you're listening to a podcast right now, *but* you have got to see Trunks go off." And I did need to see that. Trunks is great.

DRE: To be fair, Trunks goes off.

AUSTIN: Trunks goes off.

ALI: You both needed that, it sounds like.

AUSTIN: We did. We did. Also my phone was dying so it gave me something to look at for the remainder of that trip, [ALI laughs] that was not just like, outside, into the darkness of New Jersey at 11 PM. Um, that's the other thing. She wanted to go out at like— It was already super later so I— I get it.

ALI: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: I get it. I'm not dragging her, I'm sure she just wanted a nice time with the guy she sees sometimes, but...

DRE: [laughs] God.

AUSTIN: It was late. Go to Wawa. Watch some Dragon Ball.

DRE: I hate—

ALI: Not that there's anything wrong with that.

AUSTIN: That's what they said. I'm not gonna...

DRE: I know, I know, I know.

AUSTIN: I'm not gonna, you know.

DRE: You're not responsible.

AUSTIN: And it didn't— I want to be clear, it did not sound like a situation where he was stepping out while he was in like a main relationship. It just seemed like he... [ALI laughs] Like they were just people who saw each other that they were not necessarily in a relationship.

ALI: She was a— She was a bus ride away, and sometimes that situation is what it is. Right?

AUSTIN: Right. Sometimes that's the situation.

DRE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: I'm not here to judge.

ALI: You know.

DRE: Damn, sometimes it do be like that.

AUSTIN: Sometimes it be like that.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Alright, on that note, remember you have questions! [ALI, SYLVIA, DRE laugh] You can send them to TipsAtTheTable@gmail.com. Any questions apparently. You got sandwiches and Dragon Ball? You know where to send them.

DRE: Please? Actually...

AUSTIN: Like, honestly?

ALI: Yeah. For real, let's branch out a little bit on this show.

AUSTIN: You know, we've been trying to figure out some new Patreon rewards. [ALI laughs] Um...

SYLVIA: You all wanna watch Dragon Ball GT?

AUSTIN: Y'all want to watch Dragon Ball GT?

ALI: Yeah...

DRE: Yeah?

AUSTIN: [sighs] I kinda don't. I already have so much anime to watch right now.

SYLVIA: D-don't.

ALI: Yeah... I...

AUSTIN: I—

ALI: So —

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

ALI: — I just want to say this 'cause the anime that I really want to watch right now is Fushigi Yūgi.

AUSTIN: Oh my god.

ALI: Which is a *throwback*.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: And I really want to know if it holds up, and it's on Crunchyroll so...

DRE: Wait, is that about like, Fushigi balls?

ALI: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Oh my god, I haven't heard that name in awhile.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Oh my god.

ALI: Yeah. Yeah. That's, you know.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?

ALI: Uh-huh. Um...

AUSTIN: Do you want to pitch it? Do you want to pitch Fushigi Yūgi?

ALI: It's— Okay so it's um, high level, it's a story about this girl who goes to a library with her best friend —

AUSTIN: Yup.

ALI: — and goes into like a secret, you know, exclusive category, why am I spending so much time on this? They open a book and they read the book and then they get put into the book together.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's an— it's an Isekai, before um— before the time in which all of those were just about like, gamer boys.

ALI: [laughs] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: And it's like— Like the main girl obviously meets all of these people and has this love interest, but then she has this like, tense kind of relationship with the girl that she's friends with because like, she ends up meeting the dude's antagonist, so like, they're friends but you know, it's this whole thing. Um, I never finished it and it might suck. But also might...

AUSTIN: Or, it might rule.

ALI: It might be good. Um...

AUSTIN: It's like a shōjo thing, right?

ALI: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Sick. We should— Anime is great, you know? Um...

ALI: (laughing) It's so good.

AUSTIN: I'm just— I'm just flipping through this.

DRE: I've gotta watch this— I've gotta watch that dragon pilot show. I started watching that and didn't finish that.

ALI: Which one is that?

DRE: Uh, Dragon Pilot uh... I can't remember if Masotan or— But it's basically like—

SYLVIA: It's Netflix Exclusive, right? Or am I wrong about that.

DRE: Maybe.

SYLVIA: I don't know if its Exclusive, I saw it on Netflix.

DRE: I— I started watching it before it came to Netflix. Uh...

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

ALI: Oh...

DRE: But it's basically like, "Hey, actually dragons have been around forever. Governments have just kept them a secret."

AUSTIN: Yo, governments.

[ALI laughs]

DRE: "And the latest way in which they're used now..."

AUSTIN: Can you fucking imagine, pause. Can you fucking imagine, if we woke up tomorrow, and— and dragons and *governments* had been keeping that secret?

DRE: Mhm.

SYLVIA: So, Austin, I know like, the next sentence Dre is gonna say about it and you have no idea.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Alright. I'm ready.

DRE: Uh, anyway, what they do with them now, is they put special armor on them so they look like fighter jets.

AUSTIN: Fuck.

[SYLVIA laughs]

ALI: Oh...

DRE: Also the way that you fly a dragon is the dragon has to eat you. Uh...

ALI: *Oh...*

DRE: But the dragon likes you enough before the dragon eats you that you don't get digested.

SYLVIA: It's so weird.

AUSTIN: Uh... huh.

DRE: Uh-huh.

ALI: So anyway.

AUSTIN: Whoo. That's. You know? Uh...

DRE: It's pretty good though.

SYLVIA: I saw a— When I saw the trailer and it became a plane, I started screaming.

DRE: Yeah.

ALI: [laughs] Screaming with excitement or screaming from like a flight or fight response?

SYLVIA: Like both.

ALI: Okay, fair.

SYLVIA: Like it just overwhelmed me.

ALI: [laughs] Um...

AUSTIN: Alright. They— Oh wow, they just put the armor right on there, huh.

SYLVIA: Mhm.

AUSTIN: I mean, I guess it's good to have armor. Are their bodies not armored? They're dragons.

DRE: No, they just do that so that you can't tell it's a dragon.

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

DRE: It's more of like a stealth thing.

AUSTIN: Yo, that's a dope dragon.

SYLVIA: Yeah, it— The animation honestly looks really good in it.

AUSTIN: Yeah, this animation looks really great. Um, I wish I had more anime time in my life. It's so hard because anime is... a thing that like, mostly I watched subbed because that's mostly what's available.

ALI: Yeah.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And like, that's— it's hard to be like, "For the next thirty minutes to two hours, I'm just gonna watch a thing." Damn. You should uh...

SYLVIA: Ali, I think I interrupted you when you were trying mention something, by the way? Like awhile back? You— Okay.

ALI: On, nothing impor— I think I was gonna say, for anime that like, sounds bad but actually slaps, I've heard good things about the— the slime one? The like, "I entered an RPG and I'm a slime."

DRE: Hm.

ALI: Um, people seem to like it. People whose opinions I trust, so...

AUSTIN: Hm...

ALI: That's my [laughs] That's uh, anime hour at (laughing) Friends at the Table Patreon.

AUSTIN: You know, you know where to find us. you know what it is.

SYLVIA: I mean.

ALI: That's for joining us.

AUSTIN: Thank you for joining us. TipsAtTheTable@gmail.com if you like, subscribe and— and you know, like. What's the other thing they do?

ALI: Um...

DRE: Um, turn, hit the bell.

AUSTIN: Hit the bell.

ALI: Hit the bell.

AUSTIN: Reach for that brass ring. Uh, you can support us at [FriendsAtTheTable.cash](https://www.patreon.com/FriendsAtTheTable). You can listen to everything we do on this feed and enjoy it.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: I'm exhausted. Can you tell?

ALI: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

DRE: Oh wow, we've been doing this for awhile.

SYLVIA: Yeah!

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ALI: What I will say is, bookending all of the pitch that we did, for the other— for the start of the show.

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: At the end of the show I would say, this would be a good time, if like you have that extra money and you've been supporting us for a bit, you can raise that.

AUSTIN: Wow.

ALI: And see all of the other stuff that we do.

AUSTIN: That's true, that's true.

ALI: You could start getting those postcards. If you're able to, and you'd like to do that. Those are good.

AUSTIN: And you like to.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: They are good. Janine just finished one and it looks great.
(laughing) I'm so excited for people to see it.

ALI: [laughs] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So yeah, if you enjoy this, check that stuff out. And if you're listening to this— if you're listening to this and are like, "I wish I could've seen this live because I have to yell about my favorite anime which is... Uh... Yu Yu Hakusho."

ALI: Oh.

AUSTIN: Then consider going up to the Hacker level um, to join us during a livestream and yell at us about your favorite anime. That way we go, "Wow, yeah, that one is good. That is a good one." [ALI laughs] Um, alright, that's gonna do it for us. We should uh, time.is again. Time.was.

DRE: Uh, one last important note.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: I put the ending theme for Dragon Pilot in the patreon [AUSTIN: Uh-huh. I see it.] and I think that song fucking slaps.

AUSTIN: Alright.

ALI: Alright.

AUSTIN: What I'm gonna do is click on that Patreon button. I'll bring that up, so we can hear that slapping while we clap. Oh this song is dope. Alright, when we clapping?

DRE: Uh...

AUSTIN: Yo, this song slaps!

[DRE, ALI laugh]

SYLVIA: This is— This is France Gall is a really good singer that I like. I didn't know— Huh.

AUSTIN: Also it's doing a cool little dance.

DRE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Just like, very disaffected. Very just like, "Yeah, I guess I'll dance." Which is how I would be if I was a dragon pilot. What second are we clapping?

ALI: Oh, that's a good question. Uh, 30.

AUSTIN: 30. Wow, you really want to hear this song for another 20 seconds.

ALI: I do.

AUSTIN: Five second warning.

[ALI sorts]

[very synchronized clap]

AUSTIN: That was so good! That was a good clap, on my side.

DRE: That was a good clap.