

## Gathering Information 03: Character Playlists

Transcriber: robotchangeling

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### **Introduction and Playlists**

**Ali:** Hello, everyone, and welcome to Gathering Information: a behind-the-scenes podcast about setting the table for Friends at the Table. Today is a beautiful rainy morning, rainy afternoon, [**Dre:** Mm-hmm.] [Ali laughs] and I'm joined by my friends, Janine Hawkins?

**Janine:** Hi. I'm Janine Hawkins. I'm one of Ali's friends. [Ali and Dre laugh]

**Ali:** And Andrew Lee Swan.

**Dre:** Hey. I'm here to tell you that one accurate measurement is worth a thousand expert opinions.

**Ali:** Yeah. Thank you, [**Dre:** Mm-hmm.] Andrew Lee Swan via Grace Hopper.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Ali:** [laughs] I think Grace was cooking with this one, though.

**Dre:** Oh, yeah.

**Ali:** Anyway, today we are here to talk about character playlists and to definitely not

have a whole episode that's sort of an apology to Dre for the last one.

**Dre:** What? What?

**Ali:** [laughs] I was editing it back, and I was like, "Wow, Dre really couldn't say shit during this episode, and that was kind of fucked up." [laughs]

**Dre:** Ah, oh, that's fine. Listen, that's what we do on this show.

**Ali:** [laughs] So, I have finally— interesting thing for listeners at home, that it is May 20, but because I produce Friends at the Table and know when the episodes release have scheduled this to record exactly to line up with what we've recorded versus what we've released. So there's no hidden information games being played here today, and we're just here to talk about what's going on in Friends at the Table, which is a bunch of normal stuff, it seems like.

**Janine:** So we're agreeing not to talk about the secret key? Okay.

**Dre:** Mm.

**Ali:** [mystified] The secret key?

**Dre:** Secret key alert.

**Janine:** The secret key? Remember the secret key that we said we wouldn't talk about? Ali, are you believing [Ali: Yes.] what I'm saying right now?

**Ali:** [laughs] I was confused! I was like, "Is there a really...? Could there be a key?"

**Janine:** No! [laughs]

**Dre:** No, you could, as bad as I am at remembering every minute detail of what we record, you could absolutely tell me there's a secret key, and I'd be like, "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, I remember that. Yeah, I'll remember via context clues as we keep recording here." [Ali laughs]

**Janine:** There's no secret key.

**Dre:** Okay.

**Ali:** There might be. There could be in the future, so keep it in mind.

**Janine:** Gotta listen to find out! [Ali laughs] Listen to Friends at the Table [Dre: Yeah.] to find out about the secret key!

**Dre:** Uh, a key is a dream your heart makes.

**Ali:** Mm. Yeah, disneyland.com to go to the *Star Wars* world. [Dre laughs quietly] Anyway. So, this is a little bit of a weird one, because I do have, like, two completely separate topics that I want to talk about, which is the first is we all made character playlists, and I'm so curious about— because I know when I make a character playlist, like, what is important to me, for instance. [laughs]

**Janine:** Uh huh.

**Ali:** And I really want to know, like, do you guys go vibes-based? Are you looking at lyrics? Is this just like the sort of gym-style, like, oh, this is just gonna get me in the mood for a specific type of thing? Let's talk. Where are your heads at? [Janine laughs]

**Dre:** Uh, I'm halvsies.

**Ali:** Okay.

**Dre:** About half of my playlist is vibes-based, and half is, like, lyrics meaning based.

**Ali:** Okay. I will have the playlists linked in the episode descriptions, and obviously y'all can tweet them out or whatever. I don't know that this is, like, hidden information or exclusive in any way.

**Janine:** No. For me, it's been different from season to season. Like, I've been doing playlists since I started on the show, so I've done, like, Adaire through to Thisbe, and it depends. Like, I think Adaire was more lyrics-based. Signet was more vibes-based, very heavily vibes-based, really. [Ali chuckles] Es, I think, has been sort of a mix. And Thisbe, sort of by necessity, has been vibes-based, because Thisbe's playlist only has three or

four songs with lyrics in it, and I've been very deliberate about when I pick and place those.

**Ali:** Ooh.

**Janine:** Like, in terms of...you know, because it's a playlist that sort of I add a song or two after every, like, arc.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** And the very first song with any lyrics I added after the Crysanth Kesh and Valence situation, [Ali: Sure.] and the only lyric in that song is "apart." [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** Sure.

**Janine:** And then—

**Ali:** Wow!

**Janine:** Yeah, so. And then after that, there's, like...when's the next one with lyrics? The next one with lyrics I think just has, like, chanting? Like, spooky chanting?

**Ali:** Okay.

**Janine:** Yeah, so it's— I've been very careful and deliberate about that. There's a solid...like, the first half of that playlist fully is just electronic music without lyrics.

**Ali:** That seems fitting. I'm glad to hear that. That's... [Ali and Janine laugh]

**Janine:** Well, I mean, that's the...that's like the thing, right? Like, if I'm exploring a character who wouldn't see themselves as a character, the lyrics are, like, when Thisbe's having these moments of, like, self-awareness, I guess?

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Ali:** What I like about your playlist is that you have two different songs called “Ghost in The Shell.” Is this just a remix of the same song?

**Dre:** Oh.

**Janine:** Yes, yeah. [Ali laughs] That’s a motif is I started with “Ghost in The Shell”, and I was like, because there’s so many remixes of this song, and I really like this song, and I really think it’s a solid Thisbe song, it’s gonna be like a motif I return to in the playlist. So, it starts the playlist, and then the second remix is the season break.

**Ali:** Mm.

**Janine:** And then everything after that is the second season, and you know, when I end it, I’m gonna cap it off— I have another remix picked out that I’m probably gonna cap it off with, unless the vibe changes significantly, [**Dre:** Mm.] and then I’ll find a different remix. But I like sort of returning to that motif with her.

**Ali:** That’s wonderful. So, I... [laughs] I’ve also made a bunch of them for— since the start of the show, basically, and then what I’ll do is I’ll make them for different seasons. So, for instance, I have a playlist that’s called, like, “Hella 2018” or whatever, which is I think only about Spring.

**Janine:** That’s my favorite “Ghost in The Shell” song remix. [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** Ghost in The Shell, brackets, Hella 2018.

**Ali:** And for Broun, I had a— well, Broun is a little weird, because I—

**Dre:** I’m sorry, who?

**Ali:** Broun from PARTIZAN.

**Dre:** Oh, okay, yeah, yeah, yeah, sure.

**Ali:** As opposed to Brnine from PALISADE.

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

**Ali:** Who are two different characters, [Ali and Janine laugh] as far as I'm concerned. But when I was initially making Broun, I was in a weird place, because I was like, we'd just finished Spring, right? And I was like, "I'm not gonna be able to make a character as good as Hella again. [laughs] Like, I don't know why we keep doing this. This is gonna go really poorly."

**Janine:** [sympathetically] Ali.

**Ali:** Yeah, I was in a place. So, I was like trying to go back to my roots, so to speak, in terms of just, like, making an OC who was ridiculous, and one of my *Star Wars* characters is named Helena, after the My Chemical Romance song.

**Dre:** Mm.

**Janine:** Ah.

**Ali:** So, I listened to a ton of *Three Cheers for Sweet Revenge*, which is why Broun's mech was named after a—

**Janine:** Right.

**Ali:** After that album, actually; it's just the Three Cheers. And I would just listen to that album to, like, get into the zone, but then— [laughs]

**Janine:** God bless you, Ali.

**Ali:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** The purest and truest among us.

**Ali:** Yeah. Well, I appreciate that. And I made a Broun playlist, like sort of at the beginning, like, "Here's the vibes." And then when this— I think around the time Valence died and the season ended, I added a couple more songs, which I usually don't do, and

I actually like put in the title of this playlist, like, “post-Kingdom spoilers,” because that’s... [Janine and Ali laugh] In case like a fan finds it and, you know, is listening to it. Just know that it gets real at the end of this playlist or whatever. And then, we had—

**Janine:** Knock knock. Who’s there? Feelings.

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** Uh huh. And then Brnine was a specific thing, because I really tried to use music as, like, a way to figure out the difference between them in PARTIZAN versus them in PALISADE, and the way that I’ve described it is that they’ve gone from being a My Chemical Romance character to a Radiohead character, and that is a significant, like, vibes downgrade. [laughs quietly]

**Janine:** Yeah. I don’t know about downgrade. [Ali laughs] It’s a shift. It’s a vibe shift. It’s a...

**Ali:** It is—

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Janine:** It’s a lateral vibe shift.

**Ali:** It is an incredible shift, yeah. And I...to the point where there’s a weapon that Brnine has now, that they haven’t used yet, that I described to Austin like: when I use this, I want it to feel like the My Chemical Romance soundtrack is playing again. [all laugh] So. So, look forward to that.

**Janine:** Oh, I am! That’s the secret key!

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** You secret keyed me, now.

**Ali:** Wow. Yeah, true.

**Janine:** I gotta look for that now.

**Ali:** [laughs] You'll know what it is. It's a disgusting...it's a disgusting gun.

**Janine:** Oh.

**Ali:** Dre, how about you? How are you feeling with Figure and also your— how was the Thrandir playlist if you had one?

**Dre:** Oh, boy. I did, but that is...about like, I don't know, a year or two ago, I swapped over from Spotify to Apple Music.

**Ali:** I gotta do that.

**Dre:** And I think there are— like, there are ways to import all your Spotify playlists into Apple Music, [**Janine:** Yeah.] and I have not done them. [Ali laughs quietly] So yes, there are Thrandir playlists. I do not remember what is on them, and I don't know if I can get to them.

**Janine:** There is a service that will, like, import a small selection for free from Spotify to Amazon or Apple.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** Oh.

**Janine:** But also, you can— they have a thing that's like a subscription, where if you keep it, it'll keep your playlists synced across things, but if you just want to, like, one-time batch import, it's like three bucks.

**Dre:** Okay, that's fine.

**Janine:** Yeah, it's worth looking into. It's not as bad as it seems.

**Ali:** I feel like I vaguely remember your Thrandir playlist as being, like, really



bluegrassy?

**Dre:** Yes, for sure. [Ali laughs] Bluegrassy and sad are the things I'm remembering about Throndir.

**Ali:** Sure, sure, sure, sure. Yeah, that fits.

**Dre:** [laughs] That's the vibe, yeah.

**Ali:** Uh huh. How about Figure? How's Figure doing?

**Dre:** Well, listen: Figure is now doing much better than where they were. So, Figure's playlist is mostly metal with—

**Ali:** Okay.

**Janine:** I was surprised at how goth Figure's playlist— [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** Why?

**Janine:** Can I say— so, I like skipped— I don't want to say “skipped through the playlist,” but I like listened to snippets, because especially with Apple Music, I don't have Apple Music, so I had to listen to the clips.

**Dre:** Yeah, sure, fair.

**Janine:** Figure's playlist: super goth. And Brnine's playlist, to me, was very *Cowboy Bebop* but take out the jazz.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Dre:** Mm, okay.

**Janine:** Which, you know, both of those made sense to me, but they did also take me by surprise.

**Ali:** [laughs] Those are accurate vibes, I think.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Ali:** I think me and Dre did a good job representing our characters, and I think Janine did a good job representing our playlists.

**Janine:** Thank you. [Ali laughs quietly]

**Dre:** Yeah, so like, the two main albums that are showing up on my playlist are the newest Ghost album, *IMPERA*, and those are more of like vibesy songs than anything, with like some lyrical meaning. The band themselves says that that's an album about, like, the rise and fall of empire [Ali: Oh.] and like the bad things that empires do, which is like, okay, yeah, that's *PARTIZAN*, right?

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Dre:** That's *PARTIZAN* appropriate. And then the other one that has multiple tracks on it is *Liminal Rite* by Kardashev, which I'm just gonna read this snippet from their website, which is about what this album is about. It's basically a story about an old man who is developing dementia that goes to his childhood home and is, like, very very sad as is trying to basically escape the sadness of his current life by reimmersing himself in the past and nostalgia but failing to do so, and then at the end realizing like, "Oh, I just don't have a future, and I don't have a past. This sucks." [Ali laughs quietly] You know, this is what it does.

**Janine:** Oh my god. Knock knock.

**Dre:** Yeah. Yeah, knock knock. And at the end, he takes his own like. And their explanation for this, the final paragraph is: this album "does not tell the story of suicide and despair as a means to be macabre for its own sake. Rather, it is a call to find a sense of self that utilizes the best parts of our past to move forward. It is a reminder that regret is only valuable if learned from and left behind." And I was like, yeah, that's

Figure.

**Ali:** Aww.

**Dre:** That's Figure in Bismuth this season, 100%.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Dre:** That's my boy right there.

**Ali:** [laughs] Figure's going through it.

**Dre:** Yeah, but—

**Ali:** You want to talk about that a little bit? [laughs]

## **Character Talk [0:14:46]**

**Dre:** Yeah, I feel like if we're doing the inverse bell curve of Figure's emotions, we have hit the bottom, and we are starting to go back up again.

**Ali:** Yeah, I will say, like, the downtime we just had and some of the discussion around, like, "what should we do next?" has been some of the funnest in the game so far.

[laughs] Like, of the podcast, but also of this season, in terms of everybody— the fact that you came into that downtime with the idea of, like, "So, Figure's going to have this very specific trauma response, and that's what my scene is gonna be," and then every character just rallied around them to be like, "Bro, are you all right?"

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** [laughs] Like, "Yo, are you, like, okay?" and like, now that's the team goal, so to speak. It's been really...people— [laughs] I think—

**Janine:** I think it's easy to rally around a cause where it's like, on the one hand, someone that you hang out with is doing bad. On the other hand, they're doing bad because of a person that everyone doesn't like.

**Dre:** Sure.

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Janine:** That kind of is gonna get everyone on board one way or another, right? [Ali and Janine laugh]

**Dre:** Mm-hmm!

**Ali:** I also think— especially because it's happening so early in the season. I think one of the things with PARTIZAN— and PARTIZAN was fantastic, and Sangfielle was also a little bit like this, but with PARTIZAN it sort of felt like none of the characters...not that they didn't like each other, but there was definitely, like, because of the situations that they were in, there was a lot of self interest. So, to immediately be able to shift that really early in the season and sort of be like, "No, we're sort of a team, and we're gonna recognize when one of us is not doing too hot and, like, try to find a solution for this," is like...it feels like a difference from what we've been doing for the past two-ish years. I guess, Dre, I'll let you speak a little bit here, because we... [laughs] There was a bunch of questions that I asked you last time about, in terms of like, how Figure feels about themselves versus the team and how they're relating with people on the *Blue Channel* versus, like, Clem and things like that, and like, how are you— this is your time to be like, "Figure's in a new place in this moment. [Ali and Dre laugh] Here's where I was coming from, and here's where I am right now."

**Dre:** Yeah. I mean, I think...so, Figure very much was seeing themselves through a lens of, like, "I am a tool, and so therefore my value comes from my ability to be useful and productive in the way that I am supposed to be."

**Janine:** Huge mood.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Dre:** Huge mood, right? And I think where that really started to really shift internally in a meaningful way was somewhat of the conversations with the whole crew but mainly the conversation with Thisbe, because I think the way that, like, Figure would internalize the

rest of the crew being supportive is that, like, “Oh, okay, these people are supportive of me, and they do like me, but I think they mostly like me because I am useful, and they want to help me so that I can continue to be useful in a way that’s not, like, inhibited because of my connection to the Witch in Glass.” Whereas the conversation with Thisbe was much more directly of, “Oh, no, you don’t deserve better because, like, we want you to be *our* good tool. You deserve better because you’re not a tool, you’re a person, and that’s just what people deserve.”

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Dre:** And Thisbe being very direct about that, I think, doesn’t allow Figure to have the space to misconstrue that.

**Janine:** Yeah. The seed for that conversation very much happened when you had Figure pull Thisbe aside to be like, “Hey, is there something I need to know about Brnine? Because the, you know... [Ali laughs] Is some sort of weird thing going on? Is Brnine not trustworthy? Like, what’s the angle?” and like, for Thisbe, that was like a very, you know, nothing, no-sell kind of interaction, but for me, I was like: oh, this has to be the thing. This has to— you know, this makes sense. This is Figure— you know, Figure has a problematic leader in their life already and is trying to suss out, like, “Do I have two now?” [Dre laughs]

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** And like—

**Dre:** Is Brnine Clementine Kesh? Discuss. [Ali laughs]

**Janine:** And like, it made—

**Ali:** Those discussions have been happening. [Dre and Ali laugh]

**Janine:** But like, it made perfect sense of like, this has to be the thing, right? This has to be the hook that I’ve been looking for in terms of, like, getting Thisbe involved in other people’s lives and not just in her own bubble waiting to respond. Because like, yeah,

that's...feeling like a tool who is just there to be of use, obviously, is also kind of her deal.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** But in a different way, in a way where she's, like, cool with it, but no one else is? [Ali laughs quietly] And that has to also be worked through, but like, yeah, I...that was— that conversation was such an important, like, “Oh, I see. I see now. I'm seeing with, like, extra clarity.”

**Ali:** I'm interested in your perspective here, because I feel like this was your opportunity to, like, show a different side of Thisbe that I feel like you've been sort of looking for the opportunity to. I guess this isn't a spoiler; I'm allowed to say this on the show, but like, Austin recently was like, “Hey, everybody. Let me just know something that you're interested in for this next mission.”

**Janine:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** And your answer was, like, “I want Thisbe to show more of like a nurturing side.” And then we had that downtime where [laughs] it feels like the bridge started to happen there, even if it wasn't Austin giving you, like, a cool NPC to take care of or whatever.

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Ali:** So, I guess I— part of the question is like: how long has this been on your head, in terms of like, “Oh, this is a part of Thisbe I haven't had the opportunity to really explore,” or, you know, whatever else?

**Janine:** Yeah, it's like...I think it's part of bringing Thisbe back for a second season is, like, you know, from the start, I've been really adamant about, like, I don't want to tell the Data story. I don't want to tell the story where the robot becomes convincingly more, quote, unquote, “human.” I don't want to tell the story where, like, you know, Thisbe gets, quote, unquote, “fixed” in that way. That's not interesting and, in a lot of ways, is really toxic and gross, and I just don't want anything to do with it. But, like, I also don't want that to be cutting off the idea that character growth is possible, right? Like, those

are two separate things, to me.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** You can have a character grow without doing that stuff. You know, I've pledged, like, Thisbe's never gonna get a boyfriend or a girlfriend. Like, a lot of stuff's just— that's not gonna happen with Thisbe. But what I do really want to focus on is Thisbe's, like, self understanding? I want to send Thisbe to get some CBT.

**Ali:** Sure.

**Janine:** I just want her to be, like, aware of her own thought processes and stuff, and her being nurturing is part of that, because I want her to...I want her to, like, you know, recognize the things that she's good at and that she enjoys and recognize enjoyment as enjoyment and not mandate, right? And I want her to recognize that she is and has always been making choices, that it's not— like, she's not going to newly start making choices. She's going to newly start recognizing that she's making choices and why she's making those choices. And that's the big thing there, is like, she's not just meant to cultivate; she enjoys it. Like, maybe she enjoys it because she's built to enjoy it, but whatever; she enjoys it.

So I wanted to give her more opportunities for that, versus just like, the stuff that we've seen a lot of, which is her smashing stuff up, [Ali laughs quietly] because she doesn't enjoy that, right? She does it because she has to and because she's good at it, but it's not, like, it's not what gives her purpose, and like, purpose can be a lot of things, but yeah, it's...that's like the big important thing that I want to underscore this season with her is just, like, you know... [sighs] You can call someone operant, but what does it mean to be an operant? Like, an operant is, in Thisbe's mind, means a certain thing, but in reality it really just means, like, someone I respect and will listen to, and I want her to come to a point where she, like, understands that and understands motivating factors like that, and I think...I'm hoping the stuff with Figure will shake out in a way where it's like, it'll feel good and organic to get there, you know?

**Ali:** Mm-hmm. Dre, I'm curious for you, now that you can...now that we're sort of on the

road and it doesn't feel like you have to keep from saying that, like, there's— [Dre laughs] you have a long term goal with Figure in sort of getting away from Clem, like, what that— how you feel about how the start of it sort of shook out. And in the same way that Janine was saying, in like, “This is what I would like Thisbe to learn, and I hope that we get there,” what is your sort of, like, season goal in that way?

**Dre:** Yeah. Um, I think ultimately the season goal for Figure is for Figure's arc to be, like, an example of and an exploration of what it means to heal from trauma in a genuine way that also doesn't force you to, like, forgive people who haven't earned forgiveness.

**Ali:** Mm.

**Janine:** Mm.

**Dre:** Like, how do you move forward from trauma and let it go in a way that isn't just, like, fake surface-level forgiveness, I guess? And that's very much inspired by, like, my own thoughts as therapist and my own work with therapist of working with people who have been traumatized by other people and who, to me, part of their kind of...I don't want to say “problem,” because I don't believe in saying that is a problem, right? But like, part of their process that they get stuck in is this very much idea that we have as a society of like, that's fed to us over and over again, of like, “Well, in order to heal, you've gotta forgive. You've gotta forgive to be able to let it go,” and that's bullshit. That is not true. You don't have to give anyone forgiveness who hasn't earned it in order to, like, have peace. That's just a lie that is in the best interest of a lot of people who have power to make you feel like you have to forgive them for the awful shit they do to you.

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Dre:** And that's, like, you know, that's power in terms of, like, the way that parents have power over their children or like the way a boss has power over their workers or the way politicians have power over the country. That's power in a lot of different levels.



**Janine:** Or society in general, the like...

**Dre:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Janine:** “Don’t speak ill of the dead,” even if it’s a **[Dre: Mm-hmm.]** horrible person who did horrible things. **[Ali laughs quietly]**

**Dre:** Sure, yeah. Like, I— yeah, you know, like, **[sarcastic]** sure, Antonin Scalia said a bunch of people don’t deserve to be treated as humans, but he’s dead now, and so you can’t say that. That’s too mean.

**Ali:** **[sighs]** Yeah. Yeah. It’s a nightmare.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Ali:** And it’s fun to explore. That’s...I really do like Figure this season, and I’m like—

**Dre:** Me too. **[Ali giggles]** No, like, I say that genuinely, because I think, like...I think I said this on another podcast. I can’t remember if it’s one that we ended up releasing or not. I was not very happy with the way that, like, I handled Figure in PALISADE, just because I felt rushed into making him, and it just felt like he was like this weird bridge character, and I had no idea what to do with him with the time we had left.

**Janine:** You had so little time to...

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Yeah, totally.

**Janine:** You know?

**Dre:** And so I’m glad that I get to do something with him that is intentional and, like, is important to me as a person as well.

**Ali:** Yeah, I guess— that’s really interesting, because I definitely...because I...I’ve been with Broun-slash-Brnine the whole time, so I’ve sort of had the way to think about that, and I feel like Brnine was one of the first characters that I felt like I was exploring

something that was both sort of personal and like interesting to me...not the first time, but like, [laughs] that was both personal and interesting for me to put in a story and, like, see how that is worked through. With Broun specifically, I had been living in California at the time, taking care of my grandmother, and sort of knowing that, like, it was a situation that was going to be temporary. I did not know how long it was gonna happen, and you know, I had responsibilities there, but also this sort of, like, the bad impulse that I had to feel like I wasn't allowed to make roots there or like, you know, settle in that way, because the thing I wanted to do was just do what I was doing and then leave. So, Brnine specifically being a character whose drive was, like, "get out," or whatever and who was, like, super cynical and had all of these ideas in terms of like, "Oh, I can't...I can't believe in, like, a collective action or that there would be anyone in power who would really take care of me, because, you know, the only thing people do is sort of take advantage of each other, and that's what I have to do too."

**Janine:** Ah, yes, the Adaire mindset. We love it. [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** Get yours.

**Ali:** [laughs] So, that's why— I mean, obviously the Valence stuff is integral to Broun at this point, but to have a character who was able to sort of reach out to that person and, like, show them kindness as well as giving Broun the sort of opportunity to see, like, oh, that's the thing, right? I'm in the middle— I'm standing in the middle of this, like, huge revolutionary effort, and it's working, and I just have to believe in it, and I can do small things to help people, and you know, even if I won't know these people for my entire life or if I have to say goodbye to them, doesn't mean that, like, the connections that I'm making aren't genuine. That's... [laughs] That was fun to, like, put on the screen, so to speak.

**Janine:** I think it's interesting that we, like, all kind of made characters that kind of have been useful in working through some things, or at least it seems that way from sort of [laughs quietly] what we've all just said. I...because that's the thing that I've always

done, and it's a thing that, like, to the point that I talk about my characters with my therapist, and she's like a big— [laughs] she's a big fan of it, in fact, because she's like, "Yeah, no, this is a good way to work through [Ali laughs quietly] the damaging sort of consequences of some of these attitudes and how you—" you know, and like, that's...so that's really familiar to me, of just like, you know, taking this idea that you find yourself consciously or subconsciously struggling with, and like, you put it into a little container, and then you see what happens to that container, right? You see where that takes them and what the end result is, and like, I can't say that it's *because* of Thisbe that this has happened, but I can say that my attitude towards work and what I think works says about me has changed a lot since I started playing Thisbe.

**Dre:** Mm.

**Janine:** I'm sure the medication also helps with that, but like... [all laugh] You know. I have a much healthier approach to work now than I used to, and I don't identify as much with those feelings— I still identify with them but not as much, which has in turn given me, I think, a little more room to be like, "Well, what does it look like when Thisbe starts to get past these things?"

## **Back to Playlists [0:33:43]**

**Ali:** I guess since we...I don't want to say that we're done talking about this, but since we've kind of dug into the relationship stuff a little bit, we can dig back into the music part of this. [laughs] In terms of...I don't want to feel like I don't have anything to say, but I'm just head empty, because I've had a very long week. [laughs]

**Dre:** Word!

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Janine:** We could pick our favorite tracks.

**Ali:** Sure, yeah. Yeah, what's the—

**Janine:** Return to the basic, [Ali laughs] like: what's everyone's favorite song on their

playlist or the one that's like [**Dre:** Ooh.] if you couldn't link a playlist, if you could only link the song.

**Dre:** Let's see. Um...

**Ali:** Yeah, what are, like, the secret characterization things that are also hiding in your playlist?

**Dre:** I mean, I got anime songs in here, because it's Friends at the Table.

**Janine:** You sure do.

**Ali:** You have anime songs in here?

**Dre:** Yeah, I got anime songs in here. What? I've got a song from Hathaway Flash. I forget what anime this— Aimer? Is that how you pronounce that person's name? I'm pretty sure this was also in an anime.

**Ali:** There are anime songs in here. I saw the Babymetal and was like, "Okay, that makes sense. It's metal." [laughs quietly]

**Dre:** Yeah. And like, Babymetal is anime adjacent, right?

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Dre:** It's not directly an anime, but it's anime adjacent. Um...man. What would be—?

**Janine:** I got gamer tracks on mine, so we're...

**Dre:** Oh, sick.

**Ali:** Ooh.

**Janine:** Ali's got K-pop.

**Ali:** Yep.

**Janine:** Dre's got anime. I've got gamer stuff. I've got a song in here from

Heavensward, of course. [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** Oh, hell yeah. Let's go!

**Janine:** I got a song in here from *Remember Me*.

**Ali:** Oh, good.

**Janine:** A lot of the Heavensward music I really like for Thisbe, because there is a good mix of, like, high fancy cool old-timey stuff and then really machiney electronic stuff, which to me is, like, that's the ideal Thisbe song. I think the best songs in this playlist all have that sort of mix, because I want it to feel like...she is a robot, but also she's from a long time ago, you know?

**Ali:** Oh.

**Janine:** There is sort of an arcaneness that, like, is sort of doubled this season, for obvious reasons. So the best songs in here, I think, have a little bit of that, like, grandness, that old grandness.

**Ali:** [laughs quietly] Thisbe is a grand character. That's true. [Dre laughs]

**Janine:** Mm.

**Ali:** This is true. Yeah, with Brnine's playlist, I...a lot of my thought was like, a lot of these are gonna be songs people listen to and think that they're Broun/Valence songs, but they're really Broun/Brnine songs. [laughs]

**Dre:** Mm. Sure.

**Ali:** Because I, you know, the relationship that Broun/Brnine has with themselves is, I think, something I do have to dig into in not a funny "I'm not that person. What are you talking about?" sort of way, at some point in this season.

**Janine:** Also, I think you're missing the main read that's gonna happen which is people listening to the songs and thinking that they are Brnine/Gucci songs. [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** Mm.

**Ali:** Can I just say...

**Dre:** I mean, maybe they were.

**Ali:** Brnine/Gucci was a shock to me this season.

**Janine:** Is there a ship name for that? Is it...it can't be—

**Dre:** Brucci.

**Janine:** Is it Brucci or is it Grnine?

**Ali:** It can't be Brucci.

**Dre:** Oh, Grime is good! Grnine.

**Ali:** Grnine? Oh, sure. Yeah, because—

**Dre:** I like Grime better, though, even though your name's not Brime. I like Grime as a ship name. [Janine and Ali laugh]

**Ali:** Because you can't do Brucci, and you can't do what would be...yeah, it would be Grnine.

**Dre:** Grucci.

**Ali:** That's such a— you know what? Sometimes you start— you talk to somebody on the phone, I guess? [laughs] You play a scene where two characters are talking on the phone?

**Janine:** Oh, yeah. [laughs] That's how it starts.

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

**Ali:** And things— you know, the vibes are just there. Are just there. I'm gonna— okay, I'm gonna say— this is a hot sclusie. This is a real “thing that I wouldn't say into a

microphone” sort of thing, but I secretly, before we started PALISADE, thought that because Jesset City—

**Janine:** Gucci had the secret key? Me too.

**Ali:** [laughs] Yes.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** Because Jesset was sort of like the president of Millennium Break or whatever, the last that we saw him or whatever else, I thought that the way the structure was sort of gonna work was that Jesset was gonna be in the Gucci position and sort of be like our operations manager, so to speak, right? The way that Gucci is like, “Here’s your mission. Go do it.”

**Janine:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** And from doing that and from knowing that they had a bunch of, like, unsettled feelings, and this was also sort of something I didn’t tell Austin until really late. I was just like, “I’m going to, through force of sheer will, create a...” um...oh my god, what were their names in Twilight Mirage? It was Primary and...

**Janine:** And Satellite, right?

**Ali:** And Satellite. And I was like, “Just through, like, the fact that Jesset probably isn’t gonna be onscreen a lot but is gonna be someone that I communicate with, I’m going to create this relationship again between the two of them,” and instead what I do is talk to Gucci a lot. [laughs]

**Janine:** Yeah, you should have told Austin that sooner. [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** Too late now!

**Janine:** He was very helpful and complicit with the Dyre Owed situation, [laughs quietly] so like, you gotta just loop him in.

**Ali:** Yeah. Well, see, this is the situation that I'm in now, which is that I've created that relationship but accidentally, through a different means of communicating to someone on the phone. [Janine laughs] So, we'll...we'll see how that goes towards the end of the season. I don't have any grand plans. I don't know that I'm, like, a huge Brnine/Gucci shipper right now.

**Dre:** Grucci.

**Janine:** Grnine. You a Grniner? You Grninin'?

**Ali:** [laughs] Sure.

**Dre:** Oh, man. I love that Clipse song. [Ali laughs] "Grnining!"

**Ali:** Yeah. Oh my god.

**Dre:** [imitates song]

**Ali:** Whose playlist is that song going on?

**Dre:** Oh boy. That's a Bluff City playlist.

**Ali:** Yeah. But yeah, I will say that I'm keeping my options open. I'm a fan of the vibe so far. I've been doing this thing really funnily is that I keep holding off the conversation that they obviously need to have.

### ***Love is Blind* Talk [0:40:56]**

**Ali:** [laughs quietly] It sounds like you're talking about *Love is Blind* to me. [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. You know, it just hasn't been the same since Brnine and Gucci, you know, got out of the pods.

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Wait.



**Dre:** You know, the chemistry just isn't there anymore.

**Ali:** I don't—

**Janine:** I heard that Gucci was gonna propose to Brnine but then Brnine fell asleep on the couch in the pod.

**Dre:** Mm.

**Janine:** And then Gucci was like, "I can't do this."

**Ali:** [crosstalk] What are you talking about? [laughs] What are the two of you talking about?

**Dre:** I heard that Brnine was really feeling, like, somebody else in the pod—

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

**Dre:** But then they had to leave the show.

**Janine:** Yeah, yeah.

**Dre:** And so has just kind of settled for Gucci.

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Ali:** What are you—

**Dre:** Ali, have you watched *Love is Blind*?

**Ali:** No. Please tell me everything about this.

**Dre:** Oh my God! It is—

**Ali:** What are you talking about? [laughs quietly]

**Dre:** Hey, I—

**Janine:** I haven't watched it. I've only watched people respond to it. [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** Oh. I genuinely hate this show.

**Ali:** Okay.

**Janine:** It's awful. It's a horrible thing to do to people.

**Dre:** But the premise— yeah, that's why I really— like, I don't like most of the reality romance shows, not because I think they're, like, dumb and I'm too smart for it, but because I'm poisoned by making my job be about, like, helping people learn healthy relationship dynamics.

**Janine:** You have gotta—

**Dre:** And I just see all the ways in which those shows, [**Janine:** Yeah.] like, intentionally try to sabotage people being happy with each other.

**Janine:** So, yes, the reason— I don't watch those shows, but I watch reactions to them, because I watch— there's a channel on YouTube called Psychology in Seattle.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** And there is a psychologist, and he specializes in, like, relationships and families and things like that, named Dr. Kirk Honda, and he watches shows like *Love is Blind*, and he sort of breaks down, like— one, he's very good about being like, "Hey, it's a reality show. This is often very scripted. Like, we don't know— I'm not responding to these people. I'm not diagnosing these people. These are characters that are being edited and shown to us, but I'm using it as a jumping off point for discussing, like, attachment theory [**Dre:** Mm-hmm.] and Dr. Gottman relationship stuff and all of this." And like, he will go in on— he'll like watch *Love is Blind* and be like, "Okay, so, here we have someone who's, like, really— they seem like they have very insecure attachment. They're very preoccupied. They're very— you know, here's the way that this can manifest. Here's the ways that this can— you can sabotage your relationships by trying to keep them. You just push people away."

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** And, like, goes into it. That, I think, is a really— is a good, helpful lens to watch those shows through. I don't think I could just watch them straight, because it is [**Dre:** Yeah.] so much just like...sometimes I just think it's straight-up unethical that they are, like, putting people in these situations.

**Dre:** Oh, it absolutely it.

**Janine:** Like, in *Love is Blind*, they apparently, like, basically almost never feed them. They just pump 'em full of alcohol all day.

**Ali:** Whaaat?

**Dre:** Ugh, god.

**Janine:** And then just, like, put them in these pods, and like—

**Dre:** I've heard that about, like, the *Bachelor* shows too.

**Janine:** Yeah, yeah.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Janine:** So, it's like...it's messed up.

**Dre:** So, Ali, the premise of *Love is Blind* is that you get a bunch of people who are all traditionally attractive anyway [**Janine:** Mm-hmm.] in gender segregated housing, and they cannot see each other. They can only date by talking to each other, like, through intercoms in rooms and stuff.

**Ali:** Mm.

**Dre:** And they don't get to meet and see each other until they have decided to get engaged and propose.

**Janine:** Except, at the start of the show, they're all in a big room together, but none of them get to talk.

**Dre:** Oh, is that true? Okay.

**Janine:** At least with this season, they all got to see, like...I find it weird, because it's like they're showing each group, like, "Okay, don't worry. Everyone is basically hot here. Just, it's fine," [Ali scoff-laugh] and then they put them in the pods. Like...

**Dre:** Yeah. Yeah. And, to be clear, like, everyone is hot there, right?

**Janine:** Mm-hmm. Yeah.

**Dre:** Like, everyone is very traditionally attractive and young, and...

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Dre:** But yeah, so it's— and of course, like, it's not like, "Well, you get to talk for as long as you want," it's like, "All right, everybody's gotta get this figured out in like two weeks, so..."

**Janine:** And if you don't, you're off the show, because we're only gonna keep following the people who agree [**Dre:** Yeah.] and then who do the, like, living together bit and all that.

**Dre:** Also, it's hosted by Nick Lachey and his wife, who are like [**Janine:** Yeah.] relationship terrorist.

**Janine:** They host, like, all of the dating shows on Netflix now.

**Dre:** Yeah, yeah. But anyway, after they get— after they get engaged and meet and see each other for the first time, [**Ali:** Okay.] then they go to like a resort island somewhere, and that's usually where things start predictably falling apart, because it's like, "Oh my god, I have to be around this person now? Eww."

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Dre:** And then, after that, they have to go, quote, unquote, live in the real world, where they basically, like, move in together. And I think...I think everybody who is in the pods

are, like, all from the same general area, so at least nobody's moving, like, across the country to move in with each other.

**Ali:** Mm.

**Dre:** Like, I think one season was like, everybody was from Chicago or something like that. But yeah, it's just bad. It's bad. It's a bad way to do relationships.

**Ali:** Uh...uh...uh...

**Dre:** Oh, and then it ends with— sorry, it ends with them getting married at the altar and then the person either saying, like, “Yes, I'm going to marry you,” or “No, I won't,” in front of everybody.

**Ali:** Okay. I've seen clips of that, yeah. Anyway. Perhaps going back to the topic we—  
[laughs]

**Dre:** Yeah, sure.

**Janine:** Perhaps.

**Dre:** Anyway, uh, Friends at the Table dating reality show podcast, \$40,000 Patreon goal. There we go.

**Ali:** No. No.

**Dre:** No?

**Ali:** For \$40,000, let me watch the New Orleans season of *The Real World* that The Miz was in again, thank you. [Dre laughs]

**Janine:** Oh my god.

**Ali:** That's all I'm doing.

**Dre:** Was he *Real World*? I thought he was *Road Rules*. Was he *Real World*?

**Ali:** Oh. Ooh, he might have been both.

**Dre:** Maybe he—

**Ali:** I thought he was *Real World*.

**Dre:** He was probably on *The Challenge* constantly, so.

**Ali:** Ohhh, sure, sure, sure. Yeah, yeah, that makes sense. That makes sense. That makes sense.

**Dre:** Yeah.

## **Songs again [0:46:58]**

**Ali:** Anyway, Dre, we didn't get the answer from you. [Ali and Janine laugh] We got one from Janine. In terms of like, what's the...what's the, like, one secret good track on your playlist that's like...

**Dre:** [thoughtful sigh] I mean, none of them are secret good. They're all bangers, all the way through.

**Ali:** Sure, sure, sure. Yeah, yeah, yeah. But the one that's, like, you know, "When I put this on here I was on one or I was in a specific— I was trying to say a specific thing."

**Dre:** Sure.

**Ali:** The thing that I was saying about Brnine/Broun versus Broun/Valence is "Where I End and You Begin" from Radiohead, which you could think is a shipping song about somebody who's passed away but is really about the person that you are on the inside. [laugh quietly]

**Dre:** Mm-hmm. Um, probably the song with the best name on this playlist, which is "Compost Grave-Song" by Kardashev.

**Ali:** Ooh.

**Dre:** Which, in the story of that album, is the guy remembering the accidental death of his younger brother and the guilt that he feels about that.

**Ali:** Oh.

**Dre:** But for me, in terms of Figure, that song is about how Figure feels about their, like, past life that is like their dead younger brother.

**Ali:** Ohh. Huh.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Ali:** I do wonder— because, like, so, for...with Thisbe, it's very clear, like, you know, we...Janine has said multiple times, like, "I don't want Thisbe to 'become a person.' I don't want it to be a Data thing."

**Janine:** Eh, eh, eh! Thisbe's already a person!

**Ali:** Right, no, no, no, yeah. You know what I mean.

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

**Ali:** [laughs] Sorry, Thisbe!

**Dre:** Thisbe doesn't have to "become," quote, unquote, what we think of as a, quote, unquote, "person."

**Ali:** Right. Yes, yes.

**Dre:** To be a person.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Janine:** Yeah, she doesn't have to become normative.

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

**Ali:** Right. Right, right, right. [laughs]

**Janine:** Personormative. I don't know. [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Ali:** But for you, Dre, is there— are there the same sort of limiters that you have for Figure, in terms of like, “I don't want Figure to, like, become the person that they used to be,” or like, are there—

**Dre:** Oh, yeah.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Dre:** I mean, I think I don't have a very clear— like, I couldn't give you the timeline of Figure's previous life, right? But another kind of overarching theme of Figure is an exploration of, like, radicalization, of going from someone who is very much like a... [sighs] I think— I don't remember if I said this on a podcast or if I was just talking with, like, Austin off air, but like, I think of as when Figure died, Figure was a person who was like, “Yeah, it's great. It's us versus them, and we're gonna win, because I'm part of the ‘us’!” and then the war comes, [Ali laughs] and you realize, “Ah, fuck. Like, I'm not part of the ‘them,’ but I'm not part of the ‘us’ either,” right? And then being resurrected and put into the servitude of Clementine Kesh just completely tears the rest of, like, that blindfold off, right? And starts PALISADE very much in a place of “Everything sucks and is awful. Like, the system is built to destroy and oppress us, and there's nothing we can do about it.” and hopefully through, you know, this process of healing and finding, like, productive righteous anger, they start to find a way that they feel that they can make meaningful changes by working with other people.

**Ali:** Yeah, that's interesting, because it's like, I don't think of any of the other characters of like—well, I don't know that that's fully true—believing the propaganda, question mark? I mean, Broun definitely has part of that in their history, just in terms of like, “I joined the military and I designed weapons.” [laughs]

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** But when we started PARTIZAN, it was such— it was from a place where they were



already sort of trying to shake to get out of the system that they were in, and I think that's sort of the same across all of the characters. So, for Figure to have these sort of stages in their life, in terms of like, "Oh, this was when I was really gung-ho about it, and this is sort of when everything fell apart," is really interesting. I'm excited to dig more into Figure.

**Dre:** Yeah. [Ali laughs] Figure is probably the most fun and, like, the most into a character I have maybe been since Throndir.

**Ali:** Oh, wow.

**Dre:** Yeah. Throndir will always be number one special boy in my heart, [Janine laughs] but Figure has been a lot of fun for me this season.

**Ali:** I'm glad. I'm glad.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Ali:** It definitely feels like that. Like, it feels like we've been on it in a way that we...

**Dre:** Oh, yeah.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Everyone has been, like, all gas no brakes this season, I feel like, and it's awesome. [Ali and Janine laugh] Like, I feel like a lot of seasons, we have to take time, like, figuring out what we want to do.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Dre:** And I feel like we did that in, like, the first episode, and then it was like, "All right, this is what it is. This is what we're doing. Let's go."

**Ali:** [laughs] Are you...we know that Janine is going to keep adding songs to her playlist as it goes on.

**Dre:** Sure.

**Ali:** Are there...because Figure is going to be a transitional character in this season, are there, like...do you have some songs at the ready? Are you gonna be— are you gonna make, like, a second playlist for Figure 2.0?

**Dre:** Sure.

**Ali:** Or is it gonna be—

**Dre:** Maybe. [Ali laughs] I usually do add songs as I go. May— hmm. Yeah, things will change about this playlist is what I'll say.

**Ali:** Okay.

**Dre:** This playlist used to have a different name on it. How about that?

**Ali:** Right, sure. Yeah, that's true too. [laughs] There's still a secret key to be revealed!

**Dre:** Yeah. Uh huh!

**Ali:** [laughs] Later this season.

**Dre:** And like I said, the secret key is a wish your heart makes.

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Dre:** When you're being possessed by an Iconoclast.

## **Setting and Character Talk [0:53:41]**

**Ali:** Yeah. Oh, how are we feeling about the Iconoclasts?

**Dre:** What? What Iconoclast?

**Janine:** Ugh. No comment. [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** That shit's dead, homie. I don't know what you're talking about.

**Ali:** [laughs] Janine, how was that for you, to have it come up in the last session?

**Janine:** I, um...hmm. I mean, so, technically it came up a couple, you know, on the train is when it first really hit, right?

**Ali:** Right, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Janine:** And it was just this thing of like, there was a moment of clarity where I felt like the only person on the plane who sees the gremlin on the wing, you know? [Ali laughs] and then it all just happened so fast. It's like, yep, you know? Like, I...weirdly, even though we all went through the season where Iconoclasts were, like, the thing...

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** I still definitely feel like a personal, like, knowledge of them or like responsibility or something? So it was just very much like, "Ah yes, here we are again."

**Ali:** Yeah, I— well, because we all dealt with them, but they were sort of Signet's, like, rivals?

**Janine:** They came out of Signet's playbook.

**Ali:** Right.

**Janine:** Like, they were created from that playbook, because you have to pick— you have to, like, make a thing in *The Veil* for that character class. It was called *The Veil*, right? Yeah. So, you had to, like, build the thing. I was like, "Oh yeah, I want horrifying paint monsters and goopy scary..." and that's how they happened, and here we are.

**Ali:** [laughs] It definitely felt, while we were playing it, that it was...I don't know, because there's no way that Austin could have intentionally had Thisbe be the only one going into the train. Like, that was all natural decisions that we made [**Janine:** Yeah.] throughout that session.

**Janine:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** But to have Thisbe be the one standing there and seeing this revelation [**Janine:** Mm-hmm.] and getting the, like, drop or whatever was— [**Janine:** Yeah.] felt really,

like...I was like, "I'm happy for Janine in this moment, but I wonder if Janine is having complicated feelings right now." [laughs]

**Janine:** I do think that, like, I probably metagamed a bit by having Thisbe immediately give up and be like, "Okay, this isn't happening. Goodbye. Like, we need to go." [Ali laughs] I think maybe if we had never encountered Iconoclasts before and I didn't have that knowledge, Thisbe might have been like, "Let's get a big bucket or something. Let's scoop it in." [Ali and Janine laugh] But...so I, you know, I think I might play that scene a bit differently with hindsight, but... [laughs] Yeah, I was very much like, "Ah, fuck, okay. Right. Yeah." [Ali laughs quietly] But also, like, not entirely unwelcome, you know? Twilight Mirage was, I think, despite— I had a lot of difficulty in that season.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** But I think it might be— if it's not my favorite, it's like up there. It's, like, high competition. I'm very fond of Signet. I'm very fond of— she's probably, like, tied with Adaire, in terms of my— well, I really like Es too. I don't know. [Ali and Dre chuckle] So, you know, it's been nice to have PALISADE where we're sort of getting those little tastes of the Mirage again. It's fun.

**Ali:** Yeah, I've been happy with how much of it has come up. I'm glad that Austin seems to be having a lot of fun, like, using that palette again, because it's...I mean, PALISADE is such a direct sequel to PARTIZAN that, like, obviously the overlaps are there.

**Janine:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** But to be like, "Oh, it's also a sequel to Twilight Mirage" [laughs] is like, it feels like one of those, like, oh, this is the greatest trick the devil ever pulled, [Janine laughs] and Austin seems to be taking very much advantage [Janine: Yeah.] of being like, "Hey, remember that other thing?" that I'm excited for more of those to come up until it hurts [Dre: Mm-hmm.] and then I wish that he had not done that. [laughs] It's funny that you say that it's a little metagamey for Thisbe to be, like, "Well, I gotta go. I'm not dealing with this, obviously."

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Because she's the character who would have the timespan to be like— I mean, I guess I don't know that. Thisbe has been around for a long, long, long, long, long, long, long, time, but have you thought about her experience in terms of like, you know, experiencing that time or having that depth of knowledge? I know that it comes up a lot in, like, Gathering Information rolls or whatever, but like, [**Janine:** Yeah.] do you ever think of like, what is Thisbe's comprehension of what the Twilight Mirage is? Or...

**Janine:** I mean, so, I compare Thisbe...at least initially, I compared Thisbe a lot to, like, the way that a mech is to a human, Thisbe is to a tractor, kind of along that line. So it's like, you know, I can sit and be like, "Well, what would an old tractor know, compared to like a new tractor?" and it's like, they probably know a lot of the same things, [Ali laughs] but like, the context would be different, right? [Dre laughs] Like, the old tractor would be like, "There's not as many horses around these days. That's sort of weird." [Ali laughs quietly] Like, it would be stuff like that, but it's like, that tractor isn't necessarily going to be like, "Oh yeah, the train— why don't people use trains anymore?" I don't know. I mean, to a degree, they might. [laughs quietly] This is kind of— I'm kind of losing this one. But like, it's...you know, her experience was limited in such a way where I sort of don't have to engage with it too too much, which I think is good, because there are some unanswered questions, at least in terms of what our perspective as players is, about, like, when did the Iconoclasts arrive here?

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** And like, a lot of stuff like that, where it's like, I'm fine to be hands-off on that rather than dictating stuff because Thisbe should remember it or whatever.

**Ali:** Right, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. I think— yeah. [laughs] I like that Thisbe is not like an encyclopedia. Like, she's not a C-3PO, right? Like, she's very intentionally not.

**Janine:** Yeah, no.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Janine:** She's not supposed to be. Like, there's a degree to which, you know, she's had access to information, and we've shown her having access to information, but a lot of the time, she has to deliberately get it or have already had it or something. Like, she's not just this sort of infinite— you know, because she was a spec— she was built to be a specialized tool.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** And that required a little bit of generalization? Like, she had to be capable of defending herself, but you know, ideally, in a perfect world, the people who made her would have just had her doing, you know, cultivation and field work and stuff like that. That was their intention, so like, there should feel like there are limits of her knowledge on how things work.

**Ali:** Yeah, and I think you've done definitely a good job on balancing that thread for Thisbe so far.

**Janine:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** But the subject does actually make me think of something in terms of Figure, which is like, [laughs quietly] in terms of Figure's, quote, unquote, like, "fandom," or the— [Dre and Ali laugh] the history of Figure being, like, a history teacher or whatever. Are there, like...are there flags that you have in secret, in terms of like, "Oh, this is a thing Figure really liked back then," that you're either waiting to have show up to have them, like, react in a certain way?

**Janine:** [hushed] Secret key.

**Dre:** [hushed] Secret key!

**Ali:** Or are you just sort of like "play to find out what happens" in this?

**Dre:** I feel like that's giving the game away, Ali. [Ali laughs]

**Janine:** That's spoilers, yeah!

**Ali:** Okay, sorry. [laughs]

**Janine:** How can you ask that question?

**Dre:** Because like, hey—

**Janine:** We're gonna be robbing people of the moment when Figure has a hot dog again [Dre: Yeah.] and is like, "Oh my god, I loved hot dogs!" [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** Oh my god, now I can only have hot dogs with ketchup on them. Clementine Keeeesh! [Janine and Ali laugh] Hot dogs with ketchup are fine.

**Ali:** Well, I mean, just like, in terms of like— especially since we're talking about the Twilight Mirage now. Like, thinking about the history of technology in that way and the history that our characters have access to, like, what are the...what are the stuff that they're into? And I feel like, for me, I don't know that I, like...I don't know for Brnine that I'm, like, "Oh, this is something that Brnine would react to really strongly or respond to or whatever," but like, in a character way, I sort of think forward in terms of like, I try to think of conversations that I don't really think would come up, and if they do in play, that would be great, but like, how does Brnine react— how does Brnine interact with this person or think about this person or, like, where's their relationship at? And where am I finding that kind of, like, compass point, in terms of, you know, this sort of imagination of an interaction that they would have? So, for— 'cause Sylvi isn't here, I feel comfortable saying like, you know, in the future, if Brnine has a really strong reaction to something that, uh...Diesel? Griesel? Is Griesel his name? [laughs] It's not Diesel.

**Janine:** It's Griesel, not Diesel. [laughs]

**Dre:** Griesel. Griesel.

**Ali:** Yeah. You know, Brnine having—

**Janine:** Diesel Sunrise is... [Ali laughs]

**Dre:** Cori's dad, Kevin Nash.

**Ali:** Brnine having a really strong reaction to that would speak to, like, their relationship with their parents, for instance, or you know, if Brnine ever has the opportunity to be like a real mentor and try to be like, "Yo, don't...don't just do shit and not think about that," because like, Brnine did a lot of shit without thinking about it for a little while. So, like, I guess that's sort of where that question comes from is: are there similar, like...you know, not vantage points but I guess, like, the way that an actor would— that isn't even it either. I was gonna say the way that an actor, like, practices specific phrases or whatever to get more natural. I feel like that's what I sometimes do when trying to think through relationships in that way? But like, if y'all have other tricks or sort of, like...

**Janine:** I mean, this is actually how Thisbe's conversation with Figure about, like, you know, "What do you need to be free of the Witch?" happened, because— I had to take a picture of it. [Ali laughs] I had to take a picture of this note that I wrote, and I don't remember when I wrote it, because I didn't date it, but I think it was, like... [sighs] It must have been, like, during the session with the...with the train, where I was just like spitballing, like "What would this conversation look like?" before I'd committed to, like, "Oh, we have to find room for this," because, you know, we hadn't quite gotten there. And I have to post this picture that I took, because it's very close to what I ended up actually saying, funnily enough.

**Ali:** Oh, this is, like, written!

**Janine:** Yeah, yeah.

**Ali:** With doodles!

**Janine:** I wrote it— well, no, they're not doodles. It's just on a pad that's, like, printed. Yeah.

**Ali:** Oh, those are stickers.

**Janine:** No, they're— [Ali laughs] No, they're just, like, printed. It's, like, on the page. It's not...



**Ali:** [laughs] Okay.

**Janine:** I just, like, have an old notepad that I'm trying to use up, because it's corny.

**Dre:** Sure.

**Janine:** So I just, like, scribbled this down and then put it aside for a bit and then came back to it and was like, "Yeah, this actually needs to happen. This can't be hypothetical. This is what we have to do."

**Ali:** Yeah, this is basically...so, to describe what is here: it's a picture of the notepad aforementioned with some little doodles, and it says, "What do you need to be free of the witch," and then, "She is an unworthy operant. She does not deserve to wield you," which I think might have actually just been 100% in the show.

**Janine:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Ali:** As you said.

**Dre:** That sounds right, yeah. [Ali laughs]

**Janine:** I, like, muted myself while I scrabbled for this note and was like, "I gotta just say it! Let's go!" [all laugh] But like, this is a thing that I've done sort of since Adaire even. There's, like, old Notes app things sometimes where I would just type a line of just, like, "this is just a thing I think Adaire would say. Like, this just feels right," and a lot of those lines just don't— you know, it doesn't— because that's not the show we do. We don't pre-write lines and then deliver them.

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Janine:** But it's more about, like, the characterization and, like, crystallizing what, you know, what do you think of this person? Like, this was helpful for me, in terms of thinking, like, okay, well, what is Thisbe's relationship to the Figure in Bismuth at this point?

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** Like, what does she...you know, because I didn't want— especially at the end of that episode. There was a sense of, like, there's room for Thisbe to become hostile here, and I had to sort of consciously turn away from that, where like, it's not about betrayal or whatever. It's not that. That can't be the thing. And having this little thing was, like, helpful in being like, "Okay, this is the attitude. This is the approach. This is the angle."

**Ali:** Oh, and when you say "hostile," you mean in terms of Thisbe rejecting the idea to give that thing to Clem.

**Janine:** Yeah, yes.

**Ali:** And then— okay, yeah.

**Janine:** People— there was a moment of, like, people looking to Thisbe to object, [**Ali:** Uh huh.] and I was like, "Oh, whoa, this is the wrong direction for this. Let's not— you know, let's course correct. [**Ali:** Right.] Let's figure out what this should actually be."

**Ali:** [laughs] That was also a good moment of being like, "I'm not there. [laughs] I know that y'all want me to make a decision, but I'm not going to." Dre, do you have any similar sort of tricks in terms of when you think of characterization or even just, like, not even as direct as quotes in this way, [**Dre:** Yeah.] but in terms of, you know, shorthands of how to get into the head of Figure in Bismuth.

**Dre:** Yeah. I mean I will— I don't have a notepad, but sometimes I've just jammed stuff out on, like, the Notes app on my phone. Or I will just, like, DM Austin to be like, "Hey, I thought about this. What do you think?" [Ali laughs] and we'll, like, go back and forth on it.

**Ali:** Perfect. Perfect. Are there any other relationships that you're like— I guess that's the other thing is you started out with a— you don't have— you have a hook with Phrygian.

**Dre:** Yeah, I have a hook with Phrygian, and I also have a gravity clock with Partial Palisade that we haven't had the chance to explore, slash, I haven't, like—

**Ali:** [teasing] I tried to give you that chance, and you—

**Dre:** No, I know.

**Ali:** You dragged me on Twitter for it. [Janine laughs]

**Dre:** I had to do other stuff. I had to do other stuff. [Ali laughs] I mostly was dragging Austin accusing me of basing characters off the Omegaverse, more than anything, which I still don't understand! [Ali laughs] Like, and now I know what it is, but I don't understand.

**Janine:** Listen, ChatGPT understands it. You gotta catch up.

**Dre:** Oh, okay.

**Ali:** Huh?

**Janine:** They proved that ChatGPT, GPT-3, was trained using fanfic data, based on its knowledge of certain Omegaverse tropes.

**Dre:** That rules. Let's go.

**Janine:** That's a thing that's happened. It's just, like... [Ali sighs]

**Dre:** [joking] AI is the future.

**Janine:** It's like, there's no reason GPT-3 should know what this is if not— if it was not trained on, like, Archive of Our Own.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** Sure. Yeah.

**Janine:** Because it's entirely made up by these communities.

**Ali:** Damn.

**Dre:** You gotta have the scent of the alpha, or whatever.

**Janine:** Ugh.

**Dre:** Am I doing it right?

**Ali:** [displeased] Mm...

**Janine:** No.

**Ali:** No.

**Dre:** Okay. [Ali and Janine laugh]

**Ali:** I mean, I think you are, but out of principal, I don't know that I can say that it's "right."

**Dre:** Yeah, you gotta— no, yeah, yeah, yeah. No, for sure.

**Janine:** [laughs] Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** God.

**Dre:** You may be correct. You are on the wrong side of history. [Ali laughs]  
Understandable.

**Ali:** Uh huh. God, how did we get here? How do we keep getting here?

**Dre:** I don't know, man.

**Ali:** [laughs] How does this keep happening?

**Dre:** It's our show. What do you want? [laughs] This is what we do.

**Janine:** Every episode of Gathering Information so far has ended in discussions of the Omegaverse. What can— you know, what can you do?

**Dre:** Sure.

**Janine:** Apparently, what can you do?

**Ali:** Yeah. Lord in heaven, this episode really got away from me. [laughs]

**Dre:** Uh huh.

**Janine:** Listen, I'm along for the ride. You're the one who has to edit it, so I'm along for the ride.

**Ali:** This is true.

**Dre:** Yep. Yep.

**Ali:** This is true.

**Janine:** You turn this into whatever you want to turn it into. [laughs quietly]

**Ali:** [wearily] Yeah. Yeah. Uh huh. [Dre laughs] Uh huh. Uh huh. You know, folks, we're still in the beginning stages of this podcast. [laughs]

**Janine:** Is this the third one?

**Ali:** We're still working out what it's gonna be. This is the third one, yeah.

**Dre:** Yeah. You know—

**Janine:** We're leaving the beginning stages, I have to say. [laughs]

**Ali:** Mm-hmm. No.

**Dre:** I was gonna say, "Imagine this kind of energy if we were talking about *Hunter x Hunter*," but everyone who's hearing this is already a Patreon backer, so.

**Ali:** Oh, right. Yeah, yeah, yeah. [laughs] But on that note, this has been Gathering Information for June of 2023. Do we have any final thoughts in terms of our playlists? Anything we want people to say while they go listen to them or think while they're listening to them? Besides, like, "Damn, these are some jams."

**Dre:** I hope, if people haven't heard of Spiritbox, I hope my playlist makes people like

Spiritbox, because that's probably my current favorite band right now. [Ali laughs]

**Janine:** My playlist is really good when you have a lot of laundry to fold.

**Dre:** Okay.

**Ali:** Ooh!

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Ali:** People should look up the lyrics to the TOMORROW X TOGETHER and BTS songs that I put on my playlist. [laughs]

**Dre:** Nice, nice, nice.

**Ali:** They're in Korean, but they're important.

**Janine:** Oh, I have— yeah, that's also— well, the Korean song on mine I don't know is super important, but it's good.

**Ali:** [laughs] I know that I— like, I had avoided putting K-pop on this for a while, just because I was, like, fitting a specific vibe, but since like 2020 basically the music that I've been following is just K-pop [laughs] because I really let it take me.

**Janine:** Mm-hmm.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Janine:** There's been— listen, the third song on my Adaire playlist is K-pop, so I've been here.

**Ali:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Janine:** I support it.

**Ali:** It's always there for you to listen to. But yeah, "Farewell, Neverland" is a song about needing to grow up and take roots. I put it on there, because it's about, like, flying and

sad, and I was thinking about Brnine in their stupid ship.

**Janine:** Flying and sad. [laughs quietly]

**Ali:** Yeah. And then “Film out” is just a... [quietly] a Valence/Broun song. [laughs] I'm allowed to say that. Anyway, thanks for joining me, y'all. This has been really fun.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** Thanks for teaching me about what *Love is Blind* is, because I did not know. And...

**Dre:** You're welcome? [Ali laughs]

**Janine:** On the next one, I'll tell you all about *90 Day Fiance* and that show that TLC tried to do about adopting adults that got canceled really fast because one of the guys who's on it was a big ol' creep.

**Dre:** Mm.

**Ali:** Okay, I literally need to end this episode [laughs] instead of asking you about that last thing, because I know about *90 Day Fiance*, but this other thing I have never heard of and sounds...

**Dre:** Yeah, that sounds horrifying.

**Ali:** Bonkers.

**Janine:** I'll pull up a video. [typing] I'm gonna dig it up.

**Ali:** [laughs] Okay. Okay. Okay. But that's for another time, as we've said, and for today, we are gonna say goodbye, and thank you for listening, and haaaave a...good...day.

**Dre:** Uh huh? [Janine laughs]

**Ali:** Have a good day.

**Janine:** Did you see the thumbnail? Is that what the reaction was?

**Ali:** I did. I did.

**Janine:** Uh huh.

**Ali:** I did see the thumbnail.

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Bye! [Janine laughs]

## **Austin's Playlists [1:15:50]**

**Ali:** I have decided that I'm not gonna do, like, a cute transition about this and just say: hey, everybody. The episode— [laughs] June 2023's episode of Gathering Information was slightly delayed to work on some, like...let's talk about something before— let's let the audience hear about something first before we're able to talk about that. I think that's clear in that episode, because we have a repeat with Dre. But because it was delayed even more, I thought, "Why not get Austin in the booth and ask him about some stuff?" Because I would be remiss to not talk to you a little bit about the PALISADE playlist.

**Austin:** Is this— are we doing— this is live.

**Ali:** This is live.

**Austin:** Well, not live. [Ali laughs] You're recording.

**Ali:** We're not live, but that was me talking to the audience.

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** That wasn't me easing you into this recording.

**Austin:** Am I recording?

**Ali:** I hope you are.



**Austin:** I am. [Ali laughs] I was like, “Wait, this sounds really professional,” and I hit record. We didn’t do a clap, Ali.

**Ali:** [laughs] We didn’t. We’ll do one at the end.

**Austin:** Okay.

**Ali:** It’s just the two of us.

**Austin:** Okay. It’s just the two of us. It’s easy to line that up. I have a backup going.

**Ali:** There you go.

**Austin:** Yeah. Hi.

**Ali:** Hi.

**Austin:** How’s it going?

**Ali:** It’s going okay. It’s going okay. It’s a beautiful Tuesday night.

**Austin:** It is. It’s nice out.

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** It’s a little humid but not, like, the worst, you know?

**Ali:** Yeah. Yeah. It’s been rainy days.

**Austin:** It has been rainy days.

**Ali:** I walked to Rite Aid, and I was like— it was getting kind of windy, [**Austin:** Mm-hmm.] and I was like, “It’s gonna start raining on me [**Austin:** Mm-hmm.] while I’m going on this seltzer run, and I don’t know what’s gonna happen.”

**Austin:** Bro, I need to do a seltzer run sooo bad right now. I am out of seltzer, and I’m out of the other type of water that I drink, the, um, high PH value flavored water that I sometimes drink.

**Ali:** Whoa!

**Austin:** Because you're not allowed to— you're not allowed to have flavored drinks with Invisalign in.

**Ali:** Oh, right. Right.

**Austin:** And I'm on that Invisalign right now, [Ali laughs] and you can't have flavored drinks because, generally speaking, they are filled with things like citric acid, which you can't get in with the Invisalign.

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** And you can have whatever you want, but you have to, like, brush your teeth, right? You have to take them out, brush your teeth, or you have to like clean them or whatever, right? And so it's like, you can't drink coffee with them in, because the acidic nature of coffee, plus it'll stain the aligners. But there's a couple of, like, high PH drinks— like, you know, water that has, like, a *very* light flavor that has been my, like, godsend that is— no one's *told* me I'm allowed to drink it, but high PH means it doesn't have, like, a high acidic content, you know what I mean? So it's not, like...

**Ali:** Oh, right. Okay, sure.

**Austin:** So, I've been using that in place of most of my seltzer drinking, but I still have seltzer also, [Ali: Sure.] for like meals or whatever, you know?

**Ali:** Right. Okay, sure.

**Austin:** Anyway, I'm out of both. [Ali laughs] I have one more of this high PH thing. I have to order a replacement box. I need to.

**Ali:** Yeah. I had a lot of today just sitting in my apartment, not drinking anything.

**Austin:** Yep.

**Ali:** [laughing] Because I was out of seltzer.

**Austin:** I drink a lot of water, just, **[Ali: Uh huh.]** that's not fun. It's not fun.

**Ali:** Right. Anyway, I'm not here to talk to you about seltzer, unfortunately.

**Austin:** [quietly] Fuck. **[Ali laughs]** Ready for seltzer— I guess we're thinking about doing another. There's a drinks chat, potentially, in the future for us.

**Ali:** You know, there's chats about that.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** And we— I don't want to reveal here, but—

**Austin:** Yeah. Sorry for teasing that.

**Ali:** [laughs] For the folks.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** Just, you know, keep drinks in mind **[Austin: Right.]** and go to our Twitch channel, I guess. **[Austin laughs quietly]** Anyway, I'm here to talk to you about the PALISADE playlist.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** And playlists in general.

**Austin:** Playlists in general.

**Ali:** Yeah, because I— well, because when I was considering having this conversation with you, two things occurred to me, which is that it is such a different thing— because making a character playlist **[Austin: Uh huh.]** is such, like, a personal thing.

**Austin:** Yeah, and I don't get to do that.

**Ali:** You don't get to do that. Okay, but I'm curious about revealing some Austin OC history here.

**Austin:** Sure.

**Ali:** And—

**Austin:** Happy to, always.

**Ali:** [laughs] Is there a character in your past that you were like, “I made this playlist for them, and it was a fucking banger,” or...

**Austin:** I don't think so, because I've been a fucking forever GM.

**Ali:** No.

**Austin:** Like, when I was online roleplay person, we weren't doing...I was doing mixtapes for, like, people I wanted to date, and that was it.

**Ali:** [laughs] Okay, yeah.

**Austin:** And that was where all of that energy was going, was like, “Hey, I made you this. There are seven Belle and Sebastian songs on here; sorry.” Like...

**Ali:** Okay.

**Austin:** Uh, is it true? Is it true that I've never? It's been— the ease of making a playlist now is nothing like what there was before.

**Ali:** Oh, sure. Okay.

**Austin:** I made playlists constantly as, like, a young person, like in the MP3 era, you know?

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** But I don't think...the culture wasn't there yet.

**Ali:** Okay, sure.

**Austin:** Which I feel bad about. I could have been the culture, and I wasn't.

**Ali:** [laughs] This is true. Yeah, you could've, like, handed out...

**Austin:** But like—

**Ali:** Or you— well, because it's a personal thing if it's a character playlist, right? So it's like—

**Austin:** Yeah, but also like, I feel like if was around— if I was like 19 when Tumblr was around, maybe.

**Ali:** Okay.

**Austin:** Because I feel like character playlists for characters you're, like, fans of is a thing.

**Ali:** Oh, absolutely. Yes.

**Austin:** Or ships that you're a fan of.

**Ali:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Austin:** And I bet that was happening on LiveJournal, but I missed it maybe.

**Ali:** Oh, that was happening on LiveJournal.

**Austin:** Right?

**Ali:** There's still a couple of songs that are, like...

**Austin:** I had— hmm.

**Ali:** I have MP3s of them because they were on, like, *The Office* playlists that people uploaded. [laughs quietly]

**Austin:** Oh my god. I definitely had songs that were like, this is about my character, my OC and my primary roleplay partners at the time, right? Like, my internet—

**Ali:** Right, okay, yes. Yeah.

**Austin:** You know what I mean? I was like, “Oh, this song is about this,” or like, this is— but I don’t think I made a full play— mm, maybe I would have. I don’t know. That stuff is all so blurry and weird and like... [Ali laughs] You know what I mean?

**Ali:** Right. And then, these days, you’re not, like, “Oh, let me make myself a Hector Hu playlist.”

**Austin:** No, but like, in a way, isn’t the Bluff City playlist the Hector Hu playlist?

**Ali:** Right.

**Austin:** Or like, I think if you go and you look at something like the early, uh...it’s tough, because sometimes I’m, like, trying to hit a vibe for the season.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** Early, you know, Hieron stuff definitely was. But I think there’s an early Hieron— there’s a Hieron playlist I have called “Sun Day and Eve’s Light” and like—

**Ali:** I’ve listened to this playlist a billion times.

**Austin:** [laughs] That’s a Samot/Samoths playlist, right? Like, it is.

**Ali:** [laughs] Yeah.

**Austin:** Right? And it’s also a banger! [Ali laughs] I don’t make playlists like this anymore. I gotta make— this is a good playlist, because it’s short. It’s an hour. It’s 16 songs.

**Ali:** Yeah. I keep that in mind too, yeah.

**Austin:** These are all bangers.

**Ali:** Uh huh!

**Austin:** Fuck.

**Ali:** It was great. You did a great job.

**Austin:** Thank you. I need to get— I need to— I'm in a place right now with it, right? Because like, if you look at the PALISADE playlist, I'm cheating, [laughs quietly] because I'm adding to it every week.

**Ali:** Right. Uh huh.

**Austin:** And I'm about to add the best song to it.

**Ali:** You're about to add the best song to it?

**Austin:** This comes out after this next thing, right?

**Ali:** Um, sure.

**Austin:** Does it not?

**Ali:** [laughs] I can wait to—

**Austin:** When's this drop? I need you to drop this on Friday.

**Ali:** I will release this on Friday.

**Austin:** Because “Need 2” by Pinegrove is going on, from the TikTok trend of the people dancing. I'm gonna send you the song; you'll know it immediately.

**Ali:** Okay.

**Austin:** Because there's a very good Cori-relevant meme about it. I'm sending it now. [Ali laughs quietly] I'm sure you've seen this incredible video that some fan made of Cori doing the dance from this. Not from this, but... [typing] Uh, I have to find it now. This is bad radio. This is bad radio. I'm doing bad radio, but.

**Ali:** [laughs] Yeah, that was me quietly listening to that. You didn't have to talk during it. [laughs]

**Austin:** It's bad radio. I'm filling the air. We've been over this. It's a disease I have.

**Ali:** [laughs] But I— this is from the Cori tumblr post of Cori dancing?

**Austin:** Of Cori dancing, yeah. Because of—

**Ali:** This is a TikTok meme? Of course it's a TikTok meme.

**Austin:** Oh, yeah, that was not— someone didn't just intuit, like, that's a funny thing to do. [Ali laughs] It's like a trend, yeah, yeah.

**Ali:** I believe it.

**Austin:** It's called the "Pine 2 shuffle."

**Ali:** Okay. That's fantastic.

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Ali:** That's fantastic, and people will understand why you did that.

**Austin:** Uh huh. They might not, but also, the song just goes. Like, it's a fun— it's a good song, and it's in the space that this season's soundtrack has been in, you know what I mean? So.

**Ali:** Right, yeah, for sure. Yeah, so, talk to us about why you've been adding a different song every week.

**Austin:** [sighs] It's like an echo of the Twilight Mirage season description thing.

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** So like, for people who don't remember, Twilight Mirage, every episode after— like, eventually they all have them, but I think it was after, like, the sixth one, I was like, "Oh, I'm gonna add a Frank Ocean lyric to every episode this season."

**Ali:** I remember this, because I feel like in early Twilight Mirage, we



were...COUNTER/Weight, we were just doing quotes. We were doing, like, funny things, right?

**Austin:** We were doing, like...

**Ali:** Catchphrases.

**Austin:** Catchphrases, like the “next time on” type stuff. Do you remember what I mean?

**Ali:** Oh! Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Austin:** Like the *Cowboy Bebop* or like that style of anime.

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** You know, the...you know, next time on the episode and then a little phrase. Like, I just clicked on “A Special Kind of Warmth,” and it’s “Are you going to just stand still?” You know? [Ali laughs] Like, that’s fun, right? You get it, right?

**Ali:** Yeah, this is in the...

**Austin:** “Remember to pull the trigger,” you know?

**Ali:** Right, this is in the *Cowboy Bebop* vein—

**Austin:** Yeah, that is exactly.

**Ali:** Of, like, “See you, space cowboy” type shit.

**Austin:** Yeah, “Get ready to feel the beat!” you know?

**Ali:** Right. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Austin:** And this is all— you know, and that was all fun.

**Ali:** Okay, yeah.

**Austin:** And then, like, Hieron never did that, because Hieron was always doing...two different things about Hieron, right? Hieron doesn't have intros, traditionally. Marielda did, but most of Hieron does not.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** And then, most of Hieron has...I guess Winter had the letters, right? The epistolary stuff.

**Ali:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Austin:** And then, by Spring...was I still doing that? I wasn't doing epistolary, certainly. I think I had kind of gone to the top part is just a summary, because people really wanted summaries, like clear summaries, instead of in-character letters from character to character, [Ali laughs] which I get. It makes sense. And the bottom part was, like, excerpts and ephemera from various things in the world, right?

**Ali:** Oh, yeah, yeah.

**Austin:** Where it would be like—

**Ali:** Not quite the, like, codex that we do now, but...

**Austin:** Exactly. Definitely not that, because this is like— I'm looking at one now, and it's like...let me go early Spring so it's not, like, super spoilery, but it would be like...oh, wow, this doesn't have one at all. Damn. I must have, like, decided to start doing it at some point. You know, this is the thing. It's wild. It was four years ago, you know? [laughs quietly]

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** More than that. Four and a half years ago. Oh, this one has content warnings. You know we were getting real by mid-Spring. Yeah, like— ah, right. They were excerpts from a certain— from, like, lectures and stuff from an NPC.

**Ali:** Oh! Right, right, right. Okay, yeah.

**Austin:** That we ended up revealing later about who it was that you were reading these excerpts of stuff from. So, that was fun, but it wasn't...that wasn't a song. But Twilight Mirage, we were listing song lyrics, and with PALISADE being— and I think PARTIZAN doesn't have— I think PARTIZAN just straight up just has the dossier.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** Like, “here are the characters,” you know what I mean? But there's no, like, little fun stinger type thing, you know?

**Ali:** Right. We were having fun in PARTIZAN but in a way of not having fun, I think. [Austin laughs quietly] Like, especially with you and Jack, like, creating a whole language system for the—

**Austin:** Oh, that's true. [Ali laughs] You're right. Things like—

**Ali:** Like, that's not fun.

**Austin:** No, I mean—

**Ali:** It's, like, horrible, but it's...

**Austin:** God, that was so stressful. Like, getting to a new arc, and me and Jack need to be like, “What the fuck are we calling this? What's the idiogram—” [Ali laughs] So, for people who don't know, things like— there's a three part episode called DESERT SQUIRE: “DESERT SQUIRE — VANTAGE,” “DESERT SQUIRE — RIPOST,” and “DESERT SQUIRE — SLEIGHT,” and those all mean something.

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** Those all, like— “desert” means something, “squire” means something, and then the third word means something.

**Ali:** Yeah, y'all would, like, take time to figure this out, and I would just [Austin: Uh huh.] look at the production chat and be like, “You know what?”

**Austin:** “Y'all having fun over there? Okay.”

**Ali:** [laughs] “I'm here if you need me, but...”

**Austin:** Yeah, uh huh. Versus normal episode titles, where I'm often coming to you and being like, [pleading] “Ali, did we say anything good in the episode that sounded like a title?”

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

**Austin:** Which is what we're doing again this season, right? We're back to—

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** Which was a conscious decision to try to capture, actually, some of the— that's what we did in Hieron, right?

**Ali:** Right.

**Austin:** And versus, like, Sangfielle, which has these kind of, like, book title things, right?

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** With like, “What Happened at Bell Metal Station,” and “The Candle Factory,” and, you know, “The Hymn of the Mother-Beast.”

**Ali:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Austin:** They're all kind of, like, pulpy, you know, you know...

**Ali:** Yeah, but I think even for going for quotes, I think that we're, like, still going for a very specific mood?

**Austin:** Yes. It's still a Divine Cycle mood, [Ali: Uh huh.] but I wanted to capture the sort of fantasy element of Hieron a little bit, where it's like character-driven. It's something someone said, you know?

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** So. Sometimes you don't know what it is, and I think that there's been a lot of fun, like, "Ooh, when are we getting to 'the canvas of dreams'?" You know what I mean?

**Ali:** Right. Right, right, right. "That's Chappy," except— [laughs]

**Austin:** That's Chappy. That's Chappy. Yes. And we're doing arcs this season instead of every episode having its own thing, [**Ali:** Yeah.] which we've done in the past, which is also just a matter of convenience and scheduling and stuff, right? Like, I'm not always available to come up with, you know, a name with you at the end of the day or whatever.

**Ali:** Oh, right. Yeah.

**Austin:** So.

**Ali:** We've had fun doing it, but I don't know that, like, a 90 episode season needs, like, 90 bespoke titles.

**Austin:** Okay, don't promise that we're doing 90 episode seasons. [laughs quietly]

**Ali:** We already went up to, like, what? Okay, 90 episodes is a lot. [laughs]

**Austin:** 90 is a lot!

**Ali:** I'm on one! Okay, that's fine.

**Austin:** You are on one! 90—

**Ali:** I'm on one.

**Austin:** I mean, I guess if you count...if you count the Road, it gets real scary.

**Ali:** You know? Uh huh. [laughs]

**Austin:** Because the Road was 20, and this will be [**Ali:** 40.] 17, so that's 37, and then we're ahead on recordings. Yeah, we are probably— we've recorded 20 episodes total,

at this point.

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** Right? So. Or 19 or something.

**Ali:** It's gotta be, yeah. It feels like PARTIZAN just started and— er.

**Austin:** PALISADE, yeah.

**Ali:** It feels like PALISADE just started, and that's not at all true.

**Austin:** It does feel like that, though. I mean, we're in a really interesting place, which we can't get into entirely, because we've already recorded more. [Ali laughs quietly] There's stuff that you don't even know yet [**Ali:** Mm-hmm.] unless you've listened ahead.

**Ali:** I have not yet.

**Austin:** Yeah. That's— you're kind of, you know, a little ways out from some of that. [Ali laughs quietly] Anyway, we're really off topic here. We are getting ahead. But, so, song lyrics. I wanted to evoke the Frank Ocean song lyric stuff again, but I didn't want to just go back to Frank, because it's not in the Twilight Mirage, and so, every week, I have been adding another song to the PALISADE playlist and adding a lyric from it to the episode description of the week, right?

**Ali:** Okay.

**Austin:** And so, I think that starts at episode— I mean, it starts at episode one, and I think it starts at the 48 or 49— I think the last— oh boy. I have to check. I have to check. I have to check. [Ali laughs] It's right in front of me. It's not the end of the world. I can just click on PALISADE 1 and look at the lyric.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** Uh, okay, that started actually on— damn, is it really that—? I guess I could just do this reverse also, right? Which is it has been 17 episodes, right? So I could just go

backwards to where 17 songs. Wait, is it not here anymore? Did it get removed?

**Ali:** Wait, what?

**Austin:** It's "Calm Like a Bomb." There it is. It's the Rage Against the Machine song "Calm Like a Bomb." So, 55. From 55 through 69 [Ali laughs quietly] have all been new songs added to this playlist, so far, and there'll be more by the time you listen to this. Right, because before, the playlist ended on "White Ferrari" by Frank Ocean.

**Ali:** Right. Okay, sure.

**Austin:** And so then I kept adding to it, and so...

**Ali:** And now it's just—

**Austin:** And I don't know, there's something fun about, like, this is the last thing I do after I make the descriptions for each episode is I go, "Ooh, okay, well, what's the song I'm gonna add?" And I have a separate playlist of potential [Ali gasps] future PALISADE songs that I add shit to every week.

**Ali:** Okay.

**Austin:** And that's 34 songs deep, right? And we've used some of them, but like, I'm sitting on a bunch of stuff.

**Ali:** Wow. Okay, this is interesting to know, because that was part of my question. It's funny that I'm using this frame of having you on a recording to ask it.

**Austin:** Oh, okay.

**Ali:** But I keep being like, "When's the episode gonna be when I'm like, 'Austin, I know the lyric for this week'?" [laughs]

**Austin:** Uh huh. I'm ready. Let me know! You can— please do, you know?

**Ali:** Okay.

**Austin:** And there's stuff that's in here that I'm like, I don't know that we're ever gonna get to the right vibe. Do you know what I mean?

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Which is tough.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** But I don't know. We'll see.

**Ali:** Yeah. I will say that since we're releasing this on Friday, [**Austin:** Mm-hmm.] in terms of vibe, I said on a previous episode of this show with Sylvi that something I think was really exciting about having Sylvi is that Cori is a character who, like, makes me think about Brnine from different perspectives, [**Austin:** Ah.] because Cori is such a different perspective from anybody else on the ship.

**Austin:** Hugely.

**Ali:** For instance, what does Brnine think about their parents? [laughs] Which is a loaded—

**Austin:** I would love to know, especially right now! [Ali laughs] Damn, we about to find out! Can't wait to do this downtime.

**Ali:** Right, I'm very excited for this downtime. I'm extremely excited for this downtime, but yeah.

**Austin:** I'm excited to learn about Cori's...like, does Cori have a mom? Like, what's Cori's whole family situation?

**Ali:** Yeah. Sylvi keeps teasing it, and I cannot wait.

**Austin:** Yeah, yeah. I'm hyped.

**Ali:** But yeah, in terms of you needing to chart... [laughs]



**Austin:** Mm-hmm?

**Ali:** It's like you're, like, on a sailboat or something, and you've made...

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** [laughs] You've made preparations for all these possible outcomes.

**Austin:** And you just might not land on those islands, you know?

**Ali:** Uh huh, right. Uh huh. You know, abandoned vibes.

**Austin:** Abandoned vibes! [Ali laughs] Which is just every season also, right? That's also just prep, in a way, right? That like, if I showed you all of the prep that went into the PARTIZAN season document...

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** There's a lot of stuff in there that just doesn't— that never made it into the show. You know what I mean?

**Ali:** Oh, sure.

**Austin:** Including stuff that's vibes-based in some ways, right? Because it's like, oh, we just told a different story, you know?

**Ali:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Austin:** I think about a lot, like...there are ways in which it seems like this season is...or I've heard people tell me. Like, this is not like I've glossed this from fan discourse or something, but I have talked to some people who've been like, "Oh, yeah, this season's really good, but it feels like last season was a little more open-ended." You know, last Divine season, PARTIZAN was a little more open-ended, in terms of where things could go. And I think that that's true, but part of it is things went somewhere at the end of PARTIZAN, [Ali: Mm-hmm.] and where they went is where we are now, and we would be in a much different game if you had burnt thrones— er, sorry, built tables or, uh,

whatever the third option was. It was burn thrones, build tables...I forget what the third one was, in the PARTIZAN finale.

**Ali:** Yeah, in the finale. Right, right, right, yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah, which was like, you could have been your own country, right? And like, think about how different this season would be if the things were about, like, running a planet and dealing with potential threats from the Principality but also dealing with internal disputes and all that. You know what I mean? Think about— or you could have become a stel inside of the Principality.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** That would have been a much different PALISADE, you know?

**Ali:** [laughs] Oh my god. Millennium Break stel would be...

**Austin:** It'd be bad.

**Ali:** It would be bad.

**Austin:** Gucci would be worse than ever.

**Ali:** Yeah. Oh, Gucci's fine.

**Austin:** Oh my god.

**Ali:** There's nothing wrong with Gucci. [laughs]

**Austin:** Unbelievable.

**Ali:** [laughs] You have to understand that I...I need to launch a Gucci campaign now, because something happened on the table [**Austin:** Wait.] with regards to Gucci, and just because she, you know...she was dishonest once?

**Austin:** [crosstalk] Wait, something happened on the table? What do you mean something that happened on the table?

**Ali:** Well, because everybody doesn't like Gucci now. [laughs quietly]

**Austin:** Oh, so now you have to become the Gucci defender.

**Ali:** I have to be the Gucci defender.

**Austin:** Gucci's cool now.

**Ali:** Gucci's cool now.

**Austin:** [quietly] Oh my god.

## **“Upon Our Grace” [1:37:08]**

**Ali:** [laughs] I guess we'll see. And that's a good segue into something that happened with this arc, [**Austin:** Mm-hmm.] which is that there was— it seemed to me, and I edited it, so I can— the way that it was presented to the audience was that—

**Austin:** Ah, yeah.

**Ali:** [laughs quietly] You know, there was an NPC who made a decision, and then we talked about it for a very long time, and—

**Austin:** Well, we didn't talk about the NPC making the decision. We were talking about— let's be direct.

**Ali:** Right. Tenn Alpenglow [**Austin:** Yes.] receives his shitty boss.

**Austin:** Yep.

**Ali:** And is like, “You know what? Well played. I gotta go.”

**Austin:** I gotta go.

**Ali:** [laughs] And then we were in kind of a weird place as players [**Austin:** Yeah.] to just sort of be like, “Okay, what happens next?” [Austin sighs] and that was a big talk from a lot of different opinions.

**Austin:** Both in and out of character.

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** That went forever.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** And was one of those moments where I felt torn between the two modes I often enter. One of those modes is: hey, I'm a GM, but really what I am is someone who is directing a conversation, and I will often step back and say, "What do you do?" and I want you as players but also as coauthors to make a decision about what you think is interesting or what your characters will do, which is a strategic choice to leave it open to either of those things, right? A lot of games really want you only in one mode or the other, and a lot of tables really focus on one or the other.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** Where it's like, "I'm in character, and that is it," and other games— you know, you think about something like the difference between *Quiet Year*. *Quiet Year*, you're not allowed to have a named character, right? You don't ever embody a character who is yours. You are an author, and so you're not— I mean, you can voice a character at the table or a position, but it's not your character ever. You don't control someone, and so it's not trying to put you into this improvisational mode that's tied to a particular perspective permanently. You're a collaborator at the table, versus other games that are fundamentally entirely about you as a character, embodying that character, and all of your mechanical leverage is just tied to that character, not the broader stuff. And I think *Armour Astir* is designed to walk between those modes. Moves like the b-plot move that allow you to draw the camera away [**Ali:** Mm-hmm.] indicate to me that like, okay, this is a game that wants you to play a character, but it also wants you to take control of the camera, so to speak, pretty often.

And so, I was trying to be really hands-off in this, and I was like, "I don't know, let's talk about it. What do you do? And let's talk through what some of the repercussion

would be if you tried to go arrest everybody.” You know, all the spies. [both laugh] Or like, do you use these spies to get leverage with the Cause or do you just try to, you know— and at this point, there was no point system, right? And I think that my— and maybe I’m wrong about this. You can tell me what you think, but we ended that conversation at kind of a standstill, and I felt like, oh, I didn’t give enough structure for the open dialogue to build around, versus things in the past where we’ve done like, you know, the Old Man’s Chin arc in Winter in Hieron where there was like this big battle that was gonna happen that was like, okay, here’s a structured minigame, and people can decide where to put their forces or where they want to be or whatever, according to that stuff, and then you can decide a gameplan; or the court scene in the first season of Hieron, in Autumn in Hieron.

**Ali:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Austin:** Here’s a little minigame. I do this a lot, right? I do this at least once a season in— eh, maybe on average, like, every other season or something, right? And sometimes we play a different game like *Kingdom* or whatever, right? So, like, there are other times when we do that type of stuff. But generally speaking, there’s some structure for that open-ended writers’ room conversation that allows you to feel like you’re also making strategy plays and not just “What’s the story you’d be happiest with or concept that you’re interested in?” and I didn’t do that. I didn’t have the, like, “Well, you could spend— here, you know, you have this list of spies. Here’s what you could trade it in for.” We had just kind of open conversation, and we went in circles for... [scoffs] 90 minutes? An hour? I don’t know. [Ali laughs] I don’t know. You edited it.

**Ali:** I think on— what was released ended up being maybe 45 minutes?

**Austin:** Damn. Okay, so we left a lot in.

**Ali:** Well, it was a lot left in, in terms of— because I’m counting 45 minutes from, like, the point of Tenn exiting—

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

**Ali:** To the initial of like, “Oh, here’s what the town is like. Let’s talk about what the town is like,” and then like, “Okay, well, you have this information. What do you do with this information?”

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** And I do think the, like, structure helped a lot, because it did a little bit feel like a dog getting a tire sort of situation?

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

**Ali:** Where it’s like, you know, we sort of came here for these vague reasons, but I think, as players, we knew what we sort of wanted out of it, and then how we wanted to have that domino in the story.

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** But like, in that— especially in the, like, after three hours of already doing the mission thing, [**Austin:** Yeah.] like, trying to find those bridges in just a fictional way [**Austin:** Yeah.] was tough, because, you know tabletop games do end up needing that structure.

**Austin:** And I could feel you were all looking at me for answers, and it’s like, I am making the decision to not give you the hard answer here.

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** I want you to hash it out. I think that’s part of what our show does really well, and like, sometimes it does, and sometimes you do need— you’re right, you just need that structure sometimes.

**Ali:** Right, and it also felt like— you know, what I think it... [laughs quietly] Did I think, as the conversation was happening, that it was really smooth and we were communicating things super well? Not especially. [Austin laughs quietly] But listening back on it and knowing how it ended up, like, in the— what you were speaking about some of the line

between in character versus out of character, like, I like that when we have those conversations, people can feel open to just being like, “Well, I do want to roll some dice.”

**Austin:** Yeah, totally. Which—

**Ali:** Like, I don't want to have done this whole thing and then, yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah, I mean, that was the other pressure, was like, oh, I...and sometimes this hits in a different way, right? There's the ignorance moment in Autumn in Hieron that just makes me throw out prep and be like, “All right, this conflict is over. You found a sort of narrative answer so sweet that we're not gonna roll dice for combat here,” right?

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** That feels natural. And in some ways, the decision to hand over Colver to Alpenglow felt like, you know what? That's in Alpenglow's character to take his boss and bounce, right? And that's a fun way to get us off of this fight. This thing— like, it didn't feel genuine to me that Alpenglow would be the one to pull the trigger after getting the thing he said he was there for, right?

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** So I wasn't gonna— I didn't want to, like, “and then he's a shithead anyway.” I mean, he is a shithead, right? But the way he's a shithead is more interesting, and it hit me literally the second we stepped away. We were like: all right, we can't— we're not gonna get there right now. We can't— no one is solving this question. No one's on the— not no one's on the same side, but like, we're talking past each other, and even sometimes people have different in-character and out-of-character decisions about what they want to do with the spy list, and that's not— you know, they're not even able to square that circle, let alone with another person also.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** And as soon as we stepped away from that conversation, I was like, “Ohh,

Colver's gonna order them to eradicate this place." [Ali laughs] And then we get the note of like, Alpenglow, you can be the most chivalrous knight in the world, but you fundamentally are gonna take the orders of the person who wants you to enact their powerful vision against the world, right? who wants you to be the blade of their arm, right? And like, let me complicate all of his chivalry by having him turn his back or turn around and betray the promise he made everybody, because his boss—his shitty boss who he doesn't even like—told him to, because he thinks that's what is good. And I think that was, like, an interesting idea coupled with the very clean "go Whac-A-Mole some spies," and I say "clean" not in terms of like, "ooh, that was slick," but like, it's simple. It's a simple idea to, like, go try to collect all the loose spies from the battlefield, but it's a fun premise. It's a fun action sequence thing to keep account of, I think? I think?

**Ali:** Mm-hmm. Yeah.

**Austin:** And you know, it's one of those things that's like, it's actual play. In the version of this that was a script, this would all be so much smoother, because I would know. We would all know that it's going to end up being that Alpenglow comes back, and then they're chasing down spies, and we kind of structure out and time certain things out differently and da-da-da-da-da. But instead what we got was kind of a short mini mission where everybody—no one hung out and talked to anybody. [Ali laughs quietly] Everyone went right to their objectives, then kind of, like, almost didn't go to their objectives. You know, there's a moment when you and Phrygian or Brnine and Phrygian and Cori almost didn't go into the wing of the museum or the wing of the monastery you were at, and I had to be like, "Uh, Em is there. You see Em." That way, you push on the gas. [Ali laughs quietly] Otherwise, like, okay, then you're gonna go back and just talk—like, it felt like a start-stop-start-stop, right?

**Ali:** Right, yeah.

**Austin:** So it's like, pacing management is a whole thing. And then it's like, okay, it ended without there being a lot of dice rolling, and one of the things that people wanted to do was roll some dice. Like, multiple people had come to me and been like, "I really want to roll dice this arc," and that just didn't—wasn't gonna happen, based on giving



back Colver and arresting Em, and so, again, if I knew— if this was a scripted TV show, I would know where it goes and could edit the beginning to be smoother, but instead what we have to do is go, “All right, [sighs] let’s come back next week,” and then, “Here’s some ideas. What if you had to collect some spies, and while you—” I mean, I didn’t say this. I didn’t say, “All right, everybody, you’re gonna have to collect some spies. Let’s meet at 7:00 p.m. to do the spy fight.” [Ali laughs] I just said, “Okay, I think I have an idea. Let’s come back and do another recording and see how it goes,” and then it went the way it went.

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** Which was well for everybody except for Griesel. [Ali laughs] And Phrygian and some of the Twill and some of the spies and...et cetera. So. I think it worked?

**Ali:** RIP to Griesel.

**Austin:** RIP to Griesel.

**Ali:** I do think it worked. I think it created, like, a fun narrative thing, in terms of like, “oh, the tension is building in the *Blue Channel*,” and then the big spaceship comes back.

**Austin:** Right. Spaceship comes back. Have a spaceship fight, finally.

**Ali:** Yeah. We gotta do more— we have to go to space.

**Austin:** I mean, you have a reason to now, right? Chimera’s Lantern.

**Ali:** Oh my god. Yeah, oh! You know what?

**Austin:** And, you know, things are moving over on the faction game too. You’ll see.

**Ali:** [laughs] I don’t know if I should listen to it. I usually wait until after downtimes to listen to them so I can go into a downtime blind.

**Austin:** You should listen to it.

**Ali:** Okay.

**Austin:** There's stakes that are clear by listening to it.

**Ali:** [sighs] Uh huh. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm! Mm-hmm. I know a little bit. I'm pretending like I don't. [laughs]

**Austin:** I mean, there's some stuff you don't know yet too. There is some stuff you don't know yet, I will say.

**Ali:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Austin:** I mean, we've talked about a little bit of it, but.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** Because where we leave off is you have these spies. [both laugh quietly] What do you do with them? was a big question.

**Ali:** Right. What do you do with the spies?

**Austin:** And that was as much of a contentious question as "what do you do with the spy list?" before there were four spies to spend as tokens or whatever, so.

**Ali:** [laughs] Yeah. The crew of the *Blue Channel* needing to contend, over and over, with decisions and struggling with it is a point in the column of "Gucci is not that bad." [laughs quietly]

**Austin:** Let Gucci make decisions. Yeah, uh huh.

**Ali:** You know what?

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

**Ali:** [laughs quietly] It was an arrangement that worked out, and we'll see how it goes as the season continues. [laughs]

## Final Thoughts [1:50:02]

**Austin:** I'm excited! I'm excited to see where it goes from here. Big moves coming, let me tell you.

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

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** That's true. Friends at the Table.

**Austin:** Friends at the Table.

**Ali:** Nobody does it like us. [laughs quietly]

**Austin:** I mean, you know. I messaged you and Jack the other day and was like, "Oh, I know what the Road to Season 10 is," so.

**Ali:** Did you say that? Wait, when did you say that?

**Austin:** I said this in production chat two days ago.

**Ali:** What is season 10?

**Austin:** It's the third of these.

**Ali:** Oh, I know what's season 10. Oh my god.

**Austin:** I have to think this way.

**Ali:** That's season 10?

**Austin:** It's season 10, because this is season 8, right? Am I wrong? This is season 8. All my documents say season 8, like my big prep document is just called "Season 8." And it's like, not really season 8, because like, we've had two Bluff City seasons now, right? We've already done 10 season total.

**Ali:** Right, right.

**Austin:** But main seasons? And I count Marielda and Winter as one season.

**Ali:** Right.

**Austin:** Right?

**Ali:** Jeez Louise.

**Austin:** And I count all the Roads as part of the big season, but you know, PALISADE, Sangfielle, PARTIZAN, Spring, Twilight Mirage, Winter, Winter/Marielda, COUNTER/Weight, Autumn. Eight.

**Ali:** That's eight seasons.

**Austin:** Winter/Marielda is one, so.

**Ali:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Austin:** So I know which—

**Ali:** Kudos to us.

**Austin:** Yeah. [Ali laughs] I mean, I don't— let me say something. I don't know what 10 is in the sense that, like, I don't know what game we're playing for it, and I don't know how we— I know vaguely where I want it to go, I think, but in the same way that the end of season 6 led to season 8, the rest of season 8 could lead to a different season 10.

**Ali:** Oh, yeah. I could not tell you right now really what we do for season 10, because I have no idea what's gonna happen next in PALISADE.

**Austin:** I couldn't tell you anything about the characters, but I think some big— do you know the...Isaac Asimov, the science fiction writer has this notion in his— he has a series called *Foundation*, and he has this notion called psychohistory, which is this sort of idea that, like, predictive...predictive mathematics and prediction engines and stuff can see the future, but they can't see little things. They can see the big flow of future events. You can see when an empire might rise or fall, you can see when a technology

might change things dramatically, but you couldn't tell the story of one person in it. You couldn't predict the story of one person in history, right? You could tell that the Roman empire was gonna fall. You couldn't tell when it was going to fall.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** Or you couldn't tell which emperor would be the last, right? Or how it would change into different things and blah blah blah. And I kind of feel that way about the Divine Cycle a little bit, which is like, I kind of feel like I have a general idea of the way the wind is blowing, but that's— and that's because the stakes of this season are smaller than that. The stakes of this season are: what happens to Palisade? What happens to the Twilight Mirage? And those will have knock-on effects to the big rest of the world, or rest of the universe, rest of the galaxy, but the bigger stuff, I feel like there are certain tensions and certain pressures that I think lead us to certain things, and that's all I'll say for now. There's also big shit that could change all this, right? Because...

**Ali:** Right, yeah.

**Austin:** When Divines fight, millions die, and like, that's the world we live in right now, right? That's the setting.

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** So, I don't know. We'll see.

**Ali:** But I do think it's interesting, in terms of, like, the way...because what we've done for the previous two seasons, and Twilight Mirage I guess does this too, but we've isolated them to a location, [**Austin:** Yes.] and I think that—

**Austin:** All of our seasons are location names, which is wild still, to me.

**Ali:** The seasonal ones— or I guess COUNTER/Weight was a—

**Austin:** They're Hieron. The seasonal ones are all still “in Hieron.”

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

**Austin:** Right?

**Ali:** [laughs] And Sangfielle is also the name of that continent.

**Austin:** And Sangfielle is a place.

**Ali:** Wow!

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Ali:** Good for us, I guess.

**Austin:** Well, and Bluff City. Like...

**Ali:** And Bluff City.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Great. That's wonderful.

**Austin:** Maybe this is our problem. Maybe we'd be, like, 10 times as big if we had, like, named them something— maybe we named a season the way we name episodes.

**Ali:** Oh, no.

**Austin:** You don't think that's it?

**Ali:** That would not help our reputation [Austin laughs] of being, like, too artsy—

**Austin:** Too artsy, too up our own asses?

**Ali:** And obtuse, yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah, okay. You're probably right. [Ali laughs] Probably right.

**Ali:** But I guess, you know, *Star Wars* isn't called, um...

**Austin:** Tatooine.

**Ali:** Tatooine.

**Austin:** Right. It's called *Star Wars*.

**Ali:** And, you know, there's— yeah, there's wars here. There's stars.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** God, what was I— oh, I was saying because, like, the bridge between last season and this season...like the thought of, like, and this is so— this is Brnine-coded, so this is—

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Ali:** This is my opinion of it.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** But like, the idea of people being sort of stuck to a place and then going to Palisade where they're *going* to a place.

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

**Ali:** And the, like, comment that you got about the season not seeming as open-ended, I feel like there's...I don't feel that way as a player, because even though we've set up a lot of foundational, like, faction type stuff, [**Austin:** Right.] map type stuff, things like that, it still feels like it's such unexplored...land?

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** I don't want to just say land, but like, you know, opportunity for stories and all of that things, like, from a player and a character side.

**Austin:** Totally. I mean, listen, one of the big questions with what to do with those spies is: can we use them to set up the felling of even one pillar of the Principality? [Ali laughs]

quietly] The Principality has eight or the Bilateral Intercession has eight pillars.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** Nine pillars. Nine pillars. So it's like, we are— it feels early in some ways. You know, sometimes, as *Armour Astir* says, those can fall like dominoes once they start going, but there is a real, like, sense that...who knows how the war is going, you know? You might be losing, and that, to me, is still very open-ended, and I don't have a plan for that at all.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** I have a plan for like, you know, classic “clocks tick” type stuff, but that's not...that clock isn't gonna end and then it's like, “and then the war ended.” Do you know what I mean? The clock is gonna tick over, and then like, I'm gonna say, “Then this wild shit happens,” you know? But that's TBD, you know? And that won't end the season. Those are smaller things that are about changing the stakes, but yeah, I don't know how things are gonna wrap up on Palisade. And I also think the other thing that we haven't really talked about publicly, and I know we've already gone for a long time, [Ali laughs quietly] but one thing that has surprised me and relieved me is how character driven this season is.

**Ali:** Yes.

**Austin:** I think we really wanted Sangfielle to be character driven, and there was friction, because I think there are ways that *Heart* is really character driven. I think stuff like the beats that you're chasing are really great to keep the characters at the forefront. The way that you, like, got XP was by, like, saying, “Ooh, I want to kick someone off the top of a tower,” and then you do that, right? And then you get XP.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** And I thought that was really character driven, but a lot of that game is about traveling from place to place or, you know, you said the other day, you were like, “It's about dungeons,” right?



**Ali:** Right, yeah. And that's what— I think that was tough about the beats system, because I think the...the way that I felt playing it, and it felt like the trap that we set into that's a hard trap to escape is that it would be like, "Oh, where do I want to go to do this thing?"

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** And then it became less about, like, "How is my character going to get to the place where they're gonna get so mad that they're gonna kick somebody off a flight of stairs?"

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Ali:** It's like, you know, somebody would put that on a sheet, and then you would build a cool train station.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** And like, shoutouts to that train station.

**Austin:** No one even got kicked off the top of that train station, at the end of the day.

**Ali:** [laughs] Wait, is that not where the kick happens?

**Austin:** It never happened, right?

**Ali:** Ohh.

**Austin:** Didn't— or maybe it did. But no, no one got kicked off. I thought it would happen, and then—

**Ali:** Oh, that's right.

**Austin:** No, it did. It ended up happening in Sapodilla. It ended up happening at the library.

**Ali:** Okay, that's right. That's right. That's right.

**Austin:** Because I thought it was gonna happen—

**Ali:** It was not a kick down the stairs. It was a different—

**Austin:** I mean, I thought it was supposed— it was supposed to happen at the train. I built a train station so it could happen. [Ali laughs] I built a train station and put the, you know, the slimiest little shit I could in that train station.

**Ali:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Austin:** And then you play the game.

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** And that's games. That's actual play.

**Ali:** You know, that's games.

**Austin:** That's games. So yeah, so I don't know. I'm happy about how character driven this season has been. I think it's also different in a real way. Like, *PARTIZAN* was so big ideas forward, and I think that that's not a— I don't think it's a problem that *PALISADE* is less that.

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** I think that also is just part of a sequel, is like, ooh, how are all my faves doing? You know, what's going on there? There's big ideas and stuff here too. It's why I'm so grateful for the faction game, is like, we can go wild with big weird shit in the faction games and get to talk for 45 minutes about the ideology of gardens or whatever, but the single team focus again, first time since *COUNTER/Weight*, and the way that we're just playing the game and the way *Armour Astir* leans toward character drama means we're getting, I think, some really fun character beats with everybody. Could not be more happy about that.

**Ali:** Yeah. Well, we'll see how it continues.

**Austin:** We will.

**Ali:** But yeah, [laughs] we've spoken for a while, so I'm gonna let you go.

**Austin:** Thank you.

**Ali:** We are both gonna go play *Final Fantasy XVI*, probably.

**Austin:** That is what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna...I'm gonna do that.

**Ali:** Shoutouts to us.

**Austin:** Shoutouts to us. [Ali laughs] I'm gonna do the Abnormal Mapping episode on *Final Fantasy XVI* in July, so I have to beat it by then.

**Ali:** Oh, yeah, okay. Shoutout to Abnormal Mapping.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Follow them.

**Austin:** Yeah. Any other shoutouts?

**Ali:** They're just @AbnormalMapping on Twitter, right?

**Austin:** I think that that's right. I think that that's— I don't think it's like "abmap," you know what I mean?

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

**Austin:** I think it's probably just all full— yeah, it's just @AbnormalMapping.

**Ali:** Uh huh. They have a dot com, abnormalmapping.com, not a dot net over here.

**Austin:** They got at dot com. They got a Patreon.

**Ali:** Shoutout to them.

**Austin:** Shoutouts to them. Shoutouts to everybody. Shoutouts to everybody who we do

work with on the side sometimes.

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** You know? [laughs quietly] We're always doing other stuff, but also: [friendsatthetable.cash](http://friendsatthetable.cash).

**Ali:** Friendsatthetable.cash. I'm actually remembering— I thought I was gonna mention something about *Star Wars: Rebels* earlier, and I forgot what I was gonna say.

**Austin:** On this show?

**Ali:** While we were recording tonight. I think I was gonna say that, like, the decision around— the, like—

**Austin:** Mm.

**Ali:** The shift from that being Tenn Alpenglow's decision to being Kenneth Carrion...Carrion Clover? It's Carrion, right, like the bird?

**Austin:** It's Marian. Marion Colver.

**Ali:** Marion Clover. Like, really changes the threat of that character, I think, who has been played so far as such a joke.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Ali:** And I remember thinking a similar thing about *Star Wars: Rebels*.

**Austin:** Sure.

**Ali:** And like, the thought that like, because of this arc and because, you know, his sister was involved, and because there was such a domino effect, feeling like he might be more of an important antagonist accidentally is kind of exciting and fun, but we'll see what happens.

**Austin:** Well, like—

**Ali:** We don't know that that's for sure.

**Austin:** We don't know. I have no fucking idea. I mean, I have ideas, but I don't *know* know know. I do think it's great to have a little shit who is a piece of work that you could push over with a shove be the person who orders the death of hundreds of people, because that happens every day, right?

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** And like, I think that that's part of the fear of...you know, it's not as simple as the like, the guy who's whiny— you know, part of what made— part of what worked in Hieron with Isaac Addleton is he was just a little guy who you could bully. [Ali laughs] And he was still dangerous in a way, [Ali: Uh huh.] but the genre space of fantasy was that he would never be in charge of a great empire or whatever. There was no structural way for him to take control of a bunch of people and make them do what he wanted, but it turns out that the deeply corrupt Bilateral Intercession that is partly, you know, hyper conservative fundamental— you know, partly fundamental religious organization and partly hyper conservative secular organization and partly tech bro. People like that can get control of those organizations very clearly, and the genre space of sci-fi that we're in is one in which that happens all the time, and like, that lets us let him be a threat and also a whiny baby who is very funny to play sometimes, you know?

You know, these shitty tech guys are really funny. They suck, and I so wish that the fight between Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg had happened, [Ali laughs] and I hope it would have gone really wrong is what I'll say onto the air. I hope it would have gone really wrong for both of them. But the world we live in is where little shitheads get to ruin people's lives all the time, you know?

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** Let alone literally that, like, Kenneth Marian Colver is based loosely on the sort of American, you know, functionaries who oversee things like the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. You know what I mean? Like, those people were not, like [exaggerated] big cool men, like macho— you know what I mean? Like, even in the shitty macho way,

even in the shitty, you know, deeply misogynistic and chauvinist way about like, “This is what a man is!” Like, the people who we put over there to run that shit were little babies, and I don't mean like— I don't mean that in, like, an emasculation sense. I think that they were just, like, whiny and selfish and narcissistic, regardless of what their gender was. Of course, most of them were white men. But like, they were not, even by their own weird standards— like, this is the classic thing of like Tucker Carlson, right? Is that, like, **[Ali: Mm-hmm.]** this is the dude who's telling me about, like, how men aren't men anymore? The bowtie guy? Shut the fuck up! You know what I mean? [chuckles]

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Like, you're not even up on your own shit. And so, like, that is part of what makes Colver a fun character to keep coming back is that, 12 episodes ago, he was whining about bread prices, you know?

**Ali:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** And now he's deadly, and those two things aren't separate. So. Anyway. Games.

**Ali:** Anyway. Have a good night.

**Austin:** Bye.

**Ali:** [laughs] Bye.