

## **Ultimate Gon's Mistake - Hunter x Hunter ep. 19-21: Media Club Plus S01E07**

Transcriber: robotchangeling

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### **Introduction**

**Keith:** Hey, everybody, it's Keith. Just wanted to let you know up top that we've got a couple of new pieces of merch in our store. You can go to [friendsatthetable.shop](https://friendsatthetable.shop) to check out the Friends at the Table merch store, if you listen to Friends at the Table. We've got shirts and hoodies and stickers, a couple reprints/redesigns of old merch that we've done. If you're not a Friends at the Table listener, you should check out Friends at the Table, but the merch is so good you should just go look at the designs anyway. They're fun just to look at. You can go to [friendsatthetable.shop](https://friendsatthetable.shop) to check that stuff out, and you can go to [friendsatthetable.cash](https://friendsatthetable.cash) to become a supporter of this show and of Friends at the Table. As always, we appreciate your support. Thank you! Bye.

[\["The Boy in Green"\]](#) by Jack de Quidt plays]

**Keith:** Welcome to Media Club Plus, a podcast about diving into the media that interests us and the stories that excite us. As always, we are brought to you by Friends at the Table. This season, we're watching 2011's *Hunter × Hunter*, based on the manga by Yoshihiro Togashi. With me, as always, is Sylvi Bullet.

**Sylvia:** Hi, I'm Sylvi. You can find me everywhere at [@SYLVIBULLET](#). Just search for me, and I'll be there.

**Keith:** Andrew Lee Swan.

**Dre:** Hey, you can find me on Twitter at [@swandre3000](#). I decided not to do a bit.

**Keith:** [laughs] Okay, and Jack de Quidt? [Sylvia laughs]

**Jack:** Hi. I'm Jack. You can find me on Cohost at [@jdq](#) and you can buy or you can download any of the music featured on the show at [notquitereal.bandcamp.com](#). Today is Saturday, and I need to have written some of that music by Tuesday. Right now, it does not exist. [Keith laughs] I'm speaking music—

**Sylvia:** Yeah, right, this is—

**Jack:** I'm speaking music into existence.

**Sylvia:** If all goes according to plan, this is the last episode we'll record before this show is out in the world, huh?

**Dre:** Oh, yeah.

**Keith:** That's true. And at this point, it has to go according to plan, because I've already uploaded the episode 0 that has a four minute explainer up top that includes, "Hey, by the way, an episode's gonna be out on Tuesday," so it's gotta—

**Jack:** Wow!

**Keith:** At this point, we're locked in.

**Dre:** It's gotta happen. Yeah.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Do you think that there's gonna be music? [Dre laughs]

**Keith:** Yeah! Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Okay.

**Keith:** Yeah, I do. Yeah, I think there is gonna be music.

**Jack:** [laughs quietly] We'll be fine.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** I'll figure it out.

**Keith:** Yeah. Yeah. I'm totally— you know, I'll hum into a microphone and just paste it on the front if I have to.

**Jack:** Yeah, I would—

**Dre:** [sighs] The longer we do this bit, the less time Jack has to go write the music.

[laughs]

**Keith:** That's fair.

**Jack:** That's true.

## **Summary [0:02:50]**

**Keith:** These three episodes are the first best three episodes that we've had so far. I'm gonna say that. I said in the Discord last night that these are an early—this morning—that these are an early peak for the show, I think. I'm really excited to talk about these. First off, this episode has a lot of child torture in it.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, that—

**Keith:** Sorry, but there's no way around it.

**Jack:** Yes. Episode one—

**Sylvia:** [laughs] My— straight up a warning for the show. Child torture in general [**Dre:** Yeah.] is kind of a content warning going forward.

**Keith:** To balance out that child torture, we also get a big “what is a Hunter?” lore drop at the very beginning of the episode. The bizarre and surprisingly cruel rules to last week’s sort of mystery bracket are revealed. It’s not good. Hanzo beats the shit out of Gon but still manages to lose. Kurapika and Leorio become Hunters, along with Gon. The entire tournament is played in a flashback, except for the first round.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Keith:** This is outrageous. Immediate—

**Sylvia:** I love it.

**Keith:** It’s so good.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** Jack, for context, the tournament arc is, I would say, a main feature of the genre, and to get to this tournament at the end, deliberately to do a tournament and then to have the main character sleep through the whole tournament [Sylvia laughs] and then need to be told what happens...

**Sylvia:** Stop me if I’m wrong, but Togashi, like, popularized this a little bit too with *Yu Yu Hakusho*, right?

**Keith:** *Yu Yu Hakusho* is—

**Sylvia:** Or am I misremembering?

**Keith:** *Yu Yu Hakusho*, to me, is a show that takes the exact opposite tact as this show. Tract? You take a tract, right?

**Sylvia:** No, tact—

**Jack:** You take a...

**Sylvia:** I think tact works.

**Dre:** A tact or a tract.

**Keith:** Tack? A tack.

**Dre:** A tract—

**Jack:** A tack.

**Keith:** Right.

**Dre:** A tract is the weird thing that people would hand you instead of a tip at Cracker Barrel to tell you to go talk to Jesus. [Keith laughs]

**Jack:** Mm, mm-hmm. And a tack is how you make a boat go sideways.

**Keith:** Right, tack. [Sylvia laughs] That's the tac in Tic Tac.

**Jack:** Yes.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** It is. Uh, we've gotten off track of the summary.

**Keith:** Right. Sorry, yes. We'll get back on the summary. Just a lot— there's a lot of, like, plot beats in these three episodes. Like, lots of different things happen. We get a massive Gittarackur reveal. We get our first crumbs of info about Gon's father, Ging. And, um, maybe this isn't the end of the Hunter Exam.

**Jack:** Yeah, we get a little teaser at the end. We also get a very clear, um...I'll say this at the top so we can sort of cover it and move on. We move out comfortably of the Hunter Exam section— I mean, brackets: or do we?

**Keith:** Right.

**Jack:** And into our next goal. We are given a clear goal [**Keith:** Right.] at the end of this

arc, and watching that develop is really cool. The crew minus Killua are heading off to a mysterious mountain to rescue Killua from his assassin family.

**Keith:** Speaking of rescuing Killua from his assassin family, Jack, I don't know if you remember, you made a prediction on the last set of episodes toward the end.

**Jack:** Oh, 16 17 18?

**Keith:** Yes.

**Sylvia:** Yes.

**Keith:** Yes. Do you remember your prediction?

**Jack:** I, uh, ooh. Was my prediction something like, “when you make a character with the power and capability of Killua, what you are saying to the audience is eventually we are going to show you that character troubled by something or problematized by something, and I'm so excited to see what that is”?

**Keith:** Uh, it was actually a bit more specific than that. You said, and I might be getting this not quite exactly right. [Dre and Sylvia laugh] You said that Killua was going to kill Netero and be disqualified.

**Dre:** I think Sylvi typed this quote in a Discord conversation.

**Keith:** Oh, great. Great.

**Dre:** “I have no doubt that Killua is passing the Hunter Exam—”

**Sylvia:** That was what I said, yeah.

**Dre:** “Unless he kills Netero or something.” [laughs quietly]

**Keith:** Right, there we go. [Jack laughs]

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Yes.

**Sylvia:** That was the exact quote.

**Jack:** Okay!

**Keith:** So, it also goes to another thing that you explained in the last set of episodes, which was that you tend to, like, be weirdly on the right path with your guesses but that it branches off into a bizarre, uh...

**Sylvia:** There's always a little swerve.

**Keith:** Yeah, it always does a swerve and, like, makes the character— I think you specifically were like, I guess the right thing but happening with the wrong characters, which is then literally what you did later that episode.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** Yeah, what is— it's really fun as a viewer to have that experience, because you feel like you are on the same wavelength as the show, but it is still surprising you. You know, it's the sisters-not-twins sort of philosophy [**Keith:** Sure.] of guessing how a show works, where I'm like, I'm having a good time hanging out with this, but there is gonna be a little swerve here and there, because yes, the Hunter Exam— and we'll talk more about this as we get into the episode 21, but the Hunter Exam comes to an abrupt and unceremonious end when Killua murders Bodoro in the middle of his match with Leorio and walks away, therefore qualifying every single other candidate and disqualifying Killua.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

## **Episode 19 [0:08:37]**

**Keith:** Now, the remarkable thing about this is that— oh, first of all, just real quick, to get this out of the way: this takes place at a hotel. [laughs quietly] I never really picked up on this—

**Sylvia:** Really?

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Keith:** But the first thing they say when they get there, they're like, "Yeah, this is just a— this is a hotel that's managed by the Hunter Association, so."

**Sylvia:** Oh my god.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Keith:** "Feel free to make yourselves at home."

**Dre:** Yeah, I think—

**Sylvia:** Oh my god!

**Dre:** Yeah. Is Beans there, or is that what Netero says?

**Jack:** Green Green Jellybean Man is here, yeah.

**Keith:** Beans is there, but I think it's Netero.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And this hotel is sort of like a classical Indian architecture. It is a real...I don't know how they decide when to unveil big new static set paintings, because it is always extremely cool when they do so. It's like they have these little establishing shots that get us into arcs, and then we're in, you know, fairly nondescript background work. There is an absolutely incredible set reveal at the end of 21, but we will talk about that later. But yes, the tournament begins, and this bracket constructed by Netero is, I will say, deeply confusing. [laughs quietly]

**Keith:** Yes.

**Jack:** It took me most of this episode to figure out exactly how this works, but the long and the short of it is that everybody has been paired up in fights. If you win your fight,



that's it. You're a Hunter. [snaps fingers] Bang, done. If you lose your fight, you are given— you proceed through the bracket. You are given another opportunity to have another fight until you get down to one final battle between, presumably, two losers.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** The winner of that battle becomes a Hunter, and the loser is disqualified.

**Keith:** And in what other way is this bracket strange, Jack?

**Jack:** This bracket is strange, because it is weighted, and it is weighted according to three scoring categories by Netero. [Sylvia laughs quietly] And this was really cool, because this was kind of the first time— well. [laughs quietly] I mean. God, we're never gonna be done with "what is a Hunter?", are we? This is gonna be the fucking albatross around our neck.

**Keith:** This is a massive, massive [Dre: Uh huh.] "what is a Hunter?" episode.

**Dre:** Uh huh.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Yes, we will be talking about "what is a Hunter?" until the end of the show.

**Jack:** Okay, because it is revealed that Netero and the crew have been scoring these people in three categories. Category one: physical strength. Great. Absolutely fine.

**Sylvia:** The most straightforward of them, I think.

**Jack:** Most straightforward. I know what that means. Punching, running, shooting, withstanding being bitten by 5000 snakes. [laughs quietly]

**Sylvia:** While they do this, they show, like, clips of past episodes. Am I remembering that right? I watched this much later than the rest of everyone.

**Keith:** Yeah, they're showing a little montage of what counts as physical strength.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Option two, or scoring category two: mental acuity. A little trickier to qualify, but still, I sort of know what that means, you know?

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Jack:** How well can you think of your way out of problems, how well is Gon able to do the whole, like, “I’m going to figure out how to get Hisoka’s badge,” all that thing, stuff like that.

**Keith:** One thing that they showed was Hisoka learning how to catch the former proctor’s thing to kill him with.

**Jack:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Dre:** Mm.

**Keith:** Like, that counts as mental acuity, because he had to, like, figure out how to stop this attack.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Now, option three is the highest weighted, so I was about to be like—

**Keith:** If everyone wants to make a little guess, if you’re not watching along, make a little guess what category three might be. [Sylvia laughs]

**Jack:** That’s right, it’s— [laughs quietly] I’m making the heaviest air quotes with my fingers. “Overall impression.”

**Keith:** [laughs] Tilt.

**Sylvia:** This motherfucker [Dre: Mm-hmm?] is choosing Hunters based on vibes.

**Jack:** Based on vibes!

**Keith:** And isn't good at it, because— [laughs]

**Dre:** Vibes and yearbook awards.

**Jack:** [laughs] Yes, it's yearbook awards.

**Keith:** Is choosing based on vibes and is not someone who should be choosing based on vibes. I have here, this will be— so, the way this works is, those interviews, the more you were mentioned by another person, the more chances that you get in this bracket.

**Dre:** Uh huh.

**Keith:** And that does not take into account Kurapika's little, you know, "I'm thinking about him positively and him negatively." This is just raw mentions [**Dre:** Uh huh.] is, like, really how this goes.

**Jack:** It is chaos. [Dre laughs]

**Keith:** I've written "Hunter horseshoe theory. Hunters must either be the scariest worst person or the kindest most excellent saint but also really strong." [Jack laughs]

**Dre:** Netero just making this bracket like how Elon Musk thinks Twitter should work.

**Sylvia:** Oh my god. Oh my god!

**Jack:** Just bing bing bing, putting it in place. It's so funny.

**Sylvia:** That's what the X stands for. [Dre and Jack laugh]

**Keith:** Yeah, it's actually cross. [Sylvia sighs]

**Jack:** This game had people get killed by a turtle!

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Someone gets carried off by baby-faced birds, [Sylvia laughs] and we come down to the end, and it's just a man being like, "Oh, this guy's vibes are more powerful than

that guy's vibes."

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Jack:** "I'm gonna rank him higher." This is important, because if you are ranked higher, you get more losing chances. Does that make sense?

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Jack:** If you fail a match and you then proceed to the next bracket, you are given more opportunities to lose and stay in the game if you are better, and this immediately throws a wrinkle into the plan, when Killua notices that Gon is ranked higher than him.

**Keith:** Oh, he did not like that.

**Jack:** This is the first—

**Dre:** He did not like it.

**Jack:** He did not like this.

**Sylvia:** It's so good!

**Jack:** This is the first real moment that the boat gets rocked, I feel.

**Keith:** There's flashes of it on the airship with Netero the first time.

**Jack:** Oh, yes.

**Dre:** Yeah, for sure.

**Jack:** There is something—

**Keith:** And, sorry, and during Trick Tower, there's flashes of it too.

**Jack:** But this is beautiful because— and I don't want to get ahead of ourselves. We'll

talk about this as we get to the episodes. This is a real important set of episodes for Killua, and the way that they seed the tide turning slowly in this moment is so clever. Killua just goes, “Wait a second. I am more powerful than Gon. Do I have less potential than Gon? What is happening here?” And, you know, it’s clear that Netero...my read on the Netero “get the ball off me” scene on the airship was that Netero knows exactly how powerful Killua is.

**Keith:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** He’s just playing with him.

**Dre:** Sure.

**Jack:** And I can't help but wonder if this bracket is Netero trying to rock the boat a little with Killua. What he does not know, however, is that there are forces outside his control that are going to cause his stupid game to get rocked a little more than he thinks.

**Dre:** Can we— do you all— I have posted the bracket in our channel.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, I'm looking at it right now.

**Dre:** By looking at this bracket, according to Netero, the person with the worst scores in the Hunter Exam is Gittarackur.

**Keith:** And Leorio.

**Sylvia:** Yeah. Uh—

**Dre:** Well, no, Leorio’s of a different tier.

**Sylvia:** Theoretically have the worst potential, too. Like, that was a big thing, right?

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Is like, the most potential to be— like, to grow?

**Keith:** Yeah, the thing that— part of the physical strength, mental acuity, and overall

impression speech is Netero saying, like, “Because you've proven your mental acuity and physical strength simply by being here, this bracket is based mostly off of the overall impression.”

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Keith:** And then also brings in the interviews. That's, like, what those interviews were part of.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** I only just bring up the potential thing because it's one of Killua's specific complaints is like—

**Dre:** No, and I—

**Sylvia:** “Gon has more potential than me? Is that what he's saying?”

**Dre:** I think that's interesting, because if you look at it just in terms of, like, raw numbers in terms of how many chances you get to win, Killua and Leorio have the same amount of, like, chances to be in a match and to win, but if you look at how the bracket is drawn, [Keith: Oh.] even though the, like, they're the same, like, quote, unquote, “seed”, Killua's line is lower, and I wonder if that is— maybe I'm just reading way too into this thing, right? But maybe that is a sign that, like, Killua has more potential than Leorio.

**Sylvia:** Possibly.

**Jack:** We are now power scaling. Isn't that what you called it? [Keith laughs]

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, we are.

**Dre:** Sort of.

**Keith:** Sort of.

**Jack:** I think that there's also a—

**Sylvia:** We're trying to— we're trying to analyze a character's power scaling.

**Dre:** Looking at it in general, the lines on the right side of the bracket are just higher than the lines on the left side of the bracket.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Because it is a higher number.

**Dre:** So that may just be a thing.

**Keith:** You are right, Dre.

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

**Keith:** I didn't realize that, yeah, Gittarackur actually has one fewer shots than Leorio. I mis—

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** I did misread this because of the line height. I think that it's a trick of just the graphic design here.

**Dre:** It could be, yeah,

**Jack:** But I actually have a—

**Dre:** But I think the—

**Jack:** Oh, sorry.

**Dre:** Oh, go ahead, Jack. No, go ahead.

**Jack:** I have a really, uh, non-character-focused reading of this, which is I think this is a piece of sleight of hand by the show. I think—

**Sylvia:** Ooh.

**Jack:** So, as this arc continues, there are gonna be big Gittarackur twists.

**Dre:** Uh huh.

**Jack:** And I think part of why that twist functions is that Gittarackur slides through the game like water off a duck's back.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Jack:** He is powerful, but he's not too powerful.

**Keith:** Right.

**Jack:** He is mysterious, but the terms of the mystery are broadly unclear. He is considered a powerful opponent but not on the same level as Gon or Hisoka. I think—

**Keith:** Hisoka's drawn a lot of attention from Gittarackur.

**Dre:** Yes.

**Jack:** And Gittarackur's whole vibe is really "there is something weird about this person," but not so— our focus is pulled elsewhere deliberately, and I think that, on some level, if you were to look at this bracket prior to knowing what happens, you would go, "Yeah, that looks about right," and I think it would make this moment that comes in 21—oh, sorry, in 20—hit so much harder, given that he has been staged as a very specific kind of foe.

**Keith:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** Um, let me see. Rules, quick rules. Important to go over the rules here. Weapons are allowed.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** [laughs] So, you can use a sword. No cheating, says Netero.



**Dre:** Of course not.

**Jack:** Big talk from the vibes-based examiner. It would be like if you asked for your high school rubric and— well, I suppose this is kind of like a high school rubric. It's just sort of, like, "good student?" question mark? And also, if any— so, you're not allowed to kill your opponent. If anybody dies, the exam ends, and everybody left passes. First up—

**Dre:** Jack—

**Keith:** Yeah, all the legal killing was the last game.

**Jack:** [chuckles] Yes.

**Dre:** Jack, you have left off an important rule.

**Jack:** Oh, yeah, go ahead.

**Dre:** What happens if you just knock your opponent out?

**Jack:** Oh, yes. This is a critical rule. That does not count.

**Keith:** Right.

**Jack:** The match is not over.

**Dre:** What do you mean?

**Jack:** Your opponent has to audibly surrender.

**Keith:** So, if you knock someone out, then you've all gotta sit there and wait until they wake back up.

**Dre:** Uh huh. Yeah.

**Jack:** That seems to be the implication, yes.

**Keith:** Yes.

**Jack:** Now, if you watched the Trick Tower arc, in which characters said something like, “I am going to torture you for 72 hours,” you might have an idea of where this is going.  
[Sylvia laughs]

**Keith:** Right.

**Jack:** I did not.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** And I will say that episode 19 was an unpleasant experience.

**Keith:** I'm gonna call it stomach churning.

**Dre:** It's rough. Yeah.

**Jack:** I got to the end of episode 19— and I'm not making, like, a moral objection to this. I think it's good television. I think it's, like, you know, the show is doing what it sets out to do. It works fine. It is such a flat, brutal, simple episode of television that I got to the end of it and sort of went, “Well, I haven't really gained anything or learned anything. That was just miserable,” and the show makes up for it by 20 and 21 being so brilliant and following on so cleanly from what we see here, but this is a really singular episode of *Hunter × Hunter* so far.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Because the first match is between Hanzo and Gon. [Sylvia sighs]

**Keith:** There's a few really interesting things that happen right at the beginning of this. The first is that we see Hanzo recognize the issue with these rules immediately.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** But then doesn't hesitate for even a fraction of a second to exploit the rules. We also see, at the same time, Gon completely misjudging his opponent.

**Jack:** Yes. [Dre laughs] Gon thinks, and I think as the viewer I also thought, because

we've seen Hanzo fall on his ass a few times. I mean, Hanzo is— we've talked in the past about Hanzo is an extremely funny character in principal.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Just a big goofball.

**Keith:** Yes.

**Jack:** And I think—

**Sylvia:** I think straight up we spent a good chunk either last episode or the episode before this one talking about how much we loved Hanzo's shenanigans.

**Keith:** Right.

**Jack:** There is a truly brilliant Hanzo shenanigan at the end of episode 21, but in order to get there—

**Keith:** Oh, yeah.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** —we have to get through this.

**Keith:** Well, and it is sort of a wildly magnified version of the thing that makes Hanzo, you know, such a fun character to watch, which is, like, the first thing that we see is, like, him going around introducing himself to everyone, being like, "Hi, I'm a shinobi. I'm part of a secret— I'm part of a clandestine organization, blah blah blah." [Sylvia laughs] Like, it's so funny. And then become very serious, like, [seriously] "No, my rules do not allow me to accept this poison drink from you." And we've seen him have these, like, moments of seriousness next to moments of absolute, you know...I don't know. What is a word for what he does? His shenanigans.

**Dre:** Wackiness. Yeah.

**Keith:** Yes, his wackiness. He's a goofball. He's a goofball ninja.

**Jack:** So...oh, but just before the fight begins, Hanzo looks at the referee, who is a man called Masta, and says, "Oh, I know who you are. You were tailing me on Zevil Island," and this is brilliant, because we get this sudden reveal that there were examiners on the island the whole time, assigned to the individual characters, and then we just get an extremely good classic *Hunter × Hunter* joke, as it is revealed that—

**Dre:** Like, who noticed what. [laughs]

**Jack:** Hanzo noticed his. Kurapika noticed his. Killua noticed his. Leorio and Gon did not.

**Sylvia:** [laughs] Leorio does pretend he did, though.

**Keith:** Gon is unfazed. Gon's totally unfazed by this. Leorio is, like, mortified. [all laugh]

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** He's the best.

**Jack:** And, notably, the viewer also did not notice this. We weren't even given a hint of this.

**Keith:** No. No hint of this at all, which is actually kind of surprising, knowing Gon.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** Yeah. This is just a nice trick that the show has played on us. This is a bit like the badly written— I like it here, but it's a bit like badly written detective stories where all the really critical clues are actually withheld from you so you can't actually solve the mystery.

**Keith:** Right.

**Jack:** But here it works out really well to...

**Keith:** Well, this is like a— this is, you know, this is a skill issue.

**Jack:** Yeah. We are not the...

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** What are they called? The Hunter Committee? What is this group of weirdos called?

**Sylvia:** The Hunter Exam Committee.

**Keith:** The Hunter Exam Committee, yeah.

**Jack:** The Hunter Exam Committee. So, the fight begins, and Hanzo starts beating up Gon. So far, so normal

**Keith:** Immediately starts beating up Gon.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Keith:** There's one phrase, like, you know, there's one like, "Hey, you thought that you had something, but you didn't." You know, "Pretty good for a kid, I guess." Hit you in the neck, and you're already on the ground. The next thing that we see is, like, Hanzo straightening his spine back out, because he crumpled it too much.

**Jack:** To be like, "Get up. We need to fight."

**Keith:** To be like, "Okay, now I'm gonna hit you again," you know.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And we get some good Killua— Killua is mad, because he's like, "I could've dodged that. I'm more powerful than Gon." [laughs]

**Keith:** Yeah, he's deeply in his feelings about the bracket.

**Sylvia:** Such a sulky little shit. The Killua characterization in these three episodes I'm so glad we get to, because I've been banging my "Killua's my favorite" drum for a lot of this show, [Dre: Yeah.] and now I get to point to the reasons why.

**Keith:** These three episodes clearly display Killua's two wolves.

**Jack:** [laughs] And Killua is looking at the wolves, saying, "I could kill both those wolves."

**Keith:** I could kill both these wolves. [Keith and Dre laugh]

**Jack:** [chuckles] No problem to me. I've killed 46 wolves. I'm 12 years old. [Dre laughs] I love Killua so much. But, and so, Hanzo says, "Gon, surrender. You will be able— if you surrender, you will have another chance. You'll have more than one other chance to fight," and Gon doesn't surrender.

**Keith:** No.

**Jack:** So, Hanzo— I mean, there's no way to sugarcoat this. Hanzo tortures him for 15 minutes of the episode.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** We don't even have to sugarcoat it. This is the word Hanzo uses to describe what he's doing.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Dre:** He does.

**Jack:** He...uh, we've put content warnings on this episode, right?

**Sylvia:** We mentioned it earlier, as well.

**Keith:** Yeah, I...right.

**Sylvia:** We did explicitly say this on—

**Keith:** We did mention it. We haven't—

**Sylvia:** On this episode, but...

**Jack:** I mean, I want to talk about the way this scene is shot. There is, like, a lot of blood for this show starts kind of being put on the floor.

**Dre:** Uh huh.

**Jack:** And then, in just some really great art direction, we see the blood fade and dry.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** It's not all fresh blood, and so there's this clear visual image that he has been tortured for a— he's barely able to stand.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** In fact, he spends most of this episode on the ground.

**Sylvia:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** At one point, I think Satotz turns to one of the examiners and says, "He can't even vomit anymore."

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Yes.

**Jack:** Which is a fucking terrifying line to put in a kids' show.

**Keith:** This is a...so, the character that says that is the martial artist. What is his name, Bodaro?

**Jack:** Bodaro. Bodoro.

**Keith:** Bodoro? Yeah. And what happens right before that is we get a couple minutes of the beginning of the torture, and then we get a cut and, you know, a fadeout, and it fades back in, and someone exposit that it's been three hours.

**Jack:** Jesus.

**Keith:** This has been going on for three hours.

**Jack:** We have this deeply cruel— I mean, this is— and again, I say this without— I want to be clear that I'm not making a moral judgment on the making of the show, at least in this moment.

**Dre:** Sure.

**Jack:** There are points where I will make a moral judgment. But this is exploitative, right? This is exploitative television. You know, we are watching a character who we have grown to love be just dismantled violently and onscreen for a lengthy amount of real world time in the episode, and the thing this does is it gets us to the place as a viewer that Leorio and Kurapika get into over these three hours of torture, which is they are like, "Oh, we're going to step in."

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** Well, so, first they try and persuade Gon to surrender, and Gon will not surrender. Then they threaten to step in and are told that if they step in, Gon will be immediately disqualified, and I think they will also be immediately disqualified? And—

**Keith:** Uh—

**Jack:** Oh, sorry, go on.

**Keith:** I think it's just Gon.

**Jack:** Okay.

**Keith:** If you interfere, you're only [Dre: Yeah.] hurting the person you're trying to help.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Assuming you don't, like, kill somebody.



**Jack:** And then...so, then we get an exterior shot, like an establishing shot of this hotel, just with the sound of Gon getting beaten up over it.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Jack:** There's very little music in this episode. And then—

**Keith:** Until.

**Jack:** Well, and then—and I love this so much—Kurapika and Leorio say...so, Hanzo breaks Gon's arm, and Kurapika and Leorio say, "If he does more, we are going to step in, disqualify Gon. He can come back if he wants to. This is not continuing." And, in fact, it's done in a really lovely way. Leorio says, "Kurapika...don't stop me. I am going to step in here," and the camera pans over to Kurapika, and he says, "Don't worry." He says, "I wouldn't stop you. I'm going to do the same," and then his eyes turn red, and it's like, oh, this is another brilliant—

**Sylvia:** Oh, red eye reveal is so good.

**Jack:** I think I've talked about this every time Kurapika's red eyes come in, but what a great thing to have a character do in your show as a way to so cleanly, uh...it becomes an event every time Kurapika's eyes turn red.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And it says so much about his— we have been told the circumstances in which his eyes will turn red, and so now, whenever we see it, we're like, "All right, Kurapika is in this mode now." It's great.

**[0:30:09]**

**Sylvia:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** They also— this does a really great job of, like, you know, it's easy to say, like, "Oh yeah, it's been three hours. We did a big cut. You know, it was three hours of torture

that happened in that cut,” so they do a great job here of adding the weight of, like, having to imagine these to are also watching this the whole time.

**Jack:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** I mean, I don't think anyone here is having a pleasant time. I think there's a few characters who don't care or are unaffected by it. Leorio and Kurapika are, like, clearly having the second and third worst times out of anyone here.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Yeah. I...a thing—

**Keith:** The other— oh, sorry. Go ahead?

**Jack:** Well, then he says, “I'm gonna cut your legs off.”

**Keith:** Yeah. There's one real quick joke that happens—I think it's a joke—that happens either right before or right after the Kurapika eyes red moment is that Hanzo takes some time after these three hours of torture—

**Jack:** Oh, yeah.

**Keith:** To, like, drop some backstory. [laughs] Is like—

**Jack:** Yeah!

**Keith:** Does a handstand and then is like, “Let me tell you a little bit about my home,” and is basically like, “I was trained from a young age to be a ninja, so I'm really good at torturing.”

**Sylvia:** It's...

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** “By your age, I'd already killed,” he says. Cut to Killua, who says, “Not a big deal.”  
[Jack, Keith, and Dre laugh]

**Sylvia:** I love them—

**Dre:** “I’ve killed so many people I don’t even care.”

**Sylvia:** I love them so clearly laying out the parallels between Hanzo and Killua, after Hanzo spends all this time just, like, brutalizing Gon.

**Jack:** Ooh, yeah.

**Sylvia:** And also, like, while Killua is having his little insecure moment about, like, “I’m way stronger than Gon. I have way more potential than Gon.” Also amazing because it gets cut off by Gon sweep kicking his fucking arm out from under him, right?

**Jack:** Yep. Yep.

**Keith:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Sylvia:** It’s...

**Jack:** Gon, with a broken arm, kicks, uh, the shinobi, kicks Hanzo over.

**Keith:** Hanzo, yeah.

**Jack:** And—

**Keith:** Kicks him, like, across the tournament stage here.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Keith:** It’s a good kick.

**Jack:** But it doesn’t mean shit. You know, Hanzo is like, “I let you kick me, because I wanted to let you kick me,” and in a really lovely moment of levity, we have Hanzo in focus in the foreground saying, “I let you kick me, because I wanted to,” and completely out of focus in the background, we can see Leorio jumping up and down and shouting, “You’re a liar,” which is really...

**Keith:** Oh, yeah. When he goes, “I let you kick me”?

**Jack:** It’s just a really good visual gag.

**Keith:** Yeah, it’s so funny.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Oh my god, that’s so funny. And it’s true. That’s a lie.

**Jack:** Is it a lie, you think?

**Keith:** I think it’s definitely a lie. The delivery of the line, to me, especially if you hear the dub, like, I’ve always felt like— because why would he do that? Why would he let him kick him? He’s definitely like, “I allowed that to happen.”

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Yeah, it’s very...it’s very silly.

**Keith:** Did we talk about the theme kicking in? Did we— did I miss this?

**Jack:** When is the theme— when did the the— oh, I completely botched saying that.  
[Sylvia laughs quietly] When does the theme kick in?

**Keith:** So, I think that it’s during the kick. Like, Gon’s on the floor. He’s been on the floor for hours. We haven’t seen anything beside, like, Hanzo manipulating Gon’s body into positions to further attack him in, you know, specific bones and muscles or whatever. And as Hanzo’s delivering this backstory and then we’re getting some chatter from the crowd, like, we sort of see Hanzo’s face just get kicked, and then it’s like, oh, Gon kicked Hanzo in the face, flew him across the room, and then we see that he’s up. He’s kneeling. He’s, like, panting, and his theme kicks in [theme playing] boo-boo-boodla-boodla-boo-boo-boo-boo. [Jack laughs] And then he’s like, “Ah, your story made me so bored and annoyed!” [Dre, Sylvia, and Jack laugh] And it is an absolute total shift in the vibe in one second.

**Jack:** Yes, because this is where the episode turns. So, first Hanzo says, “I’m gonna cut off your legs,” and we’re back to the “I’m gonna torture you for 72 hours” plotline again. The fact that this has come up twice in one arc makes me think that the show— we’re gonna come back to this idea of just, like, making someone either physically or mentally so miserable for as long as you can that you sort of bend them to your will. This seems like a recurring theme. And Gon says— and this is where the episode turns. Hanzo says, “I’m going to cut off your legs,” and Gon says, “Well, that’s a problem.” [laughs] We get this beautiful little hand drawn in black and white shot of the spectators being like, “Whoops!” and everyone laughs. Hisoka and Bodoro share a little chuckle, and Bodoro says, “Oh, I’m so sorry,” because what we have sort of figured out here is that Gon is not only not going to give up, he has not been, quote, unquote, “broken” by the events of this and in fact seems fully prepared to Gon’s Mistake his way out of the situation, that is...

**Keith:** I wrote here— I wrote “Ultimate Gon’s Mistake” is what I wrote. [Keith and Jack laugh]

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** Like, brainstorm a solution to a problem so arbitrary and, like, purehearted.

**Keith:** Well, Gon has a point, which is like, nothing you’ve done has worked, and if you cut off my legs, you’ll lose, because I’ll die. You can’t cut off my legs in a way that won’t have me bleed to death.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** And Leorio says, “He’s so stubborn,” and at this point, Gon’s stubbornness really just drives the rest of this episode.

**Keith:** Yeah, it really does. I think that, uh...that, like, Gon— so, the thing that they show is that Hanzo has understood the stakes the whole time and has understood the rules to the game the whole time, what makes these rules particular and weird and cruel, and

the reveal here really is that Gon also understood those rules from the beginning. We just didn't show...we just didn't see him formulating this plan to exploit the rules, because he basically, as soon as he gets attacked like this, I think he goes, "Oh, as long as I don't give up, then I can win."

**Jack:** Yeah. Yeah, he's like, "This is fine."

**Keith:** Yeah. And then he tells that to Hanzo. This is the reveal. He's like, "You can't do that, because then I can't give up! And if I can't give up, then you can't win!"

**Dre:** [mocking] "Meh!"

**Keith:** "So you might as well let me win!"

**Sylvia:** There's a really good, once again, Killua moment—ding ding ding, Killua moment—where people start laughing at Gon's just sort of, like...I don't know, bullheaded confidence [**Keith:** Yeah.] is what I'll go with to describe it.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Keith:** They didn't hear Gon's theme change like we did, but they still all felt the same thing.

**Sylvia:** Yeah. Like, they all start—

**Jack:** No, that's the sound Gon makes when he's very brave.

**Keith:** Oh, it comes out of him? [laughs]

**Sylvia:** It comes out of his hair.

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

**Sylvia:** There is a, uh...it's just like, Killua thinks, "Why is the mood shifting in here? The stakes— the situation hasn't changed at all."

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Like...

**Keith:** He's like, "Gon hasn't gotten any stronger. Why has the brutal atmosphere gotten so much lighter?"

**Jack:** Yeah. Really, really cool, and again, this is just— all of this is work to get the viewer and to get Killua to the point where he needs to be for the next episode to hit as hard as it can.

**Sylvia:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** This is some really— you know, I'm always so reluctant to just be like, "I'm gonna just look at the story as a piece of structure," because...I think it's Le Guin has this really great passage where she talks about a resistance to the idea of stories as simply being, like, a beautiful box wrapped around a message. You know, is all a story is, like, the box and the bow around a message? And she's like, "Well, no, of course it's not. A story is a whole bunch of other things beyond just it as a container for something else," and so whenever I'm like, "Oh, this is just how the structure works," I'm like, the show is also operating on other levels. But the Killua work in the next two episodes comes as a culmination of a bunch of really particular moves, primarily in this episode, and I think Killua being the one to set himself apart from everybody else in the room [**Keith:** Yeah.] and go, "Yeah, everyone's laughing, but like, nothing has really changed here, and I just [**Dre:** Mm-hmm.] saw someone that I love very much get tortured for three hours."

**Keith:** Yeah, I wrote this during the next episode as a note for, you know, something that happens kind of early on, but I wrote that Killua has had a totally different emotional experience during this fight than anybody else.

**Sylvia:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** Like, the difference between how Killua versus Leorio and Kurapika are reacting to this is so obvious that even Kurapika and Leorio notice it. They give him, like, this really awful look and suspicious look [**Jack:** Yeah.] in the next episode when Killua's talking to someone.

**Jack:** And then—

**Keith:** Hanzo. Killua's talking to Hanzo in the next episode.

**Jack:** It sort of comes down to a final moment where Gon has got Hanzo to sort of freeze and really think about how this is gonna go. [laughs] Hanzo is pointing his blade pressed into Killua's forehead. We have this great visual of, like, two—

**Keith:** Gon's forehead, yeah.

**Jack:** [laughs quietly] Oh, sorry, Gon's forehead. Two, like, strands of blood running down either side of Kill— of, uh, Gon's nose. I nearly did it again. And I don't remember the question that is asked, but Gon says, "I'm going to go and see my dad," which is just brilliant.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** You know, this revelation that he doesn't just want to follow in his father's footsteps or understand why he left or understand what made him be a Hunter. He just wants to see him, [Sylvia: Mm-hmm.] and he believes that being a Hunter is the thing that will get him there. It's so crushingly sad, and it's also, in the way that Gon so often is, such, like, a purehearted statement of hope and desire, of speaking something into the world that you care about. It's just an all-time Gon moment so far.

**Keith:** Well, there's another aspect to it, which is that he says that he has a really bad feeling that if he doesn't do it now, he'll never see his father, which is like, it's so brutal, because it's like watching Gon be sort of trapped in [laughs quietly] by the fact that he's the main character of this story. Like, this, like, hopeless— he sort of feels like he's hopelessly fighting against— to, like, keep up with his own story. Like, he just traded four hours of torture for this sort of idea that he has that this is his one shot to see his dad. That is, like, a miserable trade.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.



**Jack:** Yeah.

**Keith:** And it does feel...it does feel like it's, like— it is out of a place of like, you know, hopefulness but also despair, of like, it has to be now, so it doesn't matter what happens to me, because I have to keep— I'm already locked in.

**Jack:** I want to shout out Gon's performer, vocal performer. Who is Gon's performer in the Japanese cast?

**Keith:** Oh, I don't know.

**Jack:** They are doing such a great job in this scene.

**Keith:** Yeah, yeah.

**Sylvia:** Uh, I believe that's Megumi Han.

**Keith:** Great, yes, yeah.

**Sylvia:** Is her name? Yeah. Fantastic performance. Has done a lot of— I'm looking at her filmography right now to see, like, what other people would know her by. A lot of the major roles she's been in I don't really know. Oh, she was T.K. in *Digimon Adventure* [Keith: Ooh.] in the Japanese version. [Dre laughs] So, there you go.

**Jack:** She's been in a ton of video games.

**Sylvia:** Oh, in a video game actually, so not the show T.K.

**Jack:** Oh, she plays Jill in *Final Fantasy XVI* if you've been playing that.

**Sylvia:** Oh, there you go.

**Jack:** But yeah, her performance here is just brilliant, completely in tune with where the character needs to be in this moment, and then, you know, it actually wraps up really quickly from here. Hanzo kind of hears this and says, "Okay, I surrender. Game over."

**Keith:** And Gon accepts?

**Sylvia:** [laughs] No, he does not!

**Jack:** Well.

**Sylvia:** He gets so grumpy about it!

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** He straight up says, "I won't accept that."

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** And says, "Fine, then you surrender," and he's like, "I don't want to lose either, but I don't want to win that way!" and it is...

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** Ah, he's great.

**Jack:** There is—

**Keith:** Hanzo's sort of flexible, like, character traits here really working. He's, like, totally able to grasp the ridiculousness of this situation, immediately picks up on like, "Wait, so you want to win, but you want to win in a way where I lose, not just give up." [Jack laughs] And Gon's like, "Yes." And then like, "But you can't beat me in a fight." Gon's like, "No, I can't."

**Jack:** Yeah, he says— [Sylvia laughs] Hanzo cannot— and I think he's right. Hanzo cannot see a way that he wins this particular fight, and so he says, "I'm simply not going to do it." [laughs] Gon says, "Let's work together to figure out a way that I can beat you," which is just, come on, Gon. And Hanzo responds to this by knocking Gon out, punching him really hard.

**Keith:** Yeah, yeah. Hanzo eventually taking the option that he initially offers to Gon of, like, just win the next fight, which I think says a lot about Hanzo that it took him this long to accept that deal.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Mm-hmm. [Dre laughs]

**Keith:** Like. You know, I can't— let me look at this bracket. It ends up being Pokkle that he fights. [Jack and Sylvia laugh]

**Jack:** That match is really funny.

**Keith:** Oh, no, no, no. It would have been Killua. I am wrong. It would have been...

**Jack:** No, he fights Pokkle.

**Keith:** Oh, no, no, no, no. No, he fights Pokkle.

**Dre:** He fights Pokkle.

**Keith:** Right.

**Jack:** It's a really funny outcome.

**Dre:** And wins.

**Keith:** So, like, if he had looked for one second at the board, it would have been like, Hanzo knows that he can take Pokkle. I guarantee that this is true.

**Jack:** Yeah, 100%.

**Keith:** And so, like, no, he opted for the four hours of torture, for I can't really imagine a reason why.

**Jack:** Ha!

**Keith:** Maybe just not even occurring to him to lose.

**Jack:** Well, he considers himself to be...I was about to say "honorable," but there's no honor in what he did.

**Keith:** No.

**Jack:** He is— he plays by the rules.

**Keith:** He could still consider himself to be honorable.

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

**Sylvia:** He considers himself capable I think is more it. I think he just thought he could get this taken care of in the first round.

**Keith:** Yeah, it's a sunk cost thing.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Like, once he's been torturing him for a half hour, it's like, "Surely not another half hour," and then it's like, "Well, it's been three hours. It's gotta be just right around the corner."

**Jack:** Ha!

**Sylvia:** There's, like, a pride thing to it, you know?

**Keith:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Jack:** And he gives the little speech. He says, "When Gon wakes up, he's not gonna want to accept, but he's gonna have to. Them's the rules." And he also basically says, like, "Watch out for Gon. Let him go on," because if he doesn't sort of...basically the whole game breaks if you play it like Gon did. [laughs quietly]

## **Episode 20 [0:46:21]**

**Keith:** Right, yeah. I think that the...oh, so, we're in episode 20 at this point. We have sort of jumped ahead, so I do want to make sure that we do get something else that happened. I want to set this up real quick, and then we can rewind a little bit. Gon gets knocked out by Hanzo, wakes up in a hospital bed with Satotz. Satotz, I believe,

immediately— oh, so—

**Sylvia:** We...

**Keith:** Sorry, go ahead, Sylvi?

**Sylvia:** We do get, like, a— well, there's, like, a dream that Gon has before this that I do think is, like, kind of good, is him chasing up, like, what he assumes to be his dad at the top of the stairs. We know it's his dad, because we watch the show, but also I don't know how Gon knows what he looks like in this dream. And then—

**Keith:** Uh, Gon's got a picture of him.

**Sylvia:** Oh, right, Gon does have a picture of him! Nevermind. And then the, like, stairs he's going up crumble away, and I think that's just a good way to show, like, Gon's anxiety over having possibly lost the Hunter Exam.

**Jack:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Because he doesn't know.

**Keith:** So, it's back. Satotz is like, "Nah, the Hunter Exam is over." Gon's like, "Can we go watch the rest of the thing?" He's like, "You've been sleeping for a day. Everything's done." Is this where he explains who wins and loses?

**Jack:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** He says, like, Killua passed— or, uh, Kurapika passed. Leorio passed. Unfortunately, Killua killed someone and was disqualified. [Dre laughs quietly]

**Jack:** What he says is, "Killua failed," and then we get a series of images heavily implying that Killua has killed someone.

**Keith:** Oh, right. Right, okay.

**Jack:** We see that shot of Killua leaving through the door.

**Keith:** And this is what we were talking about at the beginning. This is just so wild to me. Where we left off was me saying that *Yu Yu Hakusho* does the kind of opposite thing which is that it takes this idea of a tournament, really blows it out into, like, oh, this is now— full episodes are happening in and around this tournament that are not in any way tied to what's normally happening in a tournament arc. This is, like, kind of a denial of having an tournament arc at all.

**Jack:** It's beautiful.

**Keith:** Because we see the one fight. Gon faints. He wakes up and then is told that— it's sort of like a horror movie where they show you the monster at the beginning and then the rest of the horror movie is narrated from the one survivor who says, "Yep, I'm the one survivor. [Jack laughs] Let me tell you how it happened."

**Jack:** Yes. Yeah.

**Keith:** [laughs] Like, it's so bizarre!

**Jack:** It's just brilliant. Just before this happens, we get a really nice firm bit of the rules. Someone who has passed the Hunter Exam cannot subsequently fail—you know, it cannot be retroactively set up so that they fail—and they cannot ever retake the exam.

**Keith:** Right.

**Jack:** If Gon—

**Keith:** He says, "You can't fail after you've passed any more than you can pass after you've failed."

**Jack:** Yes, and if Gon doesn't actually want his license, he can sell it, although, quote—and I'm gonna come back to this, because I don't really understand this. We'll get more information about this. He says, "If you sell it, it is of no practical use to anyone else."

**Keith:** Right.

**Jack:** It essentially just becomes a trophy at that point.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** It is—

**Keith:** There's a few other really great lines. Sorry, Jack, do you want to finish what you were gonna say?

**Jack:** Uh, yeah. This is so sad. Gon is in bed wearing a sling. I'll come back to this as we figure out more about what went down, but is this how Gon thought it would go when he was running through the tunnel? You know, the sort of the apotheosis of becoming a Hunter, the joyful award, and it's just sitting next to you in a bed after you wake up, didn't even see the end result?

**Keith:** It happened to him while he was asleep.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** He won while literally not even being aware of it. It's sort of like insult to injury on top of the Hisoka badge situation.

**Jack:** Yeah. And he says, Satotz says, "Due to the efforts of our predecessors, Hunters are treated quite well," and as a result, they want to pass everyone, everyone who applies, but there are so many villains seeking to apply to get a Hunter License—

**Dre:** [laughs] Yeah.

**Jack:** —that they have to do these games. And I wrote down, "Hmm," [**Keith:** Yes.] because how well has this worked out for you, Satotz?

**Dre:** It's not working well at all.

**Keith:** It's not working, and like we said at the very beginning of the episode, it almost seems to filter in the worst of the villains.

**Jack:** It's like what they say about using hand sanitizer too much pre- the COVID pandemic.

**Keith:** Right.

**Jack:** Right? Where it's like, oh, all we are doing is basically selecting for **[Keith: Yeah.]** the one superbug that cannot be killed by hand sanitizer.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** By playing the Hunter games, all we do is we make Hisoka and Gittarackur.  
[Sylvia chuckles]

**Keith:** This is the situation they have set up. Okay, all sand has inherent morality.  
[muffled laughter] They're either good or evil. The size of grain has no difference [Jack laughs] in whether you're good or evil, and in order to sift out all of the bad sand, you've made a sifter, and then you're only gonna allow in the biggest pieces of sand. [Sylvia and Jack laugh] And it's like, but you've already established that the size of the sand has no bearing on whether or not they're good or evil. [Jack laughs] Yeah, but it's all the biggest ones are the ones we're taking.

**Jack:** Uh, we want, uh— now, look. Now, look. We don't want the person who robbed the liquor store. Absolutely not. They might use the Hunter for ill. Oh, murderous clown?

**Keith:** Lex Luthor.

**Jack:** Yes. [Keith and Jack laugh] Please, please, welcome in.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Step one of the Hunter Exam, a man disintegrated another man's arms.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** And at that point, Satotz said, "Ah, keep playing. Well, you've come along now."  
This does not work.



**Keith:** No.

**Jack:** Then Satotz gives a little “be a good Hunter” speech. He says, “You must decide when to use this card.” This was curious to me, because we still don't know what this card does, and it has a little—

**Keith:** Right, this was actually the first appearance of the Hunter License.

**Jack:** Yeah. It's a beautiful prop.

**Keith:** Jack, did you know there was a license?

**Jack:** Uh, they've talked about a license before, but I had thought of it a bit like a birth certificate or a, uh...

**Keith:** Like a license to kill?

**Jack:** Well, no, I thought it was a physical thing.

**Keith:** Oh, you did, okay.

**Jack:** I have, like, a piece of paper, a form that is my, like, “here's why you can stay in the U.S.,” and it is not a card. It's not, like, in my passport. It's like a piece of letter paper, and I thought it would be something like that. You know, like, frighteningly flimsy, just something written down to indicate that somewhere, someone else has made a consequential decision.

**Keith:** Yeah. Can I read some quotes here?

**Jack:** Please.

**Keith:** So, Satotz takes out, after explaining we would accept everyone if there were only good people in the world. [laughs quietly]

**Jack:** Ha!

**Keith:** Is basically what he says. Unfortunately, there's villains, so we have to figure out

which of those villains to allow in. [laughs quietly] He takes out the Hunter License. He says, “Most professional Hunters consider this card more valuable than their own lives yet no more than a worthless scrap of paper at the same time. The important thing is what you accomplish once you become a Hunter.” I'm ringing the bell hard. This is a...this is a full thesis statement about Hunters here, I feel like.

**Jack:** Is it clear? No.

**Keith:** I'll tell— basically what he's saying is that even though this card is the thing that allows you to be a Hunter, it's actually the ability to become a Hunter that allows you to be a Hunter, and so this card is—

**Jack:** It's “the real treasure was the friends you made along the way” type shit?

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** But the real— it was the power that you obtained along the way? [Jack laughs] Because it's sort of like, yeah, yeah, anyone who's a Hunter is a Hunter because of what they can do, not because they have a stupid little card that, for some reason, is really really important to not lose. [laughs quietly]

**Jack:** Card has a magnetic stripe. Gon says that he will use it once he's paid everyone back for the favors that they did to him over the tournament, and he says, “Oh, the tournament's still going,” and then we get this twist.

**Keith:** It's good that these— it's good for Leorio that these conversations that Gon has about being unworthy because he's received help along the way, that Leorio's not there for those, because I'm sure they would make him feel extremely self conscious.

**Jack:** Yes.

**Keith:** *Gon* is worried about getting too much help? Ooh...

**Jack:** [laughs] Okay. So, we have this perspective shift.

**Keith:** Yeah, we jump back. This is where we were, before I remembered to set up the

episode. We jumped forward. Now Satotz is explaining to Gon all the things that happened while he was asleep, and it starts with jumping back to Hanzo after the fight has ended.

**Jack:** Yeah. Dre or Sylvi, do you want to recap this next section? I know that Keith and I have been talking a lot over the last... [Sylvia laughs]

**Keith:** That's true. One more— I have one more quote. This is tied to what— [Sylvia laughs] Sorry. This is tied to what we were saying [**Sylvia:** You're good.] right before I insisted that we jump back in time. This is how I remembered that we need to do that. Hanzo's trying to make sure, definitely for sure, Gon wins and I lose this match, and what Netero says is, "If Gon were to throw a fit and kill me, we still wouldn't be able to revoke his license," is what he says.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** Yep. Fucked up. Your system doesn't work, Netero.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** It's so busted!

**Keith:** It works for— hey, it's working for him.

**Dre:** Yeah, and I mean, I think this is the back and forth of Netero that we've kind of had hinted at so far, is that, most of the time, Netero just seems like kind of a goofy old man [**Jack:** Mm...] and then we get these little bits and pieces where people are like, "No, man, Netero's, like, fucked up."

**Keith:** Yeah, Menchi calls him cruel, like, [**Dre:** Mm-hmm.] three or four times in this season, and half of that is today.

**Sylvia:** He's a fucker.

**Keith:** But he's so likable. [laughs quietly]

**Sylvia:** He's a— listen, there's a lot of fuckers who are real likable, you know?

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Keith:** It is— but it's so bizarre how, like, he seems perceptive, attentive, and kind, but he's not. He's cruel and horrible.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** Well, he's the head of the search committee.

**Dre:** People contain multitudes, Keith.

**Keith:** Yeah. [Jack laughs]

**Sylvia:** He works for HR, basically.

**Dre:** Wow. [Jack and Sylvia laugh]

**Sylvia:** Very nice and then also just doesn't actually really have your best interests in mind.

**Jack:** Gonna fucking get you, yeah.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Keith:** All right, so how does the rest of the scene play out here?

**Sylvia:** Um...

**Dre:** Uh, did we talk about Hanzo saying the thing about, like, Gon's eyes?

**Jack:** No. We should start here.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** No, we didn't, which is a great place to start. Do you want to take that, Dre?

**Dre:** Yeah, sure. I mean, I don't have the play-by-play written down, but basically, like, Hanzo is— I think it's Killua, right? Killua says, like, [**Keith:** Yeah.] "Why did you let him win?"

**Keith:** Right.

**Dre:** Very, like, dripping with venom, you know, from this place that we've seen Killua kind of slide into.

**Keith:** It's a very bizarre takeaway from what we just watched.

**Dre:** Yeah. But, I mean, again, that's how Killua sees things, right?

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Dre:** He sees this as a contest of strength, and in that context, Gon is hopelessly outmatched. And, you know, he sees that—and he's not wrong—Hanzo could have just kept torturing Gon forever. But Hanzo explains that, like, you know, normally when you torture someone, the only thing that, like, lets me live with torturing people is that they look at me with, like, hate and anger in their eyes, and that allows me to, like, compartmentalize or something. But whenever I looked at Gon's eyes, even after I broke his arm, there was none of that, like, negative emotion. There was no fear. There was no rage. There was no, like, malice towards him, and he basically says, "Yeah, and that won me over, so I decided to just let it happen, to let it go."

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** He said, "I had broken his arm, but I could tell that he had already forgotten about it." Jesus Christ, Gon. Gon!

**Keith:** Gon, remember.

**Jack:** Gon! I broke my wrist when I was five or something. I fell off a table. I don't say that I think about it a lot, but I tell you what: I have not forgotten that I did it. I remember

having to wear that little cast.

**Keith:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** Wasn't pleasant.

**Sylvia:** Gon's got goldfish brain. It's fine. [Jack laughs]

**Keith:** This is where Kurapika and Leorio and even Pokkle are eyeing Killua really suspiciously.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Keith:** They cannot believe that he's asked this question. Like, they are so...they are outraged by this, by what happened, and Killua's like, "Why didn't you get him better?"

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** I fucking love every time Killua, like, Killua's lack of social grace comes out. Like, it's always been a thing that Killua's kind of just a bratty little shit, but then like...

**Keith:** Yeah, he's a real shit, yeah.

**Sylvia:** Just being open about, like, "Hey, you could have beat up my best friend better. How come you lost to my best friend, even though you were kicking his ass, loser?" [laughs] Like.

**Jack:** It is— and this— you know, like you say, we have seen Killua in this mode before, and by the end of this episode, we will know why. It makes sense, and we're gonna talk about that, but I want to put a pin in this for the listener to, when we get to that, think about this moment where we're like, Killua has this capacity to be— it's beyond tactlessness. It is a kind of violent, calculated detachment.

**[1:00:21]**

**Keith:** Very callous.

**Jack:** Yeah. It's wild. Uh, next fight. Kurapika versus Hisoka.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Bing bing bing!

**Keith:** And, uh, nothing weird happens during this one?

**Sylvia:** Nope, it's super normal. They just sort of fight. They dodge each other a lot. It seems like no one can really get the upper hand. Hisoka gets real close and whispers something in Kurapika's ear and surrenders. A normal fight. It's normal.

**Jack:** Kurapika— yes. Now, sorry, Kurapika surrenders, Sylvi?

**Sylvia:** No, sorry, Hisoka defenders.

**Jack:** Hisoka defenders. [Jack and Keith laugh]

**Keith:** Oh no, it's the Hisoka defenders!

**Sylvia:** [laughs quietly] Sorry, Hisoka surrenders.

**Jack:** Really weird. Kurapika is stopped in his tracks. Hisoka—

**Sylvia:** Hisoka defenders DNI.

**Jack:** Hisoka defenders DNI! [Sylvia laughs] Okay, that's the end of that fight. I want to talk about this one, because it is a visual gag or just a sight gag that is so funny. Now it's Hanzo versus Pokkle. Hanzo begins the game that he played with Gon that took four hours, and Pokkle surrenders immediately. [laughs] It's just so good.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** It's fucking great.

**Jack:** Pokkle sees what Hanzo is about to do and goes, "No, I'll take my chances with someone else." [laughs] And this is great, because it takes Hanzo out of the game.

Hanzo can no longer play his “I’m going to torture you until you surrender” game. Hanzo is not officially a Hunter. Next fight: Hisoka versus Bodoro.

**Sylvia:** This—

**Keith:** Hisoka beats him up.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** He beats the shit out of him.

**Dre:** He does beat the shit out of him.

**Sylvia:** And similarly ends the fight by whispering something to the opponent, but this time Bodoro surrenders.

**Keith:** And I do love us narrating through this, because this is also the experience of watching. I cannot explain how weird it is that they’re showing this through flashback.

**Jack:** I love it so much.

**Keith:** Satotz is narrating over montage.

**Jack:** It’s brilliant.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Because it...it’s a kind of— like a kind of an alienation from the tournament itself.

**Keith:** Right.

**Jack:** I think that if we were in the tournament, we would be— all we would be thinking about would be, you know, how are these fights going to go? How are these matchups going to play out? What are the moves that people are going to use against each other? And would this—

**Keith:** How is it going to build up to Gon, who should fight last?



**Jack:** Yes. Yeah, exactly. And with this alienation, it pulls out all that...all that tension, all that wondering, and cuts right to the most interesting, most sort of raw moments of each fight, the most consequential moments of each fight, in terms of how it is all going to go forward.

**Keith:** And it lets it say that the important thing isn't the tournament, and it's not who wins and who loses, it's actually Gittarackur and Killua.

**Jack:** Yes. Yes. This is kind of— I'm so wary of pinning this straight onto it. This is like a theatrical technique on some level, pioneered by Bertolt Brecht, who was a German playwright who has shown up in *Friends at the Table* quite a lot in various ways. Brecht has this technique called the distancing effect or the alienation effect, which he is using it to try and separate the audience from feeling one with or identifying with or following directly along with the characters. Brecht doesn't want you watching a play and going, "Oh, I feel these guys' emotions! This is me! You know, when I see the fight on the stage, I'm thinking about what it would be like to fight." You know, he wants you to have stepped back and to be sort of looking at it on a structural or a symbolic or a more direct level, and this is sort of what is happening here by saying we don't need to watch a tournament arc. We need to see how this plays out in the sense of the sort of broader structure of the thing and gets us to the fight that we are working towards, which is in the next fight. The next fight is Killua versus Pokkle. Killua surrenders immediately. He says, "I am not interested in fighting you." Walks away.

**Sylvia:** It's so good.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** Literally exactly what he said in the interview too, which is like, [**Dre:** Yeah.] "I don't want to fight Pokkle, because it wouldn't be interesting."

**Keith:** And what, what an error this was.

**Jack:** Mm-hmm.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** What an error it was. Because on some level—

**Keith:** How differently things could have gone.

**Sylvia:** [laughs quietly] Doing the John Madden telestrator, circling Killua a bunch of times, being like, “And here’s where he messed up.” [Dre laughs]

**Jack:** He is a...he is the most Killua-ass Killua in this scene, right? He even does the little hand flip as he walks away. [Sylvia laughs] There’s this kind of very calculated nonchalance from Killua, and this is the...this is the farewell to a kind of Killua. I mean, we might see him again later in the show, but I have a suspicion that we will not see this Killua for a while. Or maybe we will see a more... [laughs quietly] a more direct, a more unvarnished version of this Killua, but Killua is about to go through a transformation, and this little moment of him flipping his hand and walking away and saying, “Yeah, sorry, I’m not interested in fighting you,” is a goodbye to the breezy casual skateboarding murderer Killua. Goodbye, my friend. I hope to see you again, one day. Uh, Leorio is up now. He’s going to fight Bodoro, but Leorio, in a move that I can’t tell whether it’s because he doesn’t want to fight or because he’s a doctor, says, “I will not have this fight until Bodoro is fully recovered from his fight with Hisoka.”

**Sylvia:** I really like that moment.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** I really like that moment. It’s another point in the, like...like, the weird nobility that Leorio kind of treats people with. Like, this motherfucker loves being chivalrous is the vibe. [laughs]

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** And that’s another, you know, Doctor Leorio moment.

**Dre:** Well, that’s his last name, right?

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Oh my—

**Keith:** That's true.

**Sylvia:** So true!

**Jack:** Uh, what's his last name?

**Dre:** Paradinight?

**Keith:** Paradinight.

**Jack:** Oh yeah, Paradinight. I'm just making sure that I have a backup going.

**Keith:** Okay, great. Thank you.

**Sylvia:** Thank you.

**Jack:** Uh, Start Recording. Make sure I don't hit Start Streaming. [Keith laughs] That would be very funny.

**Keith:** That would be very funny.

**Jack:** Okay. Um...and then all hell breaks loose, because— and the show presents this so casually. All right, it's time for the next matchup, Gittarackur versus Killua. Every time we have seen Killua actually fight someone, it has been an actual bloodbath, so I suspected that it was either— I went into this fight going, "Ah, this is not— [laughs] this is gonna be consequential," you know? Something is going to happen here.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** And Killua begins the fight, and in one of the most frightening great pieces of, like, use of visual language I've seen in a long time, Killua begins the fight by using his

shadow step that we saw him use against the serial killer in Trick Tower before tearing out his heart, and we saw him use it against Netero during the ball game. That's the shadow step where we get this music cue; the screen dims to purple. We see Killua walk in this very, like, stylized deliberate fashion, sort of step by step, except there is absolutely none of the visual or audio ephemera associated with it when it happens this time. There is— Killua tries to do his shadow step at Gittarackur, but there are no effects or music. He just walks.

**Keith:** No whooshing. No shadows.

**Jack:** He just walks slowly towards Gittarackur, and this is great, because, you know, sometimes— I think there would be a way of framing this scene where that would be scary, because it would be like Killua is hiding what he's doing. It is—

**Keith:** No, it looks weird.

**Jack:** It is immediately clear that something is wrong. It is like watching the person— oh, I tell you what it feels like. It feels like watching someone in a show pull the trigger on a gun and it go click. Something has malfunctioned here or is not working.

**Keith:** Yeah. It also helps that I think Satotz, right before this, was like, "And this is where Killua makes a big mistake." [Sylvia laughs]

**Jack:** And then Gittarackur says, "It's been a while, Kill," and removes the pins [**Sylvia:** Agh!] and transforms into the dark-haired figure that we saw earlier.

**Keith:** Yeah, the different figure that we've seen.

**Dre:** The one that goes to bed by digging out a big hole in the ground.

**Jack:** And I had wondered—

**Sylvia:** Yeah, the anime twink who's a tuber. [Dre and Jack laugh] Like in a potato sense, not in a VTuber sense.

**Keith:** Right.

**Jack:** T-U-B-E-R. Yes, yes, yes.

**Dre:** But also a VTuber. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Sylvia:** Possibly!

**Keith:** Not a VTuber, a PTuber. [laughs]

**Jack:** Mm...

**Sylvia:** Shut up!

**Jack:** Uh, I had wondered, as we saw Gittarackur start to transform, whether this was gonna be a new body. I didn't know whether or not something Gittarackur can do is, like, shapeshift more broadly and the dark-haired figure we saw earlier was just the body that he was using at that point, but that character art is so good, and we talked about it in the last episode— the last— yeah, maybe the last episode.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, I think so.

**Keith:** Yep.

**Jack:** The big wide black eyes, the long dark hair, and it's this character. And Satotz—I think it's Satotz—says, "This is Killua's big brother," and we hard cut to commercials. [laughs] It's like, this is good writing for television.

**Keith:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Jack:** Knowing exactly where the points of tension are in your episode, just cutting the audience off at its most exciting point.

**Sylvia:** They paced these really well. I know this whole episode has been us being like, "These are the three best episodes we've watched so far," but these are the three best episodes we've watched so far.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** We come back from credits, and we learn this character's name. This is Illumi. Is that how I say it? Illumi?

**Dre:** Yes.

**Sylvia:** Illumi I think is...

**Jack:** Illumi.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Killua's big brother. Is this the same vocal performer as the person who has been playing Gittarackur?

**Sylvia:** I need to look that up.

**Keith:** So, I think that it's, like, a voice changer, because as—

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Keith:** As the disguise is, like, transforming away, you get them in chorus, and I think it is the same voice being doubled.

**Sylvia:** It is the same voice actor, yeah.

**Keith:** Yeah, okay.

**Jack:** Yeah, with the processing up.

**Sylvia:** In both dubs, yeah.

**Jack:** Great. Really, really cool transformation in just affect from this actor. God, how do we begin to talk about this? Okay, here's what I'll do. I will say how this scene goes in the broad sense, and then we can dig into it, so we don't feel like we have to do an extremely granular play-by-play.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Illumi confronts Killua and immediately essentially starts berating him, just sort of tears him down completely before the combat even begins.

**Keith:** Killua's terrified.

**Jack:** Killua is—

**Keith:** Killua's been shaking since the transformation started.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Killua is just absolutely terrified. We learn that Illumi needs a Hunter License for a job that is coming up. What we know about Killua's family, remember, is that they are a family of extremely highly trained and presumably very good assassins.

**Sylvia:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** Illumi has entered the Hunter Exam to get a license for a job. And then, with spinning hypnotic eyes, and we get these— the way this show shoots villains— the way this show shoots everybody is brilliant, but the way this show shoots villains as having a capacity to exist on a sort of dreamlike abstracted plane is brilliant. We've seen this with Hisoka. We've seen this with the prisoners in Trick Tower. Villains are sort of afforded a presence in front of the camera that is very dreamlike and separate. Yes, and we get these beautiful closeups of Illumi's big black eyes with spinning text in them, like a script that we— haven't seen this script before. This is not the iconographic language that is used elsewhere in the show that is sort of the language everybody reads and speaks.

And with his eyes spinning, he tells Killua that he is not cut out to be a Hunter, and he says outright, "You were born for one purpose: to be an assassin," and then I wrote down this quote, because it is brilliant. He says, "You are a puppet of darkness, devoid of passion. There is nothing you desire, nothing you wish for. The only pleasure you're capable of getting is derived from causing death. What do you imagine you'd accomplish by being a Hunter?" and he basically says, "You don't have desires. You

don't want anything except to cause death. What is it that you want?" And Killua can't answer him. He is silent, until he summons up, "I want to be friends with Gon. [Sylvia makes pained noise] I am just so sick of killing people."

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** "I want to be friends with Gon and just have fun." And Illumi says, "No, you don't. You are incapable of friendship. [Sylvia sighs, pained] The only thing that you can do is figure out whether or not you can kill someone. The thing you are feeling towards Gon is not actually friendship. You don't know how to classify him. You are wondering if you can kill him, and you want to find out."

**Keith:** This is a— so, you know, I'm not gonna step in every time that our dubs or our subs say something different, Jack, but this is a pretty big one, I think, for my dub versus your dub. For me, what Illumi says is, "You don't know how to classify Gon, because he's too dazzling for your eyes," is what he says.

**Jack:** He says— for, me, he says—

**Sylvia:** It's so good.

**Jack:** Uh, where did I write this down? Because I also pulled out this line, Keith. It's lovely. "Gon is such a radiant personality that you don't know how to classify him." Leorio keeps wanting to step in. This is real good Leorio hours in these episodes.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** Leorio is saying, "You're already friends. How do you not know this?"

**Sylvia:** It's so fucking good. I love Leorio so much. [laughs]

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** At which point, Leorio\* goes, "Okay, well, this might actually cause a problem for



Killua, who I have groomed to be— me and my dad have groomed to be a murderous assassin, uh, so I'll just kill Gon,” and then everybody says, “Well, no, hold on. If you kill Gon, you fail the exam, and you don't get your license,” at which point Illumi does a little bit of calculus. It's really funny. Really flat, scary figuring out this.

**[1:15:33]**

**Keith:** He's very nonchalant about it.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Like, these are all just whims. Like, he's just like, [casually] “Oh, what would be the best thing to do? I can't— ah, how should I handle this?”

**Sylvia:** Illumi is a very silly character in a lot of ways, just not about what he's discussing, but the way he goes about it is, like...

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Very goofy in a way that, I think, is sort of an intentional foiling with Hisoka and a little bit, [**Keith:** Yeah.] like, also obviously with his brother is a lot of, like...we will get—we will talk more about the relationship between the Zoldyck brothers.

**Jack:** We sure will.

**Sylvia:** Like, I feel like that's a guarantee.

**Jack:** Oh yeah, and I want to make time to— I'm still just going through this scene. I want to— there's a lot that I want to talk about about the relationship here as it is immediately presented, but Illumi's answer is hilarious. Oh, also, I want to say really quick: this is kind of, um...we can see Gittarackur in Illumi, in this moment. I feel like this kind of very blasé confident planning is something that we had seen in Gittarackur already. There is an extent to which they are not saying “oh, these are two completely different people; it's a completely different persona.” We really have been watching Illumi, just in a different guise. This is the same sort of decision-making, because Illumi's

answer is—

**Keith:** In a different guy.

**Jack:** [laughs] In different guy. He says, “Oh, well, look, if I pass the exam, and you give me my license, and then I just kill everybody here, and then the problem’s solved, and then you can’t take my license away from me. Isn’t that right, Netero?” and Netero sort of goes like, “Well, yep.” and I wrote down—

**Dre:** Yeah. Yeah, I guess, technically.

**Keith:** Technically, yeah, that’s true. [laughs]

**Jack:** I wrote down, in capital letters, “THIS IS NOT A WELL-STRUCTURED SYSTEM!”  
[Dre laughs]

**Keith:** It’s really not. It really isn’t.

**Jack:** This doesn’t work! So, Killua admits defeat without a fight, just falls apart completely, and Illumi says, “Okay, I lied. I wasn’t gonna kill Gon. I was just testing you.”

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** “And now I know—”

**Keith:** He was really just embarrassing him. This, like, made him feel horrible and guilty and shame.

**Jack:** Yes.

**Keith:** Just to prove the point.

**Sylvia:** It’s kind of the first, like, window we get into what Killua’s upbringing was like, [Dre: Yeah.] in a major way, and it, like, really, like...you get gestures at how damaged being a child assassin makes someone, but this is, like, these episodes are the prime example of— or our first, like, major example of it in action, [Keith: Yeah.] and also, like, what leads Killua to behave in the way Killua does.

**Jack:** Yeah. Fully.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** There's a lot of weirdness to...there's another dimension to this that we're not getting yet that I think we'll have more to say on later, but the way that Illumi insists on ownership over Killua is, like...

**Jack:** Yeah. It's...

**Keith:** It is intense. It's scary. It's weird, obviously. And there is another dimension to it that we'll talk about later.

**Jack:** Yeah. I would love to dig into this a bit. I mean, I...these scenes, this scene with Illumi and Killua is so well written, and so much of it is monologue, right? Killua actually doesn't say a lot during this sequence.

**Keith:** Yeah. It starts with an Addams Family joke, basically.

**Jack:** Oh, does it?

**Sylvia:** Really?

**Keith:** Yeah, so, the first thing that they say after they come back from that commercial break that you mentioned where it's like, this is your brother, or this is Killua's brother, commercial break, they come back, and Illumi goes, like, "Killua, you cut up Brother and Mom," and he goes, "Yeah, I did." Like, "They were crying."

**Jack:** Oh, yeah, sure.

**Keith:** And it cuts to Leorio being like, "Of course they were crying," and it cuts back to Illumi being like, "Crying tears of joy!"

**Sylvia:** Mom was so happy!

**Keith:** You did such a good job. I'm so proud of you!

**Sylvia:** She was so proud!

**Jack:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, let's talk about Killua's family briefly, because this is so...it's so interesting, Sylvi, that you said, you know, we got the impression that being a child assassin messes you up, and...

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Jack:** I had sort of intuited the level that being— that being made to kill or choosing to kill or encountering so much death as a child would necessarily mess you up, and also being put into not just a killer, a sort of practical system of death, you know? You are trained to be a function rather than a person. You know, you are sent out to deal death but by a contract or, you know, your personhood is taken out. It's not even something as, like, hotblooded murders of passion or whatever. You know, you are reduced to a weapon to kill.

**Keith:** Right. Yeah, you're an assassin in the same way that, you know, 10-year-olds used to be factory workers.

**Jack:** Yeah, fully. The thing that I had not quite got and what this scene just drills into so much is how fundamentally, overwhelmingly abusive and nakedly manipulative his relationship with his— or rather his family's relationship with him is.

**Sylvia:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** There is a very calculated pattern of grooming or of direct manipulation here.

**Dre:** Sure.

**Sylvia:** Like, it's a— yeah, like, it's taking the, like, sort of the family that's very, like, tradi— “traditional” makes it sound like I'm talking about more, like, faith-based stuff, and I mostly just mean in terms of like, there's like a family business.

**Jack:** Or like, they want me to be a lawyer.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, exactly. It's like taking that sort of, like, pressure and amping it up to just, like, an extreme degree and also throwing in this very, like...you know, it's not subtle, but I do think it's well done example of, like, familial manipulation.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Especially towards a 12-year-old.

**Jack:** And we get two sides of it. One is implied. You know, the one is that we hear that his mom cried tears of happiness. You know, there's this kind of like, "Oh, my beautiful son, you can do this. I'm gonna push you down this path." And then we get what is implied by the way that Illumi talks about his and Killua's dad, which is that Illumi and their dad and possibly a guy named Milluki, another brother, [**Sylvia:** Mm-hmm.] take this other very, very particular line, which is a denial of the aspects of Killua's personhood, sort of joyful or exploratory or, uh, varied personhood. A denial of that [**Sylvia:** Mm-hmm.] and a sharpening of that down to: you are nothing but a killer. Not just I don't want you to feel these emotions, I don't want you to experience the world in this way, but drilling it into you that you cannot feel these emotions. Not in the sense of I forbid you from it, but there is something wrong with you. We have made some—

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** We have made you into something that cannot feel those emotions, and that being—

**Keith:** Right, and you only think that you feel them because you're confused.

**Jack:** Because— yes, you don't understand yourself in a way that we do, and this being...you know, we've sort of implied this, but this whole scene is played against the background of this rotating script in Illumi's eyes, and the extent to which what is just rigorous manipulation and what is a sort of pseudo-supernatural hypnosis is very firmly blurred in this scene and is actually played with in the next episode, in terms of, like, how much of what Killua is experiencing is actually his own actions versus a direct control from the Zoldyck assassin family? It is so stark, and it throws into— for me, it

throws two things into really stark contrast. The first is it makes Gon look radiant. What does he say Gon is, in your dub, Keith?

**Keith:** He's daz—

**Jack:** Dazzling.

**Keith:** Too dazzling for your eyes.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** He makes Gon look dazzling. You know, this character who is just a dynamo of not just good feeling but all kinds of feelings. You know, over the past few episodes, we've seen Gon say, "I felt angry." "I felt confused." "I felt excited." "I felt joyful." You know, Gon is someone who is so present in the world that his nose literally guides him from place to place. [laughter] Gon is the kind of guy who identifies bloodsucking butterflies and then ties them to his finger. You know, Gon is existing in the world as a full-fledged person, not one exempt from anxieties or frustrations or confusion or fear, but he's there in the world. And, you know, early on in the show, I talked about Killua feeling dreamlike, feeling detached, and so much of that is these aspects of his personhood that have been cut away by his brother and his dad.

**Keith:** Another—

**Jack:** Seeing those is so clear here.

**Keith:** Another interesting thing about this and about, like, Illumi sort of casting Gon as someone who's sort of, like, immediately available to the world emotionally, as a contrast to Killua. This is, like, why they're different, why they can't...

**Jack:** Yeah, why you can't be with him in that way.

**Keith:** Why they can't be together. The other— the thing that we are introduced to here for— I think for the first time. We talked about this. I'm pretty sure this is the first time in these episodes. We get the Killua interiority that we've been missing for these episodes.

**Jack:** And it's—

**Sylvia:** Mm-hmm.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** The anxiety during— between, like, over the bracket, some of this Illumi stuff. This is the first time that we're, like, in Killua's head, hearing what he's thinking, seeing what he's worried about. We get this, the sort of— we get the proof that Killua's a real person in these episodes, just in time for Illumi to say that it doesn't exist.

**Jack:** Yeah. Yep. Yeah, and it comes to nothing, or rather, any sort of personhood that Killua tries to exert in these scenes comes to nothing.

**Keith:** Right.

**Jack:** You know.

**Keith:** He can't even move.

**Jack:** He has this really brilliant moment of interiority when he says, you know, "I want to be friends with Gon," and Illumi just shreds it, just instantly. Not just shoots it down, but makes the shooting it down— works shooting it down into his broader point of [Keith: Right.] essentially, "You are not really a person. You are a weapon for me." And, you know, suddenly so much of Killua snaps into place, not just in the sense of, you know, what I've known since I saw him do vampire hands and tear out that man's heart, which is that he's a child assassin, but so much of Killua's affect is...it's like suddenly—it's like looking at a clay pot and then suddenly seeing the potter and going, "Oh, right. I know why the pot looks like that." It's brilliant. And then something drains out of Killua. But then, bing bing bing!

**Keith:** Do we get the line "If you stay with him, you'll end up wanting to kill him"?

**Jack:** Yes, yes.

**Keith:** "Just to see if you can."

**Jack:** Yes. It's so good. God. Oh, oh, I want to talk about this before we move on. I have been asking...I wrote it down in my notes. I want to find my exact...da da da...oh, here we go. I'd been wondering what this show was about for a long time. You know, I've been saying, "Okay, so we're in a Hunter Exam. I'm not quite sure what the broader sort of thematic push of the show is," and I'm still not confident in saying that I've got it exactly, but when Illumi said, "I lied, Kill. I was never going to kill Gon. I just wanted to test you, and now I know. You are simply not qualified to make friends," and then we get this reverse shot of Killua just drained, just reduced seemingly permanently to the state of this Zoldyck assassin. I wrote down, "Oh, wow. This is what the show is about."

This tension, I think, is going to be the dynamo that is going to drive us for, I don't know, a fucking ton of episodes, is this relationship between Killua and Gon. Killua's specific denied personhood, denied feelings of love, denied feelings of friendship. His understanding and desire that that's something that he wants but his—the ways in which people have sought to pull that away from him. And then, on the other side, we have Gon, this naive wonderful radiant entity blundering from problem to problem, doing anything to try to figure out how to make this connection with his friend again, just as he is also being hunted and preyed upon by this murderous entity that sees the ways in which Gon is lively and Gon is present and Gon is wonderful, and rather than doing what Illumi does and saying, "Well, I want to take that away," says, "Oh, I want to turn that to some awful—I want to weaponize that or turn that to some awful goal or end." That, I think, is where we're going.

**Keith:** Yeah, I mean, the show is...you know, the show is like— any show is sort of like one of those little toy archeology things, and you get a little brush, and you get a little thing, [Sylvia laughs] and you're digging away, and it's like, "Ah, I feel like we've got, like, a shin here." [Jack laughs] We've identified, like, "Oh, this must be the leg of the show."

**Jack:** Yes, absolutely.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.



**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Piece by piece, you know, you go, “Ah, wait, I think this might be the leg of the show!”

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Much like Ging Freecs, we are uncovering... [Keith laughs]

**Jack:** A weird arche— we’ll get to that.

**Sylvia:** We will.

**Jack:** But Ging Freecs is Indiana Jones? I don’t—

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** We’ll talk about this. Weirder. He’s not Indiana Jones.

**Keith:** And maybe Satotz is Indiana Jones?

**Jack:** Maybe Satotz is Indiana Jones, but not just Indiana Jones, Indiana Jones if he found the boulder and then said, “I’m gonna turn this into a visitor center.”

**Keith:** Indiana Nose.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Sure.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Keith:** He has no mouth. Just a nose.

**Dre:** Yeah, sure.

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

**Jack:** Okay, bing bing bing! New fight time. Everybody’s moving on. Leorio versus

Bodoro. This fight goes normally, right, Dre?

**Dre:** Yeah. Yeah, what? Yeah, why wouldn't it? [Sylvia laughs]

**Keith:** Yeah. And how many people don't die of the two in this fight?

**Dre:** Um...

**Keith:** Both, right?

**Dre:** Both don't— oh, wait, hold on. I'm checking my notes. No, one of them doesn't die. One of them does die.

**Sylvia:** Oh— oh. So, that started good, and...

**Keith:** Oh no.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Halfway through...

**Keith:** I hope it's not Leorio, I guess, that doesn't die.

**Dre:** No, it is. Yeah, no, Leorio's dead.

**Keith:** Oh, it's Leorio that dies.

**Dre:** Yeah. Uh huh. [Sylvia sighs]

**Jack:** It is not Leorio. We're joking.

**Dre:** He says, "I died as I lived, sniffing my horny hand," and then he died. [Keith laughs]

**Jack:** No! Don't remind me of Leorio's current worst moment. [Dre and Sylvia laugh]

**Dre:** I think that's...

**Sylvia:** You know, I think it might—

**Dre:** I think it's about as bad as it gets. [laughs]

**Sylvia:** Yeah, I feel like it's all up for Leorio. You know what? He brings you low so he can build himself back up.

**Dre:** Uh huh.

**Sylvia:** It's a character arc.

**Keith:** Yeah, I can't...I can't, off the top of my head, think of a lower low.

**Jack:** So, the fight begins, and without any warning whatsoever, like a laser-guided mission of trauma— mission? I said mission, I meant missile. Like a laser-guided missile of trauma, up comes Killua, vampire hands enabled, kills Bodoro, and that's the end of the Hunter Exam. Bodoro is dead. Killua is immediately disqualified and just leaves. Everybody else passes by default.

**Keith:** Something fun happens here with time, I guess? They— we get Satotz still narrating this as it's happening. The visual is we've actually jumped forward seemingly a minute or two to see, like, Gon is, like, storming down the hallway.

**Jack:** Yeah, it's great. Really, really good.

**Keith:** Angry. Satotz is like— so, the narration catches up with reality. Satotz is like, “No, Gon, you have to rest.” No, Gon does not have to rest. Gon has to go see his friends and see the rest of the contestants.

**Jack:** Nobody in media has ever been told, “No, no, you have to rest. Lie back down,” and then done it. [Keith laughs]

**Dre:** And then has gone to rest, yeah. [laughs]

**Jack:** And then has gone, “You know what? Yes.” Now, we have seen characters in media who have rested, yes, I'll grant you that. But as soon as [Sylvia laughs] someone says, “No, no, you have to rest.”

**Keith:** Right.

**Jack:** It's like a knock knock joke. The other per— oh, you know what it's like? It's like that bit in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* where he taps the rhythm on the wall and Roger Rabbit can't resist bursting out of the wall, because he's a cartoon. [Keith laughs] If you are in media and you are told you have to lie down and rest, no, you have to—

**Keith:** It's actually a curse that means you must not rest.

**Jack:** [laughs] You're going, "Oh no, they cursed me!"

**Keith:** No!

**Jack:** And then you get up.

**Keith:** The incantation.

**Jack:** The incantation! Gon is furious and appalled and joins the others in this little orientation room, this room built for maybe 50 people but it has seven Hunters in it, [Dre: Mm-hmm.] all sitting separately like students on the first day of class who don't want to get to know each other, and Gon storms right up to Illumi, who he's never seen before face-to-face. This is the first time Gon has seen Illumi and not Gittarackur. Grabs him by the wrist and says, "Apologize to Killua!" and we cut to credits! What a good show.

**Keith:** I won't— oh, do we have it? I think we do have it by now. I won't— yeah, in the hallway, I think we see it. I can't tell you what I think this means, if it does mean anything, but Gon does have a cross on his head for this, to bandage up where Hanzo punctured him in the forehead. I don't know if this is meant—

**Jack:** When you say a cross, you mean like an X, like Hunter X Hunter.

**Keith:** Right. Right, he has the X from Hunter X Hunter on his forehead.

**Sylvia:** I believe it's a times symbol. Wasn't that what we decided?

**Keith:** Yeah, it's a multiplication— yeah, it's like a cross, like mixed with or multiplied by? I think it's not totally clear, but it is the exact same X is on his forehead in bandages.

**Jack:** Yes.

**Keith:** I don't know what that means. It just was notable. Like, they didn't have to do that. That's so weird.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** No, it's just— I think it is just— uh, we've talked about how Gon is cursed to be the protagonist of the story.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And I read that just as the production design or the art direction firmly putting its thumb down and saying, "Yes, buddy. Even in your wound, you are being marked by the logo of the fucking show." [laughs]

**Keith:** Yeah. [laughs] Branded. He's literally been branded. [Dre laughs]

**Jack:** You are a— you know, and it's so unsubtle, right? Because it's not just the X, it is the X over the wound that he— that was the culmination of his obstinacy and determination.

**Keith:** And pain.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** And pain. Being marked with the Hunter's X. It's lovely. I don't know. I have a real deep love for unsubtle storytelling sometimes. It's just a really nice moment of it, especially when we have had such great nuanced colored writing with Illumi talking with Killua. Them just being like, "Yeah, Gon has a cross on his head like in the, uh, like the show has."

**Keith:** Like the show. The show has it.

**Jack:** It's great.

**Keith:** Okay. Yeah.

## **Music Notes [1:36:14]**

**Jack:** Before we move on from this episode, I want to do two quick music notes. Uh, music notes, like they are in music. [Sylvia laughs]

**Dre:** Mm.

**Jack:** I mean notes about music. We have some new music that is introduced when Illumi reveals himself. This is a sort of darker, looser, more traditional sound than we have heard. You know, Gon is most closely associated with a— [laughs] with a brass band, the most Gon instrument choice that you could think of. [Dre laughs] The Hunter Exam is associated with these, like, chunky, threatening, exciting electric guitars and basses and percussion cues, big rumbling drums. Hisoka is associated with flamenco guitar. When Illumi arrives, it is a series of choral chants, [**Sylvia:** Ah!] almost religious choral chants [**Dre:** Mm.] and rattling bells. Heavy reverb on these choral chants, so the sibilance of their syllables gets swallowed up by the reverb, and then I think—

**Keith:** Lot of bass, very, like, low, slow.

**Jack:** Very low, but not the electric bass of the Hunters, a real heavy natural bass of singers and bells and then— which is really scary, because, you know, a lot of where we see Illumi— a lot of what Illumi is talking about is very immediate, right? is very in the now.

**Keith:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** We have made you to be this person. This is your purpose. And the soundtrack is telling us that there is something old happening here or there is something deep or there is something ceremonial or severe, and I really like that, you know, that we get Illumi— when I talked about how much I didn't like it when they just played Gon's sad theme over shots of Gon looking sad, because I'm like, well, I know. You are telling me

the thing that everything else in the show is telling me. I think this is a really good example of something else happening here, right? Which is that we have Illumi outputting one kind of aspect of his character and of the Zoldyck assassin family's character while the music is underwriting that with a kind of ceremonial, old, frightening severity.

And then, in a beautiful piece of music supervising, as we cut to Killua's interiority, that theme continues. So we're told this isn't really actually Illumi's theme. This is a soundtrack and music that we should associate with this crew of assassins generally. You know, Killua is being brought back into the fold against his will to this assassin family, and the music is solidifying that he is a part of that. I thought that was just really lovely composing, really good music supervising. And then, as we see Killua kill Bodoro and we realize that this is against— or rather, we realize that this is the end of the Hunter Exam, this is the end of all that they've been pushing for is this kind of, uh, extrajudicial? It's all been extrajudicial.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Even more extrajudicial.

**Keith:** There are no judicial kills here.

**Jack:** No. It's a kill that is even worse than it could have been. We actually have Gon's theme play sadly again.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** This, to me, is good composing, because what we are watching isn't just a series of shots of Gon being sad. We are watching the culmination of Gon's efforts and desires and, uh...we are literally watching that. You know, we are seeing these scenes play out against a sad version of Gon's theme, and to me, that is a much more effective deployment of that piece of composing than it was when we just saw Gon sitting in a tree feeling sad.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And that's the end of Jack's Music Notes.

**Sylvia:** I...do you want to know the lyrics to the song that plays, the one that plays during the brothers confrontation?

**Jack:** Oh shit.

**Keith:** I do.

**Jack:** They're actually singing in Japanese?

**Sylvia:** No, they're singing in Latin.

**Jack:** Yes! Oh my god. Much like when someone in media is told "you have to rest," and they have to get up immediately, there is no time that someone has written something in Latin against music that is not a delight when you translate it. Either it is a complete disaster of a translation, and that's joyful, or it's fucking metal, and my guess is it's going to be the latter. What have they written, Sylvi?

**Sylvia:** From what I can tell— I'm trying to triple check this now, but I believe it's "Zoldyck est dominus, Zoldyck est dominae," which is just "Zoldyck is the master," but also the feminine version of that as well.

**Jack:** That's fucking brilliant. And they're presum—

**Dre:** Hmm.

**Jack:** The implication that I get based on how this scene, the music supervision here worked, is that they're speaking less about Illumi or the mother or the dad and more about [Sylvia: Mm-hmm.] the supremacy of the Zoldyck family as entities like this.

**Sylvia:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** They are saying, you know, you are being reduced to a Zoldyck assassin, and we are the fucking best at this. That's a beautiful music cue. Maybe I'll...maybe I'll put it in this episode. Maybe I'll arrange it. [Sylvia giggles] We'll see. I'm gonna need y'all to



send me really nice clips of the music, because I can't go searching for them without spoilers.

**Keith:** Right.

**Sylvia:** Yes.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Yeah. Unfortunately, uh...

**Keith:** God, the spoilers are everywhere.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, you cannot look for this one at all.

**Jack:** No, because if I know anything about how stories work and how music supervision works, when one of these characters invariably kills the other, we're gonna get a sick arrangement of this music. [laughs quietly] [others are silent] And that's how I feel about that.

## **Episode 21 [1:41:53]**

**Keith:** Uh, new episode.

**Jack:** 21.

**Keith:** There's another arm break.

**Jack:** Yeah, this one's pretty straightforward.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** Yeah, who wants to talk about the second arm break in these episodes?

**Sylvia:** I fucking love this bit so much.

**Keith:** Sylvi?

**Sylvia:** We get Gon sort of just striding into the room where they are at, like, Hunter orientation. It's very funny seeing where everyone sat, because Kurapika and Leorio are not sitting next to each other. [laughs] It's just, like, a very funny thing to have, like, oh yeah, we're besties and we've been hanging out, but also, I'm just gonna sit behind you a row up.

**Jack:** Yeah. Very weird.

**Sylvia:** What's important here, though—

**Keith:** Who's sitting further back? Is it Leorio?

**Sylvia:** I don't remember.

**Keith:** Because Leorio does feel like a lean forward over your shoulder kind of guy.

**Sylvia:** That I would believe, actually. You know what? Even if it's not Leorio, to us, it's Leorio.

**Keith:** It's Leorio, and that's what it is, because the idea that those two would be in the same room and not sitting next to each other is silly.

**Sylvia:** It's very funny to me. The thing that really matters here, though, is Gon walking right up to Illumi, grabbing him by the wrist, and we get, like, a zoom-in of, like, Gon's grip squishing Illumi's forearm basically, and he tries to swing him out of his chair, but Illumi's graceful enough to land on his feet afterwards.

**Keith:** Yeah, he has like a feather fall thing happen.

**Sylvia:** Yes, and they have this sort of exchange where, like, he wants...Gon wants Illumi to apologize, and when Illumi's, like, not going to, he wants to just know where Killua is. I think he says something about, like, "Give Killua back," or something.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** Because, during this discussion, Gon sort of talks about it like Killua's been

kidnapped, and Illumi points out, like, he left of his own volition. He walked out those two doors and went home.

**Jack:** Did he, bro? [sighs]

**Sylvia:** But did he?! [Dre laughs]

**Keith:** But did he?

**Sylvia:** But did he.

**Jack:** We'll talk about this later, but...

**Keith:** I think this is where— I think this is where it first comes up. I think this is where, uh...

**Jack:** Yeah. So...

**Keith:** Netero introduces that Leorio and Kurapika have—

**Sylvia:** Filed a complaint.

**Keith:** Put forward a hypnosis theory. [Sylvia and Dre laugh]

**Jack:** Yes, although Kurapika being Kurapika... [laughs]

**Keith:** Right, thank you. Yes, please.

**Jack:** Kurapika is so sweet. I... [sighs] Kurapika is like, "Now, look, I do want to be even-handed about this, [**Keith:** Yeah.] because I'm Kurapika, another—"

**Keith:** Please, no one misinterpret me.

**Jack:** He says, "It's generally considered impossible to make someone do such a thing," that is to say, hypnosis murder. Right, so, they are essentially saying Killua's kill of Bodoro was specifically authored by Illumi to get Killua out of the tournament and sort of break him essentially, pull him back into the Zoldyck assassin crew. Everybody— at

this point, everybody goes, “Well, now, hang on a second. That whole tournament was fucked. Let’s break it down.” It’s great. Everyone suddenly— it’s like the scales fall from people’s eyes about the Hunter Exam, and they’re like, “Wait a second.”

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** “I’ve got questions.”

**Keith:** Well, there’s— I think the moment you’re talking about, Jack, is when Pokkle is like, “Well, yeah, sure, Killua’s murder of Bodoro was weird, but so was your victory over Hisoka who whispered something to you and then gave up.”

**Jack:** You want to tell us what that is? You want to share that with the class, Kurapika? And Kurapika says, “Mm-mm.”

**Keith:** Says no thank you.

**Dre:** No. No, I don’t.

**Keith:** I do not want to share that with the class. I think this is funny because this is sort of— I think that this is Pokkle being, like, mad at Killua. Like, I don’t want people helping Killua, because Killua embarrassed me.

**Jack:** Yeah. [laughs] Yes, absolutely.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** And like, Pokkle is specifically upset about Killua already.

**Jack:** During this whole conversation, Gon is still holding Illumi’s wrist. It’s brilliant. Illumi is so genuinely baffled by this whole turn of events.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Illumi— you get a couple shots of Gon, like, squeezing Illumi’s arm and Illumi being kind of surprised at something, seems to be surprised at, like, how strong Gon is.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Well, not just that. I think surprised at, like— I think he is surprised at that, and we learn more about that later; Gon has broken his arm. But I think also surprised at, like, why are we arbitrating this? It's done. You know.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Jack:** I'm hesitant to make big statements about Illumi, given that I've seen him for one episode, but Illumi does seem to be just—

**Sylvia:** Well... [Dre laughs] You know, you've seen a little bit more Illumi, just not necessary with that face.

**Jack:** That's true, yes. Illumi is, like, on some level, the culmination of what he wants Killua to be: empty, hyper-focused.

**Keith:** Sort of frivolous?

**Jack:** You know, he has these big black eyes with nothing inside. Light but mean, cruel.

**Keith:** Right.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** Oh, you bringing up the eyes does mention— does have something I've been wanting to bring up but haven't been able to, because we haven't had Illumi be Illumi yet. When Killua's, like, in his, like, murder mode, he has the same sort of pupil-less, like, featureless eyes that Illumi does.

**Dre:** Oh, yeah!

**Sylvia:** And I think that's really worth pointing out.

**Jack:** That's brilliant. Can you send me a screenshot of that? I want to see that.

**Sylvia:** Yeah. It's not, like, pure black like that, but I think it's straight up the very good

shot from episode 20 where [Dre: Sure.] Killua has the blood on his face I think is the best example of it.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Where it's just the sort of purple color of Killua's irises.

**Jack:** Oh, look at that! Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Yes, we talked about this in the episode where he pulled out that man's heart. I think I described it as, like, this is the first time we've seen this particular look on Killua. I didn't realize I was describing, like, [laughs quietly] the characteristic Zoldyck assassin move of "I am a weapon." [Sylvia laughs] But Gon says, look, this doesn't matter. This doesn't matter. I don't care that Killua's been disqualified. I have absolute faith that if he does the Hunter Exam again, he will pass. I'm more concerned that his evil brother has been manipulating him to kill. [laughs quietly] He says, "Once I rescue Killua, I will never let you see him again." Beautiful Gon thinking, just simple as that.

**Sylvia:** I love him.

**Jack:** At which point, and this is just— this might be my single favorite moment of the show so far. It is just fucking wonderful. Green Green Jellybean Man does the orientation. Everybody's like, all right.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** Smiling away during this whole exchange, by the way.

**Jack:** All right.

**Keith:** Standing there, smile on his face, and then is like, "Can we go back to it?"

**Jack:** Let's do the orientation.

**Sylvia:** I mean, listen, how many times do you think Beans has had to do this? We don't

know if Bean is, like— how old do you think Beans is? Beans could be 800 years old.

**Dre:** Oh my god.

**Sylvia:** Beans could have founded the Hunters...

**Keith:** Beans could be 800 years old.

**Sylvia:** Society, you know? This could be old hat.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Is Beans...the manga is in black and white.

**Sylvia:** Yes.

**Jack:** Is Beans being green an invention of the show, or is it—?

**Sylvia:** We've talked about 1999 anime Beans.

**Jack:** Yes, we've talked about horrible pink Beans.

**Keith:** Right, the flesh-colored Bean, yeah.

**Sylvia:** Yeah. I believe that the...

**Jack:** Pink Pink Jellybean Man.

**Sylvia:** We have to dig into, like, what the manga volume, like, covers look like, because that, typically speaking, is where a lot of— that and other promotional art is where a lot of people get, like, canonical color schemes from, and I don't know if I've seen any with Beans on it. It does, just based off the fact that he was horribly flesh-colored in 1999 does make me think that the green bean aspect of it was a recent development or just, like, a thing that Togashi wasn't able to get to the production team in the 1999 one.

**Jack:** He's lovely. I love Green Green Jellybean Man. [Dre chuckles]

**Keith:** I've already heard that the 2011 series is, like, hews closer to the text of the manga.

**Sylvia:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** But I don't know if that also means that they've...that the mangas have more or less impact on, like, the color schemes of characters. I have no idea.

**Sylvia:** Fair, yeah.

**Keith:** I looked it up. I don't think Beans is on a cover.

**Sylvia:** I don't think so either.

**Jack:** Ooh.

**Sylvia:** I was expecting it to be, like, maybe if there's a Netero on a cover, there'd be, like, a Beans in the corner of it. Did you know Beans didn't have a name in the 1999 anime? We probably talked about that.

**Dre:** Oh, no.

**Keith:** We did talk about that, yeah.

**Jack:** He doesn't have a name in this. We named him, and then Togashi listened to the show. [Keith laughs]

**Sylvia:** Yes, true.

**Jack:** [laughs quietly] And put it in backwards.

**Sylvia:** And traveled back? Yeah.

**Jack:** Beans is named so cursor— hmm. How do I say this word? Beans is named with such a cursory attention to what he is that it would be like if, in episode one, I saw the clown, and I went like, "I bet that guy's name is Hisoka," and then I was right. [Jack, Sylvia, and Dre laugh]



**Keith:** Yeah. But then the show itself barely cares about naming him.

**Jack:** No. Yeah, no, not at all.

**Keith:** No one is like, “And this weird guy’s name is Beans!”

**Jack:** No, he says— Beans is introduced on the airship. He says, “This is Chairman Netero. I’m Beans.” [Jack and Keith laugh] Okay. I want to talk—

**Keith:** He might as well have said, “I’m Rob.”

**Jack:** Yeah. What’s up? It’s me, Paul, Netero’s guy. [Keith chuckles] This is genuinely one of my favorite bits of the show. The presentation begins, and we learn what a Hunter card does. The Hunter card—

**Keith:** Ringing the bell. This is a big bell ring.

**Jack:** Oh, yes, and we get a little presentation.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** The card will let you enter 90% of the countries that limit immigration and 75% of the restricted areas in the world.

**Sylvia:** That’s fucking crazy.

**Jack:** You can also use 95% of public transport for free, and banks will—

**Keith:** And this is the newest bit of information, this last bit. This is, like, the real bit—

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Because we’ve sort of heard about these other thing from Kurapika, you know, 15 episodes ago.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Keith:** This is this next bit.

**Jack:** Banks will— now, this is a big one, listener. Banks will treat you like you are a top-rated company. You can also sell the card for enough money to last a lifetime. Now, there are no replacement cards. This is— the whole vibe of this is like library card orientation day at the university. No replacement cards.

**Keith:** The most important library card of your life. Important sub difference, Jack: my sub says that the Hunter card provides you a line of credit that rivals large corporations.

**Jack:** That's— I think that is clearer but less funny than just [**Dre:** Yeah.] banks will treat you like you're a top-rated company. [laughs]

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** The idea of walking into a bank and being like, “I have a Hunter card,” and them being like, “Oh, yes sir, yes sir. Absolutely.” One in five Hunters somehow lose their cards within a year of getting it, and Beans delivers this with such, like, a puckish casual joy. He's like, “We've all gone through the Hunter Exam. I'm giving you the stuff,” and it is met with absolute deadpan disinterest from the main cast following the events of the last two episodes. [Keith laughs]

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** The way this ceremony has been just ruined, just reduced to nothing is absolute delightful, and then we get this big custom glossy title card showing the people who made it as Hunters, and the episode seems like it is going to come to an end, but we have a little bit—

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Oh, this is before a commercial break, and I just—

**Keith:** We do have one big sort of thesis statement. This is the most official Hunter stuff we've ever gotten on what a Hunter is. Can I read that?

**Jack:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, please go ahead.

**Sylvia:** Please.

**Keith:** So, we have the unofficial one. Beans says, “The most important thing is don't lose your card,” and then three official ones. One: to rise above challenges. Two: believe in your own strength. And three: fulfill your dreams. Army strong! [Dre and Sylvia laugh]

**Jack:** The way—

**Dre:** Be all you can be.

**Jack:** The way the Hunter Exam just, after all of this, stutters. After running in the dark, hundreds of people. After everybody dying in the swamp. After the weird cooking contest where they all get killed by pigs and all fail the test, seemingly. After the— uh, what's after that trial? Oh, Trick Tower.

**Keith:** Trick Tower.

**Jack:** Killua pulling a man's heart out in Trick Tower. And then we have, after Trick Tower is this. Oh, no, Zevil Island.

**Keith:** The island, the island, yeah, Zevil Island.

**Jack:** Getting the badges on the island, the battle royale. And the way that it just stutters to just a miserable, flat, ruined halt. All this death and effort for what? A card that gives you free transit on buses and the fact that banks will treat you slightly better. It is so—

**Keith:** And license to kill.

**Jack:** And license to kill. It is so beautifully suddenly hollow, and it always has been hollow. We have been told how hollow [Keith: Right.] this was the whole time, but maybe we thought that the show didn't know that. Maybe we thought that, you know, it was funny because they were fighting really hard, and the show is presenting this goal with the full knowledge that this is, like, a great thing that everybody wants to get. But

no, the way that this is being presented against— well, first with our main cast's reaction and then against the just death and terror and abject sadness and being pulled back into your family's worst desires and worst impulses. The show knows exactly how hollow free transit on buses is.

**Keith:** Well, we—

**Jack:** It is such a beautiful moment of sad deflation, of like, the Hunter Exam ultimately comes to an age 16-25 reduced rail travel card. It's wonderful. [Dre laughs]

**Keith:** You really get this, like, a slingshot back to the sort of, like, the conversations that— the arguments that Leorio and Kurapika were getting in in the first few episodes of, like, what a Hunter is, and like, Kurapika has this very idealistic vision of Hunters. They're like— basically Kurapika's like, "Hunters are heroes who save the world, and I want to— I want to be a Hunter so that I can get revenge on the people who killed my family." And Leorio's just like, "Being a Hunter is for the moneeeey! Money money money money!" [Jack, Sylvia, and Keith laugh] and we know that this is kind of a facade. This is not really what Leorio wants, and actually what Leorio wants is kind of to be a hero in the same way that Kurapika has described, but he is seemingly right that, like, I can't think of any way, at this point, to say that the Hunter Exam— getting a Hunter's License isn't basically about, like, financial security long term and short term, getting access to huge amounts of wealth and...

**Jack:** And the show is very open about this.

**Keith:** Yes.

**Jack:** I think this is part of why I find it so delightful. I think the show knows that, underneath the gold, the chalice is made of plastic. I think that where it is interested is in saying: what happens to you if you want a gold cup that much? You know?

**Dre:** Mm.

**Jack:** If you are so desperate to lift that thing above your head and you have filled your head with all these ideas about what it is.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** I don't think it is very interested in the revelation that it's plastic underneath, but the show's just tipping its hat— or it's tipping its...tipping its...hat?

**Keith:** Hat.

**Jack:** Hand.

**Keith:** Tipping its hand. Hand.

**Sylvia:** Tipping its hand! Right.

**Keith:** Right.

**Sylvia:** We're smart.

**Jack:** And going, "Yeah, it is plastic."

**Keith:** Tipping a hat is a different thing.

**Sylvia:** It is a thing, yeah.

**Jack:** And this revelation is treated with as little respect as the show affords the process of being a Hunter, [**Keith:** Yeah.] because immediately Killua is— oh, sorry. Oh my god. I've got Killua on the mind, even though he is no longer in the scene!

**Sylvia:** I always got Killua on the mind. I get it.

**Jack:** Killua s— fuck! [laughs]

**Sylvia:** I just did that to you. I incepted you.

**Jack:** Gon says, "Okay, but look, I want to go and get Killua. I'm not done fighting with Illumi," and this is such a clear nice setting of the stakes. You know, we have resolved the Hunter Exam, and the path to the next sort of goal, the next...where we are going, narratively and literally, is immediately laid out for us.

**Keith:** Right.

**Jack:** There is no pissing about as we figure out what's next.

**Keith:** It's even given a name right away.

**Jack:** Yes, because Illumi says— so, Gon says, “We gotta go and do this,” and Kurapika and Leorio say, “We’re gonna go and do this,” and so we’ve assembled the crew, and Illumi says, “Well, yeah, absolutely. I'll tell you where Killua is. I don't think you're gonna get there. Killua lives on top of Kukuroo Mountain. That is where our house is,” and we get the most menacing establishing shot of a mountain. Does someone want to describe what this thing looks like?

**Dre:** Oh.

**Keith:** Sharp. Sharp wasteland.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** Sharp wasteland with carved ruined dragon statues in front of it.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Deeply unpleasant. The family home's at the summit. Gon says, “Got it. Bye,” [laughs] and leaves.

**Keith:** Jack, I love this bit that you set up about the hollowness and the cynicism of, like, what it means now that the Hunter Exam's over. Your very important bit of plastic that lets you live a life full of convenience and wealth, unless you sell it, and then it lets you live a life of extravagance. There is...I do want to sort of bring up as a— not a silver lining, but as a, um...just as like, you know, just as like a little worm in the dirt here. [Sylvia and Jack laugh] The Satotz line about this card is the most important— this card is more valuable than Hunter's own life but also is just a worthless scrap of paper; the actual important thing is what you do now that you're a Hunter, which goes to, you know, Kurapika being like, the thing to do if you're a Hunter is be, like, a good person and help

the world. We get a little more of that from Satotz later, but there is this sort of, like, uh, you know, I don't want to put my foot down too far into the future and spoil anything, but there is this, like, funnel that the show has for, if you want this card to be rich, like, here it is.

**Jack:** Yes.

**Keith:** Go do that, then, you know? And in the same way that, in a few minutes, we'll talk about Pokkle saying that he wants to be an exotic game hunter, [**Jack:** Ha!] we get Beans saying, "If you want to be a rich Hunter, you know, these are the rules." These are the only rules you need to know if what you want is to be a rich guy.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** Yeah, totally. And also, when he said, "This is the most important item that you own. You will value it above your own life, but it's also just a scrap of plastic." I have now encountered several absolutely critical immigration documents, and let me tell you: the feeling is exactly the same. [laughs quietly] Like, this piece of paper is the most valuable thing I own. If I just lose it, it's gone. It's just paper. It came out of a printer in an embassy somewhere. It's very silly. But mine doesn't give me free travel on, uh, public transport.

**Keith:** Anything.

**Jack:** No. In fact, it makes my life much more complicated. [Jack and Keith laugh] Yes.

**[2:02:32]**

**Keith:** Okay, so, we're back. We're back. I think that you were setting up, Jack, the scene between Illumi and Hisoka.

**Jack:** Yes. So, Gon leaves, and we get a really nice little moment of conflict between who we have now revealed to be— it's been really interesting, right, because Hisoka has kind of been eclipsed by Illumi as a weird menacing force, and we get reminded that he is also a weird nightmare.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** Right. Gon is essentially protected from Illumi. This is why he's allowed to break his arm and suffer no consequences, because Illumi does not want to run headlong into what I have written here as "Hisoka's perverted ambitions."

**Jack:** Yes.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Hisoka says, "Is it really a good idea to tell Gon where Killua is?" and Illumi says, "Well, no, not really, because we don't hide where we're from, and also the locals know that we're up there. Everyone's just fucking terrified of us," and as they get closer, Gon and Kurapika and Leorio will realize why. But Illumi, I think, wisely recognizes Gon as a sort of existential threat to the Zoldyck ideology and Killua's presence in the family and possibly, you know, the family itself, so briefly threatens Gon, and then Hisoka says, "Gon is mine. Don't forget that. Leave him be or suffer the consequences," and in much the same way as we started to see the boat of rivalry rocking between Gon and Killua, we are now starting to see a potential sort of thread of that between Hisoka and Illumi.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And then Hisoka says he's going to wait until the fruit becomes ripe enough to pluck. It is so fucking gross.

**Sylvia:** Yep.

**Keith:** It's so gross.

**Jack:** Hisoka's voice actor is extraordinary. Hisoka's voice actor sells this performance so well. Ah, fuck. I pushed a button on the back of my monitor I didn't mean to. Now it is asking me if I want to change the monitor preset modes. Hold on. [Sylvia laughs] Will that go away if I just don't do anything?

**Keith:** Uh, while you're fixing that, I'll add in a subtitle difference. Maybe it's not a



difference. Maybe you just didn't highlight this particular phrase, but I think it'll be a fun one to return to. Illumi tells Hisoka that they live in different worlds than Gon and his crew. Like, it won't matter if they show up, because we're not even in the same world.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Keith:** It's not gonna work.

**Jack:** This comes back to I think the way that he was talking to and about Killua. You know, of like, you are not a person in the same way that Gon is a person. We are different things. You know? You are trying to compare a bird with a fish. They are completely different. That's the end of the villains, and now everyone says goodbye. Everybody's leaving. They're leaving. Gon is so happy to see Hanzo, the man who tortured him for four hours. Hanzo is very happy to see him.

**Keith:** It's hilarious.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** Hanzo called it. Hanzo literally was like, "Yeah, he didn't even remember that I had been torturing him."

**Jack:** And Gon says, "We went through a lot but had a lot of fun." This is the flip side of the— [Keith laughs] This is the flip side of the show being so horrible and explicit about that scene with Gon is that we— this scene is played as, like, a weird funny joke, and while there is a kind of terror inherent in, like, what kind of person is Gon to feel this way? it does actually end up as this, like, lovely moment of levity between the two of them that is made [**Keith:** Yeah.] even funnier by Hanzo saying, "If you're ever in my country, come and visit," him, and then he gives them his business card. Remember, this is a shinobi. He gives them his business card.

**Sylvia:** Fucking great.

**Dre:** Uh huh.

**Jack:** And his business card says, in huge letters, “Cloud Hidden Ninja Hanzo,” and Kurapika says, “Wow, that is one big self-assured ninja,” which is... [Jack and Dre laugh]

**Keith:** Oh, this is a massive difference between the subs.

**Dre:** Oh.

**Keith:** In my sub, what it says— what Hanzo’s business card says is, quote, “A shinobi who tries to leave an impression.” [Jack and Sylvia laugh]

**Jack:** That is even funnier. Oh, that’s actually a better version. What’s Kurapika’s reaction to that?

**Keith:** Uh, he reads it out loud and then goes, “Huh.”

**Jack:** [laughs] Hanzo is so funny, which made that episode just fucking terrifying. So scary.

**Keith:** I know, I know. These are the two— these are the two modes. These are— it just did it in reverse, where it was like scary Hanzo who refuses the poison and then funny Hanzo who goes introducing himself as a superspy to everyone.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** Well, and then Hanzo who tortures Gon relentlessly for four hours, and the show lingers on it. Bizarre.

**Keith:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Jack:** Bizarres storytelling. Then Pokkle shows up, apologizes for getting worked up with Kurapika, says, “We were all in a bit of a mood, weren't we? after we saw Killua kill that man.” [Sylvia laughs]

**Keith:** I have a metaphor here.

**Jack:** Yeah, go ahead.

**Keith:** So, Pokkle's like— Pokkle teaches Gon what a computer is.

**Jack:** Yep. Yep. Uh, the internet exists.

**Keith:** Which is very funny. And that the internet exists. That's a fun sort of, like— something that feels anachronistic. You know, like, this show is kind of out of time in a really fun way that reminds me of original *Dragon Ball*.

**Sylvia:** I've been watching this with my girlfriend. She's never seen it before, and she reacted so strongly to the internet reveal.

**Jack:** It's so funny.

**Keith:** Yeah, the internet reveal is really, really funny. Especially because the internet barely existed when the manga was being written. [Dre laughs]

**Jack:** It's great.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** We should say that the...

**Keith:** So it kind of makes sense to have to explain the internet to someone, but then it still makes sense because Gon's a forest child.

**Jack:** Yes. It's also very funny that the way the internet is introduced is that Kurapika says, "I don't know where the mountain is, but I'll just look it up online." Just gonna google, uh, [**Keith:** Yeah.] Zoldyck assassin base. It has 4000 five-star reviews, and they say things like, "Good assassin." "Good killing." "Killed my uncle. Success!" [Keith laughs] God, imagine a five-star review of an assassin's business that just said "success."

**Keith:** [laughs] Success. So, Pokkle's like, "Yeah, yeah, I'm gonna be— you know, I'm gonna really get to it. I'm gonna turn my sort of embarrassing victory-by-default into a good thing and become an exotic game hunter." That sounds fairly literal. It sounds like the most normal kind of Hunter we've heard of so far, but it did just sort of, like, kind of

hit me in the face with that, like, being a— picking what kind of Hunter you are is like having a subclass and that being a Hunter is sort of— this is my metaphor. It is like the real life— to them, it's the real life equivalent of the sort of reality simulator kind of video games, like the kind of games that want to be everything to everyone forever, like a *Star Citizen*.

**Jack:** Yes.

**Keith:** Or, in some ways, like a *No Man's Sky*. But it's like that— what if that is real? The only thing that you have to do— the only thing that you have to do is be one of the strongest people on the planet, and the entire world becomes a real life video game to you.

**Jack:** Yes. This is very consistent with what I was talking about very early in the show when I didn't know what the Hunter Exam was, and I kept being like, "Oh, it's just games. It's a variety of games that are put in your path," and I think it's interesting that you have brought that back up here as we get to the end of it. I do want to notice that after Pokkle apologizes to Kurapika, and Kurapika apologizes too, and then Pokkle says, "Do you want to use my laptop?" and everyone says, "Yeah, sick." Isn't it nice how all the people who have gotten through the Hunter Exam are kind, good, honorable sorts, except the two absolute evil monsters? [Keith laughs] It's one or the other.

**Keith:** Three!

**Jack:** Who's the third evil monster?

**Keith:** Hanzo!

**Sylvia:** Eh...

**Jack:** [laughs] Yeah.

**Sylvia:** But his vibes!

**Keith:** His capacity to be silly and goofy does not overshadow the four hour child

torture. I'll say this. I mean, this is a big statement. I think that the Hanzo-Gon fight, if you can set aside the structural violence of the Hunter Exam itself and maybe the implication that Netero is the sort of maybe individual responsible for that structure...

**Sylvia:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** Setting that aside, the cruelest thing that we've seen in these 21 episodes is Hanzo torturing a child for four hours.

**Jack:** Yes.

**Sylvia:** That is true.

**Jack:** Do you remember the message that I put in our Discord?

**Keith:** Uh, "I will fight Hanzo with my bare hands"? Is that what you said?

**Jack:** I will fight Hanzo— I think I said, "I'm going to fight Hanzo with my bare hands." Yes.

**Keith:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Jack:** And I stand by it, but I do also think he's a wacky, funny, goofy guy.

**Keith:** Yes, yeah.

**Jack:** And in that way, I am like Gon.

**Keith:** [laughs] I am like Gon.

**Jack:** Gon says, "Hey, while you've got that laptop open, can you look up something for me? Can you look up my dad?"

**Sylvia:** Can you google my dad?

**Keith:** Can you google my dad? [Dre laughs]

**Jack:** Type in his name. G-I-N-G space F-R-E-E-C-S and then another S. I do it all the

time. God, I had to spell my name down the phone to a bunch of people to help me move house today, and I don't like spelling my name down the phone.

**Sylvia:** Do the extra spaces in it make it frustrating?

**Jack:** Yes. The one that actually gets me is the D-T at the end, because down the phone, the difference between “delta” and “tango” are very close.

**Sylvia:** Oh.

**Dre:** Mm.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Keith:** What do they find when they google Ging Freeccs?

**Jack:** Oh, the most exciting thing to find if you're in fiction and you google someone: a lot of security checks. His name is hidden behind a lot of security. Pokkle says, “He must have friends on the national level,” and Leorio leans down and whispers, “It sounds like your dad is someone really special,” and Gon is delighted by this, and I have a very bad feeling about it. [Sylvia laughs]

**Keith:** So, they say their goodbyes, and Gon is, like— they have a brief conversation about, like, “Ah, we should have had Pokkle google the mountain.”

**Jack:** Oh, Pokkle gives them his email address.

**Keith:** Right. [laughs] Pokkle gives them his email address.

**Dre:** Yeah, uh huh. Yeah.

**Keith:** And then Kurapika's like, “Ah, it's fine. We didn't need Pokkle to google this anyway. We'll google it ourselves. We don't want other Hunters knowing what we're doing anyway, so let's go,” but Satotz has a couple words to say to Gon. It cuts to— I mean, it is so bizarre to have these, like, adorable moments after the episodes that we just watched. It cuts to a closeup of Gon sitting on a bench, just knees down, kicking,

swinging his feet happily, sitting on this bench next to Satotz.

**Jack:** Nature's weirdo, Gon Freeccs.

**Keith:** [laughs] The guy who can't remember if being punched and then choked by Hisoka was scary or fun.

**Jack:** God. Oh, sorry, firstly: Gon has forgotten his Hunter card. [laughs]

**Keith:** Oh, yes, he immediately—

**Jack:** Satotz gives it back to him.

**Keith:** [laughs] Satotz is very nice, gives it back to him.

**Dre:** Uh huh.

**Keith:** And then tells him— who wants to talk about this story that Satotz tells Gon?

**Sylvia:** Uh, I can kinda do it.

**Keith:** Okay.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** So, Satotz sort of describes— I don't have the exact wording he uses to describe himself as a young Hunter, but he talks about how he was sort of like—

**Keith:** He says that he excavates and preserves ancient ruins.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, but there was also— there was something about him, like, not really having the love of the game anymore that I don't quite remember.

**Keith:** Right, he was in it for the glory. He was in it for the...

**Sylvia:** Yes.

**Keith:** He was like, "I was just in it for the fame," essentially.

**Sylvia:** And then, while going about doing this, he— I don't remember if he learns about him or he meets him specifically.

**Keith:** He learns about. He never meets him.

**Jack:** He's never met him.

**Sylvia:** He finds out about a Hunter who not only does the, like, preserves and rebuilds things but also, like...the specific thing is, like, he makes it open to the public and stuff like that? Like, he—

**Keith:** Yeah, he sets up free museums, like, at the site of the ruins.

**Sylvia:** Yes.

**Jack:** He restores them.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** And self finances them. He self finances projects to excavate ruins and then return them to the country of origin as a free museum, a free public museum.

**Sylvia:** Can't pay child support though, huh?

**Keith:** Can't pay child support.

**Dre:** No. [Sylvia laughs]

**Keith:** Can't make one visit. No birthdays.

**Jack:** Because he says, "And I figured out this Hunter's name, and his name was Gon Freecss." Oh, sorry. Nope.

**Keith:** Ging Freecss.

**Dre:** Ging Freecss.

**Jack:** Ging Freecss. And Satotz says, "I wanted to meet him, but the man was an



enigma, and I could learn nothing about him,” and we learn that Satotz— it’s so sweet. Satotz says this in the present tense. I think this is lovely. Satotz says he wants to become a Hunter just like him and thank him in person one day. Satotz is great.

**Keith:** I love Satotz.

**Sylvia:** I love Satotz.

**Jack:** He could so easily have said— and I think it’s fun the way this show has done this several times now is just introducing a character that has— I’m sure I’ve talked about this. The way that there is no distinction made between— you can be shown a really weird looking character in this show, and they will never appear again, which means that when someone like Satotz was introduced in the first tunnel chase sequence, I was like, “Oh, right, we’re gonna see him, and he’s gonna go. It’s, you know.” But no, he stuck around. He’s a consistent character. I like him a lot. He could say, “I *wanted* to become a Hunter,” but no, he’s like, no, “Ging was great. I want to thank him in person one day.” Gon leaves, and Satotz says—

**Keith:** He blushes. He’s, like, really happy about this.

**Jack:** It’s really sweet.

**Keith:** Yeah, it’s very sweet.

**Jack:** Satotz says, “Oh, Gon,” and Gon turns around and says, “What is it?” and Satotz pauses and says, “Take care of yourself.”

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Cut to an internet cafe. Kurapika is looking up the mountain. I don’t think it’s an internet cafe. I think it’s in the hotel. It is in the Dentora Region, the Republic of Padokea. It’s described as a stable country open to tourists. And then something wonderful happens, which is that we suddenly cut to shots of busy roads, cities, airships moving in the sky, people stuck in traffic, other characters. We have been freed from the weird gestural hell of the Hunter Exam, and we are back in the real world. We are

surrounded by, like, birds in the sky, boats in the sea. It's really cool.

**Keith:** In a way, we're not quite back in the real world. We're in the real world for the first time in the show.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** Uh, yeah.

**Keith:** Because the only other non-Hunter Exam moments we have is Gon, who's a forest child and grew up in the woods.

**Jack:** Yep. Uh, we saw the buses towards the city, towards—

**Keith:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Jack:** Uh, what's it called? Zaban City?

**Keith:** It gestured at cities and towns. We saw some shops and shopkeepers, but like, we're now in a world of highways, not, like, bazaars.

**Jack:** It's wonderful. I was really surprised by how well this moment landed for me, just this sudden, like...it could so easily be felt as, like, an imposition of the real. You know, like the real is asserting itself in the story, and you go, "Ah, no, not this. I want to go back to the weird stuff," but the weird stuff has been so alien and frightening and odd and consequential that this very lovingly rendered shot of just, like, a bunch of people stuck in traffic on a sunsetty summer day felt like a weird breath of fresh air, of being like, "Oh, right, something I can latch onto. Yes, I know what that experience is like." And they're stuck in traffic, and Gon realizes that they can basically, like, run on the balustrade next to the traffic by the ocean. Gon wants to rescue Killua so much that he is going to run to the airport, and they reminisce about the exam as they run. They say, "This was like that time we ran in the dark, but this is a lot—" Do they say this is a lot easier or a lot harder?

**Keith:** Yeah, yeah. A lot easier. Like, "This is way easier than the Hunter Exam."

**Dre:** Mm.

**Jack:** And you'd think that'd be the end of the episode, but we get a little bumper. Satotz watches the airship leave and is met by Menchi and Buhara. Menchi says, "Wasn't that a really close call back then?" because we learn that Satotz almost let slip, as he turns and looks up at an airship passing overhead, that the real Hunter Exam isn't over just yet, and yellow flowers—

**Sylvia:** The Hunter Exam begins now!

**Jack:** The Hunter Exam begins now! Yellow flowers blow in the wind as we come to the end of our first arc. Is that right?

## **Final Thoughts [2:19:16]**

**Sylvia:** Uh, I would say so, yeah.

**Keith:** No.

**Sylvia:** Keith disagrees.

**Keith:** The season ends after the next four episodes, technically.

**Jack:** This feels like an arc ending, to me.

**Sylvia:** That doesn't mean it's not the same arc.

**Dre:** Yeah. I agree.

**Sylvia:** Or a different—

**Keith:** I think— okay. So, there's two things. I think— okay, first of all, this doesn't matter.

**Sylvia:** Oh, it doesn't.

**Keith:** The second thing is we're about to get four episodes that either count as the

shortest season of all time, a four episode long season, or—

**Sylvia:** Arc doesn't mean season.

**Keith:** What's that?

**Sylvia:** An arc isn't necessary a season of TV in the same way.

**Dre:** Yeah, that's not—

**Sylvia:** It's just a story arc.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Uh, okay, well, then it would be the shortest arc.

**Sylvia:** It is.

**Keith:** Oh, you just think it's a four episode arc? That's fine.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, I do, straight up. [laughs quietly]

**Keith:** I think it— I think that this is a...I think the next four episodes wrap up loose threads from this arc, and then we move into the second arc, but it's not important.

**Jack:** Is this next arc going to be Gon tries to figure out how to use an airport? [Sylvia laughs quietly]

**Keith:** Yeah. It's four episodes of that.

**Sylvia:** Yes, and he gets stuck in Pittsburgh for an extra night. [Jack laughs]

**Keith:** And I think that ties up a lot of what we've been dealing with for the past 20 episodes.

**Jack:** What, Gon figuring out how to use an airport?

**Keith:** Yes.

**Jack:** Uh, who would use an airport best? My guess is, weirdly, probably Leorio.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Yes, I would agree.

**Keith:** Leorio's the most normal.

**Jack:** Leorio seems like the kind of guy who understands how an airport works.

Kurapika would do it just fine, but—

**Keith:** Uh, very funny— yeah. Kurapika would be very early, [Jack laughs] very well packed, sitting and waiting for too long. I think Leorio's someone that gets to the airport maybe five minutes after they're supposed to. They're, like, just barely slightly late, but in a way where everything's fine.

**Jack:** And Gon doesn't show up at all, and they're, like, really scared, until they get on the plane, and they discover—

**Sylvia:** And he's piloting.

**Jack:** —that the pilots have let Gon sit in the cockpit, because he's been a nice little boy. [Keith and Dre laugh]

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Keith:** I do love the visual during these last couple minutes of Kurapika being the one at the helm for the computer, typing and google searching.

**Sylvia:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** And it's like, Leorio's wearing a suit and carrying a briefcase. Gon is a little forest child, and Kurapika is wearing, like, a gown. It just is very funny that it's not Leorio that's at the computer.

**Jack:** I know. It's great.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And that's where we are. That is the end of episode 21. Is there anything we want to talk about that we have not covered?

**Sylvia:** I feel like...anything that I would have to say is going to be more— we can discuss more freely next episode.

**Dre:** Sure.

**Jack:** Dre?

**Sylvia:** I think. Yeah.

**Dre:** Um, there was something, but I think after what Sylvi said, actually, I think it would be better to talk about with further context in future episodes.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Yeah, I don't think there— I don't think that I— I think I hit everything.

**Jack:** Incredible.

**Keith:** Yeah. Great.

**Jack:** Really fun episodes.

**Keith:** Great set of episodes. Oh my god.

**Jack:** I finished that first episode, and I was like, "Yeah, this was fine. I've seen— you know, I just saw Gon got beat up for basically the full length of an episode. This wasn't great." And then the next two episodes just knocked it straight out of the park.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** It's something that you've really, you know, if you're signing that check, you've gotta be able to cash it.

**Jack:** And they do, I think.

**Keith:** And they do.

**Dre:** They do.

**Keith:** It's a big— it is a big check. Like, the stuff they have to do to make the brutality of that first episode not, like, stick in your mouth for the whole rest of the arc is really tough. It is a tough needle to thread, and I think they really do it, and it leads to, I think, the best— the most successful set of episodes we've watched.

**Jack:** Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. And I am so excited to get a sense of where we're going next, because, you know, right up until this point, it has just been the Hunter Exam the whole time, and I have had no idea of what this show is outside of the Hunter Exam, and I think "go and get Killua" is such a great plot hook that I am very excited to see more of.

**Keith:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Jack:** Also, Killua has failed. Not a Hunter.

**Keith:** Not a Hunter.

**Dre:** Not a Hunter.

**Keith:** The only one— I mean, only of the final nine.

**Dre:** Right.

**Jack:** A bunch of people were killed by a tortoise, yeah.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Dre:** So, it could be worse.

**Keith:** There is this sort of underlying implication that, because everyone was being followed by their own personal, uh, guard—maybe not until after they got out of the

tunnel? but who knows—that there is some measure less death than you would—

**Dre:** Than is seemingly implied?

**Keith:** Than is implied. But I don't know by how much, [Jack sighs] and I don't know if it's even fair to give them that credit.

**Jack:** I mean, fucking, maybe. I don't know. I don't know. My read on that was that they were watching them to give Netero his stupid scoring points, that there was no guarding going on.

**Dre:** No.

**Keith:** Well, there's— so, this is the sort of— the second half of this is like, we get this information from Pokkle that— not Pokkle, from, um...

**Jack:** Uh, Hanzo.

**Keith:** No, sorry, the bee woman.

**Jack:** Oh, yes, yes. You're right.

**Dre:** Oh, about how they, like, come get you because there's a GPS tag?

**Keith:** Yes. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, we get that. We get that. We get, oh, you know, the—and that is sort of something that's said but not proven, and then it does sort of get kind of relitigated when Hanzo's like, "Oh, you were the one that was assigned to me. I assume that everyone had someone."

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Keith:** And, you know, if that's the case, then unless they're just leaving people to die, [laughs quietly] I don't know. I don't think so.

**Dre:** They could. Who knows?

**Keith:** I'm gonna say that they're not. I'm just gonna say that they aren't. I don't think



that that's— I don't think I'm making excuses. I think it's probably not.

**Jack:** I'm afraid of them.

**Keith:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Dre:** Oh, sure.

**Keith:** Oh, you mean the individual Hunters or the Hunter...

**Jack:** The Hunter organization.

**Keith:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, sure.

**Dre:** All the above, for me. [laughs]

**Keith:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Jack:** Yeah. Yeah. Uh, Buhara seems cool. [Sylvia laughs]

**Dre:** Yeah, that's fair.

**Keith:** Yeah. Menchi seems cool.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, I'm a big Menchi fan.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** I don't trust the prison guy.

**Keith:** Oh, no, not at all.

**Jack:** If you run a prison, I don't trust you anyway, but...

**Keith:** And Satotz seems cool.

**Jack:** Oh, Satotz seems cool.

**Dre:** That's true. Yeah. Beans—

**Keith:** And at this point, we get sort of the ratio of which Hunters are cool that pass. It's about the same.

**Dre:** That's true.

**Keith:** About two to one cool to shitty.

**Jack:** Oh, I was thinking about it— if you weren't watching the show, you might have thought we glossed over it. What Hisoka whispers to Kurapika and Bodoro is not revealed and is not subtitled.

**Dre:** No, it's never explained.

**Jack:** There is no...

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Keith:** right.

**Jack:** We weren't forgetting to talk about that. You just see Hisoka's mouth move and then the characters' surrender.

**Keith:** It's curious even that they had what seemed like a low intensity cordial spar before the whisper moment.

**Jack:** Well, the other person didn't know what Hisoka was planning. But yes, I suppose Hisoka could have just walked up and whispered to them. I don't know.

**Keith:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Jack:** I don't know. Hisoka can disintegrate people into butterflies. I...

**Keith:** Yeah, sorry, it's not Kurapika being low intensity that was surprising. It's Hisoka choosing to fight for a little bit but, like, not very intensely [**Jack:** Yeah.] and then to give up after a few minutes of kind of, you know, even-matched sparring.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Just something to keep in mind.

**Jack:** What are we watching next time, Keith?

**Keith:** Next time, we are watching— this was episode 20, correct?

**Sylvia:** This was episode 21 is what we left off on.

**Keith:** 21? Okay.

**Sylvia:** It's "Some × Brother × Trouble".

**Keith:** So, 22, 23, 24, and 25. Four episodes. This is our first four. It's our second scheduled four, but it's our first four that we're actually gonna do.

**Jack:** And we are going to try our best to keep the episode about the same length. How that's going to turn out, you will see.

**Sylvia:** We'll see!

**Jack:** But that's our goal.

**Keith:** Yeah, I think that as this— only true to a point, but I think that having four episodes, we will just have— we will naturally stick onto fewer things per episode, I'm hoping.

**Sylvia:** The thing is, just by doing this, we'll be able to look at the whole— what I consider a mini arc as one thing.

**Jack:** [laughs] Oh, this is—

**Sylvia:** And hopefully that'll make stuff...

**Jack:** The rivalry.

**Sylvia:** I just think it's funny to bring it up now. I think that'll make stuff easier for us to just discuss, because we can be a little more free with it.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** You know, as always, you should go to [friendsatthetable.cash](https://friendsatthetable.cash) to support the Patreon. That is the Patreon that lets this show exist. You can also follow the streams that we do at [twitch.tv/friendsatthetable](https://twitch.tv/friendsatthetable) and watch archives of those streams and, you know, occasionally some other stuff on [youtube.com/friendsatthetable](https://youtube.com/friendsatthetable). You can follow us on x.com at [@friends\\_table](https://twitter.com/friends_table) or cohost.org at [@friends-table](https://cohost.org/@friends-table). You can also follow us on TikTok at [@friends\\_table](https://tiktok.com/@friends_table). Did I miss anything? Oh, this is the first episode that's out— this is the last episode that will— the last episode that we're recording before episodes start going live, so you should go to Apple Podcasts and rate and review highly, as highly as you possibly can—

**Sylvia:** Five stars.

**Keith:** Five stars, please.

**Jack:** No, here's what I'll say.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** And I'm going to borrow from the excellent Ranged Touch here. You should leave us a five star review if you enjoy the stuff that we make. We don't take advertising. All the stuff, all the ways that people hear about our show is through word of mouth, but five star reviews on podcast platforms, especially Apple Podcasts, really help us out. If you write us a five star review and it is funny and good, we might read it here at the end of the episode, but we can't do that yet—

**Sylvia:** We can't, no.

**Jack:** Because none of it's out yet.

**Keith:** None of it's out yet.

**Sylvia:** This is, you know.

**Jack:** Here's my review of the podcast.

**Sylvia:** Oh.

**Jack:** I'm gonna give it five stars.

**Sylvia:** Yes!

**Jack:** I think everybody on it is fun.

**Keith:** Except...

**Jack:** I think the music is great. I will say, personally, it takes up more of my time [laughs quietly] than I was expecting it to, as a listener. I thought I'd just sit down and listen to this podcast, but no, I actually have to watch *Hunter × Hunter* and record it as well.  
[Sylvia laughs]

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** But that doesn't take out my reduction. It doesn't reduce it from five stars. Still very positive.

**Keith:** Maybe even watching *Hunter × Hunter* increases it.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, hey, maybe a good time— because I know some people are just gonna listen along to this, and that's totally fine.

**Keith:** Yeah, it's fine.

**Sylvia:** If you haven't watched *Hunter × Hunter* yet and you're just hearing us talk about it, you should check out *Hunter × Hunter*. Find a way to watch it.

**Dre:** You should watch *Hunter × Hunter*.

**Keith:** Yeah. Or read it, if you want.

**Sylvia:** Or read it, honestly. Honestly, reading it's a great way to go.

**Keith:** Yeah, give you a different little flavor.

**Sylvia:** Because then you can be like, “Well, wait a second. That didn't happen in what I saw,” and then [**Keith:** Yeah.] we can be like, “Sorry, we’re casuals.” That’s not true.

**Keith:** Any final things to plug?

**Sylvia:** Um...no, I think we covered all our bases. Oh! Worth mentioning, you can also rate us on other apps too, not just— Apple Podcasts is the big one, but [**Keith:** Right.] if you're listening somewhere else, just go in and give us a little, like, [**Keith:** Yeah.] two thumbs up, five stars, ten out of ten, whatever it is.

**Keith:** Whatever the best one is, please. I'm taking only best ratings right now.

**Sylvia:** Yes. [Jack laughs]

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** Only best ratings, please.

**Keith:** I don't have— I don't have space to receive negative ratings, so please only positive ratings.

**Sylvia:** [laughs] I don't have the emotional bandwidth right now.

**Keith:** Yeah, I don't have the emotional bandwidth for four, three stars, or, god forbid, a one star.

[[“The Boy in Green”](#) by Jack de Quidt begins playing]

**Sylvia:** [laughs quietly] We need to end this fucking podcast episode.

**Jack:** And that’s how we feel about that. Goodbye!

[song plays out]