

Tips at the Table 42: Your First Dream (December 2020)

Transcriber: Mo mo#3373

[00:00:00]

AUSTIN: [quickly] Welcome to Tips at the Table, an RPG podcast focused on critical questions, hopefully smart answers, and fun interactions between good friends. I'm your host Austin Walker. [speeds up] Joining me today, Keith J. Carberry.

KEITH: [quickly] My name is Keith J. Carberry, you can find me on Youtube and follow me at RunButton, you can follow me on Twitter [@KeithJCarberry](#).

AUSTIN: Also joining us, Jack de Quidt.

JACK: [quickly] Jack. [Notquitereal](#). [Notquitereal.bandcamp.com](#)

AUSTIN: [friendsatthetable.cash](#). [Friendsatthetable.net](#). You already know what it is. First question comes in from Erin. Erin says—

KEITH: We're doing the whole show like that by the way!

[QUESTION 1: 00:00:27]

AUSTIN: No, we are not. [KEITH laughs] People deserve more respect and are—

[reading] "Please tell us," says Erin, "about the most amusingly terrible character you've ever played or played with. I basically just want to hear stories about how someone's beloved dumbass did something wicked foolish and got completely owned. I can start. In a 3.5 D&D game, I played a master of masks who loved to act and assume new roles and basically be as boisterous as possible. Unfortunately, the GM was obsessed with battle and wargaming so we mostly just fought in huge battles against generic soldiers. [laughs] My guy was way underpowered and died seven times before the cleric decided not to resurrect me anymore. He was mobbed by demons, stabbed, shot, hit with spells, and torched in a burning house. Yes, it was bad, but I still had a lot of fun. One of the best parts about talking RPGs is telling stories like this and bonding over hilarious failures. I would love to hear one from everyone."

Um, my guess is that there might not be a lot because I—My understanding is like Jack, you don't have a lot of like, pre-Friends at the Table experience, right?

JACK: No, not really. I was trying to think—

AUSTIN: We know your stories about terrible characters who do amusing things.

JACK: Oh yeah. Uh huh.

KEITH: Yeah, all my best ones are on the show too.

AUSTIN: Mm.

JACK: We've saved—We've saved the good ones for the show.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Um, I'm trying to think if—Like, did we ever playtest Tower or something, Austin, and failed and it fell apart? I'm trying to think if we've playtested games for the show that have just crumbled.

AUSTIN: That's possible. What was, there was definitely um...I can think about like the first BFF game, there was some fun stuff that didn't, that was pre-record—we didn't record it because it was not the show. You know what I'm talking about? When we did a test game of that game?

JACK: That game, we got incredibly obsessed with being on a beach and various beachside activities, if I remember right?

AUSTIN: That sounds right. That was fun. I have a real answer to this, which is I played a second edition AD&D game, an advanced Dungeons and Dragons game in college in which I played a paladin. So, the set-up for this is my friend Anthony was running the game for us and he had messaged me and was like—not *messaged* me, we knew each other, we lived on the same campus and he was like, Austin, I'd love if you joined. Right now the party is like a rogue, a wizard or whatever the wizard equivalent was in AD&D. It's probably wizard. I don't think it was mage. A rogue, and maybe it was a thief? Maybe it's thief and not rogue. It's been a long time since I've read Advanced Dungeons and Dragons, OSR nerds don't—don't kill me. Um—

KEITH: I'm saying it was thief.

AUSTIN: You believe it was thief.

KEITH: I believe.

AUSTIN: I'm checking now. Um, it was [reading] dededededa uh, by...okay, Advanced Dungeons and Dragons, dededa, second edition. It was thief. So it was thief—oh, oh, oh. There was a grouping, right of course, because bard is also a rogue type class in AD&D second edition.

KEITH: Got it.

AUSTIN: And of course likewise, there's like fighter, paladin, ranger are all warrior types and then mage is a wizard type, I guess. Anyway, so there'd been a mage, there had been a fighter, I wanna say? Maybe a ranger. Mm. I wanna say—I think—I wanna say it was a mage, a druid, and a thief, and so, um.

KEITH: They walk into a bar.

AUSTIN: My friend Anthony was like, "Austin, we badly need a paladin or a cleric to come in to do like a little bit of healing, a little bit of like, holy stuff, like we need someone to touch that side of the game. The party needs that badly." Anthony was the DM and was running the game kind of by the book in the—not by the book, by the encultured way people ran those games. Which was, I'm designing a dungeon and if the party can't make it through, tough shit.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And so, he was like the party would really love it if a paladin or a cleric came through. So I rolled a paladin, I never played anything lawful good in my life and so I was like, why not, let's give it a shot. I made a paladin named Victor and I was like, I'm just going to play this guy like a complete asshole. He's going to be like what people think of when you hear the word Cyclops from the X-men. He's going to be that exact, you know, church cop. Boy scout. And seven minutes, let's say, less than ten, into the first session, I reached my hand into a hole, was bit by a giant poison centipede, failed my saving throws, which is like a hard thing to do for a paladin because paladins, one of their big things is they have good saving throws, completely failed them, took a ton of damage, died instantly. Died on the first roll of the game within ten minutes. [KEITH and JACK laugh] Immediately rolled a character named Vincent, who was Victor's twin brother. [laughs] Came back in, was more careful around holes going forward.

JACK: God, that's really good.

AUSTIN: So that was a big one. That's my lovable, lovable dumbass paladin.

KEITH: We loved him for the whole five minutes.

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah. I eventually managed to—go ahead, go ahead.

JACK: [cross] You managed to—oh no, he just managed to die before he could do anything. Hand in a hole, that's the end.

AUSTIN: Yeah. That's the end, don't do it. I did it out of confidence that my saving throws would protect me, I was a fool. I, later with the same DM, would play a ranger along with Art. Mine was named Gareth and I wanna say Art's was Abdel. Um, and Art was like, cool slick ranger who was like an elf and elves are like extremely OP in AD&D second edition, and I was a human, but I was strong as shit. I had like whatever the default strength score could be um, and ranger in

AD&D is not just—You don't need to do the ranger who is like the Legolas scouting, tracking or the Thrandir has a big dog ranger. You can do, I'm a ranger, that does swords good and so that's the sort of ranger I was. It was just like intelligence score in the fucking like 6 or something, and so I was just playing that character like, big big heart, big you know smiles, trusts his friends, loves everyone, is easy to beguile, and that was actually really fun to play. It was just fun to play someone who was genuinely just trusting and loving and strong as shit and just completely got into trouble non-stop, and also was BFFs with Art's character, who was like a brilliant strategist. So it was a good team. Good—Good times. Those are my two—those are my two answers for this.

KEITH: I have a real one that I remembered during your story, um.

AUSTIN: Okay, good.

KEITH: In, I believe it was in, the first tabletop game I ever played was Pathfinder.

AUSTIN: Mm.

KEITH: And my friend Kevin had rolled like, this like, frog rogue? Like a semi-anthropomorphic frog. Like this thing was super frog.

AUSTIN: [laughs, amused] Ok?

KEITH: [laughs] And—and but—and just because Kevin was Kevin had decided that this frog's hobby and passion was like grappling, which had its own rules in Pathfinder.

AUSTIN: Of course, of course.

KEITH: And so was constantly trying to get other characters, PC *and* NPCS, into grapple contests and like trying to work that into being helpful. [AUSTIN laughs] So trying to convince people to give him stuff if he wins at wrestling, trying to convince other characters to agree with him based on wrestling. [breaks into laughter] I mean just constantly trying to grapple—and I don't know why, I just think we were all slightly tickled by, that there were separate rules for grappling.

AUSTIN: Right, right, of course.

KEITH: And so we just did it all the time.

AUSTIN: That's very fun. That's very good, actually. That's the best use of grappling rules in any game I've ever heard, so.

JACK: Being a frog.

AUSTIN: Being a frog who likes to grapple.

KEITH: [still laughing] Who likes to grapple.

JACK: [cross] Um, I don't have an answer—

KEITH: [cross] I think he has—he's a great artist. He's still—I mean, he still is a great artist. I think I can probably find some art he did of his frog.

AUSTIN: Oh, please try to.

JACK: His flawless frog. I do not have an answer for this. The—I will say that the two biggest—we get into scraps every season—the two biggest scraps I think I've ever been involved are attempting to break into Memoriam College and uh, trying to infiltrate a research facility in Twilight Mirage that ends with us telling the entire plan to a lady that we meet along the way, and I think also just failing the objective?

AUSTIN: That's a great arc. I love that arc.

JACK: [cross] The milk heist is very, very good.

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah, the milk heist arc. Top tier.

JACK: The milk arc. I don't know if it's a heist, we're trying to find information.

AUSTIN: [cross] No, it's not. It's actually like the opposite. You're trying to protect people in that arc. [amused] You just don't necessarily know who you're protecting. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JACK: Are we? I thought we were just trying to eat cookies and explain—

AUSTIN: Mm. If that was the difficulty—if that was the mission, you would have succeeded.

JACK: We would have done just fantastic.

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

JACK: Good on Morning's Observation.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah. I do think there is a Tower character you played with me when we were doing Tower playtesting years ago that was just fantastic, who was a character who—maybe we told this story before—didn't, just completely misunderstood who their god was. Who their divine was.

JACK: Oh yeah. So a mechanic in the Tower involves being given a bunch of gifts and in getting those gifts, you know, sort of treating them as like player flags on some level and like trying to interpret what kind of a story you think is being told, what kind of a place is being created, and both me and the character colossally misunderstood what Austin was trying to tell me, to such an extent that it ended up proving fairly damaging to the character, I think, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, it was a great game 'cause it was based on like a riverboat where you were like, not a stowaway, but like, kind of like a young deckhand, maybe is the way to think of it. You were doing odd jobs on the ship during its riverboat travel, and you were convinced that the god had something to do with like, old Hollywood or something. [JACK laughs] And I was playing—

JACK: Just like golden age.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You were like ah, this is a golden age Hollywood or golden age entertainment industry like the birth of radio. You know, like that style of things.

JACK: I was trying to like—I was trying to basically make tithes and sacrifices to my god that reflected this, right? I was like, “Well, the god clearly likes old hollywood or old radio, whatever so let me try and you know, please the god in this way.” That wasn’t what was happening was it, Austin?

AUSTIN: No, I’m just going to pull it up because we have it. We have notes from every game we’ve ever played. I think we do anyway. I would love to see for instance, what sort of rules you tried to write for this god.

JACK: As you gave me these objects.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Ok yeah, so I announced myself in this game—oh god, does it not say? Um...I guess I don’t have the name of whatever the god was that I said I was unfortunately. But I do have you had written things like, so the things you got were like an 8th grade history textbook from 1981—this was in the future, you should not have gotten one of those—an 1972 Olympic medal, a—a handaxe, a New York firefighter engraved handaxe, a strange portable phonograph, I forgot what that was. It was probably like a MP3 player or something, right? A medallion that seems like—based on my description here, was like a Civil war medallion. An engraved pistol from something called the pilgrimage of meat, an air force shovel, a—oh here it is! The first one was a locket holding the picture of Louise Brooks. That was the first thing, that’s the bottom of your tower. Louise Brooks, and this is the situation, right?

JACK: This was the error, right.

AUSTIN: Louise Brooks is a jazz era, jazz age flapper who was like kept in the uh, you know, the lockets of soldiers overseas or like was the sort of thing that people watched during the depression. You know what I mean? That ended up being a big part of what her kind of reach was. This kind of vision of beauty during an ugly time and so I announced myself as the divine

of distant promises. And so you had like, “Ah yes, theatricality in all actions” or, “effective action should be rewarded even if their effectiveness is not understood”, boat people should stick together.” But really what I was doing the whole time was just basically like, the god of historical tragedy or something. [laughs]

JACK: Like yeah, historical atrocity, right?

AUSTIN: Yes, exactly. And so you were just running it as if this character who was working on a boat was just having a great time and at every turn, I was taking disappointment tokens, it was great. Anyway, that was a fun one. That was all done I think probably via Skype, text.

JACK: Nah, we were in the same place. I think we played that game [pauses] Ooh.

AUSTIN: No, I don’t think so. It was one of our first games. I’m 90% sure we played that game while I was...

JACK: Oh yeah, it might have been one of our first games.

AUSTIN: Our first game was the puritan, like vaguely, like.

JACK: We just played it as straight as possible the first time.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Well, you were playing like a little girl who was in, who was—we were playing *The Witch* in retrospect, is what we were playing.

JACK: Yeah, absolutely.

AUSTIN: That game was kind of like the Witch.

JACK: Eggers’ *The VVitch*.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh huh. Yeah, yeah, yeah. *The VVitch*. Um, that was kind of the vibe, and that was all done via Skype text. Just skype chat. Which means it’s all lost, because Skype does not keep records unfortunately. And I wish I had thought of that.

JACK: But also that, on some level, that’s fine.

[QUESTION 2: 00:14:38]

AUSTIN: It’s fine, it’s fine. It was good though. Anyway, there’s our lovable terrible characters. Um, next question. Shaun writes in and says:

[reading] “My tabletop roleplaying sessions are run weekly and usually last for about two hours. An hour and a half after social chatter many nights. So that means people show

up, right, people show up, do an hour and a half of social chatter and ninety minutes of that then run for two hours. We wanna start adding a feedback bit to help the GM run things and feel like they're keeping things fun but a lot of advice out there says it's best to do such feedback discussions in the moment so we're worried about either losing more game time than we can afford and not getting valuable information by making compromises. How do you balance getting player feedback and ensuring the max amount of play time especially with tight schedules?"

I get that this is like a thing that is, I mean there's two obvious things. The first one is, cut the social chatter to an hour. Give yourselves an hour. Give yourselves a like, "hey everyone show up around here," and then or like, "let's get on the call around now, and then an hour later we'll jump into the game." And that way you can book that 30.

JACK: I read that as...I read that as there is half an hour of social chatter and then one and a half hours of play.

AUSTIN: Oh, I see what you're saying. Yes okay, that makes more sense. That makes more sense.

KEITH: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that actually makes way more sense. So you were reading, they last for two hours but actually only one and a half hours after social chatter.

JACK: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. That makes more sense. So—

JACK: But I mean I think on some level, your point stands. Although it's nice to have time before a game, you know, to...

AUSTIN: Yes. Yeah. I think that's an important warm-up period for most folks.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I would not want to like, say get rid of that.

JACK: Jump in, welcome to Friends at the Table.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Though what I would say is maybe, try to maybe to bank that time in or build that time in by starting a little earlier. That way, you give yourselves exactly what that is, and that's one way. The other way is just like what we do tends to be post-game text-based chat stuff. Like I—I—everyone is so tired at the end of a session most of the time.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Not always, not always, but often. And it's—I get the impulse that is like you have to do it, you should do it, best practice do it there at the table, but if the option is don't do it at the table because you don't have the time or don't do it at all, then just don't do it at the table. Do it later, you know?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um.

JACK: And I think also on some level, I think that if my friend is sitting opposite me and says, “how did I do, do you have any feedback?” In the moment, I might actually not be able to give as good an answer or feel like I'm comfortable in giving a good enough answer as I would be, you know, even just a couple hours later over chat or, or, you know. It might not have percolated in my mind how—[pauses] We've definitely had instances of feedback where on the recording or on the call we talked about being like, “do we want to do it like X or shall we do it another way?” and then we decide one way and then like 2 or 3 hours after we finished recording, someone will say, “Ah no actually, I thought about it and I'd like to do it like this.” And I think that's an instance where giving yourself some time between the session and, you know, more time for it to percolate might be more of a benefit than a hindrance.

AUSTIN: Totally, or just to understand what the point of frustration is or to identify the things you really liked. It can be hard at the end of the session to be like, “Well, here is something I really loved and like to see more of,” because it's all—you're all just coming down from that state of making sure your character gets through okay [laughs] [JACK: Yes.] and that you played them well and that you had a good time and like, if you're not taking notes along the way, which maybe is part of this too. It might be worth saying everyone should as a best practice, as a suggestion, take notes about what they really like about a game and maybe what they'd like to see changed as the game is going on, just short quick, you know, type something out or write it out by hand quickly to reference and even expand on post-game via message, even if not via conversation. Um, because that way you don't lose things, so that's the other hand. That's the other half of it, I guess. On one hand, the stuff that happened you can sit with and come to firmer more complex conclusions about and give better feedback after sitting on it. But on the other hand, I think this is the reason why I've seen it recommended that you just do it at the table is that it's easy to forget the thing that maybe you wished happened differently or remember the stuff that made you feel good if you're not necessarily like responding quickly. [JACK: Right.] Um, so I think a kind of modified approach in which your table is taking a couple of notes when something you know. Hey, mark down one thing that you—when something goes good and you like it, just write down PLUS on a notepad and write “the big bear.” [laughs] That way you remember, “I love the big bear.”

JACK: [overlapping] And when it—

KEITH: [overlapping] We all love the big bear.

AUSTIN: We all love the big—The frog that wrestles. Write that down and later you'll remember, "I love the wrestling frog," but then you put a MINUS next to it and say, "didn't like the grappling rules."

JACK: Or take a little ghost—take a little round ghost token.

AUSTIN: [amused] Yeah, take a round ghost token, a contempt token. Exactly. Um, yeah. Brendan in the chat says, "For Discord games, I've been posting a pre-formatted writing prompt to get feedback in the chat after we get off on chat. Usually, and I usually prompt one day later and that's worked super well. Often like, name something you liked, something you liked that someone else did, something of your own, something that you wish would happen, and something you wish had been different." Yeah, I've seen that style of configuration go around before and can definitely be useful. Any thoughts, thoughts here? Logistics questions are pretty straightforward I think most of the time.

KEITH: Um...Yeah, just sort of to reiterate like, you know, I'm sure that different people have different advice for how to do this and it's probably true that in some ways like, if you can all feel good about doing it at the table that makes a lot of sense but it just doesn't seem worth like trying to fit it into a situation that it seems that is pretty like—that everyone else is, that everyone's pretty fine with as it is like...

AUSTIN: Mhm.

KEITH: You don't have, where do we cut fifteen minutes, and it's like, ah I don't know if it's worth cutting fifteen minutes if we can just do it another way and it works.

[QUESTION 3: 00:21:04]

AUSTIN: Yeah, give it a shot and see, hey, if it does feel like this isn't working 'cause it's not happening live and in-person, then you know that and you can adjust, you know. Um, alright. Next question comes in from Des, who writes:

"I've been running a mission-based game for a long time now. The time has come to end it so we can move on. I've run into a couple of problems with doing this though. First, I've never ended a campaign before and I'm having trouble focusing on which narrative threads to leave a mystery and which to wrap up since there hasn't been one big bad that the story has coalesced around. Second and maybe even bigger, doing online university during a pandemic accidentally put a stop to me running this campaign for months and I'm worried about how coming back for just the finale after such a long break is going to throw a wrench in everyone's play. To summarize, do you have any advice for closing a loose, open campaign especially after leaving it for months? P.S. I don't want to leave the campaign without ending it. This is the first time I've gotten this close to closing

one out and not abandoning it for the next one. So answers other than just move on would be appreciated.”

Um, thoughts? Any ideas here? [pause]

JACK: Um, I can see—[sighs] I come into this question thinking that I was going to say, this is where the value of what we play as finale games might come in handy. [AUSTIN makes an agreeing noise] Where it's like, we switch into a system that we have learned for this game and we find the—often we find the conflict, maybe not the core conflict, but other conflict through play of that system. I mean, I'm thinking about the end of Spring in Hieron where we had some pretty clear threats going into that finale but by the nature of the game, a lot of additional conflict, sort of new conflict was drawn up by the game itself which might help with your concerns about there not being like a um, a particular big bad in that you can definitely find enough conflict to hang an narrative around through these games that are pretty much designed to build that on some level. But the more I think about it like, you say that you are so close to finishing a campaign for the first time and that feeling really good so I can understand if on some level you actually didn't want to move away from the system that you are currently working in. I'm not quite sure what I would suggest in that case.

AUSTIN: Um, I mean I definitely think that those two things can be...I don't know what the game is, I guess. I guess, Des says that it's a mission-based game so you know, probably think something like a Forged in the Dark game. [JACK: Yeah.] So I, I would start by saying that I do think that Jack, you're right that they could possibly play something that's a different system that, to me, doesn't feel like leaving the campaign without ending it but you know what my feelings are on game-switching, which is do it as often as you want to cause it's fun. [laughs] So maybe that's not a surprise.

To that end though, my big suggestion is to actually look at the way something like this happens in other sorts of serialized media where there is a break or a conclusion but then some sort of follow-up content. The thing that comes to mind the most for me is this happens all the time in anime where there will be a 26 anime season or maybe even 2 seasons that long and then there will be a movie, and the movie will have the characters, and the movie will have similar situations you know basically, but it is not necessarily, “And this is the big questions of the main season need to be answered here.” I just watched the film for *Psycho-Pass* which takes place in a different—it doesn't take place in Japan, it takes place in—on the mainland Asian continent. I forget where so I don't wanna like, jump to conclusions or misrepresent that. And there is like a major character who shows up to complicate things from the history of the show but like, it's not just—it's expounding on core ideas in that show, it's not trying to tie those up once and for all or something like that. And yet, finishing it gave me a sense of completion because it produced a trajectory for the characters still.

I think that another way to think about this is just in the realm of something like, you know, any sort of franchised fiction. You look at like, the final Sherlock Holmes case, or you look at anything in that space where there's a recurring character or status quo gets returned to normal

normally. Sitcoms do this also, right? Sitcoms and with some exceptions, most of them end on a thing that's basically like a one-off of a regular episode that has some additional stakes but it's not trying to necessarily be—it's not trying to wrap up every loose end or for me, the good ones don't strain themselves to do that. You don't need every ending to be Metal Gear Solid whatever, I guess. I was gonna say 4 but that's not even the last one anymore. [laughs] Um, but you know MGS4 ends with every loose end brought on screen and attempted to be tied up. You don't need—

JACK: Yikes.

AUSTIN: It doesn't necessarily have to happen, do you know what I mean? You don't need everything to be resolved, you can instead tell a story in the model of the story you already liked being told. In your case, I don't know if it's a heist game or a mission game, it says a mission game. But like, one last mission, one last job, and give the stakes that suggest or that communicate why that could be one last job. Maybe the payout is really big, maybe the objective is so big that the team can never talk to each other again after they achieve it because that's how much you know, heat will be on their heads. Maybe the whatever the thing is will fundamentally get at the core of what they want from the world in such a way that they're happy to hang up their hats afterward but achieving that might tie into one or two other plotlines that may have been raised. It doesn't necessarily have to then be the grand red string on the wall, everything is connected, you know? Other opportunities represent themselves sometimes.

JACK: Yeah. I think that's a really good, the way that you were describing it as like a, it's kind of like all the other episodes but with something in it that makes it final.

AUSTIN: Yes.

KEITH: Uh, I have an [pause] um. Like a sorta toss-out thing which is like, what would you two think of like, doing a recap episode. Not like a flashback episode, but like at least doing a get-together to be like, cause they said they went months without playing.

AUSTIN: Totally. Totally, yeah.

KEITH: And that way, that would go a lot towards just by default getting to what people thought was interesting like whether you turn this into a narrative thing or whether it's just like a, hey let's talk about, can we just like sit and try to remember what we were doing for a half-hour? That might be something that helps.

AUSTIN: Totally. Just by what people bring up you'll identify what they care about.

KEITH: Right. Totally.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That way, it will select where to trim. Yes, totally, that's a great idea.

JACK: There's um, one of my favorite series is the *Imperial Radch* trilogy by Ann Leckie and those are books with a very heavy sort of, um. There's a lot in those worlds. There's a lot of unique language. There's a lot of unique concepts. There are unique places. The first book is all about a series of political moves that get very intense and in-depth and I was so impressed by the way she begins the second book which is that without really doing a recap, she never really sits down and goes, you know, last summer I did X or I did Y. She—it's as though she is working down a list of things that she needs to reintroduce the reader in terms of concepts, in terms of characters who are important and yeah, in terms of actions that they did and I think that combining the, y'know, the everybody sit down and take cues from your players in terms of what it is about the world that they remember, what it is that they're excited about and then kind of collating that into a interim mission, right? Where like, what stakes there are are reaffirmed, what characters and places that are important, or concepts that are important to you get re—you know. It's like if we were going to make a sequel to *Marielda*, we'd probably do a recap but we would also demonstrate on screen, this is what reconfiguration is. This is who the Yellowhouse is. This is who the Black Slacks are.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: There'd be little turns and little arcs that would kind of bring that all back into the main, to the forefront of people's minds again.

AUSTIN: That's the other thing is, and this is, you've kind of raised this for me thinking about this season, thinking about *PARTIZAN*, which is you might need to give yourself more time than you necessarily maybe want or think. [JACK: Yeah.] You might build in a whole recap arc, or not an arc, recap arc but like a re-entry arc that sets the stage. That kind of puts the golf balls on the tee for that finale drive that kind of gives you the lead-in to situate what the stakes are. Obviously, I'm also a fan of being like, we jump five years into the future and now the situation is X. We've done that plenty of times before, but something about the backhalf of *PARTIZAN* which I don't know how clear this is but we come back from the midseason finale stuff, the kind of quote-on-quote holiday game, the kingdom game and instantly have the Nooncrown episode which has a huge dramatic change to party configuration and what the status quo of the game is and I'm immediately at that point like, oh shit we're on the final approach. Like, we're there because this has sped up the back half of the game substantially and it did speed it up but what it also did is, it made me have to, and I didn't know this for months probably after that happened, it changed the destination. It didn't just speed things up, it also shifted where we were going in such a way that I did still need more runway to get us there than maybe what we thought coming right out of that episode. Like, coming right out of that episode, it was like...okay.

JACK: Finale now? Let's go.

AUSTIN: Is it done? Like, is there one more arc and then a finale arc? Because this feels like, I don't know what to do with this yet. But on the way you start putting down the track for that final

runway and you're like, oh wait a second, I need a little more space, I need some time to develop this out. So give yourself that space, you'll thank yourself in the long run because if you rush it, you know, you might, six months from now, be like damn, I wish we set things up a little cleaner going into that final game, you know? So maybe give yourself, you know, a little extra time and set things up. Be happy with your set-up is what I would say. Um, next question coming in from Wayne who says,

[QUESTION 4: 00:32:07]

"I have been running a Blades in the Dark game off-and-on for a while now in my own custom cyberpunk-ish setting, worldbuilding is fun and it's something that the players and I collaborate on, but how much to do? Since the game meets pretty irregularly, my approach to the story and the worldbuilding has been to figure it out as I go. I have some themes but no big main plot arc in mind. Thus, when planning a new session, I'm sometimes torn between introducing new factions and characters versus doing further development of those previously introduced. I worry that constantly introducing new ideas will make the world messy and leave existing ideas underdeveloped. On the other hand, adding new stuff is fun and I don't always feel like I know how to add depth to existing ideas/factions/characters. I'd be curious to hear y'all thoughts on striking a balance between breadth and depth in your world-building."

[pause]

AUSTIN: I'm curious for y'all if I'm starting a session and like, someone, would you rather I...and maybe there's not an universal answer for this and that's my gut. My gut says maybe there's no universal answer for this, but do you get more excited when something you already care about shows up or when something new, that is novel, that has like, some sort of cool hook shows up?

JACK: Hmm.

AUSTIN: I know again, that maybe that's too broad.

KEITH: It--It's like 50-50, I think.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: Maybe not exactly but it's functionally like, I think you know it's all...Everything is a mix of, you know, breadth and depth. Like, there's no perfect world. Everything is made-up. You know? There's no, you can't...Can't use math to figure out the reality.

JACK: Oh I thought you were going to say everything is made up of something.

KEITH: No! [laughs]

JACK: Everything is made up.

KEITH: You can't, you know, just sit around and think up of a literal universe. And so you've got to compromise by having things not go as far down as reality does and I think some games lend themselves to being more breadth and some games lend themselves to be more depth.

AUSTIN: [agreeing] Mmhm.

JACK: Something I like a lot is when there are places that we know about and people that we know about in the fiction but they have been at a remove.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Oh that's fun, yeah.

JACK: And you begin a session by saying, "Okay, basically this is what it's about. This is what this session's about, we're going there, or we're doing this." I remember when we started Winter in Hieron for the first time, and Spring to a certain extent where you showed us the map of Hieron and said more or less, where do you want to go? Where are you interested in seeing? And being able to have this, these are places that we had heard about before, these were places we knew were out there and being able to say oh we're going here, we're doing that, I think um. [pauses] Um, latter bits of Partizan. I'm trying to choose my words really carefully. I think. I think that in the latter—we've released everything up to the actual finale, right?

AUSTIN: [confirming] Mmhm.

JACK: Yeah, I mean like we're no longer on—people aren't necessarily on the moon and I think getting into space felt incredible as a player even though like, it wasn't something that was new, we had known that there was stuff out there but I think you beginning a session by saying, "this is the one where we're gonna go" felt really good. At the same time though, when you said there is a quarry in the north that nobody has ever been able to get into, we hadn't fucking heard of that ever before.

AUSTIN: That's not...exactly true, which we'll talk about in the...in the post-mortem.

JACK: Oh nope, that's not true. We...Okay, yeah. In theory we didn't.

AUSTIN: I think that's like one of the most interesting things about this season.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I was actually just explaining—you know, I'm just going to tell this story now without details and we'll revisit for the post-mortem but we're here and it's a great little peek behind the curtain to some degree, it's not the first time it's happened. We go back to COUNTER/Weight.

JACK: The curtain.

AUSTIN: Uh huh, the curtain. Hmm. If we go back to COUNTER/Weight, there's this—there's a moment in a faction game where Sylvi and Dre and I are playing and the season's big bad, right, gets revealed and some details come to light and then a day later, I'm like we have to cut that. That's not the way for this character to get debuted. The debut has to be rumbling. The facts have to come second. The appearance has to be first.

KEITH: Do I know—I think I remember this.

AUSTIN: Yeah, so we cut it. Natalia Greaves finds information about what Snowtrak dug up under the snow basically and so we cut it straight up and so in Partizan again, without going into details because this is still—I mean the episodes have been out for a few weeks but I don't know who's listening to Tips. There's a big reveal at the end of the arc that Jack was just talking about, kind of at the north pole and not at the very end but towards the very end of that episode, there's a realization about what that facility is, what it's doing, who is there, etc. The party knew one key detail about it from the end of the Kingdom Game because Keith, you had made a prediction I wanna say of hmm, the...One faction will hit back in some way and at the table, I say okay, here's what you get. You get a photo of this person basically, to be like, look motherfuckers like, you know. This is a big deal.

JACK: Look at what we've done.

AUSTIN: We've got something here, yeah. And I sat with it and I was like, [clicks tongue] "It's not the right way. A photo isn't right. You should see blank. You should see something there. I don't know what yet, I don't know how you will—I don't know how the game will get there but when it gets there, it should get there with your characters there." And I was just telling this to an old academic friend of mine who is a Canadian game studies academic, Felan Parker, who messaged me to basically say, wow that arc, the Chasmata Quarry arc, was really good and there was a really great reveal in that moment, and what I basically said to him was like, that only exists because my party already knew what the twist was and I had to give them a second twist. I had to go back to the lab and find a way to twist the twist which is why and again, I'm speaking very very broadly when we get to the post-mortem I can tell this story with all spoiler-free or spoilers...alive. Spoilers out.

KEITH: Free of caring about spoilers.

AUSTIN: Free of...right. Exactly. The things behind the doors, the other rooms that you go into had to be, I had to come up with something as striking as that so that it would be interesting and I could get a genuine "oh shit" reaction. Otherwise, it would just be like, "oh yeah, this is the thing we heard about five months ago" and that's just not fun. So that is a fun story to me about the ways in which worldbuilding happens and the ways in which you can use callbacks in some ways, right, where that..it's not enough and maybe this is my actual answer to this question. It's never enough to stick with the old thing and the moment that you feel like you don't have a new spin on something which you say here Wayne, you say I don't always feel I know how to add

depth to existing ideas, factions, or characters. That's the moment to put it to the side and introduce something new. The addition of a new thing will sometimes eventually spin the motor up on an old thing because you'll see how they interact.

KEITH: [overlapping] Yeah.

AUSTIN: You'll understand how this changes the state of play in some interesting way or it'll raise a question that you're like, "oh actually, wouldn't this other faction be really good for this, or other character, or this other whatever" and so that to me ends up being my guideline. My guideline ends up being, if I can't come up with something new and interesting for a known quantity then they need some time on the bench and that's okay. It doesn't mean that you're done with them necessarily, you know, and at the same time I have to admit that there's always characters or settings or you know, elements of a setting, factions, locations, that do get left on the bench that I wish had seen play but that is the nature of the beast like, you're going to produce more than you end up using. There's so many—I'm mad we don't get more Callister Drive Callister this season. One of my favorite like absolute nightmare people.

KEITH: Yeah.

JACK: Oh my god I'd forgotten about them. They suck!

KEITH: I tried to get, I tried to get Callister in a little bit more but it just didn't work.

AUSTIN: It just doesn't work and then, and then you know stuff with character changes and blah blah blah blah. And that just happens, right? You know, thankfully we have Partizan Season 2 at some point and maybe Callister can show up again. [laughs] Um, that's the sort of thing that is just part and parcel with running games is sometimes you put something on the bench and say, "Well, maybe I'll get a good idea later with it" and it doesn't come and that's okay. It can still just have been a cool thing for that episode, you know? For that recording or session.

KEITH: And you touched on this a little bit and we talked about this in other episodes but like part of the thing with like, you've dug a hole and you're like this hole is too shallow but if you bring it to the table people will dig the hole if they wanna dig the hole.

AUSTIN: Totally. Totally, that's a good point too, right? Is if you say like—if someone else is interested in an NPC, you can ask them what interests you or interests them about them.

KEITH: It's impossible to keep players away from an NPC that they like.

AUSTIN: Totally, they will fucking put that motherfucker on-screen and you will do something with them. [JACK laughs] Which also comes down to the idea of like the way to treat NPCs for me is to think about them as having motivations and character traits and not necessarily having objectives all the time. Like I don't know what my fucking objectives are in 2021. I have some

character traits, I have certain gravity like, I'm a—a—a pinball. I'm a ball and a pinball machine to some degree.

KEITH: I heard about this ring that's being delivered to a museum and I'm thinking of stealing it. [JACK and AUSTIN laugh] That's what I'm doing in 2021.

AUSTIN: Oh okay, cool.

JACK: Wow!

KEITH: So if anyone comes to talk to me, I'm going to be like, "wow did you hear about that ring? What are your special skills?"

AUSTIN: [still laughing] What are you—yeah, exactly. [KEITH laughs] But instead of that, if Keith was just a thief looking for good opportunities, you can play that character the second a player wants to bring them to the table and then you can get up to mischief with them and go forward and find good new stuff because you have a good handle on how they act around what's around them, you know? So. Hope that helps, Wayne.

JACK: Sometimes it does, it absolutely rules when the innkeeper gives me a quest to steal a ring. I love that shit.

AUSTIN: It does.

[KEITH laughs]

JACK: I love that shit. It's so good. I haven't played a game where an innkeeper has given me a quest to steal a ring in too long.

AUSTIN: [laughing] What is the Jackson headfallsoff [tweet](#) about...about...Here it is.

“ME: I am fundamentally opposed to the monarchy and the church as ruling powers. History is a record of their atrocities.

My therapist: That's fair.

Me: but I love when the chosen king reclaims his divine sword and leads his army in glorious battle. [JACK laughs]

My therapist: Who doesn't.” It's that with innkeepers giving you ring quests. [KEITH laughs]

JACK: Yeah this is me with innkeepers...I love it when someone says, “oh traveler! Have you heard of what's been happening under the bridge?”

AUSTIN: [laughs] I am fundamentally opposed to reactionary and traditionalist game design that only centers accumulation and killing. [JACK: I love it when the innkeeper gives a bridge quest.] Also me, but I love it when the innkeeper says stay a while and listen.

JACK: Oh god.

AUSTIN: Um. Brendan Mcleod in the chat says, misheard this as ink keeper and was deeply intrigued. Love to have an ink keeper.

JACK: Oh now what is a crab singer?

[QUESTION 5: 00:43:52]

AUSTIN: [laughing] Uh-huh, exactly. All right, next question comes in from Max. I believe this is our last question but I'm going to double check so that I know...Yeah it is. Max writes in and says:

"I am currently suffering from terrible creative burnout in all aspects of my life. Through the global situation, how it's affected my personal life, I've come to the conclusion that putting anything to paper so to speak is better than getting nothing done at all, but knowing and doing that are two entirely different beasts. Do you as players and GMs have any tips on how you manage to contribute to the games you're in when you aren't necessarily on your best creative ball and how do you sit with ideas you know you'd done better if you had just been in a different place?"

JACK: This is such a good question, especially right now.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: I mean, I can only speak for myself but I am absolutely in this hole as well. I was, I've been composing today and doing that thing where you sit down to try to do a piece of creative work and can't. Where nothing you write sounds good or you can't write anything at all and you end up deleting a bunch of stuff or, and I definitely feel this way when we play games sometimes, I'm just sitting in front of the microphone going, "oWhat do you do on a tabletop podcast?" Like what does a good tabletop player look like? And on some level I don't have an easy answer for this which is, the fucking worst thing. Like, [sighs] the thing that works best in the long term is like trying to find rest when I can.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Um, trying to balance getting stuff on the paper which I think is really important and saying, it's not happening. Like, I will close project files because I feel like I'm not going to get anything done and I'll just make myself miserable if I keep trying. Um, but I do think that sort of saying, you know, not everything has to be a homerun. Reassuring myself, saying I want to do the best work I can but the 'I can' in that sentence is italicized or emphasized, you know. I don't have to hit—Not every track on the album is going to be a standout track and that's okay. And then when we're—you know, I was really really depressed early 2020 when we were doing a lot

of the um, Clementine stuff. Like in and around Chorus Island, like the back end of the kingdom game, and you know, stuff that happened subsequent and a lot of that for me was just—was going like, “we’re going to tell the story, it’s going to happen how it happens.”

AUSTIN: Jack, did you say that was the beginning of 2020?

JACK: [cross] It was like May. It was like May or June, right? I consider that the beginning of 2020.

KEITH: [cross] It was like July.

AUSTIN: [cross] Jack, it wasn’t. I’m sorry. It was not that.

JACK: I suppose when I think of it, I was really depressed between like April and like, September. [JACK and AUSTIN laugh]

AUSTIN: No, fair, all of this is fair. I’m not saying this to undercut. [JACK: No, no. It’s because of the year, right?] I’m saying this to emphasize that oh my god, this year has gone forever.

KEITH: Yeah. Was it July and August? Was that when it was? Or? June-July? [JACK laughs]

JACK: While we were recording, I was—

AUSTIN: It was post the burning of the Minneapolis police station.

KEITH: Yeah, definitely.

JACK: Sure, uh-huh. I know I was writing music in [pause] a cabin in quarantine for Chorus Island and just being like, I don’t fucking know what. Like, I don’t know what a melody is but I really, for me, the big thing is like [pauses] and I’m trying to find a way to say this that doesn’t kind of frame it around labor and productivity but it’s like the work gets done, you know? Like, it might not be the greatest work you have performed, it might not be something that you look back on and go, [laughs] that was sick and I did great. But you know, it’s going to happen one way or another. The music gets written eventually.

AUSTIN: And, and, for me, I’m always like, trust the process, which is not how...

JACK: Trust the processes! Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah but like you will make different things again. I don’t believe I’ve made the best thing I’ll ever make. Maybe I have. Maybe I have.

JACK: I hope not!

AUSTIN: But we'll see. Who knows? Maybe it won't get better than COUNTER/Weight or Hieron or whatever's to your taste but I will continue making things in the orbit of those things. I hope I will continue writing stories both for the show and elsewhere that find audiences. I will continue to be a friend and some days, I will be a worse friend and some days, I will be a better friend and to some degree, it's batting average is more than it's homeruns.

JACK: It's batting average is more than it's homeruns and honestly, fuck the batting average. Are you playing baseball? Are you enjoying the sounds that the ball makes against the bat?

AUSTIN: Yes. What better average than I'm having a good day or I'm enjoying the sound of the baseball bat crack against the incoming ball, right?

JACK: And somehow they're paying me to do it or you know.

KEITH: *Well*, you know—

AUSTIN: Well, that's not most people playing tabletop games. The joy is supposed to be the playing. [JACK: I,I, I don't wanna say—] Which is the other half of this though, right?. Which is like if you are not having fun with it right now, if the stress outweighs the experience of the work that goes into doing it, it is okay to take a break.

JACK: Yeah! Go watch the Mandalorian or...

KEITH: In defense of your batting average metaphor, I think you know, for—the average batting average is like *so low*.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Oh, it's really low for me.

KEITH: It's great how low it is. It's like...I mean we're talking about like, you're hitting like one out of every five, four, five, alright great.

AUSTIN: And you're the best in the world at this.

KEITH: You're the best in the world at this! And you're hitting one out of every four.

AUSTIN: You're one of the best whatever 500 people at this in the world in your life—not in your lifetime but like in your playtime, you know?

KEITH: Yeah, um. Love the batting average. Baseball's *hard* as hell. [AUSTIN chuckles]

JACK: They throw those things at you so fast!

KEITH: So fast, like a hundred—It's faster than what you're even allowed to drive a car! The slowest ones are faster than the fastest cars are allowed to drive.

AUSTIN: Oh god, here's my actual other very specific like practice advice which is, do the stuff you don't care as much about. [JACK laughs] Play one-shots in games that you don't know that well but you think sound interesting. Create a throwaway character that you wanna do a couple of arcs but then you just want to do a really short run with just to try out a different playbook or a different class. Um, you know, play some boardgames instead of RPGs certain weeks. Right? Something that has a lower cost in terms of like, whatever your—and I know that's not always the case with all board games but you know what I'm saying, right? And likewise maybe play a lighter RPG if you're definitely going to stick with RPGs. Play something where there's not as much to keep track of. Shift up who has to GM from week to week or start playing some more GMless things that are, um, that you're able to integrate with. Have more conversations about content and how you're feeling about stuff. Be, take that seriously in the sense that you're allowed to be honest with yourself and vulnerable about what you don't wanna deal with right now. You should not feel like you're going to be uncool for saying I don't want this game to have blank in it. And I know that it's like 101 advice to some degree but I hope that hearing it, you know, kind of restates this is a—those things exist, those practices exist to help you, not just as some like, you know, oath of your table is supposed to be good so you say the thing about having an X-card and having lines and veils like those are tools for you to protect yourself and ensure that everyone is having a good time at the table and you should use them generously or without it necessarily being a life and death thing. You don't need to invoke a particular trigger or trauma for you to be like, you know what I just don't wanna—I'm going to pull the line on graphic depictions of violence and death on this one. We can have it in the um, actually line would be a complete, can we not go there today? That does not preclude you from having fun with your team or with your crew. Um, but you should be willing to have that stuff. I hope that those sorts of things would help. Allow you to get to the table, get some stuff down and again to some degree, part of the reason I say play one-shots is because there will be less psychic weight on them for—less of an demand in your own brain for them to be good. They can just be a fun thing you play. I just ran an *Into the Dark* for the giant beastcast last week now? And...

KEITH: What did you do?

AUSTIN: I ran *Into the Dark* which is a new Forged in the Dark or a new-ish Forged in Dark by Stras Acimovic.

JACK: It's sick.

AUSTIN: And um, the artist who's name I don't remember because I...I mean the actual reason is because I didn't already play a game by the other person the way we played uh, Scum and Villainy by Stras. John W. Sheldon. It's like a dark fantasy post-apocalypse, you know, Hack and Slash but also there were no fights. There were like, no real fights in that game which was interesting. I guess there was one. Uh, but I played that game. I picked up that book, I read that book, I floated it and a couple other games to the crew. We picked the one that, we ended up going with this because it seemed like the one we could pick up quickly and we played it and

low stakes and you know, if that session had gone bad it would have been embarrassing because I want people to enjoy those things but I didn't have to care if the worldbuilding was good. I didn't have to care if the jokes didn't land, because we're not coming back to it. It's not a foundation for something else, it's a free-floating structure and so give yourself those one-off things that you don't have to care about as much as your main campaign for sure. So. So yeah. That's my advice. [pauses] Um. Brendan in the chat you miss 70% of the shots you don't take. Katie says and you miss 26% of the swings you do take, so. [JACK laughs] Any other thoughts on, on just doing stuff right now generally?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's hard.

JACK: It's hard—It's hard.

KEITH: My thing is, you know, I think a lot of people have a lot of reasons why they don't do the things they wanna do. I've always had this so, my thing has been the last few years at least is like—I have never gotten anything done that I needed to get done any faster by sitting and waiting for myself to go and do it. So I might as well like, do something that I enjoy while I'm ignoring what I'm supposed to be doing. Like because otherwise I'll just sit there and be like I should go do that thing and then just not do my stuff.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

KEITH: So it doesn't get it done any faster and sometimes giving myself a fun thing to do or a good time will help me get in the mood to do the stuff that I actually have to do. So, I think like, you know. I try to give myself a little less guilt than I used to over avoiding responsibilities.

JACK: Yeah. Definitely.

KEITH: 'Cause they, you know, Jack like you said, they, you know, like eventually you'll do it. You might as well not be miserable on the lead-up.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: If you can help it.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Also, and this is just a tip that I learned that helped me a lot. When you're tidying, tidy the—or move the physically largest thing first because then once you've tidied that you're like holy lord that was most of it! Like you know, when you have a messy desk, I have like a big stack of books on my desk. I get that out of there and my desk will suddenly feel so much cleaner.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: It's kind of the opposite when people are like find a nice small doable task and do that first. When I'm tidying, I'm like, pick the largest object and tidy it. And that's good. That also works for dishes.

AUSTIN: It does.

JACK: You got a colander or something. If you got a saucepan, get that out of there!

AUSTIN: Get it out!

JACK: And you'll certainly be like most of my dishes are done.

KEITH: A cutting board.

JACK: A cutting board!

KEITH: Yeah.

JACK: My least favorite thing to like dry, if I'm drying my dishes is like piles of cutlery.

AUSTIN: Well, that's 'cause it's a big thing and a small thing at the same time.

JACK: It's like stuff, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Yeah.

KEITH: Yeah. I never dry. I never dry, I just let it drip-dry.

AUSTIN: Do you drip-dry?

JACK: No, I dry when I need to cook or eat.

AUSTIN: You're washing because you need to immediately use the thing, yeah.

KEITH: If I'm doing dishes and I need a fork, I'll shake it. I'll just shake it off.

JACK: Oh yeah sure, I suppose. Yeah.

AUSTIN: I see what you're saying, yeah.

JACK: A curse that I do is that if I'm cooking and I put water in something, just water to empty it out into something else, I then wash that up as though I got it dirty when I didn't. There was just water in it.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah but you don't know where that water has been.

KEITH: It came out the tap.

JACK: It came out of the tap it went into. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Don't know where it came from, really do we? [JACK: Do we really know?] There could be a water gremlin attached to your faucet, couldn't there?

KEITH: There could be!

JACK: I suppose, I suppose there could be. I—I—I think they probably come from a mountain.

AUSTIN: Really puts you in a dilemma for cleaning anything actually. [JACK and KEITH laugh] Cause that gremlin's gonna get in the way.

KEITH: Right. Um you know, my least favorite thing in doing dishes is if I'm trying to be good and I'm cleaning as I'm cooking and I go and start cleaning something like, ah I got this pan I used, I fried something in it. Let me go rinse it in the water, get some of the gunk, get it ready to be fully cleaned later, and then in 10 minutes I'm like, [clicks tongue] I could have used that dirty pan.

JACK: Yeah and like then I'm the one who has to clean it later.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Fucking hate dishwashers.

AUSTIN: Same, it's tough.

KEITH: Wait, dishwashers?

AUSTIN: [cross] You mean washing dishes?

JACK: No, I mean I was thinking about how much I would like a dishwasher when I said that.

KEITH: Ohh.

JACK: I fucking hate washing dishes.

KEITH: I just bought—I just bought a little one.

AUSTIN: Like a tabletop or like a countertop one?

KEITH: Yeah, or like a floor one, yeah.

JACK: Could you fit one of those in your apartment, Austin?

AUSTIN: Not at all, no. I—no. I have *no* kitchen space, it sucks. Like I cannot stand in front of my—

KEITH: Yeah. I have a huge kitchen but no counter space.

AUSTIN: Yeah. That's—that's—Ah, I think I'd rather that than what I have. I need to move.

KEITH: No, you're right. Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Also you can get surfaces. You can get surfaces. They're just not going to be the same height as the countertops, right? That's the thing that's tough is like it's hard to buy a table that is countertop size.

KEITH: There's no wall space—it's weird. Like there's a bunch of room on the floor but there's nowhere for me to, there's not enough room for me to put an island somewhere, you know what I mean?

AUSTIN: Oh, that's a problem.

KEITH: So I have like one long wall that's got my two little counters and then like, kind of like a recessed area, where I, it's like a hole where I have my silverware.

JACK: [laughs] My silverware hole.

KEITH: There's no drawers, I have upper cabinets and lower cabinets and no drawers. No drawers.

AUSTIN: Oh that sucks. Do you have like a—?

JACK: Oh that is, that's rough.

AUSTIN: You don't like—You don't have even like—oh, that sucks. That's tough. That's tough!

KEITH: And then my sink is - I have so little counter space that my sink is like a barn sink. Like it's a free standing sink.

AUSTIN: Ohhh.

JACK: Ohhh, wow.

KEITH: And it's against the wall opposite my counter space.

JACK: Do you put something over the sink that you can like, cut vegetables on or something?

AUSTIN: Like you keep it next to the sink and you place it-

KEITH: I do not-I am not so good at keeping this sink free of stuff. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Sure. Right, I gotcha.

JACK: Fair. Uh huh. That's a problem.

AUSTIN: Well, that's a problem right there.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah. [JACK: Well...] And I have, I do have this beautiful huge drip thing which-that holds wine glasses upside down. Unfortunately, I have one stemmed wine glass.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: [amused] Keith.

JACK: But it has this whole thing to itself.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: We're just moving on to wine glasses as your primary glass type. Your primary glassware.

KEITH: Yeah, it's a really nice one. I-I impulse-I, it was like some holiday or something so I bought wine at the good wine store but I had broken a wine glass, my only wine glass and I was there and they had two options for me. They had the worst wine glass I'd ever seen and they had a wine glass that I've used before at my friend's bar that is like, the best glass and it's like, it was like 60 dollars. It was New Year's. Oh, it was New Year's for last year so I was like fuck it, give me the 60 dollar wine glass. So I have one wine glass that costs as much as a set of wine glasses.

AUSTIN: I haven't had wine that costs 60 dollars, let alone a glass. I guess that's fine though, right? A wine glass can be more expensive than a good wine because you're like...

KEITH: Yeah, it is great glass. It is a great glass. I was doing a—

AUSTIN: What makes it \$60 worth? You can get...

KEITH: The glass is extraordinarily thin and delicate.

AUSTIN: That doesn't—Does it change your—it probably changes something.

KEITH: It does.

JACK: Makes the wine look very tasteful.

AUSTIN: Are you at the wine tasting skill that you can recognize the difference between tasting it from that glass versus a \$20 glass?

KEITH: Uh, yeah. So last year I had this eye-opening experience when I was at a friend's, we were making, I was helping them make cider in their backyard. They got a cider press and we were there making cider and then I brought tea. We were drinking—we were outside so I made tea for everyone outside and they had the same tea and I ran out of cups. I didn't—There were more people than I thought were going to be there so we were using like little espresso cups for them, like those little mugs that you do espresso in [JACK: Yeah, the cute ones!] and I had a sip from it and it tasted bad.

AUSTIN: Oh no, I do think—[KEITH: It's the same tea.] I do think cup size or shape rather, does change taste profile.

KEITH: It was dramatic, and so...

AUSTIN: But what I'm saying is inside of the realm of long-stem wine glasses. Do you think that the thinness...

KEITH: Yeah, well this is the next thing.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: So we did a big tasting with a bunch of tea cups that I had and then later, a week later, we had a bunch of wine from a bunch of different wine glasses and that was one of them and it was, it was the best one. It like, was pretty substantial.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: And that's why I didn't feel so bad buying it.

AUSTIN: Well, just don't break it. Don't break that \$60 dollar wine glass.

KEITH: I didn't! I've had it for a whole ass year.

AUSTIN: That seems important and uh, it sounds nice. Maybe I'll get you some nice wine at some point for like a gift. Now I know you have a wine glass. [laughs] I can get you wine.

KEITH: I do, I have one wine glass. I have a plastic one too. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh, wait, put that one up on the thing.

KEITH: It came with a boule set. So I have these pétanque balls. It came with two plastic wine glasses.

JACK: Oh, that's so good! God, I love it when...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Did you ever have—finish yours.

JACK: One of my favorite things was when you buy a thing and they pack in a completely unrelated thing with it.

KEITH: Yup. Yup.

JACK: I mean I understand that boule and wine are kind of related but it is so good when you buy thing A and they give you thing like P or whatever.

KEITH: And, can I tell you? I love all the boule games, I love them. But it was such a fun thing to be like look, they gave me a glass to drink and pétanque with.

JACK: Ah, boule pétanque.

AUSTIN: Well yes so I'm going to play, this is from Spam Samantha, one of our good friends and also a moderator in the chat posted this about, about a couple months ago since I had not realized this. This is from a clapcast last August, August 2019.

KEITH: Is this me talking about boule?

AUSTIN: We'll get there. 3, 2, 1 go. Mine's not going cause—Oh there we go.

[Clip from "CLAPCAST 24: Goodbye Hieron" plays]

KEITH: I played cornhole for the first time.

AUSTIN: For the first time?!

JACK: Oh, yeah!

KEITH: I had never played cornhole.

JACK: I have no fucking idea what cornhole is.

SYLVIA: I've never played it.

AUSTIN: Did you play—did you play conkers, my favorite yard game?

KEITH: No, we played boule, *my* favorite yard game.

AUSTIN: Boule?

SYLVIA: Boule?

KEITH: Pétanque?

JACK: Boule! Pétanque!

AUSTIN: Bétanque?! Boule Bétanque!

KEITH: Pétanque!

AUSTIN: [laughing] The protagonist of Season Six, Boule Bétanque.

KEITH: Boule is our—

JACK: *Pétanque*, sorry.

[CLAPCAST 24 clip ends]

AUSTIN: 100% where Boule Betanque comes in. 100%

KEITH: Really?!

AUSTIN: 100%, what are you kidding me?! You think I came up with Boule Betanque—

KEITH: It didn't even occur to me!

AUSTIN: It was this conversation, I must have pulled my phone up the second you said that—

JACK: Written down.

AUSTIN: I think that this was a recording—I think that this—I guess I don't know where this is from. But it sounds like we're in the same room together somehow.

KEITH: It does but we're not. We definitely were not.

AUSTIN: We could've been! August 2019, that would have been Gencon. You, me, and Sylvi.

JACK: No, I was on that recording.

KEITH: Ohh, okay.

AUSTIN: Oh, were you on that recording? Yeah it couldn't have been then. That must've been the end of our Hieron recording. Anyway, that's 100% where our Boule Bétanque from Partizan comes from.

KEITH: That's good.

JACK: Oh that's so good. I wonder how Boule Bétanque is doing, I wonder? I hope they're okay.

AUSTIN: Oh, I hope they're alright, we'll have to check in one day.

JACK: Weren't they like a squid person?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, the same species as Gig, uh, Gigus. Gigus from Twilight Mirage.

JACK: Oh, Gigus back in Twilight Midnight.

AUSTIN: Yeah, everyone's favorite character. Twilight Mirage Gig.

KEITH: [laughs] Yeah, I remember Gigus.

AUSTIN: One day, one day, I'll feel *real* good about Twilight Mirage. I don't know when, but I'll get there. [laughs] Everyday it gets a little bit better. Um, I think that's gonna do it for us. That's our last question. We did our best to answer. We kind of got off-topic. [JACK: Yeah.] It's been one of those things. Hey, listen, that's December. That's our December Tips at the Table. [JACK: Oh, sick!] That means we are technically caught up on Tips at the Table. We've been doing kind of a rush to get here. Um, Ali—

JACK: Keith, bust out the wine glass!

[AUSTIN and KEITH laugh]

KEITH: I don't have any wine. I mean, I could bust it—I could fill it with iced tea.

AUSTIN: That sounds good. This is what I'm saying, is use that glass for—or don't, don't, don't break it, it's too risky.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah.

JACK: So, so fragile.

KEITH: I would love to not break it. My fucking—My friend, I told the story to my friend and he was like I could just get you those for \$20 from Restaurant Depot. Like, let me know.

AUSTIN: Well, do that.

KEITH: I will, yeah. I'm going to do that now.

AUSTIN: God, Katie has been listening to TM all day now. Katie, are you doing the onion? Are you peeling the onion?

[1:06:29]

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Can we have an official peel the onion conversation?

JACK: The onion begins with Twilight Mirage?

KEITH: Sure.

AUSTIN: Yeah, have you—Jack, have you—

JACK: No, I know—I *know* what the onion is. I just—I just—Let me see the exact list.

AUSTIN: That's what I'm saying. Type in, I typed into google 'peel the onion.' That's not gonna do it.

KEITH: I officially endorse the competing shallot. The peeling shallot.

AUSTIN: Wait, what's the shallot thing?

KEITH: It's a smaller onion. It's red.

[AUSTIN and JACK laugh]

KEITH: It's a little—it's round, it's oblong.

AUSTIN: [amused] I know what a shallot is. I mean what is the listening thing?

KEITH: It's—uh, okay so you listen to the first episode of every season.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

KEITH: The character—you listen to like the character gen and worldbuilding episode for every season and then you listen to um—uh, Autumn. You listen to Autumn in Hieron from the middle back alternating with the middle front.

AUSTIN: Shut the fuck up. Bad. This is worse.

KEITH: So you start with like 10 and then do 11 then 9 then 12.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Right.

JACK: What's happening?!

KEITH: And—[breaks off in laughter]

AUSTIN: This is—I—I'm having a breakdown. The onion method for people listening to this who don't know about peeling the onion was I think first suggested by Annie.

JACK: It's Annie, right?

AUSTIN: Johnson-Glick, who's a great artist. Dancynrew on Twitter. Uh. The onion method. Optional, begin with Bluff City and end with Road to Partizan, they don't fit as nicely in the layer scheme. Beyond that.

KEITH: I agree. I think that's right.

AUSTIN: I agree with that. My reason is I love Bluff City but it's tough. Starting—

KEITH: And by agree, I do think that—I think it's probably better to do that last, not do it as—

AUSTIN: As part of the...

KEITH: Right, or just do a ten like, alongside.

AUSTIN: I think it's weird to not have the Road To Partizan cut in with Partizan or like interspersed with or at the beginning.

JACK: Partizan is not included in this list. She's saying Road to Partizan.

AUSTIN: Oh, Partizan's not in this.

KEITH: Right, there's no Partizan.

AUSTIN: I see, I see, I see.

JACK: Which I broadly agree with. I think this listening order is deeply cursed but I think it's fun academically.

AUSTIN: The funny thing is that I know things—I know things that—I know—hm. Hm...

JACK: You *know* things.

AUSTIN: I would say I would do this differently for reasons that I can't talk about yet. Start at Twilight Mirage 00 and listen up to 27—that no one knows about yet, this is not like, this is like, listen, I'm the GM, I know some things about the world. Start at Twilight Mirage 00 and listen up to 27. The end of the Miracle when the PCs will all be apart for a year. To really experience that time passing go back to start COUNTER/Weight and listen up to the end of the Kingdom Game when the Hieron anime is first mentioned, episode 21. Start Autumn in Hieron and listen up to Winter in Hieron 26 and when Austin says, "if you haven't listened to Marielda, which was like our micro season between COUNTER/Weight and Winter in Hieron, now's the time to do that." Listen to Marielda with an asterisk because—

JACK: Now we have to talk about the ultimate Marielda.

AUSTIN: But first we have to talk about parallel dimensions. Marielda 1, Marielda 2, just the parts in Spring in Hieron 27 where Jack is playing a different character. Marielda 3 through 10, the Gencon live, Live at the Table Misspent Youth, Marielda 11 to 14, then the Winter in Hieron Holiday Special, *then* finish Winter in Hieron then listen to Spring in Hieron then finish COUNTER/Weight, then go back to Twilight Mirage, you'll start with this Year of Ours episodes and get a nice run down of where everyone's at.

JACK: Katie in the chat points out that by all accounts, this order came to Annie in a dream which I think is so good.

AUSTIN: Incredible. Incredible.

KEITH: I wonder if it was someone explaining this or was it just like, the paper with words on it.

AUSTIN: [sighs] Like, past.

KEITH: You think it was someone saying here is the way to listen to Friends at The Table. First, start with Bluff City optional. [laughs]

[1:10:19]

JACK: [laughing] Keith, have I ever told you—[KEITH still laughing] which I'll tell this and we have to go because it's quick and we're off-topic. Keith, have I ever told you the first dream I can remember?

KEITH: No.

JACK: So, this is the first dream that I can recall.

KEITH: Ok.

JACK: I must've been like 4. I was like, tiny like 4 or 5.

KEITH: I have a first dream from the same age, so let's trade.

JACK: Ok, here we go. It's late in the evening. Bare trees are silhouetted against a sky that is—

KEITH: B-A-R-E?

JACK: Yes. B-A-R-E. Not B-E-A-R. Like winter trees, the sky is growing darker. And then—

AUSTIN: Wait, wait, wait. One second, one second, one second, one second, one second, one second. I need to—can you stop for a second?

JACK: Mmhm, of course.

AUSTIN: I'm going to need you to restart this story. Is that possible?

JACK: Absolutely.

AUSTIN: Okay, can I get a count. Give me a second. I just need to, just need to. Uh. One second. Okay, I have to do it here, and then, this is taking longer than intentional.

JACK: No, no, it's okay.

AUSTIN: Apologies. Apologies. Apologies. Apologies. I said apologies. People have to let me apologize and accept my apology. [clears throat]

JACK: That's how it works.

KEITH: They're clamoring in the chat, I'm glad you apologized cause it–

AUSTIN: Cause people are upset.

JACK: They keep saying apologize, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay, apologize, apologize. Alright, go ahead, you can start this over.

[MUSIC BEGINS - "[The Wythered Route](#)"]

JACK: Okay, I'm 4 or 5. Winter trees bear against a skyline. I'm not present in this dream, it is just a, it is a first-person view of a sky with winter trees silhouetted against it. Dusk. Four years old, rising over the bare trees in the sky, comes the head of William Shakespeare, the size of the moon. [AUSTIN and KEITH start laughing] End of dream. [laughs]

[AUSTIN and KEITH laugh]

KEITH: You knew it was William Shakespeare at the time?

JACK: Yeah, I must have seen [laughs] I must have seen, it was like that classic like, it was like a bust of William Shakespeare or something. You know, he had his bald head. He has his like–

KEITH: The famous bust.

[MUSIC ENDS]

JACK: The famous bust. You know, the Shakespeare bust.

KEITH: The Shakespeare bust, we all know. That's so funny. You see the head, and then that's it.

JACK: Yeah, the head is huge, it's gigantic. And it's clearly not a living William Shakespeare but it's also colored. It's a–a statue of William Shakespeare. [["The Wythered Route"](#) plays briefly again]

KEITH: And he didn't—he didn't tell you any specific way to listen to a podcast? [AUSTIN laughs]

JACK: He didn't—[laughs] He handed me a piece of paper saying, "X many years later..."
[KEITH laughs]

AUSTIN: Really quick, Tyler in the chat said, "Wait, Partizan is my first season listening and as a holiday escape, I've been listening to Twilight Mirage. I'm currently on Episode 22, should I pivot to the onion as a genuine first listen?" No! Absolutely not! [JACK laughs] Please! I love the fans

who are doing this. They're doing it from a place of familiarity and love, not from an arguing that this is the right way to do it. Keith.

KEITH: Fuck it, yeah, do it.

AUSTIN: [amused] Fuck off. What is your first dream? Give me the first three words—four words of your first dream please before you continue.

KEITH: Um. [pauses] When I was—

AUSTIN: Okay, well, I need a little more. Give me what Jack gave me when I said stop.

KEITH: Okay uh, when I was a child I had two big red shelves in the corner of my room.

AUSTIN: Okay, stop.

JACK: Okay, shelves, not shells.

AUSTIN: Wait, shelves or shells, this makes a big difference.

KEITH: [enunciates] *Shelves*.

AUSTIN: *Shelves*. Okay, um. Go ahead. Tell that story.

[MUSIC BEGINS - "[The Grapplers Down at Promenade Arena](#)"]

KEITH: Uh, when I was a child, I had two big red shelves in the corner of my room. They were like, legitimately, they were sort of stacked on top of each other and they were four feet by four feet each. They were huge. Um, and they had like toys and stuff on it, it was kind of like where a kid kept all of his junk. It was kind of like a toy box but shelves.

AUSTIN: [amused] Uh huh.

KEITH: And I had this dream that there was a small version, like a sort of sparrow-sized version of the mean caterpillar from Alice in Wonderland.

JACK: Oh no!

KEITH: On the shelf and I woke up, I had a false awakening in the dream, saw the caterpillar, and it said to me that I should be careful or it would bite off my finger. [MUSIC ENDS]

AUSTIN: Ooh.

JACK: Oh my god!

AUSTIN: I picked the wrong music for that one. [KEITH laughs] I had to eject, it was in a different place.

JACK: This is why...

AUSTIN: You were at two bright shelves and I was like doo-doo-doo-do-do-doo and then you were like...

JACK: But then it turns out there's a very threatening caterpillar.

AUSTIN: Yikes! Yeah.

KEITH: Yeah. It was a--this genuinely disturbed me as a three or four year old child.

[MUSIC BEGINS - "[The Cost of Greed](#)"]

AUSTIN: It should have been here.

JACK: I mean honestly if I had a false awakening and then a caterpillar said I'm going to [MUSIC ENDS] bite your finger off.

AUSTIN: Yeah I mean that would have been, that would have been rough.

KEITH: Yeah. And that's a scary caterpillar in that movie. That's like not...

AUSTIN: No. That's a scary--

JACK: From Alice in Wonderland?

AUSTIN: From Alice in Wonderland. Disney.

KEITH: Yeah.

JACK: He's the smoking caterpillar, right?

KEITH: The smoking caterpillar, yeah.

JACK: Right, but he's sparrow-sized and he's threatening to bite your finger off.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah, he was like the size of an adult fist. Like bigger than a caterpillar but not--what's that?

JACK: What was the threat? It was if you don't--

KEITH: He was going to bite my finger off.

JACK: [cross] Oh, just that he was going to?

KEITH: Yeah, just like, watch out or something, we're going to bite your finger off.

AUSTIN: Jeez.

JACK: Oh shit, that's fucking scary.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah.

JACK: Do you remember your first dream, Austin? Or is this a 2 out of 3?

AUSTIN: *No?* Um.

JACK: No. [laughs]

KEITH: Or do you have a first dream you remember?

AUSTIN: I don't. This is a new question for me. I like—there are dreams I remember but I don't have like, the definitive or like an interesting...The ones that I remember now are the sort of the things that I mythologized to myself as a teenager when I was like, first wrangling with my depression and they're so all just like sad dreams -

KEITH: Mythologizing your old dreams?

AUSTIN: What?

KEITH: Mythologizing your own dreams? Your old dreams?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally, 100%! Yes, cause it's like—let's say that I was 14 and like, hated myself and was depressed all the time.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And I remembered, let's say I remembered at that point 10 dreams. Well, I would let 9 of those dreams go and hang on to the fucked up like sad one where I get by a car, do you know what I mean?

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Like that's the sort of teenager I was.

KEITH: You—in the same vein, I guess I mythologized some dreams and you’ve heard of it from the Sonic Adventure Let’s Play.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

KEITH: Because I used to say I only ever had two nightmares.

AUSTIN: Oh! Yeah, you used to say you only had two nightmares which I don’t believe. You definitely had more.

KEITH: It was true! I mean I had more but I never remembered them.

AUSTIN: Right. Of course, yes.

KEITH: I’ve never been a dream rememberer so like, I had my second nightmare and was like oh that’s another nightmare, add that to my list of nightmares.

AUSTIN: Add that - Exactly. Right.

KEITH: And I had for years, I held on to this only had two nightmares thing, and the other one was being chased by an endless staircase by a, like a bendy straw kind of noodle guy threatening to strangle me.

AUSTIN: Ooh.

JACK: Bendy guys are very frightening in dreams.

AUSTIN: Don’t like them, no.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I did not have many—most of my dreams for most of my childhood were deeply grounded. I did not have superpower dreams. I’ve never flown in a dream that I remember. Maybe once or twice, maybe once or twice. [JACK: So good.] Uh, I never had that style of—I had nightmares with like things chasing me and other things like that but I never had the sort of endless staircase type dream. I would have, for me it was way more like, I’m lost inside of the supermarket, I’m lost inside of the school. I went to this big terrifying Catholic school as a, like from kindergarten to eighth grade basically that had the outside looked like a spanish castle or something and inside was not like that, it was like a school but it was like a school that didn’t have enough money because it was like the poor Black and brown school in the archdiocese and so they didn’t give us any fucking money and in fact the pastor at the time was embezzling money from the church and the school, it turned out so fuck Father Ron. [JACK: Oh my god!] A different Ron than the other Ron we talk about sometimes on this show. [KEITH laughs] A much

worse Ron in retrospect. Um, but I used to have nightmares about getting lost in their extra hallways and stuff like that for sure, for sure. But yeah, I'll have to think about it, if there was a definitive early dream for me. You know.

KEITH: A lot of my current dreams are—

JACK: Shakespearean.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: A lot of my current dreams are more like I realize that they were nightmares or whatever upon waking.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Sure. The experience.

KEITH: But at the time they're just sort of vaguely stressful things that are happening, you know and I'm like and I woke up and I'm like, ah I had a dream and someone stabbed someone in front of me but in the dream it was just like, [bored tone] ah, I was at this party and it felt weird because someone stabbed someone.

AUSTIN: I had a dream recently—ok here's the thing. One is, if you read a note about a dream you had or like a message that you sent someone or just anything that reminds you of it, can you recall most of the dream like it's a real memory?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I can totally do that.

KEITH: Um, very very rarely.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: I get very impressionistic dream memories.

AUSTIN: Sure. Um, a thing that happened to me recently that was fun is I dreamt I was like in a college that was a couple of—in an urban environment, it was a couple blocks away from a little bar and I was trying to find someone's bike, someone's bike had gone missing. I was trying to do them a favor, they were sick and I was trying to find their bike. And a thing that happened to me recently was I had to go into the VICE office to shoot this thing and while I was walking back, it was one of those dreams where everything felt super real. Really like distinct and like, physical and I realized I superimposed the dream on top of the few blocks around the VICE offices where the VICE office became the bar and then specifically, I remember this shortcut between the avenue the bar was on and the avenue the college campus was. The college dorms were basically like a standalone apartment complex and those were just in the place of a

condo, like a block of condos near the VICE offices. And there was a pathway I've never been able to walk through because it's fenced on both sides but it's like a dirt path and in the dream I had just made that, I'd opened the gate between those two spaces in my mind and was able to traverse it and when I went to visit VICE, I was like holy shit, this is that place. This is where I walked to go find that person's bike in my dream. [JACK: Wow.] The other thing that happened to me recently is the kind of a layered dream set-up where I get fucked up on what the real—something is happening in the dream as the main plot but I'll get a b-plot in the dream that is like a world event is happening and I can wake up feeling like that might be true so like a couple of months ago, I dreamt that I was at home. I was in Jersey for a funeral and I was dressed up in a suit and had a car, which I don't own a car but in the dream I had a car and I was going to go to my dad's like family—my dad's place to go meet up with them to go to the funeral that was at a cemetery nearby. On the way, I was starving. I hadn't eaten anything in days and there was a Chick-fil-A, a place I don't go to for very specific reasons, but I went there in the dream and in the dream on my phone and on the tv and people talking between themselves, I had dreamt that Pusha T had announced via diss track that he was the father of multiple of Kanye West's kids.

JACK: Oh my god!

KEITH: Wow.

AUSTIN: This was not the plot of the dream. The dream had nothing to do with—

KEITH: That would've been huge!

AUSTIN: Well, it was huge, people were talking about it, it was—it would be the biggest thing in the world for that—

JACK: Several kids?

AUSTIN: Several kids. And he was like, you know I love those kids, you know it was like very. [laughs] Anyway, the point is the dream is about the funeral and the funeral happens and it was weird and dreamy but I woke up and I like went to text Ali like, "this shit with Pusha T and Kanye is wild!" And I was like wait, that can't be right. That can't—My phone—it would be all over Twitter but it's like when it layers like that and it's mundane in the dream it's so easy to believe that it's real.

JACK: Yeah.

KEITH: What if you took a nap and you woke up and just like, went to go think about Bean dad and was like, "No, that was a dream. That had to have been a dream."

AUSTIN: No that had to have been a dream, Bean dad could not be a real thing.

[JACK laughs]

KEITH: That had to have been a dream.[laughing] The MBMBAM song guy, really? No, that was a dream.

AUSTIN: Ohh.

JACK: Yikes.

AUSTIN: *Yikes.*

KEITH: The thing that happens in my dreams that I'll get whipped into - like I will have a dream that becomes a totally different dream in the middle of it, like something will happen and it will change the tone and genre of the dream like, completely. I remembered an earlier dream though, I think.

AUSTIN: Oh!

JACK: Oh, earlier than the threatening caterpillar?

KEITH: Yeah, an earlier dream. When, Austin, when you were talking about a dream that feels really real that you can almost remember as if it was a memory, I had this when i was like 3 years old, I had a dream that I was sure was real where it was my cousin Chase's birthday party and for some reason, it was taking place on my house's front lawn and there was balloons at the party because it was a party for children, and I or someone else let a balloon go and my dad jumped and got the balloon, like jumped like 20 feet into the air.

AUSTIN: Wow.

JACK: Whoa!

KEITH: And that is the whole dream and I was like, so sure that he did that.

[1:23:49]

AUSTIN: I have a list of funny dreams that I've had this year.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: These are the dreams that I had this year enough that were striking enough—

KEITH: You've written them down or you just remembered them?

AUSTIN: —that I messaged Janine about them in the morning.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: [reading] I'm now remembering that I dreamt, and I can remember most but not all of these. I'm now remembering that I dreamt about an open-world rhythm game RPG that used the Watchdogs system where you can recruit random people into your anti-authoritarian dance squad but it was extremely grim like roving death squads. Weird game. [JACK laughs] I dreamt that I was at some big gaming event and I signed up to do 4 consecutive speed runs. The first was Dragon's Dogma which I bet I could learn a speed run to because I know it well enough but then it was like a Contra game, a Castlevania game, and then a game I had never heard of until that day so I was like cramming, miserable. I woke up so nervous. [reading ends] I remember very specifically like I remember the cubicle they gave me to practice in and also the Wu-Tang Clan was there at the event as like, judges.

JACK: Oh, the Wu-Tang Clan was there!

AUSTIN: 100%. I dreamt that we had a cute apartment and you got me a bunch of fishing gear for my birthday.

KEITH: In what configuration?

AUSTIN: That's a good dream, that dream's great. Apparently we went to the lake a lot in that dream. Uh, I don't remember who—I remember, I remember, I wanna say that RZA looked at me and knew I couldn't do it.

JACK: Was OBD there?

KEITH: Wow, that sucks.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Huh?

JACK: Was this a dream version where OBD was still alive?

AUSTIN: No. No, it was modern-age Wu-Tang clan and they were not the focus, they were just in the room with me practicing their shit and were—so they must have been doing it too because they had their own set of cubicles. Anyway.

JACK: As they are wont to do.

AUSTIN: As they are wont to do.

KEITH: That's something, that is a feeling that can only happen in a dream where you look at someone and you know that they are mad.

AUSTIN: You *know*. Yes, I—mm, I feel like that's true in real life, in my life. I dreamt my crown popped off, very good—glad to wake up to find it in place. Ah, that's a scary one, I hate teeth dreams. [reading] I dreamt that my friend Evan called in a weird favor, [KEITH: I do that all the time.] to let me play Cyberpunk early but also it was the holiday season and my dad was driving me to the place where I could play it, a weird underground comic shop further out in queens, and dad and I got into an argument on the way there because we were both stressed and because we were frustrated by the directions, and I remember I got there and it was literally an underground comic shop and I was trying to like, cram in, I was trying to get in as many notes on the game so I could do content for it. [reading ends]

JACK: Were there any other journalists there?

AUSTIN: No, that was the thing. Evan called in a favor through like comic book industry things. Um. This one was very specific and this is not even the full version of this. [reading] I dreamt that everything was open and Starbucks had been turned into a bookstore plus Starbucks and it was so nice. [reading ends] You know that Starbucks, Jack, that's on my block?

JACK: Sure.

AUSTIN: What if that was like 5 times big? [JACK: Oh, that would rule!] 6 times as big and it was a bookstore? And then also there was—some famous author was there and I—god, I can't remember who it was but she was there and it was like one of those situations where it was like - oh it might have just been like N.K. Jemisin where it was like, "I don't want to go over and ruin your day while you're drinking coffee or eating a snack, this isn't the thing. But you know, there you are, you're in my dream, you're over there. This is a good—This is a better world." [reading] Um, I just remembered that I dreamt my friend Shaun was part of a criminal conspiracy inside of the police. Years prior, he'd gotten a small time gig that threw him into a much larger thing and it was me, my friend Matt, who used to live together with my friend Shaun and we went to go hang out with him where we all lived together and we both realized slowly that he was part of this big terrible criminal thing. [reading ends]

JACK: Huh!

AUSTIN: Uh, Keith, you're in this next one.

KEITH: Oh.

AUSTIN: [reading] I dreamed that Janine, Keith, Vinny from Giant Bomb, and I were hanging out in an all in one city in a skyscraper archaeology thing and the mob was there and also the elevators were haunted. [reading ends]

[KEITH laughs]

AUSTIN: It was weird. I knew it was a dream because Vinny was like, "Do you guys like shellfish?" And Janine said yes. Because she does not like shellfish. [JACK and KEITH laugh]

KEITH: Maybe she was just being polite.

AUSTIN: It must have been.

JACK: The haunted elevators did not give it away.

AUSTIN: Must have been. We're back in February now. [reading] I dreamt that we were visiting my family for a holiday but also that my family lived in some fancy penthouse in Atlantic City and also it was a big group family and not just little pockets and also we were playing Co-op Dragon Age 2 at the time like on our phones or something. I don't know.

KEITH: Wow.

JACK: That game doesn't exist, right?

AUSTIN: It doesn't, and speaking of games that don't exist. Uh, the last dream I had in 2019, I'll end here because this goes on forever, I absolutely dreamt about a complete Co-op Dragon Dogma 2, there was a whole light/dark dynamic where creatures would be killed by the sun's light and there was a great sequence where we were chased by a great land dragon thing until we led it to a big room with the sun but then like halfway through we passed certain points and the sun started to fade and it turns out the sun was a deceiver, the sun was fake and there was some sort of god back there controlling the sun so that people would develop to a certain point and then he would consume them. [JACK: Oh.] Also, we found a town and there was a cool quest where we had to, in first-person, chase around a little key running around like a mouse. [reading ends] [JACK laughs] Anyway.

KEITH: Have either of you have something or have a memory that was real that you thought was a dream?

AUSTIN: Ooh, good question.

JACK: I don't know. Almost certainly, right?

AUSTIN: Probably, right?

KEITH: I have one.

AUSTIN: What is it?

KEITH: I have one that I—I had a birthday party actually, Kylie's younger sister, Kylie from Runbutton, younger sister had a birthday party at like this indoor playplace kind of thing when I

was, I couldn't have been. I was probably somewhere between 8 and 10 and it had...it was like, imagine a big big room that was just all McDonalds playplace but it was like the whole building.

AUSTIN: The whole building, yeah yeah yeah.

KEITH: Yeah, and at the center of the building was like a big tree with a face that talked.

JACK: Shit.

AUSTIN: Can't be real. Must be a dream.

KEITH: And I thought that this was fake for years and learned that no, this was a real place, this was a place where you would go to have a birthday party in somewhere like, in west of Boston.

AUSTIN: Sure.

KEITH: And I could've sworn that it was a thing, like a weird old dream that I remembered.

AUSTIN: Yeah that's, that's, that's fantastic. For me, that's definitely, the thing I can think of like that are definitely places I've been to once in the same way right, where it's like was that a weird trip that I had or am I half-remembering some bullshit? A dream, rather, you know. Arp says the Discovery Zone? Is this a real place that people know about?

KEITH: Is that, is that what it's called?

AUSTIN: It would be amazing if Arp knew this place.

KEITH: Okay, the...Discovery Zone tree.

AUSTIN: Oh my god. Oh yeah, the tree is going to be the thing, right? Because...

JACK: Discovery Zone, Boston.

KEITH: Umm..This doesn't - this doesn't scream to me.

AUSTIN: This doesn't look like this.

KEITH: Talking tree...Let me do talking. THAT'S IT.

AUSTIN: Holy shit, do you have a link?

KEITH: Wait, oh this is maybe not—that is the tree. This looks like the tree to me.

AUSTIN: I wanna see the tree.

KEITH: C-D-M kids dot org. What is that? Is it the museum? Treesa the talking tree, um, I don't know if this is it.

JACK: Keith, please, God, you got to link us this tree.

AUSTIN: Keith, you have to link us.

KEITH: So I know this tree but I could know this from something else.

AUSTIN: Oh my god this tree.

JACK: Oh no!

KEITH: I might know that tree from something else. Oh wait, no, is that the tree? [pauses]

AUSTIN: Is what the tree? The one we're looking at?

KEITH: No, no, it was a different tree. Ok let me google now Massachusetts.

AUSTIN: I'm looking at an ad for Discovery Zone. I can't turn on the audio or else we're gonna—

KEITH: Has Arp say anything else? Discovery Zone...

AUSTIN: Let's see. No, nothing else from Arp yet.

KEITH: Okay. [typing] Massachusetts, play place, talking tree.

AUSTIN: This playplace looks like the thing for sure that you're talking about.

KEITH: This, I found this talking tree. This sucked, at Hotel Bellagio in Las Vegas. This thing is awful.

JACK: That's what they were trying to steal in Ocean's Eleven actually.

AUSTIN: It's the tree, yeah. Oh that's a creepy fucking tree. That's a really creepy tree.

JACK: I don't care for that.

AUSTIN: Don't like it, yeah.

KEITH: I believe there's also a tree at the now defunct, um, the—what is it called? Jeez, there was one in New York too. FAO Schwarz.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: The one in Boston had a really big creepy talking tree.

JACK: FAO Schwartz was like a toy store, right? Like a really weird toy store.

KEITH: Yeah, it was a toy store.

AUSTIN: Like a high-end luxury toy store basically. I think it's still open in some places. Correct.

KEITH: Yeah, it was the toy store from the movie Big where he jumps on the piano.

AUSTIN: Correct.

JACK: Ooh, right, yeah!

AUSTIN: And then becomes, I guess he's already an adult at that point or does he become an adult after?

KEITH: He—he—No no no, he's an adult at that point. Yeah, and he's like, they don't—he can be weird in a store because he's an adult.

AUSTIN: Cause he's an adult and no one can stop him!

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: If I did that in a toy store, they'd be like, sir, can you fucking not?

JACK: Everyone knows this stupid song.

KEITH: I do, I have one last dream thing. If I find this tree, I will link it. But uh, this is one I think, more than any of the other ones you can get a glimpse into my soul when you hear about this dream. I had a series of dreams actually where I met and had small pleasant conversations with Steve Martin.

AUSTIN: Wait one second, can we start this story over again one more time?

JACK: Oh yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh, let's see here, what do I...Ok let's go ahead. Go ahead with that story.

[MUSIC BEGINS - "[Bright Morning. Cool Evening](#)"]

KEITH: Okay, I had a series of dreams where I met and had small pleasant conversations with Steve Martin. He would just be nice, I would tell him that I was a fan of his work and there was one where we were on a plane. He was stuck next to me on a plane and we just had a chat on a plane and that was it, and there was one where I went to visit my grandfather and he was in my grandfather's TV room just sitting on the couch chatting with him and I showed up and we had a chat and then he was like well, I gotta get going, and then he left. And I think I had one more but I can't remember.

AUSTIN: And that'll be it for us. That's a great one. [Friendsatthetable.cash](https://www.friendsatthetable.cash) to support us, you can find all the music you heard this episode at notquitereal.bandcamp.com. [JACK laughs]

JACK: And also in the music Jack and Jill by Adam Sandler.

AUSTIN: Please don't sue us Adam Sandler. You already know where to find us all. Thank you so much for your support. I hope everyone is having a good year so far. We'll be back with another episode of Tips at The Table in the near future now that we're almost caught up kind of. We're caught up, we're caught up. We have another 28 days to do another episode to be caught, like we're caught up. We did it. So thanks for joining us for this sprint, we're going to continue catching up on other stuff. We have an episode of Bluff recorded, we have an episode or two, we have two episodes of a Live recorded which sounds like, reverse of what you want.

JACK: We might even have three!

AUSTIN: We might. By the end of it, we'll have three. We're doing a very special thing with lives that is easier—not a very special thing, there'll be some live to tape episodes coming so look forward to that, it should be fun. Anything else on the way? I think Pusher updates have been hitting. I'm very far back on Drawing Maps, I still have some more mapmakers coming so look forward to those. Until then, I hope everyone has a great evening and a good week. Bye bye bye.

Jack: Bye!

[MUSIC fades out]