

[Spring in Hieron Post Mortem \(Read the post!\)](#)

Transcriber: Cole

**Austin:** Welcome to friends at the table and actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization, and fun interactions between good friends. I'm your host, Austin Walker. Joining me today, Ali Acampora.

**Ali:** Hi, my name is Alicia Acampora. You can find me [@ali\\_west](#) on Twitter.

**Austin:** Keith Carberry.

**Keith:** Hi. My name is Keith J. Carberry. You can find me on Twitter [@keithjcarberry](#). And you can find the let's plays that I do at [youtube.com/runbutton](https://youtube.com/runbutton).

**Austin:** Sylvia<sup>1</sup> Clare.

**Sylvia:** Hey, I'm Sylvia. You can find me on Twitter [@captaintrash](#). And you can listen to my other show [Emojidrome](#) on iTunes or Google Play.

**Austin:** Jack de Quidt.

**Jack:** Hi, I'm Jack. You can find me on Twitter [@notquitereal](#). And buy any of the music featured on the show at [notquitereal.bandcamp.com](https://notquitereal.bandcamp.com).

**Austin:** Janine Hawkins.

**Janine:** Hey, I'm Janine. You can find me [@bleatingheart](#) on Twitter.

**Austin:** Art Martinez-Tebbel.

**Art:** Hey. You can find me on Twitter [@atebbel](#).

**Austin:** And Andrew Lee Swan.

**Dre:** Hey. You can find me on Twitter [@swandre3000](#).

**Austin:** We are doing the Spring in Hieron and Seasons of Hieron post-mortem today.

**Ali:** Fwoof.

**Austin:** Yeah, it's a lot. You know, I feel like a lot of us said goodbye to the show when we finished the last episode or when we finished recording the last pick up or when you finished layering a billion different tracks, Ali. And yet, here we are ready to say goodbye to it again. So, I guess, real quick before we get into the questions, the first thing I want to say is thank you so

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

much for all of your support, listeners, for all of the incredible love you've shown us over the years, and then, especially as we wrapped up Hieron. We received questions from over one hundred and ten people, last I checked. We received, you know, easily over two hundred and fifty questions. Just counting the ones that came in before the deadline hit. Some stuff did not get through because of the deadline, but I promise most of that stuff was asked elsewhere in that collection. I'll say also, I edited these down to just the uh... One, we are not answering two hundred and fifty questions.

**Art:** Nope.

**Austin:** That would be too many questions to answer.

**Ali:** Mhm.

**Austin:** So, we've cut it down to-

**Keith:** For cowards. *[Austin sighs]* I'm ready. *[Keith and Ali laugh]*

**Sylvia:** He's got a point.

**Austin:** Alright. **Keith** is gonna do a seven hour live stream, everybody. *[Ali laughs]* Have fun.

**Art:** We're all gonna go, but Keith is going to stay after.

**Austin:** Keith's got ya, yeah.

**Keith:** Yeah, is there's a question for someone else, I will answer it. I'll just do my best.

**Austin:** Yeah. Uh huh.

**Sylvia:** And Keith's answers are all gonna be canon, too, after we leave.

**Keith:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Austin:** That's true. That's how it works.

**Sylvia:** He has- *[inaudible]*

**Keith:** Everything will come true.

**Art:** Everything he says counts.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Everything Keith says counts. That's right. *[overlapped]* I will say-

**Art:** *[overlapped]* Can I-

**Keith:** If I say something that is not true, it becomes true.

**Austin:** *[sadly]* Let me finish my little intro spiel that I have.

**Keith:** Okay

**Art:** Alright, but I've a note. I have a note.

**Austin:** Okay. Speaking of notes, we got a bunch of them along with all of those questions. A lot of them were thanking us for the show. There was a great thread going around in response to- It was either the [FatT\\_FanArt](#) or the [fatt\\_quote](#) Twitter... I don't remember which one-

**Janine:** It was- I think it was the wisdom one, right?

**Austin:** Oh, yeah. It was [Friends at the Table wisdom](#) that had people talking about how- how they first started listening to the show. That stuff was really moving. That stuff was really emotional for me to read and was- So, just like, thank you for all of that. And also, thank you to everyone who sent notes. Both in terms of appreciation for the show, people who told us ways we could do better about different things. Like, we read everything. I read everything. I put everything in a document for all of us. I take all that stuff super seriously. So, if your question or your comment didn't make it here, it's not because I didn't read it or I'm not considering it or that we decided it wasn't important, it's- it's about cutting these two hundred and fifty questions down to a manageable number. Art, you have a note.

**Art:** When you say over a hundred and ten-

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Art:** -it really makes people know it's between a hundred and ten and a hundred and twenty. Whereas, if you say like, over a hundred-

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Art:** -it could be as- it could be a hundred and ninety.

**Keith:** Damn, you're right.

**Austin:** I don't know how many it is. And also-

**Janine:** If it's a hundred and five, it's less cool. Then it makes us seem less cool.

**Austin:** The other thing is I believe in honesty, Art.

**Art:** Mm.

**Austin:** I'm not here to try to rhetorically twist our popularity. *[lightly laughs]* If anything, historically, I want to emphasize the fact that we are smaller than people think we are. *[laughs]* Not bigger. Alright. We should get into these questions cause there are so many of them. Also, the order is uh... all over the place. So, we're gonna be bouncin' around to a bunch of different stuff here over the next little while. Let's dig into it. This one comes in from Jordanna, who says,

'I've been listening my way through Tips at the Table, and in an older episode, members of the group talked about how Winter in Hieron was very difficult to make. Was Spring easier and/or did the process of making it feel better? How so? Is everyone happy with how the campaign closed?'

**Austin:** Does anyone have an immediate gut level response?

**Keith:** I have an immediate gut thing there.

**Austin:** Sure. Keith.

**Keith:** Spring in Hieron was the easiest season for me that- It was the most natural to get into.

**Austin:** Yep.

**Keith:** It was so easy to just keep going and keep having fun with it. And, you know, different people have, you know, different reasons for thinking that Winter in Hieron was very difficult to make, but if I had ever said Winter in Hieron was difficult to make, that's only because I hadn't yet done Twilight Mirage. *[everyone laughs]*

**Austin:** No, that's a hundred percent true. I... I have said in the past that I think Winter is my least favorite season, in terms of just like, personal appeal. In terms of like, I want to listen to this. And in terms of the fun I was having while making it. Twilight Mirage was way harder to make as a thing. Spring was better on both counts. Spring was the easiest season we've ever done, for me, in terms of creative decision making in terms of plotting out story beats, in terms of understanding who the characters were. I think largely because we've been in the world and with these characters for so long.

Despite it being something that we were ending, it was something that I was pretty confident we would end well. Which is not to say that we did not have to have big conversations early on about the shape of this season or that I didn't have doubts here or there. But I have that about everything we've ever done. And coming off of Twilight Mirage, which was very.... I would say aspirational, very experimental, very ambitious, this felt so comfortable to come back into, as a GM. Not only because I knew the world and characters, but because Dungeon World is such a familiar old friend at this point, you know? I don't know if that matches other people's experience.

**Janine:** I mean Hieron also... gives us a lot more room to breathe than the more self-contained seasons like, Twilight Mirage.

**Austin:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Janine:** Where like, you know, we- There's a lot more pressure. There was a lot more pressure in Twilight Mirage to say all the things that we wanted to say about those characters. And specific- and specifically, like as a GM, you have more room to move around and consider things after. But for us, with our stories, like, it's very much a like, now-or-never thing. Whereas with Hieron, you know, even though I joined later and only had the two seasons, it- you know, there's a lot of room where- Winter, I felt that pressure more to like, try and say all the things I wanted to say.

**Austin:** Interesting.

**Janine:** But in Spring, I was able to look back and say like, 'Okay. Well, you know, here's the stuff I said in Winter about this character, and now the stuff that I want to say is often like, referring back to that to make a complete picture. I don't have to make a complete picture of this season alone.'

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** 'I'm not working in isolation.' We're working with all this material that lets us, you know, that lets us work a little more broadly and a little less delicately to tell something that is still fully round and stuff. But the pressure of it is a lot less because we have that space to breathe rather than trying to cram everything that we want to say into just the one, you know?

**Austin:** No, a hundred percent. A hundred percent. Like, I... Doing this season has made me eager to do other things at this scale for a lot of those reasons. For the ease-

**Keith:** Uh, hello?

**Austin:** -for the reference-

**Janine:** Uh oh.

**Ali:** Oh...

**Art:** Did we lose Austin? [*Janine and Ali laugh*]

**Sylvia:** Oh no.

**Keith:** Eager to what?

**Ali:** I thought that was just me.

**Dre:** Nope.

**Jack:** Everyone's- every- He's gone. *[Ali laughs]*

**Keith:** Oh my-

**Art:** Is the- is the stream still up?

**Keith:** Obvious- obvious-

**Dre:** I think the stream just died.

**Austin:** I think I'm back! Am I back? No?

**Keith:** Obviously he was about to say something crucial. *[Sylvia laughs]* And they stopped him.

**Dre:** This is-

**Art:** We're all fired.

**Janine:** I guess he's eager to shut down the stream and run into the woods.

**Austin:** The timing on that is really funny.

**Jack:** God, agents from Blough City have showed up in Austin's apartment.

**Ali:** Oh...

**Art:** Chat is being really chill about this.

**Keith:** I think it just- I think it just caught up.

**Dre:** Yeah. They just caught up. *[everyone laughs]*

**Keith:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. *[more laughter]*

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Ah, I think I'm back. I did it. I think I'm back.

**Art:** Yeah, we're gonna have to chill out.

**Austin:** Hello?

**EVERYONE:** Hi/Hello.

**Austin:** I'm back. The timing on that was very funny to me. *[everyone laughs]*

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Jack:** It was.

**Austin:** For people who were watching the stream that dropped, one, apologies for the stream dropping. But two, I had literally, while **Janine** was talking, typed into our discord, 'If anyone needs my attention, make sure to 'at' me here.' As if to say like, 'Otherwise I won't see it.' And then immediately, my internet died. So, apologies to the chat for my internet dying. That's fun. That's a fun thing to have happened, you know? Where did we drop? Did we drop- Janine, did you finish what you were saying?

**Janine:** You said the word 'eager.'

**Austin:** Yeah. Who knows? Oh! I think the thing I was gonna say is that I-

**Jack:** Uh oh, you might have gone again.

**Austin:** No, we're- we're up.

**Keith:** No, no, no.

**Ali:** No.

**Keith:** I got it. Is this now-?

**Austin:** No, we're up.

**Jack:** Everyone in chat just said, 'Oh no.'

**Austin:** Okay.

**Ali:** Well, don't- Yeah.

**Keith:** Oh, no, no.

**Janine:** No, yeah. Okay.

**Keith:** It's- Look, they don't know what they're talkin' about.

**Dre:** They're far behind. Yeah.

**Art:** Oh, the- the-

**Janine:** We have- we have a local recording.

**Austin:** People are saying...

**Janine:** We'll- it'll be-

**Austin:** It'll be fine. I think finishing this up has actually made me eager to work in this like, um... this scale again at some point. Definitely no promises of like, when that is. But in terms of exactly what you said, Janine, the fact that you were able to reference past stuff, the slow growth of characters, the familiarity with the world, that deep investment. It- I love- I mean, for me, COUNTERWeight is still my personal favorite thing, single like, season that we've done. Even though I think it was messier than Spring. Even I think it was not as tight and- and like, you know, high scores all around. But what it didn't have is this sort of like, deep investment with- with the players and the characters and the world over this long period of time, where you just start to embody it and inhabit it. So, I cannot wait to do something else in that space, or in that scale.

**Art:** Yeah, in a lot of ways, Winter felt like pushing a big rock up a hill, and the nice thing about Spring was we got to push the rock back down the hill.

**Austin:** Mhm. *[quiet laughter]*

**Art:** And like Sisypheus, now we're at the bottom of the hill again.

**Austin:** *[amused]* Oh shit!

**Art:** *[laughing]* And we have to do season six.

**Janine:** There's a lot of- There's a lot of shattered wood down here, and we're not sure if we rolled over someone's house or just a wagon or maybe a sign. It's hard to say.

**Austin:** *[laughs]* God.

**Art:** Yeah. But yeah, cause yeah, it's everything people said. The characters are so easy now, and- and, you know, you really got to like- you got to drive them like they were stolen, you know?

**Austin:** Mhm. Is any- Any other thoughts here? Or any other feelings on- I mean I- The other half of this is is everyone happy with how the campaign closed?

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Yes.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Janine:** *[quietly]* Yeah.



**Austin:** Yeah. A hundred percent. We'll get into it probably a little bit more later when we talk about things like, ambiguity and kind of the behind the scenes on the epilogue and the actual final- final epilogue- like, sub-epilogue at the end. But um... also, I'll say real quick, there are gonna be spoilers for *all* of Hieron here. *[Austin and Ali laugh]* We should keep it to those. We will not be-

**Jack:** Just top to bottom.

**Austin:** Uh huh. We will not be spoiling COUNTERWeight or Twilight Mirage here or anything like that, so. I don't think... I hope not. Any other thoughts here before I move on? *[silence]* Alright. This one comes from Karen who asks- or who says,

'One of my favorite comedic moments was when Fero invented the wholetaur. "Hello. Nice weather we're having." If the other-'

**Austin:** I shouldn't have said that. Keith, you're supposed to say that. Sorry.

**Keith:** 'Hello. Nice weather we're having.'

**Austin:** There it is.

'If the other player characters could use the Origin of the Species ability, what would they create?'

**Austin:** **Janine**, you were the one who highlighted this. You were very excited, I suspect. Do you have something in mind?

**Janine:** Yes. I deliberately didn't pre-plan an answer to this.

**Austin:** Perfect. *[laughing]* Just- just like Fero.

**Janine:** Yes, I wanted to just- to just wing it. Um... so, speaking of wings, I want two wings on it, but the wings are the head. The wings are heads.

**Austin:** Mm. Mhm.

**Ali:** Mm.

**Janine:** So, it's like, two heads, but they're wing heads.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** So, it's like when butterflies have that thing where they open their wings, it looks like a face, but it's two faces looking at you. And they're real faces. They're not fake faces.

**Ali:** Of course.

**Austin:** Way to be judgy about butterfly faces.

**Janine:** *[laughs]* No, they're not like freako faces. Like, they'll like, talk to you and...

**Austin:** Got you. Got you.

**Janine:** Yeah. I don't know if it talks, actually. It might just like, make a sound. But anyway, so it's two wings with- that are faces and heads. And the wings are on... I want to say just like... just like, legs maybe.

**Austin:** Mhm. Mhm.

**Janine:** Just maybe some legs.

**Austin:** Just some legs? Wing- wing legs.

**Janine:** Yeah, cause I-

**Keith:** Wings that are heads coming out of legs.

**Janine:** Yes, I really like the idea of- of like, when the wings are closed, and maybe it's like, crouching on a branch or something, it looks kind of like a butterfly. But then, you sort of get closer, and you realize there's nothing... There's no- there's a lot of the structure you expect of the butterfly is missing, and then, the wings open, and there's two faces looking at you.

**Austin:** Mm.

**Janine:** That's what I'd like.

**Ali:** And what does Adaire need this for? *[Ali, Sylvia, and Janine laugh]*

**Austin:** Yeah. Yeah, this does not say if Janine could-

**Ali:** *[still laughing]* Cause it said-

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** It said other PCs.

**Sylvia:** Oh, damn.

**Janine:** Mhm. Um... *[Ali laughs again]* Look. *[laughs]* I got very excited about creating a thing. But also, I have an answer for this.

**Austin:** Ah.

**Janine:** Cause that's a fucking fantastic distraction and also probably very good for spying.

**Ali:** Mhm.

**Art:** I can't believe we let Janine go first. *[Ali and Jack laugh]* Now everyone has to follow this. I'm over here like, 'I don't know. Hadrian probably wants just a bigger dog?' Like- *[Austin and Ali laugh]*

**Dre:** That was gonna be my answer. Fuck! *[Janine laughs]*

**Austin:** You can both- you can collaborate now. You're family, right? Like, it's- it's doable.

**Keith:** Don't you feel like Kodiak to be a little hurt if you came back with a dog, and said like-

**Austin:** Ooo.

**Keith:** -'It's just like you, but it's bigger. Which is useful.' *[Ali, Janine, Austin laugh]*

**Dre:** No.

**Art:** Get a sad Kodiak bark.

**Austin:** *[dog foley]* Rr. Yeah, that would be the worst. God. Any other- Ephrim, it sounded like you might have had something?

**Sylvia:** I- I didn't have one for Ephrim. I was just thinking like- Okay. So, I imagine a cat, but with a beak.

**Austin:** Yeah. Oooo. A cat with a beak.

**Janine:** Oh.

**Jack:** Pointy.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**[0:15:00]**

**Janine:** That's kind of an owl. But like, without wings.

**Sylvia:** Like-

**Ali:** It would eat fish all the time.

**Austin:** You know what? The thing is you said not for Ephrim, but yeah, I feel like- I feel like a cat with a beak on Ephrim's shoulder would be top tier fashion.

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, you know what? Actually... *[Austin laughs]* Nevermind. I stand by my answer.

**Keith:** So, this is like a-

**Janine:** Oh, but what's the use for it? *[mocks the former question]* Mya-mamaaa. *[Ali laughs]*

**Austin:** It's good looking. It looks-

**Sylvia:** Clout.

**Janine:** We can just have cool animals.

**Dre:** Sylvia said fashion.

**Sylvia:** The good thing about Ephrim is I can justify everything as just saying it's for a clout cause that's like- *[Janine laughs]*

**Ali:** Mm.

**Sylvia:** -that's his whole spiel, you know?

**Jack:** 'This cat has a beak! Look at it!' *[Austin laughs]*

**Janine:** Cracks nuts.

**Austin:** Ephrim does live- live for the- for the clout. It's true. Any other animals?

**Jack:** *[overlapped]* I want like a-

**Keith:** This cat with a beak- You had a deal for me to sign? *[Austin and Ali laugh]*

**Austin:** Jack, is that you?

**Jack:** I want like a stack of animals that is one animal.

**Sylvia:** Yes!

**Jack:** I don't know... I don't know- *[Austin, Dre, and Sylvia laugh]* You know how-

**Art:** You want a stack of animals?

**Jack:** Yeah, you know how this-

**Janine:** Like pancakes?

**Keith:** This is an animal-

**Jack:** Yeah. Like pancakes. Or like, you know those- like in Mario, the goombas all stand on top of each other sometimes?

**Austin:** Yeahhhh.

**Sylvia:** Mhm.

**Jack:** But imagine if that was just like, many birds or- or something. And they were all actually one animal-

**Austin:** They are all one animal.

**Jack:** -capable of like, moving independently. Or-

**Austin:** Jack. Jack. Jack?

**Jack:** Yeah? Uh huh.

**Austin:** We- This is a- This is the panther, which we introduced in season one. It's just standing on top of its -.

**Jack:** Yeah, but the panther is like a cool cloud. I'm talking like a vertical-

**Keith:** I-

**Jack:** -acrobatic tower.

**Janine:** Like a heave-ho animal.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Right.

**Keith:** This is- this is similar-ish to something that I was going to do right before the epilogue. I don't know if we ever talked about it on an episode, but we kind of moved past needing it.

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Keith:** Which was a solution to my- You remember when I had- when I tried to make that frog farmer that died of depression?

**Austin:** Yeah.

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

**Austin:** Yeah, I do.

**Sylvia:** *[laughs]* Awww.

**Keith:** I- I fo- *[laughs as Sylvia continues to laugh many 'awws']* I was going to- I was going to make an animal that was three frogs that were all friends.

**Austin:** Aww. *[Ali laughs]*

**Keith:** But all together.

**Jack:** But it was like, one-

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** But it was one animal?

**Keith:** It was one animal that were three frogs holding hands.

**Jack:** Like, 'Hi, Steve.' 'Hi, Mark.'

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** 'Hi, Greg.' *[Austin laughs]*

**Sylvia:** *[still laughing]* I'm so sad about this.

**Austin:** You finally get to deploy the wholetaur tech for a new- a new character type-a new animal type.

**Art:** And that triple frog would go on to star in Budweiser commercials. *[mostly everyone laughs]*

**Ali:** Mm.

**Dre:** God.

**Jack:** And that's also just like Frog and Toad, except if there's one word that was just the character's name.

**Austin:** God.

**Jack:** It's Frogandtoad.

**Austin:** Frogandtoad. I love it. Any other characters? Lem did- did you have one?

**Jack:** I just said mine. Stack of birds. *[Sylvia laughs]*

**Austin:** Stack of birds. Sorry. I thought that was Jack's. I forgot that that was Lem. *[Dre laughs]*  
Hella, is there a Hella animal here? What do you got?

**Ali:** Did Hella and Fero collab over a second animal?

**Austin:** Just the sprangaroo, I- Oh, no. Wait.

**Ali:** Just the sprang-

**Austin:** What about the whale...

**Jack:** That was a classic starter animal.

**Austin:** -the whale-dog or whatever it was?

**Ali:** Oh, right.

**Austin:** The eagle dog? What was that thing?

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** I remember there- part of the season being like, oh, Hella has to go up to Fero and be like, 'Hey, you should make this, so we can do this thing.'

**Austin:** Yeah. Definitely.

**Ali:** And I think it made the show, so I think that's my answer.

**Austin:** That's a good idea.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** I feel like Red Jack... who I've decided is the character I'm answering for would want some sort of animal to help him make beer. And I realize what I'm actually just describing is children. He just has children helping him make beer. *[Ali and Jack laugh]*

**Jack:** Oh my god.

**Austin:** But like, something that could like, get in- get in there, get in the beer vat-

**Jack:** Carry- carry stuff around.

**Austin:** Yeah, yeah. But-

**Keith:** One big yeast.

**Austin:** Yeah. Like, yeah-

**Art:** Yeah.

**Jack:** One big yeast?

**Austin:** It's like a super yeast. Yeah. That could help carry stuff around. And then, you drink it.

**Janine:** I don't think I-

**Keith:** Talk to the yeast and ask them what to do.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Tell them what to do-

**Janine:** Isn't-

**Keith:** -cause that's the big problem is not being able to tell the yeast what to do.

**Ali:** Mm.

**Janine:** Isn't fermentation like... Aren't you just ma- asking for a big animal to come *[laughs]* fart in your beer? *[Keith laughs]* Like, isn't that what fermentation is? Is that what we really want?

**Jack:** And then die.

**Austin:** And then it die-

**Jack:** Fart and then die.

**Austin:** Or no, no, no. Cause you keep the yeast around, right? You don't kill the yeast with a beer. Does the beer- Doesn't the- Does the yeast beer- Is it gone?

**Keith:** No, it's still alive in there.

**Austin:** It's alive. Yeast, too. Thank you.

**Art:** Well, and this one would be big, so it could get out. And we could call it Yeastace.



**Ali:** Mm... *[everyone laughs]*

**Austin:** And the next question is from Nathaniel who says,

‘It feels a lot like- Uh, it feels like a lot of character “lacks,” quote-unquote, that we heard in Winter were resolved in the end, which makes it super satisfying- makes for super satisfying arcs. Was this an intentional direction all or some of you took towards the end, or something you barely even noticed that came out naturally through playing very consistent characters? Congrats on that part by the way it is SO hard. I've never seen it done so well.’

**Austin:** Thank you. On behalf of everybody. Even though I wasn't playing those characters.

‘Aidaire seems to have found her true connection, and Hella- stability in the form of each other, and this pretty much saved them in the end. Ephrim has found a home, one that he stayed in even after he wasn't feeling safe anymore. Does Hadrian feel like he's found his direction in the church he now leads and his family? Has Lem found conviction in his studies or with Galenica, or was this ultimately something he didn't need? What about Thrandir and his need for retribution, or Fero and his want for respect?’

**Austin:** Start with those last few people here. Hadrian, do you feel like you found direction?

**Art:** Uh... sure. I don't think it was like an intentional...

**Austin:** No.

**Art:** There's- *[stammers]* The question asks if it was intentional, and I don't think that happened on purpose. But yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah, I think the thing-

**Art:** It turns out the direction was just like, ‘stay still.’

**Austin:** Yeah. Which- which I think was like, a recurring theme for a lot of- That was like- Actually, for I would say three of these four, ‘stay still’ was part of the question. Was like, ‘Will you stay still?’ For Hadrian, Lem, and Fero.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Lem, that was like a key part- Er, Jack, that was a key part of Lem's story this season, for sure.

**Jack:** Yeah. It's like- ‘What does in-’

**Austin:** One of the core conflicts, right?

**Jack:** 'What does involvement look like? And what are the ways in which..' Like, Lem was a character who, you know, decided to step in from the sidelines at various points in Autumn and Winter.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And like, screwed it up monumentally. And took to heart the fact that the reason that he had screwed it up was that he had stepped in from the sidelines. Not the fact that once he had stepped in from the sidelines, he had behaved awful.

**Austin:** Mm.

**Jack:** You know, like, Lem was- was still definitely, for a long time, a character that was going like, 'Well, that didn't go well because I got involved.'

**Austin:** Right.

**Jack:** Not, 'That didn't go well because I got involved and- and did not take various things into account or acted recklessly or failed to act at a certain moment or whatever.' And so, in Spring, a lot of what I was thinking about, which ended up kind of playing itself really nicely in terms of a dynamic between like, 'close to' and 'away from' the community, or 'close to' and 'away from' Emmanuel was like, 'What are ways that Lem can... Or what are the ways that Lem can and does choose to involve himself and choose to recuse himself?'

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Jack:** And what can we learn about where we're gonna try and kind of take this character to an ending through those ways. And like, I don't... I'm very firmly on Team...'Lem is Good in terms of alignment. But he's still a- He's a bit of an asshole, consistently.

**Austin:** Consistently, yeah.

**Jack:** And I think he's gonna remain that way.

**Austin:** For the rest of his life.

**Jack:** Yeah. Maybe- maybe one day we'll see Lem get better but like, there were a lot of times- You know, one of the last things that you hear Lem say in Benjamin's discussion about the Understanding and about the threat of the Understanding is- is Lem basically says like, 'Well, we mustn't let this get in the way of a thing *I'm* worried about.'

**Austin:** Yep.

**Jack:** 'Which is Galenica.' And I feel like that was the moment of being like, Lem has- Lem has come a long way, but he still has a- he has a long way to go.

**Austin:** Totally. Fero, did you feel like your want for respect was a lack that you either resolved- or either you got what you wanted there or that that lack resolved over the course of Spring?

**Keith:** I- I- Well, first I wouldn't say spec- I don't think that- Fero is definitely looking for something from the people that were around him. I don't think 'respect' is exactly the word that I would use.

**Austin:** I suspect- Keith, real quick, just-

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Just a cover your ass thing. I suspect all of these specific things are pulled from somewhere. Either a thing you specifically said on an episode or a tweet.

**Keith:** That's fair. Yeah. I-

**Austin:** But.

**Keith:** You're probably right.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Well, but I can always say that if I said respect, I was wrong.

**Austin:** Yep. Absolutely.

**Keith:** The thing is- The thing that I'm- The thing that I... Cause like, the reason that I'm clarifying is just because when some people hear respect, they hear like, some asshole being like, *[in a snotty voice]* 'Show me respect!' Which isn't-

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Keith:** I don't think what Fero is- was trying to-

**Austin:** That wasn't your Fero voice?

**Keith:** That's not- No, that wasn't my Fero voice. It was more like, respect in the way- It's more like respect in the way with- where it's like- like, 'Can't these people be treating me like a- like I'm a better friend to them than they are?' Which is a kind of respect, but it's why I wanted to make sure that we knew what kind of respect I'm talking about.

**Austin:** Sure.

**Keith:** If I had said- Especially if I had said respect in the past. Um... No. *[Keith and Austin laughs]* Fero- I don't- Or... it's not... If Fero... If I- Fero got some of it, but it was too little too late, I

guess, is the thing. Like, I'm really happy with the end. Like, Fero got what... he wanted and had been saying for, you know, most of-

**Austin:** The whole season.

**Keith:** -for like, the last- yeah, the last fifth of Winter and all of Spring. Which was, 'I want to quit doing this. And I want to quit feeling like I've got to stick around and help. And I want to go home. And I want to stop being dragged around from thing to thing to thing.' And there's a world where Fero... There's a world where that's not what Fero ends up wanting in the end. And we didn't get there. Like, Fero was happy to be back in the cave.

**Austin:** Right.

**Keith:** But there's a- there's- it's always possible that if things had gone differently, Fero wouldn't have wanted to go back to the cave in the first place. So, no. Fero didn't get that respect, but also... the- the thing that he actually did want, he did get.

**Austin:** Right.

**Keith:** And was happy with it.

**Austin:** And we'll come back to some of these other Fero questions later.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Definitely other questions in here about this. Throndir, I'm curious because when you described your lack, it was so focused on Arrell which is what I believe the retribution was about. And we had such an interesting arc with Throndir and Arrell in Spring that we actually resolved not early in the season, but closer towards like, the fin- you know, the closer to what is the middle than the end. And I'm curious if that changed for Throndir, or if even before that, his lack changed.

**Dre:** Well, and I think... God, it's been a long time since I've remembered this, but I think part of the retribution, too, focused on like, home?

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Dre:** And like, the shitty stuff that happened at home. So-

**Austin:** Right. Right, right, right.

**Dre:** I think the answer- part of the answer for Throndir about retribution is like, I think part of what the story I was thinking of telling with Throndir in Spring is like, 'What do you do when you're angry about something, and it's legit to be angry about it-'

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Dre:** ‘-but there's really not much you can do?’ Like, ‘How do you move forward with that?’ And I think...

**Austin:** Well, what do you think- If you could summarize what that answer is, what- what is it? ...For Throndir. *[breathes a laugh]*

**Dre:** Yeah. I think it is kind of what happened in the epilogue. It's focusing instead on like, the positives that are there in front of you and that you're then able to build upon.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Dre:** Like, focusing on those relationships. And even when things get difficult...you know, still believing in those good relationships and trying to maintain them and keep building on them.

**Austin:** Totally. Folks who I- who I moved over more quickly, Hella, Ephrim, Adaire, how- how about y'all? Do you feel like this is all pretty on point in terms of having fulfilled those lacks?

**Sylvia:** Yeah, I think so. I kinda- I kept my one in the back of my head most of the time when I was playing with Ephrim just because... it became really central to his arc, given what he was doing.

**Austin:** Mm.

**Sylvia:** And so like, that was sort of a big like, motivating thing in this season was protecting that desire. And like what... what extents someone would go to to do that, too.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** And I feel like I handled that alright.

**Austin:** Totally. Adaire and Hella?

**Janine:** So, I think for Adaire, a really big thing... a really big thing was Aubade. And like-

**Austin:** Mm.

**Janine:** -because so much of- so much of- You know, the reason she lacked true connection is because of her connection was a thing that you can essentially purchase or transact for. Like, ‘I do a favor for you. You do a favor for me. And now we're friends.’ That was- you know, that's very much how Adaire is in- in Winter. And that comes from- you know, that comes from her life of like, material scarcity and having to very much do what she could to get what she had.

And then, you know, going to Aubade where there is no material scarcity... It is- it is purely like- you know, that- that is a world where everything hinges on people just interacting

with each other and just like, living their lives and like, having those basic needs managed. So, you know, the- the idea of this sort of transactional approach to social relationships is something that she would have had to really strongly reassess. And like, I think we totally saw her struggling with that. And after that, it felt like- it felt like it had to happen that- you know, there needed to be more. There needed to be- She couldn't go back to just being transactional.

**Austin:** Right.

**Janine:** And like, that's... I think the way that- the way that I sort of ended up characterizing her. And it was- it wasn't always like, intentional. I sort of realized after the fact that I was doing it, but it's- it's a very- very much like, 'Every decision that gets made is something that you're rolling previous decisions into.' So, you're rolling previous experiences into. You're like, referring back to them. It's never just playing...

**[0:30:00]**

**Janine** (continued): It's never just playing the one character. And I think a lot of people probably struggle with this. I think when I was younger, and I was- and I was writing characters and stuff, I struggled with this because I had this idea of them as like, set in stone until like-

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Janine:** -one thing happens, and then maybe they completely change, and you know. But there is- It's a lot more useful to... as you are making choices for a character to look back. To like flip- Imagine you have notes in front of you- or maybe you do have notes in front of you. I often do. To like, flip back to the previous page and be like, 'How does this event that just happened inform the next bit?' And- and then you sort of keep going back and forth. And I think with a Adaire, that ended up pushing me in a direction that was exactly where she needed to go.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** Just based on that sort of flipping back and referring and saying, 'How would this have shaped where she would go next?'

**Austin:** Ali, how do you feel about about this claim?

**Ali:** Yeah, I think it's kind of interesting because for me this question is so... kind of rooted in how Hella was feeling during Winter. In that like, during that season, like, the sun was missing.

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** There was like, stuff happening in the world that people had never seen before. And the idea of just being like, 'Well, I just want something that's real, and I don't want to be doing this anymore.' *[Austin laughs]* is kind of the thing that it was. But I think over Spring, what became

interesting was that like, Hella was trying to... figure out what that answer really was for her and then, also what it was for other people.

**Austin:** Yeah. I think like so much- so many things that come to mind for me with Hella in this season are things like, doing the census or helping people build houses. And that is a real- real way- a way to address stability, both obviously- obviously in the community, but even indirectly her own. Where it's like, 'Alright. The more that the world is in place and not exploding and people are like, content the more all of us have this degree of stability in our lives.'

**Ali:** Right. Yeah.

**Austin:** Any other thoughts? It was really fun to- It was very fun to see these again cause in my prep, I certainly did not look back at them going into Spring. It was just like, a much more holistic... picture of who these characters were at that point. Kind of the way that you just said, **Janine**. But seeing how y'all played them in line with this stuff, I think speaks to the- the like, accuracy of your previous statements about what those lacks were. Because even if it was not an active thing on any of our parts, with I guess, the exception of **Sylvia** mentioned specifically thinking about it, it is... it was definitely there. You know, you can feel a throughline. This one comes in from Jordan C. who says,

'A question for Art and Austin. I'm a person who would consider myself to be quite religious. I've always found Hadrian's struggles with his God and with his faith particularly comforting and moving, especially considering the twists and turns that my own faith has taken during the course of my own life. What's inspired Hadrian spiritual journey to go the way that it did, and in what ways has it been influenced by your own lives?'

**Austin:** Art, do you have thoughts here?

**Art:** Yeah, some of this is going to come... is gonna be answered a little later. Some of there- some of this I think is a better- It's gonna be better answered in a little bit.

**Austin:** Sure.

**Art:** But yeah, I mean I... I think it is a lot like... I don't wanna get too... too finite, but like, I was raised not like religious, but in religion. I went to... Uh, I went to a Jewish Sunday school every year- every Sunday for eight years. Including after I got bar mitzvahed, which was like, the- My temple was all about getting you to go to the one year after your bar mitzvah. They were like, 'Don't just bail on us now that you've gotten the thing you want.' [**Austin and Ali laugh**] And so, I stayed through. The eighth grade teacher at my temple was amazing, honestly. But um, not important. And then like, you know, by third grade, I was like, 'I don't think I believe any of this.'

And sort of like going through the phases of agnosticism to atheism to not wanting to be associated with atheism because of *those* people to- to marrying someone who is more religious than me. And like, just trying to like, explore that space... in like, a really non-contact

way, right? I mean, of course, I wasn't married when we started, but... but I was- I was dating Jess then. And- and yeah, it's- And like the- I've always found paladins really comforting because as a religious- as a person who grew up in a religious minority and- and who felt uncertain about things, being able to play a character that's just like, so sure... and so... right was like- is like a really appealing thing to like, explore for me.

**Austin:** Yeah. I think it has been interesting for me, as someone who... You know, I went through a real strong period during which I was not only... So, I grew up super Catholic, and then in college- really in high school, but by college, I'd moved away pretty much entirely and spent, you know, a couple of years being hard core New Atheist. Not... not ever too aggressive about it, but I was twenty and an asshole. And then, it took a decade. It took longer than that for me to become comfortable around faith again. To sit in a church and to find what still appealed to me about the experience. And to identify what didn't. And to identify, for me, the- I think a lot about the death of one of my grandfathers, as you know, cause that is what Hieron has been about to some degree. This is actually not one of the ones who died of cancer. It's a person- this other one died of... I have four grand- I've- I've known three grandfathers in my life. Both of my parents are married and divorced and remarried.

And the- my stepdad's dad, when he died, I went to his funeral. And at that funeral, they played one of my favorite like, Catholic hymns or whatever. They performed it. Not performed it. Sung it. And I really loved it, and that song is uh- God, it's... How- how does it go? 'Here I am Lord,' which I was- was one of my favorites when I was a little kid. And hearing them sing that was just like, 'Oh, wow. Yeah. Church Yeah. Okay. I remember why I liked this, even if my beliefs have drifted in different directions.' But then, like, three steps later, the- the priest explained that my grandfather was, in fact, before- Sure, he was a hardworking man, and sure, he loved his family. But before he loved his family, and before he worked hard, he loved God more than anyone.' I was like, 'I gotta go. His family's in the room. They just lost him. Can you chill?' It was *literally* an appeal for money. Like, it was literally, 'And everyone should follow in his- in his footsteps and make sure to, you know, give generously.' And it fuckin' sucked.

And so- but like, being able to divide those experiences out helped me figure out how to tell a story about a character whose faith was troubled, but who still fundamentally understood the world through the maneuvers of an institution of faith who- who would always reach for a parable, who would always understand the world through the lens that the church had given him, in Hadrian's case. And- and yet who was fundamentally driven by goodness by the third season- er by, you know, Spring at least, right?

So- so yeah. I think huge influence, but also something that has been a difficult thing because I've always wanted to make sure that we are... that we- A thing that I came around on was really the place that faith has had in particular movements of resistance historically around the world, along with its place in oppression. But not- not ever losing the- the objective fact that that is true on both sides of those things. And so, making sure to- make sure that faith is both, 'Hey, we're summoning a blood dragon in the sky,' and also is a source of strength for this



person who is trying to guide and lead a community. Next question. *[lightly laughs]* Cy writes in and says,

‘This one's for **Sylvia**. I've always been curious about Ephrim's backstory, especially with regards to the Grand Tour and his negative reactions every time they showed up or were mentioned. Is there anything relating to that or anything else from his backstory that you never got to share and would like to now?’

**Sylvia:** To answer the ‘would I like to share now-’

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Probably no.

**Austin:** Okay. *[lightly laughs]*

**Sylvia:** I don't- I don't want to like, add-

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

**Sylvia:** -anything.

**Austin:** We're not trying to Rowling it right now?

**Sylvia:** Exactly! That's- I've been thinking about her pretty much all week leading up to this is that- I'm avoiding that.

**Keith:** Oh, I didn't- I didn't understand what you said, Austin. So, I was like, what? And it's oh, Rowling.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah. That's her last name. Is that right?

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Keith:** No, you nailed it.

**Ali:** Mhm.

**Keith:** I just like- did- just didn't- It just didn't click in my head what we were talkin' about.

**Austin:** Hm.

**Sylvia:** Anyway, with this stuff with the Grand Tour, I kinda- Originally when I had- when I made Ephrim, and I remember messaging Austin about this, I had like, a full backstory and shit. *[Austin laughs]* And you were like, ‘This is too much. You need- We need to like, let it be

natural.' And I'm really glad you did because then, what I ended up doing was I took some of the ideas from that-

**Austin:** Right.

**Sylvia:** -but I mostly just took attitudes towards the different things in the world and like, wrote them down. I had like, a name for like, an important NPC, if we ever interacted with them in that way-

**Austin:** Sure.

**Sylvia:** -that I could bring up. But that was about it. I just- I really just needed to know like, how did this character feel about this faction or this region or like, stuff like that. And like, I feel from what we talked about on the show, Ephrim being like, having to travel around a lot as a kid-

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Sylvia:** And like, 'That's tough.' I think we kind of get a lot of the like... I don't know. I think we justify that animosity really well without showing the specific incidents that led to it.

**Austin:** Totally. Well, like-and I think one of the most interesting things for me is the ways in which Ephrim was a- was born a prince, right? Or was born into the- into the principedom, into the princehood-

**Sylvia:** Mhm.

**Austin:** -into the- the Order of Princes and was protected in a way that I've always loved the way that you gesture at that protection being overbearing, at the least. And yet also, when push came to shove, Ephrim wanted to be a leader, right? Like, Ephrim separated himself from 'prince,' separated himself from the church and from all that, but also, was like, 'I'm going to lead this place.'

**Sylvia:** Yeah. And I think that like, you know, you're a product of your environment, right?

**Austin:** Mhm. Yeah.

**Sylvia:** And I'm glad we kind of got that across.

**Austin:** Yeah. Um, alright. Catherine writes in and says,

'How was the process of wrapping up the story as a whole when characters were in very different parts of their personal arcs? For example, I feel like while Hella obviously still grew as a character throughout the season, her story had mostly resolved around the midway point, whereas for Thrandir, it felt like he just started to hit that resolution at the

end. You definitely made it work, to be clear, but what was organizing all those moving parts like? Did you ever discuss that as a group or one on one?’

**Austin:** I will definitely say that we- we definitely discussed it at least one on one. I suspect in a group here and there, in terms of like, there are definite moments where I was like, ‘Listen. We do not have many recordings left, I don’t think. If you have a thing it is time to like, bring it out. It is time to put the pedal down. Let’s move.’ Whereas there are also definite moments where like- **Dre**, you and I spoke about the Marielda arc towards the end, which I thought was gonna go a different way and was gonna have all these other Throndir moments in it, and then just didn’t, at all. And I was like, ‘Ugh, I feel really bad about it because there was supposed to be more time for you to shine.’ Do you remember what you said to me in response to that, basically?

**Dre:** Oh, gosh I mean I remember us... I don’t remember that conversation, but I remember a lot of conversations I mean after Arrel died-

**Austin:** Right.

**Dre:** -being like, ‘Okay. What does Throndir do now?’

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Dre:** So, it’s kind of interesting to me that this question felt like Throndir only hit resolution at the end, whereas you and I had a lot of conversations about, ‘Ughhhh, is Throndir just done... now?’

**Austin:** *[laughs]* Right. That is the funny thing. I think maybe that’s- that could be why it feels that way is we wrapped the Arrell arc, and then it’s like, ‘Okay, what’s next for Throndir?’ And we start to build towards it, and we do get to a conclusion. Obviously, your epilogue is fantastic. The description that you give of Throndir’s life and what happened after the end of Quiet Year was really, really strong. But- but yeah. I can imagine, I guess, from the listener’s side, not realizing that that bit- there was a bit there where both of us were like, ‘Okay. The season’s not done yet. Um... what’s next?’ *[Dre laughs]* But we did talk about it.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** We definitely had those conversations. I mean that is what you basically told me after that arc was like, ‘Listen. As far as I’m concerned, Arrel’s in the fucking ground. *[Austin and Dre laugh]* Like, Throndir got his.’ And that made me feel better, for sure. Did we- Did I have any other big conversations with people around- or did you have them with each other around resolving arcs or anything like that? *[Keith makes a noise]* Or feeling like we needed to wrap stuff up? Go ahead.

**Keith:** I feel like we were constantly talking about-

**Austin:** Oh yeah.

**Keith:** when was- If Fero is going to leave or not, when Fero's gonna leave. If he was actually gonna do it, when it would happen. And like, the circumstances around it.

**Austin:** What would keep him there? What would- Yeah.

**Keith:** Which is- And it was perfect because like, as like, out of character... as- as much out of character as in character, like, Fero was always just as close to leaving as I was to making him leave.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Keith:** I don't know if that's weird that it's- I'm separating that like that, but- but it's like-

**[0:45:00]**

**Austin:** No, no. I get you.

**Keith:** I always felt like I was that close to pulling the trigger on it. Which is also, how it ended up coming across, I think, in most of- of the season.

**Austin:** Yeah, it was on a knife's edge. I think especially early on when it was like- when you start to leave the actual like, grounds-

**Keith:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Austin:** -like the castle grounds or the university grounds. But even just like- Yeah, like-

**Keith:** And in the- in the epilogue, too, I was like- I was like- I had, you know, a very loose idea of what it would take to get Fero to leave. And it's just not how the epilogue went.

**Austin:** Mm.

**Keith:** And so, it didn't come up for a lot of it.

**Austin:** Well, do you- Was there a specific thing that was going to be like, the catalyst for that? Or was it more-

**Keith:** Yeah. if there was like a- if there was a major disagreement. Like, if there was a- if there was a big disagreement-

**Austin:** Oh. If- Oh, okay.

**Keith:** If there was something in- Yeah, if there was something-

**Austin:** Huh.

**Keith:** -that needed to like, happen or not happen and Fero was on a side and- and people were on another side, and it turned into like, an argument, I- like, I was prepared for Fero to go.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** And then that didn't happen until the last session, and I was like, 'Well, you know-'

**Austin:** And then you drew the card. Then you literally were the one.

**Keith:** Then I drew the card, right. Yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** But yes, literally yeah.

**Austin:** God.

**Keith:** That's yeah.

**Austin:** That moment fuckin' ruled so much.

**Keith:** Oh my god. Yeah.

**Austin:** Any other thoughts here about your arcs wrapping up, and when they did this season? Or if they did? Or if you feel like they did, you know? *[Ali exhales]* Was that a sigh, Ali?

**Ali:** I'm like, trying to think cause it's tough because I think that... Hella's situation got really weird because like... almost dying so close to the end-

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** -sort of turned it into like, 'Okay. Are we even doing this? And then, if we do do it... what's the- what's the thing?'

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Ali:** Cause there should be like, a thing. But then, also there's like three weeks left maybe.  
*[laughs]*

**Austin:** Yeah. There's like three weeks, and then an abstract game where we're not gonna get many character scenes.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah. Yeah. I think we found it. I'm happy with that whole sequence.

**Ali:** Yeah, absolutely. The thing about Hella... the- the interesting thing for me, especially with how the- the like, ending just ended.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Ali:** Um, was there was like- Because you can listen to it, and all of that stuff with the last little bit of The Quiet Year happened very quickly. *[breathes a laugh]* So, like, during the recording, I was like, 'Okay. I'm on this boat, and I'm just on it.' And then, the next day I like, woke up and was thinking about it, and there was this like, very rewarding feeling that was like, 'I guess I never did want Hella to have a redemption arc.' *[Austin, Ali, and Janine laugh]*

**Austin:** Oh god.

**Ali:** So, like, leaving it with like- still be- that being like, a little complicated and still being like, something that she always has to like, check herself on was something I was happy with.

**Austin:** Yeah. That part of that letter that you wrote is by far like, my favorite little bit. This- this idea of a Hella continuing to catch herself doing the weighing. Like, it's not just that she does it. It's not just that she's like- spends the rest of her life being like, 'Alright. What's in my good pile? What's in my bad pile?' *[Ali laughs]* It's that she's aware of that she's doing it and is working towards figuring out an ethos that goes beyond it. Or that doesn't reduce down to that. But that- Yeah. Like, that- that little section in that letter fuckin' slayed me. So good.

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

**Austin:** We- There's a question real quick- there's a question that I don't think made this, but do you want to briefly say how long that like- Someone- *[Ali laughs]* This is a little bit of clarity. Hella's letter and Hadrian's final thing were both pickups.

**Art:** Mhm.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Is that it? And then the intros were pickups, obviously.

**Art:** Yeah.

**Austin:** The pick up- Those intros were all pickups after the game.

**Art:** Oh, we did get a very sweet letter about... a question that was like, 'Did Ali go and write that letter-'

*[crosstalking]*

**Austin:** That is literally the thing I'm-

**Art:** '-that evening?'- Like, '-during that break?'

**Austin:** Yeah, that was from Adam?

**Art:** -and it was like- Yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah, that was like, 'Wow! That would be incredible.'

**Art:** That was so sweet. But no. *[Austin laughs]*

**Ali:** If only. I did write it-

**Austin:** If Ali did that, we should all be Ali's assistant, *[Ali laughs]* and she should be a novelist because that fucking ruled.

**Ali:** I did write it in like two hours though, the day the episode was released. So... *[Austin and Ali laugh]* that did happen.

**Austin:** That was- We mentioned on Twitter or Discord or something that we both had one more thing to do, or that we both recorded the final thing. And that was one hundred percent the thing was like, 'We gotta record the fuckin' letter.'

**Ali:** Yeahhhh, *[overlapped]* it was such a-

**Austin:** The rest of your scene was actually done that day though.

**Ali:** Right. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I had all of that- And it was so weird cause I like- I wasn't sure if I wanted to do a pick up at all, but then it was like... *[exhales]* I don't want- There should be more there.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Ali:** But then I was super sick. I remember the day before the episode came out, and you were like, 'You sure you don't want to do this?' And I'm like, 'I'm not sure, but I just left urgent care.' Uh, so. *[laughs]*

**Austin:** Which I did not know about otherwise I would have been more chill.

**Ali:** It's chill. I just had a cough. It's chill.

**Austin:** It's chill. It's fine. *[Ali laughs]*

**Keith:** It's fine. We all think it's chill here.

**Austin:** Bodies are great. Love 'em.

**Ali:** Um, but yeah. I did it that morning. I... I wrapped it out. It was such a weird thing cause I was like- *[sighs]* It was like, 'Does it even need to be changed? Do we need to see them interacting?'

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** Because the big thing with the epilogue for me was like, the- And I think I had even said it in the recording that was like, 'Would she have ever gone back?' But like, we're never gonna see that conversation. Whatever situation needs to be fixed isn't gonna be fixed in the like seven minutes that we had in that epilogue. *[laughs]*

**Austin:** Right. Right.

**Ali:** So, like, just don't show it. But I also just didn't want this show to have anything saying like, 'They never talked again.'

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** *[overlapped]* So, I think that having-

**Austin:** Which is a read you could make without the way-

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** -you wrote that letter even was like- The thing I love about the letter, or the other half of it that I think works really well, that communicates the thing you're saying is that it's a very familiar letter. It's very clearly in a series of, 'Oh, I thought of a thing you might want to say in a sermon. *[Ali laughs]* Here's a thing that came to mind,' you know, kind of a series of letters back and forth that I think to me at least communicated an ongoing conversation.

**Ali:** Right. Yeah, yeah. I think the big thing for me is that like, if we were gonna leave Hella forever and this was gonna be the last moment that we saw her, like, the fact that she was still involved with that church was something that I wanted to get on screen with as much distance as I possibly could have. *[laughs]*

**Austin:** Totally. Totally.

**Ali:** And I feel like I walked the line.

**Austin:** Yeah. Agreed.

**Art:** Oh, and- Can I take a quick moment to like, shoot something down? I saw people-



**Austin:** Yes, please.

**Art:** -speculating-

**Austin:** Please shoot this down.

**Art:** -that Hella is- is dead in the last epilogue because Hadrian is sad at the Adelaide...part of the church when thinking about Hella. And that is not- was not my intention to suggest that Hella had died in that time. I mean it's whatever you want.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Art:** It's fuckin' not our story anymore. But that was not what I was trying to communicate in that moment.

**Austin:** You were not like, 'Damn, she was a real one.'

**Jack:** It's alive sadness. *[Ali and Austin laugh]*

**Austin:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Exactly. It turns out being away from your friends fuckin' sucks. You don't even need to be... dead. That's my deep thought for the day. *[Jack laughs]*

**Ali:** Mm. Mhm.

**Keith:** Damn.

**Keith and Jack:** You don't even need to be dead.

**Austin:** Um, any other big thoughts here around- around arcs wrapping up? We'll have some more room to talk about, I think, every character still, so if you have a thing, I promise there will be other opportunities. And if not, at the end you're like, 'Wait! I want to talk about one more thing,' you can do it. So, I'm gonna keep movin'. This comes in from Joey who says,

'Congrats on the big finale. I'm writing to ask what your thoughts are re:ambiguity in storytelling.'

**Austin:** As it builds very cleanly off at last one.

'Spring has two notably ambiguous endings. Samot washing up on the beach in Aubade and Galenica's pending reconfiguration in the epilogue game. What drove the decision-making behind the scenes? Was there much discussion of how much should be explicitly stated versus left vague?'

**Austin:** Yes, to both of those.

**Ali:** Can I just say something?

**Austin:** Yes.

**Ali:** I don't feel like Samot walking-

**Austin:** No, me either.

**Ali:** -washing up on Aubade is ambiguous at all.

**Sylvia and Janine:** No.

**Ali:** That was a meal. *[Austin laughs hard]* That was a gift. *[Sylvia laughs hard]* We did not have to do that. *[laughing]* Like, that's not ambiguous.

**Janine:** We would all complete that- We would all complete that sentence the same way. What happens next? We would all say what happens next- *[overlapped]* would be-

**Austin:** *[interjecting]* Uh huh. That episode literally had me say, 'I spent this whole season thinking I had a get-out-of-jail-free card with regards to their ending.' Um, so yeah. I think... We love subtext, and I get it. I get that sometimes you're like, 'Is that subtext?' But no. That's- The thing happens. You're good. *[Ali laughs]* The Galenica thing on the other hand was extremely intentional, right? We have probably thirty or forty minutes of us being like, 'Oh, fuck. Uhh... What happens?'

**Keith:** Yeah, all the- all the planning for that happened right before we said- we did the end. Like, it wasn't-

**Austin:** Yeah. So, we- You draw the card, right? And then we take a break? Or no, we talk for like, a little bit. And then we take a break. We're like, 'Fwoo, okay.' Because what we put out is, 'Is that the end of the show?' *[Austin and Jack laugh]* Which-

**Jack:** You mean we cut that line?

**Austin:** Oh, yeah. We definitely cut that. I think we leave on me reading the rules about-

**Ali:** Mhm.

**Austin:** Right?

**Jack:** Yeah. That's this moment where we're just like, 'Hey, is this it?' Music? Bang. Music.

**Austin:** Right.

**Jack:** Print it.

**Austin:** Print it. Done.

**Art:** We have a- we have a conversation about the end of The Sopranos.

**Austin:** Yes, we a hundred percent do it. It's hugely influential.

**Jack:** I think that was in the edit for a while.

**Austin:** Oh, it must be.

**Jack:** I was like, composing with that.

**Austin:** *[laughs]* Yeah. We were like, 'Hey.' So, for people who don't know, The Sopranos ends on a very sudden note that seems like it's building towards some disaster or some- some big event.

**Keith:** G-sharp was the sudden note.

**Austin:** What was it? Yeah. Great. Thank you, Keith.

**Keith:** G-sharp.

**Austin:** Uh huh. *[laughs]* And then it cuts to black. And famously people called their cable providers to be like, 'Did you cut out my HBO? And da-da-da-da.' And that is not what happened. The showrunners on that show were just like, 'No. Like, this is the thing. This is the end.' I don't think that they have come out and said, 'Here is what I think that means.' **[Jack laughs]** But critics certainly did. And the fact that we continued with epilogues does not mean that I did not still want to hit this thing that was true about the end of The Sopranos, which is that at the end of- without getting into spoilers for the end of Sopranos, life goes on, and people who have concerns do not get to stop having them because the camera stopped rolling.

Threats are ongoing, and if they get solved, new ones appear. And what you can kind of do is extend out the logics of the story to match what you think might have happened. And so, for me, the key that I- kind of the key narrative logics that I wanted to keep focus on were the- whatever the characters wanted to bring, right? Like, any character... All of you got to say whatever the fuck you wanted to in those epilogues. We worked out how long each one was between each other. I think we just- Did we just talk through like, 'Alright, who is comfortable saying where they are x time away'? Is that right?

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Art:** Yeah, we did do that.

**Jack:** We like, broke that, I think.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** The like- 'Okay, we can swap this one and this one.' Or like, 'Do you feel like you could be this far away or this far away?' And some people were like, 'I can go a bit closer.'

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

**Jack:** And we like, hashed out an order.

**Austin:** Art immediately was like, 'I could be ten years out.' So.

**Jack:** Yeah. Like, very comfortable.

**Austin:** Or was at least like, I can be far- I could be the furthest out, for sure.' Because I think, **Art**, you'd already had in your mind the idea of being older, right?

**Art:** Yeah. I mean I've sent you- Before I knew what the epilogues would be, I sent you like, a Hadrian ending we didn't use-

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Art:** -that was like, the saddest fucking thing I could think of.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Art:** But like, I always had a long tail on that.

**Austin:** Yeah. And then the thing that I knew I wanted to hit was the kind of- the undropped blade of reconfiguration. 'It has been blank years and reconfiguration has not happened yet.' We, in fact, recorded it- The final line we recorded was me saying, 'It has been ten years, and reconfiguration has not happened- has not happened yet.' Leaving off uh... Or wait, no. That's not what I said. That's not the thing-

**Jack:** No, you say-

**Austin:** The thing I said was, 'It has been ten years since the Frost Shepherd arrived.' Notably leaving off the whether or not reconfiguration has happened.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Austin:** But we ended up cutting it earlier because Hadrian's closing moment was so strong. You know? But yeah, like, for me-

**Jack:** The rhythm-

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** The rhythm of that moment just felt like... Like, there's such a fantastic rhythm in **Art's** words at the end there with like, to have a home, to be at home.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Jack:** And then- and then you almost begin that last line as an afterthought. You're like, 'And, you know, *[Austin laughs]* it's been ten years since Hadrian picked up a sword.' But by the time you get to the end of it, it lands with such weight. And like, to have a breath after that line and have that line kind of hang in the air felt to me, at least, like it was doing the work-

**Austin:** Yes.

**Jack:** -that would have been done by you saying, 'It has been- it has been ten years.'

**Austin:** *[interjecting]* 'It had been ten years since the Frost Shepherd arrived.' Yeah, but like, I guess like that's- I'm happy to clarify those things. Which is like, 'Yeah. Reconfiguration could still happen. We don't get to move into-' Samot was not wrong about this. His solution fucking sucked, but living life in the face of potential crisis is what these characters do. It's what they've done their whole lives. It's what the next generation will do. So, I think that, for sure- that ambiguity was a hundred percent intentional. Leave- leave blank spaces, you know? *[breathes a laugh]* Are there any other ambiguous things at the end there that we want to be like, 'Yep that's intentional'? I'm trying to think if anything else came to mind.

**Keith:** Everyone keeps riding bugs.

**Austin:** Every- Yep. You know what? *[Jack laughs]* Bugs are here to stay.

**Jack:** Even though we know.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Even though we know what they do.

**Austin:** Absolutely. Absolutely. And I would say that-

**Jack:** Let them rule.

**Austin:** Yeah. More broadly like, given the structure that we did this in, given the fact that we kind of talked out when we wanted to move around, in terms of the timeline. Talking about- talking through, you know, the ability to kind of say... frame a thing that you felt was narratively appropriate, those blank spaces are super intentional in terms of- in terms of, 'What happened with X character? What happened with Y character?' There is a sort of 'fill in the blank' intentionality there. The camera followed these heroes' quest, you know, quote-unquote, and the rest of it is up to- is up to you as a listener to kind of find again the sort of logic of- of what a character said. 'Oh, how did Throndir talk about justice? How did- You know, how did Ephrim

talk about moving into this new- new part of his life?' And I think that that is what the players wanted, and I'm really, really happy with all of it.

**[1:00:00]**

**Janine:** As I...

**Austin:** Yeah, go ahead.

**Janine:** -was reading these questions, I just want to add, like, a lot of the questions that we got reminded me of like, you know, when I get really passionate about a story, I want to know every single thing about it. But a lot of the time, if a story gives me everything, then I stop being passionate. Like, there's- Because there's nothing for me to think about. There's nothing for me to chew on anymore. It's- it's just like, it becomes... You know, it's- it's- I guess the only word for it is like, there's an inertness.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** It just kind of becomes inert versus being this thing that is still kind of moving and like, kind of alive to me.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Janine:** So, there is like, you know, with a lot of stories that I really like, there is this compulsion to want to know everything, but... it's one of those things where if I ever fulfilled that compulsion and did know everything, I would probably be a lot less invested. *[Austin breathes a laugh]* And like, I- So, I think about that a lot in the context of what we're doing. Of like it... it can be frustrating to not have all of the answers as a player. There are a lot of questions that is just like, 'I- I would love to see all of these things played out to completion, but then once that happens, there's nothing left.' So, I've been thinking about that a lot.

**Austin:** The... *[sighs]* I had a thing here, and I think I've lost it. And that's okay. *[laughs lightly]* There are gonna be some other- I guess that's- The thing that I always think about is like, and there will be some other questions to this end, is like, 'Did we say clearly what we intended to say?' versus, 'Was this absent because a slip of the mind, you know, or something like that? Or because we just didn't have it.' Maybe that's the other half. That's the thing I was thinking of saying was like, I think it can be funny to get those questions sometimes because we don't know the answer. I don't know. We would have to play more. It is play to figure out those things for us. It means getting on a microphone.

You know, in- in- As people who play tabletop roleplaying games, you know, who- You know, I've played them off-mic for years, I certainly would like, go back to my room and write out my story about what happened to my character in downtime or think about that stuff or have conversations when we're away from the table and all that stuff. But as a storyteller who is

producing a piece of fiction, figuring out those answers is doing the work because we haven't written most of them down. Again, there will be some exceptions. I will answer some more stuff in this- in this episode about stuff that didn't come up or at least address what our big ideas were. But a lot of the time, it's like, 'Dog, I don't know what happened to Corsica Neue.' We would have to sit down to figure it out, wouldn't we?

But we closed the book on it, and I closed those tabs in my brain to some degree. I am using that creative energy in different places. And so, those gaps are really fun because they produce- because there's no answer, right? *[amused]* Like, I suspect there is an answer to what is- what's going to happen in Dragon Age 4. There is not an answer for what happens, you know, after Hadrian finishes speaking... yet, but I think that's a huge awesome, open space for people to start imagining, and I think that that is more exciting for me to think about not knowing what Benjamin, for instance, gets up to. Um, Adela *[ah-dell-a]*, I believe I'm pronouncing that right, writes in and says,

'I really appreciate all the Table Friends' ability to develop your characters over the course of a season in a way that feels natural and authentic, and/but something feels extra special about this in the case of Hieron characters, probably because they've had several seasons to develop.

I've especially felt the impact of Fero and Hella's character development this season, but all the Hieron characters have had such good arcs. We see this character development through subtle changes in their personalities and their thoughts/choices, as well as the more obvious things like bonds and alignment changes. I was wondering if this is something the players think about and plan as you go.

Do you have a vision for your character's arc that you strive to achieve or do characters/personalities/alignments/relationship changes occur as naturally to you as they feel to us? Also, do you think that having three whole seasons with these characters has caused you to think differently about their development than you would with a character you've only had for one season?'

**Austin:** Which I think we've kind of already answered, right? Sorry. Adela *[ah-day-la]* in the chat corrects me and says, 'Adela' *[ah-day-la]*. So, any thoughts here? Is there- is there this feeling of like, planning an arc for your characters, or are you kind of embodying them and going along for the ride?

**Ali:** I feel like it's always both, right? There's always the like, macro thing of being like, 'Okay, I'm making a show. All- all of the rivers flood into one ocean, right?'

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Ali:** So, it's going somewhere. But like, also the thing that I'm dealing with right now is that like, this bird person is having a revolution or whatever. So like... it's-

**Keith:** So I should throw a rock. *[Ali and Austin laugh]*

**Ali:** Uh huh. Exactly. Yep. There you go. So, it's... *[sighs]* I don't know. I feel like I can't... explain what I mean. But there was- there was like- Especially for Hella, there was always a version of her that I was playing where it was like, easy to see the like... what the story of her would be if someone else was saying it.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Ali:** Where it was like, 'Oh, there was this woman. She was strong. She was evil, and then, you know, she went into a magical sword. And then she came out. And she did her best.' Right?

*[Austin laughs]*

**Keith:** Still strong, less evil.

**Ali:** *[laughing]* And that was kind of the- That was kind of the thing that I was going for. *[Austin laughs]* And like, in a lot of the embodying her trying to be better and like, stealing Hadrian's cadence, or like, her trying to deal with micro issues in very specific ways, to be like, 'Oh, yeah. This is the legend of Hella Varal.' But also, like, when you're sitting down in front of a microphone for four hours, you're kind of just only dealing with that. For hours, yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah. Yeah, totally. There's like, a degree of like, I think about- The thing I'm about to say is gonna sound silly as hell, karate practice.

**Ali:** Mm.

**Art:** Mm.

**Austin:** Or like when I did fencing or taekwondo or any sport- or like, any- any physical skill. I don't play an instrument, but I actually imagine something like, improvisation and an instrument... er in music is probably similar in the sense that you internalize a whole bunch of rules and ideas and feelings, and like, 'Here's how I do a faint. Here is how I do a sidekick.' In this scenario, you're fencing and kicking, and it's dangerous. *[amused]* Don't do this. But then, it's like, 'Alright. I'm in it. I'm in it, and I have to trust my instinct. And hopefully I've developed those instincts.' That's what it feels on this side of the table, anyway. I don't know if that adds up to you, where it's like, 'You know who Hella is because you've been Hella, and because you've thought about being Hella.'

**Ali:** Yeah. And I also think the- especially for Spring, the um... the alignment change was huge.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** And I wonder if other people feel that way because I know that we had some big ones. But like, changing her alignment at all and then having her alignment specifically be, 'to raise your



reputation,' and not just be like, 'Try not to be evil' or like, whatever *[Austin and Ali laugh]* it could have been was like, such a specific- *[laughs harder]*

**Austin:** Oh, that'd be so funny.

**Ali:** It was such a specific thing because it was like, so much about her relationships with other people and how she like, wants other people to view her over- than being like, an internal thing.

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** So, I don't know.

**Austin:** Did anyone else who's changed their- their alignment feel similarly? Again, we did have a bunch of those.

**Janine:** For me, it was a lot of like... Uh, I tend to... find it easier to relate to things I don't want a character to be than to connect to things I do want them to be. Like, it's hard for me to say, 'At the end of the season, I want this character to be like this.' But I can say, 'At the end of the season, I *don't* want this character to be like this.' I did this with Signet, and I did it again with a Adaire. Where like, I decided... very, very early on that I didn't want Adaire's story to be... a thing where like, she starts out shitty, and then she becomes- she has like- she has a heart of gold. And like, I kind of got part of the way there, but Adaire is still, I think, objectively kind of a shitty person.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** And she is like, at peace with that shittiness. Like, she doesn't think it's a bad thing. It's just like- you know, she kind of owns it.

**Austin:** So, you don't see the like, leaving the university in the end as a tragedy for her. As like, a backslide or-

**Janine:** No. A hundred percent not. There- I know a lot of people were like, really sad about that, and I was like, to me, that was like, the best ending. *[Austin laughs]* That was like, the happiest ending possible for her. Was- Cause she- she left the university, but she left the university with like, a hundred percent of her top priorities were all bundled up together and went with her.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** Basically. Like, she got- she got all of the things she always wanted. You know, she got a stable family. She got to be a model provider to a degree-

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Janine:** -in a way that she didn't have herself. Like, she got to do all of this stuff and fulfill all of these things. And then, when stuff went bad, because things will always go bad in her eyes, things will eventually always go bad because of reasons- not because of her; just because of reasons- *[Ali laughs]*

**Austin:** Oh, really? Is that why? Okay.

**Janine:** She got to take all of that stuff with her, and- and didn't even really-

**Austin:** And you were- And you complained you never got to use the Heist to move. *[Ali and Janine laugh]*

**Janine:** Uh huh.

**Jack:** But very late.

**Janine:** Yes. Well, I mean- Look. She- So, she- That was- that even went better because- you know, because the- the addition that **Ali** made to that sort of epilogue of like, where they actually go. In my mind, it was fully like she just pulls up roots and goes somewhere, has a new name- I had the new name ready to go. Like, it was a whole thing of I was sure it was just gonna be starting from fresh- starting fresh again. And then, Ali, you know, through her epilogue and stuff reminded me that like, 'No, they have people- there are people in the world who still think that Hella especially, but also, like Adaire did something for them, too.' Like, Adaire-

**Austin:** Right.

**Janine:** -has done things for people- has- has, you know, facilitated things and whatever. She has places to go. So, that was- that ended up being a way better ending than I would have ever even picked deliberately for her. But just like, in general, I didn't want her to become a good person. *[Ali laughs]*

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** I wanted her to become like, the kind of person that... you know, is fine, but also, everyone who knows them has something they're going to roll their eyes about that she's going to do some shit. It's like, 'Yeah. Fuckin', I'll talk to her.' *[Austin laughs]* That kind of person. So, it was easier to sort of imagine those like- those less than ideal outcomes than steer around them to find the better one or the one that was- kind of satisfied all the needs, but was still.... keeping clear of the big things that I-

**Austin:** Right.

**Janine:** -think would have felt a little cheap.

**Austin:** Yeah. In terms of- Well, not just cheap, but she didn't do the work, so to speak of-

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Austin:** And I don't mean that in like- So, a thing about the alignment changes I actually love is not only is it changing the flag in terms of what you want to be doing, what you want me, as a GM, to give you opportunities to do, but when you're doing an actual play podcast, being like, 'My alignment changed' is a mic-drop. In the sense that like, 'Yeah, I'm communicating something about my character and the way they see- see myself in the world.' You did do an alignment change this season, right? At the beginning? But-

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Austin:** *[amused]* But it wasn't to Good, right?

**Janine:** No.

**Austin:** So, it was still Chaotic.

**Janine:** It went from Neutral to Chaotic and like-

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Janine:** -my- my definition of Neutral is self-preservation.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** That's how I tend to read Neutral especially in Dungeon World's books. Neutral is like, 'I mean I'll do things for people, but not if it's gonna get *me* hurt. If it's gonna get me hurt, I'm gonna- I'm gonna be, you know, the bystander and get the hell out if I can unless there's some other reason for me to stay.'

**Austin:** Right. Right.

**Janine:** And, you know, Adaire's... Adaire's alignment change ended up being to Chaotic because she did have a reason to care about other people. But again, that didn't make her Good.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** That didn't make- That didn't mean she respected laws or anything. It was- it was... She acknowledged that there was a reason to care about people in general. That there was a reason to care about the world around and outside of you and to do things motivated by that care. But not necessarily to follow any kind of... morality or attempt to even at morality.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** It is very like, a spur of the moment what feels good then, what feels right then kind of thing.

**Austin:** Yeah. Fero, did you also- It sounded like you were throwing to- to **Ali** before, **Keith**?

**Keith:** Oh, yeah, yeah. I do- I have some stuff. I- I was thinking about it. I didn't realize this. I changed alignments-

**Austin:** You did.

**Keith:** -this season more than anybody else did.

**Austin:** You do it twice?

**Keith:** Twice. Yeah, two times.

**Austin:** Wow.

**Keith:** I changed from Chaotic to Neutral, and to Neutral- from Neutral Good, which was a tough decision. I had to do a lot of thinking about that. Which is sort of like... the thing that I've been doing since the end-ish of the last season- like the last quarter of the last season is like-

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Keith:** Cause when we're playing, we do some... We all do some instigating. We all do some like, starting a conversation or starting like, a major action. But mostly we're like, reacting to each other and to you.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Keith:** And so, I found it like, a really good way for me to get into that space was just to like, just kind of sit and not write anything down, but just sit and think about... different interactions that I have as characters. Like, as- as Fero like, think about- just like, really think about how Fero would feel about something.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Keith:** And uh, it turns out, that's kind of depressing. *[laughs]*

**Austin:** Yeah. Yeah.

**[1:15:00]**

**Keith:** But the um... The thing that- the... God, I had something and I forgot it during the interim.

**Austin:** It happens. We can go somewhere else, and if you have it again, if you find it, you can- you can say something.

**Keith:** No, I think it's just like- it like... I think it's really- it's really comfortable to- The thing that I liked so much about doing this third season was like... I always tried to get to a place where I can react as naturally as possible as the character that I am, and it's really easy to do that once it's been like, we've done three seasons of this. Which is why I think I had so much fun this season. And like, I- I really felt like I was- I knew what... knew what Fero would think about everything that was happening to him almost as soon as it came up.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Keith:** And... the most planning I think- or not- I guess, it's still not writing it out or anything. That's just not how I do things really. But the most- the most thought that I put into anything this season was at the very, very beginning thinking about whether Fero was going to quit or not, and close to the end, when Fero changed his alignment to Good. And the thing that I wanted to get across was like, Fero being Chaotic was not the thing that was making Fero want to leave.

**Austin:** Right.

**Keith:** Cause like, Fero was Good at the end and still wanted to go.

**Austin:** And still- That was not- Yeah.

**Keith:** The finale- the finale just made it even worse. And then the epilogue just didn't go... It just didn't go that way. Like, the thing was always for me like, Fero wants to leave, but needs the opportunity to leave or needs to be... Either- either through like, some- like, nothing happening or a really big thing happening. And there was never no space.

**Austin:** Right.

**Keith:** There was never like a space where it was like, 'Well, everything's calm, so I'm leaving.' And that was his big problem with- was like, nothing was ever calm. It just kept going and going.

**Austin:** And it was gonna keep going and going.

**Keith:** Right. Yeah.

**Austin:** Right? Like, it really was. Yeah.

**Keith:** The thing that I- that I think I said, at least one time, was like, 'All I- all I signed up for was to go on one boat trip.'

**Austin:** *[laughs]* It's true. Yeah.

**Keith:** To Eventide. It just like, snowballed. And it's like, 'I'm sick of this.' But- but then the- the pull was like, whether Fero was Chaotic or Neutral or Good. You know, it was- it wasn't just an easy choice to- to bail when there was something that I could have done.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** So, that's- that's- I think that's most of what I had to say.

**Austin:** I feel you. Yeah. Throndir, you pinged me. **Dre**, you were like, 'I could talk on this.'

**Dre:** Yeah. Well, it definitely didn't start out this way for Throndir, but I know- I don't think I've shied away from talking that like, parts of Winter and then, especially Spring, Throndir has more or less been like, an allegory for me.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Dre:** And like, my personal development over the course of the show. Like, when I first came into the show, in Fall, I was in a really awful place personally. I'd basically like, flamed out of a job that, when I took it, was like my dream job. And very quickly became not my dream job. I was working part time, had to move back into my parents' house, in my basement. Like, I was really like, in a bad place. And I did kind of a Twitter thread on this, so I don't want to completely rehash everything, but like, a lot of good stuff in my life has happened. And I think it's happened... because of things that I've learned while doing this show and opportunities that doing this show have afforded me. So, I definitely think in Spring, I wanted Throndir- I mean Throndir has always been a personal character for me, and I think has unwittingly and unmeaningly been an allegory for me before this season. But this season it became an intentional thing.

**Austin:** What was the... Is there a- Was there a moment? Did you know that coming into this season? I guess is about I want to know.

**Dre:** Yeah. For sure.

**Austin:** Okay. So, you were like- you were like, 'Alright. This is the time. This is it. I'm gonna zero in on this specific thing.'

**Dre:** Which actually made the part where... I mean Throndir shoots Benjamin like really, really hard. If this- if that was a decision made in Spring, I think that's a lot easier for me as a player to do.

**Austin:** Or you mean in the Winter- in Winter?

**Dre:** Winter. Yeah, sorry.

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

**Dre:** Or especially in Fall. [*Austin laughs*] But like, in the Spring, it's like, 'Oh, okay. Like, can I do this, and it still- like, this is still the message that rings true?'

**Austin:** Right. And the answer was, yes. You were able to do that.

**Dre:** I hope so. I think so. [*laughs*]

**Austin:** Well, I mean you were able to say, 'Yes. I do this thing.' Instead of-

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah. Yeah. Without betraying that part of the character who had become that part of an extension of you, or reflection or whatever.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Cool. Any other thoughts here before we move on?

**Keith:** I remembered the- the quick point that I wanted to make.

**Austin:** Yes.

**Keith:** When I was talking about like sitting and thinking about a character and like- and reactions and stuff, it was- it was the part where- in this question where it said um... where it was talking about subtle changes in character, and how like- like, it's- it has seemed to me like a really natural way to have characters develop is they- they act the- they act pretty much to say- Like, Fero is- acts very similar to the way that Fero has always act. But his attitude towards like, different things and different people has changed. It's like... Does that make sense? Like, it's- it's not about having new ideas as much as about, for Fero at least-

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Keith:** -as much as like- like, the things that were- the things that were making him feel specific ways have changed. And just like, sort of like rotating on a wheel. Like, 'Eh, everything just like, moved a couple notches to the left.' Like, at first-

**Austin:** He's still the dude he is. He's still making the- He's still doing the same thing, but the-

**Keith:** Right.

**Austin:** -his perspective on why he's doing it, on the characters who- who push him to do it, et cetera, has changed?

**Keith:** Right. Right. It's about like, changing my attitude, or Fero's attitude towards specific... things and not changing what Fero does.

**Austin:** Mm.

**Keith:** Fero does the same thing-

**Austin:** I think that's true for him.

**Keith:** It's the attitude. Yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah. I definitely think that's true for him.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Alright. I'm gonna go to the next question. Chris says,

'What did Orth think of the ending? Also, which season the Hieron is his favorite?'

**Austin:** We got a bunch of like, COUTNERWeight anime things. This was my favorite one. For people who don't know, Orth Godlove is a character in COUNTERWeight who is a big fan of the Seasons of Hieron anime, which exists in that world. Um, God. I think different- different Orth's would have liked different- Different parts of Orth- Different times in Orth's life- Different Orth's would have liked different seasons, right?

**Keith:** Well, there were different Orths.

**Austin:** There are also different Orths because Jack and I both played Orth. Jack, what do you think?

**Jack:** I think probably, if we're assuming that it's- that it's airing chronologically- *[laughs]* I don't know- I don't know when... Presumably Orth was watching Autumn during COUNTERWeight.

**Austin:** I guess. Wait, during- So, or no. You don't think it's like, Autumn is during the Kingdom game, and then COUNTERWeight is during... *[Jack laughs]* Or then, sorry. Then Marielda is during the beginning of COUNTERWeight. And then Winter is towards the end of COUNTERWeight, and then Spring is post-COUNTERWeight?

**Jack:** I think Orth is-

**Art:** Wow, they took a long time to make this show.

**Austin:** It was very high- high production values.

**Jack:** It got rebooted four times. I wonder if like, Orth, you know- We've definitely seen Orth watching anime in the back of a car going-

**Austin:** Mhm.



**Jack:** -going to some place or another. Like, Orth working late in a- in a- sitting at one end of a very long boardroom table watching the finale. And I think probably... like- like that- like the people who saw The Sopranos ending and phoned their- their television company, I think Orth had this like a little momentary sharp point inside him as it ended, where he went, 'Wait. Hang on' as it cut to black. And then, he was like, 'Ah, that's rough.' *[Austin and Ali laugh]* 'I'm gonna have to have to fi-' Do you think he talks to people about it or do you think it's a very like-?

**Austin:** He's got like, a message board somewhere.

**Jack:** He's on a message board, yeah. Just like, logging on and being like-

**Sylvia:** What's his username?

**Austin:** I don't know.

**Jack:** Orth Godlove.

**Austin:** It's ju-

**Sylvia:** Eh, just his name.

**Austin:** Yeah. You're right. That's- Yeah.

**Sylvia:** He's verified on his anime... message board. *[Austin and Ali laugh]*

**Austin:** He pays! He pays extra. Just so he can have a-

**Jack:** *[amused]* Like, Executive So-and-so.

**Austin:** *[laughing]* Yeah. Exactly.

**Jack:** God.

**Austin:** Yeah. Executive\_Orth. Fuck.

**Jack:** The biggest nerd.

**Austin:** *[groans]* Brutal. Yeah.

**Jack:** Everyone's like, 'Is that Orth Godlove from-'

**Austin:** From Orth Godlove?

**Jack:** '-like, whatever company he works from?'

**Austin:** Yeah. Uh huh. God.

**Jack:** Like, 'Yep, absolutely.'

**Austin:** That's absolutely him.

**Jack:** I think his favorite is uh... He likes the traditional opening.

**Austin:** Ah.

**Jack:** He likes the - He likes the misery and difficulty of Winter. He thought that taught us a lot about the characters. You know, it's interesting to see people put through crises.

**Austin:** Yeah. I agree.

**Jack:** 'And finding what kind of people the crises make them. And it's always satisfying to watch a good story come to an end,' says Orth Godlove on the message board. *[Austin laughs]* Feet in like, immaculately black- *[laughs]* black leather shoes.

**Keith:** *[overlapped]* Everybody-

**Jack:** Feet up on a table of a- a break room.

**Keith:** Everybody always likes the first opening best. 'Why do they ever change it from the first opening?' says Orth.

**Austin:** OP1, Yeah, Orth's Youtube history: Seasons of Hieron, OP1.

**Keith:** 'Don't get me wrong. I loved the opening to season two, and three is good, but they always change from the first one.' *[Austin laughs]*

**Jack:** Yeah, that's exactly- *[laughs]* It's like, message at 9:41, 'Why do they always change the opening?' Message at 9:51, 'Ho- Hold on. I've thought about it. *[Austin and Dre laugh]* All three- all three openings mean a lot to me.' Anyway. I hope he's doing well.

**Austin:** Oh, so good. Uh, me, too.

**Jack:** Free taxi rides for life.

**Austin:** For life. It's a gift. It's somethin'. Alright. Next question from Bee who asks,

'What systems have influenced y'all the most? Dungeon World obviously started this campaign, but so many different systems have been played since. Who learned from Blades in the Dark? The Tower? What games have people played that left an impact that were not on the podcast?'

**Austin:** Bee also added a quick question I'll answer briefly, which was whether or not Ten Candles which has a very similar um...

**Jack:** Mm.

**Austin:** -like, refrain?

**Jack:** Like, if it's true- What did they-

**Austin:** It's like-

**Jack:** What did they say in Ten Candles?

**Austin:** I don't rem- I don't- It's like, something about like the-

**Jack:** 'The world is dark. This is-'

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** 'This is true.' Or something.

**Austin:** We're all dying, Melissa. Whatever it is.

**Ali:** Mhm.

**Austin:** It's in there somewhere. And- and that refrain happens between each full turn. And whether or not that influenced the- 'It has been six months since the Frost Shepard arrived' stuff. Not- not directly, but it's one thing in a long line of that style of like, narrative device. And I'm happy to say it's in the grab bag. I didn't think of it specifically. I think we actually talked a lot about those endings in terms of Fiasco endings, right? Where instead of doing, 'This is- this is my character, Blah-blah-blah.' We just kind of did open narration, but we definitely said-

**Jack:** One dice at a time.

**Austin:** -'Wouldn't it be cool if we did- if there was like, Fiasco-style narration here?' As towards- in terms of like, what shaped this, or influenced us, I don't know if anyone has any strong feelings here, but like, learning how to- learning how to prep for Blades helped me prep for the rest of Hieron a lot. I think it's why you see, especially coming into season... into- into Spring, the distinct adventure- adventures that have like, 'Here's the cast of characters. Here are the locations. Here are- you know, here's maybe a mini map, or at least a general like, breakdown of different locations and different groups that are functioning there.' You know, Dungeon World didn't have a list of, you know, groups or squads or whatever- the crews in Blades. But I was definitely thinking about those places in that similar way. So, Blades was definitely, as a GM, a big influence for me. I don't know if anyone else has thoughts here.

**Sylvia:** Just on like, coming from a player perspective on Blades, it really helped me personally with like, risk-taking, even when maybe you shouldn't be risk-taking. Like, pushing your characters for- Like, the- the 'driving them like a stolen car' thing. Ya know?

**Austin:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Definitely.

**Sylvia:** *[amused]* Like, just- I don't know if it shows with the amount of HP I lost over the last season, but I felt like, way more comfortable doing something that could totally blow up in my face-

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Sylvia:** -after playing through that and with what we did with Twilight Mirage.

**Austin:** Yeah. I mean the end of Twilight Mirage was a lot of learning how to do that with everyone's characters, right?

**Sylvia:** Mhm.

**Austin:** So, for sure.

**Keith:** What do you mean?

**Austin:** Shut up. *[Keith, Austin, and Sylvia laugh]*

**Janine:** That's a good point though. I mean Twilight Mirage... I talk a lot about how I've- I have, as a new player of tabletop games, struggled to- to kinda deal with my desire to win and also do the right thing all the time and also make the perfect move and like, have everything figured out and- and do all that stuff. You know, the... *[lightly laughs]* Twilight Mirage helped me... and like, this is multiple systems that we played there, not just one in particular- but helped me learn that like, failure is fun. Like, failure can pull the strings of a story along in a much more interesting way than success. In a way that made it a lot less frightening to go back into Spring.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** There are a lot of things that happened in Spring that I think would have kind of freaked me out a little bit if they happened in Winter. In terms of like, some really big failures. Some really big-

**Austin:** Right.

**Janine:** Some really high stakes. And the idea of like, 'I don't know how to face this.' There were moments of that. Like, there were moments where something seemed insurmountable, and it was still like, too intimidating to really take on in a way that I think would have done- or would have been the most interesting. I'm thinking a lot of the dragon. The dragon situation and like-

**Austin:** Sure.

**Janine:** -how I, you know, just took at face value that it was a big thing, and I could not hurt it. Even though we found out later, it could have been pretty easily hurt. *[Ali laughs]*

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Janine:** Or it could have been pretty easily dealt with.

**Austin:** Yep. Yeah.

**[1:30:00]**

**Janine:** *[exhales a laugh]* But like, you know, it's still, I think, was a little easier for me to process that than it would have been in Winter because, in Twilight Mirage, failure was such a... frequent and approachable thing that I had to kind of expose myself to it a little more than I had in Winter.

**Austin:** Every roll has a good chance of having at least a compromised success. Not that-

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Austin:** -seven to ten... er, seven to nine isn't compromised in some way here, but Scum and Villainy Blades, definitely little harsher on that front, or can be.

**Janine:** And even- even in The Veil, there were a lot of situations where just like, I would fail roll after roll after roll and this cool idea that I had would be denied, and it just became this moment of like, 'Right. This is like, still... This- You know, these- these failures are having this cumulative effect on this character.'

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** Like, this all still builds to something. And that's an important lesson.

**Austin:** Definitely. I think a lot about um, the... I think a lot about Twilight Mirage's training for Spring. I think that's part of why Spring was so easy. We talk- we talked at the beginning about Twilight Mirage just being difficult and ambitious and blah-blah-blah, but- and we'll get to this later, I think- but someone does specifically ask, and maybe I'll just answer it right now. Cause it's top of mind.

Someone asked if the Twilight Mirage ground game idea influenced the 'Home and Away' game stuff here in Spring. And absolutely. We- I don't- I don't get confident about doing that style of game. Like, it's not the same. The ground game was a big exportable map in Twilight Mirage that we did- that did not go the way I hoped it would. We didn't have enough time. The game was moving way more slowly than I thought, and we didn't have like, super well established setting or characters. So, it was hard to find that sort of like, drive and- and kind of

self-starting exploration. On top of the fact that like, the exploration was really compromised by questions of colonization and all the other stuff that- the baggage that came with Twilight Mirage.

But the- the thing that it did do was help me conceptualize this feeling of like, 'There is a home base. There are places you're going to go explore. There are stakes at both of those places.' And so, it was definitely a natural extension for me from- from that. So, in that way, Twilight Mirage was hugely influential for me, in a big way. Ali, it sounded like maybe you had something else there, too. But I don't know if I was mishearing.

**Ali:** I don't think so.

**Austin:** Okay. Any other thoughts here? Alright. I'll shout-out Burning Wheel, also. Burning Wheel, huge influence that- I think I played that game- I guess I played that before Winter or maybe at the same time as Winter is when I played some Burning Wheel. But, you know, games. They're good. They're useful.

**Art:** Um... I'm sorry.

**Austin:** B.F.F. actually. B.F.F and Fall of Magic.

**Art:** Mm.

**Austin:** Also huge. Huge, in terms of just like, I want there to be scenes where characters talk to each other. *[lightly laughs]* And are just at a place and are just doing a thing. And so, in that way, like, downtime episodes, which also have- have a Blades thing, but just like, moments where there are characters on screen together, huge influence from Fall of Magic, B. F. F., and the downtime in Blades.

**Art:** When I read this question, the thing it made me think of was the beginning of the movie Walk Hard. The parody of the Johnny Cash bio-

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Art:** -biopic.

**Austin:** You mean The Dewey Cox Story?

**Art:** The Dewey Cox Story. Yeah, where the-

**Keith:** That's- Wait, that's a parody? *[Ali laughs]*

**Art:** Oh, yeah. That's not a real guy.

**Keith:** Wow.

**Art:** That's John C. Reilly.

**Keith:** Wow.

**Art:** Who is not a musician.

**Keith:** Isn't he? I thought he was a doctor.

**Austin:** He's a doctor.

**Art:** No.

**Austin:** No, for real. He's actually a doctor. He was pretending to be a rock star, or a country music star. He's actually a rock star. He was pretending to be a country music star. *[Keith laughs]*

**Ali:** Mm.

**Art:** Yeah. But it starts with- with him like, you know, leaning against like, a thing, and he has to go on stage, and someone says, you know, 'Don't you know Dewey Cox is thinking about his whole life before he goes onstage?'

**Austin:** *[laughs]* Yes.

**Art:** And I think like- I feel like that's my answer to this question. Like, yes, in a- and in a way, every game I've ever played directly informs everything that ever happens here. That's-

**Austin:** Yeah, immediately after. Yeah.

**Art:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah, what's past is prologue. Alright. I'm gonna advance. Unless there's more here? Alright. Dustin writes in and says,

'Do any of you have a favorite song throughout all three three seasons of Hieron, and what is it?'

**Austin:** I'm gonna include Marielda here also, as part of Winter.

'Mine would have to be "[I Have Seen the Stars](#)" from the Marielda season. The way this bridges Marielda into Winter in Hieron always gets me.'

**Austin:** It might- That might be mine, too. I remember listening to that song for the first time. It was in an office building in the meatpacking district of New York. It was my first year at Vice.

They were having me explore the possibility of developing a board game with a New York based mobile game developer, as part of a branded deal- *[Austin and Jack laugh]*

**Ali:** Mm.

**Austin:** -which is extremely my life. And so, I was like- I'd had like four meetings with this. We were like, playing board games and putting together design ideas and a billion other things. It's not a thing that makes any sense in retrospect, but it was one of those things where Jack sent me the song *[laughs lightly]* mixed with the- with the narration, I think. Uh, yeah. With- with the narration, or the episode may have hit, and I hadn't heard that- that mix yet. And I was like, 'I have to go.' And like, 'I know-' Like, everyone was having conversation, but we were supposed to be in at 9:00. It was 9:20, and I was like, 'Yeah, I just re- Fwoo, I'm super tired. *[laughs]* I really gotta get out of here.' And as soon as I-

**Jack:** 'Oh, sleepy now.'

**Austin:** *[laughs]* And like, so I just remember walking down this like, you know, shitty New York office building maintenance hallway basically- cause that's what a lot of those offices are like, when you're out of the actual office part and like, going towards the elevator- and just like, trying to get a connection. But I couldn't anymore cause I was too far from the Wi-Fi, and I hadn't gotten outside where there was cell signal yet. And then finally getting it and getting in a car to go home cause I was being very lazy and listening and just like, tears streaming down my face as I listened to the star- 'I Have Seen the Stars.'

**Jack:** Oh, I'm so glad.

**Austin:** It was so good, Jack.

**Jack:** Thank you. That track was- was one of those ones where like, much like the end, much like the last track of Spring, I kind of knew what I had to do sitting down.

**Austin:** Right.

**Jack:** A lot of the- a lot of the sort of composition work was- I knew what I had to go.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Jack:** And I remember writing 'I Have Seen the Stars' and just feeling like it wasn't coming together in any kind of a way *[Austin breathes a few laughs]* because like- because like, I know that song, and I know- I know how the melody falls and how the chords fall. And so, to my ears listening to it as I was composing it, I was just like, 'It's just the Hieron theme.'

**Austin:** Right.



**Jack:** It's that- You know, 'I know how that goes. It's the Hieron theme.' And so, it meant a great deal when that track came out and when folks really liked it. And I've got- *[lightly laughs]* I was listening back to the end of Marielda in prep for the end of this season, and I got to it on the soundtrack, and I was like, 'Oh, wow! This is great. What track is this? It's this one? This one that I didn't like very much when I wrote it?' *[Ali laughs lightly]* So, that's- I'm very happy with that. Thank you.

**Austin:** Just real quick, I want to say like, obviously there are other big songs in there, but the thing that I- You know, obviously, I think like the Four Conversations [track](#) is incredible also. But the thing that made this song work for me the most 'I Have Seen the Stars' was that it is the first time I got what we did with Marielda and could feel the echoes-

**Jack:** Mm.

**Austin:** -or like, the ripples into what the rest of Hieron would look like.

**Jack:** It's function-

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

**Jack:** -as a kind of narrative bridge.

**Austin:** Exactly. It just like-

**Jack:** A mirror.

**Austin:** -so brought that together, especially cause I'd figured out what the star- I- *[excited]* You have to understand. I knew what the stars were. *[Ali, Austin, and Jack laugh]* The stars were prepped that early, so I fuckin'- You know what? I *had* seen the stars. *[amused]* They will not save you! *[laughs]*

**Jack:** Yeah, the Austin side of that is 'I have seen the stars.'

**Austin:** Yes, and in retrospect-

**Jack:** 'They suck.'

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** God damn.

**Austin:** *[laughs]* So, yeah.

**Jack:** This very gentle track.

**Austin:** Um, uh- I am- I'm gonna- I am- Austin is gonna step away really quick to run to the bathroom. I want everyone else to tell Jack what their favorite song is while I'm doing that. *[Ali laughs]*

**Jack:** Until I say stop. *[Sylvia laughs]*

**Austin:** But don't say that until I'm back from the bathroom. So, BRB. Y'all keep talking.

**Art:** Austin really doesn't believe in our ability to read another question, huh?

**Jack:** No, we can just go. We can't move the PowerPoint along.

**Art:** Mm.

**Ali:** *[overlapped]* I think-

**Sylvia:** I really like '[Broken Branches](#).' If we're just mentioning songs.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Ephrim's nearly- Ephrim's nearly murder song?

**Sylvia:** Yeah. Maybe that's why I like it so much, *[Janine and Ali laugh]* but I also really- I really love that track. And '[Under the Boughs](#).' [boh-s] Am I saying that-? Boughs? [ba-ow-s] I don't know how to say that word.

**Jack:** I've always said boughs [ba-ow-s], but it might be boughs [boh-s]. I'm not sure.

**Keith:** It's probably both. Language is like that.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, probably. Anyway, Jack, that song is beautiful.

**Jack:** Thank you. 'Under the Boughs' is a weird one because I... I don't know if- I don't know if I've said this... I might only have said it to Ali and Austin. Um, towards the beginning of this season, Ali was like, 'Could we have a theme for live episodes, like Tips at the Table and things?' And I wrote one that I- that I really liked. Just like a pretty melody that I thought was really good, and then didn't have the time to like, finish or arrange or wrap up properly. And it was such a Hieron sounding- You know, it was only ever going to be for a Hieron season, and as Hieron was coming to the end, I was like, 'I'm not gonna find anywhere for this really nice melody.'

And I messaged Austin and Ali and was like, 'Hey, I think it's this live track that I kind of half wrote a year and a half ago.' *[Sylvia and Ali laugh]* So, I think 'Under the Boughs' was like, the first- I guess, one of the first tracks I wrote for Spring in Hieron, albeit in a kind of very weird- It had a much more- much more of a clarinet part in. And I think I played it way slower.

*[animated]* The first time I heard 'Under the Boughs' in the episode, I was like, 'Did Ali speed it up to match something?' *[Ali laughs]* I play that track really fast. Um, it's a strange one.

*[simultaneously]*

**Janine:** I- Oh, go ahead.

**Ali:** I think- Oh, go ahead.

**Ali:** Oh, I was going to say that my answer I think is also 'I Have Seen the Stars.' I remember having a very specific reaction to it when I had heard it. Cause it was also just like... It- it had happened right at the end of the Marielda, which was like, an undertaking to do. And then going back to Winter, it felt like a song that was like, really familiar, but also, with Austin's read on it, it felt like, really sad and desperate. *[laughs]*

**Jack:** Mm.

**Ali:** So, every time I heard it, it like, always hit me in a way that was like, always kind of disarming. So, I think when we wrapped Marielda, I listened to it like, thirty times. *[laughs]*

**Jack:** I hope it- I hope it held up.

**Ali:** So, good job.

**Jack:** I'm glad. Yeah. *[Ali laughs more]* Thank you.

**Austin:** I am back, also. Did we get more answers in?

**Janine:** Yeah. I was gonna-

**Art:** Yeah, we got a couple in.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Art:** We still have to go around a little more.

**Janine:** I was going to say that for me the big standout this season, in particular, was '[The Duke at Sunset](#).'

**Austin and Ali:** Mm.

**Jack:** That's a late one.

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Is it cause the bug?

**Janine:** *[amused]* I just- Well, maybe. I just... *[Dre and Janine laugh]* I really like... I don't know how to describe it cause I'm not good with musical terms, but I kind of... tend to respond best to the songs where like, I can turn it up really loud on my headset and part of it feels kind of.. heartbeat- Not- not like a heartbeat. But it just like- it feels like it's reverberating. Like, it feels like it is just going through me. Like, I like when a song is very intense like that. Or when it just has... I don't- Again, I don't know how to describe it. The other, you know- I'm also really basic in that the Marielda theme gives me shivers like, every time I listen to it. It's just so solid. But 'The Duke at Sunset' is just one of those songs where it's like... I can imagine hearing it being played by a- like, on a bunch of real instruments in a room. And it just kind of like, stopping time.

**Jack:** Oh, I'm so glad. I sent Austin and Ali the isolated sound of the bug dying *[Janine, Austin, and Keith laugh]* before I sent them the track, I think. I think I just said- I think I just gave them the file and said, 'The bug died.' *[laughter]*

**Austin:** True.

**Jack:** It's just like this awful isolated like, shriek sound. It was only like, I guess-

**Austin:** Nope, Jack. What you said- you- Mm. *[lightly laughs]* You sent us a file, and you said 'Bugdeath.mp3 Headphone warning.' *[Sylvia, Ali, Janine, and Austin laugh]*

**Jack:** *[amused]* Cause it's just isolated. It's just this awful isolated like, scream sound. But I like- I like 'The Duke at Sunset' because the other thing I realized with that track was it's a... We don't have names for the tracks until they're finished.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Jack:** Unless it's very obvious what the name is. And as I was writing that track, I was like, 'Oh, wow. This is as much a theme for the- the multiple suns setting in the rhizome as it is for this weird bug attack.'

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Jack:** And kind of leaning into that and trying to write a track that... had this twilight feel. This- this like, light coming from everywhere. This weird moment of peace before a bunch of losers climb a branch and kill what would be a perfectly useful bug.

**Austin:** Well, now we know.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Damn.

**Jack:** Before they do it in.

**Austin:** Alright. Who else?

**Art:** Um, I like 'Hadrian and His Son' a great deal. I've listened to that scene a lot.

**Jack:** Oh, yeah?

**Art:** So, it's really grown on me. I really like the demo you sent me of the last song when you were just pacing out how the end of the show would go. I really appreciated that. To know that like, 'Oh, I didn't just like... record something that was on un-musical-able.' *[Austin laughs]*

**Jack:** I think I sent it to you first. I think I sent it to you before I sent it to Austin and Ali because I wanted it to be cosigned by the person ending the show.

**Art:** Sure.

**Jack:** To just be like, 'Is this anything?' *[Austin laughs]* And it was. It was.

**Austin:** And it was. And it was.

**Art:** Yeah, it works great.

**Austin:** Who's left?

**Keith:** I'm left. *[long pause]*

**Austin:** I've heard that about you. *[Sylvia and Dre laugh]*

**Dre:** God. *[Sylvia laughs harder]*

**Keith:** *[amused groan]* At least there's a real contender for stupidest joke, and it's not mine. *[Austin, Sylvia, and Dre laugh]* I have- I have two. I have a simple answer- or I guess um... not simple answer. These are- these are answers for two different reasons. One of them from this season was '[The Tree Blooms](#),' which I really like. It is a lot like... you know...

**[1:45:00]**

**Keith** (continued): Something about it feels more like a song that like, I would have already had on my iPod. Which is- which I really like about it because a lot of the soundtrack is like... I guess- I guess there's just something really familiar about it. Like, there's- Like, it just feels like-like, 'Oh, this is a really great sound' in a way that I'm really familiar with. And it's- it's mostly just a guitar, which I also really like. That a lot of the music that I listened to is just a guitar. And I just- It's just really darkly guitar. The other answer, the emotional answer is there is something just so striking about the first time that I listened to the first episode of Marielda, and I was like, 'Holy shit.' *[Austin laughs]* 'This intro is so fucking good.' *[laughs]*

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

**Keith:** Like, it was- Like, just like good- Good in an astonishing way that gets repeated over and over *now*, but was new when [Marielda](#) happened. Where it was like, 'Oh, this is a- We're like- This is a new sort of thing. This is a- This is changing the show.'

**Austin:** Yeah, 'We can do this?!'

**Keith:** Yeah. Yeah. This is change- This changes the show in a way that like- like, oh, that sort of astonishing newness happens a lot now in Friends at the Table soundtracks. But that was the first time where it was like, 'Oh, this is just like, a game changer.'

**Jack:** Oh, thank you so much.

**Austin:** The um-

**Keith:** Third answer might be the original, the- the Autumn in Hieron like, [theme](#).

**Jack:** The old.

**Keith:** Yeah. Which I love.

**Austin:** And one that is - you have to- we have to shout-out is '[Broken Branches, or The March of the Unstill](#)' which I think is the first drum having track in Friends at the Table.

**Jack:** Mm.

**Austin:** Because I remember, Jack-

**Jack:** Probably.

**Austin:** -you messaged me and Ali, you were like, 'I figured out how to do drums.' [**Jack laughs**] Or at least you were like, 'I'm- I'm learning how to do drums.' And then seven months later, we- we recorded '[Sleep Detachment](#)' and being like, 'I have figured out how to do drums.' [**Jack and Austin laugh**] And-and we don't get 'Sleep Detachment' without the- the Corsica Neue track, without 'Broken Branches.' Because that is you being like, 'Alright. I'm gonna learn how to- how to, you know, figure out drums.' And that was really good.

**Jack:** Hope drums- hope there's something with drums in the future.

**Austin:** I'd love to hear some more drums, Jack.

**Jack:** Maybe.

**Austin:** Maybe.

**Jack:** Who knows?

**Art:** Season six, all drums.

**Dre:** All drums.

**Austin:** It's just percussion. Hm.

**Art:** Just percussion. That's some timpani, if you want to know.

**Austin:** Okay. Okay. Alright.

**Janine:** We're doing Stomp now. We're all hint- we're hinting- We're rebooting Stomp.

**Jack:** Stomp!

**Austin:** Season six: Stomp. We've figured it out, everybody. We've figured out the name. This fucking moon. It's Stomp.

**Art:** Bring in the noise. Bring in the sadness.

**Austin:** *[laughing]* Uh huh.

**Jack:** Bring in the boys.

**Austin:** Bring in the noise. Bring in the boys. *[Sylvia and Dre laugh]* Is there anyone else who- who needs to shout-out a song here?

**Dre:** I guess I haven't gone yet, but I think- I think for me there's just something about the original [Autumn Not Winter](#).

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Dre:** And whenever I hear it that, you know, it being reused or like, re-mixed- I don't know. I'm not good at musical terms- but whenever you go back to that kind of, you know... that song,

**Jack,** I'm always just like, 'Aww.' Like it just like- it makes me like, just smile.

**Keith:** Which one, Dre?

**Jack:** *[overlapped]* I'm so glad.

**Dre:** \*Inwardly and Outwardly.

(\*The Winter album is '[Inside & Outside](#)'; the Autumn album is '[Autumn Not Winter](#)')

**Austin:** The original. The original

**Keith:** Oh, okay.

**Jack:** I completely- I completely freaked myself out because it turns out I had been playing the Hieron theme wrong for five years. *[Austin, Dre, and Jack laugh]*

**Austin:** I forgot about this.

**Jack:** I- I wrote the Hieron theme in 2014, right? Twenty-

**Austin:** 2014. Yeah.

**Jack:** 2014.

**Art:** Yeah. It was just a fifth birthday. It's been... 2019 minus five.

**Keith:** **Jack,** I think you got quiet all of a sudden. Maybe it's just me.

**Jack:** Oh. Maybe it's just not my bad-

**Keith:** Yeah. That's you.

**Jack:** -my bad posture.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Um, and I- Like, you know, print. Send it. It's done. *[Austin laughs lightly]* And then it was only when I was trying to like, as directly as I could, replicate 'Autumn Not Winter' for this ending that I realized that I'd just straight up being playing it wrong all this time. Like, other than like- I think that the Spring [theme](#) and the Winter [theme](#) are played quote-unquote wrongly in that like, the melody falls completely differently over the chords. And that fucked me up because I was like sitting down to write the end- the end, and I was like, 'I know how to play the Hieron theme. It's easy. I could just- I play this guitar but with my eyes closed.' And then I listened to it, and I was like, 'Oh, Jesus. You have to learn a new guitar part. And it's the one you thought you knew for five years.' *[Austin laughs]* But it's- it's done now. So, we've got-

**Austin:** Actual play, Jack. It's just actual play.

**Jack:** Actual play.

**Keith:** Speaking of- speaking of guitar part. I also like, I think from Winter, the '[Samol](#)' version of the theme

**Jack:** Oh, yeah.

**Keith:** That one's great.



**Jack:** He just plays the theme on the guitar.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** On the guitar.

**Jack:** Right?

**Keith:** Just the- and it's just the theme as guitar, which is amazing. I love it.

**Austin:** Samol ruled.

**Jack:** Thank you.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** God.

**Jack:** Samol ruled.

**Austin:** Uh, I'm going to advance because-

**Jack:** Let's do it.

**Keith:** He also was a purple dragon that ate people for fun.

**Austin:** Yeah. Fucking rules. *[laughs]*

**Keith:** *[laughing]* He fuckin' ruled. *[Sylvia laughs]*

**Austin:** He did eat people *for fun*.

**Jack:** Did we canonically say he ate people for fun?

**Austin:** I- I think he gave like, a hand wave for why he did it.

**Jack:** He was just like, 'I was a- I was-

**Austin:** 'I was-'

**Jack:** 'a strange old god of the world.'

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** 'And I wanted to eat people. '

**Janine:** Gotta do somethin'.

**Keith:** 'These are bugs. You are bugs on my skin.'

**Austin:** Literally. Yeah.

**Keith:** *[amused]* 'I'm chewing the fleas off of my body- my itchy body.'

**Austin:** God. Uh, these come in from Ishmael. Jack, you and I talked about whether or not we wanted to answer this first one.

'How do orc gods work? Do you just declare yourself and pick a title or like...?'

**Jack:** A couple of answers to this, right?

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Which is like... No. I don't think so.

**Austin:** *[lightly laughs]* Right.

**Jack:** But um-

**Austin:** Wait. This is like, one of those where it was like, we shouldn't answer that. But no. That's- No, that's not it. That's definitely- *[Jack laughs]* We need to say no. But wait, that means we have to say something else.

**Jack:** Yeah, there's like- I guess the two answers are that... that **Austin** and I talked about that we're happy to give is- is one kind of- a sort of vague plot answer to this. And also, how we conceptualized orc gods and other aspects, other peripheral aspects of the storytelling.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Jack:** And I'll do that second one first, which is that like... at least speaking for myself, and I think broadly in terms of the way we create worlds, it's like when you watch someone painting a big scene. And- and sometimes they're focusing on painting someone's hand. And they go into a lot of detail. And sometimes they're like, 'I want trees over there,' and they paint like a big brush of green. And then maybe if they think about it a bit more, they'll put some other bits of green in. And, you know, maybe the attention- the painting isn't about that in the end. It doesn't come about that thing. And so, at least the way- like, I think we've talked and hinted about how orc gods work... We don't have a hard answer for this.

**Austin:** Right.

**Jack:** Because we've never- we've never brought the camera there. We've never added detail. But in talking about the... the way the Archives functions and the way the orcs kind of conceive of their own relationship with history and with religion... I always kind of tended to think of orc gods as being about a sort of shared cultural folklore. Or a shared cultural history, in the same

way that, you know, in the U.K., we might have like, 'Richard the Lionheart. He was very brave.' Or like someone-or-another something-or-another. And like, if there is enough weight in the folklore and enough weight in the history about a thing, it sort of becomes... it becomes deified. But- but again, even describing this and like-

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And like-

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** If we wanted to answer this, we would have to sit down and play.

**Austin:** We would have to play the game.

**Jack:** Or-

**Austin:** We're getting close to play now. Right? Like, we are nearing play-

**Jack:** Right. Right.

**Austin:** -as we- as we discuss. Cause what we're doing is clarifying conversations we had four years ago coming into Winter.

**Jack:** Right. Where we're like, 'Is it this? Is it that? Or maybe it would work-' And like, we're edit- we're already starting to editorialize.

**Austin:** Yep.

**Jack:** Where we're like. 'Oh, so, maybe it would be better if we described it this way.'

**Austin:** Right.

**Jack:** 'Or we described it that way.' *[overlapping]* I think just-

**Austin:** But I think this speaks to that thing I said before. There isn't a lore Bible. There is not a like-

**Jack:** No.

**Austin:** -'Here is the final answer for all this stuff that we draw from.' It is what you just said, which is like, 'Here's a sketch of a face in the distance. I know... general sha- I know it's a human face. Or in this case, I know it's an orc face. I know-'

**Jack:** Yeah, we can look at orc gods, and we can say, 'It's about folklore. It's about- it's about a cultural history. Shared cultural history.'

**Austin:** Right. Right.

**Jack:** Although just-

**Austin:** I think it was a- One thing that I did- one thing I did have written down was I think it's a holdover from pre-Erasure orc life. Like, I do think that is one of the things that carries over. That's a thing that's like-

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Austin:** -a little addition from notes that I did take, you know?

**Jack:** Yeah. Absolutely. I think just because I... I'm always cautious of, you know, *any* society in our show falling into some kind of self-parody. I do just want to head it off at the pass and say that the New Archives isn't full of orcs suddenly saying like, 'I'm the God of X,' [**Austin laughs**] and everybody being like, 'Okay. Yes indeed.'

**Austin:** Right.

**Jack:** 'We have the God of X here.' Like... it carries more weight than that, I think.

**Austin:** Yeah. Yeah, I think that's- that's probably about where we'd like to get here. Like, it would need- it would need more work. We would have to figure out something we really like. And it isn't good enough for us to be like, 'Here are seven minutes on it.' You know? Think about-

**Jack:** Exactly.

**Austin:** -think about how long it took us... I was looking through all the stuff from Dialect recently, the game that **Janine** and **Dre** and I played at the start of the Road to Season Six. And we spend five hours playing that game, and two of those hours are like prep for that game.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Getting on the same page, finding words that we think are interesting, getting very basic stuff down because that is what it's like to do that work. Like, it isn't a thing that's just like, 'Here is a ten minute answer.' We would not be happy with it, and it wouldn't be as good as we wanted. You know? So.

**Jack:** Yeah. Absolutely.

**Austin:** Yeah. Another question [from] Ishamel that I think we also got from a bunch of other people, and so, I wanted to like just- 'Hey look. They're both next to each other. Let me copy and paste it because it shows up a bunch of places.' This is not me being like, 'Ishamel's cool. So, Ishmael gets two questions.'

‘Were there any moves anyone took that never seemed as useful as they hoped?’

**Austin:** And we can just say this quickly and keep moving cause we’ve got a bunch of these to get through still.

**Jack:** Oh, Jesus. Let me open up Lem’s- Lem’s character sheet. I want to- *[laughs]*

**Ali:** It’s all of them. Always. *[Janine laughs]*

**Austin:** It’s all of them always.

**Jack:** All of them always.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Ali:** *[laughing]* All of them always.

**Austin:** That’s the right answer. It turns out.

**Ali:** Um-

**Keith:** I don’t-

**Austin:** Okay.

**Keith:** For- for Fero, I only- I had one. For Fero, I used a lot of moves a lot... as Fero. And I think that the one that was not as useful as I thought was the one that literally let me see into the future. *[Jack and Keith laugh]* And tell me what was going to happen. I had a move that- where I could call the spirits of a place, and they would tell me-

**Austin:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. You could talk to them or whatever.

**Keith:** Yeah, yeah. They would... God, I wish I could- I remember the name of the move cause I have the thing right here. But- but basically, I could roll. and either it could tell me, you know, the future or a disaster would happen.

**Austin:** Right. Uh huh.

**Keith:** And I was like, ‘That would be awesome to know a future- the future.’ And then, you know, a disaster- a disaster happens. Communion of Whispers. *[reading]* ‘When you spent time in a place making note of the resident spirits, you’ll be granted a vision of significance to you, your allies, and the spirits around you.’ But the reason it’s not that useful is because, ‘On a miss, the vision is upsetting, frightening, or traumatizing. The GM will describe it. Take minus one forward.’

**Austin:** Yeah. Well, moves got consequences.

**Keith:** Yeah. Which is- which is rough. And then, you know, I just kind of forget about it cause it's not- it's not in my- my typical wheelhouse of things that I do. So, that's my- that's my answer.

**Austin:** Ali, it sounded like all of them?

**Ali:** My answer- Okay. So, my actual answer is that I went through all of Autumn and all of Winter with my race thing being that I could roll at *any* point to change *anyone's* damage in *any* fight and *never* used it.

**Austin:** Why did you never use that?! That's a great move!

**Ali:** Because I for- I know! *[laughs]* I know! It's great.

**Austin:** That's-

**Ali:** I forgot about it. *[Austin groans]* And then, we change-

**Keith:** Oh my god.

**Ali:** I know. I know. I know. I know.

**Austin:** Oh my god! *[Sylvia and Ali laugh]*

**Ali:** And then we got to Spring, and I change rule books. And I was like, 'I should keep this cause I literally never used it, and I would like to.' But instead, I changed to the one that's like, the 'Visions Through Time' one.

**Austin:** Oh, well that one-

**Ali:** Cause I was like imagining this relationship where like, the thing Hella would be doing was like, the world was all fucked up. She would speak to Adelaide-

**Austin:** Mm.

**Ali:** -and Adelaide would be like, 'Yeah. No. Go over there cause it's fucked up over there, and you should go there.' And then it just didn't work out like that. I think I barely- *laughs*

**Austin:** Well, until I got the lightning.

**Ali:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Austin:** Until the biggest thing that I had not planned for literally at all. *[Ali laughs]*

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** But I really only got it in there before the buzzer.

**Austin:** Yeah, uh huh.

**Keith:** It's gonna be fun. The first person- the first person that goes back and listens to Hieron, or Autumn after this gets to hear all the times that *[Austin and Ali laugh]* changing someone's damage would have been a really awesome thing to do. *[Sylvia laughs]*

**Austin:** Uh, Adaire, you had Heist right. You never got to do a Heist.

**Janine:** I had Heist. Like I... I feel Heist a lot more keenly. Like, there are- there are other things that I have that I never used. Like, I... Flexible Morals never came up, which is a- which is a thing that lets me lie to anyone who tries to detect my alignment and say it's any alignment I like. Which would have been great. *[laughs]*

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** But didn't come up cause that's not really the kind of game we play. You know, I have- I have like, multiple trap things and and a lot of stuff that just like, didn't come up. I used Disguise once, I think, even though Disguise is a very good move. Granted I used it in a situation where it was great. So, I feel redeemed. But Heist, I never got to use. It was such a- it was a thing of like, the timing felt so good cause I think I took it right after breaking up the cultist thing. So, it was really easy to imagine being like, 'Man, that felt great. I want to do that more.'

**Austin:** *[amused]* Uh huh. Yeah.

**Janine:** 'What if that- what if that's my thing?' *[Austin laughs]* And then it just- *[laughs]* And then it just fuckin' never- never came up. And it's like a- it's a-

**Austin:** It's like- Yeah.

**Janine:** It's good. It's just... *[reading]* 'When you take time to make a plan to steal something, name the thing you want. Name the thing you want to steal.' And then I get to ask questions about like, how it's defended, who's gonna come after it, who else wants it. *[overlapped]* And it's a move that's like-

**Austin:** I fully thought- I fully thought that this was gonna come up in Marielda, like a thousand percent.

**Janine:** Yeah, it- it seemed like it would have. Which is part of why I was so... um, I think, on the boat, as we would say in Marielda. Like, I was so rooted on the boat in Marielda-

**Austin:** Mhm.

**[2:00:00]**

**Janine:** -because it was just like, 'Okay. Well, this feels like it has to come up. So, it feels like I need to really figure out where my angle is here, and then we can-' And, you know, and it didn't end up being that at all.

**Austin:** Right. Right.

**Janine:** Even a little bit.

**Austin:** Even a little bit.

**Janine:** So, yeah. It's really frustrating cause that move... as written gives you a lot of... you know-

**Austin:** Well, look. Adaire has a long life.

**Janine:** It would have given me a lot of wiggle room.

**Austin:** Yeah. Just think about all of the new banks you can rob now that the- it's the rhizome instead of just-

**Janine:** But you know she doesn't rob- Like, she wouldn't rob a bank now.

**Austin:** You're right.

**Janine:** Because she knows the- she knows where that money comes from.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Janine:** And like, also doesn't need it as badly as she would have once. And like, she's got kids who can do some work for her now, so it's fine. *[Ali laughs]*

**Austin:** *[amused]* Wait. Okay. Good. Great anyone else or should we keep moving? I'm gonna vote on keep movin' cause we've got a lot still. Uh, Jack?

**Keith:** I just want to note, I looked over these, and I used so many moves all the time. What- Was I just constantly using moves?

**Austin:** You were- you were extremely OP. Keith?

**Keith:** Yeah?

**Austin:** Fero is a fucking beast. Fero is incredible. Fero... Like, mechanically-



**Ali:** Yeah, Fero's really well built.

**Austin:** Yes.

**Ali:** As like, a character.

**Austin:** Also, you misused one of those moves a lot for two seasons.

**Keith:** That's true. But I thought- I thought about it, and it- I don't think it made much of a difference.

**Austin:** It's fine.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Cal writes in and says,

'I have a question for Jack, which is when you were writing it, did you think Hieron music is being diegetic? Like, were you scoring scenes, or were you scoring scenes as Lem?'

**Jack:** This is a great question, and it's one that I thought about... I think a lot during the beginning of Winter. So, when I was like, beginning really sound tracking a Hieron season. Cause the first season was kind of more just like, 'I found two tracks.'

**Austin:** *[laughs]* Yeah.

**Jack:** And I- The answer is no for a bunch of reasons. Primarily... not primarily. One of the reasons is Lem is a violinist.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Jack:** And if I was going to soundtrack- if I was going to use a violin as a primary instrument in the soundtrack, it would necessarily imply, directly or not, that the Bard had an involvement in it. Which I didn't know that I necessarily wanted. And also, I can't play the violin.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Jack:** So, that kind of ruled- *[Austin laughs]* That kind of ruled that out. But... I think- I think... one of the things that... you know, really helped writing the soundtracks is that I know, as the composer, what is happening in ways that Lem doesn't necessarily.

**Austin:** *[lightly laughs]* Mhm.

**Jack:** Or I have insight into things or can- can ask for insight into things that Lem doesn't have. And, you know, obviously any- any form of authorship onto a thing is going to be fallible in one way or another, or unreliable and in one way or another. But I think if Lem was soundtracking

the show, I would have been kind of lured into making a bunch more decisions about like, 'Can I try and play this scene sarcastically?'"

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Jack:** Or 'Can I try and play this scene naively?' And while I might want sarcasm or naivete to kind of come through in the music, I feel that all that would end up really doing if I- if I tried to do that would be take away from scenes, rather than add to them.

**Austin:** Right.

**Jack:** I think also... I think of the music... The music as being another authorial voice in the show. In the same way that like-

**Austin:** Absolutely.

**Jack:** -Austin as a narrator is a- is a narratorial voice. And us, as the players are, you know, speaking out of character. And I think of the music as an entity speaking out of character about what's happening and about how things are going. In ways that like, frequently we will- I'll score a scene where a character says something very confidently, and the music makes it clear that they don't quite feel that way. Or the inverse. You know, someone says something very nervously. Stuff like, um- at the end of ['The Conduit'](#) when- when Hadrian is like, 'Go get Hella. We're gonna go- we're gonna start knocking some heads together to find out what's going on.'

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Jack:** And the music kind of begins to pick up to have this strength of the- the strength of action and a sort of vaguely sinister maneuvering among the community. Stuff like that, I don't think I would be able to do if I were like, 'This orc weirdo [*Austin and Keith laugh*] is going to try and do a thing.' The only other thing here is that like, a sort of general rule that I follow is I try not to soundtrack too much out of character speech. Or when we move out of scene. So, for example-

**Austin:** Right.

**Jack:** I'll make sure that I don't- If we are discussing one thing, and then we suddenly get into how... a prolonged tangent about how this relates to something super rad in, you know, a movie we saw... I'll either clip the music, or I'll decide to start it at a later point or whatever. Because I want the music to stay in Hieron. But there was this- a very near ex-

**Austin:** Which isn't diegesis. But it's like... adjacent somehow, right?

**Jack:** It's adjacent- It's much more adjacency. Yeah, absolutely. It would feel so weird, except there was a moment where I was- I was drafting um... the scene where Hadrian steps down from the- from the stage, and suddenly you and Art go into this magnificent anecdote about **Ali**.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Jack:** Which has some wonderful moments in it, like Ali raising his fists. And I, just as a test, ran that soundtrack into that conversation. And it was this- it was this really weirdly powerful moment because we've never heard the show do that before.

**Austin:** Right.

**Jack:** Where it's like, the music hits a pause, and we think we're done, but then we're talking about something else. But I- It was the end of Hieron, and I didn't want to break my own structures that late. And I also didn't want to take away from the power of the scene. But there was this great moment where there was like, a minute and a half of you talking about Muhammed Ali soundtracked that I- that I really liked. But I cut in the end.

**Austin:** Yeah, definitely. I feel like the um... So, a funny thing about that is you had sent me those clips that- Not the Ali story, but like, Hadrian praying, Hadrian stepping down.

**Jack:** Oh god. That was such a good end.

**Austin:** The final bit. All of those little bits. But here's- The thing is I went into this episode thinking that Ali had cut out the Muhammad Ali story because it wasn't in there. And I only heard those little bits. And in my mind, I stitched those together. And so, when I finally like, sat down to listen to the final episode, and I hit that bit, it- like, I- I hadn't forgotten about it, but it was like, 'Oh, wow. This is in here. This is this is awesome.' So, I'm happy that that was there. Ali, thank you for leaving that in.

**Jack:** It's a fucking great story.

**Austin:** It was- it was- I'd forgotten it until Art jogged my memory by making me think about prize fighters. Also Tim, Yes. Ali often will cut the episode and then give- Tim Howes, in the chat, asked if Ali cuts the episode, and then Jack adds music. And that is the only way I think it would work. *[Ali laughs]* Right? Is that-

**Jack:** Sometimes very-

**Austin:** I guess- Ali, you'll send like, raw...Like, you'll be like-

**Jack:** Mhm.

**Austin:** -'Here is- here is this fifteen minute scene...'

**Ali:** Right. Yeah. It'll always be like, 'Here's the scene. Put music where you want to put music to.'

**Austin:** Right. Right.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** But it's still cut most of the time. It is like the-

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** -that section. Yeah.

**Jack:** There is one exception to this where um... I am let sometimes... blindfolded into a darkened room *[Ali laughs]* where we have no episode audio, or an idea of what the episode audio is gonna be. This is usually themes. I do this for lives.

**Austin:** Yeah. Sure, sure, sure.

**Jack:** And Bluff.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** *[amused]* And- and various prep pieces of music and things, which is always just a fucking ride. Cause I'm like- I'm trying to write to... what I know the rhythm of **Austin's** voice to be.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Where I'm like, 'Man, here's probably something here or that could be something there.' And then I listened to what you eventually put over it, and I was like, 'Oh, wow yeah. It wasn't- I didn't see it going that way.' *[overlapped]* But yeah, usually I am-

**Austin:** If you go back to the Bluff post-mortem, I think I definitely talk about how hard it was to write intros to those songs because we didn't- they weren't- they're one-offs.

**Jack:** We don't know what they are.

**Austin:** We don't know what the fuck they are.

**Jack:** Yeah, it's just like- it's just like, 'Let's go.'

**Austin:** By like episode-

**Jack:** Also, we're generally working on such a tight schedule that-

**Austin:** Oh my god.

**Jack:** -if I was waiting for you, we'd have no music.

**Austin:** And, I couldn't do it without some music. I could not do it. Like, Mari- by the end of Marielda-

**Jack:** Fuckin' catch twenty-two here, babyyy.

**Austin:** Yeah, exactly. *[laughs]* A hundred percent. That's why like, I ideally love to get the theme in and sit with it for months because by the end of it like, 'Oh, yeah. I know this rhythm. I know where I can take a breath. I know how long sentences should be.' That's how like, those Marielda intros got good. It's just like, 'Oh, I've internalized how much time I have, how I can extend it, how I can subtract on it.' But- but Bluff is the hardest by far. Alright, I'm gonna advance. Last thing on music, I think, Jack, from Paige,

'Are you excited not to have to-

**Jack:** *[quietly in the background]* This is an easy one.

**Austin:** *[still reading, but amused]*

'-clap in songs to evoke Marielda?'

**Jack:** Yes, I fuckin' hate clapping. *[Sylvia and Austin laugh]* Man, it sucks. I can just plug in my digital keyboard, and I get that beautiful like, snap- snappy clap that shows up a lot in Twilight Mirage.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Jack:** It's wonderful. Clapping fucking sucks. A thing they never tell *[laughs]* you is rhythm is the worst thing. It's just maths. It's just counting. And you have to count so precisely. But if you count not precisely enough, it sounds really robotic. Clapping is just- You're like, just smashing two pieces of yourself against each other. *[Austin laughs lightly]* And you have to do that in the right time. God, it's like- Imagine if you were told you have to jump, and you have to hit the ground at this exact moment.

**Austin:** Or it's-

**Jack:** That's what clapping is like.

**Austin:** Right. Or else, you have to do again until you do it right. That's it.

**Jack:** Yeah. I have a fun game, which is called whatever season I'm in, whether it's live or- or synths, I'm excited about the other one.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Where I'm like, 'God, give me synthesizers. I'm stretching my hands. I'm so excited. Musical instruments- live instruments suck.' And like, now I'd- it's not a spoiler to say I'm working with synths now, and like, every five minutes Logic throws up an error-

**Austin:** Of course.

**Jack:** -that just says like, 'system overload.' Or like, I have to like, fucking debug some organ or something. Like, you know... But no clapping. Yes! I'm out!

**Austin:** Congrats.

**Keith:** Do you feel this way like, after a play? [*Austin and Keith breath a laugh*] Like, 'Oh, here we go.'

**Jack:** Yeah, I don't like it- No it's great because you don't have to go like this during a play. [*claps in a random rhythm*]

**Keith:** You don't- Wait, you don't?

**Jack:** Although it'd be really weird if everyone did.

**Austin:** [*laughing*] Could you imagine finishing- [*Ali laughs; someone claps randomly*] What if we had finished the live show at Gen Con, and everyone in time had gotten up and done-

**Keith:** Yeah, in the last act in every play at least-

**Jack:** In fuckin' 5-time.

**Keith:** I don't know. Like, Jack doesn't live in America. But in the last act of every play I go to- in the last- we are handed sheets of paper.

**Austin:** [*laughing*] Yeah.

**Keith:** It's- it's drum tablature.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** And do you have to clap in rhythm.

**Austin:** It is always the clapping bit from the West Side Story song '[America](#)' though. So- [*laughs*]

**Jack:** Yes.

**Austin:** It's pretty- [*clapping fast*]

**Keith:** Oh, is that what it's from?!

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** I've been doing it for my whole life, and I had no idea it from something.

**Austin:** That's what it's from. That's what it's from.

**Jack:** God. That's great.

**Austin:** Alright. Eddie writes in and says,

'You've been telling the story for five years, and with that amount of time comes a certain amount of hindsight. Is there anything about the story or characters you would change if you had the chance to do it over again? Was there any point where, after a season, you re-evaluated how you were treating certain aspects of the story? For example, from an outside perspective, it felt like the role of Hadrian's family was re-evaluated between seasons. I think that they were barely mentioned in Fall-

**Austin:** True.

'-brought up as a plot point in Winter-'

**Austin:** Basically true.

'-and became some of the most important, and tbh best, NPCs in Spring.'

**Austin:** That is one hundred- We definitely re-evaluated that over the course of long conversations. Group conversations, right? I feel we talked a little bit about that during the Winter post-mortem. We must have.

**Art:** Yeah. I don't know that we talked about it a lot going into Spring.

**Austin:** We didn't, but can I tell you the thing? The difference? Was like- This is- this is- I hope that this comes across as sweet and not as bad. When we started playing this game, I had not seen you be in a relationship for a long time. And I had not seen you as an adult in a relationship.

**Art:** Sure.

**Austin:** By the time we got to Winter- you were with Jess by Winter, and coming into Spring, I had spent a lot of time with both of you together. And seeing that side of you with her, seeing how happy she makes you, and seeing you in that playful mode, I knew how to play... Not that you are Hadrian or something, but that was so... such a guidance for me. The relationship you and Jess have. So, thank you to Jess.

**Art:** Yeah.

**Austin:** It meant a lot for me to figure out who Rosana was by thinking about Jess and Jess's strength. And then like, a hundred percent was pulling on- on who Jess is for Rosana.

**Art:** Your timeline is a little skewed.

**Austin:** I bet.

**Art:** We were- we were married by the time Winter got started.

**Austin:** But I hadn't spent time with you guys really.

**Art:** We had been- we- we've been together longer than Friends at the Table exists.

**Austin:** Oh, wow. Okay. Did I-?

**Art:** Yeah.

**Austin:** When did I first-? I first met her after I moved back here though, right?

**Art:** Yeah, definitely.

**Austin:** Okay.

**Art:** No, you didn't meet her right away. But yeah.

**Austin:** Okay. Yeah. So, that's- The big thing for me is very much like, spending that time with y'all helped me a lot with figuring out how to- how to frame those scenes with you. So, that was a huge thing. And also, thinking about Rosana honestly, in the cold winter game and being like, 'Here is a person who is the fucking leader of this community along with these other characters,' thinking about what her priorities were, and then doing the same with Benjamin as he grew up. So, that was a huge thing. I'm curious if there are other things though. Were there any other like... not regrets, but like, things that changed, or new directions y'all took? Or that even we took together that I am now blanking on cause I'm focused on this Hadrian one.

**Keith:** Um, thinking about... for me, this is not really an answer. It's sort of like, a side answer. But thinking about those in character instead of out of character has been really important for me.

**Austin:** Mm.

**Keith:** Not just in this season but-

**Austin:** Yeah.



**Keith:** -maybe especially in Hieron. Like, not- not thinking about something... Thinking about anything that I might consider as a mis- as a mistake on my part, instead having- being like, forcing myself to think of it as a mistake that- of the player character-

**Austin:** Right.

**Keith:** -like, gives me something to do with that. And then ends up making things feel... like, it ends up helping me not overthink it so much cause I'm like, 'Well, whatever I did, if I feel like I make the wrong choice, I can instead make Fero feel like he made the wrong choice, and that will help me do something else.'

**Austin:** Yeah. I'll definitely say there is a big list of these things that I'm like, always trying to get better at in terms of representation, in terms of making sure we're hitting themes in a way that I think is interesting. Again, people have sent notes every season to be like, 'Hey, I know you mean well. Here's how you fucked up. Or here's how you took a misstep. Or... here is some perspective that you might not have.'

**[2:15:00]**

**Austin** (continued): I take all that stuff super seriously and do my best to have it like, influence future direction. And so- and so, please know that at the very least those things- those are not plot based things most of the time. Those are- those are different types of things. So, those do mean a lot to me. So, please continue to feel free to send those in. Any other thoughts here?

**Janine:** I... So, this is like a complicated thing where like, at the end of Winter, one of my bigger regrets was that Adaire's family had never been on camera. And I think even through most of Spring, I was still kind of like, feeling like, 'It'd be kind of cool if like, someone from her fa-' Like, you know, they were in Velas. Maybe like, they were in the refugees, or you know. I was still kind of like, half-heartedly looking for these windows where that would come up and... But at the same time, now that it's done, and we didn't get that- like, we didn't see that, I don't even know if I'd call it a regret-

**Austin:** *[breathes a laugh]* Mhm.

**Janine:** -or a thing I would change in hindsight. Because like, the story that we always get about characters who separate from their family is like, 'Oh, there's a reunion, and maybe their family still sucks. Or maybe everything's better, and they make amends.' We don't see as often the story of like, 'I'm not close with my family and... maybe they're out there. I don't- I don't know.' Like-

**Austin:** Right.

**Janine:** We don't- we don't get the story of someone who has detached themselves consciously and isn't really seeking to connect. And maybe the thing they feel is more like... I think I kind of

was trying to hint at this when Adaire like, looks towards the destruction of Velas. In that moment where like, Hadrian's really upset about it, and she's just kind of like, 'Okay.'

**Austin:** *[laughs]* Right. Well, like-

**Janine:** Cause like, for her, it's- she... It's just- it's just a thing. It's just a thing that's passed that she's not necessarily looking to- to correct, and like... that's a way to be.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Janine:** Like, there's nothing wrong with that, and there's a lot of reasons that lead a person to feeling that way. And I didn't necessarily want to say that, 'No, the only way forward- or the only way for a character like this to- to move forward is to reconcile with that part of their past' cause I don't necessarily believe that. I think it can be helpful.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** But it's a very individual situation, and in Adaire's case I don't know that it was- that would have been the correct one.

**Austin:** And it didn't prevent her from making new connections, right?

**Janine:** No, absolutely not.

**Austin:** Like, sometimes we'll see that character... we'll see that character who like, has broken from home and because of that, 'Oh, no. They can never- Until they reconcile with home, they can never make real- you know, put down real roots again.' Like, no. Like, I mean she's Adaire. She's gonna be mobile.

**Janine:** You were not shy about using the word family to refer to-

**Austin:** A hundred percent.

**Janine:** -you know, her and Hella and Rix and Rowe and Barbello.

**Austin:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Janine:** Like, they are a family. That is her family.

**Austin:** Totally. A hundred percent.

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Austin:** So, uh... Next question. Is that okay? Unless someone still has something. Also, feel free to- again, just for people on the call, to ping me if I'm like, moving too quickly, if you want to like, pause and hit something. Or just say, 'I have a thing.'

**Keith:** I- I have a place that could- I have a place where we could- I could zoom in real quick on what I said earlier.

**Austin:** Sure.

**Keith:** I- I see all the time people still talking about Mother Glory, which is good.

**Austin:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Keith:** I think that's probably the um... I don't know how to- let's- how to say it. It's maybe the worst thing Fero did was-

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** -was leave. And there's a lot of real reasons why I did- why I, as a player, didn't stay. But like, the- the nice thing about having regrets either as a- as a player character or as a person is like, that- that choice like, informed a whole next season of how Fero was going to be.

**Austin:** *[lightly laughs]* Totally.

**Keith:** Or at least that combined with the rest of the end of Winter. So.

**Austin:** Yeah, definitely. I think that was a huge influence was thinking through how to make right by that- by that failure. Or that fault.

**Keith:** Well, and also doubling down, too. Like, both-

**Austin:** Right.

**Keith:** Like, in some ways making right, and in some ways being like, *[overlapped]* 'No, like- like- it-'

**Austin:** This is true about who Fero is.

**Keith:** Yeah. Like, it was-

**Austin:** *[overlapping]* Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Keith:** -important that I left, even though I feel bad about it. Like- and, you know, people can feel both ways about that.

**Austin:** Mhm. In fact, often will. Right? Like.

**Keith:** Right. Yeah.

**Austin:** It would be way easier if it had been Fero leaves and says, 'Fuck off.' *[breathes a laugh]*

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** And instead it was like, 'No, I'm- Can- can anyone else- can anyone else do this?' It's like, *[groans]* Oh, that's the fuckin knife twist.'

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Um, alright. Atticus writes in and says,

'What was the big moment that really cemented who your character was to you, if any?'

**Austin:** Coming off of that Fero example.

**Sylvia:** My one's pretty easy.

**Austin:** Sure.

**Sylvia:** I think like the end of Winter, that confrontation with Samothos.

**Austin:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Sylvia:** And like, I wanted to... I kind of held off on the last question because without bringing this up I couldn't really answer it.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Sylvia:** My only real thing that I want to- would re-evaluate is just like, having more of a direction at the beginning of Winter with Ephrim. Cause I didn't really feel like I found that until we got to like... Until we were going to the Archives.

**Austin:** Sure.

**Sylvia:** That's when I started to really feel like, comfortable with that character and feel about there. And like-

**Austin:** Yeah. You can't beat yourself up for that though in the sense that like, that is getting into a character. Like, you're going to spend three months...

**Sylvia:** Oh, yeah.

**Austin:** -just like, 'Who is this?'

**Sylvia:** Oh, for sure. Like, I'm not upset about it, but just like, in hindsight-

**Austin:** *[overlapping]* Yes, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Sylvia:** -if I could have had that like, stuff there it would've helped.

**Austin:** That definitely makes sense. Any other big moments that really cemented who your character was to you?

**Jack and Ali:** *[simultaneously]* Um-

**Jack:** Oh, sorry. Go ahead.

**Ali:** Oh. No. My answer is really quick, so I guess I'll say it. It was obviously Hella and Calhoun.

**Austin:** Uh huh. *[Jack laughs]*

**Ali:** But then the flip side of that was like, Hella jumping into the pond after Hadrian, at the end of Winter.

**Austin:** Oh, yeah. Sure. Totally.

**Jack:** I think mine was definitely Lem flooding the Stoneworks.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** *[laughing]* Oh god.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** As just being like... It- it suddenly hit on many beats that I- I was interested in exploring with Lem about- *[Ali begins speaking with someone off-mic]* responsibility and about neutrality and about characters who... It was- it felt so wonderful to make such a spectacularly misjudged like, violent decision on screen in the knowledge- and have that moment be just like, 'Oh my god. Okay. This is what this character's gonna be about now.' And that was like, a very clear interesting moment where it's like, 'Oh, right. We want to talk about what neutrality means, and we want to talk about- about how you get to this place. And- and if you can get away from it, and the ways in which you might do that.' And also, you know, Lem has always been a lens through which to talk about the history of places and the history of people. Like, Lem specifically has moves about, you know, 'What's this place like? And how did I learn it? And- and how is that hist- how did that history come through?' And so, for Lem to show up in this... unbelievably important historical place and then, through his own selfishness, destroy it *[laughs]* accidentally, felt really important, as a- as a way for me to start thinking about- about how I wanted to play-play the character.

**Austin:** Yeah, definitely. I think a fun nuance of that that gets... I love the fact that that happens because Lem is ostensibly trying to rescue Fero, but it never feels like that.

**Keith:** No, it doesn't.

**Austin:** It never feels like that at all. Even though that's the-

**Jack:** Nope.

**Austin:** -the actual objective. It's so good.

**Jack:** He's being given a task list. He's been given a really interesting-

**Austin:** Yup.

**Jack:** -engaging task list-

**Keith:** And then-

**Jack:** -that is interesting to the way he thinks about the world.

**Keith:** Which is- My answer is the yelling.

**Austin:** Right. Sure.

**Keith:** From- from right after- from the helping. *[Austin and Jack laugh]*

**Austin:** Love to have characters who are- who are in a good place.

**Jack:** Bad?

**Austin:** Yeah. Anyone else have answers here before we keep moving?

**Art:** Um, Hadrian not asking for help when he forgot the name of his god.

**Austin:** Sure. That's early. And that's- Yeah. It'd be so easy, right? If he could- if he could've opened up at all to anyone. He could have said, 'What is the- what... This is gonna sound weird. What is the name of the person I pray to and say their name a lot?' And he didn't.

**Art:** Yeah, everything's just rolling from there.

**Austin:** Adaire?

**Janine:** I think for me it is again... I think comes back to Aubade where, you know, Adaire set up DuCarte's.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** And like, she had everything she could have ever wanted. She had everything that she had strived for for her entire life. You know, she was established. She had built this thing. And she was still miserable and didn't understand it enough- enough to even acknowledge that she was miserable.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** She was just like, in that headspace where... she just could not even comprehend like, you know, 'I have all of the thing- I have all the components of what I believe a good life is.'

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** 'But there is still this like... malaise.' There's still this just like, deep thing where it's all she could do was try and misplace this energy, and like, you know, kind of self-sabo- self- self sabotage herself and like, hurt people that she cared about because she didn't really know what to do with that feeling. Cause she had nowhere else to put it.

**Austin:** Yeah.... Anything from Throndir here?

**Dre:** I think unintentionally and more in hindsight, the end of Winter where Throndir quote-unquote kills Arrell for the first time.

**Austin:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Dre:** And like, does it wrong.

**Austin:** Yeah. That moment fucking rules though.

**Dre:** It does because I like *[Austin groans]* I think for- again, for me in hindsight, like, I think a lot of the moves I took in Winter for Throndir were much more combat focused.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Dre:** And then, in that moment, I like, just like- I forgot the rules of combat because I was more worried about in Throndir as like, 'Oh, I don't want Benjamin to see somebody getting murdered.'

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Dre:** And that to me was like, a good moment of like, 'Okay. Yeah. That's- that's who Throndir is.' Like he's capable of violence, but I need to move away from making him a like... a person who commits violence as a first act.

**Austin:** As a default, yeah. Totally.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah, that's super interesting. Alright. That's everyone, right? I don't think I skipped anybody. Um, Ry asks for... for mostly Ali, Janine, and me to fill in some blanks here on the Adel- the a- fwoo. I almost said Adelaide. I really did. *[Ali and Sylvia laugh]* I really truly did. The Adaire and Hella relationship. The Hella and- and Adaire relationship.

'How early was this arc for these two characters planned out? As early as Winter? Were there any conversations or considerations you had to bear in mind to make a player character-player character relationship work? To Austin, similarly, were there any considerations that went into this from a GM-ing angle? Do you have any thoughts on the importance of making relationships canon in the show versus leaving that space open for interpretation for either PCs or NPCs?'

**Austin:** I'm gonna let y'all take the lead on this cause that's kind of what I did- That's my answer, right? Is like, I...

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** There are moments when I was like- off-mic, where I was like, 'If this is a thing that is- we're going to do, we're running out of time.' *[Janine and Ali laugh]* But that was kind of all of the nudging. I was not trying to like, push anyone into any decision making on that front. I very much wanted you to figure it out on your end.

**Ali:** Yeah. Okay. I feel like I have a lot of things to say, so I'm just gonna run through the list-

**Austin:** Let's do it.

**Ali:** -right now. Which is... Oh my god. Okay. *[laughs]* The first thing is that I think people feel like the Hella-Adaire thing was really sudden, and I invite you to go listen to the scene *[Austin and Ali laugh]* Adaire was introduced in. *[laughs harder]*

**Janine:** Yes. Yes. Right?!

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Ali:** You only have to listen to that one.

**Janine:** It was from the jump in a way.

**Ali:** It was from the jump. Um, the second thing is that I feel like... We- we definitely talked about it a little bit, but I feel like we only talked about it at the beginning of Spring in terms of just being like... 'If this is gonna happen, it's cool that it happens.' I think my side playing it was very much like, the ball is kind of in Adaire's court because the thing that was really interesting for me with



Adaire was that like duality with her whole thing. So, if Hella was just a mark, I could have easily played her as a mark. *[lightly laughing]* So, just like, going through all the Spring, playing Hella as very obviously in love with Adaire was very easy and fun to do. The- *[sighs]* My other like, favorite Adaire line is when she's talking to the like- the... the bar dude who is in the Dark Sun-

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Ali:** -and he's like, 'Yeah, you should come to one of those meetings.' And she's like, 'Yeah, I don't really hang out with that many people that much.' And that's just like, such a full easy lie that she made. *[Austin, Ali, and Janine laugh]* I feel like I wanted to leave the opening for like, all of Adaire's interactions with people to be that much of a lie. What else did it want to say? Oh, I think the third thing that I wanted to say is that I- I feel like, especially on Tips at the Table, we talk a lot about how like, you should definitely talk about all the time. You should do like, a comfort thing. You should always be talking about this. But like, I feel the way that it really happened, in a lot of ways that these types of relationships do, is that me and Janine just made a bunch of tweets about it. *[Ali, Janine, and Sylvia laugh]*

**Austin:** Ha!

**Ali:** *[laughing hard]* We just kinda knew. *[Dre and Keith laugh]*

**Janine:** And also, in discord we'd like link each other to really good Hella-Adaire fan art-

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** -and be like, 'Damn. This is good, isn't it?' *[Sylvia laughs hard; Janine and Ali laugh]*

**[2:30:00]**

**Austin:** Yeah. I can't believe that both Hella and Adaire started threads on r/relationships about whether the other one was into them. *[more general laughter]*

**Ali:** *[laughs]* Yeah. We were- we knew we were kinda on the same page. It was great to do. The thing that complicated it is that I... *[exhales]* I was really not expecting Adelaide to like, say that she loved Hella, and she was the first person to do that. That was like, one of those things that could have just been subtext forever.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Ali:** I don't mind subtexts. *[laughs]*

**Austin:** Like that is like- That is one of the complicating things about a lot of this stuff is that we- It- Just to- To butt in for a second on this last thing around the importance of making relationships canon the show is that I think that's important. And also, as a reader, I love subtext. *[Ali laughs]* As like- as a person who like, just finished playing Fire Emblem, I wish that

game had way more queer relationships. Like, you know, all the way through its entire being. But also, I like a lot of the subtext that is there. And that is like, as a showrunner, that is a difficult thing to end up playing with because you... I mean one of things is I hope that the audience trusts us since our makeup is very diverse in terms of sexuality, and they know what our fucking interests are, right? *[Ali laughs]*

But also, it is- The other half of that is the other thing you said before, which is the idea that like, Adaire could have been lying the whole time is also interesting to us, as- as players and as, you know, creators. And that is- It's tough because when you're- when you're in a- a marginalized group, you are always being forced to speak for that group, even if that's not your intentional thing. And so, while none of us would have wanted to make the show where the lesbian relationship turned out to be a fucking lie, that would have sucked, there are also, as players- **Ali**, you're interested in the idea of like, Hella is like, 'Hm. I don't know what to think about- about Adaire. *[Ali laughs]* Oh, she's a fucking liar.' That would have been interesting, right? So, it's tough to... It is tough to walk those lines. And I think it is just about being like, as careful as possible. Regarding Adelaide, she knew she had to fucking shoot her shot. She could see what was going on. *[Ali and Janine laugh]* She was like, 'I cannot fuck around. This door could close.'

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Little- little did she know!

**Janine:** Yeah, I think so much of it did just evolve- evolve from like... flirting... just because and then realizing like, 'Oh, this works really well. Like, this a good character dynamic. This is interesting. This is like-' It's interesting when characters interact, in general. And seeing characters interact in a level that is like... intimate, but also kind of exploratory. Kind of like, not sure. Like, I think, on my part, I always played Adaire as like... deliberately a little bit burned, a little bit wary. Like, you know, *[Ali laughs]* the Blake- the Blake rejection always looms large when we talk about Adaire and romance-

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** -as a thing of like, Adaire has a hard time putting herself out there because historically she gets kind of burned because she's not- again, not a great person. A lot of people, I think, in her past probably were like, 'You're okay to hang out with, but we'll just stop there.' So, I think there is a degree of like... being averse to risk that made her very cautious. That made it so it would have been weird if.... It would have been weird if we had- had really like, cemented that relationship sooner than I- than we did, I think. Like.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Janine:** I think to me it feels the opposite of sudden. It feels like a slow burn kind of thing that was just like a big thing happened. And like a *big* thing. Hella died.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Yeah, I think that's-

**Janine:** That was a-

**Ali:** -the other half of it- Yeah, I-

**Janine:** That was a big catalytic kind of moment of like-

**Ali:** Uh huh.

**Janine:** I think the wheels were already well in motion before that, but that was definitely a significant tipping point. Of just like, 'Oh, this is right. The world has ended and could end again.' And like, we're in this- this apocalyptic loop, and I'm over here sitting on my hands instead of just telling the girl that I like her. Or like, that kind of thing. It's- it's- it's such a weird thing to navigate.

**Ali:** Mhm.

**Janine:** I don't think- If we had- If we had set out from the beginning and said, 'We want to have a relationship between two player characters,' I don't think I would have volunteered...

**Austin:** Mhm. *[Ali laughs]*

**Janine:** -to do that. Cause it's like, an intimidating prospect. I would have been like, 'That's cool. I'm gonna- I will support you guys on the sidelines. *[Austin laughs]* I will be your number one fan. I don't know that that is for me though. That seems like biting off a little more than I could chew at the moment. But thank you.' But yeah, I just... I don't know. It was a baby step thing.

**Ali:** Yeah, I think it works exactly the way that we did it because the- the way that it ended up being like a full confession on screen was like, I was so torn about the Hella pala-din body thing. Like, I knew that I- I knew that I didn't want her to just like, be dead. *[Keith laughs]* Because I wanted to play the rest of Hieron, right? Like.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Ali:** If it was the middle of the season, maybe. But knowing that we only had like, one thing and the finale left, it was like, 'Wha- I- But- I want to be Hella.' But it was such a thing like, knowing that she wouldn't want that for herself into like- I eventually messaged you, and I was like, 'Listen. We've been talking about what the pickups things are, and like, I think the only way that I am gonna be able to let her do this onscreen in a way that I'm comfortable with is to show what she still wants to live for.' And that ended up being Adaire. *[lightly laughs]* Cause there's like- There was also just that thing of like, 'Oh, she should have just went to Adularia at that point.'

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Ali:** But like, being- existing within Hieron being able to like, exist physically in that space was... cause Adaire was in it, you know? I'm happy.

**Janine:** And that ended up being the kind of, in that scene and also in the epilogue, I think I sort of tried to... I tried to differentiate Adaire before- *[sighs]* before she acknowledged she started- that she cared for Hella from... It's tough to explain. You know, I think about the cracker scene. *[Ali laughs]* Where she's like, you know, basically just like, 'Look. I- You can- Here's this evidence that I thought of you in some trivial way, so you'll be happy now, right?' *[Austin laughs]* Because I'm saying the right thing to make you care about- you know, to make you care about me, as a friend or whatever.' I compare that to when she's talking to Hella about the body and saying like, 'Okay. I'm making this case in favor of you doing this, but I don't want you to do it just because you believe the words I'm saying. Cause the words I'm saying mean nothing.'

**Austin:** Mhm. *[Ali laughs]*

**Janine:** And I gue- It comes up again in the epilogue where I made a point of having Adaire I say like, 'I'm not gonna be alone. Like, you don't have to come with me just because you don't want me to be alone. It's not- You know, I'm not just- I'm not telling you these things to... to try and sway you or persuade you.' Because again, that is- that has been historically so much of Adaire's thing is like, 'How much do I have to talk to get you to believe the thing I'm saying?'

**Ali:** Mm.

**Janine:** And I wanted to make sure that her relationship with Hella was kind of like, hands clean in that regard of her being like, honest about... 'I'm not just doing this because I know if I do it enough you might believe me.' That was a beat that was important to hit and was also tricky. *[Ali laughs]*

**Austin:** Totally.

**Ali:** We got there.

**Austin:** You got there.

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Ali:** It's all there. Yeah, it was fun to do. I'm glad that they're- I'm glad that it was like a real thing. Cause that's the other part of it for me was that like, I- I could play through all of Spring, and the characterization would have just been like, Hella who has a big crush on her friend.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** And like, that was clear in every conversation. And that would have been fine. Sometimes that's what happens. The like- the flip side of that is that it's like, interesting that you... talk about Adaire as being kind of guarded because I had always felt like the um... the true connection thing was always like a stone on Hella's chest. *[Ali and Janine laugh]* Cause like, overhearing that and knowing that person for so long, and then just being like, 'Okay.'

**Austin:** 'Oh, it's like that. Okay.'

**Ali:** Like, 'Sure. Okay. You're gonna go find that' was always why... Hella wasn't gonna be the person who was like, 'We should do this. We should be together.' Because in her mind, she was like, 'Oh, Adaire knows this door is open. She's just searching for something.' And I'd always like, use that as inspiration for the character, but really wanted to make sure that she didn't talk about it in the confession scene. I had like, almost said something. But it was just- it would have been such a weird thing cause like, that's a thing that you think for ten years.

**Austin:** Yes.

**Ali:** But you don't like, say to somebody like, *[amused]* 'Hey, eleven years ago you said this thing-'

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Ali:** '-and I'm gonna bring it up right now'.

**Austin:** *[laughs]* At the worst possible time? *[Ali and Janine laugh]*

**Ali:** So, good for them.

**Austin:** Hell yeah.

**Janine:** Good for them.

**Austin:** Good for them. *[Ali laughs]* What a family. A family can be anything, y'all.

**Ali:** Mhm. *[Janine laughs]*

**Austin:** Next question. Yeah? Yeah. Okay. Lucy wants to know,

'How much did scheduling affect the storyline, particularly in Spring? It seemed strange to me that Lem reunited with Emmanuel only to instantly leave him again in early Spring. At the time, I chalked this character choice up to how groups could coordinate recording times. Were there any changes to character direction/arc choices in Hieron attributed to group scheduling?'

**Austin:** Lem, was that a scheduling thing?

**Jack:** No.

**Austin:** It's just Lem kind of sucks?

**Jack:** Yeah, it's Lem kind of sucks. I think Lem has been through a- a... I mean everybody has. I think Lem has been through a kind of deeply weird experience. And also, it comes back to what I was talking earlier about Lem kind of being pretty good at identifying the symptoms as being wrong, but really terrible at identifying why the causes are wrong.

**Austin:** Mm.

**Jack:** And I think one of the ways Lem, you know, does that is... gets out of Aubade and- and is like, 'Oh my god. Emmanuel! You rule! I'm a big Emmanuel fan. Well, time to get to work.'  
*[Austin and Jack laugh]* And- and that's a- that's a really difficult uncomfortable tension for like, a lot of reasons. And a thing that I- A thing that I'm really happy with... We talked about this because it was something that was a source of anxiety for me, like, I think both off and on recording where it's like, 'How do we tell a story about someone who is beginning to think they might want to be in a stable place or with the person they love, while they are also an adventurer?' Like, just from a sort of formal perspective, like, 'How do we get the adventure and also... that? And is that- is that possible?' And I think that the starting point for that kind of had to be Lem returning and then saying, 'Oh, it's so good to see you. Uhhh, gotta go.'

**Austin:** Right. Right. There was a lot... Here is- This is a fun thing that did not happen, but I was thinking a lot about ways to communicate that Emmanuel finally felt stable in the relationship despite you taking steps. Because you had taken- becau- despite you taking steps away- because you had taken steps home. You know what I mean? Like, as you made more- more-

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Austin:** -put down more roots at the university, would Emmanuel- would he follow up by being like, 'And here's how I'm supporting you to go off and adventure'? And here is-

**Jack:** Right.

**Austin:** -here is an idea I pitched to Janine in January, which is, 'What if Emmanuel built a cabinet for Lem to strap to his back?' And Janine said, 'What?' And then I showed her this screenshot from this adventure game that I can't remember the- or this like, RPG I can't remember the name of- Outward? I think it's from Outward.

**Jack:** Oh.

**Austin:** Where instead of a backpack, this dude just has a cabinet. And Janine made some good counter arguments... about how-

**Jack:** Mhm.

**Austin:** -why... You know, my thought was Emmanuel would be like, 'You can keep this cabinet in my room, or you can bring it with you when you go places.' *[Austin and Jack laugh]* And Janine made some good counterarguments. But the thing that I said was, but then I don't get to be like, 'Your boyfriend built you this cabinet.' And I never did that. But mostly I never did it, not because I didn't agree with the idea that the cabinet was good, but because by the time it felt right for Emmanuel to be supportive of you leaving, you weren't leaving as often anymore.  
*[lightly laughs]*

**Jack:** Mhm.

**Austin:** And that's just how it works sometimes, right? So.

**Jack:** Mhm. I really- You know, Lem... Lem was always a three act structure. A punch, punch, punch. A one, two, three punch-

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** -of 'Let's present a cute flaky... orc.'

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Jack:** 'Oh my god. This guy actually kind of sucks. Let's spend a season really trying to sell that.' And then like, 'Okay. Now where?' And I really believed that it could go both ways, and I would have been happy to tell the story both ways.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** I would be the first to be... I want the best for Lem, and I want the best for people that care about Lem and Lem cares about. But, you know, also, I'll tell... I'll take him the other way, if I need to.

**Austin:** Totally.

**Jack:** But because the season- The more the season went along, and the more the broad narrative themes of... community and building community and what community looks like in turmoil and how you stick by and struggle with and care for the people around you, it felt like the only way I could begin to push him in a way that didn't feel like, monumentally bleak for a final season of a character was towards those people-

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Jack:** -and towards that community.

**Austin:** Yeah, definitely. I'll just say broadly here, in terms of the question of scheduling, I guess there's a here or there, in terms of- Really it came down to more of like, 'Who wants to stay home? Who wants to go away?'

**Jack:** Mm.

**Ali:** Mhm.

**Austin:** And can we keep those groups-

**Jack:** Over and over.

**[2:45:00]**

**Austin:** -over and over again. And also, just like, 'Well, we know we need an away game. I mean if y'all want to all just continue to stay home, you can do that, but-'

**Jack:** God, there were so many moments where we'd just like, not a poll, but we were like-  
**Austin** was like, 'Who's staying home?' And everyone's said, 'Me.' *[Jack and Ali laugh]*

**Austin:** I was like, 'Okay. But the clocks will tick,' and they did. Even with you moving, obviously. They would have ticked way more if we had done like, a double downtime at some point, you know? Which is an interesting dilemma when it comes to like, the way fronts work in Dungeon World and storytelling. Because like, 'Well, if my concerns are at home, then shouldn't I stay home?' And like, 'Yeah, but also, the world is gonna keep movin'.'

**Keith:** Such a- That's such a funny thing. I don't remember it happening at all because my thing with Fero was like, 'Geez. I need to do a home game at some point. I haven't done one in forever.' *[Ali laughs]*

**Austin:** You- Yeah. Well, you were always the person who was most eager to be like, 'I don't need to fuckin' stick around here. *[lightly laughs]* I can go wherever I want and have a good time.'

**Keith:** For the same- almost the same reasons everyone else was eager to stay.

**Austin:** Yeah. Is there anything else there, in terms of scheduling affecting stuff?

**Ali:** I... So, not super. But I do really regret never having an arc with Ephrim.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Ali:** I went into Spring, and I was like, 'I can't wait until we finally do a game together.' *[laughs]*



**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** That never happened, huh?

**Ali:** And we can see what this is like.

**Sylvia:** Okay, I have a new answer to the, 'Do you regret anything?,' Austin. *[Austin and Ali laugh]* And it's that!

**Austin:** Wow.

**Ali:** It's okay. We were involved in a whole thing at the end together. So...

*[crosstalking]*

**Austin:** God.

**Keith:** Fero had almost no... I don't think Fero had an arc...

**Ali:** You can just imagine the interactions they've had.

**Keith:** I don't think Fero had an arc with um... Adaire either. Maybe one...

**Austin:** Um-

**Keith:** I might just be thinking about the- like, the times when everyone was together.

**Austin:** Yeah. There are downtime stuff where people were together, but that's kind of it.

**Keith:** Yeah. I think so.

**Austin:** And the like-

**Janine:** I feel like the only a Adaire-Fero interaction...

**Austin:** Oh, that's no- *[quietly]* Is that-

**Janine:** -in Spring was like...

**Keith:** The dragon stuff?

**Janine:** -arriving from Aubade and being like, 'What the hell is that thing? Weird. Okay.' Like- *[Keith laughs]*

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Yeah. Pretty much.

**Austin:** I guess that stuff is-

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Keith:** And then there was- there was almost nothing with Hadrian either. There was like-

**Austin:** Well, and then the dragon fight, everyone was together. That's the one time everyone was together.

**Keith:** Right. Yeah, yeah.

**Janine:** Mm.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Right?

**Janine:** Mhm.

**Austin:** Because Fero was Alcyon... was the mistral. It was the- What are the floating islands called? Why have I already lost all of this shit? They're called the mistral.. The group is called The Quill... Wow.

**Keith:** The floating isles was the-

**Austin:** It's just gone. Just-

**Ali:** Wait, who are you losing?

**Austin:** The birds. The mistral. What were they called? What was that place called? See? This is what I mean. Like, I closed these tabs in my brain. They're gone. They may as well not exist.  
*[lightly laughs]*

**Keith:** Yeah. I can't remember the name of the place either. I just call them the floating isles.

**Austin:** The something isles. Weren't they the something isles?

**Keith:** I thought they were floating. The floating isles.

**Austin:** They were floating.

**Ali:** *[overlapped]* Is it important?

**Austin:** No.

**Keith:** But I thought that was just a nickname. I think there's a real name. There's gotta be a real name.

**Austin:** There's probably a real name.

**Keith:** They don't call them the floating isles. They live on them. To them it's just the Isles.

**Jack:** Ali?

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Hm?

**Jack:** Did you have-

**Ali:** Hello?

**Jack:** Did you work out the name?

**Ali:** No, I said, 'Is it important?' *[laughs]*

**Jack:** Oh. *[laughs]*

**Austin:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. That was- Yeah, Ali was like, 'Don't- We don't need to talk about this.' Uh- *[Ali laughs] [responding to the chat]* The Isles of Flight! The Isles of Flight. Thank you.

**Keith:** Right.

**Austin:** Thank you.

**Keith:** Flight.

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

**Art:** Ali was like, 'We're halfway through this question document.'

**Austin:** I'm gonna keep movin'. Let's keep movin'. Here's a fun one.

[From Damian]

'How did the Dream Essence sequence during the second home party arc come together? At what point did Jack know/realize they were playing Snitch Nightly? It was one of my favorite parts of the whole season, and the slow realization of what was going on really blew me away.'

**Austin:** Jack, did I give you a character sheet that said Snitch Nightly?

**Jack:** I knew before we recorded.

**Austin:** Oh! Because we did it. I revealed it to you...

**Jack:** So, this is one of my favorite moments of like, us-

*[crosstalking]*

**Austin:** This was orig- this is a-

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** -us screwing up our own show.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** It's like, we make a good show, I think. And part of the way we make it is that we edit it. And we like to talk about shit, and we decide when things didn't work.

**Austin:** Yep.

**Jack:** And like, at one point, we got the whole Snitch Nightly sequence in about four minutes, right?

**Austin:** Yeah. Five. *[laughs]* It was exactly like a midseason reveal in the faction game with Sylvia and Dre in COUNTERWeight-

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Austin:** -where I revealed what was up with- Natalya Greaves discovers a thing about an antagonist in COUNTERWeight, and then a week later, or like, three days after recording, I was like, *[sucks teeth]* 'That's not the way to do that. Delete all that. That doesn't go in the episode.' And then this was the same thing where like, over the week, we all talked and we were like, 'That's not- No...'

**Jack:** It was like, a good beat., but we-

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** -were all just like, 'Oh, this feels so weird. Like, this... this isn't landing right or whatever.'

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And then I think we all put our heads together and were like, 'How do we do this? What is this?'

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And I think the answer we came up with was just... *[laughs lightly]* dream episode.

**Austin:** Dream episode. Yeah, totally. Especially cause we'd already done the weird... We'd already started the weird dream shit, right?

**Jack:** Oh, yeah. That- One of the recent episodes- Recent. *[Jack and Austin laugh lightly]* One of the episodes near that begins with Adaire, Hella, and Lem... I think it's just those three.

**Austin:** Getting the echo of the Hitchcock dream, right?

**Jack:** Uh, they are- They see the burning sun in the university... right?

**Austin:** Right. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. And I-

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Jack:** It was just like *[pulsating]* in the background.

**Austin:** When I- Sorry, when I say the echo, the thing that- the reason I say that is because I actually took a lot of words from that- from Hitchcock in- in the university-

**Jack:** Oh, in the chapel?

**Austin:** -then the Memoriam. Yeah, yeah, yeah. That- A lot of my descriptions of what they saw were literally word for word from that sequence. And so, yeah. So, I already knew weird dreams is a thing we can fuck around with, and then yeah, we decided to do a pickup. Or no. We didn't do a pickup. We just played another- another session where you got some Dream Essence going, and that brought you to a place where you could see that story unfold. Or be part of that story.

**Jack:** Mm.

**Austin:** But we didn't script it. It wasn't scripted in that way.

**Ali:** Yeah, I think what it had originally been was cause like, Lem was doing research anyway.

**Austin:** Yes.

**Jack:** Oh, yeah.

**Ali:** So, I think had come at a point where it was just like, 'You would've just said all of the stuff.'

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** And then we were like, 'Ehhh, Lem should probably find out differently.'

**Austin:** Yes. That's totally right.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** It was like, Lem found that Uklan Tel had cracked this. And instead, what Uklan Tel had cracked was... was-

**Jack:** Dream Essence.

**Austin:** -was Aubrey's Dream Essence recipe. And then, you use that thinking you would find stuff. Yeah. Totally.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Austin:** In terms of the broader stuff, I just wanna use this as an opportunity to be like, 'When did I-' I got some angry e-mails from people who were like, '**Austin**, when did you know when Snitch Nightly was fuckin', the Solarch?' *[Sylvia and Ali laugh]*

**Jack:** The red- the red- the red thread between some images.

**Austin:** Yeah. It's a lot. There's a lot out there. Yeah, there's like- Yeah, conspiracy charts and shit. I knew- I knew that Snitch Nightly had gotten Maelgwyn in that fucking gauntlet then. When Mael- By the time Maelgwyn was in a gauntlet, I knew Snitch Nightly had done that shit. I didn't really put together the Solarch stuff until probably... *[blows air through lips]* I wanna say late Winter when y'all were down... ha, downstairs- when you were in the lower sta- *[lightly laughs]* lower lamina and encountered the church. Cause that is when I had to really think through, 'Who do these people report up to?' And that was when I first started thinking about Snitch for the Solarch. I didn't confirm it in a way that I was ready to play with until I talked to Ali and was like, 'Would Castille be down with this?' *[Ali laughs and whines slightly]* I think what I-

**Ali:** You didn't ask- *[laughs]*

**Austin:** What?

**Ali:** You were like, 'Would Castiel have done a mean thing for Maelgwyn?' And I was like, 'Probably.'

**Austin:** Yeah, that is what I said. Yeah. I did not actually give you the full details, right?

**Ali:** No, no, no.

**Austin:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Totally.

**Ali:** You were extremely cagey, and I was just like- 'Okay.'

**Austin:** Yes, But like, if you ever go back and look at tweets where I'm like, 'Yo, fuck Snitch Nightly.'

**Jack:** *[overlapped]* So, this is the other thing-

**Austin:** 'Snitch Nightly is no fuckin' Lazer Ted' is cause I've known for years that he fucked over Maelgwyn.

**Jack:** And as soon as like-

**Ali:** Don't do that.

**Jack:** Don't do that. *[laughs]*

**Austin:** Right.

**Jack:** As soon as Austin was like, 'Oh, do you want a play Snitch Nightly in this thing?' The number one... number one- Number one primo goal was, 'Don't- don't reveal who it is until it needs to be done.'

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And number two was, 'I want this to be a bad person, and I want to play every bit of this character as like, a slimy unpleasant...' If- if this character has any kind of zingers, they're not like Lazer Ted zingers where we're like, 'Oh, yeah!'

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** 'This guy!'

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And so like, a lot of the- a lot of the fun and a lot of the reasons that scene was interesting for me was... in what ways do we describe villainy on a big and on a small scale?

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Jack:** And, you know, like, we describe stuff in that sequence that some of the like, most like, basically, unpleasant stuff that we've done in the show-

**Austin:** Yep.

**Jack:** -in terms of just like, straight contract killings.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Uh, union busting. *[lightly laughs]* Like, bits- nasty, nasty bits and pieces. And it was very important to me to place Snitch in a... If he was just a criminal goof- a lovable, criminal goofball, *and* the Solarch? That would have felt wildly like, jaring.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** He had to be both a criminal goofball, a genuinely nasty piece of work and the Solarch.

**Austin:** Well, and my favorite flair is that you end up making him into an opportunist after he's the Solarch. Right? That is the bit that sealed the deal for me.

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

**Austin:** With like, 'Oh, yeah.' Again, this is what I mean when I say, 'You have to play the game to give you these answers.' If I had- if we had not ever gotten to this, I was like, 'Oh, yeah. Snitch Nightly is the Solarch.' How fucking unfulfilling would that be if in the post mortem- *[Ali laughs]*

**Jack:** Just even a shitty- He's a shitty Solarch is the thing.

**Austin:** Right. But like- Like-

**Jack:** Right? Like, it's not even like, they give him the thing, and he's like, 'Noble. Noble villain now.'

**Austin:** Right. No, he's the worst. So, yeah. So, that is- that is a great example of what I mean when I say like, 'You have to play to get the good stuff.' I'm gonna keep moving because we still have a bunch. Kate writes in and says,

'What do you feel the existence of the King of Winter card adds to the gameplay of The Quiet Year, especially when the game is being played as an ending and not a beginning? It's hard for me to see how such an arbitrary and unknown end point allows for you all to play to find out what happens, especially when people can and do add major new discoveries and projects all the time. But you must see value in it or you'd have removed or modified it. So, I'd love to hear your meta game design thoughts.'

**Austin:** A couple people seemed excited to talk about this one. I will say, for my part, you know, play to find out what happens is very flexible to me. It does not mean 'play with my hand on the rudder at all times.' I really love the procedurality of The Quiet Year, and I fundamentally liked the fact that- to speak back to that ambiguity from a few questions ago- that it would guarantee



us that feeling of unfinished business. That there was never going to be an end to Hieron where it was like, 'And then it was all wrapped up.'

Because I would never let there be one. If we were not playing The Quiet Year thirty minutes before the end, I would have had Galenica show up and be like, 'I might reconfigure all this.' Right? Like, I would have found a way to intr- to reintroduce instability moments from the end. And the difference is The Quiet Year let me wash my hands of being that person and does it itself by making you spin a billion different plates. We can talk about this-

**Keith:** It sort of-

**Austin:** -a little bit later-

**Keith:** Oh, sorry.

**Austin:** -but like, that was the- that is always going to be the core of how we had to step away, but go ahead.

**Keith:** Oh, um- It's sort of like, you- you need to get somewhere, but you don't know how to get there. And you found a car, and you don't have any money, and you just have to drive the car where you think you're going until it runs out of gas.

**Austin:** *[laughs]* Yeah.

**Keith:** And you don't know when it's gonna run out of gas cause it like- it hits empty before it actually stops. And it's like, 'Well, we're going until we can't go.' *[lightly laughs]* This metaphor breaks down because when the car runs out of gas, I guess you just live there now. **[Ali, Sylvia, and Keith laugh]**

**Austin:** Wait. Keith, no. You walk until you get to a gas station.

**Keith:** Well, in the- We did not. We don't- There's not another season of Hieron, so we don't-

**Austin:** No.

**Keith:** -fill it back up.

**Austin:** Okay. Sorry I don't mean to be- I don't mean to upset your analogy. I'm just saying if you- that happens to you, you're allowed to not live where you end up. **[Ali laughs]**

**Keith:** No, no. That's where- that's where the- That's why I'm saying the meta- that's where the metaphor breaks down.

**Austin:** Got you. Got ya.

**Keith:** In real life-

**Austin:** Yes. Yes.

**Keith:** -I would walk to a gas station. It's happened before.

**Austin:** Good.

**Keith:** I used to drive a car that leaked gasoline.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** For a long time. Too long. But yeah. In- in The Quiet Year, when the car runs out of gas, you live there.

**Austin:** You live there. This is the world. Does anyone else have thoughts on this? I know...

**Janine,** I think you also mark to this question. And you've run The Quiet Year more than once at this point.

**Janine:** Um, I've only run it-

**Austin:** Or maybe you've run it once.

**Janine:** I've run at once, but I've played it-

**Austin:** Well, run it- It's not supposed to have a GM anyway, but-

**Janine:** Yeah, but you know.

**Austin:** But no. I know- Yeah, I said it.

**Janine:** Especially when you're playing it with people who've never played it before. It's- you know. So, I mean... *[sighs]* It is an arbitrary end point, but I've played games of The Quiet Year where the King of Spades was basically the last card in the pile. And, you know, at that point, it's not really arbitrary. At that point, you may as well have just been playing until- you know playing every single card. And the thing is when you- when that happens, when the King of Spades isn't an arbitrary end point, when it's just the end, you still have projects that you- that you've just started recently.

You still have discoveries. You still have more importantly a lot of ideas that you've introduced, maybe ideas that you introduced seasons ago, where nothing ever came to fruition. Because that's kind of the nature of that game. And that's also just like, the nature of um... I would say organic group storytelling is like, sometimes you're gonna introduce something, and it's kind of a 'meh' thing. That is- that is just kind of a footnote. In the Marielda Quiet Year, those-

I mean this isn't a- this isn't a fair thing because they did come up again, but the- the two brothers who had their hands fused to the weird orb-

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** -and they swam through the lava and like- You know, they come up again, but like, weird, life-protecting lava orb, in that particular game of The Quiet Year specifically, I don't think it came up again. Like, it was- it was a thing that I had revisited from earlier that like, it was an artifact that someone found and-

**Austin:** Totally.

**Janine:** -whatever. But like, you would think an artifact like that would play a more central role in that story, and it didn't. And that's fine because that's what that game is. That game is you just kind of go where the cards take you, where the ideas take you. And it's- it's... it's very natural in that way. And again, I don't- I don't think it's a bad thing. I think especially, you know, you- When the episode was being edited, Austin, you said Janine, I forgot how joyful or something you were when you were like, 'What if we draw the King? What if we draw the King?'

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Janine:** And that- that like, sincere. *[laughs]*

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

**Janine:** I was sincerely *thrilled* when the King came up right after that because it just felt like the perfect ending point, As- as like, sudden as it was and as dramatic, it just felt like, 'Yes. Of course this is where this has to stop.' And it's no- Like that's- I'm saying 'where it has to stop' very deliberately. And I'm not saying 'where it has to end.' Because it is not the end of the story.

**[3:00:00]**

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Janine:** It is like the- the house lights going up. You know, the curtain dropping. Like, it's- it's just... we stop seeing it at that point. But it's not the end. It's not- And again, it's- it's... *[exhales]* Yeah, it's- I think goes back to what I was saying earlier of like, you don't really want to answer every single question. Because when you have the unanswered stuff, when you have the like, 'What happens immediately after this?,' when you have that rolling around in your head, it is so much easier to feel like a story is a living thing versus just a thing that is settled and done. And you can move on from it and- and whatever, you know?

**Austin:** Yeah. Totally. Dre?

**Dre:** Um, I think this is pretty similar to what **Janine** said, but I think something like, you know, having this penultimate card- er this ultimate card that just is there, that just makes everything end, I think is really emblematic of what makes telling stories in an actual play format like, so unique and so fun. You know, I think it's- it's stuff like that that is the difference between like, we could tell the stories we tell by like, collaboratively writing a book. But it's- it's mechanics where like, you have to roll dice or you draw cards-

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Dre:** -to kind of see how your idea plays out or what happens. And then you have to connect the dots between your intention and what the dice or the card dictates is the outcome that I think is like, really fun and unique about this genre.

**Austin:** Yeah, it produces so much excitement, and the prompts and restraints for storytelling are so powerful that I think it drives a lot of us to take risks that we wouldn't otherwise. You know, if you were like, 'Alright-' If after every turn you were like, 'Do you want to play the Frost Shepard? Is this the end?' We would never say- No one would be in agreement with when that is. And my- my guess would be we would all go longer. We would err on the side of, 'Oh, but what- one more thing.' And I like that restraint. I like that prompt.

I'll also say that like, there's a- that thing that- that Dre said is a big part of why you can hear us play at the end. Ali doesn't cut it when Benjamin finishes speaking. Ali cuts it when Keith draws the card, right? Like, there's a world where we could have just been like, 'And then the Frost Shepherd arrived.' And we didn't do that. You heard Keith run for the other computer and be like, 'One second. I got it! I got it! I got it!' And all of us like, brimming with energy and excitement and fear. And that is the show. That is actual play, as much as us going back and recording a pickup because we thought like,, 'Ah. Mm. Ah...' You need that- the mechanisms of play to produce the effect that- that we do. And- and so, yeah. I think that's my little love letter to that. I'm gonna keep movin'. Eleanor wants to know,

'How did you manage the extra scenes bringing other players on the camera? Especially did people know in advance that Nick would be coming back before Benjamin cast the spell?'

**Austin:** I don't think in any of those cases anyone knew, except to the people coming on, and sometimes not even them. *[amused; Sylvia and Ali laugh]* Sometimes I'd be like, 'Ali. Ali, Ali, Ali. Ali, are you around.?''

**Dre:** 'Are you up?'

**Austin:** 'Ali, are you up? You up? There's about to be a fuckin' situation in Alcyon where I think your insight might be...'

**Ali:** *[laughing]* Fuckin'.

**Sylvia:** Oh, yeah.

**Ali:** I'm just tryin' to watch Family Feud. *[Austin and Dre laugh]* I'm getting these messages from Austin. *[laughs]*

**Sylvia:** Oh my god.

**Ali:** 'Yo, you around?'

**Austin:** *[amused]* I'm so sorry to pull you away from Steve Harvey.

**Ali:** *[laughing/coughing]* 'Can you come-?' *[laughs again]* No, it's fine. It's great. It's just also-

**Austin:** No.

**Keith:** If there's one thing we know about Ali-

**Ali:** *[exhales]* Fwoof.

**Keith:** -it's not enough Family Feud in her life. *[Austin and Ali laugh]*

**Austin:** By the way, Ali, I for real almost sent you a Steve Harvey impression today. So, I'll send that to you later.

**Keith:** Of you?! You doing-

**Ali:** Wait, did- You already sent one last night. Is this a different one?

**Austin:** Oh, this is that. Listen. *[Ali laughs]* Days blend. Did I send that? I did send that?

**Ali:** *[still laughing]* Yes.

**Austin:** Okay. I did not find you a different one. No.

**Keith:** Wait, is it you doing a Steve Harvey expression?

**Austin:** *[incredulous]* No! No. I am not *[everyone laughs hard]* recording me...

**Keith:** I almost recorded- or I recorded my own Steve Harvey impression, *[Sylvia and Ali laugh]* and I almost, or maybe did send it to Ali. And maybe I did this multiple times.

**Austin:** *[laughs]* Amazing. Amazing, amazing, amazing. Uh, regarding Nick, Nick knew it. Obviously. *[laughs]* I knew it. I knew it the whole season that it was gonna happen. Like, that's why so many of those intro- er those descriptions were Benjamin studying Nick's- studying Fantasma's uh... the Crystallized Lecturers of Fantasma. That's why those took on that different subtitles. Like, the crystallized dialogue or whatever it was. A crystallized message from Fantasma. Or a message from crystallized Fantasma or whatever it was. And then, yeah. And

then- and then that night, I knew- I knew that we would hit a point where Benjamin would be like, 'Uh oh. I gotta call my- my bro, Fantasma in.'

I didn't know when that point would be. I estimated it to be at like, 9 p.m. um... cause the hope would be that we would get Nick in, and then play for like, a little bit after that. Like, only a little bit and then tag out and then come back for another full session when everyone was around. And instead, it was 8:55, and I was like, 'Nick, I think we're almost there. We're not quite there yet. Can just hang out for another *[unsure, high-pitched]* ten minutes...? Five minutes? Ten minutes?' And then, it got to be like, 9:15, and I was like, 'Oh, it's not gonna happen.' And then Ephrim was like, 'Um, I just got this new movie called, *[Sylvia laughs hard]* Fuck Everything Up or whatever the fuck.' *[Ali, Keith, and Sylvia laugh]* And I was like, 'Yes!'

**Keith:** That could just be a move called Really Bad Idea. *[Austin, Keith, and Sylvia laugh]*

**Austin:** How did we not bring this up until... Sylvia's done. Sylvia's tapped out. *[Keith laughs]*

**Sylvia:** Oh my god!

**Austin:** And I was like, 'Yes!' because let me tell you- Have you read that move recently? How did you not bring that up for least useful move? *[Ali laughs]*

**Sylvia:** I don't know. Well, here's the thing is I used it. I just didn't succeed with it.

**Austin:** Uh, watch-

**Sylvia:** So, like...

**Austin:** Yeah, but- *[groans]* Fwoo. Sylvia! Big dog!? *[Sylvia and Ali laugh]* Watch the World- Watch the World Burn.

**Sylvia:** Mhm.

**Austin:** *[reading]* 'When you open a channel to the burning planes, and call a fire storm-'

**Sylvia:** Yeah?

**Jack:** Mm.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Mhm.

**Austin:** '-tell the guy tell the GM what you're sacrificing.' We never did that. You never even told me what you were sacrificing.

**Sylvia:** Oh, yeah.

**Austin:** So, it's already not good.

**Jack:** *[overlapped]* It was pretty clear.

**Austin:** *[reading again]* 'The sky opens up and fire pours like rain from it within an area of about equal to a small village. *Everyone and everything* in the area takes damage, as appropriate!' *[shouting]* That's regardless of your roll! That's regardless! *[Ali laughs; Austin continues shouting animatedly]* That you do- You do that no matter what! 'On a ten plus-

**Sylvia:** *[overlapped]* Are you famil-

**Austin:** '-you can extinguish the storm with little effort. On a seven to nine, the fires rage out of your control spreading and gusting where they are carried by wind and weather. On a miss, something cruel, intelligent, and hungry comes with the storm.'

**Sylvia:** What can I say? I expected a ten plus. I don't know.

**Austin:** But the thing- *[Ali laughs]* For this-

**Sylvia:** You gotta roll with that attitude, right?

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** You do. You know what? I respect it. The thing with me was when you said you were doing that, I was like, 'Yes!' Even on a ten plus, Benjamin will be like, 'Yo, what the fuck?' *[Sylvia laughs]* I gotta go get Fantasma right now!' And so, I knew we had an in, and then you got a six. And I was like, 'Oh, I can- I can time this shit out perfect.' I think we still- Ali, you still had to like, make it a little bit clearer. I think maybe people heard Nick come on the call, but it was a complete surprise for that whole crew.

**Keith:** It's-

**Austin:** There was no...

**Keith:** It's so funny that the- that like- that we were late bringing Nick in because from where I was, I had no idea things were- like, the potential to break as bad as they were going to break was even in the cards.

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Keith:** So, everything happened so suddenly, and it was like, 'Oh, we were fifteen minutes off target.' *[Austin and Ali laugh]* 'We were supposed to fuck up way earlier.'

**Austin:** Well, like y'all were like- ran out to meet them and shit. I was like, 'Aw, fuck. They're gonna go fight them outside. Benjamin's going to be safe and secure. And Benjamin is not going to freak out over this.' It would've turned out fine. It turned out fine. That stuff is always fun. I wish- I wish it was a thing where we could all- it was all our full time jobs, so we could just hit those moments and be like, 'Alright. We're done for the day. Let's pick back up. I want to call somebody else in.' But that isn't how our lives work, unfortunately. Or that we like- it's actual play. You never know when that's going to happen until it lines up.

**Keith:** My wish is that there was a way to have brought Nick in where it didn't go [*discord foley*] 'blururup' right like, right before.

**Austin:** Yeah, a hundred percent.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Where we just heard his voice.

**Austin:** Yeah. That would have an ideal.

**Art:** That happened all three times. All three times someone unexpectedly came on a game, you do have-

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Art:** -I mean it's cut from all of them, but everyone did react to the discord sound.

**Austin:** Yes. Yeah. Which is a shame. But like, it's somethin'. You know? Alright. God. Uh, **Keith** writes in. Presumably a different Keith.

**Keith:** Yeah, no.

**Austin:** Jack. Maybe we've already hit this a little bit.

'How did you decide to add or change the instrumentation during the main themes?'

**Austin:** We definitely hit favorite motifs across the ways, but-

**Jack:** Yeah. Oh, yeah. There's like, a small answer I kind of want to give here. Which is... I'd never gotten... [*sighs*] Like, the music in Hieron is based a lot on, you know, like, folk music- English folk music, European folk music, and then also, the kind of- the appropriation and reinterpretation of that by 19th century classical composers.

**Austin:** Mm.



**Jack:** Who- who were like, 'Ah, yeah. Let me re- *[lightly laughs]* Let me reinterpret the- the pastoral song' because there's a lot of really interesting stuff going on there in terms of what they choose to carry over and what they choose to gloss over and everything.

**Austin:** Right.

**Jack:** And... You know, I hoped to work with all of that in Hieron. And there's a sort of style of voicing, chord voicing, harmonic voicing that I associate with a lot of Ralph Vaughan Williams, who's an English pastoral composer. His work has this very melancholy, summery feel. Lots of chords that are complicated in ways that aren't necessarily sinister, but do feel like you've been awake for too long.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And the sun hasn't gone down for quite as long- It's been- it's been hot for too long. Or the sun's in your eyes. And I'd never really had a chance to play with those voicings, in part because I associated them so strongly with summer. So, I'd kind of been holding them in my back pocket to be like, 'If shit gets really bad and we move into the full summer season, that was always threatened-'

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Jack:** '-that's- that's part of the avenue I'd go down.' But realizing that we were going to have this transformed natural landscape and wanting to get this sense of newness and strangeness and... complication in the chords, it was very exciting to suddenly start- start phrasing. Which I do a lot with like, those- those little clarinet... accomplements where the clarinet, rather than playing a melody role, will sometimes just backup a piano part in the back end of Hieron. The other thing I did was just like, I'd been playing the clarinet now for two and a half seasons, and people really like it. And I wanted to do something really out there with the clarinet towards the end.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** To just be like, 'What if we just put the pedal to the metal and try and play right up against the edge of my ability?' And so, that's where you get stuff like, '[Consequences](#)' and those big clarinet runs in '[Spring in Hieron](#).' It was just me going like, 'Right. This is the last- last I'm gonna have a shot at this. Let's just- let's just really go for it and see how it goes.'

**Austin:** Totally. Alright. I'm gonna keep moving cause we still have a bunch, and we've been going for too long. Here is one from Brianna that I want to hit at least a little bit quickly, which is,

'I was really curious about accountability and the way it became a central focus of Spring in Hieron Forty-Four. Throughout Hieron, we've seen some- uh, we've seen a lot of

characters do awful things that they are not held accountable for. Hadrian killing Jericho. Lem flooding the Archives.'

**Austin:** -for instance.

'Do you have thoughts on the fact that there were attempts for the Understanding to be held accountable when there wasn't necessarily that same accountability for many other harmful actions of the characters throughout the series?'

**Austin:** I have a billion thoughts, but for me, the two things I want to hit. One is those previous things were importantly, in terms of that accountability, done away from the in-group. The in-group couldn't police itself. It couldn't hold people accountable because they weren't directly harmed or there wasn't mistrust sown. The thing about that card was it reduced trust, right? Or the thing about that- that specific event was it reduced a resource. And the resource was trust. Those other things didn't reduce trust because they were done off to the side. And so, it was easy to let them slide. Not that, you know, there were not other fractures in the group.

The second is, you know, generally- generationally, one of the big stories of Spring have been this next group of young folks trying to do better than their well-intentioned, you know, parents and the previous generation. That accountability I think is part of that. Benjamin seeing his father sad and unable to do anything is what made him want to hold people accountable. But it's- it's similar for, you know, the conversations around Blue J. Not only with Blue J... Blue J using they/them and- and trying to- you know, having a different identity than their father, but also just generally, Blue J, regardless of their gender, wanting- wanting to break the cycle of violence and that cycle of kind of- even- even Red Jack's boisterous loving style of patriarchy is still that thing. And so like, that has been a recurring theme here.

And so, I think for us, it was a- for me anyway, it felt like a clear distinction. Like, intentional that this thing that did not flood... did- you know, it was an illusion. It was a- it was a breach of trust more than it was a physical- you know, doing physical harm to any group of people. And that is the thing that Benjamin felt wounded by and wanted to make clear that even that is a breach from a leadership that was self-elected that had been in power for eleven years, or ten years or whatever. Since, you know- maybe less than that. Nine years, but had never been- had ever been held accountable.

It's not like this world doesn't have elections, right? Like, it's not like these people don't know what some form of democracy- democracy or accountability or- Like, other cultures have had other forms. And yet here because of crisis Corsica and Ephrim and Co. were like, 'It's us. Don't worry about it. It's us.' And I think, you know, it's an emotional decision. It is not decision driven only by like, a philosophy of justice or something. And Benjamin was like, 'Oh, if we don't step up in this moment, this is going to continue.' And so, I think that was one moment of Benjamin pushing back against the old way maintaining itself in the new world, in the- in the rhizome. That's my answer anyway.

**[3:15:00]**

**Keith:** I've just- I have a quick note specifically.

**Austin:** Sure.

**Keith:** I'm having a- I'm having trouble remembering far- that far back from Hadrian killing Jericho.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** But Lem flooding the Archives, one of the big important things about that is that Lem disappeared from the Archives right after that and then was locked in a sword for ten years, and then when Lem got back the Archives wasn't there.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Keith:** So, that's like a- that's like-

**Austin:** There's a narrative accountability. It's just not-

**Keith:** Right. Yeah. There is like-

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** There's- there wasn't anyone to hold Lem accountable.

**Austin:** *[laughs]* Right. Right. So, bad was the sin.

**Keith:** And I- I- That was my- that was my only note on- just like, you know, there's other- there's- of course there's other things that player characters did-

**Austin:** Totally.

**Keith:** -that sucked, but-

**Austin:** But yeah. *[Ali laughs]* Alright. I'm gonna move quick here since- Or no, Ali, do you have something?

**Ali:** I actually because... just because I want to-

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** There's like, a thing that was cut in that- the epilogue. Cause I think specifically for Hella to be a person who had like, done a lot of harm and to not take a lot of those consequences-

**Austin:** Sure.

**Ali:** -like even avoiding death was such a huge thing of her being like, 'Well, why do I get to be alive? What the fuck?' Was a thing, um-

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** -that I think like, her specific removal from that community is like, the version that she knew was the thing that she had to do. Right? Where it was like, 'I do actually have to be... accountable for this. I- I don't want to leave totally, but I should. And like, even if I tried to stay here and make this work...' You know?

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** I don't know. I think it worked. Just want to say. *[laughs]*

**Austin:** No, that adds up to me. Does anyone else have anything here before I keep moving?

**Sylvia:** Uh-

**Austin:** Go ahead.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, a little. My- mine's kinda similar to... It's like a- it's like both similar and also the complete opposite to Hella's perspective. Where it was like, staying was kind of the way Ephrim stayed accountable. Where like... I don't know. The way I saw it was he... spent all- all of his life answering to authority figures that never were held accountable.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Sylvia:** And when he was in that position and did- did something on the magnitude that they did to him, it is like, one sort of way of being like, right and righteous by trying to be better than those people. *[Ali laughs]* But then at the same time like, it is also trying to keep yourself from sinking for- like, even darker and deeper down into doing bad things right?

**Austin:** Yeah. Yeah. Um... alright. I'ma keep movin'. Uh... one second. That was actually- That should not have gone there. There we go. Um, I don't know why it didn't jump to the right place. Here we go. Apologies that I have to skip some of these, but people have hard outs, and we've been going for three and a half hours. So, I'm gonna try to get through ones that we haven't hit in some way already. Here's one that I know came up a lot, and so, I did want to, **Keith**, bring this up.

'I was very compelled-'

**Austin:** -says Gav,

‘by the conversations Austin and Keith had a couple of times in Spring about Fero taking on near divine power. I’m curious about whether y’all made a choice to leave him mortal, as far as we know, or if it simply never came into play.’

**Austin:** Keith, I know you have a bunch of thoughts on this.

**Keith:** Yeah I... I think that there's a lot of- of ways to not consider Fero a god. Nobody else seemed to. And like, we- Hieron is a place where new gods are made, but like, gods are a very specific thing. Like- And Fero can do a lot of really wild shit, but, you know, Fero is not Hieron. And Fero is not, you know, Galenica. And also isn't interested in doing that. Fero didn't even like Ephrim... *[laughs]*

**Austin:** Right.

**Sylvia:** End of sentence.

**Austin:** *[laughs]* Yeah.

**Keith:** Yeah. *[breathes a laugh]* Well, I mean like- like the- the um... you know, Fero killed the guy trying to- Fero killed a god. Fero threatened to kill another two. Um... specifically for trying to like, reconfigure stuff. Um, I even stopped- I don't know how obvious this was, but I almost didn't use my creation powers at all in the last- in the- in the epilogue.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** I was asked to a couple times, and I did. And I also did... for-

**Austin:** The intro. We- we did like, that-

**Keith:** -the intro.

**Austin:** -intro. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Keith:** Yeah. But I pretty much didn't do anything else. And that- part of that was like, you know, ‘Why... Like, look at this place. Why would Fero need to make anything new here?’

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Keith:** And it's not- it's not about adding something to a dying world. It's like, this is a brand new place with brand new things. Who knows what's even out there? I think Fero had a pretty good idea of what was on- in Hieron, at a certain point.

**Austin:** At that point, yeah. Totally.

**Keith:** Yeah. And so, I don't know. I don't- I don't think that like, physiologically or bio-I biologically or whatever Fero was a god. And also, Fero wasn't treated as a god by anyone. So, I don't- And, you know, wouldn't want- wouldn't want to do it even if it happened.

**Austin:** Yeah, I mean this is one of those things which is like, Fero definitely had quote-unquote a divine spark. Fero was *very* powerful. And like Galenica, Fero has that direct connection to the bits of the old Hieron that are still around, but that is not the same thing. And I don't think Fero has ever... Keith has never been like, 'I want to explore the god stuff more.'

**Keith:** Right. That's- Oh. That's- that's what I was gonna say. Sorry for interrupting you. The- but the-

**Austin:** No, please.

**Keith:** The thing was like- like, you know, if Fero was like... machiavellian in that way-

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Keith:** -maybe Fero could have wormed his way into being considered a god. Or, you know, if he was really passionate about becoming powerful could have, you know- you know Goku Super Saiyan-ed his way into being a god.

**Austin:** Sure.

**Keith:** But it just didn't happen. It's not what he was interested in.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** You know. So. That's- that's my answer.

**Austin:** I think that's honest for that character.

**Keith:** You- Sorry, you were-

**Austin:** Uh, no. That's a hundred percent it. It's just like, it wasn't your interest as a storyteller nor did it seem to be Fero's interest as a person. And so, that is...

**Keith:** Right.

**Austin:** Like, I guess more importantly like, to just skip ahead for one second here. Uh, I have to find the right one. This is... *[thinking noises]* dah-dah-dah. Here we go. I'm gonna move this up really quick just so I can hit this immediately. Corey writes and says,

'To borrow directly from Wikipedia article Deleuze posited the rhizome as a "theory and research that allows for multiple non-hierarchical entry and exit points in data representation and interpretation."

**Austin:** That's a very like, Wikipedia summary of that.

'How much of your decision to create a rhizomatic Spring was based on Deleuze's philosophy and how do you see that concept influencing how you played the epilogue?'

**Austin:** This philosophical idea is like, the core of the epilogue. It's why it's the rhizome. It's all the stuff I said at the beginning of- of the epilogue about the world no longer having an up or down. About towers no longer having height. It is everything. It is *everything* about the episode- er about the epilogue. Deleuze and Guatarri positioned that the world- *[exhales]* I'll just like, tryin' to like, get this very briefly. The world is shaped like a rhizome in and- The social is shaped like a rhizome.

Things are not... There is no... And to some degree, I am borrowing here from like, Derrida and post-structuralism, in general, but like, there is no 'there' there. There is no like- there's nothing in a tower that makes a tower a thing that we should give a sense of authority to. What happens is that the tower and the people who build the tower produce social structures, often through violence, in order to gain or push meaning in this other way. What they call an arborrescent way. This idea of like, tree shaped, right? A tree is hierarchical. There's a top and a bottom. And there's branches that come off of a trunk. And, you know, what up is. You know where down is. You know what's important in a tree. You know what you can't hurt. You know what you can.

A rhizome, a root ginger, it'll grow in all sorts of weird fuckin' ways. And so, for me, the new- the new rhizome, you know, the world after the Second Spring was that. And then immediately came under threat by people who, in some cases very reasonably, or understandably rather, were like, 'Uhhh, I miss knowing where up is. I miss knowing where my food comes from. I miss knowing where the center of the world is.' And so, everything from Galenica's threat of reconfiguration, to the Grey Duke's offer of bringing order to society, to even, I think, the fear that goes into the choices that lead to the Understanding is this struggle over the beauty versus the terror of a world that is rhizomatic for people who only know the previous world. The world of order and the world of a particular set of order- type of order. And so, I think again and again, whenever I could hammer that, I did.

And then naturally that also just came up in play, even from people who maybe haven't read a drop of fuckin Deleuze and Guatarri because the core idea kind of is- it bubbles with that structure and that- and that... that concern or that- that tension. It's- It, to me was like, the second Adaire was like, 'I want to start making maps,' I was like, 'Yes. This is the fucking thing. People want to map the rhizome. They want to de-rhizome- they want to make it not the rhizome anymore because they want it to make sense to them.' And that happens in real life all

the time. And you can just go read some Deleuze and Guatarri to read more about how that happens.

**Keith:** Understatement of the year that you can *just* go read some... [**Austin** laughs; followed by **Keith** laughing]

**Austin:** That's all. Just go do that.

**Keith:** Just go do it. Yeah.

**Austin:** Um, here's an easy one from John who says,

'I don't really have a question, but I do have a comment and a favor. The comment is to say thank you. The journey you brought all of us on has been incredible, and [y'all] have changed the way I approach the table with my friends for the better. My time in graduate school has had its ups and downs and Friends at the Table has been there [and] helped me navigate. So, again, thank you for putting yourselves out there.'

**Austin:** I've included this cause I wanted some- some symbol of all of the many, many, many incredible, very nice things people have sent to us. [*reading mostly from John's question*] The favor John asks us is that the friend that John discovered us with is 'getting married to the love of his life, literally during our- our post-mortem.' As much of a fan as John is, he is a bigger fan and would mean a lot to John and to him, if we could give him a quick shout-out. 'His name is Dan. If you can't. It's okay, and I understand.' Shout-outs to Dan. Congrats on getting married.

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Thank you for introducing John to our show.

**Jack:** Congratulations.

**Keith:** Congratulations, Dan.

**Dre** and **Sylvia:** Congrats!

**Austin:** I hope- I hope your wedding is going well.

**Ali:** Congrats, Dan.

**Art:** Yeah, Dan.

**Austin:** Um, alright.

**Sylvia:** The first marriage recognized by the Church of Samothres outside of Hieron. [**Ali**, **Austin**, and **Dre** laugh]



**Austin:** Finally. Alright... I'm going to fuckin' put this... I'm gonna- *[exhales]* I'm gonna put this one up on the screen. This comes in from Linda, Katie D, Danny, Annie, Kirb, Fesha, Dora, Sarah, Julian, Han, Muna [moo-na] or Muna [myu-na], Katie K, Arpad, Elly, and Emi. And there are five of these. *[Jack laughs]* Linda has returned.

**Dre:** The Linda Collective.

**Jack:** Welcome back Linda.

**Art:** Have you all considered changing your names to Linda?

**Austin:** That would make this so much easier-

**Ali:** Mm.

**Austin:** I think. *[Jack laughs]* I think, anyway.

**Art:** Just sayin'

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Art:** Maybe one of the Katies?

**Austin:** Maybe. You know what? That seems like it would solve a lot of problems. *[Ali laughs]*

'What is your favorite moment of play in Hieron that another player initiated?'

**Austin:** I'm gonna- We're gonna lightning round this cause there's so many.

**Jack:** Yeah. Bang. Easy. Quick. It's Keith saying, 'Let's go kill the dragon now.' Done.

**Austin:** Aw, hell yeah. That's a great moment. *[Janine laughs]*

**Keith:** Oh, thank you.

**Austin:** Oh, a good moment that is! God damn! And then you did it.

**Jack:** Powerful. Wonderful.

**Austin:** And then you did it.

**Jack:** Yeah, and we did it.

**Austin:** And then it was like, not a big deal. *[Austin and Ali laugh]* What an amazing, weird fight. Let me tell ya, I didn't expect that fight to be against seven people. Uh- *[laughs]* God.

**Jack:** I don't think- I don't think that the Advocate did either.

**Austin:** No. No, not at all.

‘**Art**, what did Jess say was the throughline for your characters?’

**Art:** Okay. This is um...

**Austin:** I'm gonna bring us some context here. Art, you said, *[reading]* ‘Tonight over dinner, Jess explained to me the thematic throughline that connects all of my main season Friends at the Table characters and how that might be affecting some of the ways fans interact with those characters.’ This is impressive because: A) She doesn't listen to the show. B) I was completely unaware of this connection.

**Art:** Yeah. I have the- the text immediately after this happened. Jess texted it to Austin, and um... I'm gonna cut a little bit because I think it's a little sensitive, and I think that'll be apparent when it goes. But... ‘the externalization of your struggle to be an adult, to seek a good path, to be authentic to yourself and your family, and your desires to find that without your dad.’ Um, I think it's something that informs both of my first two characters. Jess is insistent that this is also true of Grand Magnificent, but I don't see it there. But, of course, we started Friends at the Table about, you know, a year and a half-

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Art:** -after I lost my dad. And... you know, in a lot of ways, for me at least, you know religion is about, you know, paternal figures. And I think that that's a lot of what was ascribed onto those by me. And then again, Cassander is about the idea of if you can grow as a person after losing a parent.

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Art:** And I think, unfortunately, for myself, who again, didn't realize this at the time... Um, the answer I had for Cass- *[breathes a light laugh]* Uh, COUNTERWeight spoilers coming up. Everyone clear out.

**Austin:** Go away.

**Art:** This is it. *[Dre laughs]*

**Austin:** Don't do that though We still have things to talk about.

**Art:** We're gonna start talking again.

**Austin:** We still got some more-

**Art:** Okay.

**Austin:** Please stick around. But.

**Art:** Yeah. But just like-

**Austin:** Uh huh. Go ahead.

**Art:** -put- put your fingers in your ear. Count to twenty. Then for Cassander, the answer I came up with was, 'No.' [**Austin breathes a laugh**] That you couldn't grow after that, as a person. And um, yeah. That was a really weird thing to... to hear about. Things that I had done and were definitely true. And-

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Art:** And yeah. This was at a Cheesecake Factory. [**Ali and Keith laugh**]

**Ali:** Yeah. That sounds like Cheesecake Factory.

**Austin:** Ah, one of the places of power that we- that- that I think all of us have in our hearts.

**[3:30:00]**

**Art:** Yeah. There- there's more to it. But it's- but then it goes into- to- about, you know, modern masculinity itself. But we're not...

**Austin:** We don't have the time right now.

**Art:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Thank you for sharing that.

**Art:** Yeah. If you're- if you're lookin' for a tie breaker on people who want to marry you, pick the PhD student.

**Austin:** There you go.

**Art:** Very insightful.

**Austin:** Uh...

'Jack, did Red Jack actually hear something or was that hand-waving on both Red Jack's and/or Jack's part?'

**Jack:** No, I think he absolutely heard something. I don't know- I don't know what it is.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** But when I was playing that scene, there wasn't a doubt.-It wasn't hand-waving in the sense that I was... Uh, my goal when I play Red Jack has always been- The number one most useful thing you said to me when I was worried about playing Red Jack the first time, Austin, was like... You said- I asked if he looks different.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And you said something- you said- I can't remember exactly what your answer was, but just further cemented in my head this idea of Red Jack as a figure from myth. As- as a figure who has walked out of a myth and found himself interacting. And has always been interacting with-

**Austin:** Mhm.

**Jack:** -with people. Like, Red Jack is both the myth and is not separate in that regard. He's not- he's not apart from the rest of the world.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And so, whenever I play Red Jack, I try and get at this kind of... The way Red Jack sees the world is very different, I think, to the way other people see the world. And the way the world responds to Red Jack is frequently very different. And so, I wanted to get that feeling of...a dream, or of waking up in the middle of the night not being quite sure where you were. And so, like, I think that the rhizome and Red Jack were- were experiencing something together in a kind of- in a kind of mythological sense. That was very real and was- was definitely not me just saying, 'I'm not exactly sure what, but I want it to feel weird.' And it was definitely not Red Jack saying- trying to come up with some kind of an excuse.

**Austin:** So, there's two left on here, and I meant to delete one of these. I'll- it... Can we pick one? Either 'What was your favorite part of an arc you weren't in? Or how did Maelgwyn end up in the vault?' [**Jack laughs**] Which one of those?

**Jack:** Who gets to pick?

**Austin:** I-

**Jack:** Is it the chat?

**Austin:** Uh, yeah. I guess. The chat's gonna take a while to get here though. So, how about y'all?

**Sylvia:** I have an answer for the thing you weren't a part of.

**Austin:** *[enthusiastically]* Oh, okay. Well, we just do that one then.

**Sylvia:** I just really liked listening to Aubade.

**Austin:** Oh, yeah. Sure.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** That whole arc was just really fun to listen to-

**Austin:** God.

**Sylvia:** -as someone who wasn't in it, and also someone who had a very, very stressful game at the beginning of that sequence. *[Ali and Dre laugh]*

**Austin:** Uh huh. Yeah, I mean that trio of different arcs is so fucking good, in terms of like-

**Keith:** That's one of my favorite things that we've ever done.

**Austin:** Yeah, I- It was one of those things where it was like, 'We're gonna come off of Twilight Mirage, which is again very ambitious and difficult, and then we immediately were gonna do something else ambitious and difficult.' And the fact that like, we managed to stick the landing on that was very good. Alright. So, I can just go to the next- No? *[clearly playing it up]* Oh, the chat is saying Maelgwyn vault. Damn.

**Ali:** Mm.

**Austin:** Fuck.

**Ali:** Gotta love Maelgwyn.

**Austin:** So, we know the Snitch Nightly part of this already, right? That Snitch told Samoths that... Maelgwyn was there as an agent of Samot's. The rest of it is like, really easy and simple, right? Cause like, we already know that Maelgwyn was technically working for Samoths. So, I've always imagined it as a real easy conversation, right? Which is like, Samoths telling Maelgwyn that it's dangerous and that he has something for him to keep him safe, which is not a lie. And he'd had-

**Ali:** *[shouting]* What?

**Austin:** This is dead-ass- I'm dead-ass serious.

**Ali:** That's so mean.

**Austin:** What do you mean?

**Ali:** That's such a mean thing to do to your son. 'Hey, just go hang out in this vault.' *[laughs]*

**Austin:** No, it absolutely isn't. No, what is time? They're gods.

**Ali:** I know, but-

**Austin:** They don't know reconfiguration doesn't exist yet. They don't know that that is going to happen. They've probably done this before. *[laughs lightly]* Do you know what I mean? Like, this is probably not the first time he's put someone in the gauntlet. This is- They're bad people.

**Ali:** Let Maelgwyn live.

**Austin:** And so, he gives him the gauntlet to keep him safe because he knows that he's messing with shit. He does not know how bad it could get. It's like, *[somewhat is Samoth's voice]* 'Oh, you're young, and you are going to get yourself into trouble. Let your father and I work this out, and when we're done, you'll be back.' It's a bad thing. It comes from a place of overbearing love. It comes from the man who would send fish rocks at people. Samoth is not a good person. I don't even really know if he is in Aubade. I think he's better. But *that* Samoth? The closest thing he can get to love is, especially in that moment, in his grief, is being an overbearing father who literally puts his son in a fucking closet. Like, it isn't a good story. *[breathes a laugh]* It's one I've been sitting on for years. And Maelgwyn knows. Maelgwyn is not a fucking fool. And in the process, loses it, right? It's like... Eh. It's not good. *[silence]* Don't ask me for stories. Um, the last one comes in from Tom who says,

'Something I've been more or less dying to know since Marielda, in broad strokes, is how would have- how would it have affected Winter and Spring if Samoth had been killed with the sword he forged for the job instead of the Blade in the Dark? I feel like it had the potential to completely alter the entire world arc for Winter and Spring and have been very curious about it ever since.'

**Austin:** And this is the last conversation- or the last question because the answer is I- Who can say? Of course- Yes. Yes, it would have changed *everything*. And that's what makes actual play so incredible to me. There are a thousand little things like this. We got a bunch of people who asked like, what if Samoth used a different- used the Arrell dust instead of using the star stuff? Or what if Fero hadn't- the sand hadn't disappeared? What- A million questions like that, and all of them are good questions. All of them are valid, and the answer is to play the game that way. There isn't a blueprint for what we do on the show. There are best practices. There are ways that we get better. There are ways to experiment and try new things. But in terms of the story, it comes from what we do.

And so, when you have that sort of feeling that's like, 'Aw, if only...' You know, the final intro, the final- or the final description is Devar talking about this idea of rupture that Uklan Tel first brought up in season one. This idea that the world could go a different way, but it doesn't most of the time. Most of the time. Actual play is great because most of the time, it goes a

different way. It goes a surprising way. It changes. The- the story can take huge swings in a way that, it's often the case, real life does not. You can- you can wake up tomorrow, and the world can be made of- of the rhizome, can be made of plant life instead of being made of soil and dirt.

And so, that is- there is no way to answer it, except for you, as creators, as fans, to like, fill in those gaps and build your own stories. And trust that you can follow those- those characters and their logic and their- their kind of heart into new places. But we can dream it up all day. But until we roll dice, it isn't real, you know? It isn't- it isn't the story that we're telling.

And so, I- It is why I love the format. It's why I love telling the story with all of y'all. I said thank you to all the fans and- and everything at the beginning, but also, to the crew. To- to everyone on this call with me right now. This is *the* most rewarding thing I do with my life. It has pulled me out of very dark places. It has been the one thing that, on my worst days, gets me excited. That when I am in terrible... like, 'I don't know what I'm doing with my life moments,' which do not go away, [*Austin and Dre laugh lightly*] regardless of what your job or your title or whatever is. Like, that shit is not- it doesn't- that doesn't stop. This is- has been a rock, and y'all have been so good to work with me on it. So, thank you all for joining me for this. It really means a lot. Um, and that's it except for plugs. It's time to do some plugs. [Friendsatthetable.cash](https://www.patreon.com/friendsatthetable). There we go. Oh, I went too far and now they saw a cool thing.

**Keith:** That's the new jingle. That's our- FriendsattheTable-

**Austin:** FriendsattheTable dot-

**Keith:** -dot-

**Austin:** -cash.

**Keith:** -cash?

**Austin:** Dot cash? [Friendsatthetable.cash](https://www.patreon.com/friendsatthetable) is where you can support us. It's our patreon. We are in the middle of reworking that patreon. I will say right now that the tiers are changing. **Ali**, we didn't push those tiers live yet, did we?

**Ali:** No.

**Austin:** They're not changing that big. No one is- The big ones aren't changing is what I'll say. The biggest thing is that the twenty thousand dollar level is not an extra episode of Bluff City anymore. Instead it is the commitment to doing a live show once a year, which we already did this year. But that's not really what we mean. We're gonna figure out a way to do a live show... Art or Ali, it's fair to say at like, a venue that is, you know, in a major city somewhere.

**Art:** That's just us.

**Austin:** That just us.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** That doesn't have a two hundred dollar ticket entry.

**Ali:** Yes. Uh huh.

**Austin:** That's the big one. Is like, way for us to do a show where y'all can plan to come and hang out and see us live that is not just a... a Gen Con or a SHUX or something super expensive. A PAX, or something like that. And so, we're gonna do that. We can- we can figure out how to make that work. I think we're gonna say the thirty k? Are we agreed on that? Is-

**Art:** Uh, we're agreed that we can say that.

**Austin:** Okay.

**Art:** -with the amount of time I think it is between now and then.

**Austin:** Yeah, it'll take- Thirty k- the thirty k number will be that we'll start doing another monthly show that is not a role-playing game, not actual play. It's a show we tested at the Pusher level. You can go hear that pusher level one. Maybe we should just make that free at this point, so people can hear it and know what the thirty thousand dollar thing looks like.

**Ali:** Mhm.

**Austin:** Which is a show that I've been calling Random Article. Which is- Do you know those bits in the show where we're like, 'What's up with boats?' And we just go on a weird thing for boats. We look at boats. It's just that, except we go to Wikipedia. And there were like, pirate flags was a good one. We go there, and we just hit random article, and we talk about what we find for an hour. And the first one of those was such a big success. It was so fucking funny. So, we'll make that free, also, on the patreon. That- the test episode. And that'll be our thirty thousand dollar uh... uh... What's the word I'm looking for?

**Art:** Goal.

**Austin:** Goal. Thank you.

**Jack:** *[quietly]* Goal.

**Austin:** Reward. Yeah, totally. Everything else is staying the same. No new tiers. No new anything else is changing in the near future. Maybe we'll do a re-evaluation of that eventually, but for now, everything else is staying the same. Are there any other patreon notes, Ali or anyone?



**Ali:** Uh, we're about to have this big break from the regular show.

**Austin:** Yes.

**Austin:** So, if you- if there's a patreon thing you've been waiting on...

**Austin:** Now is the fucking time.

**Ali:** It's comin'. *[laughs]*

**Austin:** Also, honestly, this is a silly- this is a thing to say is like, we've been making the show for five years. We could not have continued to make it and do things like Bluff City or the Live at the Tables or Tips at the Table without your support. I would love to keep doing those and do even more of them. And if you're someone who's listening to this in the podcast feed, and maybe you're like, 'Oh, yeah. I like Friends at the Table,' consider checking that stuff out. Most of the people who listen to the show do not support us on patreon. I get it. I have listened to a lot of podcasts that I have spent zero money on because of not having any fucking money. *[Ali laughs]* But if you've really enjoyed Hieron over the last few years, this is one way that you could support the show. [Friendsatthetable.cash](https://Friendsatthetable.cash) and- and toss us some bucks. Five bucks gives you access to a billion things to listen to. They're all very, very exciting. So- so go check that out. Plug number two. Jack, do you want to announce-

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Austin:** -this... thing?

**Jack:** Yeah. So, as of now- Wait, hang on. I need to click it.

**Austin:** Click it. *[Ali and Dre laugh]*

**Art:** I'd been checking. I knew you hadn't done it yet.

**Jack:** Right. I think I've clicked it. Yeah.

**Art:** It's- Yeah, you did.

**Jack:** As of now, almost all of our live music is... music from the live shows is available online with this unbelievable, unbelievable new art by Craig Sheldon, who is [@shoddyrobot](https://twitter.com/shoddyrobot) on- on Twitter. I'm going to continue to update this as the live episodes get new music, and I'm going to get some of the live episode music on there eventually. When- when I've edited it and got it to a place that it needs to get to, but right now there's the [Fall of Magic theme](#), there is the [Lasers and Feelings theme](#), and there are the two outro stings that we used for the Clapcasts for Twilight Mirage and Spring in Hieron, which are soon going to be replaced with something new.

**Austin:** Yeah. I'm excited to hear the new stuff. Speaking of new stuff, Jack, can I play this thing?

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Austin:** This will not be on there yet. This will be on there later. But.

**Jack:** Yeah. No. This is- this is not- this is for the future.

**Austin:** Yeah. Totally. Um, it's the future cause it's sci fi. We do not have a theme for season six yet because we are gonna fill the main- the main feed- I guess this is news for some people. We're gonna put the Road to Season Six games that we've recorded this year in the main feed so that we can take a break. So we can take a fucking step back for a little bit before we actually dig into season six proper. The Road to Season Six games, I'll give a big intro spiel to these when we start dropping them, but they're a bunch of one-shots. Mostly one-shots *[lightly laughs]* that have... that kind of tell the story between Twilight Mirage and season six proper. And that is a... that is... I wouldn't say it's required listening to listen to Season Six, but I think they're very fun. And I think that there are some fucking rad moments, and as a teaser for them, here is the Road to Season Six theme and also a trailer... It needs to play. There- Uh, no. Start it over. Ready? Go.

*[Jack de Quidt's "[HOURGLASS. SUNRISE. CRYSTALLINE.](#)" plays as trailer begins]*

**Austin:** What might a just history look like? On the barren moon of Partizan it might look like frozen time. Today it drifts in placid loops. Third satellite of its system's largest world. But by the year of fourteen twenty three of the Divine Principality's perfect to millennium, when it is at the crossroads of a fractious empire, war will shake its orbit.

**[3:45:00]**

**Dre** (as **Vessel's Gold** in Armour Astir): These divines basically wrecked my people. So, even though I've fought pretty much anything, when I saw you in the sky, I went cold.

**Keith** (as **Pique Nideo** in Microscope): We would like for it to be dedicated to Stel Nideo. A grand gesture for a grand house.

**Jack** (as **Marianne Perfect** in Ech0): In order to attune artillery unit sensors better, we are not told anything about our bodies before we inhabit them. We enter our mechs in darkness, and we leave them in darkness.

**Ali** (as **Pidgeon** in Beam Saber): No one needs to get hurt here, but I do need you to shut down the power to this facility immediately.

**Art** (as **Memphis Longhand** in Beam Saber): The only god Memphis Longhand has ever seen in a mech is in Memphis Longhand's onboard mirror.

**Janine**: Anyway, the thing I wanted to do was to mess with someone's blood.

**Sylvia** (as **Orbit Shard** in For the Queen): If my Apokine decides to give me something and tells me to keep it close, I will keep it close to me. Whether it's a weapon or not.

**Jack**: Hey, Austin?

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Jack**: You wanna know what the weak point of a mech is?

**Austin**: Yeah, what's the weak point of a mech?

**Jack**: The fuckin' pilot.

*[music fades]*

**Austin**: The name of season six is Partizan. It takes place on a moon at the edge of the Divine Principality's empire, where all five of its major houses, its great stels cross, and where their civil conflict will spark. I'm very excited to play it. I'm fuckin' so excited for people to hear about the characters that we're already starting to put together. Everything is fucking dope. We're gonna take a break before we actually start recording it, but I am- I am- my gear- Every night I'm like, 'Oh, I figured out a new cool fucking thing.' So, people should look forward to that. Are there any other thoughts on that before we advance the slide one more time?

**Jack**: I'm so excited.

**Austin**: Yeah, I'm fucking so stoked. *[Sylvia and Ali laugh]* You have no idea.

**Jack**: I'm so excited.

**Austin**: Like, getting through the Road to Season Six, I guess the Road to Partizan now, was- was really... awesome because it kept me focused on Spring, in a weird way. People know that going into Twilight Mirage, I was like, so excited for Twilight Mirage. And it was cause it was building up with no escape valve, and the Road definitely gave me that escape valve. But now, it's like, I look back, and I'm like, 'Yo, check out all this amazing shit!' Like, we've recorded a bunch of dope shit, and one of those things that we recorded that you heard quoted a few times there in the teaser was Beam Saber. We did a game of Beam Saber. That is where I think three of those quotes might have been from, including Jack's incredible, 'Do you wanna know the weakest part of a mech?' *[Austin and Keith laugh]* And that game was incredible.

And I have privately been watching the excellent Cenotaph actual play that is presented by not- uh, 'You Don't Meet at an Inn.' [@Notaninn](#) on Twitter is where Austin Ramsay who

developed Beam Saber is, and I love the system so much. I've been in the discord. It's fantastic. Beam Saber so fuckin' god. I'm so excited to actually play it. I want to like, just shout about how good all the characters are gonna be, but we haven't recorded anything yet. So, I can't even give you a tease of that stuff. So again, Road to Season Six will be in the main feed over the next month and a half, two months. It'll be a little while still. I don't think we have a firm date, but my guess is... November? Before season six proper starts.

**Ali:** *[quietly]* Yeah.

**Austin:** Which I'm fine with.

**Ali:** I think so.

**Austin:** Let's just- You know?

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** That's okay.

**Ali:** It's been five years, you know?

**Austin:** It's been five years. We need to breathe.

**Ali:** Five years every week. *[laughs]*

**Austin:** Every week. Not ev- Like *every* week.

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

**Austin:** We take like, a couple weeks off here and there, if there's an emergency or someone's like... Even then we figure it out most weeks. *[Ali laughs again]* So, we're gonna take a little bit of time. We're gonna fill the feed with this stuff. I'll probably write some new intros along with that great theme, but other than that, like, it's- we're gonna take some- take a little bit of a break. So, that's- Is that it for season six? Is that it for Partizan? Also, I'm just gonna say, the moment that I realized I could name the season after a spear, after- on the lives, talking about how much I want the next season to be about spears instead of swords was very good. And also, there will definitely be a Pusher update or some sort of update about finding a fucking name.

**Jack:** *[laughing]* Naming this fucking season.

**Ali:** Oh my god. Yes. Ohhh yes. *[Janine laughs]*

**Art:** Good luck.

**Austin:** Minutes before the season?

**Ali:** Before we do it.

**Austin:** Or minutes before this. When we finally were like, 'Yeah, that's it.'

**Art:** Yeah, we didn't-

**Ali:** Just-

**Art:** We didn't pick a name until like, 2:55.

**Austin:** Here.

**Art:** And we started at 3:00.

**Austin:** I'm gonna play- *[Sylvia and Ali false start sentences]*

**Keith:** We were- we were still discussing it after we were supposed to have started. *[Ali laughs]*  
I cast my vote at 6:03.

**Austin:** Uh huh. Here is- I'm not gonna play the actual things, but here is an overlapping MP3  
three seconds long of all of the various intros I did with different names, where I just-

**Art:** *[laughs]* Ha!

**Austin:** I forgot to mute them all. *[audio begins playing with various season names]* 'war, war,  
it's war, war will shake- shake its orbit.' So, that's- I recorded something like, nine different  
fuckin' names. Partizan was always my fave, but yeah. Alright. That's the show, everybody. Is  
there...?

**Ali:** Mm.

**Austin:** Can we? Should I? Just- I'll click this cause normally this goes to [friendsatthetable.net](http://friendsatthetable.net),  
right? And that's the place to go. People know that. So, I'm just gonna- Wait a second! *[Keith  
laughs]* That's a different URL!.

**Keith:** Oh no.

**Ali:** Wow.

**Austin:** [Friendsatthetable.shop](http://Friendsatthetable.shop)?

**Keith:** That's not real. *[Ali gasps]*

**Austin:** Dot shop. I'm gonna go to it and see if it loads.

**Keith:** Don't even try it. It's definitely not a thing. *[Ali breathes a laugh, Keith laughs hard away from the mic]*

**Austin:** [Friendsatthetable.shop](#) gives you another opportunity to support the show by picking up these new posters. Some folks know that we started working recently- We did a [T-shirt](#) for Fall of Magic with [Heart of the Deernicorn](#). Is that- is that right?

**Sylvia and Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Which is the- the crew that put together BFF and Fall of Magic. That's a great T-shirt. This is a fucking dope [poster set](#). *[Ali laughs]* Three- Like, uh huh.

**Keith:** Can I- can I say how good that three- three poster set is?

**Austin:** Yeah, it's great.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Keith:** It's a great deal.

**Austin:** Three set- three of them for thirty five dollars.

**Keith:** Ten bucks off.

**Austin:** Ten bucks- Is it ten bucks off?

**Keith:** It's ten bucks off.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Yeah, it's ten bucks off.

**Austin:** That's ten bucks off.

**Art:** Yeah, you get that third one for five bucks.

**Austin:** That's- You should get the set, in my opinion.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Mhm.

**Keith:** I'm sayin'.

**Austin:** So, this is- I just want to say this like, to be one hun- one hundo, like for real on this, this is a good way to support us. The numbers work out okay. *[Ali laughs]* I ain't too proud to be like, the numbers are good on this, in the sense that we have a great partner, Ross. Again, from Heart of the- Heart of the Deernicorn is working with us on things like shipping and wholesale- or not wholesale- What's the word I'm looking for? Like-

**Keith:** Warehousing?

**Austin:** Warehousing. Yeah, warehousing and all of that stuff. And is- It turns out when you work with like, really-

**Jack:** Site's crashed.

**Austin:** What?

**Ali:** Mhm.

**Art:** It's crashed?

**Austin:** Did it crash?

**Keith:** Wow.

**Austin:** Hey, Ali?

**Ali:** I got through.

**Austin:** Ali? Could you-

**Ali:** Hi?

**Austin:** Could you get on- *[Austin and Ali laugh]* Could you get on the phone?

**Ali:** *[laughing]* Yeah. Let me call IT. *[everyone laughs hard for a while]*

**Art:** I'm gonna call IT when we get off the phone. *[everyone still laughing]*

**Austin:** Um, if the site crashes, we're sorry.

**Jack:** I think it's back.

**Keith:** Please check back later.

**Austin:** *[laughs; then excited shouting]* We should- we didn't even put the show on Twitter yet! We didn't even put it up on Twitter! *[Sylvia laughs]*

**Ali:** No, I did. I did put it on Twitter. I'm sorry.

**Austin:** Oh, you put it on Twitter.

**Ali:** I had a tweet this whole time.

**Austin:** Yo, you should've let it chill *[Ali, Austin, and Jack laugh]* to let the people who are here get through first. Yo, you crashed the server. *[groans]*

**Keith:** How- how fast can we get the CEO?

**Austin:** Yeah. *[laughing]* On the fuckin' phone.

**Jack:** *[overlapped]* On iTunes?

**Austin:** Do we-

**Art:** Pretty fast.

**Austin:** Do we know-

**Art:** I think-

**Austin:** -what the process is?

**Ali:** Oh my god.

**Art:** I do-

**Ali:** No, let's not talk about this here.

**Art:** -know that process.

**Austin:** Okay. You go deal with that.

**Art:** **Ali** and I learned how to build websites this week.

**Austin:** Yeah. Shout-outs to Ali and Art who have been building this website and watching webinars and all sorts of bullshit to make this happen. Um... and- *[laughs]* WeareFOXHOUND says, 'You know what the weak point of a website is?' *[everyone laughs]* Y'all are too powerful.

**Art:** The fuckin' servers.

**Austin:** *[laughing]* It's the server- the fucking servers. So, this will be up soon hopefully. Apparently, Katie says it's back, which is good. It's not back from me, but...



**Dre:** It's loading for me.

**Austin:** Okay.

**Dre:** It's back.

**Austin:** Again, this is a great way to support us. And also, I am excited to get these and put them on my wall. I've wanted these for a long time, and we-

**Keith:** I'm pumped to have these.

**Austin:** Right?

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** It's great art. Craig did incredible work. Also, I will say right now that we are absolutely- Like, Craig will get paid off this also.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** So, like, if you wanna support us, if you wanna support the show, if you wanna support Craig, this is a great way to do it. Thank you so much.

**Keith:** So good to finally- This is finally gonna get me to the- wherever they frame stuff to get all the other stuff I want framed framed.

**Austin:** Yeah. Same. Same. I'm sitting on probably way too much shit that I need to get framed, and this is gonna be the thing, for sure.

**Keith:** Yeah. Yep.

**Austin:** So. I think that's it? I think we made it through?

**Keith:** I think we made it through.

**Art:** Oh, and this is a pre-order.

**Austin:** Yes.

**Art:** So, you can't- this can't sell out. This is a pre-order till the end of the month, and then we're gonna print- we're gonna print more than the preorders. But like, you know, be calm. Be orderly. *[Ali and Janine laugh]* If the website never comes back, *[Jack laughs]* you know, just send us cash in the mail. I don't know.

**Keith:** Loose. Loose in an envelope.

**Austin:** Uh huh. Yes, they are twelve by twelve. They seem dope. I have not seen them. I- You know, I live in New York. I don't live where these get printed or whatever. I don't know what the fuckin'- But they look good to me, and I'm excited. And we're workin' with people we trust. So, you know. Time to make those walls sing... with Friends at the Table art, I guess.

**Ali:** Mm.

**Austin:** Yo, we finished Hieron.

**Art:** We did.

**Keith:** Yeah. *[Ali exhales]* It's hard to believe.

**Austin:** It fucks-

**Jack:** *[overlapped]* Thank you, Austin.

**Austin:** It fucks me up. Did someone say my name?

Kc I said-

**Jack:** I said, 'Thank you, Austin.'

**Austin:** Aw, thank you, Jack. Thank you, Jack.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Thanks everyone.

**Austin:** Thanks everyone.

**Jack:** Thank you, Ali.

**Ali:** Aw.

**Austin:** Thank you, everyone.

**Jack:** Thank you, everyone.

**Austin:** That's- This has been-

**Keith:** God thank us... *[overlapped]* everyone.

**Austin:** God thank us, everyone. *[laughs]* No, that's real egotistical *[Janine laughs]* actually. I feel like that's not...

**Sylvia:** I stand by it.

**Austin:** Oh my god.

**Keith:** I said everyone. *[Jack laughs]*

**Austin:** Oh, you're right. So, not just us.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Not just- Yeah.

**Ali:** Mhm.

**Austin:** Okay.

**Ali:** The audience, you, me, Keith, everybody.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** I'd like to thank all the characters. They're not real.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Jack:** But we pretended that they were in our brains.

**Ali:** Oh, yeah. Thank you, Hella.

**Keith:** Can I-

**Austin:** Thank you to Hella.

**Keith:** -get the stream key *[Ali laughs]* so that I can go through the rest of the... two fifty?

**Austin:** Uh, no. *[Sylvia laughs]* You can do that over- There's a place I know you could do that, **Keith.**

**Keith:** Where's that?

**Austin:** Do you know where-

**Keith:** What place is that?

**Austin:** You could go to [contentburger.biz](http://contentburger.biz). *[lightly laughs]*

**Keith:** Oh, what a great place to go.

**Ali:** Oh.

**Austin:** I would love to go.

**Keith:** Especially... If you were really interested in watching the best Runbutton let's play ever made, the Shenmue 1 let's play and the newly started Shenmue 2 let's play, you can go to [contentburger.biz](http://contentburger.biz) for that.

**Austin:** Did you find that Fruda grape yet?

**Keith:** We did. We totally did. Yeah.

**Austin:** Alright. Good.

**Keith:** In an upcoming episode, we found the Fruda grape. And guess what? We couldn't afford it.

**Austin:** Oh, no.

**Keith:** Yeah, we couldn't afford it. So-

**Austin:** Oh, that's heartbreaking.

**Keith:** We're gonna have to remember where it was and re-hunt it down.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Cause I am dying for that fresh, fresh taste of a Fruda grape.

**Austin:** Well... *[sighs]* you can go there for that. You can find me on Twitter [@austin\\_walker](https://twitter.com/austin_walker). What about you, Dre?

**Dre:** You can find me on Twitter [@swandre3000](https://twitter.com/swandre3000).

**Austin:** Jack.

**Jack:** You can find me on Twitter [@notquitereal](https://twitter.com/notquitereal), and buy any of the music featured on the show, except the Marielda live show theme and the music you just heard at [notquite.bandcamp.com](http://notquite.bandcamp.com).

**Austin:** Also, the... what do you call it theme? Also, right? The uh... Misspent Youth theme is probably not up yet, right?

**Jack:** That's the Marielda- that's the Marielda one.

**Austin:** Oh, oh. Sorry. Yes, yes, yes, of course. Duh. Ali?

**Ali:** Yeah, you can find me [@ali\\_west](#) Twitter.com, and you can also find the show over [@friend\\_table](#).

**Austin:** There we go. Janine.

**Janine:** You can find me [@bleatingheart](#) on Twitter.

**Austin:** Sylvia.

**Sylvia:** Hey, you can find me on Twitter [@captaintrash](#), and you can listen to my other show [Emojiidrome](#) on your podcast app of choice. We- uh, we did the eggplant last time.

**Keith:** Yeah. Congratulations on episode sixty-nice.

**Jack:** Oh, wow.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Oh, congrats.

**Sylvia:** So, you know. Just wanted to commemorate that really quick. I thought that would be a good pitch. And now that it's like, very late in the day because we did this for about seventeen hours, people-

**Austin:** Yeah. Uh huh.

**Sylvia:** -you know, it's the right time to listen to that.

**Austin:** It is.

**Sylvia:** You know?

**Austin:** Kind of like, bring you down a little bit.

**Sylvia:** After dark.

**Austin:** Yeah- Ooo. After dark.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** I like it.

**Sylvia:** Exactly.

**Austin:** Dre, did already say you?

**Dre:** Yep, you did.

**Austin:** Art?

**Art:** Hey, you can find me on Twitter [@atebbel](#). I am reporting the site is back up right now.

**Austin:** Hell yeah.

**Art:** But I- Yeah, I want to get off this and talk to someone about some servers.

**Austin:** Hell yeah. Keith.

**Art:** Listen to us on Pandora maybe.

**Austin:** Yeah, also Pandora maybe.

**Keith:** Oh, I get a round two. My name is Keith J. Carberry. You can find me on Twitter [@keithjcarberry](#). With the show going off, it's a great time to catch up on the patreon for Friends at the Table. Also, a great time to go to Runbutton and listen- watch some Runbutton videos. And also, yeah, [contentburger.biz](#) is the Runbutton patreon. It's very important to me.

**Austin:** Yeah. Uh, one last shout-out is- I want to shout-out the incredible transcription team. Many of those folks are here in the chat right now. You can find out more about that by going to [twitter.com/transcript\\_fatt](#). F-A-T-T. Or to [tinyurl.com/fatttranscripts](#). There is only like, I want to say forty-eight, maybe less episodes remaining to be transcribed across *all* of our content. Almost all of Hieron is done or being worked on. But I think it's all done or is claimed and being worked on. These transcripts are incredible. They are paid transcripts. These people get paid for- for their work. And they have been so helpful for me in the last year, both as a GM and also as a showrunner.

That- the trailer you heard for Partizan or for the Road to Season Six today would not have happened if not for transcripts. Being able to pull those up and like, scan through stuff is- was incredibly helpful to me. It's like, one more piece of evidence that when you- you take disability and accessibility in mind, there are knock-on effects for- for everybody. It turns out that a more accessible world is actually better for everyone. And so, I'm so proud of the work that the transcription team has done, and I'm so excited to- to get fully caught up. We are like, within striking distance. So, shout-outs to that incredible team. And shout-outs for you for having the Olympic strength and stamina to stick this one out with us. *[lightly laughs]* I'm gonna to go eat some chicken wings.

**Ali:** Mm.

**Austin:** I'm very excited for them. Have a great night, everyone. We should time.is.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Oh, yeah.

**Jack:** Let's do it.

**Art:** *[quietly]* Oh, yeah.

**Austin:** I'll pull that up and uh... Is everyone ready?

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Janine:** Mhm.

**Art:** Yep.

**Austin:** Uh, I'm gonna do fifteen seconds... Does that work?

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Janine:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Yeah.

*[Five claps can be heard]*

**Jack:** Mm.

**Keith:** That was a great one.

**Dre:** Not good.

**[4:00:00]**

**Keith:** No, that was great. *[Sylvia laughs]*

**Jack:** I feel-

**Ali:** That sounded fine to me.

**Austin:** That sounded fine to me.

**Dre:** *[unsure]* Did it? Okay.

**Austin:** I think it was alright. Alright, everybody. Thanks so much. Have a remainder of your-whatever Sunday is left for you, I hope it's good.

**Keith:** Have a remainder of your day. *[laughs]*

**Austin:** Have a *[starts laughing]* remainder of your day! *[everyone laughs hard]* Goodbye.

*[Jack de Quidt's ['Autumn Not Winter'](#) begins playing]*

**Keith:** Bye.

**Janine:** Great.

**Austin and Jack:** Bye.

*[music plays to end]*