

## Tips at the Table 44: #SylviSurprise (February 2021)

Transcriber: robotchangeling

**Austin:** Welcome to Tips at the Table, an RPG podcast focused on critical questions, hopefully smart answers, and fun interactions between good friends. I am your host, Austin Walker. I'm joined today by Sylvia Clare.

**Sylvia:** Hey, I'm Sylvi. You can find me on Twitter at [@sylvibullet](#) and you can also listen to my show *Emojidrome* wherever you get your podcasts.

**Austin:** And Jack de Quidt.

**Jack:** Hi, I'm Jack. You can find me on Twitter at [@notquitereale](#) and buy any of the music featured on the show at [notquitereale.bandcamp.com](#), where one day I will put it towards buying an extremely cool synthesizer. [Austin and Jack laugh]

**Austin:** All right, let's get into it. This first one comes in from Envy(???), who says:

When I run games, I feel like I have a big issue when it comes to keeping the pace of the game up once the situation has escalated. I'm normally good at prompting players to action and presenting them with situations that require them to act and things flow nicely, but then I hit this roadblock. The armies clash, the building starts falling around them, or maybe the shooting begins, and I lose the ability to keep pace entirely. I feel like once the situation has gone from fine to shaky to bad, I have nowhere else to go and start floundering without really being able to come up with the things— come up with things that are happening that aren't too vague or big picture to be actionable for the player. I make do, and we get through it, but it feels anticlimactic most times.

**Austin:** I think this is a totally relatable dilemma, Envy.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Because I feel like we...we definitely can hit this moment at times, when especially...it's the moments you're talking about, where there is a scale difference between the size of the party and the players and what they can affect. We've done a couple of large scale battles, like in the cinematic war sense. I think about the stuff in Old Man's Chin in "Winter in Hieron." And then obviously, some like end of season stuff in the divine cycle seasons. But I think this is— partly this is the reason why we stay at that smaller scale, is to...is because I'm terrified of this particular dilemma, especially when it comes to scale. That said, I think even in the situations where there is a scale difference, but also in the ones where they're not, the thing I tried to do is set the camera's focal point at the party's level once things get as out of control as possible. There is a building that gets caught on fire in Marielda. Mmm, there's... [Sylvia laughs] Hmm.

There's probably a few of those, huh? [Jack and Sylvia laugh] Once, there was a building in Marielda that got set on fire, and the party was trying to escape it while there was an ongoing fight between a number of different kind of factions around the building and I think inside of the building at a certain point. Once we established that that was happening, I did my best to just talk about not the scale of what would happen what the outcome of that fight would be. Because unless the PCs really cared directly about that, then it's okay to leave that up for grabs and kind of fill in the gaps later as a GM, I think. And instead I focused on their personal stakes. And if that's giving you trouble, then maybe part of the trouble is also coming from having unclear or too broad of stakes for the party to begin with. The party should probably not be the axis on which the success or failure of a war hinges, unless...like, you know, in terms of the people are fighting on the, you know, in a battlefield. They instead could be, you do the *Rogue One* thing. You do the like, you know, whatever the war movie is you want to compare it to. Maybe they can be the thing that turns the tide of the battle or the thing that opens up the door for the war to go a different way. But I think if you stay focused on personal conflict instead of that larger scale, or even once that larger scale kicks off, if you stay close to like, "Okay, you're trying to get out of this place," and you stay there, then you still have room to escalate. Because even if the larger scale thing is going their way, things can be breaking bad in front of them. And even if things are breaking bad in front of them directly, then you can situate that inside of something where like that doesn't just feel like there's no...there's no other stakes in play, I guess. I don't know. I think that that makes sense.

**Jack:** Yeah. There was a fight sort of in the midpoint of or towards the midpoint of PARTIZAN in...that you sort of framed as like a spooky situation that began to escalate.

**Austin:** Again, I'm gonna need some...

**Jack:** That features a fun surprise.

**Austin:** I'm gonna need some, uh...

**Jack:** It features a fun surprise for Milli in the cockpit of her mech.

**Austin:** Ah, yes. [Sylvia laughs] I was thinking of the wrong fight, by the way, for what it's worth. So, I'm glad you clarified.

**Jack:** I think that's the spookiest fight in...oh, there have been some spooky fights in PARTIZAN.

**Austin:** I think the first fight.

**Jack:** That was a fairly spooky one.

**Austin:** But that one might be spookier bec— well, it, the debut— hmm. We have to define spooky.

**Jack:** Hmm.

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

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

**Austin:** I know the one you're talking about.

**Jack:** I'm wondering if...so, as a player, it felt to me like that was escalating in really interesting ways, you know, up...as things were getting worse, and then once combat started, things kind of continued to escalate. When you were planning for that, did you...did you have things in place that, triggers that you knew you wanted to pull to kind of crank the tension of that sequence up? Or once the combat started, were you kind of following the lead of the players in that sequence?

**Austin:** I was following the lead of the players, for sure. I knew how to get everyone into...I knew the thing you're referring to with Sylvi's character was on the table. [Sylvia laughs]

**Jack:** Mm. [laughs]

**Austin:** I didn't think I'd get to execute it, because I thought—

**Sylvia:** I'm so glad you did. [Austin laughs]

**Jack:** It was so good!

**Austin:** I thought I'd get caught. I thought I'd get called out. I thought someone would ask a question and roll some dice. That didn't happen, thankfully. But the...from there, I had like one or two other beats sort of planned, in terms of like the arrival of other, you know, parties to what that fight became. But there were things like that sequence has this long chase sequence down the alleys. And like, I think it's both of your characters again. [laughs softly]

**Sylvia:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** Now that I think about it. [Jack laughs softly] And like, all of that was following your leads, because we wouldn't have ended up in the...there was a warehouse sequence. Like, I didn't have any of that shit planned. And so that, I think, is a good example of...that's actually, maybe that whole sequence is a great example of this, where it's like, it seems like the door opening moment with Sylvi's character is maybe the height of—

**Jack:** Sylvi surprise.

**Austin:** Sylvi surprise. Hashtag Sylvi surprise. [Sylvia laughs] Is the...is the point at which you'd think that the tension has been raised as high as possible, but then from there, the action kind of

atomized and followed everyone individually in such a way that there was the ability for those stakes to almost be reset. And maybe that's another piece, another tip, which is like, you can always ratchet things down by creating a new status quo and be like, all right, everyone's adjusted to this now.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** And you can start ratcheting it back up if you need to.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, that last thing was kind of what I was gonna say, was just like, you can sort of adjust the like...yeah, like, you can change sort of the baseline for things—

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** —in a way that, like, makes it so you can work within the new parameters you've given yourself.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** But like, not...you're not trying to constantly one up it. You're trying to work back to it.

**Jack:** Oh, yeah.

**Austin:** And to that end, never be afraid of taking a break. You can break the tension in something by saying, “All right, can we get ten minutes to like run to the bathroom and get a snack?” And whether or not the players like actively know that this is happening, my suspicion is that like, okay, everyone takes a breath. You kind of reset your emotional core a little bit. Maybe you're still tense, because the situation is tense. But you can— you have a little more room to build again without it feeling like you're going too hard. Or people have that time to come up with a solution which then the knock on effect of having a good solution to a dilemma or a situation is that the stakes will lower again, tension will break, you know, et cetera. So. Yeah. Any other thoughts on this?

**Jack:** I'm trying to think. Um...can you can you reliably...can you rely on the outcomes of the dice helping you with this?

**Austin:** Never.

**Jack:** Where it's like—

**Austin:** Never ever. [laughter]

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** You can't rely on...you can't rely on the dice ever, period. However, that doesn't mean you shouldn't try to rig them to your favor as best you can, in terms of setting things up for difficulty, allowing or disallowing helping dice when appropriate, for instance.

**Jack:** Oh. Uh huh. It's so good to be helpful.

**Austin:** It is! [Sylvia laughs]

**Jack:** When you're playing a tabletop game.

**Austin:** I mean, think about the situation...actually, the game that you're...the situation that we were talking about, hashtag Sylvi surprise, was...

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** That whole fight goes the way it goes partially because y'all have the upgrade that let you help at a distance. If you don't have that upgrade, you lose that fight. That final roll is everyone helping each other from across a battlefield—

**Jack:** Oh, it's so good.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** —in a way that would not have been allowed if you could not have communicated to each other, despite the situation. And we're getting towards spoilers here, so I don't want to go any deeper than that. But like, but like those those sorts of things are actually really interesting and worth like thinking about in terms of the way the story changes if that doesn't happen. But because of that, because I knew you had that, I could put pressure on in a greater way. And then, and then, like that's a situation that I think is worth thinking about. Is like, what levers do I have to pull on to ratchet up difficulty or to make dice rolls feel more intense than they would be otherwise? I think about like, you know, in a system like Forged in the Dark games, this is like insisting on Risky or Desperate positioning, for instance. In a Powered by the Apocalypse game, you know, obviously, you don't really get into the world of like pluses or minuses that often, but like make people start making Defy Danger checks to do things because the situation is so, you know, difficult. Obviously, you don't want to scare people from doing anything. But if it's a moment where you want to escalate, always think about escalation mechanically along with narratively. Try to make those two things blend.

**Jack:** I guess the last thing here is we were playing a game in Bluff City once, and I had a character standing in front of a burning truck. And we were talking, and the scene was kind of progressing, and Art put a message in the chat which was "You know this truck can explode at any point, right?" [laughs]

**Austin:** [laughs] What game was that?

**Jack:** It was, uh...it was the *Fiasco*, the *Fiasco* game in Bluff season two.

**Austin:** Oh, okay. Sure, sure, sure.

**Jack:** Of the car chase through the cranberry, cranberry fields.

**Austin:** Sure.

**Jack:** You know, sometimes escalation is your dear friend Art just helpfully reminding you that you've set a truck on fire.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm. [Sylvia and Austin laugh]

**Jack:** There might be consequences for that.

**Sylvia:** So, I guess our suggestion is invite Art to your group.

**Austin:** Yeah, invite Art.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** I hear he has a good rate. [Sylvia laughs] I think he would come through and just add some ambience, you know? Um, all right. Next question comes in from Jack. Jack, we've said before, if you want us to answer a question, [Jack and Sylvia laugh] you could just ask. All right.

**Jack:** What am I asking this time? I forgot this one.

**Austin:** Uh, do you want to just read it? You read it. Read it as if you wrote it, Jack.

**[0:11:25]**

**Jack:** Yeah, totally. [deep breath]

In my *Lancer* campaign, I've established three main NPC factions.

**Austin:** [laughs] Can you imagine, Sylvi, if Jack was secretly running a *Lancer* campaign [Sylvia laughs] and didn't tell anyone in the fucking...in the crew?

**Jack:** [laughs] Well, I'm telling you now.

**Sylvia:** That would be amazing.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:**

In my *Lancer* campaign, I've established three main NPC factions: the entrenched aristocracy, the outside capitalists, and the revolutionaries. Obviously, they have dope names, which I am not going to refer to here. [Austin and Sylvia laugh] My problem is I was keen to make sure that none of the factions read as "the good one," but my players are rad, so they're naturally drawn towards the burgeoning labor movement of the revolutionaries. I think PARTIZAN did a really good job of showing how nobody was unequivocally good, and I wondered if you had any advice along those lines. How can I make my revolution complex and a little compromised?

**Jack:** That's a good question.

**Austin:** It is. I also want to say: if what your your table is interested in is a simple and uncompromised revolution in which they kick the shit out of aristocrats and outsider capitalists—

**Jack:** Let's go.

**Austin:** Let's fucking go.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** That's a fine place to be. Like, I don't...do not think that the lesson for us from PARTIZAN was every story you tell and every game you play has to undercut its own revolution, its own revolutionaries. That's a space I think a number of us are especially interested in playing in, because it scratches, you know, creative itches for us. That doesn't mean that that's like a corrective or a, you know, that's not dogma. [laughs softly] That said, I think that the right answer here is to look to real historical revolutions and ongoing, you know...you know, leftist, union-based communists, anarchist groups and see where the schisms already actually lie and the tensions already actually lie. You know, you can't put, you know, three leftists in a room without, you know, two of them conspiring against the third. [Jack chuckles] Because there's meaningful difference between what a lot of us on this side of the, uh, of kind of political ideology believe. And so think about the...for me, I start at like, what is the material situation? Why are they fighting? And where would divisions actually come from? You can have divisions based on—which is what we did in PARTIZAN, for instance—based on strategy because there's a different perspective on what will or won't work. And if you do that, my biggest advice is to make sure everyone who believes something different has a good reason for believing what they believe. It's...I don't think that it's a big spoiler to say that in PARTIZAN we had revolutionaries who thought that immediate action, kind of big explosive action was the best way to make immediate change, or to ensure change, period. And we had people who were...who wanted to take a longer game, you know, war of maneuver rather than...sorry, that's wrong. That's not the right phrase. What is the...why am I blanking on this? Da-da-da-da-da...I could just Google this and just have it instantly. War of maneuver is right, I think. Is that right? [typing] Am I getting this wrong?

**Jack:** War of maneuver has a...has a nice kind of quirkiness to it.

**Austin:** No, I'm wrong. It's war of position.

**Jack:** It's a nice phrase.

**Austin:** War of position versus war of maneuver. Because maneuver is the moment of like actual conflict in Gramsci. And so we had the kind of war of position revolutionaries who were like, listen, this is a long, long term thing. We don't want to close strategic doors, et cetera. And I think what was important for me was to represent that those two sides were not...one side was not simply cowardly, and that's why they didn't want to do like huge, you know, military action all the time immediately. It was that they were actually more cynical about what could be earned through a more direct and violent approach. We saw how that season works out in the end. If you haven't seen it, you should go see it. I'm very happy with the way everything kind of turns out. I'm excited to return to that world and continue telling that story. But for me, the key of it was that like those two sides, neither of them was inauthentic or uncommitted to the broader cause, but there was a meaningful real difference between the two.

I think that this, you can, instead of basing it on strategy, you could base it on need. You know, you could have part of your revolutionary group care mostly about, you know, obtaining meaningful supplies to help people immediately and another side wanting to win a strategic long term PR victory, you know, and recruit more people. You could have one group that's tied to, you know, one interpretation of the core philosophy that is about focusing internally and making your own group as strong as possible. And you can have another group focused on trying to branch out and kind of work with other revolutionaries across, in this case, the galaxy, given the scale of *Lancer's* conflicts. And like, those are real divides among the furthest left of the left, to the degree that I don't think you'd even call...like, you know, I don't think the Trotskyists are worried if they're good leftists or not. They have a particular worldview that is different than like, you know, the Marxist Leninists, and like, that is...that is at the core of many historical divides inside of communism. [quiet laughter] So I think that's, for me, that's one way to do it, I think. And again, that's only if you need— if you really feel like your party—or, your party—your table really wants to go in that direction. And also, this is a question you should ask them. That's always the answer, is always, hey, what are you interested in?

**Jack:** There's also...a plotline that I broadly hate in small scale stories is misunderstanding.

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

**Jack:** Where one character is led to believe that another character— it's like, Disney does this all the fucking time.

**Austin:** Yeah.



**Jack:** And we spend the whole third half of the— the *third half* of the movie going, you know, well, if you were just in the room!

**Austin:** If you would just— yeah, mm-hmm.

**Jack:** And you just told him that you hadn't betrayed...

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** But I think on a much larger scale, and when you're talking about supply lines or logistics or operations or wires getting crossed or mixed messages moving from, you know, solar systems to galaxies, the idea of mistake or of...unintended consequence within a revolutionary movement across something as large as a solar system is also very interesting.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** That's not quite what you're talking about in terms of like, "How do I make sure that the revolutionaries aren't just the goodies?" but it does perhaps speak to "How do I make my revolution complex?" which is, if you're talking about trying to handle a unified ideology—which as Austin's already laid out, kind of doesn't really exist—on a scale as large as a galactic revolution, there are bound to be interesting moments where complication can seep into the cracks, or where things can move further apart or closer together, depending on sort of how logistics have gone.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm. Let me also just say—

**Jack:** A—

**Austin:** Oh, sorry, go ahead.

**Jack:** Oh, it's just like the, oh, Person A is asked to deliver message A and decides that they want to do it slightly differently, and then that has this weird knock on effect on Person B, which means that by the time we get to Person F, you know.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm. The thing I was gonna say is—

**Jack:** What were you gonna say?

**Austin:** Don't be afraid of...and, you know, I already opened by saying it's okay to do the uncomplicated revolution. Revolutions are complex without...without...in ways beyond morality. It is hard to do a revolution. [laughs softly] It is...

**Jack:** Takes fucking ages.

**Austin:** And it is opposed...they are opposed by many sides, including many that should be their allies, or are sometimes ideological allies or kind of like end goal allies. You have like a sort of like, hey, yeah, wouldn't the world be better if it was more egalitarian? [Jack chuckles] And someone might agree with you and then also not...and also oppose your revolution. And so there's plenty of ways to tell great stories about revolutionary movements, revolutionary action, that find complexity in the...in the difficulty of performing a revolution and not only in the question of whether it's worth doing. And so one of the reasons I'm excited to get to the next season of *PARTIZAN*—

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Austin:** —is that I think that the action will shift in that direction, because we're done the groundwork in a real way, you know? [laughs softly] You know, we come into that season being like, this whole place fucking deserves to burn. And now we have characters who say this whole place deserves to burn. And the act of, or, you know, part two of that story is not going to be me being like, [scolding] "Now, now." It's gonna be like, all right, let's figure out what this looks like and why is that difficult.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Austin:** And that doesn't mean that you won't have moments of doubt, you won't have moments of debate. I just watched, uh...*Judas and the Black Messiah*, the film about Fred Hampton and the assassination thereof by the FBI. And that's a film that has moments in which its primary characters do have doubts about what they're doing, but it's not about...it's not about the goal or even the method. It's about the cost for themselves, almost in...not in selfish ways, but in ways about like, hey, we are bringing a child into this world. Let's talk about that. How does that...I'm excited for what we're doing, because I want the world to change for my child, but I'm also worried about that. And exploring those things naturally, I think, you can do that without necessarily undercutting an ideological perspective. I think that movie does a pretty good job, also, of the thing I was saying before of like, hey, it's difficult to do this because of how many roadblocks are put in your way, that you don't need to actually undercut the core message of a revolution to make it interesting. You can just show the ways in which it's difficult from the jump. Any other final thoughts on this? Jack, I hope this was useful. [Sylvia laughs]

**Jack:** It was really useful. Yeah, I'm stoked.

**Austin:** Let me know how it goes.

**Jack:** I'm looking forward to coming back in a year's time to make another show.

**[0:21:36]**

**Austin:** Uh huh. All right, next question. Juliet writes in.

As a GM, we tend to embody all the NPCs in the game world. Your show has a wonderful cast of characters, and they are all interconnected in fun, often complicated ways. I try to do the same in my games. Sometimes though, these relationships create problems for me when I— when multiple NPCs are in a scene with the player characters. I find it hard to voice the different characters without either focusing on one NPC to the detriment of others, or worse, having a conversation with myself. I could relent and just ensure that there's only ever one NPC in a scene, but that feels a little weird in the fiction. Do you have any advice for GMs to play scenes with multiple NPCs effectively?

**Austin:** This is one thing that's like hard for me to know sometimes in terms of what I do. I'm...do I do...how often do I have multiple NPCs in a scene?

**Sylvia:** Uh...I think it happens, like...I don't know. At a regular enough...like, I can think of examples of it. Like, I can think of like, in Twilight Mirage, like this was the first one that jumped to me.

**Austin:** Mmm.

**Sylvia:** We were in a room with a bunch of the like...oh, I forgot their title, but they piloted the...after we did that escort, like it was way at the beginning.

**Austin:** Way at the beginning.

**Sylvia:** And then we met like a bunch of the pilots of the mechs in a room afterwards.

**Austin:** Oh, sure.

**Sylvia:** And there were like three or four of them.

**Jack:** Oh, uh huh, at that like cool club or something.

**Austin:** Yes, there's like a club, yeah. Oh god, what were they called? They were called, um...ugh, I don't remember. I remember one of them's name was Auger. I remember...I remember what one of them looks like, which is a stupid thing to say because that person doesn't exist.

**Jack:** They're like glass knights, right?

**Austin:** They— yeah, they were...I know the latter ones all had names that...you met another group of them later from a different, from the Garden, which was another place. And that was Fall, Winter, Autumn, and Spring or something, you know? But what the hell was that first group called? Saint. They were Saints. They were Saints.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** 'Cause it was Saint Auger that was one of them, and then...god, what were...Saints is good. I shouldn't have wasted Saints on a group we barely got to see. [Austin and Sylvia laugh softly] That's the thing, you don't fucking know. We don't...

**Sylvia:** We can bring it back.

**Austin:** Yeah, that's true. Who knows? Yeah, they were the Saints of the Crown of Glass.

**Jack:** Just do more saints.

**Austin:** Saint Caliper. That's the one who I have in my mind. I remember—

**Jack:** Oh, Saint Caliper!

**Austin:** Saint Caliber. No, wait, Caliper's wrong. Who's the one that I do remember, then? Wait. Me: it was definitely Saint Caliper. Seconds later: no. Oh, Saint Symmetry was the one that I remember very clearly in my head.

**Jack:** Oh.

**Austin:** Symmetry has straight black hair that's slightly cropped on the sides and left longer on top. He has a tall, thin face with deep brown eyes and big ears. Oh, okay, I had a facecast. This is why I have a complete memory. Yeah, okay. [Jack laughs] It's Jerry Wolf, who is an actor. And that's exactly who I had in my head. I could never have named this actor, but that's him. Okay. Anyway, you're right. So there are scenes with that. I think the thing that I do more often...or one of the things I do often is I abstract when I have two characters talking to each other. I'll say the two of them debate about something for a little while, and then maybe I give one line of flavor. You know, I'll say like, oh yeah, they're debating about...you walk in, and Jesset and Gucci are debating about tactics. And, you know, one of them says as you come in, that like, you know, "The time for big action is now!" or whatever. And then what do you say? But otherwise, I think I just try my best to manage cadences and to give players an opportunity to jump in. And then to use key throw phrases, like I throw from one person to another. I don't just go, like, [low, slow voice] "Hey, I'm talking like this." [higher, peppy voice] "And now I'm talking like this!" I go like, "'Hey, I'm talking like this.'" And then so and so says, "Hey, I'm talking like this.'" And that little bridge at least gives the players something to hang on to if they...if my voices are not as clearly different as I imagine they are in my head. [laughs]

**Sylvia:** [laughs softly] Yeah, I think that is like, honestly, kind of the key thing here is like, even with...like, there's always going to be times where your players are going to ask who's speaking.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** That's just like life. That's gonna happen.

**Austin:** Totally.

**Sylvia:** But I feel like the...

**Austin:** And it's not worth being...it's not worth feeling...don't feel like that means you failed at something.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Like you said, that's just gonna happen.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, but I think like things like the phrases where you're just like throwing to the other person to make sure you're differentiating, or like, even just including a bit of like GM talk beforehand, about like, what this person is doing before they speak or something?

**Austin:** Mmm. Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Like, just to give their like sort of emotional vibe or whatever.

**Austin:** They pull up a map or they— right, right, right. You can tell that they're...they shrug their shoulders forward. Whatever it is that they do to like, yeah, that makes sense.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, there's just like little things you can do to kind of like make sure that like the spotlight sort of shifts towards whichever NPC you want to be like embodying at that moment.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** And I think if you're like trying to stick to just like...like, you can have your NPCs talk. But if you want to avoid having full conversations, I think like sort of handing off between...like, say you're playing two characters in a scene, handing off between them.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** And like, when one says something to the other, have that character build off that in an interaction with the player characters.

**Austin:** Yeah. I think the camera is always...

**Sylvia:** So that conversation feels more circular. Yeah.

**Austin:** Totally. And I don't think that that makes for great writing, necessarily. [laughs softly] It's like...

**Sylvia:** No.

**Austin:** I think about *Anthem* a lot—RIP to *Anthem*—the Bioware game, where the cutscenes in that game were all in first person. And you had these people who were like dramatically, you know, emoting and gesturing as they talked, because it was for the player's vision in a way that made it feel like an old FMV game at points.

**Jack:** Oh, yeah.

**Austin:** And otherwise would look right at the screen, look right at the player, and be like, “Well, what do you think, rookie? Are you ready to take this on?” or like whatever it was, and it was always so uncanny, and like, it never worked for me, because...again, I don't think this is good writing. But for actually playing tabletop RPGs, it's okay to use this here. [laughs]

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

**Austin:** Because that's what the players are here. That's what the play— the players are the main focal point here, more than anything else.

**Sylvia:** And it's like, clarity is so important when you're doing a thing with multiple people.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm. God, yeah.

**Sylvia:** It's not like you're making something to be like sat down and experienced by one person. You need to make like...you can make these concessions even if they feel a little clunky.

**Austin:** [laughs] Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Because it's like a multi-person thing.

**Austin:** Exactly. And I think that it...I do think that it benefits from it big time. Any other thoughts on this? Anyone else...has anyone else played two characters at once in...I'm trying to think.

**Jack:** Sometimes...

**Austin:** [feigning ignorance] Hmm, Jack, have you, maybe? [Sylvia laughs]

**Jack:** [laughs softly] I tried not to have the Hitchcocks talking together.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** Because...like, for exactly the reasons that, you know, you both laid out. Mainly to the point that Sylvi spoke to, which is that having two characters speaking at once is just confusing.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** And...or gets confusing quickly. And, you know, in that case, I tried to kind of imply what Austin's talking about, which is take it out of dialogue and describe action or paraphrase speech. You know, someone gets up from a chair suddenly on the other side of the room. I often had one of them to the listening to the other one and not really saying anything.

**Austin:** Yes. Yes.

**Jack:** But you just see them react. Another thing that's worth thinking about is, you know, for like, quote, unquote, "plot critical scenes," I can understand wanting to keep everything in under the control of the GM, in terms of character dialogue. But something you often do, Austin, is hand characters off to people.

**Austin:** Yeah, totally.

**Jack:** In less consequential scenes. You know, we'll be like—

**Austin:** Honestly, even in more consequential scenes. [Jack and Sylvia laugh] I can think about things like in the middle of Twilight Mirage—

**Jack:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** —where I handed you one of the most important characters in Twilight Mirage, you know?

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Austin:** It happened. Like, hand it over.

**Jack:** That's a fun leap of faith moment, though, right?

**Austin:** Yeah, it is.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Totally, totally. And...and...and..

**Jack:** You get to see what happens.

**Austin:** I guess the other thing is there, I think you're right, less consequential is better, because it can really stress someone out to be like, "I have to do what?" so I don't want to under...I don't want to...I don't want to say rush right into it. You're probably right. Anyway, continue. I'm sorry I stepped on that.

**Jack:** A good example of this that I think about a lot is when, uh...like, let's say Sylvi and I are going to go visit some NPCs to find some information out about something.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** And we show up, and there are two NPCs there talking, and you'll say like, you know, Keith, do you want to play, you know...Marco Polo, this NPC that's in this story we're telling? [Sylvia laughs]

**Austin:** Damn, we got Marco Polo for Season Seven? Shit.

**Jack:** We got Marco Polo. And Marco Po— you know, and Keith will play that character in that moment, where it's like, now we can have a more natural conversation. We do this at the end, towards the end of the *Good Society* game.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** Which is gonna be on Patreon tomorrow, where Janine—

**Austin:** Is that the last episode, is tomorrow? Damn.

**Jack:** It is, yeah. Janine sort of parcels out characters at like a dinner, which is really fun.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** But yeah, you know, if you don't think it's going...if you think that the other person will be comfortable with it, maybe sometimes take a big swing. Maybe just give one of your players a character. But otherwise, you know, in lower consequence or lower pressure situations, do think about just parceling out your NPCs. And it's so exciting as well. Like, some of my favorite stuff on the show has been giving you, Austin, my characters to speak as or play as. And I'm sure there's some flipside of that, where, I don't know, is it exciting to you when you hand us NPCs—

**Austin:** Always, always.

**Jack:** —and go, “Oh, what are they gonna do with this character?”

**Austin:** What are they gonna do? Totally. A hundred percent, always fun. I actually think, now I'm thinking about this, is a thing that I'd love to see, or I'd love to hear if people have done this, is bring in part of No Dice, No Masters, which is the kind of simple—

**Jack:** Ooh!



**Austin:** —dice system that gets used for like Dream Askew and Dream Apart. The thing where you parcel out larger kind of elements of the world.

**Jack:** Oh, it's so good.

**Austin:** Like okay, you're in charge of technology. You're in charge of, you know, communities. You're in charge of nature. You're in charge of weird stuff or whatever. I don't remember all the categories from *Dream Askew*, but that's probably—

**Jack:** The weather.

**Austin:** Technology, communities, nature, and weird stuff, and weather. [laughs] That's probably them. And then...or, you know, similarly, like, “Okay, you're going to be the person who plays...when I need someone to play an extra NPC for this faction, I'm gonna tag you to play one of them. Is that okay?” And maybe having something like that from the jump is like a cool way to like anticipate this, especially if it's giving you stress. We...I think that— not we, but games culture more broadly— there was a trash tier take going around. [Sylvia laughs]

**Jack:** Oh, yeah. Let's take five minutes on this take. [Sylvia laughs]

**Austin:** Okay, can we? Where is it? Where did I put that? Did I put that up...yeah, here we go.

**Jack:** Fuck this take.

**Austin:** Fuck this take. This take is...I'm not gonna read the take word for word. But what it said was basically: if a player doesn't remember an NPC's name, doesn't remember to use or that they have like a magic item on their sheet, then they lost it. They don't have it anymore. They lose access to it. Fuck the player for not putting in work. And we are not that table, I don't think. We are very much a fan of the players table. I do my best, at least. I hope.

**Jack:** [chuckles] “What were the names of those Saints, again?”

**Austin:** Right.

**Jack:** “They're gone. We can never...” [laughs]

**Austin:** They're gone. Oh, you don't remember? They're all dead, then, huh? Oh, you didn't explicitly say you're gonna check in on so-and-so? And there are— let me be clear, there are times when I want to play in that space in better...in maybe more rail-guarded ways.

**Jack:** Show us the barrel of the gun, though.

**Austin:** Yeah, exactly. I do my best.

**Sylvia:** You pick your spots, though.

**Austin:** Right.

**Sylvia:** It's not your like governing ideology about playing games.

**Austin:** [laughs softly] Right. I'm not trying to punish anyone. And I think that's important. But what I do want to...the bridge I'm building from that is, while I am not a the GM is the king, you know, authority, you know, philosopher god of the table. [Jack laughs] What I do think is the other half of that is you should be...the rest of the table...the table's at its best when everyone is truly collaborating and when the players are also willing to help a GM when the GM is on their back foot, when you need a little extra help or time, or hey, blah blah blah. You have no idea how many times I've been like, "Ugh, I'm having a rough day," and Jack has said, "Hey, would it help you if I put together a list of 20 places or names or [laughs softly] restaurants or whatever," [Jack laughs softly] just for you to pull from on interest— you know, on certain occasions. We have a list of spaceships that Jack wrote me years ago now, that I've pulled from every year since, I want to say. Let me see if I can find it. I'm not gonna read it. I'm not gonna read all of it, but I do want to give credit. I think I've always given credit.

**Jack:** We wanna save some spaceships.

**Austin:** Yeah, I'm not gonna spoil unused space— what if we spoil *one* unused spaceship, Jack?

**Jack:** Yeah, we could do one unused spaceship.

**Austin:** All right. Just for reference, this document was created October 18, 2017. So.

**Jack:** Almost certainly because you had a headache.

**Austin:** Almost certainly because I had a headache, right? Or a...depression. [laughs softly] Because I had a depression. Still do.

**Jack:** [laughs] The headache of the soul.

**Austin:** Ah, yes. [Sylvia laughs] Hasn't cleared up yet!

**Jack:** Nope.

**Austin:** Sorry, Jack, these spaceship names did not...did not clear it. [Jack laughs] This was...I am just checking really quick here, to see if there was...if I have any fun context here. I don't seem to. There is no...I have you sending me the ship, your ship document, but I don't have me immediately before that being like, [whining] "Jack, help me!"

**Jack:** The headache of the soul.

**Austin:** Yeah, exactly. So it may have been on a call or something. Anyway. The ones that I've used from this document: The World Without End from Twilight Mirage. The Gleam of Glory, which is not a spaceship, is a regular ship. That is from Spring in Hieron. That is an Ordennan ship that came up. You used one of these, the Blue of the Heavens.

**Jack:** Oh, that's a mech, right?

**Austin:** Oh, wait, were you David or were you Smack? I always forget.

**Jack:** I was Smack.

**Austin:** You used Blue of the Heavens for Smack Talk. We used...I stole one of these to put in a real book, Jack.

**Jack:** I saw this. [laughs] This is really good.

**Austin:** This is my favorite one, too. [clears throat] The Dead Nettle is on page 410 of, uh...*From A Certain Point of View: The Empire Strikes Back*, quote— [Sylvia laughs]

**Jack:** [laughs] This is very funny.

**Austin:** [reading] "'I *told* you that you wouldn't want to mess with my boss.' The ship's apparent captain, a Mirialan woman with a smart braid a few shades darker than her bright green skin, was standing, arms crossed, above four of her dead guards. 'Sonari Kal(??? 37:20), Captain of the Dead Nettle. I'd appreciate it if you two get off my ship.'" This is like a very dense paragraph of references for me, because Sonari Kal is a gender-swapped version of my Old Republic main character OC, Sonar Kal.

**Sylvia:** Fuck yes!

**Jack:** It's so good to make stories.

**Austin:** Yeah. And this is also the paragraph where I was told ponies might not exist in *Star Wars*. [Sylvia laughs] Because I originally described her as a Mirialan woman with a smart ponytail, but they wrote me back saying, [Jack laughs] "We don't...we don't know...we don't know if ponies exist in *Star Wars*, so you can't say ponytail. [laughs] Can you say tail?" And I was like, "No."

**Jack:** No!

**Austin:** That's different. [laughs] A smart tail is a different thing! So I went with braid, which is the wrong vibe.

**Jack:** Ah.

**Austin:** Ponytail and a braid are not...do not communicate the same thing.

**Jack:** No.

**Austin:** But...

**Jack:** But if ponies don't exist, what're you gonna fucking do?

**Austin:** The fuck am I gonna do? Braid probably refers to fucking some other shit that we don't know that it exists. I don't know. Tying things. [laughs] I don't...what's the etymology on braid?

**Jack:** [laughs] That bullshit game.

**Austin:** The bullshit game! That's where...

**Jack:** The fucking... [Austin and Jack laugh]

**Austin:** It just means to interweave, so no, that's...yeah, okay. Another one's the Wake Robin, which is Kent Brighton's ship. The Other Hand, which is Tannoy Kaji's ship, one of my favorite names on this. The Other Hand is just so fucking good. The Pail to the Wheel, which is a Curtain flagship from PARTIZAN or from...I think it's from the PARTIZAN finale. We don't ever...that name might not ever be said, but it is the name of the Curtain ship.

**Jack:** I don't think it comes up.

**Austin:** The Snow in Summer, which is the one from the two parter, um..

**Jack:** It crashes.

**Austin:** It crashes. Yep. So those are all the ones we've used from this. Is there one in here that you think is...do you see this list, Jack? I'm gonna post it in chat.

**Jack:** Mmm.

**Austin:** I'll just post in our internal chat, and we can pick one to say out loud.

**Jack:** Yeah, totally. This is hot spaceship news.

**Austin:** Hot 'sclusies, to use a Run Button term.

**Jack:** Um...oh, what about the one just below the Snow in Summer?

**Austin:** [brief pause] Sorry, I was taking a sip of coffee.

**Sylvia:** The last one's great.

**Austin:** Oh, that's a good one. That one's really good. Oh, I cannot wait to use this one. All of these are so good. Jack is the best.

**Jack:** [laughs] Thank you.

**Austin:** Jack is royalty among namers. Do you want to read this? Who wants to read this one? The one under Snow in Summer..

**Jack:** You go for it. You've been marshalling the ships.

**Austin:** No, no. This...I've said these ship names. This is...you know what? This is yours, Jack. You should read this one.

**Jack:** Okay. So, uh, one of the secret ship names is The Second Opinion, as in, we need to get the second opinion. [Jack and Sylvia laugh]

**Austin:** I love that so much as almost like a mirror to The Other Hand. [laughs] I really want The Other Hand and The Second Opinion to get into some sort of space duel.

**Jack:** God. We're a year away from spaceships.

**Austin:** [sadly] Yeah.

**Jack:** It would be...it's a shame there's nothing cool that we can name.

**Austin:** Jack, you've spoiled it. We're not gonna...we're not doing space in Season Seven? Damn it. [Jack laughs]

**Sylvia:** [feigned outrage] What?! I gotta change my whole character. [Austin and Jack laugh]

**Jack:** Sucks.

**Austin:** I mean, your character but in space would fucking rip! [laughs]

**Jack:** Oh my god.

**Sylvia:** Honestly, that would be really sick.

**Austin:** Are you kidding me? Fuck!

**Sylvia:** Ah!

**Jack:** Can we do a save import from Season Seven to Season Eight where we just bring Sylvi's character in? Oh,

**Austin:** [laughs] It'll be a little corrupted. It'll be like a thing where like, you know in *Monster Rancher* where you just load the like...do you know what *Monster Rancher* is? Is this a thing that didn't make the jump between...

**Jack:** Oh, I think I know what *Monster Rancher* is.

**Austin:** The PS1 game where you load CDs into it to make monsters?

**Jack:** Yes!

**Sylvia:** Oh, it's the shit.

**Austin:** What if you could do that but with an entire season of *Friends at the Table*? Someone—

**Jack:** Oh my god.

**Austin:** Burn your favorite *Friends at the Table* episode, and put it into *Monster Rancher*. [Sylvia gasps] And show us the stats.

**Jack:** Put it into *Monster Rancher*. Yeah.

**Austin:** Burn a CD.

**Jack:** Your favorite episode. Put it into *Monster Rancher*. [laughs]

**Austin:** God. I want to know. I want to know, now. It's like the other day when we looked up the horse names.

**Sylvia:** I hope we're some form of Suezo.

**Jack:** Oh my god. That's so funny.

**Austin:** I hope we are, too. I wonder if there's a—

**Jack:** Austin, when you read the name of that horse's dad, it was one of the funniest... [laughs]

**Austin:** Oh, I don't remember the name of the horse's dad. See, this is the thing. Sometimes you're inside of comedy.

**Jack:** The horse's dad's name is like...Targus, or something. [laughs softly]

**Austin:** [bewildered] Targus?

**Jack:** [laughs] Well, it's like...

**Austin:** Which horse was it?

**Jack:** Ah, man.

**Austin:** Was it...which horse was it?

**Jack:** This is Twilight Mirage's...there's a racehorse called Twilight Mirage.

**Austin:** Yeah, sorry. We should...

**Jack:** This is Clapcast content.

**Austin:** Yeah, this is Clapcast content that we're spoiling— that we're "spoiling." There is a horse named Twilight Mirage that was very successful as a racehorse. God, I'm looking for it now, but I'm not seeing it. But I guess, you know what? Just hang on. Wait for that...wait.

**Jack:** Yeah, it'll show up.

**Austin:** Oh. [laughs] Oh, I think I found it. It's very funny. I'll wait and let people hear it naturally, so.

**Jack:** Can you type it in the chat? I want to know what this horse's dad was called.

**Austin:** I think that it was this.

**Jack:** Yes. [Austin and Jack laugh]

**Austin:** All right, we're off on one right now. So let's try to...let's try to reel it back in.

**Jack:** Oh, I mean, to reel it back to the question. Something I was thinking about when you were saying, you know, what if you parceled off characters and said, oh, every time the Jukebox—"

**Austin:** Boys

**Jack:** —Gang.

**Austin:** Uh huh, the Jukebox Gang, yeah.

**Jack:** The Jukebox Boys show up, you know, Dre is gonna play all of the Jukebox Gang people. On some level, that's not very far from what a lot of GMs and from what a lot of tables do, where it's like, you know, when we're in Hieron...

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

**Jack:** When you have questions about vampires, you'll go to Dre.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** Or if you have questions about the Archives, you would go to me.

**Austin:** Ordenna, or the Archives would go to you. Right, right, right.

**Jack:** Or, yeah.

**Austin:** Yes, totally.

**Jack:** And I don't think it's too far of a leap there to say, well, you know, this player has a degree of understanding of this space or of what they're interested in about that space. Why don't they play an NPC in this context?

**Austin:** Mm-hmm. Someone in chat...who was it? I just...Jessie M. says, "I know there was some square iOS game that used your song library like that." That was *Space Invaders Infinity Gene*, if I'm remembering the right one.

**Sylvia:** Uh...I actually think we're thinking...'cause I owned...I think I owned the game Jesse's talking about.

**Austin:** Oh. Okay.

**Sylvia:** And this was a tactics RPG.

**Austin:** Oh, really?

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Interesting. Huh.

**Sylvia:** I had it on my iPod Nano.

**Austin:** Shit. I want to know what that was, because the...



**Sylvia:** Yeah, I'm really trying to find the name.

**Jack:** Wait, what? On your iPod Nano?

**Sylvia:** Yeah, it was like you used the spin wheel.

**Austin:** That's incredible.

**Sylvia:** *Song Summoner: The Unsung Heroes.*

**Austin:** Holy shit.

**Jack:** I'm looking this up. You used the spin?

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** [typing] Song Summoner: The Un...

**Jack:** The Unsung Heroes. Oh, look at this shit!

**Austin:** To my credit, *Space Invaders Infinity Gene* also does this and was published by...

**Jack:** Also does this?

**Sylvia:** Sure.

**Austin:** And was published by Square on the PS3 and 360, apparently.

**Sylvia:** Okay.

**Austin:** Taito did it on the phones. Okay. Wow, this *Song Summoner* looks sick!

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Put this on PC.

**Sylvia:** I should see if I can find my old iPod if it's on there.

**Austin:** Oh my god.

**Sylvia:** Turn Fall Out Boy songs into anime boys.

**Jack:** I have an iPod Shuffle in my desk drawer right now. It's...those old iPods are good as hell.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Um, I love this game, because it was on an iPod Nano, seems to be in like a 4x3 aspect ratio, which more games need to be in.

**Sylvia:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** Now we've...now we've moved to...

**Austin:** Hey, Sylvi, why are three of these...or two, two of these characters back to back in this trailer I'm watching, your characters?

**Sylvia:** Oh my god. Wait, really? I need to look at this. [Jack laughs]

**Austin:** 'Cause here's one. Here's Soma Beauty.

**Sylvia:** Oh my goodness!

**Austin:** Who is some sort of hot devil lady with a double bladed sword thing, double bladed lance.

**Sylvia:** A double spear, wow.

**Austin:** Then the next character is also a silver rated character named Her Majesty. [laughs softly]

**Sylvia:** More like a Sylvi rated character, am I right?

**Austin:** A Sylvia— yes, uh huh.

**Austin:** Oh my god.

**Jack:** Her Majesty!

**Austin:** The next character is a gold named Original Gangster.

**Sylvia:** That's what I should've—

**Austin:** We're not going to talk about Original Gangster. We're just gonna keep on moving, keep scrolling.

**Sylvia:** That's what I should have named my character, is Her Majesty.

**Austin:** God, there's a character—

**Jack:** That's a good name. Not that far off.

**Austin:** This fucking game looks so good.

**Sylvia:** It's really sick in concept.

**Austin:** Look at this robot.

**Sylvia:** And then it's really clunky to play.

**Austin:** No!

**Sylvia:** But it's on an iPod. That's why.

**Austin:** This robot is named Great Artist, and they're saying, "But struggle, battle, this...this has meaning!" and then the next...I mean, then there's a character named Boxcar who's a big robot. Then there's this fucking guy, who seems to be some sort of post apocalyptic punk man named No Future.

**Jack:** Holy shit.

**Austin:** No Future's kind of sick.

**Jack:** Also, what's going on...

**Sylvia:** Oh my god.

**Jack:** What's going on here?

**Austin:** What is going on there? It looks like you've made yourself a Trooper.

**Sylvia:** I think that is the screen you get like after you've just summoned someone.

**Austin:** Mmm, I see.

**Sylvia:** And the Trooper, I think, is like a trait or class thing.

**Jack:** It looks like they goofed it. That thing looks like...it looks like...

**Austin:** That looks like...yeah, like you've made a bad fusion.

**Jack:** Oh.

**Austin:** And you end up with like a trash character.

**Sylvia:** With Mokujin?

**Austin:** It does look like Mokujin. It does.

**Sylvia:** Also, I guess Trooper is just the name for the units, actually.

**Austin:** Mmm, gotcha.

**Jack:** Oh.

**Austin:** Does that mean her name isn't Her Majesty?

**Sylvia:** No, her name is Her Majesty.

**Austin:** Oh, okay, good. Well, then, we're good.

**Sylvia:** She's just a Trooper named Her Majesty.

**Austin:** Some of these characters like JoJo's characters,

**Jack:** They do, don't they?

**Sylvia:** Oh my god.

**Austin:** Let me show you the one I was specifically thinking about here. I don't know this person's name. It's the person next—

**Jack:** JoJo's characters. [laughs softly]

**Austin:** [laughs] You know what I mean. [Jack laughs] It's a person to the right of No Future, but even No Future in this image looks sort of...

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Looks like like they could be from something. Anyway.

**Sylvia:** No, I would definitely read whatever manga No Future is from.

**Austin:** [laughs] Um, this is better than gacha games, 'cause I got music right here, and I don't have to pay for it, so. [Sylvia and Jack laugh]

**Sylvia:** Oh my god.

**Jack:** Gonna put in Belle and Sebastian into the game and see what it fucking does.

**Austin:** I wanna put in and see what the fuck...what's it do? Oh, I wonder if there's a *Song Summoner*...

**Jack:** "Fox in the Snow." Let's go.

**Austin:** [laughs] Fox in the Snow. Great spaceship name. [Jack laughs] Opening up Spaceship Names, adding it to the list. [typing] Fox in the Snow, number 17. [Jack laughs] Boom, done. Where do you go?

**Jack:** Where *do* you go? [Austin laughs] That's a sad song.

**Austin:** That's a sad song. That's a good album. God. All right, we should go to the next question.

[0:47:28]

**Jack:** Next question! [Sylvia laughs]

**Austin:** Uh huh. [Jack laughs] Sky(???) writes in— actually, Sylvi, do you want to read this one? It's not because it's important to you, but just I'm trying to pass the mic around.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, sure. So, Sky writes in and asks:

I know seasons of the show are very focused narratively, but I thought I would throw this question to you nonetheless. I've been running a game for my 13 year old cousin and his parents for a while now.

**Jack:** Amazing!

**Sylvia:** Yeah, really good.

And in the session zero of our new campaign, they told me they wanted the story would be much looser and lower stakes than our previous campaign. I've been keeping to that pretty closely so far and not building a serious overarching narrative. But as we've gone on, I'm noticing them picking up on threads I haven't actually planned on, like a potentially shady patron or thinking that enemies from one encounter might show up again I want to respond to that but also want to keep to what we decided on already. How do I balance keeping things chill and low stakes with following their prompts to tie things together?

**Austin:** Good question

**Sylvia:** That is good. I would say I think my gut instinct is like, right off the bat, is if they're bringing that stuff up—

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** And you feel like they're excited about it, roll with it.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Like, just because some...like there's a shady guy hanging about, like a shady patron as described here.

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

**Sylvia:** Like, that doesn't need to be your like main villain now. That can be just like a bad guy of the week or a bad guy for a couple weeks, and then...you don't need to, I don't know.

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

**Sylvia:** I think—

**Austin:** In other words, you could build...maybe it's about building smaller arcs instead of still doing one big one.

**Sylvia:** Yeah. It's almost like looking at it in—and I know this is...this word is a little different coming from us, 'cause we are making a show. But like an episodic format, almost—

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** —is like a way to think of it.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Where it's like, you have smaller stories planned that don't necessarily have to fit together in an overarching way.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** But you can still bring in these fun ideas that like your players are having.

**Austin:** That makes perfect sense to me and I think speaks to...this has been on my mind a lot lately. We started that *Quest* campaign last year that we're gonna get back to after *Good Society*

wraps up. I'm excited to make characters with the folks who don't have *Quest* characters yet. And that was like, I really want to do some episodic storytelling. I'm willing to say Season Seven will probably end up with a big overarching story, 'cause that's what we do. But I'm interested in going into it with a much more episodic kind of framework. And I'm already...we only recorded worldbuilding and then one session of the campaign, like the post-worldbuilding campaign. And I'm already like needing to—in this way, Sky, I totally relate to you—feeling myself like trying to restrain myself from doing the big like huge campaign-long, “Ooh, this is what's really going on,” thing and instead focusing on that smaller scale. So I'm with you. And I think that the thing that I've learned while trying to practice this a little bit is to...one, do what Sylvi just said, which is think about smaller timeframes and think about paying things off much more quickly. It can be a great temptation, while running a campaign, to sit on big reveals for months and, you know, session after session after session. Instead, trust yourself to make those reveals and to...and to build something new thereafter. You know, nothing survives coming in contact with a play table. Your ideas will shift and change and will generate something new. Maybe it's more fair to say nothing survives, but when it hits the table, it mutates and grows and, you know, expands and turns into something else. It's not that it dies at the table so much as it spreads. And so I think trust yourself to make those reveals and then see what happens thereafter.

And then I think the other thing is, in that episodic mode, give yourself stories and even tell them the player straight up, “Hey, I really want to revisit that shady patron that you...that you've met the other day.” And say it like that, in a way that's like, it's as if you didn't even notice that they noticed, you know what I mean? Like, “You know that shady...that shady patron shows back up.” And they'll feel like clever that they picked up on it, you know what I mean? But say it outright, that like, hey, I want to do a game about this thing that we touched on very briefly. And then that can become your kind of big A plot over the course of a campaign. And then other times, just be straight up. [laughs softly] And be like, you know, you've taken this side job. Use the terminology that people often know now from video games, like side quests, and...or like from TV, you know, talk about episodic adventures, talk about doing one-offs, talk about doing like a tournament arc or whatever. You know what I mean? It's okay to do that stuff. The...I am not a believer in the magic circle. I am a believer in all of us are sitting around a table and telling a story together, and we should use all of the language available that we all know to try to like tell that story in a way that's, you know, that's as fun and as direct as you can. Because not telling someone the thing you want or the thing that you want to do or asking them what they want to do, I think, leaves a lot on the table in terms of potential, like, overall joy. If I know players want to do X thing, and...or if I suspect they want to do X thing, but I don't ask, and I just kind of go like, “Mmm, I don't know,” then we're closing the door potentially on something that would be really good. And just getting that directing answer can go a long way. But it's a thing I'm...obviously one of the things I'm referencing here, maybe not obviously, is *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex*. The first season does like a very good thing, which at the beginning of each episode, it says, “Stand alone episode, blah blah blah blah blah,” or “Complex episode, blah blah blah blah blah.”

**Jack:** Oh my god. That's so good!

**Austin:** The complex episodes—

**Jack:** Holy shit.

**Austin:** It's so good. Jack, you should watch *Stand Alone Complex*.

**Jack:** I know.

**Austin:** Immediately.

**Jack:** Also, Austin gets given a shiny gold token every time he brings up *Stand Alone Complex*.  
[Sylvia laughs]

**Austin:** Jack, I cut a whole conversation about it basically out of a recent episode of...

**Jack:** Ah.

**Austin:** Oh, you know, I left the reference in, but I cut like four minutes of me talking about the Tachikoma, the cute robot tanks, from a recent—

**Jack:** What are you saving up for?

**Austin:** From a recent *More Civilized*— oh, it was just a drag on the episode to talk about Tachikoma for four minutes.

**Jack:** Oh, god.

**Austin:** I was like, I gotta cut this. This is just...go watch *Ghost in the Shell*. You don't need me to fucking tell you for five minutes about how the robot, the battle droids remind me of Tachikoma, but they do.

**Jack:** I think...I think what you said about, you know, not believing in the magic circle but being people at a table. I really can't stress enough the value in all the joy that I have found in my own creative practice from, you know, sitting down with my collaborators and, you know, talking frankly about like, well, what do we want from this? You know, where do we want to go here? And it does seem like they're...you know, you talk about following their prompts, but it really does seem like they are saying to you, "I'm interested in a potentially shady patron."

**Austin:** Mm.

**Jack:** Or, "What if these enemies show up again?" And it might be worth asking them, you know. There is the slipping it into conversation that Austin mentioned, but also, if this is something you're anxious about...



**Austin:** Yeah, raise it.

**Jack:** It might be worth saying, you know, “I know we talked about wanting to keep things low stakes, and that's something I'm interested in doing if that's something you're still interested in doing. But would you like to see more of like the mustachioed...the mustachioed weirdo?”

**Austin:** [laughs] Oh, my favorite character from *Song Summoner*, Mustachioed Weirdo.

**Jack:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Sylvia:** Okay, I did find some more names from that, though, and they are good.

**Jack:** Yes, let's go!

**Sylvia:** There's a character who's just named The End of the World?

**Austin:** Oh my— okay, wow.

**Jack:** Whoa!

**Austin:** Incredible.

**Sylvia:** And also, Forbidden Apple.

**Austin:** Oh. We gotta play this game.

**Jack:** Whow. Forbidden Apple is really good.

**Sylvia:** The wiki I found only has the characters for two of the five classes, so I'm like—

**Austin:** Oh.

**Sylvia:** I want to know more about the knights and archers, but I've just got mages and monks.

**Austin:** Aw. What's the fifth class?

**Sylvia:** Uh...oh, what is the other one? [mumbles]

**Austin:** Mages, archers, knights, monks. What's missing? Let's think. Clerics?

**Sylvia:** I think a healer, probably.

**Austin:** Some sort of healer, yeah.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Uh huh. Damn, fuckin' RPG, because we all knew. Like, okay, I guess you gotta have a healer in there somewhere. A sage or a medic in there.

**Jack:** Or else they'll fall over.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** White mage.

**Austin:** Yeah, probably a...probably a white mage.

**Sylvia:** Wait, it's soldier, mage, archer, knight, and monk.

**Austin:** I take it back. Soldier and knight, huh? You really thought...is knight, does knight have some sort of special thing?

**Sylvia:** Probably tankier.

**Jack:** It's do with class.

**Austin:** Oh, it's just cl— [laughs] What sort of family were they born into? Noble or not?

**Sylvia:** God.

**Austin:** God. All right. I hope that that helps, Sky. I hope that...we're a little punchy today, but I hope that that helps a little bit.

**Jack:** We're excited about the new season!

**Austin:** We are excited about the new— it's true. We are excited about the new season.

**Sylvia:** And you should be too, listeners.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And you should be too.

**[0:56:32]**

**Austin:** Pay attention as more information comes out in the coming days. Next question, final question today. Matthias(???) writes in and says:

I've been listening to the show for more than a year now, and it's always been a great source of entertainment and inspiration. Thanks to your show, I've been working on an *Armor*—

**Austin:** Thank you.

Thanks to your show, I've been working on an *Armor Astir* campaign for a while, basically since that episode came out. My question is this: I've been struggling with finishing up the worldbuilding because—

**Austin:** [laughs softly] Speaking of starting a new season. [Jack chuckles]

—finishing up the world building, because I feel like every time I have a good idea, it opens up a new issue elsewhere and puts an old idea into question. How do I stop myself from overhauling things that are finished all the time? And I guess it would also be nice if you have anything specific for worldbuilding with ADHD.

**Austin:** I should start by saying I am not diagnosed with ADHD. But I will say that, as someone who has done a lot of world building lately and who has a real problem with focus and who can really struggle— I really struggled with world building for this season. This season meaning Season Seven, not PARTIZAN. Because I have a lot of...I am [hesitates] 35 years old. I'll be 36 this year. I almost forgot my own age. And I am like, the story of me as a kid in school is like the classic, I'm able to do— I'm able to intuit things and get good answers and write good essays with very little work. And then when I hit the part of my academic career where I had to like work hard, I fell apart. Because I'd never learned any way to...or this is the way I conceptualize it now. I don't know if this is actually true. But it felt, to me, like I'd never developed techniques for focusing on work. I was very much a “I can do my homework at the last minute and still get a good enough grade” person. And I was a very, I'll write the essay five hours before it's due, and it'll be fine. I'll pull an all nighter and do it. And then I hit a part of my academic career where it was like, no, you have to put in work. You have to like work on this, you know, consecutively over the course of many weeks. And you have to take really good notes. And you have to not get distracted by looking at other things on the internet, or watching TV, or having an idea for a story and going to write that instead, or any of the other things. And it took me a long time to develop a number of techniques to like help me manage that stuff. And a lot of that stuff has to do with place time. I find that I'm personally very productive in the kind of from 5pm till midnight time of the day. And especially if I'm in public, if I'm at a coffee shop or a diner or something. And let me tell you, I can't be there at those places anymore. [laughs]

**Jack:** Hm.

**Austin:** This coming season, the name of which I almost just said out loud. Whoops.

**Jack:** I keep doing this.

**Austin:** It's dangerous out here. If we do and you're watching this live, you have to be cool about it. [laughs softly] You can't go tell anybody. Promise me. Anyway, I don't have those methods at home, and I haven't for the last year. And so this is the first time that I've had to do worldbuilding since the lockdown has started and since I haven't been able to have a number of things that I do in terms of my daily schedule, in terms of feeling like I can find the focus that I normally have to keep me on task or to give me like, you know. When I was doing the PARTIZAN worldbuilding, for instance, I would go to a coffee shop. I would sit down. I would have notes. And I would bounce between those notes and then my many distractions at like a pretty regular interval with...knowing that I could give myself 5 to 10 minutes of break time for every 20 to 30 minutes I put in. And that's how I got that done. I like can't find that rhythm here at home at all. And so doing the worldbuilding for this was nightmarish. [laughs softly] It was very hard to commit to. And so...and I would often do the thing that you're describing here, Matthias, which is I would...I would have fits and starts. Or I would have kind of these heavy starts and stops, where I would find...I would fall completely into it for an hour or two, and it's all I would do, and then I'd burn out on it and couldn't work on it again for days. And so, again, not diagnosed with ADHD. [laughs softly] But speaking about how I've found some degree of focus and have zeroed in on the other part of this, which is how do you stop writing when you know enough? The number one thing that helped me was starting to try to explain stuff to other people. A thing will kick in for me when I am sharing my worldbuilding, which is embarrassment at having to dump a lot of stuff on to somebody else and having to think through "How do I share this with somebody else?" in a way that's coherent. And when I'm able to put my head in that space, and when I'm able to say to Jack, or to Janine or Sylvi or whoever I'm sharing something with, like, okay, I need to tell you how religion works in the setting we're building. I guess, spoilers, it has religion in this setting we're building. [laughs]

**Sylvia:** [in mock surprise] What? In *Friends at the Table*?

**Austin:** In *Friends at the Table*.

**Jack:** [laughing softly] In *Friends at the Table*.

**Austin:** In that, when I'm having that sort of conversation, I can sense the places at which...or I can, in trying to explain it, I'm like, I've been typing for a long time. This is too much typing. I'm about to dump more than I can expect Sylvi to understand— not understand. Sylvi is very— Sylvi, you're able to understand everything.

**Sylvia:** [laughs] I don't know.

**Austin:** But you know what I mean, right? Where I'm like, "Okay, wait. Now this is connected to this. And to explain this, I need to explain this. And explain them, I need to explain them." And at that point, it's like, okay, I've given too much, I have to start scaling back here. [Sylvia laughs quietly] So that's a huge thing, is just having someone to bounce ideas off of. Which again, as the GM, you shouldn't expect yourself to be an island and do all that world building yourself. Share what you're doing. Get feedback. And the other half of that is, that feedback will help you

put boundaries up, because you'll see that like, hey, no one's really excited about this part of the world that I put time into; I don't need to keep developing over there. They're responding really positively to this stuff; let's zero in here and give a little bit more to that. And I think that that ends up being a big part of my mechanism for dealing with the, like, where am I— where is my focus going? Is talking to my players, seeing what excites them, seeing where I feel like I'm asking too much of them to keep up. Or to like, what is my bare minimum ask. And the other way of doing that is also to translate what I've already written into a shorter document and to see if I can do it. And if I can't, then I start to say, okay, I have to start cutting this stuff here. If I can't turn this two pages about this civilization into four sentences, then I've probably gone overboard, and...because I don't want to ask someone to read two pages on one place, you know? So those are some tips that I have. And those are like, again, very big picture things—and also not all tips, partly just rambling experience sharing—but I hope that that's a little bit helpful.

**Jack:** On my desk, I have the document that you sent us at the very beginning of PARTIZAN, where you have—

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** You know, you've basically put this worldbuilding. It's something like six or seven pages, but the first page is— like, a lot of that is factions. [Sylvia laughs]

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** But the first page is just, you know, you have gone through all of the world building that previously would have been two or three pages or whatever, and, you know.

**Austin:** Yes.

**Jack:** Stel Kesh. Here is what Stel Kesh are. They are tied to X.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** Here are keywords that are associated with them. Stel Nideo. Here is what Stel Nideo are. Here is what they are tied to. Here are keywords associated with them. And like, that moment of being able to say to your players...and we're doing this in Seven as well, where it's like— the S does not stand for Seven. Although I suppose it...

**Austin:** Huh.

**Jack:** I suppose it...

**Austin:** That's fun.

**Jack:** I suppose it can.

**Austin:** I hadn't realized that.

**Jack:** Yeah, that is fun.

**Austin:** Someone did suggest at some point that we do the Resident Evil 8 thing, and put—

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Austin:** —a seven in the, like a roman numeral seven in the name.

**Sylvia:** Oh.

**Austin:** I don't think we—

**Jack:** You know, we could do that.

**Austin:** Is it too late to do that? It's too late to do that.

**Jack:** No, I mean, we could— I mean, it's possible. Think about it.

**Sylvia:** Wait.

**Austin:** Anything's possible, right? [typing] Jack, I'm thinking about it. I don't think it works. I'm typing things out.

**Jack:** No, you're right. We can't do it. I was spelling something wrong.

**Austin:** Ah, I see.

**Jack:** In my head. When I was rotating letters in my head, they were the wrong ones.

**Sylvia:** We could fit a roman numeral in there, just not the correct one.

**Austin:** Let me see. Which one? Let's see. Uh... [Sylvia laughs] Oh, yeah, sure. Uh huh. Yeah. Uh huh. [Sylvia and Jack laugh]

**Jack:** Well, you know, we've gotten to this point with Seven, where we are able to, you know, look at an aspect of that world and be able to say with some confidence, like, all right, this is what's...this is what is interesting at this moment about this.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** When we are worldbuilding it. And the joy that I think we are gonna have in the game itself is...the worldbuilding doesn't have to stop, you know?

**Austin:** Right.

**Jack:** When you...when you start the session.

**Austin:** It sure didn't for us!

**Jack:** [chuckles] It didn't.

**Austin:** I think about the stuff that happened in the first gameplay session. Not gameplay. *Ground Itself* was gameplay. The first non-worldbuilding session is building directly on stuff from the worldbuilding game.

**Jack:** Yeah. Totally.

**Austin:** Which we came into with some aspect of the world already...major aspects of the world already decided, and then built something inside of that space, you know? So.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Austin:** So like, yeah, you're right. Worldbuilding doesn't stop when the campaign starts.

**Jack:** When you're...you know...I don't want to read intention into your question, but part of what I'm feeling is like a resistance to stopping worldbuilding, because worldbuilding is really exciting.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And it's easy to keep doing that. And part of the answer is like, good, you don't have to stop. You might have to stop in the traditional way of, you know, working through Google Docs or talking things out with your players, or...

**Austin:** Or the solitary way, right? Yeah, yeah.

**Jack:** Or the solitary way, yeah. Absolutely. Or playing a well building game. But, you know, when you move into the system itself, a lot of what you're going to be doing is still well building.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And that's very exciting. Also, don't...the other thing is it's exciting to explore what you've built.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** Something I think about a lot is the way that *Dwarf Fortress*, the game *Dwarf Fortress*, has a mode where you can build a fortress from scratch. And then you can go and explore it as an adventurer hundreds of years after you, you know, after you abandoned your fortress or whatever.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Jack:** And whenever we finish that sort of, quote, unquote, classical bit of world building at the beginning, or classic bit of wealth building, there is a real excitement to moving into, all right, how are we going to explore this space with our characters?

**Austin:** Totally. I'll also say, I think that one...another way to talk about this is to hit the pause button earlier and talk about— talk to your players as soon as possible around the space that they want to— the characters that they want to play, the— and I know you're playing *Armor Astir*, so we're already like in fantasy Mecca, basically. So that's already some basic, you know, thing. And they're gonna pick playbooks, and blah blah blah. But even in that scenario, if you talk to one of your players who wants to play, you know, a, uh...god, I'm trying to remember the playbook names in that game, because they're all very good. Who wants to play an Imposter, which is the one that comes to mind because of Dre's...Dre's already talked about wanting to play an Imposter next season, in the next season— not next season, [Jack chuckles] but the next season of PARTIZAN or whatever we end up calling that. And so like, talking to Dre, before I even get into the kind of more focused worldbuilding of PARTIZAN Two or Season Eight or whatever it ends up being called. I'll have like ideas about like, oh, hey, Dre wants to play this thing with these ideas and these connections. Let me build around that a little bit.

We did conversations with...I did conversations with everyone at the table individually for Season Seven, that'll go up as Drawing Maps conversations in the coming weeks and months, about their characters. And I did that in the middle of worldbuilding, where I had enough to say, "Oh, hey, here's something about religion, for instance. Sylvi, how does that connect with your character idea?" and then left that conversation being like, aw shit, I have so many more ideas to fill in XYZ thing and give flavor to this. And because I know that Sylvi wants to do A, that means I need to set up B, C, and D. And then...and that's such a different and more productive experience for me than sit down, look at Google Sheet, alt tab, scroll Twitter, alt tab back. What's— what am I listening to? Let me listen to something. All right, Aldomina...okay. Hmm. And that's just like a dead end. But when I'm like, oh, Sylvi said that she was excited about blank, then I can bounce off that a little bit better, because I know my end goal a little bit, which is like to provide a play space where my players will be excited. So I think that's...getting players involved early and talking about genre and character is going to give you a lot more directed fuel than you sitting down and doing genre, character, tone. And I mean, that stuff's important too, because again, it's like...Sylvi didn't, Sylvi and I didn't sit down and go, "All right, we're going to play a game."

**Sylvia:** [laughs] Oh, man.



**Austin:** Like, we knew tone and genre space and et cetera, so.

**Sylvia:** I think, also, just something to say about that too, is that, like, your players might find that really helpful.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** When coming into a new world that you're like, just...you've just built.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** I think, like...I feel like it's something that kind of comes clear in...that'll be in that Drawing Maps is like, I had ideas, but they weren't like solid enough to be a character yet.

**Austin:** Right.

**Sylvia:** And then by the time we were done that like, just like hour long—I don't even know if it was an hour long talk, like half an hour long talk—I felt way more secure about like, what I wanted to do this season.

**Austin:** Right.

**Sylvia:** And like where my character was just sort of like coming from in a lot of different ways.

**Austin:** Yeah. That makes sense to me.

**Sylvia:** Yeah. I don't know. Just worth mentioning, 'cause like, if you already want to bring more people into the like fold of worldbuilding, like, I think it's worth mentioning that it's like you're not giving your players homework.

**Austin:** Right.

**Sylvia:** It's helpful.

**Austin:** Yeah, you're not...yeah, yeah, yeah. You're not...it's not a weight. It shouldn't be a weight on them. It should be a thing that folks are...folks are not only contributing to but getting something out of, so. I also just like to have that space where it's like...because those world—those conversations with y'all were like worldbuilding, character building, but also just kind of like, hey, what's on the table for this character? What are we talking about? What are the...what are the big like, let's talk about what you want to see this season even more broadly than just, you know, who are you playing and what is the part of the world you're from or whatever, you know? Can you tell that we're excited to talk about this next season?

**Jack:** Are there any—

**Sylvia:** Yeah, I'm already really biting my lip right now.

**Austin:** It's so hard. It's so hard.

**Sylvia:** I almost said so much shit. Like, I don't know if you could hear the gears in my brain turning.

**Austin:** Uh huh. Yeah, totally. A hundred percent.

**Sylvia:** But yeah.

**Austin:** 'Cause mine too. You know?

**Jack:** When Austin said Aldomina, I had a sudden full body shot of adrenaline [Austin laughs softly] because I couldn't remember whether or not we had said that. [laughs softly]

**Austin:** It's in the tweet. It was in the tweet today, so it's fine. Aldomina. Aldomina we can say.

**Jack:** Are there any ponies in, uh, in this place?

**Austin:** Jack, we had a whole conversation about whether or not your character could have a horse. [Sylvia laughs]

**Jack:** And you explicitly told me no. [laughs softly]

**Austin:** Not because there weren't horses.

**Sylvia:** Spoilers!

**Austin:** Anyway. [laughs softly] This is— we're playing a game of chicken.

**Sylvia:** Great. Now people know that Jack's character doesn't have a horse.

**Austin:** [laughs] Not yet.

**Jack:** [laughing] We are playing a game of chicken with Season Seven.

**Austin:** Uh huh. Yeah. We are. We have to end this podcast.

**Jack:** Let's all say the name on three, Austin.

**Austin:** No! [Jack laughs] Thank you Matthias for writing in. Remember, you can send your questions at [tipsatthetable@gmail.com](mailto:tipsatthetable@gmail.com). We have to end this podcast before we spoil our own surprise. [Sylvia laughs] There's so many words I want to say that would give away the game we're playing, that would give away the...like, so many things. And it's just hard not to, because we're all very excited, and we'll have more to come.

**Jack:** Stay tuned. It's happening. That's the— I think the thing that's most exciting to me is that, like, we're making it! It's in full production.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** It's in full production. And I'm very excited about Season Seven. I'm very excited about the show, and this is last time that we'll be talking— that I'll be talking into a microphone to you live probably before like the name is announced and stuff, so we definitely hope you're excited for that, and look forward to it, I guess. If you want to continue to support us you can do that by going to [friendsatthetable.cash](http://friendsatthetable.cash), et cetera. Right? That's all I got.

**Jack:** Yeah. I think that might be it.

**Austin:** Anyone have any plugs? Anyone want to plug anything before we clap again?

**Jack:** You can go to [notquitereal.bandcamp.com](http://notquitereal.bandcamp.com) to buy any music featured on *Friends at the Table*. Today I wrote the first final audio for the...to the theme. That doesn't mean the theme is done, but it does mean that the base is almost finished.

**Austin:** Oh, is that true? I didn't realize that that was the final. Is that the file...one sec. I was gonna say say called, but I'm not gonna say what it's called, 'cause if it's the one that I think it is...

**Jack:** Yeah. Uh huh.

**Austin:** I shouldn't say the name of it, because it would give something away. [Sylvia laughs]

**Jack:** Yeah, I think that's probably the fi— I think it's neat enough.

**Austin:** Yeah, I think that's neat enough.

**Jack:** I think it's probably ready to go.

**Austin:** Yeah. I love it. It's good.

**Sylvia:** God, I almost said something, too. [Austin laughs] And I'm glad I caught myself.

**Austin:** We don't often...here's the other thing. This is a...this is a new feeling for us, because normally we announce at the, um... [snaps fingers thoughtfully] The post mortem.

**Sylvia:** [simultaneously] Post mortem?

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** I know. This is just self indulgent bullshit now, but we don't get to...

**Austin:** We don't get to do this ever.

**Jack:** You know, we don't get to this often.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** This is fun.

**Austin:** Let's get it—

**Jack:** Let us have our fun.

**Austin:** Please. Thank you. All right. [Jack laughs] We should go to time.is. Thank you all for joining us.

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

**Austin:** We'll be back next month with another episode of Tips at the Table. All right. I'm ready to clap. You wanna do five seconds?

**Jack:** Five.

[they clap]

**Sylvia:** The way you said “five” made me think you were gonna do a countdown.

**Austin:** Me too. Me too.

**Jack:** I thought I was gonna— / thought I was gonna count down.

**Austin:** I thought you were gonna do a countdown for sure. I thought Jack was gonna be like, “Five, four,” and that didn't happen.

**Jack:** I scared myself. [Austin and Sylvia laugh]

**Austin:** All right. Thank you all for joining us. I hope everyone has a good night, a good week. We'll be back in March for another episode of Tips. Bye bye bye.

**Sylvia:** Bye!

**Jack:** Bye!