AUSTIN: Welcome to Tips at the Table, an RPG podcast focused on critical questions, hopefully smart answers, and fun interaction between good friends, I'm your host Austin Walker, I'm joined today by Ali Acampora.

ALI: Um, hi! My name is Ali Acampora you can find me at Twitter… *[laughs]* wait, ali_we— *[laughter]* @ali_west on twitter.com!

AUSTIN: *[cross]* You can find me on Twitter! Go look!

KEITH: I, yeah, Ali is Jack, you can find her @twitter!

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* Yeah, @twitter! Uh, Keith Carberry!

KEITH: Hi, my name is Keith J. Carberry, you can find me on twitter @KeithJCarberry, you can find the let's plays that I do at youtube.com/runbutton, uh, and coming up soon is the, the conclusion to our three year long Silent Hill 4: The Room let's play, it's not that long of a game, it took us that long because we hated it. It's the worst game I've ever played, it's up on Patreon and the rest coming out— it's being slowly trickled out onto Youtube.

AUSTIN: Also good, Shenmue 2, uh let's play—

KEITH: *[cross]* Oh yeah, big—

AUSTIN: The 08th MS games, good stuff on there.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, Sylvia[1] Clare!

SYLVIA: Hi, I'm Sylvia, you can find me on Twitter @captaintrash and you can listen to my podcast Emojidrome wherever you get your podcasts.

AUSTIN: As always, you can find me on Twitter @austin_walker, you can find the show @friends_table, and you can continue to support the show at friendsatthetable.cash. Uh, got some questions in, so let's just get into it! Um… this one, I think— *[laughs]* as, as uh, all of us on this podcast have edited podcasts before, probably have thoughts!

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[1] The name in the audio recording is no longer in use, hence the audio/transcript discrepancy.

AUSTIN: *[cont'd]* Um, Riley asks: "I'm starting a new actual play podcast and the question that always comes up in discussions with listeners is the question of episode length. What do y'all think is a good length for an episode? Obviously, you have denser episodes, an hour and a half to three hours, but do you think an hour can be effective? Maybe even a 30 minute podcast? What are your thoughts?" I'm gonna defer to Keith and Ali, the people who've produced Friends at the Table, first!

[Ali laughs]

KEITH: Um. Ali, you edited it most recently, so, I guess you have a…

ALI: Yeah. So, I personally feel that the… the, time ideal of a Friends at the Table episode is between an hour and twenty minutes and an hour and forty minutes. Just, I feel like we get enough done in that timeline, there's multiple plot points that come up, some goofs and gags, and it's all good. Um— *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: I, I agree with that, by the way.

ALI: Yeah, okay. Thank you! *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: That is, that is definitely where I would estimate is the good spot.

ALI: But I think it really depends, like, I don't know, I… *[sighs]* how often is it going for? How many people do you have… what are you doing, what are you talking about? Um. I like, for an actual play podcast, thirty minutes seems very short? Unless you're trimming a lot of the like, thinking about stuff. An hour is fine? I don't know.

AUSTIN: An hour is fine, I—

KEITH: An hour is fine. An hour seems really short to me.

AUSTIN: It is. I, so, well, but we're wrong, of course, because, uh, TAZ is an hour.

KEITH: There's twenty-four whole ones of those every day!

AUSTIN: There's, right, there's twenty-four episodes of an hour long actual play podcast a day. Yeah, it, I think Ali, you hit it on the head of like, what are you doing and, and what are all the other factors? So like, COUNTER/weight, I think could have been an hour long— in fact, there *are* episodes of COUNTER/weight that are like, just over an hour, right?

ALI: Yeah, for sure, yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, almost certainly. Um, and hour and six minutes, fifty-eight minutes, I'm looking at it now, fifty-six minutes. Because that's a cast of… of, core cast, the Chime were uh, four players plus a GM, and then there were longer episodes, the, the episodes that Sylvia and Dre were in, those tended to be a little longer I'd say, right Sylvia?

SYLVIA: Yeah…

AUSTIN: The like, faction turn?

SYLVIA: Yeah, well that's 'cause we had so much like, broad, like, one: so many factions!

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Uh huh!

SYLVIA: But two, a lot of broad strokes that we did there?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

SYLVIA: Um… so yeah, that ended up being longer.

AUSTIN: And it speaks to it right, was like, we didn't wanna break those up into two episodes because there was so much to keep in your mind a little bit, and like, we wanted those to feel like, um, big moments, stuff happening in space, in the area. Um, we didn't want to break those down into, into multiple smaller episodes. I guess—

ALI: *[cross]* Right, I mean so much of that was like, stuff… coming out of those conversations, so like to have this like, hour long conversation that you guys have, and then people wait a week for the scene that comes from that is kind of like… it makes it feel less organic?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

ALI: Whereas like, if you were doing an actual play podcast about like, The Quiet Year, and had an episode per card draw?

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: Y'know, those might be twenty minute episodes that are really satisfying.

AUSTIN: Totally! That could be actually really fun, like especially if you did them, if you did like one a day? That would be sick, I would listen to that podcast, that would be like a dope like, uh, you end up doing like a thirty episode run or something like, this February: The Quiet Year. The quiet month. Y'know? Um, or, or that's the other thing is like, if you were doing twice a week episodes at thirty or forty minutes, I bet you could get, you could find some success? If, if

interesting stuff was happening then, right, if it was like, this whole forty minute episode is the fight. And that is it, like, what you don't ever want to do is cut a fight in half! Y'know? Unless it's like—

ALI: *[cross]* Yeah…

AUSTIN: A very dramatic moment in the fight, but most tabletop fights are not that… that important or interesting in terms of like the moment to moment beats? You should let those resolve. But yeah, in general I definitely think— so I think, I'm thirty-some episodes into TAZ: Amnesty right now, I had kind of bounced— not bounced off of it, that's not true, I got busy and I didn't listen to it after the first like, eight episodes? And those tend to be about an hour long— *[tinny recording of an episode of TAZ]* Um, I just hit the next one, that was Griffin McElroy's voice going "Previously!". Um—

SYLVIA: Finally, he's on the show! There you go, everyone!

AUSTIN: He's on the show! We, we did the crossover, everyone's been clamoring for it. Um, those tend to be about an hour? Maybe a little bit over it, but like then you subtract the money zone time, and it's about an hour, an hour and a half. And I think, I think that those episodes could have gone a little longer and would have been more fulfilling for me? Mostly because PBTA games, Powered by the Apocalypse games, feel really good once you get that momentum rolling, once things start to snowball? And needing to pause is a thing where it's like, oh shit, like, we have to come back to this in a week! And players… it's harder for players sometimes to like, pick right back up, because so much of Powered by the Apocalypse functions with like— alright, you get a plus one forward to this, you get a minus one forward to that, what were the, what was the fictional positioning exactly, et cetera. For what it's worth, I actually am really enjoying Amnesty and think that like, I think I like it better than Balance, but of course I do because it's a Powered by the Apocalypse game, and it's a game set in the modern day, and all that stuff. But, I think that like, I can feel them wanting to get longer because the show needs to be longer than what Balance was. And I think it's the same thing with us, like Twilight Mirage would've been a mess at an hour long episodes, y'know?

ALI: Yeah.

KEITH: Yeah. So, for, for me as, as an avid podcast listener for uh… a really, really long time, um… I've been listening to podcasts since like, 2005. Uh, and uh, podcasts less than an hour… are really popular?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* They are.

KEITH: I… don't like them. I like, I listen to a couple podcasts that are like, between fifteen minutes and forty minutes long, and they're over so fast, and I'm like so not done listening to something? That like, even, even if it's a podcast that comes out every day, there's a show that I

listen to that's twenty minutes five days a week. And I'm, I just would so much rather it be a full podcast once a week, the whole thing once a week? That's a personal preference, but I thought that I should say it?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally, I mean—

KEITH: *[cross]* And then the—

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

KEITH: Oh, just the other thing was like, if you're, if you're recording in longer sessions, like we tend to do, there's gonna be a time where you've gotta like, decide, does it make more sense to split this up into, y'know, like, to like, say you record for four hours, we're gonna split this up into two two hour long episodes, or three hour and a half long episodes?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yes.

KEITH: Does it lose anything from week to week if, if this turns into three things? Is there like, uh, like an arc that we can, where is the arc where we can cut it?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yep!

KEITH: Does it *have* to be three even length episodes? And like, I think that those are things— the reason that Friends at the Table episodes vary in length is probably because uh… like, like, the answer is different for every episode.

ALI: *[cross]* Right, yeah.

KEITH: Like, sometimes it makes sense to cut it um, y'know, due— sometimes it makes sense to have like, uh, one longer episode and two shorter ones, because that's where the beats of the episode fall?

AUSTIN: Totally.

KEITH: And that's always gonna be more… important, I think, than like, making sure the episodes are all the same length?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* A hundred percent.

KEITH: Which, frankly I don't think is an important thing for a podcast to do?

AUSTIN: I think it's— so, I think there's a bunch of different things here— another big one for us is, are we switching parties? Like, early Twilight Mirage—

KEITH: Oh, yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, knowing that we were gonna come back to the same party after, meant that you could, you didn't need to be as final with where those cuts were, is that fair to say, Ali? That like, hey, we're gonna be right back to this group, and so the audiences need to hold as much in their head for as long? Um, whereas, in the second half, um, or like, we ended up doing that again in the second half, right? In the second half we did… uh, of Twilight Mirage, we did those episodes where it was like, two or three episodes staying with the same pair of people? Um, three times? Do you remember that? Or, the same like, two to three people? And that we didn't jump between sides, right?

ALI: Right, yeah, I think… it became such a weird thing 'cause it was always like, are we gonna have like a two hour long episode and a one hour long episode, or do we wanna try to do this one thirty, one thirty? And like, it felt like it kind of always ended up that it like, it made more sense to mismatch them? Because…

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Of what, whatever the audio is demanding in that moment. Like, I think, I think… god, I think when there was that like, very intense arc where Dre's character like, almost shot all those people?

AUSTIN: Great arc.

ALI: With the big sun?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: And it was just like, to like, I feel like cutting that earlier when you didn't get like, the climax of, y'know, that moment would've been kind of weird? It was just like, it was a lot to think about a lot.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

KEITH: And then the episode following that, if I'm remembering how that ended up working, the episode following that was just like, nonstop the whole fucking time.

AUSTIN: I think that episode's like the end of that arc, actually? Because that's one of the last things that happened 'cause everyone's on your— we can't get into re— going back.

KEITH: Okay, yeah.

[Keith and Ali laugh]

AUSTIN: But.

KEITH: I think I'm just misremembering the order of things.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's like, one of the last things that happens 'cause—

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Gig shows— it's a whole thing. Anyway. Anyway. The point is, there's a lot at the table. So the actual— the other thing here is like, to Riley, what is your goal? Because, if your goal... a thing that I, I've brought this up recently in the Discord and I've, I, y'know, I've been in media for a few years now, and my experience there is that as consumers, our gut instinct is people see the world that we do. Or, they see it a way that's different than us, one or the other. We think about this in a binary way. I remember when I was a kid, I used to work— my dad, uh, my dad was a small businessman at the time and he had like a hip hop clothing store in Atlantic City, and I worked there, and he used to scold me, not scold me, but he used to encourage me to be a more active salesman. Uh, to like, talk to people as they came in the store, and say "Hey, what's up, do you need anything? Are you looking for something in particular? Hey, heads up there's ten percent off on these, this pair of jeans," whatever, blah blah blah. And I was like, Dad, I don't wanna do that, 'cause when I'm shopping, I wanna be left the fuck alone! Like, I don't wanna talk to anyone, I want my headphones in, I wanna just like, be in my own little world, if I want something I'll ask someone for help, like that's how I live. And he says, "Austin, like, most people aren't like you. Not that no one is, but the job of you as a salesman is to quickly read someone, try to figure out who they are, and barring your ability to do that, develop like, strategies that will work most of the time. No strategy works a hundred percent of the time, anyone who tells you that it will is lying to you, or doesn't know what they're talking about."

So, in media, that is also one hundred percent true. If we wanted to— if we were playing for numbers, if our goal was to be as big as possible, we would be running D&D. We would be releasing hour long episodes on the dot even if it meant cutting content. Even if it meant shifting things around, like— and I'm not, I'm not dragging shows that are doing that, what I'm saying is that like, part of the reason that we, that I know, part of the reasons why we are the size we are is because we're playing games that don't have a huge built-in audience. Because we are releasing content that's longer than the average listening audi— y'know, the average audience member consumes in the pod, in the, the kind of demographic of podcast listeners, for whom anything over an hour is long. Um, and so, the reason we do that is 'cause of who we are. Like, Keith, I like long things, y'know, like, like Ali, I care about where the stories break, and like making sure that that is more important than keeping to whatever the best practices page says? But I think that we do that knowing that the best practice would be do an hour, no more no less, and go with it from there. And like, that's a conscious decision that we make, it's not something that's just like... I don't know, like, who cares! Put it all out, four hour episodes, y'know?

ALI: My one practical advice here is like, as you're sitting down to actually do this, um. Like, just listen to the entire thing and like, cut out what you know you're gonna cut out? And then you'll have like a much more honest like, layout of like oh, this session.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Was two and a half hours or whatever, and then you can kind of like... make that decision then.

AUSTIN: Totally.

KEITH: One more smaller point, really small point is just like, we also have a really stretched out podcast because we're always jumping back and forth between or like—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yes.

KEITH: It always takes us longer to get going because we need to find our footing each time? There's like the way, so, I think that... y'know. Running a, uh... a... COUNTER/weight style campaign leads to shorter episodes just because it's always us getting back into the same action that we got back, we were in last time?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. It's so much easier—

KEITH: *[cross]* Versus what we do now, which is like, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Jumping between parties, and also, and also just— we didn't say this explicitly, but expect your episode length to be much shorter than your recording length. Like, you, do... if you record for four and a half hours, you should expect, depending on if you're cutting to an hour or two, or whatever like, that should not be one episode, but it also shouldn't be like... you shouldn't be recording just one episode at a time because you get that good stuff once everyone's warmed up, and that warmup will take between fifteen and forty minutes, so don't record— if you're aiming for hour long episodes, don't record for an hour. Record for at least two hours so you get that momentum, you know? Sylvia, we talked all over you this question!

SYLVIA: No, it's fine, I don't really like, this, this is kinda something I don't have a ton of expertise on, and like, I can say, like, pacing stuff like you guys said, but like.. I don't know the finer points of when to stop an actual play podcast aside from.. being on one and listening to ours. [Austin laughs] I don't know, ninety minutes seems like a good runtime to me! That's how long I like my podcasts to be!

AUSTIN: [cross] It is. Love it! Me too. Love a good ninety minute podcast. Alright.

[16:00]

AUSTIN: [cont'd] Uh, next question comes in from Katie, who says "I am playing in a Dungeon World campaign with some good friends, and I'm incredibly excited about it and all the worldbuilding we've done. The problem is that as we approach playing and actually play, I get really, really nervous about it. I start to worry that I'm going to make some stupid decision or do something that's not interesting and steer the game in a direction that's not as fun for everyone else. My nervousness comes from thinking my friends are so cool and being deeply invested in what we're doing and worrying that I'll let them down. How do you deal with tabletop roleplaying game imposter syndrome? It's probably related to those feelings in other parts of my life, but I'm going to save my more general questions for my therapist." [Austin and Sylvia laugh] "And balance wanting to make the coolest thing you can with letting yourself relax and enjoy the fun." Any thoughts here about tabletop rpg imposter syndrome?

SYLVIA: Yeah, I find it really easy to sorta fall into this trap, too.

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah.

SYLVIA: Especially because we're putting our show out there?

AUSTIN: Yeah!

SYLVIA: But… I find that, and like I don't know how helpful this is as advice, but practically speaking, when I am finally like, sitting down to play with y'all, it… like, maybe the first little bit I'm thinking about it, but once things get rolling, like, if you're truly in like a comfortable environment, hopefully you'll be able to sort of forget about it a little?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

SYLVIA: Part of that also will come from just like, your group making you feel comfortable, and making you feel like you are an equal part of the like, creative process and stuff with a campaign? Um, but if you're like really worried about your ideas, there's nothing wrong with like, messaging someone beforehand and being like, "Hey, I was thinking of doing this today, what do you think?" Or like, whether it's your GM or another player character, in the group? Like, there's nothing wrong with a little bit of extra communication if what you're really worried about is like… doing stuff that won't be as cool? But like, these people are already friends with you, they probably think your stuff's cool too.

AUSTIN: Yeah, definitely! And, I don't think anyone expects someone at the table to bat a hundred— or bat a thousand? Bat a thousand, that's the saying. Um, not, you're gonna have ideas and you're gonna make moves you're like, ah shit, I wish that woulda gone better? That's okay. What is important is that like, you maintain that excitement because if you do, that will carry through, and will make the actions you're taking seem interesting and excited and exciting because of your own level of excitement and investment. Like, that investment will lead you to

make interesting decisions, even if they go bad! And even if, you know, maybe, you know, later you're like, oh I shoulda done this instead, or whatever, the fact that you will be having a good time at the table will bring the mood of the table up, and when everyone's in a good mood and is like, having fun and you're, you're able to like, give yourself over to it in that way, the, there's just kind of like a nice warm sensation that washes over any sort of like, missteps or like, half-missteps or whatever it is. Like, so I'm— I just wanna be clear like yeah, everyone makes mistakes, or everyone can feel like they've fucked up sometimes and that is okay, the key is just like, the fact that the overall experience is really good? Um. And, and not to beat yourself up for those independent little mistakes. Like, if you cook everyone a really good meal, but also the brussels sprouts are like, only okay, it's okay! You've still cooked everyone a really good meal! Y'know? And only an asshole would be like "Yeah, but the brussels sprouts sucked," fuck off, that guy!

ALI: I—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Any other… yeah, go ahead, Ali.

ALI: I think that… *[laughs]* to echo some of the sentiments from last month I guess, is um… if you do this often enough, you might come to a point where you are just gonna have to face it. You're always gonna feel like this an hour before you do it, and two hours afterwards? And it's just gonna happen? And you're still gonna have a really good time doing it. But I mean like, that's the, that's the point of like the… the unpredictable-ness of playing rpgs in the first place, but like, you don't get to go in with a plan. You go in with an idea! And you go in with like, some enthusiasm, but like… so many things are up in the air that like, you don't have to take one hundred percent responsibility for like, the entire story…

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: You don't have to take one hundred per— one hundred percent responsibility for like, how other people are having a good time, like, obviously don't put people down, don't like, be in a bad mood, but like, someone else might feel, feel really shitty about it, and like, you know that's, you not having the right thing to say or like… also like, doing assistance rolls and also failing isn't ruining their day! Like it's just, it's a team effort, so like. It'll be fine.

AUSTIN: Yeah! *[Ali laughs]* Uh, Sylvia. Or, sorry, Keith, do you have anything here?

KEITH: Yeah, I, I just wanted to highlight specifically the team effort thing that both Ali and Sylvia talked about? Like, the… the team effort thing specifically is like, y'know. Everybody else at the table wants to use each others' ideas.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: Yeah.

KEITH: So like, like… it is like… even, even if you do like, baseball's a bad analogy, I was gonna try to do a baseball analogy, it doesn't work because if you do, if you do miss, like, there's like, I guess, here, imagine baseball, but there's like, all of your friends are also batting and if you swing and you miss someone else can take that ball and make it a double?

SYLVIA: There's a very easy basketball analogy here, is the thing?

[Ali laughs]

KEITH: What's the basketball thing?

AUSTIN: [cross] Rebounds.

SYLVIA: [cross] Rebounds exist in that as a sport?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh huh!

KEITH: Rebounds, never heard of 'em.

SYLVIA: It's— yeah. [Austin and Keith laugh] It's just one of those. But yeah! People will help you!

KEITH: Yeah, and rebounds are great, because presumably if you, if you shoot and then miss, you did take it to the basket at least, and get it very very close!

AUSTIN: Well that's the— the other thing here is unlike basketball, there is not another team playing against you, Katie, no one else— I hope! Unless your friends suck, but I don't think they do, shoutouts to Katie's friends, no one's— like, everyone is trying to rebound the ball. That's actually such a— it's like, just like you and your friends are shooting around, and it's cool when you get it, when you like, get a three pointer, like when you, when you make the swish, when you get like nothing but net, or when you like, do a dunk, it's awesome, but when you… when you miss people go like aww, but then you rebound it, and someone passes you the ball again and you take another shot, or they go up and shoot it, you're just like—

KEITH: [cross] What's the, what's the one where you…

AUSTIN: [cross] You're all working on the same team.

KEITH: Where you throw it up and then someone grabs it—

AUSTIN: [cross] Alleyoop. An alleyoop.

KEITH: Yeah! It's, yeah, it's not even a miss, it's an alleyoop.

AUSTIN: Right, a good GM is not another team— isn't the opposing team, a good GM is like… throwing you an alleyoop, y'know? Actually, a good GM is kinda both? It's kind of weird, it kind of falls apart at that point 'cause a good GM sometimes blocks you—

KEITH: *[cross]* Everyone's grabbing each others' balls and alleyooping them.

AUSTIN: We're gonna go to the next question, on that note!

SYLVIA: God.

[Ali and Keith laugh]

[22:58]

AUSTIN: This one comes in from Amber, who says "I love all the giant robot action—" This is an old question. Uh, we didn't get to it, we've been saving it for *years*— "I love all the giant robot action in COUNTER/weight, and Twilight Mirage, for all we haven't seen so much in that front yet!" *[Sylvia laughs]* "But—" *[laughs]* "I'm not at all familiar with the so-called mecha genre as an anime and video games! Recommendations for someone interested in watching and/or playing giant robots duking it out! My preferences run towards stuff that isn't too old, has at least a half decent story, and of course, stuff that isn't absolutely dominated by grizzly manly white men without going into the gross fanservicey route." Um… I think this is one of those questions that's like…

KEITH: It's asking a lot.

AUSTIN: In a way, because like, I'm gonna caveat anything I recommend? Basically, not anything, I guess, video games is maybe easier because there's less gross fanservice in most mecha games because they're so interested in just giant robots that they don't include characters. Uh, at all! Um, but I'm curious, Ali, it sounded like you may have had a quick suggestion here or?

ALI: Well, what's— what's too old? *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: Right? We don't— we're us.

KEITH: *[cross]* See that's the big— that's the big curveball.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Us, we are too old, Ali!

ALI: Uh huh! *[laughs]* Yeah…

AUSTIN: Cause what were you thinking?

ALI: Well like, 'cause you, the takes that might take… um. War in the Pocket off the table, because that's, that's kinda old.

AUSTIN: Yeah, but it's good.

KEITH: It is good.

ALI: But it's very good!

AUSTIN: It's very good, and it does, I think, yeah.

ALI: It's like the length of a movie!

AUSTIN: Yeah—

ALI: So it's like, just go sit down and watch it!

AUSTIN: Yeah, go sit down and watch— I still can't believe Jack hasn't finished War in the Pocket yet, I'm so mad. Mobile Suit Gundam, War in the Pocket, 0080, zero zero eight zero, War in the Pocket, is a great six-episode short Gundam series… that does not do gross fanservicey stuff, it isn't only white dudes? Um, it is, there is a really dope lady in it, I don't— I wouldn't know that I'd call Chris… like, a leading character, but she's a main character, right?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, and it is…

KEITH: Did you say a bleeding character?

AUSTIN: A *leading*— leading.

ALI: *[cross]* Leading.

KEITH: Oh my god, that makes so much more sense, I'm sorry.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: God, um… I would also inside of Gundam, continue to recommend 08th MS Team, zero eight, t-h, MS Team? M like the letter M, S like the letter S, the first two letter— or the kind

of abbreviation of Mobile Suit? 08th MS Team, which has, it's certainly has its fanservice, um, but is—

KEITH: I saw that one this year, I really liked it.

AUSTIN: I really like it, I think it's like… the good and the bad of Gundam all in one thing? Uh, I will as always note that the Japanese subtitles have a, a homophobic slur in like the first five seconds of that show? The dub does not have that, the dub gets rid of it, thankfully, and it is the only instance of something like that in the, in the show? Um, there is some like, anime fanservice stuff, but it fundamentally is about a team of soldiers fighting in a, in a ground scale war. If you're interested in Beam Saber, 08th MS Team is a great… a great starting point, in terms of figuring out what the vibe and feel is. I… really like um, uh, Escaflowne as like…

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Yeah…

AUSTIN: A hard counter to shitty, gross, man-focused mecha? It has dope mechs but it's also kind of a great fantasy story, uh, that is… I, I think? Maybe the um… god, what is the genre name, why have I blanked on the genre? The like, going to a different world genre?

SYLVIA: Isekai?

AUSTIN: Yeah, isekai, it's an isekai about a teenage girl who like, goes to a mystical moon… or I guess she goes to another world that thinks that Earth is a mystical moon, which is dope! And like, there's like, the dashing prince, and the kind of like, more rough, rough and rowdy mecha pilot, and she's kind of torn between them, and… It has a great visual design, and I think it's…. *[sighs]* It might be too old? Like I don't know what too old means!

ALI: Yeah…

SYLVIA: Well— there's also, with Escaflowne they did do that movie?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah. Right right right right.

SYLVIA: That's sort of a condensed version, a little later? So if the original one's too old for you, you could watch the movie. But, y'know.

KEITH: There's—

AUSTIN: But watch— the show is on… a few things, too.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Watch the show.

AUSTIN: You can watch it online, like it is streaming at some services. Keith? Were you gonna— sorry.

ALI: *[cross]* Um— Oh, no—

KEITH: *[cross]* There's enough years between War in the Pocket, which I think definitely counts as too old, and Escaflowne to where, which I think there's like seven years in between those?

AUSTIN: That sounds right, Escaflowne's like, definitely the nineties, right?

KEITH: *[cross]* Yeah.

SYLVIA: Esca— Uh, Vision of Escaflowne the show was '96?

AUSTIN: Yeah! Only twenty-three years ago.

KEITH: And then— And then uh— *[laughter]* And then two years later was um. Uh. 08th MS Team.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. Ali? I'm really curious about your answers here, for sure.

ALI: Oh, I have one that isn't too old, that I thought of which is the Big O?

AUSTIN: Yeah!

ALI: Which is a great mech show, it's kind of like a detective series, it's like a film noir… It's great.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* I love the Big O. The Big O— as someone who doesn't like a lot of super robot anime, I still fuckin' love the Big O. It's just like… so stylish, the mystery stuff is so cool, all of the like, it's, okay, if you like Bluff City? You should like the Big O!

KEITH: I don't, I haven't seen the Big O.

AUSTIN: Oh, the Big O is *so* good, Keith, you would love the Big— oh, okay!

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: The Big O, Keith, is like what if Batman had, what if like, the Batman animated series, except Batman had a big robot and also it was really interested in like… memory and like, it was like… what if the Batman animated series but with a big robot and also Dark City? Like, people losing their memories, people not really remembering like, their own history and people being caught, not in a time loop, but like stuck in time, removed from time? It's very good.

KEITH: Sounds pretty cool.

AUSTIN: It's gorgeous. Great characters. Trying to think of other stuff recently… I really like—

KEITH: The Big O is the name of the robot, right? That's the…

AUSTIN: I think it's—

KEITH: The giant, it looks like the Big O!

AUSTIN: Yeah, I believe it's called also, the Big O, yes. Yes.

[Ali laughs]

SYLVIA: One of the more recent ones that jumps to mind for me, and it's, this one comes with the caveat of I haven't watched it in a few years, so I don't know if it has some of that like, stuff you're not looking for? But um, Eureka *["Erica"]* Seven? I really liked back in the day.

AUSTIN: Or, or Eureka Seven? Right?

SYLVIA: Eureka Seven. They say, her name in the dub was like, pronounced "Erica" if I'm remembering right?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Oh, okay. Wild!

SYLVIA: I don't know…

AUSTIN: I have watched the first like three episodes of it and… have not gone back.

SYLVIA: But like, if you're looking for something more recent, and you're looking for something that's got a bit more like… that one's got like, sky snowboarding mechs in it. It's kinda flashy effects.

AUSTIN: Which is sick, yeah.

SYLVIA: It's pretty sick.

AUSTIN: Um, I will shoutouts, shoutout and recommend, uh, Ironblooded Orphans as a very heavy show? Um, but a very good one. I'm like, halfway through— more than halfway through my rewatch of it, um, and I think it mishandles some really touchy subjects, some really like, difficult subjects? I'm still very impressed by the way it tackles and thinks about like, the costs of war, the way that infrastructure works, it has like a really neat— it has some really interesting

twists on like, the genre staples? Um… and it's a great show about kids getting in over their heads. You know, young people who want the best for the world but don't necessarily have the ability to bring that into reality? Which is like, a recurring theme across Gundam especially, but anime also? Right, is like, young people are the future! Um, does that mean something? Can you do something with that? But yeah, those are, those are good ones. I think, in terms of video games, um, stuff that is like, accessible and— or not accessible in terms of disability accessibility, but in terms of uh, you know, available on contemporary consoles or PCs, last year's Battletech is a fantastic tactics game? And it's not flashy anime mechs, it's way more like, heavy stompy Western mechs? But it's fantastic and it's gonna be a huge influence on season six, on Partizan. Largely… because of its, its interest in like the mingling between people of different classes and the alignment of like…, different um, kind of like, how does change happen inside of these giant structures that are fundamentally un— you know, unequal? It is not a, it is not like a game with like, deeply revolutionary politics, you end up kind of being a restorative monarchist? But, it's very much a game about confronting uh, the… a group of people who have like, the worst interests in mind for people, and the ways in which bad actions at the top can really shuffle out into hurting regular folks on the margins, and you know, in this case, literally on the margins because of, of where this story takes place. It's also just gorgeous. There's like, so many great cutscenes, the soundtrack is incredible, it's a huge influence on Partizan. And it's also just like, it's available on Steam, and it's on sale pretty often. Um… I also really like Daemon X Machina, which came out on Switch this year, and is very flashy, it's like the opposite game, it's very flashy, it has lots of really bold characters, it has one of my all time favorite like, characters from that style of mech action game? And her name is *Guns Empress*? So…

SYLVIA: She *rules*.

AUSTIN: Uhhh, people should play Daemon X Machina is what I'm saying!

KEITH: Uh, I have two games, one actually, you can't play, RIP Chromehounds…

AUSTIN: RIP Chromehounds!

KEITH: RIP Chromehounds, what a good one…

AUSTIN: Chromehounds was great.

KEITH: And I haven't played it in years, but I do remember really liking Zone of the Enders, which I'm pretty sure you can play on—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah!

KEITH: On uh, on Xbox?

ALI: *[cross]* Oh yeah, that had a rerelease recently.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah, I played Zone of the—

ALI: I think that's on the PS4, too.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I played Zone of the Enders 2, like, a month ago. Um, and I think the story is a little like, eh? But it's a dope game, it's like—

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: There are some incredible setpieces in it. And yeah, that's yeah, for real, Zone of the Enders and Zone of the Enders 2. Zone of the Enders 2 especially just has some incredible setpieces. And it's like.. Built in that direction? Like it's not a game that's like.. Oh, we need to have regular action be really good, like it's pretty good, but then what's really dope is like, when it's supposed to be really dope, you know? They invested in the sequences that are, they invested in building a system that would make those sequences really cool.

KEITH: I, I bought Zone of the Enders 2, and then I played it for a couple hours and then I got sidetracked and haven't been able to get back to it.

AUSTIN: You should pick it back up, it's really good.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's really good. I'm thinking, I'm trying to think, is there any other game here? There's—

SYLVIA: Titanfall 2.

KEITH: *[cross]* Pray for a Chromehounds 2?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Oh, thank you. Thank *god*, Titanfall 2! *[Ali laughs]* And Titanfall, but Titanfall *2* is one of the all time best mecha… campaigns.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* That *campaign!*

AUSTIN: Is, I want a new Titanfall so bad!

KEITH: It is really good. I'll also, a lot of the lore of uh, COUNTER/weight is owed to Titanfall!

[laughter]

AUSTIN: It's true. It's true! That's where I got it all.

KEITH: A lot— lore that we are *still* using!

AUSTIN: Yes, that's true! That is a hundred percent true.

ALI: Uh huh.

AUSTIN: Divine doesn't happen without Titan— without, Titanfall and Skype. *[Keith and Ali laugh]* Bad audio quality, if we had— if we had been on Discord then? If we had been on good Discord then?

KEITH: No, because it—

ALI: *[cross]* Well…

KEITH: 'Cause Art, Art hadn't fixed his sinuses yet.

AUSTIN: Oh, is that what it was?

KEITH: It could've been that, too.

AUSTIN: Could've been that. It's also a way to say that. Uh… I think that that's probably my like, broad set of recommendations, given the set of— there's other stuff here that's like… I would recommend if you didn't start by saying nothing too old, like? But it's, but it is, everything else is too old!

ALI: Um, I… I didn't finish it, but I think Thunderbolt is also another good modern Gundam?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: I'm a little… I don't… it's weird 'cause I, I don't know how that show plays if you aren't familiar with other Gundam series?

AUSTIN: Yeah…

ALI: Um… but. It looks great.

AUSTIN: It looks great—

ALI: *[cross]* Soundtrack's fantastic.

AUSTIN: Yeah, the soundtrack slaps, the second um, like, entry in that? Uh.. Bandit Flower, Gundam Thunderbolt: Bandit Flower is really really good? But you would need to watch the first one, et cetera. Um, also—

KEITH: There's a lot less of this genre now than there was like, thirty years ago?

AUSTIN: Absolutely.

ALI: Yeah.

KEITH: Like, a lot less?

AUSTIN: A hundred percent less. Not, that's not true, seventy percent less. A hundred percent would mean there's none left, which is not true! Um, I'm gonna just—

KEITH: *[cross] [laughs]* All the mecha died out!

AUSTIN: Yeah! So my, my, again, my big one is 08th MS Team is a great short one.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And is available on Hulu right? Like, I'm now looking at the list of mech stuff that is available in places. Ironblooded Orphans, available everywhere, worth watching, look up some content warnings, if you don't, can't find them, ask me on twitter. Um… I think Gundam Unicorn is a fantastic show that you— I only got as much out of it as I did because I'd already watched so much other Gundam to the degree that I don't wanna recommend it. *But*, if you like, bounce off of so many other things and you're like, I wanna give Gundam one last try, I think Gundam Unicorn is worth watching? And it's gorgeous and it's from like, the mid 2000s, and I think that's kind of like… the height of contemporary Gundam from the last… fifteen years in terms of stuff that's available and watchable.

KEITH: Is that the one that you sent me a link of to watch a character trash a scene?

AUSTIN: Uh, I don't know, what do you mean trash a scene?

KEITH: Uh, like jumped up on the table and yelled at everyone.

AUSTIN: Oh no, that was Double Zeta, that was—

KEITH: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: That was uh, Judau Ashta who our friends at the Great Gundam Project describe as the most Keith character in Gundam— *[Keith laughs]* Which is one *hundred* percent true! Um…

Alright. I hope that those are useful answers. I of course lean very Gundam because that's like, of the mecha shows, my fave?

ALI: Yeah, same.

AUSTIN: But, but there's other stuff out there, y'know?

ALI: Yeah, I— I don't have any like, I don't have any point of reference for like, the Gunbuster franchise, the… Macross franchise, but like, if you don't like Gundam but you still wanna watch like, giant robot stuff, there probably, there's probably like… a recommended like, start here with series place that…

AUSTIN: Yeah…

ALI: *[laughing]* I cannot provide!

AUSTIN: *[cross]* I'm gonna also stop—

ALI: *[cross]* But those are just like things that have been running for years that you could probably find something you like.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I went onto Netflix just to be like, what is out there right now? Just on Netflix, like if you just have it, and the answer is… Netflix does have Ironblooded Orphans, it does have… Gundam Unicorn, Gundam— Gundam UC on, on Netflix. Um, but it also has Eva, which I'm not recommending, uh, and it has Code Geass, which I'm also gonna choose not to recommend. Um…

[Sylvia laughs]

ALI: *[cross]* They're there!

AUSTIN: *[cross]* But just know it's there. They're there! They're three.

ALI: I mean, y'know—

KEITH: I only learned this year that it's not pronounced "Code Geese."

AUSTIN: It's a—

ALI: I'm gonna say something. Sorry.

AUSTIN: No, you go for it! Please.

ALI: *[laughs]* To answer this question, if you wanna see some giant robots duking it out, and you don't wanna watch Eva? Like at least go on youtube and do like, best Evangelion fights or whatever?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: 'Cause those are probably worth watching.

AUSTIN: They're dope.

ALI: Um, it goes some places? So y'know…

AUSTIN: Yeah…

ALI: Read about that before you start watching that, but like…

AUSTIN: Yeah…

ALI: I loved it when— I wrote my—

AUSTIN: Yeah!

ALI: High school final essay about it, so.

AUSTIN: Wow! I didn't know this! That's very good.

ALI: Yeah, so.

AUSTIN: Yeah, we did like a whole fucking series of it about it on Waypoint, and it was like, the most trying thing in the world because it's something that means a lot to me, that I knew going into it owuld be hell and then was kind of hell. Uh… but. But yeah! Anyway. If you go, if you go to Netflix and just type in "gundam", you will see all of the mecha shit they have? Because that's how the algorithm works. Keith, what were you gonna say? Were you gonna say something else?

KEITH: Uh, I don't think so? I just said that I thought that Code— Code whatever it's called—

AUSTIN: Geass.

KEITH: Was called Code Geese, which I thought was a funnier title—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* No, Geass is like a— it is, geese is funnier, a Geass is like a… um. *[sighs]* What's the word I'm looking for, like an oath, I guess is what I would say, is that right? And it's like uh…

KEITH: Code Oath.

AUSTIN: Code Oath, well because… or is it like um… god. In, in that word, in that uh… universe, a Geass is like a special ability, basically.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: But in, in the real word, I believe, a Geass is like a… an oath, or something. And in that, in that… in the world of Code Geass, that's like the kid's main power? Is like, he can make people do things, like he has like, brain— he has like mind control basically, he can make any one person do something once, basically. Um, and it's, it's a lot. Anyway.

SYLVIA: Code Geass in general is just a lot. It's a lot should be the subtitle.

AUSTIN: It's so much! But like… is it more than Eva? No!

SYLVIA: Yeah…

AUSTIN: It goes some places— anyway, we're gonna keep moving.

[40:29]

AUSTIN: *[cont'd]* This one comes in from Dana, who says: "I've run a couple of short campaigns now, and I have a recurring problem I—" Recurring problem. Period. Pause. "I generate a lot of ideas from my own desires and the PCs', create a story arc from them, and play to see what happens! And after five to six sessions, the first arc is done and I'm out of ideas. They fight a big fight, and the immediate threat that's been building is dealt with, but there's unresolved questions and antagonists, and I don't know what to have them do or what the next session should look like. Once a supervillain's big plan is foiled, I can't think of what their next plan is. How can I get more ideas for minor villains and scenarios to throw at the players, or for new ways to use existing villains and plot points. Or, should I be holding back some of my ideas from the initial brainstorming?"

KEITH: Have it take longer to foil the villain.

ALI: Yeah… when I think of like, should I be holding some of my ideas back, I think of Austin knowing about what Spring in Hieron would be for three years or however long it was?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I guess that's true. I guess that's true!

ALI: And like, y'know, have more villains? Have two super big villains?

SYLVIA: I mean, you say it in your question that you've got like, loose ends and unanswered questions, like… it's tough to expand on those, but you can probably find a way to tie those into your main plot to like… make your PCs look into them, or use those as material to build a new villain. Right? Like…

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

KEITH: Keeping track of how those loose ends are, are reacting to things that are happening before you get to that end point is probably another thing, like…

ALI: Right.

KEITH: like, they only become loose ends when you don't know what they've been doing from the… like, third episode to the last episode. Or, or session. Not episode!

AUSTIN: Session. Uh huh!

KEITH: *[cross]* These— these people are not doing a show, I know!

AUSTIN: *[cross]* It's tough! It's so hard to do what we do and not— yeah. *[Keith laughs]* Um, yeah, I think all this is good. I think, for me the, the thing that I do a lot is… I say what's this person want? Okay, here is…

ALI: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: Ibex, here is Arrell, here is, y'know, whoever. What do they want? Um, and what would, and what is an interesting way to put what they want on— what they want, and what they will do to get what they want onscreen? I think that's as true in fantasy as in superhero fiction as in sci-fi. Like, villains, interesting villains have interesting desires. Um, I think it's easy to fall into traps around like, making the htings that they want be… like, either really boring or really over-agreeable or like, there's ways that you can fuck it up 'cause that's just writing? But if you can just sit down and look at your list of potential— of NPCs, not just villains, but of NPCs? And go okay. What does this person want? Then, like, what would they do to, how far would they go to get it, but also just important like how can I illustrate that desire onscreen? How can I illustrate, y'know, that this character really wants there to be uh, wants to like… make it so that um, uh, y'know, maybe they just want a big house! What would they do to get a big house, right? Would they rob a bank? Would they… would they frame someone? What are, what are their capabilities?

       If they want something bigger than that, if they want, everything I'm gonna suggest is like, a good thing, 'cause my head is in that space of like, what would the villain want! Oh, to

eradicate uh, you know, wealth inequality! Well, help them. You should help them do that— no, but like if, if they wanted to like, eradicate the local fishing industry or something right? Like okay, well then, that's interesting, would they… like, start to sink ships? Would they commune with the fish god? Like what, who are they from there, and how would they start to work towards that end? And I think the other thing that is really important to understand is that like, once the machine is going, once you have the engine, once you kick the engine and it's like running? You don't need, especially in this early like, post-first arc thing? You don't need to run games that are building to a specific point. If you go back and look at every show we've done, I have clearly done very tight prep on the first arc of, of whatever, you know, season it is? And then the, that prep has to become looser, and has to be more about places and people and desires and motivations and et cetera, and less about like, here is a particular like… adventure that you're going to go on. Because it has to be guided by play, and because it's okay if things are a little loose and weird in session seven through fifteen. Now, when you get to session fifteen, maybe like oh shit, I see all these threads, I can pull them together and we could have a really dope, you know, session eighteen and you can, you can do that heavy prep again for like a big encounter, a big, y'know, next big final encounter. But, but what I'm not, I'm not like, resetting the clock on prep in that sense, do you know what I mean, like? And I guess it depends on the game. Blades in the Dark, for instance, was a thing where it's like, oh, here is a new mission, and that mission requires similar degrees of prep from time to time? But like, that's, what was the… what are the Marielda heists again? It's train heist, it's library heist? It's final heist? Is that right?

ALI: No, w— oh.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that's it.

ALI: Train… yeah, school.

AUSTIN: Yeah, school, school, yeah. Uh, there's like downtimes between them, but that's it. There's only three heists, right? And my plan was to just do like, two or three of things similar in nature to like, library slash school heist, right? It doesn't have to be— look at, look at COUNTER/weight, how many of those early missions are tied directly to some sort of big picture plan I had? Basically none of them. Right? It's like, the… Cene rescue is the first mission, then it's encountering the like, um. The… Iron Choir, and rescuing Orth from a train and it's like, yeah that stuff became important later, but at the time it's just like, the Iron Choir uh, needs food! They're trying to— the, who are the Iron Choir? They're the Iron Choir, they're a group that are like, living outside of the cities of Counterweight, and so they have needs, they have a need, what is their need: to be sustainable. How do they pursue that need? They steal supplies from trains, from transport trains. Okay, that's a mission. Like, it doesn't need to be building to some big dramatic conclusion there. Later I realized that there was resonance between Jack's character AuDy, and members of the Iron Choir, and some of the ideological alignments there. And at that point I could start building that into a thing that feels like it was always there. I think so much all the time about the Action Movie World and Worldwide Wrestling RPG rule which is

like, as the GM it is your job to make it look like and make it feel like all this was planned from the beginning. And it isn't! It just isn't. Like, it's just not how these sorts of games work, and that is like, in other words, it might be worth saying that like, it's okay for there to just be what feels like filler episodes? Um, uh, and to like run with that, downtime episodes, episodes where they're just like going after a minor villain, et cetera.

Dana is in the chat, actually, and says "For context, in my game of Masks, the big bad wanted to stage a prison break so he could take credit for stopping it, but the PCs foiled that, and know that he was responsible, but don't have proof." That to me sounds like their goal should be to get proof? And they should start doing investigations around that? And his goal should be either destroy that proof, or think of new ways to um, make himself look like a hero, right? Like maybe he— maybe the next arc with him is to uh, do something else that would make him look like a hero. Or, maybe another, maybe someone does get out of the prison, but it's not his fault, it's somebody else's, y'know? Um, it is kind of okay to spin tires a little bit and just be like, alright, we're just gonna do another thing! Um, trust yourself and your players to find really interesting drama along the way. Uh, if that makes sense. I don't know if there's any other thoughts here. From people on the player side of things, or people who have run games and may have hit this.

KEITH: Um. I was, I was just gonna say like, at the end you were like, y'know, you mentioned ideas from the players, that is always a good call I think like, a lot of the way that you get to a spot where you're like oh, all these things that seemed like they weren't anything at the time match up is because it's a, it's players having weird ideas about what to do and where to go? And like, well. What they chose what to do and where to go and that's the important stuff, so. Y'know like, if they have an idea on how what next to do…

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: That's like, like yeah, you stopped, you stopped the bad guy, what do you, now what?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Which is kind of like the classic thing in tabletop rpgs is like, now what? And that's cause it comes in handy!

AUSTIN: Yeah totally— especially in a game like Masks, where the now what can really suddenly fall on the characters' personal lives? Where like, do an arc about high school, you know what I mean? Do an arc about like, seriously, do like the school dance arc, do the, having that backdrop of like, these are mostly teenagers, means that you have all of these great like, um, quick and easy references to things your players will understand quickly. Do the Halloween dance episode or the prom episode. Do the homecoming parade, do the, you know, stuff that is about like, being young? Do the like, the cool you know, battle of the bands episode right? And, and, or you know, session. Um, and stuff will start to generate in your own mind, immediately, once you find that style of framework like oh wow, we could do a cool thing with like a music

villain! And then maybe that music villain is working with some other artist and like, I don't know what they're trying to do, maybe they're like trying to like, disrupt the town 'cause they think that the town is really boring or whatever, right, like whatever bullshit sorry, I'm just imagining Riverdale superheroes now?

[laughter]

KEITH: Yeah. Battle of the Bands is great because then you can have a hero band fight a villain band would be a true battle of the bands.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* A villain band! That's great. Fuck. Hell yeah! Absolutely. Go— Dana, go run that game and let us know how it is! Thank you. Um, yeah! I hope that that was useful. Dora—

KEITH: Villain band probably has better music, honestly, but…

AUSTIN: Probably, yeah, what're you gonna do.

ALI: Oh. I just wanted to add a thing, 'cause I think that—

AUSTIN: Oh! Yes, sorry, go ahead.

ALI: Sorry! *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: No, you're good!

ALI: I think that your advice of being really motivation um, like, first is, is really good 'cause I feel like that's also how I, I play characters? But in terms of doing that and then also thinking of like, why they want that thing? Will help you be able to develop branches in terms of like, okay, this plan failed. Or this plan succeeded. And how is this person going to react from that?

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: And then like, being able to like, either string PCs together in certain situations of being like, well this person… y'know, wanted to break people out of this bank to get credit for it, but this person is in prison for this crime or, you know, whatever else.

AUSTIN: Right. Right right right! Totally, it's like—

ALI: *[cross]* Or like, yeah.

AUSTIN: Was there someone on the inside counting on being broken out and now—

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: That they didn't get broken out, do they call in a favor from someone else outside to either break them out or go get the villain, you know? Like there's all sorts of cool things you can build around here. God, the next session being the villain you stopped was found dead this morning. *[Ali laughs]* Like, well what happened? Who killed him? Is a great— is a, like was it one of us? It wasn't one of us! We stopped him, but we didn't, that's not us! Great, great hook! Great story hook. Um…

KEITH: It's in the headlines though, that you killed him!

AUSTIN: It says that you killed him! Exactly. But yes, Dana in the chat says "Okay, sounds like I need to do more running short term and less worrying about planning the next arc." Yes, that is exactly right. Feel, feel fine doing that, it is okay that like, not every session is like, the knockout session, you know, or the knockout arc.

KEITH: Ideally, playing the ar— playing the game is just as fun as like, solving the narrative?

AUSTIN: Right. Right. Totally.

[52:34]

AUSTIN: *[cont'd]* Alright. Dora writes in, and says: "I was wondering if you have any tips for developing and incorporating factions, and not just gameplay, but also storytelling in a larger sense. I love writing groups with different and often conflicting interests, but I sometimes wonder how to do this in a way that drives the story and isn't overcomplicating or confusing. Factions are fun, but how can I utilize them in a way that brings out the best in a story?" Good question, I'm still figuring it out. Uh…

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: *[cont'd]*Shit. Um, I mean the big lessons— I mean, one is just to note that if you're listening to this and you haven't yet, you can go listen to the last five Drawing Maps episodes to see me try to work this out in real time. Those are now in your podcast feed if you're hearing this. They are, they've been really fun, they've been me setting up the five key factions in um, out upcoming Beamsaber game, Partizan. And you can hear me try to work through this in a much, much, much longer way of like, okay. What, what are the, how do I make something that's— how do I make a toolset of interesting narrative like, ideas that I can then refer to and then play with as the season continues. But that's about prep, less so than about like, incorp— like, in play incorporation? Um, I, if I had to give ike… two big tips, um, the first is to be simple and bold. Actual play is not a novel? It is not a, something that you can— that your players can refer to a transcript in the middle of play? Your players won't be able to pull up a wiki and be like wait, one second, who the fuck is the Rapid Evening again?

And so, a lesson I've— it's a hard learned lesson in some ways, but like, having very strong clear differences between your factions that your player are gonna be able to quickly identify and like, respond to? Um, and being able to be like, you see that this person is wearing the ta— like the nametag, or like the badge of an Advent uh, you know, an Advent group military officer, will get a rise out of them if they understand very clearly what the Advent group is. So for tabletop games specifically like, it makes a lot of sense to be as like… um. Again, bold and memorable as possible? You don't have to be super detailed, you don't have to feel like you need to like, get into hierarchies or let them know that they're from a sub-group of blah blah blah, like, as long as they get the big picture, you will get a good response. The second thing is to think about how… factions, what level the factions and the NPCs operate at inside of your game.

In the world of Hieron, the player characters were functionally a faction by the endgame. Without getting into spoilers, they were operating at the level of like, heads of state? They were doing things that were about— they were kind of, um, uh… they were kind of stand-ins for the nations and the communities that they were part of, and dealing with other people that were standing in for the nations in a metaphorical sense? Um, in contrast to something like COUNTER/weight, especially the first… the beginning of COUNTER/weight, but even really to the very end there was always this sense that one of the things that I was trying to do with factions there was like, you were small. The world is big. You might be able to shift where one faction is going, but the factions exist there to be a threat, they exist to not just say, there is someone with a uniform, but the fact that you see a uniform at all is scary to you. So think about the ways in which you can use the symbols of factions to talk about the players' place in the world.

So again, clarity, simplicity, these guys have on red uniforms, they have on blue uniforms, you know the blue uniforms are like, the theocrats and the red ones are like, the hyper-rationalists or whatever? That's just Outer Worlds, I'm just talking about the Outer Worlds now, uh, and then, and then… Thinking about and putting into play factions in relation to player character stuff. Are they bigger than the player character, can the player character actually ever bring them off the rails or change who they are or not? And you'll communicate to the players something about who their characters are and what the world was like, if you're able to do that pretty well. For my players, who have seen me struggle with this over the years and, and I hope succeed with it sometimes, I'm curious what you think works here in terms of when they show up and, and how they interact and tell big stories. And also for Sylvia, who helped work at this level with the faction game, specifically.

SYLVIA: Yeah, um… I mean to talk about just the faction game stuff in particular, one thing that really helped for me was just making sure that like, every faction had a clear motivation, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah. yeah.

SYLVIA: Like, basically like, whether it is just like getting from point A to point B, with our game, or if it was like… uncovering an ancient horror! Like, you know!

AUSTIN: Right. Right.

SYLVIA: Things happened that those groups wanted to happen, and they happened while things were like… happening for the player characters in the background? And that helps make them feel more alive, I find, when like, we have come back from something in like another campaign, and like… One of these groups has been progressing or working on something like um… for example, like the, what was his name? The Grey Duke—

AUSTIN: Yes, yeah yeah yeah.

SYLVIA: In, in the um… the finale, or the epilogue of Hieron. That was really good because you felt like, okay, this is a group that has like, they have some sort of beliefs that they like, or not like beliefs, but they have like, laws that they are following—

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

SYLVIA: They have like, values that they're trying to like… both push on people and like, defend for themselves? Like, whatever those may be. And then… on top of that, they are constantly like, trying to do stuff that is in interaction or conflict with the other factions. Like, that's kinda the thing that could be really easy to do is to not have them interact at all?

AUSTIN: Yeah…

SYLVIA: And you need to make sure that there's some sort of conflict with your factions, because that's a really fun way to put your player characters in the middle of something.

AUSTIN: Yeah, some of my favorite Twilight Mirage stuff towards the end was being like… oh shit, all these groups are at, at odds? But that does not necessarily make it easier to work with the ones I like, y'know? Yeah, for sure. Ali and Keith, any thoughts here on factions?

ALI: Um, yeah, a little bit, I think like, kind of… it's tough, 'cause I only have the player perspective, but I think that like, in terms of knowing how often to use them and how many factions there should be and things like that, like, it really depends on the tone of your game? When we started COUNTER/weight, and we were playing Technoir, or the Sprawl also, was all a game about like, you're able to be replaced.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: What you, *[laughs]* You have to fight as hard as you can, but like, y'know, there's so many other people in the world doing the thing that you do and trying to get ahead, that playing that game it, it felt really suffocating because it felt like any action that you took was gonna piss somebody off. Because there were like, so many people who, who had so many interests in this, this um… this, Counterweight, which is where we were. Anyway.

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

ALI: Whereas for Marielda, it was this feeling of like, okay there are other people who exist in the city, and… there's, y'know, there are people that you can manipulate, manipulate into something that you, you wanna do, there's people that you know that you should avoid—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah…

ALI: There's people that you should know should have— kind of have your back and like, how do you want your players to feel in the environment that they're in is like, a really good way to kind of start thinking about like, okay, do they have people who, who are gonna help them, who are gonna sell them things, or are they only have people who are gonna like, steal jobs from them, or do they only have people who are like, gonna actively hunt them down?

AUSTIN: Right, totally, right, like who, you basically had, you had characters to turn to in, in COUNTER/weight, but not factions, you could never be sure that the group that Orth worked for as a whole would help you, and in fact they often didn't, right?

ALI :Yeah.

AUSTIN: I can't think of anyone in   COUNTER/weight that was like, I guess eventually there were some people that were like, our whole faction is, is chill with you! And by the end there, it's like, the big question was how much can you unify these groups, but like, that whole game is just like, every time a clock advances, it sucks. Y'know?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: COUNTER/weight was good.

ALI: *[cross]* Good job.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh huh, COUNTER/weight is great! *[Ali laughs]* But you're totally right like, and thinking now about Beam Saber as I do that prep and look at those squads and all that stuff, where it's like, okay, there's stuff here that is… there's some really fun uh, stuff in the Beamsaber book around picking certain squads at what, what tiers they should be, and how they're either competitors, allies, or like spoilers? Um, it's worth reading the Beam Saber book, that stuff might be in Blades also and I'm just not remembering it, but the idea of like… Austin, Austin Ramsay has this idea that is like, if you're within one or two tiers of someone, you're in comp— in competition with them. Um, and so like, you know, if you're up against some salvage operation, you're like a tier one and they're a tier— you're a tier zero and they're a tier one or a tier two, you could bloody each others' noses, you can hurt each other in a real way, et cetera. Um, but, uh, if there's like a tier three or tier four larger scale, like, organization? That's someone

who can like, sweep in and just like, end that conflict instantly? Which means that you can have really interesting games where like, you're appealing to them for help, you're trying to get them on your side, you're trying to stop them from supporting, or from, you're trying to like disrupt their support of whatever your tier one target is. Thinking about, you know, the kind of forged in the dark games do such a good job of the thing you just said, Ali, which is like, you're in a world with some people more powerful than you, some people less powerful than you, you're, you know, because, because of the way the game works, you tend to be getting stronger in power as the game continues to some degree at least, um, and as you do, your relationships can change? Uh, and you can only notice that changes at the table if you have illustrated it to begin with right, like, if you start the game at alright, everyone put your heads down, the fuckin black coats are here, and they're like, here to, to harass people in the streets, and then by the middle of the game, you and your like, rebellious labor union have taken the streets back, and you're like literally pushing back on the, the Black Coats, then like yeah, awesome, you've done, you've, that is, that is storytelling with factions, y'know? It doesn't have to be trade negotiations. But also, if you watch the Phantom Menace, you will learn— *[Ali giggles]* How to tell stories about factions. Keith, as the number one Phantom Menace defender on this podcast— *[Keith and Ali laugh]* Do you have any thoughts?

KEITH: Hey, come on, *you're* the number two! *[Austin laughs]* It's—

AUSTIN: There's stuff there!

KEITH: There's stuff there, that's all that I'm saying! It's not— it's not even close to the worst movie in the world!

AUSTIN: Keith, you are very far from your microphone, I think.

KEITH: Am I? Am I? How's that?

AUSTIN: Better, you're at two hundred percent for me right now, and you're still quiet. Yeah.

KEITH: Let me, let me take a look at my Audiaci— uh, oh, did this get turned down? That— that knob looked like it got turned—

ALI: *[cross]* You're shrinking!

KEITH: I think I bumped a knob.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that sounds right.

KEITH: I bumped a knob.

AUSTIN: I have a— okay. Okay. Anyway.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I thought you were yelling from across the room about, about your Star Wars fandom.

KEITH: No, I moved away the normal amount from my mic when I'm being loud, I did not move across the room.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Right. You did the yell, yeah, uh huh!

KEITH: But I had bumped, I think I had bumped a knob with my phone.

AUSTIN: There you go.

KEITH: Yeah, Phantom Menace… It's not the worst movie in the world, it's a total C, C minus, so get over it. Sorry.

AUSTIN: You heard it here, folks.

[Ali laughs]

KEITH: Fuckin', figure out, figure out why you hate that movie so much, because it does not reflect the quality of that movie, actually.

AUSTIN: Uh huh! God. Alright. Um… One more question? Anyone else have anything here on factions? Alright. Mark writes in— Ah, you're right, IBO, [[Terrence Hector]] in the chat says that Ironblooded Orphans has trade negotiations, I'm gonna go back really quick. Mobile Suit Gundam, Iron Blooded Orphans, is dope with factions. I think some of the factions suck in the most interesting way, uh, it does something really really really good around power imbalance between factions? Like, Iron Blooded Orphans is a Beam Saber game that goes off the fucking rails, people hsould— people should look up those content warnings, and then watch Iron Blooded Orphans. Okay. Uh, oh wait, gotta go back one more time, Dylan in the chat says, again, very important note, "The Trade Federation ships look cool." Agreed!

KEITH: Agreed, yeah, fully agreed!

[Ali giggles]

[1:05:44]

AUSTIN: They're sick. Alright, Mark writes in and says: "I recently got a bunch of my friends to try D&D. None of them had ever played a roleplaying game, and they were all curious and very supportive of me. I hadn't played in twelve or so years myself and never as a DM. They even went so far as to buy a pre-built campaign, to buy me a pre-built campaign. My problem is twofold. While researching how to be a good DM and all my adolescent play groups fell apart of bad DMing, I found your podcast, discovered different play systems, the value of leaving grey areas, and I am no longer impressed with D&D and am especially feeling myself and my players being creatively stifled by having a pre-written campaign. The other problem is that my players are really invested in the story. And although they enjoy Blades in the Dark, and are really interested in sci-fi play systems, they're also very invested in this story and their characters, and they wanna finish it. The campaign, again a D&D campaign, is level one through level sixteen. And it's gonna take us like, a year to finish, but I love them and it's worth it. So my question is this: have any of you ever been in a situation with a pre-written campaign, where throwing out the story wasn't an option in a play system like D&D with a pre-bought campaign, do you have any tips for making the story flexible and letting both my own and my players' creativity breathe and grow?"

Um, I have never been in this situation. Has anyone on this podcast been in this particular situation?

ALI: I don't think so?

AUSTIN: So… the funniest thing is, the closest that I can come is that we've changed systems before.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: We've definitely re-invented the show and been like, oh, we're gonna do this instead of that? But it sounds like it, it's not one hundred percent clear, Mark, but it sounds like it feels like that's out of the question for you? Um, uh, or it's not something you're particularly interested in, but I would say just as, to cover our bases, that one thing you could consider doing is moving to something like Dungeon World? That would be a little more flexible for you to tell the story together? While still looking ahead at the plot beats in the game that you've been running. Um, the kind of, that set up. I… the thing I wanna recommend from my heart is to do that, and you should read through the, the book and, and take note of the things you think are cool and interesting, and let the game you're playing spin loose and let your imaginations run free. Take what's already been established, and start building your own game from where you're at, and not worry if it hues really closely with what is in the pre-built campaign. Unless your whole group is interested in that way that you're watching a TV show and you wanna see where that thing ends. But… beyond that like, you can, it is possible to take a campaign like that, go through, identify the bits that are pre-written, or not pre-written but like, filler, not revealing major plot beats or seeing plot beats and moving them around, and thinking like, oh well, you know. This is a campaign about getting into the wizard's tower and killing the wizard, but before I can do that, you have to get the four crystals to unlock the wizard's tower, and so what if instead of doing

four dungeons of getting the stuff for the wizard's tower, you get, y'know, three of them. Or you get two of them. Seriously like, you cut two of those dungeons out, because if you wanna get through that stuff more quickly.. It is totally within your rights to run this game as like, a series of vignettes where you are giving them multiple levels between sessions, and so instead of doing like, y'know, the dungeon like, all level one through level sixteen dungeon crawls and shit, you're like alright, we're gonna check in at levels five we're gonna check in at level eight, we're gonna check in at level twelve, and like, you can level up between sessions, we're just gonna do kind of snapshots on the way. Um, but really, it sounds to me like what you should do is talk to the table about maybe changing systems and rolling with it and going from here you're at to where you— just to like, a game of your own? Without throwing any of this stuff away, like you can, they can keep those characters, they can move them over to a new system, they can do that work and then kind of open the floodgates of ideas and not feel like you have to recreate everything that's in the prewritten book. I think—

KEITH: Austin, I don't know if you've ever ran D&D from one of those prewritten books?

AUSTIN: I have, yeah.

KEITH: It, I, so—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Only, only like, only like the sort of like, oh we're gonna run three or four sessions out of it, you know what I mean?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like a month-long mini campaign?

KEITH: That's, that's what I've, I actually, the ones that I've done have been even shorter, they were like, I did a handful of single-session ones when I was learning how to GM.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah. Yep.

KEITH: But the way that I remember— that they were, I remember them being written, it would be pretty easy just to take out all of the story stuff and plop it into a new system.

AUSTIN: Yeah, probably. Honestly? Yes.

KEITH: Like, yeah, like, 'cause it's just how it's like oh, it's telling, here's the people in the town that know what is going on, and y'know, I, I think that the way that those are written often highlight the ways that someone might feel restricted by Dungeons and Dragons?

AUSTIN: Yes.

KEITH: Like, you were all like, playing from a pre-written campaign is often the most restrictive way to play Dungeons and Dragons? But uh… it, I don't think it would be that difficult to just like… like, like scalp, take a scalpel to it and paste it into a campaign that's more interesting that you like more in a different system.

AUSTIN: The thing, the one thing I would warn against— the only thing about that that makes me go like oh, be careful with blank, is you are… in a dungeon and someone y'know, rolls to pick the lock, and get into the room, and they fail. That is gonna be a dungeon that could be set up, because it's a pre-built thing, where like, alright, well if you don't get in there, you don't get some important piece of information. You don't have to run Dungeon World that way, you don't have to run most contemporary indie tabletop rpgs that aren't like a particular type of old school renaissance game in that way. Um, and again, you can talk to your players and be like no, we want that hardcore experience where y'know, we get locked out of important information, we never get the whole story! But my guess is—

KEITH: I don't think D&D even does that anymore?

AUSTIN: I don't know what edition Mark is playing, you know what I mean?

KEITH: That's true, but I think—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* But maybe you're right.

KEITH: Four and five, four and five both have a thing where it's like—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Got better about that stuff.

KEITH: You would, you, when there's not combat you assume it's a success after a certain amount of time passes.

AUSTIN: Yeah, but I'm just using that as like a quick and dirty example, though—

KEITH: *[cross]* Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Because there are plenty of examples still where that system has a solution in mind that is like— here's another example. You come to a, you come to a room and there's a locked door, and there's a solution to open that door, and you're reading from the book that the solution is to stand on these various plates, right? It's like, stand on these plates, or they could— if they have an explosive device, or a ring of opening or whatever, then they can use those. Um… if you move to something like Dungeon World, it's gonna be a way more open-ended solution and you should allow for those, even though the book would not necessarily say that you should do that? And honestly, you should do that even in D&D, so.

KEITH: Honestly, I was, I wasn't even, I wasn't even considering copying and pasting dungeons, just like, characters and plot points?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally.

KEITH: If you're— if you wanna get away from D&D, I suggest getting away from that, that part of—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* That style of prep.

KEITH: Like, that's the part that I would wanna get away from?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

KEITH: Like, that's— the thing that I did like the most about using those pre-written… uh, campaign sessions that I played a few times, is like not having to design combat scenarios, 'cause they were right there for me, because it's my least favorite part.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Totally. Totally. Yeah.

KEITH: And I was like oh, I can just run everything around this thing that's right here, but the um… But I think the… at this point, I would feel the opposite way, which is like, I don't wanna use D&D for the… game part of it.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: *[laughs]* Which I do think is the least fun part of it.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah. Any thoughts here, Sylvia or Ali?

SYLVIA: I'm trying— I have played like, pre-made campaigns before, but it's been so long ago that I'm trying to think of like, anything useful that hasn't already been said?

AUSTIN: Hmm. Yeah.

SYLVIA: I think like, I don't know. Maybe throw a few characters of your own in there.

AUSTIN: Yeah!

SYLVIA: Spice it up.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally! That's the other end, you're right, like that's the other way is like, if you're gonna keep doing this, as D&D…

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You could do that.

ALI: Right.

KEITH: Sorry, I should've specified that my, my suggestion was like, worst case scenario you could just do the thing that's in the book but with a different game. Um… that was not, that was not advice as much as like, this is maybe the, the way that you can get this done if you have to.

AUSTIN: Right. Right. I did not mean to— I felt like I cut Sylvia off there, I wanna go back, in case Sylvia, you had more to, I apologize.

KEITH: Yeah, sorry Sylvia.

SYLVIA: I was just gonna say like, because… the problem with a pre-made campaign is eventually it does end? But your players might wanna keep playing with the characters they've made anyways? So at that point, it's gonna be like, I feel like easier for you to transition into something original if you've put in some original content yourself, to like… at least establish a world you can spin of finto after you're done what's on like, this campaign you're running.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah totally.

KEITH: I think the problem here is that Mark's camp— Mark is estimating this campaign is gonna take a year, which means it's actually gonna take eighteen months? *[Austin laughs]* And I don't think that they even wanna play that much of D&D.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Agreed. Um, that is definitely my read, is what I'm saying. Yeah. *[sighs]* It's tough.

ALI: I, I feel like, especially with this question because… you mention like, feeling, feeling the moments in a game where you feel like yourself and your players are being kind of creatively stifled by this, and like, seeing those exit ramps, right, where you can like… sure we can stick with this, this pre-written story that people were kind of interested in enough to like, purchase it for me— *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: But like, if they wanna like, if they meet like a cool goblin, and they're really into this, this NPC and they wanna know more about this guy, they can just start like playing in a campaign

through the perspective of like, that guy, and thinking about what he works for right, and you can still kind of go through the story beats, but like… y'know. Maybe in a different dungeon, maybe they stop, y'know, they stay in one town longer, and like… there's still an evil villain, but like it's… y'know. What's going on with this town?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

ALI: How they're being affected by it. Um, and also just like, sitting down and talking to them like, outside of the game and being like, so… this is level one through sixteen, we've all presumably like, we know the chapters at least, we all like it enough to play this but like… what's here that we actually think is important?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: And y'know, maybe play that. *[laughs]*

KEITH: I— I do have one, one more thing, I'm, I'm going like, as advocating not switching, which I don't think we've done yet, I think we haven't said stick to D&D, but if I were to say that, um, I think that one of the big issues with DUngeons and Dragons is that it prescribes a way to play that game that isn't the best way for me to enjoy it/ it's, they have like, when you read the rule books, it shows you how to play and it's not even close to the only way to actually play DUngeons and Dragons. And the way that it chooses to pitch itself isn't… fun for me. But there's definitely a way to play that game that is fun, using pretty much all of the rules. You can, you can take what you've learned from other games and run Dungeons and Dragons in a way that looks more like that.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that's kind of what Sylvia was saying too in terms of injecting your own stuff into it?

KEITH: Oh, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: And beginning to change it a little bit, right? But yeah, you're right, lie, continuing to house rule stuff and play towards the sort o f like, open-endedness that your players and you wanna start to explore there. It's totally a thing!

KEITH: It's got, it has an ethos of dungeon design— ethos, is that the right word?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

KEITH: Um, uh, that like, I think that anybody that's played Dungeons and Dragons can recognize the way that a Dungeon Wor— a Dungeons and Dragons dungeon is set up/

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: You don't have to do that.

AUSTIN: Right!

KEITH: It doesn't— like, you can just… still be playing D&D and not do that sort of thing if that's part of what's the, like— you can just do a different thing that you like more instead.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

KEITH: And not have to go through the switching games thing, like you don't have to ask for checks for everything, if you don't want to.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah, totally! You can totally— let stuff ride, you can totally, yeah, yeah, totally.

KEITH: *[cross]* You can just— yeah, you can just decide, yeah.

AUSTIN: Absolutely. ALright. Well, I hope that that helps in some ways at least, for you Mark, I hope things— I hope that y'all find a way to… make that transition or, or to at least come to some degree of like, yeah, this is good. We'll finish this out and, and everyone's happy at least? Either way, good luck. That is our last question today. We got through this in a much, a much more reasonable time than we often do, um, remember you can send your questions in to Tips at the Table, tipsatthetable@gmail.com, um, and can continue to support us by going to friendsatthetable.cash, any other announcements right now? We're caught up on Tips! Finally.

KEITH: Um, I'm launching my reclaimed wood store, you can get all the—

AUSTIN: *[cross] [sighs]* Alright. *[Keith laughs]* No one heard that stuff! No one knows the thing you're referencing.

KEITH: No, it wasn't for them!

ALI: They'll hear it in a month or so.

KEITH: It was for, it wasn't for them, it was for you guys!

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh huh, fair. Fair! Fair. Um… Ali, what do we got going on? We got a Bluff coming?

ALI: Um, yes! Soon, episode of Bluff City is going up today probably? It's looking like probably after I watch my designated required Family Feud of the day?

AUSTIN: Okay, yeah, fair.

ALI: But it will be going up tonight, there was just a little mistake.

AUSTIN: Yeah! Happens.

ALI: And then…

AUSTIN: That was, it was me, my mistake. It was my mistake, to be clear, I said a character's name wrong in the intro, I fixed it.

ALI: *[laughs]* This episode of Tips at the Table is going up… soon. Beam Saber in the podcast feed this week— or no, right, yes.

AUSTIN: Yeah. In the regular feed.

ALI: *[cross]* Beam Saber is starting this week, yes.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah yeah. Uh, Beam Saber the Road to Partizan game, not—

ALI: Yes.

AUSTIN: We're not starting Partizan this week.

ALI: No, no no no. Wait a little bit for that.

AUSTIN: Yes, still a little bit.

ALI: There's gonna be a Pusher update, probably next week about Hieron stuff that'll be fun?

AUSTIN: Cool. Um, now that we're caught up on these, I can start turning my attention to some other stuff, also I'm almost caught up on Drawing Maps, so once I'm caught up on that, we can start getting Mapmaker stuff up too, so bit by bit by bit, we are…

KEITH: That Bluff Episode that's about to come out is so good.

ALI: It's *so* good!

AUSTIN: *[cross]* It's the second of three of these?

ALI: That's a good one, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: Yeah, well the first one was it just the character, or the world gen stuff?

AUSTIN: No.

ALI: It was that whole first session, so it was…

KEITH: Oh, okay okay.

ALI: *[cross]* Character gen, plus all, everyone had like one scene.

KEITH: I wasn't sure how it— I forgot it was two sessions.

ALI: I'll send you the… what happened each episode.

AUSTIN: Does— yeah. Yeah. This one goes through… the turn, or something?

ALI: 'Til the tilt, and then after, so.

AUSTIN: The tilt, yeah.

ALI: Get ready for the tilt!

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: *[laughs]* What else am I thinking of… Oh, um, speaking of how we're caught up on Tips, we're almost caught up on Live?

AUSTIN: Yeah!

ALI: And I had mentioned this in a Patreon post, but like the plan right now is to have one this month and two next month? So look out for December.

AUSTIN: Look out for December! It's coming. Busy one.

ALI: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Awesome. Uh, we are now four— we are also done recording the second Bluff game, so it's like we have that material. We have some like, people out of town this month, so things could take a little bit of a— not a break, but like, there may be like, a couple weeks where there's not a Bluff after the stuff that's going out is out, but… hopefully we can keep the train rolling, we'll see.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, alright! That's gonna do it for us. Thank you all for joining us again, we should time.is one more time.

ALI: Oh, would love to. Twenty seconds?

AUSTIN: I could do twenty seconds.

SYLVIA: Yeah, sure.

[pause]

[claps]

AUSTIN: Sounded good.

ALI: Yeah, sounded great.

AUSTIN: Alright everyone, have a good night!