

[Drawing Maps Audio 10 - January 2020 - PARTIZAN 00-04](#)

Transcribed by Ril @kaorukeihi

AUSTIN: Hey, everybody! Welcome to Drawing Maps for January 2020. This is Austin. Can people in the chat hear me okay? Which is a thing I haven't said in probably... God, six or seven months of Drawing Maps. I don't remember the last Drawing Maps to have a live recording... You can check the Patreon. But it's been a little while, and as I announced in a previous Drawing Maps update, we are now... now that the... now that... It may have been like a year. It may have been like a year since the last time we did one of these, actually, in a live format. So, we used to do these...

Drawing Maps has been a weird show. It debuted I think two years ago as a very forward looking show, a very stream-focused show, in which I would go over things I needed to prep for the next few sessions of Hieron or... I think it started with Twilight Mirage, it started... I think it started around *Scum & Villainy* Twilight Mirage, and then continued with some Bluff City stuff, and then some Spring in Hieron stuff. And, we've done a bunch of different things, sometimes the show looked, you know, looked like going through character creation, you know, coming up with NPCs, coming up with challenges, coming up with potential plot twists, sometimes it was coming up with names, and coming up with faction ideas, sometimes it was me giving a live tour via Google Maps of the county I grew up in South Jersey...

And then, for PARTIZAN, in between Spring in Hieron, and while Spring in Hieron was wrapping up, and while the Road to Season 6 was on, we did a bunch of a new style of Drawing Maps, which was very much focused on me reviewing and talking through prep I had done off mic. That was interesting, I really love those episodes. They ended up being way more work than the previous Drawing Maps streams, but I think that more people... I think people got a lot out of them. I got a lot out of kind of making my prep comprehensible to someone other than me, which long term is good because future me is someone other than me. Sometimes you take a note, and a note is really useful for a week, but it's not necessarily useful three or four or five weeks after. But making that material comprehensible to an audience meant really cementing it, and making it clear even to me. The... So, that was great even though it was more work.

Now that we're *in* PARTIZAN, I can't really do that style of work, and there's something about that style of like prep that is not the same, right? The worldbuilding stuff that we were doing for the last eight episodes of Drawing Maps is a very distinct sort of Drawing Maps work. It's a very, it's a very like hands-on but also kind of hands-off. And by hands-on I mean my hands on, and by hands-off I mean players' hands off, right? Like, obviously we were playing the Road to Season 6 games throughout that year, but the ways in which decisions had been made, I get to then tinker, and I was just like "Here's my prep, here's my material, let me talk through what's up with Nideo, let me talk through what's up with Apostolos." Um, and that style of like revealing prep doesn't really work in the same way when it comes to sessions, because if I was like "Here is, here is my prep on the next session of PARTIZAN,

here's what SBBR or the Rapid Evening are gonna get up to in their next arcs."... That wouldn't really be...

One, as a show, I don't really want to go down that road. We did it a little bit in Hieron, and I think it was really useful in Hieron. But Hieron doesn't have, you know, *Dungeon World* doesn't have scores in the same way. Certainly, we were thinking about adventures, we were thinking about places and stuff like that, but mission design, as you'll see if I pull up some of the prep I did, is a kind of very particular thing in *Beam Saber*. And I don't necessarily wanna do that live on stream which is we would have been doing in original Drawing Maps mode. I don't really just want to talk through it and be like "Well, this is Cleos, and this is Cas'alea, and this is blah-blah-blah." And so, instead we're got a new mode of Drawing Maps for the next few months at least, we'll see how it goes, and as always, if you have feedback, please let us know (in Patreon comments, ideally).

The model here is going to be a little bit backwards-looking. In the same way that Past looks to the back, looks to the past, while Crystal Palace looks to the future, we're transitioning from Palace to Past here, and looking backwards. And revealing, you know, things that maybe didn't come up in the sessions that were recently released, or going over stuff that did. There's gonna be a sort of like rolling Post Mortem quality to this. There is going to be kind of a... a... "Alright, let's line up things ideologically", and I don't even mean Ideologically, I mean just like around what worked and what didn't, and kind of the perspective on what the show should be in between arcs.

So, given that, but given the fact that this is a new audience, and maybe a new... a new setup, I do wanna go over some of these, these notes. This page I just didn't update, which is fine, because people listening instead of watching don't... won't see it at all. But I've said this before, and it's worth going over kinda what's the gist here is for what Drawing Maps is, and what it isn't. I'm gonna ignore the "what the show is" part, because I kinda went over all of that and because these notes are wrong.

But what it isn't is: unchecked or unannounced spoilers. It is not a show in which I will say like "And this is what's gonna happen in six sessions!" It's not a... Nothing I say here is permanent or unchangeable. I've always said before that until something goes into the show proper it doesn't exist, basically. And it's not an explicit tutorial. Though we will be having a conversation later about some topics, about how to play *Beam Saber* or how to play Forged in the Dark games. It is not... I'm not branding this as like my professional advice for other GMs. I hope it's useful, but it's not... I haven't done the work to be able to put that stamp on it, if that makes sense. This is very freeform, this is going to be very like open-ended, and very much off the cuff. For me as someone who has been a teacher, for me as someone who has like gone down the road of trying to write both kind of stuff that is either explicitly pedagogical or didactic... Like, this isn't that, and I don't wanna mark it as that going into it.

This is a live show—if you're watching... If you're the Hacker tier it means you got a link that mean you could watch me do this live. This is not designed by committee, this is a thing where I'm like "Hey, I need ideas for ____." Or "Hey..." It's not a space where we can kind of collaborate—me and the audience—on something. And I know that it might sound off-putting

or hostile, but it's just like not what I'm interested in doing with this space, in the same way that I wasn't necessarily doing this with the past Drawing Maps episodes. I think there are DMs and GMs that do that really well. It's not a thing that I do particularly well at. I do that with my players, and so that is kind of the... one of the important things there is maintaining that relationship with them.

And finally, it's not complete. Both for the reason I've said before, which is... it is not a... whatever we say here doesn't exist until we hit like an episode with it. But also... In a Post Mortem sense, a Post Mortem is always going to be limited by the amount of time available to it, and so, you know, if we're doing a month-to-month evaluation of what's already happened, there's gonna be stuff I miss. There's going to be bad things, like mistakes that I've made, that we don't... that don't come up in the conversation in the episode. There's going to be good things that we did that I don't spend time with, because I didn't remember them, or because I didn't take a note down when it happened, "I thought it was cool." So by no means should this ever feel like "And that is my final take on the month of episodes that this is about, or the set of episode that this is about." so much as an incomplete, cut down, you know, reductive conversation that hopefully will still be useful. It's a bridge, not a highway, you know. No highway is ever complete either, but you know what I'm saying.

So, today our agenda is fourfold. ...And, really, threefold, but if we get to the fourth one, that'd be great.

One is to go over our goals and principles, which I do at the beginning of every Drawing Maps, and every, you know, before I actually start rolling any dice in any weekly game that we play. It is very useful to do that, and it's gonna be useful to look at those and look back at the session, the set of sessions that came out, and go forward on that stuff.

Two, it's going to be the Post Mortem of the Obelle arc, the kind of Obelle arcs, I guess, of both the Rapid Evening and the Society of Banners and Bright Returns. And I guess this is the point at which I will say there will be spoilers for PARTIZAN's episodes 00-04 in this stream. So, that is like what it is. That is the thing it's gonna be, we're gonna talk about what happened, we're gonna talk about player actions, we're gonna talk about NPC actions, and factions, and blah-blah-blah. So that is the heads-up warning on that. Definitely go listen to those episodes if you haven't already.

There will be a Q&A, some folks send in some questions, which I asked for on Twitter earlier. In general, you can always send those to the tipsatthetable@gmail.com email address. If you didn't get a question in time for this one, don't worry about it, there will be other episodes of Drawing Maps. We're using the same email account as our Tips email, but just put in the subject "Drawing Maps question" so it's easy to pull it out.

So, again, PARTIZAN arcs 1 and 2 spoilers coming up.

[00:10:12 — Goals and principles]

First up, let's talk about my goals and my principles. In *Beam Saber* there are four goals, I've arranged them in the order that I say them on the show.

One is **ensure everyone at the table is safe**. I think that we did a pretty good job of this. As always, this is a... Actual play is not an unedited format, which means that there are often breaks in the action, there are often opportunities for players to think through things that will get cut down and reduced in order to make our show not be three or four hours every week, because that's a good way to make sure no one listens to the show. The... the stuff that... But there are also plenty of times where we stopped to talk through what players wanted on top of what characters wanted. I'm very happy with the way in which the potential PvP section went towards the end of that... towards the end of the second arc, the Rapid Evening arc. We, like, off mic put lots of potential tools in place in order to draw lines and veils, in order to stop scenes in their tracks. And we paused at, I think, key moments to talk through comfort for things like the depiction of violence... Not just the depiction of violence, but whether we wanted to go down certain narrative paths. Safety is a really interesting thing because I think it's easy to talk about immediate safety, to talk about like "Hey, is this thing that's about to happen comfortable for you?" But one of the things that I'm happy we talked through were this kind of larger precedent-setting safety. So, things like Clementine's actions in, in killing Cardiff Drive¹, there is both the immediate thing, which is: is this something that the players at the table are happy with? Is it something that Jack as Clementine's player is interested in doing? But also: what's this mean for stakes and the tone of the rest of the season? It's really important to like have those larger conversations when you're doing a campaign, because you can stumble into setting a precedent pretty easily. And that's not to say that it means that when it's set it's good, but it adds a hurdle to returning and readdressing those things, right? Even people whom I know really well, it's very easy to take a particular instance of... a particular outcome as a green light for similar outcomes in the future. So I'm really happy that we managed to do this pretty well.

As always, we always go through all the same basic postgame stuff around making sure, you know, people had a good time, and that, and that, you know, trying to put... trying to give everyone at the table space to talk through... anything that they'd like to see different. In general I think everyone is having a great time, we'll get there in a bit, but this is probably the best a season has started for us maybe ever? Maybe Spring is the only other one that I'd put in contention, but that was such a different... It's such a different thing.

Two is to **fill the world with detail**, which I'm pretty happy with. I think you can call up a number of really key visuals, which is important to me, props, in a sense. You can think about like, the big motherboard device that they... the SBBR used to hack the Troop units. Obviously, I think getting things like the Troop units on screen, the Cloud, the kind of jumping... grasshopper mech. I think, I think there was like a real sense... This was something we didn't sit down and talk about a lot, but... I have such a clear image in my head of like the grain silo, and area where, where Oxblood was set up. Obelle in general, I think had a really great vibe. And we got a good mix I think of really dramatic depictions of things like mechs, you know, flying with their beam sabers out, with of course things like in

¹ Cardiff Reach.

episode 00 spending lots of time on fashion. There's more fashion to come, by the way, we finished both of our downtime episodes, and one of them, again, has a really good fashion segment, I hope you're all ready for some, for some really cool shit. So that stuff I'm really happy with. I'm not gonna, just so you know, I'm not gonna spoil any downtime stuff even though we've recorded it already. At least not without any big, big, big warning, 'cause I know that stuff people are gonna want to hear in action. See, I think, I think, I'm pretty happy with the model of detail that we've hit. I think I will also say it's probably worth saying that one of the things that we'll continue to work on is just lining up in terms of aesthetic sensibility. You always have to feel that stuff out at the top of the... of every season, so something like that is something that we'll continue to work on for sure.

Um, excuse me.

[00:15:00]

Three, **convey the world honestly**. Which means something very specific, and I'm just gonna read from the book here. "When you need to tell the players what their surroundings look like, what the NPCs do, what happens because of all of this, speak with honesty. Don't lie to players, and don't favor anyone over others." I think again and again I was really clear with players about what stakes were. I think I had a... I will get to this later also, but having gone back and relistened to these episodes more times than I normally do, one of the moments that really stood out to me was a moment where... I just love this like fifteen-second moment, where Dre is getting ready for Valence, to have Valence kind of go down the path of the False Flag, the White Star anthem, and eventually reaching out with their mind, with Valence's mind to kind of warn everyone about the impending doom and get everyone out of the way. And that... There's a moment I go "Wait! Dre, this is me putting my hand on yours, this is me being like 'Wait, this is serious, this is super serious.'" And I love that moment because I want to say... I want to point to that moment as evidence of what it means to be one... do one of the things that's gonna be on the screen in a moment, which is **be the fan of the PCs**. And the ways in which that can be an honest thing, right? Like, Dre ends up going forward with that, maybe even more so *because* he knows that like there's something really interesting about to happen, which I convey by being like "This is a big thing you're doing, this could have lots of knock-on effects." So, things like that are really important. I think slowing down the action to get clarity on important details about the scene, about what would happen if, you know... "Hey, you could go try to save Cymbidium. That's a thing I have to say to you, so that you know, that that's on the table." Because otherwise later from like "Oh, you had a chance and you didn't do it"—that feel unfair, right? So we try to keep focus on that stuff. And in general, like, I think I did a pretty good job of passing the spotlight around. I think everyone had some cool standout moment. I also like... Sovereign Immunity is probably the person who has the least, and yet still, Art, I think, really exploded at the key moments where he needed to... Or where he wanted to, is actually more important. And given that we've done downtime I can say Sovereign Immunity has some dope moments coming up.

And then **play to find out what happens**. As always, it's like, you know, no one gets to decide things all by themselves. I fully didn't expect either of these sessions to go the way

they did. I *really* didn't expect the end of the SBBR Obelle arc at all, and it, it was like finding the missing piece in a puzzle I've been building for months. Valence's False Flag operation, Valence's playing the White Star anthem ends up completely, like, becoming the spark that's gonna light everything, and it's so good. And it's why this rule is so important.

So, our principles. **Be a fan of the pilots**, I've already addressed that. I am so happy with the players, and with the characters this season. Again, I'll get into that a little bit, it's one of the things I think worked really well so far.

Address the pilots, address the players. As always, this is a thing where, you know, you do both of those things. When it's about safety, or about someone as a coauthor, you address the players. That is us saying "Hey, do we wanna have a scene where Clementine kills someone basically in cold blood to prevent them from going to a rival, from being captured by a rival? Or in order to, you know, successfully pursue the... or successfully achieve the goals set out by her mother, who is also her commander?" That's a conversation where I say "Hey, Jack, how do you feel about this?" And address the pilots's really about making sure to keep players embodied when I can. Where I say, "Hey, what's Leap do?" Keeping Keith in Leap's mode. And doing that as much as I can.

Fill the world with inequality. Which is again, a principle of this world. We did this, but not as much as I wanted to, and that's because some things... I mean, we did it... It's built into the setting, it's built into the parties, obviously, right? We do it in a big way at the end of the Rapid Evening arc. I think I've hit this pretty well when it comes to things like the... making clear like the reasons why Millie and, and Leap want to not be in the situation that they're in. I think Sovereign Immunity being this weird axel on which that relationship turns is really fascinating. The reason I say I don't think that we've hit it as hard as we could have is because I did prep, to emphasize certain aspects of Obelle the city, the town, that didn't come up. And that doesn't meant that we didn't hit it, or that we couldn't hit it in the future, but what I really want to make sure is—and again, I will return to this a little bit—there are ways in which to make sure the civilian cost or the civilian perspective is at play.

Make the war the enemy, not the soldiers. I think we did this pretty well, and it's also... You know, of these, I wanna say, it is... It remains the one that I'm... the principle that I'm least... Not least engaged with it, I'm very engaged with it, but it's the one that I'm most willing to break at certain points. To read from the book, Austin Ramsay writes: "This war has been going on a long time, and is more devastating than any person ever could be. Show this by giving every NPC humanity. Everyone has someone they care about, whether it's because it makes survival easier, or just more tolerable. Humanize individuals, and make groups monstrous through cold calculations or dangerous acts of passion. Look to 1914's Christmas Truce for moments where soldiers fought the war, and not each other." And I think that that's an effective way to tell a story about types of war. I *do* think that there are moments where you want to...

For me, the thing here has always been: humanizations and vilification don't need to be polar opposites. There can be ways to make that play. In these... in this set of episodes, I think what you end up seeing, especially because you end up seeing Cas'alear as one of the

major soldiers, maybe the most professional soldier in either of these arcs, and cas comes up twice, first at the end of the SBBR arc, and then early on in the Rapid Evening arc. And I think... cas' whole thing is like being an honorable soldier, being someone who respects cas' like enemies, if those enemies are like the party, had been like seemingly valor, you know, valorous and committed to their ideals, and blah-blah-blah-blah-blah. And so like, I really did want to hit that pretty early as being like, "Hey, look, you're gonna end up fighting a lot of Apostolosians here, there are Apostolosians here that you would end up liking a whole bunch. Or who will do their duty, but also blah-blah-blah..."

At the same time, like, we do live in a world in which individual do commit war crimes, right? We live in world in which in the last year the president of the United States has pardoned people who have committed war crimes. And sometimes I want, I do want to make the soldiers the enemy. I don't... This is not me being like "Aha, I have secret plans about war crimes to be committed soon!" But I do wanna be able to... There are moment when I will break this rule. What I think the heart of the rule, though, is, and to be more generous to the rule, the notion is that those people are produced by the circumstances, they're produced by ideology, which is supported by, you know, certain material relationships, certain material influences, and, and that in some ways the war produces the war criminal, if that makes sense. Um, you know, the racist paramilitary or private military, you know, contractor who, you know, pursues war crimes in like a distant country from their own home is both reprehensible as an individual, but also is created by the ideology and culture of the nation that they come from, right? And so, that is like the heart of the rule, and when you carry that down to its logical conclusion, I think you can follow it pretty clearly.

Make the war too big to defeat. I mistyped "too", I wrote "to", it should be "too". [Austin laughs a bit] I think we've done that pretty well here, I think already the sort of scale of conflict is really fascinating, it's not something that we've seen in this early of a season. I think a lot about the end of COUNTER/Weight, the end of Twilight Mirage—and I'm not gonna spoil specifics about those—but by then you have these big factions, you understand the factions as listeners, and as players, you can see them come together, you can understand the weight of them and how difficult it seems to find peace. Very rare that you see that this early into a season. And I'm really happy with how we've done that.

Make the pilots feel small, and the mechs feel powerful. Um, Mow big? [Austin laugh a bit.] Mow big. Mow big. And I think we've done fine on that.

Consider the risk is an interesting one here. Again, I'll read from the book. "Pilots lead dangerous lives and most of their actions will be with a risky position. If they are carrying momentum of a success their position might controlled instead. If they just failed a roll, had a complication, or improvising, it is probably desperate. Trust your instincts, but don't be afraid to negotiate and revise." One of my notes that we'll get to in a bit is about that, so we'll revisit it then.

And then **hold on lightly**. "This is not a competitive game and doesn't require hardline rulings. If someone, yourself included, wants to take back a statement, that's okay, but consider what it means if dice has already been rolled." Plenty of times during these

sessions did we pause and said “Wait, is that really what we wanna do?” and stuff like that. Something important to remember going forward, but something I think I’m pretty good on right now.

[00:25:20 - Post Mortem]

So, Post Mortem of Obelle. I’m gonna take another sip of this tea. Mm. What worked, what didn’t, what was left on the table?

Also in the chat—and this is, this is, me being able to answer this question live is one of the benefits of being at the Hacker tier—Morgan J says: “Is this the first time two parties have interacted with the same NPC in a short span of time?”

Um, I’d say probably not. You look at something like Hieron, in Spring you’ll end up having a character having a character like Uklan Tel, or like Sunder Havelton, or someone pop between the two parties in any given thing because they’re in the downtime and when they’re not. But... there’s a specific type of interaction here which does... which was novel, but it’s also about the relationship between the two parties, which is if not hostile, certainly not allied. Which is distinct, and allows this different type of relationship where a minor NPC on one side can suddenly take the center stage, which is interesting. Alright. Anyway.

Post Mortem! What worked, what didn’t, and what was left on the table. So, I’ve broken this down into like Big Wins and Needs Work, and then there will be a Left on the Table slide also.

Big Wins, things I’m really happy about.

Pacing and speed. Part of this is about the recording also. We got two well-sized arcs out in two episodes each. Go back and look at Twilight Mirage, first nine episodes, I think there’s two and a half arcs between the two sides... Or there’s two and a half arcs total, there’s the opening arc which I think is two episodes, then there’s the ground, the opening ground arc, then there’s the opening, the full opening space arc. And... they just go, and they drag, and... We’ve talked before about the ways in which—or I’ve talked before about the ways in which the Veil, a system I think is really cool, struggled for us for actual play because we’re already so wordy and so contemplative. There is no roll that we can’t turn into a conversation, and so a game that’s already about contemplating and conversating will naturally extend even longer for us. Contrast it with this, where even though we had to introduce characters, introduce the way in which missions are structured, introduce ideas like Rules of Engagement and primary and secondary objectives, introduce locations—we still managed to get through two really, really dense arcs in four episodes. I don’t know that we’ve ever had this efficiency before, maybe Marielda, but Marielda is only a single party. COUNTER/Weight was never this quick... I think the only thing it compares to, and one of the models for the pacing and speed we were looking for here, was the... towards the end of Twilight Mirage when we switched to *Scum & Villainy*, there’s a moment towards... right before the, kind of right before the finale arcs, right before the finale arc... I guess it was like

two episodes after this before the actual finale... There are the three... there's a moment where the party splits in three, and there's kind of three shorter arcs, and *those* were very much the touchstone for the speed I wanted here.

One thing I'll shout out here too is, I've listened to a lot more people run Forged in the Dark stuff, including Austin Ramsay's own actual play of *Beam Saber*, the Cenotaph, which is both [on YouTube](#) and [on podcasts](#)... I guess only the first nine episodes I wanna say are on podcast, but you can go watch the whole thing on YouTube at You Don't Meet... We... [You Don't Meet At An Inn](#). I believe that's right. If I'm wrong, and you're in chat, please correct me. So yeah, like the... People can run... People run Forged in the Dark games so much different than us, and you'll see this once we get to downtime, and both our downtimes are pretty sizable, in contrast. But one of the things I really wanted to do, and one of the big decisions I made was to cut down the number of overall clocks and rolls. I know it feels like sacrilege that I would say "We're cutting down..." Um, "we're cutting down clocks" seems like a terrible thing, "where's Austin?" But I really wanted to limit the total number of things you had to do to complete a mission here, and I will say—and we'll get there—the ways in which you build a mission in *Beam Saber* is so so so smart, and allows for... gives, gave me tools to build in a way that was a little more condensed. So, that was a huge win for us.

[00:30:00]

Um, **realized characters**. Shoutouts to all of my players who understand who they're playing with a sort of superhuman speed. [Austin laughs a bit] Which is wild to me, because... I [Austin sighs] ...A thing to know is like, as far as I know, no one listened to Drawing Maps, right? No one listened to Road to PARTIZAN. Maybe not no one, some people did, I... actually that's unfair, that's unfair. I believe, I *believe* that Jack eventually got through most of the Road to PARTIZAN, and that I wanna say... I wanna say Sylvia² and Dre maybe? But my understanding is that most of the player did not listen to all of that stuff, and I know that no one has ever mentioned listening to Drawing Maps... I don't even know that everyone has access automatically... Oh, that's not true, I gave everybody access to Drawing Maps specifically. But there was an... But instead what we have is an ongoing conversation about these things. There is very rarely something that I bring up that I don't make available through another conversation. But it can be hard to know. Like, has this... Are we on the same wavelength? How were you feeling about your own characters? And also, also there are times that players want to keep stuff close to the chest 'cause they are not confident about their character yet, or they are still trying to make decisions they need to feel out, like... It's like building a stew, and you don't want to bring the same exact thing for the stew that everyone else has brought, and so you don't know what to bring quite yet. You have like... you have a choice of four things, but you wanna look around the table and see what else everyone brought.

But what I think you end up seeing here is this really great well-developed skill from everyone who has gotten so good at, at intuiting what the table vibe is, understanding who they want to be, and what they can bring to the table, and how to quickly communicate

² The name in the audio recording is no longer in use, hence the audio/transcript discrepancy.

character through small motion, through jokes, through little tiny bits of characterization, and through dynamic and dramatic choices. Which everyone at the table had. Stealing the Troops instead of destroying them, running Mow through big structures, setting the ground on fire, you know, stealing stuff from Tes'ili's warehouse, saving as many people as possible from Past's crash... And that's all just SBBR, right? You go over to the Rapid Evening, it's again the same things, *all* the way through both of those episodes. Big decisions get made over and over again. And I talked to Keith about this yesterday after our downtime episode recorded, and—almost two days ago now—and one of the things he talked about was how useful Live at the Table has been for him, and, and Bluff City, in just like dropping into a character and trying it out. And I think a lot about the various experiments we've done over the years as training. One of the big reasons that we did the faction game when we did the faction game was a sort of training for everyone in that game (which was me, Dre, and Sylvia) to, one, drop into characters really quickly, to hold on lightly to outcomes, and also to paint with words as best as we could. And I think that's like one example of it. Live at the Table and Bluff City, despite being their own kind of "franchises" on their own, are also training tools, are also ways for us to like sharpen muscles, to practice. And that's been really good.

Three is **worldbuilding**. Drawing Maps worked, right? Like, all of that extra work that we did through the Road to Season 6, the Road to PARTIZAN—every... every single game there gave us something that pays off in these first four episodes, first five episodes. We don't get here without every one of the games that we got—but get somewhere else, and maybe that other place is also pretty good. But between that and then the work with Drawing Maps, and, again, making comprehensible that stuff not only to the audience, which also helps, but also to us, really really works. And I think the funniest thing about all of this to me is I finished the Drawing Map... The, the downtime game a couple days ago, and I ended up stepping away feeling some sort of way about how we felt about Twilight Mirage's opening, and the ways in which we attributed the first three episodes, the kind of rocky reception of Twilight Mirage, and sort of the rocky play of Twilight Mirage... You know, for so long the story went like this: "Yeah, we were all so hyped about Twilight Mirage, we were so down on Winter..." And we were not all down, *I* was very down on Winter, and everyone had a hard time with Winter, it was a dark season in a difficult time in the world and in our lives, but... We kind of said the reason Twilight Mirage got off on its own... on the wrong foot is 'cause we've spent so long overprepping for it, we kind of spent our enthusiasm, we all thought we were on the same page but we weren't, and we kind of went into it and wanted to be in the middle of it instead of at the start of it. In some ways we did a different tact this year because the Road to Season 6... Because of things like, when we opened Season 6 Discord inside of our personal, like our... the show, the private Discord, you know, we didn't... There was not a year of hyping ourselves up about this. There was a smaller channel for like the production team to kind of brainstorm some stuff, but that was it.

Um, but actually... We way overprepped for this season compared to Twilight Mirage in terms of factions... And like, I knew what the factions were at the ground game of Twilight Mirage at the jump, but I actually didn't know them as well as I know the five Stels here. We prepped way more in terms of, um, what the... what Partizan itself is, and we revealed that prep. And I think that ended up paying off. And so in some ways my new lesson from

Twilight Mirage is: it was too much in the middle, right? It wasn't Hieron where *nothing* had been really figured out except for a few loose details, it wasn't *this* where... Or COUNTER/Weight, which... COUNTER/Weight was also prepped in some ways more than Twilight Mirage was. But we didn't sit in the residue of that prep for as long, and we were not as excited going into COUNTER/Weight as we were about going into Twilight Mirage. And frankly, I don't think anyone except... I don't think the whole cast is as excited about coming to PARTIZAN as they were to go into Twilight Mirage. But I think it actually... All of the prep has paid off! Because the world feels... It works. The world feels like it fits together. And so when I think about something like Valence playing the White Star music, and all of the knock-on effects that causes, the knock-on effects of Past crashing, of Cymbidium dying, of that being associated with what is perceived to be a Kesh attack on a town on the Apostolo... southern Apostolosian border... We've never had anything like that happen in the first five episodes of a season before. Where it makes sense to a listener, and to the players what the stakes are. And that is really, really good.

And I think this leads into four, which is **re-thinking "faction play" at a new scale**. We're not gonna do faction turns. I may privately roll some dice here and there, and maybe some of that might come into these Drawing Maps episodes, but we are going to be able to see the factions move at this smaller scale, from the kind of on the ground angle, and I'm really excited about that, because we're already seeing it, we're already seeing, you know, Apostolos... Everytime I say "Apostolos has, like, upped its military presence in the south alongside the border of the Prophet's Path," that means something that is comprehensible, I hope, to the players and to the listener... And is the sort of thing we would have had dedicated a scene to in the COUNTER/Weight model. I would like to dedicate a scene to that, that sounds fun and cool, but given the pace that we achieved by staying at this level, I'd like to try to keep that pace too. The other half of the kind of the re-thinking "faction play" at a new scale thing is that you'll have to listen to some of the downtime stuff. In the next few weeks when the downtime stuff comes out, it becomes pretty clear how using downtime action, using intros, using, you know, gather information rolls we'll be tell stories about what's happening in the world. Also the scale of Partizan is just tighter than something like COUNTER/Weight. But it's also tighter because it's... because everyone knows what the pieces on the board are. In a way that like... If I said the name of a planet on... in a system of the Golden Branch there's a good chance you might not remember it off the top of your head. And I say that because I recently looked at a map of the Golden Branch, uh, and was like 'What the fuck is that?! Who? Who is...? Where..? What is...?' Let me open this up real quick, I'm just gonna do it. Now, let's see here, let's open this full size image. Hey, what's up with the planet of Slighter? What's up with the planet of Wreath? Does anyone remember what's up with Wreath? Does anyone remember what's up with Quarrel? You know, you might remember Ionias, you might remember Kalliope, you might remember September... Do you remember Tetrakal? What was up with Tetrakal? You know? If you asked me without me looking at this chart I wouldn't know. And so being a lot more clear, and a lot more... symbolic, and, and, a lot more... um, a lot more willing to lean into this big big pictures that communicate something very clearly where you can kind of get everything in a bucket. This is again why things like the Past/Present/Future/Space/Motion work so well for me.

I also remember Wreath being a cool name for a planet, agreed. [Austin laughs a bit.]

Um... Five is **close editing**, another big win. I sat and listened through every one of these episodes front to back, Ali listened... Obviously, Ali always listens through three or four times as she does the edit. It's been rare, historically, that I have had the time to do that. I will do it maybe with certain special episodes, or, more importantly, historically what we have is Ali will send me a scene to listen through, and be "Where do you think the cut should be here?", "Hey, how should we tackle this?", "Should we remove this?", "Can we do a pickup for this?" This is the first time since... since Vice that I've had the time to sit down and listen to a whole episode before it comes out every week. And so that has paid off, because having... just having one more voice to check stuff against I think has helped Ali, and has helped us keep these... They are still long episodes, but keep them as trim as they have been, finding ways to... finding places where I can suggest doing a pickup instead of Ali asking me to do one, which I think can be... not scary, but like, it's... No one want to annoy someone else and be like "Hey, can you do a pickup to try to condense eight minutes into two minutes?" But those are the types of things that I definitely did. Like, the whole first twenty minutes I wanna say of episode 00 was pickup. That was originally like a 45-minute conversation, and instead I cut it down to 20 minutes of just like "Here is the setting, now let's get on to characters." Stuff like that I think has helped the flow a whole bunch.

And the alternative to that is **loose and fast season prep**. I know the world, and I have some pieces, I have some like... I have some things in my back pocket that might show up. But I don't have a structure. I think about... Even going back to COUNTER/Weight, where Rigour is in the ice, and I know in my heart of hearts that at some point Rigour is going to become... Plot A. I don't know what it's gonna do, I don't know... you know, unless it gets spun off, right? Unless something happens in the faction game that destroys it or duh-duh-duh-duh-duh, who knows? But I *think* Rigour is gonna be a big deal. I don't have that this season. I have a number of things that I think could be interesting, I have a number of things that could be... What happened with Past is like one of the big engines of this season for sure. And that is tied to certain things for sure. But that might not be that important, right? That might end up being a catalyst that pushes people into other directions. So much of this season is being driven by players, and so I'm having much looser season-scale prep in terms of like "I'm gonna, I'm gonna do this..." I guess there's another thing I should say for clarity is, in the past... In the past, I think going back to at least... I don't know when I wouldn't have done this. There's always like "Here are some things I'd like to see on the screen." And I think about those things ahead of the season. And you see those in things like the opening two and a half missions for... for the Beloved Dust in Twilight Mirage, the sort of war table selections "Hey, which of these places you wanna go to?" in Spring in Hieron... Less so in Winter. I'd say in Winter I had like an initial... I had like initial situations in mind, which were Twinbrook and Rosemarrow, and then was like "Well, I'll figure out the rest when we get there." But by and large I tend to be like "Alright, here are like three cool things the party can go do this season. Here are like three missions, three arcs, whatever." I don't have that this season.

I didn't really... I *did not* have the recover Past from Obelle stuff until after the first session because how could I, right? Like, I knew Past was coming down, I did know Past for sure

would crash. I didn't know for sure Cymbidium would die, or would not have been recovered. There was a possibility, that was on the table, Cymbidium could have been saved. And we could have opened up with a state funeral for Cymbidium, we could have opened up with something unrelated, you know? Trying to, to actually assault Obelle to recover the body, like, all sorts of other stuff was on the table, and instead I just left it, let it open, didn't do any prep for it outside of just general like "Oh, Cas'alear is someone who is gonna show up again, let's tease Cas'alear first..." And then, and then played it by ear and came up with something next. And then I don't know what next missions are gonna be for both of these sides. You'll hear it in downtime, there's a point in which I generate... potential missions generate out of play, especially on the SBBR side, you'll see that like "Hey, they have a couple of options that they can pursue." And once those things are set up, then when we did the downtime for the Rapid Evening, I was able to generate interesting things around that took into account what SBBR ended up doing, deciding, and I could put some other stuff on the table.

But that is really exciting for me as a player, and I wanted to say both of these things, the close editing and this kind of different style of prep reflect honestly material difference for me, which is not having to work, you know, 60 hours at Vice every week. [Austin laughs a bit] Being able to put that time... Being... to... In some ways, this is the Mark Twain thing, the like "I would have written you a shorter letter but I didn't have the time"...

[00:45:00]

Being... Working the job that I'd been working for the last four years meant needing to overprep. And I wanna be clear, I wasn't like fucking up, like, you go listen to Marielda, I wasn't like overprepping those heists, go listen to *Scum & Villainy*, I wasn't overprepping those, those sequences, but I had to think about seasons in a different way, 'cause I couldn't count on having time to sit down and, and make good decisions any given week, right? So thinking about like Spring in Hieron, the model of there being the three locations that they go to, or the kind of... there's four locations on the table, in a sense, they end up going to three of them. And the reason that that has to be set up that way is 'cause "Alright, this is my break week, I'm gonna take, I'm gonna take... I'm gonna spend my vacation time so I can spend a week coming up with these locations and plotting them out, and coming up with NPCs, because I don't know that in three, or four, or five weeks when it's time for them to go to a new place, that I will have the time to sit down and hammer something out." Because I've stepped back from my role at Vice, and changed my situation there—I'm just doing podcast there now—I actually have that time on hand, so thank you to anyone who supports the show. I will say there will be some other opportunities to support me on some stuff in the near future, hopefully. And if you could continue to do that, I really appreciate it, 'cause that actually will have a knock-on effect here to where, you know, every little bit that I can... that I can comfortable that in the future I will have the time to sit down and make good... like, do the work as it happens instead of all at once up top, the better it gets.

Um, so. Those are all my Big Wins. Pacing and speed, realized characters, worldbuilding, re-thinking faction play at a new scale, close editing, and loose and fast prep. Here are the things that I think need some work. Why are there...? Oh, sorry, this is a fun thing, there's a

fun little thing that people didn't see—and this will go into an eventual Mapmaker update. I'll also say really quick, I am rethinking the way Mapmaker vs Drawing Maps works.

1) Drawing Maps, Mapmaker: which is which? Off the top of your head, maybe if you were paying close attention, you know? But I make that mistake all the time and call one the other. So, there's already like a little bit of overlap and confusion there.

2) It's weird that Mapmaker... It's weird the way it's set up right now because of the way you get access to certain things at the \$5 level vs the \$10 level. I wanna say right now, and just like introduce it to the world that I'm probably going to raise the possibility of changing the way these things are priced, and what is at what tier sometime in the future. I will definitely give a heads up about that and like some sort of transition time, because what I don't want is for people to feel like they are missing... for people to feel like they already paid for something and aren't getting it. We're still catching up on Mapmaker stuff, so I don't want to change anything until Mapmaker is caught up. But I do think right now it, it... If you just look at the tiers it doesn't really make a lot of sense, especially given the extra work the goes into this vs Mapmaker stuff.

In any case, here are the maps of Obelle, which fucking rule. I made both of these using a tool called... [The City Generator, which is available on itch.io](#)... I've mentioned this before because I used the same tool during the first *Beam Saber* Live at the Table Road to PARTIZAN game that we used. It is made by watabou, so if you go to [watabou.itch.io](#), you will find this thing called Medieval Fantasy City Generator [Austin laughs a bit] and these are the things that I used to communicate the city to the players. I used one with a kind of a... You know, in both cases Obelle is Obelle, it's the same basic map, but I used different color schemes, one for night, for the attack that SBBR did at night, and one for the day which is kind of bright... So, the night one is like an old CRT monitor—which also I think helped communicate the, the kind of aesthetic very well—black background with kind of like a gross gold-brown color, and the points on top of that. And then, the by day one, I used kind of this kind of bright white and gray, like off... Like, different colors of gray, basically, three different colors of gray, a lot for like the water, and the buildings, and everything else, and then I used some effects from roll20 to like knock out different facilities, the facilities that were destroyed, I put like little smoking craters on them, and some like red NO signs, and then a big, big, big crater in the north-west just to communicate the general vibe here. And those were really useful also. That was another thing, another part of that fast and loose prep. You know, I spent an hour doing these, maybe two hours doing these, and they came, they came together really, really well. I had a general idea between how to do... Like, I had a general idea of like what these cities look like, but then playing around I was like “Ooh, yeah, I could cut the city in half with the river, and that's really cool, and blah-blah-blah.” So, again, really big shoutouts to the Medieval—let me find the name of it again—the Medieval... Medieval Fantasy City Generator which you can find on itch.io. It's so, so useful, it's so good.

So, the stuff that I wanna say **need work**.

One is just **overall rules familiarity**. There is so much in terms of like... Forged in the Dark games have so many dials that you can play with and tune, and we've never done a full

season of Forged in the Dark. I don't... There are players who never really got a chance to engage with it for more than a few sessions. When you think about something like Twilight Mirage... Let me see... friendatthetable.net... Go to Categories — Twilight Mirage... Um... And you look, and you go to... You know, This Year of Ours, you do to episode 36... 36 is the first episode where we go back, or where we go to *Scum & Villainy*, really go to it. There are two arcs per side, and then one other arc that is like the big final arc before the Feast, and then the finale. So you have players who maybe had four or five sessions with Forged in the Dark ever. Like, with Keith that was it! And then the *Beam Saber* game. Anybody who was not in Marielda had not sat with it... Even Marielda was only what, three... three heists and then like a couple of downtimes? Four heists? The train, library... What am I missing? Am I missing..? I don't think I am missing a heist. The final heist, right? I'm double-checking. Bad that I don't know this off hand. Yeah, that's it. Train, library, final heist! So like, no one's done long-term Forged in the Dark stuff. And so, we need to get better at the rules. There's a lot of cut stuff of us looking stuff up or me trying to remind people of something, or me trying to remind myself of something 'cause I've completely forgotten... And just, that's just practice again. "Needs work" does not mean this is a failure, it means these are things we need to continue working on.

Two is like the **feeling and spread of threat**. The SBBR mission went off without a hitch, there were good rolls. I need to feel more comfortable introducing threats. I say all this knowing that Valence got a scar at the end of the mission, and that is why I say "spread of threat". That happened so quickly... I mean, Valence had been pushing themselves, or Dre had been pushing Valence, pushing them, really hard throughout the mission in some ways, but it never really felt like they were outnumbered and outgunned, and that was kind of intentional, you kind of want some wins for your team up top. But then suddenly it was like dialed to eleven. And that can work. But in the future I really want to feel that slow, that slooow like "Okay, do we have what we need to get through this? Let me make sure that there's kind of like a sustained encounter, a sustained sense of conflict." Again, not a failure, but something I wanna think about.

Revisiting PvP rules. I'm gonna save this conversation around this for a little bit, because there was a question that came in that was really good, we can talk through that a little bit.

Um, four is **figuring out the meta-structure of the show**. Now, I know a second ago I said "It's good that I can do this loose and fast season prep" because it lets us... lets me do higher quality more reactive stuff. At the same time the part of it that is difficult right now is "what's the next episode?" Is it SBBR's downtime? Is it the downtime from the Rapid Evening? How do those two things interlock? How many episodes do we do? Do we do downtime episode like downtime—mission—mission—downtime—mission—mission? Do we do downtime—downtime—mission A—mission B—mission A—mission B? Do we do..? And all of this is stuff that we still need to decide, and we don't have a strategy for it yet, because we can't, because we don't know what the material is yet. So that's a big thing, and like we... I think we did right by doing A—A—B—B, you know, SBBR—SBBR—Rapid Evening—Rapid Evening this time. I don't know that that's what we're gonna do forever, and what we're gonna try to do this season is be very reactive and do what's right for any given moment. We don't always need to set precedent and follow it.

Five is **clarity checks**. Um, a thing that came up after this episode shoutout was like “Oh, Clementine killed Gucci!” And like no, Gucci was in a big mech, like a 60-foot tall mech while Clementine was on the ground pointing a gun at a guy. But that is not the failure of the listener, that’s a failure of me who is supposed to tell that story very clearly. There were a number times I should’ve paused and restated what the situation was, what the circumstance was. Always good—and we talk about visual storytelling a lot on this audio show—but it’s so important for me to pump the brakes and be like “Alright... Let’s go over what just happened again. Alright, here is what the tableau is.” That’s effective, too, right? Like, we... And I think, to be fair to us in that moment we wanted to kind of move past that kill, that sequence, because we knew it was heavy material, but it’s still my responsibility to make sure it’s effective material, and to make it effective it has to be clear. So, things like that. Clarity over like hey, where are characters in the world, in the sequence, who is available, who is far away, etc.

And then finally, **evening out recording length and schedules**. Both of the episodes that... The previous episodes, the episodes that are out, that you’ve heard, were great, we recorded those arcs in a single session each, that’s fantastic. They’re long, they’re long recordings, but not longer than anyone was interested in doing, and more importantly, being able to like wrap them in a single thing had a great unitive effect, really good clarity on everything that happened. And then we went like a month before the SBBR downtime, and then another month after that before the Rapid Evening downtime. We got sick, I’m still sick, Keith is still a little sick. Like, it happens. And also with the holidays, which is tough. But we have to get better on, on recording schedules. We all have so many things going on, we all have very flexible weird schedules. People are traveling, people have family stuff, people have... you know, medical stuff. There’s a billion things happening, and there’s a *lot* of us, and so it’s tough. But we need to get better on that, because that will end up helping the show’s consistency quite a bit.

Here are some things that were **Left On The Table** I think are really fascinating. [Austin laughs a bit.]

Echoes of the past. I’ve used the names here of the things themselves that I have in my prep, and I’ll actually just pull that up here. So, the first thing was echoes of the past which I’ve written here: “GHOSTS”. So here if you’re watching you can see me scroll through what this prep looks like. This is literally the way I’ve prepped, and I’ll talk about this in a little bit because we got a question about prep for *Beam Saber* too.. But if I scroll down there to the things that may have come up, that could have come up, one of them, one of the potential complications to the Rapid Evenings mission is echoes of the past. “The citizens of Obelle have reported ghost sightings as the impact of the living library Past has led to bits of the Perennial Wave taking on the character of past people, creatures, things, and even events.” That did not come up! I wish that would have come up. Maybe that will come up later, we’ll see. That’s like a good thing we can return to.

Two is **civilians**. I *really* wanna make sure that people are in... people who are not the player characters and who are not military figures show up in this game. It’s super important,

we need to get them on screen as often as possible, because those are the people for whom the world is happening to, and who cannot happen back to the world without high risk. And so there are two instances here that could have in, in... where civilians could have shown up more directly.

The first is a complication I've written for the SBBR side which is **civilian interference**. "Fighting may lead a civilian defense force to appear in ConCons, prepared to defend their farmland from fighting." This would have been a sequence where SBBR would have had to realize that while the mission's RoE, the Rules of Engagement allow for the destruction of the fields, the local civilians did not necessarily believe that that was the case. Um, and this would have been a situation where they vastly outpowered civilians. They would have had to make a decision about what to do, given that. And that's interesting, and I think that's something that would probably pop back up at a certain point, but did not come up here.

And then the other one is civilian... **The Clampdown** here. The Clampdown, a complication for the Rapid Evening side that didn't happen. "Obelle is not only home to Apostolosians, but also many who do business across the border in the Prophet's Path. Local Apostolosian civilians' troops and police have instantly become suspicious of these non-Apostolosians with accusations of dual loyalty being hurled their way. Cas'alear hates this—dynamism is the heart of their sibling's new Apostolosian Empire, and dynamism has no place for the bullheaded rigidity of racism or bigotry." So, Cas'alear would've been a voice against that stuff, but it still would've been happening. "Rakka Amakan, a local Talonite priest of Peace, of the Divine Peace, has been unable to safely leave his quarters or hold service in his small temple since the event." If you go back to the page I had with the map on you'll see here just across the way from that inn in the middle of town—which is where the Palace part... the Partizan Palace Casts mech was hiding—it's the inn that the players in the Rapid Evening were staying at, there's a little temple. And that temple would have been where this character, this Talonite, who is one of the bird people from Twilight Mirage, uh, Rakka, Rakka Amakan would have been like in need of help, and this could have been a way in which they could've like earn some local trust back or gain a local ally, stuff like that.

[01:00:02]

Ended up not having time to fit it in—which is part of why the pacing and speed felt good, is I didn't try to overstuff these adventures—but again, a thing that could show back up in a future episode for sure. Including that character particularly, right? Like, as a GM, reuse the stuff you didn't use. It doesn't disappear. You get to come back.

Three is just **a real fight**. In both cases... You know, there's a brief encounter at the end of the Rapid Evening fight where they knock back Gucci, and free Clem, and let Clem get away. There is a moment where they are... No, there is nothing. There is nothing in the SBBR side that feels like a real fight. And that's okay for these opening salvos, and when it's time it would feel really good. But I would love to actually see them fight head up. It's tough when you're Tier 0, because your stuff is just worse than everybody else's. And one of the things that I think I'll have to think about going forward is how expensive it is to go up in Tier. You know, they're gonna have to start saving up is they wanna get better gear and better

equipment. But yeah, in general they were never up against equals, right? They were never up against anyone who had the sort of equipment that they had. They were either up against people way better than them, in the case of both Gucci and Cas'alear towards the very very end of the SBBR arc, but.... and Gucci in the Transgress Oblige. But they never had to have... they never had that one-on-one, this is a fight.

GLORY, who also would have been better than them, even though they only had... Even though Kleos was there with only their one mech, GLORY is something that's gonna come back for sure, but you would've seen that GLORY was like... I wish we would have gotten a little bit more of GLORY's motivation there, and specifically GLORY's relationship with Cas'alear—which is gonna be tough to get in, that was really the perfect moment. There's a... there was that sequence where Cas'alear was walking away, and... from, from the crash site, and I keep asking like "Does anyone want to go talk to Cas, and find out what their deal is? And, you know, why cas doesn't want to deal with this right now?" And... that moment no one took that opportunity, and that was right for all of those characters, those characters aren't gonna go talk to cas about what that situation was. But Cas'alear has a very specific relationship with GLORY, and GLORY has a very particular... I mean, I kind of already hinted at it when I talked about Cas'alear's relationship to dynamism and to bigotry. Cas'alear doesn't have a fucking time of day for GLORY. I think very specifically, and I'll say this here even though it hasn't come up on... in play yet, maybe it will at some point, maybe it won't. Cas'alear... Cas'alear chose cas... chose Cassander as their eidolon and took cas as a pronoun for very noble reasons comparatively. And the... I think that there's something really interesting at play... that could come to play between Cas'alear and GLORY long-term, that's a potential vedge the party can play with. Because I don't think Cas'alear gives a fucking *shit* about what GLORY does, has no respect for them, etc. I would've loved to have gotten a little more of that on screen, but again, there's only so much time and these are already long episodes.

The weather and time of day. There's a... there's an event that we're gonna do for... I was gonna do for... SBBR. It's called **Darksy** which is just like "Hey, it's DARK!" [Austin laughs a bit.] "It's really dark!" I decided not to do it, I already felt like it was complicated, and I didn't... and for *the* first mission I didn't want to bring it up. But again, the sort of natural, bright long kind of dawn and dusk, and then the sudden true darkness of the night on Partizan is something I'm excited to play with in the future.

And then **Cymbidium himself**. There's a world in which Cymbidium lives, right? There's a world in which they say "Fuck the RoE, let's get in there, let's save Cymbidium, let's dig the Elect out, let's see what we can salvage, even if it means taking risk, even if it means getting into a fight. Hey... you know, blah-blah-blah-blah-blah." And the reason that doesn't happen partly is because Valence is knocked out with a scar. That happens, right? Like, okay, that... This is not me dragging anybody, this is not... I think all of the choices everybody made was dope, and important, and good. But it sucks because like I do... It doesn't suck! It would've been cool to see some more Cymbidium. I like Cymbidium as a character, but this is part of the job, right? Like, look through the crosshairs, let your own NPCs die, hold on lightly... It happens. And so, and so, yeah. That's a big thing for sure.

[01:04:45 - Q&A]

Uh, one second. Here. Alright. So. Time to talk about the **Q&A**. And we'll do the Q&A and then we'll wrap up, because as Cole in the chat notes, and as my OBS is telling me, we've already been going for over an hour, so that's good to know. If you have questions for the next Drawing Maps which will be about, presumably, downtime and then the next arc or two of PARTIZAN, you can send them to tipsatthetable@gmail.com.

Arp sends in two questions. **Arp** says:

"1) Some of the acting in PARTIZAN 04 was so good that it seems rehearsed? In addition to having basic notes, do you practice voices beforehand? Do you have potential scripts for everybody?"

Not at all, nothing like it. I'm gonna show you my literal prep. This is... So. For the Rapid Evening game, here is what the prep looks like. I have notes up top that say: "We are picking up just one day after the final moment of the last week's game, and in real life, only a couple days after that recording, so it's all VERY fresh." I have notes about what I wanna do at the top: intro the crew, have them describe their base, describe their +s and -s with other factions, other squads, etc.

Two, "Clementine, you are awoken when a servant goes into your room much earlier than normal to open your curtains and bring light into your palatial bedroom. As soon as you begin to rouse, she mouths a few words to you: You only need to recognize one of them: "Mother." What do you do?" which is our kind of opening sequence.

"Waiting at your receiving hall is Gucci Garantine (describe her here), who is here for a long-ago-scheduled appointment to go over lumber tax rates for the coming season."

And then, "By the time you launch, people are already gathering in Cruciat Square with signs that say: "Remember the Past"

Those are my notes for like what the pre-mission stuff is. Then I have a paragraph on what the mission is, and I think I've read that basically as is. I basically have... Then there's a note on what... And in fact let me just jump ahead a little bit, because we have another question here...

Morgan wrote in to say: **"Is there anything hugely different for you about prepping a *Beam Saber* mission compared to a *Blades* or *Scum & Villainy* score?"**

And the thing is that if you open up your... If you at home open up your *Beam Saber* book, and go to the GM, the Game Master, uh, chapter or whatever... I believe it's there, let's see here... Uh... Campaign scale... Yeah, Preparing a Mission. So, if you go to How to Prepare a Campaign? Unlike *Blades* and *Scum & Villainy* there's a section here called Preparing a Mission. And what Preparing a Mission says is: "There is one rule for designing a mission that you must keep in mind: make a situation, do not make a story. The flexibility that pilots have access to through their vehicle abilities, flashbacks, and everything else means that

your plan will need to be similarly flexible, so try to avoid extensive paragraphs on events that will happen, and instead make notes that detail narrative resources and possibilities.

These are my guidelines on how to prep missions for *Beam Saber*. They work for me and hopefully they'll work for you too. There are eight categories." This is from Austin Ramsay. "Eight categories that I prepare for a mission. Briefing, employer, target, objective, Rules of Engagement, complications, characters, and challenges. The GM can pull from each section for obstacles that pilots must overcome. Some of these obstacles will be represented by clocks, while others may be sources of consequence in the fiction. The contents of each section should flow from the outcomes of previous missions as well as Step 3 of the end of session..." I... which... Step 3 of the end of session is like where you talk to your players of what they kind of want, I believe. "...the end of session questions will give you an idea of types of objectives, environments, opponents that players want to face, etc."

So, again, those things, the things that each mission briefing has... And, and these are actually... If you go to *Beam Saber*... *Beam Saber's* own... beamsaber.libsyn.com, you will find a list of these things called Mission Reports, that are very similar to what I'm about to talk about. Some of these are made by Austin Ramsay, some of them are made by other *Beam Saber* GMs and fans. And... so these are things that are just like:

Briefing: here is like the high-level of what this is, and so for example—I'm looking at one on the *Beam Saber* page right now, which is—

"Briefing: The Hatchetmen [Tier 1] are transporting a secretive package over land routes. Capture it, don't let it fall into enemy hands. There's a light escort (2 light mechs; machine gun, light armor, wheeled), the faction is relying on secrecy to protect the package. The package is in a roundish 6 wheeled APC", with some other traits, right?

And that is like, the briefing. And then if you scroll down, there's like, employer, like who is employing them? Who is the target? What is the objective? What is the secondary objective? Are the rules, Rules of Engagement? So like, "Hey, don't threaten or employ force against civilians. Don't fire upon a clearly marked medical transport."

And then a list of complications, and characters, and challenges. So, if you look at mine for this... This is very similar, except because it's me, these are very wordy. If you look at the very very brief, good, smart, well-designed, simple Mission Report over at the *Beam Saber* page... it is, you know, a couple of hundred words. I have lots of words next to each of these things, and they're all kind of weirdly flavorful, even though I'm not gonna quote them specifically, but so, for instance, Mission Report for the Rapid Evening.

I have the briefing, where I've listed out kind of some of the text that you would hear from, uh, Crysanth Kesh, though even this is not... it's not even close to word-for-word, because Crysanth is such a different person than just my writing voice. But it's basically saying "Hey, the Past was destroyed, you have to go get recover enough of the Past to recreate it, and go recover the body of, of, of Cymbidium."

The employer is the Curtain, the target is Apostolos, and privately I've written GLORY, that's something that you... that they could've learned by doing gather information checks. Rules of Engagement: no deploying of chemical, biological, explosive or poisonous weapons, and to kill or capture anyone who has access to Divine Past's memory. The objectives were to

ensure Silversky retrieved key parts of the body of Past, and then to produce actionable intel about who killed Cymbidium, and also... or also recover anything they've already stolen from Past. And then there's list of complications, right? And the list of characters.

On the complications side: no protection (which is that you're brought into an inn at the center of the town, and that basically they realize that there aren't... that there's no one there to protect them from hostile... from a hostile city, and they are seen as enemies because they're from Kesh, and people believe that Kesh just attacked the city, or just attacked the town. And so, if things with Cas'alear had broken bad, if that negotiation had gone bad, if they had not negotiated at night, maybe that would have come into play, maybe some would have tried to assassinate Clem, for instance.

The next complication I've written is "the body is yours, the rest is ours", which were some words about what ended up happening, which was Cas'alear and Apostolos claimed "Hey, you can have Cymbidium, but there's no proof that the body is the body of a Divine, or that debris is the body of a Divine."

Then there's echoes of the past which is the ghost one we talked about. There's the Clampdown which is the one about the priest, the Talonite priest of Peace.

And then there's one called "On the Horizon" which is "Sources can tell you that there has been a strange symbol drawn on the ground over the last few days: a diamond"... a diamond where... and then I, my own notes are bad here, I didn't finish my own notes here, but then I talk about Gucci showing up, so that one also happened.

There's a list of the characters: Sombre Sky, Cas'alear Rizah, Kleos from, from... GLORY, Cardiff Reach from GLORY, Figure A, Gucci Garantine, Rakka Amakan, a list of their mechs, which is not one of the things that's demanded in the *Beam Saber* style mission report...

And then a list of challenges. Challenges are really interesting, because they can be very specific, so, if I go back to the SBBR one, I have like:

Point Barnacle (Fuel supply): 4-step, watch tower with sniper, infantry guards, a single Troop that will activate.

Point Carp (Sensor station): anti-armor emplacement. And so, one of those is a 4-step clock, one of those I didn't write a clock down at all, because I wanted to kind of play it by ear.

Fording the river, which we ended up doing just in the entangle— in the engagement roll instead of as a separate thing.

Tes'ili Serikos (in a jeep with a megaphone).

Three Troops at Point Dory which would have equaled a 3-step clock, but it would have become a 6-step clock if they had already launched.

So like, challenges are like, here are things that the players will probably have to roll on in order to achieve their mission, and then... But they can also be kind of really broad things, like, for instance: Declaring it a Divine. One of the things they'll have to do is to get it to be declared a Divine. And that... that didn't come up because of the way the negotiation went. Because instead of going through the arc where they go in to see the Divine, and they find

enough pieces, and they say “Look, this proves that it’s a Divine!”... Clem wings that negotiation though her ability to threaten force, basically, and, and kind of, you know, leverage the might of Kesh and bring... and bring Cas’alear on board to accepting those terms. Which is wild, right?

And so, yeah, that’s, that, that... There’s a lot to leave on the table there, but no scripts, no... nothing like that. Every, every now and then we’ll do a pickup where like something is supposed to be really clear and we’re not clear, or the words aren’t good, but those are not the types of pickups I like to do, especially if it’s a dialogue, especially if it’s multiple characters talking. A speech is one thing, but even then I tend to like just restate what I said but more clearly. But nothing like a speech— or nothing like a script, and certainly not for anybody else! I don’t think... The only time that’s ever happened is the other way which is where I say to a player: “Hey, how would X... How would *you* say X, you know...”

[01:15:00]

“Hey, Art, do you want to record a letter to send..? Do you want to record a thing we’ll put it on the top of an episode? Can you script out a letter that Hadrien wrote to send to somebody?” Or something like that, right? But that’s it, I’d never ever ever EVER do anything like a potential script.

But I do definitely practice voices. Like, I definitely worked on Crysanth’s voice a lot, I do terrible British accents, you know this. And a lot of this is just confidence, is a funny thing. I can walk around my neighbourhood and drop in and out of weird accents all day, but you put me on a call with people, and it’s really hard. It’s *really* hard to commit to a voice.

Um, second question here from **Arp**.

“We’ve all been drawing Leap with one eye because Keith referenced specific things in the worldbuilding ep - but in 04 he says “glowing eyes” (plural). I’m assuming it’s just speech patterns and not actually a relevant detail, but it haunts me - has it come up again in planning/talking amongst yourselves... how many eyes does Leap have?”

I checked with Keith, Keith has— uh, Leap has one eye. Leap has like the one Geth-style eye. I think the specific thing... Let me read the specific thing that Keith said to me today when I checked in on this was: “What if a Geth was made from a Super 8 camera?” Geth, one of the species in the Mass Effect universe.

Our next question comes in from **Michael**, who says:

“The question I wanted to ask is about the use of references to COUNTER/Weight and Twilight Mirage. Obviously these are direct narrative links that tie actors and institutions from one game to the next, but a load of small, incidental names, objects and characters have been brought back for the first few episodes of PARTIZAN - the Rapid Evening, Cass as an eidolon and pronoun, the Panther, the Independence, Figure A and so on. I’m sure each case is different, but do you have a general idea

what you intend to communicate with those references? Do you have rules for yourself where and when not to use those references? And have you discussed or tried to mitigate any problems that could arise from relying on references to tell the story you're aiming to tell?"

Definitely. The biggest rule I have is... Like the biggest thematic thing here is that it's about Kesh, right? The Rapid Evening side... If you count these up, right? Cas'alear obviously shows up on both of these things. But the Kesh game is about history in such a big way. You know, we know that, that these are characters who are... who have particular relationships with their past. Three of them have been imprisoned for what they did in their past, Millie has a very specific relationship to idealized visions of the past as a cloned supersoldier who is supposed to embody the traits of a person who she does not... who she decided she does not want to embody, as far as we know, anyway. We know that Clementine's relationship with the past is exploitative and extractive, as is most of the relationship of Stel Kesh... Stel Kesh's touchstone is the past. And we have an opportunity here, we have choices to make here. Sometimes that will be about inventing and communicating a past live with the audience or to the audience. And we'll see some of that stuff here too, here and there, right? You don't need necessarily...

So, for instance, you know... You know, Stel Brightline, or, sorry, House Brightline and Gucci Garantine are references to the Road to PARTIZAN. Neither of those things existed before, like, the Garantine family, and Horizon, and House Brightline all just come from the *Armour Astir* game.

And so that's like a slight reachback, right? But when you know that you have X number of listeners who have listened to both of, to both Twilight Mirage and COUNTER/Weight, and you know that they at least were with these big things, it can be really useful to twist the knife a little bit there, specifically around this theme of the past being kind of taken advantage of, or misunderstood, purposefully in some cases. And it's worth doing that because it's the equivalent of in our world having someone twist the knife about a political or a historical figure that we know the truth about, or that we, that we admire, or that we hate, right? Um, it means something to, to bring those symbols back to the forefront, and it's a compelling way to use it.

Here's what I say in terms of rules for me. 1) Doing it early and in a way that it almost doesn't matter in the broad scope of things. There's a reason why I didn't say: "Take humanity harm." Because I would have to pause the game and be like: "What's humanity harm? Oh, I'm making a specific reference." "Take 'Dazed'." "Dazed" is fine. You, the listener, know it's humanity harm if you've listened to those past seasons. I don't need to explain the joke, so to speak, to you. And if you don't get it, it's okay that you don't get it, I've explained what the effect is. So, that's the other rule here: to explain in common terms with very little, um... with very little kind of frill about what the thing is. "Oh yeah, the Panther is a mech that was once piloted by a past ace, by an ace of the past." You know who else did that? Aria Joie did that. That's exactly the way we talk about Aria Joie's mech, as in her mech was designed to be like the mech of a past ace. And I'm not, I'm not saying that Aria Joie and Clementine Kesh are the same person by any means, but think about their

relationships to the mechs that they pilot, and what the commu— what the, what they were meant to communicate by doing that. And... So, I want to make sure that I use terms like that. Now, I'm...

The other half of this is, I'm doing this up top, because it's great, it's a good way to get buyin very quickly from a new... from an *old* audience, who has old things that they love, and can provide the foundation for building new stuff. You know, even among people who've listened to Twilight Mirage, only a small percentage know who the fuck Figure A is. I hope Figure A ends up being a cool character this season, I have no idea. I don't have any big plans for Figure A, I don't have any... Figure A is not Independence, despite there being kind of a similar relationship between the two, in that Independence showed up in the short fiction episode Last Time The Bomb Dropped in COUNTER/Weight, and then would show up again in, in Twilight Mirage, and Figure A showed up in the short fiction episode Guaranteed Events in Twilight Mirage, and now shows up again in PARTIZAN. But Independence I had big ideas for going into Twilight Mirage. I don't have any ideas for Figure A, or I do but they're tiny, they're like: "It'd be cool to have a conversation between them and somebody else, that'd be sick! It's be really interesting to think about the ways in which a being who was tied into a system that was a continuous flood of information, and now has to adjust to a much slower system of, of input", you know? Stuff like that. But that's not big plot stuff, right?

And instead getting those up top, and then breathing after that, and building on top of that, I think that's gonna be the happy medium that we achieve, I hope it is. If you are interested in discussing, or of seeing me discuss and mitigating these things, go to the fan Discord and do a Ctrl+F and look, I feel like I've talked about this non-stop for the last eight months [Austin laughs a bit] while talking through why characters won't come back...

So, the other half of this rule is: no player characters themselves are coming back, right? No institutions from Twilight Mirage that were not already caught up in the main worldbuilding that we did with the Road. You know, so no... none of the endgame factions that players were invested in, or a part of. Unless a player decides to bring them up, and even then we would have a side conversation about whether or not that's comprehensible to a listener who hadn't heard Twilight Mirage already, or how to make it cohesive and clear. Um, and nothing that would rev... nothing that would require more than a minute of, of explanation, right? Everything that's more than that—you end up losing it, and it's just too much. So, so yes, that is something that's front of mind, for sure.

Uh, Morgan already brought up... I've read Morgan's thing about the huge difference between prepping a *Beam Saber* mission compared to a *Blades* or *Scum & Villainy* score... The mission report structure is brilliant, like, it's so simple, it's so good, and it's such a good restraint of GMs. I really recommend people pick up the book, buy it from Austin Ramsay... Again, it's on itch.io. Go read it, because it's such a small detail, but it really... and I *believe* there's nothing like it in *Blades in the Dark* or in *Scum & Villainy*. I checked and I didn't see anything before we recorded, maybe I missed it—and if I missed it, feel free to point that out in the comments or to me right now, if you're in the chat. But that i such a, such a big distinct advantage for prepping these missions.

Morgan also asks **what did the cast do that surprised me the most in these first episodes, how did I work with it.**

It's definitely Dre. I was too... SBBR... One, skipping the Point Dory was really fun, it was a great moment of just like, "Fuck, I didn't prep for that at all! Shit! Okay, yeah, let's go with it, that's fun." But then Dre playing the House Whitestar anthem was like I said, a puzzle piece clicking into place, everything about the opening of this game *clicked*, everything about the why we were building factions the way we were, why we were doing... It all clicked into place, and yet also completely surprised me, and kept us up top, or kept us good.

Okay, last question is from **Cole**, who writes: **"I have a quick question about handling PvP in this system going forward. Obviously this came up and was discussed in the latest episode, and it seems like it may become a focus again and again this season since several of the PCs are starting off at odds with one another, to put it lightly.**

In Dungeon World, when dealing with NPCs, the players would only roll for an outcome IF the NPC had any chance to be swayed, etc. Could Keith have said that there was no argument or course of action Byron could have taken that would have changed Leap's mind about escaping? Has there been a discussion since that episode about how to handle PvP in this system going forward?"

Um, we've not... We've not had a secondary conversation outside of the general like "Hey, did everyone have a good time? Was there anything uncomfortable?" blah-blah-blah stuff, and everyone was good with it. I have like an entire breakdown here of talking through PvP.

And the place to.... What I will say is a very interesting complex question that has a... that has a specific history inside of Forged in the Dark games specifically. And frustratingly, one of the resources that was available is gone now, through talking through the stuff. But I want to talk through what I have available at this point now, and kind of what I've learned over the years, and I wanna point in at least some broad direction towards some other stuff.

So, one is just... One is just **rules as written** on PvP. You'll often find people talk about Forged in the Dark and say there aren't good rules for PvP in the game. That's not really true. But there are not rules in the way that you would think of rules... the way a lot of people think about tabletop rules. So. The rules are what I read during the end of the Rapid Evening game, which is: Hey. 1) Pause, take stock. Make sure that the conversation does not roll quickly... move quickly into dice rolling, because once dice get rolled everything feels real, and people will feel like you can't take things back, even though all session we talk about being able to take things back.

2) is Develop a method of resolution. This is the moment at which you do what Cole has suggested here, what Cole is questioning here, and say: "Hey, is this a thing that you could roll for?" And then you decide what the method is. You decide who goes first, for instance, who has initiative—and in this game you could roll for initiative, you can roll a fortune rll to

determine who's gonna go first, or someone might have a move that says that lets them always go first, etc.—and then roll. And then acknowledge the outcome. And then look at and confirm where that conflict came from. Make sure that it's about players and situations... sorry, characters and situations, and not player conflict at the table.

I will say up top, we've had this situation before, in a situa— It is, it was like looking through the mirror brightly, in comparison to the being here of Twilight Mirage. We've never really got into detail about the situation, we're far enough away from it now that I feel comfortable doing that, but we had a full recording of an episode of Twilight Mirage where Keith was playing the Empath, and, as you know, Keith did not end up paying an Empath, Keith ended up playing a... I forget what the engineer, fixer, whatever name was for Gig in the end, but there was another... there was another name in the Veil for what Keith ended up playing as. Keith was the trans... whatever the Transmission one was what Gig was, whatever the person who could transmit stuff, I forget the name of that playbook. But, Keith and Art specifically had a moment in the first episode of Twilight Mirage, the canned episode of Twilight Mirage, in which the rules of the Empath, and Keith's... the way that Keith played the character led to a conflict between two major characters right away out the gate within the first 45 minutes of play, that escalated very quickly, that we did not have the rules to deescalate, or the process to deescalate with, and to address like in a way that kept the table cool. Like, it went.. It was a rough situation, I think both of them would say that. And a lot of that was built around... thankfully, the Veil has been updated at this point, but the Empath did not have any, ANY check for like, what consent looked like for using their abilities, or ways to talk about at the table using these abilities. And also I think the way that the Empath was written... If you wanted to use those abilities, some of the abilities required a... a resource called Flow, and so, as a gamer you want to get that ammo as quickly as possible, and it's very easy for a player who think about those things mechanically, and a player who thinks about them only... who thinks about them primarily mechanically, and a different player who's thinking about them primarily narratively, and because that player isn't counting that resource, of course they're only thinking about it narratively, and because the other player is thinking about it mechanically, of course they are thinking about it mechanically... for those players to come to a head, and... So, when we got to that point in the session, I was like: "Alright, let's see how it goes this time!" And so, one, I'm just really happy with how both Art and Keith handled that situation, both as collaborators, like storytelling collaborators, as players, and as friends. That was really really really like rewarding to talk through all of the options.

The second thing I want to talk about is kind of the subtext of Cole's question, which is... They write, you know, is there a situation in which Keith could've just said "No, this can't happen." And I think the answer is probably yes, and that answer from me ends up being mostly about safety, and about Keith saying "I don't want to pursue this line of scene. I don't want there to be a scene in which my character can be convinced of something." What I do want to emphasize—and so this is kind of Step 2: **Table dynamics: the whens, whys, and hows of "social" PvP**. I think a lot about... I'm gonna frame this with a story of my own past, which is...

[01:30:00]

In college, Art and I were very good at roleplaying games, by which I mean, as players we were able to play the table in a way that let our characters thrive, and be the leaders, and make decisions, because we had a developed sense of acting, and in retrospect, I wish I'd shut the fuck up. More importantly, I wish the GMs had given space for quieter players who were not going to ever deliver a monologue, to effect play through dice. Not everyone has had the same experiences that have trained them to be able to communicate what their character might be able to communicate. And for some reason, socially, there is this thing where what we do is we say "Combat I'm willing to be abstracted to dice. But I don't want social play to be abstracted in dice. If your character wants to shoot me—happy to roll the dice for it. But if they want to convince me that's different, because... because there's a one-to-one connection between me and my character," which no one would say, because they know there's not a one-to-one connection between you and your character. The question of consent is so complex and interesting here, because your character would not consent to being shot, but because of the types of games a lot of us grew up playing, we concede to will away the consent of being shot to the dice, but we don't wanna do that to "You've made up my mind", or "You've convinced me of an argument." And that is not me saying "And that's why we should always allow that sort of roll at the table."

But that is me prepping the second part of this, which is: we should always have that conversation, and say, "Okay, wait. Are we *sure* there is no circumstance in which this would happen?" I think that there are plenty of things to which that is the case, I think if Art had said, you know, "Sovereign Immunity says to Leap to give me the key to your mech, and go for a swim," Keith would be, everyone at the table would be in their right to say "I don't think it's a thing you can roll for. I don't think that's... I don't think anything you say is gonna get Leap to give you the key to this mech," right? But I do think it's worth pausing and saying "Wait. Is it possible that this person who is trained for eighty years (or however old Sovereign Immunity is), who has trained for that long in convincing people of things, in being advisor, and having a sort of social grace, and an ability that Art doesn't have, would be—and also who is imprisoned also—would have the ability to... And let's talk whether or not that's a possibility."

The thing I love about *Blades in the Dark* and *Forged in the Dark* games to begin with, is that there's a lot of space to... tinker with this. So, I'm going to look ahead really quick at... an example that is, sadly only available on reddit right now, there's a reddit post about this that's copied this text, this text is from John Harper, from an FAQ on *Blades in the Dark* that is gone, that FAQ used to be on Google+, Google+ is gone from this Earth. Thankfully, this one entry was already captured and put on reddit, but the link to it is dead, but I'll read it anyway.

"How do you handle PvP?"

You use action rolls pretty much as normal. The PC with initiative rolls an action. The PC whose resisting can roll to resist.

If there's a question of who's acting and who's resisting, you work it out from the fiction, or both parties can roll action.

It seems a bit complicated at first, but if you step through the results and apply them, it works out well.

Here is an example from our group: Brann's Cutter, Kobb, wanted the crew to do a particular job. The other PCs wanted to do something else. So, Kobb was like, "This isn't a fucking democracy. We're going after this cult. So gear up."

I asked the other players if this was a roll or not. Can Kobb even try to command them like that? They thought it was worth a roll." Which is them saying "I'm interested, I think it's possible that we could be convinced, but we would need to be convinced."

"So Kobb rolled Command (it was controlled, I think). The other PCs rolled Will to resist, and then decided to either go along with Kobb's command, or resist and pay stress. Everyone ended up deciding to go along with Kobb's orders."

Something that didn't happen here but could have, is we could have said: "Let Sovereign Immunity roll, and then let Leap and Millie resist the roll and still do what they want to do anyway, but now we've systematized that action in a way that plays into some of the core themes around stress, loyalty, the desire for freedom, etc.

The thing I love about Forged in the Dark games is that you could have that roll happen. In, in *Dungeon World* I cannot do the thing where I say, you know: "Hey..." Let's say Adaire wanted to convince Hella of something, and Adaire rolled some sort of roll to do... I mean, this move just doesn't exist anyway, like, Parlay sort of is this, but Parlay requires some sort of investment, some sort of leverage to begin with, but let's say that that happened. There is no... there's no place for like, Adaire rolls a 12 and succeeds, or 10+ and succeeds, and then Hella says "No." The thing about Forged in the Dark games is the player can say "no". The player can say: "You know what? No, I'm not gonna do it, I'm gonna resist this even if it stresses out to the point of a scar." And then *they* can decide what the scar is, and then *they* can decide whether or not the scar comes up in play, because it's on their table, it's their thing to play with. I can say: "Hey, does your scar come up?" or "Hey, I have an interesting idea for how your scar comes up." But I don't even get to play that card myself, they have to, they have to give me the go ahead.

And so, one of the things I love about Forged in the Dark is that it allows this style of social interaction between players where you can, you can be in that room. Like, imagine being Leap, imagine being Milli in that room, and this person who has seen the world for 70-80 years, who has information about the world that you do not have, and who has... and who has the techniques of speech that allow them to be naturally convincing. And they tell you something you're gonna do is a bad idea. We could've rolled that out. We could've rolled it out in such a way where it's not that... It's not that, you know, Sovereign Immunity gets a six, and that means that they have to do it. It means that they have to fucking take a roll to resist

it, and that is... maybe stresses them out. And then they get on their mechs and they leave! I would absolutely let them go that way.

Um. All of this is to say: the decision to say like “No, there shouldn’t be a roll.” should be arrived at when we’ve understood and talked through the entire PvP process, and the ways in which we can tell stories using dice and using systems. A lot of that is socially agreed upon when we say: “Yes, this is a system I want to play.” A lot of this is agreed upon when we say: “Hey, I want there to be interparty conflict.” A *lot* of it comes into play when we say: “Hey, this game has a system of drives, and that excites us, because we know that the characters will not get what they want until their drive clocks are filled.”

But at the same time there should always be that pause, and that’s why the first step in the rules as written are: Hey, take a breather. Talk through what’s at stake. Talk through whether this is a character conflict, or player conflict, and once it’s clear that it’s a character conflict, come up with how you want to resolve it.

That is a very mature way to play, and it can be really stressful for you, the player, and not just for the characters. But it’s so much more honest to me to go through that—and remember, one of the early thing is to portray the world honestly, to play honestly—it’s so much more honest for me to say: “This is a world in which characters are agents, but are agents that hit each other like... they bounce into each other, they have interaction.” than to say, firmly: “No one can roll dice to produce outcomes socially, but they can physically.” It opens up the door to a lot of complex and interesting dilemmas, because there are ways and there are lots of stories where you don’t want to give up character agency, and where questions of consent come up. Even without being an Empath, and even without going down really dark roads around trauma. Just like, “Hey, do you wanna get a burger?” Like, okay, do I roll dice? Like, if you wanted to roll dice to ask me to like... on a day when I was like really deep in my depression, I don’t want to go outside, you’ve asked me to go do that, and you get to roll dice to make me go do that... Oh, I don’t wanna!.. I have to resist that, I get that, I get where that comes from.

But as long as you have safety mechanisms at the table, and you have good table culture, I think it’s very... It can be really rewarding to open yourself up to that style of play, because people do exert influence over each other in stories, people do get guilted into doing things, do get pressured into doing things. And when you’re telling stories about people, those are... parts of the palette that you can play with. It shouldn’t only be... Because the alternative is to procedurally lean towards player interaction only being about shooting each other. Because that is the point at which we’re all hands up, “Oh yeah, okay, you should roll to shoot me, because there’s no other way to resolve this thing.” And I wanna make sure we don’t fall into that hole. And so I wanna make sure that we always have available to us all the different mechanisms of social, social resolution, social action resolution, that range from “Hey, no, not at all. I’m playing the X-Card. I don’t want to even do the scene.” to lines and... to veils where we say, “Hey, that can happen off screen, we can say abstractly what happens, we don’t need to see it.” to “Hey, actually, can we just talk through this and make a decision we’re all happy with based on where our characters are at, and then we can just play that out, or we don’t even need to play that out.” to “Um, okay, what about this dice roll, I

think that this would give me a range of options that I'd be happy with even if I don't know that I want to do it." to... all the way to someone who goes like "You know what? Yeah, roll it, let's see what happens. I'm totally, I'm totally, you know, indifferent to the outcome, 'cause they're all so interesting. Let's roll the dice and see what happens."

And all of those need to be on the table for those last few to really, like, live. But if you can make sure that the safety mechanism is there, and you're able to at least pause and have the full conversation, then those later things that bring the dice back in as a collaborator can really shine.

So, that is my long example, or long conversation around PvP, and this is why I decided to go an extra 20 or however many minutes, whatever I'm at now, is because I really wanted to get to this question and answer it.

So, that is, that is what we're gonna do today. I will save all the looking ahead stuff or me to do off mic. If you have questions for the next Drawing Maps episode, you can send the in to tipsatthetable@gmail.com. I just realised, I actually didn't need to... I don't need to convert anything in this audio, or I shouldn't have, 'cause I could have just run an Audacity during this, I didn't do that, so this is still gonna take a little bit before I get it out as an mp3, hopefully not too long. But...

I hope you enjoyed this, and I hope everyone has a great week.

If you have off tomorrow, I hope you use it well. Please remember that Martin Luther King Jr. was not the sort of deeply whitewashed and always, you know, hyper-peaceful, hyper-indifferent political leader that a lot of American pop-culture likes to present him as, and in fact was an important labor leader, someone who understood that one of the biggest problems facing any sort of movement of justice was the presence of people who preferred peace and comfort to change, and carry this forward with you this week if you carry anything forward at all.

I've been Austin Walker, you can find me on Twitter [@austin_walker](https://twitter.com/austin_walker), and as always you can find the show [@friends_table](https://twitter.com/friends_table), and you can support the show by going to friendsatthetable.cash. Let me know how you like this episode, and do that primarily by leaving comments over on the Patreon feed, if possible. You can also tweet at the show, if that helps. But, but leaving it on the Patreon feed would be the best.

So, thank you so much, I hope everyone has a great week. Bye-bye-bye!