

## Tips at the Table 43: Nightor and the Curtains (January 2021)

Transcriber: Mo mo#3373

[TIMESTAMP: 00:00:00]

ALI: Welcome to Tips at The Table for January 2021. Here we are in January 2021 recording this, and I'm very proud of all of us.

KEITH: Wow.

SYLVI: Oh my gosh, we did it!

ALI: We did it!

KEITH: It was a lot of Tips in December.

ALI: We did—yeah, we've—we powered through it and we're here and we're about to do that for all of the other Patreon tiers, sort of. Um, it's pretty steady pace for most of them so we'll go through more of that at the end and communicate it in separate ways—

KEITH: [overlapping] A lot of the Pusher stuff came out.

ALI: Yeah! I'm excited for the Pusher stuff. That's also, we just started the Partizan Pusher stuff and that's going to just keep going for the next 8 weeks, and I'm very excited for that. But today we're recording Tips at the Table! So welcome to Tips at the Table, an RPG podca—meh!—an RPG podcast focused on critical questions, hopefully smart questions, and fun interactions between good friends. Um, my name is Ali Acampora, I'm joined by Sylvia Clare.

SYLVI: Hi, I'm Sylvi. Uh, you can find me on twitter [@sylvisurfer](#) and uh, should I mention the show one or...

KEITH: Yeah!

SYLVI: Do you want to do that? I can do that after?

ALI: Yeah!

SYLVI: Then yeah, just [@friends\\_table](#) on twitter which, if you wanna see the tweet that was made on stream, you can go there right now. [ALI and JANINE laugh] Also I have an emoji podcast or something.

KEITH: That's what I thought you meant by 'the show one.'

SYLVI: Nah, I meant Friends at the Table. [ALI laughing]

KEITH: Okay.

ALI: [laughing] Where do we find Emojidrome?

SYLVI: It's [@emojidrome](#) or wherever you get your podcast.

ALI: Wonderful, thank you.

SYLVI: Mhm, thank you.

[ALI and SYLVI laugh]

ALI: And...[starts laughing again] Keith is also here, hi Keith.

KEITH: Hi, my name is Keith J Carberry. You can find me on Twitter [@KeithJCarberry](#) and you can find the Let's Plays that I do at [Youtube.com/Runbutton](#). We recorded—we sort of like, marathoned through 7 hours of Yakuza 0 recently and those are—

JANINE: Hell yeah!

KEITH: Those are coming out. We're not doing anymore but we have 6 episodes worth of Yakuza 0. I made Kylie play it finally. Um and uh, you know, no spoilers for the content that we recorded but she then went on to beat all of Yakuza 0 in about 3 days so.

[ALI laughs]

JANINE: *Yeah*, it's a good game!

KEITH: It's so good.

ALI: Yeah, I would—I would like to be playing Yakuza 0 for 7 hours at this moment.

JANINE: I would love to experience that game for the first time again.

ALI: Yeah.

JANINE: That would be good.

ALI: Um, that's Janine's voice, who's also joining us. Hi Janine!

JANINE: Hi, I'm [@bleatingheart](#) on Twitter. Um...Do not follow my twitter if you don't wanna see Hitman 3 Retweets because that's gonna be my week.

ALI: [laughs] I'm excited for Hitman 3.

KEITH: Oh yeah, me too.

JANINE: Yeah.

ALI: I haven't played Hitman 2 but I'm like ready to go.

KEITH: It's like 1 and a half days I think, right?

JANINE: Yeah, pretty much.

ALI: Ohh, that's so exciting!

KEITH: Yeah.

ALI: Congrats Janine! [laughs]

JANINE: Thank you. Very excited and terrified.

**[QUESTION 1: 00:03:13]**

ALI: [laughs] Um, let's jump into it here. Let's go to this first question from Angelica. I'll just go ahead and read it.

"Hi, I'm an artist and I do a lot of different questions"—ah, oop! [laughs] We do different questions.

KEITH: This is one question. Angelica, as far as we know, does one question. [ALI laughs]

ALI: Only the one question from Angelica today. Um.

"I do a lot of different projects and tend to work on a lot of different things at the same time." I added a word there. "Unfortunately, this means that halfway through a project, I'll sometimes lose interest or get distracted or get discouraged by something else. A lot of things get left unfinished. The work that you guys do is longform so my question is this: how do you keep yourself interested? I'm starting to feel like the real reason I get distracted is because I'm afraid of finishing things. How do you guys find the confidence to keep going even when you think the work isn't up to your standards?"

ALI: [pauses] I wasn't positive if this was the best question for us because...[JANINE laughs] I know there's probably a spectrum here of projects we put down. [SYLVI laughs] But you know, we do things and we have things that we work on and have to get done so, you know.

JANINE: I think a big part of this is, at least in the context of the podcast, is that there are so many of us that stopping is often not an option, you know?

KEITH: Yeah.

JANINE: Like it's, once—once we're in something it's like, "Well, we have to finish this because we just do." [ALI and KEITH laugh] Because there is no other way out but through. Um, in terms of like personal projects though, man, I wish I had an answer because it is always a mixture of whatever I'm telling myself at the moment that seems to kind of be working. The current mantra is, I saw an artist on twitter tweeted that the best advice they ever got was that everyone has a set amount of bad work in them that they have to get out and then after that it's good. So, I tend to, when I feel myself like losing interest because I'm specifically discouraged by what's happening and feel like I'm not gonna follow through, I'm thinking like well, if I get through this, then a better thing will come after, you know?

ALI: Yeah totally. I think when I was reading this question, part of the advice that I wanted to give is that like, I mean of course you want to follow through with things. It's disappointing when you start a project and you feel that you can't finish it but a lot of times when I'm in that place and I'm like, "Okay, I feel comfortable putting this down." Um, you know, the experience of getting through half of it is still a thing that you lived through and you know—[laughs]

JANINE: [overlapping] Yeah, that's real. It still counts.

ALI: —had and it informs the next project that you start or you know, if you go back to that specific hobby again so it's not like it's wasted time completely. Um—

JANINE: And you can always pick things up like after.

ALI: Yes.

JANINE: Sometimes you do absolutely just need to walk away from something for a bit.

ALI: Yeah. 100%. Another way that I try to life hack myself from like having too many things going on at once that I like don't do them anymore is that I make sure that I can only do a specific amount of things at once. Currently, I have a bunch of clay that when it arrived, I forgot that I had bought it [ALI, JANINE, and KEITH laugh] and some ingredients for—

KEITH: C-Clay?

ALI: Yeah, some clay like I had these—

JANINE: Air dry or like polymer?

ALI: It's polymer clay.

JANINE: Mmhm.

ALI: I watched some youtube videos on making potted plants and I have some like naked planters, um, right now. [laughs]

JANINE: Oh sure, yeah.

ALI: And I was like, "I wanna make my own pots instead of buying them." And I bought it and I haven't done that yet and I have some ingredients for like stuff that I wanna bake too and while I've been doing this I keep being like, "Oh, I wanted to start knitting again," and I'm not gonna buy those knitting needles until I finish one of those other things. Um, so trying to give yourself discipline in that way.

JANINE: Oh, I admire you.

[ALI and KEITH laugh]

JANINE: I admire your restraint tremendously.

ALI: Well, I'm doing my best so thank you. [SYLVI and ALI laugh]

SYLVI: I think—I—This kinda goes in the stuff that was said already but I think something to keep in mind with like, what we do is we do get breaks, like we have breaks in between recording stuff like there's um...

JANINE: That's a very good point.

KEITH: Sometimes big ones.

SYLVI: Yeah, sometimes big ones!

JANINE: Yeah.

SYLVI: Like we are on a break for something right now for the Patreon. Like yeah, Keith you were in that, I can bring that up without it being something no one here knows about.

KEITH: Yeah.

SYLVI: Um...but like—and that's helped a lot honestly, with that because I've been able to step away from it for a bit and like, when I have sort of related ideas or like feel motivated towards like doing stuff related to that, it feels a lot more natural and doesn't feel like I'm forcing myself to sit down and finish a thing. Um, which could help. I don't know but yeah.

ALI: Yeah, sometimes I do think there is some value in just like forcing yourself to get through it if it's like a small enough or insignificant enough project to do so. Um, or if it's like with the podcast sometimes I'll be like, "Okay, this podcast comes out once a week. There's only so much editing that I can do on it so at some point like, there are probably parts of it that could be better, but it also has to be complete and people will—9 times out of 10, the problems that I think are there when I listen to it a month later, people wouldn't have noticed, so it's like fine."

JANINE: Yeah.

ALI: Um anyway, Keith I think you were about to start talking there.

KEITH: Yeah, I uh...I mean there's different kinds of projects, right? And some of them like—I guess it's like, some projects take up space like physical space and some projects don't. Um and I sort of—it kind of—it tends to clutter sometimes but I think that's part of it. Part of the like—sometimes you just want to clean stuff up like, "Ah this has been out here, you gotta clean it up."

JANINE: Yeah.

KEITH: But one of the things that I've done in the past, it's worked for me is like if I'm doing a project that takes up space, as long as it keeps taking up space it's just a constant reminder to go finish it. I have sort of half built a guitar last year and there was a problem with it, so I took it apart and I have the pieces on my table and they've been there for two weeks and I haven't done it even though I know that I need to but it's on that table. Eventually I either need to do it or never use my table again. [everyone laughs] And uh...my only other thing is like you know, not everyone can choose every project that they've gotta do but it sounds like in the question...[reading] "I do a lot of different projects and tend to work on a lot of things at the same time," seems to me like that these are things that you're choosing to do. Um and uh, I think that a lot of the times, projects get done based on how well you pick them. Like, if I were to pick a project that was gonna take six weeks, I'm not finishing it. If a project is gonna take three days, I will absolutely finish it. You know? So that's...

JANINE: [overlapping] There's also...

KEITH: The beforehand of the project can sometimes be just as important in eventually getting finished as the follow through.

JANINE: Yeah, there's um...This is like, [laughs] so I started going to therapy for like the first time ever in the fall and it's been great, big fan! Big fan of therapy. I was a person who told people they should go to therapy before going to therapy myself and I'm glad I took my own advice. One of the first conversations I had with my therapist though, boiled down to me being really guilty about like, I start all these projects, I have all these grand ideas for myself and then I don't stick with them, or like I'll get halfway through them and then I'll drop them and basically...Basically explaining this as if it makes me a bad person, I think was the takeaway and the thing that she told me that was very helpful was like, maybe you were just not a person

who has one thing they focus on until it's done. Like maybe you are just not that kind of person, and that is a totally fine way to be. It doesn't like say anything about your character, it doesn't say anything about how talented you are or how untalented you are, anything like that. Maybe you're just a person who your attention tends to shift and the things you want to do with your attention shift with it. Like it's... You know, like pursuing your passion and putting things off to one side and then going with the thing you're actually interested in doing, following your intuition in that way isn't a bad thing or a bad way to be. It is just a lot of about like, what is your relationship to that? Is it getting in the way that you don't finish things or is it just a thing where you feel like you're supposed to finish things because that's like what a quote-on-quote... You know, that's what your template of what you should be is that you finish a project and then move on to another project and things like that. So, it might be worth considering that side of it as well. Like, are you being unkind to yourself or holding yourself to a standard that's kind of constructed.

[pause]

ALI: Yeah I definitely think that's worth saying because um, I mean it feels like jumping between projects in that way is like easier [laughs] than following through with one a lot of the time.

JANINE: Mmhm.

ALI: Um, so that's something that you feel more comfortable with then it's not the worst thing in the world. Um, the thing is that I guess we haven't dug into and I guess I don't have a bunch of, I don't have specific advice here, is like the fear of finishing things? You know, there's satisfaction in that moment too even if it's not 100% the thing that you sat down and said, "I'm going to do this thing, this is what it's going to look like. It's gonna be this way." Um so... I guess that's what I have to say on that. Um, you ready to move on?

KEITH: Yeah, I think so.

JANINE: I think so.

ALI: Cool. I, um, would like some help reading these questions and I don't like wanna call on people, so.

KEITH: Sure, I can read this one. That's fine.

ALI: [laughing] Thank you.

**[QUESTION 2: 00:14:45]**

KEITH: It's from Jose. [reading]

“Hi there, I have a question about retconning/revising at the table. A few times I’ve heard y’all say it’s cool to go back and change what was said at the table if necessary. I’m curious though about what we can consider necessary. Often while GMing, I’ll make up a consequence for a roll but then have a much more exciting idea right after. Sometimes even as I’m coming up with a consequence for the next roll. I always really wanna go back and revise to make sure a more dramatic or cool thing happens but usually quash the impulse as I’m wary of interrupting both the flow of the play and the player’s action in response to my original consequence. Any advice on how to decide when it’s appropriate to go back and revise what was said versus when it’s best just to let live and play be live play?”

[pause]

SYLVI: [thinking] Ugh..

KEITH: I have a sort of gut reaction to this if people don’t mind.

SYLVI: Yeah.

ALI: Yeah.

JANINE: Mmhm.

KEITH: Is that like...[sigh] Well, I think first of all, I think it’s, you know, if your friends are like wanting to hear out these new ideas. I don’t think there’s ever any harm in just being like, “Hey, what if we did something else instead?” And sort of gauging from there. Like, I don’t think um, I don’t think there’s anything wrong with that. I *will* say that if everyone is already reacting to a thing that’s happened, going back and changing it can potentially be a confusing thing to do. Like it’s one thing if there’s something that doesn’t feel like it makes sense or if something people aren’t like happy with but uh, if like—[pauses] if everyone has moved on and are now setting up new things to happen on top of the old thing, that feels like a tough time to go back and change it.

SYLVI: Yeah, I think like another...One, I agree but also I think like another, an easy like retcon to do is always just like if you think—If you have an idea for something that like, changes—like I think it depends on the scale of detail that you’re changing, I guess is what I mean. Like I think it’s mostly pretty harmless to say like, “Oh could I have like picked something...Oh I forgot to pick up something at a place,” but that’s like not like, a plot important thing, but like a thing that you could have seen your character doing and like your DM probably agrees or whatever. I don’t know. I’m making up scenarios in my head, it’s fine. [ALI laughs] Um...but what I mean is just like there’s—I wouldn’t be afraid to ask about smaller scale stuff just in general. I think that like it’s a very harmless sort of retcon, um, as long as you’re not like going crazy with it and then I think just like the way I try to sort of stick to things cause I—I a lot of the time wanna go, “Wait a



minute! Could I have done this cool thing instead?" is like, either try and find the core thing about that idea that excited me and bring it back in another way.

JANINE: Mmm.

ALI: Yeah.

SYLVI: Or just like...it's kind of, I don't know. This sounds shitty but you kinda just gotta get over it sometimes when that happens too.

JANINE: Yeah.

SYLVI: Like, I think a big thing about retconning is that like when you set up like a criteria of when it's okay to do it, you also need to be okay with throwing that criteria out and being like, "No, we should just stick to it." Um, and so like I don't know. I guess I would—I guess what I'm saying is, my general rule of thumb is if it's something that will add flavor but not drastically change the course of things, I will usually bring it up and if it's something that feels like a massive change to the direction of the session, I usually am just like, "No, we can keep going with what we're doing. What we're doing is fine."

JANINE: Yeah.

SYLVI: Because like what you said, people are usually excited about what things end up happening and like if they're not, you're going to have a conversation about getting people into it again and it might come up there. Yeah.

JANINE: I think from a player perspective, there is...For me, there is a line of like, is this going to involve a re-roll? Because if the answer is yes, then we're taking play back a few steps and like is it worth it? Is this even a thing I'm going to remember in a week or something. Like is this interaction that pivotal, or is it just a thing where I had a cool idea and didn't get to execute on it, and whatever, cool ideas are infinite. There will be more. [ALI laughs] From a GM perspective though, it's a bit different right? Because like, everyone at the table is reacting to something you've done. So when you wanna take that move back, you can't really in the same way. Like when you're a player, you can be like, "Oh actually, this roll I want to sneak around. In my last turn, I said I was going right. What if I was actually going left over the windowsill or something?" Like things like that, whatever. It's...I think it's very easy for the GM to be like, "Cool, that sounds way cooler to me. Let's go with that." But when you're GMing, doing stuff like that not only does it kind of slow things down and also kind of make things more confusing because you're changing like—You're changing what people are reacting to in a way that might become hard to track or keep track of in their heads but also just like, does it matter? Like, [sighs] a lot of that stuff just for your standard like, yeah it would be cooler if the dragon, you know, set the drapes on fire again. We're all just making up scenarios tonight.

SYLVI: Yeah! [ALI and KEITH laughs]

JANINE: It'd be cooler if the dragon set the drapes on fire rather than just doing a blast of fire at your...knight...at Nightor the Knight. [KEITH laughs]

ALI: [agreeing] Mm, mmhm.

JANINE: But...like does it matter? Like is that a big—

KEITH: [overlapping] We gotta play this season. [ALI and JANINE laugh]

JANINE: [laughing] Is that a big climatic moment or is that just like a thing that would be cool? Because again, you're going to have more cool ideas in the future. Is this an interaction that anyone at the table including you is actually going to get hung up on? Like are you going to be in a month being like, "Man, I wish that dragon had lit those drapes on fire," or will you have completely forgotten it because now the dragon is possessed by a griffin or...this is why I don't GM very often. But you know what I mean. [ALI laughs]

KEITH: And I, this is my impression, maybe people don't feel the way about this but like uh, the question being asked from the perspective from a GM. As a player, I almost feel like you have a little bit more like leeway in terms of like trying to figure out what you can and can't do, including how much wiggle room there is in maybe wanting to retcon something because it's like, I feel like it's part of the player thing to like test the waters on things and see what you can do and the GM goes like, "No, you can't do that because of the rules or because it's too much work or because that's not good," and so, I don't know. Maybe I'm wrong, maybe no one else feels this way but I almost feel like like the GM has so much control over other things that then the like, also is changing things after the fact seems like a...I don't know, it just seems like a player thing to me. I don't know why. It just feels like player. [ALI and then KEITH starts laughing]

JANINE: I mean sometimes I think it's necessary though, right? Like if there is an important moving piece that you forgot to take into account and it's like, "Oh shit it doesn't make sense that this person with"—I'm gonna stop making up scenarios because I'm embarrassing myself, but if it doesn't make sense that you neglected this one piece and you can't integrate it in, you know, in what happens since—

KEITH: [overlapping] Nightor can't put out the drapes because Nightor is afraid of fire.

JANINE: [laughs] Yeah, so you had Nightor put out the drapes then it's like "Oh shit, fuck, I gotta address that." Um, you know I think for the GM, it makes perfect sense if there's just like something that's really big and glaring or like again, going on the intuitive model, something that's going to really nag you, and something that's really really going to bother you or cause problems down the line or something that even already has caused a problem, and you wanna kinda roll it back and smooth things out. It's totally reasonable to want to retcon or redo things in that sense.

KEITH: [agreeing] Mm.

JANINE: I think it's just a matter of developing that sense for like when does it really matter and when is it just going to complicate things but not actually change the outcome, you know. Like if the thing you want to do is like add a backflip or something to an attack, well people are still gonna roll to defend. It doesn't really change too much so it's hard to like, it's hard to give a really good meaningful answer without knowing specific cases of what's bothering, um, of what's bothering this GM in terms of what they wanna redo but like, yeah, I think a lot of it is intuition. Just figuring out like what's the stuff that's really—that really matters and that is really worth changing and will really impact the direction of things and what's the stuff that is just style and flourish.

ALI: Yeah, I definitely like the advice we've been giving in terms of like, the priority here is the rhythm of the table versus like moment-to-moment changes is a good one and one that Jose seems to be following despite wanting to do otherwise but I—

JANINE: Asking this question proves it, right?

KEITH: Yeah.

ALI: Yeah.

JANINE: It proves, yeah, it's okay.

KEITH: Which is true for a lot of the questions that we get, I think.

JANINE: [agreeing] Mmhm!

ALI: Yeah, what was I saying? But yeah, I—I—I, yeah, I'm definitely— I'm sympathetic to this because I've definitely had the moments as like a player where I'm like, "When it's my turn...I'm gonna punch this guy and do this thing and yadda yadda," and then immediately as I'm thinking that, someone else does something else and it's like irrelevant and I'm like, "Damn!" And I get that like, there's that emotion being like, "It could've been cooler, it could have been!"

JANINE: Mmhm.

ALI: But like Janine said, there's still going to be, you know, infinite good ideas and cool ideas as you keep going so it's fine. Um, I also think like, and this is probably slightly bad advice but since it's coming from the GM side like, if there's really something there where you're like, "Oh, I think that this NPC or this faction person or you know, the person who is acting in this scene should have done this other thing."

JANINE: [overlapping] Nightor, please.

ALI: Yeah, Nightcore, sorry. [laughs] Should have done this other thing.

JANINE: Did you say Nightcore?! Not Nightcore!

SYLVI: Oh my god!

ALI: Wait—

KEITH: Nightcore is the genre.

[ALI and JANINE laugh]

SYLVI: Now we're talking.

ALI: Is it like, gore?

KEITH: Nightor?

SYLVI: Nightor?

JANINE: Nightor.

ALI: Nightor. Nightor. My bad, my bad. This is truly my bad. Um, if Nightor was there and you were like, "Damn, Nightor should've seen like a cool key behind the curtains and taken it." You can have those things move behind the scenes, right?

KEITH: Yeah.

JANINE: Yeah.

ALI: Like between sessions you can be like, 'Damn, that really should've happened and I'm going to have it come up in the beginning of the next session. That's going to be our set-up for the next scene.' So like, you shouldn't think of the ideas that you have there as ways to—you know, to a bunch of good ideas in a trashcan because there are ways you can think of like, oh damn, I really wanted Nightor to like cut that guy. [laughs] I'm just gonna keep saying things—[JANINE and SYLVI laugh]

SYLVI: I tried!

ALI: [still laughing] The—The next scene—

JANINE: We're building lore! We're building the universe.

SYLVI: Nightor seems kind of scary.

KEITH: Nightor the knight, he's afraid of fire. He won't put out the drapes. [ALI laughs]

SYLVI: Cuts people.

KEITH: [overlapping] And if he doesn't find the key in one room, he'll find it in the next.

JANINE: [overlapping] He's locked in an eternal battle with the dragon that's possessed by a griffin.

ALI: [laughs] But, yeah, if an NPC shows up again and you think to yourself, you know, "They should've said this really cool thing in this moment." Next time they're on screen, they can definitely say it.

JANINE: Yes!

KEITH: Yeah.

ALI: Or say something close to it or be cool in a cool way, you know. In terms of like when is retconning appropriate, capital-A appropriate, it's tough, I mean, I think Janine's advice here is best on being like you know, you have to trust your intuition if it's something that's really going to change the circumstances around the story versus just being something that's for flavor. Um, I'm a fan of like playing really loosey-goosey in this way or you know like [laughs] if it's really that important to you, even if it's not just something for the story, just do it because you're—I mean games are just conversations that you're having with your friends anyway and if you really wanna tell a group of your friends like, "Hey actually, I just want this scene to be slightly cooler," like you're allowed to do that.

KEITH: Yeah.

ALI: These people like you.

KEITH: You're always allowed to ask too like, what do you think about X?

ALI: [laughs] Yeah.

SYLVI: Yeah. Also, I know this is more just like adjacent to this question but in general, I wouldn't be afraid to ask for a retcon if something is like making you actively uncomfortable or anything like that.

JANINE: Oh yeah.

SYLVI: Like I think we—We had to do that at the beginning of Twilight Mirage with the like, empath character thing, and like it is sometimes a tough conversation but it's really worth having 'cause usually you end up fixing the problems with your game and are able to enjoy it more.

JANINE: I think again, that comes back to like developing a bit of foresight in terms of like, am I going to just keep hating this?

SYLVI: Yeah.

ALI: Yeah.

JANINE: Like is this going to—is this gonna bug me? This is like a superpower that you get if you're an incredibly anxious person I guess or something but like, is this going to be a thing where I wake up at 4 in the morning and I can't stop thinking about it because I should have fixed it and now we're 5 months deep and I can't do anything and it's infuriating like, being able to recognize that stuff is probably a skill but is very useful.

SYLVI: Yeah.

ALI: Yeah. Um, I guess the only other thing that I wanted to say is that the times where I definitely wouldn't retcon something, like unless it was like a specific X-card situation or a line drawn, I wouldn't want to retcon something that would like significantly change the outcome of a roll, um you know. Sometimes at some point, the dice just have to be what they are. There's an example in the Partizan episode that's going to come out this week actually, where like the roll that's about to happen is being discussed and Austin says to the player he's talking to like, "Do you want this promise from me that if this roll fails, this thing isn't going to happen?" And I feel like, sort of having those conversations beforehand will kinda keep from the aftereffect of being like, "Oh, I failed this roll and something really bad happened and now my player's uncomfortable," is a good way of doing that. Something I thought of when I read this question, but yeah otherwise, go with your gut, I guess.

[pause]

KEITH: Well it's official. That's our answer, go with your gut! [ALI laughs]

JANINE: Go with your gut, believe in yourself. Uh. Make the dragon light the drapes on fire and then Nightor will find the key that was hidden behind the drapes. [ALI laughs]

ALI: Next question, who wants to read it?

SYLVI: Uh, I can.

ALI: Yay, thank you!

SYLVI: This is the one from S Gates?

ALI: [confirming] Mmhm.

**[QUESTION 3: 00:31:45]**

SYLVI: Uh. [reading]

“I have a question about being less quiet in games. Do you have any tips on how to be a more outgoing player? My playstyle is often kind of introspective and sometimes in games with friends who have more bombastic styles, I feel like I get a little run over. I enjoy playing with these folks but I’d like to be able to hold my own more. I just don’t know how.”

SYLVI: Oh buddy.

JANINE: [sympathetically] Mm.

ALI: [chuckles] So this is another one I pulled that I don’t 100% know that I have the best way to articulate advice but I know that 3 of us got better at this over time [SYLVI laughs] and one of us has never had a problem with it. [laughs]

SYLVI: [still laughing, overlapping] That’s so mean!

KEITH: Which–Which one? [SYLVI and ALI laugh harder] Who? Sorry, am I missing some sort of cue here? Who are you talking about?

ALI: Keith, I would say that you’re a confident guy. Um...

KEITH: I’m at least a loud player.

JANINE: You have a lot of podcasting experience and we’re used to making space for your ideas and words.

KEITH: Mmhm.

ALI: Mmhm. And also had more tabletop experience than the three of us when we started Friends at the Table.

JANINE: Also extremely true.

KEITH: Yeah.

ALI: So Keith, you got any advice? [laughing]

KEITH: Oh well, I don't feel like this question is for me. I think it's for the three of you.

SYLVI: Yeah.

KEITH: Um...I mean I can just say maybe it's the opposite of the last one, don't go with your gut because your gut is too quiet.

[ALI laughs]

SYLVI: Like, kinda feels shitty to be like "give it time", but this is legit a thing that takes a lot of time to get good at. So I wouldn't beat yourself up if it takes a while to really come out of your shell. Um, like I think something that helped me was I made myself play, like I tried to do this with Ephrim, which is I made myself play a character who would by definition have to do a lot of talking. Um. [ALI laughs]

JANINE: Oh yeah.

SYLVI: And so like I kinda just like dove into the deep end, um, which can help a lot and also like you can still find those quiet moments for those characters. You don't need to constantly feel like you're at a ten or anything, but it definitely sort of—it feels like it incentivizes you to sort of speak up more and then like, I think a thing that helped with that too is that I had a character who really had like shit they did not agree with and shit they did agree with and if you can just argue with players—like in-character, not in a way that's not fun, but in a way that's like, "Well hold on, that doesn't go towards my motivations" or whatever. Like anything that can help with that, like anything that just helps you sort of stop thinking about of yourself as the player and just think more about what your character would do tends to help me with this problem, because then I'm just not overthinking things as much.

JANINE: Yeah. To that, I know I was going to say like similarly, be extremely clear about what your character's goals are, both with yourself and also with your GM because then you have kind of a roadmap of like you know, should I react? How strongly should I react to this thing that's happening? And your GM can also kind of guide things into a sort of situation where I mean, I would hope that they've also maybe noticed that you're one of the quieter players? So they could also maybe knowing where your character's priorities are and things like that, guide things in a direction that would allow you more space to react or would also you know, encourage the other players to be like, "Oh right, they have this whole thing about this situation. I wonder what they think." Like, keeping things like that you know, very much on the table in front of you can be helpful in a lot of different ways.

ALI: Yeah, for sure. Um, yeah, I feel like you know, it is a time thing. Especially with tabletop games where it's like you have the first session. You kind of have an idea of your character. You kind of have an idea of the other characters in your world, but you don't really know the parts that are like important to you or to the story or to the character in that way, and then you get 3 or



4 sessions in and you have a better roadmap of that stuff. So naturally, you're talking more because you have more opinions on these things. Um, I think really the truth of the matter is like when I've been in social situations having those problems, I know that like the ways that I've been able to integrate myself more or to speak up more is like if I'm about to start saying somebody—something and somebody else in the group notices that I've gotten talked over they'll be like, "Oh Ali, what were you saying?" Or the person who talked over me will be like, "Oh, excuse me." And if that's not like happening at your table 100% or, you know, if you're—if you know the people you're playing with, if you're close with your GM or if you have another, I don't wanna say that like, you know the person that you're closest to at the table, but you know there's gradients there all the time, to just be like, "Oh you know this is something that I sorta need help with." So if you can tell your GM like, "Hey, I feel like you know, I have these ideas for my character but I'm not able to act on them because I don't have the time for it." The GM can make the space to be like, "Okay, your character, what are you doing?" Um, I think that's part of the thing that makes Friends at the Table mesh really well because Austin takes the time to do that, but at the same time if it was just like me and Janine and some other people at a table, I would be like, "Yo, Janine. [SYLVI and ALI laughs] The last couple of sessions I haven't spoken up. If you notice that or something like that, maybe you can have my back in that regard if you see someone speaking up over me." Um, that's my like real true life advice, because you know you do—if it's something that you're frustrated with, you should feel comfortable leaning on people that way because it is a full conversation with other people and if you need the space, other people should also be giving it to you rather than you just being like, "Well, I'm just going to start talking and if I talk over other people, I'm just gonna do it." Which is definitely, I think it is a decision sometimes I've made. Maybe not consciously but you know.

JANINE: I have.

SYLVI: [overlapping] Yeah.

JANINE: I've gone to sleep trying to make myself—it's tough, right? 'Cause I grew up very...um, I grew up very talkative but then became aware that I interrupted people a lot. So then I stopped doing that and then as I got into podcasting more, was like, "I need to learn how to interrupt people more again." [ALI laughs] And like, I think I've swung a bit too far in the other direction. It's a balancing act all of the time but I think there is also something to be said to—you know, a lot of the times I think when I felt—Um, when I felt like I was getting run over, it was because I felt like other people were responding to things faster than me and I was just sitting there with this energy of like, "I want to do something but I don't really know what. But I should do something, but everyone else is doing all this other stuff and the situation is changing too fast for me to respond." So you know, every now and then a thing that is helpful in that sense is just saying, "Hey, wait wait wait wait. Like I wanna—There's something, I wanna do something here. I maybe need like a little bit of help figuring out what the thing I would do is." Like, just being willing to interrupt and be like, "I really really want to do something here. I'm struggling a little bit though." Um, and you know, if the chemistry at your table is good, the people that you're playing with should want to help you with that, should want to help you figure that out and do something cool with your character that everyone's excited about and you know, can bounce off of, but that also

takes a little bit of practice to, you know, get the confidence for and also be used to how other people respond and the rhythm of the table and um, you know. It's a little scary.

ALI: Yeah, for sure. [pause, then laughs] Keith, any final words or should we move on?

KEITH: Yeah, I uh...I feel like—so I don't think there are not a lot of situations in life, in most people's daily lives where the kind of energy that people can bring to a tabletop game is typical. Like, usually you don't have to like fight for uh—to like get your voice heard, because even if you are a quieter person, because there's not like 4 other people rapid fire throwing out ideas over each other all the time. Um, but I think you know, along with all the other advice, my advice is that like, it sometimes can feel weird to do the tabletop thing because it's not really how life typically is. It is a place that is like more suited to being louder if that's the energy of the table and so like, I guess I'm just saying it's not weird to feel uncomfortable being loud and boisterous in a tabletop game because that's not how real life is but you should try it, it's fun. [ALI giggles] You should try it in a tabletop game if you can. You should give it a shot. No one will think it's weird because they're all already all doing it. [JANINE and ALI laugh] Um, so yeah. Give it a shot.

ALI: That's a good point. [laughs] Um, okay next question. Uh...

JANINE: I can read it.

ALI: Okay, perfect.

#### **[QUESTION 4: 00:41:59]**

JANINE: Um, this is from Tenderfoot. [reading]

"I'm starting a new tabletop game with some friends and family at the end of this week. It's in a system that is entirely new to me, Scum and Villainy, aside from listening to a few actual plays. What advice do you have to a GM who is starting a new game with a new group for the first session?"

JANINE: Uh, set your expectations and then lower them slightly in terms of how far you're gonna get. [ALI giggles]

SYLVI: Yeah.

ALI: Uh-huh.

JANINE: Or even set your expectations and cut them in half. Like, maybe this is just like podcaster advice but it feels like general advice to me of like just give yourself a lot of time for people to get into the skin of their characters, and to figure all of that stuff out, and to actually get things rolling 'cause like the first session, the first few sessions are probably going to be a lot

of figuring stuff out and like finding the rhythm and finding out—Not just how the system works but how the system's going to work for you and your group.

[pause]

ALI: Yeah, 100%.

SYLVI: Yeah.

KEITH: Mmhm.

ALI: Oh Sylvi go ahead.

SYLVI: I think—oh I was just gonna say, I think we, like. [sigh] I think to keep in mind because I feel like when it's like new system stuff, people tend to go towards like, "Oh yeah, give the—the players need a lot of time." But the GM, you're going to need like time to figure shit out and if you're just upfront at the beginning of your session like, "Hey, we might need to pause now and then just 'cause I'm—This is new to me and I wanna make sure we're doing it right." Like, I think that would take a lot of stress off of you.

JANINE: Mmhm.

SYLVI: Especially because you're saying this is like friends and family. I'm assuming these are people you know pretty well. I think that like, it's like more than reasonable to just upfront be like, "This is gonna—it might be a little choppy the first time but it'll hopefully become easier as we all get used to it."

ALI: Yeah, that first session isn't going to set the tone for the rest of the game forever, right?

SYLVI: Mmhm.

ALI: Like there might be parts that—

JANINE: It's a pilot episode.

ALI: Yeah, yeah yeah yeah.

JANINE: Like pilot episodes are often *rough as hell*. [ALI laughs] Actors change, stuff happens.

ALI: Yeah, 100%. This is also why I like just sitting down and doing character building stuff as the first session or the first time like y'all sit down. Just to be like, "Hey, what are we actually doing? What are we actually thinking about in this moment? What moves are we taking and what mechanics do we have to talk about right now as a group, before we start talking about what's actually happening in the space? Um. [sighs] I...Not really...I'm not really much of a GM,

I—I introduced a bunch of games to a couple of friends of mine and then sort of ran Twelve Candles sort of for people.

JANINE: You also facilitated Shooting the Moon for us like, I know that game is technically GMless but also you—I relistened to that thing 2 times now for various reasons and you were very much in that role so don't sell yourself short. [ALI laughs]

ALI: Well, I also ran Shooting the Moon and um, [laughs] in situations like that, I found it helpful to...Because you're sort of in the captain's chair in that way, sort of guide people as best you can beforehand either by being like—I mean you've already decided on a game with these people but I, in cases like that I've been like, "Here's the game that we're playing. Here's sort of the basic mechanic in terms of how decisions are made and who gets to make them when." Twelve Candles has that whole thing where it's like, if the players succeed, they get to talk about what happened and if the GM succeeds, they get to talk about what happens and I think explaining that upfront makes sense. With Scum and Villainy, you would wanna, you know, copy and paste the different positionings and things of that nature. Just so before they even think about their characters, they sort of know some of that stuff. But...yeah, I just—[laughs] I feel like the first session just take it easy, take your time, um, yeah.

KEITH: Uh, I think it's worth knowing like, as best you can, knowing the scope of what is going to go on in that first episode. Episodes...Session. [ALI laughs] And like, knowing the relevant rules really well. Like you might not get into a big battle or something in a first session. Maybe you will or a small one or something, but like, you know, knowing what it's going—what the game says it's going to be like, to like talk to people and figure things out about a town or wherever. Like, That stuff is going to be really important in a first episode because it's going to be a bunch of people trying to figure out what is happening here in this place and that can go a long way to smoothing things out. Like the amount of time and, um—the amount of time and the impression that they can have on players when you are starting a game to like to have answers to questions about like what's is gonna—what's happening here, like how do we do this without having to dig into the book. Like if you have to dig into the book, it's fine but you could save 15, 30 minutes on a first session if you are—you know, if you, ahead of time, are able to piece out what things you might need to know and have them ready. That's my real advice for this.

ALI: Yeah, for sure. It's definitely tough for the GM and it's, you know, I sometimes think of—[laughs] There are times in my life when I think to myself, "Past Ali really came through for me right here. The Ali from 20 minutes ago or 2 days or 3 days ago really set me up for success in this way." And there are ways you can think of this as, "Okay, when I sit down to do this, what are the ways that I can help myself?" Is it copying and pasting a bunch of specific things from the book that I know that I'm gonna reference back to in a google doc so I can have it right away? Is it setting a timer on my phone when we sit down to play so I know that we're taking a break 2 hours in? Is it, you know, making sure I ask one of the players beforehand which move that they wanted to take so when we get to the thing, we know what we're doing, yadda yadda? So good luck, I hope y'all have fun. Scum and Villainy is a really good game.

JANINE: [agreeing] Mmhm.

KEITH: Mmhm.

ALI: Um, ready to move on?

KEITH: Sure. Ali, do you wanna read this one or do you want me to?

ALI: Uh, if you could, that would be great. Thank you.

**[QUESTION 5: 00:49:20]**

KEITH: [clears throat] Mal asks:

“My group recently finished a campaign and we thought that all of the characters found satisfying conclusions to their own narrative arcs and that the campaign as a whole was wrapped up really nicely. However, the things that the characters did over the course of the campaign could have huge interesting implications in its canon. Think virtually anything that happened at the end of Twilight Mirage but especially regarding divines. Although we took a little time to sum up at the end, there are some incredible doors open to new experiences in that universe just laying around and we all would return to that place—we all *want* to return to that place. We have made a lot of Guaranteed Events style content. You receive plenty of questions on how to Bluff City a campaign but how do you Twilight Mirage or Partizan one? Where the rules and themes may not change, but the world advances significantly. Barrage of other questions about that to answer at your discretion: 1, is Microscope a good starting point to establish historical progression? And 2, if we haven’t fully emotionally disengaged yet—what if we haven’t fully emotionally disengaged yet? Related, how do we reject the urge to yank in a bunch of poorly fitting callback elements?”

ALI: Um, I thought that this would be an interesting one to think about now that we’re saying goodbye to Partizan.

KEITH: Mmhm.

ALI: Sort of thinking about the next season of Partizan, even though it’s not a time gap like described here. Um, because yeah, it was fun to do one—it’s definitely a lot to consider. [laughs] I will admit here into a microphone that Austin did do a lot of the heavy lifting on his end. So perhaps we’ll have him do a short answer on this question sometime but I mean from a character perspective and in terms of being attached to the world still, I think we can still speak on that. Yeah, I don’t know. I—[laughs]

JANINE: I mean you know what Austin did, right? Like this is a conversation we had. The conversation we had about Partizan season 2 was like, what do people wanna do?

KEITH: Mmhm.

ALI: Yeah.

JANINE: Like, do we wanna follow up? Do we wanna have somewhere to go? Do we want to wrap a lot of stuff up here? Do people wanna pick up characters? Do people wanna pick up new characters? Like, that's a conversation to have specifically and explicitly. And if everyone's on the same page, great. If everyone's not on the same page, that's a thing to take into account. But like, that's shit you gotta talk about because there are some people who are gonna say, "The thing I want is to just be in a completely different place and then as we play to maybe pull in those loose ends and do shit with them that way." And there'll be other people who say like, "No, I wanna play my character. I wanna finish that. Like, I wanna pick up again and spin it in a different direction and you know, do all of that stuff." That's just a conversation that has to happen where everyone puts their wants on the table.

ALI: Yeah, 100%. Um. [pauses]

SYLVI: I think like, just to answer the Microscope thing really quick. I think it is a fantastic game for that, especially if you are trying to do a sort of bigger scale thing like we did going from Twilight Mirage to Partizan. You can cover like smaller like amounts of time but um, if you wanna sorta make it feel like a familiar world but like time has passed and things have changed, playing stuff out in Microscope I think could really help with that. Um, there's other like worldbuilding games but most of the ones I can think of are on a much smaller scale like Quiet Year, stuff like that. But uh, Microscope is definitely a good starting point for that one. I also think that it's a good way to sort of get out the like urge to do callbacks because you can do things that have happened in the like direct aftermath of your campaign and they'll make sense to be mentioned and referred to, without it feeling like you're just like doing the same thing again. And usually or like—I don't know, I feel this way about the game. It helps come up with just different directions that you didn't really see coming for your campaign. Like the whole progression thing that Dre came up with when we did that on the Road to Partizan. [ALI laughs] Like, nobody planned that and it became a really cool thing! So like, I think it's a good way to sort of bridge that gap because then you have some fun new ideas to play with and change your old ideas in a way that it doesn't just feel like you're recycling stuff. Um, cause that's the best way to avoid a cheap callback is to make a plot relevant callback instead. [ALI laughs again]

JANINE: Mmhm.

ALI: Yeah for sure. Um, I also think Microsoft is a good fit for this because it does give you the—

JANINE: You said Microsoft.

ALI: [makes noise]

[SYLVI and JANINE laughs]

KEITH: Of course Ali thinks that M\$ would be a good fit.

ALI: I think that you and your friend should go download Halo 2 and then play out the rest of your campaign in it. [KEITH and SYLVI laugh]

KEITH: Oh nevermind, yeah I'm back on board. Download Halo 2. Just play Halo 2 instead.

[ALI, SYLVI, and KEITH keep laughing]

JANINE: Mmhm.

SYLVI: Season 7 is just us playing Halo 2. [ALI laughs harder]

KEITH: Oh god.

SYLVI: Sorry to give it away.

KEITH: What a great—yeah, Season 7 is we're doing a Halo 2 Let's Play channel.

ALI: [quietly] Yes. Yes.

KEITH: Just do that.

ALI: That's what we're doing, we're announcing it right now. [SYLVI laughs] Thank you for your support all of this time on this actual play podcast.

KEITH: I'm going to teach everyone how to be XR and double shot.

ALI: [laughs] I'm so excited to roleplay with my Halo character in Halo 2. Um, the Master—What are they called if they're not Master Chiefs?

KEITH: John-117.

[ALI laughs]

SYLVI: Spartans, right?

ALI: 'Cause you play multiplayer and there's other Master Chiefs, right?

KEITH: Oh.

ALI: Everyone is their own Master Chief, right?

KEITH: I believe that Bungie's answer for that in the day is that yes, these are all just Master Chief. [laughs] Like they were just like, "Yeah, it's just that one. It's just him a bunch."

SYLVI: Love that!

KEITH: Which is, I think, I think—Actually, that might have been their answer for why are there—who are the other 3 Spartans when you play 4-player co-op?

ALI: [overlapping] Spartans?

KEITH: And it was just like, "Oh, they're all just Master Chief." Which to me carries over into the multiplayer. That's my opinion.

ALI: [laughing] This is so interesting. It's just all Master Chief hunting down other Master Chiefs that are all the one Master Chief.

KEITH: Yeah.

SYLVI: That's kind of fucked up.

KEITH: It is kinda fucked up.

SYLVI: Kinda harsh.

KEITH: Well, in Halo 2, you can be an elite. So you could be an elite.

ALI: [still laughing] Okay, okay. Well, yeah, look forward to my—

KEITH: That's what we'll do, we'll have two, we'll have two sides.

JANINE: Do those have a special name?

KEITH: One will be the Elite side and one will be the Master Chief side.

SYLVI: [overlapping] Oh my god.

JANINE: Mmm. Mmhm.

KEITH: We're bringing Machinima back.

ALI: I think that Microscope is a good fit for what you're describing especially because of the sort of tender feelings about the campaign. The fact that you can sort of zoom really into specific moments or specific factions and then also sort of zoom out over different time scales feels like



it would be good for your table. Um. [pauses, sighs] I mean, I don't know how to stop the urge from having a bunch of poorly fitting callbacks. I think that if it's something you're doing for fun with your friends that you care about and like, it doesn't matter if they're poorly fitting if you like it and enjoy talking about it.

KEITH: Yeah, you're allowed to be more cringe in real life than you are online so it's fine.

ALI: Yeah.

KEITH: No one's gonna, no one's gonna like be weird on twitter about it.

ALI: [laughs] That's true.

JANINE: [doubtful] I don't know if you can promise that.

[ALI and KEITH laugh]

KEITH: They'll just—They'll find a way to listen. Um, yeah. I think not to discount how tough it is to make a sequel to something but a lot of the ways of doing this is just to do it. I mean you know the world and you know the things that happened that—the doors are open to new experiences in that universe just lying around that you all want to return to, and so you just have to do—make a new season that takes place then. [ALI laughs] I don't know that there's a formula to it because every campaign is gonna be different and so you've just gotta like take all the stuff everyone likes—I guess what Janine said at the beginning like, talk to everybody, figure out what you don't want—people don't want to be forgotten, and then try and figure out what follows from that after a thousand years or however many years. 20. 4.

JANINE: Even like, even just picking like what are the, you know, three things that we think are the most interesting and then finding ways to incorporate those in ways that feel natural and let you pursue those ideas without, you know. You don't have to answer every question and a lot of the time, things are a lot more satisfying when you don't because you get to... You know, you get to have those thoughts of like, "Oh is this related to that?" And like, maybe it's not but it's kind of fun to think about it. Like it's fun to have that—to have that curiosity and that interest in things that like may be totally unrelated, maybe not. So narrowing the focus might also be helpful. if there's a thing that you're just dying to solve or to see more of, then... But I guess that's also like having that talk, you know? Not worrying about the game system so much as like asking everyone like what is it here that we're most interested in following?

[01:00:05]

ALI: Yeah and in terms of narrowing the focus, I think like something important in accomplishing the thing that you want to accomplish which is like, how do we take this event that we all still feel strongly about and like see how it goes through the world, is like taking the time to think of like, really how do the people of the world think about these actions? How do the people who would

make the decisions think about these actions? And then because you know that there's going to be time there, trying to separate reactions from like how those emotions would go forward. Like if you have the leader of a faction who's like, "I think this sucked." [laughs] We're not necessarily going to see that faction in 200 years, you know, starting a war or really acting on that person's opinion but you can make the assumption that like oh, that person resigned. Here's how that faction would've turned right instead of left or um, you know, if they had started building their defenses in X way, in 300 years they have this completely different reputation. Yadda yadda yadda. Um, but like, I think that the—[laughs] especially in doing—I'm thinking of, we had a conversation the other day where Austin was like describing a thing that we would do that would have a big time jump and I was like, "I couldn't do that because I'm too much of a slice of life person and I would hate it." And knowing that that's my impulse and that's like the strength of like I guess how I think of characters, the way that I would keep myself from falling into that pitfall is being like, "Ok, I know. I really know what my character would think of when they wake up the next day after the finale but how does that—how is that the first domino in this big thing that's going to tumble into a billion years into the future instead of me just thinking about that next morning?" So, set your sails that way and good luck. This sounds really fun, so.

KEITH: Yeah.

JANINE: Mmhm.

#### **[QUESTION 6: 1:02:20]**

ALI: Have fun doing it, that's the most important part. Anyway, here we go on to our last question. From Juliet, I'll take this one. [clears throat, reading] "What do you think about games that feature dice and cards as a primary effector of storytelling such as Power—" [laughs loudly] I was looking at these letters and I was like, wait, I should know what they mean and say them in the right way. [JANINE laughs]

JANINE: Powered by the Apocalypse.

ALI: [slowly] Powered by the Apocalypse...

JANINE: Forged in the Dark...

ALI: [reading] "Forged in the Dark..." [laughs] Most games played on actual plays. Compared to games where the primary non-deterministic features are just other people's roleplaying and choices. Games like Microscope, Kingdom, Good Society, some of the Live at the Table and the Road to Partizan games."

ALI: [pauses] How do we feel? I like them both. [laughs]

KEITH: Yeah, I also like them both.

JANINE: Yeah, I think—I think the ideal for me is like a combination of the two.

KEITH: [agreeing] Mmhm.

JANINE: Like, the Good Society gets mentioned here and the Good Society *has* cards that you use for pretty, you know, not for like the whole length of it but for some pretty significant set-up, there is an element of just like random who you were drawing from the cards and I really like that. I really like that set-up—it's kind of like, you know, that classic when you're setting up a character sheet and you roll 5 numbers and you get to assign those numbers to something. Like that's, that's fun because it has both. It has that random chance but it also has that sort of touch of authorship of that like, I'm telling my story here and an element of it is random and an element of it is luck. Like, that's also one of the things that I like about the way that we tend to run games is that like even when chance is a big factor, there are cases that you can make to Austin where he is inclined to just be like, "That's a sick idea." [ALI giggles] Like, it's not unheard of, you have to make a good case depending on the game but like—or, you know, when we're playing Dungeon World and it's like, sometimes there are just things where there's no reason your character would fail at it so just give it to the player like.

ALI: Yeah.

JANINE: I think the best—the best, like the sweet spot whether the game actually has it written in or not is a combination of the two, where like you combine those random elements but also just that GM fiat. That like desire to tell a good story with your friends and find a good spot there between them.

[pause]

ALI: Yeah for sure—

KEITH: I played at a table where the GM's version of GM fiat was that if he thought your character was being annoying, he could just punish them for no reason.

ALI: Pfft! [laughs]

SYLVI: *Jesus*.

JANINE: Cool. Cool of you to out me like that, Keith. Nah it's—[everyone laughs]

ALI: What kind of things were annoying? Did you see this—this—this come up?

KEITH: Uh, I can't remember. I, I lost—

JANINE: Is it just stuff like going down the wrong hall or like, making a joke instead of swinging your sword?

KEITH: Um. I don't know, I can't remember...

JANINE: [overlapping] Or not taking Nightor seriously? [ALI giggles]

KEITH: I can't remember if this ever came up but he had like a—He had like a full 2 pages or, maybe it was, maybe it was not that long but—

ALI: Whoa.

KEITH: Of these 4 different things that he had that were different forms of punishment for different things that you could do wrong as a player.

ALI: [shocked] What?!

KEITH: Including death. One of them was just that he would kill your character. [laughs]

ALI: Whaaat?

JANINE: Oh, I thought you were saying that one of the things you could do wrong was death and then you would get punished and I was like, "How?!"

ALI: [overlapping with JANINE] Yes. [laughs]

KEITH: [overlapping] Oh, sorry. [laughs] So, it's wild out there. Tabletop games is wild.

SYLVI: Yeah.

KEITH: You'll just get a—you'll just get a bad GM.

JANINE: That sucks.

[ALI still laughing]

JANINE: A whiff as a threat.

KEITH: Yeah.

JANINE: If you do something I don't like, ooh boy! You're gonna get a wooden spoon to the backside like, [KEITH and ALI laugh] this is—that's a weird way to manage a table.

KEITH: It is extremely weird, yeah.

ALI: Yeah! I'm so up for like openness and preparedness and like handing out google docs to your friends but the idea of being like, "Hey everybody. Here's the syllabus for our game and here's the 4 pages of shit that you're going to do that's going to annoy me."

JANINE: "These are class rules," taps blackboard.

[ALI laughs]

JANINE: No gum—

SYLVI: Hey everybody, I'm really excited for our first session. I hope we have fun. [claps hands] Do not anger me or I will smite you. [ALI and KEITH laugh] Alright, great!

KEITH: That's how they are, that's how GMs are or that's how they were.

JANINE: Pretentious pyne will be pages 1 through 50 of the monster manual.

SYLVI: When people were talking about an old-school revival, they were talking about the Old Testament. [KEITH and ALI laugh]

ALI: [keeps laughing] Um...yeah, I mean in reflection of this question like, I like both of these systems. I don't know that I would say that this is like a firm binary in systems that, you know, games tend to do one or the other, but there's definitely, you know, games lean either way. Um, I know that a—um, a poor quality that I sometimes have is that I just won't want to make a decision even though I have to and I do sometimes feel more comfortable in games that have dice in that way where it's like, okay. I've said the thing that I wanna do and I'm gonna let this dice tell me what happens. Where sometimes in Kingdom or like The Quiet Year or things like that, it'll be my turn and I'll have to say something and I'll just feel like [whimpering sounds] "But I don't wanna...I can't think of anything." [laughs] And also I either have two good ideas and I just wish that—I wish I didn't have to be the one to decide between them. So something with guard rails definitely helps in that way. Um, but I also came from the like, textual playing background where there were no rules ever. There was no dice ever. If I wanted to have a thing happen, I would just say that it would happen and it would and I wouldn't have to worry about what anybody else says. So I like playing like that too.

JANINE: And that really cuts to the heart of it too, right? Which like, that only works when you know the person that you're writing with and you trust them.

ALI: Yeah.

JANINE: And they know you and trust you, because they can then trust that you're not going to do something that violates the story they're trying to tell with their character. [ALI: Yeah.] And with tabletop games where it is all just this sort of shared storytelling and the chance element,

the like, you know, particular restraint offered by rules is less—it can go really bad if you’re playing with people who have different goals than you. Like again—we’ll explain shortly why I keep bringing up the Good Society, but in Good Society there is a very specific part of the set-up where it is like, are you playing a romcom? Are you playing drama? Are you playing farce? And it specifically says like if you’re playing with people who just kinda wanna have fun and be silly and goofy, you’re probably gonna wanna go with farce. If you’re playing with people who want really serious stuff happening, you’re probably gonna wanna go with drama. Like, and there are mechanics in place for like if something happens that you think really diverges from the tone that you established at the beginning then you can kind of roll things back and say, “Well, okay. This might be taking us in a direction that we kinda didn’t set out on so how do we course correct?” Um, and it’s really important for everyone to be on that page because if you have one person who is just trying to do like a comedy of errors and everyone else is telling these like heart-wrenching stories about, you know, different stuff. Like, it’s going to be hard to play that game out in a way that people are happy with. Um, you know. Same with text RP. Same with storytelling games. like it’s a lot about trust.

ALI: Yeah, 100%. Not that that isn’t there with dice games, and especially with dice games where it’s like, um—

JANINE: Yeah, yeah.

ALI: You know, when things get bad, you know exactly when they’re getting bad and now it’s the time to try that and—

JANINE: There’s still interpretation, right? There’s still narrative interpretation that’s always gonna be the thing of like, you have to trust your GM. Your GM has to trust you.

ALI: Yeah. Um, any other thoughts here or? We good?

SYLVI: Yeah.

ALI: Okay, yay! Well, that was our last question for tonight. Moving on to the next slide here to say, speaking of Good Society. [JANINE and ALI laugh] Janine, do you wanna do the honors here? Hi.

JANINE: Yeah, so we’re going to be releasing—I think the plan is to do um, a sort of pre-taped but live stream of a few sessions of Good Society that we pre-recorded and we basically played them over the holiday break. It was like um, it was—um, sorry, I was facilitating and our players for those games were Ali, Jack, and Austin. So we pre-recorded, just because I was too scared to do an actual live. [laughs] So we’re going to be releasing those soonish. The timeline’s still a little bit shaky because we have to finish some stuff up to prepare them to actually put out that way but um, I’m really excited about them. It was really fun to play that kind of game. I backed Good Society on Kickstarter and have been dying to play it ever since it came out so. That was really—that was fun.

ALI: Yeah, I had a great time. I'm excited for people to listen to it because I had a lot of fun. Janine, you did a tremendous job. [laughs] I was so lost but so good.

JANINE: Thank you. My palms were sweating so much the entire time.

ALI: It was very good. We should say that it's also set in the Shooting the Moon town which is very exciting, our fun holiday game. So it's a delight, I think you're going to like it.

JANINE: Mmhm.

ALI: But yeah, there were parts of that game that I was so confused on and would not have gotten through if you hadn't [laughing] been so good at facilitating. So thank you!

JANINE: Thank you!

ALI: [giggling] So yeah, that's going to be three sessions and also speaking of Live at the Table, we kind of have a livestream of Quest penciled in for this Friday. It's still a little bit of a question mark if that's going to happen for sure, but if you're watching this and you're free on Friday, look out for that post potentially. And yeah, that'll get us close to caught up to Live at the Table with all of those. [JANINE laughs] Just some other updates on Patreon stuff, if you [inhales deeply] if you supported us in April 2020–2020, yes, for the Partizan postcards, you should have gotten an email from me tonight about how those are going to go out soon, I should be sending those out on Monday. If you supported us in May 2020 for the Partizan postcards, you should have gotten a Patreon message from me telling you that I'm about to email you later so [laughs] look out for that. There's like an 85% chance that I accidentally sent that message to May 2019 people and not May 2020 so if you're listening to this and you're confused by that message or you're listening to this and you supported us in May and did not get that message. It's all good. The gist of it is if you go to [Patreon.com/profile/settings](https://Patreon.com/profile/settings), just make sure your address is correct there. If it's correct there right now, it'll be correct when I download it when I get around to it. So if everybody who is owed a postcard could just log into Patreon and do that for me please, it would be a huge help. But I will—When those postcards are about to be sent out, I always send out an email that's like, “Hey, do you want me to hold it for you? Has your address changed? Yadda yadda yadda.” So all of those are still going to happen but if it's correct right now, it won't have to be fixed later so thank you. But yeah, we're continuing with that. We stopped with the postcard stuff a little bit because mail in the United States was really weird and scary and I did not want to put all of our beautiful valuable postcards through a flat mailing sorting machine in Southern California before the elections.

KEITH: It's better now. It's still weird though. I bought some coffee and it's been in Providence since the 15th.

ALI: Oh, yeah, it's the holidays. It is what it is.

KEITH: It's not really the holidays right now!

ALI: But...the things that were sent in December [KEITH: Yeah, yeah.] that were still there are probably still there just getting housed so it's kind of a first in, first out situation.

JANINE: The other issue is that mail does not go to all international countries right now, so.

ALI: Yeah, there's that too.

JANINE: Unless you pay like 25 bucks or weird things like that. So that's not great.

ALI: Yeah, yeah. Yep. But yeah, for individuals who are owed things, those emails will be coming and we can cross that bridge there. But yeah, I was between addresses for a little bit this time of the year. I was separated from the postcards for a little bit but now reunited and they will go home to where they belong. So thank you everybody for your patience with that and the pusher stuff is still coming out. Um. Clapcast, oh my god. I'm-[laughs]

KEITH: There's one more.

ALI: The--yeah, I don't think that there's going to be--I'm not sure if I'm doing like a big Partizan finale Clapcast the way that I have for other big 7 people recording things, but I'm basically just sitting on like-[laughs] Maybe this is a bad thing, but I just wanna make all of the Clapcast episodes that need to come out at once and then just draft them and have them come out which is why it's been a little bit of a break right now. Um, but once the first one comes out, the rest of them should be weekly after that and that's going to be--if not this Friday, then the following Friday. So, look out for that. All of the laughs--

KEITH: Weekly until they're caught up, not weekly forever.

ALI: Yes, no no no no no. No no no no no, but we're doing okay with our catch-up and I'm proud of the team and I'm proud of myself and I just am so appreciative that the people who support us on Patreon are not madder about it so thank you so much. Anyway, moving on from that. We're also announcing that the Partizan post-mortem is coming soon! This Thursday is the last episode of Partizan.

SYLVI: Thank god.

ALI: Partizan season 1, I guess. Yeah.

JANINE: Mhm.

ALI: We'll be back with more Partizan one day but not the following Thursday which is a little bittersweet so, aw. Shout out to Partizan. I loved Partizan.



KEITH: Yeah. Partizan was the best start to any season that we ever had, I think. [ALI laughs] I said it the whole season long. No season has ever started better for us, I think.

ALI: Oh, yeah yeah yeah. Well, we had that big Road and Austin put in so much work to make all of that really smooth to come in on to begin with and then we knew the system and we just were good at it and it—[laughs] It just went really well. We just really did a good job.

KEITH: Yeah, it went really well. My theory was that we haven't really started a new season with new characters since like Bluff started and that doing Bluff got us much better at like, getting into a thing and getting good at it right away. That's my theory.

SYLVI: Was Bluff after...? I guess it was after Twilight Mirage.

ALI: Yeah, was it?

KEITH: It was either like right before or right after, like we had not done very much.

SYLVI: Like—yeah.

KEITH: But by the time Partizan started, we had done a lot of Bluff.

ALI: Ohh, sure sure sure.

KEITH: And then in-between there was all of—

JANINE: There were also Live games, right? Like more, [KEITH: Yes, totally. Yeah.] there's been so much of us just like churning out single use characters. [ALI giggles]

KEITH: That's how I like to think of it, as churning.

JANINE: I hadn't thought about that. [KEITH, JANINE, and ALI laugh] Listen. I named a dude—I named a knight Nightor tonight, I can't describe that as anything *but* churning.

ALI: Yeah, well. Shout to Nightor.

JANINE: That's peak churn right there.

[ALI and KEITH keep laughing]

ALI: Um, anyway yeah. Shout out to Partizan. I'm looking forward to the post-mortem. The post-mortem is going to be on Saturday, January 30th at 4PM eastern time. If you have a question for us, you can send it in to [tipsatthetable@gmail.com](mailto:tipsatthetable@gmail.com). I would be very much appreciative if you put Partizan PM in the title or Partizan Post-mortem. You can put PZN instead of Partizan. I like saying that. I like that—I like that we decided that.

JANINE: We haven't made the P'zone joke in a while about that. It's still there though. [ALI laughs]

ALI: The P'zone joke, damn.

KEITH: Can't wait for P'zone season 2.

ALI: I don't know if there's a Pizza Hut that delivers to me or else for the Partizan season finale or for the post-mortem, I would get a celebratory P'zone. I guess I could make one.

KEITH: I still never had Pizza Hut in my whole life.

ALI: In your whole life?! Oh, you said this.

KEITH: I said this and I said I promised that I would get one by the time something something and then I just didn't.

JANINE: A P'zone is just a calzone. Just get a calzone.

ALI: Yeah.

KEITH: Well it's not the P'zone specifically, but it's just a pizza from Pizza Hut. I've never had any pizza.

ALI: Right.

JANINE: Nyehh, it's fine. It's fine if you like puffy pizza.

ALI: Yeah, fair.

KEITH: I think it was 'cause I was complaining about that whole genre of like Papa John's and Domino's being the absolute worst, totally inedible pizza [ALI: It serves a purpose.] and uh, people were like, "What about Pizza Hut?" And I was like, "I don't know, I haven't had it."

ALI: I know I—

JANINE: Pizza Hut has the best food to get after a dentist appointment when you're like 9.

KEITH: Oh, I'll keep that in mind.

[ALI laughs]

JANINE: You go to the dentist and then you go out for dinner with your parents and you go to Pizza Hut and you color in the placemat thing with the crayons and you drink a Pepsi and undo all that good dental work.

ALI: Any 9-year-olds listeners or any mentors to 9-year-olds out there, just keep that in mind.

KEITH: Yeah.

JANINE: [laughing] Mentors?

[ALI laughs]

KEITH: Or parents.

JANINE: [still laughing] Any mentors?

[KEITH laughs too]

ALI: Well if you're a parent, you're mentoring them.

JANINE: Take your blacksmith apprentice to a Pizza Hut and buy them a Pepsi NOW.

KEITH: And then show him how to temper steel.

[ALI and JANINE keep laughing]

ALI: But yeah, the Partizan post-mortem—

KEITH: [overlapping] Call them Nightor.

ALI: [laughs] Um, I'm sure y'all have questions. I'm sure you're thinking of your questions right now and you're like, "I'm going to email this right now." Wait until Thursday! Wait until Friday! Partizan isn't over yet.

SYLVI: Yeah.

ALI: But Saturday. January 20th.

KEITH: Send two emails! I don't care. I'm not reading them.

ALI: No!

SYLVI: It can't be a post-mortem question if it's not mortem yet. You know?

ALI: Right! Yeah, yeah yeah. Partizan's still—Partizan's still—

KEITH: It's still pre-mortem.

ALI: It's heart is still bleeding. Yeah.

SYLVI: Yeah.

JANINE: Gross.

KEITH: Did you say it's heart is still *bleeding*?

SYLVI: That's sick.

ALI: I meant to say beating—

SYLVI: [overlapping] It's okay.

ALI: —but I wanted to be cool.

KEITH: It is cool though.

SYLVI: Yeah.

[JANINE laughs]

ALI: Um, I—yeah. So we're going to be live streaming it and then it'll be in the feed the following Thursday. So if you can't make it, do not worry. You will be able to hear our send off to Partizan season 1 and uh, Season 7 is coming after that and we've been talking about it and we've been thinking about it and I'm very excited. Can't say anything more. Um, that's it, I guess.  
[tinyurl.com/free](http://tinyurl.com/free)—

KEITH: I'm nervous. I'm still in the phase where I feel like I have nothing and I'll never have anything for it.

ALI: Ohh.

KEITH: I have something, but.

JANINE: I'm proud to announce my new character Nightor. [ALI laughs]

KEITH: I love Nightor. Already a fan favorite for me.

SYLVI: Yeah.

ALI: I feel like the biggest hurdle that I have to get over, 'cause I have no idea so far and I haven't even started thinking about it as name and, [KEITH: Oh yeah same.] like the looming threat of like needing to make the decision is really, actually now I'm saying it—I'm saying it as like kind of a joke and now I'm thinking about it I'm like shit. Damn.

KEITH: Yeah, I'll get it.

ALI: I need to look at more Instagram ads so I can come up with a name like I did to Broun.  
[SYLVI laughs]

JANINE: [overlapping] I picked mine like a full-ass year ago, it's been. [ALI laughs]

KEITH: [overlapping] Instagram ads? You look at Instagram ads for names?

ALI: Broun—No no no, Broun was based off of an Instagram ad because it's Brown spelled with a U and it was merchandise for the LINE FRIENDS character, Broun spelled with a U but it said Brown with a U and I was like that's fucking hilarious, that's going to be my Season 6 character, [KEITH laughs] and thus Broun was born. So yeah. Yeah. Just gotta find an inspiration elsewhere.

KEITH: I had Exeter Leap way, way ahead of time too, which is rare for me. I usually don't come up with the name until like halfway through the character creation episode or whatever. [JANINE laughs]

ALI: Huh.

JANINE: I could never live like you. [ALI laughs]

KEITH: I don't do it on purpose!

JANINE: I know.

KEITH: I would love to change.

ALI: [keeps laughing] But yeah this has been Tips at the Table, thank you so much for joining us everybody. If you have more questions for us, you can send them over to [tipsatthetable@gmail.com](mailto:tipsatthetable@gmail.com). Post-mortem questions go there. Questions questions go to there so remember.

JANINE: We didn't shout out [tinyurl.com/freebluff](https://tinyurl.com/freebluff) even though we talked a whole bunch about Bluff improving us.

KEITH: There it is.

ALI: I think I said it and then we—yeah.

JANINE: It's right there.

ALI: Bluff City the first season is free. If you're thinking to yourself, "Damn, I wish my friends listened to Friends at the Table but I don't know which to recommend," then that first Fiasco session is fucking hilarious. I really like it.

KEITH: Oh god, I almost said this during that last question but Fiasco might be my favorite Tabletop game and that is incredibly um like, no one—pretty much no one ever tells you what to do in Fiasco.

ALI: Oh, yeah.

JANINE: Until the end.

KEITH: Yeah, until the end, they tell you how you did. All that stuff you made up? It got you killed, idiot. Sorry. [ALI and SYLVI laughs]

SYLVI: It ruled! [KEITH laughs]

ALI: That game is so hard because it's like, here you go. The camera's on you. Start fucking talking and it's like, [whimpering] "Ohh, but I don't know how."

KEITH: My favorite parts of any roleplaying game is like, when you get into a role of—like—sorry, the pun unintended. When I get into a role of a like, just reacting to things and making other people react to things and that is all Fiasco is. So when it works, it works so good for me. It's just like—my favorite—it's an entire game of my favorite thing but it is tough and can, you know. Um. When it doesn't work, it's tough. But every time I've played it, it's worked! [ALI laughs] You know, just takes a little bit to get going so.

ALI: I mean, it's a great way to get better at that specific thing, [KEITH: Totally.] but it's a hurdle.

KEITH: Yeah.

ALI: I'm gonna say. [laughs]

JANINE: Mmhm.

ALI: But yeah, play Fiasco with your friends, have fun. Watch the Bluff, study it, it's great.

KEITH: It shows how many kinds of players there are because I one time talked about Fiasco as if it were like an almost perfect first roleplaying game to play and I think Ali like almost lost it at

me for—[ALI and KEITH laugh]—the idea that that would be an ideal first game experience for her was beyond the pale, I think.

ALI: I didn't lose it, but I disagreed and yeah, if you wanna hear more of my opinions, more of Keith's opinions, more of any Friends at the Table cast member's opinions. [laughing]

KEITH: Me, Ali, etc. [JANINE laughs]

ALI: More Tips episodes, us playing games, us talking about our inspirations for characters, you can go support us at [friendsatthetable.cash](https://friendsatthetable.cash). We have a couple different tiers there. We do a lot of good work in my opinion so thank you so much for supporting us and uh, yeah. Thank you, have a good night!

**[END OF EPISODE - 1:27:46]**