

## **Twilight Mirage 68: The Twilight Mirage Post Mortem**

Transcribed by Audrey Zee Whitesides

*(CW: Discussion of physical & emotional child & spousal abuse occurs in this episode. The section where this happens is between 2:12:15 and 2:15:17 in the audio, and is marked off in this transcript when it begins & when it ends.)*

*Apologies to any question-askers or chat members whose names I've incorrectly transcribed, not having a way to verify those.*

["The Twilight Mirage" plays]

AUSTIN: Welcome to the Friends at the Table Twilight Mirage Post Mortem. We have finished Twilight Mirage, uh, a game— a season where we played many games, and we'll just shout them out right away off the top. We played the Veil by Fraser Simons— Simons? Simon? I'm forgetting. Uh, we played Scum & Villainy by Stras Acimovic and John LeBoeuf-Little. Um, we played King— Follow, not Kingdom, Follow by Ben Robbins. We played, uh, Futura Free, which was a hack of D. Vincent Baker's Mobile Frame Zero: Firebrands, and also a hack of the Quiet Year, by, by, um, Avery Alder. Um, and I guess technically we did a quick session in [laughs] Lady Blackbird for Patrons. Um, that did a tiny, half of tiny side story. Um, I think that that is the wh— the whole of the games we played this season. Is there anything I'm missing? [Pauses] Ok, uh, sounds like no. Joining me today, uh, Alicia Acampora.

ALI: Um, hi! That's me, you can find me at @ali\_west on Twitter.

AUSTIN: Also joining us, Sylvia<sup>1</sup> Clare.

SYLVIA: Hey, I'm Sylvia. You can find me on Twitter at @captaintrash, and you can listen to my other show, Emojidrome, on Google Play or iTunes.

AUSTIN: Andrew Lee Swan.

DRE: Hey! You can find me on Twitter at @swandre3000.

AUSTIN: Art Martinez-Tebbel.

ART: Hey, you can find me on Twitter at @atebbel, and you can listen to One Song Only, which I hear is coming back—

AUSTIN: Finally.

---

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

ART: —and, uh, this, um, side project that people involved in have is, uh, slowing down a bit.

AUSTIN: [laughs, overlapping]: God. Uh, uh, uh, Jack de Quidt.

JACK: Hi! You can find me on Twitter at @notquitereal, uh, and buy any of the music featured on the show at notquitereal.bandcamp.com.

AUSTIN: Janine Hawkins.

JANINE: Hi, you can find me at @bleatingheart on Twitter.

AUSTIN: And Keith Carberry.

KEITH: My name is Keith J. Carberry, you can find me on Twitter at @keithjcarberry, you can find the Let's Plays that I do at youtube.com/runbutton.

AUSTIN: And as always, you can find me on Twitter at @austin\_walker, and you can find the show at @friends\_table. Also as always, uh, you can support the show by going to friendsatthetable.cash, uh, where you will find, uh, basically a year's worth of, uh, live games, one a month. Uh, a lot of Bluff City episodes— for people who don't know, maybe they, they just started listening to, uh, the, the feed during Twilight Mirage, and didn't ever check out Bluff City, um, Bluff City is a ongoing one-shot-based campaign in which we kind of fill in the gaps of a Mid-Atlantic gambling city, a sort of Atlantic City with the serial numbers filled down, um, but with a little more magic, and a little more drama, and a little more wrestling [laughs] than is actually in, uh, Atlantic City, New Jersey. Uh, so you can check that out also at friendsatthetable.cash. And there's a ton of other stuff. There's, there's Mapmaker stuff where you can see kind of, uh, character sheets and, um, maps, we'll be updating that now that the finale is over, with all the maps [laughs] from the finale. Dre did a really good job of taking pictures of the map as it updated throughout play, so I'm super excited to show people how that— how it went from a pretty plain map—

[DRE laughing in background]

AUSTIN: — to a place where there was a planet that had a body, and a head, and a smiley face, to just all sorts of wild shit on that map, so look forward to that. Um, uh, and y'know, there's a bunch of other stuff on there too, so go check that out, friendsatthetable.cash. Uh, we are currently behind on a number of things because of the finale, um, and are generally kind of thinking about how to rework some of that stuff, and, and rework our workflows internally to make sure we're up to date. Know that we are like— that is a priority for us, and it's something we're going to be addressing, uh, in the near future. So, all that business out of the way, let's talk about the Twilight Mirage. Does that sound good for everybody?

[Several people at once]: Uh huh. Yeah.

AUSTIN: All right.

[Boop noise?, and ALI laughs.]

AUSTIN: I felt like maybe we should start at the very, very end, because we had a number of questions, including this one from Nat, about the final sequence. Nat says:

How did the ending sequence come to be? Like, it's amazing & I cried whenever I listened to it, which I have like 3 times, but how did it happen? I love the show so much, y'all are such beautiful & wonderful people.

Thank you so much, Nat, I promise this was the only time we've ever, uh, I'll include a big compliment like that, but it's like, ok, thank you. I mean it from my heart. Um, I'd say like, Jack, Keith, & Ali, do you wanna speak a little bit to this? To the kinda finale sequence?

ALI: Um, yeah! I mean, I guess I can start, but it was kind of mostly y'all who worked on it. Um, it started from the Futura Free song, obviously—

AUSTIN: Right

ALI: We were like, this is such a good idea and we should use it for something, and this was the best version of that. Um, and then, I— was it just Keith, or a combination of Keith and Austin who came up with the questions specifically?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] All Keith. Hundred percent Keith. I pitched it to Keith and I was like, "Can you come up with 5 question for people?" And Keith, you came up with 11?

KEITH: 15?

AUSTIN 15. Ok.

KEITH: [overlapping] I f— I came up with 15 and then lost all of them 'cause my computer shut off—

[ALI & DRE laugh]

JACK: [laughing, in background]: I forgot about that!

KEITH: —and then I had to, um, I had to rewrite them—

AUSTIN: Right. [sighs deeply]

KEITH: M— they, uh, I, uh— I got like 10 of the original 15, and then I had to write another 2 or something.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yes. Yeah. Um, and yeah, as Ali says, Futura Free as a song, the Frank Ocean song was like, the huge inspiration for it. There was, uh, I shared this in the Discord, but there was a night when I was walking around my neighborhood listening to that song, and I immediately rushed— it was that song, and also a podcast that gave me another, different intro idea, which I'm not gonna spoil here. Uh, but I rushed to our production chat and was like, "We need to do an ending like this." But I actually didn't conceive of it as being the end of the season 'til a little bit later. Um, and then yeah, I was like, I trust Keith to— Keith knows who Gig Kephart is way better than I do. Keith can come up with good Gig Kephart questions, um, um, and we did. Then I guess, Jack, you, we, we— so we recorded for like 90 minutes total, I think, right.

JACK: We recorded, uh, an absurd amount of—

[Someone laughs quietly]

JACK: We, we had not a full recording, because our full recordings are gigantic, but we had, like, a lot of stuff.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: And, uh, Ali sent— Ali edited all of that. Um—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Right.

JACK: —as in, made it all sound good—

[AUSTIN laughs]

JACK: And, and then, sent it to me as just sort of a big package, and I opened it up in Logic—

[AUSTIN laughs]

JACK: And then—

[ALI laughs]

JACK: —had the fun time of editing human voices? Which I never do.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: Oh.

JACK: Um, so like, there was just a lot of, like, “Oh god, right, people talk in a way that music doesn’t. Like, y’know, music fits within bar lines, or whatever, and people just talk, and I have to figure out where to cut that in a way that sounds nice.” And I produced a cut that was like— I misinterpreted what Austin had told me—

AUSTIN: [sighs] I had said—

JACK: —before this—

KEITH: Oh, I don’t know about this!

AUSTIN: I had said, like, “Oh, we just need to—” So it was like, 90 minutes of stuff, or something, right, the raw— or, the edited version that Ali put together. And I, either I or Ali or both of us had said, “Oh yeah, just put together like 5-10 minutes of it and work from there.” And what we meant from work from there was like, “And then pick out sentences that you think are good—”

[JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: “—and, and toss them into whatever song you make.” And Jack thought we meant, “Make a 10-minute long [laughs] song.”

[ALI laughs, DRE laughs]

JACK: Well, and like, I had thought this when we were all hanging out together in New York, or whatever—

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: So like, in terms of my plans for—

AUSTIN: [overlapping, under his breath] Oh my god.

JACK: —what my production workload looked like toward the end of that season, I was like, “Holy lord—”

[ALI laughs]

JACK: “—here we go, we’re gonna have to get this sorted.” So it was kind of a relief when I, I got this thing done and I sent it off to Austin, and I said, “It’s 10 minutes!” And Austin said, “No.”

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: N— no, what are you— what? No. And then— then the tricky thing was like, how do you cut it down from 10 minutes. And then, so—

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: —you asked me to step in, and like, take it from 10 minutes to, uh, like that’s the first time I edited voices in this way too, right, like how do you take this 10 minute thing that is just these conversations and try to find the bare skeleton of vocals for a music track? Without knowing much of the music track. And so I asked you to give me, just, give me a skeleton of music. And so you sent me a like, 70 seconds—

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: —of music, and I just like, put it on loop and cut and cut and cut, and ended up putting, like, together what the vocals— what the order of questions are, how you’re— how it’s going from place to place, how it opens and ends. We knew we— you knew to end it on the, the Tender wake up thing—

JACK: [overlapping] Yeah, like—

AUSTIN: —which is fantastic. Um—

JACK: That—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: We got that fairly early in the— in the files I was listening to, this like, “How do you feel about— do you prefer falling asleep or waking up?” question came up, and like, everybody answered it and everybody’s answers were really cool. Um, but Grand had that great answer about like, um, uh, waking up is just realizing you have stuff to do?

AUSTIN: Right.

[ALI laughs]

JACK: Which was like, such a good Grand answer. And, uh, for Ali to have this other answer, which, um, I like cut very slightly? I just changed the rhythm of it very slightly—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: —but in the original, it's, it's still this very, like, contemplative, like, considered answer?

[ALI laughs]

JACK: Um, and it just felt like the way the season should end. Like, the description of someone waking up and being like—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: —being excited about the day just felt like the most natural place.

KEITH: [overlapping] It's— the best part about it is, like, essentially, Art and Ali, like, gave the same answer, but—

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Right.

[JACK laughs]

KEITH: —but having a different idea about having what stuff. Having— how having stuff to do feels.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Wh— right. Exactly. Yeah. Totally. Um, and I will say also, real quick, there is no 10-minute track. We didn't— Jack did not compose 10 minutes to it. That is not— it may have come across as, as, as the other way—

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: We're not— we're not sitting on a 10-minute track.

JACK: [in the background] No, no, no, no.

AUSTIN: We would not have done that.

JACK: [overlapping] Although like—

KEITH: [overlapping] How— how long was it the end? It was like, 5 minutes? Is that a good guess?

JACK: [overlapping] What's— what's weird is it's like 6 minutes by the end, and the actual difference between a 6 ½-minute track and a 10-minute track is like—

[AUSTIN laughs]

JACK: —kind of small at that point?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Right.

[ALI laughs]

JACK: But I think if I had been told, like, “You have to do a 10-minute track,” I’d have panicked way harder than if I’d been told, “You have to do a 5-minute track,” that, with the intro and outro, came to about 6 ½ minutes.

KEITH: [overlapping] Yeah.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Right. And I w— though, though, you did also compose 3 minutes, whatever, 2 minutes before that from my improvised outro to the season, which you smartly said, like—

JACK: [overlapping] Yeah!

AUSTIN: —don’t do a different— like, just do the one— we’re gonna do the one you said live to us while recording, we don’t need to, like, make it better.

JACK: So like, I heard that live, and I was in Washington, D.C., and we’d been recording this finale for like, 400 years.

AUSTIN: Yep.

JACK: And, um—

AUSTIN: With water breaks.

JACK: With wa— with water breaks.

[ALI laughs]

JACK: And you delivered this ad-libbed monologue. And I was like, choking up listening to it? And I was like, “Oh, right, we— I do not— I want to put music to this—”

AUSTIN: Right.



JACK: “—I do not want a second take here. I don’t want to lose whatever emotion that monologue carried that got me— and hopefully other listeners— to feel the way I did.”

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Um, and then when I was writing it, the track that became, like, an anchor, I didn’t feel that way at all. I just was like—

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: I just was like, “Oh god, I can’t recapture this emotion whatsoever.” And so, it was an enormous relief when I sent it to you at the end of finishing it, and you were like, “Oh, I choked up,” because I was like, “All right [claps], ok—”

[AUSTIN, ALI, and KEITH laugh]

AUSTIN: Yeah, no, because I hadn’t gone back to listen to that & it’s like— the, the anchor outro, the track— the stuff that plays. I hadn’t listened to that. Like I didn’t— I, I— this is the first time I’m listening to the show, actually, in like, in a concerted, concerted way; as I prep for Hieron I’m re-listening to Winter. Normally I check in on certain bits or make sure certain scenes came out well, or whatever, but I just don’t have the time in my life normally to be like, “I’m going to listen to this long show that we do,” ‘cause I’ve been listening to other shows, and working on the prep, and all that. Um, but, um, listening to that moment was just like, “Oh shit, ok, good, that worked, that came across, I’m very happy about that.” So—

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: —you, uh, you, all of you, I’m so happy how that whole thing came out. Again, it was like a thought that I had 6 months ago or something now [laughing], and I was like, “Oh, I bet that would be good!” and because of the 3 of you, it was so much better than I could’ve imagined. So, shoutouts to y’all. Um, I’m gonna keep it moving, because we have— I’ll just say right now we got something like 230, 235 questions. Um—

[ALI laughs]

JACK: And we will be answering them all!

[ART says something in background, several people laughing]

AUSTIN: So, right now, next one! No. We had to take a cut, right, I had to take a cut. I had to make sure that we— I tried to pick questions— 1, everybody went through and were like, “Hey, these are questions we’re interested in answering,” um, and 2, uh, on top of that, questions that

would give us the opportunity to answer themes of questions that we got a bunch of. Right? That like, “Hey, here’s a bunch of people asked about this thing, here’s a really good version of that question, let’s zero in on that.” Um, so, the next one comes in, and it’s— it’s gonna continue the musical motif, in fact, very focused on motifs. From Ruby to Jack:

Friends at the Table’s score always has great usage of *leitmotif*, but in this season, every character got their own little theme song, and the use of motif was so much more prominent. How do you think the use of motif impacted the soundtrack of the Twilight Mirage as a whole, or what was the thought behind the decision to make motif more heavy in this season?

JACK: Um, it was a really complicated season, full of really complicated moving parts.

AUSTIN: Mhmm.

JACK: And, I think it became pretty clear to me early on that if I didn’t have some method of anchoring ways to musically tell stories about characters and events, um, I would just go spiralling—

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: —I would just go spiralling out, and, y’know, I would have to be writing new melodies, like, constantly— which I sort of did, but, but by establishing motifs for— establishing broad motifs for, “This is what conflict in the Mirage sounds like,” or, “This is what, uh, a sort of peace sounds like, this is what it sounds like when people we care about are under threat—”

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: “— this is what it sounds like when our— when we’re being threatening.” Um, and then, just the more direct motifs of, “Fine, this is how like, how I compose for Grand, and this is how I compose for Gig, or Tender.” Um, and especially like Earth, and Morning’s Observation— like stuff like that let me work more easily than it would be if I had to write a new melody every time we came up with a new scene, which is something that happens more regularly in Hieron, where the palette that I have is so much less, and I have to rely on different ways of telling stories. Y’know—

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: By just going, “Fine, I’m gonna give you a new melody, a new theme, or a new track.”

AUSTIN: Totally.

JACK: Um, I think also I composed most of the soundtrack using Alchemy, which is a synthesizer in Logic. It is an incredibly versatile digital synthesizer. Uh, and one of my favorite things about Logic is it makes it very easy to identify a sound that appeals to you. It has something like 3000 or 4000 different like, bass sounds. And then each one of those can be modulated across kind of 8 different ways? I can make the sound sound darker, I can make the sound sound more aggressive, or I can make it sound thinner. So it was very easy for me to develop a motif that I liked, and then work through a lot of different ways I could play with that sound, make that sound reflect different things. And I think that compositional process resulted in a lot more of these motifs, 'cause that process of creating it was so exciting.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And it was also something for me that I think really paid off was the character-based motifs, um, obviously we've done bits of that in past seasons, um, and certain, y'know, instruments that make me think of different characters in, say, COUNTER/weight. Or, or, or different, different motifs. But here, I think because of the This Year of Ours stuff, or because of tracks like, um, "Mr. Magnificent and Elegy", there's stuff that ended up being really powerful in the finale, because you could draw on a palette that people were already familiar with, that I, as a listener, was already familiar with. Um, uh, y'know, I think 80% of my, my Grand/Echo ship is the, the play—

[JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: — and 20% is the music. So, that is, that is— music is a powerful thing. Um, all right, I'm gonna keep it—

JACK: What's—

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

JACK: Yeah, yeah, yeah, no, well, Grand and Echo is so much fun 'cause Grand has that, like, shallow, soft high synth line—

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Um, the sort of pleading synth line, and Echo has that, like, unbelievably, um, aggressive bass. And these like—

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: — these like very fast drums. And, um, on their own, they sound very, um [laughs], they don't work super well, and then when I put them together, I'm like, "Oh, cool! Funny that!"

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Right. Um, all right, we're gonna keep moving, because again, we're gonna keep moving. Uh, so this one, uh, Keith, you marked.

KEITH: Hello.

AUSTIN: This comes in from Saul, who says:

How did you decide on Gumption's fate in the Divine Principality?

Um, and I tagged you, because I think we worked on this over the course of a week. Maybe longer?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: In terms of like, coming from the recording, um, I- I think the way it's edited it's not clear, but like, we definitely left it hanging with Gumption in a big way. Um, and then you and I bounced ideas off of each other for like a week, in terms of, "How do we deal with Gumption?" In fact, during that week, I had forgotten that the DFS had completed that particular project. A lot of the other DFS stuff, we figured out— or I had figured out, but I didn't know ab— I didn't know what to do with Gumption. And we tossed around a couple ideas. But I'm curious, like, like, what do you, what sticks out for you here?

KEITH: Um, yeah, so I guess that the biggest part was like, we kind of both forgot how it ended.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yeah. We both— I think we—

KEITH: [overlapping] We like— You came to me with an idea, and I just like, "Oh yeah, that sounds like a good idea!" And then we were talking about it, and like, you know, like—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] It's like the opposite idea! Right?

KEITH: [overlapping] Yeah.

AUSTIN: We both agreed to do a thing— so there's a line in the finale now that's like, "Acre prevents the Divine Principality and the DFS from resurrecting, uh, uh, Potent, the Potency." Right?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And we're like, "Oh, and then Gig— or Gig does that with Gumption, Gig prevents them from taking control of Gumption, sick." And we're like, "Oh wait, no. No one stopped that clock."

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: We both forgot that that clock success— like succeeded. They got Gumption, and like, you have to let the r— like, let the rules hang. Like, I wasn't gonna go back and do a pick-up where, for whatever reason, that clock failed to advance all the way, and instead—

KEITH: Well, yeah, so that's— that's how it started was I was going to do something with that clock, and we ended up— I ended up not having the resources to do it—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Going, yeah.

KEITH: — and then it just got edited out and replaced during the lawn games move?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] The lawn games thing. Right, and then it ended up being like—

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: “Oh, wait, wait, you can't do that thing anyway. You can't do it by yourself, you don't have the resources for it.”

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: “And so, what else are you gonna do instead?”

KEITH: [overlapping] Right.

AUSTIN: And so, we ended up going the lawn games thing. The lawn games thing is hilarious, and funny, and good, because it suggests something about how the, the Qui Err do stuff, but it left open this question with Gumption.

KEITH: Yeah. And so, we— for a minute we were operating on, like, a good Gumption ending, and then it was like, “Oh, no, we can't do that.”

[AUSTIN laughs]

KEITH: Um, and then I can't remember what your original idea was. I guess it was, 'cause we were both like, “Well, how do we reconcile, like, wh— how do we— why would Gumption work with them?”

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Um, I can't remember what your original thing was, but then I was like, “What if they took apart, took apart his self-healing thing, and put it in their mechs.” Um—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah, I think you, you were like— Um, uh, I said, “Ugh, this might be too

positive, given that the clock does finish for them.” Um, ‘cause we had talked about, “Well, maybe Gumption just leaves.” It’s like, well, they—

KEITH: [overlapping] Yeah.

AUSTIN: — the players didn’t earn that, y’all didn’t make that happen, so I can’t, just like, “Oh, and then this time—” I think we, we’ll get some questions later that are about, like, tone, and how to make tone, what, how to make the utopia, the utopia.

KEITH: [overlapping] Mhmm.

AUSTIN: And one of the things that I’m committed to, or was committed to this season, I think the players super were, especially in the final act, was like, “No, for things to happen, people have to do the thing. Or, society has to do the thing” Um, and so—

KEITH: [overlapping] Yeah.

AUSTIN: — as much as I wanted to be like, “Oh, and Gumption’s just too good-hearted to work with the DFS,” which I think is true—

KEITH: [overlapping] Right.

AUSTIN: — what you said was, “I think you’re right, but the clock was only to steal the parts, right? So we’d still have to come up with a reason why Gumption would stay. I guess it’s just like, ‘Well, this is my home now?’” And then you said, “Wait, maybe they rebuild Gumption as a new Divine. Um, or he’s different, not Gumption or doesn’t work right.” And that’s when we ended up going this other thing. And you said, “Or, they network his regenerative stuff into other Divines.” And I go, “Right, yeah, god, that’s brutal.” [laughs] Right?

KEITH: [overlapping] Yeah, yeah, so this—

AUSTIN: Because that confirms the endgame that Divines were worried of. Like, it commits. That’s what they were afraid of—

KEITH: [overlapping] Yeah.

AUSTIN: — from the jump! That’s what Anticipation was researching, that’s what Pleroma is all about. That is why Independence left—

KEITH: [overlapping] Yeah.

AUSTIN: — and like, it turns out they were right.

KEITH: Yeah. And this is my— this is my petty, behind-the-scenes-ass angle, but I was also like, “Well, you guys didn’t wanna fucking help me save Gumption, and now Gumption’s the worst possible— he gets the worst possible outcome he could possibly get.”

AUSTIN: Right. Well, and I—

KEITH: Um, which it is. It is, I think—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] It’s the worst.

KEITH: It’s the worst thing I could imagine for Gumption.

AUSTIN: For Gumption, 100%. And I think it’s—

KEITH: [overlapping] Or for any Divine.

AUSTIN: Right! Which is why Independence leaves, right?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And again, I think we’ll wrap back around in a little to talk about this, so I’m gonna save some—

KEITH: Independence?

AUSTIN: Uh, Indepen— uh—

KEITH: Oh!

AUSTIN: —the fear.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: The fear of the Divine. Uh, the DFS in general. Like, what happens to the DFS, and we’ll get back to why does that happen to them, like what is it that fails for that society? So yeah, we’ll get there. A lot of people taking ghosts in the chat, a lot of Contempt.

[KEITH laughs]

AUSTIN: All right—

KEITH: I love the ghosts, I’m glad that that stuck.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So, we're here right now, right, which is Alistair writes in and says:

Was it possible for the group to have averted the formation of the Divine Principality, or the Rapid Evening and DFS going in that direction, given how far in the future that occurred? Would it have come down to not engaging with the DFS in such a detrimental way regarding stealing Gumption, or would they have had to have made more of an active effort?

As a GM: the DFS, the Divine Principality didn't exist until after our final recording. Like, I didn't know who they were until I finished, and I went, "Oh shit!" And I immediately DMed Ali, I think, and was like, "I know who this group is for a future season that I had been thinking about." Um, but I, I guess, or even in the recording I was like, "I think this is what happens with them." But, um, so that wasn't the plan in any way. I, I had a feeling that the Rapid Evening would in some, in some way be around? But you know, the Divine Free States could have been removed from the board by Signet, or something, when that card got pulled up. I don't think that's what would have happened? Or the Rapid Evening could have, right? I can imagine a world in which Grand Magnificent, or Even, or Tender, or somebody else draws the card, and is like, "Well, let's just get rid of Crystal Palace. Let's use that card to just completely wipe that." And so, no, nothing is sketched in stone in that way, right? Um, and so for me as the player side— or as the GM side, I would have loved to have seen people engage with, "Well, ok, what's happening in the DFS? How do we build that?" Because for me, such— the core of this season, uh— the core of the season's view of utopia hinges on literally building things, um, and doing things at a cultural level. The DFS falls apart because utopia for them was not about a psycho, psychological state, it was about having good roads. It was about having good healthcare. The utopia of the Divine Fleet was the Divines. Right? It was Contrition's Figure, and it was Contrition's Figure working with Contrition. It was Mercy. Um, it was Potency. It was Curiosity leading them places, from place to place to place, instead of letting people fall into their behaviors of wanting to sit still. Um, the Divines did things that people couldn't do, and encourage the best possible behaviors, and were literally a social safety net. Right? Um, and so when the social safety net is destroyed, it's not surprising to me— or, or specifically not in Twilight Mirage, the thing that happens is people get grounded to, to this other thing. And I think that's in direct opposition to COUNTER/weight, where in COUNTER/weight the point we kind of make is, "No, people can change the world through action. People, and with a fire in their heart, collaboration can make things better." And here we're saying, "Sure, but without the structures that they build to make things better, it's just that easy to fall apart." And so you start to see Nideo in, y'know, in episode descriptions talk about, "We're going to ground with or without the Cadent." Um, and you start to see them be willing to throw lives away, and to work with people who go against their, their morals, and stuff like that, because it kind of happens in the slow, background way. And so, it would have— would've needed players to get involved in the DFS in that way, but because it was just the way the season had gone, I don't think anyone was interested in the DFS? Outside of protecting lives, which you did in that great debate scene, Echo. Um, any other thoughts on the DFS, or wanting to work with the DFS, or stop them, here?



[short silence]

KEITH: Um, I think a big thing about the DFS is like, uh, y'know, there's not like a, a switch that flips where it's just like—

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: —from utopia to not utopia? Like, there's a slide—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: And like, we started the season with them being like, like, “Can we just go to these guys’ planet, and be on their planet instead of—” Like, that’s how it starts.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: So it’s like, they didn’t— it’s not like they were ever on that great of a foot to begin with for the whole season.

AUSTIN: Right. They’d already— I think again, the, the— two things: we’re already seeing them in decline, which was, which was the pitch of the show when we first pitched it, was like, a utopia under threat and in decline, what do you do to protect it? Um, and what Nideo does is like, decide not to protect that part of it at all, and protect the state instead of protecting the values. And I guess the last thing there is, uh— y’know, I don’t think it was— the thing I think about a lot with them is, especially with the point you just made with Gumption, is the utopia was a utopia. It was truly, really good for people. It also never really engaged with its original sin of refusing to let Divines die. Or, deciding Divine death was supposed to be taboo. And, um, in some sense it’s a fruit from a poison tree, right? Like, it is, for me, similar to, not identical to, but the way in which I don’t think America has engaged, really, truly, with the cost, and the ways which it was founded on slavery, right? And so, at some point, we have to fuckin’ deal with that or not. Which is why so much of Signet’s stuff with the Waking Cadent felt so important. Because it’s like, “All right, let’s give this another try, but from the jump we have to reimagine what the relationship between people— between non-Divines and Divines,” if that makes sense. Um, any other thoughts here?

JANINE: Nideo always sucked.

AUSTIN: Nideo always sucked. [laughs]

KEITH: Um—

JANINE: And also, since episode 1, sucked in the same way. Sucked in, y'know, one of the first interactions that Signet had with anyone in this season was going to him saying, "Hey, I'm worried that someone is going to come assassinate— or kidnap, or whatever— our leader. Can you get me into these box seats?" And he was like, "Sure, if you do some errands for me."

AUSTIN: [laughs] Uh huh. Yeah. What can I get from it? Totally.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, all right, let's keep moving.

JANINE: [overlapping, in the background] I don't like that guy.

AUSTIN: Let's move into a new subject: loose threads and other notions. Rowan— I'm gonna keep building on this with you, Signet—

Was it a conscious decision not to include Belgard in the second half of the season?

JANINE: Mmmmm. Um, it's, uh, yes and no, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, definitely.

JANINE: There's, there's two sort of answers to that of just like, on the one hand, I totally— and this came up a lot— I wanted more, um, scenes with Signet and Belgard because it felt a little weak to be sort of building this really strong foundation of like, Divines need to be seen as equals, etc.—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: —with Signet, while not giving Belgard that sort of equal treatment. There'd be a lot of cases where I'd say, like, "I want to talk to Belgard about this," and you'd say, like, "Well, she agrees with, she agrees with Signet, probably, right?" And it's like, on the one hand, yes, probably, but on the other, it's hard to— it's hard to see indepenence without dissent. Um, so that was—

AUSTIN: Wait, you mean, lower-case "i" independence.

JANINE: No, I mean the— [laughs] yes, yes, yeah. Um, but the other side of that is, like, with Belgard active and not just a sort of passive figure, it really fucks with the balance of things. And to correct the balance, by having Belgard around and doing stuff actively, would be in some ways to contradict the significance that we've put on Divines.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Um, so, there's like no happy compromise?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] But there's that—

JANINE: The unhappy compromise there is that Belgard is busy.

AUSTIN: There, it's like— yeah. Well, like, the— there's a moment in the micro-arc with you and Tender on Altar, when you're going toward the, the Vault of Anticipation, where early on we're like, "Hey, is Belgard here?" And it was one of those moments where it was like, "Well, I could imagine there being good scenes with Belgard here."

JANINE: [overlapping] Mhm.

AUSTIN: "I know what's gonna be in that Vault. Uh, it's called the Vault of Anticipation, I think we all know we're gonna go see Anticipation here." But also it didn't feel honest to have Belgard there, right? And also felt like— I think the point you made was like, "I don't want Belgard near these fucking people from the Waking Cadent, [laughs] y'know, and the Method of Apotheosis here, right?"

JANINE: [overlapping] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, so yeah. I think that that's, that's— I, I still think if I— it's— I mean, we'll get here again later, but it was a big season. It was a long season, and it's so hard to be like, "Ok, well, what would I cut to include more Belgard?" Um, but I would like to have. I definitely think that's a space where it's like, you and I should have sat down and been like, "Ok, is there a better downtime action that we could figure out?" Not a better downtime— or an additional downtime action, or something that made you—

JANINE: Yeah. It was a thing that I—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah.

JANINE: —that I, we always had been considering, but we didn't actually have that many downtimes.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] No.

JANINE: — so it was— And there were usually other things—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] It was 3? Right?

JANINE: Yeah, exactly—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah.

JANINE: — so it's, y'know, if we had 4, maybe.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. I mean that's the wildest thing is, this show went forever and also there was like a total of 7 arcs? Or like 6 arcs or something?

JANINE: [overlapping] Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's just a lot of time.

JANINE: If we'd had a little more downtime, there'd be more Belgard time, and probably another trip to a brothel. Guaranteed.

AUSTIN: Almost certainly. Um, just, and again, just fill in that blank space. In, or— earlier in chat, people were getting excited because I said that I ship Echo and Grand. I, I— y'all are allowed to just do that. Like, I, I am— not just allowed, I encourage you to find those headcanons and, and treat them as real in your heart, in the same way that I think, "Yeah, of course Signet went to more brothels." Right? Like, there's a sort of like—

JANINE: [overlapping] Yeah.

AUSTIN: — in a TV show, you sometimes see a person do a thing once or twice, and it's supposed to set up the presumption— like, think about watching a TV show like *Law & Order: SVU*, when, like, a character goes to a baseball game for their kid. That doesn't happen every episode, but they're going to more than one baseball game— unless, that episode is about them not going to the baseball games.

[JANINE laughs in background]

AUSTIN: Y'know. Um, al lright, next question. Um, very important one here. I'm gonna make sure I didn't skip any. I did. I— we gotta go back, sorry. Sorry, sorry. We'll get there. We'll get to that good one. We will. Eli says:

Players, is there an aspect of the world, or your character's backstories, that never came up on air, that you wish had?

And I bring this up, because not everybody had Belgard, but I'm sure everybody had similar things that didn't get screentime, that you maybe thought of it.

DRE: I spent a decent amount of time thinking about how, kind of, society was structured, in the Ever Forward?

AUSTIN: Mmmm.

DRE: And I don't know if I ever came down with anything concrete, but I had this idea of it being like, way, way, way more interdependent, and like, families being a much more kind of like, fluctuating and freeform thing?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah.

DRE: And it's not like, you have 2 parents and, like, your siblings, and like, but like the idea that it was just like— I don't know, almost that like, as you were growing up, you would just kind of, like— I don't know, bounce from, like, house to house, and like, place to place, and, and that there was just, like, a lot less kind of structure, and more of just like— I don't know, like I said, I never came down with anything concrete.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's a cool direction though.

DRE: Yeah. I definitely had this idea of the Ever Forward being a, like, radically interdependent kind of place, as far as social structures are.

AUSTIN: Mhm. Yeah, I think that's interesting, especially given, like, the physical shape of it, given the nature of the group as being filled with explorers, y'know, and researchers, and people working on different sorts of, um— or, not working in but living in that sort of exploratory mode, and not just it being part of their daily work, um, is really, is really— and also just any time someone is like, "Families work different here," I'm like, my ears perk up. I'm like, "Oh word? Let me hear that. Let me, let me get that info." Uh, any other, any other, um, aspects of the world or your PCs that never came up? [pauses] I have one, for sure, which is a simple one. It is the phone booths that you have to call from one ship to the other—

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: —that Ali pitched in the world creation. Which I think—

JACK: [overlapping] Oh, yeah.

JANINE: [overlapping] Oh my god, I forgot about those!

AUSTIN: Not me, not me! Like I— like, it is 100%—

JANINE: Or like, the ship— the old-fashioned ship intercom system.

AUSTIN: That stuff too, right? Totally.

JANINE: [overlapping] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or like, the idea was very much, like, you had to go to a specific phone booth on a ship to get in touch with another ship in the fleet, um, and I think the— y'know, we can talk about this later too, I'm sure, is just like, we ended up so rarely being in the fleet for, for a bunch of reasons that largely had to do with what I thought the pacing would be. Um, and needing to deal with the fact that actually, no, the pacing is going to be way slower than I think it is, I'm not gonna have time to just do the regular-ass Seance game that I thought. Um, and because of that we didn't get a lot of that stuff, and I wish we had. I totally wish that, that I had realized some of the pacing issues with the season earlier, so that instead of getting— I don't know, I am happy to have had the Contrition's Figure arc, and the, uh, the Privign arc, um, but I just — I want more time. I want more time—

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: —so that it would be easier to do that stuff too, y'know? Um, any other stuff from backstory or world?

JANINE: Uh, I, I like, set Signet up to be a good vehicle for like, some good old-fashioned, like, Catholic body horror—

AUSTIN: Mmm.

JANINE: And then just, we just never got into that. [laughs]

AUSTIN: With like— wait, what do you mean?

JANINE: [overlapping] Like, it would have been a thing—

AUSTIN: I don't know about this.

JANINE: It would have been— [laughs] No, you do. It would've been a fun thing to, sort of—

AUSTIN: What?

JANINE: We never talked about the nature of her lifespan, how she was living that long. And it worked out, it ended up being a good sort of, like, it ended being a good thing to, like you were saying, the, the death of Divines being taboo, like, the death of an Excerpt—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Mmm, yeah, yeah, yeah.

JANINE: Yeah, it, it's a good counter-balance.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yes. Yes.

JANINE: And also the stuff with Belgard, but—

AUSTIN: We never found Signet's, like, original hand that had become a relic that was passed around.

JANINE: Yeah, that was— that was— I think I mentioned before that I, like— my original vision for Signet was like, her religious duties being like, walking in a parade surrounded— er—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: —being followed by a bunch of cases of like, mummified, y'know, body parts, like Catholic relics and stuff—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah.

JANINE: —and I just wanted, I just wanted hundreds of them.

[ALI laughs]

JANINE: Just a constant churn— [laughs] —of these horrible, y'know, old, uh, body parts that had been cast off and, and replaced, or—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah, that shit's sick. That shit's the best. Because, yeah—

JANINE: [overlapping] Think about that. We never got to that.

AUSTIN: I'm not here to retcon stuff, but imagine that happens sometimes. 'Cause that casts the Iconoclast stuff in such different light—

JANINE: Yes, yeah.

AUSTIN: —once you are able to be like, “No, no, no, no, no, no. No. Bodies, in general, are horrific. [laughs] We all—

JANINE: [overlapping] Yep.

AUSTIN: “—everyone involved in this, in this formula between Signet and the Iconoclasts has some body shit going on,” uh, is super, super, super good. Um, anything else before I move on?  
[pauses] All right.

ART: Um—

AUSTIN: All right, go.

ART: Um, yeah, I think— I mean, I guess not really.

[Several people laugh]

AUSTIN: Art— goddamnit.

ART: I like, had something in mind but now I’m bailing on it, like—

AUSTIN: What? Don’t— what? Ok. Thanks, Grand. I mean—

[Many people laughing]

ART: Yeah, you got it.

KEITH: But like, yeah, that’s such sort of—

AUSTIN: Mmmmmmm. [claps]

ART: Wait, wait, let me— I wanna make sure this isn’t gonna come up later, in the, in the—

AUSTIN: Just say the thing. Just say it at this point, Art.

ART: Um, um, um, ok, we’re not— oh, mmm, yeah. I sort of wish that we’d gotten some, some time on, uh, Memorious?

AUSTIN: Oh sure, totally.

ART: I sort of wish we had gotten to, like, see that, like, boring world that, uh, that Grand wanted to buck against so badly?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah, that’s a really good one. In terms of just like—

ART: [overlapping] And the very dear in my heart sibling I invented in the last 8 hours of us doing Twilight Mirage.



AUSTIN: Yeah, I wish I'd known about that sooner, that would've been a good pressure to put on Grand Magnificent. Um—

ART: Again, I, I didn't invent— didn't come up with them until I was driving the morning of the last session. I was like, "Oh, that's a good name."

AUSTIN: Yeah. Atez [sp?] in the chat says, "And Crown?" Crown was, like, the place I least worried about showing, because that's basically what you saw in the first half of the game? The ground game in Sculpture was— became Crown, so it ended up being like, "Ok, I'm not gonna be able to run this game for 2 years. Uh, one is al— one and half, or one, one— y'know, 14 months is already a long-ass time, which are the planets we're not gonna see? I guess it's Crown, um, sadly." So. Uh, I love Crown and I, I'm— one day maybe we'll revisit it in a side game or something. Any other stuff before I move on? Ok. This comes in from Alex/Dora:

Tender was a catgirl. What animal people would the other PCs be? Yes, I'm asking what their fursonas are.

DRE: I'm a bug.

KEITH: [laughing] In general, or?

AUSTIN: Just in general.

DRE: Yeah.

KEITH: What's your— what's your bug's persona?

DRE: Ahhhh. Wait, hold on—

[AUSTIN trills lips]

ART: Give us— give us a furry bug or get the hell out of here.

[Several people laugh]

ART: A bug with fur.

DRE: Are there furry bugs besides— I mean, like, spiders aren't bugs, I know, but that's like, the only, like—

JACK: Moths?

DRE: —insect-adjacent—

ART: Oh yeah, moths!

KEITH: Yeah, there's moths.

AUSTIN: Moths are good.

DRE: They got wings, so they're—

JANINE: Caterpillars.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Moths got wings, they got big antennas.

KEITH: Yeah.

DRE: Yeah, it's a moth. There we go.

KEITH: Ok—

AUSTIN: Even at the beginning of the season is a caterpillar, then becomes a moth.

KEITH: [overlapping] So Dre— Dre, Dre is Even and Even is a bug, and Even's bug's fursona is a moth.

AUSTIN: Yes.

KEITH: Nailed it.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Anybody else? Uh, this is a required question.

ART: [overlapping] Yeah, I think Grand Magnificent is obviously a beaver.

AUSTIN: Oh my god.

ART: The architects of the animal kingdom.

[DRE laughs, AUSTIN deeply sighs]

JANINE: I do associate beavers really closely with flannel, so that does work.

[KEITH laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh, you know.

DRE: Yeah, fair.

AUSTIN: You saved that one for me. You really did. Uh, is Sig—

ART: You don't spend enough time in the Midwest, or Canada, or places where the beavers are wearing flannel.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Right. Of course. It's fashionable there. Signet, are you just a beetle? Is that too easy though?

JANINE: I don't know, I'm torn—

AUSTIN: Or a butterfly?

JANINE: I— there's a butterfly that I was gonna, like, make a reference to at some point, and then I never did. And people like, tweeted it at me, and it was really hard not to be like, "I, I got it." Um, there's, like, a butterfly that like, makes a cocoon that looks like it's made of gold.

AUSTIN: Mmmmm.

JANINE: It's called a *Mechanitis polymnia*— also, *polymnia*'s a reference to Polyhymnia, which I think is the Muse of, like, religious songs or something?

AUSTIN: That sounds right, sure.

JANINE: It's— but, Even's already a bug, so, like a— [sighs] I mean, I named her Signet 'cause I could do like, the Candidate, like—

AUSTIN: Oh, right.

JANINE: Y'know, it's— y'know, a homonym?

AUSTIN: Homophone.

JANINE: Homophone?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: I think a homonym is written the same way, homophone sounds the same.

JANINE: Right.

JACK: Ohhhhhhhh, it's like a Candidate name!

JANINE: Yes, Jack.

AUSTIN: Yeah, Jack, it's like a Candidate name. It's a cygnet, like— like a swan.

JACK: Like a— like a swan!

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That's the joke.

JANINE: [laughing] That was the thing.

[Someone laughing in background]

AUSTIN: Phoenix Down.

[Several people laugh]

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Um, yeah, that's a good one. That's a good one. Uh, I still need some more. I still need Fourteen Fifteen, I still need Echo and Gig.

KEITH: Ugghghhhhh.

JACK: And Tender.

AUSTIN: No, Tender is a catgirl. It says it on the screen.

JACK: But I mean, y'know, even if you had to pick—

[ALI laughs]

KEITH: You could have 2.

AUSTIN: Oh right, I guess Tender could also have a different— Mmm, I actually don't know—

DRE: Twist: Tender's fursona is a dog.

AUSTIN: Right, but, but, but, but, but, but— I wanna be very clear, I just wanna be very— we talked about Tender deciding to be a catgirl, right?

KEITH: Oh, yeah.

JACK: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: That's like— part of that was—

ALI: No, she specifically didn't. That was Tender's thing.

AUSTIN: What?

ALI: Yeah!

AUSTIN: I misremember this entirely!

ALI: [laughing] Yup!

AUSTIN: Wh— ok. Did she not wanna be a catgirl?

ALI: She definitely wanted to be a catgirl, but she was also, like, a descendent of catgirls.

AUSTIN: Oh! That wasn't— ok, I knew, I knew she didn't— I knew it wasn't, like, VR catgirl. But I, I always assumed it was like, "Oh yeah, I became a catgirl."

ALI: No.

AUSTIN: I didn't know that she was born a catgirl. Ok.

ALI: [overlapping] We specifically— Episode 0 we discussed this, and I was like, "No, this is specifically—" We had animal people in COUNTER/weight—

AUSTIN: Yeah! Yeah, totally. Right.

ALI: And on a long enough timeline...

AUSTIN: Yes. Totally. Although I do like—

[ALI & ART talking uninterpretably in background]

ART: Sounds like she needs a fursona.

AUSTIN: Yeah, agreed.

ALI: [sighs] I'm gonna go last. [laughs]

AUSTIN: For now, let us know how many ears Tender has. Important question that did come in from a couple places, including Zoe.

JACK: [overlapping] Oh, god.

ALI: Shut the fuck up. No, whatever—

JACK: Oh, you don't have to answer that.

[Several people talking at once, ALI continues to talk underneath]

AUSTIN: Ok.

KEITH: Wait, are you saying there— is it two cat ears, or is it two human ears and two cat ears—

JACK: No, Keith, we do not need to—

[Several people laughing]

ALI: That is the question, [something hard to make out] right, Keith.

KEITH: [overlapping] I just wanna know how does it—

SYLVIA: We've already touched on body horror once this stream, we can do it again. It's fine.

KEITH: I— yeah, I just wanna know like, what would—

JANINE: No, that's the thing, it's—

KEITH: —prompt someone needing to know how many ears, 'cause I would've just assumed two forever.

ALI: Art.

JANINE: She just keeps extra ears in cases that Signet carries—

AUSTIN: Oh my god.

JANINE: —like 14 pairs of ears.

AUSTIN: 15? 14? 15? Somewhere around there?

JANINE: [laughing] Yes.

AUSTIN: Um, all right. So I need Fourteen Fifteen, I need Grand— no, I got Grand. I need Fourteen Fifteen, I need Echo, I need Tender, I need Gig. This is supposed to be a quickie.

KEITH: I don't wanna go yet. I have an answer but I wanna think of a better one.

AUSTIN: Oh my god.

JACK: A bird. I think a bird. And I fought a bird, which is like—

KEITH: Yeah.

JACK: I mean, I don't know if "fought" is the right word. A bird nearly killed me. Um, so I don't necessarily—

JANINE: That's how you become a bird.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Is that— really?

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

KEITH: Yeah.

JACK: Holy shit. I've been chased by a goose.

KEITH: [overlapping] That's why there's so many birds, 'cause of all people through all of time that have been killed by birds.

AUSTIN: [overlapping, laughing] Been killed by birds.

JACK: Um, I think I— I don't think I'd be a bird like, Kitcha Kanna. I think, I think like a stork or something. Y'know.

AUSTIN: That'd be cool.

JACK: Maybe the answer is like, different birds each time. So like, I guess like that bird that kills snakes, and like, a peacock or something, and like a—

AUSTIN: Really revealing your biases here, Jack. Your anti-snake biases.

[Several people laugh]

AUSTIN: Your first bird choice was a bird that—

KEITH: Yeah, my third bird would be a mongoose, that beautiful, beautiful bird.

[Several people laugh]

JACK: Oh, god. And then, and then— wait, so, and the Body Politic would be just ilke, a stork or a crane. And then what's the biggest bird? What's the beefiest bird?

KEITH: Uh, harpy eagle?

ART: Ostrich?

JACK: Uh, one of those—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: —would be, uh, Carcanet's Ironclad.

AUSTIN: What about a condor? That has a "c" in it. All right. Um, still need a few more here.

SYLVIA: I was thinking a gazelle? I wanted something fast.

AUSTIN & JACK: Ooooh.

JANINE: [overlapping] Mmmmmm.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: I wanted something that could run fast.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Like an ibex?



SYLVIA: No, not that one. Specifically not that one. Uh, I just don't like how that sounds, y'know?

AUSTIN: How about eye-bex?

SYLVIA: That sounds a lot better. Maybe. I'll think about it.

AUSTIN: Ok.

SYLVIA: Come back to me. We'll get back to this at the end of the show.

AUSTIN: All right, all right.

ART: I almost started telling an anecdote that I can't tell on mic. So, I'm having a great evening.

AUSTIN: Ok.

ALI: I have an answer.

AUSTIN: Tender.

ALI: Um, Tender as, uh, like a person is a sliding scale between Bone Bone the cat and Lizzo the fantastic rapper?

AUSTIN: Oh, sure.

ALI: But, um, Tender's fursona is more like Cat Jazz, the Instagram/Tumblr cat who's like, staring intensely at those pancakes.

AUSTIN: I don't know this.

JACK: The Russian cat?

ALI: You— you—

[Several people talking at once]

AUSTIN: Ohhhhhh. No, I don't know cat names.

JACK: [overlapping] The one looking at the blinis?

AUSTIN: I don't know names of cats.

ALI: Ok, fair.

JACK: Oh, it is looking at the blinis! Yeah!

AUSTIN: Yeah. This is a good one. I like this one quite a bit. Love it.

ALI: [overlapping] You've seen the video, right? Of the guy describing the picture?

AUSTIN: Yes? Yes. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

ALI: Ok.

JANINE: The one where he likes it 'cause he's like, "Oh, it's— I relate 'cause we all want— we all want them. He's got them & we all want to have them."

AUSTIN: [overlapping] We all want pancakes.

ALI: He's specifically like, "You think it's a, uh, happy expression, but it could be forlorn, 'cause it can't have them."

AUSTIN: Very true.

JACK: So is your fursona a different cat?

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: Yeah!

AUSTIN: It sounds like it is.

ALI: Uh huh.

ART: I don't think that works.

AUSTIN: It works.

ALI: It absolutely works.

AUSTIN: Cats are varied. There's lots of them.

ALI: Uh huh.

ART: But like— does that mean that someone's fursona could just be a different person?

JANINE: A tiger's fursona could be a lion.

AUSTIN: I don't like this.

JANINE: We can all agree to that, right?

ALI: We're moving on.

AUSTIN: We're moving on. Uh huh. Gig.

ART: I guess I can agree to that.

KEITH: Ok, so I figured out a better answer for myself. And I think that, uh, I think that Gig is some sort of, uh, is some sort of, uh, of weasel? Of some kind of— like a, like a ferret, or maybe, um, stoat. I like stoats.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

KEITH: Uh, and I've learned this: there's a kind of weasel called a least weasel, which is, I think, the real world equivalent of, uh, Richard Scarry's Lowly Worm.

[Several people laugh]

JACK: A least weasel?

KEITH: Least weasel.

JANINE: I think that's that little hoppy worm. That's— that's the little hoppy worm on Youtube.

KEITH: Yeah, it's the smallest—

AUSTIN: Look at him, he's a little baby!

KEITH: Yeah.

JACK: I would like the most weasel.

KEITH: I think that's— I think that's a polecat, the most weasel.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Jack, good news! Uh, "the least weasel, or simply 'weasel' in the UK..."

[Several people laugh]

JACK: Why— why did you guys look at that weasel and go like, “Ah, that is the least weasel.”

KEITH: That’s the least weasel. I, I do [indistinguishable]— it’s the smallest.

ART: [overlapping] We do have more weasels here.

JACK: You have more weasels?

KEITH: There’s a lot of kinds of weasels, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I, I guess so.

KEITH: There’s stoats, there’s polecats, there’s, uh, there’s ferrets.

JACK: The least weasel.

JANINE: Yeah, that whole *mustelid* family is a pretty robust one.

KEITH: Yeah, there’s a lot of different— I’m one of those.

SYLVIA: [overlapping] I was looking up a picture of Bangs’ weasel, and I thought it was two— I thought it was one weasel that was really buff, but it was just two together, uh, fighting.

JANINE: I’m sorry, did you call it the bangs weasel? Is that a thing?

SYLVIA: That’s what it’s called. The Bangs’ weasel. Uh—

JACK: Wait.

JANINE: Like it has, like, hair? Like it has bangs?

SYLVIA: No, it’s— as in it belongs to Bangs.

JACK: Bangs’.

JANINE: Oh.

ART: But also now, is it that weasel fucks?

SYLVIA: No.

AUSTIN: Hmm. We’re moving on.

JANINE: I want it to have, like, hair. Ok.

[AUSTIN laughs]

KEITH: Is it cool-looking?

AUSTIN: It looks all right.

ART: You could give any weasel bangs, I think.

KEITH: No, this hair's not long.

AUSTIN: [sighs] Siri writes in and asks Sylvia and Jack:

Did you think of your characters as disabled?

JACK: Yes. Absolutely.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You wanna speak to that a little bit?

JACK: Yeah! 100%. I think that I— the playbook that— starting from a playbook perspective of looking through the characters that were interesting to me, um, & this character being described that, that had a, like a chronic health condition, um, was really interesting, but something that was kind of central to my thinking about that character from the start was that that, that was something that had to be considered in the way that we thought about it and the way we talked— y'know, like, we could have just picked that character and go like, "Ah right, they're an assassin."

AUSTIN: Mhm. Right.

JACK: Um, and in the same way that in the post-mortem when you asked like, y'know, "What happens to Fourteen?" The most honest answer, I think, was the one that I gave—

AUSTIN: Er, in the finale. In the finale, not the, the—

ART: [overlapping] Post-mortem is now.

JACK: Did I say post-mortem?

AUSTIN: You did, you did. I was like, “Wait, did we— did I miss something?”

JACK: Oh. No. No, no, no. I think, though, that something that I wish I had been better at during the season was working more actively to examine the ways that Fourteen’s disability, uh, allows them to engage with the world—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: —and how the world around them engages with them. Um, like towards the end of the season, um, I got a great email being like, “Hey, here’s how you’re talking about Fourteen at the moment. Is this, is this how you intend to be talking about Fourteen and Fourteen’s disability?” And, and it, it got me thinking about the ways in which I wasn’t, and the ways in which that I had been. Um, y’know, we’re talking about parts of our character’s backstory that we wish we’d seen on-screen, and I think something that I wish I’d seen more of is the ways, positive and negative, that the Fleet responds to people like Fourteen.

AUSTIN: Mm.

JACK: Um, in a situation where these digital bodies and, and, um, virtual and real spaces are blurred, I would imagine that there would be broader response. What is happening to Fourteen, and what Fourteen is experiencing, is probably not something that is unique. Um, and we know in the world that there are people like Castlerose who are quite willing to continue to take advantage of that.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Y’know, Castlerose knows exactly what’s happening to Fourteen and—

AUSTIN: A hundred percent. Yeah.

JACK: —and is like, um, is like, “Right, well.”

AUSTIN: Is like the closest thing we’ve ever, we’ve ever had to a complete and total villain in a way that even, even Kitcha Kanna was not as cruel and— like, there’s a level of detachment that Kitcha Kanna achieves for himself by becoming a crime lord, by becoming, like, the head of this group inside of the Mirage. Castlerose has no problem just being personally the fucking worst. Y’know?

JACK: Yeah, totally! And I think— but I think something that I wish I had done was, was look in the other direction.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: And we got part of that in the sense that we, we know that the crew of the Notion cares about Fourteen and, and understands to an extent— or, not even pretends to understand, but is experiencing some fraction of what Fourteen's experiencing as they are. And while we got some measure towards talking about that with things like the fisherman saying, like, "Hey, keep notes!"—

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: —I don't know whether or not that goes as far as I wish that we had gone, in terms of talking about how Fourteen's disability, uh, affects them in the context of the Twilight Mirage. Um, and that's tricky. That's tricky to toe the line of how to tell that story, but it's something that I went into the season thinking, "This is something that I'd like to do," and came out of it thinking, "This is something that I did a bit. This is something that I did somewhat."

AUSTIN: Right. Totally. Um, always, always, always room for improvement on this stuff, and also room for figuring out strategies ahead of time instead of reactively, which is— there's always a degree of reaction, but I think it's an important— One of the most important lessons of the season for me is, like, identify— this goes back to the very first episode that we recorded that we ended up tossing, was like— or maybe it wasn't the first one that we recorded— but was like, "Oh shit, I should have looked closer at the Empath book, I should have seen this dilemma coming," which we've talked about at this point, that like, we didn't use the Empath playbook, uh, for, for, from the Veil, because— we ended up changing characters and re-recording an episode because there was an issue around it that deals with consent that none of us had anticipated. I think that same thing can go here, which is like, ok, we knew— we did know going in that we wanted to, to represent the Dying as someone with a chronic illness who we, we thought about that actively, and that we framed scenes around, and we thought about it that way, but there were definitely things where like, a little more research would've gone a long way. And even just having conversations that we did end up having. Like the second half of the conversation— the second half of the season going into the finale, you and I did have that conversation, Jack, which was like, sometimes even on-air, which was like, "Does this frame it in a good way? Does this frame it in a way that feels honest, but also feels thoughtful, um, and, and is not manipulative, and is, y'know, trying to explore it and not just leverage it?"

JACK: Yeah. I think the thing that sort of— that I tried to keep as a guiding principle was that I— we saw Fourteen in a very interesting time in their life, and a very interesting point in history, for the Mirage.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Um, and, uh, I didn't— or I tried really hard not to make the story one of someone who is losing or is getting further away from what they are.

AUSTIN: Mm.

JACK: Or is losing or getting further away from themselves.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: I didn't want it to be the story of somebody gradually becoming less. Um, and I think that by situating Fourteen in this place where we were able to tell stories about trying to make things grow, and trying to make things, um, trying to cultivate things, was important in terms of guiding my thinking of, "How can I create a character who is trying to discover things, and trying to add to themselves, and is trying to, y'know, take things on as they go?"

AUSTIN: Right. Uh, Sylvia, do you have thoughts on this?

SYLVIA: Yeah! No, for sure. Um, let me just figure out where to start, 'cause this is such a broad thing, especially with Echo here. I definitely— when we first started, um, the Honed playbook especially sort of— it was, it was a little weird when I just read it, like, like, out of nowhere. I'm trying to think of the right word, but like read it, like, uh, like sightread I guess is the closest thing I've got to what I'm trying to say.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Right, right, right.

SYLVIA: But just looking at the playsheets and seeing that one. And when I decided it, I wanted to try and do my best from having a character with a weaponized disability.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: Um, which is a thing that like, happens a lot in fiction, where it's like, that character has this, has whatever sort of condition, and it turns into, like— they make it into a weapon, or something. Like, for example, I think like, uh, what's-his-name in Game of Thrones who got his hand cut off is a big example of that, from what I know, is just— And I wanted to make sure that it wasn't treated like a superpower—

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: —that is a thing that is very tangibly affected this person's life, and is something that they struggle with, uh, because of the way people treat them based on how they were born and, uh, the fact that they're— in Echo's case specifically, they're, they don't interact with the world the same way everybody else does.

AUSTIN: Right.



SYLVIA: Specifically because they're missing their nanites, like, in fiction but also, like, um, I used a lot, just to get into stuff that influenced it, specifically, I used a lot of just like— I struggle a lot with learning disabilities? Like I've got several.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

SYLVIA: Uh, and it is obviously a much more minor version of, uh, this, but it is something that I struggled with in like, school, people being like, "Oh, I don't get why you can't see this the way other people do."

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: And taking that and blowing it up to being something much more bigger and much more intense is how, like— one of the ways that helped me make sure I was— or, at least tried to do a good job with this. Um, I also just wanted to make sure that like, it never felt, like, Echo being super strong was tied to them not having nanites.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: I wanted to make very clear that that was a separate part of their origin—

AUSTIN: [laughs] Right.

SYLVIA: —because there is nothing worse than being like, "Yeah, you were born different and that makes you super strong." It's not just lazy writing, it's also very othering in a way that people don't realize is really insulting.

AUSTIN: Yeah. One— one of the things that I was really appreciative from you, um, as a player was— so, one of the, one of the— uh, I have a friend named Jeff who's into disability studies, uh, as an, as an academic, and one of the things that, y'know, in speaking with Jeff about this stuff, um— One of the things that he really emphasized with me was the— I mean, there's a bunch of stuff ranging from disabilities as kind of societal category, stuff like that, it was a really, really useful and insightful conversation. But one of the big ones was like, you can and should show disabled people engaging with technologies to address their disability. Um, and that there could be a range of those things. Those things can change over the course of a story, um, and that the best way to handle, uh, y'know, having disabled characters in your story is, like with many marginalized identities, is to include multiple people. So there's different perspectives, right? Um, so on the one hand we have someone like Cascara, who is in a wheelchair through the entirety of the season, and we also have someone like Echo, who slowly uses different technologies, ranging from the eyepatch to the heads-up display, um, y'know, to the, the weird VR room on, in Sculpture City, to address the disability, or to, to, um, not to address the disability, but as living with disability, those are, those are technologies that they put to use. Um, I really loved the way you kind of foregrounded that stuff in your play, um, because it helped

remind me to think about the character's disability as, uh, something they were actively living with, and not just something on a character sheet, if that makes sense.

SYLVIA: Mhm!

AUSTIN: Um—

SYLVIA: I'm glad that came through.

AUSTIN: A hundred percent, a hundred percent! Um, all right, next question comes in from Thomas, who says:

What is your favorite decision another character made?

It's an open question, anybody who has something that jumps to mind.

ART: I've got one.

AUSTIN: Sure.

ART: Um, Signet deciding that things were gonna pop off at, uh—

AUSTIN: Oh, sure.

[JANINE, SYLVIA, & DRE laugh]

ART: Signet deciding that this was a drunken, yell-y holiday instead of a, uh, holiday classic.

AUSTIN: Instead of just a, uh, happy one.

ART: Or like, a, y'know, everyone snipes at each other and is kind of just salty holiday.

AUSTIN: Right, right. Yeah, that was a big one, and was absolutely a big decision that I think somehow took me by surprise, though even listening back to that whole episode is like, "No, no, there was a build, there was a build and a reveal."

KEITH: Mmm.

AUSTIN: Anyone else have one?

SYLVIA: This is kind of— like, it's not specific enough, so I'm sorry if it's a bit of a cop-out, but the mission where we were trying to free the, um— or, two weeks out and I've already forgotten all the names. The wandering ocean in space. Uh—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: We constantly kept escalating stuff, like everybody else kept just adding things, um, and Even obviously, for people who've listened, really escalated stuff at one point.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: God, that whole sequence.

SYLVIA: I thought like, dramatically I really loved what we did there, and I really loved how willing everybody was to just go for it.

AUSTIN: To like, play into their statuses, especially—

SYLVIA: [overlapping] Yeah. Yes!

AUSTIN: — with, with, uh, Even's, "Yo, I'm going to fucking kill some Advent, I'm obsessed with this," and Gig being like, "I'm reckless, I'm *reckless*," this is 100% what that looks like, this isn't a fun thing that's just like, "Oh, I'm goofy, I'm a goofy, reckless guy!" Like, no, no, no, no, no, no, this is what it means.

SYLVIA: Yeah, sincerely, Keith managed to like, really balance both the silliness and the scariness of that in a really—

AUSTIN: It's so scary! I was really scared!

SYLVIA: It's really awful!

KEITH: And how scary is it when someone's being silly while they're being scary?

AUSTIN: Mhm!

SYLVIA: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Like, please take this seriously! This is not good for anybody. And like, to face that down with, "No, actually, I'm like, like committed to being goofy about this in the worst possible moment," really functioned well in that sequence. Um, anybody else have an answer for this?

KEITH: I have one. This is another weird one, because it, um, we didn't know about it til afterwards, but I don't think I've ever been as surprised by anything in any role-playing game, uh, as I was when, uh, Art was like, "Oh yeah, Grand's robot at the party was a bomb."

[Several people laugh]

KEITH: “That was a bomb robot, and I—”

AUSTIN: That was so good.

KEITH: I have never— I don’t think I’ve ever been at as much of a loss.

[Laughing continues]

AUSTIN: Sometimes you just have a bomb.

ART: Thank you for not thinking that as a sloppy retcon, ‘cause I sort of didn’t tell anyone, and I didn’t write it down, so you all just had to believe me.

KEITH: No, no, I totally believed you.

AUSTIN: Ohhh, so good.

JANINE: Um, I, uh, I really liked that Tender didn’t tell Signet what she learned about the Waking Cadent—

AUSTIN: Fuck. [groans]

JANINE: ‘Cause, like, y’know, it’s like the easiest thing in the world, and I do this a lot, of just like, y’know, one of the core moves that we make is gathering information, and then there is, like, “Do you tell everyone?” and the answer’s like, “Yeah,” and then you move on.

AUSTIN: Yep.

JANINE: Um, so it’s really easy to, to just kind of not think about that, but that’s not really what people do a lot of the time, especially when it is a thing that’s like, really big and intense, and like, you wanna just like, sit with it a bit ‘cause it doesn’t feel real, y’know?

AUSTIN: Totally.

JANINE: Um, so the fact that Tender sat on that, it was— I admit I did like find it fun in a way to be mean, when it was your [indistinct as JANINE and ALI laugh]

ALI: Uh huh!

JANINE: Um, to like, to like, uh, grind my heel a bit into, into Tender’s, uh, back.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JANINE: But like, that—

[ALI laughs very hard]

JANINE: —that was a really interesting choice that led to a lot of real interesting stuff down the line.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I mean, like, it leads to that great, all the great stuff in the Temple of Pleuroma, where you're literally like, "No, I'm gonna fucking make you do it. Like I'm not giving you the out." And it's so fucking— it's so good.

ALI: It was— when I was editing that, at some point I was like, "Are Janine and Austin just dual-GMing me?"

[AUSTIN, JANINE, and ALI laugh]

ALI: Ok, sure.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ALI: But like, yeah, it was— I mean, I think, I'm gonna do the fake thing and do the opposite— it's not fake. So Janine really pressuring me on that was really good, 'cause it was like Tender not being able to talk about it, and eventually just being like, "But Signet, I expect you to take care of me."

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: That was like the best version of that episode.

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

ALI: Because like, there's the version of Tender who could be like, "I idolize you, and you know, I'm having a hard time with this." Like, that's not who that character ever would have been.

AUSTIN: Totally.

ALI: And at that point, like, Signet being cold— it just worked out. And I'm happy that we, we found—

JANINE: Mmhm.

AUSTIN: And like, primes Tender for the final act turn, right? Of like, “Oh, ok, I’m gonna have to do some work here,” and it becomes, “Oh, I’m gonna do all of the work that there is. I’m gonna, I’m just constantly gonna be doing this,” is a great pivot. I love it. Uh, any other lingering answers here?

JACK: I really liked the cascade of poor decisions Tender made during the milk arc.

ALI: Noooo.

AUSTIN: Oh my god, it’s so good.

JACK: Starting with— when Keith was saying, “I’ve never been as surprised on this show as when—

AUSTIN: Fuck.

JACK: “—Grand did the bomb,” the moment when Tender suggested that we should make the possibly world-ending gun, in an attempt to like, lure out the—

ALI: I never.

JACK: The fact— the fact that you floated a plan similar to that.

AUSTIN: I thought in that moment— I swear to god, I had to— I was like, “Oh my god, did they kill the people? Are they the people who kill the people?”

JACK: Right! Right! I was like, “Are we doing a Minority Report situation in which we are the, the guy?”

AUSTIN: The killers! Right!

JACK: Um, and that was just a situation I find myself in a lot. I think I talked about this in a Tips [at the Table] recently, is that I, Jack de Quidt, am just delighted by something that is happening, and my character is like, “I have never heard a worse idea—”

[AUSTIN laughs]

JACK: And I think that the milk arc, with Tender’s ridiculous gun plan, and then, and then Tender just going on a small beach holiday and revealing everything about our secret plan—

AUSTIN: It’s so good.

JACK: —was just like an extremely joyful session, uh, that Fourteen hated.

[AUSTIN and ALI laugh]

AUSTIN: Um, is anyone left? Dre? Dre and— I think maybe just you and me.

DRE: I enjoyed a lot of— I wasn't in this arc, but the arc where, um, the team had to just work with a bunch of kids that owned their own amusement park—

AUSTIN: God, that whole sequence, yes, yes.

DRE: I think I messaged you, Austin, I was like, "Oh my god, I am glad I am not in this, because like, this would fuck me up so bad." 'Cause I was still like, working with kids as my job.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

DRE: But like— aw, man, yeah, there were so many good moments where it's like, "What are— i's a kid. It's not like—

AUSTIN: Right!

DRE: "—another adult saying this sideways shit to you. It's just a kid, and this is what kids do."

AUSTIN: Yep. Totally. Um, my— I have two, I'm cheating, 'cause I'm gonna do one from— I'm gonna do two, I'm gonna two, because I wanna do two. That's why. Um, one is, um, the decision during the holiday special, um, in the dragon game, which is the Grand-Even-Signet game of Grand putting in the black stone in the final challenge, and saying, "I don't want this to succeed." Um, y'know, it still succeeded at a cost, um, but it was one of those moments it was like, "Ok, you're getting into who this character really is now, and taking the more risky and daring, and, and honest option," and I really, really, really appreciated a whole bunch. Um, I have a second one, and I'll remember it in a moment. Fuck. I forget it.

JANINE: A thing I'll— a thing I'll say, um, while you're thinking, is Art is, I think, maybe one of the best, if not the best of us at being honest in play. About what a character is doing even when it's like, "Oh, you're just— this is so bad, this is—"

JACK: The "Hadrian doesn't know he rolled a 1" situation?

JANINE: Yes, exactly.

AUSTIN: Oh, right, totally.

JANINE: He's like, very good, just like, very, very good— it's a very aspirational thing to see those bad choices play out sometimes, 'cause it's like, I wanna be that honest in play too.

ART: Thanks.

AUSTIN: Yeah, and it's hard to do that.

JANINE: Yes.

AUSTIN: Um, I forget what the second one is. If it comes back to me, I will, I will stop the tracks, stop the car in the tracks, and, and say it. But if nobody else has one, I will move on. All right. This one comes in from Tim:

What was your favorite name of the season?

JANINE: Waltz Tango (Cache).

AUSTIN: That's probably the right answer.

DRE: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Mmhm.

ART: Um, I'd like to— I'd like to, to—

AUSTIN: Oh, fuck you.

[ALI and KEITH laugh]

ALI: Wow.

ART: You don't know what I'm gonna say!

AUSTIN: What is it? What's the one you're gonna say?

ART: I'm gonna say Declan's Corrective.

KEITH: [overlapping] Do you wanna do it on 3? Wanna do it on 3?

AUSTIN: Oh, ok. I thought you were gonna say your Excerpt name.

ART: No!

AUSTIN: I thought you were in character as Grand Magnificent, and I thought you were gonna say the best name is the one I came up with!



ART: No, um, I just, I, Declan's Corrective has two "k" sounds in it, I like the way the "cl", it's just got real good mouthfeel all the way around. Um, also, I don't know the Excerpt name I came up with, I don't even have it written down as like, one thing, 'cause we were like, brainstorming on it—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: —I'd like, have to go to our—

AUSTIN: Our fans?

ART: Our DMs—

AUSTIN: Yeah, our DMs, or—

ART: —and like, stitch it together.

AUSTIN: Yes.

ART: Yeah, I don't even know that name.

AUSTIN: It's got mountains?

ART: I just know there's a period in the middle of it. If you're out there and you're tweeting about it, there's a period in the middle. Between "Grand" and "Magnificent", that's a full stop.

AUSTIN: Full stop.

JANINE: I thought that was a comma. Ok.

AUSTIN: No. Not a comma.

ART: Yeah, it's two sentences.

AUSTIN: Two sentences, it's very important that we did it with two sentences. Uh, we had that—we did have that conversation. It is "Peace returned to the valley, the rivers flowed clear and blue, the mountains resplendent, grand. Magnificent light shone on the diligent and the penitent alike." It's a good name. It's a good name. Uh, anyone else have favorite names?

ALI: Public Person.

DRE: [overlapping] Kitcha Kanna is a good name. Oh, I'm sorry.

ALI: No, no.

AUSTIN: Kitcha Kanna, Public Person.

ALI: Kitcha Kanna, yeah, those are—

AUSTIN: Public Person, I missed— I really wanted Public Person to be in the show, and it just, like, never lined up that way. Um, he just like— there's a limit to, like, "How can I get this information broker into the show, outside of making him, like, really just throwing him into the game in a way that just doesn't feel honest?" And so I never did. Again, maybe he'll show up in a side game? But he was absolutely supposed to be the Paisley Moon of this season. Like, a hundred percent. Um, and just never, never got the—it happens. That's how it goes sometimes. Um—

JACK: I liked, um, I liked Figure A. Um, Figure A is a name that is like, clean enough conceptually— it's a very, it's a very straightforward name.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: Um, but it's one of those names that as soon as you see it, you're like, "Ah, damn, why didn't I think of that! That's great!"

AUSTIN: It was—

JACK: "Why can't we have more Figure A?"

AUSTIN: I know. One day.

JACK: Um, and I also—

AUSTIN: We'll get like a Figure B and that'll be their, their great-great-great-great—

JACK: Yeah, exactly.

AUSTIN: I don't know. Maybe we won't, but.

JACK: Um, there was another one, which is, um— I'm looking at a list of NPC names, and I saw it, and then I lost it. Um, I like, uh, I like Lily Lysander a lot, just 'cause of the alliteration.

AUSTIN: Mhm. A lot of alliteration this year.

JACK: Oh! I like all the fucking— my favorite running characters are the Castlerose assassins who keep coming back as different 21st century or 20th century musicians.

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

JACK: The fact that we could have a character called Charles Mingus, and the fact we could have a character called, like, the Thin White Duke, and stuff like that—

AUSTIN: Mmhm. Was very fun.

JACK: A lot of fun.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Um, all right let's—

JANINE: We had good family members too. Um—

AUSTIN: Oh.

JANINE: Echo and Ballad are two great, uh—

AUSTIN: Yes. All of Echo's family, that's all, all Sylvia's naming conventions, all super, super good.

JANINE: Yeah. Keen Forester Gloaming and Gray Gloaming?

AUSTIN: Yeah, Keen Forester Gloaming, Gray Gloaming—

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Gray spelled with an "a" and an "e" interchangeably—

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: —because I can never commit. Um, Keen Forester Gloaming is the most fun I've ever had at saying words since Territory Jazz. I love saying, [slips into Keen's voice] "Keen Forester Gloaming." Like it just, just— and a thing I realized very recently is that Chief Intercessor of the Rapid Evening, uh, and Primary Observer of the Twilight Mirage is just his Excerpt name. It just is. Like, he says it without it meaning anything, 'cause it's just a verse to him. Um, it's just like a— it's just words at some point. Um, and I fucking love— he's my, he's my favorite character.

JACK: [overlapping] What about the— what are the marks around in his Excerpt name?

AUSTIN: Uh, probably—

JACK: [overlapping] Intercessor?

AUSTIN: I think it's two ways. It's either Intercessor, or because this is the season of doubles, it's Mirage. Right?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: He is, he is, he is Mirage. He is like, "Is he there or isn't he there?"

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, "Where is his loyalty at?" All of that stuff, I think, is a hundred percent.

JACK: Excerpt of the worst Divine ever made.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. A hundred percent. A hundred percent. Um, um, shoutouts to *Brokeback Mountain*, which is where his accent comes from. Which is— like, I just watched *Brokeback Mountain*, and was like, "I need to learn this Montanan accent." And it's not exactly that, but that is the 100 percent— I think it's like, Heath Ledger's accent in *Brokeback Mountain*. Um, are we ready for the next, the next, ah, question?

ART: Shoutout to Ang Lee.

AUSTIN: Shoutouts to Ang Lee.

SYLVIA: Shoutouts to Ang Lee.

AUSTIN: This one comes in from Claire:

Over the course of the season, many of the player characters hinted at attraction, and even romantic feelings towards each other and NPCs. However, by the end of the finale, many of these connections went unaddressed to varying degrees, even during the character's epilogues. Were these questions purposefully left unanswered, or do the players have personal feelings about how those relationships might have continued, or ended?

I'm leaving this to y'all, for the most part.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: That's a laugh from Ali.

DRE: [overlapping] Even figured it out, so, I figured it out, so I'm good.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, Dre, Dre, you and Cascabel, you and Casca— you and me, we did all right. Like—

[ALI and DRE laughing]

AUSTIN: We on record, so— Um, but yeah, Ali you were laughing. Is it because you have like, three romantic leads this season? Romantic connections this season? Is that right? Open, Wind's Poem, and then I think a lot of people see Fourteen Fifteen—

ALI: Ok. Sure.

AUSTIN: —as a potential paramour, right?

ALI: Yeah. I, I know there's a lot of Tender/Fourteen fans out there—

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

ALI: —and I would like to issue a public apology [laughs] for having to like, the most potent player character ship in the show, when the entire point of my character was non-commitment.

AUSTIN: Right. Yeah.

ALI: Um, that was the whole thing. [laughs] Um, so I apologize for that. Um, the, the like guiding, like, light that I have for everyone is you can either read Fourteen and Tender's final actions as like, this horrible breakup—

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: —or you can read it as like, this amazing Gift of the Magi situation? [laughs]

SYLVIA: Oh my god.

ALI: Fourteen is like, "I kept the Mirage so we can live together, in the dirt in the Mirage." And then Tender's like, there's like— "I gave Anticipation away so we can live forever in technology!"

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ALI: It's like, "Oh, ok."

JACK: It's like, "Ahh, you sold your watch strap to buy my thing." Ah, god.

AUSTIN: Yeah—

JACK: Yeah! I don't know. Like, wh— on the one hand, what Austin said earlier, about like, "Yo, you can just do whatever you want with headcanons and things. Like, just go right ahead. Uh, in fact like, go right ahead, with blessings." But like, I think, for me, Fourteen was always a character who was interested in cultivating relationships with people that, perhaps because of their condition, or perhaps just because of the person that they were, was about finding a connection with people that wasn't necessarily romantic.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Um, we have known Fourteen to be, uh, like a hell of a flirt, but I think especially in the case of Fourteen, I think that is sometimes independent from wanting to pursue romantic relationships with people. Like, you've talked about this on the show in the past, I think a lot of us have talked about this on the show in the past, with, um, Scout Harding.

AUSTIN: Right. Yup. From *Dragon Age: Inquisition*. Yeah.

JACK: [overlapping] Um, *Dragon Age: Inquisition*. And how Scout Harding is this incredible character who has this rapport with people, but also, that relationship is, is a friendship. And it's very important to me, coming from video games where we don't see this relationship very often, and when we do, it's often not told very well; it's very important to me to be able to tell stories about people who are close friends, and the intimacy that is involved in a close friendship, that isn't necessarily a romantic relationship. Um, I have friends in my life who I value tremendously, and who I love very much, and who I have a degree of personal intimacy with, but that is not a—that is not a romantic intimacy. And I value those friendships, and I value those relationships a great deal, and it's important to me to be able to go some way towards depicting those kind of characters in the stories that we tell.

AUSTIN: Who are absent from mainstream media all the time, right? Like—

JACK: And when you see them, you're like—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: "This is great," 'cause like, 'cause like I think it's a relationship that a lot of people have, and a lot of people experience it. Which means that when we see it on-screen, or when we see it in the stories we experience, we're like, "This is fucking great! I know, I know someone like this."

AUSTIN: And I should note that like, this, this wasn't— we're not having this conversation now like, "Wow, I'm glad that worked out." We had this talk internally, in the same way that—

JACK: Sure!

AUSTIN: —Dre and I had the, like, “Oh, we should confirm, we’re both on the— are we both on the same page with Even and Cascabel?” And we said yes, and we did that. In the same way, the three of us— y’know, uh, Jack, Ali, and I talked about the Fourteen/Tender relationship— like, it’s not often that we wanna do, make decisions off-mic, but there is nothing but, uh, uh, value in adding the safety mechanism—

JACK: Sure.

AUSTIN: —and the care in discussing romantic entanglements and questions about character relationships, y’know, away from the table, or out of character, and having those safe conversations about what players want as individuals, um, and not just, y’know, pushing— making that, that decision have to happen on the fly, um, at the table in the moment, because in the moment there are situations that can end up pressuring players into making decisions that they don’t wanna make, um, and it’s so important to make sure that consent, and, and y’know, openness and conversation around this stuff, um, is part and parcel with the way that play happens at the table. Um, and that’s not to say that stuff can’t happen in the spur of the moment, right? Like that there also can’t be a sort of love connection happening between two characters, an NPC and a PC, or a PC and a PC, or whatever that’s happening. But what’s important is that at some point, you make— you take that step and go, “Ok, wait. Can we— do we wanna show this on-screen? To what degree do we wanna show it on-screen? Is this a thing that we’re interested in at all, or is this going in a different direction?” And like, those conversations are so valuable to me as a GM.

ART: All right, I have two things to say in response to that.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: One: Sylvia and I never had a conversation about Echo and Grand—

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: That’s true.

ART: —and I’m feeling very called out right now.

AUSTIN: Uh, we didn’t— I didn’t know it existed until, until we sat down to— so like, I knew there was a little bit of it early in the season. But then, as you pointed out, y’all weren’t on a call together ever again. Until the— until Patina, or downtimes, and then like, y’all didn’t have conversation time there. And then when Sylvia said the words, “What has Echo done all season

long? Save Grand,” my whole heart exploded in joy. I was like, “Oh, shit!” And that was the last recording. We— like, that was it, right? So—

ART: Yeah, I— uh, we might’ve come back for the epilogues, and I—

AUSTIN: Yeah, that’s true.

ART: I think that’s part of it? It’s like, I think it’s ambiguous ‘cause we nev— like, it’s purposely unanswered ‘cause I always want there to be space for people to, like, do what they want, especially when it’s ending—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: —like, I feel, like, very little satisfaction in bringing some big, important plot point 20 minutes before I never deal with these characters again in my life, like—

[AUSTIN laughs]

ART: Um, especially something like that. Like, y’know, uh, all of these are for people, for other people now?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART: Um, that’s differing from my second point, that I reference at the beginning of this, uh, of my answer, which is that I’m very mad that Mulder and Scully ended up together on the *X-Files*, because I thought that was a good, functional, professional relationship ruined by this, like, clamoring for these two coworkers to have sex with each other.

JANINE: That’s how I feel about *Bones*.

AUSTIN: Right, sure.

JANINE: Same thing.

ART: Yeah, I—

KEITH: Art, you’re right, but they did spend, like, five seasons telegraphing it. Like, they—

ART: I don’t think they spent the first season telegraphing it.

KEITH: Uhhh—

AUSTIN: Mmm, I watched that first season pretty recently. They fuck in the first season.



ALI: Mmhm.

JACK: Welcome to I Want to Believe, a new podcast from the Friends at the Table network—

[Several people laugh]

SYLVIA: Don't joke, I would love that.

KEITH: Yeah, same.

ALI: Please.

ART: Anyway, I think I like the *X-Files* better in a world where that relationship doesn't exist. Um, and yeah, sorry, sorry that I wasn't on more arcs with Sylvia.

SYLVIA: Yeah, do I have to apolo— I guess I'm sorry too? I don't know.

AUSTIN: Those aren't apologies, no—

KEITH: Yeah! I want written apologies.

[Several people laugh]

AUSTIN: Oh my god.

AUSTIN: Do you have— yeah, do you have thoughts? Before we move on from Grand/Echo, and sort of—

SYLVIA: My whole thing was I just kinda wanted to leave all that stuff—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: —vague, 'cause I think it's more fun for people to fill in the gaps.

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

SYLVIA: I never looked at, um, what we were doing with, like— I never wanted Echo's story to be like— like, I'm fine with romance being an element, but I never wanted it to be a love story, I wanted it to be about someone figuring out how to be their own person?

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: And, as like, I was— I very much wanted it to be, like, yes, character relationships interact with that, but I didn't want it to be like, "And then, they kissed this hipster dude at the end of the show, and everything was fixed." Like, like, I didn't really think that— like, I didn't realize it til around the time everyone else did, and I was like, "Oh yeah, that does click."

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

SYLVIA: But then also, I was like, "Yeah, well, y'know."

AUSTIN: Totally.

ART: Yeah, and I've seen better ideas in fanworks in the last week than I ever would've come up with.

[AUSTIN laughs]

SYLVIA: Yeah, that's also, yeah.

ART: You're all better at this than I am, just have, have fun.

AUSTIN: Signet, or, uh, Janine.

JANINE: [laughs] There's an elephant in the room here that I think will be addressed in the next question, so I'll leave that, but the thing that I will say here is that, um, I remember at some point, Austin, you made some comment about, like, flirting— about Signet flirting with Sho or something, and I remember I said like, "Ew, no!" Like I said something to that effect, because like, specifically because that's like, to me, a more maternal relationship—

AUSTIN: Right. Which I had not seen.

JANINE: Yeah, the thing—

AUSTIN: Or, it wasn't Sho, it wasn't Sho, it was Blueberri Jin.

JANINE: Right! It was Blueberri Jin, you're right.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JANINE: Um, and that's a thing that also I feel like we don't get into too often in this show, and part of the reason I wanted to play a, a, in hindsight cartoonishly older character, um, in a sense, not a physical sense, obviously, but you know. I wanted to play like, this sort of mom-like figure, who still had some romantic aspect to her, like still had, um, you know, physical attraction and

stuff like that, because mom characters often don't, but also I wanted to have those kinds of relationships as well, the kinds of just like—

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: "I just wanna help you become a fully realized person," or, "I just wanna see you— I wanna see you well-situated."

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: That kind of thing. Um, like, and I wanted, if that went well or poorly, to not be a thing tied to relation— to romance, but a thing tied to, like, responsibility, and like, parenting and mentorship, and that kind of thing. Um—

AUSTIN: Right. And whether or not that was a success or not.

JANINE: Yes. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Versus, versus it being, and I'm using reduced here as shorthand, but it being reduced to, or only caught up in, only described as a romantic failing, or a romantic, y'know, relationship gone wrong.

JANINE: Mmhm.

AUSTIN: Totally. Um, all right, any other thoughts here? Um, I think the last one is probably Gig and Kent, um, which again, we just like— Gig just, as a character, turned out, was not feeling those feelings in the same way. Like, enjoyed Kent's company, right, but was not—

KEITH: [overlapping] Yeah, yeah, sure.

AUSTIN: —was not anything else. Which also happens.

KEITH: Right. And then, you know, I feel like that one was actually pretty resolved, 'cause I—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: I invited Kent to come with, to come to the Qui Err, and Kent was like, "No, I just, you know, signed all this paperwork with Seneschal's Brace—"

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yep.

[KEITH laughs]

KEITH: It's like, "Ok, then, bye."

AUSTIN: Gotta go. Yeah. Um, anything else on this, before we move on?

ALI: I, very briefly, just wanna say that Waltz Tango (Cache) was like the biggest—

AUSTIN: Oh my god. I forgot about, how did I forget about that.

ALI: Um, it was just the biggest test for me as a person, like—

[AUSTIN laughs]

ALI: —removing character affection from my own affection. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ALI: It was such a Maelgwyn situation.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Every time Waltz— I just want everyone to— I need a supercut of any time Waltz Tango (Cache) is on-screen with Tender, and you can— if this was an animated show, you might be able to hear Tender purring. Just like—

[Several people laugh]

AUSTIN: "Won so many awards!"

ALI: [laughing] Stop it, specifically, I don't remember what we were talking about this, I think it was just like, in Discord, but I was like, "I think Tender like, carries around a Waltz Tango (Cache), like, DVD & she really wants him to sign it, but like, can't ask him," and that was like, if a director was telling me, "Ali, this is what you're doing in this scene," that was the exact emotion I was chasing every time they were in a room together.

KEITH: Wait.

ALI: Like, "You're all— I watch all your stuff, you're so great, but we're also co-workers."

KEITH: Well, hold on, hold on, hold on.

AUSTIN: Oh my god.

KEITH: What is the DVD of?

[AUSTIN and ALI laugh]

KEITH: He's a mercenary. So the bounties—

ART: You've never seen the *A-Team*—

AUSTIN: Yeah! Uh huh.

KEITH: Ok. That's fair. I have not seen it.

AUSTIN: [groans] Waltz is—

ART: Oh, you should see the *A-Team*. Like, just a couple episodes. It's not, like, good, but it's an important—

[KEITH and AUSTIN laugh]

AUSTIN: Oh, it's so good. I— it's so fucking good. All right. I'm gonna move on. 'Cause the—

KEITH: You talking about the *A-Team*, or the Waltz Tango (Cache) thing?

AUSTIN: The Waltz Tango (Cache) thing. He seems all right, he seems good. All right, I'm moving on. From Bea, who says:

What does marriage look like in the Twilight Mirage? Were there cool traditions that were different on different planets of ships?

I imagine yes. I imagine yes for that second part, but I'm curious— Janine, it sounded like you had an answer for this one all queued up in your mind.

JANINE: Belgard and Signet are definitely in a marriage. I don't wanna say— it's— I don't wanna say they're married, because that's like, a really specific, um, mental association, but they're in a marriage, like, they are— they're—

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, the podcast where “they're not married, they're in a marriage” is a meaningful distinction.

[Several people laugh]

AUSTIN: And I mean that. It's not sarcasm.

JANINE: It is! Right? Like, they are partners in the sense that they didn't have, I mean, they definitely didn't have a ceremony other than whatever ceremony there is when you become an Excerpt, or did become an Excerpt way back when, in the—

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: —the olden times. Um, they don't like, kiss on the mouth or whatever, 'cause Belgard doesn't really have one, but they are— y'know, they are in a partnership, they are— At every opportunity that I had, I tried to describe them in this, like—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: —comfortable-old-married-couple way of like, they have this thing and it works, and they are closer to each other than anyone else in the world, and like, that's not a thing— I'm not dancing around that, I— that is, to me, they are like, partners in every, every sense. Um, and then also, just like, Signet has other, has other needs—

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: —and she goes and pursues those, and Belgard is fine with that, and Belgard does shit too, and I— like, Belgard doesn't go to brothels, but Belgard I'm sure has needs, like social needs and whatever there are else to fulfill.

AUSTIN: Right, right, right.

JANINE: But I wanna be explicit about that because I think that that is part of what marriage can look like. I don't— I also don't think that's the case with every Excerpt and every Divine.

AUSTIN: Right, that's like, you said they had the ceremony of becoming, Signet becoming Belgard's Excerpt. But that is not a marriage ceremony for some other Excerpts and uh, uh Divines.

JANINE: [overlapping] Mmhm, exactly.

AUSTIN: Some of them are partners in different ways, and some of them historically, and especially in the Divine Free States now, are not that at all. Right?

JANINE: Mmhm.

AUSTIN: Which is interesting. So. Awesome. Any other marriage thoughts? A lot of people wanted to know about Gray and Demani's wedding, which I think is just, in my mind, is just the entire Brink becomes like the— picture a truck stop in the sky, but then picture that that truck stop is run by like, cool, two cool queer ladies and their like, punk son, and they just redecorate the whole thing— You know what it is? It's— they— it looks like the place that Art got married. Um, which, Art do you wanna describe that? The, the location? The venue?

ART: Yeah, um, it's a big, warehouse-y antique store in Culver City, in Los Angeles.

AUSTIN: Yeah!

ART: It's, um, they do a lot of work to make it a wedding venue, it's very crowded—

AUSTIN: Like, it's just an antique shop. Literally is just an antique shop.

ART: Yeah, all the stuff still had price tags, some of our guests stole geodes because they thought they were wedding favors.

[Several people chuckle]

AUSTIN: Are you for real??

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Why didn't we— why didn't we steal geodes?

ART: Like two—

JACK: Austin, put the geodes back.

[AUSTIN laughs]

ALI: I— I saw—

JACK: God, that's a good fucking wedding.

ALI: Yeah, I snuck into an unauthorized zone, but I didn't steal anything, so I'm not—

JACK: Didn't we— we found something really frightening, didn't we, Ali, or did we— we didn't find the clown—

ART: Did you see the clown ride?

JACK: No, no, you were worried that we'd see the clown.

ART: Oh my god.

JACK: We saw like a suit of, a suit of— we saw like, uh, like a gauntlet, like an iron gauntlet—

ALI: Yeah, we—

JACK: —that was mounted to a sort of wall plate, right?

ALI: Mmhm.

AUSTIN: Ah, Maelgwyn.

[Several people laugh]

[ALI says something indistinct at around 1:32:37]

KEITH: [overlapping] I wanna know how bad is it like— ‘cause it’s one thing for there to be a scary clown, but it’s another thing for the clown to be so scary that someone is worried just that you’ve seen it.

JACK: No, Art was worried!

ART: [overlapping] It was so horrifying. We had— we— it was there the— we went to the walkthrough the week of, and they were like “What antiques would you like out for your guests?” and that’s where I had to be like—

JACK: Not the clown!

ART: “No, put that tuba out,” and that clown was so horrifying that we had to like— we talked about it when we saw it, and then at the end we had to be like, “This can’t be here,” and then when we left I had a separate conversation with a separate person at the wedding planner, like, “If you get here and anyone can see that clown, it’s a— it’s an emergency!”

[Several people laugh]

AUSTIN: So I think all of—

[JACK says something indistinct at around 1:33:18]

ART: Get that clown off the floor!

AUSTIN: I think—

JACK: We did not see the clown.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I’m sad. Mm, mm, I’m sad. I would rather live in the life— mm— Yeah, I am. I would rather live in fear for the rest of my life having seen that clown, than to not have—



JACK: What if Ali and I had come back, and been like, “Austin!”

AUSTIN: “We are scarred, because we have seen the clown.” Um—

KEITH: “It said someone here won’t make it out!”

[Several people laugh]

AUSTIN: God.

ART: I mean, if you’re in LA, and you wanna go down to, uh—

JACK: Oh, god.

ART: —to Big Daddy’s Antiques, um, I bet that’s still there. I bet no one bought that \$2000 clown— [audio breaks up]

AUSTIN: [laughs] Art, you broke up. Did the clown get you? Art?

KEITH: Oh my god, oh my—

DRE: Oh, fuck.

AUSTIN: Art?

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh my god! I think—

ART: No, I’ve been here, I just wanted to try to fool you a little bit.

[Several people laugh]

AUSTIN: Um—

DRE: To fool a bit, or did the clown take your voice?

AUSTIN: I think the clown stole Art’s— yeah.

KEITH: Well, here’s where— it has to go in the wiki. Here’s where no one’s ever sure if it’s really Art.

AUSTIN: From now, it could be the clown.

KEITH: From now forward.

JACK: I am excited to—

ART: [overlapping] You'll never know!

[Several people laugh]

JACK: I am excited to hear what this clown thinks about the weird, utopian sci-fi season, having just embodied the body of the man who did it.

AUSTIN: Ohh! Um, so I think— I think the, the Gray/Demani wedding is like that. There's no clown, they keep the clown away, but it's lots of cool antiques, and, um, stuff that the truckers have brought through, and stuff that they— I think they just pick— I think that the various truckers that come through the Brink are like, "Oh yeah, I found this on this planet, I picked this up from a little souvenir shop," and it ends up just naturally kind of looking like the cool version of a TGI Friday's in there? Where it's genuinely filled with like, knick-knacks from the worlds? Um, and not just like they hired a decorator to do that? Um, and then, imagine that, but with some cool flowers. I think that there are flowers in the Twilight Mirage that look like dried flowers, but are alive all the time, um, and can grow looking like dried flowers. So, there's a lot of that—

JANINE: I think there are dried flowers in our world that are like that.

AUSTIN: Ok, sure, I believe that. They're also in the Twilight Mirage. Because it's cool. Um, and I think everybody comes, and it's a nice time, and, uh— but I suspect it's weird, because it's not— that is not a Divine Fleet wedding, it's a— I think they're in the unique and important position of like, needing to invent their own wedding, their own wedding traditions, because they've left the Principality of Kesh behind, right? And they're not quite— they're part of the Twilight Mirage, but they're not part of Seneschal's Brace, or the DFS, or Qui Err, or the Qui Err Coalition, and so they're in that unique and important place of like, "Let's invent stuff that we wanna do at every wedding, and every, like, y'know, personal, uh, um, milestone." Um, fill in the gaps there. Otherwise, I'll just write a fanfic for my own show in here. Um, any other wedding thoughts? [pauses] Cool, cool traditions. I guess here's one, 'cause we already set up it a bit. Even, Dre, you set up that like, families are not, uh, in the— they're not just like, two parents, um— Is there something like a, a marriage in, in the *By*— or, not the *By-and-By*, in the, um, the *Ever-Forward*, or is it something else?

DRE: Yeah, probably. 'Cause I mean, I think that like, there probably are people in the *Ever-Forward* who opt for, you know, what we think of as a, like, traditional monogamous relationship.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: There's probably just as many, if not more, people who have various forms of, you know, polyamorous relationships or open relationships or, you know, um— As far as like, traditions or, you know, or like ceremonies or things like that, I would imagine that maybe, you know, there probably isn't as much of like a formal— I'm thinking of like, Western culture, the differentiation between like a ceremony and the reception?

AUSTIN: Sure.

DRE: The *Ever-Forward* does not have a ceremony, but it definitely has a reception.

AUSTIN: Huh. That's interesting, I like that a lot. Um, is that— well, y'know, let that inform your thoughts in the future. Uh, all right. I'm gonna, I'm gonna move on. Um, speaking of utopia, and the practices that build them, and religion, and tradition, and ritual, this one comes in from Riley, who says:

It was an interesting choice to make the main utopia of this season a theocracy. What were some of your goals and concerns going into that, and how do you feel like that aspect of the fleet, and other religious and pseudo-religious groups, turned out in play?

Um, thoughts here. Because I think a couple of people, I think both Signet and Tender both obviously are people who have like, deep connection to the church, and who have spoken about everything ranging from Catholicism to, to, y'know, a number of other religious traditions. Um, but I'm curious if anybody at the table has more thoughts on, on this.

JANINE: Um, so, I think I was really clear from the get-go pretty much like, from character creation, um, and also in a lot of the, like, Q&A streams we've done since we started Twilight Mirage, that I wanted Signet to be a character that supported the idea that faith could be a beneficial thing in a person's life—

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: —and not just a sign that they were, like, ignorant or gullible or whatever, because I think that's the message you often get, um, especially in a lot of like, nerd-focused media— nerd-focused media's a terrible phrase, what the hell—

AUSTIN: I know what you mean.

JANINE: You know what I mean! [laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: Big nerd.

JANINE: [overlapping] And— yeah. That character choice—

ART: [overlapping] On the Joe Rogan Experience—

AUSTIN: Oh my god. [groans twice]

[KEITH laughs]

JANINE: Um—

DRE: Good post-mortem, everybody, we're done here.

[AUSTIN laughs]

JANINE: [groans] Uh, that character choice was a choice that I was making for a character and wasn't, like, me thinking, "Oh, this utopia season should be about a theocracy." But I think it got to a good place where it sort of, with Signet, the sort of— the way things go for her, I think, underscores the idea that like— an idea I agree with, which that is if you rely on faith being institutionalized, it's gonna be broken, and it's gonna fuck shit up; versus, if your faith is a personal thing that you can weigh against what is happening in the world around you versus just making blanket choices based on how you think things should work, or the way things used to work, or whatever. Um, that's how you get more actual benefit, more actual positivity out of it. Um, I think we got there with that, but it's a little hard to say.

AUSTIN: I think it got fractured in a real way, right? Like, I think—

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Which is intentional, right? I—

JANINE: Yes. It should.

AUSTIN: Y'know, I wasn't the word "schism" around without thinking what it would connote, right? Um, faiths change and break over time, and we hit a spot in which, as I say in the kind of faction part of the finale outro, we started with one Divine Fleet and we kind of ended with four. We ended with, with completely different interpretations of faith, um, or that specific faith, on top of other ideas around faith, from churches we didn't see, or only saw echoes of, to, to churches that we never saw on-screen at all, but, y'know, knew the name of or whatever. And it was, y'know, I think it's easy to look at the show and think of past seasons, and see it as being a show that is deeply anti-faith, and anti-religion? Um, there is a lot of scepticism around god, and

around power, and around the idea that the universe is created in a way that cares about us, right? Like in the broadest sense, you look at something like Hieron, and Hieron— in Hieron, it is simply true that the universe doesn't care about us, and the people who were in positions to protect us and save us, and who we worshipped, have failed to do that. And that is not a thing I regret in any way, but I was interested in telling a story that started in a different place, and then explored honestly from there how faith could fit into people's— into the lives of people, and how it could unify some people, and how it could help people find definition for themselves. Playing Sho was so rewarding, um, because she was someone who was deeply honest in her faith, who had to confront the failures of the church, and who went to step forward, still strong in her belief in the place of faith in her life, and the place of a church in her life, a place of organized religion in her life, um, but had to say, "Ok, how do I deal with the fact that there are people in this organization— in the organizational side of my faith that have failed me?" Um, and it was really rewarding to check back in with her in the second half of the show to show how she had grown and changed. So that's, that's, for me, like definitely the kind of through-line. Um, Tender, as someone who, in the last episode, said you were a Candidate who chose an Excerpt name 'cause you read the Bible— you wanna speak to this a little bit?

ALI: A little bit. I, um— so, the foundation of Tender originally was like, to have a character that was— had a very close relationship to their faith, but had a broken relationship with like, the, um, the structure of that faith.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: Like, the church, essentially. Um, and like, I— when I initially had like, conceived of Tender, that was a further relationship? So like, I think I struggled a little bit finding the footing of like, how to best show this, but she's also working as an agent for, essentially, the Divine Fleet?

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: Um, and like, I— you know, there's a range of the, the sort of things that she chases, and like, the way that that relationship becomes really unhealthy—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: —and also is chasing the thing that's gonna make her happy. Um, and I think that's, like— what I said before with her not being able to commit to anything, y'know, once you put like, the thing that she loves on the table, it's just like, "Ok, well, this is the things she's gonna try to make work." Um, whereas all other opportunities she's either like, kind of pushed people away, or kind of been like, "Y'know, I feel warmly towards you, but I'm still gonna treat this with distance."

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: Um, things like that. And I just kind of tried to have that echo throughout, um, and I think that's how interesting the, like, Signet-Tender-Cadent-Divine kind of was, because there were a lot of characters who had like, been damaged by the way that the Fleet was declining.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: And the responses to that, in terms of like, uh, Signet, and the, uh, Sho rejecting the Cadent in a big way, and being like— I don't wanna speak for either of you, but being like, y'know, "You were useless then—"

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: "—you're not really being as progressive as you could be now, what are you really doing?" and Tender being like, "Well, yeah, she spent years in this position and no one listened to her, and like, she's capable of doing this. Just let her do it, let her grow as a person." And I think that her, her initially being like, "I don't wanna recreate the Fleet with the Waking Cadent, 'cause I don't agree with this, but I also have this love for what this faith is," ended up being an ending that I was satisfied with, so I was glad we kind of got there—

AUSTIN: Yeah!

ALI: We got to see all these different versions of that.

AUSTIN: This reminds me that the other choice that I loved was the end of the heist game, the heist game from Follow, um, in which the end of it, where Jack is playing the Cadent Under Mirage, and Tender is playing Tender— Ali is playing Tender—

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Um, and Jack makes the decision as the Cadent to, um, defer to Tender with what to do with Robin's Song, and with Open Metal, and kind of says like, "Oh, I'm—", who basically says, "I'm basically a figurehead. Like, you are my right hand. I will trust in you, I have faith in you." And then Tender makes that decision to be like, "All right, well, I'm fuckin' kill this guy."

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Um, is this moment of like— that reshapes the rest of that season for me, right? Like, I had been playing the Cadent as someone who was, um, naive, but I didn't want her to seem incapable. And what Jack made me realize was that incapable— not being capable does not have to look like, you know, being foolish or not, not knowledgeable, or not having the potential to do things well; it can just look like indecision, or a refusal to be the one to make the decision. And so, we end up getting the whole arc of the Cadent Under Mirage over the rest of the show, in which she becomes someone who wants to make decisions. But also then, it let me decide—

we'll get into this again in the next question, I think, but so much— one of the core questions for the season has been, if you are a utopia, if you have shit, if you have stuff, if you are in a position of power, do you have a responsibility to give that power to other people, and to spread as far as you can, or is that— does that run the risk of becoming imperialism, right? Does that run the risk of you over-showing your hand of, of pushing into other people's lives? Um, and obviously there are ways to succeed at that while— y'know, without falling into imperialism, but fundamentally, it's easy to live a perfect life on a mountain. It becomes immeasurably harder to do that once you move into the world, right? Once you're dealing with other people in a day-to-day life, it becomes way harder not to hurt someone in your attempt to help people generally. And for the whole first half of the season, the faith of the Resonant Orbit, as represented by the Cadent Under Mirage, is content with living on a mountain. And, because of the events of the midseason— the, the holiday special, and with what follows, with Tender's guidance, decides, "No. There is a responsibility." And that ends up being the core of the debate that she has with Signet at the Feast of Patina, where, whether she means to or not, she ends up echoing a lot of Kamala Cadence's points around the responsibility of Divines to serve people. Um, and I think she does so in a way that is like, convincing to some degree for the listener, but not for Signet, who has abdicated that entire aspect of the faith, 'cause it's built on— again, it's a poisoned tree, right? Like, it is what will lead to another Independence situation, and Signet sees that but the Cadent Under Mirage can't. And so, I just really wanted to emphasize that degree of nuance, nuance, in which people can be acting in their faith from the best intentions, and even helping people, but also, the second you're applying any sort of belief system in the world, it's going to get messier, um, and, and I think the Waking Cadent— or sorry, the Cadent Under Mirage ended up being someone who was really useful for, for bringing that out, um, in terms of the consequences. Um, any other thoughts about faith here? Because, despite it being a major religious fleet, most of the characters did not have a direct relationship to the Divine in that way.

DRE: I think Even, for me, was, especially kinda towards the end, was the kind of story of a person who started off, I mean like, literally serving. Y'know, like in a military sense, but, um, that service for him came from, y'know, a belief that the values, the things that came from the *Ever-Forward* and the Fleet writ large, were, like, worth serving and worth protecting?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

DRE: And then becoming a really kind of disillusioned with that, um, but I think at the end swinging back around and realizing that like, y'know, even as something that you no longer believe in, or you don't value the same way, there's probably still like— there're, there're like, personal values and morals, like, worth holding on to? I don't know.

AUSTIN: Right, right. Um, Riley in the chat, I just saw this— I was not looking at that chat, I was looking at notes and stuff— um, wanted to clarify that there's— one of the key parts of this question is like, "Oh, the utopia is a theocracy," um, and that historically theocracies have not necessarily been the most safe or, or, um, just societies, right? Um, and I think that's entirely

part of what we wanted to challenge ourselves with, right, was like, we've spent— again, we've spent lots of seasons talking about faith and societies built around faith as being dystopic, and dystopian, and being corrupt. And the part of the challenge— and this is all the way through the entirety of how we rendered utopia, was can we find a way in which to think about a society built around a common faith that was also grounded in a materialism, in a way that human faiths have not been historically. Um, that is not a intri— I wanted to separate the idea— I wanted to see if we could separate the idea that faith, and that organized religion, things that I have left behind as a person, um, could still be a, a center for organizing for good. Um, and maybe that doesn't function here, like maybe that doesn't tangle with it enough, but that was the thinking behind it at least. I don't know if the other players, uh, have thoughts there too.

ALI: I have a little one, in that I feel like this is part of what Tender's arc is too—

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: —where it's like, especially after the Miracle where she's like, "Ok, I believe my faith is good, I believe people need help. I've seen other societies now, and seen how, like, even the societies I think have hurt me, have hurt the people within it," um, and being like, "Ok, what I'm gonna do is walk the earth and help everybody the way I can, and that's my job, and it's gonna work." And like, that's definitely her with like, those kids, and then you get to the end of the show, where it's like, "Ok, those were all good intentions, somebody told me to fuck off at Christmas, and I'm gonna have to take that into account."

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ALI: 'Cause like, the thing that— like, y'know, Tender definitely believed, "Hey, y'know, we should all make this work if we all have the best intentions, and we should push out bad actors." And then being like, "Ok, in what way am I also a bad actor here? And like, in what way are things more valuable to the people here than they are for me."

AUSTIN: Right. I'll say the thing that just hit me is a thing I actually said earlier tonight, which is, y'know, the big villain leaving this season is a, is a theocracy that has totally twisted itself, twisted what was once good intentions into something deeply harmful, in the Divine Principality. And the thing that I wanna underscore there is, the— what I think is revealed is that the belief system was not enough for that theocracy to not be harmful to people. What made the Divine Fleet function was an investment, a material investment in people and services that ensured that those on the margins were moved from the margins and their, their needs were addressed, um, and they were not oppressed, and not systemically, um, uh dehumanized, and kind of left to be, to be on the sides where their needs were not met. And so it's like, one reason I'm so happy we started in *Contrition's Figure* in the space game was because I immediately wanted to focus on: as society is falling apart, as this theocracy begins to struggle, or maybe reaches the height of its struggle, who suffers? And the answer is going to be the people on the margins. Um, and there was a limited amount of canvas space to work with there, right? Because I— we'd



established that things like self-determination were still effective in the Fleet. Right, people were— their identities as individuals had not been threatened. But I know that as societies begin to crumble, there are people on the margins who become— who get stuck under boots. And in this case, it became clear to me that someone in the carceral system, people in the carceral system, the carceral system in general was a place where a, a theocracy that was falling apart would quickly fail to meet the needs that it was once was. And the utopia would begin to crumble there. And so, for me, the reason that the Divine Fleet becomes the DFS, becomes the, the Divine Principality, is that it fails to continue to invest in the infrastructure. Right? It— we started the season, or I kind of teased the season once with a picture of a building under construction. The intro talks about Divines as being like buildings, like cathedrals, like, y'know, highways. Um, Divines are in some ways, in this season, a stand-in for public services, um, and so, what the revelation is is that the theocracy, in the end, the Divine Free States are more interested in the beliefs and the ways in which those belief systems, and the dogmas, and the structures of how people are supposed to worship— the definition of what a Divine is becomes a weapon to keep the status quo the status quo. To keep those who are in hierarchical positions of power in power. Um, and they can't do that without the faith, right? That becomes the thing that, that they utilize to push the rest of the Divine Free States towards the eventual imperial identity that it takes. It starts with what counts as a Divine. It doesn't start with who's feeding you. It starts with what counts as a Divine, and how are these other beliefs a, uh, a perversion of that belief. Um, and it ends with, and now we're going to switch these things from being, that were once guardians of justice and guardians of individuals, and of the culture at large, into things that enforce, kind of biopolitically, enforce a way of life. Uh, which we will get into at some point in the future as we, as we one day return to this universe. I hope that that's a better answer, I had to just think about it for a second, and actually get to the heart of what I wanted to say there.

ART: Can I give like a cop-out-y end here?

AUSTIN: Always.

ART: Um, which is that like, y'know, the specific clarification calls out, y'know, being a Jewish person, and that kind of thing, and as a Jewish person, I would like to say that I spent this season just kind of dodging the question.

[AUSTIN laughs]

ART: Uh, Grand Magnificent never had to have an opinion on that—

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART: —which was a little bit by design. I little bit wanted, after Winter [in Hieron], sort of wanted to like be a little less tied into the, the like foundation of the plot.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: I wanted to be a little higher up, I wanted to be a mid- to higher-level, um, actor. Um, yeah. It didn't go well. I'm in the present with you all too.

AUSTIN: Right. Uh huh.

[KEITH laughs]

ART: Uh, but like that's, that's— Hadrian is my character for dealing about how I feel about being in a religious minority, and Grand Magnificent is my character for talking about all the cool ways you can put neon on clothing.

[AUSTIN laughs]

AUSTIN: And then that ended up becoming more challenging, because it ended up being literally about a per— well, all right, but your starting belief was, "I wanna build God a new body," so.

ART: Yeah, but like— that's not the same thing, I think.

AUSTIN: Sometimes we dig our own graves.

JANINE: That's not to glorify God, that's to glorify him.

AUSTIN: Oh, right, you're right.

ART: Yeah!

AUSTIN: That's true, that's true. Um, briefly I wanna find a thing I said, 'cause sometimes I say words that I don't define. Um, biopolitics is a term that Foucault uses to, um, discuss a change in the way power functions. Um, it's a mode of power, that the powerful can, can operate in. Previously, there was a time at which the people who ran the world had sovereign power, had power over life and death, who lived and who died. If you were powerful, you were allowed to say, "I'm going to kill this person." That's what power was about, was about killing someone, uh, or starving someone, or whatever, um, and being able to get away with that. Uh, not only get away with it, but be told, "Yes, that is just. That is just that you killed that person, because you are the king, and divinely, you are the sovereign of this place and you decide who lives and dies." Biopower, kind of biopolitical, uh, theory is all about the ways in which contemporary leaders, how sovereign powers now, are less interested in who lives and who dies. They obviously also still do that, but they're more interested in— the turn, the thing that develops is their ability to determine *how* we live. Not *if* we live, but *how* we live. Um, what determines who can sleep with and still be considered a good person. Uh, it determines what sorts of food you're

allowed to eat and drink. How long you're allowed to be out in public, what you're allowed to wear when you're out in public. Obviously Foucault is very interested in sexuality and gender, and the presentation of sexuality and gender, so there's a lot of stuff there. But it's as much about what music is considered pretty versus what music is considered ugly as it is about who you sleep with. And so, it's all about the ways in which those in power can discipline us, until we act like capital-G capital-C Good Citizens, and I see the Divine Free States and the Divine Principality, and the Rapid Evening especially, right? The Rapid Evening, who have literally—the Principality of Kesh is, is as close to the panopticon as I can get without saying the fucking words, like, the people in the center halls of the panopticon perform discipline on themselves. They don't need guards to come say, "Do, don't do that." They discipline themselves because they know are being watched. Um, and so, the people on Cycle are doing that, they're deciding to live in roles that society needs in order to continually reproduce itself. Um, and we'll get more into that, again, at some point deep in the future. Um, I hope that that is, I hope that that is, to some degree, fulfilling, uh, as an answer. Um, next question? This one comes in from Nora:

What were your biggest influences in creating a utopia? Were there certain things you set out to do with utopias in Twilight Mirage that you felt like other utopian fiction or political philosophy missed, or things you'd seen elsewhere that you wanted to be sure were included?

Um, any thoughts here? I just talked a lot so I'm trying not to talk again.

[ALI laughs]

KEITH: That's ok, I have, uh, I guess, um— uh, I feel like Gig worked really hard to try to make some, like— to try to make, um, the Quire planets, like, a— like good places to be?

AUSTIN: Mmm.

KEITH: Um, and a lot of that involved, um, cooperation and working together, and having fun toge— like, communities.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: And I feel like I spend a lot of time thinking about it and reading about, um, like, versions of a future that, that a) are dependent communities, and so a lot of it was almost an exercise for myself to think about, uh, more, uh, uh, interdeterminate self-determination, instead of very dependent self-determination. Does that make sense?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Can you— can you, can you define what you mean by interdeterminate?

KEITH: Yeah, uh—

AUSTIN: A little bit. Y'know.

KEITH: Yeah, I'm just talking about like, like, uh, the idea that communities are literally important versus maybe, uh, maybe existing but unimportant, or that you can do something without one?

AUSTIN: Right. Or important only in so far as they allow for something like trade, right? Which is like, one of the ways that we talk about communities in America is that, like, I say this way including the way, I think, a lot of creators talk about fan communities, the way in which we talk about minority communities in America is— think about how often you've heard the phrase that like, "Oh, the black community has a lot of—" Maybe you haven't heard this, but this is a thing I've heard as being in the fucking business world, is like, "Oh, the— y'know, the rise of middle-class black Americans means that they have lots of buying power now." Right? Think about the construction of identities, uh, including, y'know, queer identities, that are, that are kinda fenced in until they are made to be productive inside of, um, the system as it stands today, and the ways in which the goal is to create a community that either doesn't have to be dealt, so it doesn't put anything under risk, or it works to be another column to hold up things as they already are. And I think Gig did a lot of work to be like, "No, no, no, no, no. Communities are, in and of themselves, valuable things."

KEITH: Yeah, yeah. And so, yeah, what you're saying, that is, like, that's, um— I think the idea of monolith communities that are, like, not even people, like a business world or a political world, treat communities like not— they're not— they are identity-based, not geography-based?

AUSTIN: Yes.

KEITH: Which is already, like, a misnomer. Like, that's not what a community is, really.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: By the— but then there's al— [sighs] The internet changes that in ways where now you can have virtual geography for a community, but I was talking about, specifically, going back to other side, where it's like, uh, like, communities— not only are those communities not valuable, but no communities are valuable?

AUSTIN: Mmm.

KEITH: And I, I read a lot about stuff that takes that as a position. Uh, and a lot of it's really compelling stuff.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: But I, like— so I, I think that, like, Gig's ideas and stuff he wanted to do was a direct challenge to the, like, stuff that I'm surrounded by—

AUSTIN: Constantly.

KEITH: —by choice, politically.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

KEITH: Like, in my own time, where I'm like, "Well, a lot of this stuff is compelling, but also like, like, y'know, communities are literally valuable."

AUSTIN: Right. We, uh, I think we ended up having a bit of this, 'cause I, I— part of the NPC faction outro was about the group of kind of counselor-class people in the Qui Err Coalition stepping away, right? And dissolving the state effectively.

KEITH: Mmhm. Yeah.

AUSTIN: And I think you and I come at this from different perspectives— like I'm not— I don't wanna get too deep into our personal political philosophies here, right, but I am absolutely a communist and a socialist, and I suspect that you lean anarchist at this point, right?

KEITH: Mmhm. Yeah.

AUSTIN: And I think that like— a thing I love is a lot of the challenges— and I could sense that in Gig from the jump, right? Like, Gig's whole vibe of DIY, DIY self-sufficiency is so, such a positive vision of what, kind of, anarchism can look like as an individual trying to help communities, and help people self-sustain, right?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Help you self-sustain without reliance on a state that can take advantage of you. Um, one of the things I loved giving Gig as a character all season were opportunities to interact with people who could not self-sustain, regardless of whether or not they knew how to build an ice-skating rink.

KEITH: Mmhm.

AUSTIN: Um, or who could self-sustain, but at a cost or under threat. And like, and what Gig made very clear was like, "Oh, actually those groups need to protect— need protection. Or those groups need to be more self-sufficient than they are right now." Or like, it was just fun to see Gig figure that stuff out. For sure.

KEITH: Yeah, it's— it— this season in general's very strange because of how long it was. That like—

AUSTIN: Yes.

KEITH: I, I can— I have had dramatic changes in how I feel about the world just since we started—

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: —the season. Uh, and so, about, about when it started mattering, I started having a firmer grasp on like, what I wanted Gig to do, and specifically that was like, to kind of be a guy with like, good instincts but no theory.

AUSTIN: Right. Yes.

KEITH: That— like, that could sort of stumble into the right thing, or stumble into the wrong thing, and leading into the downtime, we had had discussion where I had decided Gig was gonna stumble into the wrong thing.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

KEITH: And, uh, be, continue to be part of Seneschal's Brace, uh—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: And, uh, and, uh, uh—

AUSTIN: This is the Patina, the Patina downtime you're talking about, right?

KEITH: Yes, yeah, yeah, yeah. And then, uh, the Iota Pretense eruption that only happened because of Signet, um, instigating everybody—

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

KEITH: Uh, I was just like, "Uh, no, y'know, that was— that's compel— that's a compelling enough argu— that's like, the first bit of sense anyone's been talking, I guess that's what I'm doing." Um—

AUSTIN: Which felt right, right? Because at that point—

KEITH: Yeah, it did.

AUSTIN: —it felt like good intentions found theory, or found, uh, um, uh—

KEITH: He found an argument that like—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: There wasn't anyone making an argument, really.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Or, the only people that were were like, the Seneschal's Brace people.

AUSTIN: Totally.

KEITH: Like, they were the only ones actively trying to make, uh, convince anyone of anything? Um, and then, y'know, it took one other person that— and it was just like, a split decision, split decision for me to make that split decision for Gig.

AUSTIN: Right. Um—

KEITH: Uh, I don't remember what was about, that last bit— eh, it made sense.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it made sense. Uh, anyone else have thoughts here?

ALI: Um, I think there's the, the elephant in the room, which is like, the idea of redemption, which I think that we've—

AUSTIN: Mmm.

ALI: —had a gradient of, over the season.

AUSTIN: Over the season— over the, over the series, or the show, right?

ALI: Yeah. Yeah. And I think that like— I mean specifically for Tender, who had a like, warm— probably the warmest relationship with Declan's Corrective out of the cast, um, in terms of just being like— I mean, the thing with Tender is she did not have traditional means to, um, like, prison, essentially— that's not the word that I should be using, but— um, she never had the opportunity to go to *Contrition's Figure*.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: She is guilty for the crime she committed, but like, that is a thing she struggles with personally, and then she has to act in world as someone who acts with confidence. And then

like, in terms of her just being able to look at this person and be like, “Oh, you have access to this thing that I really want—”

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: “—and also, I believe in the structure of the society that I lived in,” so like I, I, I played it straight the entire time, where it’s like, “Ok, you did the thing.”

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: And like I— y’know, there’s obvious moments of suspicion there, that’s like, why she sticks around with him, but it’s also just like, her, her commitment to believing that worked was part of her relationship with him, obviously.

AUSTIN: Right. I—

ALI: Um, go on.

AUSTIN: There was an episode I was not on of Waypoint Radio— um, if you have more, you should do your more, and I’ll wait, and save mine.

ALI: Um, you go on, and then we’ll see. [laughs]

*[content note: At this point, 2:09:07 in the audio, Austin begins talking about abuse & abusers generally. In a couple minutes, at 2:12:15, he starts talking about a specific example from his life in more detail. I am sectioning off the entire section about abuse, and will also section off the part where Austin goes more in depth, so that readers can skip some or all of this. Just scroll down until you get to a line that breaks the page, and this particular discussion will be done.]*

AUSTIN: Ok. Um, there was an episode recently of Waypoint Radio that I was not on, uh, in which the, the topic of redeemed villains was the focus. It was a really great episode, um, it was Natalie, and Danielle, and Patrick, and Rob, uh, um, from Waypoint. And one of the great differentiators, or differentiations, that comes up there that spoke to me, and especially for this character, was the difference between redemption and rehabilitation. Um, there are people on that podcast who have dealt with—

ALI: [overlapping] That’s the word I was looking for, thank you.

[ALI and AUSTIN laugh]



AUSTIN: Um, people on the podcast who dealt with, have dealt with abuse, um, um, and abusers, uh, and who were glad that their— the people in their lives have found rehabilitation, and that's separate from the sort of redemption arcs that are often presented to us in video games, and in movies, and stories. Because the redemption arc often tries to erase or reconfigure the actions of abuse or violence, um, in ways that erase the pain, or make it worth it in the end, something. And, um, also spend screen time on the abuser, right? Like the example that that podcast goes into really well is the Bloody Baron from the *Witcher III*, uh, a character who is an abuser, um, and who gets a lot of screen time, and who is more important to his story than any of the people he hurt, um, and there's a great conversation about it. Um, and I bring this up because this just came out fairly recently and, uh, it was a really fascinating thing to think about in the wake of Declan's Corrective, who— I think we've done the season by the time this episode even came out so, in terms of recording, it wasn't an influence on that, on the finale, so much as it was just an interesting listen on this topic. But, um, one of the things it reminded me was we, I'd never really spoken to y'all on the show about my influence for Declan's Corrective, which is two things. One was— this whole season has had a lot of rehabilitation. Tender— Signet did go to *Contrition's Figure*, Tender did not, but was a criminal, right? Was, was arrested for, for terrorism, effectively? Um, Echo was a criminal, who I think everyone agreed from the jump was unfairly— y'know, maybe not unfairly, but was being treated with a severity that was not due them. Um, so there was a great deal of characters who I did want— and Fourteen Fifteen, for instance, is a character who ends up having, uh, a rehabilitation arc that is not— without having seen the sin to begin with. So I really wanted there to be in this season, once I knew who the characters were, a range of, of different types of focus on different types of bad actors. Um, and the thing with *Contrition's Figure* that's so weird, for us in 2018, is that no one in society sees the rehabilitation. We talk about faith, and it is literally on faith that the people who go in, whose crimes you do not know, um, in society, uh, go in, receive treatment, and return once they're ready to be in society again.

[**content note:** Here, at 2:12:15 in the audio, Austin begins talking in more detail about specific physical and emotional abuse in his life, until 2:15:17. To skip this, scroll down til you see a line that breaks the page.]

And that is such a hard thing to comprehend, or it was a hard thing for me to comprehend for a long time, until I started thinking about my father, who was someone who was physically and emotionally abusive, um, someone who comes from the cycle of abuse, someone who was tied to a tree and beaten by his father as a kid. Um, and someone who— like if there is— Declan's Corrective's a poet, my father is a musician, my mom is a poet, so it's definitely the most of my parents there. I lived in fear of my father for all of my childhood. Just deeply. And at some point, he got better, and partially from therapy, I think, but I never met his therapist. Partially because of the effect that his partner, his wife, had on him, I think. Partly because he came to terms with

the relationship he had with his own father, maybe? But I don't know. Um, and the pain that my father caused me is deeply still there. I still— y'know, my understanding of my own masculinity will always be shot through by the names he called me when I was a child, right? Um, I will never get over the things that he did to my mother. Um, and also, he is not that person at this point in his life. And that is a very hard thing to contend with. Um, and so there are shadows of that in *Corrective* for me; there are poems of his that gesture towards abuse, and gesture towards selfishness, and he is an intimidator— he's a person who wants to intimidate you, or at least worked on intimidation. Um, and also, he's someone who, I think, wants to do good in the world, and has genuinely changed. And it would have been so easy for, for me to dedicate screen time to making people like this fucking guy. Like, we had Ibex. We've had Arrell. Right? It like— we have Samot. Um, we have people who've done truly terrible things on the screen, um, and I've wanted to give them— and even in this season, people like Undela Apogica, um, people like Volition, right? Where like, I want to zoom in on that stuff. But here, it was an experiment— and I don't know that it works, but it was an experiment on whether or not I could capture that specific relationship of this person has done terrible fucking things, and now they are changed. And I believe in change, and I believe in rehabilitation, in the same way that I believe in— that my mom was right to get the fuck away, right? And like, y'know, we spent time in shelters and stuff, like I, I— it's important to be safe, and to, y'know, ensure your own independence and the safety of those you love from abusive sources.

---

[Here, at 2:15:17, Austin stops talking about abuse.]

In a season that's about utopias, and in a world in which, for me, black and brown people are the ones who, uh, are incarcerated in my country, and who leave those places where they have not been given the resources to improve themselves, where they have not been given the resources to re-enter society and find a positive life— to imagine a world in which, not only are the resources there, but there are— in the world, there has been, through the construction of institutions like *Contrition's Figure*, a shift in the way people think about rehabilitation. That people who did stupid things when they were 20— that Morning's Observation could become a better person. And Morning's Observation, thankfully, y'know, did not go through that system at all, for, for his fuckin' ass, but could have been that person, right? Um, and I wanted to— if we're going to imagine a world in which we can have utopian thinking, which is to say, thinking that is incomprehensible to us, because we do not live in that utopia— to push myself to try to show it here. And again, I don't know that it works a hundred percent, but I'm happy that we gave it the experiment, instead of just being like, instead of— I'm so much happier with what happens to him, than if I had dedicated a scene every downtime, uh, or 5 more poems or something, to slowly woo people over to his perspective. Does that make sense?

ALI: Yeah.

ART: Yeah, I'm just— it's just so sad now that we don't get to see Declan's Corrective get to the point where, where they're posting just in all caps on Twitter.

[AUSTIN and ALI laugh]

AUSTIN: My father does his very best, all right? Um, yeah, and he's a big— it's, it's a wild thing. Like, time does not heal all wounds. Like, hard work and dedication and a, often a difficult commitment to personal change do, um, and I'm happy my father has done that, and, and furious that so many have not, so. Um, any other big utopian— I mean, I think that also speaks to one other big thing that was us for this season, was, um, process. Um, I had a really productive with Jack— with KB, Jack's partner, earlier in the season, um, in which we talked about, uh, utopias as static versus utopias as living. And that for us, the thing I wanted to get across was utopias that will survive, and that will succeed, and that we should believe in, and the ones that we should think about and desire, should be utopias of process, not utopias of stasis. Um, and I think that that ends up reflecting in what we frame as positive in the end of the season. Um, I'm terrified of the Splice. I'm not a fan of the Splice, I don't wanna be in the Splice, I immediately think that in our world today, the Splice would reinscribe a lot of power structures that already exist, and that whatever freeing, freedom it offers us at first would quickly become, um, caught up in, in the same old bullshit. And I say that 'cause I'm on the internet all the time, I know what that's like. Um, but also, I wanted to represent the freedom that that the notion of the Splice offered, and that, that I knew resonated with people because I know how people have responded to Arrell in Hieron, without getting into too much detail. And I wanted a version of that

that was like, all about the joy of collaboration, and of working together, and having infinite space, and having a place where you can imagine yourself as anything, and to be that thing. That resonates for a reason, that's not bullshit. Um, and part of why I'm happy to frame the end of that thing with, with such a positive step, is that the last thing that happens with a character regarding the Splice— the two last things. 1, Fourteen Fifteen assures that it cannot come at the cost of reinscribing the marginalization of the people in the Quire system through that debate, and 2, that Tender decides to be the thing the internet does not have, and be a process of, of— in which people are made safe. And I don't know what that would look like, and I'll say that if we had another 6 episodes I would absolutely be complicating what Tender Sky, Internet Cop is like. Because there are ways that goes bad.

ALI: [laughs] Yeah.

AUSTIN: But because it was about process and not about stasis, it ended up becoming framed in a positive way, because that was my, my keystone for this season. Investing in ongoing processes is the way— processes that self-regulate, and that address their own issues are, is the way I want to frame utopian thinking as positive, if that makes sense. Um, but also a cop. Definitely a fucking cop.

[KEITH and ALI laugh]

ALI: Heyyyy—

AUSTIN: And also, just in terms of, broadly, references, like, uh, Ursula K. LeGuin. Uh, Olivia Butler. Like, all the— people wrote in and were like, “Oh, was this a LeGuin, was this a—”, like, yes, a hundred percent, a hundred percent. Um, there are lots of bad utopias in fiction, and the ones I'm interested in for this season were ones that were like, coming from people who understood what marginalization already looked like, and then imagined complicated utopias from there, so. Um, any other big picture utopian thoughts here?

JACK: Um, I think it was— I think it's worth saying at some point in the post-mortem that— and I think this is shown through, this has been a really difficult season to make.

AUSTIN: True, yeah.

JACK: And I do not resent that difficulty, but that difficulty, beyond any work, speaking for myself, beyond any work that we've done in the past, this has felt like the one that, on every axis, we've had to just like, y'know, shoulders to the wheel.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Um, with varying levels of success, y'know, sometimes you push the wheel and it doesn't go anywhere at all, and sometimes you push it and it goes 20 feet, and you're like, "Whoa! What?" Um, but I think that it's been very exciting to witness a utopia in motion—

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: —and to be involved in a utopia in motion. I think a lot of our— a lot of my early missteps, early in the season, were, uh, hearing we're working on a utopia in motion, but not really internalizing how, how that should function. And I think something that became clear to me, and I, I, y'know, got more and more excited by as the season went on, kinda culminating in Futura Free, which was sort of the perfect system on it, was like, "Have these discussions. Talk about this stuff."

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: We, we, we talk broadly about goals, but we really don't say, like, "All right, we're gonna do x, we're gonna do y, and we, we want to make sure we, y'know, always hit this whatever." Like, I would join some Discord calls for sessions going like, "I don't know how I feel about this."

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: And that's an extremely vulnerable position to put yourself in, and to expect the people around you to be in, while making a show, especially like this, where we fuckin' improvise everything for a year.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Which is easy to forget, I think, sometimes, even on this side of it.

JACK: [overlapping] Oh, if edited and writ— right, no, totally, everything we've ever said has been improvised, except stuff you've read.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: And like, but that was deeply exciting. And I think also, as a sort of contribution to creating a text, it was, it was a thematically accurate way of describing something like this. We didn't come to this with a design document. We came to it with like, a lot of pictures of Catholic art.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Right, right. And like, some Dostoevsky, like clips—

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: —and yeah, uh huh. All right.

JACK: Let's go, let's go, let's go.

AUSTIN: I'm gonna move on to the next question if that's ok. [pauses] Ok. Um, I think this is a great— this is one of my favorite questions here. Uh, this one comes from Andrew, who says:

The way violence was handled this season was really interesting,  
and felt in line with the portrayal of a utopian vision for the world.  
Could you talk a bit about violence in role-playing games, and how  
you feel it can and should or should not be used?

I'll say that last part I want to leave pretty open, um, in that— I said this at like, the Waypoint Radio panel at PAX last weekend, but I'm not anyone's priest. I can't be. I can't say when something ought not be used in some— in like, the life of an adult. If you and your friends are having like, a really goofy time doing John Wu-style gunfights in games that are deeply uncritical, but you as a person live a deeply critical life, and a deeply thoughtful life, and everyone is, is going into it with like, the same understanding of the way violence is gonna be portrayed, like, I can't be the person who's like, "No, you're sinning." Um, it's just not who I am. But, I can talk to what we intended. I'm actually a little more interested to hear what people, um, especially I'd say Dre, Fourteen, um, just everybody, but I wanna start with Dre, because, Dre, violence became kind of a cornerstone for Even, in the last half of the season. Um, and you always were willing to frame it as a negative thing. Was that intentional, was that something you were trying to explore there?

DRE: Um, I mean, yeah. I think this definitely— the way that I approached like, violence in RPGs, I think has, was really changed, all the way going back to Marielda and playing Sige—

AUSTIN: Mmm.

DRE: —and like, us having conversations where like, I would talk to you off-mic and be like, "Man, playing the violent aspects of Sige is like, uncomfortable and hard." Um, but that's like the character that I made. Um, and I think like, that fed into then, like, Even, y'know, towards the end of the season, um, that was where I felt his path had taken him.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: And, um, yeah, it was— like, specifically the scene where there were, uh— where we're in the hangar, and there's like, the three, like Torch Units, or whatever—

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

DRE: —and Even uses the gun, like—

AUSTIN: Or, or, they're like Angler units with, with people in them.

DRE: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah, With people—

DRE: Yeah, they're not Torch Units, they're people. Um, like—

AUSTIN: Not that some Torch Units weren't people, some of them were.

DRE: Right, yes.

AUSTIN: Yam is definitely a person. But those ones— yeah. Anyway.

DRE: Um, I think one of my like, regrets from this season was that I'm worried I played that scene like, really like, "Oh, yeah, no, I shoot them." Like—

AUSTIN: Oh, no, that scene was so scary!

DRE: Ok.

AUSTIN: That whole sequence was scary, but that moment of like, "Oh, no, I'm gonna—"

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: There's a reason I didn't make you roll for it, was like, "Ok, you're— ok, fuck. Ok, here we go."

DRE: Yeah. Because like, y'know, I think, I think Jack, y'know, kind of mentioned earlier that like cognitive dissonance of like, me as a person either loves this or hates this and is in direct opposition to my character. Like, me as a person felt sick to my stomach playing out that scene.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: Um, 'cause it was, it was, it was gross. It was like—

AUSTIN: Yeah!

DRE: —that's not how, that is not the values that me as a person, like, has, and the actions that me as a person, uh, would take. So hope that that came through.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] And yet there is— Totally. But like, the thing that's interesting to me is it comes from a very positive place in some sense, which is your— it comes from overcorrection, maybe?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: What, what is scary about the scene is the coldness with which Even does it. Even isn't acting because his friends are in danger. Um, he isn't acting with speed because it's, it's necessary in the moment. He's acting because he's obsessed with something he maybe should be a little obsessed with, which is his hand in creating the Advent Group, bringing together Advent, the Volunteers of Seiche, the Concrete Town Particulars, and O-Comm, right? Like, there is— we started the second half of the season with inaction, um, or with, with compromise in place of action, in a way that— this is a question I didn't include in here, but like, "What was the hardest decision for me," or, "What was the thing that kept me up at night?" was how to wrap that first arc, because I wanted to make sure that there was— the first arc after the break, the, the arc on Gift-3 with Signet, Even, and Echo, because I wanted to lean into player agency, and the players had decided to go this route that I— I expected that whole game to be like, "And then we crash in the front gate, and beat the shit out of Advent, and secure this, this like, portal. Nbd." Um, and it turns out to be this much more important thing about the way the players, and like, Signet, I think this is you, especially, "No, this place isn't a place where we kick down the fuckin' door and kill everybody." Um, and the complications that come from wanting compromise. And so much of the second half of the season ends up being about that, and about where is the line between compromise and a sort— how are the ways in which compromise, which is often useful, can be also be a tool of, uh, oppression, by way of indifference, or by way of not thinking about who is going to be affected by, by that stuff. Does that make sense?

JANINE: Sometimes you need to shoot first.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Like—

DRE: Yeah.

JANINE: —that was the big thing was that— what happened there was Signet was coming from a position where, I don't know that this is a hundred percent consistent, but I think for the most part Signet is not a shoot first, in any situation. It's, it's very much like a move has already been made, and if you are attacking, it's because you are stopping—

AUSTIN: Right.



JANINE: —something that's in play, it's not, it's not like— and y'know, in this case, where everyone is just kind of doing their thing but you need something different to happen, to her that's not a situation, or at least at the time, is not a situation where you shoot first. Um—

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Because, you know, that's her, that's her background, that's her— she's coming from a place where people get along and talk to each other mostly, and like, you disagree, but you don't pull out your weapon, you go through channels. You get someone a cake or whatever.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah. Yep.

JANINE: So, sometimes— but, sometimes, you do need to shoot first. You do just need to fuckin' kick the door in, because someone is fucked up, and should not be there, or whatever. Like—

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. Um, sometimes hurting people doesn't have to look like that direct— like, they were literally keeping families apart, actively, because they were— uh, I think that I think never became hyper-clear is that research project that they're doing at the time is literally part of the research project— um, this is something you would've found if you had gone into that facility more, or whatever— that becomes them chasing the Wandering Sea. Um, that's what they're like— that's why it goes through the water, and that's what they're doing on the other side of the portal, and blah, blah, blah. All of that is about them trying to get the Wandering Sea to try to build their own weird, like, ocean Divine. Um, and using the like, the tech on Gift-3, and the stuff from the— the energy from the storm mixed with the Wandering Sea, um, which ends up all coming together in a really cool way, at the end, in a way that's even clearer than, than, um, than it was at the moment, maybe. Um, I guess last person that I really wanna hear from here is Fourteen Fifteen, who one, on one hand is an assassin. There are lots of moments of violence from Fourteen Fifteen, including probably the most flippant death in the series, which comes from our Follow game, where Mother's Story gets killed. Um—

[JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh, which I have mixed feelings about, as a storyteller, actually. Because it, it felt like it maybe went in a— I love that sequence in the, in the Coen brothers, or the, um—

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh, oh my God, what is the writer-director's name that I'm forgetting? Shane Black way, right? Of just like, "Boom, snap, it happens." It's aestheticized in a way that's really compelling, and really like, scratches my brain in a good way? But also, in the middle of the Sho-Fourteen arc, and given the rest of our decisions for the rest of the season around violence, I, I still don't— it doesn't quite sit right with me, because it felt like we were aestheticizing a

moment, um, and the beauty of the violence. Also fuck Mother's Story. So it's kind of like, "Eh—"

JACK: Right! It's like— yeah, I go backwards and forwards on it, in that I think it, it, it cuts to the like, telling stories as weird and complicated in the same way that programming is, where like, you change one thing and you're like, "Oh no, wait, that means I'd also have to change that thing back there—"

[AUSTIN laughs]

JACK: I was thinking to myself, I was like, "Well, I like that scene enough that maybe it would've worked earlier, but then part of the reason it worked is that we had this relationship with Mother's Story, and we—"

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Y'know, it was a punchline to a kind of simmering, unpleasant joke. I think the reason I, I like that scene, and I think a thing that governed a lot of how I thought about Fourteen's relationship with violence, is that, because of the way we roll dice, and because of the way that Fourteen is this kind of like, lapsed assassin?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: We don't often get to see them being good at their job, or at least good in the way at their job in the way that Castlerose anticipates them to be.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Like, we see Fourteen being good at their job— like, I think a lot about the, um, Wind's Poem?

AUSTIN: Yep.

JACK: In the hotel room? Like, that's Fourteen—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah, with the batons. With the cops.

JACK: —using the skills they've learned to be like, "All right, ok. I can do this." But I think the scene with, with Mother's Story in the elevator is very much like, this is a Castlerose assassin, and we're seeing Fourteen in that, in that mode. But I think you're right. I think especially coming at that point in the story, there is something that feels disingenuous, or that feels aestheticized about that. Um, we got a question that was like, "Did Fourteen ever fire their gun?" I think the exact words used were "fancy gun", which is great, 'cause I'm pretty sure that's how we described it every time it came up. Um—

AUSTIN: Uh huh! It's a very fancy gun.

JACK: And the answer is no. And that is a conscious decision. I spent a lot of time thinking about— and you hear Fourteen say it on the show a lot. Fourteen admits, “I haven’t fired it, and I don’t want to fire it, but I’m probably going to.”

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: Like, Fourteen explicitly calls that out, as like a, y’know, “This is what I think will happen.” But in context with the ways we were talking about violence, and the ways we were talking about the utopias we were thinking about, the idea of a gun in a desk drawer that isn’t fired, and is never mentioned again, felt like a really powerful image to me—

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: —um, and is one that I’m very glad we held off. Because it would be very easy to frame a scene where the gun is fired, and I’m so glad we didn’t.

AUSTIN: Right, or even a scene where Carcanet’s Ironclad goes back and gets it during the Feast of Patina, right? Um, super interesting. Um, also we should talk to Sylvia, as people in chat point out. Like, Echo’s whole thing through the course of the season was whether they were willing to do violence or not— not, I don’t mean to use that exact framing of—

[Several people laugh]

AUSTIN: —“Are you willing to do violence or not?”, but that was part of their arc, right? Was like, they’re the Bodyguard, and they’re willing to protect their friends, but also, it’s a big deal when the sword comes out. And so much of their interaction with Quire, the planet, was about violence. Um, Sylvia, how did you think about violence this season, and especially in relation to the utopian stuff?

SYLVIA: Specifically what I was trying to do with Echo was— originally, I just thought it would be really cool to have a character that’s cool at, good at cool action stuff—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: —but when they do it, you shouldn’t be happy about it?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: And I really— I, I really wanted to try and land the fact that like, yeah, Echo’s been trained for this, but it does really take something away from them when they have to engage in

the violence to an end that is so extreme as killing someone.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Um, that's like, why I tried to make it a thing when, like, the sword came out. At least I tried to be very good with that early on. I don't know how many times I did end up drawing it during the show, but I tried to make sure it was, like, a big deal that Echo was going that far.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] I think— I think the inclusion of the hammer helped in the second half—

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: —because the sword still kept the, that energy, you know what I mean? Like, “Yeah, I'll use the hammer in combat against Barricade or against a spaceship, but when the sword comes out, that's, whew, ok, here we go.”

SYLVIA: Well, yeah, that was also the thing too, was like, um, I really like the hammer because you could, you could see that as being a tool, not just a weapon.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

SYLVIA: And I really liked it too, especially actually when Echo started to get, like, the Angler, and like, the Overture, not just because I got to have a cool mech.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Fuck, it's so fucking cool though.

SYLVIA: But, uh, because it, it, it added like— it added different ways to, like, protect people or to take action that would help protect people that Echo wanted to protect—

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: —that weren't just, um, like that scene uh, in, like, early on, where I was rescuing from the Duke, I believe?

AUSTIN: That's right.

SYLVIA: Was his name at the time?

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh huh.

SYLVIA: Uh, and I wanted like, that was, that was very much like, that moment, where I felt like, “Oh yeah, I need to make sure this thing, like, integral to the character arc.”

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. Well, and I think, one of the things that ends up happening— we don't really comment on it directly, but, uh, you get obsession also, right, as your status.

SYLVIA: No, haunted.

AUSTIN: Haunted, it was haunted. Right. Right, right, right.

SYLVIA: Yes.

AUSTIN: Which is Quire not wanting you to do violence, right?

SYLVIA: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Um, and a thing that goes— mmm, it most— we talk about it maybe a little bit in the finale, I mean it's in the text, which is, Quire says, "No more guns, please. No more. Don't shoot anybody." And it says, "I'm gonna back Seneschal's Brace." And it also brings into being a city of people who do not want to be Seneschal's Brace, and absolutely want to do violence against fascists, in, in Parhelial. And it almost dreams into existence a society that can do what it cannot bring itself— but they, what, what, um, what Quire cannot bring themselves to do. Um, I'm gonna use they/them for Quire, even though I think I've done both in the past, and think it could go either way, but, but, uh— and I think that's important for one reason, because there's a conversation I actually had that was a really great conversation in the Discord. Um, and the reason I'm having this conversation here is because I think it's important to remember that haunted status was not just, "Oh yeah, it makes sense that this is what Quire has given Echo, the desire not to do violence." But that was a status in the sense that it was actually a difficulty, and it was an obstacle, and that, as Signet said, sometimes you have to shoot first. Um, because Quire could not bring itself to kick the fascists out. It certainly, they certainly had the power to do that, I think. They certainly could have done some space magic shit that was like, all of the, all of the Advent ships, all of the DFS ships, or all of the, the, not the DFS ships probably, but the, uh, New Earth Hegemony ships blow up, right? Um, I suspect that that was in their power. Um, but part of what came out of this great conversation I was having with someone in the Discord, uh, was that— [sighs] I, I, y'know, one of the things I was trying to explain was, for me, Quire, as a planet, is— the planet will never save us from imperialism. Earth will never save us. Earth will— and this is how people write about this, this is how colonizers write about this— they will say the Earth was a, y'know, opened itself up to them. It offered a bounty to them, it, it, um, gave them so much. Colonizers will say that they will do more with the land than what's already been done. Look at the way that businesses talk about China today, in which they talk about transforming the country of China— "Just 30 years ago, there were only rice farmers in China," say, says capitalism, right? Um, this is the same thing that, that, uh, white Europeans said about the Americas, and about Africa, uh, about Asia, about southeast, uh, southeast Asia, about the entire world, often about other parts of Europe, right? Um, in which colonizers moved in and said, "No, no, no, no, no, no. We know how to get more out of this land than you do. Um, and I wanted— one of my goals here was not to make Quire

the moral heart of this season, in the sense that I don't believe the Earth will ever save us. We can— we need to save the Earth, 'cause it's what we fucking got, and we have to make that decision. We have to be the people, the actors here. Nature might reclaim us all one day, after we destroy ourselves, but it isn't gonna do the job for us. It's always going to make itself available for those who already have power, and they will use it to get more power. And so, when Quire says, "I need to make more of me, so there's enough room for everybody!", it's framed as a miracle, 'cause like, in the moment, it's like, "Holy shit, this is incredible! Um, we all have a place to live now." But immediately, the first scene of it, and it's such an important scene, is a group of people who aren't from there being like, "All right, who gets what planets." And that includes Echo. Echo's in that conversation, deciding who gets what planets. And like, that's how it works. The people who have power are going to carve up the thing and make it theirs. Um, and so, when Quire is like, "No, no, no, don't do violence, please. Please don't hurt anybody," part of that is like, it should be— it's bad! Like, Echo has to, had to figure out not only, "Hey, Even is maybe going too far here," but also, "When is it worth me drawing that blade?" And I think you did such a great job at playing that stuff, Sylvia, it really, really, really was, was great.

SYLVIA: [overlapping] Thank you.

AUSTIN: Um, uh, anything else before we— we're almost done, we only have a couple questions left because it's late.

ART: Um, I don't wanna like, make all this longer, so I'm just gonna be really quick, but I also tried to move away from violence this season—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: —and ended up making an arms manufacturer?

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Yeah, cool, buddy.

ART: Um, so, sometimes you try something, it doesn't work, and, uh, you just gotta think on how you're gonna try next time.

AUSTIN: God.

KEITH: How many bombs did you deliver this season?

[AUSTIN laughs]

KEITH: You, personally? I think it was three.

ART: It's only two!

KEITH: Well, there was the bomb— well, one of them didn't go off. There was the, there was the downtime bomb, there was the Kitcha Kanna bomb, and then there was the, oh, did I make one up in my head?

AUSTIN: No, there—

KEITH: Was there not a third one?

AUSTIN: There's the downtime bomb, but when it goes off.

ART: No, you're counting the same bomb twice! That's one bomb.

AUSTIN: It's two deliveries. Um—

KEITH: Oh, oh, and then the— sorry, yeah, that's— sorry, when I said "Kitcha Kanna bomb", I meant the bomb that blew up Kitcha Kanna.

AUSTIN: Not the one that you delivered—

KEITH: [overlapping] So then there was, then there was Kitcha Kanna's bomb.

ART: That's like saying if you stop for gas when you're delivering a bomb, that's another bomb delivery? You guys are—

[AUSTIN laughs]

KEITH: Well, it was a different intent, it was you meant to blow up.

ART: [overlapping] —working with— you have a bonkers definition of bomb delivery.

KEITH: Well, ok, I'll say there's three different things you tried to blow up with a bomb.

AUSTIN: Oh my God. Well, I don't think, I don't think—

ART: Oh my God, I didn't try to blow up

AUSTIN: Ok, we're moving on.

[KEITH laughs]

JACK: It's amazing how Grand Magnificent has arrived on this post-mortem.

AUSTIN: Um, so—

ART: Honestly, words need to have meaning, that's what I'm saying.

AUSTIN: All right. As always, I'm trying to completely dissolve it. Um, from Jo, which builds on something that, that, uh, I think, Jack, you were talking about. Um, Jo says:

So as Twilight Mirage went along, it felt like there was less playing to find out what happens, and more talking to find out what you want to happen. The best example of this is the scene where Grand traded Independence to save Fourteen Fifteen. This happens in my games as well, and I was wondering, do you feel the same way? Do you have any ideas how to combat this in play?

And like, my super gut reaction is like, lean in. Um—

JACK: Oh yeah.

AUSTIN: —talking about it is playing to find out what happens. Playing—

ART: Yeah, that's all we're doing. Talking.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Right. Playing, playing doesn't only mean being in character. It as much means putting your head on your microphone and going like, "I don't know how you get out of this situation. Like, what do you, what do we want this scene to be?" is play, it's one of the reasons I love doing this with you all so much.

KEITH: Hold on, real quick. I don't know if Jo has a microphone.

AUSTIN: True. Jo could have a desk, and be like, "Ugh," and hands on head, I don't know what their situation is. Um, fair. Fair, fair, fair. But you know what I mean, right?

KEITH: I know what you mean, right.

AUSTIN: Um, for me, I conceive of this show as when, when Signet and Tender, when, when Janine and Ali and I go like, "Wait a second. Janine, you're doing this on purpose, right? You're making, you're torturing, uh, Tender here, right?" That is the play as much as Janine, in character, torturing Tender.

[ALI laughs]

KEITH: I think something that we're really lucky— that, that makes us really lucky, is that we have a show to do? And so we get to keep that in mind all the time?



AUSTIN: Mmm. Mhm.

KEITH: And like, I'll, like— I think we talked about this in the last Tips at the Table, but, I think because it was me that, that was talking to other people like their D&D games were a show, or whatever.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

KEITH: But like, thinking about your, your like, regular-ass campaign like it's a show is super helpful. It really does a lot. 'Cause it is a show, it's just for, y'know, you and your friends.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

KEITH: At the table.

AUSTIN: And it's rad. Yeah.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, any other thoughts here though, on this, on, on this part of the show, which, which, I think Jo was a hundred percent true, in that like, we did way more of this, partially because the Veil is just that game, right?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: The Veil, from the jump, is, "Why are you doing this? How do you feel? Let's talk about what you want to happen in this scene," y'know.

JACK: I think there's a time and a place for it. And I don't want, by saying I think there's a time and place for it, to— I don't want that to come off pejoratively.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: Um, but I think, just as you're talking about, y'know, that that is a mode of play, I think something that I hope comes across, that we work hard on in the show, is, is displaying different ways you can play tabletop games.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Um, I think, had— I don't know, when I was in that scene with Art, it felt very important to me that we had that space to step out of the characters, and, and discuss what we wanted to do. In part because this situation, in the game, was one that was so precarious, and it felt like

we had to make a decision in a way that was careful, otherwise it could go, like, actually extremely nastily? Um, and then there are other times, uh, where you just want to play as the character, play the voiced characters, see what happens. Um, but I don't think that there is anything less by saying, "All right, what do we actually want here?"

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

JACK: I think you've been really good at that this season, Art, of like, explicitly saying like, "Where do I want to take this character? Where are you interested in seeing this character go?" Um, and I think that that's something that we couldn't have a character like Grand without?

AUSTIN: Right, because then—

ART: [overlapping] Yeah, I don't remember— oh, sorry.

AUSTIN: No, no, no, no. You answer.

ART: I don't remember what gaming book it was that first was like, "You should use dramatic irony in gaming," because clearly I took that all the way to heart. Um—

JACK: You ate it.

ART: Yeah.

JACK: You were so excited about it that you ate it.

KEITH: And it didn't go to your stomach, it went to your heart.

[AUSTIN and JACK laugh]

ART: And like, I'm definitely the wishy-washiest player, in terms of like, talking out what the next thing is going to be, and sometimes that's great moments, like the thing with the ring and the hand in Winter, and sometimes it's just, I'm sure Ali has virtual piles and piles of me hemming and hawing over literally nothing.

[AUSTIN and ALI laugh]

ART: Um, but yeah, and it's— but I do think it's important that like, once, once you, you can't win the game, so you should just be trying to, to do the game the best you can. And that comes from using the fact that players and characters have different—

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: —knowledge.

JACK: Uh, yeah. Always.

AUSTIN: Two things there: one, Faery [*pronounces like “fiery”*] in the chat, or Faery in the chat says, “Do you think there was a scenario in which Fourteen Fifteen died during that scene?” Absolutely!

ART: [at the same time] Absolutely!

JACK: 100%.

AUSTIN: Constantly!

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, I, I— we got a lot of questions that were like, “Well, could’ve things gone differently here or there?” And the answer is almost always, yes. Like, you look at my notes from the beginning of the season, Undela Apogica is the big bad— Undela Apogica and Independence are the big bads, and you don’t even see Independence until, like, April or something? Y’know? Like, that’s the way that game was—

ART: And that was probably when we were gonna wrap in May.

[JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: Right, a hundred percent. Like, it was, it was supposed to be this big finale thing. Um, and that I think speaks to something else about Jo’s question here, like the conversation of— or, or maybe it actually speaks to Jack saying, “There’s a time and a place,” in the way that’s not, y’know, definitive, but in the beginning of the season, the Ground game had nothing but, like, play to find out what happened, right?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, and, and maybe needed a little bit more off-mic, or out-of-character at least, “Hey, what do we want this show to be? What do you wanna do this week in this show?” Because what I did was give everybody a map, and said, “All right, go places. Let me know what you do.” And it turns out that was not a great format for exploring the setting or ideas, um, partially because it’s gonna be a long year no matter what, and exploration’s gonna take a lot longer than we ever think it will. Um, but partially because it was so directionless, and it wasn’t tied to character flags. It was tied to what was already in the world, and we were not having enough of that, “Hey, what do we want to have happen here,” in the, the meta, broad sense, and not the close-up sense, y’know. Uh, and so, yeah, that is, that is, like, basically a thing that’s true no

matter what. Uh, there's always the possibility of things going in a different direction, because so much of what happens is just the thing that happens in play. I like— there is no arc that we had that I, that went the way I thought it would go, at all. Like, um, I'm trying to think of any that— maybe the Arc game, the Arc game went the way it mostly I thought it would go, which is y'all would side with the kids, and would help them become sustainable. Um, but I did not anticipate the methods of that stuff, I did not anticipate roller-skating rinks, or conversations with the kids in order to find out different ways to get into the, the Big Garage, stuff like that I didn't anticipate. But beyond that one, like, over and over again I was surprised and had to roll with it. And again I mentioned on a Tips episodes recently, but one of my favorite things about Action Movie World and World Wide Wrestling RPG is they both have this principle for the GM, which is "Make it seem like it was always planned this way." And y'all make me do that all of the time, which is like, "All right, fuck, they went left, I thought they were going north. And they went left, that's not even the same thing. Who even knows?" Um, and, and the job is to try to like, make sense of it all. Um, so, so yeah. Any other thoughts on this stuff?

JANINE: Um, it— [sighs] it is such a thing of like, there is a line to walk, but there's, there's definitely like, a situation where someone starts the conversation that isn't, "What happens next?" but, "Here's what I want to happen next." And like, sometimes that works too, and sometimes that's like, a thing that has been, y'know, they've worked over in their head, it's like, the perfect situation. Y'know, I've been there.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: Um, it's like the thing they want to unfold this particular way. Um, and that— [sighs] being open to the change, I think, is the key? Like, it's— we're not relying a hundred percent on dice rolls, we're not relying a hundred percent on like, this kind of Mad Lib whatever happens, happens thing. We are trying to be more thoughtful about the story we're telling, and we also do enter into certain ideas. Like, I went into the finale a hundred percent sure Signet would die. Like that was—

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: To me, that seems like the thing that happens, is we're not shy about killing characters off in the finale, and she's been alive for a very long time, and like, emotionally, the thing she was best at is kind of fucked up.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Um, and like, the easy choice was totally, "Oh, well, she dies now." [laughs]

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: Um, and that's not at all what— like, the complete opposite happened. Um, and that's a hundred percent a function of, of just like, playing and being like, "Well, actually, it doesn't feel like she dies here. It doesn't feel like this is how this goes."

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Um, and you just have to be open to, to seeing that stuff play out.

AUSTIN: Yeah, otherwise it's just like— I mean, the other thing that happens is you can get in your head and be like, "Ok, this is the thing that has to happen." And then it, it can't, right?

JANINE: Mmhm.

AUSTIN: Um, and so you have to make a turn—

JANINE: [overlapping] And that also— Yeah. that also wasn't like, she didn't— it wasn't like she was going to die or stay alive based on a single dice roll or whatever, like, it was—

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: —not— most games give you that room. Um, at least, a lot of games give you that room. Um, and like— I don't think it's a bad thing to take advantage of that, and just, y'know, put together like, a real story, and not a, like, a Mad Lib kinda thing, you know what I mean?

AUSTIN: Right. Right, totally. Um, God, there was one thing— oh! I thought of another incredible moment that I wanted to shout out from a player, which was early in the season, super early in the season, there's a moment where Even, um, Gardner sees Janey Surge— sorry, Janey Errania, was, was her last name— working on, um, this kind of like, 3D painting of her and the Doyenne, and does not intrude, does not try to find out what it is. I love that moment, because it was one of things of like, this character, this player is thinking about how his character would actually act in this moment, which is, give this person privacy, as they are in a very sad state, and I really, really loved that bit, a lot. Um, all right. One more question, does that sound good? Unless anyone else has something else here. [pauses] Ok. This one comes in from Emily, who says:

This season has been described as ambitious and experimental.  
How did Twilight Mirage help you grow as a player, GM, or  
storyteller? What were new things that you tried that you think  
worked, or didn't work? Did you try anything new that you'd like to  
carry with you to future seasons?

I think I've already answered this, between the open map stuff at the, in the Ground game, um, Corrective, uh, all sorts of stuff that we, we tried to do here, that like, I think that's been most of

my answers here. So I'm curious for you, as players, um, and as storytellers also, what were some new things you tried, that worked or that didn't? I can call out names and things to see things that I'm curious about, but. I mean, we've already kind of hit one with Art and Grand, as being like, you assumed Grand would be this joke character, versus your traditional tragic ones.

ART: And I mean, Grand was certainly more, was lighter. Um, part of this, and this isn't really an answer to this, is that there's, like, there's such a great pressure release valve now, in our non-main feed content—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah. Yeah.

ART: —that like, it's so much less, it's so much less involved, y'know. Um, instead of thinking about one person for like, 8 or 9 months, or 14 in this case, um, I got to, I got to have side, side hustles, y'know?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: I got to really think about Jake the Jackal.

AUSTIN: Fantastic character. People who don't know who Jake the Jackal is, let me tell you, you're missing out. Um, anybody else here feel like they took a new direction with a character or as a player, or anything like that? I mean, you both kind of doubled— you kind of doubled down on playing multiple characters, and also didn't do that?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You played one character like, so core to them, to Fourteen Fifteen, is that they are one person and not four people on-screen.

JACK: Yeah, and I think part of the reason that I, um, part of the reason that I choose to, to play a character like that, to play a character, y'know, that was, that was embodied in different ways—

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: —was to challenge me to think about the, the ways in which you can portray a character on two levels, right? The ways in which you can portray three or four distinct personalities—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: —and distinct, um, appearances, while also trying to maintain this— because, y'know, it's, it's fun to set yourself a challenge—

[AUSTIN laughs]

JACK: —in what will turn out to be the most complicated season of a podcast we've ever made.

AUSTIN: Ough.

JACK: Um, but it was a lot of fun. And I really hope that, that each of Fourteen's kind of incarnations came across as a distinct entity, while also absolutely at the same time being Fourteen Fifteen. If you could— we spent the most time with the Body Politic, so I think there's a tendency, even for myself, to think of that as a sort of, like, "That's Fourteen!" But that's nonsense, that's bullshit. Fourteen, Fourteen, y'know, was a hundred bodies, remember.

AUSTIN: Right. Right.

JACK: Um, and I think if you can get to end of the season, and sort of think of Fourteen as— not really be able to go, "Well, which one of these is Fourteen?" Um, then I hope, I hope— if that's the case, I hope that we've gotten to a point where it, where it worked.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: But it was very difficult. [laughs]

AUSTIN: One of the reasons I really love that, that, uh, the most recent, one of the most recent, uh, pieces of fanart from Annie, um, from @dancynrew on Twitter? That is—

JACK: Oh, Dancy Nrew! I said it in a Let's Play recently, and it's a great thing to say out loud!

JANINE: He said it like, 6 times, over and over again! [laughs]

[AUSTIN laughs]

JACK: It was very enjoyable to say.

AUSTIN: Um, has that, has— that, that drawing is Carcanet's Ironclad's— it's their, their, like, metal helmet opened up, and inside you can see the Body Politic, uh, Worthy, Worthy of Grace, and, um, and, and the, the Gunslinger?

JACK: Gunslinger.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: All inside. Um, and that is, uh— it feels like there's such a unity of being, even though there's distinction inside. Y'know? Um—

JACK: Also drums. I learned how to write drums.

AUSTIN: That's a big one. And boy, you did a fucking great job, I fucking love it so much, unh! The first time—

JACK: Will I carry—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] The first time you sent me the Morning's Observation track, from the argument inside of the Beloved ship—

JACK: Oh, "The Sleep Detachment" [continues indistinctly under Austin]—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] "The Sleep Detachment", "On Sleep Detachment". Oh my God, I was like, "Yo, there's drums on this and they are for real the best!"

[ALI laughs]

JACK: Will I carry it forward? No! No drums in Hieron.

[AUSTIN and KEITH laugh]

AUSTIN: Well, y'know, there's some people—

JACK: No drums in Hieron!

AUSTIN: That's not true, your first drums were in Hieron!

JACK: [pauses] One drums in Hieron.

AUSTIN: One drums in Hieron. Hell yeah!

ART: Is that a— is that a liter— you're using a, a— Jack, where are your drums coming from?

[AUSTIN laughs]

JACK: That's a great question, Art! A computer.

ART: Ok, that's what I— I didn't know how to phrase that. Like—

JACK: They're digital. They're digital drums.



ART: All right.

JACK: It's like a drum machine and it's a sample of, like, like, a drumset called Bluebird, which I don't know why it's called Bluebird, but that's the one I use.

AUSTIN: Tattoo of a bluebird. Um—

JACK: Tattoo of a bluebird.

AUSTIN: I'll say two other real quick things, for me, unless other people have one here.

KEITH: I have something real quick, but you should do yours.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Sure. Ok, I'll do one of mine, which is take into account the year you're having, before beginning a project. Um, this has not been a great year, as a brain person? As a person who has one, who has a brain. Uh, it has been a year of being deeply overworked at my day job, uh, and deeply frustrated with culture, and with life. Um, and one in which, y'know, I was stuck in traffic coming home from work knowing that this was coming, and still couldn't get out in time. Uh, and decided to do the most ambitious season of our, our podcast yet. [laughs] Uh, instead of doing something much simpler. Um, the good news is I think the next two seasons I have in mind are much simpler things, or really anything else we have in mind in general— Bluff City is complicated, and I think we'll still do some live games that really get out there in terms of ambition and experimentation, and we'll find other ways of being ambitious. But in terms of pure, like, tackling ideas, this was the hardest project I've had, probably ever? In terms of like, the, the, the [sighs]— the complexity of trying to get these ideas down in a way that I could be proud of. Um, meanwhile, trying to launch a website that was trying to do something similar in the space of video games, uh, and coming out feeling that neither hit the, hit the speeds I wanted, hit the velocities, and found their smoothness. Um, and it's just like, be fuckin' aware of what you're working on, and like, be aware of how far you can push yourself, and what projects to kind of prioritize. Which isn't to say— I think the messiness ended up making this more honest, in a lot of ways. Um, it's not a novel, it's an actual play podcast. But knowing that stuff would have helped me, I think, scale a little bit different? I'm very curious of myself, to think like, "Well, what if Twilight Mirage had been a Marielda mini-season or something?" Um or like, a world we set up like Bluff City, that we always revisit from different places? And so, one of the biggest lessons for me is like, think about that stuff ahead of time, and be willing to scale, and be experimental not only with content, but with form. So, that was really useful. Um—

ART: Um, jumping on the what kind of year you're having, um—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: This is like, an answer I wanted to give, and never found the question for, so, this is the last question, so you're, it's happening.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ART: Um, which is the like, the year that I had is sort of like, the reason Grand has that dark turn?

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Um, four of our, four of our, my close friends moved away, in the spring and summer of this year, and so that's like, why I was thinking so much about like, "What is friendship? Who are my friends?" And then it's like, "None of these assholes!"

[Several people laugh]

ART: The characters, of course, you all are precious to me. Um, and like, yeah, that is, that is—and I couldn't plan for that, of course, although, y'know, three of them moved because they got academic jobs, which is a little predictable, in, in hindsight, but I just assumed everyone would keep not getting jobs. Um—

AUSTIN: Right, that's all!

ART: Um, yeah. So like, yeah, that's, that's, that's that. That's the answer I wanted to give, and didn't get a perfect question for, so sorry, format nerds.

[AUSTIN and KEITH laugh]

AUSTIN: God. Uh, Keith, you also had one here.

KEITH: Yeah! My thing, uh, uh— Jack reminded me of this. So, it's not— I guess it's not a, not a new thing, it's sort of my persistent cop-out for characterization, um, but, uh, the thing that I hoped with Gig is the thing that I have hoped with— since Mako, which is that, like, there's some sort of interesting line that you can draw through Fero and Mako and Gig, and, and feel something about, like, me in there? And I don't really know how to articulate it, because it, y'know, it's like four years of a podcast worth of articulation. Uh, but—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: [laughs] So, so the best I can hope is that like, someone's that's listened to it all comes out of it and goes like, like, "Oh, this is, y'know, four years worth of something that Keith wanted to say." Uh—

AUSTIN: Sure.

KEITH: Yeah. And then— the trick then is going back to characters that I've played before, and then having to do a thing that I was doing four years ago, so I'm relistening—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: I'm relistening to Hieron to be like, "Who is Fero?"

AUSTIN: Who is Fero? But yeah, I'm listening to it too.

KEITH: Who is, who is, um, what was I doing four years ago that was anything.

AUSTIN: Which is gonna get even more complicated when we figure out what Spring is, right?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And how Spring works. So, I'm looking forward to that. Um, I had another one but maybe I've lost it. Maybe that's ok. Does anyone else have—

KEITH: [overlapping] Did you ever remember your, uh, your other scene?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I've, I've now, in fact, given two more scenes.

KEITH: Oh!

AUSTIN: Which were the, the Tender-Cadent—

KEITH: [overlapping] Did I miss that?

AUSTIN: Yeah, the Tender-Cadent, and then, and then, Even-Janey. Um, I think the other, the last one for me here is the, one of the biggest ones was definitely, um— no, I've lost it. It's gone. I thought I found it, and then I didn't, and that's totally ok. Anyone else have anything? [pauses] Ok, I think that that's it then, I think that that's the end of our post-mortem. Thank you so much for everyone who, uh— oh! Nope, I remember what it was. I remember what it was.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Um, it was— it is thinking about the next time we do a show in a Forged in the Dark system, um, and it's one of the reasons that I'm super interested in like— so, I don't have an announcement about— we don't have a, we don't have a trailer for Spring, because we have not started recording it yet, because we've all been travelling and working on the finale, which has been the biggest, weirdest finale we've ever done. Two: um, I don't have, I'm not saying

promises about next future seasons or whatever, I don't wanna be like, "This is the game we're playing in a year," 'cause who the fuck knows. But, when I'm looking at games, one of the ones that stands out to me is Beam Saber, which is a mech, uh, Forged in the Dark game, for two reasons. One: despite doing two seasons all about mechs, neither of them have really been about mechs. Um, there've been mechs in them, but they haven't really been the thing. Uh, so I think I still have like, a big Gundam in me. Um, two: it does the thing that I fuckin' learned twice, in two different series, seasons, which is— and I think it does, it, it seems like it's gonna do the thing that like, I care about the most— I have to experiment with it, and who the fuck knows, but the lesson is figure out how to have the nuance of a bunch of factions, with also the buckets of a few factions. Um, I love the faction stuff in this season, and in COUNTER/weight, and in Marielda. Um, in each case, there have been many listeners for whom that is overwhelming, and that is a genuine concern. Um, it's not a concern in Hieron, 'cause Hieron isn't built in that way, and I mean that as much thematically as mechanically. But, a thing that reading Beam Saber reminded me of, but also that we did in COUNTER/weight, and a thing we do here, eventually, is that by bucketing a bunch of sub-factions into a larger bucket faction, you can communicate something quickly without it being overwhelming. And so, the Advent Group, and then eventually the Qui Err Coalition, um, and the DFS, which is actually like seven factions inside of it— the, the NEH, which has like seven or eight factions inside of it— ended up being really useful shorthand to gesturing towards a kind of amalgamation of a bunch of different things. Um, and being able to get to that quicker, while still having the deep bucket you need as a GM to reach in and be like, "Oh, here's who handles the economic concern on Skein. Here's where the space cop who's been chasing Grand around space for a while is from," and being able to give her specific character comes from having that pre-built list of factions, right? Like, Scum and Villainy ships with 40 factions, or something, and they are not bucketed in the way we ended up doing it. And for me, it's like, hey, the shortcut here is to, on the prep side, have those, but on the play side, function first and foremost with, here are the buckets they're representing. Here's what the NEH is doing, you don't need to worry immediately about what the seven or eight sub-factions inside of the— yeah, 36, it's 36 factions in Scum and Villainy, and about the same in Blades, right? Um, Marielda had the same. Um, and so, it's like, "How do we make sure that those things are clear right from the gate?" And that is super useful in storytelling in general, um, because once you have those big picture things in place, you can then kind of start to dig in, because you, everyone has the same basic, like, shared knowledge of who are the major players, if that makes sense. Again, no promises that we're gonna play Beam Saber, I'm looking at a bunch of games for our, out, whenever we return to this universe. Um, uh, there are a bunch of mech games coming out, it turns out, between that, and Lancer, and, um, I just saw another new one— All Systems Nominal, um, another Forged in the Dark mech game that I have to read. Um, but that is one of the things that I, I know I'll have in mind, is like, I want the, the, the depth of world that having the factions prepped gives you, but I also want the clarity of grouping, of grouping them, which we did, which we did eventually, but, but, y'know. Anyway, all right, that's—

JANINE: You— you did, wait, wait—

ART: [overlapping] We now present— oh, oh, sorry.

JANINE: No, it's just— I was gonna say, you reminded me of a thing of an answer I have for this.

AUSTIN: Oh, sure!

JANINE: Um, the thing that Twilight Mirage, I think, helped me really get my head around in way that— it's like, a thing I hadn't really thought of, I think, properly before. Um, I— [sighs] I had it all worked out in my head how I was gonna express this, and then, like, I had not, I— mm. [laughs] Um, I think I, for, because, y'know, Friends at the Table is sort of my first time spending time with these kinds of games. And I think I placed a lot of— not reliance, but I sort of believed that a game's systems could imbue a sort of energy—

AUSTIN: Mmm.

JANINE: —um, into the play. And there are a lot of games that we've played that do kind of demonstrate that, and I think sort of reinforce that idea for me. But through the course of Twilight Mirage, I think I got a better understanding of like, um— y'know, this is a thing that I said, that I said to Jack, like, last week or something, which is I think that if we had done Scum and Villainy to start with—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: —I would have a really different impression of Scum and Villainy as a game, versus the Veil. Because I associate the Veil with a slightly more boisterous thing than I associate Scum and Villainy, and Scum and Villainy is—

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Y'know, that was sort of the whole thing with bringing in Scum and Villainy, was like, y'know, it's associated with, with Blades in the Dark, which was Marielda, and there's like, a boisterousness to Marielda, and, and I had just kind of assumed that that was part of like, a systems thing, and a lot of it just— that's not all of it, like—

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: There's just, y'know, systems lend themselves well to certain tones and things, but that's not, um—

AUSTIN: The be-all, end-all.

JANINE: [overlapping] I was putting too much weight on that. Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. Um, I— there's definitely part— again, one of the questions that came in that we won't give a lot of time to is just like, "Hey, how did you figure out Futura Free as a system?", which is like, "I don't fu— I," lots of me being in chat with y'all being like, "I don't know what to do! What are we doing? What's important?" And then, another being— again, a question that— it comes back to that question Jo asked, of like, talking about what you want to be doing. And it ended up being so useful to talk through with y'all, like, what your priorities were for the finale, in terms of not the outcome, because the outcome was never assured. Like, this could've gone bad, like, so easily. So easily it could have gone bad. Um, but, in terms of—I think about this a lot in terms of windows, or, um, like if you imagine, if you imagine a spectrum of like, tragedy on one end and comedy on the other end, right, um, where is that window at? Um, and as a designer, how could I build something that allowed for a certain window? And so something like letting you spend Contempt Tokens as a resource slides that towards comedy and away from tragedy, right? Because it gives you a resource by which you can enact change in the world, that you can also regenerate when bad things happen. Um, so there was some thought of that to like, help push it in that direction, but it still could've gone incredibly poorly for everybody! Um, there were cards you didn't draw, there were cards you did draw, there are things that like, could've happened or didn't happen, or whatever. Um, and, and, and, uh, on top of that, there is just like, the thing, the other half of that that I learned was like, learning to let go of that stuff. So when I, and Jack can, can speak to this, that when we did our test game, one of the things that I had told Jack was like, I have in— I have, um, events that are tied to certain cards, that are like, "Oh! I know what happens when this card is drawn." And the only time we ended up using that in play was the first— or, the Kings that got drew. When the Kings drew, I put on new clocks, and I narrated one or two events, so that was like, Keen talking about the arrival of, uh, the impending arrival of Crystal Palace, but I hated how it played out, so I immediately ditched those. Um, and so, that's the other big one, is just like, knowing when to let go of that stuff, mechanically, because while sometimes it can help present a specific tone, whether that is a jauntiness— that's not the word you said. What was the word you said, Janine, to describe—

JANINE: Boisterousness.

AUSTIN: Boisterousness, or to present a sort of like, deep, uh, like, feeling of, um, of like, cynicism, and fear. Um, games can do that stuff, but there's enough time, there's a time when you have to let go, and let the players drive that action especially. So, that is another big one, for sure. Um, yeah, I don't know what happens if the "Remove a threat from the map" card doesn't come up, I have no idea. I have no idea what happens, I'm so curious to know. Um, anything else here before we wrap? [pauses] Ok. So, before we wrap, the last thing I wanna note. One: if you have questions, and are curious about other stuff, you can always send them to [tipsatthetable@gmail.com](mailto:tipsatthetable@gmail.com), which is where we, uh, we get our questions to do our Tips at the Table episodes. If you don't know what that is, it's part of our Patreon, every month we answer tips about everything from how to talk to your GM about a plotline you don't love, to how to, uh, prep for, uh, a system change of your own, to, uh, how to bring up romantic stuff at the table,

um, to like, how, what are snacks? How do you do snacks? How do you do microphones? We kind of do as much as we can in that space. So if you have questions, send those to [tipsatthetable@gmail.com](mailto:tipsatthetable@gmail.com). But two, um, we are gonna do— and this has already been announced on Twitter— some of us are gonna be at SHUX, which is the Shut Up & Sit Down convention, uh, in Vancouver in October. Does anyone remember the dates?

ALI: October 12th to the 14th.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Right.

ART: And our event will be on Saturday.

AUSTIN: Awesome.

ALI: Presumably. It may change.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah, they said that, they said maybe.

[ALI laugh]

ART: They told us it was gonna be on Saturday.

JANINE: [overlapping] We may not have a time, but we have a date.

AUSTIN: Right. But also that kinda doesn't matter, 'cause as far as I know they don't have, they don't have single-day tickets, right, they only have—

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: —weekend tickets. Um—

ART: Yeah, but if you don't wanna go— if you're like, "Well, I can get to Vancouver, but only for 12 hours," you pick the 12 hours between like, let's say, 10 and 10 on Saturday.

[Several people laugh]

AUSTIN: Totally. Um, does anyone— Jack, do you wanna tell the story of how this happened, since I blame you?

[KEITH laughs]

JACK: "Blames" is an interesting word here, it's interesting you just picked the word "blame" here.

ALI: Oh, I picked the word “blame”.

AUSTIN: Thank you.

JACK: Oh, well, ok, ok. So, uh, I had already been planning on going to SHUX, I was thinking of, um, I was thinking of just going and guesting on a couple of panels, and maybe just running a game for like, three people. Uh, as part of a panel, just be like, “Oh, I might run Dream Askew, or something.” Uh, and I mentioned this to Art, when I was Los Angeles, and Art was like, “Oh! I should come. That’d be great. You and I can run a game for two other people.” Um, and then I was like, “That seems, that seems interesting.” So I mentioned that Art and I were thinking about this to Austin, and Austin was like, “Oh, yes, I would love to come.” And at that point, when it’s Austin—

AUSTIN: Ok, you’re now summarizing a lot, but.

[ALI laughs]

JACK: —at that point, when it’s Austin, Art, and me, we should probably, y’know, run a game.

AUSTIN: You’re eli— you’re eliding a very important fact, of pressure.

JACK: [overlapping] Which point am I eliding here?

AUSTIN: The one is— one, one: I had already been invited, and I was like, “No, I don’t wanna go,” or was like, “No, I can’t go, I would love to go, but work. Ugh.” Um, and in my heart of hearts, I always wanted to go, which is an important one. And so you, someone who I trust and love, saying, “What if we did this thing?” was just so tempting. But more importantly—

[JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: —what you said was, “All right. We have one day to decide if we’re going to do this or not.”

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Tomorrow—

JACK: I was telling the truth!

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

ART: I had, I had four days, and I still waited until the last day.



JACK: We had a deadline to hit. And Austin and I were in a room. Uh, and—

AUSTIN: As we often are.

JACK: Just like, y'know, "Let's do it," so—

KEITH: What kind of room? What color were the walls?

JACK: It was like, uh, yellow?

AUSTIN: Yellow?

KEITH: Carpeted or hardwood?

AUSTIN: Hardwood.

KEITH: Hardwood, you were in a hardwood, yellow-walled room—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Wait, were we in my living room, or were we out—

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: —in the world?

JACK: Wooden floors, but, uh, not wooden walls.

AUSTIN: Not wooden walls.

KEITH: Ok, so tell me exactly what happened in the hardwooded, yellow-walled room.

JACK: Well, so then we filled in a very complicated form, and then we were apparently doing something, and then the next—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Which had a hard question on it, which I'm still not sure we answered right. I don't know.

KEITH: What was the question? How hard was it?

JACK: Uh, we—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] What is this show?

[ALI laughs]

KEITH: What is *this* show?

AUSTIN: What is this? What is this?

JACK: Is it a theatrical performance, or is it a live ga— anyway.

AUSTIN: A live game, yeah. Is it a theatrical performance, or is it a live game?

JACK: [overlapping] Anyway. Then the next day—

AUSTIN: I say live game.

ART: We'll be doing the "Bye Bye Greasy" episode of *Home Movies*, in play—

[Several people laugh]

JACK: Yes! We are!

[AUSTIN groans]

JACK: Anyway, the next day, the next day, um—

ALI: The second act.

JACK: —um, after a— the second act— after a, an interesting and eventful meeting, that already took a lot of thinking about—

AUSTIN: Oh yeah.

JACK: Austin and I said to Ali, "Um, we've, we've done a thing."

AUSTIN: "Ahem, we did it. We did a bad. One bad, but might be a good."

JACK: "But might be a good."

ALI: We were walking down the street, I was unprepared for this.

AUSTIN: We were walking until we stopped walking down the street—

ALI: Mmhm, mmhm.

AUSTIN: —and you said, “Um—”

[ALI laughs]

KEITH: Where’d you stop walking? What were the cross-streets?

AUSTIN: I can tell you the specific place we were, do you remember where we were? Do you remember what we—

JACK: Was it outside the Church of Most Precious Blood?

AUSTIN: It was outside the Church of Most Precious Blood.

ALI: Oh, always Jesus with y’all.

AUSTIN: I love doing this. Nameoftheyear in the chat says, “A real life Austin and Jack conversation, or anecdote, still managed to include bureaucratic form-filling.”

[ALI laughs]

JACK: Yeah, it fuckin’ did. It fuckin’ did, I tell you. Anyway, this story is brought to us by the patience of everybody, especially Ali. Uh, but all this is to say that, um, we’re gonna be at SHUX, and we’re going to be playing something.

AUSTIN: We don’t know what exactly yet. We have some ideas, but nothing to announce.

KEITH: [overlapping] Tag.

AUSTIN: Yeah, tag. We’re gonna play tag.

KEITH: [overlapping] Duck Duck Goose.

ALI: Oh, hell yeah.

JANINE: Transition to some jacks.

ALI: Oooh.

AUSTIN: We could do some jacks. We could do all sorts of— maybe we’ll play six different games!

JANINE: We’re gonna bring jacks back!

AUSTIN: Exactly, we're bringing it back.

JACK: We're gonna bring Jack—

JANINE: Marbles.

JACK: We're bringing Jack Black.

AUSTIN: That's it, Jack Black will be our special guest, on—

KEITH: Is Kyle Gass gonna be there?

AUSTIN: No. Not allowed. Decided.

KEITH: Not allowed.

AUSTIN: Don't make your name—

KEITH: [overlapping] Oh, is he banned from SHUX?

AUSTIN: Yeah, banned from SHUX. No Tenacious D. Just Jack Black. But he'll be doing *School of Rock* cosplay, so it all adds up. It's fine. Um—

ART: They're putting us in such a big room, it's really gonna be embarrassing for us.

ALI: [laughing] It's gonna be so embarrassing.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's gonna be bad, I don't— it's fine. It's fine.

JANINE: Everyone just bring a pillow with an extra jacket and a matching head on it.

[Several people laugh]

JANINE: And just like, put that beside you. It'll fill up, and yeah. Great.

AUSTIN: It'll fill up, it'll be great.

[SYLVIA(?) says something inaudible in the background] [???, 3:19:05]

JANINE: Or at least comfy.

JACK: The thing I will say is, um, you can buy tickets to SHUX by— I'll put a link in chat— um, but I will say that they are close to not having any tickets anymore? Um, so if it's something

you're thinking about doing, and it's something that you're able to do, I would recommend maybe going for it sooner rather than later.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Um, I'm gonna, I'm gonna post, post and paste the link.

AUSTIN: Um, I'll—

ALI: Attached to that— [laughs]

AUSTIN: [overlapping] I'll note— Oh, go ahead. What are you?

ALI: Go on.

AUSTIN: No, you go ahead.

ALI: Um, I was gonna say two very [laughs] important things. Like, very last minute international travel is not a possibility for a lot of people, so like—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yes. Right, right.

ALI: —as someone who—

KEITH: Including me, maybe!

ALI: Mhm. As someone who like, skipped meals and sold my textbooks to go to Kanye West concerts, [laughs] I fully understand it but like, this is gonna be our first live show, it's probably not gonna be the last—

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: Yeah.

ALI: Um, if you can't make it, you can't make it, it's fine. This is kind of just us being like, "Oh, to be able to do this in the future, we just have to do it", so we're just gonna see— [laughs]

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Yeah, totally.

ALI: The second very—

AUSTIN: To do it, do it.

ALI: Yeah. The second very important is that SHUX does put their panels on their YouTube, um, and—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Oh, awesome! I did not know that.

ALI: Um, they typically don't do it— Yeah. They typically don't do it until, like, a couple months after the con, it probably won't be 'til like, 2019, but, like, that stuff is gonna be recorded, and you are gonna see it, if you can't be there. I know a lot of people in the audience are probably like, "What the fuck?" Like, "Why are you doing this?" And like, I understand.

ART: To give you an idea of how small a show SHUX is, we brought their website down, it looks like.

AUSTIN: What?

ART: And there's only 390 people watching, so—

AUSTIN: No, no.

ALI: No.

AUSTIN: No, we didn't do that, did we?

ALI: That's not true

JANINE: No, I—

AUSTIN: Oh no.

JANINE: I tried— went there earlier, and it didn't— I went there like—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] It's just—

JANINE: —five hours ago and it was a little hit and miss—

AUSTIN: Ok.

JANINE: —so I think it's that it's—

AUSTIN: They're in the UK. It's far.

JANINE: I like your version more, but—

KEITH: Um, yeah, when you guys thought, when you guys brought this up and said, "Hey, we're gonna do this, so if anyone wants to come—" And I, uh—

ART: [overlapping] Not a lot of time.

KEITH: I don't have a passport. And you guys were like, "Well, you can just get a passport." And I was like, "I don't have a birth certificate to get a passport, 'cause I lost my birth certificate, and also, I lost my Social Security card." [laughs]

AUSTIN: Keith!

JACK: Oh my God.

ART: We can't help you if you can't prove who you are.

JANINE: Ohhhh.

[ALI laughs]

KEITH: Well, I did—

JACK: [overlapping] We did have some difficulties at that point.

KEITH: A couple days ago, I did, I ordered a, uh, I ordered a, uh—

AUSTIN: I—

KEITH: —I rush-ordered a birth certificate, so we'll see how it goes.

AUSTIN: I— I fully thought you were going to say a fake passport.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: I was so worried.

KEITH: [overlapping] Well, well, listen—

ART: No one confess to crimes on stream.

KEITH: [overlapping] Is anyone driving? Is anyone driving across the border? I will hide in the trunk—

[ALI makes a worried noise]

KEITH: —that's fine with me!

JACK: Oh, no, no, no, we can't say this.

ART: [overlapping] No—

KEITH: How long could they possibly detain me for? Right?

AUSTIN: Oh my God.

DRE: Long enough. Long enough.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Cue the music!

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: All right, that's gonna do it for us! Uh, as always, thank you so much for your support, uh, in every possible different way. If one of the ways you'd like to give support is monetarily, uh, which again is a thing I'm that not gonna say, not— I'm not not gonna say thank you for, but I am gonna say thank you for all different types of support. But if you do wanna toss us a couple bucks, you can do that at [friendsatthetable.cash](https://www.patreon.com/friendsatthetable). Um, we are— like I said at the beginning of the episode, we are definitely back on some stuff there, but we are gonna be catching up in the near future. I'm super excited about to run our Masks game for Bluff City, I have like, it's all prepped out, I just need to find the time to do it. Um, and it has been, it has been a joy to do the Twilight Mirage with y'all, I am, I am so, so, so lucky to be able to play games with you, uh, with you all. We, we, when we all kicked this off, it was like, such a, "Yeah, I'd love to play games with my friends" thing, and I'm gonna tell you the secret: it still is. That is still the heart of this for me, is every week I look forward to sitting down with y'all, speaking into microphones, going onto Roll20, and being absolutely surprised by the thoughtfulness, the care, and the, the kind of brilliance you all bring to your characters, um, and the ways in which we get to build worlds together. And it is, it is, it blows my mind— it blows my mind not that I'm lucky enough— not only that I'm lucky enough to have people support us at, at, on Patreon, but that I have been lucky enough to have you all in my life. Uh, I went a long time of not being able to play games at all, and now I get to play them with the best people in the world. So, thank you all so much. I love you all, I love you in the chat, uh, that is gonna do it for us. Uh, you know where to find us. Uh,



look for— oh! One more little thing. We are gonna put up a Patreon— a previously Patreon-only, uh, mini-arc in the main feed over the next few weeks. Um, it is going to be the game that we played of— [pauses, a dog barks in the background]

JANINE: Are you buying time? Fall of Magic.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Fall of Magic!

ALI: There you go.

[KEITH laughs]

AUSTIN: I forgot that I was gonna say the—

JANINE: I couldn't tell if you were being dramatic or not, or if it had a new name.

AUSTIN: I genuinely almost said, "The scroll-y one. The one with scrolls."

[ALI says something inaudible at around 3:24:14]

AUSTIN: Fall of Magic, one of my very favorite games we've ever played, um, I really hope, for people who don't, don't follow us on the, the Patreon, like, I really hope you enjoy it, and I think gets a pretty good snapshot of what we do over on the Patreon. Um, it is super good, I am super excited for people to hear it. It's also fun because it's a thing we recorded over like, six or seven months, of individual recordings once a month, like, every other month, which means that there's like, a dream-like, weirdness to it, because we're always like, "Wait, what did we do last time? Were you a— you were some sorta dog? What?"

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Um, so, look forward to that. If you already heard it, please enjoy the relisten, we need some time to get, to get things up and running on Spring, so. Thank you again so much. That is going to do it for us. I will talk to you all very, very soon. Peace.

ALI: Bye.

JACK: Bye.

["The Notion" plays]