

## Tips at the Table 40: Fruit vs Be (October 2020)

Transcriber: robotchangeling

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

**Sylvia:** Hey, I'm Sylvi. You can find me on Twitter at @sylvisurfer and listen to my other show *Emojidrome* wherever you get your podcasts.

**Austin:** Andrew Lee Swan.

**Dre:** Hey, you can find me on Twitter at @swandre3000. And do you always say hopefully?

**Austin:** Yes.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Always.

**Dre:** And/or do you always say it with that specific inflection?

**Austin:** Eh, I mix up the inflection, but I always say hopefully.

**Keith:** Yeah. It's close.

**Dre:** Okay. [laughs]

**Keith:** That was along the lines.

**Austin:** Yeah, yeah.

**Dre:** Okay. Alright.

**Austin:** And that was the voice of Keith J. Carberry. Hey, Keith.

**Keith:** Hi. I'm not giving hopefully good answers. I'm giving bad answers today.

**Austin:** Okay. Yeah. [Sylvia laughs]

**Keith:** I'm going rogue. No one can stop me. Bad answers only. [Dre laughs]

**Austin:** Bad answers only. Let's go. Uh, let's just jump into it today, as we continue to catch up on these. Maddie(???) writes in and says:

I have never had a personally successful session of a tabletop role playing game before. I've played a few games of D&D, and while everyone around me seem to be having a good time, I couldn't focus or really remember moment to moment what we were doing. This could be the groups I've been a part of or D&D itself or the adrenaline-induced anxiety of trying something new like this, but I've never really gotten into the groove of a character or felt motivated by the game. I often found myself browsing Twitter while other players debated spell mechanics. Do you know— uh, do you have any specifically accessible games in this way? Or know of anywhere that I could go as a rookie player? Even just something that helps you focus better. Any advice at all would be appreciated so much.

**Austin:** And that is from Maddie. Any thoughts here? I feel like my perspective here is like the least interesting, because as the GM—which is like the majority of what I do at this point—I always *have* to be in full focus mode. [laughs softly]

**Dre:** Mmm. [laughs]

**Keith:** Mmm.

**Austin:** Or nearly always. So I'm turning it to y'all.

**Dre:** [sighs] Well, first of all, there's definitely nobody on this call who has ever looked at Twitter while playing a game on *Friends at the Table*. [Austin laughs] Absolutely not.

**Austin:** It's everybody. Right, it's everybody?

**Keith:** Yeah. [laughter] And there's definitely not any moments where you catch some— catch yourself browsing Twitter by catching someone else having retweeted something. [Dre laughs]

**Austin:** Ah, I see.

**Keith:** You see a— “Oh shit, both of us. Damn,” and then you're back in it.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm. How do you...how do you manage that? And still manage to pay attention at the table.

**Dre:** I will say, for me, I try not to...and not just Twitter, but I try not to do something where I read, because if I'm reading something that is the most likely thing to completely pull me out of focus.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Dre:** I try to do something that is just engaging enough with my hands—

**Keith:** Mm-hmm.

**Dre:** —that like it like gives me that like extra bit of focus but doesn't fully take me away.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Dre:** In one of my home games lately, I have found myself actually building Gunpla while we're playing.

**Austin:** Oh, that's good.

**Dre:** And that has been actually a nice balance of like helping me to get some of that excess energy into something that helps me focus without completely absorbing me, so that I don't come back and I'm like, "What? Huh? What? What happened?"

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

**Keith:** Yeah, I—

**Sylvia:** [simultaneously] Yeah, I'm kind of similar. Oh, sorry. Go ahead.

**Keith:** No, it's good. You know.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, I'm...I like to just sort of have something that's not related to like...that's not text-related at all and preferably something more like tactile that I can do, just because it helps me focus to just have like, a little something to fidget with or whatever. I also think that like... [sighs slightly] there are times where if you catch yourself doing this during a spell mechanics debate, it's probably like, [Dre laughs] not worth it to beat yourself up over it.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** But it is good to get your— be like, oh, I should probably focus on this again. 'Cause it's totally—

**Keith:** Hey, sometimes a spell mechanics debate can be red hot.

**Sylvia:** True.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Sylvia:** But also like, it's totally natural to drift a little bit when people are getting into like really crunchy stuff. Especially—

**Keith:** Really crunchy stuff about a character that doesn't apply to you.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** That is exactly it, yeah.

**Sylvia:** Like, if you're playing like a fighter or something, right? And like, especially if this is like a D&D thing. Like, if you're playing a fighter, your mechanics are so different than that of like a mage or whatever, that you're not really going to care as much when that stuff—

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Or be as engaged when that stuff is being brought up.

**Austin:** And it's also...you know, not to drag D&D immediately. [Sylvia laughs] But it's a system that has room for really frustrating long debates about stuff.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** So I do think Maddie's impulse of like, are there other games I could play that will keep me a little more engaged because they won't fall into the trigger of this distraction, which is that style of mechanics rules lawyering stuff. And like, you know, we play a bunch of different types of games on this podcast, and I think...it's not that none of them get crunchy. I think you can go back and listen to like that recent arc in PARTIZAN where everyone was like trying to find every last die they could for a big roll, and like, it gets there sometimes. [Dre laughs]

**Keith:** That was sick. I loved that. That was so much fun.

**Austin:** Yeah, that was so sick. Totally. And, you know, that did not have to— that did not have us all needing to look at...

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** One, that was a lot of interaction between people.

**Keith:** Riht.

**Austin:** And two, that was lots of...um, interaction between good friends. [Sylvia and Dre laugh] And also, it was...it was not like, here's a particular like move or magical spell that I have that then, you know, the GM has to negotiate with, or blah blah blah. It was just more general rules. And so I think finding games that encourage that sort of collaboration between players. Forged in the Dark games in general have a lot of helping moves, which means that you'll be more often—

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** —focused on like, how can I help engage in this moment?

**Keith:** Mm.

**Austin:** What is my character doing? How can I position myself so that I can be part of this activity? Or playing games that just generally don't have that style of super crunchiness. You know, if you go listen to something like...or the other side of this, games where it's okay to kind of fade back just a little bit.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** Something like *Stewpot* is something that we've played on the live shows that has like, okay, who's scene is it? And I personally don't mind if someone is like, you know, scrolling Twitter a little bit while something like that is happening, when someone else has a big scene. And then when it's your turn to be part of a scene, the stuff that you're talking about tends not to be rules lawyer-y, you know, debates about mechanics.

**Keith:** We just played *Lasers & Feelings*. That comes to mind.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** And another thing— so, this happens to me all the time. I don't...I catch myself, like, having faded up out of listening, like doing something like Twitter.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** Probably once...it's always been a problem for me, because I have ADHD. And because it's a problem for me, it's something I'm aware of. And because it's something I'm aware of, I don't do it very often.

**Austin:** Right.

**Keith:** So it's like, once, once a long session, I will like be like, "Fuck, I was just on Twitter, and I didn't hear a minute of stuff," you know?

**Austin:** Uh huh. Yeah.

**Keith:** Which, I think that's, you know, one out of every 300 minutes is not the worst... [Austin laughs] is not the worst record. But I do...I get into this thing where, when...when I'm trying too hard to be focused, I have too much to say.

**Austin:** Mmm.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** And will be in too many scenes or be be talking too much in a scene.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** And so I have to lay back. And then when I lay back, it feels like I'm listening to a podcast, because I'm always listening to a podcast.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** And so, when...when I'm getting into listening to the show that I'm on as if it's a podcast I'm listening to, then I can start to—sitting there paying attention—start to lose words.

**Austin:** Right.

**Keith:** And so it's really like find— for me, it's like finding the balance between those things. But the most important thing for me has been just like checking in with myself on like...I just have to actively go like, am I paying attention?

**Austin:** Right.

**Keith:** And like Sylvi and Dre said, doing something with my hands. I've done a lot of different things with my hands. I tear up little bits of paper. I've played with candle wax. That's a bad one. Don't do that.

**Austin:** I remember that one.

**Keith:** You don't remember that?

**Austin:** I said I remember that one. You burned yourself.

**Keith:** Oh, you do remember that one.

**Austin:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Uh huh.

**Keith:** Okay. Yeah, I did burn myself doing that.

**Austin:** (??? 8:33)

**Keith:** Don't do that. I do...sometimes I'll mute my mic and I'll just strike matches, though.

**Austin:** Mmm.

**Keith:** So that's along the same lines.

**Austin:** That's fun.

**Keith:** Yeah, that's a good one.

**Austin:** A fidget cube was really really helpful for me a few years ago when I found myself in that place. I lost it.

**Keith:** I did have a coworker give me a fidget cube when I was still working at California Pizza Kitchen.

**Austin:** Mm.

**Keith:** And that was good. I preferred the spinners to the cube, even though it was less to do. It was still more...it was still more engaging to like, to feel the gyroscopic effect of the thing.

**Austin:** It feels cool. They still feel cool. I miss—

**Keith:** They still feel cool.

**Austin:** Can we bring spinners back?

**Keith:** Yeah, let's bring— let's get— let's all get a spinner.

**Austin:** Were they called spinners? Was that what they were called?

**Keith:** Fidget spinners. Yeah, that's what they were called.

**Dre:** Fidget spinners, yeah.

**Austin:** Huh.

**Keith:** Yeah. The people who really got into 'em...was not me. I never bought— I never got into like, "I bought a brass— a \$90 brass fidget spinner." [Austin laughs]

**Dre:** Oh god.

**Keith:** But if you got to that level, you just call them spinners.

**Austin:** I see. I gotcha.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah, of course.

**Keith:** Because they're not...they're not...they're real. They're collector's items. Not...

**Austin:** Toys.

**Keith:** Toys.

**Austin:** I'm not fidgeting, I'm...

**Keith:** They're not for kids! They're serious!

**Austin:** Yeah. Uh huh.

**Keith:** [laughs softly] I don't know. But. [Austin laughs] Those are my— that's my answer to this.

**Austin:** It's a good answer. Alright, let's keep moving. Unless anyone has any—

**Keith:** Don't burn yourself.

**Austin:** Yeah, don't burn yourself, kids. [Dre laughs] Does anyone have any other final thoughts or should I move on? Alright.

**Dre:** I think we're good.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**[0:9:57]**

**Austin:** Co(???) writes in, and they say:

Hey Friends, recently at a work game, I had a point where the GM hit on a major trigger for me. The entire party was very nice, gave me the space to process, and reconnected so



it wasn't a more traumatic thing. But I have a lot of discomfort now about the level of vulnerability I got to. How do I get back to comfortable after going through the horrifying ordeal of being known?

**Austin:** And this is a good question.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** And it's good partially because it seems like the steps that were taken at the table were the right ones. Right? It sounds, I guess, like there were safety mechanisms in place to stop this the second it started— or maybe not the second it started but during the process of it happening. I don't know if that was an X card or something or if someone drew a veil or what, but there was a conversation, and then there was the retcon. And now we're in that kind of like uncomfortable second spot, where it's like, okay, how do we...how do you reintegrate after something, after a trauma was triggered, right? I'm not sure. If anyone here has any opening thoughts on this. I feel like we've had moments where there have been like heated discussions at the table.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** And so I can speak to that, specifically around trying to foster an environment where that reintegration feels safe and comfortable. Based on the question— it's hard to know, because like, you don't know specific people, you don't know the situations, et cetera. It sounds like you're confident— and maybe I'm reading into this, but it does sound like you're confident that the process was good. And so for me, if I was in that situation, and I've been in similar situations—not at a tabletop roleplaying, you know, game table, but in life—where, you know, trust was broken or where harm was done, and you have to go to work the next day. You have to be with these people again. Or you, they're your family members.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** And I was not in a position to like fully extricate myself from XYZ thing. How do you continue going? And if, for me, the situations where I felt like the harm was done despite a process, a good faith process being in place, and the process functioned, and so the harm, though it happened, did not happen at the result of malice or something, I always try to keep my focus on on that fact, that these are people who fundamentally want to produce a space or a relationship that is positive and not harmful to me. And that can still be really hard. So like, I also do my best not to beat up on myself in those situations, when I'm having trouble reintegrating into groups like that, because the harm was done, whether or not it was intentional or not. And so I think that that's a natural reaction to kind of struggle with, to go back to a point where harm was done. So I hope, one, that you're not beating yourself up for that struggle. And two, like, I think if you, if you stay focused on that...and also if you do feel like there was something, a step not taken in terms of making sure that you were safe to begin with. Maybe you feel like now, hey, we should have had longer conversations about what went too far. Like, maybe we had the

X card in place so that we could stop content that went over the edge before it, you know, was permanent and lasted throughout the campaign. But maybe you didn't have a— not you specifically, but the table did not have a long enough conversation or serious enough conversation about what sorts of content should have been off the table to begin with. And if that's the case, then maybe a good step would be to come back and say, "Hey, can we have a lines and veils conversation again? I want to make sure everyone, including me, has the opportunity to put forward stuff that I don't want to see come up again in the campaign." And hopefully that's a good faith conversation where everyone participates and gets a more comprehensive collection of things. And that can be...that can be specific ideas or topics, but it can also be tone. It can also be about atmosphere, about pacing. You could say, hey, if we're going into stuff where there's going to be, you know, more particular depictions of violence, for instance, let's slow the pace of the game down. I'd like you to, instead of getting into a really big dramatic description of that violence, if we can just like go beat by beat when something like that happens so that we have better opportunities to draw a veil or play the x card. Stuff like that is important, because then what you're doing is reinforcing the processes that are already there to protect you. And also, it's not just that you're basing going forward on trust, you're actually taking some steps.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** And sometimes just the process of taking a step and going through that process with other people on a project— you know, or on a...you know, on a group thing, can help rebuild the scaffolding of trust that you need to go forward from there. So even if you just sit down and like you get three new things on your, you know, lines and veils list or whatever, and those things are things that maybe never would have come up anyway. And maybe even they're not even triggering things. They're just things that you're like, you know what, I'm just not interested in this right now. This isn't a tone or an idea that I want to see come up in the rest of the game. This isn't even about my trauma, this is just about like, I really don't want demons to show up, 'cause I'm just like, not in that space right now. Even if it's not, you know, a big important thing, that process of going through that activity with everybody else can help build a step towards having what you need to reintegrate with that group in a way that feels comfortable. You know?

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Dre, does any of that...does any of that make sense?

**Dre:** Yes.

**Austin:** As the person who like knows how relationships are supposed to work, professionally?  
[Dre and Sylvia laugh]

**Dre:** Well, yeah, I mean, I would definitely say like: first, the biggest thing is like just be kind to yourself in this. Like, you know, the unfortunate part of this is that it like... [sighs] Me, it always kind of sucks that like, to a certain extent, to like protect yourself, the onus is kind of put on you

in this way and that like how much you have to advocate for yourself to a certain extent, you know?

**Austin:** Mmm. Mm-hmm.

**Dre:** So it like... [sighs] I think it's important to be kind to yourself for that reason, because, like, recognize the work and the like effort that you're putting in to protect yourself. Like, that is work. That is effort.

**Austin:** Yes. Yes.

**Dre:** And it's okay if that is difficult or draining for you. You know, like you said, Austin, hopefully, you know, this is a case where good things are already in place, and like something just like slipped through the cracks. And so hopefully that is in place, because then that also shows that hopefully this is a space where other people are invested in helping you with this. You know, so that it is a good space for you.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Dre:** Remember that, you know, if this group [audio cuts out] themselves to be interested in supporting you and interested in like, making this work...again, not just for you, but like as Austin said, for everyone.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Like, remind yourself of that, too. I think sometimes when we're bringing our stuff to the table, I know something I can get caught up in is like, "Oh my gosh, I'm bogging everybody down with my stuff. [Austin laughs softly] Why can't I just get over it?"

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Dre:** And I have to remind myself, like, no, these people care about me. I'm not bogging them down, I'm like, doing what they want, which is like [laughs] to help them be a better friend for me.

**Austin:** Yeah. And also, you could be providing an opportunity for other people who similarly would like to revisit that conversation to revisit it.

**Dre:** Absolutely.

**Austin:** But who don't feel like they are in...who, maybe similar to you, don't feel like they're in a position to raise it, but would benefit from it being raised. And I know that that can be really hard. I think that Co(???) is in the chat, and they say, "I'm just nervous about shifting our work and game dynamic." And I think that that's an understandable fear to have.

**Dre:** Absolutely.

**Austin:** But the thing that I would say is the game dynamic is always shifting.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** And it's important to try to put your hands on the way it's shifting to make sure it's shifting into a more positive space, rather than moving into something where the expectation around this is, going forward, hey, none of this will come up again. I mean, ideally, I think your GM should raise this or another player should also be in a position after this happens to raise this. But barring that, you're well within your rights to— not just well within your rights, but I think it's healthy for the table and for you, to raise it and talk through it, instead of sort of ceding the direction that the table culture will shift. If...and you note that this is a work game. I hadn't...in fact, we kind of moved over that very quickly.

**Dre:** Mmm.

**Austin:** So I understand there are...there's another layer of dynamics there, because these are people you work with. But that dynamic has shifted, because this has already happened. And so, instead of just kind of letting the gravity of the situation pull in whatever direction it's going to go, which, who knows what that looks like? Because there's any number of unpredictable ways an event like this can have long term consequences or long term shifts. And maybe— and maybe, and I'm sure this is what you kind of hope, is like, well, I can just be quiet about this, and it won't turn into anything else long term. I understand that that's like...for me, that's always the hope when something dramatic happens [Austin and Dre laugh] is I go like, if I just shut up about it and just ignore it, it won't be a problem six months from now.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Uh oh, whoops, it's six months later. Uh oh, I should've had this conversation six months ago. But I think that there is an opportunity to help shift it in the direction you're more happy with long term by having that conversation sooner, or as soon as you're comfortable to have it, at least.

**Dre:** Yeah. I would also add, like, in talking about this stuff, you also get to control how much you get to disclose in these conversations.

**Austin:** True.

**Dre:** You can just say, "I don't want X in this game," and you don't have to explain why.

**Austin:** Totally.

**Dre:** Like, that is totally fine. And I would also say, I don't know if this is the thing you're feeling, but if there is a part of you that is thinking that like because the GM or these people saw you get upset at a certain level of content that now it feels like they know more specifics about this trauma or this trigger that you have than they actually do. So like, you know, if you can take time to kind of like check yourself and be like, am I making jumps or conclusions here and about the way that I think they're looking at me now?

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Dre:** That is, again, understandably, from a place of distress. You know, all of our minds jump to places when we're just stressed. But take a second to like breathe and slow down and make sure you're not jumping to those places and making this more distressing for yourself than it already could be or is.

**Austin:** Yeah. I hope that that was a satisfying answer. And I hope that the situation is resolved, or, you know, resolution is at least a process that begins for you soon.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

[0:20:52]

**Austin:** Next question comes from Dana, who says:

One thing I feel like I hear referenced by a lot of the friends and fellow players is that—

**Austin:** Sorry, let me start this over.

One thing that I feel like I hear referenced a lot by friends and fellow players that falls totally outside my experience is making character song playlists. I don't really know much about music, and while I have a couple of bands I follow and often get soundtracks to games or shows that I like the music of, I feel lost when people talk about subgenres or any details about music. It's not that I don't like music outside of what I know, I'm just that, quote, "guy who likes music" video. I just bob my head and say, "Yeah, that's music, right? [Dre laughs] Love to hear music," without having the vocabulary or drive to seek it out. However, I know music definitely affects my mood, and I like listening to playlists people have put together for games and characters. And I'd like to be able to put something together to communicate something about my character, or just to get myself in the mood to play. The closest I've come is to identify a very anime-inspired character to a specific anime character song, and that's as much about the visual and narrative connection as it was the music. Do you have any tips for finding music for a character playlist, when I know what the character's vibes might be, but my own music collection is narrow—a lot of city pop/future funk, a lot of soundtrack to that thing I like—and I don't have the vocabulary to describe the vibe in musical terms.

**Austin:** I forget who highlighted this one. Sylvi, I think?

**Sylvia:** Yeah, I did.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** So, I was gonna say, I forgot about the anime part, 'cause one of my suggestions—and I've genuinely done this before—is like think of an anime character that's similar to your character—

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Sylvia:** —and look for AMVs with that character in them.

**Austin:** Ooh. That's still a good...that's still a good connection, though.

**Sylvia:** No, it's—

**Keith:** That is good advice.

**Sylvia:** Look, it's some real galaxy brain stuff. [Austin laughs softly] I know that I'm operating on another level right now.

**Austin:** Always. Sylvi, you are always.

**Keith:** Technically, when you're doing that, you're operating on someone else's level. [Austin and Sylvia laugh]

**Sylvia:** Um...the other thing too, is like, you already mentioned that you listen to other people's character playlists and stuff like that. And like, you can start digging into...like, this is just sort of general music recommendation stuff, I guess. But if you hear a sound or something that like catches your attention while you're doing that, and like, "Oh, I wish I had thought of that for my one," or whatever, like, look through that artist's like...or just that album even, and you can probably find something, and then like, if you find like...I don't want to like promote any specific apps or anything, but like, most things have like a Related Artists like situation.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** And that can usually help you sort of connect the dots with sort of finding...like if you find that like a particular genre feels like it's drawing you in for that character, you can sort of just like go down a rabbit hole and find that.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** I remember, it never really came of anything, but like for a while there, I was working on another Milli playlist and got like really into like post punk and like early goth shit, 'cause I wanted to do that. And like, it's also just a fun time. Like, even if you don't end up doing a character playlist, it will end up probably being a thing that still helps you understand that character—like, what you want to end up playing your character as.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** Or at least getting you in that sort of headspace.

**Austin:** Yeah. I believe that we are contractually obligated to mention Pandora, which I don't even know if it's a thing.

**Sylvia:** Hey! [Dre laughs]

**Austin:** If we ever mention a streaming, a musical streaming service, uh. [laughs softly] Which, a service *like* that is certainly one that has recommendations, a recommendation-based thing, an algorithm-based thing.

**Dre:** Oh, christ.

**Austin:** I am certain that there also are just non...like, there are services that will just say, "Hey, I like this one song. What are other songs like this?"

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** That are not a subscription-based listening service.

**Sylvia:** I mean, like...

**Austin:** I mean, frankly, you were on YouTube. YouTube will do this.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** If you go into YouTube and hit play on something and look at its recommend— what is recommended afterwards, maybe open up this— open it up in like a private browser so you don't have your own personal history or you started a different account or something if you wanted to.

**Keith:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** It'll start suggesting you similar songs, you know?

**Sylvia:** Like, I don't want to spoil anything, but we had to do a recording recently where music came up, and this is literally how I got to the like endpoint for my like thing that I had to come up with.

**Austin:** [laughs softly] This is good. This is a good tease.

**Sylvia:** Was just through YouTube recommendations, was like, I was like, "Uh, maybe this? No, that's not right."

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** "Oh, this is in the related videos. Let me go— yeah, that's perfect." [Dre chuckles]

**Austin:** It's worth saying, too, that like it is work to keep up with and explore music.

**Keith:** Yep.

**Austin:** Like, I want to be, like...

**Dre:** Oh, yeah.

**Austin:** It is not like...I hope that you under— I hope that you can feel like this is not a...something about you that makes you abnormal or something, like. It can seem that way, I think, for a lot of folks, that like, oh yeah, you just know what the top 40 songs are at any given moment in the world. And that's not the case. Like any fandom, being a fan of any subgenre of music takes a lot of time and a lot of effort to like sit down and listen to music, especially if you're not just turning on top 40 or putting on, you know, a Spotify playlist that just plays you whatever the songs that it tells you you might like are. But I...so I hope at least like, that is not me saying like, "Well, you just have to do the fucking work to like music, obviously, Dana." Like, that's... [laughs] To be clear, that's not what I'm saying.

**Keith:** It's so much work to...

**Austin:** But it is so much work.

**Dre:** Yes.

**Keith:** It's so much work to do music as a hobby, like...music is very popular.

**Austin:** Yes.

**Keith:** And people like music at a bunch of different levels of engagement.



**Austin:** And there's an infinite amount of it. Every second a new song comes out. [laughs] In the world.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** And like, even just knowing the question, I think it said...I don't have the...I think it said—it's a long question, so I don't...

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** I think it said something somewhere about genres, like not even knowing what subgenres to call things.

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

**Dre:** Genres are fake.

**Keith:** Genres are fake. They're also fun and funny and useful sometimes, but like just even knowing them is the work.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** Like, I have friends who like, we will share music, and one of the things that we'll do is like try to name a genre. Like, I will come up with a genre name for something that is fake. But it's descriptive.

**Dre:** But it's real.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Keith:** It's helpful and descriptive.

**Austin:** Right, right. [Dre laughs]

**Keith:** But it's literally fake. It's not a genre that you could search for on Bandcamp or whatever.

**Austin:** Yeah. I ran into this issue when I was doing that Katie Dey like...I don't if I ever mentioned this any—I must have mentioned it on Twitter at least. Katie Dey is one of my favorite active musicians, and I put out a...I worked with her like music publi— what do we, her label, I guess? to do like a bio of her and like an interview with her to then send to like...I basically did PR. It's my first ever PR gig, and it was for an Australian like art pop musician.

**Sylvia:** Hell yeah.

**Austin:** And one of the things that came up in conversation with Katie was just like, what the fuck do we call your music? [Austin and Dre laugh] Because she often gets, you know, compared to...again, yeah, like art pop people like Kate Bush or something, but like...and that's an influence on her music for sure, but is that right? Is it electronic pop? Is it psychedelia? Is it...like, what is it? And like, that process is so...it's completely bullshit, but like you said, Keith, it's also extremely fun.

**Keith:** Yeah. It's fun; it can be funny; it can be instructive. And as the more ridiculous they come, the more specific they become, the more instructive they can be.

**Dre:** Mm.

**Keith:** But it really is all just...it's also not, like Dre said, it's kind of— it's mostly fake.

**Austin:** It's mostly fake.

**Keith:** But it's like, the work to know how even how to find good new music that you want to listen to, is literally arduous.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Something I used to love would be I would spend— and I still do it, but I would spend like a whole day, and I'd come away with maybe two or three new bands that I would like.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** [laughs softly] Yeah. The nice thing is having a friend like Keith, who then will message you and go, "You will like this band, Austin." And so that's the other half of it, is like, if you can find a couple of friends whose taste you might overlap with. And also, the other half of this is like, your taste can't be wrong.

**Dre:** Yes.

**Austin:** Whatever it is that you're responding to is your taste. And you should like let...explore that space and like go with it and see what it is you like about that stuff.

**Keith:** Coming from sort of like a less influenced place, too, will...

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Is like, it's almost a blessing to not know what people think of a band that you're listening to for the first time.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** Oh my god, yeah.

**Keith:** Like, it's literally a poison to know that people don't like a band—people that you know don't like this band—when you're listening to it for the first time.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** 'Cause that...

**Austin:** You just won't let yourself...yeah. Yeah. It's tough.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** It's tough. It's work. It is. It really is.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** So, good luck. I hope you find stuff that you like. And also, if you don't, you don't, and it's okay.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** 'Cause like, this is a fun component of this.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** But there are so many things that I don't...like, I'm a terrible, miserable visual artist. I can't draw sketches or doodle or do anything.

**Keith:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** And it's like, are there— there are lots of times that I beat myself up for not being able to do that, because I look at my friends who can do some sort of artwork—or, obviously, fans of the show—and I'm like, oh, I wish I had like an ounce of that ability. And I don't. And I don't put in the work to develop it, to be clear.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** That's on me. But that doesn't mean that I think I have an incomplete relationship to the worlds and stories and characters that we, you know, deal with on the show.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** So, at the end of the day, if you're like, "I've really tried it, and it's just not for me," then it's not for you and that's okay.

**Keith:** Mm.

**Austin:** You're not missing something essential.

**Keith:** Even if you enjoy other people's.

**Austin:** Totally. Totally!

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Keith:** I don't make character playlists. I don't do it.

**Austin:** Right. You don't do it. Yeah.

**Keith:** I'm not...it's more—

**Austin:** And you love music!

**Keith:** I love— I listen to music all the time. And like, I would rather listen to music than make a playlist of different music. [laughs softly]

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** I don't know. Sometimes I— I did it for the for the Ark teens. That was my— that's my only *Friends at the Table* character playlist.

**Austin:** The Ark teens? What's the—

**Keith:** Yeah, from uh...

**Austin:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** That's fun.

**Dre:** Oh, from Twilight Mirage?

**Austin:** Yeah, Twilight Mirage teens.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** They're great.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Yeah.

[0:31:20]

**Austin:** The Ark teens. Yeah, totally. Amazing. Alright. Next question comes in from Vis, or Vis [pron: vees]. I'm not sure on the pronunciation.

*Friends at the Table* convinced me to try tabletop RPGs again, after a brief disastrous attempt in high school, with some friends of mine. We're all tabletop noobs however, so our play isn't very good. It's lots of fun, but oftentimes goofy and fumbling. I enjoy that, but I do want to get better, especially when it comes to improving my RP game, roleplaying being something I just have no experience with. I know I'm just gonna suck for a while, but is there any way I can jumpstart the improvement process? TL;DR tips for a newbie player looking to get good at RP?

**Keith:** My reflex bad answer is that— [Austin chuckles]

**Dre:** As promised.

**Keith:** If it's fun, it's already good.

**Austin:** Yeah, uh huh.

**Dre:** Yep, uh huh.

**Austin:** Totally. A hundred percent. Which doesn't mean that you shouldn't push yourself if you have different ambitions than what you're achieving at the table, but there can be lots of things that are good. I think, like, fast food pizza is good, and also so is extremely, you know, [Dre laughs] high luxury— luxury pizza, also good. [laughs softly]

**Keith:** Mm-hmm. Yep.

**Austin:** They're just different sorts of good, and so...and I really do genuinely believe that fun is the thing that you need to develop to get to—

**Dre:** Yes.

**Austin:** —not goofy and fumbling, and if you start there, that's your foundation. Go ahead.

**Dre:** I would say that RP is not just like speaking in character for like three paragraphs at a time. RP is also like the actions that your character does.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Dre:** And like, doing really cool, interesting, or surprising things. But that, like, in the context of your character make absolute sense.

**Austin:** Totally. There's like, I really love the...there's a Thrandir moment in the third season of *Hieron*, where there's like, would Thrandir pull the trigger in this situation? And Dre was like, yup, absolutely. That's good RP. That's good...it doesn't need to be— there was no big speech. There was no big dramatic turn necessarily. It was about action and about committing to a decision.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** And so that's one really big thing, right? Is just thinking not about voice or characteristics, but thinking about action is a good first step. For sure. Not even first step. That's like a good tenet that you have to have at heart as you play. I don't know. I feel like...it's similar to like...advice I've given before is like, try new things, try new characters, push yourself to make big decisions and not to play safe. Those things will naturally train the sort of RP muscles in your brain to try out new, different, you know, new techniques and get invested in different ways. But I also just do think that it's okay to have fun with your friends, to have fun, fumbling, goofy fun. And like, that doesn't have to be...that doesn't have to...that can be an end to itself, you know?

**Keith:** Mmm.

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

**Keith:** It's called *Live at the Table*.

**Austin:** Yeah. We do it. We love it. It's great.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** [laughs] I, you know, it's a different bucket of experience, or it's a slightly different mix of experience than what we want to do with the main show, but you shouldn't assume that...I don't think that it's...I think that it is fair to pursue the type of play you want at your table, first and foremost, and not think that there is a hierarchy of styles of play. And I say that maybe even though we make the show I think is the most fun for us and is the most interesting and that I want to see in the world. Like, *Friends at the Table* is the art and storytelling I want to see in the

world, which does have some sort of element of evaluative or judgment or something in there. But it doesn't mean that that judgment is about how other people should be making something, it's only about what I want to put in the world or what we want to do together. And I think that's just like, I don't know, I see lots of people who...I've seen lots of people over the years say something about like, you know, the way that *Friends at the Table* plays games is intimidating or like is whatever. And I always want to make sure I'm clear that like—

**Keith:** Yeah, get scared!

**Austin:** Yeah, get fucking scared! We're coming for you. We're gonna knock on your door—

**Dre:** Get scared, scrub.

**Austin:** We're gonna be like, "Oh, pfft, that's not roleplay."

**Sylvia:** God.

**Austin:** That's rollplay with two L's, 'cause all you're doing is rolling dice.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Dre:** More like dole-play.

**Austin:** More like dole-play, that's right. More like, uh...what...hmm.

**Keith:** Smol-play.

**Austin:** You're real— aw, look at you. You're real smol. [laughter]

**Sylvia:** I don't like this.

**Austin:** More like swole-play.

**Sylvia:** I don't like this at all.

**Austin:** More like swole-play. You're all strong. You'll beat me up. I don't like that!

**Sylvia:** What are we doing right now? [Dre laughs]

**Austin:** I don't know. This is bad pun shit. See, this is what I'm saying.

**Sylvia:** No, I know!

**Austin:** We're not good at this.

**Dre:** Listen, can't spell...

**Sylvia:** I'm very glad this is behind a paywall. [Austin laughs]

**Dre:** Can't spell reps without RP. That's all I'm saying.

**Austin:** Boom! Get 'em. All kinds of games. All *kinds* of games!

**Keith:** [laughs] If you want to get good at roleplay, you gotta hit the gym.

**Austin:** [laughs] You gotta hit the motherfucking gym! If you can't bench my bodyweight, then you can't RP! [laughter dies down] No, you're having good time now. That's what you need. That's the foundation for everything else that comes after that. And again, explore what you want to explore. There can be...you could focus entirely on like world building games forever where you never play a character, and I think that that can still be being good at RP. It doesn't have to look like one thing, so. Anyway.

**Sylvia:** I'd also say just like, be patient with yourself.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** It takes time. Like, roleplaying is kind of a vulnerable thing. Like, in a weird way. And so like—

**Keith:** That's why you gotta get strong.

**Sylvia:** Well, yeah, of course. That's why you gotta get six pack abs like me. [Austin laughs] But like, it gets...it's like anything like that, it just gets easier over time. And like, just focus on the fact that you're enjoying it, I guess.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** I sort of lost my point there at the end.

**Keith:** It's also like, Austin, like you said that the, you know, the main show is a different mix than the live show. And similarly, we all have different mixes that we bring to the main show.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** I feel like my mix always will have a little bit more of the live show mix in it. If that makes sense. And so, your table's gonna have the mix of the different...of all the different players. With different sensibilities.



**Austin:** Exactly.

**Keith:** And it's gonna come out different.

[0:37:58]

**Austin:** Alright. Two more questions. Tyler writes in and says:

I'm running a *Songs for the Dusk* campaign—great game—that's been going on for a while, and I really love the characters that the players have made and some of the factions that they have worked with. But outside of that, I have no real grasp on the world. We're using the setting that comes with the game, and I'm realizing that unless it's a setting that I'm already familiar with or a setting I created myself, I have a lot of trouble connecting with the worlds of the games that I run. I'm constantly forgetting important things, and I feel like I have been very inconsistent with how the world works. Have you ever—have any of you ever run a campaign using a setting that you've had trouble internalizing? What did you do to make it easier on yourself?

**Austin:** For people who don't know, *Songs for the Dusk* is a really cool Forged in the Dark game that takes a lot of inspiration from things like *Destiny*. It's kind of a post apocalyptic science fantasy setting is kind of what I would—how I would describe it?

**Sylvia:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** It's really cool. But I will say that, like a lot of Forged in the Dark games, the setting is almost like a really well filled-out template for you to begin exploring, more than a finished like world sourcebook or something like that. And in my experience, there's a huge difference between playing with something like that—which is also what you'll find in *Blades in the Dark*, what you'll find in *Scum and Villainy*, again, a lot of Forged in the Dark games do that—and playing something with a really well-realized, set canonical setting, where I'm thinking of something...a lot of things, right? This is like Fantasy Flight *Star Wars* game. This is *Legend of the Five Rings*. This is any of your D&D settings where you can find huge sourcebooks about huge parts of the world and how the world functions and blah blah blah blah. And that is...it is...what I want to emphasize for Tyler is that in a situation like that, I don't think that you're missing anything, in the sense that if you're struggling to internalize something, it might be because there's not much there to internalize so much as what there is is a prompt for you to begin, you and your players to begin developing, the table to begin developing into a world that at that point will be easier to internalize because you've put your spin on it. And frankly, I also think that's true for worlds that do have larger sourcebooks and more detail and all of that.

The trick, for me, to internalizing something like the Doskvol setting of *Blades in the Dark* is to like start putting my own spin on it. And I've run a few *Blades* games in that setting over the years. And it's one of those things where you're like, okay, well, I know, you know, that X faction exists, but what's my version of it? What's our version of it? You know, how do we fill in the

blanks to that? And sometimes you'll have a character who has a specific relationship. I frankly think that this is the same thing that, you know, any...if you tried to run a game based off of the PARTIZAN mapmaker content sheets or something, right? and you take a look at any of the factions in PARTIZAN. Like, I'm gonna just pull up on my— you know, not on the stream but on my screen, the factions list, right? And so you look at something like, uh, you know, Silver Sky Recovery and Restoration. Salvagers are a dime a dozen, but with Chief Engineer Somber Sky— ah, I forget about Somber Sky. Somber Sky was great. With Chief Engineer Somber Sky in the pit, no one on PARTIZAN is better at putting a machine back together. And it's like, there's nothing there to internalize almost, right? Like okay, it's a salvage operation, but what's that— and there's a goal here to work on a divine. And so it's like, how do you build from that into something that you are able to be invested in? And the answer is to start at that place but then to build a house around it, so that then you know the ins and outs of it. With a game like *Songs for the Dusk*, which similarly has really evocative stuff, it's really waiting for you to bring your own puzzle pieces together and start putting those things into place and clicking everything together. Dre, I know you're running a *Lancer* campaign currently, and *Lancer* has like, again, a pretty well-developed setting.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Austin:** But I haven't read parts of the book at least. There are also often times where it feels like there's lots of blank spaces. How do you handle something like this?

**Dre:** Yeah, I mean it's... [sighs] The setting that we were running, it's on a break right now, but it basically was like...it is more or less like in a place of the galaxy where we could make up our own stuff.

**Austin:** Gotcha.

**Dre:** Basically. I know for me personally, and this is like a big nerd thing from my work life that I bring into RPGs. [laughs] But there is a technique that I learned in becoming a therapist that is called genogram, which is basically like a chart you make to organize and like markdown like somebody's family. And I started doing that with my NPCs and PCs in the game that I GMed. [laughs]

**Austin:** Huh.

**Dre:** As a way to help me keep like better tabs on like visualizing these relationships or even just like concepts or like objects or like ships or other important things.

**Austin:** Yeah. I think that's a huge thing. I think actually a better piece of advice than the one I just gave, which is about process, right? Again, something that's not in this question is how you're doing your prep, Tyler, but yeah, it might be about finding a process that lets you better lay out the information in front of you and draw those connections between people and, you

know, factions and all that other stuff. So changing that up or looking for additional tools for laying all that out is a good idea, for sure. So, we are—

**Dre:** Because, full disclosure, I feel like on this podcast I'm the person, who more than anyone else, says, "Shit, Austin, who's that person?"

**Austin:** I think that's—

**Dre:** "Like, what's their deal?" [laughs]

**Austin:** I think that's about how (??? 43:49)

**Sylvia:** I don't know.

**Keith:** Yeah, no, that's me too.

**Austin:** We have lots of...we have lots of moving pieces, and also you're not in half of the games. How could...you know what I mean? [laughs softly]

**Dre:** Yeah, fair. That's very kind of you. [laughs]

**Austin:** No! I don't think I'm being kind.

**Sylvia:** I just don't like the implication that I have a memory at all. It's not fair. [others laugh]

**Austin:** No, I think it's...I think that it's underestimated how piecemeal it is. And also, I think this is true for me too. I see people in the fandom say some shit sometimes, I'm like, I don't know who the fuck that is. I ran that game four years ago. [Dre laughs] I need reminders all the time on our own setting shit, so. And again, that's part of it.

**Sylvia:** Good thought.

**Austin:** You know, part of my process is if I open up, you know, the season six like master document that I have, it's like whatever, 60 pages long or something, right? And that's just notes and notes and notes and notes and notes about, you know. Literally, if I'm like looking at this, this includes...there includes stuff here that is like numbered lists. [laughs softly] This is a 23 point like list that starts at: Perennial Wave is spread throughout the galaxy. The Divine Clash happens. During the Divine Clash, the *blank* begins. I can't say this yet, 'cause this is still a spoiler and no one even on the call knows about this thing that's happened yet. [Dre and Sylvia laugh] Number three is: The Portcullis System is brought online. It is inside— it is the *blank*, which hasn't been revealed--er, this part's been revealed on the show, but I still won't reveal 'cause it's such a recent spoiler. And like, huge, huge, huge notes to just make sense of this to myself. And much of this is not even stuff that will show up at the table, but it's useful for me to make sense of and get that grasp on the world. It's important to fill out those notes and fill out

what is happening. And sometimes even just make notes about things that could happen or that might happen, because then you start...once you start playing with the pieces, you'll have a better understanding of how they move, if that makes sense? It's like playing an RTS or a, yeah, *Civilization*, a 4X game or something, where you're like, why the fuck do I have this scout who can, like, doesn't have any military might and can move three spaces a turn instead of two, but like two is basically three already. And then you play enough games like, oh, no, three is actually like way more spaces than two over the course of a full game. And by, you know, playing around with the pieces in your setting and coming up with new ideas for them and making them interact, even just in your notes, you'll start to have a much firmer grasp on how they interact and how they kind of lattice up into being the world.

The other side has nothing to do with factions and has a lot to do with tone and vibe. I think that there is...the other thing that you could do is think a lot about, watch movies about or shows, read books, read poetry, read whatever it is, you know, engage with whatever it is that can inspire you to have a good sense of how the world's...we talk about this a lot in terms of like metaphysics, what the metaphysics of the world are, but just kind of like what the natural priorities and like the kind of vibe of the game you're playing is. Because the world is not just characters and factions, it's also...it's also the sort of like, the narrative logic that will make something happen, right? That you'll default to, if that makes sense. Like, the difference between *Twilight Mirage* and *PARTIZAN* is huge in terms of how the same situation might play out, right? If there is a hostage situation...I can think of...I can think of three situations probably and how they shook out differently across *COUNTER/Weight*, *PARTIZAN*, and *Twilight Mirage* differently. And so it's like, there is a hostage crisis at the center of one of the, uh...what do you call it? Was it a *Kingdom* game? No, it's a *Follow* game at the center of *Twilight Mirage* that has like a lot of big speeches and lots of big like philosophizing and debate. And that's like the way that that happens there. There's a conversation in a bar towards the end of *COUNTER/Weight*, where the door opens and someone gets shot in the head. Those vibes are different and reflect both differences in the games we were playing. *Follow* is not a game in which doors open and someone gets shot in the head in such a dramatic way. It's a game about—

**Keith:** [scoffs] Not yet.

**Austin:** I mean, well, you know. I feel like, I do...that specific game also did have doors closing and someone getting shot, but it was a much different scenario in terms of what the stakes were. *The Sprawl* is very much that sort of game. And then contrast that again to something like the tense debate about what to do at Fort Icebreaker in *PARTIZAN*, where things are tactical, things are manipulative. There is like a tension internal to the party, which is built around what the party dynamics were but also mechanically what some *Beam Saber* stuff allowed us to do. So like, all of that stuff, I think, influences what the world is. And so, make sure that you're spending time on just that sort of general, hey, how does this world move? How does it function? You know, it's...in our world, if you drop a ball from the top of a roof, or top of a, you know, down to the ground, it'll fall down. And it'll do that the same way every time. But doing that in *Songs for the Dusk*, in your *Songs for the Dusk* world, is not going to be the same as what might happen in the different worlds, so to speak, because the narrative logics might be different

and the kind of metaphysics of that world might be different. And understanding that in an intuitive way takes a lot of practice and investment. But that, to me, is what ends up making the world feel alive, 'cause you can quickly default to a feeling. You can quickly default to what would happen if *blank*, and that is the kind of improv skill that is what helps bring a world to life, I think. Any other thoughts here? [brief pause]

[0:49:54]

I think there's only one more question, and it's one that we've already asked once on the pod— er, on Tips, but I've kept it on, 'cause it's a good one. [laughs] And this group of people I don't think has answered this yet. Katie writes in and says:

What is your favorite pre-podcast energizing food, mid-podcast hopefully quiet snack, or any other rituals from your five plus years doing this that help you get in the podcasting mood?

**Austin:** I've already answered this, so this is just for y'all.

**Dre:** Uh, pre-podcast, uh, Wellbutrin and Vyvanse. [laughter] Just a little ADD humor for everybody out there. [laughs]

**Austin:** Uh huh. Uh huh. That makes sense.

**Sylvia:** You joke, but actually I do like, when we're recording, it is actually always a day where I remember to take my meds.

**Dre:** Oh!

**Sylvia:** Because it's way easier. [laughs]

**Dre:** Oh yeah. And if I know—

**Sylvia:** Like, oh yeah, just gotta make sure I do this before then.

**Dre:** If I know we're recording like kind of later, I will take my meds later than I normally do. [laughs]

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Dre:** To make sure they're still in the system, for sure.

**Keith:** Calories in Vyvanse?

**Dre:** Huh?

**Keith:** Are there calories in it?

**Dre:** No.

**Keith:** No?

**Dre:** No, it's an ADHD stimulant medication.

**Keith:** There could— it could still have a calorie.

**Dre:** That's true. I guess, you know what? I don't know. I guess I don't know.

**Sylvia:** (??? 51:07) [Dre laughs]

**Keith:** I don't know either.

**Sylvia:** I get enough weird diet ads from the algorithm. I'm not googling that, sorry. [Dre and Austin laugh] I always go for like during snacks and stuff, I usually go for like gummies and like—

**Austin:** Oh, sure.

**Sylvia:** Soft shit like that.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** Like, Sour Patch Kids are like kind of the classic for me. I used to do wine gums a lot. If I'm feeling really risky, I will occasionally have Oreos.

**Dre:** Ooh.

**Sylvia:** But that's rare, 'cause I don't want to crunch. It's the golden Oreos, too. Those are my favorite.

**Austin:** Ooh.

**Sylvia:** Just so everyone knows a little bit of fun trivia.

**Dre:** What is—

**Keith:** Golden Oreos?

**Dre:** What is a wine— did you say wine gum?

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Oh, you don't know wine gums?

**Austin:** Yeah, wine gums.

**Dre:** No. What are those? I'm gonna google these.

**Keith:** It's a gummy.

**Sylvia:** They're like, um...yeah, they're just like a little gummy thing, but they're like chewier than most gummies.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** I don't know how else to describe them.

**Dre:** Oh, yeah. Okay, I have seen these.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Yes. Okay.

**Sylvia:** The sour ones are really good.

**Keith:** They're old, right? Like that's a old ass style gummy.

**Austin:** They're old—

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** And they're more of a thing in Canada than America. Than the US, rather.

**Sylvia:** I also think like partially it...I feel like they're probably more of a thing in Europe too.

**Austin:** Oh, that makes sense. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Sylvia:** And it also comes from me having an Irish mother. [laughs slightly]

**Austin:** Oh, sure. [Dre laughs softly]

**Sylvia:** So like, just all of the like candy and shit I'm used to is like a weird European shit.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. They're like a gumdrop or like a...they're like not quite a fruit snack. Do you know what I mean? They're more of a candy than a fruit snack feels, if that makes sense.

**Dre:** Mm-hmm.

**Sylvia:** Feel like I always go with like, they're like a better jujubee or something like that.

**Austin:** They are a better jujubee.

**Dre:** Okay.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Jujubes feel they're gonna rip my teeth out every time, which is...

**Sylvia:** Yeah, they're awful.

**Austin:** They're so sticky.

**Keith:** Um, my gummy of choices is Dots, which definitely feel like they're gonna rip my teeth out.

**Austin:** I think Dots are easier than jujubes, but yeah.

**Keith:** Okay. I've never had a jujube.

**Austin:** Phew. You should try *one*. [laughs]

**Keith:** Okay. [laughs]

**Austin:** It'll make you reevaluate Dots. I mean, you're— I'm with you on Dots. I'm a hundred percent— I am with you on Dots.

**Keith:** I love Dots.

**Austin:** They're good, but they do do that.

**Keith:** I have this extremely nostalgic thing with Dots. We had a town ice skating rink, the Ulin Rink in Milton, Massachusetts, that I would go to all the time as a kid. They had rentals for like five bucks. You could rent ice skates and skate around. And I would always get a hot chocolate, a slice of pizza, and then...and then go back out and then come back, and I would have a box of Dots.



**Dre:** Oh my god.

**Keith:** And so now it's very tied to ice skating—

(??? 53:33)

**Keith:** —even though I haven't been ice skating in years and years, but that was...for no reason! It was the only time I ever had Dots. But every time I was ice skating, I was like, “Gotta have Dots!” [Austin laughs] I don't know. Not my podcast food of choice. I guess, for me, it would be like a peanut butter sandwich.

**Austin:** Ooh.

**Keith:** Like, that's like...

**Austin:** Great answer.

**Keith:** Yeah, I'm always having...peanut butter, maybe peanut butter and jelly or peanut butter banana, but it's like...

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** It's filling.

**Austin:** Yep.

**Keith:** Nourishing.

**Austin:** Yep.

**Keith:** Quiet.

**Austin:** Yep.

**Dre:** Hmm.

**Keith:** Not junky.

**Austin:** Yep.

**Keith:** I will have caffeine, though.

**Austin:** What sort of bread? What's the bread you're talking about here?

**Keith:** I buy a wide variety of breads.

**Austin:** Sure.

**Keith:** So sometimes it is a nice crusty bread.

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** Sometimes it is a fancy...like a fancy pre-sliced white bread?

**Austin:** Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** Like a Dave's White Bread Done Right?

**Austin:** Yeah. Mm-hmm.

**Keith:** Or sometimes it's, uh, just like shitty like Cumby's, Cumby's brand. [Keith and Sylvia laugh]

**Austin:** Cumberland Farms brand. [Keith continues laughing]

**Keith:** Gotta get that white bread from Cumby's. It's right next door.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** White bread cumby's is the worst.

**Austin:** Bad. [Dre laughs]

**Keith:** [laughs] I do have caffeine. I will like half the time be slowly drinking tea throughout any given recording, and sometimes I'll have, instead, I'll have a shot of espresso at the beginning of a recording.

**Austin:** Ooh.

**Keith:** And I feel like that is like a nice small bump, like a immediate bump but a small enough bump where I don't crash on it.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Dre:** My serious answer is bananas, Reese's Pieces, and beef jerky.

**Austin:** Ooh. Yeah.

**Keith:** Jerky's a good one.

**Austin:** Jerky's—

**Keith:** Jerky is too expensive for me.

**Dre:** Jerky is expensive.

**Austin:** It's expensive— (??? 55:13)

**Keith:** I mean, it's not too expensive to buy. [Austin laughs softly]

**Dre:** I don't know. It's expensive.

**Keith:** Well, it's like, it's not prohibitive. I could, if I wanted to spend \$8 on my snack, I *could* buy beef jerky.

**Austin:** Oh, that's so expensive.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Keith:** But my...but like, yeah, but my snack is a peanut butter and jelly. It's hard, it's tough to beat like dollar sandwich.

**Austin:** The cost— yeah, yeah, I was gonna say. It's even cheaper than that, probably.

**Keith:** Yeah, probably.

**Austin:** I guess if you're buying like good bread, that raises it a bit. But like...

**Keith:** Yeah, good bread. I get good peanut butter too I get, uh...

**Austin:** Yeah. But like, you could do a peanut butter sandwich on the cheap, so.

**Keith:** Crunchy dark roasted peanut butter.

**Austin:** Ah, I don't like that.

**Dre:** Oh, hell yeah.

**Keith:** Oh boy.

**Austin:** Not a crunchy peanut butter person. I can't do crunchy.

**Keith:** They do do non-crunchy dark roasted. I like 'em both. I have 'em both.

**Austin:** I would love to try a creamy dark roasted. That sounds good. I should pick one of those up. That sounds good to me. Now I'm just hungry.

**Keith:** Energy bar, like a Power Bar style thing. We talked about this off mic.

**Austin:** [laughs softly] We did talk about this. I recorded that.

**Keith:** We did talk about this recently. Okay.

**Austin:** Where— what was that? Did we do another Tips? Where were we?

**Keith:** I think I also recorded it.

**Austin:** What was that from?

**Dre:** That was Bluff. 'Cause I was here for that.

**Austin:** Bluff. That was Bluff.

**Keith:** Bluff, right.

**Austin:** That was Bluff the other day. Yeah.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Keith:** I love a weird...love a weird energy bar flavor.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Can't get enough of it.

**Austin:** Agreed. Alright.

**Dre:** But not gonna name a specific one.

**Keith:** The specific one that I've been eating I will not name, because I don't like the name of it.

**Austin:** [laughs] That's very funny.

**Dre:** Uh, okay. Yeah, fair.

**Austin:** We'll talk off mic. It's fine.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** I guess, wait, was everyone here on that Bluff? Yes.

**Keith:** Yes.

**Austin:** We've already had this whole conversation.

**Keith:** Oh.

**Austin:** This is just Bluff again. [someone laughs]

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Bluff minus Jack. Jack's on that Bluff, right?

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah. So look forward to that. That will be...

**Sylvia:** Yeah, Jack's on that Bluff.

**Austin:** I don't know when that'll be. That'll be...that will probably be in the— that will *definitely* be in the new year. That'll probably be in January. No promises.

**Dre:** We're not gonna just jam that out tonight?

**Austin:** No, I don't think so. I don't think Jack has— uh, Jack, wake up and compose music. Go. [Dre laughs] And then I have to do an intro and everything else. I don't even know what the next game is.

**Sylvia:** Merry Christmas.

**Austin:** Yeah, Merry fucking Christmas. It's very funny to me that we could have done a holiday special this year, but we just took the weeks off instead. We should. We should not release anything. Just as a reminder, we're not gonna release an episode this week or next week. There'll be something in the feed this week, probably, but it won't be an episode. It won't even

be a fiction episode like I often do around this time of the year or this time of the season. Nothing. I don't have the time this year. But the...we will be back in first week of January with the first episode of the PARTIZAN finale. So look forward to that.

**Keith:** Is there a difference between a jujube and a Jujufruit?

**Sylvia:** Oh.

**Austin:** I think a Jujufruit is a specific type of jujube.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, I'm not qualified to answer this.

**Austin:** [typing] That is correct. Yeah. Jujufruit is a jujube type, I think?

**Keith:** Oh, wait, no, that's jujube. Okay. Jujufruit doesn't say anything about jujube on it.

**Austin:** This is the same.

**Keith:** They do look—

**Austin:** This is the same.

**Keith:** It's the same? Okay.

**Austin:** Uh, maybe I'm— maybe they're not. Maybe...hmm. So, I was think— when I was talking about jujubes before, I was talking about Jujufruits in my head. Do you know what I mean?

**Keith:** Oh, okay. Yeah.

**Austin:** So maybe jujubes are actually fine and Jujufruits are the ones that are bad.

**Dre:** Hmm.

**Keith:** I'll try 'em both.

**Austin:** Please.

**Keith:** Juju drops. Why are they— it's just a funny name. [laughs]

**Austin:** 'Cause it's the name of this fruit, right?

**Keith:** Yeah, I know.

**Austin:** Juju fruit. Or juju fruit. I don't know. It's a type of date, apparently?

**Keith:** Yeah, the red date.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Ziziphus jujuba.

**Austin:** There you go.

**Keith:** Love it. Love that.

**Sylvia:** It's a good wizard name. [Keith and Austin laugh]

**Austin:** Ah, none will stand against Ziziphus Jujuba. God. Alright, we're gonna go.

**Keith:** [laughs] Ziziphus really is a name.

**Austin:** Ziziphus.

**Sylvia:** [laughs] Yeah!

**Keith:** Of a...yeah.

**Austin:** It does. It is.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** It is. Janine and I fell into the trap of watching a bunch of bad fantasy shows last year. That's not true. It was only one of them, and it was *Legend of the Seeker*. It's come up a couple of times now. That show is not very good. It's kind of like a bad...it's kind of like a real B-tier adaptation, in like a Hercules or Xena model, of a series of fantasy novels that are like explicitly objectivist parables that are terrible by Terry Goodkind. But the show is just the most...

**Keith:** [fascinated] Goodkind.

**Austin:** The show is the most like junk food-y TV show you can watch, and there's a wizard in that named Zeddicus Zu'l Zorander. So, I feel like Ziziphus is...Zed's... [Dre laughs]

**Keith:** I think it's a step up.

**Austin:** Yeah, a step up. Is that like Zed's master.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Zed was trained by, uh...whatever that word is that I've forgotten.

**Keith:** Getting...having the bad triple Z name is like the...it's like his Kylo Ren mask.

**Austin:** Yes, a hundred percent. A hundred percent. Uh huh. Yes. Alright, that's gonna do it for us. As always, you can send your questions in to [tipsatthetable@gmail.com](mailto:tipsatthetable@gmail.com). Please continue to do so. We are almost caught up. We're up to, uh...the...was it October's was this one? So November, December, and we're caught up. Two more and we'll be caught up on this, so that's fun. So we're getting there. Send your questions in, [tipsatthetable@gmail.com](mailto:tipsatthetable@gmail.com). And, as always, [friendsatthetable.cash](https://www.patreon.com/friendsatthetable) to continue supporting us on Patreon. I hope everyone has a good week. I hope everyone's holiday is good, if they're celebrating anything in the next couple of weeks. And I hope 2020 ends...well. [chuckles] Given everything. [quiet laughter] Good luck to everyone as things continue to pile on and if you have to deal with family or if you have to deal with travel or if you have to deal with anything else. Be safe and take care of yourselves.