

## **Gathering Information 09: Into the Mirage**

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<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Wrestling [00:01:50]</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Episode agenda [00:08:19]</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>COUNTER/Weight prequel [00:08:49]</b>	<b>13</b>
[00:15:00]	18
<b>Arbitrage [00:20:40]</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>PALISADE finale [00:26:00]</b>	<b>28</b>
[00:30:00]	32
<b>PALISADE's shifting stakes [00:32:27]</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Player character death [00:40:10]</b>	<b>40</b>
[00:45:02]	43
[01:00:00]	57
<b>COUNTER/Weight prequel and PALISADE [01:10:42]</b>	<b>65</b>
[01:15:03]	69
<b>PALISADE finale systems [01:16:28]</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Soundtrack [01:25:11]</b>	<b>79</b>
[01:30:00]	84
<b>PALISADE finale systems (2) [01:30:22]</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Outro &amp; Time.is [01:31:24]</b>	<b>86</b>

### **Introduction**

**Ali:** Hello everybody, and welcome to Gathering Information, your — wait. Behind the scenes podcast for setting the table of Friends at the Table... *at* Friends at the Table. I'm a little rusty here 'cause I —

**Austin:** [overlapping] It's been a minute!

**Ali:** [overlapping] I don't know when... It's been a little bit. I...

**Austin:** Are we... Are we back on these? Or were we ahead of the game, and so...?

**Ali:** No. We are back on the... [mumbles]

**Austin:** Well, okay... [mumbles] That's fine.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Um. I...

**Austin:** [overlapping] Well, we got lots to talk about! Don't we?

**Ali:** We sure do!

**Austin:** So. Should be —

**Ali:** So...

**Austin:** — have no problem getting people into [overlapping] the mic room.

**Ali:** [overlapping] I think — yeah. I think it's going to be okay.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Um. I believe... I know this is probably going to be the January 2024 episode.

**Austin:** But don't listen to it if you've only heard through January's episodes!

**Ali:** [laughs] [overlapping] Uh-huh. Yeah.

**Austin:** [overlapping] This is coming out in late March of 2024...

**Ali:** It *is* coming out [overlapping] in March 2024.

**Austin:** [overlapping] The most recent released episode is *PALISADE* 42. [chuckles]

**Ali:** Uh-huh.

**Austin:** Where we'll talk about *PALISADE* 42 in this episode!

**Ali:** I mean. We sure will be.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Um...

**Austin:** I'm guessing.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Yeah. So. It's the...

**Austin:** [overlapping] Unless you want to talk about something else. We can talk about something else.

**Ali:** [laughs]

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

**Ali:** Well, yeah. Topics of today are going to be... Yeah. So I was... [overlapping] All of these, obviously...

**Austin:** [overlapping] What are we gonna... [chuckles] "What do you want to talk about?" That's what he says.

**Ali:** I... [overlapping] A few things.

**Austin:** [overlapping] That's what — that's the Cody Rhodes thing? Cody Rhodes...? That's his... I don't know how much of a Cody guy...

**Ali:** Cody Rhoades says "What do you want to talk about?" [laughs]

**Austin:** [laughs] It's so funny! I wish I was a Cody Rhodes guy! Because I think I'd be a happier person in life if that's the type of person I was. But no. He gets into the ring, and he has a little microphone. Right? And he goes —

**Ali:** Ohhh!

**Austin:** He goes, you know, "San Jose."

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** "Hello, San Jose! So."

**Ali:** "What do you want to talk about?"

**Austin:** “What do you want to talk about?” That's what he says.

**Ali:** That's great, actually!

**Austin:** [overlapping] “What do you guys...?” Sorry.

**Ali:** [overlapping] That's so much better than storytime with Adam Cole.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yeah. It is.

**Ali:** [overlapping] That's like...

**Austin:** It's, actually, it's...

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** “So. What do you guys want to talk about?”

**Ali:** [overlapping] I love that. Good for him.

**Austin:** [overlapping] It's *very* funny. Uh-huh.

**Ali:** What... Okay. [chuckles]

## **Wrestling [00:01:50]**

**Austin:** Is this about pro wrestling? Is that what we're going to talk about?

**Ali:** [laughs] I didn't even say what the topic of this episode was going to be yet.

[half-chuckling] But I do want to know what you mean by “you wish that you could be a Cody Rhodes guy, because it would make you a better person”.

**Austin:** It's, like, how you're... Being a Cody Rhodes guy is like being a Bugs Bunny guy.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** You know? And... You know? I'm a Daffy Duck guy, fundamentally. Not a Bugs Bunny guy. Right? And so. [chuckles]

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** It's the same. It's like liking the Mets instead of the Yankees. It's like —

**Ali:** Okay.

**Austin:** — not being... Like, Cody Rhodes is... And, you know, Cody has, like, a certain charm. I've liked a lot of Cody matches. But Cody is, like, ycou know. Cody... [sighs] Cody is... And part of this is the story that he's in right now — which is, like, the whole “finish the story” —

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** — he's the son of this great wrestler, he never really got his due, and du-du-du-du-duh — there's, like... [chuckles] doctor-prescribed protagonist feelings on him? A little bit?

**Ali:** Ohh!

**Austin:** You know?

**Ali:** Su-su-su-su-sure. [overlapping] Right. Yeah.

**Austin:** [overlapping] And I think that he's, like... And I think that he's fine. But everything he does feels so careful?

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** He's, like, the opposite of Eddie Kingston. Do you know what I mean?

**Ali:** Right. [overlapping] Yea-yea-yeah. Yeah.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Like, Eddie, Eddie actually *is* that guy, in a way. You know, Eddie's from Yonkers, Eddie has, like, the energy of someone who is in wrestling 'cause he can't do anything except that.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Right.

**Austin:** [overlapping] It's, like, he'd be wrestling or he'd be dead, and that's it.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** And like, I'm not saying Cody doesn't love what he does. But everything Cody does feels manicured. It feels careful. It feels... And it doesn't mean that he —

**Ali:** Right...

**Austin:** — he hasn't been screwed over many times. It doesn't mean that's, like, stuff I dislike from a... I mean, it is just so... Ah. It's so pristine, in a way.

**Ali:** Right. Well it's also the, like... I... Okay. [laughs]

**Austin:** Yeah. Mm-hm!

**Ali:** [chuckling] I'm going to... How many... I'm going to set five minutes [overlapping] and we're going to talk about that.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yep. Okay.

**Ali:** Because the Eddie Kingston thing is... I have time.is open, it's 3:28.

**Austin:** [chuckling] Thank you.

**Ali:** [overlapping] I'm going to... It's going to be 5 minutes.

**Austin:** [overlapping] You can jump ahead by 5 minutes.

**Ali:** [laughs] But, like, the... The position of like: "oh, you know, they never found the right gig —"

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** “— and the right company.”

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yea-yea-yeah.

**Ali:** [overlapping] “And they've been screwed over.” Eddie Kingston is such a, like, smart example there! Because the appeal of Eddie Kingston to me is the Blood & Guts match that he did when he walked into the ring with a gasoline tank —

**Austin:** [chuckles]

**Ali:** — and I *felt*, I really believed in that moment: “He's gonna start a fire”. [overlapping]  
Like: “this is actually dangerous!” Like, I... [chuckles]

**Austin:** [overlapping] “He’s gonna start a fuckin’ fire!” Yeah. Yeah.

**Ali:** And you're right that, like, as much as, like, Cody is, like, an interesting character...

**Austin:** Mm-hm.

**Ali:** You know, it's good on the mic sometimes. I think that, I don't watch WWE, but I feel like he's doing better character work there than he was in AEW?

**Austin:** Yeah. And he almost needs to be! He almost needs to be in WWE in order to do better character work! Because...

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** He's injecting part of what made him go to AEW to begin with. To start, co-found AEW to begin with. [overlapping] Right?

**Ali:** [overlapping] Right!

**Austin:** Into WWE it's part of why it works in some ways.

**Ali:** Right. Yeah. And, like, as much as I can believe that he is, like, compassionate about the business...

**Austin:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

**Ali:** And, like, the, you know, the position that he's in — I've never felt that like Eddie Kingston feeling of, like: A) he is actually in a fight.

**Austin:** [chuckles] Yeah.

**Ali:** Like, he's fighting somebody [overlapping] for glory or honor or whatever else.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yeah. Uh-huh.

**Ali:** But also that, like, there's a difference between watching an actor on the stage and being like: "wow!"

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** "That's really good acting!" And then being like: "Oh, there's just, like, a automatic concern for this conversation [overlapping] because it feels like it's a—"

**Austin:** [overlapping] Because you're bought in! Yes.

**Ali:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Austin:** Well, okay. The one time that I've been bought in on the like "this is a real fight" is... Have you seen the clip of him revealing his bruise at Hell in the Cell 2022?

**Ali:** Oh, I think that I... [overlapping] have.

**Austin:** [overlapping] I'm going to screen share this moment. Right—

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** It's too important. It's that good.

**Ali:** [chuckling] I've maybe only seen the bruise! I haven't seen the moment.



**Austin:** I'm going to show you the moment. We're gonna... I'm screen sharing. Alright.  
Three, two, one, go!

[pause]

**Ali:** [groan-chuckles]

**Austin:** It's so wild! People not listening, or not watching: [chuckles] Seth is just laughing at him!

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** It's a deep red, [overlapping] *terrible* bruise!

**Ali:** [overlapping] It's so gnarly! It looks like a plum.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Across half of his pec!

**Ali:** [overlapping] Yeah.

**Austin:** [overlapping] It looks like a plum. It looks like half of his pectoral, his right pec, and most of the inner part of his arm is just a deep purple, it's gross!

**Ali:** [sighs]

**Austin:** And that worked! And — again! — it almost only works 'cause it is WWE!

**Ali:** [overlapping] Right.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Like, it only because it's not... you know.

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** It's diff — anyway.

**Ali:** [muffled] Mm-hm!

**Austin:** Cody is just... [agitated] But even this is Cody being like: [detached] “Now look at my bruise.”

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** You know?

**Ali:** Uh-huh.

**Austin:** So... Sorry, you don't need me look up looking up *Dragon Dogma 2* stuff and Jerma videos and et cetera. But.

**Ali:** Ah, right.

**Austin:** On screen share.

**Ali:** Another funny thing... Okay, wait. We're out of the wrestling five minutes zone.

**Austin:** Yes.

**Ali:** But a funny thing that's been happening with the Friends of the Table YouTube is that I used to go through and delete all of the videos that I accidentally watched on it.

**Austin:** [sighs]

**Ali:** Because it... I was embarrassed. [laughs]

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** [laughing] I was afraid somebody would [overlapping] find them and be like—

**Austin:** [overlapping] See all of your kpop and wrestling videos?

**Ali:** [overlapping] “What are all these Korean Cafe videos? Like, what is this?”

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yeah. Sure. Yeah.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Sure, sure, sure.

**Ali:** But now, like, three or four people use it —

**Austin:** Yeah?

**Ali:** — so, like, there's a bunch of videos on it?!? [laughs]

**Austin:** [sighs]

**Ali:** So it's all fine. We are all... [overlapping] Everybody has opened themselves to each other.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Is this just a wild mix of stuff in there now?

**Ali:** Yeah. Uh-huh.

**Austin:** I'm gonna check it. I got to see what the...

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** I'm logged in over here!

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** Alright. Here we go! [overlapping] I'm gonna read.

**Ali:** [overlapping] I could, like, tell Keith is there 'cause, like, there's some Comedy Bang Bang stuff.

**Austin:** [overlapping] "World's Sharpest Kitchen Knife".

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** "Poured 250° C hot butter on raw salmon". "A man ate 120 gummy probiotics for lunch" — don't do that!

**Ali:** [overlapping] [sighs] Yeah...

**Austin:** [overlapping] “500 paper sheets are transformed into vibrant... bowl”. Okay.  
“Chicken Nugget Official [chuckles] Trailer Netflix English Sub”

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** “The Secret Life of Wasps - Nature's tiny Guardians”.

**Ali:** Like, some of this [overlapping] is Janine, right?

**Austin:** [overlapping] “Kendrick dissed Drake and J Cole”. [chuckles]

**Ali:** That's me.

**Austin:** That's you.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** Yeah, a lot of this is Janine. Yeah. “1871 candy drop roller restoration” — that could be anybody, honestly!

**Ali:** [chuckling] Uh-huh!

**Austin:** But! But.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** But “HOW THE NEW AVENGERS ARE GONNA BE WITH ANY THREAT | RDC TV” That is you!

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** For sure. Any RDC stuff — that is you.

**Ali:** Uh-huh. Yeah. Anyway!

## Episode agenda [00:08:19]

**Ali:** So today I wanted to talk about — even though it feels like it's a long time from this point — going back to *COUNTER/Weight* stuff and some of the, like —

**Austin:** Oh, sure!

**Ali:** — setup there from the GM side, and some of the decisions about Arbitrage. And then I obviously wanted to talk about the last arc.

**Austin:** Mm-hm!

**Ali:** And maybe talk about it from more of a production perspective?

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** But, obviously, as we talk about it I think we're going to be, we're going to say a lot of things.

**Austin:** Yes.

## **COUNTER/Weight prequel [00:08:49]**

**Ali:** But yeah! So, I... It's funny. I went through... I was going through the Patreon, because in those episodes you mentioned a post that you made of...

**Austin:** Forever ago.

**Ali:** Setting it up and it was so far ago that I can't find it. [chuckles]

**Austin:** Yeah. It's a... Well, it's a Pusher Level... back... thing.

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** I believe! Maybe — am I wrong? Maybe I'm wrong! Maybe I never released it. Maybe — no, I'm pretty sure I did. I remember doing it and I remember getting responses from certain people. Do you know what I mean?

**Ali:** [overlapping] Right, right, right.

**Austin:** [overlapping] I remember being like — and this would have been four or five years ago now. Right? It's that old. It's in there, somewhere. So, the thing you're talking about is that I did a... I released the original Transmission, which is the *Technoir* term for, like, a setting playbook, for when it was the Atlantic City setting, basically. Right?

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** And I did... It would have been, like, [half-chuckling] 2019? You know?

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** It was a *long* fucking time ago.

**Ali:** Uh-huh...

**Austin:** Um... But... The Transmission document for that series, for that prequel series, is, like, a mix of unused stuff from the original *COUNTER/Weight* Transmission...

**Ali:** Mm-hm!

**Austin:** With the original Atlantic City Transmission that I made when I was playing *Technoir* with people from the Atlantic City area in, like, 2010 or whatever. Right after *Technoir* came out.

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** Right? Like, before I went to grad school, 2009, 2010 somewhere in there.

**Ali:** Okay. I have found it by the way.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Okay, good.

**Ali:** [overlapping] I'm gonna link it.

**Austin:** Thank you.

**Ali:** I will link [overlapping] this post.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Thank you, thank you, thank you. Good. Yeah. Pusher update, there it is! September 2017!

**Ali:** [giggles]

**Austin:** Aaahh! We were so... [chuckles] Oh my god! I don't even want to think about it! Ugh!

**Ali:** Yeah...

**Austin:** Time! Alright. Well!

**Ali:** We were making *Twilight Mirage*.

**Austin:** We sure were! We sure were!

**Ali:** [sighs]

**Austin:** Um.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** Anyway! What's — yeah. What's — you've questions about it? You got...? You wanna...? [chuckles]

**Ali:** [laughing] [overlapping] I feel like I had questions about it that I somehow... [laughs]

**Austin:** [overlapping] “So what do you wanna talk about?”

**Ali:** [laughing] Now I go I have to rewatch this. No! I guess mostly I wanted to talk through, [overlapping] like —

**Austin:** [overlapping] Also, there was some new stuff in there, too. To be clear.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Yes. It's —

**Austin:** [overlapping] I didn't just lift it. Right? So, like, a character like the incredible Twotwo, the host club droid, new. Completely new. Right?

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** Grandpa Hart — who we didn't get to go meet — completely new. Um... But. But! Importantly, SureThing.dat, I think, is in here.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** As SureThing.dat... Sorry! It was the Card Shark there. Right? KardSharq...

**Ali:** [overlapping] Ohhh!

**Austin:** “Everybody needs an edge. Card counting. Cam display. Nerve linked ocular screen. Unique.” That's here! You know? Already. So! So yeah.

**Ali:** Wow.

**Austin:** Some stuff in there already.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Okay.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Cameron McLeod, already in here. Voski Kovacs, already in here. Um... Ash Hunter, the prize fighter, I think. Maybe we renamed — I might have moved some names around? You know? But.

**Ali:** Okay. Fai-fai-fair.

**Austin:** But yeah. They're in here.

**Ali:** And was that just, you know, like: “I have this, I might as well use it again.” Or...

**Austin:** It was a little of A and B!

**Ali:** [overlapping] Mm-hm.

**Austin:** [overlapping] It was a little of like: “I have this.” And also I cut a lot of the casino stuff out of *COUNTER/Weight* because it wasn't a casino town anymore.

**Ali:** [chuckles]



**Austin:** It was just the Berlin! Right? And so I was, like, well, if I if I come back and use this Ace City Transmission I can use that as the, like, I could lean into the fun hotel, hospitality, casino stuff. And it really came from me starting at, the original premise was: “What if there was a part of COUNTER/Weight that was still run by Apostolosians. But *not* by the Apostolosian government — just by Apostolosian people. What would that look like?”

**Ali:** Hm. Mm-hm.

**Austin:** And going from there to, like, big Atlantean hotel was really fun. And then from there to “oh, I could do, I could pull on this old stuff that I never got to touch, that’s so funny! And so cool.” So.

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** Did that! You know? And as always with *Technoir* it’s, like, I don’t know what’s going to show up! That whole game — there was a version of that game when I sat down to run it where I was like “are we gonna end up fighting, like, Divine — sort of like, remnants of an old Divine that’s buried here?” ‘Cause there is one buried there! There’s, like, fun weird shit that just truly never came up! You know?

**Ali:** Mm-hm. And it was never like: “oh, I need to get Asepsis—” Or not Asepsis. “Arbitrage in here”? [overlapping] Was that a decision that you made —

**Austin:** [overlapping] Oh, I had no fucking...

**Ali:** [giggles]

**Austin:** I made that decision... 7 minutes before it happened? You know?

**Ali:** Oh, perfect!

**Austin:** Maybe — it might have been the end of one... It might have been at the end of the session before, or something like that. But it was not — I remember *having* the idea in the middle of play. You know?

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** Being like: “oh, fuck! This is very funny.”

**Ali:** [whispers] Right. Right.

**Austin:** I truly... The thing that I thought it would be — and I'd have to pull up my own actual, I'd have to actually pull up the one that I actually used, the full Transmission that I actually used. But the gist of it is that it was... You know. The thing that I thought would be the most... [sighs] interesting stuff would be to get the group's first encounter with a Divine earlier. And, like... Because, you know. Peace is really interesting. Order and Peace is a really interesting beat. But I think that's kind of interesting about *COUNTER/Weight* is there is not an early game direct relationship between — you know! Mako shows up and seems like — Mako knows what he's doing to some degree —

**Ali:** [overlapping] Mm-hm.

**Austin:** [overlapping] — by the time Order and Peace shows up. Does it go bad? Yes. But —

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** You know, Mako has been trained to cloud — or to fog Divines, rather — and there is —

[00:15:00]

**Austin:** We never see that happening, like, quote “for the first time”. And that was one of the things that I thought might happen — was that we would get that. I thought we might get some, like, gang war between the established older era of Apostolosian and this kind of new brash young group.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Mm-hm.

**Austin:** [overlapping] I thought there might be, like, fighting in the marketplace. I mean, this is the thing that's so nice about...

**Ali:** [giggles]

**Austin:** ... about this is, it's 36 items are in this kind of table, of things that could show up in the story. Right? And we ended up with Coffee Affogato. Which, again, I didn't know that that's what that plot would be until I rolled those things. You know?

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** You build the table then you roll those things. You know, I thought we could have a boxing thing. That's why there's a boxer here and one of the events is a prize fight. We could have had a prize fight. We could have had, like, a big “everybody shows up in, like, their fancy outfit for the fancy boxing match”.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** You know? We could have had Aria singing the National Anthem? You know?

**Ali:** Wow!

**Austin:** [overlapping] All sorts of things!

**Ali:** [overlapping] Yeah, the Apostolosian National Anthem! [laughs]

**Austin:** Yeah, exactly! “Here we have the ex-Orion War propagandist.” That could have been fun. You know. It could have gone a bunch of different places. But...

**Ali:** Mm-hm. And it's good that *Technoir* lends itself to that sort of width. Because I... I know that there was a little bit of... We were being careful, a little bit —

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** — the way that we were handling returning to *COUNTER/Weight*.

**Austin:** [chuckles]

**Ali:** I think that was sort of your...

**Austin:** We also left with Aria having a new boyfriend! So!

**Ali:** So?

**Austin:** Okay.

**Ali:** So? [chuckles]

**Austin:** We weren't being that careful! But yes.

**Ali:** He's just some guy! Like! [laughs]

**Austin:** [laughs] Ohhh! "I miss him!"

**Ali:** [laughing] How was that not just some guy!

**Austin:** "I miss him so much every day! I just want him back!"

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** "Feel like shit!" Um.

**Ali:** I know.

**Austin:** But!

**Ali:** Well, yeah.

**Austin:** You're right. We were playing... I was not going to try to kill Mako or Aria or Cass. You know. Or Audy.

**Ali:** No.

**Austin:** Like, that would have been... [overlapping] very funny!

**Ali:** [overlapping] Right.

**Austin:** But no.

**Ali:** And even the —

**Austin:** I mean, if the dice went that way we would have figured it out! You know? We weren't —

**Ali:** Right. Yeah! Again, I think I said it in that recording, but Aria dies in, like, [overlapping] the first five episodes of *COUNTER/Weight*, anyway.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

**Ali:** So it's, like, that universe... "Just buy a new heart. It's fine."

**Austin:** Yeah. Exactly.

**Ali:** Um. [laughs] But that was sort of the... That's why we did have it in, like, it was a little bit of a bottle episode [overlapping] in that way.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yes. Yes. We —

**Ali:** It's not, like, we could go to...

**Austin:** You couldn't go talk to Orth in a long-term way or whatever. You couldn't go meet —

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** — with Jamil. You couldn't go meet with Paisley. There are lots of — you couldn't go to Centralia Dome. Like, it was meant to be off the record, or off the books a little bit. You know? Off the map from the normal spaces, because the... especially the way that *Technoir* works is the more you rely on someone the more they get kind of tied into the plot. You know, if you go to someone for an advice there's a chance that they end up getting caught in the conspiracy? So to speak?

**Ali:** Ohh.

**Austin:** Because the way that it works is that every NPC at the bottom of their thing has, like, a list of things that they know about. Right? And so if you go to Voski and say: “Hey, have you heard anything about this?” And they agree to tell you something, I roll a die that then says it's one of six things. Right? And so it's like: “Is it Coffee? Is it the fact that it snows here? Is it the CCT?”

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** “Is it this campground?” Et cetera. And then you add that thing to the map and I believe — I'm working off of memory here — if you hadn't already asked them something that person's name gets added to the map, too. And then if you're going to them and they're already on the map, you draw a *connection* between them and the thing that they tell you about. And then! If they're already on the map and connected, it goes to a whole different set of six things they're connected to! So there's, like —

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** — the, like: “Oh, yeah. I heard about that.” And then there's like: “Oh, this person's already in it a little bit.” Then you get the deep shit. Then it goes from: “hey, you know, Voski doesn't just know about the fact that it snows. Voski knows about an explosion. Or is tied to some explosion or something.” You know? It's an interesting system that is, like, meant to emphasize that, like, in the film noir genre the people who you trust end up getting caught up in the conspiracy, too — either as innocents or because they were already caught up in it. Right?

**Ali:** Oh, sure, sure, sure.

**Austin:** You know.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** So.

**Ali:** [whispers] God.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Gaming.

**Austin:** Gaming!

**Ali:** I love games.

**Austin:** I fucking *love* games.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** And I wish some of the mechanisms of this were a little clearer in the recording. It's one of those games that's so fun to GM for me for that reason. But that fun is hidden. Because part of the fun of it is that my job — or the GM's job — for *Technoir* is to obfuscate the machine a little bit. And to, like, not...

**Ali:** Ohh.

**Austin:** Like, I'm not going to show you what all the potential connections are. For a person. Right?

**Ali:** Right! Ri-ri-right.

**Austin:** You're just going to, it's going to feel like something's coming together, as if it was always planned that way. That's the joy of *Technoir*, for me, anyway. You know.

**Ali:** [giggles]

**Austin:** But yeah. So to go back to your core thing, I had no idea Arbitrage would be involved in this, at all! I kind of saw my shot and took it. You know?

**Ali:** Right. Yeah. Fair. [chuckles]

**Austin:** Yeah.

## Arbitrage [00:20:40]

**Ali:** How are you feeling about Arbitrage these days?

**Austin:** Uh. Excited to wrap back around to Arbitrage in whatever the third of our Divine Cycle — or, I guess, not third of the Divine Cycle — third of this ongoing Divine Principality arcs are. I think we set up a really cool antagonist and I don't know how to... I don't know what that'll look like in the next series. But that is — you know. As much of a big bad as we've ever set up, I think Arbitrage is up there.

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** As a manipulator and a powerful distributed force. And not someone you could just shoot in the head. Right? I think that thing that makes Arbitrage so fun is you cannot beat Arbitrage by, for instance, pinning it to the ground and driving it into the sun. Right?

**Ali:** [chuckles] Sure!

**Austin:** You can't beat Arbitrage by simply tearing it into two. And, you know, splitting it in half and eating it with a Divine and blending it with, uh, bits of Autonomy itself and the Perennial Wave in order to make a new thing called Kalmeria. That will not work on Arbitrage. 'Cause Arbitrage is distributed, is everywhere.

We haven't really had that sort of like... The end of *COUNTER/Weight* is a little bit like that because of the idea that, like, Rigour has split into a bunch of different parts and Rigourtech is in a lot of places. Um. But Arbitrage is, like, not... Is quite literally not in one place. And is in the galaxy. And I think trying to fight something like that is going to be really fun, and — I don't even, I'm saying that now, but, like, we could get to that season and that could end up still just being a background element. But we'll see. In my mind Arbitrage is set up as the next season's big villain. Right?

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** But I — along with Connadine, who I think is such a great character from Jack that I'm excited to see where all that goes!



**Ali:** [giggles]

**Austin:** You know?

**Ali:** Yeah. I think you said recently that Arbitrage became a character that had to be, like, launched into the next thing? Was part of that just, like, the... it felt like it was both the kind of natural throughline through the Combuster thing.

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** Um. But also did it just feel like: “oh, we’ve sort of set up this interesting engagement, but, like, as apparent as it’s been in *PALISADE*, it’s also not super... or doesn’t necessarily have to be tied to what the, like, [overlapping] story of this revolution is?”

**Austin:** [overlapping] On Palisade in this particular moment.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah. Like, Arbitrage has always been positioned as a opportunist. And like: “hey, I could skim a little here!” I mean, Arbitrage. Right? Like, the entire idea of Arbitrage is taking a little off the top, basically, as you move things around. Right?

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** Like: “hey, I’m gonna hold this money for you for a minute, and guess what, I’m going to charge you a little bit of fee for while I hold it.” And going back to our best Arbitrage stuff — which I think is in *Orbital* with Mustard, with Mustard Red —

**Ali:** Uh-huh!

**Austin:** — the way of like: “oh, this is a person who gets things for people! And can get them quickly and the way that they do that is through other people, mostly.” Right? They’re almost, like, a distributed network of doers. Of gophers. Of, you know. It’s... [chuckles] Arbitrage is a big scary supercomputer. Also, Arbitrage is Fiverr. Right?

**Ali:** [chuckles] Mm-hm!

**Austin:** Arbitrage is DoorDash. Right? And Arbitrage is, you know, cryptocurrency, or cryptocurrency. Is Bitcoin. Is money, in a broader sense. Right?

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** And that's, like... It's hard to beat money! [chuckles] That's why they call it money.

**Ali:** It really is! Yeah. [laughs]

**Austin:** And so... It's... It's a really fun existential enemy that I think is going to take more than the story of fighting back, you know, imperial colonists on a moon. Or on a planet. Right?

**Ali:** Right.

**Austin:** And I don't know what that looks like *quite* yet! I have a game in mind for that next season. It's not super Arbitrage-y, except it's kind of very Arbitrage-y in other ways.

**Ali:** [giggles]

**Austin:** This will all makes sense in two and a half years or whatever. But...

**Ali:** Uh-huh.

**Austin:** Um...

**Ali:** Or in two and a half years where we're like: "we have different ideas now."  
[chuckles]

**Austin:** Right! A hundred percent. Don't... You know! I'm not signin'! I'm not signing an Arbitrage contract! I wouldn't do that!

**Ali:** Uh-huh. No? Oh, okay.

**Austin:** So. You know?

**Ali:** Are you sure?

**Austin:** [half-chuckling] Yeah, I'm certain! I would not.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** I don't know what we do with Mustard right now! That's the one of my favorite most interesting moments with the current state of *PALISADE* is Mustard is now kind of cut off [chuckles] from Arbitrage! [overlapping] And I don't...

**Ali:** [overlapping] What?!? Is she?

**Austin:** Ah. Arbitrage — I guess — We'll have to talk about it.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Okay. Yeah.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Does Arbitrage... I mean, Arbitrage was from... was in the Twilight Mirage so, like... but... because of the Twilight Mirage.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Oh my god, because of the Twilight Mirage!

**Austin:** So the question is, like, is Arbitrage — is there an Arbitrage still in the Twilight Mirage? And if so is that even the *same* Arbitrage? Because it would... the time differential is so fucked. You know?

**Ali:** Right. Well, because she didn't actually let it in *Orbital*, because that...

**Austin:** Right. Right, right, right. It's already there in *Orbital*. Right? So there must be... Arbitrage must have some way of maintaining continuity between *Orbital*... Sorry. Twilight Mirage and the outside world at this point — because it's existing in both places.

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** So it must have some method. That's a fun thing to play with in wherever we go from here!

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** That's a fun, you know... A tool would be... If Arbitrage can do that then can somebody else do that? You know? Is that something else that could be done? I mean, on the other hand, I've made pretty clear that Arbitrage — to the degree that there is *an* Arbitrage — has left Palisade. You know. From a point... It has gotten to a point of safety from everything, as safe as this big distributed Divine can be.

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** We'll see! I don't know! We'll see how it goes. [overlapping] Lots of questions about where we go.

**Ali:** [overlapping] We sure will.

**Austin:** At this point.

**Ali:** We sure will see! [chuckles]

**Austin:** Yeah.

## ***PALISADE* finale [00:26:00]**

**Ali:** Yeah. We... We've had an interesting month...

**Austin:** [chuckles] [groans]

**Ali:** ... in Friends at the Table, I think!

**Austin:** Can I tell you... I woke up today or yesterday, or went to sleep last night — one of the — somewhere around the bed —

**Ali:** [overlapping] Uh...? [chuckles]

**Austin:** ... I was either falling asleep or waking up — and was going...

**Ali:** It's *Twilight Mirage* again!

**Austin:** Yeah. *Twilight Mirage* again. I was going: "Maybe we have it wrong and our plan is wrong. Maybe we should do it the other way." But I think we're probably right. With what our plan is — which we've arrived at after, like you said, quite a month!

**Ali:** Oh, our plan of... You were thinking we should go with the other...

**Austin:** I was thinking we should just play it out.

[pause]

**Ali:** [overlapping] Oh, okay.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Fuck it. Let's just stay in *Armour Astir*.

**Ali:** Ohhh!

**Austin:** But I don't think that's right.

**Ali:** Sure.

**Austin:** I think that's wrong. But, you know, like, all these decisions are very considered. I guess, for the listener.

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** We are probably wrapping up the *Armour Astir* part of *PALISADE*, by the time you hear this. Um...

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** It is March something now by the time you get to the next arc, it will probably still be... the next Downtime it will be partly *Armour Astir* and then we switch into something else!

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** For the finale, effectively. Or something that we think *could* be the finale. We don't know. It's actual play!

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** We could do —

**Ali:** [chuckling] Wait!

**Austin:** What if we do that and Keith —

**Ali:** [chuckling] At what point do you think that we're playing this finale game and being like: “Yeah. We could do some more *Armour Astir* after this!”

**Austin:** I mean, Keith was the one who was like: “The season finally started 15 episodes ago”.

**Ali:** It's true.

**Austin:** Right?

**Ali:** This is true.

**Austin:** Um... Do you...

**Ali:** I would love to be taken by that spirit! [laughs] I hope that we feel that way! That would be — !

**Austin:** [overlapping] That'd be so sick!

**Ali:** [overlapping] — such a weird...

**Austin:** It'd be very funny.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** I mean, things can happen! Right? I don't know what those things are.

**Ali:** Uh-huh.

**Austin:** But yeah. I...

**Ali:** Uh-huh.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Do you want to set up what you're setting up?

**Ali:** [overlapping] Yeah. Let...

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Sure. I... Because I think that we've spoken very... When we say "let's go the other way with this". Let's just say, we tried to sit down and record a Faction game — I feel comfortable saying this. We had it scheduled, we got on a call or whatever, and we were just like: "This isn't — none of these mechanics are answering what would be interesting — "

**Austin:** Mm-hm.

**Ali:** " — about this downbeat of being in the Twilight Mirage." *Armour Astir* has a lot of great Faction downtime [overlapping] turns and scenes.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yeah.

**Ali:** Um...

**Austin:** If... [chuckles]

**Ali:** But the... I don't know that, like, Factions are being tapped right now.

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** For instance.

**Austin:** Well, it's specifically the, like, the state of play has just changed in such a... The way I talked about it, I think, internally to y'all was like: "if we actually wanted to use *Armour Astir* mechanics then the thing that's happened is the Cause has suddenly gotten 30 more Pillars of their own." [chuckles]

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** Because they're in the Twilight Mirage now. The Twilight Mirage has nine planets or whatever. Right? Eight planets plus Volition, which, we are going to have to get into Volition at some point. Um... But we have... You know.

**[00:30:00]**

**Austin:** All of those planets are — as far as we know — supporting the Cause. You know? And that means that there is a real sense of one-sidedness [chuckles] to this conflict now? It's not necessarily over instantly. The way it ends and the way it wraps up I think bears a lot of weight on the people of Palisade. You know?

Imagine a world where tomorrow everybody wakes up and the Bilats have agreed to give up and cede power and go into a sort of, like, war criminal court. [chuckles] You know? And... That's a much different world than one in which Lucia and Crusade decide to go out fighting. Right? And go out causing as much harm as they can. Or who say: "we got to get out of here. We're going to fight our way to an Escape Route." Or who say, you know, any of that stuff. Right? There's lots of ways — or who say: "We're going to take hostages." Right? There's lots of, still, consequences! But it's not really caught up in the "who owns what Pillars" version of play so much. So. Or it could — we could try to do it that way and then end up still recording four more arcs of fighting over —

**Ali:** [giggles]

**Austin:** — 12 ft. You know what I mean? Like, there's a...

**Ali:** Right. [overlapping] Uh-huh.



**Austin:** [overlapping] We don't want it to feel like World War I trench warfare, where you're battling and dying over nothing. Which might be — that might be happening narratively! But we don't want to play that out in ongoing Conflict, ongoing *Armour Astir* style conflicts. We'd rather zoom out a little bit, and say: “Hey that's happening in this place. What's that mean?” You know?

**Ali:** Right.

**Austin:** So.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** So. Yeah. I'm excited for what's next. I... [whispers] I'm not going to do this right now.

**Austin:** Uh-huh!

**Ali:** But I do... [chuckles] I did want to — just in terms of saying game systems [overlapping] out loud to a microphone to an audience —

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yes.

**Ali:** I'm going to at the end of this episode read every finale game we're *not* playing.

**Austin:** Oh, damn! Okay.

**Ali:** [chuckles] I'm going to go to everything that I bought!

**Austin:** Okay. [chuckles compassionately]

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** Uh-huh.

**Ali:** Where it was “this one's not appropriate.” But that's for later. I... Yeah. So... Yes.

## ***PALISADE's* shifting stakes [00:32:27]**

**Ali:** It does feel like such a weird thing because, you know, it's such a shift in stakes.

**Austin:** Mm-hm.

**Ali:** And [overlapping] That's a very...

**Austin:** [overlapping] Which, like, I guess to set up more... Like, again, there are things [sighs] that were maybe not super clear in the way that I was trying to communicate what this... The things that we didn't even realize until *after* the Twilight Mirage bombs go — until we finish the episode.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Mm-hm.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Which was like: “Oh, this is actually huge! This is actually — ”

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** “This changes everything!” Being in the Twilight Mirage means that there is a weird timejump — which I do think we talked about in the episode, right?

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** Which is, like, people are going to continue living their lives one day at a time. We're going to stay on that speed. But *outside* is 10 times faster or whatever. Right? 500 days was 5,000 years for everybody outside. 500 days inside the Mirage, 5,000... Sorry. 500 years inside the Mirage was 5,000 years outside. So 10 days inside the Mirage is 100 days outside the Mirage.

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** Right? So things are fucking [overlapping] *going* out there!

**Ali:** [overlapping] Normal stuff!

**Austin:** [overlapping] Exactly.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Mm-hm.

**Austin:** So that's One. Two: the entire thing was, like, the Bilats were desperate to get access to the Twilight Mirage because they wanted something that would help them win the war — against the Pact which was on its back... the Pact had them on their back feet at the time. Right? Had the Bilats on their back feet. They were winning the war outright. Then! [chuckles] Turns out the Princept, Dalia, the Glorious Princept, got killed somehow!

**Ali:** [snickers quietly] Weird! [chuckles]

**Austin:** And that put the Pact in sort of a weird place. Especially with regard to who's leading it: is it going to be Cas'alear, Dahlia's sibling and the kind of heir apparent to Apokine? [overlapping] The leader of Apostolos?

**Ali:** [overlapping] Who we last saw almost getting assassinated because they're in that position? Question mark?

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yes. We — yeah. A hundred percent. In a little cutaway that we described in episode 42.

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** Or! So! At that point The Pact is actually in a little bit of chaos. Except now the Bilats are also in chaos because they have all these forces committed to Palisade — including Cynosure's daughter. Right? And.

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** And her whole fleet is here, stuck behind the Mirage! And, importantly, they can't just go get her. Like, if the... [chuckles] Like the scene in, like they say in *The Social Network*, if you could conquer the Mirage you would have conquered the Mirage. Right? Like, you would have already done it! They would have already done it if they could do it.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Mm-hm.

**Austin:** [overlapping] They can't get into the Mirage in a way that's effective or quick or safe! That's what they needed Palisade for!

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** They were looking for ways to breach the Mirage! They were looking for a foothold to build up enough forces; they were looking for technology that would let them get there in a quick way. Because — it's another reminder — getting through the Mirage takes years, traditionally? It took Our Profit and Our Profit's big flagship in *Twilight Mirage* generations?!? And it didn't even take all of the NEH fleet the same amount of time during *Twilight Mirage*. Some of them got there, like, months and months and months earlier than others. And that months and months was actually felt as years and years. Generations. You know?

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** Of breaching The Mirage. Everyone inside Palisade a just kind of, like, cheated it. You know?

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** By... By the bombs going off!

**Ali:** [overlapping] Uh-huh.

**Austin:** [overlapping] And are just in there now. And we know that people inside the Mirage can get stuff *out* quickly via technology that they have — you know, we've talked about the kind of catapults that launch you outside of it quickly — but getting *in* is a different matter. Especially without whatever tech they have in there. So! That changes everything! [chuckles] You know?

**Ali:** Right. So, like...

**Austin:** In a way we didn't really understand until we talked through it.

**Ali:** Uh-huh! Yeah. [laughs] Um. But that's interesting, because we are in a position now where, like, it's not that the stakes are gone. It's not that, like, the revolution is necessarily won. Because, you know, if the Bilats are the people who are able to make that gate out, or if Lucia ends up still, like, controlling the entire planet and being the person who tries to make a connection outside — there's going to be a problem there.

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** So.

**Austin:** Right. A hundred percent. There still are stakes! It's just the stakes feel a little different.

**Ali:** [chuckles] Mm-hm.

**Austin:** And I'm just interested in what the characters get up to here in the Mirage.

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** Right? Things are just different here and I think part of the thing that we're going to have to pay attention to is, there's all these elements of what makes the Mirage the Mirage that aren't just the science-fantasy, like, 'anything can happen' stuff — I mean, it's that stuff too. Is it called the Mesh still in the Twilight Mirage? Or was it called something different?

**Ali:** I think it was called the Mesh.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Does it end up being called something differently when Tender makes...?

**Austin:** No. Because I think it's a different sub... that's, like, the Argosy, Spli — The Splice. [overlapping] Because it's different. [chuckles]

**Ali:** [overlapping] Oh, ri-right. The Splice. Yeah.

**Austin:** Which is the real, the real — ! You know, ask me about The Splice in this season, in —

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** — in the postmortem — is what I would say. Right?

**Ali:** [chuckling] Yeah.

**Austin:** Well, we'll talk about that then.

**Ali:** Uh-huh!

**Austin:** Um. I believe the Splice was its own separate thing and not the Prime... Maybe I'm wrong! Yeah, no. It's specifically the Our Profit virtual world thing.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Yeah.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Where you could go live in there for, in a way, the opposite! Generations. You can live generations in... There's even another degree of timejump. It's the other way.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** Where it's, like, one day in the Twilight Mirage is a thousand days or whatever inside of the Splice. So. Anyway! Um. Yeah.

**Ali:** Beautiful. Beautiful stuff.

**Austin:** But...

**Ali:** I'm excited to dig into it. There's obviously...

**Austin:** Yeah. And I'm excited for just these characters to be around, be in a place that isn't at war in the same way? I mean, Palisade will continue to be. But, like.

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** You *could* theoretically leave! [chuckles] And go off-planet, maybe. Right? I don't know! We have to talk through what, how is the Qui Err Coalition dealing with this?

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** Are people allowed to leave? Do they trust people leaving? Do they think that... How do they know that someone leaving isn't part of the Bilats? Do they... *Huge* open questions about how the Twilight Mirage handles this as a political entity. You know?

**Ali:** [half-chuckling] Tune in for more Friends at the Table to get —

**Austin:** I mean, truly!

**Ali:** [chuckles] — the answers to some of this!

**Austin:** Some of the conversations we had, too, were really interesting because it was not “Hey, what do you... what do y’all wanna play?” It was —

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** “What do you want from the rest of the season?”

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** You know.

**Ali:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

**Austin:** “What are the questions you have about the setting? What are the questions you have about your character?” And I thought that was a really useful conversation to have with everybody.

**Ali:** Yeah! Yeah. And I'm excited to get some of that stuff in microphone.

**Austin:** [chuckles] Mm-hm!

**Ali:** Like, on show.

**Austin:** Mm-hm.

**Ali:** Um. Obviously, we mentioned the next thing that we're going to do is probably a, like, a Downtime in our *Armour Astir* — which is still upcoming.

**Austin:** Mm-hm.

**Ali:** And there are a *lot of*, uhh... threads [chuckles] waving in the air!

**Austin:** There are.

**Ali:** Mm-hm. So we'll see how that goes.

## **Player character death [00:40:10]**

**Ali:** I do have a question, though. I think the one thing that we haven't addressed here—

**Austin:** [chuckles]

**Ali:** [half-chuckling] —um, as much as the, you know, the Twilight Mirage stuff — is, like, how and when and why does this relate to Figure.

**Austin:** Oh.

**Ali:** [overlapping] And...

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yeah. I mean.

**Ali:** How did... Yeah. [half-chuckling] How did we come to this point?

**Austin:** I mean, it's the... [chuckles] What's that Move say? I don't remember the Move off the top of my head. But it's like...

**Ali:** [overlapping] Let's pull that. This is important.

**Austin:** [overlapping] I'm pulling it up. I'm going to read the whole thing. I think it's important, too.



**Ali:** Yeah. [overlapping] These are important word.

**Austin:** [overlapping] This is the Wither. Here it is! This is — not “Born to Die”, believe it or not! A move that I don’t think Dre ever used. But did have!

**Ali:** [chuckles tiredly]

**Austin:** Not Cold Company. Number of the Beast!

**Ali:** [overlapping] Uh-huh!

**Austin:** [overlapping] “Whenever you roll a six, roll an additional die and add it to the total for that roll. If you ever roll three sixes during one movie you’re killed in a spectacular fashion at the nearest suitable moment and are claimed by whatever terrible power would be most interested in your soul, magical energy, unliving servitude, etc.”

The spectacular fashion was two beats. Right? Beat Number One: the Divine Future reveals that, you know, it is in control of itself for the first time. It is living the life it wants to lead. And it wants to lead a life of peace. It wants to find... And in its world in its vision peace is a thing you obtain through stability. And stability is a thing you obtain through power. Right?

**Ali:** [overlapping] True! [chuckles]

**Austin:** [overlapping] Whoever is most powerful should just stay powerful and bring peace to the world. Right? Because that’s how — and basically is, like, this... [chuckles] Imagine that you’ve seen...

In some ways, Future’s, like, a weird mirror of Perennial. Perennial has seen all these different attempts of future. Of the future trying to get brought into being and has seen it fail again and again again. Right? The revolutionary movement either fails or it succeeds, but then eventually is overtaken by a group that wants to make it, you know, violent again, or who wants to — not just violent, but, actually, you know, fascistic or oppressive — or has seen people decide that they actually don’t want revolution. What

they want is simple reform. And so things basically stay the same. So it's restarted the clock over and over again.

Future has seen countless people who are these kind of, like, great leaders fail to achieve what they saw. Right? Future as a Divine can help you crystallize your vision for what you wish the world was. And imagine doing that for [chuckles] tens of thousands of years.

**Ali:** Uh-huh!

**Austin:** To people who are, like, a mix of what they want! But. But all big movers and shakers. Right? And Future is very individualized in that way. Right? Future shows people in their individual visions for what they want. Future is not thinking systemically, necessarily. But seeing them fail again and again and again. You know? Or succeed, and then still not get *the* future that you want — because the people that Future ends up being taken by tended to dream extremely big. And...

**Ali:** Right.

**Austin:** And! Go ahead.

**Ali:** But it's also, like, not even a thing of, like, Future has only been in the antagonists' —

**Austin:** No!

**Ali:** — hands. [overlapping] Or whatever.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Mako and Orth where we first saw people using Future.

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** You know? And Gur! And Gur used Future. Right?

**Ali:** [overlapping] Uh-huh.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Gur stole Future from the Pact, killed Future's previous Elect and took Future and used Future. And I really love that thing of like: “No. No one gets to use me like that anymore.” [chuckles]

**Ali:** Yeah...

**Austin:** Um. It's, like, a little sad. It's miserable the way that Future has come down on the side of Empire. But it's a really common way to come down, I think. I... Future, for me, is a little bit based on sort of leftist academics who end up turning right in their older age? Or who are... You know. I think a lot about, Newt Gingrich was actually a student of this guy named Alvin Toffler. And Toffler was I wouldn't say, like, leftist leftist. Right? But, like, was a materialist academic, and, you know, who had a strong critique of certain parts of technological society and of capitalism — not always in those terms. Newt Gingrich was Newt Gingrich the Republican Speaker of the House during the Clinton administration who —

**Ali:** [exhales noticeably]

**Austin:** — also kind of built the playbook for contemporary Republican strategy — post Regan. Newt Gingrich is the one who, like, got us on this culture war shit.

**[00:45:02]**

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** And there's a sort of cynicism in Future and in Newt Gingrich. And a cynicism in this kind of “Oh, I see that the whole...” You're so doomer about it all that you end up saying that like “Oh, I'm a nihilist. I think the only thing that matters is power. Fundamentally.” Or “I think the only thing that matters — we can't actually achieve any of these great futures you're dreaming of. The best thing we can achieve is stability. People are always going to starve to death. People are always going to starve to death! The most, the best thing we can do is make sure that...”

**Ali:** [exhales in frustration]

**Austin:** You know. “Our day-to-day lives are basically okay.” You know?

**Ali:** Uh-huh.

**Austin:** And that's where Future is. Which is deeply fucked and sad and evil [chuckles] all at once, I think!

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** But! So that's part one of the death — was confronting all of that — being blasted in the face by the raw power of a Divine.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Mm-hm.

**Austin:** [overlapping] A thing we don't really talk about that often, these days. um. But Future is that. You know? Future... Future is them in that way. But also, the Twilight Mirage — as in response of that Perennial realizing that she'd lost another one and couldn't undo this, and feeling helpless about how she lost this one, and crying — and the bombs that have been put in place blowing up. Right?

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** So.

**Ali:** [exaggeratedly] And they'd been put in place! Like, that... that was a thing that you'd been sitting on for a little while at this point. Right? Like, it was an idea in *Orbital*.

**Austin:** It was an idea in *Orbital*. [overlapping] We'd set it up there.

**Ali:** [overlapping] It was an alert clock that got clicked.

**Austin:** It was. That alert clock could have been a couple of different things — is the thing.

**Ali:** Okay. [chuckles]

**Austin:** Right? That alert clock — I mean, I'll just say this now — that alert clock was *originally* when I first set it into motion was about... the Argosy, Spliced. And about the descendants of Our Profit's NEH... weird virtual society. And I still have ideas for them, that we'll talk about at some point in the future. They might show up in the finale. We'll see. I don't want to overdo it. And partly the reason I pivoted off of that was: "Oh, we're doing a lot of connections back to the Mirage! We're doing... We did, like, Chimeric Cadent." You know? By the time this comes out we might see that Dre has a new character who's connected to the Mirage, again. And I didn't want to, like, triple down on that. You know? There's kind of a limit to how often we can do so much of a connection without it feeling like "the gang's all here". You know? Um.

**Ali:** Right. [overlapping] Yeah. Yeah, and we've —

**Austin:** [overlapping] But! This idea felt better established.

**Ali:** [overlapping] — been close to that.

**Austin:** Yes.

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** Yes, yes, yes. We've talked about even on these episodes. Right?

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** But this idea was one of the other ones and it was like: "We did set this up. We set this up in..." And that would have, as always, if someone had said: "I'm going to go investigate that clock". Right? "I'm going to go investigate these little blue things that are flying around in the sky", or that, you know, "these blue lights that people keep seeing". I would have had to have committed to something and it would have stuck to that thing that I committed to. But the way actual play works is that you're kind of... you're spinning clay. And players are the hands that are attention—the player attention is the hand that molds the clay. Right? And until that player attention is there it is just spinning and waiting to be touched and shaped. Right?

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** Um...

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** And so, like, I'm going to tick a clock — and it's a threatening clock — and it's gonna be a couple of different things until it's one thing. Or until a story brings us close to it enough to bring it... You know, there's, like, a Schrodinger's cat type element here too where it's, like.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Oh, su-su-sure.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Till you look in the box it could be anything. You know?

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** And... This is just how the game works. Right? Like, Art has a clock that's ticking right now that is like: “when this clock completes, take something that isn't yours”. What is the thing? I don't fucking know — until that clock completes it's something. So. But we've been ticking that clock, that alert clock, non-stop for the whole season. And so, finally, yeah. It clicks over in that moment. You know. “Make a move as hard as you want when someone fails a roll” — I ticked that clock on top of that. You know? So... Yeah! Uh. We are in the Twilight Mirage now!

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** I think it's interesting, because it's... the Figure part of it is... was really hard. Uh. I don't know that I've ever — I think I said this on the episode, that I don't think I've ever been as sad about a character dying in this show as Figure dying.

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** But that's the move. Right? [sighs] Um.

**Ali:** That very much is the move.

**Austin:** And I think that that's a good feeling to sit with. The fact that we can produce a show that does do that is a good sign for me — that I can make a show that makes me upset. I think art should be allowed to make you upset sometimes.

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** And... upset. Like, it should... It should not feel good! It should feel bad. And, like, not in a way that's good bad. You know? Not in a way that's like "I'm crying 'cause my fave got broken up with on the show I love". Or whatever.

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** [overlapping] But, like, "ruin my day" bad.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Right.

**Austin:** Art can be in that space sometimes. So.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Right. Yeah.

**Austin:** [overlapping] And it's rare that we get all the way there! [chuckles] You know?

**Ali:** [laughs] Yeah. I mean, we were definitely in an interesting position where it feels like it was the death that should have been the most expected. Because — you know — we were always... there was always that tension there. But also just because the tension necessarily was there doesn't mean...

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** The fact that the tension was *a/ways* there means that, like, the—

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** —opportunity was so wide that it made it difficult to sort of, like, plan around.

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** I guess is... [overlapping] Yeah.

**Austin:** Yea-yea-yeah. It's, like, you... When someone has full Perils or whatever, is Defenseless, you go "Oh, I'm gonna tense up because they could die any second now!"

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** Figure was always in that mode post Chimeric Cadent. Right?

**Ali:** [overlapping] Mm-hm.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Which is only two arcs or whatever. So it's not, like, there was, like, that much.

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** I think that that's right. I think it was two arcs. I think it was this arc and the previous arc? Is that right?

**Ali:** I believe so.

**Austin:** It was the Dust arc, and then this one? I think that that's right?

**Ali:** Uh-huh. Dust arc is immediately after...

**Austin:** Chimeric Cadent.

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** Is that right? Yeah. Okay.

**Ali:** And the Combustor Downtime.

**Austin:** [overlapping] And the Combustor...

**Ali:** [overlapping] Not Downtime. The B-plot. Yeah.

**Austin:** The B plot. Right! Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Okay.



**Ali:** And then in that, I think, Dre takes something... Dre takes... Dre had Number of the Beast and then took the slurp Brnine back spell thing. Right? The transportation spell?

**Austin:** Yeah. Yea-yea-yeah. Right.

**Ali:** And then next level up took [half-chuckling] Number of the Beast.

**Austin:** Number of the Beast. Right. Right. Sure. Ugh!

**Ali:** [overlapping] Um...

**Austin:** [overlapping] So we've known it could be coming. And I think part of it... the senselessness of it is so affecting. Um. And the... [sighs] We talked through it a bunch. I mean, this is one of those... on the production side you mentioned you want to talk about a little bit of that.

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** Generally speaking. But we... This is one of those ones that we left the recording and it all stayed basically the same, but we went back to it to add some detail and to add particular beats — like, a little bit of an extra conversation for clarity. Dre—and because we wanted to give Dre time to talk through what they wanted the end of that character to look like.

**Ali:** Right. And I guess it's—I mean, I obviously would have an episode with Dre [overlapping] to sort of go into this.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Mm-hm.

**Ali:** But I mean, the reason for the delay really is that the death itself happened at the end of a recording. [laughs]

**Austin:** Well, no, the death—the reason for the delay is I had to not—I had too much fucking work and we couldn't do a recording.

**Ali:** Sure. Well, there was also that. But it was also a thing of, like, you know, going into what what we do post-production.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Right. Sure.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Like, it was hard to make a...

**Austin:** [overlapping] Sure, sure, sure. Jack music and stuff. Presumably, anyway.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Well, not even just the music. But, like, to have an episode title. To have a description.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Right. Right, right.

**Ali:** [overlapping] To have an intro to the arc.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** When the last beat that we knew that was going to happen was that Figure died—

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yes.

**Ali:** [overlapping] —and there was still these open questions of, like...

**Austin:** [overlapping] I'm still beating myself up, because *I was* the one who delayed us from actually recording the follow-up episode where we would have had that.

**Ali:** [sighs] Uh-huh.

**Austin:** But. That's fine.

**Ali:** Uh-huh.

**Austin:** That's fine.

**Ali:** Sure. But... Yeah. Um... But, you know, could we have...? [overlapping] Made...

**Austin:** [overlapping] What would we have named the episode before other than... We would have named it something about, like, "The Tournament Arc" —

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** —and then all this shit would have happened.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Right. Yeah. Uh-huh.

**Austin:** [overlapping] And been like: "uh, yikes! Whoops! Retroactively naming the episode something else!" Yea-yea-yeah.

**Ali:** Uh-huh. Right.

**Austin:** Totally.

**Ali:** Yeah. And, like, at that point we knew Figure had died...

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** And that's why it was sort of like a [overlapping] "oh, there is more than one decision to make about this."

**Austin:** [overlapping] Right. Right.

**Ali:** "There's..." You know. "There's going to be multiple things to focus on".

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** [overlapping] And I mean...

**Austin:** [overlapping] But having that conversation... You should bring Dre on for sure. But. You know, the key stuff there was like: "Figure is *dead* dead." And we, when we first recorded it we had left open the idea that maybe people... the crew could go save Figure—

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** —from servitude with Gur. And what we ended up deciding was like: “No. There's no saving Figure from that. Because that's not Figure. Figure is dead. Figure is gone. That is an empty shell that is being puppeted by Future, effectively. That is not a... Figure isn't in there anymore.” You know? “Figure gets to rest for real. Figure gets to die. Figure doesn't have to be put into service again with somebody else.”

And that was really important for us to try to emphasize, because the... [sighs] way that the Move is written suggest that there's a possibility that it could be... You know. “Unliving servitude” in those sense that, like, you are actually there still. But one of the big things that we ended up wanting to... the kind offer that that I put on the table was like: “Do you want to live, do you want to be in there still and have the possibility of being saved? Or do you want to close this book?” And Dre really wanted to close the book. And I think that that was, like...

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** It's more important that happened than we hang on to this idea that, like, Figure gets—Figure gets saved from yet another person holding the leash. You know?

**Ali:** Right. Yeah. And I... You know, this is one of the first situations where, like, that has been... 'Cause that was one of the points that changed between—

**Austin:** [overlapping] Right! That—

**Ali:** [overlapping] —the moment that it happened.

**Austin:** [overlapping] The moment it happened we left that door open. Right?

**Ali:** Uh-huh.

**Austin:** And then and then talking to Dre after it was like: “Oh. No. Let's close that door. Let's be as clear as we can be that that door is actually closed.”

**Ali:** Uh-huh.

**Austin:** Because if it's open then we're promising something that I don't know that Dre is actually interested in. [chuckles] You know?

**Ali:** Right. Yeah. Exactly. Um. Yeah. And...

**Austin:** Versus, let's say, Routine Renari, whose door was left open because...

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** I think we're all interested in Routine coming through the other side of it all. You know?

**Ali:** Right! Yeah. Well, the Routine thing is interesting because I... There's sort of, like, the haters live rent-free in my mind [laughs]—

**Austin:** Uh-huh.

**Ali:** [laughing] —sort of thing with Routine. Where it's I feel like sometimes I've been the player who has, like, avoided death the most? And, like, avoided that sort of consequence — around either my characters or or characters around my characters?

**Austin:** [overlapping] Interesting.

**Ali:** [overlapping] That I was like, you know: "If... I don't want Routine to be another one where it's like: 'Oh, he's alive again.'"

**Austin:** Yea-yea-yeah.

**Ali:** So I was fine with that either just being vague or, you know, a death. A death...

**Austin:** Yeah...

**Ali:** ... is a death. And war. And it is what it is. [half-chuckling] But having the decisions taken out of my hands...

**Austin:** Uh-huh...!

**Ali:** [chuckles] It's been really good!

**Austin:** Hey, speaking of wanting, having characters who die? What's up?

**Ali:** Uh, excuse me?

**Austin:** What's up?

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** What's up with Brnine? Why are you trying to get Brnine so dead? [chuckles]

**Ali:** [whispers] It's funny to me. [in a regular tone] No. I... Well, I... [half-chuckling]  
That's also an interesting thing 'cause I—it's situational. Right?

**Austin:** Uh-huh.

**Ali:** Like, I there's a thing that's happening with Brnine right now which is, like, post the Combustor stuff, post the Dahlia stuff...

**Austin:** Mm-hm.

**Ali:** I have been playing them as somebody who feels like a ghost.

**Austin:** Hmm! Mm-hm.

**Ali:** Just in terms of like "I've done things that should have killed me."

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** "And I don't understand why that hasn't happened yet." So that's sort of the space that I've been living in. And then also the mechanical thing of, like, there are only so many opportunities that I have to get Risks or Perils...?

**Austin:** Mm-hm.

**Ali:** That once I get two... [chuckles]

**Austin:** Mm-hm!

**Ali:** [chuckling] I might as well get the third and see what happens!

**Austin:** And... Yeah. See where it goes! I see.

**Ali:** Um. You know. I will say that a lot of the second half of that episode was cut down a lot.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Ahh! Okay!

**Ali:** [overlapping] So, then... Yeah. But I... There was, like... There was an initial sort of misunderstanding. Right? Where, like, the—

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yes.

**Ali:** [overlapping] —having the two Perils and the Risk, taking a—like, if there had been an automatic... Weather the—not Weather the Storm.

**Austin:** Uh...

**Ali:** A...

**Austin:** [sighs]

**Ali:** What's the death move?

**Austin:** Great question. I'm very sleepy.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** The death move. It's the move that's like: "Oh, no! If you're going to take a hit you got to roll this thing." What the fuck is it called? Why are we both blanking on this?

**Ali:** Bite The Dust.

**Austin:** Bite The Dust! Yes.

**Ali:** [overlapping] I thought...

**Austin:** [overlapping] Bite The Dust.

**Ali:** I thought it would be a very good climatic moment to have the...

**Austin:** Mm-hm.

**Ali:** Jesset is throwing his life away.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Brnine tries to stop that — [overlapping] to put themselves in danger.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yeah!

**Ali:** I take that Peril and then immediately Bite The Dust.

**Austin:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Ali:** And, like, if it had happened there that would have been, like, the answer. Right?

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** But instead that's, like, not what the— [laughs]

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** —the momentum of that scene ended up being? And then it was just like...

**Austin:** Such a goofy scene.

**Ali:** “Well. You know. Am I just going to get out of the session and not Bite The Dust? Like, at least let me roll it!” [laughs]

**Austin:** Yeah. You do eventually roll it and just survive. Right?

**Ali:** I survive and then I have to do it again because of the weirdness...



**Austin:** [sighs]

**Ali:** [half-chuckling] I don't have to do it again. I offer to not do it again because it's, like, [overlapping] 10 minutes to the end of the recording.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yeah. Yeah.

**Ali:** But the wording on Bite The Dust is so funny that it's like: "You leave the thing".

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yeah. Yeah.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Even though I was rolling to leave the thing. So I roll it again and then Keith gives me Confidence.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Boosts... PVPs you. Yeah. Uh-huh!

**Ali:** [laughs] So I... I roll a success on that. So, yeah.

**Austin:** It's very goofy.

**Ali:** Which was probably for the best! I think that, like, if Brnine was going to die in that arc, it should have been when I thought that I would have Bit the Dust?

**Austin:** [overlapping] Hm. Mm-hm.

**Ali:** [overlapping] And not just like: "Getting on the ship is really hard!" But it's... [laughs] It's just a weird—'cause, like, it's...

**[01:00:00]**

**Ali:** And — well, you know, we're going to have the finale to go into this, obviously — but there's... I don't... I don't want to, like, reach a peak with this character who has been, I feel like, really successful so far.

**Austin:** Yeah!

**Ali:** And then just, like, sort of keep... [chuckles]

**Austin:** I think that's part of the confusion.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Uh-huh.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Is people are like: "You're killing it as Brnine!"

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** "Why do you want to wrap it up?" Or rather: "Why is *death* the way you want to wrap it up with Brnine?" [overlapping] I think is part of the question.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Right. Sure.

**Austin:** [overlapping] And I think you've given good answers to that. But I... I get the query!

**Ali:** [overlapping] Uh-huh!

**Austin:** [overlapping] I get why people are like: "Huh?"

**Ali:** [laughs] [whispers] Well, why not? [in a regular tone] Yeah. I don't know. It's just, like... I had a good Act One with Brnine. I've had a really good Act Two with Brnine. But I feel like, after the Dahlia thing, is there an Act Three? Like, what's the next step there? Because it's already reached such a climatic moment. And, like...

**Austin:** Mm-hm.

**Ali:** It is still my [laughs] responsibility to figure that out! I can't! I can't just — you know —

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** —get away from having to make those decisions [overlapping] by not having to make that. [laughs]

**Austin:** [overlapping] And you... An important thing to me is you now have to live through Figure dying.

**Ali:** Uh-huh.

**Austin:** Brnine has to live through that. Brnine... If Brnine had died Brnine would have gotten to die thinking Figure was still alive. [overlapping] Right?

**Ali:** [overlapping] Yeah.

**Austin:** Um. And not knowing: “oh, lost another one! Here we go!”

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** “This is just going to keep happening!” Um.

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** And I think that that's fun. Especially because of the way it's a mirror of what Figure's Dust future was? Dust nightmare thing was? Was out-living everybody around them? Um. This is going to be another beat of that in Brnine's vision—actual lived experience. You know?

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** So. Simply fun.

**Ali:** I am excited to play out the rest of the season. Um. We... [chuckles] We have a lot... We have a lot to think about. But I do think, I don't think that it's obvious to the audience that — or it might be — because of the... that the Figure dying and the Twilight Mirage appearing were two different decisions. And...

**Austin:** They were. They were. But they're not too different... I don't get to the second one without the first one.

**Ali:** Right. Yeah.

**Austin:** You know what I mean? Um. It just wouldn't... There was no world where this arc ends with everybody going to the Twilight Mirage if Figure doesn't die in the middle of it.

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** It's just that the... what the thing... [chuckles] I went into this thinking that this would be the reveal of something else — and it would be a big conversation with Future and it would help set up Future as a villain, but not necessarily like this! You know what I mean?

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** Like, talk about immediate cheap heat! You know?

**Ali:** [sighs] Let me tell you. [laughs]

**Austin:** You know. This is better than cutting a promo! If Future come out and [chuckles] said: “So what do you guys want to talk about” —

**Ali:** [overlapping] Yeah...

**Austin:** [overlapping] —it would not have built the way we built here!

**Ali:** [overlapping] It'd not! Yeah. I can't believe we had a Figure squash match!

**Austin:** We did!

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** [laughs] We literally did! Oh, no!

**Ali:** [half-chuckling] Figure was like “I have the money in the bank”! And then... [laughs]

**Austin:** Yeah! Uh-huh! And then the Gur Sevraq took off the mask to reveal it was Future underneath!

**Ali:** [overlapping] Yeah...

**Austin:** [overlapping] It was a whole thing! God.

**Ali:** God.

**Austin:** Yeah. Figure should not have cashed in the money in the bank.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** At this moment. Could've held it for a little longer. Um. But, yeah. I... You're right that there... [sighs] There're two different thoughts. There're two different... They're doing different things and — that this was also a thing that when we broke at Figure dying so that we could think about how to frame it all and where it was going — it was like: “I don't know what the next fucking session is!” And I realized it while thinking through repercussions of Figure's death, what would it be.

Which is why I always say this — like, we don't do the Q&A show anymore. But one of the things I talked about a *lot* on the Q&A show when we did — and we do this, this is a different type of Q&A, I guess, you're asking questions — but, like, the audience Q&A show was: “Hey, give yourselves time! Take a break! Like, go tell your, if you're GMing, say: ‘Hey, this is a great place to stop. I know we wanted to go for another hour or two today. But I have to think through repercussions.’ You know? ‘Let me take... Let me take a week. Let's get back to this next week.’ Or you say: ‘Okay, let's go to the other side of the game’ to try to, like, give the back of my head time to spin up an answer for what's going on over there. Because otherwise you're going to end up committing to something that is not as exciting as what it could be.” Um. You know! If the fucking *Our Profit* ships had shown up at the end of this arc it would have been so corny!

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** It would have sucked so, so...! Which was the... I guess I'll just say it — again, outright — the whole thing *was going* to be that they go to this talk between these three religious leaders and then the... Well, I'm not going to spoil names and things like that. Because I don't want to get into stuff that might still show up, theoretically!

But the descendants of the *Argosy*, *Spliced* — which for people who don't remember in the *Twilight Mirage* the New Earth Hegemony group ended up leaving along with *Tender* as their sort of like patron/guardian in a sort of, like, fleet of Virtual

Reality supercomputer meta... [chuckles] meta-world thing. You kind of, like, went into the metaverse. I mean, yeah. Including Tender, actually. Right? And lived in this kind of Virtual Reality space where anything was possible. Right? Almost like, again, a weird reflection of the Twilight Mirage except fully digital. Fully, you know, virtual.

Something has happened with those folks. And they were going to show up and be like: “So, who should we back? Huh. There's a big debate between three religious leaders — that sounds, like, a thing we're interested in!”

**Ali:** [chuckles] [sighs]

**Austin:** And come attend the talk, basically. The big—

**Ali:** [overlapping] Ohh.

**Austin:** [overlapping] —the big symposium between Gur Sevraq and the two other religious leaders. Not realizing, or not—you know, in the process dismissing something like Twilight Mirage. And there would have been an opportunity there for Eclectic and Figure to interject or to, you know, try to win their approval. Whatever! Right?

That was, like... That was where that was all going! Right? Future was going to make an argument and then there would be places for Eclectic and Figure to intercede in some way. Or at least to report back: “Holy shit, these...!” It would have been like alien showing up. You know what I mean? “Oh my god! There's this other *faction*! And they're fucking weirdos!

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** “What is going on with them?” You can't do that after a character dies! To me that is, like... That would be, like, me saying: “Yeah, but my toy is more interesting than Figure dying.” Right?

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** Like: “Okay, yeah. Su-sure. A character died. But I still have to hit my big plot beat.” My plot beat doesn’t fucking matter anymore! That shit’s out the window! I do not care about the Argosy, Spliced. I care about Figure and the crew of the Blue Channel. The heat on that is just so *much* higher!

And so, instead of that being the big final thing that happened it had to pivot to the other idea that I had with the clock which was: this could be the Mirage bombs getting ready to go off. And so they do. And so that ends up crystallizing in that moment. And that is the most... That is the thing that then at least ties us back to what the crew cares about. And in a way gives Figure’s death more gravitas because it’s now tied directly to the thing that puts us on the endgame cycle.

Which is the other half of this! Right? You can’t... [chuckles] Figure’s dead. I’m not going to have Dre roll a new character to play for two arcs—

**Ali:** [half-chuckling] Uh-huh.

**Austin:** —and then retire that character or whatever. Right? Like, we talked about it! It’s hard to do that. Dre did that before! They did that with Figure. For them to have to fucking do it again? Where they, like, make the whole character in a system and then duh-duh-duh-duh...? Dre will still have a character for these conclusion—for these conclusion acts—concluding acts. And it may even be the character they decide to play in a couple years when we come back to this. But it is not going to be the situation of like: “Alright. Do all the mental work of building a character.” You know?

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** And so I think that there is a... It was... They *are* connected, but not always in the most direct—not in the way that you might think! You know? They’re connected sometimes in production concern ways. We might not be heading for the finale next, if we—if Figure doesn’t die. Right? Because we don’t have this extra kind of structural reason to try to wrap things up. In fact, we end up maybe going a little long longer ‘cause there’s a new plot beat and duh-duh-duh-duh-duh. So.

**Ali:** Right. Yea-yea-yeah. I... Yeah. I do think... I mean, I'm happy with it [overlapping] because I make the show and I... [laughs]

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yeah. Uh-huh.

**Ali:** [laughs] I know... I know what we went through to make the decision.

**Austin:** Right.

**Ali:** But I do think there's a way of honoring that Figure's death was supposed to be spectacular. And the... I mean, like, the thing that I sit with that if I was watching a movie and I was like: "Damn, I felt like that movie was good!" The thing of, like, this last thing that we see of Figure's desire of—

**Austin:** Hmm.

**Ali:** "I just want my friends to be happy."

**Austin:** Yeah. [chuckles]

**Ali:** And then they're pulled into this, like, safety blanket.

**Austin:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Ali:** Basically. Because of that is, like, that's that good shit!

**Austin:** Yeah! Uh-huh! Yeah.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** And that's how it works sometimes! Right? It is not... There is a real beauty in the fact that the thing that's brought Figure's friends into safety — or comparative safety, at least — is Perennial sobbing over Figure dying. Not trying to save everybody. Right?

**Ali:** Mm-hm.



**Austin:** Um. It's not clear Perennial *could have* even chosen to do this. Right? We know that Perennial... The Perennial Wave as it works is not about intention: she isn't reaching out; and touching things; and pushing on them. And, you know, it is a force in the world. What we didn't know is how closely it can connect to where *she* is at, emotionally, at any given moment. Right? So!

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** Fun! Fun and interesting! And uh we'll see some more. I mean, I won't spoil the rest of it — but. There will be some more reasons for Perennial to to be in the show. So.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** That's all I'll say.

**Ali:** Yeah! We're in a... We're in an interesting moment in Friends at the Table!

**Austin:** Every time! Every time I'm on here it feel like... *PALISADE* has just been a big swing season — in a way that I did not think it would be.

**Ali:** [overlapping] It really... Yeah...

**Austin:** [overlapping] In terms of these, like, big event... You know.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** “Will it blow up?” You know? “Did they blow it up? Did they...” [chuckles] “Did they blow them up?” et cetera.

**Ali:** Uh-huh... Yeah... Yeah.

### ***COUNTER/Weight* prequel and *PALISADE* [01:10:42]**

**Ali:** I ended up having... There was this thought that I had the other day — similar to the, like, I was either falling asleep or waking up. [overlapping] And I was thinking that we should go the other way.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

**Ali:** I had this thing of like: “Will *PALISADE* end up feeling defined by the fact that we took this *COUNTER/Weight* break in the middle of it?”

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Like.

**Austin:** Maybe! I'm curious. Because...

**Ali:** Not defined by — but I think I sort of just realized like: “Oh, there was...”

**Austin:** Uh-huh.

**Ali:** “A momentum shift that we didn't anticipate.” And...

**Austin:** I sort of anticipated it!

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** I sort of wanted it.

**Ali:** Right. Ri-ri-right.

**Austin:** Yeah. I... Not to, like—I'm not trying to big-time. I'm not trying to be like: “All according to plan”. But it was sort of according to plan.

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** The build was too high! Coming off of... Part of the reason—the Dust arc was fine. But it had to follow up the Stellar Combustor stuff. And...

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** I left that being like: “We need a little bit of a break from these characters in order for them to feel like they're in threat again.” Um.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Because the Combustor just *so owned* the season.

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** And I really wanted there to be a moment of breathing in that had nothing to do with them — so that when they returned everything felt back to... Because we got Combustor and then we got Brnine assassinating...

**Ali:** Yeah, that was the Downtime immediately after that.

**Austin:** After the Combustor. Right? [overlapping] Yeah.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Uh-huh!

**Austin:** So the Dust arc was fine. But I left it feeling like: “Oh, we are slowing down — I'd rather slam the brakes down, and then have to go back, and then speed back up.”

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** “Than slowly coast to a bad finish.” And part of why I wanted the *COUNTER/Weight* stuff to be released in the main feed over those weeks was to, like, make sure that the audience actually got that same break and got to feel excited about going back to their favorite characters in *PALISADE*, instead of...

And have... Excuse me. Having to build back up because in order to get back to something feeling as big as important as the—bigger than the Stellar Combustor, it couldn't be so close to the Stellar Combustor. Couldn't be so close to Dahlia being killed. Right? It needed to, I felt like it needed a little bit of a breathing room.

And I didn't know that was going to be Twilight Mirage! I didn't know *that's* what it was going to be. But I knew we'd be building to a finale, and I had this really bad vision of another arc where it felt, like, almost episode-of-the-week? [overlapping] You know what I mean?

**Ali:** [overlapping] Mm-hm.

**Austin:** Or, like, monster of the week style: “Oh,, and then this time they met this guy. And duh-duh-du-du-duh.”

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** And so I knew that coming into this arc, I was going to pull my knives out. Right? [sighs] Early on in the... [chuckles] In the first episode y'all are joking around — and I mentioned. I was like: [overlapping] “Listen.” Let me...

**Ali:** [overlapping] Oh, the message to Jack!

**Austin:** Let me go find that message to Jack!

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** Let me go find it! I sent a message to Jack before this arc started where I told Jack to get ready. Because I am — I'm gonna find the exact... Here it is — I'm going to read it to you right now.

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** I said... Where... What have I linked here? I've linked Jack to a tumblr post of when Motion arrives for the first time in *PARTIZAN*. And that moment is, like, an all-timer. I don't know if you remember that, but Motion arrives coming over the horizon after they've taken Fort Icebreaker and it seemed like the mission was over? But then Motion shows up? And tries to take it back? And that's the real mission? And it's just just, like, scary arrival of the supervillain. You know?

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** And I say to Jack: “We'll see how this mission... [corrects himself] this next mission goes. But I am going to try to kill someone. Someone important.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** “A player character, an important NPC. They might stop her from coming back, but she's going to take someone with her.” So. You know. Start thinking about it.

**Ali:** [sighs]

**Austin:** Because in my mind Motion was going to somehow be part of this last arc. Right?

**Ali:** [overlapping] Mm-hm.

**Austin:** [overlapping] You were going to stumble into part of where Motion was being kept — which you didn't do.

**[01:15:03]**

**Austin:** Um... [chuckles] There were a lot of buildings there that you just didn't go into. Right?

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Um...

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** You were going to... Or, like, where the bulk of where Motion was. Right? Because Motion at that point had been built, but had not been finished. Right? Had been built enough to begin making Delegates of her, but had not been completed. Right? And then had the progress kind of reduced back down because the... you'd earned that via Faction Outcome. Or via Eclectic's Investigation Clock or whatever. And so I was, like, okay this is going to be a Motion arc! This is going to be an arc where Motion comes back. Right? [in a semi-hushed voice] And I even was teasing some of that stuff with Jesset's mech! [overlapping] Duh-du-du-du-duh! Right?

**Ali:** [overlapping] Mm-hm. [laughs]

**Austin:** And it ended up being the wrong time for it because of Figure's death. And because of everything else. [overlapping] But, like, I didn't...

**Ali:** [overlapping] Right. The monkey's paw—

**Austin:** [overlapping] The monkey's paw curled on *me*!

**Ali:** [overlapping] —when you were like: “I'm killing some...” [laughs]

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yeah! Someone important! And I didn't think it was going to be Figure! I didn't think... I thought it was going to be Brnine! I thought it was going to be Brnine or Jesset. Right?

**Ali:** Sure.

**Austin:** Which is the irony of that whole sequence. Right? So...

**Ali:** Could have been both! [overlapping] Could have been a trio!

**Austin:** [overlapping] Could have been both! Could have been a trio! Could have been...

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** Could have been all of them dead! Um, so... We'll see!

**Ali:** [sighs] Ahh, we shall see!

**Austin:** We simply shall.

**Ali:** We simply shall! But yeah. Um. Great. [overlapping] Great podcast!

**Austin:** [overlapping] That seems like a podcast!

**Ali:** [chuckles] It does seem like a podcast!

## ***PALISADE* finale systems [01:16:28]**

**Ali:** I do have this.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yes.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Just for the fun of it, for...

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yes! Please, read us the “finale games were not playing” list.

**Ali:** Okay. So there...

**Austin:** Which is not a judgment on these games!

**Ali:** Not at all! And I could probably go into, there's some of these that are probably still want to play and I can...

**Austin:** Yeah. [overlapping] We'll find times.

**Ali:** [overlapping] I can talk about a very basic pitch for each of them. But. [\*Where the Sky's as Red as Honey\*](#) by Mitchell Daily — which is a game about bees in a nest, but the queen is dead.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Hm. Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

**Ali:** [overlapping] And I was thinking of that as some sort of, like, Bilat/Authority minigame. [\*Celestial Bodies. Orbital Mechanics\*](#) by Oracle Engine Games. This is a game about, like — it's a very story-driven game and it's sort of built around the story — but it was, like, you're sort of orbiting from this place and back to this place. And I was like: “what if it's, like, an attempt to get back out of the Twilight Mirage or moving through the Twilight Mirage? Are there mechanics here that are hackable?” Whatever.

**Austin:** Mm-hm.

**Ali:** [Border Riding](#) by Stout Stoa<sup>1</sup> — is a game based on, like, Swedish culture something.

**Austin:** Hm.

**Ali:** Where people sort of go on horses and ride around the borders of their community. And there was something in PALISADE there of being like “well, how do they...? What's in and out?”

**Austin:** Mm-hm.

**Ali:** While they're in the Twilight Mirage. [Dawn and Dusk](#) is, like, a one-page... *Dawn and Dusk* by Aventura en la Fogota — which is, like, a one-page game where, like, one person starts a story another person ends it. [overlapping] I thought that was, like, another hackable thing.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Hmm!

**Ali:** [Communitas](#) by Kyle Seraphin — this game was really interesting because you use a Tarot deck and what you do at the start is assign NPCs to every Tarot card?

**Austin:** Ooooh! That's fun!

**Ali:** And I was [overlapping] so close to wanting this to be it.

**Austin:** [overlapping] That's fun.

**Ali:** But the, like, mechanics themselves just felt weird and not appropriate. But imagine if we had to do that with this! [laughs]

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Every *PALISADE* NPC! I would have loved that.

**Austin:** That would be very fun.

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<sup>1</sup> She pronounces it as “Stout Stout”.



**Ali:** [Passage](#) by Alex Craig — which is, like, just another travel game.

**Austin:** Yup. Yeah.

**Ali:** [Fair Ones](#) by @tibbius@dice.camp — I think is also just another travel game. [Lost Roads](#) by Ary Ramsey is another travel game. [a i r b u r s t](#) by will jobst — is I think a game that I've bought *twice*?

**Austin:** [chuckles]

**Ali:** Because I'm really appealed to, like, the design of it? But it's actually a game about, like, being in apartment with somebody and you all find objects in the apartment and play a game about it? [chuckling] And I keep reading it being like: “this will never work.” [laughs]

**Austin:** For the *PALISADE* finale?!?

**Ali:** [overlapping] Why do I keep thinking that this game will work?

**Austin:** [overlapping] Well, it's cool! It sounds great!

**Ali:** There must be something in the description that says that it's, like, a community game? That I keep being like: [overlapping] “Yeah, let me just try it out!”

**Austin:** [overlapping] Oh yeah, I love games that are about community.

**Ali:** And I read it and I'm like: “What's happening?!?”

**Austin:** I mean, that sounds fun!

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** It just doesn't sound like the fit for what our particular need is, currently.

**Ali:** Mm-hm. There was [Lucid](#) by World Champs Game Company<sup>2</sup> — which is like a... I think that this is an *Inception*-type, secret spies...

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<sup>2</sup> She misquotes their name as “World Hack Game Company”.

**Austin:** Ahhh! [overlapping] Sure.

**Ali:** [overlapping] But you're also in, like, a weird place.

**Austin:** Sure.

**Ali:** I thought there were might be mechanics there. Um. There's [Apotheosis](#) — which I really want to play as a “Road to” one game —

**Austin:** [overlapping] I don't... Do...

**Ali:** [overlapping] I almost suggested this. This was by Gordie Murphy. This was a game where you create a legend, and then...

**Austin:** Oh, this is great. Yeah. I have this. This is... This is a banger.

**Ali:** [chuckles] And then, yeah.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Mm-hm!

**Ali:** [overlapping] You see how it changes over time through the story of it. And I was like: “let's just zoom all the way out! Who gives a shit?” [laughs]

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** [laughing] Also ended up not being the right pick.

**Austin:** I mean, this is the thing is that, like! I think that there's a world where—we have our plan.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Mm-hm.

**Austin:** [overlapping] We know what we want to do for our finale. There is part of me that... You pitched me: “What if we make everybody go on itch and find their own little one-player journaling game?”

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** And, like... You know!

**Ali:** [sighs]

**Austin:** A grab-bag of little games to communicate something about the finale. I don't think it... [sighs] I don't think it...

**Ali:** We need structure. [overlapping] It's what we need.

**Austin:** [overlapping] We need a little more structure for *PALISADE*, specifically — because of where we're at.

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** If there had already been a big punch-in-the-face conclusion or a big “welcome home, everybody.” You know? “We all love you here in the Twilight Mirage.” Which is not promised!

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** Then doing a bunch of these would be really fun. But it's really hard to—it's just hard. It's just hard. You know?

**Ali:** Right. Yeah. And the, you know, there's also production decisions there—

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yess. Yes. Yes.

**Ali:** [overlapping] —in terms of like: “who has the time to do that?”

**Austin:** [overlapping] A hundred percent.

**Ali:** [overlapping] [half-chuckling] “That would be great if we did that. Nobody has the time to do that.”

**Austin:** [overlapping] Right now. Yeah.

**Ali:** [Grasping Nettles](#)<sup>3</sup> is another one of those big zoom-out games—

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** —where you sort of look at a society over time. [Butterflies and Hurricanes](#) by—

**Austin:** Hm.

**Ali:** —JohannaGaudet, is a funny... It's a game that's based off of, like, movies by the guy who wrote... Let me actually just go here and see who they... It's, like, a game about you're in a Sci-Fi world. [overlapping] You're a...

**Austin:** [overlapping] What's this called again?

**Ali:** *Butterflies and Hurricanes*. By the... Inspired by the works of Makoto Shinkai. [chuckles] It's a game about your... [half-chuckling] You're a senior in high school and all your friends are graduating?

**Austin:** Ahhh! I see.

**Ali:** [laughs] And I was like: [overlapping] “maybe there's something here!”

**Austin:** [overlapping] Maybe!

**Ali:** Maybe just mechanically there could be [overlapping] a way that we have been talking about the *PALISADE* characters...

**Austin:** [overlapping] No! Totally! I know exactly what you mean. Right! ‘Cause part of my... Part of my thing was like: “I think this could be a pretty melancholy finale”.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Uh-huh.

**Austin:** [overlapping] In that exact.... You know! One of the touchstones for this season is *Fooly Cooly*, and the, you know. There are certain Pillows songs that go hard and there are certain Pillows songs that are, like...

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<sup>3</sup> She pronounces the title as “Grasping Needles”.

**Ali:** [chuckles] Uh-huh. [laughs]

**Austin:** Melancholy guitar riff as you smoke a cigarette on the side of a building, you know? And that could be the vibe a little bit! I want some of that vibe here and there as we...

**Ali:** I think we'll still get it. [overlapping] Which is a good thing.

**Austin:** [overlapping] I hope so!

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** Even though we're not playing [overlapping] something like this.

**Ali:** [overlapping] *Butterflies and Hurricanes*.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Yeah. And then there was [The Salt Traders](#) by Paddy Hutchinson — another, like, “you're in a community, you're, like—”

**Austin:** Hmm. Mm-hm.

**Ali:** “—traveling and trading things”. And then [The Transition Year](#) by Affinity Games Collective.

**Austin:** Yes. I read that, too.

**Ali:** Which is, I don't want to say “it's basically *The Quiet Year*”. But it's basically *The Quiet Year* where instead of... you're transitioning from, like, a capitalist society to a more communist one, I guess. Not communist. [laughs]

**Austin:** Explicitly. Yeah. No. It's another near future — not near future. But, like, I think it's, like, explicitly solarpunk, maybe? It's a “you've got out from under the dystopic power for a year. Do you have the time to remake your world, basically, in a way that's more equitable and more, you know, peaceful and et cetera.”

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** But! But there is a degree of, like, you really need a villain to come back! And it's, like, the way that the structure of the game would be is, that would either be: “hey, the Bilats found another way into the Mirage”, or—

**Ali:** Oh, right!

**Austin:** —“the bad guy who's gonna come and check in on you is the Twilight Mirage itself”? Is the Qui Err? And it was kind of like: “I don't really—that's not how we've been framing them! And there's a way to tell that story, but that it's really caught up with some stuff in a way that's, like... [sighs] Ahhh, it doesn't feel right”. And also we've done a lot of *Quiet Year*. I love *Quiet Year*.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Right. Yeah, yeah.

**Austin:** [overlapping] But we've done *a lot* of games based on *The Quiet Year* to some degree. You know?

**Ali:** Uh-huh. And it's also we're in a position where it's, like... we don't want the game to be making the decisions about the Frost Shepherds for us. [overlapping] Right?

**Austin:** [overlapping] That's right. Yeah.

**Ali:** Like, that is the question of what the story is to an extent. So.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Tune in to... Tune in to Friends at the Table—!

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** —to find out some of those answers! Um. But yeah. We're having fun over here. If you're listening to the show just know that we're having fun! [chuckles]

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** We are having a fucking blast! I'm very happy with it! I'm...

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** I think we're all, like, eager to figure out the rest of it. You know? Figure out where we go. And that's a good place to be.

**Ali:** Mm-hm. But yeah. Yeah. Thanks for your patience with this episode of—

**Austin:** Yes.

**Ali:** —Gathering Information! I hope it was worth the wait in terms of having things to talk about.

**Austin:** Sure do!

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** We sure got some stuff to talk about!

**Ali:** Uh-huh!

## **Soundtrack [01:25:11]**

**Ali:** Any final things you wanna...?

**Austin:** I don't think so.

**Ali:** Mm-hm.

**Austin:** Shout to Jack for just an incredible track!

**Ali:** Oh my god!

**Austin:** It's hard to write a song for a moment like that. It's even harder when that moment is eight minutes long.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** You know?

**Ali:** I'm surprised Jack went for the whole eight minutes. I've been—!

**Austin:** Same!

**Ali:** —for years thinking that Jack should write an 8 minute song!

**Austin:** Well!

**Ali:** I've kept that to myself, mostly.

**Austin:** Has there never been one? There's... This is the longest?

**Ali:** I think it's the longest!

**Austin:** [whispers] Wow! Is that possible? [in a regular tone] That's possible!

**Ali:** I think so.

**Austin:** Damn! I'm checking. I'm opening up all sorts of tabs right now. There wasn't a *Mirage* song that went that long?

**Ali:** [overlapping] I...

**Austin:** [overlapping] 'Cause that would have been the season to do it.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** Yeah. That's 08:52! It's almost [chuckles] a *nine-minute* song!

**Ali:** Yeah. That's how long songs going to be!

**Austin:** Oh my god. This is the — what do you call it — in you, isn't it?

**Ali:** [half-chuckling] The prog rock fan?



**Austin:** [overlapping] Yeah.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Yes. [chuckles]

**Austin:** I specifically was going to say the...

**Ali:** [overlapping] Coheed and Cambria?

**Austin:** [overlapping] Coheed and Cambria. Yeah. Uh-huh.

**Ali:** That's where it comes from!

**Austin:** That's where it comes from.

**Ali:** It was born there!

**Austin:** That's so funny.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** I love this for you. But it's very funny. Alright! There's one...! There's a seven-minute song! A 06:59 in *PARTIZAN*.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Ohh!

**Austin:** [overlapping] Which is "[DOWNRIVER. HARROW. GABARDINE.](#)" When is this? What is this moment? Let's see.

**Ali:** I wish the title could tell you! [laughs]

**Austin:** I don't remember our coding enough! Our weird... setup for it. I bet someone has said where it's from. Yeah. Here it is. It is from...

**Ali:** Is it Motion?

**Austin:** This is from... [chuckles] No. [chuckles] Ahh! It's from Valence dying.

**Ali:** [aghast] [overlapping] No fucking way! That's so... funny!

**Austin:** [overlapping] It's from "Cemetery for Heroes". Yeah. So that has to be the Valence death. Right? Uh...

**Ali:** That's so funny!

**Austin:** I think it has to be! I'll have to check the... I'll have to check this... [the transcript](#). Let's see. Is there a link to the transcript available? I guess actually I could just search. Because it's the name of the song: "DOWNRIVER. HARROW..."

**Ali:** Dre's character dies [overlapping] [chuckles] and Jack is taken by the spirit!

**Austin:** [overlapping] And Jack just has to go off! Yeah. Uh-huh.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** Let's see. Let me see what the line here... Yep! Okay! [chuckles] This is... Tu-du-du-du-duh... Janine's talking. I'm talking. [chuckles] Dre says — this a moment before this, I was gonna say let's play it as Valence tells Thisbe to leave — then a little bit further on Janine says...

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** "This is, you know, this could be the edge and this, and you know, it's, it's a thing of like, I think at that point, she, she transmits, like", as Thisbe: "Suggested extraction." And I say: "Valence?" And "[music begins: 'DOWNRIVER. HARROW. GABARDINE.' by Jack de Quidt] Dre, as Valence: "Thisbe, this is a direct order from Operant Valence. You are to take your cargo and return to base." Um. "Janine: Are you going to throw in something about Sovereign Immunity in there? [amused] Or no. Dre: No. But I am going to throw in... As Valence: And tell Broun I'm sorry. Janine as Thisbe: Confirmed." That's... And the song is playing! And the rest of it is the Crysanth kill... And Valence dies.

**Ali:** [whispers] God! Good for us.

**Austin:** So that one... So, yeah! Uh-huh!

**Ali:** [overlapping] I'm glad we just found that out!

**Austin:** [overlapping] Love to have a theme! Love to have a...

**Ali:** [overlapping] It's so funny!

**Austin:** [overlapping] It's so funny!

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** It's so funny that we didn't know! So that's seven minutes! It was 06:59. And I'm just peeking! I don't think anything else is going to come close to these two. Maybe in *Spring*? No. *Spring* stuff is all really short, actually.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Mm-hm.

**Austin:** [overlapping] There's a lot of it. But it's all, generally... I think the longest one there is "[Spring in Hieron](#)" is 05:31. Um. *Twilight Mirage* has the most music. But even "[Falling Asleep / Waking Up](#)" — which I think is the longest one — is 06:17. So that's not even seven. There's some other long ones in there that are five and change. But not all the way.

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** *Bluff City* — no way. *Marielda* and...

**Ali:** Oh. Yeah. No way.

**Austin:** No way. Uh! *Marielda* has another seven-minute! Obviously.

**Ali:** Ooohhh!

**Austin:** That was the other one!

**Ali:** [overlapping] That's... That... Ohh... That's the... Yea-yea-yeah.

**Austin:** [overlapping] That's the classic. "[The Killing of the King-God Samoths By The Traitor Prince Maelgwyn, or The Marielda Suite](#)" That's the Four—Three Discussions? Is that Three Discussions? Or is it four? It's Four Discussions. "Four Conversations".

**Ali:** It's four... [overlapping] Yes.

**Austin:** [overlapping] "Four Conversations".

**Ali:** [laughs] Four Discussions!

**Austin:** Four Discussions. Four Conversations. [overlapping] I'm waiting—!

**Ali:** [chuckling] [overlapping] I'm looking at my Friends at the Table "Four Discussions" bootleg BluRay... [chuckles]

**Austin:** [laughs] One day we'll do Five Discussions. I'm waiting... Or Two Discussions. Fucking! Fuck! Conversations!

**Ali:** Hmm!

**Austin:** Five Conversations! [chuckles]

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** But not if I can't remember the name! And, yeah. That's kind of it! 'Cause I don't think... Yeah. And then, *COUNTER/Weight* — I think the longest there is going to be 3 minutes. You know? Yeah. "[Sermon of Sister Rust](#)" is 03:27, everything else is a minute or two. You know?

**Ali:** Um....

**Austin:** So longest Jack de Quidt track yet! Two longest ones are about Dre characters dying.

**[01:30:00]**

**Ali:** [half-chuckling] It's so funny! [overlapping] I believe...

**Austin:** [overlapping] I guess this is not literally the Dre—because the Dre character dying one is only 01:53, that's "[Put To Work](#)".

**Ali:** [overlapping] Oh, tru-tru-true!

**Austin:** [overlapping] But this nine-minute one, it wouldn't have *happened* without Dre dying. Without Figure dying.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Right.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Dre is not dead. Dre is fine.

**Ali:** But it is fundamentally a *Twilight Mirage* song.

**Austin:** Yes, yes, yes. True.

**Ali:** Um.

**Austin:** Hoohh!

**Ali:** Yeah.

## ***PALISADE* finale systems (2) [01:30:22]**

**Austin:** Well, thank you for reading that! Is that all the games? Is that the last one? [overlapping] Did I interrupt?

**Ali:** [overlapping] I think there was maybe two more? There was one about... My purchases. There was one about, if we were playing as Divines.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Ahhh! That's fun!

**Ali:** [overlapping] I think that was [Oniria's Slumber](#) by Fantastic Jean.

**Austin:** Hm.

**Ali:** “[A] place where Dreams and Nightmares come to life and make a city of their own.”

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yeah.

**Ali:** [overlapping] I don't know if that was specifically a Divine game. But I think that was, like, the *Twilight Mirage* is weird and I think could have been happening there.

**Austin:** [overlapping] There was also [Archives of the Sky](#) is a game that I've wanted to play for a long time, potentially as a Divines' game...

**Ali:** Mm-hmhh!

**Austin:** I need to find what that's called, or who made that. Aaron Reed. Aaron A. Reed: *Archives of the Sky*. This was a game that I was, like, oh we should play this for *Twilight Mirage* at some point. And that was *years* ago. And I have not.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** You know?

**Ali:** Well, it's still nice! There's still more...

**Austin:** There always time to play. Yeah! That's true.

**Ali:** ... Divine Cycle... to come!

**Austin:** There sure is! [sighs]

**Ali:** Yeah.

## **Outro & Time.is [01:31:24]**

**Ali:** But I believe that was our January 2024 episode of Draw—Gathering Information.

**Austin:** We did it.

**Ali:** We did do it! [chuckles] We did do it!

**Austin:** That's a podcast!

**Ali:** Um. Mm-hm.

**Austin:** We couldn't—we were going to do an AMCA today and we couldn't so we did this instead — and truly.

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** You can't stop us from podcasting.

**Ali:** [whispers] You can't stop us from podcasting.

**Austin:** Mm-hm.

**Ali:** Um. But yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** Time.is?

**Austin:** Time.is.

**Ali:** Time.is. Oh, we didn't even read the quote! Is there a quote today?

**Austin:** Oh, I didn't...

**Ali:** "I value the friend who finds me time on his calendar. But I cherish the friend who does not consult his calendar." Come on!

**Austin:** You know. I get it.

**Ali:** We're adults—we have things to do!

**Austin:** We have things to do, though! I got mad podcast to record.

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** I wish I could be the person... I kind of feel, like, attacked, Robert.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Yeah...

**Austin:** [overlapping] This is why you and me don't hang like that anymore. It's 'cause you're always, like: "oh, you have to check your calendar, huh?"

**Ali:** [overlapping] Yeah.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yeah. I got jobs. You know? Sorry.

**Ali:** I want to make sure that the time that I dedicate to you can be dedicated to you!

**Austin:** That's fucking *right*! That's right. I don't want to be checking my phone the whole time 'cause I'm supposed to be at work.

**Ali:** Yeah!

**Austin:** See?

**Ali:** Let me put you on my calendar, Robert!

**Austin:** That's right! I'm giving you time on this thing!

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** I just don't—and if you—here's the thing. I want to be straight up, Robert. If that's what you need from a friend right now, I can't give that to you right now.

**Ali:** Yeah...

**Austin:** I'm just being straight up on that. Because I don't want to promise you something—I know that we always have a good time when we hang out—

**Ali:** [snorts]

**Austin:** —and we go to the amusement park together. But it's rare that I get to do that these days. And so I don't want to, like, promise you that we can just pick up and go to



Six Flags. I'm not that... I'm not that guy anymore! We're not in college! I can't just skip class!

**Ali:** Yeah...

**Austin:** To go to Six Flags! Six Flags is far, also, Robert. We couldn't go to the diner today? You had to go to Six Flags? You had to—that was it for you, was...

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** 'It was Six Flags or nothing'. That's what you said. You called me, you said 'it was Six Flags or nothing'." And I—

**Ali:** That's a whole day!

**Austin:** That's a *whole* day! [chuckles]

**Ali:** I... Yeah. [overlapping] I can't be walking around for four hours straight!

**Austin:** [overlapping] And it's expensive!

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** You didn't even want to stop at the Wawa! You were like: 'we'll get food when we get there.' No!

**Ali:** No! I don't... I didn't buy the meal plan like you did!

**Austin:** No, I'm not getting a \$17 hamburger! That's wet!

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** *Robert?* Who is this guy? Robert who? Robert Brault?

**Ali:** [chuckles] Something.

**Austin:** He's a...

**Ali:** [sighs]

**Austin:** What? No. I don't—he's just a writer. He's, like, a guy who does quotes.

[pause]

**Ali:** What's up with Big Quotes that all the time.is quote [chuckles] is just quote guys?

**Austin:** It's... [chuckles] It's quotes guys. I hate it.

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** I hate it so much.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Austin:** He has—here's a quote from him from last—from a month ago: "Nostalgia is less a longing for a past we once lived than for a future we once dreamed of." No. Not true. I am not nostalgic for futures I once dreamed of.

**Ali:** [overlapping] Yeah.

**Austin:** [overlapping] I'm nostalgic for going to—having time to go to Six Flags with you, Rob. All right?

**Ali:** Right!

**Austin:** And we don't have that anymore. I'm not... I wasn't dreaming of a future where I could go to Six Flags with you every day.

**Ali:** [laughs] I was living that life not realizing that I would lose it.

**Austin:** That's it!

**Ali:** What...

**Austin:** Yeah!

**Ali:** Yeah! Like, come on!

**Austin:** And here's the thing! I bet I can find a different quote from this guy that is the thing you just said!

**Ali:** [laughs]

**Austin:** Because they don't have any, there's no integrity from these people!

**Ali:** [overlapping] Um. Yeah.

**Austin:** [overlapping] They'll say the same thing, but in reverse the next time. You know?

**Ali:** Yeah. Big Quote is copying.

**Austin:** Just trying to get... Yeah. Just trying to get those quote placements.

**Ali:** [chuckles]

**Austin:** Alright. Time—we should clap.

**Ali:** We *should* clap! Do you want to clap at 15?

**Austin:** Yes.

[a sound of clapping, then the episode ends]