

Drawing Maps 29: The Perpetual Oratorio of Davia Pledge (Aug 2021)

Transcriber: MaxXM#5418

[00:00:00]

AUSTIN: And then I'll post the thing— it's posted, and then I'll tweet the thing. Alright.

SYLVIA: Oh, also, related to that, I'm going to be looking at the questions on my phone, because I don't want to—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Totally. Yes. Fair. Fair.

SYLVIA: —jump Google accounts and shit, so if I accidentally do something [laughs] I don't mean to—

AUSTIN: As long as I don't leave the slideshow, I don't think it changes, because I ran into this—

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Okay.

AUSTIN: —recently where I wanted to jump ahead and change things, and it didn't stick until I bounced out of the full screen view.

KEITH: Oooh, weird.

SYLVIA: Okay, cool. That's a huge weight off my shoulders.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Okay, linked up the right tweet, now to look at chat and see if people show up in chat.

[pause]

SYLVIA: I can keep complaining about my computer situation while we wait.

AUSTIN: Wait, what happened to your computer?

KEITH: Yeah, what happened to your computer?

SYLVIA: So, I think it's— Two things that I've learned is that apparently that there's a problem with buildings in Toronto, with power surges affecting computers and stuff [Austin and Keith hmm mhm] and I don't know if I have the right kind of protector for it?

SYLVIA (cont'd): But also, it's just been an overheating issue, because I haven't been able to get in there and clean it [Austin mhm] because it's an intimidating gaming laptop. So, what seems to happen is either— it's just overheating a lot, and I think either the thermal paste or something that's connecting my graphics card has eroded or gotten loose [Austin mhm] so I'm going to have a friend look at it some time next week and see what I can do—

KEITH: [crosstalk] And not just—

SYLVIA: —and hopefully I won't have to take it anywhere.

KEITH: Not just are they big and intimidating, it's like— they also really don't want you opening those things up.

SYLVIA: Yeah! It's frustrating.

KEITH: Yeah, I hate it.

SYLVIA: Because they run really hot, and I should have expected this, but, you know.

AUSTIN: That is how it goes, I guess.

SYLVIA: Yeah. Anyway, looks like we have people filtering in now. [chuckles]

AUSTIN: We do. Alright.

KEITH: Oh, is there a link to the thing? I missed it.

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Uh, it's in Patreon

KEITH: [crosstalk] The Patreon. Pateron chat. Whatcha eating?

AUSTIN: [mouth full] Eyh, cofke. Eyah, chocolate chip cookie.

KEITH: Okay. Crunchy or soft?

AUSTIN: It's soft. I'm not a crunchy cookie person, generally. Not like a— not like a—

KEITH: There's this—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] I think I have—

KEITH: There's this extremely crunchy kind of cookie that they sell in the supermarket, in twisty— like, a twisted— just like—

AUSTIN: [radical] Twisteeeeddd.

KEITH: [crosstalk] –plastic wrap. [Sylvia laughs] [radical] This plastic wrap’s twisted! Uh, but it’s like loose-stacked in a plastic bag at the supermarket?

AUSTIN: Gotcha. Yeah.

KEITH: And they’re so good, but otherwise I pretty much agree. I like a soft cookie.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Takes a lot. It takes a lot to– for me to be like, “Eh, I think I’d like a crunchy cookie.” It has to be a really good crunchy cookie.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: It’s possible, I’m not saying– I’m not closing the door. Alright, anyway, we should get into this. We should– we should–

KEITH: [conspiratorial] Did [Sylvia laughs] you hear Austin’s closing the door on crunchy cookies?

AUSTIN: I’m closing the door. [stern] I’m closing the door once and for all... on crunchy cookies. I’m sick of this bullshit.

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Oreo fans everywhere shook.

AUSTIN: I guess Oreos are fine and they’re crunchy, aren’t they?

SYLVIA: It depends on if you’re a dipper or not–

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] I’m a dipper.

SYLVIA: –because if you dip them in milk–

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] I’m a dipper.

SYLVIA: –they become not crunchy.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Let me tell you.

KEITH: But! But!

SYLVIA: And I’m not.

AUSTIN: But I’ll eat a Oreo. I’ll eat an undunked Oreo, if it’s– if I don’t have milk.

KEITH: [crosstalk] I think Oreo barely counts, because it– it does definitely have a crunch, but it has to be so soft in order to not squeeze the filling out.

AUSTIN: That's fair.

KEITH: So Oreo is like a really unique texture.

AUSTIN: It's true. I thought you were saying it doesn't count as a cookie for a moment. I– we were gonna have to have a whole–

KEITH: Oh, well, it's obviously a sandwich.

SYLVIA: [laughs] Yeah!

AUSTIN: [shithead] Yeah, right. Art, if you weren't feeling too bad before, you might be now. Are you still good for this? [laughs]

ART: I quit, [all laugh] I'll see you all in hell.

AUSTIN: Alright!

ART: It's fine. It's fine.

[pause]

AUSTIN: Imma do an intro.

[00:04:00] Intro

AUSTIN: Welcome to Drawing Maps for August, 2021. Is it December? It could be. [Sylvia and Keith laugh] I'm Austin Walker.

KEITH: I literally didn't even realize that–

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

KEITH: –it said August.

AUSTIN: It does. Joining me today, Sylvia Clare.

SYLVIA: Hi, I'm Sylvi. You can find me on– I guess on Twitter [@sylvibullet](#), and also you can listen to my other podcast *Emojidrome* wherever you get your podcasts.

AUSTIN: Keith Carberry.

KEITH: Hi, my name is Keith J Carberry. You can find me on Twitter [@KeithJCarberry](https://twitter.com/KeithJCarberry), and you can find the letsplays that I do at youtube.com/runbutton.

AUSTIN: And Art Martinez-Tebbel.

ART: You can find me on Twitter [@atebbel](https://twitter.com/atebbel).

AUSTIN: As always you can support the show by going to friendsatthetable.cash. I'm gonna boost you up a little bit, Art. You're a little bit quiet. If you're listening to this as an MP3, we usually back up audio for it— I guess we might do that most of the time with Drawing Maps, because it mostly sounds okay and doesn't need too hard of an edit. But if there's any weirdness, that's why. We're doing the Drawing Maps for "The Perpetual Oratorio of Davia Pledge", which is to say— Boy, we got a lot of questions [Sylvia laughs] so let's just jump right into it. I'll start— I'll read this first one out, but we'll go around the table on some of these. Sylvi, I'll make sure you get the ones with the big text, since I know you're reading them on a phone.

SYLVIA: [laughs] Thank you.

[00:05:26] Question One: Casey

AUSTIN: Casey says—

I've been really loving Sangfielle. It feels like a totally different plot pacing than every other season y'all have done. Of course, that's not to say that either is bad, just that this has been different. It's felt to me like the show is primarily following individual character beats rather than a huge ticking clock of a plot. A side effect of this is that major events in a character's story could happen at any time.

A lot of it is clearly system-based, where one bad roll could turn a comparatively harmless into a formidable adversary or introduce new trauma to a player character. The structure of this arc felt distinct, though. Unlike the rest of Sangfielle, this arc felt more like a mission out of Marielda— again, not in a bad way. The PCs uncover massive plot points and seize their own opportunities from within them.

For the players, obviously the ramifications were more massive than usual, but from the outset, did this feel like a different type of mission? Did any of you feel the storytelling you were doing was more or less centralized around your characters? The NPCs are around you all as showmakers. For Austin, did you intend to create a mission distinct from the others in pacing and outcome, or did the cards just fall this way? Loving the season, would die for Hazard. Thanks.

AUSTIN: If you're just listening to the Drawing Maps right after listening to "Davia Pledge", who's Hazard? What's a Hazard? Who could say?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So yeah, how— how— what did y'all think about the pacing? And did this feel different going into it for you?

SYLVIA: I was thinking about this [Keith's phone starts talking] and I think [laughs] part of it—

AUSTIN: Who is talking? What is— Who—

KEITH: Sorry.

ART: That's you. That's you talking.

KEITH: I was just— no, no—

AUSTIN: It's not me. [Sylvia laughs]

KEITH: I— My phone went like [bleep bleep] because it was low battery [Art mhms condescendingly] and I was like, "Oh, let me shut my phone's ringer off," and in trying to do that, my podcast app inexplicably started playing the *Ranged Touch* Patreon show.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Great friends, love— love— Let me tell you, *Ranged Touch*— great network, people should support *Ranged Touch*. [pause] Anyway—

SYLVIA: I think— so— trying to get back to what I was saying. I think a thing that really helped me with this one was the setting of Sapodilla itself, kind of? We had the big establishment of, one, the party came back together in an interesting way, where we were all in the same space, and we were all also on the run from the cops, basically. I think that there was— there was so much narrative momentum going into it, and the setting itself was in a way similar to Marielda. It is a contained city—

AUSTIN: It is a contained city, with districts that have flower names, like— I— that's not a con— I knew what I was doing with that.

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Yeah! For sure!

AUSTIN: That is a miss— Where you immediately went to a library that goes down instead of up. This is— Sometimes there are echoes of things in the— in a Soulsian way, you know what I mean?

ART: Would you say that sometimes it rhymes?

AUSTIN: Sometimes it rhymes. Sometimes... it rhymes. [laughs] But yeah, I think that's a good point, Sylvia. I think there's different place setting here than most of the other arcs. You go to Bellmetal, you go to Yellowfield, you go to Roseroot Hall. You're kind of like, "Ooh, what are we gonna find at this place? Okay, there's a place here." Whereas here—

AUSTIN (cont'd): I mean, one, Virtue and Es already had history here. Two, we did the "At the Gates" intro that set up really clear stakes, and three, from the jump, in terms of design, it was meant to be a big place with lots of different corners to peek into in a much more city way than— It was meant to feel like a city. We had not been in a city ever before in this season, and I wanted to make that feel structured in a different way, not that— Structure, I guess, has a real particular meaning in this show, but... Keith and Art, did you feel coming into this at all like it was a differently paced setup?

ART: No.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: Also no.

ART: To borrow a quote from known shithead Kanye West, "Everything is exactly the same."

AUSTIN: [laughs] Keith, do you have a known shithead you'd like to quote?

KEITH: Uh, n— Uh, no. Let's see.

AUSTIN: Good. Yeah, okay. [laughs]

KEITH: I don't— I'm not— I don't have a shithead collection of quotes... anymore. I used to. When I was like 13, listening to a lot of standup, like—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Sure. You know what?

KEITH: —I did have a lot of different shitehad quotes.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Fair. Fair enough. That was the way, wasn't it. [Keith laughs] Yeah, so then, for my part, the thing of creating it differently— Like I said, I definitely created it— I mean, this mission didn't go— this arc didn't go the way I expected it to go either, certainly, and there are things we'll answer through other questions here that kind of get at that, and the moments at which my prep changed to focus in on different stuff. I knew... it would be...

AUSTIN (cont'd): The other side of this arc is the one— The side with them going in to try to rescue Chine is where I knew the capital-P Plot would be. I expected this to be a kind of fun heist in comparison to their side of the game, where I had hit these story arcs— the plot beats that I had set up in the Bellmetal Station stuff, which we do. That's where some of those ideas come back. Partly that's because Jack's character, Pickman, was the one most interested in searching members of the Wrights of the Seventh Sun, and figuring out what's going on with Zevunzolia, and fucking up the dude who y'all had encountered at Bellmetal Station, or somehow getting some info on them. That was Calen, who does not show up in this arc, or in either of these arcs, but is in the background because of the connection to Zevunzolia a little bit here.

AUSTIN (cont'd): So yeah, your side, I was like, "Oh, I can just tell a fun lesbian revenge plot that also intersects with the invention of the synthesizer and lets me, kind of, work on a different angle on machine gods than what we normally do, and have some fun musical beats, and stuff like that," so for it to turn into what it did was a surprise to me in a big way, but I do think that Casey's hit that it comes out of the structure— all those things I've said before, that separate this arc and Sapodilla from the rest of the season for sure.

[00:11:35] Question Two: Morgan

AUSTIN (cont'd): Imma just keep moving. Art, do you want to read this, from Morgan?

ART: Yes, but I did the classic blunder of—

AUSTIN: Ah.

ART: —putting some grapes in my mouth as you started to wrap up. [Sylvia laughs]

KEITH: Oh, no.

ART: It was only a 33% chance, you know?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I get it.

KEITH: We'll call it—

ART: [crosstalk] Did you say Morgan? Morgan writes in—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Morgan, yes.

ART: –and asks–

Coming into the arc, did you have a sense that this might be a character sendoff for Virtue? It seems like the Oratorio was designed to give her a potential chance at her end goal. And two: how do you approach the creative process for communicating about the music in this and the last arc? Did you know approximately how the fifth episode of the arc would go when you decided to underscore Duval and Lyke’s conversation in the third? *The Perpetual Oratorio* is terrifying and I can’t stop listening to it.

ART: That was supposed to be two exclamation points and I did not know that–

KEITH: [crosstalk] You didn’t hit those at all.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah.

ART: –when I started reading it, and I didn’t hit it at all. Apologies, Morgan. Maybe we need, like– Put your exclamation points at the beginning of your Drawing Maps questions [Sylvia chuckles] because I am reading them cold.

AUSTIN: Right. Uh-huh. Sylvi, did you have any thoughts that this would be a send off for Virtue?

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] No, not at all! I thought, like– When we got into– I mean, not at all going into it. There was no real hint that we were going to– Like, at most, it was some mystery about– There was some haretrix shit going on– there was a bunch of shit go– there was a bunch of possibilities of what it could be, and then when we got there, I didn’t expect for it to go the way it did. I’m very happy that it did, and once it became clear that it was a viable option, I obviously thought that I should push for it, but more than anything I was thinking it would be– Once we got to what the Oratorio was, I would be like, “Okay, I’ve figured out a way to work this into what’s going on with her character arc going forward after this and– Yellowfield?” I always wanna call it “Yellowcandle” cause–

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yellowfield, Yellowcandle, yeah.

SYLVIA: –there’s candles there, but that’s not what it’s called.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Yeah, after that, and after this, I had a direction where I could go with her, and then instead it just– we went in a better way!

AUSTIN: Yeah, I definitely had no prep that— You know, this is a cool system because players can really— one of the things that's cool about it is players have a lot of determination around when their characters get off the ride, so to speak, in various directions? And the biggest one is for zenith moves, which is how I assumed most player characters would end their journeys in Sangfielle, but that doesn't mean you can't leave earlier, and so seeing this opportunity was fun to frame it and see how it went. I— This could have all happened a different way, and I would have been just as happy. There was not an outcome that I was like, "This is the only good outcome." You know?

AUSTIN (cont'd): To that end, I think that— Jack isn't here, but I can answer the second question for Morgan about prepping to music by actually going to the conversation that I had with Jack at the time, which is that— I guess that the way that this works, it's worth saying, is in general what happens is we send the— If Jack's not on an episode, I send them an OBS backup recording of the episode as soon as I can, so they can listen to it. Sometimes I'll say, "Hey, I would really love for there to be a unique song for this— for sequence X-Y-Z, right?" Sometimes that's super obvious, right, because it's like, "Here is a sequence where music would be playing, here is a moment where there's some wild shit happening, right?"

AUSTIN (cont'd): A very obvious one of these is early on in this season, Chine wakes up and— or goes to sleep on the roof, and has this vision of the Course, and I describe it kind of extemporaneously in all of these different ways, and I was like, "I think I want music behind that, because I liked what I said, but I think it could use some extra oomph," and Jack always has my back for stuff like that. But there's also times when Jack will come back and be like, "Hey, I think I want there to be music for this," and in this case it was Jack who came to me and said, "I think that there should be music for when Lyke is delling Duval about Aterika'kaal," and I was kind of like, "Huh." They gave me three different scenes. It was that one, it was Lyke disappearing into the Oratorio. I don't know if you remember that, Keith.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: There was a roll that you failed, and you disappeared. And the long narration at the end showing Davia and Zizi's life and ending with people trying to break down the doors of the place. Those were the three that they pitched. I would've been happy with any of those, but then Jack kind of came back— Eh, I told Jack at that point, we had one more recording to go where they're going to find the device itself, the Perpetual Oratorio, and Jack was like, "Well, I'll save the actual Oratorio music for that, then," and then they kind of decided that they really wanted to zoom in on this conversation between Lyke and Duval.

AUSTIN (cont'd): And it was really interesting to me because suddenly when I heard that scene with that music before we even recorded the final one— When they sent it over to me, I was like, "Oh, this is the episode. The next episode is this. The next episode has to pay off this incredible—" I literally said, "This is incredible. Also, boy do I get to pay this off now because it is a marked moment." Did y'all see that there was a— What do you call that? Not just an animation...

SYLVIA: An animatic?

AUSTIN: An animatic for this that went around today by Twitter user [Pewterbee](#)? I wanna say— Yeah, P-E-W-T-E-R-B-E-E— of that conversation that Jack scored between you two, Art and Keith, between Duval and Lye. Once that scene was marked, I realized that I could start zeroing in on framing reasons for Lye and Duval to be on opposite sides of a thing, or to have to state what their positions were. I knew that they were naturally opposed in certain things, and more importantly—

KEITH: We've been playing that off since the first—

AUSTIN: From the jump, exactly.

KEITH: [crosstalk] —arc, yeah.

AUSTIN: You've been in every arc together, basically. You've been— Is that true? That's all of them, right, up until now?

KEITH: All but one. Everything but one.

AUSTIN: Okay. You had a natural— There's a natural "playful" rivalry between the two of them, around things like luck, good rolls or bad rollings, that exists both in fiction and in mechanics that's fun, and I'd remembered that there was that exchange that you had, Lye, with the person at Bellmetal Station who was like, "You better hope your friends," basically, "don't turn their back on you, the way you with I would on my personnel— on Calen," right? Do you remember that sequence?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And I'd set that up vaguely knowing the Aterika'kaal stuff could become an issue, but, you know, it's not scripted [chuckles] so you never know when it's gonna hit, and I knew that that scene was good already— the Lye and Duval scene was good, but with the music it was like, "Oh, this is the core of the rest of this arc." And so, we got there in a way that was really fun, and that comes with actual play being a thing that isn't— You listen to it for six hours, we make it for— You might listen to an arc that's six hours long, or eight hours long? It might take us a month and a half to make that.

AUSTIN (cont'd): We sit in that in a different way, and especially where my prep changes sometimes. It's not like I prep it, and then I put that prep in a freezer, and then I cut up little bits of it and feed it to baby birds like, [speaking to a baby bird] "Here's another little encounter." [others laugh] I'm always bringing it out and tinkering with— re-spicing it and re— [laughs] So, this's kind of gotten away from me. I think that's the end of this question. Alright, thanks, Morgan. Next question. Keith, do you want to read this?

KEITH: Uh, yeah, sure—

ART: [crosstalk] Can, uh— Can I get a quick aside? We are not recording locally on this?

AUSTIN: That is correct.

KEITH: Correct.

ART: Oh...

AUSTIN: You're good.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I have a recording backup going.

KEITH: Just so that you—

ART: [crosstalk] Don't— Don't fuck it up, though, just—

AUSTIN: Yeah, well, also it's on the YouTube, so I can pull it from the YouTube.

KEITH: Oh, okay, nevermind. We're good.

AUSTIN: Anyway, Art can you read this— or, Keith?

KEITH: I was looking at slides four and five here, and I was like, "Did you know that slide five—"

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yes.

KEITH: Yeah, okay, that's what I thought. You got it. Okay.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] I do. Uh-huh.

[00:20:09] Question Three: Jeremy

KEITH: Jeremy asks—

My question is for Austin. While listening to episode three of "The Perpetual Oratorio of Davia Pledge," I was struck by how the description of the framework manor house of— [stammers] of Pledge House. Specifically it reminded me—

KEITH: What's that?

AUSTIN: I fucked with this to avoid a certain spoiler throughout this, and now I'm realizing that there are some editing mistakes that left in an "of" that shouldn't have been there, so that's on me.

KEITH: Oh, okay, okay. Got it.

The framework manor of Pledge House.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Specifically it reminded me of something from an episode of Partizan. There is a bit where Jack is describing a house and Austin misunderstands Jack's description as the second story of a house being so—

KEITH: Wow, I cannot read today.

AUSTIN: No worries.

KEITH: [laughs]

Austin misunderstands Jack's description as the second story of a house being supported by russian sage. Is this where the seed of that striking description of Pledge House came from, or generally how often do you re-use prep that doesn't make it into any given game? Do you have a favorite example of prep for one session or arc being used in an unrelated way? Thanks.

AUSTIN: So, if you go back to that great metaphor I had, that my prep— I put it in the freezer, right? And then I take it out and thaw it to spice it up between sessions [chuckles] and I feed it to you— not into your little baby bird mouth, but we all come in the kitchen together and we get to work on that prep until there's a story because that's what actual play is. When I'm done a story, I take it out of the freezer and throw it away. I— The answer to this is absolutely not. I did not sit with that idea in any conscious way.

AUSTIN (cont'd): To that end, there is another thing— Um, Eda wrote in and said— sent this clip in from COUNTER/Weight in which Jack says, "Actually, Aria, you should make the move. I feel that AuDy would be more useful reacting to two steps rather than just Mako falling over and screaming." Keith says, "Two Steps is a really good future character name." I go, "It's pretty good." Ali laughs. Jack says, "Two Steps," and Eda asked, "Is this where Two Step— you know, Two Step Bucho, Big Bucho, Two Step Bucho comes from?" And the answer is absolutely not. The answer is—

AUSTIN (cont'd): Is it in there somewhere? Maybe. But not in anything like a conscious way. I do not have a scratch notes doc with all of my unused ideas. All of my documentation is sealed from season to season, including— really from arc to arc. I have a master document for every season, and then every arc has its own sub-document, and then I sometimes will also have a character's document. I have an intros and descriptions document for each season, stuff like that. But there's no, like, "Ooh, this is a good idea, this should just go in my big ideas pile." Should I have one? Yes. It's a good idea.

KEITH: I'm actually going to alter the answer— Yes, this is where Two Step Bucho comes from. I invented—

AUSTIN: [sarcastic] You invented Two Step Bucho [Sylvia laughs] uh-huh, yeah. I mean, it truly could have just crashed around in my brain for years. This does happen, right? What was the other one—

KEITH: [crosstalk] Yeah. Yeah, totally.

AUSTIN: There was one that— There was another one.

ART: [crosstalk] It's— Not a lot of people know this but Austin goes to the archive from the end of *Raiders of the Lost Arc* at the—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] All the time, yeah. At the end of every year, I go there.

KEITH: This is something I've been talking about for years and years. I've been doing podcasts for 11 years, so for probably 10 years the sensation of listening to an old podcast and having the exact same thoughts at the exact same time as past me, and being like, "That's wild. I had no idea that I made that joke then, because I don't remember—"

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Why would you? Yeah.

KEITH: "— this. It was five years ago," but I still did it at the same time, because my brain is the same. I'm the same person.

AUSTIN: Right. I don't remember, but Spam, friend of the show, recent— not that recently. I think sometime in the last two years, tweeted something that was a similar thing to this, where I was— it was revealed to me, "Oh, that's where that name must have come from. I must have seen this, or said this, or it was part of a stream we did," and then it just— I just sat with it forever, and I don't remember for the life of me what that one was, but there's a ton of things like this that are just— Oh, here it is. Here it is. Here it is. This is an audio thing, so this isn't gonna work for anybody on the podcast. Let me see what it is.

KEITH (on recording): I played cornhole for the first time.

AUSTIN (on recording): For the first time?

AUSTIN: It's Keith saying he's never played cornhole.

KEITH (on recording): No, we played boules, my favorite yard game.

AUSTIN (on recording): Boules??

AUSTIN: Ah! It's you again, Keith! You talk about how you played boules.

SYLVIA: Boules?

KEITH (on recording): Petanque?

AUSTIN: And then you go, "Petanque?" And I go, "Boules Petanque?" [along with recording] "The protagonist of season six, Boules Petanque." And in season six, there's a character named Boole Betanca, straight up. [Keith laughs and wheezes] I did not write that down! I did not write that down! There is nothing in any of my documents that is the words "boules petanque" or "Boole Betanca". It doesn't exist. It just sits in my fucking brain, and then at some point, I was like, "Oh, yeah, Boole Betanca. Duh! That's a good name." So.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Yeah. Maybe I've just got a little *Inception* going on.

AUSTIN: You're incepting— I hate it. I hate that you are incepting me currently.

[00:25:20] Question Four: Mika

AUSTIN (cont'd): Anyway, okay. I'll read this one. We're gonna get to one with big words in a second—

SYLVIA: I can— I can read it.

AUSTIN: Can you read this one from Mika?

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Read this one from Mika.

SYLVIA: There are many times in this show, both this season and others, in which a character rolls a failure and still achieves part of their goal. An example from this arc is when Virtue is wandering the mist looking for Pledge House. I understand the need to continue— to drive the story forward, even with a failing roll, but how do you as a GM set consequences of failure such that it still is meaningful and distinct from simply success at a cost?

Have you as players ever had failed rolls where you felt like you got off too easy because of the need for plot to continue? Similarly, are there any times you have felt like a failing roll has cost you significantly in terms of driving the narrative [pause] forward, especially in mystery-type arcs?

SYLVIA: The reason I paused after “narrative” was my phone screen turned off.

AUSTIN: Oh, no!

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] But, I got through it.

AUSTIN: Good. I mean, it’s worth saying, the roll wasn’t “do you find this place,” right? Probably? It was “do you get there safely because the cops are looking for you?” And that’s always a— One of the things that any GM has at their disposal, whether they actively recognize it or not, is setting the terms of success. Any table has this, but it’s one of the soft powers of the GM, is that they can say, “Well, actually, I don’t think that you’re rolling to find the house. I think that you’re rolling to find it safely,” or something like that, right? So in this case, it was— you get lost for quite some time, and that is the consequence, right? Lost among the fog in a way that’s interesting. [Keith sighs] Keith? Was that a Keith sigh?

KEITH: Oh, no. No, no, no, sorry. I was— That was an unrelated, just needed-some-lot-of-air-all-at-once sigh.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. Okay, I thought you were deep in thought about all this.

KEITH: I was actually thinking— I was trying to think of old seasons, where maybe we were not as good at this where this maybe has happened, and not really finding much of anything.

AUSTIN: It’s definitely— We’ve definitely done it, because we do a thousand rolls a season, and— are there rolls that are tighter to the stakes versus looser? I mean, there are times when— the opposite— I can think of plenty of times when I’m— especially at the end of a fight. At the end of a fight, I’m very eager to be like, “This fight is over, you get away,” right? This is when I tip— put my thumb on the scale the most is the end of the first big fight— first big mech fight in COUNTER/Weight stands out really big. It happens a couple times in Partizan. It happens in any of the really big fights that go a little longer than I want them to, and I’m like, “Eh, they’re not gonna give chase.”

AUSTIN (cont’d): There’s one— it happened in the next arc from where this Drawing Maps is. There’s a fight that just goes and goes and goes, and I realize at the end that there’s a creature that is still alive, and I go, “Ehh, it ran away,” right? I do that stuff all the time, and sometimes I will do that with stakes setting, or with giving someone a victory when they didn’t get one, because it’s important for the show— the flow of the show, and the flow of the game, which is what Mika is saying here, for sure.

ART: Yeah, I don't wanna come on here and dunk on, just, people— no one, you know? You know like— and maybe your Twitter is better than this, but my Twitter will just randomly feed me people complaining about D&D, or like, "What do you think about this?" And not even complaining, boasting about how shitty their D&D games are, and I keep coming back to this idea that you can't— people are like, "Well, you can never fudge a roll. You can never—"

KEITH: [crosstalk] Dude—

ART: There was something going around recently, where it was like [Austin laughs] "My character said something— this character said something to a mob boss, so I just had them killed, because I couldn't have the mob boss not win—"

AUSTIN: Oh, my god.

ART: "You can't disrespect the mob boss. The character had to die."

KEITH: [unintelligible]

SYLVIA: You know how it works in Mafia City.

AUSTIN: There was the one going around recently that was straight-up— that it is [pause] I can't remember the particular phrasing, and it's important that I do, but that— it was a breach of consent for GMs to fudge dice.

ART: Mmm, yeah. I think I saw that one.

AUSTIN: Which—

ART: I think I see all of them, I think Twitter's like, "You want this."

KEITH: [crosstalk] I did not see this.

AUSTIN: I get how you get there, and it starts with, you're playing a different game than we're playing. It's not a breach of consent if I do that— I mean, one, I don't do it, because I roll all of my dice in the open, because that's how Roll20 works by default and I've never put the time in to seeing if I could even— I mean, first of all, we don't play games where I roll dice very often, so I don't even have dice to fucking fudge in that way.

AUSTIN (cont'd): But, I suspect if we were playing a game where I was rolling dice back—secretly to you, and it was like, “Eugh, this is a nightmare. Everyone’s getting their asses whipped, and this is not how this encounter’s supposed to go, and I’m gonna ease up a little this,” I suspect none of you would be mad at me for that, and it’s not because I had you sign a thing up top, or that we had a conversation about how I would be allowed to fudge dice, but because of a more general and hard-to-pin-down collective agreement on what the game is we’re playing that is much different than some of the D&D games I’ve played, which felt like—

AUSTIN (cont'd): Those are games about a tactical exchange in which I’m trying my best to win in a fight encounter, and the DM is not supposed to pull any punches, or something like that. And that stuff gets bad and fuzzy in all sorts of ways. The thing is it’s not the same as— All issues like this are not identical, because harm— the degree of harm is not the same. Art, if you were running D&D for me and you started fudging rolls, it might annoy me if that was what we agreed upon, and I might quit the game. It’s in my power to quit the game and go play with somebody else, but I don’t know that I would have been—

ART: That’s not what the contract we signed says. [Austin chuckles] You have to play—

AUSTIN: I HAVE to sit here and play! But the degree of harm is not the same. It might be a shitty thing to do, but to throw around words like “abusive” and “a breach of consent”— it really moves into a territory where those words are very powerful and mean very particular things in our lives, and to see them deployed in that way can be very frustrating sometimes, if you, for instance, have had a history of dealing with them in your life in other, more serious, manners. Be conscious of that stuff, is what I’ll say, if other people are on Twitter and eager to engage in discourse.

ART: And if you know how to fix my Twitter algorithm, tell me.

SYLVIA: There’s no such thing as fixing the Twitter algorithm.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] It’s “quit”. Yeah. Mhm.

KEITH: I don’t know what— Sometimes I know exactly what the problem is, but sometimes I don’t. I don’t know what is the difference between my page and Art’s page that could account for— I just don’t see any of this.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] I do. I know exactly what it is.

KEITH: Oh, what it is? What is it?

AUSTIN: Give me one second to give you an exact set of figures. Art follows... 490 people.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: You follow... [surprised] Oh, you also— I thought you followed, like a hundred people, Keith!

KEITH: No, no, no, I foll- for a long time, I was just below 400.

AUSTIN: Okay. Then, yeah. I don't know what the fuck it is. I don't know what the problem is.

ART: [crosstalk] I feel bad about not following people, do you think Twitter knows that?

AUSTIN: Maybe.

KEITH: I also do, but I also know that a lot of the problems that I know from people is that they just follow three times as many people as me, and just follow totally unsustainably.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] I follow 2200 hundred people. It's a nightmare. Get me out of here.

SYLVIA: Literally why I'm off that website right now.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ART: Teach me how.

SYLVIA: Make an alt.

AUSTIN: That is it! Uh-huh.

SYLVIA: That's literally it. So, I was gonna say something about— part of the— I had this thought, like—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] [laughs] Oh, about The Question? Instead of Twitter?

SYLVIA: [laughs] Yeah, 20 minutes ago. We also kind of have this collective understanding that we're making a show. We've mentioned this a lot when it comes up, and I think that because of that we have to be more— We're more cognizant of— and I imagine Austin, you are the most cognizant of this, with pacing, and like you said when fights drag, and stuff. It's definitely one of those things where we wanna—

AUSTIN: I also truly think it's just better— I think I'm better at being a GM than I— because I think about— I go back to early—

KEITH: Than who?

AUSTIN: Me. Than me. Than me. Than past me. Than me in college, running hour long fights in L5R with seven players at the table, where it's just, like, eugh. Except for when Sean, who was playing a monk, fucking beat... What's his name? Not- not- Art, what's his name?

ART: I need a little more.

AUSTIN: I don't think you do. I think you can get there. Not Yajinden but the monk. What's the evil monk's name?

ART: Kokujin.

AUSTIN: Kokujin. Sean just double-punched Kokujin and won that fight that was supposed to be an end-of-arc super fight— Actually, you know what, that was— I'm sorry, that was a cursed water oni that he dealt with.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Oh, do you mean what— you mean what Janine did to the—

AUSTIN: To the— Yes. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. [Art laughs] Yes. 100%. Yes. Anyway. Also, what you did in a moment of Heiron, Keith. You— the whole crew did it Heiron, in Spring in Heiron. That was incredible.

KEITH: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: Anyway.

KEITH: I feel like Faro was low-key doing that all the time but just in less—

AUSTIN: Dramatic, yeah.

KEITH: —dramatic situations.

AUSTIN: But yes, the thing that I was trying to get back to, that Sylvi was setting up, was that— We're very conscious of pacing because it's a show, and because we don't cut stuff out of the show, really? We trim for digressions. We cut for— we don't have many digressions anymore. We've gotten better at that, at front-loading those or putting those at breaks, and not actually doing them in the middle of the show, because we don't have as much time as we used to. It's been seven years. If you've not lived seven adult years yet, let me tell you something weird that happens between 25 and 32, or 29 and 36. Time just goes away in a way where you have to get real precious about it in a way that sucks, or I have anyway. I can't speak for everybody.

SYLVIA: Oh, yeah. I definitely did not shut the fuck up when I was a 22 year old— [laughs]

AUSTIN: Right! Also that, right? When we started we were just, "Duh, blah, blah, blah, blah," and now we're much more focused on doing a— there isn't stuff cut in that way, but what is—

KEITH: I'll say, I still live in— I still live in—

AUSTIN: You do.

KEITH: —Digression City.

AUSTIN: We love it, Keith.

SYLVIA: [laughs] Someone has to.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] You know, I like that energy, I— But I will say, Keith, you know that that shows up in a live differently than it does at a Sangfielle game where we have seven people at the table, or eight people at the table, where it's like— We can be goofballs when we're evil wizards at live, in a way that's like—

KEITH: When I'm doing fr— when we're doing a normal episode of Friends at the Table I'm actively not digressing.

AUSTIN: Yes. Otherwise we wouldn't get—

KEITH: [crosstalk] Though, it is my natural state.

AUSTIN: Otherwise we wouldn't get anywhere in season, cause we would all do it, and it would all just be talking about boats, which I love to do.

KEITH: [crosstalk] It's addictive. It's really— It's really easy to—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] I like to just talk— that's right, we do all these other shows where we get to just digress as much as we like. In any case...

KEITH: It's why I'm in so many lives. [Sylvi giggles]

AUSTIN: Right, exactly.

ART: Lives are unhinged.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] They're— Absolutely.

ART: [crosstalk] If you're just joining us—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] We should just rename it—

ART: [crosstalk] —from Patreon—

AUSTIN: –Unhinged at Friends at the Table. Yeah.

SYLVIA: Oh, perfect. I'm on board.

AUSTIN: We're all on board, yeah. My point was that as a GM I've gotten better at pacing in general, and I think that that's a lesson you can take into your own games. It's so okay to just wrap a fucking fight up. It's so okay to just hand-wave the travel, if the travel isn't particularly interesting. Be your own best editor, you know?

KEITH: [crosstalk] I remember, too– I remember, too, GMing *Dungeons and Dragons* when I was younger, and how crucial it felt to make sure there was enough combat? When I was prepping, I would have to be like, “Okay, make sure there's enough combat–”

AUSTIN: For some fucking reason?

KEITH: And always the first couple minutes of the combat is– sometimes the first couple minutes of the combat is most fun in the whole thing, but it always doesn't last. It was usually– looking back, the most fun was literally everything else, except the combat. But it still felt like everyone was there to do a combat.

AUSTIN: Right, totally. Totally.

KEITH: Which is this weird thing where I can see now that our time would've been better spent if I didn't feel like we had to have a big fun thing to fight.

AUSTIN: But it's hard to know– It truly is hard to know, you know?

KEITH: [crosstalk] Yeah, it's really hard.

[00:37:58] Question Five: Anonymous

AUSTIN: Alright, let's keep on moving. Anonymous writes in and says–

In the Drawing Maps episode about Bellmetal, you mentioned that you hated–

AUSTIN: –meaning me, Austin–

–using more visceral, fleshy descriptions for the inside of the Red Zephyr, and preferred the sort of Overlook Hotel vibe that Duval's fallout provided. How do you feel about the Perpetual Oratorio given that the integration-of-flesh-with-technology body horror is now more explicit than that scene was?

AUSTIN: I feel good about it, because that was the intent. I knew going into it what that was going to be, and that we were going to move into *Hellraiser* town.

KEITH: I vaguely remember you talking about this, this was, like, a— caught you off guard, how quick we got in there as a group, right? Is that the thing?

AUSTIN: No, well. In Bellmetal, yes, yes, yes. As quickly as you got into Bellmetal, I hadn't quite settled on what the interior would look like yet? This is a great example of the way I GM, right? Is that— This is the most pretentious thing I've ever said in my life, but it's sort of like jazz, in that you— the back part of any performance, of any show, of any game that we play, any arc, draws on the front half, and we sometimes set things up, then we finish. We just talked about this with the Lye and Duval stuff, and how, once I realized that was potent, we could come back to that at the end of the arc.

AUSTIN (cont'd): I do this all the time with everything we do. I'm always thinking about the start of an arc, the start of a session, and seeing how I can wrap something thematically, aesthetically, back into the show, back into the story, by the end. I find the language for a turn in the middle— on the way there, often. I might know— I had Red Zephyr stalled. I knew all the rules about needing to approach it, that would cause you damage. I had all that stuff done, but I assumed that at some point along the way I would hit some really good, verdant iconography that resonated with you as players that I could then pull on in order to knock it out of the park and give some sort of additional— to kind of play with it.

AUSTIN (cont'd): The current arc that's going up right now, the second episode of which will go up tonight, which is extremely good and creepy in my opinion, was a lot of this. I had a lot of it pre-written, but there's a lot of me recognizing tells, that someone liked something, or that there was a response to something, and then playing with that and reincorporating it. In Red Zephyr's case, the first thing you did was get on board Red Zephyr— the first thing you did as soon as you saw it was get on board it, and so yes, I was like, "Uhhh, I guess it's fleshy in there." [all chuckle] And that's not me on my best foot, you know?

AUSTIN (cont'd): And that's the risk of GMing the way I do it, versus writing out a whole module and having an in-depth description of the interior of this train that I didn't even know you would get on board 100%. There's a version of that story where you just fortress up inside of Bellmetal Station and do an anti-siege fight against it, and there was a whole armory in there that no one went into, and there were weapons— you know what I mean? There's stuff that we could have done differently that would have wound up in there, and that's why in general I try not to over-prepare for things like that.

AUSTIN (cont'd): And then we found it. That's the thing, is that we did find it, and it was the Overlook Hotel, strange lobby space stuff that ended up shaking out via Jolyon who shows up, and the sort of, "Oh, there's an attendant?" And once there's an attendant— And there's a tie hanging from the ceiling, that shifts it.

AUSTIN (cont'd): Whereas Perpetual Oratorio, I kind of already knew that the vibe was *Hellraiser* down there— was this very strange, dark space, and that's pulling on electronic music. That's pulling on the Gothic story that's being told about this place. That's being pulled on the fact that it's an underground space, that I really wanted to emphasize the darkness, and I had this image of the Oratorio opening up to the beach and seeing the sea in one direction, and having that in my head, and it's like, "Okay, well that means it has to be dark in there, because I want that sense of it being a tunnel."

AUSTIN (cont'd): So all of that is like— I did the thing I wanted to do there, and also because part of the whole premise is about this integration between technology and personhood, and, you know, bodily— human bodies. That had to be there in some fashion. I was like, "Fuck it. Let's roll with it." You know. That's— Sometimes, you just do the thing. Sometimes you stumble and do a thing, you're like, "Ehh, it's not really what I want," and the next— Sometimes, you order the wrong thing for lunch, and then the next week, you're like, "Actually, I kind of really want that today," and it tastes better that day because that's the thing you really want, you know? So that's the situation here.

[00:42:44] Question Six: Addison

AUSTIN (cont'd): Art, can you read this one from Addison?

ART: Sure. [pause] I'm forgetting character name pronunciation—

AUSTIN: Zizi. Just Zizi.

ART: It's just Zizi, okay?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Eh, it's just Zizi.

ART: I was like, is this Zhizhi?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] I think that that's right.

ART: [crosstalk] I remember it's Zhizhi, right?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Maybe it's Zhizhi. Was it Zhizhi?

SYLVIA: I don't think it was Zhizhi.

AUSTIN: Hm.

ART: Alright.

I thought the reveal on Zizi being the host to a haretrix that had been in her family for generations was an interesting twist in this arc, and added a really interesting layer to Davia and Zizi's relationship. I want to know any more you can tell us about them.

I had originally assumed that the sort of person who takes on a haretrix is typically someone who isn't tied down in any way, but for Zizi that wasn't the case. I've been wondering how common of an occurrence it is for other haretrixes to take on contracts with someone who is already in a relationship or has a close family, and what that dynamic is like.

Additionally, this made me wonder how close the interpersonal relationship between the haretrix and the host can be. Are they able to have an internal dialogue, or does the host become dormant while the haretrix takes the lead?

AUSTIN: The last thing I know we've established as true. Janine has said very clearly the haretrix and host can communicate. The rest of this is play to find out what happens, right? Are there— The rule that is law in Friends at the Table is, "There is an exception," so, it's like, how common of an occurrence is it? I don't know, but it turns out there's an exception in this case. There's— I can think of only a handful of truly hard and fast rules where there is nothing that breaches the rule, and sometimes there are rules that are softer than others, so there is obviously a sliding scale there, but in terms of the type of person a haretrix might typically decide to work with?

AUSTIN (cont'd): What we see from Janine's character is one haretrix, right? What we see from Davia Pledge and Zizi is another. I will say that Zizi specifically comes from an idea that comes out of conversations with Janine in our earlier Drawing Maps, in which we talked about the idea of there being a haretrix who ties themselves to a single family over the course of many generations. The idea of being almost like an in-house advisor permanently, that is like, "I'm going to give you my expertise across lineage, and I'll be able to bridge— or cross generations. I'll be able to bridge the family's knowledge and power over generations."

AUSTIN (cont'd): And in this, that was the sort of project that Zizi signed up to do here, in a sense, was like— to recover the name of the Esterhasy family, and recover their wealth, and bring them back up to high status. We gesture at all that. That doesn't mean that's a thing that all haretrixes do, or that some would be interested in at all.

AUSTIN (cont'd): It's sort of like— are there people who get into— What types of relationships do people get into? Fuck. Wow. Big question, and that's how it is for haretrixes, right? They're a type of— they're a person— they're people, you know? Is it the case that moments in history and culture will shape the demographic breakdown of how many people are in long-term monogamous relationships versus in long-term polyamorous relationships, or not in any sort of serious relationship, but all of those stats change over time? Have humans always existed across all of those spectrums in some way, in terms of how they structure their lives and relationships? Also, absolutely, so I would never close the door on—

AUSTIN (cont'd): I would never start to assume haretrixes only do blank, because again imagine saying, "Orcs only do blank," or "Robots only do blank," in a Friends at the Table season. It's like, well that doesn't— No, no, that's not how it's ever worked, right? So I think the same way about haretrixes, in that way. This one's about you, Keith. Do you want me to read it, or should you read it?

KEITH: This one from Ko?

AUSTIN: This one from Paz— Poz.

KEITH: Oh? I'm— I jumped way ahead.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] You jumped ahead, I think, yeah.

KEITH: Okay, I'm lost, so you can read it.

[00:47:00] Question Seven: Poz

AUSTIN: Okay.

Hi, all. I loved the arc a lot. I was on the edge of my seat with the rolls near the end. My question is about Lyke and the ravening beast. I was surprised and excited to see the beast brought up again outside of fallout, but I was wondering what led to that decision to incorporate it as an important part of Lyke's story.

For Austin, did you know before Lyke ever received that fallout that you wanted him to deal with a nightmare creature to call back to the dream that was brought up in worldbuilding, and was it a lucky coincidence that the beast fallout fit? I was also wondering if Austin and Keith discussed this off-air.

For everyone else, I was wondering if you see fallout as an important way to shape your character more permanently, like with Duval and that luck fallout, and if that's helpful for helping you to understand your characters better. Thanks, excited for more of the season. Poz.

AUSTIN: We didn't— We haven't talked about the beast off-air much.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Well...

AUSTIN: Maybe, like, a little bit, right?

KEITH: So, there's actually—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] I guess, more recently, we have.

KEITH: [crosstalk] —a few things on and off-air about this.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Because the first thing was me coming up with the dream—

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: —that Poz mentions.

AUSTIN: Yes.

KEITH: And at some point I remind you of— I cannot remember for the life of me if this was on or off-air, but I reminded you about this thing, and I was like, "Oh, is this— This is like the beast thing."

AUSTIN: Right!

KEITH: And then you were like, "Oh, I have an idea about that."

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: And then a month later, I was like, "Hey, so what was that idea about this dream that I had?" And you were like, "I have no idea." [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh-huh. But it may have become the beast, right?

KEITH: Right—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Or it may have been something else that we just dropped, and I never wrote down.

KEITH: My memory was that I got echo fallout, and I think it was my first fallout, and it– maybe that’s not true, but I think it was my first fallout, and we were looking at the list, and my memory is that we saw the ravening beast fallout at the same time and both were like, “Oh, let’s do this. I found one, which one did you want? I wanted the ravening beast. Oh, that’s the one that I was looking at. Great.”

AUSTIN: Right. Right.

KEITH: And, then I kind of just really liked it as something that I didn’t fix.

AUSTIN: And that is why– And that is the full answer, for me, of this question–

KEITH: [crosstalk] Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: –is you didn’t fix it, so that’s how you flagged for me that it was important.

KEITH: Right, and that’s exactly– When I was reading this question beforehand, I was like, “Oh, yeah, Austin probably did this because I never fixed it.”

AUSTIN: Yep.

KEITH: [crosstalk] So that’s basic–

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] And so now let’s play with that a little bit, and that’s the same thing– Art, you did that with the luck stuff, with Duval, right? The obsession.

ART: Yeah, and then you went in in Roll20 and fixed my die rolls [Austin laughs] for the whole year, and honestly I think it’s gaslighting to not admit it at this point.

SYLVIA: Oh, my god.

AUSTIN: Oooh. Ah! You know, maybe if I went into Roll20 and pre-programmed your rolls somehow without letting you know, I think maybe that does veer into truly shitty behavior.

ART: [crosstalk] “Somehow”, wink-wink.

AUSTIN: If I had a secret button that can change your rolls ahead of time, that would be a nightmare. I would hate– That would be– I wouldn’t use it, because it’s actually too scary, right? I think that that completely is too much pressure to pick the right outcomes on rolls and shit. That’s why we do this, because I don’t know the right answer. The dice do. Yeah, that’s really what it comes down to, is like– If a player is like, “I’m gonna hold onto this thing,” it’s gonna become increasingly interesting.

AUSTIN (cont'd): And then also, for me, I think that there is the— there was that core contradiction inside of Lyke, that is like, “Now, Aterika’kaal, that is a monster that I can redeem. That is a god that I can put onto a better path. The ravening beast is too far gone. The ravening beast, I don’t— I’m scared of it.” It’s not that it’s too far gone, that’s too strong—

KEITH: Well, Aterika’kaal’s so little and lives in my backpack. The ravening beast’s so big and mad.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. [all chuckle] So, this is why I had to— This is the fun— That’s the fun of that relationship to me.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Yeah. Well, it’s such a good fallout because, first of all, it just absolutely happens to fit perfectly with the thing that said before we even had started playing, about the dream that I had, and so that’s perfect, and the other thing is that once you introduce it— you know, not to be cliché about it, but as soon as you put the gun on the mantle, you’re like, “This thing doesn’t do anything to me. All it is is a gun on the mantle, and my two choices are to leave it there or to delete the gun.” [Austin and Keith chuckle]

AUSTIN: Yes, exactly.

KEITH: [crosstalk] It’s just more fun— there’s no risk to me except for the implied future risk, so I might as well just let it ride.

AUSTIN: [stammers] And, you know, I think it’s gonna end up being a feature of the rest of this season, as a thing that we end up working— even if at this point, let’s say you cleared it. I think we’d both still be in our rights to re-invoke it at a certain point, or to put it back on the table, or to say, “Hey, we can always put that back on the table, even though we cleared it.”

KEITH: [crosstalk] I wouldn’t blame you if I eventually healed it— if I was so rich, and I was like—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Fuck it!

KEITH: [crosstalk] That’s the other thing, there have been times where I didn’t want to spend all my money, and so what can I heal up? I can heal everything except this, and still have some money left over. Sort of, you know, kind of half-coincidentally, but if I were ever to be totally rolling in it, and I was like, “Ah, what the hell. Let’s clear ravening beast,” and I get echo fallout and you immediately go like, “Ravening beast,” I wouldn’t blame you.

AUSTIN: It’s like a car, and it’s like, “Well, my tire got blown out. I have to fix the tire. I have to fix the— my battery is dying, I need a new battery. There’s that weird sound that comes from the left windshield wiper. I don’t know what that is, but I’m not gonna fix it.”

KEITH: [crosstalk] I had to get my engine replaced in my car a few— It was the last week of my five-year extended warranty—

AUSTIN: [shattered] Oooh!

KEITH: –and so I was out twelve hundred bucks–

AUSTIN: Or, wait, it was still in, though. [relieved] Oh.

KEITH: Still in, still in. I was out twelve hundred bucks, and that really stung, because I kind of thought it was going to be like 700?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: But the– CarMax was out eight grand, so I dodged an enormous bullet, but I already had a cracked windshield because I hit– I was building some stuff, and I hit it with some wood, and cracked my windshield. I still got that cracked windshield.

AUSTIN: Right! You just live with the cracked windshield, because it doesn't– it doesn't ruin– You can still drive it–

KEITH: [crosstalk] It's my ravening beast.

AUSTIN: But it's your ravening beast, you know?

[00:53:15] Question Eight: Dahlia

AUSTIN (cont'd): Alright, do you wanna read this one from Dahlia, Keith?

KEITH: Sure, yeah.

How did you decide when an NPC who takes power should ascend to be–

KEITH: Oh, sorry.

–a PC who takes power should ascend to being an NPC, versus when they're allowed to take power and remain a PC? For example, in Heiron, a character remained a PC after becoming the lord of a prominent place–

KEITH: I assume this is an edit? This brackets here?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah, that's an edit to prevent a spoiler!

KEITH: In Heiron, a character remained a PC after becoming the lord of a prominent place, but based on the outcome of the Oratorio arc, it sounds like when Virtue takes over Sapodilla she will be “handed over” to the other side of the table–

KEITH: –in quotes.

It's gone different ways for different characters throughout the show's history, so how do you make this decision? Thanks for your time.

AUSTIN: I think there's two things. One is– Sylvi, you and I talked about it, both that night when we played the game and then afterwards about like, "How much longer do you want to be Virtue? Is there anything else you want to get– you know, do before there is a hand over?" So that was part of it. The big answer is, "What's the party doing?" Because there's a way to do–

AUSTIN (cont'd): There's a way this could have shook out where, let's say, Duval is like, "And I'm gonna stay here in Sapodilla and work with the queen to rebuild Sapodilla." We probably stay with Virtue at that point, right? If we could get two or three characters committed to that, but what I think ends up being impossible long-term is... We stay with Virtue, we have– and then also there's two more parties. That ends up being a recording scheduling nightmare, you know?

AUSTIN (cont'd): So I think that in the Heiron case, the character in question became powerful, and we were able to– there were characters around that character, and it became a fun gameplay thing that we were interested in playing because that character was about whether or not they could step up and have this power that they were told that they should have from birth, basically, and Virtue– there is still some of that in Virtue for sure, but I think that there is– It did not strike me that you were particularly interested in doing a politicking and city-running– city management game with Virtue, Sylvi.

SYLVIA: There is a couple things– reasons with that, is like– One, I don't know how good it would be at– to do on this specific...

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Oop.

AUSTIN: Oh, you're back. You're back. Yes.

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] We're back? Okay.

KEITH: [crosstalk] You're back. You were gone for a sec.

SYLVIA: I just don't think it would work with what we're trying to do with this season, with our more episodic contained story nature, and then also with the Gothic horror stuff we're aiming for? It would be in there, but I don't know– [chuckles] I just genuinely think that if you have a vampire running this city that's also a police state, it's going to get pretty dark.

AUSTIN: [chuckles] Yeah, uh-huh.

SYLVIA: And I don't know if we wanted to do that. I know personally, it was starting to get a little tough to always be the bad guy? [chuckles]

AUSTIN: Sure.

SYLVIA: It's very fun to be the villain-y character, and get to be a little— camp it up a bit, you know? But it's also— there is a drain when you're constantly butting heads with the characters in your party, and I think we got some really good stuff out of that, but I think that just, motivation-wise, it was kind of getting harder and harder to square her staying there.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I agree with that.

SYLVIA: Yet, regardless—

KEITH: [crosstalk] No one yet has had a character— in *Friends at the Table* history, has had a character that is always arguing with everyone else for whatever reason and been like, “Yeah, that wasn't any extra work at all.” [others laugh]

SYLVIA: It's hard!

AUSTIN: It is hard.

SYLVIA: That's why I've done such a sharp pivot after this, you know?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yes, yes. Totally. It's— A thing that I keep thinking about is how good it would have been— I think *Heart* is incredible, I've really enjoyed playing it. This is a beat that we would have never have gotten to without *Heart*, because the whole season would be different, but it was a very *Legacy: Life Among the Ruins* -style beat, which is one of the other games we considered for this season. It's so easy to imagine that if you had been playing *The Vampires* and also playing *Virtue* that this is a moment where you would have retired *Virtue* as a character you played, but continued playing *The Vampire Clan*, or whatever, who would have risen to prominence in this moment, you know?

SYLVIA: Yeah, it's funny that you mention that, because *Virtue* very much did start off from when we were going to play *Legacy*.

KEITH: [crosstalk] I forgot about *Legacy*...

SYLVIA: That's where the vampire stuff really came from.

AUSTIN: There's a— I don't remember the specific... It might be *End Game*? One of the expansions for *Legacy*, which— this is how the world works sometimes, I guess, but that game was designed— I want to say the whole *Legacy 2nd Edition* was designed by Minerva McJanda, who now works for Rowan, Rook & Decard, actually, and her *Voidheart Symphony* is being published by Rowan, Rook & Decard, but I wanna say it was either *End Game* or *Engine of Life*— one of these expansions to *Legacy* had a vampire clan-style family playbook. That's what they were called, right? They were called families, right?

SYLVIA: I believe they were called— It was families or maybe dynasties, it was one of the— It was something similar to that, though.

AUSTIN: Yeah, and I remember looking at it and being like, "Yeah, you could do sick vampires with this."

KEITH: *Dynasty Warriors: Vampires*.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Oh yeah, "The Deathless Elite." Here it is. The Deathless Elite inside of *Legacy: End Game*. "Immortality, the oldest human desire. Many have sought it through the ages by deeds and mighty works, in vain screaming, 'We were here! Forget us not, for we were worthy!' Not you, though. As the heirs to wealth and power beyond imagining, you had vanquished death long ago, and not even the Fall changed that." 100% just vampire— rich vampire assholes.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's very easy to see Virtue coming from this.

ART: [crosstalk] Ventrue. Someone invented Ventrue again.

AUSTIN: This is Ventrue, yeah. Uh-huh. 100%. Yes. Anyway, so there's an answer to that, Dahlia.

[00:59:46] Question Nine: Juniper

AUSTIN (cont'd): Sylvi, can you read this one from Juniper?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

Dear Friends, obviously this arc went some places! You've mentioned before that *Heart* hadn't seemed to provide opportunities for character moments. Any thoughts on that, and what seems like an important mid-season turning point? Completely unrelatedly, why did Duval want the painting? It feels like something he would be very scared of, and he's an inscrutable and often very passive guy. [laughs] Best wishes. If there's an opposite salutation to "Peace under the Six", just imagine that here. Juniper.

AUSTIN: To be clear, I don't know that it wasn't— I don't know that *Heart* didn't provide the opportunities for character moments. Specifically, it was downtime sessions felt like there were not— We didn't slip easily into characters bantering, or having quiet moments with each other, or framing scenes in that way.

KEITH: My memory from a previous one of these that we did with Ali, who was like, “Well, one of the issues—” Or, not issues, but, “One of the things that makes *Heart* different, downtime-wise, is that we're so banged up that there's a lot of maintenance that you have to during downtime, and so there's less time to frame scenes and stuff,” but I think everyone felt that, for whatever reason, there was less character scenes in— within episodes also, and I think— I don't remember what people thought about that. I just thought it was sort of by accident.

AUSTIN: I think it's mostly finding your footing with new characters, a new setting—

SYLVIA: Yeah.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Yeah, that, too. That, too.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Comfort, that's my gut.

KEITH: I feel like we've gotten so much better at that as a group because of things like Live and Bluff.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I mean, I think that we're also coming off of Partizan, which is, for my money, the fucking fastest we ever hit the ground running. If you go back and listen to the opening Partizan arcs, both sides, it's like, “Oh, these are all fully formed people.” Like, holy shit. The speed with which...

AUSTIN (cont'd): I mean, the three of you were all on the same side [chuckles] in that game, and the speed with which that arc— everything about sitting down at the table to try to hammer out details about the scrap exchange, through the escape attempt that follows. I'm spoiling very light early— first-arc-of-the-season shit. It's just like, so— All of your characters are There. I know who they all are. I understand how they relate to one another. Ironically, there was an instance of early negotiated PVP-type stuff that we'll get back to in a second. [all chuckle]

SYLVIA: Why is it always us?

AUSTIN: I don't know. Huh. Weird.

KEITH: Ahhhhh, sorry.

AUSTIN: [laughs] And that is— But I think that it's just hard to compare to that, but if you go back to Autumn in Heiron, everyone's still— everyone's trying to figure it out there, and likewise in Winter when Sylvi and Janine come on, there's a lot of like, "Okay, well, what's— who are these characters? I don't quite know," so I think there was a lot of that here, and *Heart*'s a new system. That's the other thing. *Heart* is a New System for us.

KEITH: That is part of it.

AUSTIN: It's big! There's a lot of brain power that's going into just, "How to I make sure I don't fuck up," instead of embodiment.

KEITH: Forgive me for saying this eight different times, but I always just feel faster and more confident with my ideas when we're doing sci-fi stuff than when we're doing fantasy stuff.

AUSTIN: Same. My relationship to this whole season is so fucking weird, because I think we're killing it based on response, and I don't feel it at all, whereas— and I think I figured this out this week, finally, which is— This is the first season that I'm not part of the audience for. That doesn't mean anything. Um... I'm... My goal is to creep people out and...

AUSTIN (cont'd): Okay, I'm always part of the bit where I'm exploring themes, right? We're always exploring themes together. We're always telling interesting, dramatic, and funny stories together. I'm always part of that part of it, and so I can laugh— When someone at the table says a joke, I get to laugh at that joke, just like the audience gets to laugh at that joke.

AUSTIN (cont'd): One of my primary functions this season is to figure out ways to be creepy and to make something feel unsettling. I think the current arc that's going out right now is maybe one of the best ones we've done with regards to that, and I don't get to feel that. I don't get to— When someone tells a joke, I get to laugh at it, but when I have to be creepy, I don't feel creepy at all. It feels like I'm singing a song I know. Do you know what I mean?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: There's something different—

ART: [crosstalk] You can't tickle yourself.

AUSTIN: You can't tickle yourself, and so I'm not tickled by this season, because I'm tickling. [chuckles] I like to be the tickler and the tickle-ee, and in this moment I'm only the tickler.

KEITH: [crosstalk] I'm gonna say, this is your worst episode for analogies of all time. [others laugh] I hate the tickler analogy, and I really hate that we keep being called little baby birds.

AUSTIN: Okay. [all laugh] Normally! When I take—

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Please stop tickling your little baby birds, Austin.

AUSTIN: –When I take the prep out of the freezer to feed it to my precious little baby birds, I also get to eat it, but in this scenario I’m only feeding it to other people.

KEITH: Yeah. You’re only tickling the baby birds.

AUSTIN: I’m only tickling the baby birds! I’m not– [laughs] They’re not tickling me back!

SYLVIA: Wow. I hate it.

AUSTIN: But that’s– You get what I’m saying, right? It’s like– all the– [Keith and Sylvia agree] And so it ends up feeling very mechanical to me, and very dry, because I’m like– and that’s so funny, because I enjoy the stuff that we’ve done, and I can tell that it’s getting a response, and I think it’s good in an objective– or if I can try to step out of my own bias around them, like, “Oh, yeah. I think we did pretty good. I think this arc that’s coming out right now, that’s one of our best ones,” but I didn’t feel it that way, in that same– There are moments that I think hit, but it’s not the same thing as–

AUSTIN (cont’d): It’s even similar things. Go back to *Auspice* in *Partizan*, which is one of the moments where we’re like, “Oh, shit. This feels like it could go– like we could do a horror season,” or go to the *Lacuna* game in the first season of *Bluff City*, also a horror moment where I was like, “I bet we could do a horror season.” For some reason, because those weren’t full seasons in that mode, I was a little shook.

AUSTIN (cont’d): When we were doing that game and you were playing a character, Sylvi, who was going to investigate a thing, there was a degree to which I was on edge even as you were on edge in *Partizan* in that moment, because I was like, “Ehhhh, I don’t know when to pull the trigger on this. I don’t know– When’s the...” I didn’t even know when the jumpscare was gonna happen, so to speak, whereas here everything is so much more– I’m just in control because I’m the GM of a season that is inspired by horror, you know?

KEITH: You’re working in a haunted house, and so you’re not screaming.

AUSTIN: Yes!

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] I was literally about to say that.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yes! Yes! And so I’m like, “When do I go on break?” [chuckles] And that’s not– It’s a weird relationship. For whatever reason, in the sci-fi seasons I don’t get like that. Part of the reason is that– it’s familiarity and fondness and a billion other things, so... That’s not to say–

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] I think also...

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

SYLVIA: Oh, sorry. The peaks in different genres— like, when horror's peaking, it's because you're— the storyteller is telling a creepy story, and the audience is reacting. When something like a mech series that we're doing is peaking, it's a cool fucking mech fight or moment—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah. Yeah. Yes.

SYLVIA: —and everyone can go, “Oh, wow. Cool robot,” you know?

AUSTIN: Right. Exactly. We still— I still get hyped. I'm still—

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Oh, for sure!

AUSTIN: —rooting for you guys. I'm still like, “Yeah, holy shit! That dice roll was incredible. Oh, my god. I'm very excited to pick a fallout because this went bad,” or whatever. I'm still enjoying it, but it's such a different enjoyment than normal, you know what I mean?

KEITH: It's sort of like when we were talking about the beginning of the season when we were still sort of working out lines and veils stuff and I was like, “I'm totally willing to be wrong about this, but I don't think that there's anything any of you can do to scare me?” [Austin laughs] “Like, at the table?” And, to that point, we've now done a bunch of this season, and I haven't seen a lot of the response to this season, and I get the impression that a lot of people like it, and that's great. I always want people to like it. I never want to feel like the seasons are getting worse, obviously, but while we're playing it, I'm totally forgetting that it's supposed to be scaring people, because I'm just not feeling it.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] You're inside of it. You're in the haunted house, too.

KEITH: [crosstalk] To the point, even, where I've definitely been like, “Should we be turning things up?” And then, from what I'm seeing, maybe no? I don't know.

AUSTIN: People have different thresholds, I would say. Art, were you starting—

KEITH: [crosstalk] That's part of the problem, is...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Yeah, I've also felt kind of disconnected from the central audience this season, but I was very surprised when they announced who the most popular character was for Secret Samol this year?

AUSTIN: Oh, I missed this. Who is it?

ART: It's Pickman!

AUSTIN: Oh, huh! Yeah. Sure. I love Pickman.

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Fuck yeah!

ART: And I was so excited that it was a current season character. You know, not—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Oh, wait, that's the most pop— That was— You don't mean— You don't mean— [all wow] Oh, wow. That's wild!

KEITH: [crosstalk] That's awesome.

ART: No, number one overall.

AUSTIN: With a bullet! God damn.

SYLVIA: I love that Secret Samol—

KEITH: [crosstalk] Are you seeing this?

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] —is like our *Shonen Jump* popularity poll. [Austin chuckles, Keith laughs]

ART: They publish a whole list—

KEITH: [crosstalk] I don't even know how to see where that is.

ART: [crosstalk] You can see how badly I'm doing at making characters our kids want to— [laughs]

AUSTIN: That's not what that means, and you know it. Where's the list though. I gotta see it.

ART: It's on their Twitter.

AUSTIN: Okay, well, how do I— Why can't I find— It's just [@secretsamol](#), right?

ART: I think so.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yes. It is. It is. It is. Yes.

KEITH: [crosstalk] No, I just wrote "secret small". That's wrong.

AUSTIN: That's wrong. [Sylvia laughs]

ART: That's different.

AUSTIN: This is so funny. Yeah, so people who don't know, Secret Samol is a secret santa-style fanwork exchange. You can go to twitter.com/secretsamol. It is organized by [@imperialhare](#), [@quichekid](#), [@hellavarawr](#), and [@sokratesnikon](#) this year. Artwork by [@dancynrew](#). Everyone who's work's on this every year is great, and it's really fun to see how it goes. Yeah, Pickman with 32, Echo Reverie at 24, shout outs to Echo—

SYLVIA: Let's go.

AUSTIN: —Es at 23, Clementine Kesh at 22, Chine at 22, Grand Magnificent at 21, Lye Lyken at 21, Marn Ancura at 21, Cassander Berenise at 20, and Fourteen Fifteen at 10. I won't go through the whole list. I mean, part of this, of course, is lots of these characters have been in this list for years, you know? We've gotten lots of Partizan characters. We've gotten lots of COUNTER/Weight characters.

ART: Yeah, and you can also see how popular the pairings are, which, I think, goes a little more how you might expect.

AUSTIN: Yeah, this seems right. [Sylvia laughs] Yeah! Oh, you know? I'm— Some of this is surprising to me. I'm surprised... Eh, I'm not surprised— I'm surprised by order, but these amounts all seem right to me. None of these seem like— I mean, there's only one ship from this season so far in the top ten, so... You know, what can you do? We'll get there.

ART: Surely, still, I feel like the ships really, really reveal themselves in the third act.

AUSTIN: That's always the case, isn't it? Art, why did Duval want the painting?

ART: Oh, because Duval was gonna get a major advance if he got the painting.

AUSTIN: [laughs] That is exactly true. [Sylvia laughs] We never really sat down and hammered out a narrative reason for you wanting a renowned piece of equipment, right? You just got one. You just decided you wanted that beat, presumably because you wanted more power or something.

ART: Yeah, I was sick of these rinky-dink minor moves and wanted to melt people with my hands.

AUSTIN: Right. [Keith laughs] Well, we'll see how that goes. It is something, and a thing that's true is— I do feel that Duval is scared of it, and that Duval is inscrutable at times, so I think it's fun that you wound up with this weird thing, and I'm excited to see more of it soon.

[01:11:15] Question Ten: Gumbo

AUSTIN (cont'd): I think this is the second to last one. Gumbo writes in and says—

Friends at the Table gang, I've been listening on and off since 2016. Y'all got me through some awful days walking around and picking up trash as a maintenance kid, but this is my first ever time writing in. Very excited.

The Perpetual Oratorio arc was a rollercoaster of a listen, left me saying, "Holy shit," out loud by the end. The Oratorio itself struck me as very reminiscent of the Black Century of Apostolos, between the burning of mortal lives to press oneself onwards and the visuals of darkness and corrupt bodies.

Perhaps this is something you've discussed before on previous Tips at the Table or Drawing Maps episodes, but what inspires your conception of gods and divinity? Every season seems to have a new deep question on what it means for something to be divine, god-like, or whatever, and I am curious what, to y'all, defines the boundaries of that question? Is it the simple fact that such godly beings are beyond the realm of understanding for the PCs, or do you each bring your own personal beliefs about the divine to the table?

I ask both as a GM struggling with conceptualizing the gods for our campaign, and as someone rediscovering religion in my adult life via the synagogue where I live. Love the show, loving Sangfielle, and bucked to see what comes in season eight as well.

AUSTIN: Is "bucked" a thing? Anyway—

Solidarity, Gumbo.

AUSTIN: I don't know "bucked", but I believe you, Gumbo.

KEITH: I believe someone named Gumbo would say "bucked".

AUSTIN: Yeah, you know what? Yes. [Keith laughs] Absolutely. Here is the— My two answers to this one. One is, and this is the one that everybody knows already, and that everyone listening is like, "Well, this is the one that Austin's gonna say," which is like— I was raised Catholic, and that is gonna emanate through me in my relationship to [Keith laughs] Catholicism and faith and blah-blah-blah-blah-blah. That's all super important to the way I default to talking about God and gods and religion. That's not— That's in the text pretty openly all the time.

AUSTIN (cont'd): The second more important thing is it's all a metaphor for power. [chuckles] It's all a metaphor for the ways in which people relate to the things that structure our lives that are often hard to make sense of, hard to grasp, yet fundamentally material. Someone asked me once why so many of the seasons have gods that are real, instead of working in the realm of questions. There are moments in various seasons where it's not clear that the characters who worship something are actually worshipping a thing or if that worship should be left ambiguous, right?

AUSTIN (cont'd): Even going back to Heiron, "Does Samothese exist," is one of the open questions of that game, at the beginning of that campaign, "or are the Paladins— sorry, is Hadrian specifically talking to no one?" Or talking to something that isn't a god, or something else. If you go back to our headspace then, or what the show had revealed, it was not 100% clear who Hadrian was talking to, and in fact it wouldn't be for years! [chuckles]

AUSTIN (cont'd): But for me, one of the things I'm interested in is power, and power is this elusive thing that exists— that exists in material relations, social relations. It exists in the ways our lives are structured across laws, education, the way the world's economically structured, the way disability is had— All of these things that are at once real, which is to say that we can touch them and change them with our power— with our own power, but also very hard to identify and see and make sense of.

AUSTIN (cont'd): In this way, I am more interested in telling stories about power, often godly power, than I am— actually existing, than I am in like, "Oh, but it was just a fairy tale. It doesn't actually structure anything. It doesn't actually have power." The power of the metaphor— The value of the metaphor, for me, I think ends up being about that core thing, where it's about people wrangling something that's bigger than them, but is fundamentally on the same ontologically plane of existence as them, even if it's non-human, if that makes sense.

AUSTIN (cont'd): So I think that's— I had to think about this question a lot when I first read it, because I think it's very easy to default to, "Austin is just doing Catholicism." [chuckles and Sylvia laughs] But let me tell you something big about being raised Catholic. God ain't there. You cannot get God in a room. I tried. I truly tried as a kid. I was— You have to understand that I was that devout Catholic who was like, "I could become a priest, 100%," but God was not shaping the world for me in that way, and I know that there are people out there who have a different relationship with God.

AUSTIN (cont'd): I can only speak to mine— or to belief, or gods, or some sort of theological belief system. For me, I couldn't get God in a room. What I could do is see the people in rooms that actually make things change in the world, and so for me, I think it became a very easy leap from— When I want to talk about power, or when I'm talking about gods, where I naturally float to is, "How is our world actually structured? What happens there, and then how can I back-port that into a story about gods or the divine?"

AUSTIN (cont'd): And that's why there's such a wide range. It's why Divines sometimes feel like they're individuals, and sometimes feel like they are algorithms, and it's why the Oratorio doesn't seem to speak much, but kind of maybe puts a little extra pressure on— I think we mentioned this, maybe, in the very end of that arc, where Virtue can sense that there is a self to the Oratorio even though all it really does is make this music and [chuckles] consume everything, but it's not speaking the way a Divine does or the way Samothese did, and so there's a range of that, because I think that there's a— that's how power works.

AUSTIN (cont'd): Sometimes, power looks like a person who can speak, and who can say things, and who can enact laws, and sometimes it is a century of racist districting, you know? It's really different in many different ways, and so I think the breadth of the god-stuff I control reflects my loose understanding of power. I think that that's my— that's my answer.

KEITH: In another world, Austin's drawing giant robot political cartoons with labels—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Oh, my god.

KEITH: —that are like, "The Economy." [laughs]

AUSTIN: Can you imagine? It's so funny.

ART: I can't believe you came on here, and like, "Let me tell you something about Catholicism. God isn't there." That's— [Keith laughs] That's the quote for this episode. [laughs] Do these have titles?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] I mean, listen. [stammers and laughs] I thought the pull quote was something about feeding my precious baby birds, but I guess "God isn't real" is also one of them, I guess. I don't know. I should say— I wanna be clear that I arrived at that through decades and decades of really difficult work and conversation with priests and philosophers. It took me— I was so far in, in religion, when I was— I guess, what am I now? 25 years ago, I was a little boy who loved Jesus soooo much, and it took a lot of time to become something else, and it doesn't come from a place of dismissal, or... I'm not someone— I am not a New Atheist. I am not part of that weird, often Islamophobic clique. I am— Which also, by the way, directly turned into some of the worst shit on the internet, and you can draw a very direct line from those motherfuck—

KEITH: [crosstalk] Oh, yeah. Well, it's the same...

AUSTIN: It is literally the same people.

KEITH: [crosstalk] It's literally the same guys.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] It is literally— The same guys became shithead reactionaries, right? So like, thank god I didn't come into it in that way at all. When I was a 20 year old, trying to figure out what my faith was and reading texts against Saint Augustine and shit, that was coming from people who were deep in theology and philosophy, not people who were deep into contemporary anti-religion mess.

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Not from YouTube?

AUSTIN: Not YouTube, but also not Hitchens or Dawkins, right?

ART: [crosstalk] Can we have a...

SYLVIA: Yeah.

ART: Can we have a brief diversion for a second?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Please.

ART: So I didn't— I don't think I went into a Catholic church to see a service or anything until I was 29.

AUSTIN: Wow, okay.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Wow, I wish that made any sense.

ART: [crosstalk] —when I went to...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Sure, yeah!

ART: —when I went to a funeral of a family friend at a... Catholic church in Brooklyn, in a Dominican neighborhood? Dominican, Puerto Rican, you know—

AUSTIN: Primarily latinx neighborhood, sure.

ART: Uh-huh. And I was so shocked to see White Jesus there?

AUSTIN: He's a lot of places, yeah.

ART: Is that the Catholic church's official position on Jesus?

KEITH: [crosstalk] He's everywhere, yeah. Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah, dude. Yeah, dude. I don't think I— There were like three white people in my Catholic church growing up, and they—

ART: [crosstalk] And they don't— They don't regionalize that?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] —two of them came with me. Um, I don't know if they don't regionalize it around the world, but probably—

KEITH: [crosstalk] Yeah, I wouldn't say, "Nowhere's doing that." I've been to church a lot of times in my life and I've never seen anything but the exact same White Jesus.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

KEITH: In Catholic school, in Catholic high school, in churches, in the religious preschool that I've seen— that I've been to. Everywhere. He's everywhere.

AUSTIN: I bet if you go to North Africa, the Middle East, if you go to Ethiopia— the Ethiopian Catholics, I would— I would be surprised if it's White Jesus there? Sorry, I would— I would think that some of those churches probably have a darker skinned Jesus who actually looks North African and Middle-Eastern, but also I wouldn't be surprised if that was not the case—

KEITH: [crosstalk] Yeah.

AUSTIN: —if instead it was just White Jesus. If it was just Italian Jesus.

ART: People, like—

KEITH: [crosstalk] I will say, just to cover my bases, there's a lot of just gold Jesuses, like— This Jesus and this whole crucifix is all just gold.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Is just gold, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, there's a lot of that, for sure.

ART: I guess I wanna say, I've been to Catholic church as a tourist, but they don't seem to have the same iconography, you know? Like...

AUSTIN: The guy up on the cross, yeah.

ART: Yeah, there's not just all these Jesus pictures around. You go to, like... you know, big tourist-y churches, they—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Cathedrals, yeah, yeah, yeah.

ART: Yeah, they go— they go— they go grander.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Is the crucifix, is that a more Catholic thing? I haven't been to a lot of non-Catholic denominational churches.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Non-Catholic churches?

SYLVIA: Yeah, I wouldn't know.

AUSTIN: I think so—

ART: [crosstalk] It would still very much depend—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] —because— Well, so I don't wanna say hard yes, because there's, again, there's always an exception, but when you think about some of the sects of Protestantism, and you think of some of the response that— through which Protestantism grows is often about changing the relationship to iconography and wealth that the church displays. You look at someone like Cromwell, and Cromwell's sect, that is all about stamping out that style of luxury inside of the church, you know? That motherfucker didn't believe in drip at all. [all laugh] And that's why I hate him!

AUSTIN (cont'd): But no, I think that, you look at some of those reform movements and you can see that there is a move away from it, but I— it has been too long since I studied the schisms to remember if there are no Protestant Christian churches that have The Crucifix versus just a cross. So. You know. Anyway, my point is— power. That's what it comes down to for me in a big way. But I don't— Does anybody else have any religion stuff that they feel like they pull on when we hit this stuff?

SYLVIA: No, we have very similar [laughs] backgrounds.

AUSTIN: I thought so, yeah. [all chuckle]

KEITH: My— The— The— The big— The— The— The— [gives up] Yeah, that's it, basically. [Austin laughs] I didn't grow up very religious. No one on my— I mean, I have a very religious family, and it never occurred to me to really take it very seriously. I grew up going to church once a month, and then I also— I went almost— maybe not almost as much, but several times a year, I would also— My best friend was Jewish, and we went to temple with him once a month maybe, because I would just stay over at his house all the time, so I grew up— Like, I know people who didn't meet a Jewish person until their teens, or late teens— Like, just, really really really insularly Catholic.

ART: [crosstalk] If you don't live in a— If you don't live in a big enough place, you can miss the Jews.

KEITH: Yeah, but there wasn't— it's not— It was really insularly Catholic, but it's not like there were no Jewish people around.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: And... Yeah, I just remember being like, “Catholic church sucks, and temple’s alright, and all the Christians are weird, and none of the Jewish people ever got mad at me for anything. Catholics get mad at me all the time. Religion class is really interesting but it seems more like history than anything.” I don’t know, it just never really left a mark on me, even though I went to Catholic school for eight years.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: I had a really bad experience recently, which is like— I moved, and I was like, “You know, I should look and see if I like any of the synagogues around here, because I haven’t been to synagogue regularly in... 20 years,” and even that, 20— I’m being generous with myself when I say 20 years. [laughs] And I started looking at synagogues around here, and it was right after the Israel-Palestine stuff started heating up again, and I was seeing these aggressively... Synagogues that wanted to paint themselves as very progressive, very gay-friendly, very, “We’re good”, and they’re all just like, “And here’s why it’s good that they’re bombing Palestine right now,” and it was like, “Oh, well. Forget this,” so I’m back to not looking for synagogues.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Uh-huh. Yeah. Quick follow-up. Yes, Protestants tend to use an empty cross instead. There is no single clear answer, though it’s worth saying that that was not originally the case. Lutherans— Some Lutherans did continue using the cross for many years, but then as Calvinism gets brought in and as time changes, there’s a move away from using Christ on the cross, partly because of fears around idolatry— that having a particular person, versus a symbol, leads you towards idolatry, but also because of a different thematic meaning.

AUSTIN (cont’d): It’s commonly read that the Catholics focus on the suffering of Jesus versus on the resurrection, the empty cross representing the hope of the resurrection versus the suffering representing the sacrifice made, which is extremely interesting, and the thing about this stuff that ended up being useful for me is thinking about symbols and storytelling, you know?

KEITH: This is right out of— I’m like— As you’re reading this, I’m like, in my brain, one step ahead, being like, “Op. Catholic school. I remember literally all of this shit now.” Yeah.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Catholic school shit. Yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah. It all clicks back into place.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah. It totally does. I remember when all this— Although, speaking of, shout out to my tenth and eleventh grade theology teachers, who I think were a really instrument— Because I did a lot of not thinking about religion, just basically not caring.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: But my high school religion teachers, one of whom was— had a— was a doctor of philosophy of Catholicism, was— They were so casual in their faith, and so non-literal in the

Bible, that it was very— They very... They very obviously paved a way towards actively being like, “Oh, I don’t really— I don’t have to believe in this—”

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] “--to be a good person,” or something, right?

KEITH: [crosstalk] Right, yeah, yeah, yeah. Totally.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] That was the wildest shit about the education I was given growing up, was that there were particular teachers I had that did emphasize the to be a good person, you have to be at least Christian— at least “Judeo-Christian”, quote-unquote, right? Which— [phew] A term that gets— that is often used to justify a lot of really shitty stuff, or you had to be— some of them went as far as being like, “And really, you gotta be Catholic. You really— What you really gotta do is be Catholic, and that means to be a good person to your friends, who are not Catholic, you gotta get ‘em to become Catholic. You gotta turn—”

KEITH: “You think you’re gonna go to heaven without eating the body of Christ? Come on.”

AUSTIN: “Come on. What are you talking about?”

KEITH: “What are you talking about?”

AUSTIN: And that was truly what it was like, and then other people were the other thing, which were like, “Ehh,” and it helped for me because I had a number of role models who were, you know, not Catholic or Christian, you know— growing up with people who were Jewish, growing up with people who were atheists, where it was like, “Oh, my uncle Robert is chill. He isn’t a bad person, even though he doesn’t go to church anymore.” You know? [chuckles]

AUSTIN (cont’d): So that was extremely useful and important, and being in an area that was big— extremely— I grew up in primarily a black neighborhood that also had a lot of Vietnamese folks in it, and a lot of folks from the Middle East across Palestine and Jordan a lot, and that meant that I had interacted with a bunch of people from a bunch of different places, and so despite that, I was Hyper-Catholic Boy until I was a teenager, and then until college was not quite sure, and then it was in college that I came to some feelings. That’s how that goes sometimes. Anyway, that’s our answer to this question, Gumbo. I hope that that was useful. I hope that your own—

KEITH: [crosstalk] I’ll add...

AUSTIN: —experience with synagogue goes well. Go ahead.

KEITH: I’ll add one more thing, which is that in giving my answer, I arrived on the real answer to the question—

AUSTIN: Oh, sure.

KEITH: –which is, like– I guess I haven’t really done a lot of god stuff as a player in...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah, you... I would say you are the least interested in it.

KEITH: Yeah, and it really make– I mean, it– I love Divines, you know? I love all the stuff with Divines, but it’s because it speaks to me in that first-part-of-the-answer way, from 20 minutes ago when we first started talking about this, and– because like, “Oh, yeah, religion, despite being constantly around me, I’ve only ever learned the trappings of it, and never been personally invested in it,” and so it doesn’t really show up in my play, to the point where we deleted a bunch of god stuff from my playbook for *Heart*. [chuckles]

AUSTIN: Oh, right.

KEITH: Just stopped engaging. It was like, “Eh, I’m not interested in this.”

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Right, we completely moved it in a different direction so that it isn’t gods, and it is instead–

KEITH: [crosstalk] I then started doing that Aterika’kaal stuff, which may be the most god stuff I’ve done–

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] It’s the most–

KEITH: –but it doesn’t look like any of the other stuff that we’ve done, I don’t think, so...

AUSTIN: No, it’s different. It’s different, and it’s interesting for– again, especially, if you go back to it through the lens of what I was talking about before, about it being about power, and about how we can push and pull on power, and can we, and what are the ways, and blah-blah-blah, so... Interesting to think through.

[01:30:36] Question Eleven: Ko

AUSTIN (cont’d): Alright, one more question– Nope, two more questions, then we’re done. Actually, I’m gonna say– I’m just gonna read the– The– Oh, I guess, okay, no. This guess this goes somewhere else. Okay, Ko writes in–

Hey, Friends. Let me first offer a congratulations to Virtue Mondegreen, the first elect of a machine-god in a non-Divine universe season.

AUSTIN: I don’t– I don’t think Virtue’s an elect. Of all of our terms–

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] I wouldn’t– I don’t think she’d consider that either.

AUSTIN: Not elect, not candidate, not excerpt– Not excerpt, no, because this is such a different... Virtue probably feels like she's holding the leash, right?

SYLVIA: Yeah, no. I would– It's like, is– if– The Oratorio the elect of Virtue [grinning] you know what I mean?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] There we go. There we go.

SYLVIA: It's more like that sort of relationship, there.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh.

For everyone, you're so great at jumping into inter-party conflicts, how do you get into that mindset? Check-ins, lines and veils, and the X card are all great tools, but how do you all work together to make such incredible explosive disasters that are safe and fun to play as well as listen to? I'm especially interested in Keith's thoughts, because it feels like the biggest explosions, literal or verbal, come from his characters. [Sylvia laughs]
Infinite love, Ko.

KEITH: I'm just an asshole [others laugh] and the characters that I come up with are hard to be around.

SYLVIA: Yeah, my answer was also, I'm just kind of confrontational sometimes... I dunno, I kind of–

ART: [crosstalk] Trying to punch up my resume and I'm putting "incredible explosive disaster" as one of the things. [others laugh]

SYLVIA: I think because it's in a controlled setting, it's easier to do, right? I don't know if this works for anybody else, but because it's not a real thing that we're arguing about, really– There's no tangi– There's not really– Guys, I don't wanna trip anybody up, but there's not really a machine god [chuckles] that we're arguing over, you know? We have an–

SYLVIA (cont'd): There's a real easy release valve, and we're at the point where we've learned, through doing it in past seasons, how to make sure that people aren't... feeling uncomfortable, and also so we can get into the rhythm of it better. I think that plays to why they've been– why conflicts between inter-party stuff has kind of improved over the seasons that we've done, because we've become more comfortable doing it. We've become more comfortable using it as a means of in-character interaction between each other. I think that that really helps.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] I think a big technique that we use a lot, and you'll hear this not just within our party stuff, but big choices, and– I wanna say Art, you were the one who first suggested doing this at some point. I think it was a Partizan thing that we did, but maybe it was before that–

ART: [crosstalk] Fine, I'll take credit for this.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] –the notion of like, “We can always play it forward and see what we think. We can always go down this road, and then decide– let’s walk it back later,” which is something that’s available for everyone at home, if you’re listening to this, you can do this in your own games at home, but having that feel– that safety net, of like, “Oh, right. This is a game that we’re playing,” and if we as a group say– we get to an outcome that feels wrong, we can always go back and try in a different direction. There’s nothing wrong with that.

AUSTIN (cont’d): I think it’s helped me be able to be calm as a facilitator and adjudicator of this stuff, and keep from feeling too tense about it, which is good because I think that if I’m calm and tuned into it as a facilitator instead of as someone who is caught up in it, it helps keeps the table in that space too. It also means I always do my best to pause and talk through, like, “Okay, here’s what the outcomes are,” or, “Here are the outcomes we’re kind of interested in. Maybe we don’t have the specifics, but here are some vague directions,” and also, as always– Hey, this is about characters, not about players, right?

AUSTIN (cont’d): And it can get tough. There are times when it feels like someone is encroaching, and I know this from playing games, but I think for me those are the big things, and there’s general alignment, like Sylvi was saying, in a bigger way, about what our goals are. Keith or Art, as people who have both been through this a number of times with various characters, including your characters– Again, the beginning of Partizan was one of these also.

ART: Yeah, I think it’s just trying to... It’s hard, right, because you want to really be in your character and in touch with what that feels like, but you also want to be able to step back and be like, “No, this isn’t important.” And that can be a hard... I mean, it’s not like– not– You know what I mean.

AUSTIN: I do!

ART: Not “not important,” but not... personal.

AUSTIN: But we’re playing a game, and there is– Right, not personal. Right. Yes.

ART: And so, it’s tricky. Sometimes it feels... Sometimes I’m doing a less-good job of that, and sometimes I’m doing a better job at that. Like the Feast of Petina, I thought I was doing a good job of just keeping it separate in my head, like, “This isn’t...” But other times, it’s felt a little more bleed-y-over, and I’ve walked away from recordings being like, “Those motherfuckers– I’m gonna fuckin...” But in the end it’s not... it’s not personal unless– You know, don’t let it get personal, that’s important. Don’t say anything you can’t take back over made-up people in your made-up world. Make it mean something to you, but also make sure it doesn’t mean that much to you.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And also, give yourself that space. I do my best to say, “Hey, we can stop for five minutes, go get water, and chill,” but if someone at the table hasn’t said that, and you feel like you could benefit from it, you should be the one who says, “Hey, before we keep going on this, can we just take five real quick? I wanna go grab some water and just think through what my character’s thinking and try to figure out where I’m at with this.” Everybody at the table has the right to do that, and I think part of why we trust each other is because we all know that that’s a thing that we all have the right to do, and that—

SYLVIA: I think we did it during this.

AUSTIN: I think we did, too. I’m pretty sure we did a five minute break during this at some point, just to be like, “Hey.”

KEITH: [crosstalk] We did, yeah. We got, like, 80% through and then took five and then did the last 20.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yes. Yeah, that makes sense.

KEITH: Um, but what— Art used the word “important” and then changed it, but also if— We are talking about how important is it in the thing if you’ve got a character who’s putting up a big stink about something, I think the more of a stink you’re putting up, the more— In my head, I’m like, “Do I actually care about this? Is it actually— Does it even make sense for me to be upset about this, as a character?”

KEITH (cont’d): That was something during this one that I was trying to find a way in, trying to find a way for Lyke to not care, and just be like, “Yeah, let’s just go along to get along,” and I was like, “Nah, I just don’t feel like this one makes sense for Lyke,” but then, sort of, what Sylvi was saying at the beginning about... I actually can’t remember. I had it in my head, but basically, I don’t think that, in real life, Sylvi wants to [Sylvia chuckles] use a machine to take over a city—

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Yeah.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Correct.

KEITH: —and so fighting about whether or not to do that... It doesn’t— It’s harder for something like that to bleed over and be... tense or frustrating, or whatever, because I don’t feel like we’re fighting...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: I don’t feel like there’s a real-world analogue to this that we’re arguing over. It’s purely a fictional question about characters—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] And you're not arguing over, for instance, in-game resource—Hypothetically, the machine was, but contrast that to a situation where Player A is getting in Player B's way of having fun, right? Let's say one of you made a real combat-focused, and one of you made a really diplomacy-focused character, and the combat person has made all these smart ability choices and just never gets to show them off because the diplomacy person keeps fucking stopping fights before they happen, and it's like, "What the fuck— Like, I get it, that that's your character, but I really just wanna play the game—" And it's easy to imagine that becoming a bigger fight, because it's felt as an actual denial of a type of play you want [Sylvia chuckles] or an actual denial of in-game resources, or something.

KEITH: I think it says a lot about how we play games that Austin's example was it's the diplomacy character that's stepping all over what the combat character wants to do. [all laugh]

ART: "The diplomacy character is so good at diplomacy that the combat character cannot ruin it by hitting someone."

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] —by hitting, yeah, like, "Now, now, now. Don't worry about friend drawing a sword and stabbing you, that was actually... In their culture, that's saying hello."

SYLVIA: "It's a funny joke."

AUSTIN: "It's a funny— Ha-ha-ha!"

KEITH: I feel like there's thousands and thousands of people who've never had that happen in a game, because it's always the other way around.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yes. You know, well. But it does speak to us. It does. 100%, right? But I do think that the second that you're talking about... specifically the gameplay mechanism stuff can get hairy, and then the other thing is— The difference between this and the Feast of Petina is the Feast of Petina was just the end of a season, battle lines had been drawn, and there were enough points of failure ready to break in a way across literally everyone at the table that was so good and also exhausting to even think about. [laughs]

ART: If there were, like, Podcast Emmys, that's what we would've sent in, right? That would've been our...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Oh, I would've fucking sent that— I... I don't get in my own head about awards and stuff, or scale of the show. I know that we exist as the *Velvet Underground* or the *Pixies* of actual-play podcasts, and that's an honor, but— Fuckin', that episode should've won an award!

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Yeah, no, we do deserve an Emmy.

ART: [crosstalk] Where's our Hugo? Send me my Hugo!

AUSTIN: [psssh] Every day, I worry that we already did our best Hugo... You know what? Fuck! You know what, I'm good. You know what? I'm actually good. I'm gonna put this out here, I'm actually okay. I've changed my mind. Now that you've put it in that frame... [Sylvia laughs]

KEITH: We're not winning a Hugo unless we reframe the podcast as a fan of another thing. [Austin laughs] We have to— This— Friends at the Table will have to be a recap— a *Dune* movies recap show, or something.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] We're simply not -unctious enough to be— to win an award, that's all. Alright.

KEITH: Well, I think it's the only kind of podcast that they let in.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] That is true. That is 100% true. Yes.

ART: Jack won awards one year, but the awards were pretty fake.

AUSTIN: We've won awards from podcast— from smaller podcasting award show things. I'm—

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Now, be nice.

AUSTIN: Our fans have done...

KEITH: I'll spin up an award— RunButton will spin up an award show, and we'll give...

ART: If there's not trophies, the awards are fake. That's my opinion.

AUSTIN: Oh, my god. [laughs]

KEITH: I can get trophies.

AUSTIN: We can all just go buy trophies.

ART: No.

KEITH: It'll be a corrupt award show, but I can get us some [Sylvia laughs] trophies.

[01:41:42] Question Twelve: Alex

AUSTIN: Alright. Last question, from Alex.

What is each Sangfielle character's favorite food?

SYLVIA: Uh, Virtue's is blood.

AUSTIN: Good.

SYLVIA: Pretty easy answer there. Should I answer for my new guy, or leave it?

AUSTIN: Euugh... Go ahead and answer.

SYLVIA: I think it's like... I was trying to think of a good— I think that this is funny, with some stuff coming up in this arc, that he likes— he— I mean, they— he— they answer to anything.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] They answer to any pronouns, right? Yeah.

SYLVIA: I literally wrote that in their notes section.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] You did, yeah.

SYLVIA: But they like strong mint.

AUSTIN: Ooooh, that's fun. I love that. Lyke and Duval?

KEITH: Hot pep—

ART: [threatening] Sugar. With water.

AUSTIN: [exhausted] Okay, sugar with water, yeah.

SYLVIA: [crosstalk, similarly exhausted] Oh, my god. [Keith laughs]

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] That's— Okay, sure. Uh-huh. And then Keith, what was it?

KEITH: Hot peppers.

AUSTIN: Hot peppers!

SYLVIA: Ooooh!

AUSTIN: Love that. Love that! I feel like Lyke just has some hot peppers, at all— in a pocket, somewhere, at all times.

KEITH: Oh, yeah. Charred— Some nice charred peppers.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. Charred— I also imagine some pickled peppers?

KEITH: [crosstalk] Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] In a little vial, you know what I mean? A little jar?

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] I am picturing Lyke picking peppers off of [chuckles] Aterika'kall now. [Keith laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh, wow, that's wild. Yeah, okay. Great. Fantastic. Love that for us.

[01:42:56] Outro

AUSTIN (cont'd): Alright, that's gonna do it for us. As always, you can send your questions to tipsatthetable@gmail.com. We'll try to do the next one of these for the following— the arc after this, which was called “Hark! The Citadel Beneath,” next couple of weeks, probably. Hopefully, before the holidays, so look forward to that.

ART: [crosstalk] Don't be afraid to send in compliments about my great Vincent D'Onofrio impression. I mean, those are always appreciated—

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Always.

ART: [crosstalk] —never out of order. I won't be on this next Tips at the Table.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] No, but I'll forward them.

ART: —but they can read it and they'll tell me.

AUSTIN: Right, exactly. Thank you, as always for supporting—

KEITH: [crosstalk] And I'll take compliments for just anything, so...

SYLVIA: Yeah, same.

AUSTIN: You can support us at [friendsatthetable.cash](https://www.friendsatthetable.cash). I hope everyone has a great remainder of your week. That's gonna do it for us. Bye-bye-bye!