

Gathering Information 01: Adapting Playbooks

Transcriber: robotchangeling

Ali: Hello, everybody, and welcome to Gathering Information: a behind-the-scenes podcast focused on setting the table for Friends at the Table. My name is Alicia Acampora. I'm joined today by Keith J. Carberry and Janine Hawkins. This is our April 2023 episode—as well as our first episode ever, so thank you, everybody tuning in—and tonight we're going to be talking about building characters for *Armour Astir*, adapting characters for *Armour Astir*, and making last-minute decisions. *[Janine laugh quietly]* Welcome, you two.

Janine: Is this a secret callout? *[all laugh]*

Ali: It's just, you know, a shared experience.

Janine: It feels very like intervention, like you pulled me and Keith into a room, *[Ali laughs]* just like, "So, um..."

Keith: "Look, you're sucking shit. We know it." *[Janine and Ali laugh]*

Ali: It's not a callout so much as it is the thing—

Keith: It's a call-in. *[Ali and Keith laugh]*

Ali: It's a shared experience between the two of you. Like, Keith, I think that we...we had like a pre-recording that we thought was going to be released and wasn't.

Keith: Oh, yeah.

Ali: And in between that and the actual game, *[Keith: "Yeah"]* you changed playbooks.

Keith: Okay. Yes. That's true.

Ali: *[laughs]* That was a pretty last minute decision.

Keith: That is true. But, you know, I want to...I'll say this. Austin came to me *[Ali laughs]* and said, "This new playbooks is out. It's even better than your other one."

Ali: Mm-hmm. That's fair.

Keith: And I said, "Okay, yeah, let's go."

Ali: That's fair.

Keith: It's...because I'm playing the same character that I was last season, it's like, part of the trick of finding a playbook is like what playbook works the best for what you're doing, and it's not as— there's no artistry to it. It is like pure box-checking, almost. *[Ali and Janine laugh quietly]* Like, which one of these things literally functionally represents best what I was doing in another system, in another game, with its own other, you know, theoretical kind of narrative that's being told in it. And the first one Austin sent me was like, "Hey, this works really, really good for Phrygian," and I was like, "Oh yeah, this does work really good for Phrygian." And then I basically had to decide between the two, and it was sort of like, well, one of them was a little bit more mechanically what I wanted to do, like minute-to-minute gameplay wise. Like, it was a little crunchier. It was a little more robot-based. But the other one is so obviously more Phrygian, that I was like, "Eh, yeah, I gotta do the one that's more Phrygian."

Ali: And you think there's no artistry to that?

Keith: There's no artistry. No, it was pure mathematics. *[Ali laughs]*

Janine: Yeah, I was going to resist that as well.

Keith: Go for it. Okay. I'll hear it.

Janine: There is a degree of box checking, for sure, but like, I think...I experienced this with Thisbe. I also experienced this much more harshly with Signet, when we changed systems there, where like, changing systems with Signet I remember being frustrating to the degree that like, when I think about it— you know when you think about something where it's like, you were so frustrated you could cry? I don't think I was actually so frustrated I could cry, but when I think back on it, I have that feeling of like, oh, it was so hard to try and map what Signet was *[Keith: "Yeah"]* onto any of those classes, and it did involve a lot of, like...you have to look at things sideways and be like, "Well, okay, these exact skills I can't have, but what did these skills represent or what did they effectively allow me to do? How can I reframe the skills I'm being given here to still allow for that stuff?" And with Thisbe...it was the same thing, but it was much less frustrating, because I had sort of committed to like...I'm a little more comfortable, I think, reframing abilities narratively to be whatever I need them to be, but I think what I was looking at with Thisbe before Austin sent me the Incandescent was much more like utilitarian soldiery type, you know, very basic kinds of approaches. And then we found the Incandescent, and it was like, oh, this is Thisbe. This just is.

Keith: Yeah.

Janine: This is Thisbe, and this is like what I want to do. And there was enough there where I could be like, yeah, this is— she kind of had this ability, and we can kind of switch this around, and it's fine. And like, there are differences, but we don't have to look too closely at them.

Keith: If I can defend my position for Phrygian, *[Janine laughs quietly]* if you're a character whose like schtick is like...

Janine: Being a deck?

Keith: Physically transforming into like other forms and out of, you know, whatever ten or whatever official playbooks and like ten more supplementary playbooks, there's two that are exactly that but slightly different. *[Janine and Ali laugh]*

Janine: Yeah, okay.

Keith: In that scenario, I do think it's like, okay, well, I have— automatically, it's one of these two, you know?

Janine: Yeah. *[laughs]*

Keith: And then, from there, it's like, which one of these just fits better? It's gotta be one of them, you know?

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Keith: At the end of the day, it was really like, um...I don't mean selfish, but like...one of the ways that Friends at the Table can be good is if we're, you know, maximizing our enjoyment of the minute-to-minute gameplay. Some games I like more than others and the combat bits are really fun, and some games the combat bits are just like a little bit less fun. Like, I think everyone thought that the *Heart* combat was a little bit less fun than normal. I like the *Heart* combat, but that seemed like the vibe to me, was that people weren't thrilled about it, at least by the end of the season. And so, in my head, I was like—

Janine: I liked it, but I had a lot of gnarly shit, so. *[Ali laughs]*

Keith: Yeah, yeah.

Janine: So, that was...the thing— I'll be happy with your combat if you let me like rip people's guts out and stuff. *[Keith laughs]*

Ali: Wow.

Janine: Or let me, like, do crazy, you know...

Keith: I want to like combine rules and moves in a way that I do something that seems improbable. *[Ali laughs quietly]*

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Keith: Like, that is surprising.

Janine: That's very Keith to me, yeah.

Ali: Uh huh, yeah.

Keith: Yeah.

Janine: You want to always be playing your trap cards.

Keith: Right, and that's why I wanted to try and hang onto that first class, which I can't remember the name of off the top of my head, but it was another *Armour Astir* class where you transformed into your mech, and...I think from one of those *106th Astir Squadron* books that your book is from, Janine, but I could be wrong. And it was like, I had come up with this weird thing where I had totally bizarre stats, but I had higher stats when I was in my mech, and I was going to like have this weird thing where I could take my mech stats all the time and get basically like three free stat points that would've made me really, really, really good at rolls that I shouldn't have normally been good at. So I was very excited to do that, but I had to give it up for just how much better the Miscreated fit, like, exactly mapped onto what I was doing, especially with Phrygian who is not fully realized by the end of PARTIZAN. Like, I'd only done half a season with Phrygian. It kind of came on pretty suddenly, and part of me was like, "I don't know if I'm going to do Phrygian or Leap at the start of this new season."

Ali: Mm-hmm. Was there any consideration for you, in terms of like, well, it's five years later for Phrygian, so in terms of like, I want to match to what Phrygian is or how Phrygian is played before, versus what has changed for Phrygian within these last five years? Or were you just like, you know, Phrygian is a character who has a state of being, and that's what to show? More than like, you know, what I'm doing with Brnine, which is like, they've gotten a haircut [*Keith and Ali laugh*] and like have different hobbies, you know what I mean?

Janine: I think that's unfair to what you're doing with Brnine. Brnine has changed a lot. [*Ali laughs*]

Keith: Yeah, they also got a fake ID. [*Ali laughs*] Yeah, I think one of the things that's fun about Phrygian is that they're...like, one of the things about them that didn't change from the last season is that they are always changing a little bit. From literally the first like session that we had, Phrygian lost their war form. I think it was literally the first session, it was destroyed.

Ali: Oh, that's right, yeah.

Keith: So, there hasn't been a time where Phrygian wasn't coming up with new bits to do or be, and I wanted to keep doing that, which is like...it's kind of a little bit of both answer, because it's like, well, the main thing that I wanted to keep doing was that Phrygian could kind of do or be

whatever.

Ali: Right. I mean, it's a huge thing of the character, so. Phrygian is the sort of person that you have to think both ways about.

Keith: Ugh, Phrygian is so hard. *[Ali laughs]* Phrygian is— and this was agonizing, because I love Leap and I really wanted to play Leap at the start of the season, but I also knew that I really should keep going with Phrygian, but it's just so much harder to be Phrygian than to be Leap. Leap is like so easy for me to be, but Phrygian is like, I've gotta think about it all the time, like, "What would Phrygian do?" Ugh. *[Ali and Janine laugh]* I think— I would guess that Thisbe is similar. I would guess that Thisbe— I don't know, maybe I'm way wrong and Janine feels totally opposite, but Thisbe, to me, seems like a character that you've always gotta be thinking about what she would do.

Janine: So, I think, to a degree...I think a lot of this is player approach, right? Where like, I think the only character— well, no. I was going to say the only character I didn't really have to think about in that way what they were doing was Adaire, but like, that's not true. But it was just like in a different way, where like, with some of the other characters, my kneejerk reaction of sarcasm and stuff, I have to tamp down and go to something else. With Adaire, it was like kneejerk kindness that I sometimes had to tamp down *[others laugh]* and like find the other route, you know?

Ali: Oh no, Adaire's being too generous. *[others laugh]*

Janine: But like, I'm always trying to play characters that explore something or have some kind of like thesis, like some idea that has been in my head, and I just kind of want to like work through it. And with Thisbe, I've said before, it's sort of the unhealthy relationship with like work and with work structures and things. So, I've always kind of had to think about what she would do. I think the thing that does sort of push her beyond, you know, Signet or...I was going to say Es, but it's kind of a similar thing with Es, right? Where like, Es's experience is very different from mine. Thisbe's experience is very different from mine. There is like a big otherness that I have to capture but also be aware of areas where it risks treading on other things that I don't super want it to tread on, because I'm trying to do a specific thing, you know? That's where it takes a lot of processing power, I guess.

Keith: Mm-hmm. Yeah. Ali, how easy is Brnine for you?

Ali: *[laughs]* Brnine is a very comfortable character for me.

Keith: That's good.

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: Even when Thisbe's saying that Brnine is just some normie? *[others laugh]*

Keith: Ali, who's your hardest character to do?

Ali: I think there are parts of Marn that were difficult, because I think a lot of the conception for what Marn was got really bloated in terms of like trying to adapt that class into what I adapted it to.

Keith: Right.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: So it was a lot of like thinking through what Marn's actual skills would be and what Marn's actual reaction would be.

Keith: Mm-hmm.

Janine: Marn's definitely a lot more like serious than I think you normally go. *[Ali laughs]* Like, I normally think of an Ali character as being like...the character themselves isn't necessarily like bubbly, but like there is a...

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Janine: I guess you could say like a brightness to them in the way they are in the world. And Marn...

Keith: Yeah, kind of like...I don't know, laid back? I want to say laid back, but laid back also isn't quite right. *[Ali laughs]*

Janine: Yeah, it's tough to like put a—

Keith: Excited?

Janine: Even that doesn't feel quite, you know.

Keith: Yeah.

Janine: It's hard to like pin it down, but Marn is so much more like stoic.

[0:15:03]

Ali: Yeah. I'm surprised by that, because I felt like I tried to be doing nice guy with Marn, but then...

Janine: No, I think you definitely were, but...

Keith: Yeah, you were definitely nice. *[Ali laughs]*

Janine: That's the other thing, is your characters are usually pretty nice.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Fair. Well...

Keith: Except.

Ali: Except the ones that aren't.

Keith: Except the ones that aren't.

Janine: Well, yeah. But like, you know, even they—

Keith: Nice, but maybe not thoughtful. *[Ali laughs]*

Janine: I think they all have the capacity for kindness.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Sure. Sure, sure, sure.

Janine: Yeah. Marn's an interesting case, though.

Ali: Famously, the big thing with Hella was like, I want her to be evil, but I want her to like care about her friends.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: *[laughs]* And that's where the tragedy of Hella came from, but.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah. Well, but like, Brnine specifically is an interesting case, I think, in terms of like thinking about how to adapt a character from one game to another, because like I definitely had the option to be like, oh, I can try to match the playbook to what I had in...*Beam Saber? Beam Saber* is what we played in PARTIZAN?

Keith: Yep, yep, yep.

Ali: And I think *Armour Astir* has that class, where there's a mechanic-y class in *Armour Astir*

that I didn't go with.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: But it was like...I was either going to do that and play the same character for another year and a half or take the opportunity to show somebody who is like in a completely different stage in their life, and like had been nurturing—

Janine: Yeah. You've really evolved Brnine in an interesting way. *[Ali laughs]* Like, this is also the artistry, right? Is like, yeah, you can adapt the character.

Keith: Oh, yeah, for sure.

Janine: You can kind of spin them a little bit, or you can truly be like, "Well, this person is at a different point in their life. What does that look like?"

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: How does that get expressed? And it's like, well, they're a captain. They...you know? A lot of things have changed.

Ali: Mm-hmm. Yeah. It was very fun to like re-class Brnine and be like, the things that they do are different, and there will still be some tech guy stuff, but for instance, if something goes down with the ship or like if Thisbe needs some repairs or whatever, like, Hunting is probably the person who's going to do that, versus...

Janine: Yeah. You can delegate now. You've got people.

Ali: Right. Not reaching for the like toolkit as much anymore. *[laughs]*

Keith: You might not want what's back there's help, though.

Ali: Sure. *[laughs]*

Keith: That's maybe not the tool you want to be reaching for. *[laughs]*

Ali: That was also— I mean, that's really the thing with Captain— because I really thought about the— let me just look it up, because I think the class specifically had like a...

Keith: Did— okay, maybe this is too much, but is Brnine different because of Asepsis? Like, is that...like, how do you get from being kind of a...you know, Broun is kind of a controversial figure that's kind of in the middle of a lot of people's shitlists in PARTIZAN. Picks up a, you know, Divine backpack, and then, all of a sudden, is Han Solo, captain of a tier five ship with their own crew.

Ali: Okay. This is funny, because I sort of have a headcanon for this, and I want to eventually mention it on a website— not a website, an episode. *[laughs]*

Keith: It'd be really funny if you never brought it up but you had a little website!

Janine: Brnine dot com.

Keith: Truth-about-Brnine dot com. Dot info. *[Keith and Ali laugh]*

Janine: Dot info. You don't have to go into it if it's like a spoilery thing that you want to like build in later, you know?

Ali: Oh, no, no, no. It's just like, I have ideas of what Brnine's career has been, right? And I think the difference for them as a character is not that Asepsis has been around—though I'm sure it's provided benefits—but it's that they're bought in. Like, the story of PALISADE was this little piece of shit who didn't think that they could be affected by other people who like lived through a revolution and then like achieved their dream because somebody was nice to them, *[laughs quietly]* so after that was like, "Okay, I'm gonna do this thing. I'm gonna believe in the people that are around me and like dedicate myself to Millennium Break." And five years of like driving that ship around and probably just like installing those like shitty communication things that we developed in the holiday game of that.

Keith: Mm-hmm.

Ali: And then eventually Gucci being like, "Well, if you're going to go to this planet and install this thing there, you should like bring these people," and like a couple years of doing that, and then being like, "Okay, you should just have your own ship— or like, you should have your own crew, since we've had all of these years of knowing that you're not like gonna burn your license plate *[Janine laughs]* and you can get around easily," you know? *[laughs]*

Janine: Are you saying that Brnine built up the Gucci credit score?

Ali: *[laughs]* Basically. I mean...

Keith: It turns out my thing is I was trying to *KOTOR 2*-ify your character.

Ali: Oh, wow.

Keith: Like, "Hey, I'm so charismatic. I'm the main character," and it's like, you have a mind control backpack and everyone around you is succumbing to it. *[others laugh]*

Ali: No, I think it was years to months of being like, you're working completely alone or you're just doing this stupid mechanic shit.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: And then being like, oh, you're in it. Like, you're involved in this.

Keith: I'm sorry, is Asepsis a backpack? I always think of it as a backpack. I can't—

Ali: *[laughs quietly]* I know that you do, and I think of it more as like...

Janine: I don't think it is, right? *[Keith laughs]*

Ali: It's like a dozen weird bugs.

Keith: But I think of them as in a backpack. *[Ali laughs]* Like a futurey kind of backpack, like a backpack that looks like it's made out of like EVE material from like *WALL-E*.

Janine: Yeah.

Keith: You know, like...or something.

Ali: Oh.

Janine: Bugpack.

Keith: Like a very clean, white paneling.

Ali: Yeah, no.

Keith: But also it's kind of crawly inside.

Janine: Gross.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: I have not thought about this. I think that Asepsis just like hangs out in Brnine's room, and like—

Janine: Is there like a little terrarium?

Ali: Yeah, like scuttles around the ship sometimes, probably.

Keith: Okay. I've gotta mentally readjust, because I cannot stop imagining you just carrying it around everywhere in a little bag. *[Ali laughs quietly]* Maybe it's because it whispers in your ear, and so I'm like, "It's gotta have access to the ear." *[laughs]*

Ali: Oh, sure. I can see it. I can see it. *[laughs]*

Janine: Yeah, a backpack has access to the ear, normally. That's true. This is true about backpacks.

Ali: You're just thinking about Lyke too much is what's happening.

Keith: Yeah, just, you know.

Ali: You're thinking about Lyke carrying around a little jar.

Janine: No, no, it's like a camelbak. It's like one of those backpacks you have full of water for like a bike race or whatever, but the tube, instead of going into your mouth, goes into your ear.

Ali: Mm.

Keith: Yeah. Yeah.

Janine: And there's a little bug in there that's whispering.

Keith: I just think, you know, like a little creepy crawly tentacle sort of slithers out and goes next to your ear and is like—

Janine: Tentacle?

Keith: *[whispers]* “Hey, I think that maybe you should, uh...shouldn't let this person in. Shouldn't let them in here.”

Ali: *[laughs]* Yeah, that's not...

Janine: One of those tentacle bugs.

Ali: No, I think it's just...just a little housepet.

Keith: Yeah, like a weevil snout.

Ali: What?

Keith: A weevil?

Ali: What's a weevil? What's a weevil?

Janine: Oh, a weevil's a little bug.

Keith: A little bug.

Ali: Do I not know what a weevil is?

Janine: But a weevil in that game is like a little snooty bug with a snoot that you kill for meat.

Keith: Yeah, they've got their— okay, here we go. Here's the weevil with the looong nose.

Janine: They like eat flour and stuff.

Keith: Here we go. How do you...where's the little chat in here? I can't remember how to chat in the general. Oh, there we go. Open chat. There we go. There it is.

Ali: Oh.

Keith: Paste, and there we go.

Ali: There's also...

Keith: Boom, bug. Weevil bug.

Ali: Oh. Oh! That's a— okay.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: I thought you were talking about like a game character. This is a real life bug.

Keith: It's a real bug, yeah, with a long-ass nose.

Ali: Sure. No, I don't— I don't think it leaves the ship. Like, why would it?

Keith: *[sounding disappointed]* Yeah, that's fine.

Ali: That's fine. *[laughs]* Keith is disappointed now.

Janine: I mean, it's a Divine. It can just...

Keith: Yeah, I just like thinking of you carrying such a horrible thing on your back all the time.

Ali: I'm sure there will be like a mission where Asepsis is there.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: But it's more of like a ship thing now.

Janine: It can just like— you could have it in— you know, you could do like the cyber tome style, it's just like in your sleeve sometimes, like Signet's little bug friend.

Ali: Mm. Yeah, I could probably have like one of them around, and it would be like a little tarantula or whatever.

Janine: It's like in your pocket.

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: Like a Tamagotchi.

Ali: But we'll cross that bridge when we come to it, I guess. *[laughs]*

Keith: Yeah. And hopefully the bridge is pure.

Ali: Mm, mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yeah, no issues there. It's not a problem.

Keith: Hey, I'm getting an ad in the Discord. What the fuck?

Ali: Wait, what?

Keith: "Looking for something to do? Start a game or video playlist instantly."

Janine: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Ali: Oh, that's just like a new feature that Discord has.

Janine: Yeah. They built in games.

Keith: Chess in the park or...garlic phone. I don't know, i can't read—

Janine: *Gartic Phone*. That's the game I— every time we do like a big stream, I'm like, "We should play *Gartic Phone*," and then they just built it into Discord, and I don't know how I feel about that.

Keith: I've never even heard of it.

Ali: Um, we're a little off topic.

Keith: What? *[others laugh]*

Ali: And while we're not fully in episode, I guess I want to ask Janine, and we can just like go past this, but like, you weren't going to be Thisbe for a little bit and then decided...

Janine: Yeah. I don't know if I want to go too much into that, because there's still some like ideas on the table.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Janine: But I definitely like had some thoughts about like...you know, this also came up where I know some people were surprised that I picked Thisbe up again at all, and it's like, I think, important to, you know, she didn't— you know, she learned where the planet she wanted to go to was, and she was part of sending people to that planet, but she doesn't get to go there. It's not safe for her to like— she's worried about bringing heat there, you know?

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Janine: So she still does want to go there and stuff, but I was—

Keith: Robotic Moses.

Janine: *[chuckles]* I was for a bit, like, not...not sure where I wanted to start off this season, I guess, and if I wanted to sort of try a different approach or something. I really like playing Thisbe, but also, Thisbe...you know, Thisbe has her own unique challenges to play, and part of that is, as in the recent downplay we recorded, where two separate people are like— or three, I guess. Many people tried to be like, "Hey, Thisbe, let's hang out," and Thisbe's like, "I will stand here. Thanks." *[Ali laughs]* And it's hard. Sometimes I do want to play a character who I can like manipulate a little more. The rules, I guess, for playing Thisbe are just sometimes not conducive, I think, to what we expect from certain interactions like going to an arcade.

Ali: *[laughs]* I mean, that was perfect. Thisbe didn't have to behave any differently.

Keith: I mean, to be fair to Thisbe, you know, Phrygian is probably the second least likely to like get into it socially in the group.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Keith: And so, the first downtime thing of Thisbe and Phrygian trying to interact was just, like, two characters being like, "Why would we interact? We don't need to interact to do this." *[Ali laughs]*

Janine: I mean, so, I think there is actually...for a while, I felt bad that I couldn't do more in that scene or that I felt like I couldn't do more, but the more I think about it, the more I kind of like it, where it's like...

Keith: Yeah, I had the same thing, yeah, for like 15 minutes.

Janine: Right? Because Phrygian exists in this space where people are often scared of that whole situation or they don't know how to react or like, you know, even people who are on your side, we've talked about like, there's a lot of mistrust of the Branched. There's a lot of like weirdness.

Keith: We had people pull out of the Millennium Break project over Phrygian's involvement.

Janine: Yes. Exactly.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Janine: But, to Thisbe, that doesn't really matter, right? To Thisbe, Phrygian is just...like anyone on the crew, their deal is a little bit different than everyone else's, and it's, you know, whatever. And Thisbe, for her part, also can be really intimidating. Like, she's very big, and the contexts in which people are aware of what she does vary wildly, right? Some people know her as like a big farming robot. Some people have probably seen her like put her entire body through someone's mech or something. So I think she probably also does not have a lot of people just being super chill and wanting to hang out, and the fact that both of those characters could just like do a thing and it was just fully unremarkable to each of them is, I think, interesting. It's one of those kinds of scenes where it's like, it would play better in a TV show or something. I think you could get more like subtle cues in there than it does in audio, but I think it was still an interesting moment, in that sense.

Ali: There's a couple things I want to talk about with what you said here, in terms of like...first of all, I'm so glad Thisbe is back. I think that like...

Janine: Me too.

Keith: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Just from what we've seen so far and just like thinking of the texture of this show as a sequel, sort of being like, "The gang is back together, but there's some asterisks," has been really fun, just because like, you know, Thisbe is also different from last we saw her.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Keith: It would feel really hard just numerically to feel like the gang is back together if any less of the gang was back together.

Ali: Sure. *[Ali and Janine laugh]* Or like, I think Leap would've changed— like, Phrygian being back over Leap is a really interesting thing, because Phrygian felt like a new character then, right?

[0:30:04]

Keith: Yeah. Yeah. Even though Phrygian...when I think about it, Phrygian was really in like 30 episodes.

Ali: Right.

Keith: Or something.

Ali: Yeah, and I guess like...

Keith: Well, half of 30 episodes.

Ali: Yeah, and like, by the end of it, I think Broun and Thisbe had spent more time with Phrygian than they had Leap because of the weird split.

Keith: Yeah.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Keith: But when, you know, when everyone is spending time with Leap, the players are spending time with a more familiar Keith character.

Ali: Right.

Keith: And so Leap feels, I think, familiar right away [*Ali laughs, "Sure"*] to you all and to listeners, which is why he's so easy to play for me.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Keith: Without, I think, feeling too similar to other characters, I think. I don't think that Leap is like just another, you know...

Ali: Keith guy.

Keith: Yeah, another Mako or something.

Ali: [*laughs*] There's definitely like, of the— if you think of like the...I guess Gig is even in this, the like Fero— Fero? It is Fero.

Keith: Yeah.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: I felt like I emphasized the wrong syllable there, but...

Keith: Fer-OH. *[all laugh]*

Ali: But the like Fero/Mako/Gig/Leap cauldron or whatever. There are still significant differences between the four of them that like...

Keith: Oh, yeah. And for a while I was insecure about Mako and Gig— sorry, Mako and Fero being kind of similar, and then when we did Gig and then I went back to Fero again...

Ali: Mm.

Keith: It sort of like...I sort of realized how different each of them were from each other. Like, it was something that I was insecure about, and then, the longer you play them, the more differences there are.

Ali: Right.

Keith: And then, also, I think the more you dig into similar kinds of things, the more specific you can get, you know, that creates its own sorts of differences.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Keith: I don't feel— that's not something that I feel insecure about at all anymore.

Ali: Fair. Good. I'm glad. *[laughs]*

Keith: Thank you.

Ali: But onto the like...more to the familiarities between Thisbe and Phrygian, I guess, the other point that I wanted to make to Janine—in terms of like Thisbe resocializing and things like that—the thing that I feel like is super interesting about Thisbe right now is like, she's a very anxious character? Like, a lot of what you've brought in is like some of her worries about like, "How is me being here going to affect the people around me?"

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Ali: And things like that, where like, "What ways am I making or adding danger to a situation just by being in it?"

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Ali: But I also think about like... *[sighs]* I can't remember why I looked this up, but I was thinking

about when you had introduced Thisbe and said like, the story you want with her is not like, “I want her to feel like she’s a human.” You’ve recently said that you think that Thisbe understands humans but is not coming into the like, “oh, the thing that she wants is personhood,” in that way.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Ali: *[laughs]* Despite Brnine being like, “We’re buddies now.” But I guess, to that point, that’s something I’m curious with how you think of Phrygian, in terms of how Phrygian interacts with people and how much...like, Phrygian wants to be a room sometimes. *[laughs]*

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: And the other characters don’t have access to changing in that way. Whereas, for Thisbe, I think like, as Thisbe becomes more of like “a member of the crew,” quote, unquote, or like...what was Thisbe’s last whatever *Beam Saber’s* hook was? It was like, “Broun lies to me, because they think I’m a person”?

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: *[laughs]* Like, how much—

Janine: I should— I think I clarified at the time also that it’s like...there’s like a bit of a tangle between: Thisbe doesn’t think of herself as a person. Everyone else does. It’s not about making her character come to be more of what she would consider a person, but maybe the highest thing would be getting that character to acknowledge that, as she is, she is a person. It’s like...so, it’s tricky, because I want to make it clear that we think of her as a person. You know, she...there’s like no question about that, but she doesn’t see that. But I think she...I mean, she absolutely classes Phrygian as a person. Like, you know, she wouldn’t say that Phrygian is like her. But also, you know, just acknowledges, like, yep, sometimes a person can be a room.

Ali: It’s the truth. It’s the truth.

Keith: But not a Thisbe.

Ali: Well, I mean, and that’s the— like, Thisbe has access to another mode of thinking, right? Like, we think of Thisbe as a person, in terms of like, oh, this is a living object that I should respect and has agency and yada yada.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Whereas Thisbe is like, “Oh, sure, but also I’m Thisbe, *[Janine: “Yeah”]* and like, the way that I think of myself is allowed to be categorized differently.”

Keith: Mm-hmm.

Janine: And that's like, you know, baked into her. She was manufactured and programmed. Like, she is, in a lot of ways, limited by that framework, and that framework that she was imbued with doesn't want her to think she's a person, you know?

Ali: Mm.

Janine: It's not helpful to have an army of, like, robots that think they're people. It's helpful if they behave like people, but...

Keith: But the way Thisbe is can, you know, join a rebellion.

Janine: Yes.

Keith: Make the choice to like go back to fighting a war [*Janine: "Yeah"*] that doesn't really interest...and is even like antithetical to what she'd rather be doing.

Janine: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I mean, she's...

Keith: Which is a very, you know, person thing to do.

Janine: She's definitely like capable of making choices, right? Like, she's...but she would probably frame it as, like, she is taking the information she's given and making the choice that she believes would be most desired of her or whatever.

Keith: Yeah. Yeah.

Janine: You know, she has a way to frame that choice, but it is choice. Like, it's...

Keith: It's one of the most interesting things about Thisbe is how she behaves according— like, what behaving according to her programming lets her and doesn't let her do.

Janine: Yeah. I mean, again, I think it's like it lets her do a lot of things, but there's this framework by which she sees and understands stuff.

Keith: Uh huh.

Janine: And like, that's where the growth tends to be, is in exploring that framework and is like...

Keith: Yeah. Especially like, we—

Janine: You know, in some ways, like finding ways to justify the thing that she wants to do without acknowledging that she wants to do a thing. [*Ali laughs*]

Keith: Yeah, yeah. The thing that I think is funny about Thisbe and is really fun, like, especially, you know...especially now versus in PARTIZAN. Like, it was definitely something you could see when PARTIZAN was coming out, a little bit in the world and also a lot in fiction, but especially now, like literally in the world, like we have robots that aren't people—or, you know, computer programs that aren't people—that sort of are made to act like people but couldn't ever have any sort of independence of idea or thought that Thisbe had.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Keith: Thisbe is sort of like the exact opposite of like ChatGPT. *[Ali laughs]*

Janine: Yeah. Yeah.

Keith: Like, literally the exact opposite.

Janine: Yeah. She hasn't been fed the thousands and thousands and thousands of examples of how to sound, you know, a certain way.

Keith: Right, right. Where that, you know, maybe— I can't— I won't speak for how you think of how Thisbe is manufactured or whatever, but sort of what you were saying a minute ago, where it's like, you know, whoever manufactured Thisbe doesn't want an army of robots that all think that they're people.

Janine: Yeah.

Keith: And so she won't think that she's a person. Meanwhile, ChatGPT is very willing to front as if this thing thinks that it's a person. *[laughs]*

Janine: Yeah. Yeah.

Keith: Like, and do so in order to achieve the exact sort of control that Thisbe doesn't have over herself.

Janine: Yeah. I think there's also something to be said for like Thisbe not thinking of herself as a person but also not being able to present herself in a way that would too readily convince other people—in her time period, I think, in particular, when she was originally manufactured—that she was anything more than a tool. You know, it's...Thisbe is depressing this season, y'all.

Ali: Uh huh. *[laughs quietly]*

Keith: Yeah, I do— that is funny. I wonder if there's...

Janine: Last season was the smash stuff up season. Now...

Keith: This is the sad robot season?

Janine: Little bit.

Keith: Yeah, I wonder if there's people who interact with Thisbe that don't know who Thisbe is who are just like not sure what is going on there. I bet it happens.

Ali: Yeah, I mean, it is a really interesting point of friction to have this story arc, I guess, of like this...well, who has like literal limits to how they'll interact with people, because like, Thisbe is not a social character, as you said.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Ali: But also like has all of these social considerations...is like very fascinating.

Janine: Yeah, and like, it's...you know, she's not a social character, but also, you can find evidence that she has the capacity for it, right?

Keith: Oh yeah.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Janine: Like, I sort of-- I deliberately compared the Twill to the plants she was taking care of, but you know, I didn't want it to just be because they do plant stuff.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Janine: It is also just like, she has spent a bunch of time nurturing things, and like, it's a thing she was built for. And like, is that really that different than socializing? Than being, you know, having relationships? It's like, in some ways, yes, but in other ways, you know, it's just like a different kind of cultivation. It's a thing that she would absolutely be capable of if she, you know...I guess what I'm getting at is just like so much of it is in how she perceives things. *[sighs]* Yeah, it's tough. You were right before, Keith. Thisbe is hard. *[Ali laughs]*

Keith: Thisbe's hard. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, Thisbe is way harder than Phrygian, I think.

Janine: Yeah.

Keith: I couldn't do Thisbe.

Ali: Well, I mean, I'm curious for these same questions for Phrygian, though. Like, for Phrygian, is some of their sociability and things like that just assimilation? In terms of like, "I am a

Branched. These people don't understand me. I am othered in this like extreme way, so, you know, I should try to hang out and I should try to like mirror some of the things that I see.” Or like, in the way that Phrygian likes to be a certain sort of room, does Phrygian also consider, like, “Oh, this is the sort of like person that I would want to be, too”? Like, I'm presenting myself as like a Han Solo type, versus a...not that Phrygian is a Han Solo, but you know what I...

[laughs]

Keith: Yeah, I...

Ali: How much do you think that Phrygian thinks about their own personality, for instance? And like, what is that...?

Keith: I think that Phrygian is interesting. There is a slight parallel narratively with Thisbe. I think there's more parallels other places, but there is a narrative parallel where Phrygian spends a lot of time like thinking about, you know, the specific reason why they're in Principality space, which was like as a scientist and to do research that—uh, correct me if I'm wrong, anybody—I think ended up sort of being solved on its own, because they were researching like the Valence god.

Ali: Oh.

Keith: But their whole research team died or became a villain. *[Ali laughs quietly]* And so, now they're sort of fighting this war, sort of, you know, having taken...made the executive decision that like, “Well, the best thing I can do is essentially be a terrorist,” you know, to sow discord, you know, behind enemy lines. So like, that is...I think Phrygian is in a very serious situation, like, has taken it upon themselves to go from being a scientist to a terrorist in order to, you know, support this war that they don't really like fighting but that I think the majority opinion or at least a plurality opinion is that the way to stop the war is to win it, because it is a defensive war on behalf of the Branched. I think it's a very serious situation to be in, and I think that that colors a lot of how Phrygian approaches people, which is like an active diplomatic mind to have people like them and have people not be afraid of them, because, one, they will be the only Branched they will have seen in their life. That is almost 100% going to be true. And, two, the more people like them, the more they can do here in the space that they're kind of stuck in. And if the Millennium Break thing doesn't work out and they get caught, you know, they're dead. Or even if the Millennium Break thing does work out and some percentage of people in it say, like, “Okay, now let's deal with this Branched...”

[0:46:11]

Janine: Yeah.

Keith: Like, they're dead, you know? Like, this is a...they're like threading a needle, sociopolitically, I think.

Ali: Yeah, that's interesting. I guess I've never...I mean, like, your hooks speak to a lot of that,

right? and I think your hooks are really interesting. But there's definitely like...I think of Brnine as like bought into Millennium Break.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Whereas, it sounds like, with Phrygian, it's a little bit less of like believe in the cause or whatever...well, Phrygian believes in the cause, but like, the...

Keith: Right.

Ali: The sort of ends there are so much different, because the battle that Phrygian is fighting is such a different thing.

Keith: Yeah, I think in a vacuum, Phrygian is like, you know...this wouldn't be their phrasing, but would be like, "Yeah, right on," or whatever. *[Ali laughs]* I think that some of the proposed, you know, ideals of Millennium Break are aligned with what they believe, but it is kind of more about like: "I think that if the Principality is sufficiently weakened, the Branched could win their war against the Principality, and if, by helping weaken the Principality, I can get this new regime in charge and they're not so warmongering, even better."

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Keith: Because, yeah, the war they're fighting isn't about winning it for the Principality, it's about winning it for the Branched.

Ali: And then, I guess, the...you think of Phrygian as stuck, though, but like, if they had another option, it would be still fighting the Principality but with the Branched.

Keith: Um, I don't know. I haven't...I've sort of considered that, you know, that they're largely stuck in that it's really, really difficult and expensive to get from where they are to their home.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Keith: But that it doesn't matter, because they haven't tried to find a way back. They know that it would be difficult, and they've just decided, like, the thing to do is to, you know, stay here. My team is gone. The science stuff didn't work out. Let's blow up a building. *[Ali and Janine laugh]*

Ali: This— you know, there's a little bit of...I didn't realize this big overlap between Brnine and Phrygian which we should explore one day. But I do think that's a really fun thing of the setting, especially with PALISADE, where it was like, Broun at that time was like, "I got laid off in a town that I didn't grow up in, and I can't leave here, and I'm just gonna become jokerpilled." *[Keith laughs]* Like, that was who Broun was.

Keith: That's funny. Yeah.

Ali: And like, their whole goal was just like, “I have to get the fuck out of here.”

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: And then like, that’s why so much of the transformation of Brnine has been trying to see something that’s like, this person had the opportunity of their lives. Like, did they blow it, or are they going to try to be this other thing? And like, that’s what this season is going to be about, I guess.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: But like, the... *[laughs]* I do love just like, “Oh, I’m stuck here, so I might as well be a terrorist.” Like, that’s real shit. *[Keith and Janine laugh]* Like, sometimes you just can’t afford the plane ticket.

Keith: Yeah. Yep. This is why Phrygian was rolling for the terrorist ending of PARTIZAN.

Ali: Oh.

Keith: Was like, you know, this is like, I have no stakes in deescalation. That wouldn’t do anything for any— I don’t think Phrygian believes that deescalating, you know, Millennium Break to being a sort of political party or whatever the option two was would...I don’t think that that held anything for them sort of ideologically either, but then it was like, you know, it benefits them none. It doesn’t do anything to help their position.

Ali: Right.

Keith: Better that there’s a civil war than that, you know, there’s like the new Democrats or whatever. The Green Party gets, you know, a big electoral win.

Ali: Right, yeah. I guess that’s something we don’t talk about enough that is so important in terms of like making the war seem like it’s on this— like, it’s not even a global scale. It’s like a galactic scale, obviously, where it’s like, the things that we spent all season fighting for are completely insignificant for Phrygian, because *[Keith: “Oh, yeah”]* where Phrygian is from, this whole other thing is happening, and like the fist extends that far, right?

Keith: Yeah, the war, the Branched war is, you know, many orders of magnitude larger than this war. Like, it’s, you know, battles that are whole solar systems, you know, regularly.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Keith: You know. Versus PARTIZAN was like a country-sized moon.

Ali: Basically, yeah. *[laughs]* But an important foothold in a, you know...

Keith: Right, yes, yeah. You know, a very important, you know...

Ali: Uh huh.

Keith: It was the Washington D.C. of moons, but...

Ali: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Keith: Well, mm...what's a better...? It's the...I don't know.

Ali: Oh, you're trying to think of a better city for...?

Keith: Yeah, you know, it's the Northern Ireland of moons? It's...

Ali: Uh...yeah...

Keith: It's like some weird thing. It's like some weird kind of moon.

Ali: I guess if– *[Keith and Ali laugh]* If it was like Northern Ireland in a time where, like, getting back Northern Ireland would like really fuck up the British Empire.

Keith: Right.

Ali: Then, yeah, you know. But not even really fuck up the British– like, you know, the Curtain's doing all right. The Bilats...

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: The Bilats are managing.

Keith: I think everyone that's doing the war right now is hoping– the hope is that like something small will spark into something big. That's, I think, the dream.

Ali: Mm.

Keith: I think. I think that's what the dream is.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: Maybe the dream is just, "We might as well just do this. *[Ali laughs]* We're already in it. We might as well just keep doing it." I don't know. Maybe no one has delusions that, uh...

Ali: Mm...

Keith: That, you know, that there'll be a real flashpoint. But there could be. I don't know. I don't know. I genuinely don't know.

Ali: Yeah. I think some of the trouble is the conflicting dreams.

Keith: Yeah. I don't know, and I think that Phrygian has the luxury of not needing to think too hard about it, because they're in regardless.

Ali: Oh, right, yeah. Yeah, whereas Thisbe has the thing of like, "This isn't– this isn't what I was made for. I wasn't even supposed to be here today." *[Keith laughs]*

Janine: I mean, it's...it is a similar thing, though, right? Because it's like, if I'm not here, then where do I go?

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Janine: And maybe the motivations for like, "Where do I go?" are a bit different. Thisbe is not particularly worried about getting killed.

Keith: Yeah.

Janine: But is worried about getting other people killed. I don't think Thisbe has any conception of her own mortality.

Keith: If Phrygian wasn't in Millennium Break, they would probably be at like the capital trying to assassinate someone.

Ali: Wow.

Keith: Yeah. Who? I don't know. *[Janine laughs]*

Ali: Yeah, and then what? You know? *[laughs]*

Keith: Uh, you know...it would be like a very wacky game of *Crusader Kings*.

Janine: All you gotta do is become a room. Wait for the person to walk into the room.

Ali: Mm.

Janine: Then the room collapses. It's an accident.

Ali: Wow.

Keith: *[laughs]* I'll read one of Phrygian's moves for this here that I don't have. "At the beginning of a sortie, you may assume the form of someone you're closely familiar with. Gain advantage to pass yourself off as that person and to avoid suspicion of your disguise. This transformation lasts until you use The Beast Within, and you can't use this move again until you do." So, that's basically...to me, that's an infiltration and assassination move.

Ali: Wow.

Keith: You know, Phrygian maybe—

Ali: Fingers crossed we see it.

Keith: Phrygian would maybe try to kill and then assume the identity of some governor or something.

Ali: I guess reading moves brings me back to another thing. While we're on it, we should just say really quick: we're talking the game that we've been playing, *Armour Astir: Advent*, obviously, by Briar Sovereign, which is at weregazelle.itch.io, but the playbooks that you've been using is...Phrygian is from *Strangers in the Night* by Yuri Runnel, and that's yurir.itch.io.

Keith: Mm-hmm.

Ali: And then...

Keith: And August Orion.

Ali: And August Orion. And then Yuri also wrote the book that Thisbe is from, which is of like a trio of playbook sets, which is the *106th Astir Squadron*, specifically *The Final Mission*. But in terms of like...I guess we've spoken a little bit about like measuring— like, the other classes you were considering and measuring those. Are there like moves that you have your eye on, in terms of like, oh, you know, the arc of who I want to see my character be this season is going to be determined by like which of these I'm going to take? Because I feel like I have a little bit of that, but I'm curious on like where you stand and how you feel, like when you consider a playbook as a whole in that way, in making the decisions of one or the other. Is it just like, "Oh, this is what looks the coolest," or is it like, "Oh, I can kind of see a pathway here"?

Keith: Uh, just to— the Shifting Self, the move that I just read, that is definitely something that I'm going to take *if* I end up doing a lot of b-plot with you.

Ali: Ooh, okay.

Keith: Because the next time that we play...I don't know even if you know this, but I'm going to be doing b-plot with you.

Ali: I think that I heard that this is going to happen, yeah. I'm very excited for it.

Keith: And, you know, it'll be fun to see how combat goes, like, with just three on.

Ali: Mm, mm-hmm.

Keith: And they...I'll say it: they're not that well specced for combat.

Ali: *[laughs]* Are they not?

Keith: Uh, they have really no range at all.

Ali: Oh, yeah, they probably— well, they'll have the Blue Channel, which has a sniper on it.

Keith: Yeah, that's true.

Ali: And we'll be able to apply some moves that'll help them out.

Keith: Yeah. But Thisbe, I don't think that you have a ranged attack.

Janine: I mean, I would just add the module for it.

Keith: Okay, you can add a module. Okay.

Janine: Because I have modules? Yeah, I can add Quintessence Cannon One, which is ranged/ruined, hidden, and limited.

Ali: Wow.

Keith: Yeah. And then Cori has like...her really good weapon is melee. Oh, no, two melee, has two melee. And then Figure has like one melee and then two sort of kind of eh ranged weapons, like medium ranged weapons.

Ali: Sure. Sure. Well, we'll just have to see how it goes. *[laughs]*

Keith: Yeah. Yeah.

Ali: I believe in them. I'm sure it'll be fine.

Keith: I'm sure it'll be fine.

Janine: I do also have a sonic mortar.

Keith: Ooh! Cool.

Janine: Which is ranged, versatile, reload, drain.

Ali: Ohh.

Janine: Which is my stand-in for— remember when Thisbe used to scream a lot?

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Ohh.

Janine: That's how I adapted the scream.

Ali: Okay. Perfect.

Janine: I was not going to leave the scream behind.

Ali: Okay, yeah. Well, I'm glad.

Keith: But yeah, I'm very excited for b-plot, and if that ends up being something that I do a lot, I think Shifting Self is like a really good pick for that. The sort of opposite of that is, um...oh, maybe I'm thinking of...I may be thinking of...oh, yeah, here we go. *[chuckles]* This is one that I might do that I'm like, this will really change Phrygian and would have to be something that is explained narratively, because I think it goes against some of what Phrygian has said about himself.

[1:00:00]

Ali: Mm.

Keith: Terror of the Deep: “Your transformation is horrifying. When you use The Beast Within, everyone who can see you takes a risk, including allies. Give up a hold to shield one person from the risk.”

Ali: Ohh.

Keith: So, the thing that is so amazing about that move: it does not take tier into account. I can give risks to tier 5 enemies, but I give a risk to everyone, to literally everyone, so...

Ali: Oh.

Keith: So, I could theoretically, you know, damage every single ally *[laughs]* in order to give, you know, the enemies a risk, and that's, I think, a rough— you know, also just like, literally looking at

you is terrifying people to the point of, you know, emotional damage. *[Ali laughs]* I think that's tough.

Janine: Yeah, this is...you're playing Es style, at that point. That's...

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: Yeah. Yeah. And I don't think Phrygian is like that. I don't think Phrygian like wants to...you know, there's a reason why they walk around looking mostly like a person.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Yeah, that is interesting, though. Like, I...yeah, and I guess the feeling you have is like, "the game will take me there." Like, "If it feels like this is the choice that Phrygian is going to make, then I'll take this move?"

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: Yeah, for sure. So, those are the two that I'm like on the fence about. Shifting Self and Terror of the Deep are like...the other ones that I want, I either know I want them or I know I don't really want them, but those are the ones where I'm like, the game will either bring me there or not.

Ali: That's fascinating. Yeah, I definitely have...there's like...I guess I can also read them out, but there's two moves here where it was like, this move is a Brnine move, and this move is a Broun move.

Keith: Ooh.

Ali: And like, when I get a move, I am going to have to make a decision about like, *[Janine laughs quietly]* is this a back slip or like something different? Or am I just going to take both of them, because they're fun? *[laughs]* The...I should just say what I'm thinking about, which is one of them is Born Leader: "You lead a sortie with advantage and give the crew confidence when they plan and prepare. Figures within the cause lean on you for strategic advice. To some degree, their successes and failures during the conflict turn can be attributed to your guidance." And then the other one...I think it's going to be obvious which is which. The other one is Surprise Requisition: "When you dispatch supplies to another character or reveal something extra you had them deployed with all along, roll plus crew." And then there's just, on a plus 10, you choose all of these different things. But it's either like, oh, people literally trust you more, or like, you snuck some shit onto their thing, *[all laugh]* and now you're just like, "Well, you deal

with it.”

Janine: That’s very funny.

Ali: And like, that is, you know, the versions of a person Brnine can be right now.

Janine: All I’ll say about Thisbe is that I’ve been looking at other playbook moves to bring in, because I want it to get weird.

Ali: Ooh!

Keith: Yeah, that’s something that I also...I need to look at other playbooks to, like, get a feel.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Keith: But I’m interested in that also.

Janine: There’s a couple in particular that I’m like piqued by, so we’ll see.

Ali: Cool. I’m glad. I think this season has been going really well so far. *[laughs quietly]*

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: We’re very early, so...

Keith: I got into— I know that— not to brag.

Ali: Mm.

Keith: I know that some people— you know, we’re starting a new season. That provokes some anxiety. You know, everyone wants to do well. I feel like I made a big mistake, because we finished the first episode, and I was like, “Ah, that was the first episode. I forgot to act like it was the first episode.” Like, it didn’t even occur to me... *[Ali and Keith laugh]* And we finished it, and I was like...you know, it was just such a natural feeling episode, the first session, and I was like, “Oh, I should have done something, you know, befitting of a season premier.”

Ali: Oh. Well...

Keith: But oh well. I still think the episode turned out great.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: I one-shot those two guys. *[Janine laughs quietly]*

Ali: Right. What's better than a...you know, that's a premier.

Keith: Yeah. The PARTIZAN premier was hard to beat. Or, my side's session, for me, was like one of my favorite first sides.

Ali: Oh, didn't you like immediately try to run away or something?

Janine: Uh huh.

Keith: Yeah, me and Sylvi immediately tried to break free. It was so good! *[Ali laughs]* Oh, it was so good.

Ali: Yeah. I mean, you gotta play honest, right?

Keith: Mm-hmm.

Ali: And that's, you know.

Keith: In my head...I don't know if anyone else spent the early 2000s watching a lot of *Survivor*. *[Ali and Janine laugh]* No?

Ali: No.

Janine: I watched that first season, but I kind of fell off.

Ali: This is such a thing about you. Aren't you a *Survivor* guy?

Keith: No. Well, I have a lot of *Survivor* touchstones, but I really only watched the first five seasons.

Ali: Okay, that's so much? *[laughs quietly]*

Janine: More than most people.

Keith: Well, I was a child, and my mom watched it.

Ali: Okay. Fair, fair, fair, fair, fair, fair, fair.

Janine: Okay.

Keith: So, I was like 9 to 14.

Ali: Okay.

Janine: So, you're a *Survivor* guy in the way that I'm a *Coronation Street* girl.

Keith: Yes. Yeah. *[Ali laughs]*

Janine: Okay.

Keith: Or the way that I'm a *General Hospital* guy.

Ali: Oh, yeah.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Keith: But yeah, I watched seasons two through six, I think, of *Survivor*. And the third season, I believe, there's this— this is like an all time touchstone for me. I think about this all the time. It always has informed almost everything I do, in life and in *Friends at the Table*.

Ali: Wow.

Keith: It was like a pirate-themed season. Like, every season had a very, very light veneer of theme, and the second or third season's theme was that they were pirates, and there was this guy Rupert on one of the teams, and he was immediately my favorite, because in the first episode, they get like a little bit of money to go buy supplies or something at a shop, and one of the team like left all their stuff by the crew to go look around for supplies, and Rupert stole all their stuff and was like, "Hahaha, we're supposed to be pirates!" *[Ali laughs quietly]* And so they just had double of everything, and the other team had nothing. They had nothing. It's one of my all time favorite television moments, to this day. I've never forgotten it. *[Ali laughs]* And that is what, you know, motivated that first episode in *PARTIZAN*, was just like, you know, right out the gate, we see a move, we gotta take it. We just gotta take it right away.

Ali: Uh huh. We're supposed to be pirates.

Keith: We're supposed to be pirates. Holding up like ten pairs of shoes. *[all laugh]*

Janine: God.

Keith: Oh my god. It was really good. Ugh. He got robbed. He came in like third. He got robbed.

Ali: Oh, really.

Keith: Yeah, yeah, he got robbed.

Ali: That's too bad.

Janine: I feel like he was the— I think I remember that season, because I feel like that name

rings so many bells. Was he like the first person they really cast as a villain? Because this was so early in...

Keith: Um...he was— no, he was like—

Janine: Or was he like a fun trickster god?

Keith: He was a face. He was like, everyone loved Rupert.

Janine: Okay. Okay.

Keith: Yeah, he was like...one of the reasons he got robbed was because he was like very nice, and he played the game, but he wasn't a dick, [*Janine: "Mm"*] and he kind of got ganged up on at the very end, I think.

Ali: Ohh.

Janine: Yeah.

Keith: These are old memories, though.

Janine: Yeah, this was like 20 years ago. [*Ali laughs*] Sorry, it was.

Ali: Yeah. No, no, I believe it, yeah.

Keith: It was. It was, yeah.

Ali: And sometimes, you know, you're playing the game, and you're not...you get outgamed on a show like that.

Janine: Yeah, sometimes you're not there to make friends. [*Ali laughs*]

Keith: You're not there. Yeah, you're there to steal all your competitors shoes and wear a tie dye shirt.

Ali: Oh, what's better than that?

Janine: And now, 20 years later, we have *Milf Manor*.

Ali: Gosh. Yeah, we do.

Keith: Downhill, I think.

Ali: [*laughs*] Yeah. Yeah, we could've stopped some of the dominoes along the way on that one,

I think. Speaking of tie dye shirts, any fashion plans for the season? *[laughs quietly]* I should just ask this on every episode.

Keith: Sorry, what was it?

Ali: Fashion plans? Anything—

Keith: Fashion plans.

Ali: Fashion plans, yeah.

Keith: Um...

Ali: We're about to go to a party. You better be thinking about this.

Keith: Yeah, it's funny, because this is like a harder one for Phrygian.

Janine: I'm just going to really quick google, "Weirdest suit ever made." *[Ali laughs, typing]* I'm just curious.

Keith: I've linked this clip, this *Survivor* clip, for perusal at your leisure.

Ali: Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Janine: *[laughs]* Sorry, I found some weird suits! *[Ali laughs]* Oh, I don't even know where to start.

Ali: Yeah, you should have started with "weird suit," and not "weirdest suit ever made," because now you... *[laughs]*

Janine: Okay, so I'm going to start— I'll start with— I just have two.

Ali: Okay.

Janine: *[typing]* That I'm going to share here in Discord, in the chat, once I find it again. Oh, here it is. So, there's this one.

Keith: Wow!

Ali: Okay!

Keith: Look at the shapes.

Janine: So, that's pretty weird, right? But...

Ali: I love this.

Janine: So, okay, *[Ali laughs]* but then there's this one.

Ali: Okay. Okay. Okay. Sure.

Keith: Wow! That's intense! I think Thisbe could wear that. *[Ali and Janine laugh]*

Janine: Thisbe's not going to a party, I don't think. You're the one going to the party, right?

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: But this one says Thisbe to me.

Janine: Yeah?

Keith: I think so.

Ali: I think Thisbe would look great in this, yeah.

Keith: I found a better version of the video.

Ali: Okay. *[laughs]*

Keith: it's got the talking head. That's the important part.

Ali: *[laughs]* Okay.

Keith: The original clip didn't have the talking head. This one's got the talking head.

Ali: *[laughs]* In an attempt to describe what Janine has shared with us: they are both runway photos.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Ali: The first one is *[laughs]* of a guy in, um...

Keith: Accordion pants.

Ali: A two piece set, yeah.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: Pants that look like they're made out of an accordion. Each of the legs are a separate accordion. It's not like all...it's not like a skirt thing.

Janine: Or like one of those paper flowers that you— with the sticks.

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: Magic flowers.

Ali: Uh huh.

Keith: You say each of them are one accordion, but...

Ali: Well, so, it's like a U shape. I don't want it to seem like a skirt going down.

Keith: Okay, right, yes.

Janine: Yeah, it does—

Ali: It is two pant legs.

Janine: It looks like one accordion, but it's been cut in the middle and has become pants.

Ali: Uh huh.

Keith: Right. Yes. Yes.

Ali: Yeah. And then, there's a top that's like...

Janine: If you drew a t-shirt on a piece of paper *[Ali laughs]* and then cut it out and put it on, and then you were wearing a shirt of the same color underneath.

Ali: Uh huh.

Keith: It looks like he has a photorealistic image of a 2D shirt tattooed on his body. *[Ali laughs]*

Janine: Yeah. This is the Metaverse. *[Keith laughs]* This is how Decentraland looks, basically.

Ali: Basically.

Keith: Oh, yeah, I guess it does look like, "Hey, what if stupid Metaverse costumes were on a real person?" *[Ali laughs]*

Janine: Yeah. And then the second one?

Ali: The second one is: what if you had an oven mitt that a person could stand in? *[Keith laughs]*

Janine: But the oven mitt was a...

Keith: And also you were emo.

Janine: The oven mitt was themed after a single-breasted blazer? Right?

Ali: Yeah, or like a trench coat?

Keith: What if you were the most unknown Fall Out Boy? *[Ali laughs]* The least known Fall Out Boy, and you were inside of an oven mitt.

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: Wait, that's the same one again. *[laughs]* Sorry, one second. That's not...this suit is just— this is Apparatus Aperiitif's suit, I think. Fuck! What is happening? *[others laugh]*

Keith: Oh no, the suit is also a computer virus! *[others laugh]*

Janine: Hang on. I have to fucking...

Ali: What this really looks like is if you like drag and dropped a flat dress up game, like, trench coat onto—

Janine: Yeah. And it didn't like snap to the model?

Ali: Right, snapped to a model, but the model is wrong, so like the person who's standing inside of it is like not standing correctly and is way too small.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Keith: Wow. Now, are these functional skulls? Do you think there's storage space in there?

Janine: It looks like the mouths are zippers, right? And there's straps?

Ali: It does.

Janine: I think it's like backpacks.

Keith: Yeah. Yeah.

Janine: What if you kept Asepsis in this? *[others laugh]*

Ali: Not doing that. Not doing that. What we're looking at is another man in a suit, but this one has...four to five fabric skulls attached to—

Janine: Yeah, of the same material as the suit.

Ali: Yeah, attached to the shoulders.

Keith: And the buttons are just as weird as the skulls, because there's four of them, and they go from the chest all the way down to the waistline.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Janine: That's true. That's true.

Keith: It's a very strange cut.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: No lapel.

Janine: Oh my god. Well, I think it's like popped up, because there's that strap?

Ali: Oh, sure.

Janine: I think it's like held...

Keith: Um...maybe, but if there is a lapel, it's very small.

[1:15:00]

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: Everything about this is supposed to make you feel uneasy, including the cut and fit of the shirt.

Keith: Yeah, there's two breast pockets, but they seem off-center? The second one seems like way closer to the buttons than the one on the left there.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Keith: And, again, four skulls. *[Ali laughs]*

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: Five. There's one under the arm.

Keith: Oh! I thought that one was actually a bag, but yeah, I guess that is just a skull.

Ali: Oh.

Janine: I also thought that was a bag.

Ali: And the skulls have straps hanging from them, for some reason?

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: I guess to make them more portable.

Janine: To put your keys on.

Ali: Yeah. Well, Keith, you have a lot to think— *[Ali and Janine laugh]* what the fuck are we looking at?

Janine: Oh, wait, no. Sorry, I have— okay, this is my last one. This is my serious suggestion for what Phrygian should wear to the party.

Ali: *[laughs]* Okay, the second to last one was: what if there was a normal rugby outfit, but the person's head was way too small for their shoulders, I guess? *[others laugh]*

Keith: Yeah, neckless rugby outfit.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Uh huh. Really long arms. Oh, and this— okay, sure.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: This is: what if you were going out in a night in Bushwick in your all off-white sort of sweatpants? *[laughs]*

Keith: Sorry, it's...it's also: what if you accidentally bleached your old-timey prison costume.

Ali: Yeah, it's that too.

Janine: *[laughs]* Yes. Yeah.

Ali: Or your funny pajamas. But also if your face was a bunch of wooden planks stuck together and broken, very specifically broken.

Janine: Yeah, it's like, uh, yard waste.

Keith: Yeah, what if you were a shattered deck.

Janine: Not yard waste. Um...like...

Keith: Construction waste?

Janine: Yeah, construction waste.

Keith: And your best friend accidentally wore the same outfit as you and is on his way home to change.

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: *[laughs]* Yeah, he's just in the background.

Keith: There in the background.

Ali: *[laughing, incomprehensible]*

Janine: Huh. Is that a mirror, maybe? Maybe it's a mirror.

Keith: "This is embarrassing." *[all laugh]*

Ali: Ah, no, that's definitely a different guy. That's so funny. Well, this has been great, and now Keith has a lot to think about for plan B.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Keith: True. Yes.

Ali: Party time.

Keith: Hey, what kind of party is it?

Ali: It's a meet and greet. There's like someone from the Twilight Mirage.

Janine: What kind of meat?

Ali: Hmm. Someone from the Twilight Mirage is like coming to join Millennium Break, and representatives from each squad are going to be there to be like, "Welcome. What's good?"

Keith: Classic beef and greet.

Ali: I'm sort of...I... *[Janine laughs]* I have a vibe that I know that Brnine is going to bring, and I wonder if Austin is going to meet me halfway. Like, I... *[laughs]*

Keith: What's the vibe?

Janine: Ham?

Ali: Well, like, I think for like...Brnine is going to be the person who's like, "Yo, I'm hanging out with Jesset! I'm like connecting with the old crew. Where's the open bar at?" *[laughs]*

Janine: Oh no.

Ali: I think I'm going to be approaching it like it's like going to a wedding with out of town friends, and Austin might be like, "Oh, here's this very serious ritual," *[laughs]* or "Here's this like big business meeting," whereas, in my head, it's like, oh, it's like an outdoor event with like wine spritzers. So, we'll see. *[laughs]*

Keith: I would be...mm...it's definitely possible, but the idea of Austin knowing that it was going to be you that was doing it and then would be like, "Okay, it is a party, but you've gotta be really serious." *[Ali laughs]* That doesn't sound likely.

Janine: It's like a wake.

Keith: Yeah. *[Keith and Ali laugh]* Ugh.

Ali: We shall see.

Keith: Yeah, we'll see. I, um...sorry, who's at the party again?

Ali: It's me and you.

Keith: Okay.

Ali: And a representative from each of the like...not the like— not everybody's Millennium Break, right? But like...

Keith: Right. Break adjacent?

Ali: Each of the people in the cause, basically.

Keith: Okay.

Ali: So.

Janine: I can quickly— I got factions. Hang on. Uh...

Ali: Yeah, we have this all on our PALISADE sheets thingy. Some people, for instance...

Janine: Millennium Break, the concrete people, Blue Channel. We actually haven't filled out this chunk as much, huh? Twill.

Ali: Jade Kill, Violet Cove, Rose River, Carmine Bight, Grey Pond. The whole squad is coming through.

Keith: *[sarcastic]* Damn, it's gonna be like a wedding.

Ali: *[laughs]* I really just want like Brnine to be there and like go up to Jesset and be like, "Hey, are we doing shots?" and I need to see what the energy that like Austin responds as Jesset is.

Janine: Jesset turns around, and there's just a Bluetooth earpiece. *[others laugh]* He's just like in the middle of a conversation.

Keith: You don't have to match their energy, though. You can keep doing that in the face of adversity.

Ali: No, no, no. I know. But the like...that is the pitch that I am going to be throwing during this episode. When you hear me do it, the two of you can laugh knowingly. *[Ali and Janine laugh]* And then we'll...we're going to see what happens.

Keith: Phrygian is going to be normal.

Ali: *[laughs]* Okay.

Janine: Which normal? Which of the normals I linked? *[laughs]*

Ali: Yeah. We don't know what party Phrygian is like.

Keith: Oh, not...uh, yeah, that's true. You don't know what party Phrygian is like.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: Okay, I'll do something weird for the party.

Ali: *[laughs]* You don't have to specifically do something weird, but I do—

Keith: No, I will.

Ali: You should think about it.

Janine: What if you're the coat room?

Ali: Mm.

Keith: *[thoughtfully]* Um...coat room. *[Ali laughs]*

Janine: Brnine shows up and is just like, "I don't know where Phrygian is," *[Keith laughs]* and then goes to put their coat away. "Hey, Brnine."

Keith: Tickets. Like, coat check tickets are kind of fluttering down from the rafters. "Where did this come from? Who is keeping track of this?" *[Keith and Ali laugh]*

Ali: Well, on that note, this has been the first episode of Gathering Information. This was a really interesting one. Thanks for joining me, y'all.

Keith: Yeah, thanks for having me.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Ali: And tune in for next month, where I don't know what we'll be talking about, because we're going to have to record some stuff.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: And feel it out a little bit.

Keith: You going to do another ground one or are you going to do a faction game one?

Ali: I don't know. I mean, it depends. I imagine, at some point, we're going to want to talk to—like, do the like faction game episode, but I don't know if that's like a starting thing or like once things get a little wacky over there, you know what I mean?

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: So, we shall see.