Intro: *Granblue Fantasy* Hour (00:00:00)

Austin: It's like— that's not optimal, but I just need to— it's words, not— we're not streaming a video game or video, so.

Dre: No.

Austin: Can you just check it and see if it looks okay. I think it looks fine.

Dre: Let me hit play. Yeah, it looks fine.

Austin: Okay. (long pause) Alright, I'm gonna publish this. (long pause) Come on, internet— my internet has been *so* bad—

Dre: Uh oh!

Janine: Wha—

Austin: What's up?

Dre: We lost Jack.

Janine: We did.

Austin: Oh, that's okay.

Janine: They're gone.

Austin: We can wait.

(pause)

Dre: Ohhh shit!

Austin: What's up?

Dre: I got Gachapin Frenzy.

Austin: Oooh, nice. I got a couple of those. I should show you what my— my squad is wild right now, Dre.

Dre: I went from having the most trash Earth setup to getting like… (laughing) I got both versions of Alexiel the other day, and I was like, "okay"—

Austin: Wooow.

Dre: "I guess now I have to make an Earth team," but you can't have two of the same character, I found out.

Austin: Right. But you could have— my understanding is you eventually need a Rare and a Super Rare team anyway to do certain events, which is wild.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Um. It's so much. It's so much.

Dre: Yeah, so I'm in the part of the game that you're talking about where you're basically farming your… some people call them Omega, some people call them the—

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: —Magna grids.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: So yeah, you want to clear with R and SR characters as much as possible because it gives you more points—

(*Granblue Fantasy* music starts playing)

Austin: All right— Dre, look at the stream. It's time.

Dre: Are you— are you pulling on stream, let's GO.

Austin: No, (chuckles) you can't say that ever again in your life.

(**Dre** and **Janine** laugh)

Austin: Uh, I'm showing my squad. Here's my squad, ready? Let's walk through it.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: Alright, so Water.

Dre: What element are you doing, water?

Austin: No, (chuckles) you'll see what the situation is.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: Um…

Dre: Oh shit!

Austin: So my Water, I drew— Charlotta was like my start, but I did just draw Summer Cagliostro? Who—

Dre: Oh.

Austin: For people who don't know, Cagliostro is a trans witch queen. I guess she isn't a queen, *I'm* saying she's a queen.

Dre: She's a queen.

(**Janine** chuckles)

Austin: People love Cagliostro, she seems dope. And is, like, canonically trans. And is apparently— that's apparently handled very well. My Water is like whatever. My Water's like not my best. Neither is Fire. Fire is probably where, long term, I'm gonna need the most help. But I do have Grea who was from their previous game, who was like a cool… witch dragon? Dragonese? She seems dope.

Dre: Mm-hmm…

Austin: We're getting to the stuff that I'm good at. Let's go back to the party here— Party. Earth! My Earth is stacked. My Earth got stacked real quick. I got Aletheia, who's Gandalf? I don't know— you could tell me this isn't Gandalf, but that motherfucker's Gandalf—

Dre: No, that's Gandalf.

Austin: —right? That's a Gandalf? IMO? So that's, that's what's going on there. I also—

Janine: Why is Gandalf showing off his leg like he's cartoon hitchhiking?

Austin: He's… Cause he is! Because he's like out on the road, his like—

Janine: Oh, okay!

Austin: —his story is basically like, looking for young— Your character has a sword that he once wielded and he's like, "I'll come along with you! I'm trying to find, like… I'm trying to find someone to hang out with!" I don't know what this guy's deal is. Uhhh, he's got a guitar. He's got a spirit guitar and a cat. I should do his Fate. I should look at what his deal is, but his name is Baal… [Ba-ah-l? Which I think that's some sort of—

Dre: Isn't that [Bail]?

Austin: [Bail]? Is that how you pronounce that? Maybe that's [Bail].

Dre: I think that's how you would say it when it's a Diablo person—

Austin: [Bay-ahl]? [Bay-ahl] makes sense, yeah, uh huh! That makes sense. Uh, who seems to be some sort of god? I don't know what his deal is in *Granblue*, I haven't done his Fate yet. But he seems fine. I have to like— I have not paid attention to the— Earth just wound up being good? Earth I didn't know I was— I had like a bunch of people? Eugen, all I know is he's, like, hot and is friends—

Dre: Yeah!

Austin: —with, uhhh, Rackam? Who is like—

Dre: Mm-hm!

Austin: —the sky captain pirate guy? And if I say friends, I mean boyfriends, uh, as far as I'm concerned. I like his gun, he seems cool. So Earth I'm like, alright, I'm getting there on Earth, Earth is all right. Um…

Wind! has gotten better over and over but the big thing here is I just got Seofon, who seems like a piece of shit! But I—

(**Dre** laughs)

Austin: —he's the Eternal that I drew— I don't know, you're further in the story than me, but I just did that story event and he came across like a piece of shit.

Dre (quietly): Probably.

Austin: But I like his cool laser swords (laughs). His ghost swords are sick.

(**Dre** laughs)

Austin: We're getting to where I start to get *genuinely* very good, alright.

Dre (whispering): God…

Austin: Dark!

Dre: Yeah, I think I saw this earlier when this was up. So you had—

Austin: I got Kolulu—

Dre: —is that regular Zooey? Or is that Summer Zooey?

Austin: This is neither. This is Kolulu…

Dre: Ohhhhh…

Austin: …who is *incredible*. Kolulu has a couple of dope things. One is this, like, six hit damage Dark effect thing that is just very good and does a Blind. That also triggers when she does her Charge attack? And she does extra—

Janine: What's that power called again?

Austin: Tallyho?

Janine: Okay.

Austin: Uh huh!

Jack: Yeah, that's good! I have no problems with this!

Austin: Uh, like, Tallyho! She also has an ability— Where is it? It's one of her Support skills. She gets more attack and damage based on how low her HP is. When she's almost knocked out, Tallyho activates automatically and also once per fight she will take a lethal hit and not die. Just will not die. She's just incredibly good. She's like a 9.6 on the tier list or something. I— listen. I don't know what's up with this pacify. I think this is more rave queen pacifier than baby pacifier? Uhhh, but she's also incredibly powerful? She seems very strong. She's up there. She's like one of my better strong units. I *think* Light is probably my best?

Oh also, I have— damn, I forgot I have two more Super Super Rares. Catboy boyfriend? From the recent Eternals event. Dre, did you finish that event?

Dre: I did not.

Austin: You should finish that event and get this guy because he's a free SSR, and it's a very good event, it ends really well. You should do that event. He seems cool. He does some wolf shit. He's an assassin. He's from a clan of assassins that's very sad? It's a whole thing.

Dre: I wonder if he's… There's a lady—

Austin: Who's a mask—

Dre: —with a similar claw deal that's also an assassin.

Austin: Mmm… I also just do Anthuria's summer look with her like fancy yukata vibe. She has a bunch of like Dark magic Fire shit that seems cool? She dances, she boosts allies, I'm down.

My Light is probably… So Dark and Light are not what you're supposed to focus on early on? But my Light also wound up stacked. Albert is incredible. He just has like this Lightning sword and does incredible Lightning and Fire damage stuff. And he was like the first good character I got. I still haven't learned what this dude's deal is but he looks like… he looks like a very fancy catboy or dogboy? I guess? Is that dog ears, is that what's going on?

Dre: I think that might be dog ears.

Austin: Those look like dog ears. I, again, haven't done his Fate thing yet because we get so many characters. I pulled one of the characters *you* mentioned to me and I think— you'll have to remind me. Is this lady who has a mask on because she's too powerful? Or is it the mask that makes her powerful?

Dre: I think it's the mask that makes her powerful.

Austin: Okay, she has the mask—

Dre: I think that's her deal.

Austin: That makes sense to me. Rosamia. Her attacks are incredible. She looks really cool. Um, and that's it! That's like the squad right now. This side's also great because I got like this wild ass Zeus summon? And—

Dre: Oh yeah!

Austin: And some other good summon that I didn't even notice, like— this whole situation is ridiculous because of how many draws there are, because I drew Magus Triad of Wisdom, which—

(**Dre** laughs)

Austin: —sounds like some big deal shit and I didn't even *notice*. Like I was just going in to throw away summons, basically, to like—

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: I've run out of summons like, "Who the *fuck* is *this*?" (chuckles). I can't even read, visually, what's happening on my screen right now? So… I don't know. Anyway. I'm having a good time, so I'm gonna close this—

(*Granblue Fantasy* music ends)

Austin: —and we can do this stream, thank you. Also welcome back, Jack, are you back?

Jack: Hello, yes I am. The internet decided to die literally five minutes into trying to do a podcast, but I made it back.

(**Janine** laughs)

Austin: That's how it goes sometimes. We should do a *time.is*!

Dre: Oh yeah.

Janine: I never fuckin' remember to open *time.is*.

Jack: Me either! We've been doing this for four years (chuckles).

Austin: It happens!

(pause)

Austin: Wait is Albert *in Dragalia Lost*? Jessie M says Albert is one of their favourite characters to play in *Dragalia* but… is not meta…

Janine: It seems like there are a few, like a couple of characters there?

Austin: That's just Albert, yeah. Wow. I knew that Grea, or whatever her name is, was originally from their previous game but I didn't realise how much (chuckles) overlap there was. That's so weird, to me.

Janine: I wish you didn't have to play *Granblue* in a browser.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Ah, see I like it cause I like having it up— I'd rather have it— my phone is dead. My phone dies in, like, very quick, so I'm glad I don't have to run an app to do it, is the thing.

Anyway, "act now or face disaster"… says *time.is* says (chuckles). Says Greta—

Jack: Oh, is that Greta Thunberg?

Austin: Yeah, it is. It is, yeah. Um, good to do five seconds?

Janine: Yeah.

Dre: Sure!

(all clap)

Austin: All right. Um, let me get my notes up.

(pause)

Real Intro (00:10:28)

Austin: Welcome to *Tips at the Table* and… I forget what I say here, my notes don't have the thing! (chuckling) Welcome to *Tips at the Table*— and also this is wrong! This says February, this should say March, I'm going to edit this and we're gonna come in fresh. We're going to do it the right way. Ready, *March*. Yeah, please! (chuckles)

(**Austin** claps)

Austin (laughing): I'm gonna do a second clap!

(pause)

Austin: Welcome to *Tips at the Table*, a live stream about… answering your questions. I don't have my notes in front of me, it's been a long day, I've been going all day. I'm not going to pretend to have the thing in front of me, we're going to get through these questions and then I'm going to eat dinner. I'm Austin Walker. I'm joined by Janine Hawkins.

Janine: Uhhh, hey, I'm [@bleatingheart](#) on Twitter.

Austin: Andrew Lee Swan.

Dre: Hey, you can find me on Twitter at [@swandre3000](#).

Austin: And Jack de Quidt.

Jack: Hi, you can find me on Twitter [@notquitereal](#) and buy any of the music featured on the show and [notquitereal.bandcamp.com](#).

Austin: You can follow me on Twitter—

Janine: Tomorrow, buy it tomorrow.

Jack: Ohh yeah!

Austin: Right, is tomorrow the day, tomorrow's the good day?

Jack: Let's shout that out at the end.

Austin: Okay, sounds good.

Jack: Let's do questions—

Austin: We'll do— yeah (chuckles). You can follow me on Twitter @austin_walker, you can follow the show @friends_table. As always, you can support this show at friendsatthetable.cash. Let's jump right into it.

<div align="center">

Question One (00:11:19)

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Uh, first one comes in from Jean [french pronunciation]? [Gene]? I don't know how to read names anymore.

Anyway, they say, "I'm running a game of *Dungeon World* centred around exploring a single, deep and alien Labyrinth a la *Etrian Odyssey*. My players and I are having a good time, but I'm struggling with making combat interesting. This is easy for my side of things. I describe the ghouls sprouting obsidian claws, or the rival adventurers getting shoulder to shoulder, or the abomination spewing something gross. I see combat as a way to flesh out the monsters and NPCs and express what makes them horrific and interesting, which helps me know what they do. But sometimes my players just say, 'I swing my axe,' which is, of course, fine, but I'd love it if they were more expressive and descriptive more often. Sometimes they're very clever, which tells me that I can rely on their creativity. But where I'm having difficulty is in identifying what prompts are helping them. In short, how do I set up a scene to help my players be creative in combat or, for that matter, any action sequence?"

I'm gonna put this to y'all first because you're on the player side, I'm curious what types of prompts help you get away from just "I swing my axe" and get towards more kind of dynamic action?

Jack: I think talking and thinking about weapons a lot, kind of in the broader context of making the seasons? I remember, was it *Twilight Mirage* when we kind of like tried to shift the focus on weapons specifically for this purpose?

Austin: Yeah, definitely.

Jack: Where like, I think in the early stages of *Twilight Mirage* where we had characters that were, you know, primarily armed with long range guns we found that we were kind of just saying like, "I take a shot at him" or like "I pop up from behind a thing and take a shot at him". And so I think we started talking about trying to refocus what our armoury looked like. And I feel like a really interesting prompt for me at least, as a player, is like what is the character holding and how many interesting things can I do with that object? If it's a gun I can, I guess, throw it, I can shoot it, I can swing it at someone (chuckles). But if it's like, is this a weapon that teleports? Is this with a very long flail? Is this an axe with a very weird property? And like I think as a player that might let me help sort of frame the way I'm talking about using these weapons through the context of some property that they have—

Austin: Right.

Jack: —that is more interesting…

Austin: Right, upgrade that axe! Give that axe something neat. Make it sticky… That's the first thing that came to mind…

Jack: Or do the even weird thing, right, which is like, axes don't work.

Austin (laughs): Right, right.

Jack: You straight up stopped our guns from working. And actually that had this weird knock-on effect of, when guns were fired, it felt really interesting kind of just by default, because we knew that firing guns was serious. *Either* because it would break the weapons *or*, if someone was firing a gun that wasn't breaking, that is very concerning.

Austin: Right, right.

Jack: And so I think that kind of big tweak of just like, oh, the weapon that you and your players find the least interesting, doesn't work in the way you think it can anymore.

Austin: Right. Totally! A thing that I tried to do in *Spring in Hieron* to greater and lesser effect was to try to communicate something about the area, and whether or not there was something you could do with stuff there, right? And in fact, the thing I think about the most are the times that I wish I'd done better (chuckles), because that's just how my brain works. But I think about— there's a sequence in a library towards the end of one of the arcs. And that fight scene was *really* good because the stakes were high and because characters did really dramatic things, and I'm really happy with how it played out. But I also thought about it a lot after the fact and being like, that scene could have taken place in an empty room or communicated their action incorporating that environment into play and action. And one of the things I learned there and I actually, I've talked about this before, but *Fate* is a is a tabletop game system I don't necessarily love, but the Aspect system and specifically the ways in which areas can have Aspects, little characteristics or traits that players and the GM can call on to improve or change the effect of a dice roll are something that actually worked really well for me in trying to conceptualise spaces better. It's gotten to the point where I tend now, when I'm thinking about an encounter, to write a handful of things down, that are things that could get in the way of player action or that players could use, right? So I ended up thinking about that library encounter and thinking like, "I should have been really clear about the kind of like, long rows of shelves that players could dip behind to try to get around on their target, or things that they could push over or like, "here's like— there's a book that does something cool and magical if you" da da da da da.

Those sorts of things, like, almost think of it as like a play set. If you think of those areas as a play set or even like a play*ground*, and you think about like, "what are the toys they can play with", players will start to come up with interesting things there. Especially if you are very, um, (chuckling) unsubtle about it? Where you're like, "hey, here are some cool things that you can

fuck around with. Here is a swamp that is filled with quicksand," you know? "See if you can push someone into it," you know, and you don't have to say that part. They will get to that last bit and say, "Oh, yes, I can push someone into the swamp. That would be cool." (chuckles) It's your job to kind of illustrate that for them, either on the table or just verbally, but repeatedly until they get that idea, you know. Janine and Dre, do you have any thoughts here?

Janine: Um, I think… A thing that… Well, two things. One, I think sometimes the thing you want to do as a player is you do just want to swing your axe, like.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: Sometimes it doesn't feel like… Sometimes it doesn't feel like things are open enough? Like sometimes it feels like there's only one thing you can do. And being asked, like, "What do you do" is like, "Well, I do the one thing that I can do." And I feel like (chuckling) sometimes it's fine to just let that be the thing? Sometimes it's fine to just be like, "Well, I'm halfway through sneaking through this room. So I'm gonna keep sneaking through the room. And it looks like I'm sneaking through the room." That's just a reality of like, not every moment in storytelling is a big bombastic thing that you need to describe in detail, I think? I think it's, it's valuable to be comfortable doing that sometimes.

But to that effect, like, maybe the thing that would help would be to… You know, when you watch a fight scene in a movie, there are a lot of punches thrown. But then there's *the* punch, you know? There's a lot of back and forth, there are a lot of really straightforward fight moments, but then there's the thing where you recognise that the situation is turning for whatever reason, it is like a… you know, someone just got hurt, or there is a ticking clock or something like that. And identifying that moment and working on that moment being the special one, while maybe kind of conceding that some of the other moments can just be an axe hit, might be, if not like a good, permanent solution, like a good sort of starting point because it'll get people thinking in that way, and then they might want to have those moments more and more often.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: The other thing I was going to say is just— is that I've noticed for me personally, the more detail I have in front of me about the scene, the less creative I get?

Austin: Hmm.

Janine: So, in situations where we have, "here is this detailed—" This doesn't happen often, we don't have all of these things together often. But when we do, you know, "here's this detailed map of the terrain, here are these tokens representing everyone, here—" you know, we're being very careful about the space and things like that and how and the distance between everyone and we're making sure everyone's positions are accounted for. In those situations, I'm a lot more likely to just want to take direct actions because seeing those things kind of… It makes it harder for me to think outside of them, I guess?

Austin: Right.

Janine: So if I don't… If I'm not looking directly at a board that says, "I am within five metres of this person," I'm going to come up with different solutions. I'm going to— I'm going to be like, "Well, is this possible? Is this possible?" Where otherwise I'm going to be just assuming like, "Well, that doesn't make sense. I'm not going to bring that up. It'll sound stupid."

Austin: Right.

Janine: And that's not as true as it used to be, but it is still kind of true. It is still like… it's important to have those materials to help visualise things, but there's also a point where I feel like it can make people want to think more linearly and more directly, because it's just kind of a… it feels more like a board game, it feels more like something where those rules matter a little harder than they do with at least the kind of storytelling that we do.

Austin: Yeah, definitely. Definitely. Dre, I'm curious for you, especially thinking about like— the two things that come to mind here are, one, Throndir did a lot of stuff like this, but also this season with Valence, who is not a very combat focused character, who has to come up with things to do in combat encounters (chuckles) nevertheless, I'm curious how you arrive at doing kind of big dynamic things or what type of prompts encourage that sort of play.

Dre: Um... I mean, I think, for me, and I think this is something I've said before about *Dungeon World* and probably most games in general is, when I'm looking at things as a GM, I always like to have a copy of people's player sheets in front of me—

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: —when I'm prepping, because then I basically look at, "Okay, what moves did they bother to take?" Because those are basically big red flags to me as "this is what they want to do".

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Dre: So especially if you've got— you know, this sounds like this is probably more dungeon crawly? So maybe you've got folks who are mostly combat focused, which means that like, they might just have fun saying, "I swing my axe! and let me see the numbers that I do." Like for some people that's enjoyable, and that's perfectly fine. That sounded way more dismissive (laughing) than I meant it to.

Austin: No, no, no! I think that that is a type of fun that like—

Dre: Yeah!

Austin: I mean, you know, this is a question that starts by saying "a la *Etrian Odyssey*" which is an "I swing my axe game," like—

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: —you *do* have moments of very super intense decision making in *Etrian Odyssey* but you also just have "I'm fighting these like wererabbits or whatever and I've fought them (chuckling) a thousand times before and I know what I do is I swing my axe—"

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: "—and I kill them before they can do damage to me," like…

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: That *does* happen, that is a style of game that is fun, you know, that can be really fun.

Dre: And I guess I would say, you know… I guess *Dungeon World* is less kind of open in the way it does certain failed roll outcomes? You know, when you are doing an attack move in *Dungeon World*, usually the failed roll involves some kind of damage. But if it's ever not a combat roll, or it's a roll where the rules don't specifically state you can do damage, I think getting people to do things outside of swinging their axe, a pretty easy way to do that is just like, you fail your roll so you lose your axe.

Austin: Right, totally!

Dre: Or, you know, you can—

Austin: Listen, Hack and Slash—

Dre: —either choose to hold on to your axe and take damage or you don't take damage, but you lose your axe, and *then* what the hell do you do besides swing it around?

Austin: Right. Hack and Slash says, you know, seven to nine is the one where you exchange damage but six or under is still "The GM makes a move as hard as they want." And so there's still lots of flexibility there. And in general, that is the thing I'd say to you as a GM is, if you feel that the "I swing my axe…" You know, in some ways, let's think about the other roll, the roll that Janine set up, which was "I'm sneaking." Why is it important that the player make two different sneak rolls, right? And the answer would be that that first roll was only partly successful and then you were like, "Well, let me split it up into two rolls." Don't do that. Just let them get through it, right?

That can be the same in combat in a certain situation, where what you want is a dice roll to be important, and for there to be something that changes after the fact. So if you get the success, then you do enough damage where it shouldn't just be that you as the player write down that the damage got done. It's that the situation changes in a way where you're setting up something else to happen, right? Yes, the Goblin gets seven damage. And then like, you know— I just did it automatically, I said "and then" because I want to talk about like "and then falls back a little bit,

and then tries to like move into a defensive stance, and then, you know, pulls out a second dagger." It does something in response to it that is one of your softer moves, the "showing the barrel of the gun"-style move versus the actually hard move of doing damage back necessarily, because on the success you don't want to punish a player. But what you do want to do is still make the sequence feel like it's moved.

And on a failure, like Dre said, you can do all sorts of stuff that will prompt action because it's a knife to the throat instead of the kind of open-ended "What do you do?" it's like, "Hey, something bad is about to happen to you. What do you do?" Come up with something creative. Take something away from them, put something that they want— that they like in threat or that they care about under threat.

Honestly, if you just spend, you know, an hour looking over and thinking about the GM moves, I think you'll be in a good place of thinking about how to offer prompts like that on the fly. I do my best to review those things like more often, or, you know, whenever I'm about to do a new session, because it's easy to forget all the tools that are at your disposal and just having them kind of codified in front of you can be really useful for coming up with those sorts of prompts.

Question Two (00:25:26)

Next question comes in from Sim who says, "How do you generally deal with dramatic irony in play? I occasionally see *Blades in the Dark* convincingly pitched as a heist-flick game, and I got the table pumped for it. In our session zero, we spent a lot of time discussing our favourite heist movie tropes that we want to see in our own story. Among those that stuck out was the trope of betrayal that the audience has shown coming very early on, but that the characters are oblivious of. I'm happy to oblige them but I feel like I backed myself into a corner because I feel that some of their expectations aren't very well suited to play for what I feel confident that I can deliver. Namely, the given example can be frustrating— The given example," which is betrayal that the audience knows about that the characters don't, in this case, the betrayal that the players would know about, but their characters wouldn't, "can be frustrating for inexperienced players. And I don't want to set them up with an NPC who they might feel frustrated with having information on, knowing their characters can't act upon it. Do I straight up tell them that from experience what they specifically told me they want won't be fun? Or do I run with it and change other parts of the game to be more prepped and railroaded? I feel like my pitch has given the whole table an expectation I don't feel like I can deliver on effectively."

My gut on this is like trust yourself and trust your players.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Or trust your own ability and trust your players. You don't know that they won't like it, right? I don't want to say like "don't trust your own experience" and it sounds like maybe you've had experiences where this has gone bad. But I would spend a moment to think about whether or not those experiences began with players explicitly saying that that was something that they

were interested in. That's kind of like how I feel, I'm curious for the rest of the call, the rest of the table. What do y'all think about this?

Dre: To me the most telling part of this whole question is the last sentence.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Dre: Because I think, just, like, you don't know you can't do it until you try. And even if you try and it doesn't work out—

Austin: Right.

Dre: —it's not just you at the table. There's a lot of people at the table there.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: And the worst thing that happens if you try it and it doesn't go the way you want it or doesn't go the way that people want to go it, is you pivot, and you're probably still having fun. Like, don't tell yourself you can't do it if you haven't tried to do it yet.

Austin: Totally. **Jack**—

Dre: That's my pep talk for this.

Austin: —you had something too— Yeah (laughs).

Jack: No, I think I absolutely agree. I think I would just underline the fact which you've both said which is like you're not necessarily signing a— it can sometimes feel, when you talk about things like this before play or you begin to set these up, that you're signing like an ironclad contract.

Austin: Riiiight.

Jack: Where it's like… I definitely feel anxious about making moves with characters or having an interesting plan for a character that I don't know whether or not I can do. Because I worry that I'll be like, "Well, I've put my cards on the table, I'm locked in now, I have to (laughing) do this forever.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And when I think about some of the character beats that I've been happiest with in terms of taking a big swing and saying to **Austin**, "Oh, I'd like to try and do this with this character," that has come as a result of early in the seasons kind of feeling out what did and didn't work and jettisoning the bits that I feel didn't. And going, "Yeah, I hoped that bit would work, but it hasn't in the way that I thought it would. But I don't think that's the end of this character." And I think, especially, you know, if you're talking about a heist flick, heists are kind of perfect for this

because heists are all about, you know, setting up initial plans, beginning to act on those plans and then reacting in interesting ways as they shift.

So like, like **Dre**, I think… I really don't think you should write off your own ability to do this, I think that it's very likely that it'll go very well. But in the event that it doesn't go quite as well, the heist can always pivot or refocus or move down a different avenue. And I think the genre lends itself very nicely to that.

Austin: Thinking of it that way also makes me realise like, you can just do it as a one-off. Like it doesn't have to be… If you think about NPCs as being… And I think about this a lot because of the way *Dungeon World* is set up with what they call Campaign Fronts and Adventure Fronts as kind of two scales, but I often think about my NPCs as being kind of one-off mission or quest or adventure NPCs and then campaign NPCs, right? You know, Samothes is a campaign NPC. The…

Jack: Isaac Adelton.

Austin: Well, Isaac Adelton is literally the example of someone who crosses, right?

Jack: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, he does—

Austin: I was gonna get to Isaac, Isaac was my third thing.

Jack: Ah!

Austin: Uhhh. Fuck, I was thinking of the name of like… Wow, wow, we had too many characters in the world.

Jack: What about that nervous dwarf in the Buoy.

Austin: Sure, nervous dwarf from the Buoy. Adventure character. Shows up once. Has like a specific set of interactions— Or even, you think about the… Bolster Valentine, right? Like the sort of character who shows up, is a big deal in that— or like the Yellow House folks in *Marielda*, right? Calendar and them. Like, wow, they're important for this arc and then they stop being important. And then you have Isaac Adelton who is someone who kind of crosses over and becomes— starts as like a throwaway gag and then becomes a bigger deal over the course of play. A return character. You can just— Isaac Adel— you could have started the session… In fact, I basically started the session by saying Isaac Adelton is up to no good.

(**Dre**, **Jack** and **Janine** laugh)

Austin (chuckling): Everybody, don't trust this motherfucker. It's clear he's not trustworthy, *at all*. He's a piece of shit. And you can do a heist where that is set up up top and see how it goes. Make the in-character reveal only, you know, two sessions in or whatever, a session in, you know, you're in the middle of the heist and then the betrayal hits, and you go, "Oh, fuck this

person." That might not have the emotional pull of the heist betrayal in a heist film because a heist film is like two and a half hours long and you have incredible actors doing their best to be pieces of shit on screen.

(**Jack** laughs)

Austin: But you could at least see how it feels, right? And it doesn't have to be this high-stakes thing, which can be easy to get in your head when you hear a player say, "Oh, I would like blank" and in your mind you're like, "What they want is, 20 sessions in, we've been playing for seven months and I make a dramatic reveal, but they already knew about the reveal because in session one I said this person is going to betray you. And what if I can't execute on that?" I get where you get worked up— how to get worked up over that. But try it in a much lower-stakes thing and see how that feels. My guess is that when your players were excited about that, they were excited about it. It's not that there is like a demand. It's more just like, "Oh, yeah, that interests us too." So, I would do your best, first and foremost, not to overestimate the degree to which you need to stick the landing, so to speak, if that makes sense.

Janine, I'm curious if you've had similar situations as a GM where you know your players have wanted x and you've not necessarily been confident that you could deliver that specific thing.

Or ways you've addressed that sort of demand.

Janine: Not really… In, you know, the limited amount of GMing that I've done, it's been with a group of people who were very much along for the ride, kind of thing? Like they were very much kind of, "Let's just see where this goes, let's have fun." Like, there weren't a lot of expectations right out of the gate, even though I did, you know… (chuckles) I mentioned before, I did like a survey to try and figure out what people were really interested in. It was a lot of… yeah, it was, kind of the answers I was expecting and… you know, that's— It wasn't like a big thing. I was gonna say though, part of this, I wonder if… I wonder if part of this, the delivering on expectations stuff, is a feeling that like, once a betrayal is revealed there's nowhere else to go with it?

Austin: Right.

Janine: Because, you know, from a storytelling perspective, I can totally understand that anxiety because like, there is a thing of like, even once you come up with a really good twist, what happens after the twist? Because what happens after the twist is the shit that actually seals whether or not it's a good twist or if it's just a gimmick.

Austin: Right.

Janine: And if that's part of the concern, I would say, you know, my answer that is Snitch Nightly. You can do things after the, like, introduction of a shithead… which, you know… (sighs)

It depends on how far you're gonna go, but there's stuff you can do with a character even after you've unveiled them to be…

Austin (chuckles): A piece of shit.

Janine: …whatever.

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Janine: Um, the other thing I was going to say is, it might be worth considering… You know, even if they've said that they're interested in this, and you have ideas and stuff like that, it might be worth considering— and you're worried, sorry, about how they'll respond, it might be worth considering the reasons why this kind of thing can feel bad. And I would point to, you know, party based RPGs, where you have a character who, for example… You know, you have this character in your party, and then something happens and then they peace out on you and they take the equipment that you gave them and stuff like that. The reason that stuff like that feels bad, I don't think, is necessarily just because it's a betrayal. It's because there is a loss of investment? There's like a… it feels like you— Sometimes it feels like a mistake, like it feels like *you* fucked up because you gave them something really good or whatever. So I feel like going into something with advanced knowledge would do a lot to help with that. And that feeling of, you know, it's not a surprise, it's not like you're gonna be taking away… It's not like you're taking something from them, you know?

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Janine: Because it's a thing that everyone knows is on the table and it's kind of a different situation. Hopefully that is helpful in some way, knowing that, but I think if everyone's into it, then it should be fine.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah, that's how I feel. Trust yourself to be able to stick the landing on this. Give it a shot and be thoughtful about the ways in which that betrayal manifests itself.

Janine: Oh! Also. Do you know what the most heist movie shit is?

Jack: Is it a double cross—?

Janine: You got to make a party with the traitor again.

Jack (crosstalking): Yeah, yeah, yeah! (laughs)

(**Dre** laughs)

Austin (crosstalking): Yeah, of course, the traitor comes back!

Janine (crosstalking): The traitor comes back into the fold. They had their reasons, you gotta—

Jack: That's fucking Terry Benedict!

Janine: (laughs) —you gotta make peace!

Austin: (laughs) Uh huh!

Janine: You got to get the job done…

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: You can take it in directions depending on how it goes.

Jack: There's an even bigger slimeball who your slimeball hates...

(**Janine** laughs)

Austin: Perfect.

Question Three (00:36:25)

Alright! Next one comes from Guz who says, "I'm running a *Dungeon World* campaign and I've started offering my players choices for the consequences of failed rolls, especially early in a session. I found that this softens the blow a bit and helps my players feel like they still have agency. I wanted to ask y'all if you had any thoughts on this from a player or GM perspective. Is this a good idea, bad idea, too against the spirit of *Dungeon World* etc.?"

I *think* that what Guz is saying here is that, like if you get a six or under, again, we'll go back to the Hack and Slash roll, and say the axe— you know, the axe-wielding warrior swings their axe at a skeleton knight, fails the roll. And then what Guz would say is "Alright, you *either*, you know, get hit back for 10 damage, or I take your axe away. You decide." I'm curious as players how that lands with you.

Janine: This is Hadrian in the ring, right?

Austin: What was Hadrian and the ring?

Janine: Wasn't Hadrian and the ring like—

Austin (crosstalking): Ah, that may have been a mixed success—

Janine: —he could either break the ring or break his hand?

Austin: This is the thing, is I don't remember if it was a failed roll or not.

Jack: Ohh, right.

Austin: In general, I save those options for when the game calls for those options, which tends to be seven to nine mixed success, where you can get the thing but it comes at a price. Or you get a hard bargain, an ugly choice, etc., right? I like— but of course, like… I have a reputation as being like a harsh GM or whatever. I don't think of myself as being a particularly harsh GM because I think that harsh GMs… I want to reserve that critique to people who play against parties… who exist out there. Really, truly there are GMss who think about what we do as competitive. And I have such a deep ethical (chuckles) problem— ethical and, like, craftsman-y disagreement with what they— with that perspective?

But I do know that it's probably not a surprise, still, for listeners to hear me say I like to reserve the six and under for being the moment where I as the GM have narrative control and agency— *have* my narrative control and agency and make hard moves. Or have the ability to make hard moves. And specifically my concern with this is that it will make, when you make a hard move, feel mean. If you again and again at the table are like, "Oh, here's your option for what happens when there's a failure," and then finally you have the good idea for a really dramatic moment in which you could say, "This is it, you've, you know, gone toe to toe against your nemesis, and you've gotten a really bad failure and a really dynamic moment, I have the perfect idea for a hard move, now." In that moment, you will feel like an asshole because— or you might come across as an asshole because in that moment you're then taking that agency away from them. Maybe you're never going to have that, maybe in your mind you're going to always, even in that situation, offer them a hard choice or something. But I like the line being drawn there because it rewards the seven, that makes the seven to nine feel like a success. More than a success that when I get to make a hard move, which you know will be bad. And it assures the player that when you *are* making the hard thing happen, when you *are* making the tough thing happen, it's because of that dice roll and not because you are plotting against them or something. But I also do get where you're coming from in terms of making players feel a little bit more at ease.

Again, so I'm curious from the rest of the table how this would feel if you rolled a two, and then I said, "Alright, which of these two bad things do you want to have happen to you?" Which is a thing I've done, you know, occasionally, but it's not it's not a thing I do all the time.

Janine: Um, I just want to say, I said ring and I meant sword, I said ring twice.

Austin: Oh, but there was also a ring moment. There was the Hella ring moment.

Janine: I know, that's—! Yeah, I think the ring was like, break *her* hand—

Austin: Yes, (chuckles) it was.

Dre: Ohh…

Janine: (chuckles) There've been a lot of rings, a lot of swords, a lot of hands.

Austin: Yep! True.

Jack: The three genders.

(**Austin** laughs)

Janine: Sword, ring, and hand. To be honest, I like this idea, but also I think it's worth asking, when you're doing this, why do you feel you need to soften the blow?

Austin: Mm.

Janine: Because I think there are definitely situations where like… it's tough, right? You have a valid— **Austin**, your point's super valid, but like, eventually you're gonna want to make a hard move and you're gonna feel like an asshole or people are going to feel like you're an asshole for doing it.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: *But*. Maybe you also don't want to make a hard move? Like there are certainly games you can play where, if you don't want to play a game that has hard moves, you can do that. But like…

Austin: The thing I would say there is just don't make a hard move. There are plenty of times when I don't make a hard move.

Janine: Yeah, that's what I mean about like, why do you feel you have to soften the blow?

Austin: Right.

Janine: Like, is this a case of like, you need to know your table, you need to know that like, this is not a group that's going to respond well to really serious bad things happening? Then you don't need to make really serious bad things happen. Regardless of whether or not people are choosing things and like, I think that's totally valid. I'm sure there are some people who would think that that's a shitty game then and whatever, whatever, but like everyone's there to have fun and to tell a story that they want to tell and, you know. If that story involves not having devastating consequences when you fail—

(**Austin** laughs)

Janine: —cool, go for it!

Austin: Right.

Janine: And if the thing that you want primarily is collaboration, if you really view this as, like, you are coming to a table to tell a story together, then offering that choice, you know, make sense again. And it also makes sense to… You know, depending on where you're at with your

players, like… some players can totally be trusted to pick a less favourable thing, if the story that comes out of it is better. It depends on your group, like—

Austin: Jack is right here, you can say Jack, you can say—

(**Dre** and **Jack** laugh)

Austin: —"if you're playing with Jack…"

Janine: Jack's really— Jack and Art are, I think, really good at doing stuff like this.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Janine: And it's a thing that, you know, I try to be better at, but is very hard for me because at the end of the day, I still have that little voice in me that's like, you should pick the thing that sets you up well for the next part of the story. And it's hard to turn that off.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: But, you know, it depends on your players, but like, I don't think there's anything inherently wrong with this as long as you bear all that stuff in mind, you know?

Austin: I just checked, just for the record, and the ring is definitely a seven to nine. And that is exactly the sort of thing that I would want to reserve for a seven to nine, right? Like the fact that, in *Dungeon World*, seven to nine is specifically on things like Defy Danger, Hard Bargain or Ugly Choice, giving them that, in those moments, is a great illustration of why having all three of those vectors there or all three of those types of outcome there works. I think, I *think* contrary to that, the thing at the end of that arc or the end of that season, that is the other one (chuckles), I think that that was a failure, which is why it needed— I think Art failed a roll and then some dark shit started happening. And that is why a different character had to get involved to stop that from happening.

And I liked that divide, but again, that was tonally where that story was, versus if you're, like you said, Janine, if you're running a game that just isn't that tonally, then then that's okay. Though I would say, at that point, it might be worth either completely looking at a different game or just straight up hacking the game in such a way that everyone at the table knows that that is the circumstance and that's like a hard and fast rule. And maybe looking at seven to nines and figuring out a different outcome there that feels like you're not just getting the same thing as a two, right? The last thing I ever want is for a player to roll a nine and basically be like, "Well, I could've rolled a one and I— which is impossible (chuckles). I could have rolled a zero (chuckles) and gotten the same thing, which is a hard choice, you know?

Jack and **Dre**, do you have any thoughts here?

Jack: I think— it sounds like… I think it's worth asking what you're interested… Why doing it like this is interesting to you because you talk about wanting to soften the blow a bit and help players feel like they have agency. Is that speaking to—

Austin: Mm…

Jack: —an enjoyment of making your players involved in their characters' misfortune as much as their fortune? In which case I think that brokering with them on a seven to nine is… I think of when Austin puts options out on a seven to nine as, like, us rolling our sleeves up and Austin putting cards down on the table and us going like, "Alright, finally, I could trade you this for this."

(**Austin** chuckles)

Jack: Keith has been doing this really well in *Partizan*.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Keith's slogan in *Partizan* has become "Can I take an extra die on that?" because Keith is just always trying— and it fits so well with Leap, is just like always trying to scramble into or out of trouble on a mixed success roll. And I think that's where it's really exciting. I'm with you, **Austin**, in that I think that, as a GM, you need to have a space to make hard moves otherwise, on some level, your storytelling will start to fall apart. If there's nowhere for you with failures to say, "Listen, fuckers, it's gonna happen like this…"

(**Dre** laughs)

Austin: Classic quote. Friends at the Table Quotes on Twitter (laughs).

Jack: We're going to— scenes are going to start to move in stagnant and strange ways. I think if you are— I kind of like giving them some agency on the way far end of the spectrum, which is when something goes so monumentally wrong that a character is threatened mortally.

Austin: Riiight, right.

Jack: And I think there's definitely this path in the middle around hard failures where as a player I'm not very interested in being given agency in those moments. That's kind of like letting the water take you. But when a character is going to die, I think a thing that we do well on the show is like… That's never a moment where Austin says "And here is the only way out of this. Here is the only way it's going to go." Character death is all about talking with the player about where they're interested in seeing their character and how they're interested in seeing their character moving forward. A game that I love that does this really well is *Night Witches*?

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Which has an incredible death mechanic where, when a character dies, the player basically gets to just choose what happens to them out of a series of interesting options, whether or not they don't come back, whether or not they ditch their plane and return with some strange new quality.

And I think that, in the event of an outcome being as transformative as a potential character death, *that* is the kind of agency and softening of blows or allowing of refocusing that I'm more interested in, much more so than rolling a hard failure.

Austin: Totally. I think that that is, like… the other thing there that you kind of get at is you can do this piecemeal, you can do this… Again, for me, it's like as long as there's consistency and transparency on where you're doing it. You could say, "Hey, I'm getting rid of the six and under death move for this game. When you die, we're going to do the thing where you have to make a deal to live, or you can roll and if you don't get a success, we're going to do the thing where you have to make a deal with death to live, which is like the *Dungeon World* rule. And I actually like *that* idea, because then you can do the thing of identifying where are the places here where it's most fun for your players to have that agency? Where are the things here where you feel added stress, and you want to reduce that stress? And where are the places you want to maintain the ability to be a little bit more authoritative and say, "Here is the thing that happens on the roll of a two," you know?

Any other thoughts here?

Dre: Um, I think for me, the question I would have for the person who asked this question is, are you making this change because this is how you *want* to play your game, or are you making this change because you're afraid of how you *don't* want to play your game? Because I think if it's the former, if you're moving towards how you want the game to be and you're moving towards like, an idea you have, like a solid image of "I want this game to be fast paced, I want this game to be light hearted, I want this game to be very collaborative and not have super high stakes all the time," then I think that's fine. If you're doing this because you're worried about being a jerk, or because you don't want to be seen as the mean GM, I don't think that's good for the overall state of the table.

Austin: Yeahhh.

Dre: Because I think, you know, like… I think this goes back to the other question where I said, you know, don't assume you can't do something or don't assume that your players are going to be upset with something if they haven't told you (chuckles) that they're upset with it, or they don't want it or they don't like it.

Austin: They—

Dre: Trust yourself and trust your players will let you know if something is going poorly.

Austin: Yeah, definitely. To some degree, this is a question for the table because… more than us, right? Like, maybe they want to make sure that bad things happen in this game. (laughing) Do you know what I mean? Maybe they want there to be that tension.

I go back to that previous question, the person who was like, "We're playing a game drawn on a sense of *Etrian Odyssey*". *Etrian Odyssey* is a game where things fall apart *real quick* if you fuck up. And if that table had this outcome, they might not like that. Whereas, if we were playing a game and we were like, "Hey, we really want to evoke a certain lightness." Or I think about when we were playing a game set in the world of— that we did with *Fall of Magic*, it's like, well, maybe that's specifically a world and a tone that demands a lighter touch or a more dynamic touch or a more player-focused touch. I mean, even, you know, you look at something like *Beam Saber*, *Beam Saber* has GM-less rules, where it's about the table coming to— deciding for outcomes and what the results of a failure look like. And that's really cool. And you can have that conversation with the table and go forward from there. I think *that* is where the authority of any game is, it's in the hands of the people at the table. And so I think that's the best thing to do, and I know we ring that bell a lot. I know we say like, "Hey, transparency, communication, talk to your players," blah blah blah. But that *is* the solution to so many things here, or it's at least the first step, the first good step should be that.

Ready for the next one?

Janine and **Dre**: Mm-hmm!

Question Four (00:51:20)

Austin: Ada writes in. And this was originally from *Drawing Maps*, or about a *Drawing Maps* thing and I wanted to shout out *Drawing Maps* as a thing that people could go listen to and can write in questions to. *Drawing Maps* is the show that I do once a month that is explicitly, I guess at this point, kind of mini post-mortems (laughs) about the arcs that just came out. So I've done one about the initial— I mean… (sighs) *Drawing Maps*, at first, was me doing prep for upcoming stuff. Then it became me doing prep for an entire season, building the Stels for *Partizan*. Then it became now, most recently, looking back at the previous episodes, talking about what worked, talking about what didn't, talking a little bit about what's to come. But *mostly* talking through and answering some questions about the episodes that just aired. So you should go listen to those.

Ada says, "I'm sending this in now because I'll forget before the next one, but please pretend I asked this in the future, once you've seen how it all played out. In the February session of *Drawing Maps*, you rolled fortune dice for particular squads' long-term projects, one of which could have resulted in a big change for the Rapid Evening. Given that *Partizan* has been such a player-driven game so far, how do you feel about those off-camera rolls and how much they have or haven't impacted the game a month later? Personally, I've always found the idea of the faction turn in *Forged in the Dark* hard to deploy. I remember you previously mentioned

preparing things off screen and feeling like they fell flat in the moment, like specific event cards for in *Futura Free*."

I think that those are two different things in my head. In *Futura Free* I prepped— So *Futura Free* is the name of the finale for *Twilight Mirage*, I'm not going to get into spoilers about that stuff or about the most recent *Partizan* episodes, just so people listening know they don't have to quickly jump ahead 20 minutes or something like that. But what I will say is, in *Futura Free*, so much of what the players had kind of earned fictionally was to just let that world play out and to let the factions of that world be actors and not for me to draw a card that says something just happens, right? Or for me not to demand that a card draw that they had actually does this other thing. I think there's a way in which that still would have worked, but that would have been like playing in person and literally reprinting certain cards with different text on them. But playing as we were playing wouldn't have worked.

The faction turn is such a different thing because it happens in all of the things that we play, even when it's not called the faction turn. If you go back and listen to *Spring in Hieron*, you know, clocks tick, things off screen are moving. The state of the world changes. The difference with *Blades in the Dark* and with *Forged in the Dark* games that have the faction turn is that it looks something more like the *COUNTER/weight* faction turn which, Dre, you were a part of, where there's dice rolling happening and that dice rolling means that the outcomes are different. In the most recent *Partizan* example, and I will allude to stuff here without getting really specific. There was a faction that— there was stuff that could have happened on— stuff that could have happened in terms of the state of the ongoing war, involving factions getting involved in different ways. If the dice had landed a certain way, and there was a very high chance that the dice were going to land that way. And if it had happened, one of the major factions, the faction aligned with the Rapid Evening would have had some backup, like, immediately, right? Jack, this might be news to you as (laughing) the player associated with the Rapid Evening, but if the dice had come out differently, things would look different on that front of this war, right? But it *didn't*, and that's— I guess the thing to get at here is, I was going to have to make a decision off-screen anyway? I was going to have to make a decision about who's getting involved in this war, who's siding with who, when is all that stuff happening? And that's going to— that was going to be a decision I made no matter what. Instead, I had this really fun moment on *Drawing Maps* where I got to roll those dice and see that the thing that I thought was going to happen didn't happen. And instead now I'm like, "Ooh, interesting. Can I play with that a little bit? What new ideas are generated from there?" The rules say, if you don't like it, throw it out and just do the thing that you like instead, but what I liked about that moment was that I could roll those dice and they produced a prompt for me from which I could start prepping new ideas. And what has ended up happening and you haven't heard this stuff yet, and again, I'm not getting into specific spoilers, but when it does come up in the Rapid Evening downtime, now what I have— the role of the GM who's using the faction turn is to bring that faction turn material into play and make it visible, right?

So if you go back and listen to *COUNTER/weight* stuff, there are all sorts of things happening in the faction game that didn't show up right away necessarily. We look at characters like Ibex or Natalya Greaves, there are major characters who kind of flitter into the main camera here or there, based on what was happening in the faction game, or related at least into successes and failures at the faction game. That was a very specific model because we did full actual like role-played out sequences around the faction turn. And as much as I would love to do that for *Partizan*, it's just like… *Partizan's* already going to be too long, even if it's shorter than the past seasons, it's going to be a long season. And I don't know how we would fit in a full faction turn at this point without losing a lot of momentum.

But those sorts of decisions have to get made anyway and so leaving them up to the dice is not that big of a change. The thing that you have to do as a GM is to show them in action, right? Is to show how a faction gets involved and tries to change something. Show how, you know, an allegiance is built between these two groups, or how this squad gets up to no good and how people are impacted. It has always been a truth for *Friends at the Table* that the players have agency about what their characters do, and have— that the characters have agency about what they do, but also that the players have agency about things like tone, about things like where the camera's focus is and interest, what we want to do. But it's always been a core part of what the pitch is that the world moves without the players. We hit that stuff thematically. I think you'd look at like the Mistral arc in *Spring in Hieron* for a really clear example of how the players are not the centre of the world necessarily. They're just the centre of the camera. You look at stuff in *Bluff City*, look at stuff all throughout the entire kind of show. And it's important thematically at the heart of the show's ethos that the rest of the world exists and does stuff too. It's part of what we go for as like a recurring feeling.

And so I think that that part of it is something that is just, like, good on its face. The thing that can be tough is *showing* the players that that stuff is happening in a way that doesn't feel stapled on, in a way that doesn't feel secondary or unimportant or just *my* thing like (chuckles), "Oh, and over here, here are my favourite toys! Here's— my pet squad succeeded and now you have to deal with them or whatever." When it works well, it's when something really dramatic happens like a god showing up to your tower because of some stuff that happened behind the scenes, you know?

I don't know if y'all have any thoughts here, this was obviously a very GM-focused question but happy as always to share the mic (chuckles).

Jack: Real quick, when you *do* do things like rolling those dice to see if the situation would change and it didn't, and so, you know, you altered your storytelling and the episode itself. As a player, that doesn't necessarily feel like we missed out on agency, necessarily. Um, you know, those sequences, those recordings and episodes begin with a character saying, you know, "Following the events that were happening off screen, I have made a decision to do x, y or z," and like—

Austin: Right.

Jack: —as a player, that feels— you kind of think to yourself, "Oh, sure, okay! Right, yes, this is— I'm receiving a briefing, this is how it's gonna work." I don't think that's a reason to, as a GM, lose sight of being critical of the ways in which you are giving or removing agency from players in particular moments but I think, speaking for myself, you know, when you as the GM make actions like that, I don't necessarily feel like I've been robbed of anything so much as like a story beat is playing out, you know, differently to the way it might have done had we all been around the table sort of discussing.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Totally.

<p align="center">**Question Five** (01:00:01)</p>

Um, all right, keep moving. Calvin writes in and says, "I'm wondering what all of your various educational backgrounds are. As I progress further through my own time at university, I've started to understand more and more of the philosophical and complicated themes throughout the show on a deeper level. For instance, Austin, did you study ethics and philosophy? Or Jack, did you study music composition academically or more professionally focused on writing? You don't need to say the names of schools you went to if you don't want to, but I'm curious as to what you've studied in order to make this show so well-rounded in the topics that are discussed."

I'm totally happy to answer this question and talk about it a little bit, but I also want to underscore that so much of what the show is doesn't come from, like—

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: —formal education. I like—

Jack: Book reading?

Austin: Right, it comes— right, exactly. Well, it might come from book reading, but not school book reading sometimes.

Jack: Yeah. Not someone being like… the syllabus.

Austin: (laughs) Right! Exactly. Because I think like, when you think about something like *COUNTER/weight*, the season where I think we got our feet and like understood how to tell… how to *tell* a story over the audio medium in a way that was still visual, that is just me staying up late watching anime and watching movies with my dad and watching TV shows with my mom and my stepdad. You know what I mean? It's like, the osmosis of visual storytelling over time. And that has nothing to— Y'know, I took a couple film courses, but that's not what that was, do you know what I mean? That was like talking to my dad after going to the movie theatre and comparing notes about what we— literally comparing written notes about what we liked. And

that is as foundational for me as any class I sat in on and I'm sure that that's the same for all of you. Like, so many things that everyone on this call and everyone on the show brings to the table I know is from hobbies that they have or videos, YouTube videos that they've watched or books that they've read or music that they've listened to, you know?

But does anyone want to share any particular part of what their educational background is and ways in which it's maybe filtered in? I guess I'll make that broad, whether that is formal education or just something that was an interest that you've kind of educated yourself on by yourself, you know?

Jack: Like, I took clarinet lessons from when I was a kid. And I took some piano lessons, but like, I don't have a background in music theory—

Austin: Right.

Jack: —and I am, uh, bad at music theory?

(**Austin** laughs)

Jack: In like, in the traditional sense that music theorists who (chuckles) study music are able to talk about the way they compose or talk about the way they construct music. I can't read music very well. I can't read the bass clef, which is one of the two clefs.

(**Austin** chuckles)

Jack: That's *half* the notes. And if I want to write notation, you know, I… it's a *really* time-consuming struggle for me. Um, I think that you know… Which isn't to discount, you know, the really skilled teachers who were really patient with the kid who wouldn't play their scales. But also, you know, I never really took the classes that were like, here's how chord progressions work or things like that. That stuff for me came about much more as a result of like, talking to friends about music I liked or sitting and trying stuff out on the piano and it being bad until it wasn't. Or like sending a thing to Austin and saying like, "What is the bass doing here?" and then cutting back—

(**Austin** chuckles)

Jack: —and like, talking about that through there. Um, I did some creative writing, I studied English and creative writing at university. But I'm hesitant… I'm hesitant, like…

Austin: It's not a path, right? Like...

Jack: Yeah, we don't make the show we make—

Austin (crosstalking): But it is, also! This is the thing that's difficult, is that like…

Jack: Right!

Austin: This show would be so different if I didn't study the things that I studied. It would not be this show. But I was still… *But*, if you could turn back time to when I was running the games with Art, in college, there are so many hallmarks of what we do now that were even there because of the non-formal education, the way that non-formal education had shaped me. Because of what my ambitions were as a storyteller, because I grew up with a mom who was a poet and a dad who, you know, did music and da da da dah. Like, all that stuff did filter into the sort of like, how I wanted to run a game that had nothing to do with "and then I would go to do a masters in whatever," do you know what I mean? But that *doesn't* mean that stuff isn't important, but I'm cautious about putting too fine a point on it and be like, "Aha! The way to become a good storyteller is to read Foucault," because it's *not*, let me tell you. (chuckling) It's *absolutely* not that, that is *not* the way to become a good storyteller.

The way to become a good storyteller isn't to read any one particular author or to watch any particular, you know, film or listen to any particular podcast, necessarily. It's… for me, it is like to really do your best to think about form and think about a bunch— and listen to and watch and read and play a bunch of different influences. And let those things kind of coalesce and synthesise.

There is obviously a very big theory component to what motivates me as a creator. And I'm grateful for the education that I've had in the various fields that I have, and I *do* draw upon it often. But they are colours on the palette, they're not necessarily the shape of the thing. They're not necessarily what I'm putting to page, if that makes sense? But also, you could read some theory. It's fun. I like to read theory (chuckles). I like to— I, hmm. It's like, where do you even start? You know? Yeah, an undergrad philosophy course, I think, is a very useful thing to have if you're a creative writer and if you're trying to run a fucking *D&D* game? Let me tell you, there are some like Ethics 101 and Philosophy 101 and like… Metaphysics and, uh… If I think back to like, my Philosophy of the Mind class and the many ways in which I turned that into some completely bullshit dungeon idea, it's— it's fun to do that stuff, those are good ways. Likewise things like,

you know, courses on religion going back even before university-level classes? Reading in general on faith, reading in general on history? The world is so much bigger than anyone knows because our educational systems are very limited in what their reach is. But in general that style of reading has been really useful and helpful.

Anyone else want to weigh in?

Janine: I—

Jack: It's also like— Oh, sorry, go on, Janine.

Janine: I was just gonna say like, a thing I would point to in terms of how far education can take you in this sort of situation and the limitations is, you know, my background is… I have an English degree with a minor in French, and a Bachelor of Education. And the English degree primarily— like I took one creative writing course because they just didn't offer that at my school. And the rest of that of that English degree is 100% literature. Which you would think would put me in a really good position to see things coming a little better than I do on the show (chuckles). Even when things have long since happened, I'll like have a moment like, "Ohhhh, this was this— Okay," and then there's a lot of things I just will never have that moment for until someone says it directly to me, like, "You know, this was the thing, right?" Um, because I think when I'm playing I'm not really thinking in that way, necessarily? I'm not thinking in the way of like… I don't have a text in front of me, I don't have six highlighters. I am not making a 20-page essay—

(**Austin** laughs)

Janine: —I'm playing a game with my friends. And I (chuckles), you know, I think that's fine. I think that the education that is actually fed into whatever I'm doing is a lot of like, you know, I've always been a dilettante. I've never been good at sticking to one thing because my brain and body get really, really restless. And so instead of mastering any one thing, I just dip my toes in as many things as possible. And that is useful in some ways and not useful in others but I think the way it's useful in terms of storytelling is because that encourages a lot of lateral thinking, that encourages a lot of like, you can make a weird jump and be like, "Well, actually, there's like this one thing that so and so did that is actually— what if we did something like that?"

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: —blah, blah, blah. Or like, you know, they make hard candy by blah, blah, blah, and (laughs) shit like that which is really annoying on an interpersonal level but can spin stories in different directions that you wouldn't expect.

Austin: I think you're overestimating how annoying it is (laughs).

Dre: Yeah, I was—

Janine: (laughs) I find it annoying when people do it to me—

Austin: (laughing) Oh-kay.

Janine: —which is why I'm aware of, you know, I… I have… Family members that I got this habit from do it in a way that makes me very aware when I'm doing it because I don't want to come off like that, so it's a weird thing. But it is useful in a way because it's, you know, you can take things in unconventional directions and it doesn't, you know, that's not a thing that you get from… You can't go to university and get a "Know 5% of 60 different fucking topics" degree.

Austin: No… Well— (chuckles) Unfor— Well. you could get like a… you could just do, what do you call it? Just like liberal arts degree? But everyone you know is gonna clown on you for it, which is unfair because my philosophy—

(**Dre** laughs)

Janine: I don't know if that's a thing here.

Austin: It's a thing here, for sure, my mom has a liberal arts degree. It just straight up is *in* liberal arts. She literally has a degree in like 5% of 70 different things.

Jack: That kinda rules.

Austin: It *does* rule!

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: And I'll be honest, it's not any more— it's not any less useful than my philosophy degree is specifically (laughs), you know?

Jack: Like, the two examples that I was gonna give for just ways in which I like thinking about, you know, what is interesting to me to bring to the show is **Austin** saying, "I want to learn more about architecture" and me going, "Damn, I kind of want to learn more about architecture!" Like, I could pick up an architecture book from a charity shop and flip through this book that I got for like two pounds that has pictures of, you know, Spanish architecture, and I'm like, "Yeah, this rules."

Austin: I think a lot about you saying, "You could just get a fashion magazine," (chuckles).

Jack: Yeah!

(**Dre** laughs)

Austin: You could just do that!

Jack: Yeah, I have *Vogue*, like, in the other room.

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: Um, and like the other one, which is so funny because this is what you were just saying, **Janine**, is when we were in Vancouver and you put on that nightmarish cooking show that like, looked like it was—

Janine: (laughing) Fanny Cradock.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah!

Austin: Ugh.

Jack: It was like—

Dre: Excuse me??

Austin: It makes me *sick* to think about.

Dre: What's it called?

Jack: It's like a se— It's Fanny Cradock, she's— that's the cook. Is she British?

Janine: Yes.

Jack: It's from the like 70s or the 80s and, Dre?

Dre: Ohh…

Jack: Let me tell you! This show is what you think it is. And we (laughs)— we were just like all lounging around in this room watching this— like half-watching this show. And every so often one of us would look up and make like a noise of revulsion. And then everybody would look up, and I feel like that experience of just like, our *Bluff City* chat where we post a variety of weird stuff happening and like, the stuff that I take away— or the stuff that I take into episodes, being like, "This is useful or interesting to me" that I've spent time looking at, is things like reading the fashion magazine, watching a (laughing) stupid video of some people cooking disastrous things. God, didn't she like, bully her assistant or something?

Austin: Oh God…

Janine: Yeah, she was famous for bullying her assistants. Some of them quit, like it was a whole— there's like a made for TV movie about her and it's all very depressing—

Austin: What's her name again?

Jack: Fanny Cradock.

Janine: Yeah, Fanny Cradock. She ended up losing her stuff on TV because she was too mean to a housewife in a reality TV cooking competition. She like insulted her menu—?

Dre: Jesus Christ…

Janine: —and everyone was like, "She's a home cook! Lay off," and then she kind of—

Austin: (sighs) Jeez…

Janine: —flamed out. She used to put food coloring in her mashed potatoes.

(**Dre** makes a sound of revulsion)

Austin: Nnno…

Janine: And then pipe them in a piping bag or something.

Jack: Hey, is she Blue City Mary Berry?

Austin: Probably.

(**Janine** laughs)

Austin: She— you know who she reminds me of, and this is probably only for **Janine**, what's the bad comedian from that show we watched? (chuckles)

(**Dre** and **Jack** laugh)

Janine: OHHH! From—

Austin: Ms. Maisel.

Janine: Mrs. Maisel.

Austin: Mrs. Maisel.

Janine: The… God… Jane Lynch in the fat suit.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Janine: I forget her name.

Austin: They have a very similar vibe. Sophie Lennon. Sophie Lennon is the name of—

Janine: Sophie Lennon.

Austin: —the fictional comedian. They have very similar vibes, to me.

Janine: Fanny Cradock—

Austin: I guess they don't because Fanny Cradock is like posher, right?

Janine: No! No, Fanny Cradock has a posh appearance, she has super pencilled eyebrows, super—

Austin: Right, that's—

Janine: —lips, she used to cook in the…

Austin: Oh, but no! Yeah.

Janine: —Royal Albert Hall or something. But her whole thing is like—

Jack: (laughing) She used to cook in the…

Janine: Yes, they used to have a cooking show. There's a thing on YouTube of her and her partner doing a cooking show in the Royal Albert Hall before like TV was a thing—

Jack: A concert venue! They have a fucking organ there!

Janine: Yeah! You should look it up. I think you'd find it very interesting—

(**Dre** laughing)

Janine: —she's wearing full evening wear. But the thing that's interesting about her is because you know, she sort of came up between the Great Depression and World War Two and then got her TV show in the 60s and stuff—

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Janine: Her whole thing is like about home economy and cooking with what you have and like, you know, being efficient and saving money and she would always talk about like, how you could save a penny here and there. Like it was so—

Jack: British people also like to do this, is the other thing.

Janine: Yeah, but it was a thing of like, she wasn't being fancy for the sake of fancy.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Janine: She was trying to be fancy for the every person.

Jack: (whispering) God…

Austin: That's so interesting.

Janine: Mixed success. I think she also was really shady about Julia Child, so—

Austin: Ah, yeah.

Jack: Oh, fuck her!

Austin: The underlying thing here.

(**Janine** laughs)

Austin: The underlying deep truth here is actually the real answer, which is, whatever you do, the thing… the education that's going to be the most successful for you in terms of becoming creative is whatever you're most excited about. Whatever gets you like, sup— It's not out yet, but there's a *Waypoint Radio* coming out tomorrow where I tell a story about *Stellaris*. And the thing that's interesting about it for me and the thing that gets me hyped in the moment of the story is me talking about the ways in which the game's modelling of a Galactic Senate reflects the way in which, like, things like sanctions, and peer pressure at the kind of legislative stage gets you to make choices you wouldn't agree with otherwise. And like, that's exciting for me, because those are things I care about. It has nothing to do with what degree I have, necessarily, but even the part of your schooling that gets you excited about, draw on that stuff, chase the thing that makes you excited. That's what's going to make you put the work in in the prep stage. It's gonna be the thing that makes you really, really expressive at the table is, if you do find something about your education that really gets you excited, zero in on *that* thing as the thing to like fo— follow the rabbit hole. You know what I mean? Give yourself the time as a creator to follow the rabbit hole of the thing that gets you excited, because that's the thing that's gonna lead you to gold every time. The thing that isn't is where you're just like banging your head against something and going like, "But I thought that if I read these 70 books, I would turn out to be a good writer."

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: That's just *not* how it's gonna work—

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: Unless those 70 books are things you read and then be like, "These are dope!" You know what I mean? I would so much rather everyone who's aspiring to make a podcast, or write a book or draw a comic spend their time on stuff that they enjoy, or at the very least, they feel challenged by. Versus stuff that is just on a list that's like the canonical thing, or even spending that time in the classroom, you know?

Janine: A thing I did after— so like, a couple years ago, I read *Pride and Prejudice* for the first time after reading one Jane Austen book, maybe two in school and kind of conflating her with the Bronte's and being like, "This whole thing's not my scene, I don't like romance books," blah, blah, blah.

(**Austin** chuckles)

Janine: Um, and I read *Pride and Prejudice* like, "Oh, this is fucking great."

(**Austin** laughs)

Janine: And a thing I did after that, and that I do occasionally now, I did it with *Schitt's Creek*, which I started watching this year, is when I really, really like a thing that I didn't expect to like I will— or even just when I really, really like a thing, I will sometimes sit down with a pen and paper and just be like, "What specifically are the things that I really, really liked about this that I would want to replicate in my own work?"

Dre: Riiight.

Janine: You know, it's things like avoiding really cheap sort of shock surprises and twists and, you know, having things— for me a really big thing is not relying on misunderstandings—

Jack: Ugh!

Janine: Miscommunication—

Jack: The worst.

Janine: Because I find that too frustrating, I just don't think it's interesting for stories. But doing things like that is a lot more informative for me than a lot of the stuff I ever did in a writing class or whatever. The other thing I was going to mention was another good example of weird shit that can inform stuff. Yesterday I linked Austin to a video of a wire recorder?

Austin: Uh huh.

Janine: Where they recorded audio on these spools of very, very fine wire. And it's just like a— it's like a 15 or 20 minute long video or something like that from *Techmode* of just like, here's— Sorry, *Techmoan*, I think, um (chuckles), and it's just this like… He just set this fucking machine up and it's just like, "Let's just play these and talk about how this fucking thing works and zoom in on all these weird— this one part that goes up and down so it wears on the thing evenly or whatever," like… Just, that's a rabbit hole, but that's a thing that you can actively use, you can work at it—

Austin: Yeah, I'm stealing it, it's in the next episode, we're recording it Sunday—

(**Janine** laughs)

Austin: I already know what it does, it's real cool. It's such a good visual, just wait. It's sick.

Jack: Wait, is that us or is that SBBR?

Austin: No, that's SBBR [Sabre], yeah.

Janine: SBBR…

Austin: Please!

(**Janine** chuckles)

Dre (crosstalking): That's the name, Jack.

Jack (crosstalking): Yeah, come to Cruciat.

(**Dre** and **Janine** laugh)

Austin: Ahh…

Jack: Weather's fine.

Austin: Is it?

Jack: I'm feeling very well—

Austin: I guess so, yeah. Um, alright. Let me move on. I think we have one more question? I think? I think we have one more. I think?

Jack: Well, it's one or two.

Austin: Yeah, we'll find out.

Dre: I think one.

Austin: Uhh… yeah, we do, that's right.

Question Six (01:19:26)

Stephanie writes in and says, "Hey, everyone! I wanted to say thanks for all your work, but especially for the live plays in *Bluff City*. My online group primarily plays *D&D*, but when our two primary GMs are unavailable, some of the rest of us step up to run one shots. I love playing new indie games so it's a great chance to expose my group to games beyond D20 systems. I don't learn well from the written word, so listening to your games and referencing the live streams really helps me," I'm glad to hear that. "Which leads to my question: *Roll20* is a great venue, but it doesn't lend itself well to running these unique games. How do you figure out how to set up the board in *Roll20*? What tools do you use? And for the players, how do you deal with the struggles of not having the ability to delete things you've drawn and not being able to see your drawings until after you've released the mouse?" Can you still— is that— are both of those still true? Did they not fucking fix those things yet?

Dre: I'm not sure!

Austin: Hmm.

Jack: It's not easy to draw in *Roll20*—

Austin: (chuckling) Yeah!

Dre: No…

Jack: —I'll say that, whether or not they fixed it.

Dre (crosstalking): Unless you're Janine.

Austin (crosstalking): On one separate question.

Dre (crosstalking): Janine is very good.

Jack (crosstalking): Unless you're Janine, yeah. Or—

Janine: Only when I cheat. I'm good when I set my tablet up. When I'm using my mouse, I'm not.

Jack: Ah.

Austin: Mm. Here is—

Jack: The other time you can be good is if you're Austin and you're trying to draw a horse. That's great every time.

(**Janine** chuckles)

Austin: Fantastic horse drawer, that's true. I pulled up the *Stewpot* page really quick for the stream to look at. And the thing that I just want to say like, it's messy! The answer to this question is like, it's just— for people who are listening to this podcast, which is most people, I've just literally copied and pasted the various— Ah! Someone wrote "boo" on the— boop. Boop. **Dre** wrote boop on the screen. (chuckles) It's just straight up *the* character sheets. It is not anything super special. I'll launch our *Bluff City* game, which I think I can do without spoilers, and take a look at this too. You know, we just straight up often will put the equivalent of index cards out or blank sheets and start drawing things.

Janine: Yeah, I was gonna say, a JPEG of an index card will get you pretty far (laughs).

Austin: Absolutely. Looking back at our *Anomaly* game, it's just like big white text fields and then we write underneath them and draw our clocks in, stuff like that.

Jack: God, remember when Keith was playing Robert Twig and just broke his character sheet deliberately over and over again—

Austin (crosstalking): I'll pull it for people to look at.

(**Janine** laughs)

Austin: Yeah, it's so good. It's so fucking funny. Ah. (laughs) Again, there are spoilers on screen in a sense, but don't worry about it.

(**Janine** laughs)

Austin: Yeah, like in the case of *Masks*— I mean *Masks* is more of a traditional game than a cool weird indie game in the sense that I think you mean. I literally just put the basic move sheets up on the screen and had like a little section at the bottom for counters. I'm trying to think of if there's something else that's sort of—

Janine: Worth mentioning that for *Partizan* we're using Google Docs, basically.

Austin: Oh, right! Totally. We're *not* using—

Jack: Oh, Jesus.

Janine: We're not using *Roll20* at all.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, I mean. Sadly, God, that stuff is being worked on is my understanding, it's just not done yet. And when it is, I'm very excited to move everybody over into *Roll20*. Because it's good, those— the Google Doc sheet, I'll pull those up too, one second… I'll pull those up too and go to a part that is no one sheet so there's no spoilers (laughs). (nervously) Ah, let's go to a blank… da da da da dah… Before I pull it over. Let's look at the Soldier sheet. I think all this is coming up on stream, it should be, yes.

This stuff is all just like marked in a Google Sheet that literally just takes control— like just doesn't take— it *doesn't* take control of anything, but lets you track how much harm you have, how much stress you have, etc. There's some neat little features, but basically it's just the sheets, and then in *Roll20* we just go in and do a roll, you know? We don't necessarily— there's no interface there but I pulled up *Fiasco* so people can see. We've literally wrote, like, put the five different index cards in a circle—

Jack: Oh, this one's cute, this was one of my favourite ones.

Austin: Yeah, I like this one. We put like—

Jack: Like a card table.

Austin: —five index cards, yeah, in a circle like, not necessarily tilted? They're not in a circle connected (chuckles), necessarily. They're mostly all vertical with little nameplates above each one of them. We have the dice in the middle because the way dice work with *Fiasco* requires them not to be rolled in the chat but to be rolled physically. And you can do a search for "*Roll20* interactive dice" or like "dice on board" or even just "*Roll20 Fiasco* dice" and you'll see someone walk you through that stuff. You know, we have an extra note card at the bottom for notes, we have sections of the page setup for positive scenes and negative scenes. It's all very stitched together in that way. And these games are actually better for that, in some ways, than trying to do something like *D&D*— to make a good, like, dungeon map means doing a lot of work (laughs) in *Roll20*, whereas a lot of these games I think work really well. I think about— our *Dialect* game was another one where it's just like, we're laying cards out in different orders, but it's not necessarily like a whole big thing, you know? You don't need to replicate every part of a tabletop perfectly, necessarily, you know?

Jack: A thing I do want to say that is super helpful for me as a player is when you put those sheets for… you know when you do something and we say, "How do you do that?" And you say, "I put the sheet for it in the right hand column?"

Austin: Oh, yes, yes. My handouts, yes.

Jack: You know how in big seasons, you will have put the sheets for the most… either mechanics that we hit very frequently that are very fiddly, or mechanics that we hit very infrequently and want to make sure we get right.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: That is just *the* best because there is nothing that makes me feel more anxious as a player than like leafing through page after page—

Austin: Yeahhh.

Jack: —in a rulebook. That's *super* helpful—

Austin: That's a huge help. Give yourself a couple of hours to prep the *Roll20* page… Excuse me, it generally takes me about 45 minutes to 90 minutes… to get stuff in a way that feels right. That's a pain but like it's better than not getting to play games with my friends, so I'll deal with it, you know? (chuckles) But yeah! I think that— I hope that this is something people get to try out soon. Or like, if you haven't done this, now is a good time to play some games online. I think *Roll20's* basic model is totally free, I pay a little bit more for some bonus features, but most of them don't even come up at this point. I really needed them for *COUNTER/weight* because of a thing that we did where I kind of hacked in *COUNTER/weight* sheets. But I have not done that with *Beam Saber* because it's way more complicated than *COUNTER/weight* where I could just take the *Dungeon World* sheets and fuck around with them at the time. And now there are (chuckles) official *COUNTER/weight* sheets?

Oh my God, do you want to see something wild?

Dre: What?

Austin: I've played 3660 hours of *Roll20*, apparently.

Jack: God, that is so fucking funny.

Austin: It's *so* funny.

Jack: That's amazing. I wonder how many— I think I've played less than you but I have played a very silly number—

Austin: I *bet* you've played a silly number. So yeah, you should— people should check out *Roll20*, again, especially right now with social distancing and everything, it's a good format to play a lot of different types of games—

Jack: We've had some trouble coming into the studio.

Austin: Right! Yeah, we don't get to go into our physical studio anymore. Uhhh—

(**Dre** laughs)

Austin: (laughing) We normally fly from across the world to the same place—

Jack: Mm-hmm!

Austin: —and… we shouldn't even fucking joke (chuckles), God.

Jack: (laughs) Yeah.

Austin: Um, any other *Roll20* tips?

(pause)

Austin: All right. That does it for us. As always, you can email us at tipsatthetable@gmail.com to add extra questions… to add extra questions? I'm so tired, everyone—

(**Janine** laughs)

Austin: —you can hear my voice, I'm like stuttering, I'm very tired, it's been a long week. But the place you do send questions both for this and for *Drawing Maps* is tipsatthetable@gmail.com. Just use the subject— I think the subject is like "Tips Email" or "Tips Question," something like that. We'll see it, don't worry about it.

There is one other thing, which is an announcement, which we'll be making on all of our feeds also, very soon. Given the state of the world, given the spread of COVID-19, given the amount

of shelter in place and quarantine and curfew and everything else and the general move toward social distancing, we know that a lot of folks right now need a lot of… are in a rough place, are stressed, are looking for relief or looking for distractions. Unfortunately, we are not in government, we cannot pass a bill that would, you know, justly put money in your pocket so you didn't have to worry about rent right now, I wish we were! I don't wish we were— Eh! It would be worth it. I think if we got to be—

Jack: We'd bring more people on.

Austin: We'd bring— we'd *have* to, I don't think we— I think, you know, eight is a lot for a podcast, not enough for a government. (laughs) We'd figure it out. And if we were, we would do more. But instead what we can do is offer a little bit of distraction, a little bit of entertainment, some critical world building, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. For the foreseeable future, I don't think we'll ever probably— I don't think you can ever put the genie back in the bottle so to speak? We're making all of *Bluff City* season one free. You can get it by going to tinyurl.com/freebluff, F-R-E-E-B-L-U-F-F. You can also get it just by going to our Patreon page and clicking on *Bluff City*. All of the *Bluff City* arcs from the first season, which means starting with our *Fiasco* arc, what's the name of that first *Fiasco* arc— Oh, a Bird… a…

Jack: Bowling Alley, and a Boxer? Is it Bowling Alley, Boxer, and Bird?

Austin: I think it's Boxer, Bowling Alley. A Bird, a, hmm. You know what I can do is, I can go to tinyurl.com/freebluff—

Jack: Ah! (laughing) Have you considered going to tinyurl.com/freebluff?

Austin: tinyurl.com/freebluff, and taking a look at "A Bowling Alley, a Boxer, and a Bird," there it is. All the way from that through "Messy Business." I think this is some of our best stuff.

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: It rules, it's so good.

Austin: It's so good. It ends really well. I really really love the entire thing. It's an anthology series which means that it's a bunch of one shots that are kind of filling in what is up with this place called Bluff City, which starts as kind of your average American mid-Atlantic casino town, a la Atlantic City, and by the end is a little bit more complex than that (laughs). Um, there are some games here that are fantastic, there are some games here that we were like, "huh?" scratching our heads but still told good stories with. All together I think it's one of the things I'm proudest of. I think that the final game in that season is one of the best finales we've ever done, especially for like a season one finale. So I really hope people enjoy it. Again, you can get that by going to our Patreon, friendsatthetable.cash or just by going to tinyurl.com/freebluff. F-R-E-E-B-L-U-F-F. I'll note that there is no RSS feed if you're not a patron, that's just not a thing we can flip a switch and turn on, unfortunately, I wish we could. So you have to listen to it on the Patreon page. All $1 subscribers, who wouldn't be hearing this, I guess, but you can tell

your friends who are *Clapcast* tier subscribers, that they should just check their feeds. As of this moment, all of that stuff should be available in the $1 Patreon feed. If you are listening to this— I mean, not *this* because again, if you're listening to this, you're already a patron, so thank you. But when we do the announcement in the main feed, this is not like "I hope you give us $1," this is 100% "please just listen to *Bluff City*." We're really proud of it, we hope it'll bring you some joy in a difficult time for everyone. We are sending you all so much love and support. *Animal Crossing* comes out in two hours. You're gonna make it.

Janine: Hell yeahhh!

Austin: Everyone's gonna make it.

Jack: We're gonna do it.

Austin: We're gonna do it.

Janine: I was gonna say it's a shame you're so tired, **Austin**, because you gotta get on that flight!

Austin: I'm gonna eat a pizza and maybe go to bed.

Janine: Okay (chuckles)…

Dre: That's fair.

Austin: I think that's where I'm at. I hope everyone has (laughs) a good night, that is gonna do it for us. As always, you can follow us on Twitter [@friends_table](). Can we go to *time.is*?

Jack: Let's do it.

Janine: Don't forget the Bandcamp! We said at the end.

Austin: Oh yes, do that!

Jack: Oh shit, **Janine**, thank you so much.

Dre: Do that!

Jack: Okay.

Austin: One more thing (laughs).

Jack: And one more thing! *Super Mario Galaxy* is coming to the Nintendo Switch.

(**Janine** laughs)

Jack: No, Bandcamp is waiving their fees. It's a super hard time for touring musicians right now. Musicians make most of their money touring and when you can't because of quarantine and social distancing, it gets really dicey really fast for a lot of the people whose music you like the most! Bandcamp waiving their fees, so their cut is going directly to the musicians from the beginning of midnight, Friday, PST to midnight at the end of Friday (chuckles), PST. You can go to my Twitter [@notquitereal](#) and I will be shouting out Bandcamps that I like and Bandcamps that people have recommended to me, and you can also go to my Bandcamp at notquitereal.bandcamp.com if you want to support me financially.

Austin: Support **Jack**! Jack makes good music.

Jack: But I don't tour, so, y'know.

Austin: True, true.

Jack: There are people out there who—

Austin: Absolutely, sure.

Jack: —might benefit from the fee waiving. But yes, if it's Friday for you in your timezone and you're thinking of picking up music on Bandcamp today or then is an incredible time to do so.

Austin: If you were already thinking of supporting **Jack** by buying the music of *Friends at the Table*—

Jack: (laughing) Yeah.

Austin: —tomorrow, today, Friday, would be a good day to do it.

Jack: Friday! Yeah, I wouldn't say no.

Austin: There you go. Also, heads up, I think **Ali** is exporting the episode. So for people listening live, *Partizan* no. 12 is coming at you in just a few minutes (chuckles), so look forward to that. You'll get to hear our voices again for a little bit longer. Alright, we should go to *time.is* and clap and say goodbye.

(pause)

Austin: Uh, 10?

Jack: Mm-hmm!

Dre: Sure.

(all clap)

Austin: All right!

Jack: Great clap.

Austin: Have a good night everyone.

Dre: Thank you.

Janine: Take care!

Jack: Byeeee.