Drawing Maps 14: May 2020 - Livestream

Transcriber: Anachilles#0191 from 0:00:00 to 0:45:49.

Transcriber's Note: I ceased transcribing where Austin indicates the podcast will stop and he will be mostly working on his computer. The remainder of the livestream from 45 minutes to 129 minutes are generated subtitles taken from Youtube.

0:00:01.0

[Music Plays]

Austin: Hello, and welcome to Drawing Maps for May of 2020. I know that it's September of 2020... it has been one of those years. [chuckles] Uh, you know from being a supporter of our Patreon that every year is like, sort of one of those years for us, and so, uh, you can imagine, this year, you know, more so than most. Uh, I hope everyone is, uh, uh, having a good weekend so far. Today should be a pretty chill stream, kind of picking up where we left off with the last, uh, uh, Drawing Maps episode, uh, which, if people don't recall, the plan there was to — we'll get to the plan there. Give me, give me a second. Let me, let me advance from, from this first page, actually. Uh, what is Drawing Maps? It is real session prep, and today's episode is going to be a lot of that, probably. Various shows and games. Today's focus is pretty much tableaux, or the Grand Tableaux, I don't know what we're calling it yet, something like that. Uh, and then discussion and hopefully insight. It will not be unchecked or unannounced spoilers, it will not be permanent or unchangeable. This will not be an explicit tutorial, uh, and it will not be designed by committee or complete. If you don't know what I mean by those, go listen to a previous episode.

0:03:20.9 Uh... my guess is that probably the first half of this episode will go up in the mp3 like, Patreon podcast feed, uh, the RSS feed. The back half of it, or the most of it, probably, today, will be just hanging out and me doing work and looking at the chat, and, uh,, and... one of those Drawing Maps streams, which is to say, I have to do this anyway. I may as well have a stream on for it. [chuckles] Uh, uh, so, so, uh, that part of it will probably not go into the feed, because it will be me typing and occasionally answering questions from the chat. Uh, so, if you, if you really just want that background sound, if you really just want that ASMR of me keyboard clicking and seeing some of the tableaux stuff, and maybe occasionally talking through some things, uh, then that, that's up, that I will make also kind of, uh, at the 5-dollar tier, available. So

you just have to go to the Patreon and click on drawing maps, and you'll see it there. Uh... the... uh, [chuckles] Brendan, Brendan in the chat says, “what if we just took a vote and let Austin rest for an hour?” Unfortunately, if I rested for this hour, I would still then need to do the Drawing Maps for June 2020.

0:04:27.5 What I do is, uh, prioritize getting that out because, [laughs] we are still so far back on so many things that every second I spend not catching up feels like a second I'm stealing from people. So, uh, to advance further, today's agenda, uh, is two things. One is the Q&A, and the second thing is to continue to do this kind of quest prep. Uh, Quest being a game that we're going to start playing a little bit in some Live at the Table sessions coming forward, uh, uh, and so, and so, I just have to do like, really basic stuff. I have to do, like, go back and look at transcripts and listen to those episodes and write down what the names of those places and characters were, because we've been playing live games for years, and many of those are being rolled into this new world that we are, again, calling Tableaux, uh, for, for this ongoing kind of series of one-shots, basically. You know, I'm not imagining this thing to be a big grand campaign, uh, I don't have any — I have no prep for it outside of loose ideas I've already basically talked about. So there's not like, uh, uh, there's nothing about like tone and theme and game. Which is fun, it's a fun, it's a fun place to be for prep. Uh... uh, and so, uh, so yeah. Let me just — but, but first we're going to do the basic Q&A stuff that we do most episode. Uh, also I'm going to move a fan around, one second.

0:05:56.4 There we go. All right. I had to move a fan so that I, uh, got some of this cool air actually on, on me, instead of just behind me, based on the way that this goes. Uh, Thomas Whitney in the chat says, “Austin, I want to say thank you for bringing Paradise Killer to my attention via Wavepoint Radio. I've been playing it literally all day, and it slaps.” Yeah, it does. I'm so, like, that game is, is really good. I put, uh, 2 and a half, 3 hours into it today. Uh, uh, if you were like, “yo, I wish I could see Twilight Mirage fashions, let me tell you about, uh, a video game called Paradise Killer. Paradise Killer from the jump is like, the most, like, get fucked, Twilight Mirage, you didn't even fucking try. [chuckles] It's so good. It's like, so incredible, the... the uh, the commitment to the aesthetic is out of this world, uh, it's just like, some of the, the dopest stuff. Like, it, it, it starts at taking vaporwave aesthetics uh, and extending them, and then it, it, it, blending that with like it's own sort of like, kind of mythical, mythical, like — I, I don't even want to, I don't even want to spoil what Paradise Killer's vibe is. Uh, what I will say is like, there's a lot of good, like, city pop music in that game, and the whole thing is good. Anyway, people should go check out Paradise Killer, it's very good.

0:07:10.7 Uh... anyway, so, so before I get to the Quest prep part of today's Drawing Maps stream, first I want to answer a few questions for, from some people who sent them in. Uh, as always you can send those question — questions in to tipsatthetable@Gmail.com. Uh, use the subject Drawing Maps, so that I will know that they're Drawing Maps questions and not Tips questions. Uh, I say that, but also, one of the questions today, I did — or two of the questions that I combined into one question, I did just steal from the, from the Tips side. Sometimes questions go into Tips that are more general GM focused, and those feel like they belong here, if only because that way I can just answer them instead of having me answer them and then having like two or three other people on the call not say anything for 15 minutes... [chuckles] So, so yeah. All right. This first one comes in from Morgan, who says, “you've mentioned, (and I mean, and I mean, the Partizan Drawing Maps episodes are a testament to this), that you think really deeply about themes, motifs, and high-level concepts while prepping longer seasons. How do you approach this while prepping shorter games? Do you still put a lot of effort into the thematic content of those games (the ones that require prep, at least), or is this an opportunity to just let the higher-level ideas develop spontaneously?”

0:08:20.1 Uh... I think this is a great question, and I think it really depends on the game? Uh, like you say here, or kind of, one of the things you gesture at here [chuckling], is, is simply that like, there are lots of lives games that we've done — like, one, it's worth saying, I don't really run anything that isn't for FaTT at this point. Like, Friends at the Table is the only thing I'm doing with tabletop roleplaying games. Uh, I'm not like, I don't have... I was going to say local friends [laughs] where we play games right now. But, you know, obviously — no one in New York, should, probably, be inviting people over for, for tabletop sessions yet. Uh, but in generally, like if I'm playing games, it's for work. Uh, and so you've seen basically everything I've, I've run over the last few years, with, you know, one or two exceptions. But even those, we tend to record, if it's with the crew, so that it can go up as a Pusher update or something. Uh, uh, so yeah. So, so when I look at like, the list of live games, for instance... uh, it's stuff that I don't really have to do prep for most of the time, right? Spoken Magic, zero prep. Bellsongs, very little prep. Uh, Beak, Feather and Bone, zero prep.

0:09:26.1 Stewpot, zero prep. Uh, I didn't do Shooting the Moon, that was Ali as a facilitator. Anomaly, ties into the Bluff City prep, right? Uh, Primetime Adventures we did zero prep — again, ties into the Bluff City prep, sort of. And then all the Road to Season 6 stuff obviously ties into the Road to Season 6, again, and the Partizan stuff, right? Uh, and so, and so, most of the, the GM list stuff that we've done, obviously, I've done very, very, very... little, in

terms of thematic deep thinking. Except to say, the background radiation of having already done a lot of deep thinking about a lot of broad ideas, that are like, “oh, I'd really like to do a story in which, XYZ,” right? Uh, like, you know, I think my character in Fall of Magic, a character who didn't exist until we sat down and started playing Fall of Magic, I was definitely like, thinking about aging, and thinking about legacy, and thinking about, like, you know, family and stuff like that, right? Or if, if I think about, you know, the Downfall, the first Live at the Table we recorded once the Patreon launched... uh, uh, you know, that's a game that's about hierarchy and about the 1920s vibes, and... you know, stratification, and like, that's all work that I've already done, to some degree, that I can draw on in this scenario. Uh, and so, and so, in that way, the sort of like, prep for those GMless games is just the general prep I've done as a storyteller, identifying ideas that I'm into.

0:10:52.9 Uh, uh, when I think about something like I'm prepping today, which I guess if you have no idea because you haven't listened, you're not caught up on Lives yet, uh, is going to be a... series of, I'm imagining them as one-shots, but you can think of it as a really loose company. Uh, uh, played out in the game Question, which is an RPG that came out this year, uh... last year? Last year, let's say, I think it was probably last year. Uh, and that, uh, was made by... [mumbles] I forget, T... TC Sodick? Is that right? Yeah. TC Sohdick or Sahdick, I don't know how to pronounce TC's last name, apologies to TC. Uh, uh, and, uh, uh, that's a game that is like... god, what is the, what is the way to pitch that game? That game has, has, I think the way I'd pitch it to like the players is, “hey, a lot of these moves are really interesting.” Uh, it is a game that's very clearly following in the footsteps of a lot of Powered by the Apocalypse stuff, in terms of — and, and in general the kind of like indie boom of the last decade, in terms of like, you know, failing forward, and, uh, really interesting consequences, and even stuff like the range, the, like the range of, of, uh, combat abilities and stuff like that. Uh, mixed successes. Like, all of that stuff is, is, is from the more general independent scene for, for the last decade-plus. Uh, uh, but it's very much packaged as a very light, uh, and beginner-friendly game.

0:12:27.4 And I'm very curious about it. Like, for instance, there are no, there are no stats or skills. You have moves, uh, and those moves sometimes trigger off of ability points that you have. But you don't have, uh, but you don't have like a strength score, right? So even though there might be a character class that is like, “fighter” or whatever, right, the, the, the — I think that they're called classes in this, I don't remember if they're called classes or playbooks or what — uh, that has moves that are about fighting things, or intimidation or whatever. The Fighter does not have like a strength score. [chuckles] Uh, uh, and I'm, and I'm, I'm of a mixed mind on

this game, actually. Like I'm, I'm interested in this game partially because I don't know that it all works for me, but, I want to try to meet it halfway, and, and go to a place that I think we'd have a lot of fun with it, regardless. Uh, and so, and so, to do that, what we're doing is a game called, again, what we're calling internally Tableaux, or again, the Grand Tableaux, that is sort of like... you know, I, I've always been fascinated by the sort of story that pops up in anime often, going back to like .Hack, uh, uh, but then also there's a lot of kind of Shonen and, and, you know, Isekai stories that do the thing of like, oh, you've moved into an MMO, you're trapped in an MMO, or just even things that are not necessarily Isekai, where it's like, you're in a dis— distant land, or you've been like sucked into a different world.

0:13:45.1 But literally just, people playing an MMO. I thought — and also, I've played a lot of MMOs [laughs] over the years. And so I've thought about them. And the actual thing that made me want to do that with Quest was a line in Quest about, uh, god, what, what's the, I have to find it exactly. Uh, I don't remember if it's Destined or Fated or, uh... the, the gist of it is that like, you're, when you are rolling dice in this game... here it is. [reading] Because the chance to succeed in Quest is all the same in a die roll — that is to say, there is modifier, you don't add strength to your attack rolls, you're not adding dexterity or whatever to try to unlock something — it is not a test of skill. It is a test of fate. Players only need to roll the die once to see what happens in a given situation. Uh, and I swear I'm wrapping back around to your question here, Morgan. Uh, the thing that made me so interested, the thing that made me connect, jump from that to, back to the MMO thing I'd wanted to do for a while, was that I realized that there are, that's an interesting way of talking about characters in an MMO who are aren't, who — the asymmetry of, off, what happens in an MMO if you take all actors as being on the same ontological level, but with metaphysical differences. So, for instance, that's to say, like, the level 7 goblin you fight is an actor in that world, but can never go on a quest and get better, or can never get their... [laughs] they don't have stats that roll... you know what I mean? Or maybe they do have stats, but they're not, like, the same thing as a player character who's going to go off and multi-class and blah-blah-blah-blah. Uh, and, I think that there's like a degree of, I'm interested in a world in which it's like, “okay, hey, these, these characters are tied to the outcome that the world has given them,” uh, more than... or they're, they're, every time that they succeed, it's almost in spite of the fact that they can't go grind, [laughs] right?

0:15:41.8 They can't go make their strength better, they can't go... collect XP the way heroes, you know player character heroes in the MMO sense can. I think that was like a really fun idea that, that then caught me and said, “oh, what if we could tell a story about an MMO

game in which the player characters are NPCs and monsters, and... the, the characters who already live in this world that has become a playground for other people. Uh, and I don't, I, I, the reason I wrap back around to this is because, and this is a case where the... I'm not going to do the deep dive that I did on Partizan where I spend, you know, 6 months building factions for this, right?

0:16:17.7 Instead, I think that this is the sort of game where I want to let the mechanics and my own interests and the player interests kind of mesh and find theme in play, have theme drawn out of the rules of the game in that way, uh, uh, which is, which is, also interesting because it means that we get to interrogate the game through that, right? Uh, and it's also interesting because this is a game that's changed in the time since... like, we first thought about it, right? Like, I, there are hacks that I was planning to do that thankfully I don't need to do anymore, because people complained and [chuckles] there were changes, right? Like this is a game that, when it first was written, there was a pretty... sus... mind control move. And it was like, you know, one of the last moves you can possibly learn as a wizard or whatever. But it was just like, it was just like the classic, shitty D&D... mind control maneuver. Uh, and I was like, well, we gotta, like, I don't think anyone's going to get to that move anytime soon, certainly, but at the same time, just in case, I really gotta have rules in place to make sure that that shit doesn't break, break really bad. Uh, and, now there's a rule in place on that move... let me find it really quick, uh... there's like two new paragraphs on this move now. It used to just say, “you dominate the mind of a nearby creature for the next hour. The creature will do anything you verbally command them to without exception or hesitation. When the spell ends, they remember everything that happened.” Period, the end. [laughs] I was like, oh, that's — we gotta do better than that.

0:17:50.9 Uh, and so now it adds, uh, — when I say I said that, I don't mean that I was the one who pushed for that change. Other players, other people, did. But I did say that to myself when I first read that move. Uh, now it adds, “this spell is cursed.” If you use control to harm another creature, you permanently forfeit your character and they become an NPC boss.” Boss is a tier of enemy in this game., “The Guide, the GM, will now play the character as a villain in the story. The Guide will inform you if your use of the spell will cause your character to become an NPC before you cast it. You must agree to forfeit your character, otherwise, you may not cast control to harm another creature.” You know, it's not, it is not as, uh, outright in saying like, “hey, this is a matter of consent.” There are other places in the book in which issues of consent are discussed, to be 100 percent clear. But I do think that mechanically speaking, I like the drawing

in the sand of like, “listen, this is, you don't get to come back from this if what you've done is mind controlled someone to, to hurt someone or themselves.” Uh... that is, that is, that is the thing that goes a step too far. Uh, in the, in the, again, the metaphysics of this world.

0:18:50.5 And so for me, it's like, when I'm playing a game this is as wordy as that, where all of the moves — and again, this game has a billion moves, and many of them are very interesting and unique — uh, I like that, because it means we can start playing with the theme. We can hack things where we think it's not right for what we want to do, but we can start at, what's this game doing, and how do we bounce — how do we bounce off of these rules? How do these ideas spark something in us, and how do we find something that coheres? The other thing is, uh, you can absolutely, uh, uh, think about the thing that I'm doing here, one of, one of the tasks or one of the things I'm hoping to do in this, is to just think about these, these, you know, one-shots as one-shots, or more episodic, uh, not, not quite parables or fables, but like, the idea of more self-contained stories. You can do a lot in a couple of hours, or 3 or 4 hours, uh, that is, that is, uh, uh, more self-contained than what we normally do. And I want to practice that.

0:19:55.5 Like, mostly what I tell is really sprawling stories. You know, you look at the length of Hieron or Partizan or Twilight Mirage. You know, COUNTER/Weight is short compared [laughing] to the rest of this shit. Uh, uh, but, but, what we don't do a lot of, in, in GMed content, is one-and-done stories that can kind of cohere with the shape of a TV episode, or an individual, you know, comic book, or even a, or even just a single arc of a comic, right? And so I want to practice that style of storytelling, thinking about that style of pacing, thinking about villains less as big-bads that exist over the course of 50 episodes, and more over, more of like, how do we do this in an interesting way, where there is like a four-hour or two-episode run, where something gets resolved?

0:20:43.0 Uh, so, for me, that, that's part of where the joy of thinking about this stuff thematically. Uh... next question is a pair of things, comes in from Jared and then David. And they kind of roll together for me. Also, David, I've summarized your email a little bit here, uh, so apologies if that's a little too, if I've cut something that you think is important. But I had to fit them both on the same page. Uh, Jared says, “recently I've been prepping for an Armour Astir campaign that I'm going to be running soon, and I've been trying to establish a number of NPCs who might show up or be relevant during the campaign. However, I've been running into an issue with something that I've struggled with in previous campaigns. I find that I often you

conceptualize my NPC is in straightforward and narrative terms — want versus need, what their arc might be, and where I can see them ending up eventually. However, this doesn't really feel appropriate for the medium of tabletop, where I think player input should have some level of impact on these characters, potentially even changing their trajectories or arcs.

0:21:41.1 I want to conceptualize these characters with room to be dynamic and grow, but I feel like I can only imagine them doing so in one direction or towards one conclusion. How do you write NPCs that feel like distinct people, but aren't just pre-written arcs waiting to happen?" Uh, and then David adds, you know, kind of collaboratively without knowing it, "I GM my own campaigns, and I've always tried to imbue something special into my NPCs. But I always either make too many, in quantity-over-quality approach, or end up trying to force that attachment. I guess my question for Austin is, how do you strike a balance of making a diverse cast of characters to pull from, while also making them feel unique and relatable?"

0:22:16.6 Uh, so the way I build NPCs is, is the first bit of what Jared actually says, which is want versus need. Uh, and, and instead of thinking about what arcs they, they, they might have, I think about what they would do, what they want, and what they'll do if left alone. [chuckles] But really, it's what they want. It's what they, what, what is it that they're working towards? Uh, throw out any of this shit about [laughs] what their arc is. Don't imagine an arc for your characters in the sort of games that we play. Don't imagine what their, their ending is. Don't imagine what they're going to get up to. You can, you can — there are, are characters and games in which thinking about what they, thinking about like Fronts in Dungeon World or thinking about Clocks in The Sprawl, uh, uh, where, yes, if left alone they can start working on things.

0:23:02.0 But those aren't arcs. Those are objectives, those are goals. Those are, in like Netrunner terms, those are agendas for the corporation, right? Uh, uh, you shouldn't be thinking of them like characters in a novel or a show. They aren't. They're pieces on a board, and they're pieces that mechanically move according to affective and kind of psychological, uh, moods and needs. Uh, I say affective because I want to emphasize that, something that NPCs can be is about producing an affect, producing a, a kind of emotional, emotional space, emotional tone, emotional state, in the players. Uh, uh, so it's not just about inhabiting a character and being like, "I'm going to play this character realistically," or something like that. It's also about, uh, uh, just using them as, as, elements of your narrative to produce a certain sense of something at the table, whether that is, hey, let me, let me show part of the world through this character, or hey, I want someone, I want my players to feel a sense of attachment to someone, the way

David suggests, with the way that, that David tries to make NPCs. Uh, uh, so, so, but what shouldn't be there for you, what you just need to focus on getting over, is the idea that you've built something, you've created a character who's going to have an arc. Many of them won't. [laughs] Uh, and to be honest, that's my answer for David to some degree, is... throw out the ones that don't stick. Uh, they've had their arc, they showed up, no one cares about them, no one brings them up during downtime or during between sessions. No one says, “I want to check in on so-and-so,” you know, or... in, in, in — during the session, no one remembers their name, or — all right, good, they're gone. Come up with someone new. Keep moving. Keep, keep going forward.

0:24:45.1 Uh, you know, it is not even kill your babies, it's forget them and move on. [laughs] Uh, it will be okay for, for — you have to trust your ability to keep throwing spaghetti at the wall and hoping that something will stick. And something will. Eventually, someone will care about someone you've made. But, you know, if, if — I think it's easy to think about Friends at the Table as a collection of really great NPCs, right? Uh, but, uh, let's see here really quick — go to Twilight Mirage NPCs... uh, I'll pull up this NPC list. Like, who the fuck is Appendal B. Maxim? Who is Arin Til? I think Arin Til was the, a character that, that, Darcy's[1] character had some beef with in one episode, maybe? I really tried to make Myriad something. Didn't work. Ocean's Roar. No idea — uh, I guess that's the brother of... That's the brother of... someone. That's the brother of, uh, Wind's Poem, because it's a Mountain — not a Mountain Goats, it's a Mount Eerie reference.

0:25:40.7 Who's Bernadette? No idea who that is. Biff Briar? Is that a DJ? Is that the DJ? Yes. That's the DJ. No one cares about... fucking Biff Briar. Yeah, Arin Til is Even's, Even's — I didn't know if they were exes or if they were just former, I don't remember what their situation was. But like, most of these characters don't hit. Even the big ones, in many cases, don't hit. Uh, and, you just gotta drop them and move on, and not beat yourself over it. And, the way that you do eventually, I think, find a character that hits, is to think about, and, and, for me this, this goes back to... you know, I, I, I point to a couple different texts in terms of things that made me become a better GM. One of them, I think, is — I've, I've talked about a lot, is just like, the Dungeon World book. Uh... also, the Sprawl. And then, also there was specifically a Dungeon World GM's guide, that has nothing to do with, for instance, Adam Koebel. So you should feel not bad at all about looking up the Dungeon World GM, GM guide. It's like a fan-made thing. Uh, where is it? What's it called? It's called “Read and Understand Dungeon World.” If you, if you do

[1] The name in the audio recording is no longer in use, hence the audio/transcript discrepancies.

a search for that, you'll find it. And reading that helped me a lot in conceptualizing a lot of stuff around GMing in, in games like this. Uh, but also, I, I actually really do believe that if, if — a big thing for me was thinking about, uh, was Tech Noir. Tech Noir was one of the first games of this era of game, that I spent a lot of time with running a campaign. Uh, before, this is well before Friends at the Table, this is like 4 or 5 years before — this was, god, Friends at the Table started 2014, so it was 4 years before Friends at the Table. But in, in Tech Noir, when you build, uh, NPCs as a GM, you're, you're doing very, very simple things. Uh, you give each NPC... I'm pulling up the book now to confirm. You build, not each NPC but each contact, which is like the, the name of, of the kind of friendlyish NPCs? [chuckles] Uh, the characters that, that your, your players can make start the game with relationships with. Uh, and they all start with a certain set of, of, uh, traits, basically, right? So you have a, you have a, a character like, in fact, I'll just, you know what I'll do, is I'll pull up the transmission for... COUNTER/Weight, if I have it on-deck. Here we go. Orth Godlove. A character, I hope, we all know and love.

0:28:19.4 I certainly do. Uh, here's what I know about Orth Godlove at the start of this game. Orth Godlove: male, retired soldier, fought in the Golden War for OriCon. Now a mid-tier bureaucrat for a consolidated COUNTER/Weight technocracy. Large, intuitive, ace. Uh, I know that he has some connections to various objects, like a Rook and a gun, and some other stuff that he could get connected to if, if, the, kind of the way the Tech Noir mystery stuff works. Uh, uh, but that's kind of all I know about him. And, the goal is to inhabit more than it is to plot. Uh, and once you start inhabiting and, and letting the, the characters' attributes and ideas around who they are, and, and their desires, their like, impulses, the thing that they want, to pull them forward, you will find an arc. Uh, you don't need to plot — you shouldn't plot them, because it will not be as good as the thing that you stumble into with your friends. It won't be. Uh, or, if it is, then you're wasting your time playing games, [laughing] and you should just be writing a book. Uh, because if you're good enough to make stuff as compelling in that way, then that's an, that's an incredible skill, and it's a skill that serves fiction writing better than it serves tabletop roleplaying. Uh, the stuff that, that really works well in my experience, and obviously I'm just talking about my experience, is to see that development be reactive to what's happened. Uh, now, are there ways to take notes about ideas? Like, absolutely, right? Uh, at a certain point, will you see an arc develop, and then you kind of shift modes, and kind of guide that along? Absolutely. But even for something like my — our longest running game of Hieron, major NPCs, major, major, major, major NPCs, like — you know. Final episode, you know, antagonist type shit, uh, did not have an arc that I sketched out.

0:30:22.6 Or I, I'd sketched out and threw away dozens of possible things that could happen, based on what might happen in front of us. Uh, but it was always reactive, and it was always fundamentally just tied to, okay, who is this person? What is the thing that they believe first and foremost? What is the guiding belief, and how does that shape their actions? And everything comes around that. And if you have that, then you're going to get — get good NPCs. And, not every NPC needs to have that much — they don't need to all be swinging big. Sometimes their, their goal can be make a couple bucks. Sometimes their goal can be like, get a ride home. Uh, you know, get something for their kid. [chuckles] You know? It doesn't need to be, you don't need to be life-changing with every NPC, uh, uh, goal. Uh, so I hope that that helps a little bit. I know that I can sound flip around this stuff, but I think that there has been a lot of, I think that, that the culture of tabletop games, which is to say, mostly the culture of D&D, has failed us, in terms of thinking about what the role of a, a GM or storyteller or, you know, MC or whatever, is when it comes to, to NPCs, and how much prep you're supposed to do with them. The, the character who you like, who you toil over is never going to live as much as the one that you and your friends stumble into being interesting. Uh, so think about this less as drawing or painting a perfect portrait. Think of it more as painting or drawing 100 sketches, and, at some point, one of them will hit. You can fill in the details from that sketch, going forward.

0:32:01.9 Uh, all right. Uh, next question comes in from Victoria, who says, “I haven't played any contemporary MMOs, but from my experience, repetition is a core part of their DNA, from fetch quests repackaged to suit an area, to dailies for high-level loot... it's hard to avoid doing things over and over again in an MMO. Have you considered how this might or might not factor into the upcoming series? How can you convey repetition without making it boring?”

0:32:25.2 Uh, so the, I mean the key here is, you're not playing — none of the characters are playing player-characters in the MMO sense. No one's playing a — a human being sitting at a computer playing the game. So, they don't need to engage with that part of, [laughs] of this. But, I do think that that, we've already, in the final episode of Spoken Magic, where this idea first comes up, you see a little bit about how the world might change because of that. Uh, and, and I want to be clear, like, it, it's not going to be, I don't think this is going to be a thing where it's like, what we're trying to do is simulate the second-to-second experience of being in an MMO world. It's a nice frame, and it's thematically very fascinating for me. So, will there be an episode that has that style of repetition as a focal point? Probably! That's a funny MMO thing, you know, that's an interesting part of what it means to be in an MMO, in the same way that like, item descriptions and raids, and all of the stuff that like, hangs around that feeling — I, and, and

again, just the incongruity of a bunch of different places that don't really often thematically or tonally connect, [chuckles] but because there's an expansion and you need to put the Nier raid in, [chuckles] you drop it in. And wow, it works better than you might have expected, even though there's no real story, even though you have to kind of look the other way and pretend like it's not, it's not a big deal that this is happening. Uh, that stuff is, is, is part of what we're drawing on, you know, week to week, or not week to week, you know, month to month with these. Uh, uh, I hope, anyway.

0:33:53.0 And so, so you'll, I think you'll see some of that stuff. But we're not beholden to it. And in general I, I, I, it's important to just remember that like, we're not, as, as players, we are not simulationist, in that way. Uh, you know, in some ways it's almost, it's, it's, there's another version of this question which is like, uh, and this is not dragging you, Victoria, but just imagine the other version of this which is like, “I haven't been to any swordfights, but, in my experience, once you're hit with a sword, you're fucking dead. How — have you considered how that might or might not factor into the upcoming series?” Uh, and, and, I think the thing that, that kind of, I want to emphasize there is that, in some ways, the genre of MMO, the mechanics of the genre are repetitious. But, the experience that people talk about when they talk about why they love those worlds and those characters does not factor that part of the simulation into it, if that makes sense. Uh, and so, you know, another way of thinking about this is, uh, either Dalloway or [Bghost], I want to say it's [Bghost], talks about the fact that all simulations are, of course, failures of simulation, right? No, no simulation is a perfect thing. All simulations, like all archives, are curative, or curational, uh, I guess is what I would say, which is to say that you are, uh, making decisions about what you're choosing to emulate as best as you can. For us, it's about theme, and sense, and, and that incongruity of place. Uh, and likeness, the, the, the fact that all of this could drop tomorrow, and it doesn't mean anything. Uh, you know, maybe it means something over the long period of your life, because you've spent a lot of time and invested yourself in something, and maybe that does happen here.

0:35:43.7 But what it doesn't, what isn't, uh, there's a distinct difference between that sense, and the sort of lightness of, “I've, I've done the raid 1,000 times, and so, it doesn't matter if we, if we wipe in this raid, because I'm just going to respawn and go do it again,” right? And, and if anything, that's probably the part of the repetition that I think comes alive in, in this tonally, is the sense, not that there's no stakes, but just that we're going into it with something a lot closer to Spoken Magic or, uh, uh, Bellsongs' like, vibe, than we are, even Fallen Magic, right?

Or Fall of Magic. Fall of Magic, I think, is even too melancholy for how we imagine this, if that makes sense.

0:36:30.3 Uh... Matthew writes in and says, “I want” — I also, real quick, Matthew, I genericized this, because I didn't give a warning for Partizan spoilers, and I'd rather just address this generally, than... I mean, I'll talk about that specific episode, just not with details. Uh, “I wanted to ask about the kind — a kind of weird moment in the first arc uh, of, of, uh, Beam Saber post the mid-season break. When it becomes clear that the chosen plan was based on a player's misunderstanding of a situation, I was surprised you didn't let the players walk things back a bit. I wanted to ask why you didn't offer something like that, and if this is a general GM principle of yours. I only ask because, in similar situations where my players misunderstood the scenario, I've let players take back actions. And I'm wondering if that's a strictly worse idea, or just contextual?”

0:37:13.3 I mean, I would say the first step here is not to look at anything I ever do [laughing] and wonder if it's a generalizable principle. Uh, I don't, I, I'm not Kant, uh, uh, believe it or not, uh, and I don't GM that way. Uh, every, if I think if there's one lesson from Friends at the Table [chuckles], it's that context is everything, and that outside of things like player safety — but even with player safety tools, the point of player safety tools is about arriving at contexts that people are comfortable with, not about universalizing and drawing lines through content — you know, absolutely. Uh, uh, so I think the lesson should always be that we're talking about things contextually, that we're always talking about things, uh, depending on a situation, uh, that we only ever talk about had best practices, and not universal laws. Uh, meaning that best practices are flexible and require application, and require, uh, uh, require the, the, the people applying things to be thoughtful about application. You know, not just, here is a rule, do it like this. The, the situation there, so, two things.

0:38:22.0 One is, I did. I did say, do you want to go back? And this is a quirk of this, the way this recording process, recording and editing process works, that that doesn't show up here. For the last couple of episodes, 3 or 4 episodes, uh, I've been doing the final cut edit. Uh, Ali does like, file prep, lines up all the files, goes through once, and cuts anything that's like... super-excessive, in terms of going back and forth, not deciding something, you know... dead air. Like, big dead air, not little dead air. But, big dead air. Breaks. Uh, get off the boat situations. Uh, and then hands me those files, and then I go through and do a second pass, and then a third pass, and then that has been the file, that has been the final file since. I think the final Kingdom

episode, so the last three episodes, uh, 4 episodes, the last 4 episodes, uh, and, uh, by the time I got the files, the conversation that comes after Janine's saying that is just, was just not there. So I couldn't even put it back in if I wanted to, because I would have had to have gotten Janine's raw file, and gotten everyone's raw file, blah-blah-blah. Uh, uh, the... the... uh, the thing that happens there, and the reason that conversation gets cut, is because actually, a lot of conversations in that episode get cut, because it was the biggest, it was one of the biggest get off the boat [chuckles], uh, situations we've had in probably a year. And I think that was just, everyone was rusty coming off of Kingdom.

0:39:57.2 Coming off of the mid-season game, everyone was just like, trying to get their feet back under them. And so, there was lots of hemming and hawing about what the plan was, et cetera. Uh, and so there was a, there was a situation there where — and the, I think the reason we ended up committing instead of walking it back, and this is kind of why I give that context, is because we had, I, I had said that fact about the mission multiple times up until then. So there was plenty of time, and plenty of information, to then go a different way. And it, it, the table's like sense was just like, “eh, let's fucking go for it. We're here now, let's go.” Uh, this is not a bad plan either, you know? Like, but we'd already spent 30, 40 minutes trying to conceive of various plans. I think even by the time I got the cut, I then cut another 20, 25 minutes of going back and forth about plans that ended up not seeing the light of day.

0:40:47.7 So it was a lot of just like, what if we did this? And then talking through all the potential repercussions of doing that, and then deciding not to do it. And so like, that stuff just gets cut, partially because it's not good radio to listen to someone say, you know, to build out an entire thing and then not commit to. Uh, and partially because it means that important details do get lost in the mix, which is how a player forgets a key detail like that to begin with is, you end up getting into the fucking weeds about something else, and then a detail slips, slips by. Uh, so yeah, that, that is what happened there. I, I, you know I think that there are times when, there are times — the reason I say that this is contextual is like, there are plenty of times when you hear me say, “no, you've already said you're doing this thing, let's commit to it. You said you were doing it. You don't get to now pass that off to another person.”

0:41:33.9 So, for instance if a character says, “I get really angry and I take a swing at this person,” and then they realize, “oh, wait, I'm, I'm not capable of hurting them with my fist,” you know, for instance. This is a complete, you know, creating this out of whole cloth. Uh, and then they say, “wait a second, I wouldn't do that because da-da-da-da-da.” I'm like, wait, but what's

more — what is more honest about the character? Is it that you were so embodying your character in that moment and their anger that you were willing to throw a fist at something you knew you couldn't hurt with your fist? Let's roll with it, that's more interesting than walking it back and minmaxing, or playing, you know, playing the numbers, because you know that you needed to equip your magic sword first to do this, right? Or, you needed someone — [mumbles] the other thing that I do a lot with this is, is, I — and, and you'll, you'll hear me go both ways. I think this, this happens in that episode, uh, where I'll say to a, you know, a character will say, “oh, shit, I don't have this skill,” and I'll say, “do you want help with that from someone, or do you want someone else to take the lead? Do you want to —“ show me you asking someone else to take the lead in this, because you had the impulse to do it, but maybe you knew you wouldn't do well at it. Whereas in other situations, it makes more sense for you to say, even though your character doesn't have the skill at doing it, you're going to go do it anyway, because that's what their impulse was.

0:42:47.8 Uh, and so, and so, again, it's always contextual, it's always the conversation should happen, uh, to, to some degree, at the table. Uh, uh, and I guess the other, the other factor on this [laughing] in terms of why I think the table decided to move forward at that point was, we had to finish the episode. [chuckles] This is a show — this is a show we do, and we have to release it. And so, there's a point at which, when you've already put so much time before, before stuff jumps off, you know what I mean? I think that there is a pressure for players to take action at a certain point, instead of... micromanaging every potential mistake, after especially they've already done a lot of micromanagement. Uh, and I think that's true for, for regular tables also. I know, I, you know, I think about times when it's like, “hey, listen, we only have, you know, 2 hours to play this game tonight. And we've spent the first 40 minutes just talking about one thing, and, we haven't, you know, we haven't actually gotten to any of the stuff that the GM has prepped for us tonight.” I have, as a player in those scenarios, felt like I need to step on the gas a little bit. And I think there was some of that there, basically.

0:43:55.6 And I think it's, I do think it's extra when it's a show that you have to do where, we have to finish this so that we have an episode this week, and... so that we have [laughing] we know, because, you know, one of the players isn't going to be available for a week and a half, or whatever. Uh, that, that time crunch is real. Like, our schedules are super-busy. It's very hard to line up episodes, increasingly. And so, that means that like, it's tough to... sometimes there is that pressure to just step on the gas and move forward, if that makes sense. Uh, yeah. [chuckles] Uh, uh, in the chat, a couple things. Kestral says, “I just want to say that the Nier

raids in Final Fantasy XIV are better put into the world than you'd think, and are still infuriating in how they are," which is very funny. Uh, uh, and then, uh, Brendan says, "me: thinks of the situation — thinks of three situations where this has happened."

0:44:46.8 Uh, all right. So, for people who are listening to just the podcast version of this, that's where this is going to end, because what I'm going to do now is stop talking so much, pull up, uh, a dock, and start just typing and going through some transcripts and looking at the names of places I haven't thought about in literal years to make sure I get everything all in one place. Uh, and, and to kind of slip out of that narration mode and more into backgroundy mode. I might even put, put some of Jack's music on just to like, just to chill, you know? [laughs] Just to have a little chill music in the background. Uh, uh, and, and yeah. So, uh, thank you for hanging out. If you're going to leave now, that's totally fine, and if you're listening to the podcast, thank you for listening to the podcast. As always, you can send questions to tipsatthetable@Gmail.com. We also have a Tips episode probably recording in the next couple days, so look forward to that. Uh, and that should also be up in the feed soon. I hope everyone has a good, uh, rest of the week, or weekend, depending on [chuckles] when you listen to this. Peace!

Youtube Subtitles:
[0:45:49]

all right i'm still here but i needed to

do that outro so that i could hit

stop on this audacity file boom

there we go and we save that real quick

uh

may 2020 okay

and let me just let me just export that

right away

actually let me let me not do that right

away because i have to edit

the beginning off a little bit boom

there we go

now so that it's september of 2020.

yeah okay that's a file boom

export export yes okay

so uh here we go here's what i have so

far

very little this is like what i sent

everyone

from when i first pitched this i was

like hey

we got some of this stuff that isn't the

only thing i picked there's also some

text and stuff

but i was like hey what are the places

that we did it was downfall

as it be the b game golden sky stories

the cloud islands shore

skeletons i said i forget the gist of

this but ancient ruined kingdom of the

crow goddess or something yes

fall of magic i say prequel or no and

the time since writing this i think no

i just don't want to fall of magic is

too precious to me

i won't i won't let it i won't let it

fall to this shooting the moon yes

stewpot yes

bell songs yes and spoken magic yes so

let's have a good idea

of like we talked through what the

different classes are going to be so we

have those down

which means i can pull into roll 20

um and once i'm there i can

go into our quest thing and just make

make character sheets for people um so

that's going to be a thing i do today

and just like going through transcripts

and looking at the various

like these episodes and remembering what

place names are and

other details and jotting them down for

for just ideas in the long run

you know um one second here

names only and then come over here

boom

all right

there's that if you haven't seen the

quest stuff it's really it's

it's there is some like really cool

stuff in this book and i think it's also

just a gorgeous gorgeous gorgeous book

like it's one of those

examples of a game that just like had a

good art budget and then found an artist

who was a good

fit let me see if this is even showing

up over here

it isn't because okay what if i do

one second uh

so i have the book not in chrome

obviously

uh what if i just drag it into here

though

there we go uh yeah i think this game is

like really pretty

um uh there's some layout stuff i don't

love about it but i do think that like

the gist of stuff like this is just very

strong

um some really great character design

some really great

just like this this diagram of distances

is is fun uh i feel bad for this animal

who

i mean listen that animal shouldn't be

stealing bread i'm sure it's fine

it's probably less fine in these images

where there's a bow involved but you

know

um yeah it's definitely it's definitely

a book worth looking at just because i

think it's very pretty

uh anyway where do i want to start jeez

also let me get the chat back up because

i don't see the chat

currently uh here you are

i'm gonna make the chat bigger so i can

actually read it more interesting or

more easily

uh dan says i'm surprised you're putting

golden sky stories into it

um yeah you know i

i think people like that game more than

me like that session more than me

i was not that was like one of my least

favorite games to run

um because it doesn't do any of the

stuff i like about games

that's a game in which you have to prep

character arcs

every scene in golden sky stories has

pre-written beats that you're just

guiding people through i hate it

i i love the book i think the moves are

really fun

but like i as a gm i pass hard pass for

me

um i don't i didn't enjoy playing it

that much but i did spend a lot of time

thinking about that world and that

and that place so i did you know not a

lot compared to partisan but but you

know i spent time on it i made a drawing

for it and stuff like that

so that wasn't that's enough for me to

be like you know what yeah there should

be

put that in there that's fun

um yeah if you don't think if you don't

think that there's a

that there's a place in this mmo world

for uh sky whales and

then let me tell you we'll play

some more mmos because

sky whales all up in the mmos this is

non-stop sky whale

action uh let me pull the transcripts up

also here god how do i even want to do

this i guess i'll do this

here and then this here and then boom

boom boom

and then uh oh wait does that break this

that's gonna break this

that definitely broke this huh all right

let me add another chrome

window uh

window capture chrome 2

let's make this one

that and then let's do this and then do

this and then slide that over here

and then i swear this is all going to

make sense in a moment

boom okay

and i lost the chat i lost i lost where

i put chat

there it is okay

uh brendan in the chat says someone

who's very recently a backer at this

level

is the idea that all of these lives are

retroactively contributing to the quest

campaign

um they are uh

they are

um it's not that they're all

contributing it's that they're all like

so yes they are all contributing yes

they're all like

places in this new mmo world this

tableau of places

um basically so uh that's the downfall

audio do i have to click over oh come on

dear

dear google whatever can i make this

smaller can i zoom out here i can

probably just go over

right there we go shout outs again to

the incredible transcript team

who is just who is just incredible

um

brendan says canon but not canon uh

it doesn't matter like i think it

doesn't

pretzels is the same like i just don't i

don't

it it's not

canon

these worlds are done right like i don't

have any plans to go back to downfalls

world or golden sky stories

world or the skeletons or um outside of

this

and so what i would say is if i'm being

precious

these original stories came to an end

and what's happening over here

is a

an echo of that original story but it's

where the camera is now which is to say

we're investing in it

in terms of attention and at that point

it's

it's the thing it is if that makes sense

um so yeah let's see what was did we

ever come with a name

for this place for the b place

kind of forgot about this stuff about

names being

love a hexa cracks crassy exocracy

i am going to put on some of jack's good

music

let's go and listen to uh

what is the longest thing we could put

on maybe just to go with

let's just go with winter i haven't

listened to the winter stuff in a minute

[Music]

[Music]

yeah matthew that's part of why we're

not using interstitials like they're not

the they're not the heroes of the story

if that makes sense they're not

that style of

that style of protagonist character

no one's reaching into anyone's heart

here no one is you know

trying to to save anyone anyone or bring

the you know confront the darkness in

the morning i've read interstitial like

two or three times now

and i've considered it for various

things it just hasn't been the right fit

all right

[Music]

so

[Applause]

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]

hmm

[Music]

um

[Music]

i'm not really searching for anything

cole i'm i'm reading

[Music]

so

[Music]

so

[Music]

so

[Music]

huh

it's pretty nice

[Music]

foreign

[Music]

[Applause]

i just thought of something important

let me see i can find it

[Music]

two

[Music]

so

[Music]

there we go

that's the stuff

yeah it was literally yeah there it is

[Music]

[Music]

bye

[Music]

that's grief

i simply love the six that's all

[Music]

now

[Music]

so

[Music]

and

[Music]

hmm

[Music]

um

[Music]

do

[Music]

knee boards

[Music]

oh these bees are just big these are

just big bees

i think that was i think that i think i

thought that was established

[Music]

that's about that specific big one

in my mind they're just big bees

[Music]

oh maybe not

[Music]

i changed

yeah yeah i definitely remember the wasp

judge reveal at the end of that episode

being like whoa

big wasp but i can't remember if there

was like a baseline

um thing you know

right

[Music]

it's interesting that keith raises this

idea here we end up not using that so

that's a fun

that's why this is bolded over here and

that's a fun thing that we didn't

develop in this episode

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]

wow

[Music]

the wrist seems positive

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]

this song

[Music]

this is the first song that jack put

drums to

in their life unbelievable

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]

hmm

[Music]

i see how the names work

[Music]

[Music]

um

[Music]

um

[Music]

it seems like it's moving for me is it

not moving for y'all

well it looks good on obs side

[Music]

that was the queen right there

[Music]

hmm

[Music]

[Music]

i know this song me up still

the pedals oh brutal

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]

so

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]

okay

[Music]

right

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]

all right that's probably enough like we

don't the nice thing about this

is like i vaguely remember how this

ends but it doesn't matter enough like

it's not a sequel

to these episodes right so what i'm

really getting here is enough to build

an adventure around right like or to

give to a player who says oh i want to

be a b

person what was the deal with that place

i could say oh well

there's a heck something there they have

these names that are like this

they have blah blah blah blah blah um

it's very funny because we i i is it

misspelled

it's not misspelled but it's spelled

different in the transcript

[Music]

there's so many blank spaces here right

like

what the are the what are the six

what are the six traditions you know

oh i guess are they those six traditions

patrick hand is

a season six character great that's

that's a different season six i don't

think that was one of them was it

it might have been no damn patrick hand

never got used

[Music]

yeah i kind of like the idea of the

hexametric being tied to those six

elements justice grief naming

architecture fashion

you know that's what else do you need

[Music]

finnigan hands that's why that's why i

had that idea

all right here's a question did this

just what does this do when i did that

to the jump over here yeah okay i did

all right so that's that's enough from

downfall

golden sky stories

[Music]

also wait really quick let me go back

and say thank you

too

uh oh cole you did did you do this oh

anton started it and cole finished it so

thank you to anton and cole for their

downfall

audio transcript transcripts

trans a single transcript multiple

people worked on it likewise this one

hella cool bro ash and max for

transcribing golden sky stories

i also suspect

that i have notes on cold sky stories

[Music]

okay so locations here

include zabonichow

and snow peak city

[Music]

this soundtrack is slept on like i get

it i get why

why people go twilight mirage or go

spring or marielda but listen to this

jesus christ

[Music]

i love these notes that i have here for

golden sky

sky whales thick clouds instead of water

something mysterious happened a long

time ago that did this to the world

high and low tide got you know what

what can i do high in low tide equals

flat it's fog listen

it happens

yeah so for people who for for what i

was saying before just as like a

to show you what i mean when i say i

don't love playing this love but i

didn't love playing this game is like

scene one afternoon i had to write this

out then the game opens blah blah blah

here's the this is what happens

here are the things that have to happen

in scene two scene three scene four

and that's like fine but it's not

it's not how i like to play games you

[Music]

know

[Music]

[Music]

one of the things that's interesting on

this is that so many of my

notes on prep were not

broad world building things

because so much of the world is

prescribed by the system

[Music]

japanese myth right and so to some

degree

to some degree the thing there is like

looking just at this text

as as primary text if someone wants to

go there or build something around that

so the note that i'm going to make for

myself here is just like

for players to the text of gss

i want to draw on those elements

i also want to make a note here about

just like

be wary of lifting out of

context um tss is

fundamentally a japanese game

about japanese myth

be thoughtful about adaptation

[Music]

and

[Music]

[Music]

to

[Music]

[Applause]

[Music]

two

[Music]

um

[Music]

all right i want to pull up this game

also if i can

uh i'm guessing it's still in there

let's see

[Music]

yeah i did that little drawing that was

fun

i had zero was a crane

don't love weakness eyeball just don't

like it just don't like what that might

mean

the thing i loved about this game was

the players obviously like it was just

it was just jackie being very very fun

which is one of those things where it's

like i wish it used i wish it

i wish i got to it it felt like

it felt like um

it felt like it was more of

like watching someone i don't know it's

hard to explain

it this sounds like it's weird because

they were playing characters who are

very childlike obviously

but it felt more like hanging out with

like younger cousins like child you know

with like my little cousins and being

like oh yeah they're cute

you know they're funny it's funny to

hear my my

you know cousin who's like you know 12

talk to me about

minecraft or whatever not even 12 i

think i think that he's only like nine

um but but like that was the vibe that

was entertaining but it's like i'm not

engaged in the same way

because of the way that the way that

golden sky stories works

a little town

[Music]

uh

[Music]

[Music]

hmm

[Music]

so

[Music]

so

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]

please

[Music]

um

[Music]

[Music]

okay

[Music]

[Music]

so

all right that one's pretty easy

next up the skeletons skeletons

unfortunately

oops that up skeletons

[Music]

[Music]

the beak yes of course the beak

love these love these names

[Music]

[Applause]

[Music]

okay

all right

one of paul's there i will be right back

i just need to run to the restroom

i am back

um and this one is tough

because according this local right this

is just

i think i have to play it this is just

the destiny can you record it

or not i'm gonna do an audacity anyway

just in case

uh this is obviously not me talking now

thing i mentioned last time

um like you know what if five years from

now we're like hey we should

do a better cut of these so i actually

have been having people

do audacity all right

well then i got none of our pre-recorded

that's right

you people who like

i don't i don't know i'm saying i'm

bringing you down with me

okay that's fair we should do a clap oh

i would love to

if it pleases the court austin

um oh i guess i just assumed you were

this was that was some like elaborate

bit you were doing

did you also for think that time that is

wasn't real are you on your like jack

right

week happiness all right hopefully we'll

never use this uh these

audacity files anyway i said that's half

of the patreon one and they

and you can support us at trends at the

table dot cash uh over like it's like a

pay-per-view event

oh i demand cannot be held fiddle you

watch

and then one day there is light and

motion and

you weigh your bearded ass your bearded

axe and raise your shield

lusting for the fray eager to measure

your skill against

these tomb robbing children so full of

blood

you will never be alive again but in

this moment in the chaos between

violation and destruction

you truly live and you remember what you

once were

and you taste the sun i am super excited

to play this game in which we basically

play as dark souls enemies

um slowly remembering what their lives

were i'm going to keep reading from the

rules just to get us

kind of up to speed on what it is and

what we're doing

the skeletons is a meditative structured

freeform game

it flips the script on the classic

dungeon crawl where you play not the

intruders but the guardians cursed to

spend all of eternity

defending a tomb gather the stuff you

need

one to six players with one or more

hours to spend together we got that

a quiet place to play that can be

darkened if you have neither quiet nor

darkness close your eyes instead

uh you too listeners printouts of these

rules and the skeletons

which we have a large sheet of blank

paper which we have in roll 20

pencils or pens a six sided die and a

timer of some sort

shoutouts to time that is optionally

sounds of the tomb to be played as the

years grind past

uh so a quick note for people who are

listening to the archive there are going

to be moments in this where we are quiet

for

up to minutes at a time um i know that

like for some people who listen to

podcasts

that can be jarring uh and i definitely

um get that like if you're on your

commute you're gonna want to hit that

fast

excuse me that fast excuse me twice that

fast forward button

um but if you're in a place where you're

going out for a walk while listening or

you're just at home maybe doing dishes

um i'm gonna say try to sit with us

through those moments

because that's a big point of this game

is these quiet meditative moments that

sort of simulate and condense

years of silence in these tombs between

major events um so and we're going to do

that live we're going to do the

sitting in quiet thing so um

let's let's keep moving uh this is a

heads up um

so first we each choose a skeleton to

play there are eight each has specific

questions that you may answer during the

game

uh we answer those questions during

these moments when the tomb is being

attacked basically we're

skeletons were asleep for a long time

and then as

you know tomb raiders effectively come

in to try to bust in we wake up and in

the fray

kind of grasp at moments from our our

past lives

when the game begins you know nothing

just just as they remember nothing and

each skeleton is a cipher

over time you'll learn more so let's

start there

let's talk about these skeletons i'm

going to drag this skep

your skull is long gone but it doesn't

matter carry an iron mason to holy

symbol

sketch in the details on the

illustration we don't have to do that

quite yet

right for this general shape do you

think of this tip you know like

sometimes like a

a building has like a

like like a bay window but not but like

but like you can stand there

like uh like wait still neither response

to that

you're gonna help me on this lines um

oh this will work great door behind

there

like an attic or is it trying to figure

out what's up

actually let me just pull up let me just

let me just pull this up over here

that'll make this easier

let's do this according this local right

this is just

unless you think it's is it that color

is it is it a window

also draw a bad skeleton

like my crudely drawn okay

okay that's fine oh okay

uh i forgot

in a life that describes your greatest

accomplishment what thing in this

place did you lovingly craft with your

own hands choose from one of those

already introduced

if you are able um

who cleaned your head and why uh

what connection do you have to those

you've just killed or driven away what

memory did they invoke

oh that's a heavy one okay

um nope my right screen

up one second

there it goes okay

um i think my name was rohan ooh rohan's

a good name

yeah all right well that was rohan down

here

uh art what about you i think we all

have the same first three questions of

what was your name yeah

whom did you once did you earn in life

that describes your greatest

accomplishment

my last three are what area within this

place you forbidden to set foot in

oh that's good choose from among those

already introduced if you are able note

your answer on the map

who here among the skeletons richly

deserves this fate and

why ooh that's really good yeah

what connection do you have to those

you've just killed or driven away what

memory did they evoke i guess that's

another

that's all shared yeah um

i am not allowed to set foot

in the the beak okay

um i cannot queue up your music

also without listening to this game

under your skeleton oh sure

i'm gonna add gold coins here and also

then blood

and rat junk just the blood please

you don't want rat joke connection do

you have to those you've just killed or

driven away what memory did they evoke

um

i'm going to say that

the hmm

thing is destroyed what is it something

from a skeleton's past has been

accidentally revealed what was it and

why was it hidden note this on the map

and the magic animating one of the

skeletons but not its compulsion or

service is beginning to fade having an

idolizer what do you all think oh so

that's the truth so

you know that we're brothers but i you

don't know

yeah correct you you know you

no you know no you know that right

this character knows okay um there's a

different a different home movies bit

down here

all right god welcome to the table a

home movies

uh tribute podcast

if we ever go completely friends of the

table with our entire lives

it does not work for me rewatch podcast

i hope you're ready

um home movies at the table no

wait it doesn't work at the

bad friends of the movie friends of the

movie

friends of the movies is just our movie

watch podcast all right

uh what do you think which of these i

think stick with glory fades maybe god's

laugh gets

rough um

yeah this one seemed to immediately

begin a new one here

i know there's a point at which we start

getting into just

wall street like a like a money dragon

yeah

professional tomb robbers or giant tomb

spiders

life is is that you

just did all this work making this this

sympathetic family of trolls that we

have to murder

that's what this get we can't lose and

then i'm gonna murder one of these

trolls that would be like

arts of monster the monster

[Music]

he does say if someone explains the

matrix

big again it's gonna up it doesn't

say whoever slays the matriarch

so this is different in this way than

the we made a mistake we did not do

glory fades or

god's love oh you're totally right

good catch no

they only cast a curse on you that it's

not like an eternal curse it's odd

brutal all right i'm gonna help you i

got where's one of your eyes

cool

the tomb is flooded what is like where

it's just like

and then the empire falls away like and

then literally there

here we go we're just like attracted to

necromancy for some reason here we go

this is the ship

[Music]

crow looks at you and then this gunsling

birds album

so the bird empire is real it is here

i believe in it we were supposed to be

thinking in that time

about um thinking about all that has

gone before and how it came to be

i did did you

what did you think about

i mean like what were some of the

thoughts of of what came before

well i mean i i guess i sort of started

thinking about like how these like

totemic

empires came to be and

you know why would you pick i go yo

how does it how does the society do they

pick the cat first they pick necromancy

first

like they decided necromancy was the

best way to like

operate a cat right or was it the other

way which was like

for whatever reason cats were were

here right and like it was like

attracted to necromancy for some reason

you know necromancers are inside a lot i

imagine

and like they need like pets to

take care of rodents you know they're

dealing with a lot of stuff that's like

reanimating the dead rats and stuff

while testing and like they need cats to

keep their their clean it's dank

you know um whereas for me that that

makes me think that the

empire fish like is very coastal is very

like

sure is very uh

caught up in like travel and like all up

and down the coasts around the

the entire kingdom or entirely the

continent or whatever

um and is like more about or maybe

that are they keeping fish's pets but

also we're fishing i don't know

um and then birds are just like i

definitely imagine us as being open air

and like

running and like not wearing shirts you

know

those are the three things that birds

remind me of open air

running no shirts like yep

in like mountains you know very like

athletic in my mind very like um uh

maybe individualistic in a sense which

would explain why i was a

traitor uh very like driven by

personal like achievement

am okay we're here

um when you feel that you've spent 10

minutes or more in the dark across the

entire game the next intruders will

defeat you

allie there is a list it is either an

army of plunderers or some of your

descendants

oh sorry um i don't know if i have the

same like

if you're on the way yeah i i think that

i'm on the way away

come on i have been on this show for a

bit yes

um and i think that it's some of our def

center yeah i think that's what i like

there is an argument for an army of

plunderers which is like friends at the

table at its most nihilistic

where it's just like and then the empire

falls away like and then literally there

is nothing left of what was once this

glorious empire

now it is just like a bunch of

bandits who just

come in and dig out all the feathers and

take all the gold and like step on our

corpses

but i think we've never heard of any

they've never heard of any cats or birds

right

there yeah it has been an epoch right

like this has been

yeah right exactly they come in with

like a bulldozer

you know um which is kind of great

yeah or it's our descendants who follow

an ancient treasure map penned by our

own children

which is still very old at this point

yeah uh an epoch

in in this case is um like that

it goes century centuries millennium

age and epoch so like it is just a

different completely different

culture right like yeah this is not

necromancers at this point or if it is

like their necromancy is

something else completely

they got that science necromancy yeah

this is like destiny now

right like some fallen kicked

down the door

basically or whatever

uh yeah like archaeologists says see we

knew it was coming back to mmos even

back then there's some destiny people

come

they're mmo players but like their

archaeologists but but they are still

descendants of ours

right right um

so they follow an ancient treasure map

describe how you see yourself

in them who among you will be the first

to strike them down

can you even bear answers none one or

two questions as they prefer

i wonder if these are the player

characters if descendants of the great

ancient kingdoms are are the pcs

like not our pcs are are like the the

mmo

player characters i think that's fun i

think that's like i think that's

supported by this text

that the the who is who is raiding these

dungeons it's the great great great

epoch long descendants of these

of these empires and so you know you're

setting up your

character at the login screen

a new character okay which great empire

did you descend from

did you descend from the empire of the

cat's empire the birds the empire the

fish etc

um that's fun

are the characters

scions of these ancient empires

you know uh uh exploring

these ruins and trying to rebuild

the kingdoms of the past this is why you

do the work this is why you go back to

the text

what are they like ally

hmm i don't know it's tough because like

i think that we

if this is really as far in the future

as we're saying it is yeah it's dark it

isn't like the separate

animal humans anymore right like

culture is kind of like melded together

in that way do you think like

those that there's a point at which

either one of those remaining kingdoms

became the

the dominant one or they melt like you

said they meld together to where it's

like

i know this is just this is just a new

culture altogether

even even that one culture like let's

say the cats

went to went on to rule for a thousand

two thousand years the cat empire was

as large as it could be and then like

okay and now there's new factions inside

of the cat empire that debated what type

of necromancy was

to be the powerful kind or whatever um

and then like that all disappeared and

now we're like

third we're just like 40 000 years later

or 5 000 years later and it's like

a completely different culture

completely

right yeah and our stuff could be like

the the bird stuff could be like

because there are descendants like like

secretly handed down like some

assassin's creed nonsense

sure yeah there's bird stuff in that

yeah

that's my question is this a person is

are these people people who know what

they're coming for

or are these people who are like like

are these people what is their goal are

they here to resurrect

the empire or are they here because this

is a curiosity

um i don't think they're trying to like

resurrect the empire because i think

that it's more like

instead of being the kingdom of cats

it's like the kingdom of

animals or whatever okay like they all

kind of like

blended together okay um oh

what what no no i just had like a really

bad thought

i just had uh

but like we see ourselves in them and

they just don't

they don't care about us at all right

yeah yeah i like that a lot actually

um what if it's like the chimera kingdom

wow i got there

holy it is literally someone in the

chat

someone in the chat uh dakota in the

chat moments minutes ago said

chimera empire and dakota we did it we

got there we both got through i

physically blended

these different animals i did it five

years ago three years ago to be a

culture that is about like

like positively about like melting your

different sides and like

you know exploring a variety of options

and not just being necromancers or

people who run around with their shirts

off

um right and i do kind of like that

notion art like

how what's that look like for paul's

paul's club mine are there's you know

there's all sorts of ways that

a world of uh giants

cloud lakes and seas

where there are giant you know spirits

and

uh animal gods etc like how does it

again how does it enter final fantasy 14

how do spaces like that work in wow

those places do exist in those games

oh i didn't know that you okay dakota i

thought you had just suggested it

i see i see i see i say

i mean i think like through the magic

that i like know that like this is our

great great great great great great

great

great grand nephew or whatever right

and i i see that there that this is this

is a

descendant of our noble lineage and i

can't bring myself

to harm them because i'm

still i have such regret over killing

vellum and they just

turn me to dust because they don't they

don't know or care

um what if they don't even try to okay i

kill four of them

they look at me and there is no

revulsion in their eyes

there is this like there they they have

no guilt uh they're they're

they're no shame uh about me they have

nothing about me

and that is what kills me like

you i killed the empress or i

betrayed the empress of the byrd empire

of the avian empire

i brought down an eons old uh

kingdom in this world i betrayed those

who were loyalists to me for a man i

loved

and you don't even care about it

and it's just like this last gasp of

like deeply human

like passion uh and like

use what's left of my broken sword and

like

kill five or four of them uh and

then the rest of them are just like

no like okay fine we have to kill we

have to kill these skeletons

it's a sad game it's a do you

fight these people it's tough because i

think that my

like spell broke before right

yours did um so it's kind of a weird

thing to like see them and also

recognize them right but i think that

it's like

there isn't really any recognition there

because like the symbols they carry and

the beliefs that they carry are so

far off from what we we believed

so um

i think that the answer is that like i

don't see myself in them

and then that's why i attack them okay

cool yeah and they kill us

and we're dead using future weapons

like better swords or ray guns or wands

or something

what type of stuff do they have i

think that's probably good for now i

have to go through and also check out

shooting the moon i don't

think let's see

hey why didn't that do the thing do the

thing hey do the thing oh it's not gonna

do the thing

um i don't know if shooting the moon is

done

let's see some of shooting the moon is

done the start of shooting the moon is

done which will probably give me enough

to at least work from

um i think it is wait yeah it is

and then but before even that i think is

or is it the next one shooting the moon

is the next one okay

but what i actually need is access from

ally to the shooting the moon

game i think

is there a name for that town

wait did i just truck up and do the

wrong now

god the name i forgot that the name of

the department store

was beguns my guidance is very

funny uh anyway yeah i think

i think that's probably as much as the

most that i can get through uh uh

tonight

i hope you all have a good remainder of

the evening i'll try to get the uh

the mp3 of the first half of this up

asap

probably tomorrow probably not tonight

because it's very late um

i hope everyone has a good remainder of

the weekend we should be back

hopefully tomorrow night with that with

the tips