

Leaving the Looking Glass

It's been over sixty days since sixteen of us entered the house, and after rewards like grail riches and immunity kisses, and grueling trials like the nightmarish Mad Hatter's "happy" birthday room, Julia and I remain. I will be the first to admit that I owe in some part my position sitting here to luck and the whims of other players. If I said "everything in the game went exactly to my plan", it would have been a lie. I've made a series of errors throughout this game. Here's a list of the silliest mixed with the serious:

- Starting my second conversation with Jayden with "Hi Jakeyy! Excited for you to hopefully be next HoH"
- Posting my answers to a veto challenge in EMBB8 Announcement Chat
- Posting a *confessional* to EMBB8 Announcement Chat
- Posting a (soon deleted) screenshot in the House Chat that included in the background my F2 with Amelio and a picture of an alliance chat with all four members clearly visible
- Voting for Wryan minutes after I wrote in my confessional "I would only vote for wryan here if I were a masochist"

Still, despite more serious mistakes which include the last bullet listed above, I believe I played a great game that qualifies me to be a winner of EMBB. After surviving a 6-5 eviction vote, **I went 8 consecutive weeks without being nominated**, the longest unbroken streak of any player in the game including Amelio. **I have had zero votes cast against me** since 11 weeks ago during the Picante eviction, and have been in an explicit alliance with $\frac{2}{3}$ of the 15 other players of the game. While I may owe some things to luck, these statistics are no accident. **I have taken every chance I've had to put myself into a position to become one of the most difficult players to evict.**

I was a strong player because I made sure **most players saw me in their game's future**. I did this by managing to gain **a reputation for loyalty** later in game and by **being capable of turning poor relationships around**.

I was much more of a social and strategic player this season than a physical one, but another reason I was a good player was because **I won the challenges I needed to win to get to the end**.

For those main four reasons I believe I played a great game. I will go over each point one by one. I may gloss over certain important parts of this season. Please feel free to ask about them in your jury speeches. In the interests of being clear and concise, however, I will stick to what is immediately relevant to my case. It's hard for me to describe 2 months of gameplay in a speech written over 2 days.

Setting the Stage

At the beginning of the game I tried to enter as many alliances as possible. My being proactive about it was a strategy that nearly eliminated me at the beginning of the game after one I was in was leaked, but these groups reaped dividends later in the jury phase.

I wanted to avoid getting locked out of groups that would shape the season. I figured if I put my eggs in a lot of baskets, I could stick with whatever group(s) emerged as powerhouses later.

ALLIANCES

THE FANTASTIC FOUR



Wryan



Amelio



Eat



Sam

Week 1 Alliance that broke up during Eat's eviction after he destroyed Wryan's advantage. I initiated its re-formation with Wryan, Amelio, and me afterwards and this trio became critical for all three of our endgames.

The Fantastic Four, along with the Gays, was pivotal to my survival when I was put up against Picante. Anthony was the sole vote from the Mayo Brogade (see later alliance) who saved me.

This group also saved me from being on the block during Kiss Week, where Amelio had to choose a renom between Me, Jayden, and Wryan.

By repeatedly not voting with the Fantastic Four, I managed to divorce myself from the group while still gaining benefits from being in it. Other people picked up on the Wryan/Amelio pair but not my role in the Fantastic Four until much later (Jayden's eviction?) and even then Wryan/Amelio were considered the heart of this group.

DESPAIR TWINS



Amelio



Sam

"Noob" Week 1 F2 that flew completely under the radar until Amelio's HoH and could have made the difference between life and death for me during F4 and F3.

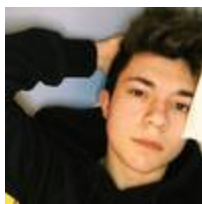
CAPS LOCK CREW



Calin



Scott



Picante



Me

Alliance that ONLY TALKED IN CAPS LOCK. Failed completely after the Picante eviction, although I still talked with Scott. It was entertaining, though.

MAYO BROGADE



Luke



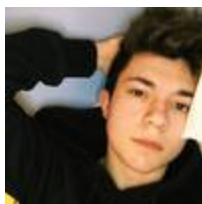
Kori



Matt



Eat



Pica



Sam

Alliance that was almost a liability early game, but later was crucial to my success.

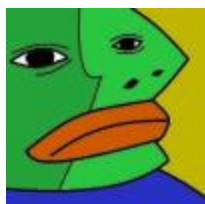
Not only was it a vehicle that allowed me to get closer to Matt, Anthony, and Eat, it also became my shield after I was only just barely saved from eviction.

After Picante's vote-off, I was perceived as being on the bottom of the Brogade. This was excellent because I could have the benefits of working with them while being the last person nommed if this group was systematically targeted.

I had to make an effort to become a part of the group, but after Kori, Matt, and I repaired our relationships together with Anthony we became strong contenders to win the game and I could cozy up to both the Mayo Brogade and the Fantastic Four as needed.

LATER ALLIANCES

MAGGIE AND EVETTE



Wryan



Sam

Wryan's F2 formed with me after Scott's eviction. Wryan, I did not expect an offer from you but I was happy to work together closely. After I accepted it, it ensured that whether the Fantastic Four succeeded or failed, I would survive... although, Wryan I'm certain you were suspicious of my relationship with Amelio lategame.

BUY SAMGRRIA WINE ON ITUNES



Jewlia

Sam

An F2 I initiated at F5. I figured that it was necessary because...

- *It was possible that Jewlia would need to tiebreak to save me at F5. If Emily decided not to make a big move or Wryan/Amelio blindsided me with a surprise F2, I would need her vote.*
- *If Amelio was evicted I would need to take Jewlia to even have a chance of winning this game. Wryan, if I were sitting next to you, you would win. You played a game similar to mine except instead of working with the Mayo Brogade, you worked with the Gays.*
- *If Wryan was evicted then I needed to pre-emptively F2 her as a way to swing her during F4 or F3 if me and Amelio both went up together. I also was concerned that Amelio might have been a sleeper jury threat, in which case I needed a Julia as a fallback plan.*

Either way, this F2 would've been helpful and since I am sitting here right now, I believe it proved to be - Julia was indecisive about whether to cut me or Amelio, and I like to think that this helped push her towards taking me.

I did not, however, expect my F2 with Julia to save me if I was ever put up against Emily though I had my fingers crossed.

Linked below is a nice visualization of my relationships, with alliances in green and F2s in dark blue.

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ELUyvOK2hgNjk8Tn5NntmDVpHU_vsI0YP7z-ejkg8_Q/edit?usp=sharing

I think it's impressive that I managed to be allies (in name) with half the game by Week 2, but obviously it'd be a stretch to directly link that to my playing a great game. A lot of these "allies" have variously voted to evict me and one even nominated me when they were HoH (...because I in turn *voted for them*).

What *would* be impressive is if I could fake-it-til-I-make it - work towards building all these nominal connections into real ones.

BUILDING CONNECTIONS

First and foremost, connecting with someone is a mutual process. *You* are the primary driver of our relationship, and I can't claim that I "made you my ally". That would be absurd, because I can't force or trick someone into allying me.

But I can take credit for my side of the process, and there's a pattern of **potentially poor relationships** turning into **strong alliances** throughout my game. I believe that this quality is unique to me and is a reason why I'm qualified to win.

Wryan



Wryan, we had a relationship that could've easily gone south. I voted to evict you and you nominated me, but we were both open enough to work past it after long discussions. After my massive mess-up, I continuously made efforts to smooth our relationship, such as promising to tie-break and save Scott during his eviction. We eventually ended up as an F2, Maggie and Ivette, (the NSFW alternate name: Junglepussey Disciples) which made it undetected to F5.

Korimax



Kori, after the Pica vote I felt that you would not target me as long as you felt that I wasn't going after you. When I won the Power of Veto, I risked using it on you not because I thought you would've gone home otherwise but because I wanted to signal that I didn't care whether or not you voted me.

When I won HoH, I also swiftly promised that I would not nominate you in order to show that yes, I had no plots against you and considered you someone close to me.

I believe it had the effect intended and you ended up as someone as I was close to in the game. I was hoping that you would pull through to F5, as I believe in an endgame that included you we would've worked to our mutual benefit.

Matt



Matt, the side-effect of using my PoV is that we had a falling out as you were the one who was backdoored. After we talked about wanting to be allies, I backed up my words with actions, such as:

- Almost immediately promising you during my HoH that you would not be nominated (even though I was uncertain at that time whether or not you had thrown me UTB)
- Giving my best effort to Anthony's Rose-Gold POV Paranoia plot in the #SaveAnthonY2K chat (yes that was a thing to everyone else reading)
- Minority voting to save Anthony to demonstrate general loyalty to the Mayo Brogade

By the end of the game I felt very close to you, and if we had advanced in the game further together I would've been tempted to take you to the end.

Jayden



Jayden, I thought that you didn't have any close allies, so I tried to serve that role to you when you were up for eviction. I gave you as much information I could muster when you were up on the block, and made sure to listen to what you had to say when I nearly nommed you during HoH.

I think in the weeks before you were evicted, we may not have been necessarily allies but we definitely considered ourselves to be aligned with one another. During your eviction (with you against Matt), you caught onto my game, so unlike everyone else mentioned here I am uncertain what our future would be like.

But until you got woke we had a great working relationship.

Amelio



Amelio;

We had zero bumps in our relationship for me to describe overcoming but I am going to write your name in bold here and put down your profile picture so you don't feel left out.

Sometimes I was tempted to start SAM'S FUN TIMES and play erratically, and you generally pushed me to the right direction, so thank you for that.

With your advice I avoided...

- Turning my HoH into a gameplay twist instead of doing what was best for my game
- Leaking the Mayo Brogade (before Picante did later anyway)

and a few other minor pitfalls.

~~~~~

3 of you I mentioned (Kori, Matt, Wryan) could have turned into my bitter rivals; but through my efforts and yours **we built strong relationships instead**. I was allies with Amelio and worked with Jayden throughout the game. I think being meaningfully aligned with 5 of the 8 other players in the game by the time jury phase hit, and 5 of 7 after Jake's eviction, is an achievement. And with my actions throughout this I gained a **reputation for being reliable**, just a few weeks after being almost unanimously declared as the person who had the most F2s.

Previously in the alliance section, and in the building connections section above, you may have noticed something about who was not included in them.

**Julia**



**Emily**



**Jake**



Yep. Julia, Emily, Jake, I was not in any alliances with you three (for most of the game) and I cast 6 votes collectively against you guys despite my vague insistence that "I wanted to work with you in the future". You were my rivals during this game despite the fact that I may not have been your go-to targets. **The cost of my loyalty to all the other players I was aligned with was that I needed to vote for the same handful of people over and over again.**

When any of you 3 asked why I was voting for you, I couldn't respond "I am aligned with everyone else in the game", so I gave answers that may have come across as irrational and insincere. I think I generally did a good job being honest about my intentions when any of you 3 were up on the block I apologize if I ever seemed shallow.

My alternate options were instead of voting for you 3 were, depending on the nomset

- 1) Betraying Julia, who I had just created an F2 with (F4 vs Emily)
- 2) Betraying Kori, someone I considered a close ally (F6 vs Emily)
- 3) Betraying Matt, someone I considered a close ally (F7 vs Emily)
- 4) Betraying Jayden, who I generally aligned with and had no obvious F2s or strong relationships (F9 vs Jake)
- 5) Betraying Anthony, someone who I was extremely close to (F10 vs Julia)

Despite my constant votes to evict, I tried to avoid having a toxic relationship (e.g. Kori vs Wryan, Anthony vs Jayden, Captain Ahab vs. Moby Dick) where we would close to rule out working together, and I think I succeeded. We were definitely not best buds in this game but I think if necessity called for it, we would have been able to work together and sometimes we did.

### **Jake**



Jake, I think we both full well knew we were gunning for each other, but we kept the lines of communication open and in another universe where the Mayo Brogade seized power instead of being kept on the backfoot, I think we would've worked together. My justifiable exclusion from The Gays alliance led me to targeting you as its brawn.

### **Emily**



Emily, you bore the brunt of my strategy's downside (I cast votes a whopping 4 times against you) but we continued to talk to each other and we had a decent enough relationship were it was viable to take me to F4.

I think it's obvious you deserve nearly all the credit for that move, but we both share credit keeping our lines of communication mostly bright and functioning.

### **Julia**



Julia, despite not being aligned all game we had a good enough relationship to recognize that it was important we worked together in the endgame. Amelio, Wryan, and Emily were all big jury threats, and the most rational outcome for us was to F2. (...although Julia is going to be no pushover in jury here either and at F4 I suspect that I would have likely taken Amelio to the end over Julia, Julia would've taken Emily to the end over me).

Despite targeting you three, I never wrote any of you 3 off completely and kept up a connection that might have come in handy later in the game. **Throughout the game, I made a largely successful effort to never burn my bridges** (though I did try to burn down Emily's house).

**Whew! That's a lot.** But there's one more section to go.

One of the seeming weaknesses of my game was my physical. I've won a grand total of one head of household and two power of vetoes. Whoop di doo.

But of the challenges I did win, I made the most of. **I won the challenges that were necessary to advance my game.**

### **Simon Says PoV**

This was after the fallout of the Pica vote, and I needed to re-assimilate myself into the Mayo Brogade as soon as I could. I used the PoV on Kori to demonstrate that I was committed to working with him. (Luke knew I was in another alliance and I suspected he would have had a poor view of me regardless).

### **Eat's HoH**

Prior to Eat's Head of Household

- It had been leaked to Wryan that I was "campaigning against him"
- It had been leaked to Matt that I was "campaigning to backdoor him"

which were both dubious claims that did hold a grain of truth. I was frustrated that someone kept blowing up my relationships, and I felt like there was someone in game out to get me.

At this point I was concerned that

- If Matt won, he would nom me (because of the backdoor rumor)
- If Calin won, he would nom me (because I triple-allienced him)
- Julia would campaign for me to be nommed to HoH, because I used the PoV
- Most of the game was angry I used the pov on Kori, and considered us a pair (I took that risk not just because "POV USES ARE FUN!!!!!" but I wanted to be closer to Kori, and gambled on everyone forgetting about the usage over time)

So it was necessary that either I or a handful of close allies (Wryan, Amelio, Anthony) win HoH.

Since the challenge could be played either solo or in twos, I paired up with Anthony and we devised a strategy together. I filled my board with garbage cards so Eat would have the best chance of winning.

And lo and behold we won!

**Sam ← helper    Eat ← HoH**



If you were wondering why Eat's poker score was absurdly high, our playing the challenge together was the reason.

Having a Anthony win HoH was crucial not just to prevent me from being put up on the block, but also because I could receive information from him and take my revenge.

One creative challenge later and it was my turn at the helm.

**My HoH**



There were two goals in my HoH:

- Halt the campaign against me (using information given to me by Anthony)
- Tighten my ties with the Mayo Brogade and the Fantastic Four

Amelio, Matt, Wryan, Kori, I promised you all that I would never put you up because I wanted to be clear to you all that I was not interested in targeting you. For most of you that move may have been unnecessary but I wanted you guys to be be certain.

Emily, I said the same to you because I expected to only nom Julia, Scott, Jake, and later Jayden. After Jayden brought up that you, Jake, Scott, and Julia were in a group together, and I realized what had happened during my vote (another alliance had made a break to save me!) alarm bells rang and I reneged and changed my nomination to you.

I consider my HoH as one of the most successful because it turned the tide of the game around. Without it, I believe that sitting here right now would be two of Jake, Julia, Scott, Emily, or Wryan (though everyone else has a fair shot too). Whoever would be here, I sure wouldn't be then!

After my HoH, the players I could nominate (Julia, Emily, Jake) without betraying an alliance narrowed, so I started throwing more often to prevent backstabbing someone by accident. An example would be at F6 where I threw HoH to Amelio to avoid the awkwardness of nominating Kori, Wryan, or Agus (although I still debate whether this was the best move).

#### **F4 PoV**



This was necessary for me to win because while I had an F2 with Amelio and Julia at this point, I knew that Emily and Julia were close throughout this entire game. Emily, you might've cut Julia, and Julia, you might've cut Emily... but 60 days is a long time to be friends with someone before stabbing them in the back, and I didn't want to run the risk of being eliminated. I knew if it was necessary for me to stab Amelio or Wryan later it would be a struggle for me.

I could also "guarantee" (translation: increase my odds) of being taken to the end because I had F2s with Julia and Amelio if I won here and evicted Emily. The most pressing concern, however, was not being evicted.

#### **Conclusion**

Julia has played a good game. I'm not going to smear it. I won't follow the formula of saying "xxx is a nice person but they didn't play a good game..."

Julia is a nice person, *and* has played a good game! I see flaws in her game, but I will wait for her to explain it before judging it; and I will not disparage hers unless she decides to attack mine or one of you asks me to. I think my game can stand on its own merits.

I believe I've played in a way worthy of gold, and hope that this speech has conveyed that. I've only skimmed the surface of what went on for me in this house. I haven't discussed many of my mistakes, and skipped a lot of my triumphs too in the interests of time, sanity, and this speech's structure. Feel free to ask any and all questions you might have.

I deserve to win the game because I managed to be tight with players who were all over the map, from Wryan to Kori to Anthony to Jayden to Matt to Amelio to Julia and had a working relationship with those I was not, like Emily, Jake, and Scott.

Ending this speech, here's some useless trivia that's evidence of how well I've navigated this house.

Here's a list of the best kept secrets of this game: every single advantage that exists in this game, who owns them, and where they were found... including those that have never been used.

| Owner(s)            | Item                  | Location Found/Associated                     |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Matt                | Paradise Pass         | Missing Patch of Grass                        |
| Luke                | Paradise Pass         | Trident of Poseidon                           |
| Wryan               | Grail                 | (Deck of Cards challenges were for the grail) |
| Wryan               | Scythe*               | Pool Skimmer***                               |
| Kori                | True Love's Kiss      | Cinderella's Lost Shoe                        |
| Amelio              | Anonymity Advantage** | Leprechaun Hat***                             |
| Anthony → Matt → Me | Excalibur****         | Backyard Stone                                |

\*Remove 3 players from HoH challenge til F13, 2 players from challenge til F9, and 1 player til F7. Destroyed by Excalibur.

\*\*Combine with another advantage to use it anonymously

\*\*\*These are guesses, but based on the information I've received and my memory I believe these are correct

\*\*\*\*Need Head of Household to receive

If you hold an advantage unlisted here, let me know, but I believe I have them all.

I've had a wonderful time in Wonderland. I'm close my laptop's looking-glass - the computer screen - and head off to bed. Thank you to the hosts for this amazing game, best of luck to Julia and I look forward to hearing your jury speeches!