

Tips at the Table - Weekend Edition

Transcriber: Anna (anna\_luna\_anna#5584)

ALI: Do you wanna do 55?

SYLVIA: Sure.

JACK: [cross] Sounds good.

JANINE: [cross] Yeah.

[several audible claps]

ALI: [tentatively] That seemed fine? Did anyone not clap?

JANINE: I think the only person in the world who's ever confident about the claps is Austin. [ALI: Yeah.] Without him I don't think we can ever be happy with the clap, I'm just gonna say it.

**00:21**

ALI: This is true.

JACK: Fair. Fair.

ALI: Speaking of being without Austin, hi! Welcome to Tips at the Table. This is a podcast about answering questions from you, hopefully smart answers from us and whatever else Austin says that I have now forgotten and didn't think to look up. Erm... [laughs]

JANINE: [confidently] Fun interaction between good questions.

ALI: Uh-huh, yeah. We're here to answer some of your questions, as we do. I think we've got some good ones here. My name is Alicia Acampora. You can find me @ali\_west and I am joined by Jack.

JACK: Hi, I am Jack, you can find me on Twitter @notquitereal or buy any of the music featured on the show at notquitereal.bandcamp.com.

ALI: Janine is here as well...

JANINE: You can find me @bleatingheart on Twitter.

ALI: And Sylvia<sup>1</sup>...

SYLVIA: Hi! You can find me on Twitter @captaintrash or the other shows I do over @emojidrome and @VGChooChoo on Twitter.

01:32

ALI: [laughs softly] Perfecto! Ok, so, yeah, we're here to answer some questions. We got some lined up here. Does anyone have any more animal stories to tell before we get rolling here.

SYLVIA: No, but my mouse did break right as the starting of this so that's gonna be fun for me.

ALI & JANINE: [laugh]

ALI: Okay.

JACK: In what way?

SYLVIA: It does not work. It is not responding [ALI & JACK groan] but the lights are on.

ALI: Uh, the lights are on.

JACK: [cross] Oh, dear.

SYLVIA: Yep.

ALI: Is it like on glass? Instead of being like on a thing?

SYLVIA: [cross] No, it's on my mousepad.

ALI: Ok, well, you only need your voice for right now.

SYLVIA: Thankfully.

ALI: [laughs]

SYLVIA: After the show I might have some trouble getting you my file. But we'll cross that bridge later.

ALI: Yeah, ok, that's fine. [laughs] I'm gonna continue on. Our first question comes in from Nick and it's tiny, so I'm gonna make it big- not that big. [ALI & SYLVIA laugh]

---

<sup>1</sup> The name in the audio recording is no longer in use, hence the audio/transcript discrepancy.

JANINE: I don't know if that- if you are changing the document, I don't know if it will show immediately, cause I'm in like present mode. So it might like-

ALI: Oh, okay. Well, I am making it bigger for me. Anyway, this question comes from Nick.  
[laughs]

[reading] "This question is for everyone, but especially, Janine. I personally am hopeless when it comes to fashion and dressing well but I don't want the NPCs in my world to be. Do you have any advice on learning to describe interesting clothing that speaks to who the character is?"

[JANINE: Ummm] I entered this because I feel that this is something that the three of you are way better at than I am.

JANINE: [laughs] You are also very good at this Ali, shut up.

ALI: [laughs] Mmm, but Janine, do you wanna start of, because you were named?

JANINE: Yeah, I think the biggest piece of advice is look- look at more stuff, like, you have to- I don't know that any of us are inherently just good at describing the stuff at the top of our head, it's like, you know, when we say that Twilight Mirage kind of started as a Discord channel we were all dumping like high fashion pictures and shit like that- [ALI laughs], that's true. That's just what it is and those pictures, you know, my- I have a Signet inspiration folder and like, at least half of it is- is like, runway shit. Or is like, costumes and things like that. And- sometimes you can just, you know, I am guilty of doing this with Signet, just being like, "Yo, this designer, this is just all this stuff. Just imagine all this and Signet is in it". [ALI laughs][laughs] Ideally, you take bits and pieces of things that inspire you. Like if you see a- if you see a costume and you go, "Wow, I really like those shoulder pieces, I'd really like a character like-, you know I have this character who's a real fucking badass, I'd bet they'd look so good with these- [ALI laughs] with big pauldrons, what if they were like copper and had like, shit hanging off of them". Like that's how it goes. You have to look at stuff and then you sort of in your head extrapolate it, combine it. Things like that.

ALI: Yeah. That makes sense. I feel like- I am a person who has always, like, gone to the mall and been like, "Yeah, one of my characters would look great in that". So, like, I get the, like, matching to a character thing, but not to, like, being able to describe it. I think probably the most obvious way, especially if you're GMing and they are your NPC, is like, just make notes. I think you'll hear Austin say a lot, like, just kind of broad inspirations from, like, cultures, where he'll be like "a lot of the buildings in this place look like it's from here" or "a lot of the dress is kind of, you know, a lot of higher class and they wear very light fabrics", and that isn't even, like, a super detailed description of a thing, but also, like, kind of brightens that world a lot better. So, finding kind of shorthands like that is good. But also, yeah, look at fashion magazines and like-

JACK: Yeah. I was- A thing that is like- and I definitely did before starting- I think I did it before starting Marielda as well, but I definitely did it before Twilight Mirage is yeah, go out and buy a bunch of fashion magazines-

ALI: [laughs]

Janine: [HmMMMM]

JACK: And go home and just go through them page by page, and that's- it's cool as hell, because: a. You're giving yourself an excuse to look at really cool shit- erm- for an afternoon, which is nice. And b. You can just sort of make this- sort of like old school collage [ALI laughs] of like 'That looks good' and like 'Oh, I like this. That also looks good' and I think doing a season like Twilight Mirage where clothes have been so important in ways that- it's not that clothes aren't important in Hieron, but we talk about them a lot more in Twilight Mirage, I think. [ALI laughs] Erm... But I- It's exiting to- Sometimes I see styles and I see pieces and what I am actually thinking to myself is "Man, I wanna wear that, [ALI laughs] always!" You know, like, I picture the cooler better version of myself in my head and I think "Ah, they look so good in that, that's great!" And latching on to that excitement when I think of how to dress characters and how- how to put together things that characters wear and how to describe them, it often comes from that place of excitement, of going like "Right, I, Jack de Quidt, [regretfully] could not wear this, but this ridiculous opera singer that I've conjured from- [ALI laughs], from the mesh, they can wear it and they're gonna look fantastic".

SYLVIA: I think, one of the things that I have enjoyed doing when, like, coming up with character designs for- 'cause I also design some stuff for my own tabletop games, so I know what you're going through, it is very hard when you've no idea how to dress your- I have no idea how to dress myself either, I understand. Erm... the things that really helped me where looking at stuff made by people who clearly have a very good grasp on that. I've been reading a lot of Jojo's Bizarre Adventure [ALI laughs] and, like, he's the least subtle guy in the world but Hirohiko Araki is a very good inspiration if you're looking for someone who knows how to get across a character in their design. Erm... I'd also really recommend if you're doing something more historical, looking up, like, old art. [ALI: Yeah. JANINE: Hmmm.] Like, renaissance paintings and stuff like that, because if you're trying to do something more medieval that can be way more- a much better touchstone than, like- I mean, Versace is an okay follow on Twitter too [ALI laughs] but like [JACK laughs] [ALI: This is true.] sometimes you wanna know what chainmail is like actually supposed to look like when it's ornate and stuff.

ALI: Uh-huh, yeah. Oh-

JANINE: [cross] Sort of- sorry, I just wanna mention because it is directly sort of connected to that. There is this- There is a, sort of, documentary-like miniseries, I think it is called 'A Stitch in Time' and it is- I don't know this one's name, I am in the middle of watching this series, I don't know her name. But the thing she is does is, she sort of, takes these famous paintings of

real-life historical figures, and sort of, recreates with a team of really talented craftspeople [JACK: Ohhh!]. Recreates this outfit and also at the same time is breaking down- Like, the first episode is [tentatively] King Cha- one of the Charleses [ALI laughs]. The Charleses- The Charles who-

JACK: [laughs] [cross] The one we killed?

JANINE: [cross] Was the son of the one-

JACK: [cross] Oh, no, his kid.

JANINE [cross] The one after the- yeah. His kid, who like he grew- he, you know, he- his cousin was King Luis and he spent a lot of time in France so he wanted to be fashionable but also was very aware that if you're too fashionable people will kill you, because you're spending their money on bullshit. [JACK: Fair.] [ALI hums in agreement] But- so this whole- this series is all about, like, they take this painting, they say, like, "What does this painting mean? What does the clothing mean in this painting?" and then they sort of recreate it based on that and sort of deal of with the practicalities of, like, "Well this fabric is really expensive but also they used it really, really efficiently because of the economy at the time" or, you know, they do the- I don't remember the name of the painting but it's the one with the lady and everyone thinks she is pregnant but she'd just holding a big green dress and there's, like, a man in a bad hat [ALI laughs] [laughs].

JACK: Oh the- erm- The van Eyck painting, right? [JANINE: Yes, yes!] With the dog? It's got an incredible dog at the bottom of it?

JANINE: Yes, totally. So it's a lot of, like, breaking down that stuff and I think that is- You can't really put in that much, that much, like, metaphor into a single NPC is maybe not gonna be... super useful use of time... ah- all the time, but it is a good way to think about what clothing can mean in terms of conveying something... and then kind of, working in sort of smaller strokes of that kind of thing.

**10:02**

ALI: Yeah, for sure. I think that's a good place to start, like, even just being, like "What does-?" Even if you're not planning a whole outfit, but even being like "What is, you know, if this one NPC has like a really- a bracelet they really love or something?" or like, even with Hella's sword, the things that you have to pick for are like, that it's ornate or that it's- looks really cool or that it's like, really powerful, so I think, kind of like, just picking one or two things on an outfit- [JANINE hums approval] [JACK: Yeah.] kind of, can get you a long way. I think another thing is that like, trying to look at artbooks based of of stuff that you like is worth looking into. I remember some of my pages from like the Final Fantasy 9 artbook was just like, pages and pages and pages, of like the NPCs in towns and their outfits and, like, those are details you would have never seen in

that game, but like, just being able to look at, you know, into a word that I think is really well built and being like, "Oh, this is how these people thought of it". I can take inspiration from this that way, even if I didn't pick it up while I was playing that game or watching that movie or whatever else. There's a ton of, like, resources like that for either video games or like- I think I have like a book on Star Wars [laughs] design as well. So, like, that stuff is out there.

JACK: I think also, like, to go along with what- what you said Ali, about finding a bracelet or a sword or something, like, if you're worried about describing outfits, maybe you don't need to go with the whole- with the whole outfit. Like, Austin has painted NPCs for us before, who have been defined by like, one thing that they have. And that's a good place to start [ALI laughs], I think, if you're feeling anxious. You know, like, [JANINE hums approvingly] "Alright, fine, so this NPC really loves their bracelet" or "this NPC has like really cool glasses." [ALI laughs] Or just they, you know, you can't go wrong with some really wild shoulder pads in some way [ALI: Yeah.]. And I think a lot about like, Far Cry 5. Which is a game with a terrible story [ALI laughs softly] delivered awfully- [ALI continues laughing] The main villain in that story has some, um- truly incredible sunglasses, they're awful sunglasses and they tell so much about this guy's character and they are so- like, the concept artist drawing those sunglasses and then the modeler modelling those sunglasses and then making sure they were lit well and everything, it was like one small costuming decision that managed to rise up though the morass of this game's [ALI laughs] terrible storytelling. It's such a great detail that says so much about this guy and like, that's a good road to go down when you're giving your characters costumes, and when you're giving them pieces.

JANINE: A good way to think about might be to think about like, if you bumped into that character on the street [JACK: Yeah.] and you had to describe them [ALI: Oh, yeah.] instantly, what would you say?

JACK: [confidently] Shoulder pads.

ALI: [laughs]

JANINE: [laughs]

ALI: Every time.

JACK (as the character): Can't get through a damn door, but they look cool as hell. [ALI hums approvingly]

SYLVIA: [laughs] I'm just imagining your person with the like- Qubeley- erm- from Gundam, [ALI laughs] the giant like- [ALI laughs louder] the giant [JACK laughs] pauldrons that that has [ALI: Oh yeah.], but like on someone's just like jacket. [ALI laughs] [JANINE laughs] So, there we go, you can use that one.

ALI: Uh-huh. Yeah you can also do that. [JACK: Yeah.] Look at more mobile suits also [laughs] like a space game.

JANINE: That's good life advice, I'd say.

ALI: Yeah.

SYLVIA: [laughs]

ALI: Erm...

JANINE: Ah...

ALI: Yeah.

JANINE: Are we good to move on?

ALI: I think we are. So... we're gonna go to this question form Ann which is actually a repeat but I don't think that anyone here answered it last time.

JACK: I did.

ALI: Oh, well-

JACK: But I'll be quiet [ALI laughs] and sip some camomile.

ALI: [laughing] Okay. Maybe-

JACK: [cross] Have fun everybody.

ALI: Maybe you have more stuff to add this time. [JACK: [laughing] That's true.] Anyway,

[reading] "Hey all, I've been playing a couple of games for a while now and I've been starting to get over a lot of my anxieties about roleplaying. There is still one thing I can't work out though, romance. [laughing] Sometimes there is an NPC that I know my character would be super into and I wanna be able to play it out, but ending up having to play a romantic scene- scene opposite my GM is, honestly, a little terrifying, how do you guys handle PC romantic entanglements and do you have any advice for making that run smoother? Is y'all's perspective changed by the fact that you have fans who are also invested in the character's romantic lives?".

Okay, do y'all have anything to [laughing] say?

ALL: [laugh].

JANINE: [teasingly] Do you?

ALI: [laughs].

SYLVIA: I dunno, Ali, [emphatically] do you?

ALI: [laughs] Erm... Maybe... Erm... I feel like this is also a really interesting question to ask and to answer coming of of the 'Milk Arc' of Twilight Mirage [laughs], as I'm gonna be calling it, because-

JACK: [cross] Jesus. Fucking 'Milk Arc'...

JANINE: I wish you could just see the face I made, it was like "What? 'Milk'?"

SYLVIA: Yeah, same. [ALI laughs] 'Cause I am very behind.

JACK: [cross] Have you not caught up, 'cause it's- [sadly] Oh... well...

JANINE: [cross] I'm a little behind.

ALI: It's-

JACK: Alright, I'd said I was gonna stay quiet, but I have to turn my mic on to roast Ali. Ali...

JANINE: [laughs]

ALI: [hums acknowledgment]

JACK: You wanna talk about...

JANINE: [cross] Did she date the milk?

ALI: [laughs]

JACK: [laughs]

ALI: [laughing] I think the milk is the only thing that I didn't try to date, but, em-

JACK: Yeah.

ALI: Okay. Let me- Okay. So, [laughing] let's start this from the beginning [SYLVIA muffled laughs]. The way that I got over doing romance in- or getting over anxieties about doing

romance in tabletop games is just, like [deep breath], realizing that romance has been in media since the dawn of time and, like, is not frivolous or [JANINE hums approvingly], you know, isn't a ridiculous character motivation or isn't a waste of time and like, if you like stories that have romance in them you should be writing stories that have romance in them. Erm... I think that there is definitely a skill from one to ten that you could go though [laughs]. You don't always have to go to eleven, like [tentatively] I do once a season.

JANINE: [laughs]

SYLVIA: [muffled laughs]

ALI: [laughs] And just kind of- There is like variables in the way to do this. Like, I think of- I think of- there is- So there's the 'Milk Arc' which is like, by the books, if you really wanna get technical about it, that entire time, I was roleplaying Tender's beliefs, which are, like, "The N.E.H. as an institution sucks but I really care about the reframe system and, like, my priestess idol wants to synchronize ideas so I wanna hear other people out". You know, so that's her taking to Wind's Poem and then that is also her talking to Open Metal. Erm.... but I don't know that I- I left that final session [tentatively] feeling like Jack and Art had a great time. [JACK hums sarcastic approval] Jack, you're here, you can maybe confirm or deny-

JACK: I think since we have an opportunity to commit to recording a- [laughs] [ALI laughs] our feelings on this. I thought that the 'Milk Arc' was some of the most fun I've had recording this show- [laughs][ALI: Awww. I appreciate that.] in a long time [ALI: laughs] and a lot of that was to do with the way that Ali took one look at the fairly safe ski run that we were about to embark on and- and- and pushed herself towards the cliff on the other end of the ski slope [ALI laughs]. I sounded a little rankled about it in the recording [laughs] because I was falling down a cliff, but I had an incredible time [ALI laughs] and it was the best and I wouldn't have had Ali make any move the other way. [ALI laughs]

JANINE: [laughs]

ALI: [laughs] I appreciate that. I- method acting is fine. To be roleplaying and being like I'm afraid that this NPC is in danger- cause I don't wanna say spoilers- [SYLVIA: [muffled] What?] but then also, like, "How much do I care about my ex-girlfriend?", is great, that's fantastic, [JACK: Yeah.] I love doing that. It was great 'cause I feel like two exes sitting down and talking about the moralities of killing an innocent person are the only kind of roleplaying that I really like to do [SYLVIA laughs] [JACK: Fair.]. So it's great to do that for 40 minutes [laughs].

SYLVIA: That is so specific.

ALI and JANINE: [laugh]

JACK: I mean this is the other thing, right? Like, we got two really fantastic scenes out of-out of both of- both of those. Like, you went off-piste, but you didn't go off-piste of the story, right? [ALI: Yeah] It was like-

ALI: [cross] But again-

JACK: [cross]It resulted in two really good conversations.

ALI: [laughs] You also don't have to do that. Like, you know, I maybe hijacked that episode. Maybe I didn't. We got good stuff out of everyone, it's whatever. But like there is that, and then I also think of, like, just something as simple as Castille holding Maelgwyn's hand before the final Marielda scene, before they go into the forge, right? There is a gradient in which you can [laughs] do romance in games. Also, like, doing it with a GM is really tough, but you can always fade to black whenever. I think we kind of did that with Open and Tender at the end of that. And then, I mean, again, like, romance isn't a dumb impulse, so like, it can be something as simple as, if you're playing something as Dungeon World, having one of your believes be like, "I wanna go on this journey to find a jewel to bring home to my girlfriend" or whatever. Like that's legitimate. Like your GM would have to, you know, set up a mission where there is a bunch of jewels and you have to pick the right one- I don't know- I'm not a GM, but like [laughs] there are more subtle ways to kind of get things into the story that isn't, like, "I'm gonna sit down and talk to this girl at a table with 4 of my other friends for forty minutes." But is you wanna do that, you can- you can. But if you don't want to, there is also, like, smaller ways. Anyway I'm gonna stop talking. [laughs] Does anyone else have anything else to say?

SYLVIA: I think this is probably- probably got said before since we're doing this question again, but I figured I'd mention it, like, talk to your GM about it, obviously [JANINE: Yeah.], but like, don't talk about it so much that it's like, 'Ok, we're just doing this off-screen.', because it's fun to roleplay through that stuff still, but make sure that, everyone is in their comfort zone with it. Because, like- GM is also king of stressful so, they might also be like, "Yeah, I'm glad you told me about this ahead of time." [ALI laughs] 'Cause, trust me, I've been in that position where I'm like "Oh, I'm really glad someone mentioned this ahead of time" when I'm doing my, like, second run as a GM ever. [ALI laughs][JANINE hums approvingly] But like also in doing that, you are able to sort of be like, "Here's where I wanna go with this", because when it comes down to it, roleplaying games are more of a collaboration than they are a thing where you're like trying to win. At least that's how I like to look at them [ALI: Yeah.] [JANINE hums approvingly] and when you bring your GM into that conversation it makes it more collaborative and generally speaking makes a better experience for everybody, just make sure that you are leaving room to still improv and have some spontaneity with it because that is also part of the fun of this, obviously.

**21:34**

ALI: Yeah.

SYLVIA: That's my piece.

ALI: [laughs]

JANINE: I would say also, like, be careful about not- hmmm, this is though, I - I want- you know- I think if someone wants romance in their story, that should totally be on the table, but also, I think it is important to not necessarily feel entitled to an NPC, because that can also- you don't know what necessarily is going to happen with that NPC, you don't know- you may not know their whole background and like- I think a lot- I'm like, dancing around it- I am thinking about Blake in Hieron, Blake and Adaire [ALI: Hums approvingly], because I, like 100%, was shipping Blake and Adaire and was like, "Okay, I want- I want them to be together, I think that would be very sweet and nice" and that didn't happen and like, I am glad it didn't happen, I think. I think it is better for the story that it didn't happen, but also the awkwardness in that moment of Adaire being like, "Oh, no. I just- you know, just as friends. Just friends sharing beer-" that's real awkwardness, that was real [ALI: laughs][laughs]. That was real because I was like, "Oh, I'm getting rejected, [sarcastically] cool." and like getting rejected in- you know- that was relatively early on and I certainly had some expectations based on how things had gone for Ali [ALI: Oh, no [laughs]]. I was like, "Cool, [JACK: Aww.] I get a friend. No." So you, you know [ALI: Oh, no.], it's a group storytelling effort, it's nice if you have a GM who, you know, has the same priorities as you and like is into that- that thing that you're going after. I would also just say maybe don't get your hopes up [ALI laughs] and sometimes it is for the best [JACK & ALI laugh]

ALI: I'm like mad at Austin now, I had no idea!

JANINE: [laughs] The second thing- I don't think he did either, really. [ALI: Okay.] Erm... The second thing I was gonna say here is that, also relevant to Hieron, I think: 1. That that helped me get over my fear of romantic GM stuff. 'Cause like, well, if it goes well, then it is better than that [ALI: laughs], so we're fine. The thing-

JACK: [cross] Better than rejection on a live microphone.

JANINE: Yes. Yes.

ALI and SYLVIA: [laugh]

JANINE: The thing that- the thing that scares me now instead is romantic interaction between players.

ALI: [hums in ascent] Yeah.

JANINE: That is the thing that is like- that like, I both- I don't think Ali and I are shy about the fact that we both ship Hella and Adaire [ALI laughs]. But also the idea of putting that into play is pretty fucking intimidating. [ALI: Yeah.] Because, you know, with a GM, the GM can adjust a

character, sort of- you know, you're playing of of someone who kind of has omniscience in a way. Whereas as with two players, you are just, kind of both trying to not step on each other's toes but also, like not cross any lines, and that's terrifying. That's the real thing to be scared of is what I'm saying.

ALI: [laughs] Yeah, I- Don't be afraid of anything, obviously. I- It's though, I don't think that I would, I wouldn't go forward with any, like, player x player type stuff without really having a conversation with the other person and then also having a conversation with Austin [JANINE: Yeah?]. [laughing] I know that I've at least in one occasion been like, "So what's gonna happen in Spring?" and I think, you know, we'll see. But also- I think Austin mentioned this a little bit before where like, sometimes just flirting is fine and, like, sometimes not knowing is also what real relationships are like [JANINE hums approvingly and sarcastically]. Like, I don't wanna make any firm Tender/Fourteen like calls here, cause I know me and Jack have really never talked about it, but there's definitely been times, where I didn't know if Jack was leading into it but I definitely have because it is funny to me. [Laughs]

JACK: There's, like, a very good moment in an upcoming recording, in which someone asks, "Does anyone care about Fourteen Fifteen?" and Tender clearly far away from the mic shouts "I do!" [ALI and JANINE laugh], which was very funny.

ALI: Tender is gonna continue to be stressed for a little bit, unfortunately. But-

JACK: Oh, yeah! Hella stressed!

ALI: [laughs] But I mean- like- That's the thing, is that I don't know how much of that stuff is been on purpose, but like, every time Fourteen speaks and being like, "Me and Tender did this thing and Grant was also there." has been some of my favourite moments of this season [laughs] [JACK laughs]. 'Cause that's really funny to me [laughs][JACK: Oh, God.] But then again I don't know that we- I don't know that those characters are official until we [JACK: Right!] make that decision. But like, the idea of old co-workers who, you know, sometimes let stuff slip is also really good- I don't know- I guess that's a thing it's that it doesn't always have to be something that the- the focus is always on or that the camera is always on, it can just be, you know, on the sidelines of the conversation. It can be that one scene of Adaire saying goodbye [laughingly] to Blake apparently [laughs][JACK laughs].

JACK: Yeah, it's like a sliding scale, it's this stuff moves on a sliding scale. Right? [ALI: Right.] It's like, with Lem and Emanuel slightly to the right of the middle, and then Jackie and Aria like off towards the right [ALI laughs] and then Tender and Open Metal just kind of crashing off in that direction.

ALI: [laughs] Tender and Open just, like, constantly wagging back and forth, I would say-but-

JANINE: There is also the Signet angle of just- just be nice in a way that is confusing to everything [ALI crackles] that's like non-human [JACK: [laughs] Oh that's so good]. Touch a lot of arms, just like, just touch everyone's arm no one will know what you think of them [ALI and SYLVIA laugh].

JACK: Signet is such a renaissance painting character in that regard, right? [ALI laughs]  
[JANINE: [laughs] Yes!] Like, [scholar voice] "What are they doing? [ALI laughs] Is this arm touching religious or- "

JANINE: [laughs] [scholar voice] "Are they sisters? Like, I don't get it."

JACK: [scholar voice] "I don't get it. Is the veil important here? What am I supposed to be reading in this picture?"

SYLVIA and ALI: [laugh]

SYLVIA: I will say that did lead- that sort of like awkwardness did lead to a very fun bit when Eco was just sitting there while Signet and erm- [ALI: Oh, right!] I can't remember the Axiom's name of the top of my head- were like- like having a conversation and Eco is just there slurping on their drink, like [ALI and JANINE laugh] "Wow, this very awkward pseudo flirting is going on". That was really fun!

[ALL laugh]

JANINE: [groans]

ALI: [laughs] God, yeah- I-

JANINE: [cross] Yeah, that's good stuff.

ALI: We should probably start to move on, but I think that like- I mean- I feel like a lot of the ways that we're talking about it now are sometimes how actual relationships happen where like sometimes you have a co-worker who you see- who you get coffee for every day and, you know, that's never something, but that's always an interaction that you enjoy and that person's feelings towards you are something that, like, are important to you. You wanna, nurture that relationship. Or, like, sometimes you know someone and then you sit down and you're like, "Hey, are we dating?" Like- [laughs] [JANINE laughs] There are degrees to like actual romantic relationships, so like- I don't know- Tabletop games should be the same where it is like, "I think that this NPC is really cute, so the way that I am gonna act and the scene is gonna be changed by that.". But like, they don't have to get together. Aria could have never met Jackie again but still have been really overwhelmed when they first saw each other. But then- [laughs] sometimes that's the thing that you wanna do, so you force your GM to do it [laughs] [JANINE laughs] by saying that they are dating for three weeks until they actually are and then you gotta get a really good dice

roll, so... you know, it is fine to dip your toes and [laughs] if romance is a thing that you wanna have a focus on, like, talk to your GM and talk to the people at the table. At least know if they are uncomfortable with it. Again, I would never have Tender be like, [high pitched] "But Fourteen, I am in love with you!", without talking to Jack about that beforehand. Like, Hella would also never do that to Adaire [JANINE hums approvingly]. So- yeah... anyway- [laughing] I think we are gonna move on now unless anyone else has any final words to say. Alright.  
[JANINE: Okay.]

**30:49**

So we have two questions here coming from Aman- I'm gonna start with the first.

[reading] "Do you have any tabletop games-" [laughs] Those aren't the words at all- "Do any of you have tabletop games separate from the show, furthermore do you play anything with or without each other that doesn't get recorded?"

SYLVIA: [tentatively] I kind of have a game away from the show. [ALI laughs] It's me and a few of my friends as my first time really seriously GMing something [ALI: [appreciatively] Uhuhh!] and I am never doing it. A Tales from the Loop game. It's pretty good! Hey! That's a pretty good game. But it is- it is something I definitely would never record because I am so- [JANINE: laughs] so, so stressed during it. [ALI: [appreciatively] Ahahaw] It's like- It's cause I'm a- So here's the thing that doesn't come through a lot on Fiends at the Table, but comes through at any other creative thing I do, [tentatively] I am a massive control freak. [ALI and JACK laugh] So I have like this notebook written down for all this stuff that I wanna do and then my friends are like, "Yeah, but what if instead of looking into this cool mystery you set up, Sylvia, we prank this house party we're at by throwing their kegs in a river?" [ALI and JANINE laugh] "Also, we didn't roll well enough, so none of us can recognize what a keg is." [ALI and JANINE laugh] Actually happened, ended up working out pretty well.

JACK: What did they misidentify as kegs?

SYLVIA: So- what ended up happening was I wanted- so- they didn't misidentify anything, it was my friend Mike was playing a character and he suggest that and I was like, "Okay, but I'm gonna make you have to find these, cause it is a busy party and also I'm cranky." [JACK, ALI and JANINE laugh] I'm a terrible GM, I really loosened up but for this I was terrible. And he rolled like the worst possible, he got like all ones or something. And I was like, "You don't even know what a keg is!" and we just rolled with it. [JACK laughs]. So, yeah, there's that.

JANINE: [cross] I erm- I have a fun story along those lines because I also have [tentatively] a kind of group on the side. [ALI: [shocked] Ha!] We're sort of on hiatus right now 'cause everyone's schedule just got like super fucking messy all at once and we- It's basically a group of people- it's a group of people I met on a Dragon Age Discord- [ALI hums appreciatively] and we started out by playing Fall of Magic, because I wanted a good thing that like set the tone for

everyone having- It's a group where, like, I think only one or two of them have ever done tabletop stuff before, so I wanted to kind of set the tone for, like, everyone having authorship over a story, basically. That was the mood I wanted to set going into actual systems and stuff. And then we moved from that to the Dragon Age tabletop game which is- based on the- [tentatively] Green Ronin Age sys- There is also just like Fantasy Age, they're like basically the same game, I think. But one of them is Dragon Age and erm- I am GMing that, and it's been very fun and very scary and very challenging, but the best thing that happened was, I had set up what was supposed to be like a really- it was supposed to be like a really simple straight forward thing. There was a bridge and some hooligans had taken the bridge out and they were- they had a little ferry and they were charging people an exorbitant amount to cross on their ferry. So it was like one of those things, where, okay, you can fight these people, you can try and cross for yourself whatever, like, they had just bought so much survival shit at the market, for some reason, so they had axes. I was like, "Okay, cut down a tree! Do anything, it's fine!" So they end up going up river and instead of, like, cutting down a tree, they decide to get one of the archers to fire an arrow with a rope across [ALI hums understandingly] and then they basically pay the toll for one character to cross on the ferry so that she can go up and tie off that rope properly and everyone can cross it. [sarcastically] Cool, great. [ALI snorts] The arrow thing- the arrow test succeeds everyone, you know, get's across, she goes to tie the knot, she rolls badly and- my thing was like, I wasn't gonna say she didn't know how to tie a knot, it was that she didn't take into account like, the bark, you know, like the bark was not as grippy or, you know, one of those kind of things where it's like, you tied this knot, but it is not as stable as it would be on another, you know- in other circumstances. So then the team starts crossing, and the first person to cross slips, and the Dragon Age system has this whole test thing where you roll for- it's weird but you- [ALI laughs] basically every time something happens you are like rolling against something else as a test. [ALI: [appreciatively] Ohhh] So I gave her a test to cross safely, she did not do great at that and then I gave her a test to try and keep her from falling into the water, also did not do great at that [ALI laughs] so she fell in the water. I gave her a test to see if she could swim to shore, she also failed that so at that point, basically, the two- there's four people in the party, both of the characters jump after her and fail their rolls to try and [ALI: [pleading] No-] get her to the shore. So they're all carried down stream- One character decides it would be a bad idea to jump in and just runs along the shore after them. They basically all get swept down river and get saved by the toll people that they were trying to avoid in the first place. [ALI snorts] [SYLVIA laughs] Some of them got injured- It wasn't good. [ALI laughs] And that's my story about the tabletop game that I play separate from the show. I would also never record that.

ALI: [laughing] Are you sure? You positive? That sounds great.

JANINE: It's been very good but it's also been a big learning experience.

ALI: [laughs] That's incredible. I don't really play other tabletop stuff outside of the game- outside of the show at least. I, like, try to hang out with people obviously 'cause I like all of you, but, I feel like- [JACK: Aww.] all of the tabletop stuff I'm like, "Oh, I really wanna play that game when

it's like a Live or whatever", but not like, "Oh, let's just run that right now." JANINE: [hums in agreement]. It feels like burning cast, like even [ALI: Yeah.] if we did something as a test, it's like, we have people who are literally paying is for this stuff, like- [ALL laugh] we should do something [JACK: Well I think-] for them, like, you know-

JACK: Yeah. That's a little- That's one way of putting it. [ALI laughs]

JANINE: No, I mean, like- look, clapcasts, like, you know- [ALI: Yeah.]

JACK: [cross] No, you're right. No I don't- I think you're right.

JANINE: [cross] People- you know, people wanna see that stuff and I think it's difficult then to justify just like doing a thing [JACK: Yeah.] for ourselves.

JACK: And in fact I think that the times that we've played games together off the show are times where we actually couldn't put it on the show, we played like three quarters of a game of, like, Ten Candles together [ALI: Oh Yeah.].

JANINE: I am glad that wasn't recorded. I feel bad about that game. [laughs]

JACK: L.A., [high pitched] It was fine. [JANINE laughs] [in normal voice] There was some fun stuff in that game.

ALI: [cross] Wait, why do you feel that? That was great!

JANINE: [laughing] We ended that game with your character in a bag because of me.

JACK: [cross] You kidnap-

JANINE: [cross] I put your character in a bag [ALI laughs].

JACK: [cross] You did kidnapped me, didn't you? [ALI: [breathless with laughter] Forgot about that!]

JANINE: You were being very shifty.

JACK: Is that the- I was being very shifty. I think you probably made the right call putting me in that bag. Ten Candles if I remember right [laughs] [SYLVIA laughs], Sylvia, there was a sort of an alien invasion, I was like an elderly pathfinder lady, they kidnapped me. Erm- But I was being very shifty. I think in that game there's mechanics for players going bad, and I think you probably made the right call.

JANINE: [cross] You like knew the thing. That was the thing, was like, at the beginning you knew the thing [JACK: Yeah.] and you did not, like, tell us the thing. [ALI: Right.] So, like stuff was

happening related to that thing and you were trying to, like, vaguely dance around it and it made you seem like you were the guilty one.

JACK: Yeah.

ALI: But the thing was that- we can just say that-

JACK: [cross] Do say that I physically- Yeah, we can say- who are we spoi- what are we spoiling here? The disease that the aliens spre- had, was spread through speech. Was spread through like a tick in conversation [JANINE: Right, right. Yeah.] and the reason I couldn't say it was because I would literally doom us all, I think. [ALI: [understandingly] Oh-] And so I was just sort of hoping that like, we might be able- I'd stay in this bag until we found a way to get outside of- into the range of a suppressor or something and I may be able to say it- but yeah, I do remember getting kidnapped at the end of that session. The other game we play a lot is consulting detective. Like- [ALI: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.] old school consulting detective [JANINE hums approvingly] which isn't really role playing but is [ALI laughs] sort of-

ALI: It's a team building exercise [JACK: Yeah.], I would say.

JACK: It's a team- parachute games and like trust falls, [SYLVIA and ALI laugh] and things, we play Consulting Detective. [ALI: Yeah. Or like-] Accidentally execute a beloved erm- Knoll [ALI laughs] leader [JANINE hums apologetically].

ALI: Or just, like, talking to half the the cast about wrestling. I feel like that's the scope of it. It's either [laughing] Consulting Detective or like, "What's good with A.J. Styles?" Who sucks. [laughs] That the gradient of the things we do separate of the show, I guess.

The second question is...

[reading] "Does who you cast as a character affect how you play them? Do you ever incorporate elements of that actor into you characters?"

I wanted to include this because Sylvia is here and you know, Ephrim is famously G-Dragon [SYLVIA: Famously.] and then Signet- I forget Signet's actresses name.

JANINE: Signet's like a bunch of different people [ALI: [laughing] Fair.]. So there's not really like a particular personality. It's like I- a lot of the casting for tabletop characters from me is like- well I mean- I was gonna say that, but like Adaire, I don't really have a real-life analog for her... With Signet it was a lot of just like, I wanted to specifically recommend faces because when you say Asian woman a lot of people think of someone who is too finely featured and not really what I was going for [ALI hums approvingly.], because that is where a lot- you know, if you- it's where I guess a lot of white people's minds jump, I should correct myself there. Because like you are thinking of like people you've seen in movies, you're thinking of like Mako and fucking- whoever,

you are thinking like anime people, you're not thinking about real-ass people. So that was why I wanted to be specific with her, but it wasn't really about an actor kind of thing. It was more just like, I want to make sure people know that she's got a jaw on her, you know.

ALI: [laughs] Fair. Sylvia?

**41:55**

SYLVIA: Yeah, so, I do this a few- I've done this a few times, obviously with Ephrim but then I did it- the first ever Bluff City, I think I mentioned Vincent D'Onofrio as a touchstone there [ALI: [appreciatively] Oh, right.] for my character, like a young Vinny D. I kinda- So my re- the reason why I do a lot of the fancasting stuff isn't so much because I see a person and I'm like, "Oh, that's them!", it's more I need like easy shorthand for it. [ALI: [approvingly] Uh-huh.] So it's always like the last step when I am trying to come up with a player character. It's sort of- I always like to make sure that I have the personality first and then I fill in the blanks. Like, "Who do I think could pull this off if this were a movie?" Or, "Who do I think has the right look for the vibe I am going for here?" That's why G-Dragon was my touchstone for Ephrim... [ALI: chuckles softly] I had a couple before that and then I like saw like- some- fucking like one picture of him with like the crucifix in his mouth and I was like "Oh, there it is. [ALI laughs] Perfect." He got the red hair he looks like- He looks mean but also looks like he could be like charismatic, so that was my thinking there. It's never- It's never something that I really- I try to incorporate into it, because, I- I don't wanna feel like I am doing an impression on the show. [ALI: Yeah.] Unless I am purposefully doing one of my many good impressions... [ALI laughs] I will say I have done casting in other st- like in- I mentioned that game earlier I have cast some pretty terrible- I cast a really bad Youtuber as one guy and basically just did an impression of that guy for the entire session, which didn't work out great for my voice. But generally speaking when it comes to fancasting I think it is more of a fun like- a detail to have in your head to help you visualize stuff as opposed to having it be a huge influence on your character.

ALI: Yeah. I feel like with roleplaying there is already- like just playing the character enough is like enough to think about without being like, "Oh, what would this actress I really like be doing right now?" Right? I think that I- when I do facecast a character I think of more to be like, this is what race she is and this is what her skin tone is versus, like, this is who I think this performance is by, if that makes sense? Just because I feel like that's an easier shorthand.

JANINE: And like you kinda- I don't know, I feel like a- I mean this is how character growth works, but like when I make a character, I don't know what their performance is going to be yet. [ALI: Yeah.] I know, like, their general outlook. I know their general, like, tone. I know, are they formal? Are they rude? [ALI snorts] Are they like deeply, deeply fucking communist at heart? [ALI laughs] Or [laughs] are they like [JACK hums appreciatively] a Pope who doesn't really understand [ALI laughs] the weight of her diminishing role in the world. [ALI crackles] Like, I don't necessarily think of them in terms of, like, their line delivery- Like stuff like that feels like it just kind of evolves.

ALI: Yeah. For sure. But I do think that like over time like especially with Hella, because I've been playing her for so long and also because I have like seen so much fanart of her at this point, I guess, I feel like I have a better idea of, like, being able to imagine her [tentatively] doing stuff. Like being able to visualise the way that her body moves or like the way that she would stand or what she would wear or whatever, just 'cause I've spent so long with that character, but I don't feel like that's stuff that comes day one.

JACK: No. It's horrifying when we start new seasons with new characters and I'm like "Oh my God, I don't know who this person-" I do this with the soundtrack, as well where I put the first song on the soundtrack and then I look at the Bandcamp page and I'm like, [mock distressed] "This soundtrack only has one song on it!" [ALI laughs] It's like- [chuckles] [mock distressed] "There is nothing here!" "I know that this character is called Hitchcock and he's, like, a scoundrel? But I have no idea what is going on." And then that sort of- that is where I start leaning on the fancasting on like, lawyer! Fourteen I talked about like, Holly Hunter, in part because of this very sort of distinctive look, but also, because of the way that in "The Big Sick" which was where her character that- I used for Fourteen came from. She has this very distinctive way of moving- this very sort of bird-like delivery, this very like- [ALI laughs] she can draw herself in to be focused when she needs to be, when there is something very serious going on, but otherwise she is kind of, like, scatterbrained and thinking about a bunch of different stuff at the same time and it's at those moments early on in the character when I desperately need some sort of solid ground to put my feet on that I tend to lean back onto those fancastings and then later in the seasons as we get on, I am more like, "Alright, yeah.", like you talk about with Hella, I am like, "Yeah, I am pretty sure I know who this-"

ALI: [cross] Who this person is. Yeah.

JACK: Or at least how this person acts. I don't know-

ALI: [laughs] Fair. Yeah. I think we can move on. The next question comes from Alex and is:

[reading] "Hey table friends, I was wondering if you guys ever thought about what kind of character you would have played if you were on a season you weren't on. If Dre, Sylvia and Janine made COUNTER/weight PCs or if Art, Keith, Janine were in Marielda? Austin, too, do you ever come up with hypothetical PCs for your settings?"

Obviously, I think some of those other people are gonna come back to this, but since we have people here...

JANINE: Erm... For me it's one of those things, where I haven't ever thought of- like I feel like I should have thought of it, but I very specifically haven't ever thought of what character I would have made in COUNTER/weight or in Marielda because Ali played the most like- [ALI laughs] I don't know how, but both- but both of those characters- both Aria and Castille, just, like, drilled

down to the core of everything I could have possibly wanted to do- [ALI: [delighted] Aww.] in those seasons. Like, okay, so you have a popstar who gets forced into politics and shit and you have a fucking statue- statue lady- like a cool statue lady with a cat and a big hat [ALI: Yeah.]. Like, that's- [ALI: Yeah.] It's one of those things where I look both those seasons and I like- even though I do wish I was on them in an abstract sense, I feel very, like, fulfilled in terms of, like, "Oh this wasn't missing the, like- I don't know. This wasn't missing anything that I would have brought, you know?" [ALI wheezes] Like this is good. This is good as it is, I'm happy. It's not a real answer, but it's something I feel very strongly about.

ALI: Alright, I appreciate that. I don't know, those seasons probably would have been better if you were in them, but [laughs]-

JANINE: [disbelievingly] Meh.

ALI: Different time and a different place. Sylvia, I guess you, you know...

SYLVIA: Yeah... It's weird, because I was in the Faction Game for COUNTER/weight, right? [ALI: Yeah.] So for that I... definitely thought of a couple of characters I could have played. I thought of just like, what would it be like if I played as any of these characters I came up with in the Faction Game for that. As for like other stuff we've done, I definitely did have ideas for what I wanted my character to be- Like 'cause when I came on I wasn't sure if I was gonna be on Hieron again or not. 'Cause I was like, I don't know! [ALI laughs] I'm- Eh... so I was like, what would my character be then? And I had all these- I had a few different ideas- at one point I was gonna play a Barbarian which would have been very different and also that class needed reworking [ALI hums approvingly]. But... erm... Yeah, I had an idea for a Dwarf to play- [ALI: [appreciatively] Ohhhh...] It kind of just comes up randomly when I am just coming up with like ideas for characters in general and I keep on, [tentatively] maybe for down the line on the show? But- also it just- It's hard for me to listen to the show and not be like- especially tabletop games, where I was like "Oh, this are my friends, I wish I was doing this with them! [ALI and JANINE laugh] So here's what I would do!", you know?

ALI: Yeah. I feel like I am getting that way- I don't know that- I don't know that I think of PCs - like other characters that I would wanna play and stuff that I haven't been in like Bluff City and things like that, but I definitely- I feel like I am getting a little bit with Twilight Mirage, where it's like, "Oh [laughs] If I- It would be really fun if I was in that weird forest, right?" [JANINE laughs] [SYLVIA: Yeah.] But nothing specific. Just because, like, if I am listening to a thing that you guys are doing, I just like, like all of you [laughs]. Like, I just, like, "Oh, this is really cool! You're all doing a very good job." I am trying to think of any like Bluff City things that I was like, "Damn, I wish I was a part of that." I guess not, like, Action Movie World would have been fun but also like, you know [JACK: Oh!]. It wasn't the end of the world.

**51:08**

JACK: I would really like to do- God, what's it called... the- fucking- space baseball game? [ALI laughs]

SYLVIA: Oh, Prime Time Adventures?

JACK. Yeah! Oh, yeah!

SYLVIA: That's been pretty good. [ALI laughs]

JACK: Every time I- I still need to listen to more of that. I hear that there's a character called Keith Carberry? I just- I need to know what is happening there.

ALI: That's really weird, I have a friend named Keith J. Carberry.

JACK: Yeah, I know a Keith J. Carberry too [ALI laughs] from Runbutton, right?

ALI: [laughs] Yeah, that's weird.

SYLVIA: This is such a weird name, no one would ever be named that. [ALI laughs] C'mon!

JACK: [cross] Who would be named-

JANINE: [cross] #friendsatthetablenames, [ALI: Who-] am I right? [ALI laughs]

JACK: Yeah. #friendsatthetablenames

SYLVIA [cross] Honestly. [ALI laughs]

JACK: Yeah.

JANINE: [slowly] Carberry.

JACK: Carberry? Does this character have a middle name?

ALI: [regretfully] I don't know.

JACK: It's not Keith J. Carberry in the show, or...?

SYLVIA: [cross] I don't think-

ALI: Yeah, I think it is just Keith J. Carberry.

JACK: Yeez. But no, I'd like to be in space baseball and it would have been fun to do- um- the Bee- the Bee Hell game- the very early live.

ALI: [comprehending] Oh! Oh, yeah. [JACK: The y'all would-]

JANINE: [cross] Is that- that wasn't- what was that- [ALI: That-] It's like a one word name. Not Downfall.. Up-

JACK: Yeah, it is Downfall!

ALI: [cross] It is Downfall, yeah.

JANINE: Is it Downfall?

JACK: [cross] It is Downfall, right?

JANINE: Okay.

JACK: Yeah. I love that game. But like... yeah, it's like- it's like you were saying, hearing shows- hearing bits of the show that I'm not on is less often me going, like [regretfully] "Oh, man! I have a really good character for that!" and more often me going like [cheerfully] "Oh man! My friends are like- [ALI and JANINE laugh] doing cool stuff over there!" It's like an opportunity for me to listen to the show, which I don't often take, because I'm, so busy and listening to podcasts is hard. Thank you everybody who does it. [ALI: [hums approvingly] Yeah.] But yeah, it is always just the most fun to hear bits of the show that I'm not in.

ALI: Yeah. Same. We have a good one, I think. Good job, everyone.

[SYLVIA laughs muffled] Anyway, yeah, that can probably be- Dre and Art and Keith can probably revisit this, especially Austin 'cause- I mean he has so many cha- you listen to the show, he's NPCs on NPCs.

JACK: I think I talked to him about this [ALI laughs]. I was like, "Do you- If you were in COUNTER/weight, what character would you be?" and he was like, [mock stern] "I was."

SYLVIA: Yeah.

ALI: [cross] He was Ibis! He just walked in and he was like [JANINE: Yeah.] "This Holiday Special is boring, I am gonna fucking be a scabber [JACK: Oh, god...] That's what happened! JANINE: This is like- This is a thing I didn't- I could not have wrapped my head around before I was a GM- or before I was in a very small limited, not super experienced way yet, GM but like, but like if you wanna like make a character in the setting, you just kinda, can and you do it and sometimes your PCs don't care about that character and like, "OK, bye!" you have to get rid of

them like- [ALI laughs] can't get supper attached, but, like, that's- Man! That's actually what I should have answered about the fancasting thing, because there is definitely a character in that game that, like, I had to make a kind of PC because everyone was just so interested in him. [ALI: [appreciatively] Uhuhuhuhu!] And he- and for that I was like, "I need an actor! I need to just- I need an actor that I can- !" 'Cause I hadn't banked on investing anything in that character emotionally or... you know. That's- yeah, you can just like do it. You can just- So I don't know, I can't answer for him obviously [ALI laughs] [JACK: I wonder-] but it's super liberating to just be able to make the thing that you want and just have like eight of them and do whatever [laughs] [ALI laughs].

JACK: There's that magician in Velas who we keep [ALI gasps] never encountering. What's his name?

ALI: [thoughtful] Oh, God.

SYLVIA: It was something good-

ALI: [cross] It's-

SYLVIA: [cross] I remember that.

ALI: [cross] Yeah.

JACK: [cross] It's Epi- Epinard the Great and Magnificent or something. Like- Like this dude who- who seems to- like, [meaningfully] he's like the secret. He's been there both times. [ALI snorts] We've never gone and seen him and I wonder if Austin's put like a bunch of prep into this dude and is like, "Damn it! Why won't they go see this magician?"

ALI: You know- that guy definitely has his hands in something. [JACK: He has his hands in so-] I wonder if one of us is just gonna make like a bee line for him [laughs] in the future. It's gonna be-

SYLVIA: [cross] He probably has his hand- He probably has his hand in a top hat so he can pull a rabbit out of it. [JACK and ALI laugh and clap]

JANINE: Or in a bowl of spinach 'cause his name means 'spinach'.

ALI: [appreciatively] Oh...

JANINE: Isn't that the french word for 'spinach'? [JACK: [appreciatively] Oh...]

JACK: [dubiously] 'Eh- Epinard'?

JANINE: [confidently] Yeah!

JACK: Maybe!

JANINE: I think you usually see it like pluralised, but like-

JACK: [cross] I think I wrote that down.

ALI: [cross] Wait-

JACK: So- this isn't my door [laughs].

JANINE: [cross] The spinach wizard.

ALI: [cross] Ah, okay. But Austin would do that on purpose. What kind of farming scam is this magician in? [laughs softly]

JACK: I named this magician.

ALI: [surprised] Oh! - [high pitched] What? And you've never interacted with him?

JACK: [cross] This magician- No, never, this magician was on the list of names that I wrote for the first [ALI: [comprehending] Oh...] Holiday Game.

JANINE: [laughs]

ALI: Wow...

JACK: I got no idea who this guy is or why I named him after spinach. [ALI and JANINE laugh]

ALI: Okay, so no farming scam, but still probably a big deal.

JACK: [thoughtfully] Yeah. I think- yeah I don't know what the hell was going on there.

ALI: I mean who- Lord knows what Hella is gonna be up to by the time we get to another Holiday Special, so- I make no promises for this magician. But I'm-

JACK: [cross] What if we-

ALI: What?

JACK: I'd just- what if we show up at the Holiday Special and just immediately take a Mulligan on it? Just like, not this time. [JANINE: Yeah.] We'll see the magician and then we're gonna leave town. [ALI laughs] That's it.

SYLVIA: [laughs] It's just like a side episode where everyone goes to a magic show.

ALI: [laughing, high pitched] That's be so fun!

SYLVIA: It would actually be incredible.

JACK: [cross] That'd be great. I don't think this guy's a real magician...

JANINE: [cross] We need- We need more episodes that are just the complete bullshit anime episode where, like, nothing really happens but everyone has a good time, you know?

ALI: I keep saying that! That's what the whole Milk Arc was. It was Tender talks to a girl [SYLVIA laughs] for an hour and a half. Like [laughs], so what?

SYLVIA: Are you sure it was the fun bullshit hour for everybody? Because it sounded like Jack's character had a different experience- [ALI laughs] just from the brief description...

JACK: [cross] [mock sternly] I fought the police!

ALI: [placatingly] You did fight the police. Grant had an awful time. I- I- I wouldn't feel as bad about any of that as I do if not for Morning's Observation being such a precious commodity. I should have put Morning's Observation in my pocket and [laughs] it'd've been fine. But it's fine. Erm- it's fine.

SYLVIA: [laughs]

ALI: He's fine. Anyway-

SYLVIA: [cross] I'm very convinced.

JANINE: [laughs] Are we moving on?

ALI: [laughs] I think we are.

I think we are. [JANINE: Okay.] Okay- last question for tonight. This comes from Nathan and Nathan says,

[reading] "Hey there, Tip Team, something that often comes up in tabletop games or at least for me, is the pause after the GM says "What do you do?" or something similar to the group. I feel

like I need to break the awkward silence, but sometimes- but I worry about always being the first person to speak. I worry that people will think I am trying to make myself the leader of the group or that I think my character and ideas are more important or that some people just think I am being rude. Is this a problem with me as a player? [laughs nervously] It is a problem with my anxious brain being an anxious brain? Have you ever had problems with putting- with players putting their characters bef- their characters over others'? Does the idea of leadership positions ever come up in Friends at the Table parties or groups you've played with outside of the show?

Cheers, Nathan"

Erm- I- this is a problem everyone in the table has, I think? [JANINE hums approvingly]  
[SYLVIA: Yeah] Especially- [laughs]

JANINE: Like every time I open my mouth in any context [SYLVIA hums approvingly] this is a problem I have [laughs].

ALI: [laughs] The like- I edit it, so... I don't think that the audience hears as much- but every time Austin's like, "So who wants to go first?" It's- There is a pause there [laughs]. There is a little bit of a pause, like-.

JANINE: [cross] This is why I hate when he's- this is why I absolutely hate when play games where he- he has a mandate to make moves when we're not making moves, because- [ALI: Yeah.] this silence to me is not indicative of the characters not doing anything, it is indicative of us all trying to be polite to each other. So, it drives me fucking crazy- [ALI: I hate it.] when it's like okay, well someone blows up a bomb at you or something. [ALI laughs] That's a bad example-

ALI: [cross] 'Cause it's always the thing!

JANINE: [cross] That's a terrible example- [ALI: Yeah.] but...

JACK: Yeah.

ALI: I think there was- there was, like, a time during the Milk Arc, again, where you know, we would reach a scene. Austin would be like, "Okay, what are we doing?" there would be a ten second pause where Art, Jack and me wouldn't say anything and then I would say something, 'cause I had an idea and then after that happened like three times in a row, I was like, "Hey everyone, I think I am talking too much." and then you were all like, "No. [JACK: Yeah.] We just aren't saying anything. We're just the ones who don't have ideas here and you're the one who does." And sometimes that's just the thing.

JACK: Yeah, or the ideas that we have are not as good as the idea we've just heard. [ALI and JANINE laugh] This happens a lot sometimes where like, I'll hold off saying something because I think that I've got some real good idea and then someone will say something and I'm like, "I am

a baby, I d- I know nothing at all" [ALI, SYLVIA and JANINE laugh] And that's, I guess, a benefit in staying quiet. I guess, the proof in the pudding as well of you , Ali, saying, like "Oh, I think I am talking too much." and us all immediately saying "No, you are not." [ALI laughs] Is like- I think that while players who talk over people, and while players who always, you know- jump at the prompt, is a problem that exists, in tabletop generally, erm, I think that if you are being conscious about it, you have a tendency to- to overestimate how much you are talking. Like, when Ali said that, [JANINE hums approvingly] I didn't- I didn't and I don't think any of us were like, [mock stern] "Man, [ALI snorts] Ali has been saying all this stuff." We were just like "Yeah, this is- " That episode felt pretty balanced in terms of how much we were talking, not so much in terms of how much we were talking to people we were dating [ALI snorts then laughs], but like, [cross] you know, I think-

ALI: [cross] This was the start when we were still on that roof, fighting those cops. Remember the first cops? The car chase?

JACK: The first cops?

ALI: Yeah!

JACK: Oh, yeah! The first cops-

ALI: [cross] The laundry building.

JACK: [cross] That we fought on the laundry building [ALI hums approvingly]. I don't even remember how we got out of that situation. But yeah, I think part of it is that, yeah- you're gonna feel anxious about how much, how much you are doing, sometime, it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking, "well, there are a number of columns and the column goes up when someone talks and you have to make sure all the columns are the same level" and I think being anxious about that and worrying about that is entirely understandable, but not necessarily something that you need to be worried about all the time. Stuff will even out. And the GM will notice when people are talking too much and shift the focus elsewhere, and other players will shift the focus elsewhere. It doesn't always have to fall on your shoulders, I don't think.

**1:01:56**

ALI: Yeah.

JANINE: [cross] Yeah, it is very much- and I think Austin is good about this. It's the GM's job- I've also tried to do this in my tabletop settings, 'cause I've had a couple of players who were quiet or not entirely comfortable with the group yet and so- it is their job too if that person is really not saying a lot, like, you know, bring a little, you know, bring it a little bit out of them. Like, bring some focus specifically to them and then that balances things out. The other thing I was gonna say is that, this also for me became like, [tentatively] part of character stuff. It's happened

with Adaire and Signet both, I've just like- part of it is- part of it is me- but part of it is there are scenes and situations where that character is in a shitty spot and it makes sense to me that they wouldn't be, like, leaping up to do something. Like, there are a hundred percent, especially more recently, scenes where Signet just wants to follow along. Or scenes where Adaire is just like, "Okay, whatever." And, like, you can play that against the scenes where the character is like, "I know exactly what to do here. This is entirely me in my element. This is, you know." You can think of it in that way and not everyone is going to be perfectly in charge of every situation, so you kind of pick and choose, like, is this this character's forte, is this character in a good place emotionally, erm- you know.

ALI: Yeah. I think a lot about this with Hella, where, like- a lot of the early stuff was also just me not knowing what I was doing, but also just her not being the person who cares the most in the room, right? So like, [JANINE: Yeah.] if Austin describes a really cool dagger or a cool cabinet with some jewels on it, or, you know, a nice book, Hella's not gonna be the one who walks over to that. So, like, you know, other characters should have that moment. But like, I- if this is something that you are anxious enough to send this question in, you are being considerate enough that it is probably not a problem. I think if you- feel like other people at the table are like shyder than you are and that's a problem, I think that, what you can probably do is, instead of being like, "Oh, my character does this." You can be like, "Hey, I have this idea, but I am open to other things.", so at least you are like, talking to the other people at the table instead of just being like, talking to your GM, you know? If that makes sense? But- yeah. I don't know. I don't know if anyone has stuff to add?

SYLVIA: I don't think I can add anything to that. [laughs] Like, you guys covered it pretty well. [ALI laughs]. Yeah, a lot of it also is just confidence with yourself. Like, I pause so much before I say something just because I am like [high pitched] "I don't know if this is good." [ALI laughs] and honestly, just throw your ideas out there, 'cause even if they're not the best, you're- the people you are playing with can usually help you run with it.

ALI: Right, yeah, exactly. I mean, that's the other thing- is that like- saying a thing and then having someone else at the table be like, "Oh my God, that's a really good idea.", is great, so don't be afraid to be the first person to speak 'cause, like- you know, I don't know that I've- So- I feel like the three modes that I have when I am about to say a thing [laughs] in a tabletop game is like, "I don't know what the fuck that I'm doing, but the camera is on my character so- we're gonna make this work." or it's like, "I kinda have an idea, but I'm more curious about what Grand is doing here, so I'm gonna like sit back a little bit." or it's like "Oh, I have a really good idea." And like- that like, "Oh, this is a thing that I really wanna do right now!" I's like, [tentatively] probably 30-40 percent of the time. Whereas other times, it's like, "Oh, I would rather do this as a team with everybody else." So like ,if you have the first best idea, just say it, 'cause like- I don't know, if you're really exited about an idea, it's probably really good, and you should just do the thing that you wanna do.

JANINE: [hums approvingly] Or even like, it can be useful to be the person who says, "Okay, what are we trying to do here?" like, okay, the GM says their piece, and they are like, "What do you do?" and you say "Okay so we need to break into the thing, erm- does anyone have- "Break in", the skill? [ALI laughs] Does anyone-" or to be like, "Hey, erm- Amanda, you have that cool hook-thing, right? What if you shot the hook up and like, we could do something with that?" and then that kind of- I feel like that that's a good way to sort of break the ice with a group in terms of them being like, "Well yeah, I was thinking about using the hook-thing through the window, but I don't know about the sound- and like- does- uh- do you have a cantrip to make the sound go away?" [ALI: [laughs] As you do.] [laughs] You know like, being the person who can condense what needs to be done and then like, kind of encourage people to have the conversation together can be helpful to break that moment of silence.

ALI: Yeah. And I feel like that leads into the second part of this question, which is like, that's how leadership positions come up in our show. Like, you can hear it happen. Either we'll fuck off and just do our own things or there'll be like, "Hey, we all have this really good idea." or "I have this really good idea, but I want this other character to help me with it." Erm- you know. All of that is part of this, so you shouldn't feel like "Oh, you know, I'm sidestepping everybody else by initiating this." Like, that's the game.

JANINE: [hums approvingly] And like realistically- [JACK: Yeah-] Sorry, I just want to really quick- like realistically it's not like an RPG where like, "Well, this is your party leader." and then these are their companion characters. Like everyone should probably- unless- unless you are in like a really strict like you're in a military regiment or something, like, it doesn't really make sense to have a- "this is the leader of the party" kind of figure. [ALI: Yeah.] You know what I mean? That's not how people usually work. Who's the leader of your friend group? [ALI laughs] Like, some people have one, a lot of people don't.

ALI: Yeah.

JACK: I think about the- going into the Arc Arc of Post-Miracle in Twilight Mirage, I was very anxious about how that group dynamic was gonna play. Not anxious about playing with Ali and Keith, because I've, you know, done that a lot, but anxious because I didn't really know how these characters were gonna shake out and how the situation was gonna shake out and what helped a lot with that, was working through those conversations- those active discussions about how we should approach the situation in the Arc. And- and broadening it from a question of like, "What should we do? What idea works?" to like- like actually trying to has that out. It's with what you were saying about leadership positions, kind of, coming organically, like- I think a lot of those long conversations in that arc where the three of us, the four of us, were trying to-

ALI: [laughing] Forgetting Grant again?

JACK: I'm forgetting Grant again. [as Fourteen] Now look, Grant- [laughing] Where the four of us- Where the four of use were trying to sort of work out what angle to even begin to approach

to take and- having like little minor spats about weather or not we think something is relevant or something isn't relevant and transferring that into an in-character discussion, I think helped us find our feet in terms of that group dynamic. I don't know if you feel the same way, Ali, in terms of how that shook out.

ALI: No, for sure. I think the Arc is kind of one of my favorite things that we've done in Twilight Mirage, just because, like, it was- it was definitely a situation where I wasn't gonna be the one who would either go off and do something on my own or just put my foot down and be like, "This is a thing that I really want us to do." And being able to talk that out in-character made sense, and made it better. So-

JACK: Yeah.

ALI: [laughs]

JACK: It's a fun arc. I hope those kids are doing okay.

ALI: Yeah. I- I would hope so. Oh yeah, they're- I mean yeah. [quietly] Yeah. Sorry, that sounded so ominous! [laughs]

SYLVIA: [laughs]

JACK: [amused] Do you know something we don't here?

ALI: [laughing] I just remembered one of the NPCs from that arc comes up in a later thing. Positively, they are fine. But- I remembered that halfway through saying that, so it sounded way more ominous than I intended.

JACK: [cross] [hums approvingly] Okay.

ALI: Yeah.

JACK: Good.

ALI: Erm- But yeah, I, like- at the end of the day tabletop games are talking, so like- you know, be willing to be the first person to talk, 'cause someone has to be. And I think that's it. I think that's our- [laughs] our underlining suggestion for tonight, which is just: Say words, because that is what you need to do. [JANINE hums approvingly] Yeah. Otherwise, this has been an episode of Tips at the Table, I don't know if anyone else has any closing thoughts? But-

SYLVIA: My mouse started working again.

ALI: Oh!

SYLVIA: So there is that.

[SOMEONE claps]

**1:11:18**

JACK: [cross] That's the best.

SYLVIA: [cross] It's because- I didn't wanna leave the people in suspense [ALI: Okay] 'cause I mentioned it at the beginning.

JACK: No.

ALI: Okay.

SYLVIA: [cross] But we're fine now.

ALI: Okay, so everyone is gonna sleep easy tonight knowing that Sylvia's mouse is good [JANINE laughs]. I'm glad. 'Cause that would have sucked. What do you do without a mouse?

SYLVIA: I've been- I've been frantically googling, "Hey, how do you-" For after this, "How do you leave a discord call [ALI laughs] through [JACK and JANINE laugh] erm- though like- keyboard shortcuts?" One: there isn't a way to do that- [ALI: Oh!] on a server. Two: I was just very scared that I'd be connected to this for like, [sadly] until a new mouse arrived [ALI laughs] at my home.

ALI: [commiserating] Aw.

JACK: We'd just be able to check in every so often with you like, "How're you doing, Sylvia?" [JANINE, SYLVIA and ALI laugh] "Are you still okay? It's bad here." [JANINE, SYLVIA and ALI laugh]

ALI: [laughing] Oh, God. Erm-

JANINE: Bet you could do it on your phone.

ALI: [appreciatively] Oh...

JANINE: Right?

SYLVIA: [cross] Probably.

JACK: [cross] Can you?

ALI: [cross] I don't know that you can.

SYLVIA: [cross] I don't know. I think-

JACK: I think what would happen is my phone would connect to the call. I'm not gonna do this, 'cause it would suck.

JANINE: [cross] But then you hang up from your phone.

JACK: No 'cause then it would just hang up my phone's connection.

ALI: Yeah. Keith recently had this thing. [JANINE hums understandingly] I don't think it's because of the phone-computer thing but he had a thing where he was just in the general chat and then I was trying to test it out with him and like, if he would hear me in a private call, but he couldn't hear me in the-

JANINE: [cross] But that was like a weird ghost thing-

ALI: [cross] Yeah. That's true.

JANINE: [cross] That wasn't like a real-

ALI: [cross] I just-

JANINE: [cross] That wasn't a real problem. [ALI laughs] is what I was gonna say.

ALI: It probably- well I mean, it was a real problem in that I could join the general chat and just hear anything that Keith was saying, so if you tried to pull that, like-

JANINE: [cross] Oh, okay, that is bad.

ALI: [cross] credit cards bit again, I would have stolen his operation. I wouldn't have done that.

JANINE: [cross] You would not have.

ALI: [cross] I just, I would have pretended to, because I hate that pic 'cause it scares me, 'cause I worry for him.

[ALL laugh]

JACK: Aww.

ALI: But I- I'd only said that to mean that I don't think that Discord's whole tubes and wires are that well adjusted that you can hang up on your phone- anyway, this has been an episode of Tips at the table, my name is Alicia Acampora you can find me @ali\_west on Twitter, you can find the show over @friends\_table. Thank you for being a Patreon subscriber and listening to this and enjoying it, we appreciate it a lot. And I was joined by... why did that sound sarcastic, I wasn't. I was joined by Janine Hawkins.

JANINE: You can find me @bleatingheart on Twitter. Also you can send your questions to tipsatthetable@gmail.com if you wanna have your questions done on this, right?

ALI: You can also do that, yep. [laughs]

JANINE: Wait, is that not the- that's the thing it has at the end here.

ALI: Yeah. Yeah.

JANINE: Is that not the-? Okay.

ALI: I'm just not good at hosting. [laughs] Thank you.

JANINE: Oh no! I thought you were saying, like, "Well, there is a better way to do it, but I guess you just gave them that email, so whatever."

ALI: Oh, no, no, no. No, it's tipsatthetable@gmail.com. Yeah, send your questions there. We try to get to all of them. We don't do them in order, because we mostly are just like, "Hey, what do you feel like talking about tonight, but we have all of them in a list. Keep sending them If you haven't heard your question asked, it will come up at some point, probably [laughs]. Also Jack de Quidt is here.

JACK: Hello, I am Jack, you can follow me on Twitter @notquitereal or buy any of the music featured on the show at notquitereal.bandcamp.com. We just did a really big new track for twilight mirage.

ALI: [cross] Boy, howdy!

JACK: That is 5 minutes long and I'm very tired.

ALI: That was a song. That was a freaking damn song. And also Sylvia is here. [laughs]

SYLVIA: Hey, what's up? [laughs] That's it, hey, what's up? No- You can find me on Twitter @captaintrash and you can find the other stuff I do on twitter @emojidrome, that's a comedy podcast I do. And-

JANINE: [cross] It's so good.

SYLVIA: Thank you.

JACK: I'm really excited to start listening to it.

ALI: [laughs] That's a good one.

SYLVIA: The latest episode we just did on the barfing emoji, [ALI: [exited] Ahhh!] so don't- if you're squeamish, maybe don't jump in with that one.

JANINE: [cross] Okay, I was- I was worried about that one.

JACK: [cross] Yeah, I'll pass that one.

JANINE: I was honestly like, "Hmmm, I don't know if this is the one to start on." [ALI laughs]

SYLVIA: We try to dance around it, but it's hard to. But- [JACK: Fair.] if you can handle it, that's a fun episode, but also if you listen to it and need to turn it off, I don't blame you. I'm also- I also do work over at videogamechoochoo.com, "choo-choo" like a train, I should mention that. I've had people people think it's chewing before. [JANINE gasps] It's not.

ALI: [understandingly] Oh! Like- okay. Yeah, that makes sense.

SYLVIA: [cross] Yeah.

ALI: [cross] Like 'to chew'.

JANINE: [cross] Yeah, that's the word that people always pair together, 'chewing' and 'chewing' [ALI laughs]

SYLVIA: Yeah.

JANINE: And then video games. That's-

SYLVIA: Listen, we got a cute little train mascot-guy.

JANINE: Yeah.

ALI: That's all you need...

JANINE: No, those are the ones- "Choo-choo" is the one that goes together.

ALI: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

ALI: Yeah, yeah. So you know, hop on board to the gaming train! [laughs]

SYLVIA: [laughs]

JANINE: [deadpan] Choo-choo.

SYLVIA: [laughing] Oh, my God. [ALI laughs] Fuck!

ALI: [laughing] And as always- I already just told out twitter, but you can still follow us over @friends\_table. You can recommend us to your friends, you can go to patreon.com/friendsatthetable and look at the stuff that we have there. You already subscribed if you are listening to this and we... think that's great. Erm- Yeah, I think we're done.

JANINE: You wanna clap out?

ALI: Yeah, that's how you do that. [laughs] Good night everyone.

JACK: Oh, yeah, we do that.

JANINE: Wait- do we- do I- Are we clapping after I end the stream? [laughs]

ALI: Oh, no, they can hear the clap.

JANINE: Okay, let's get the clap in. Unwind.

ALI: [cross] Okay. You guys good at 35?

JACK: [cross] [hums approvingly]

SYLVIA: [cross] Sure.

JANINE: [cross] Yeah.

ALI: [cross] Okay.

[a single clap]

ALI: Okay, cool.

SYLVIA: [laughs]

JANINE: Good enough, good enough.

**1:17:06**

ALI: Yeah, I said 35 and then like, didn't realise how soon that was. But I clapped and it's fine.

JACK: Nice.

JANINE: It's all good. [laughs] Have a good night, everyone.

ALI: [laughs] Bye!

SYLVIA: Bye!