Tips at the Table - Let Me Answer This Question Not As A Joke

(Transcriber: gray waveechocave#6851)

AUSTIN: Welcome to Tips at the Table, an RPG podcast focused on critical questions, *hopefully* smart answers, and fun interactions between good friends. I am your host Austin Walker. Joining me today: Art Martinez-Tebbel.

ART: Hey! I'm Art. You can find me on Twitter @atebbel and you can listen to- to me, Austin, and Ali debate, uh, Kanye West songs [*AUSTIN laughs*] at {One Song Only, the podcast}.

[*crosstalking*]
ART: It's amaz-
AUSTIN: [*amused*] That's true. You can find that at- go ahead.

ART: It's, like, OneSongOnly dot [*pause*] com?

AUSTIN: It's OneSongOnly.com, and it's on Twitter at @onesongpod.

ART: There we go. That's where it is.

AUSTIN: Uh, also joining us: Jack de Quidt.

JACK: Hi! Uh- you can find me on Twitter @notquitereal or download any of the music featured on the show at NotQuiteReal.bandcamp.com. There's a new track from last week's Twilight Mirage.

AUSTIN: There is! What's that track called?

JACK: It's called Crystal Palace.

AUSTIN: Nice.

JACK: Which if you haven't listened to Twilight Mirage... does not reveal anything other than that we're still on our name game. [*AUSTIN laughs*]

AUSTIN: Ah, that actually came up in the Discord chat today, was like, where'd that come from? And I was like-

JACK: England!

AUSTIN: Well, somewhere- yeah! But, but... indirectly. My main reference point for it is not- as I said in the chat, I'm referencing a thing that is referencing that.

JACK: Oh, of course you are.

KEITH: What's the thing? That's still vague, what's the thing?

AUSTIN: [*muttering*] Play to find out what happens, you know what I mean?

JACK: *Secret*, Keith! You've got to play to find out what happens. In a game you play as the internet.

AUSTIN: You could- yes. The thing you can play is googling around and reading, like, 'oh yeah, that- okay. That just lines up perfectly, it's not that big of a jump.' Alright. Also: Keith Carberry!

KEITH: Hi, my name's Keith Carberry, you can me on Twitter @keithjcarberry. You can find the Let's Plays that I do at youtube.com/RunButton and, uh, if you're free on- April- Saturday, April the 28th, uh, we're doing a 24-hour marathon of playing video games to support our Patreon that is at ContentBurger.biz.

AUSTIN: Hey, Keith, I have a question.

KEITH: Uh- yeah?

AUSTIN: Which Saturday is that?

KEITH: It's the last Saturday in April, Austin.

AUSTIN: There it is. There it is. The last Saturday in April. Drill it into your brains.

KEITH: 7 PM to 7 PM the 29th. The last *Sunday* of April.

AUSTIN: Damn, that’s a long stream!

JACK: I'm very excited.

KEITH: It is... 24. You've done a longer stream. [*laugh*]

AUSTIN: Yeaaaah. I guess! But, you know.

JACK: I love them because I can see my friends, and I dislike them because of the effect that they have on my friends' bodies. Um-

KEITH: Yeah. I've- feel like I thrive on a marathon.

AUSTIN: Me too.

JACK: Oh!

AUSTIN: I'm broken in that way. [*JACK laughs*] I really love that sort of like- it's tough! It's actually tough.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Because it is- I have to remind myself that other people don't enjoy those the way I do.

JACK: Yeah. For real. Yeah.

KEITH: The-

AUSTIN: Because it is easy to be like, 'oh, this is a fun time! I can just do 37 hours. Let's go.' Uh-

JACK: No, no.

AUSTIN: And... no.

KEITH: Yeah, the- honestly the hardest part is that Kylie[1] is not- does not thrive.

[*crosstalk*]
KEITH: And so what will happen is that I'm busy trying to-
AUSTIN: Which is fair! Which is not a judgment on him-
KEITH: It's totally fair! It's not a judgment- yeah.

KEITH (cont.): Like, it's *just* that Kylie is a different person with a different body. [*AUSTIN laughs*] Uh, and- but like- it'll like, I'll- it'll be like 3 AM or 4 AM and I'm tryin' to thrive and Kylie's like 'I'm literally falling asleep while playing a game.' And I'm like 'I can't thrive while you're falling asleep playing a game!'

AUSTIN: [*laughing*] I'm trying to thrive over here!

KEITH: I'm trying to thrive!

AUSTIN: God. Alright.

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

KEITH: Uh, so yeah, it's gonna be fun and hopefully some of you guys will be able to show up as guests at some point.

AUSTIN: I would love to! Uh-

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: As always, you can follow the show, twitter.com/Friends_Table. And you can support us, FriendsAtTheTable.cash.

AUSTIN (cont.): Alright! Let's dig into it today. Um, we're gonna start by revisiting two questions, actually, that came up in the last couple of months, uh, because we have slightly different cast members on today. So the first one comes in from Emily, uh, who previously asked us about how to get out of her comfort zone in terms of personality. Um, because she kind of traditionally ad- does the kind of goofy, uh, y'know, I'm just gonna read this thing. I was gonna try to summarize it, but.

AUSTIN (*reading question*): **A bunch of friends and I are planning to start a new campaign and we're still in character creation mode, and I'm trying to get out of my comfort zone in terms of personality, since I tend to default to my brash- to brash, smiley people. (Hi, Keith!) However**-

KEITH: Hello!

(*AUSTIN and KEITH laugh*)

AUSTIN (continuing to read question): **I'm feeling stuck and don't know where to begin, specifically because I'm worried that any attempts to have a serious character will just come off as boring. I know that serious isn't boring when done well, but I'm having trouble m- with making a character interesting without making them crack a joke or break something in a funny way. How do I find that spark that makes a character interesting or, at the very least, fun to play? Any tips on how to flesh out characters before starting a campaign?**

AUSTIN: Uh, so, Keith-

KEITH: Hi.

AUSTIN: Last time, Art answered this question. Who is like-

KEITH: I believe I was here for it? Was I not here for it?

AUSTIN: The note says that-

KEITH: Or maybe I just read it.

AUSTIN: I think you may have just read it, then- because the note that I had said that you were not on it. I said- it said,

(*crosstalking*)
KEITH: Okay.
AUSTIN: 'Saving this one for when Keith's on.'

KEITH: Got it.

AUSTIN: Ahh, so do you have thoughts here?

KEITH: Yeah! Um, I think that I, um, sort of self-deprecate when we talk about how all of the characters that I play are the same character, which is sort of true, uh, but the thing that I do to make it interesting for at least *me* is that I try really hard to focus on how- first of all, it's easy for me, because that's just how I- am, kind of, in a lot of ways? Um, and with the characters that are sort of the same I get to focus more on h- like, the ways that make them different?

AUSTIN: Mm.

KEITH: And so. I think one of- I think the- most interesting thing that I get to do, roleplaying sort of brash, smiley characters, is like, finding the differences between, like, Fero and Mako and Gig.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Or my other characters.

AUSTIN: What about when you've played- 'cause there've been times when you've played characters who are not that broad model, right?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Who are maybe made out of a different material. Like, I- I would say that the three of them are maybe made of the same material but then shaped differently, right?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah, yeah-

AUSTIN: If you follow that metaphor? But when I think about, like, Walligan Upchurch or even Absolute Territory- who are both funny characters!- but like, drier. Or more- more serious. Are providing a different *thing* for that-

KEITH: Mhm.

AUSTIN: For those narratives. How do you take a character like that, who, maybe those characters are not as, like, um- like, Absolute Territory, what was really fun to see me- to see you play- for me to see you play, because he was reactive in a way that Fero, Mako, uh, and, um- why am I blanking on-

KEITH: Gig.

AUSTIN: Gig! Gig. Are, um, really active, right? Like those characters will like jump- they're like 'I have an idea! I'm gonna go do this thing.' And with- you've had those moments, obviously, where you, you did have those things-

KEITH: Mhm.

AUSTIN: But in dialogue especially, you were playing this kind of detached character who was, like, above it all, and was responding to the little people in the world-

KEITH: Yeah. (*laugh*)

AUSTIN: Which was really fun! So how did you figure that out for characterization, or, or- When you aren't playing those kind of like goofy- like, 'I'm gonna jump and make the joke as soon as possible' way, how do you still figure out a way to make it interesting to play? For yourself?

KEITH: Um... so I think that, like, the easy answer is, like- well like- oh, I know that that's- I don't have to do that for 100 episodes or whatever. (*laughs*)

AUSTIN: Right, sure.

KEITH: Uh, but the I guess more thoughtful version is, um- uh- trying to find something- trying to find something, like, funny in the- like an opp- not an opposite, but in a different... perspective?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

KEITH: Like, it's still- Absolute Territory is still *funny*.

AUSTIN: Right! Yes.

KEITH: Uh, but- um. And I don't- I don't know, I still feel like part of that is playing on instincts that I, I've experienced. It's all- playing, roleplaying, is always very, like, personal for me.

(*crosstalking*)
AUSTIN: Right.
KEITH: So.

KEITH: Um, it's- it's may- it's, it's, I think it's a combination of be- like, being able to, like, hone in on different, like, shittier (*laughs*) instincts that I might have for things. (*AUSTIN laughs*) And then also being like, I can- I can play a totally different role for 1-3 episodes-

AUSTIN: Mm.

KEITH: Without feeling like I'm losing-

AUSTIN: The thing that you like?

KEITH: That thing that I like.

(*crosstalking*)
AUSTIN: Yeah.
KEITH: Yeah. Yeah.
AUSTIN: That makes sense. That makes sense.
KEITH: Oh, and- and another, another thing- the-

KEITH: About Walligan. This was the thing that I had to say about Walligan, was that, um, uh, a lot of the times I feel like- like me, Keith, is filling a specific role in the show?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

KEITH: And when I was doing Walligan w- was a time where I was, like, confident that that role was getting filled in other places.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Uh, and so I didn't have to be so, like- like, me about it, I guess?

AUSTIN: (*laughing*) Right. Right, right. right.

KEITH: Like, I could- I could- I *could* be- like, I didn't have to be as high-energy 'cause there was high energy- happening-

(*crosstalking*)

AUSTIN: Elsewhere at the table.
KEITH: Elsewhere.
AUSTIN: Right, right, right.

KEITH: And so I could just be kind of, like, a grumpy idiot. (*BOTH laugh*)

AUSTIN: Well, I think that the- the- I think that's a really interesting way to think about it, because of- it's a thing that didn't come up the last time we took this question, which was- which is, to think about roles at the table at various different levels.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Because, like, one on level there is like the very basic- you're playing a, a dungeon-crawling D&D-style game where you want to make sure you have someone who can do damage, you want to make sure you have someone who can, like, protect people and heal people, and maybe you wanna have somebody who can- who can, you know, draw aggro or what- you know, whatever. Right, like, that's- you want the MMO tril- trinity-

KEITH: Mm.

AUSTIN: Or you want some- you want to make sure you have someone who can, you know, pick pockets, or detect traps, or... You wanna make sure you have someone-

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Who knows magic, or who knows history, or who knows stuff about the world. You wanna make sure you have someone who can talk. And that level is the one we talk about a lot. But we don't often talk about that second, uh- another, a different way of thinking about roles at the table, which is, like, someone who can- you want someone who can speed the action up when you need someone to just do a thing. Like, there are times-

KEITH: Mhm.

AUSTIN: There are times when I- when I have relied on you, Keith, in a party filled with people who are like really interested in a specific place- to be like the fly on the horse's ass to some degree.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Which is, like, hey, I really want action here. Like I- we need to keep moving. Do a thing.

(*crosstalking*)

KEITH: And-
AUSTIN: And there are times when I- when I rely on other people, like, I think like Art and- and Jack, to like... hit the brakes. And slow things down and ask questions. To return to kind of a lower-speed pacing so that we can- we can kind of like take a breath. And like, uh- those are different roles of the table. And like, we've always talked about the third one there, another one there, which is like, the person who brings the chips, and the person who like makes sure everything is cool at the table.

KEITH: Mhm.

AUSTIN: And there are ways in which those can overlap with the style of play that you're- that you're providing. Um, uh- you can- you can play characters who are mediators. You can play characters who are- uh, who are- who are like, troublemakers. And there are ways to do that within a broad range of characterization, but are still providing a certain sort of role. Um, and that's an interesting way to think about that.

KEITH: It's funny that we don't talk about that. Because honestly, that's what I think about more than almost anything else, is like, my role as a character in a show.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

KEITH: Uh- on the, like, Keith being a character vs. Mako being in a story.

AUSTIN: Right. Jack, did you have a thing? I thought I heard you start to speak a second ago.

JACK: (*taken aback*) Noooo...? No-

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Uh, I muted my microphone so I could fiddle with my new fidget cube and listen to Keith. (*KEITH and AUSTIN laugh*)

AUSTIN: Fair. Fair. Alright, the next one-

KEITH: They've got a 'silent' button on there.

AUSTIN: It does. It does have a 'silent' button on there. Uh, the next one comes in from Ta- from Tallulah, who actually wrote this in originally, uh, and we answered it with Janine and Sylvia[2], but Art is here now and so... Uh-

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

AUSTIN (*reading question*): **Hi, everybody! I'm currently working on a D&D character who is a high-ranking member of a small church. I'm taking inspiration from Hadrian and Ephrim but I'd be interested if any of you had tips or advice on how to play a character that is a member of a faith, or how to represent a religious group, in-game as a player. Thanks for reading.**

AUSTIN: So Art, I'm curious how faith and religion have kind of helped you shape Hadrian as a character.

ART: Uh, hold on. I'm gonna go get a reference material. I'll be right back.

(*brief, startled pause*)

AUSTIN: Wh- okay! Just gonna f-

JACK: Wow.

AUSTIN: Fill while that's a-

ART: I can hear you! You can- you can- I can hear you talk.

KEITH: Okay.

ART: But I can't- I'm, I'm gonna go away from my microphone, I- it's really not that long. It's, I'm going to the bookshelf next to my computer.

AUSTIN: I thought you said book*shop*. (*KEITH cackles*) Okay.

JACK: He's off to the bookstore.

(*crosstalking*)
AUSTIN: Okay.
KEITH: (*laughing*) Spent more time talking-
AUSTIN: We'll let Art go.
KEITH: Than it will take to grab the book.
AUSTIN: Uh-huh! Yup.

KEITH: Probably on purpose. Art's very funny.

(*crosstalking*)
AUSTIN: Art's very funny.
ART: Wasn't even close! Already back. I just have to find what I'm looking for now.

AUSTIN: Okay! (*KEITH cackles again*) I hope this is a-

ART: (*quietly; distant*) How are y'all

AUSTIN: Is it a Bible?

(*crosstalking*)
KEITH: Wait, did you pull-
AUSTIN: What do we think it is?
KEITH: Did you bring the bookshelf over?

AUSTIN: The whole bookshelf.

(*crosstalking*)
KEITH: Like, you found the bookshelf and then you're like-
ART: Yeah, I went and got my Bible...
KEITH: 'Now I just have to find the book.'

ART: (*still quietly*) And I'm gonna figure this out real quick.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?

ART: I'm not sure where this is in this edition.

KEITH: Is it like an encyclopedia?

AUSTIN: I'm wondering if it's like...

JACK: It might be like a comic or something.

AUSTIN: Or an- a different RPG book.

JACK: (*thoughtfully*) Mmm.

AUSTIN: I've seen a quote from L5R. I've seen a quote from-

(*crosstalking*)
JACK: What if it's Sense & Sensibility?
ART: I do have an RPG book in my hand. You're right about that.

JACK: Ohh.

AUSTIN: Okay. What year was it? What- wh- is it old or is it new?

ART: Uh, the copyright date on this is 2011.

AUSTIN: 2011.

JACK: Oh.

AUSTIN: 2011.

KEITH: Oh, so not that old! Not very old.

JACK: Is that like... Burning- Burning Wheel?

AUSTIN: I could imagine like a Burning Wheel Gold.

KEITH: D&D 4th Edition.

AUSTIN: Cou- you know. That's- very big on religion. What else could it be?

ART: Uh, it is D- It is Burning Wheel Gold. You're right about that.

AUSTIN: *Swish!*

JACK: Nice. (*small laughter*)

ART: But I think I might need to go to original Burning Wheel for this? 'Cause I don't know where this is in this book.

AUSTIN: I have a PDF but it's not searchable. But I have a physical copy.

KEITH (*briefly overlapped with AUSTIN*): Oh, 4th Edition came out in 2008. That's wild.

AUSTIN: Yeah, time is wild. Dogs- Dogs was gonna be too- too old. Dogs in the Vineyard is from like, the early 2000s, I wanna say? Someone in chat suggested it might have been Dogs in the Vineyard. Uh, {gorbash} did. But I think that that's like 2003? That's my guess. That's my, out of- that's my- 2004! God. Missed it by one. (*sighs*)

ART: Okay, so the-

KEITH: That's close.

ART: There's two kinds of magic that- that are available to the kingdoms of man in Burning Wheel.

AUSTIN: Sure.

ART: And if you get the 'Faithful' trait you can start with the attribute of black 3. And {incoherent behind Austin}

AUSTIN: What's that mean?

(*crosstalking*)
ART: Um, that's like, okay for a person.
AUSTIN: I know what that means. But.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART: But like- I mean, I guess 3 is pretty okay.

AUSTIN: 3 is good! 3, so-

ART: You're gonna succeed at a lot of things at 3.

AUSTIN: Right. So very very very briefly, skills in Burning Wheel have shades. They're either black, grey, or white. Um, and the higher up you get, the more uh, heroic and supernatural they get in terms of their- uh, you know, um- uh- Achilles is probably a grey or a white shade in martial combat. In, in swordsmanship or something, right? Whereas like, the best swordsman on earth-

KEITH: But a black in defense!

[00:15:00]

AUSTIN: (snorts, amused) Right. Yeah. 'Cause- (KEITH laughing) Yeah, I gotcha. Uh-huh. They also have numbers from 1-5 or something like that, right? Art?

ART: Uh- I think you can go up to s-

AUSTIN: Does it go higher than 5?

ART: I think you can go up to f- uh, I, 'cause- I'm about to tell you how you can get your faith up to a 6.

AUSTIN: Okay! So, so- talk about that.

ART: Um. You know, it's a-

ART (reading from Burning Wheel Gold): 'By answering the following questions, you may raise'- uh, 'they may raise their starting attribute. Once in play, advancement is governed by the standard mechanics. However, the player must incorporate his face- his faith into one of his beliefs. The GM should ask the player the following questions. The answer should be based on the character's beliefs and the situation at hand. Question 1: Whom do you trust most? 2: When in danger, whom do you consult for aid? And 3: Ultimately, how can you best serve your allies?' And there's only one correct answer to these questions: god.

AUSTIN: (laughing intermittently)

ART (reading from Burning Wheel Gold): 'Each correct answer gains +1 to starting faith.'

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: And then it goes on to, like, don't just let people- like- if your players read this, don't just let them answer 'god.' (AUSTIN laughs) Like, they have to- they have to mean it.

AUSTIN: They have to actually... right. Yeah.

ART: And there's like- there- there- it talks about trait votes, how you can punish people for not living to that. But, you know, I probably read that for the first time way before 2011, you know, probably in 2006-ish.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: And I think that's really stuck with me about making characters like that. That like, your- your character sh- you know, if you're gonna play a character for whom god is the most important thing in their life, god has to be the most important thing in their life. To a degree that like, wouldn't like- you think of, think of religious people you know in your life and it's probably not true unless you know very religious people or, or you know a preacher or something, but- but that's not what you're at- in a roleplaying game to do. Like-

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Like, you know, your fighter fighting is more important to them than anyone you know, even the guy you know who trains Brazilian jiu-jitsu, right? Like the point is to play something where the thing is the most important thing to them, and I think- if you, if you start at that and then branch outward, you will get to a good place with your faithful characters.

AUSTIN: In the sense that like, in play, you can have that belief challenged. Right? But-

ART: Right.

AUSTIN: But for you, Hadrian begins at 'oh yeah! of course Samothes is the most important thing in my life.' Like, that is of c- you know, that is who you turn t- I mean- (*AUSTIN laughs quietly*) We heard the word 'Samothes' before we heard the word 'Rosana.' Right?

(crosstalking)
AUSTIN: Um, which is- which is partially on- I mean-
ART: Right, and I think that's, like, that's part of that. Yeah.
AUSTIN: I could have put Rosana on the table much earlier.

AUSTIN: Um, but y- but you as a player are always going to turn- or as Hadrian are going to turn to, to Samothes first. Um. And one of the reasons why I think- I mean, a thing that happens in play is that like, oh, I get to see the other characters who do have influence on Hadrian. And like for Hella; Hella ended up being the thing that I could challenge Hadrian with there and say, okay, is that really true? Because I've seen you put Hella first. Uh, and-

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And that- that feels like a betrayal of what Hadrian thought w- the version of Hadrian that stepped into the world to begin with, in a really interesting way. But you only get there because you play the character who is hyper-committed. Right?

ART: Right. I mean- the uh, the uh- religion is so important to Hadrian that he does- he left his, he left his family to go- and to go, you know, spread the word, to you know, help in the ways that he th- that he thinks his church thinks are more important. And you know, I think we're really gonna see the reckoning for that in Spring.

AUSTIN: (*snorts; laughing*) Yeah!

ART: Um. (*clicks tongue*) But like- I, you know, but- but that's- that's what I feel is a genuine place for that character, uh, even if it's not like- certainly it's not what *I* would do but-

AUSTIN: Right. Right.

ART: But that's not what we're doing.

AUSTIN: Uh, I would say, too, that there is a second interesting thing here. Which is... w- we- there's a, the part of this question is, how to represent a religious group. And the other way to represent it is the way that we just talked about, which is like - oh, actually a lot of people who are part of a religious group do have other things going on in their lives.

ART: Mhm.

AUSTIN: And if you're playing the paladin, if you're playing the character who is like, yes, god is- my faith is the most important- the defining characteristic for me, that's like exactly a really powerful direction to go in. But when you like a GM, or when your GM asks you to help define characters from the faith, or when you are just- you know, autonomously doing that- you know. Don't be afraid to be like, oh yeah, I basically have a Christmas-and-Easter attendance. You know, or like, the people here believe-

ART: (quiet) Mhm.

AUSTIN: But like, they don't know all of the words to, to- to the third verse of this prayer. You know? Or whatever. Um, and that is a really, um, important way to present those characters because faith slots into people's lives in so many different ways that it can be really fascinating to show a character- to have a player character who is deeply, deeply, deeply faithful and devoted and everything is like clear and easy for them... need to come like, up against people who live more complex lives than that. Who do not have the freedom to devote themselves in that way, or have not just made- or who have just made different decisions about priorities. Um, uh- I really like it when that stuff happens because there's a way at which you have to- your players' commitments to their faith become complex or more complicated because they are still dealing with people who believe what they believe. And the thing that they believe in is, for them, the most important thing, but then- you know, they also have to deal with the fact that the people who they're dealing with have other responsibilities and loyalties and priorities. Uh, and any time that happens, you will hit some good drama. Um. Alright! Ready for the next question? Ready for some new stuff? (clicks tongue, reading questions) Ahh... next up, ah- (laughs) Speaking of games we've played in the mid-2000s, Art... Um, {mxquinn} uh, asks, "**you said someone should send you a question about With Great Power. With Great Power? Thanks**." Um, With Great Power is- was probably the first indie game that I played- of that, like, school. Um, it was the first one that made me- like- we, we, maybe I'd done a demo of Burning Wheel. Do you know what I mean? Um.

KEITH: Of... of which school, specifically?

AUSTIN: Of this kind of like mid-2000s, uh, storygame focus. This interest in characters and in drama and not in simulation or- mm. I mean, it has a simulational aspect but not the way that, you know, I was playing games like D&D and Cyberpunk and Shadowrun and, uhh, you know, Vampire: the Masquerade, and sort of like tr- more traditional school of tabletop roleplaying games that was about stat acq- that was about stat growth, um, you know, combat turns and kind of that traditional style of RPG. Um, and With Great Power is a- w- I should, now I have to say, With Great Power classic- because there is now a new game called With Great Power, I wanna say maybe it's master edition or something like that, that is a completely different game. Uh, but both of them are by Mike Miller- Michael S. Mil- Miller- um, and in the original one, uh, it use a card-based game where everybody kind of played a game of almost, like, Solitaire with themselves to some degree? Um, and you built characters out of aspects. Uh, and so like, you know, laser vision was an aspect but so was- but so was, um, your- your- you know, your

grandmother who you took care of on the weekends, and so was your schoolwork, and so was your confidence. Uh, kind of a collection of things that were really important to you as your character. Um, and- the game actually, if you've listened to COUNTER/Weight, you know the very beginning of COUNTER/Weight, we were playing a game called Technoir with an expansion called Mechnoir, and that game sought to, to replicate the arc of a film noir movie, ranging- in which the characters, in order to progress, need to, like, take hits, right? They need to, like, get messed up. They need to take damage. And in- in Technoir, as that happened they would eventually begin to gain the resources they needed to close up the investigation. Right? With Great Power did something similar, where over the course of play, the players needed to let the villains- the bad guys, the superhero bad guys- the supervillain bad guys, rather- um, damage some of their aspects, and so that ranged from like, having someone strip their superpowers away to having your relationship with your partner stressed out. Um, and it was a really fascinating thing for me as a young GM to start thinking about the ways in which games could model stories that had nothing to do with stuff like your strength score. Or like, still had that to some degree, right? Because eventually what would happen is your powers would come back in a bigger way, or your aspects would come back in a bigger way. Whether that was, like, you know, one of the- one of the examples in the book was like, you'd look at Superman 2, uh, the movie, um, which is- I think that's the one where Clark just is like, "I'm gonna focus on my relationship with Lois Lane." And in doing so, like, his more superheroic aspects, like, kind of take back- backseat, and because they are in the backseat, uh, the villains are able to like run rampant- uh, maybe that's 3. Whatever. Things go bad. Right? Or you see this in Spider-Man stories all the time, right, is like- is he focusing on his personal life, his school life, or his superheroics? Or- you know, whatever his superheroic responsibilities are? Obviously the game is called With Great Power. And- and seeing a game that focused on that instead of just saying, like, "what is your gun score? Y- alright, I wanna shoot this guy," um, was really really fascinating. Um, and then it really was a game that almost let me as a GM play more as facilitator than as, um, opponent.

ART: Yeah, because the-

AUSTIN: And that was huge.

ART: The, the player has to offer up the aspect to be threatened.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: You don't get to be like, "I- my king beats your 10, I take your- I take Mary Jane." It's not like that. It's like-

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: "My king beats your 10. What do you- what do you want this to look like?"

AUSTIN: Right. Um, and it was also one of the first games that I played- maybe that we played together, Art- that was like, okay, there are scenes about characterization. This is called an enrichment scene. It's about your characters. It's about, like, what do you do between the fights with the bad guys? And obviously, games we'd played had those scenes before, but we never coded them in that way. We would play D&D and have the conversation where your character and my character talked about what fools all of the rest of the characters at the table were, but we didn't have these explicit moments where like- okay. The point of this- this isn't filler. This isn't *not the game*. This isn't, like- we're not dragging things out. This is the game. The point of this game is just characterization! Um, we never finished a full arc of that game. Partially because it was such a pain to play because everyone has to bring their own card decks and keep them locked in the same exact order and... it was a whole fucking thing.

ART: (quiet) Yeah.

AUSTIN: But partly 'cause I don't think it's a great game. (laugh) Like, I think it actually has some issues. Um, but- but-

ART: I wonder what about the new edition is, like, not enough to like-

AUSTIN: It's com- uh, it is, so it is like Swords Without Master? It's like a hack of Swords Without Master, which is another game that I really wanna play at some point. Which is a kind of swords-and-sorcery, uh, um, RPG that does use dice and, um, that is not aspect-driven in the same way. Um, and it has like, different phases and there's like lots of questions and- it seems neat. It seems really cool. Uh, but we'll get t- we'll get to it at some point. Um. So that is us finally talking about- do you have anything else to say about With Great Power, Art?

ART: Um, I mean, one of the things I really like- a big specific that jumps out at me is like- that like, the- the aspects could be such wild things. Like, they mention that, um, you know, one of Batman's aspects is Crime Alley.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: And then in the finale of The Dark Knight Returns, when he fights Superman- I guess spoilers, but- (AUSTIN laughs) Um, that it's significant to that scene that- that Batman is fighting Superman in Crime Alley. And that's like an example of like escalating that thing. Um.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART: And like, that's- that's an interesting way to think about characters, I think, too, that like- you're more- it's not just like, you're more than your stats and your relationships, like- just stuff is important to you. Like, like- you know, the location is important to you as a person as so it should be important to your character.

AUSTIN: Right. Right. Whether that's your apartment or whether that's the college campus you live and work on and study in, like, thinking about characters beyond what's- what would be on their traditional D&D-style character sheet- is, is- or like, that would be reduced to "oh yeah, I'm a student," and like, that's all it says. Um. And literally, mechanically, lifting them to be on the same mechanical, like, ontological level as "my laser vision," is a really good and important thing for, like- I don't know. That time of independent tabletop RPGs and people figuring out, oh, hey, can we do- can we shape a story around a- the- can we simulate how comic stories work, instead of trying to simulate how superhero fights would work mechanically? Is so much more- was so op- so eye-opening for me. Um. Would- I don't think we'd be here without that, honestly, even though it wasn't a game we stuck with. So... that is- that is our little segment on With Great Power. Umm...

ART: I was introduced to it at the same convention where I demoed Burning Wheel for the first time! That was quite a weekend for me.

AUSTIN: Yeah. You came back with, like, eyes wide open, Art. It was- it was pretty amazing. Uh, alright, this one comes in from Patrick, who says, "**Greeting, Table-eers! My weekly gaming group has been playing Dungeons & Dragons for a little over a year now and we have a break between campaigns coming up. I was hoping to us that break to experiment with some new-to-us systems. Do y'all have any general pointers for introducing a group to a new system? Thanks. Patrick**"

AUSTIN (cont.): Um... Anyone have any thoughts here besides "let Art go to a convention and come back with a bunch of new cool games"?

ART: Well- but that didn't work, if you remember-

AUSTIN: I fuckin' re-

ART: I spent three years trying to get people to play Burning Wheel and it never took off.

JACK: So this is like... This is the first thing, right? Which is that, that- with any sort of, uh, game that multiple people play, whether or not that's, like, multiplayer video games, or couch co-op games, or board games, or tabletop games, if people don't wanna play it, don't try and get them to play it. I mean- make a really good case for it. And, you know, try and explain why the game is going to be exciting. But if you are sitting around a table with people who aren't interested in a thing, you've prob- you should probably look for another thing.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: We talk a lot about what systems- (breathes) To an extent we are lucky enough that we've been doing this long enough that we have a pretty good idea of what systems other people like. Um, but we talk about what systems we want to do before we do them. Um, and a,

a big part of that is like... "Does this look like a game we want to play?" Um. It's fun doing live shows, as well. Now we're doing the Patreon where we- where we are encountering many more systems. And we'll definitely have moments of, like, "oh, this doesn't look like a game for me, but it looks like a sort of a game for someone else, so maybe they should play that."

AUSTIN: Right. Right.

JACK: So, I mean, for starters, not every game is gonna be for your group and that is 100% fine. There are, like, billions of games out there. Um.

(crosstalk)
AUSTIN: Which like maybe-
JACK: The other thing-
AUSTIN: -one thing there is just, like, always frame it as, "oh, let's try this out!"

JACK: Yeah. Yeah. A hundred percent.

AUSTIN: Think about it as like opening a new board game, not as in "we're going to write the next great epic," and make sure stakes are low.

JACK: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Um. And- and that's- even before you get into any sort of specifics, I think that's a good way to go about it, is like- spend some weeks just trying out a bunch of new stuff! Um, you know-

[00:30:00]

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Pick three or four games that you wanna try. And try 'em out for a couple months. You know?

JACK: We'd been talking about making a post-post-apocalyptic fantasy world for like at least a couple of weeks before you said the words "and we could play Dungeon World."

AUSTIN: Right. Right.

JACK: Um. And that's, I think, like, fairly important. Also, um, (breathes out) In terms of- recently, Austin taught me how to play Netrunner. (AUSTIN laughs) Um, we- we actually played- I think we've kind of vaguely mentioned this on the podcast. We played the, what's it called, Terminal-

AUSTIN: Terminal Directive, yeah.

(crosstalking)
AUSTIN: Which is like this- the-
JACK: Terminal Directive.
AUSTIN: -story-driven legacy game version of Netrunner?

JACK: It's Netrunner legacy? It has a bunch of cool stuff in and a bunch of less cool stuff in. I don't know how I feel about it, but it's a fun game-

AUSTIN: It was fun! Yeah.

JACK: -if you're interested in Netrunner and you have a friend to play it with, you should give it a shot. Um, but I'd never played Netrunner before, and I was really anxious about playing a legacy game against someone who knew how to play Netrunner.

AUSTIN: (laughing) Fair!

JACK: Yeah. (amused) And, I mean, Austin won fairly consistently. I think I like squeaked two victories.

AUSTIN: You- you got two victories out of it. You did- yeah.

JACK: Just from, like, spotting a flaw that you'd made

(intermittent crosstalking)
JACK: because you were very tired or something-
ART: What side did you play?
AUSTIN: So-
JACK: I played-
AUSTIN: Yeah.
JACK: So. This is the thing. I played, um, Runner, and Austin played Corp. Um-
ART: I believe that Corp is better than Runner in that specific game environment.

AUSTIN: A hundred percent. Yeah, I think that that's totally true.

JACK: Yeah, I think that's- yeah. Even when I was starting to grasp mechanics, I'd be throwing stuff at Austin that I was fairly sure was a good move, and Austin would just be able to counter it fairly easily.

AUSTIN: Um, but. But before we actually played, we did- before we actually played the legacy version of it, which- again, for people who don't know what that term means, um, there's been kind of an ongoing trend inside of board games to build these games where you play them

multiple times and each time the- the condition, uh- some sort of condition holds over from kind of match to match or, or session to session. Risk legacy was the- was kind of the thing that kicked this off. And so you can imagine a version of that where, you know, you- certain tiles on the Risk board give you- give the- in the next game, give bonuses to whoever holds them. Or other tiles are destroyed completely. Um, and so with Netrunner, that was about adding new cards to your deck or, or, or putting up, um, new rules into play- into play that would punish you-

JACK (cutting in): Destroying cards.

AUSTIN: -if you did something wrong. Or, yes, or permanently destroying cards, or- It was really cool. But before we actually played the legacy version, we started with just like a demo game, right?

JACK: Mm.

AUSTIN: I believe.

JACK: Uh, and-

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Yeah, no, we just- we just played regular Netrunner. I think you- we, we both played with, like, starter decks. I don't think you played with a deck that you brought in. Um, but Austin began teachi- began the horrible process of teaching Netrunner, which if you haven't seen, is a game that has about 40,000 components (AUSTIN laughs) and they're all on the table in a pile at the same time. Um. Austin said, "let's imagine that there aren't any runners." Which is like 50% of the game, gone. Straight- straight off the bat. There aren't any runners; there are only corporations. Uh, and then Austin kind of demonstrated, uh, a turn as the corp as though the corporation is just kind of living their life. They're receiving information, they're putting special guards on the information, they're hiding stuff in servers, they're furthering their business interests.

AUSTIN: Right? They don't even need to do any of that stuff.

JACK: No-

AUSTIN: 'Cause it was just like, I'm looking for an agenda, and I'm gonna pursue it, because I have no threat, right? So I don't even need to put up defenses or anything like that.

JACK: Yeah. It's like- and it, it's very smooth. Which was great, because it taught me- it taught me stuff that you see in table- the equivalent of in tabletop games all the time, which is like, basic ways that you take actions. Basic ways you, uh, conceptualize taking actions. Ways in which the game physically looks on a table, or on a character sheet, um, and it was only once

I'd kind of gotten the basics of, like, how a very benign 50% of the game works that Austin was like, "alright, now it's time to- to introduce the fly in the ointment" (AUSTIN chuckles). Let's say you want to steal this, and- and- and then, you know, I began to see how those systems, you know, interacted in that way. And obviously not every tabletop game you're going to play is going to be able to be demarcated so, um, you know, transparently as something like Netrunner, but I think something to keep in mind, especially if you know a game well or you've read the book and you're trying to teach people it, is- Be very brutal with the editing knife as to-

AUSTIN (cutting in): Yeah.

JACK: -what do you- what do you say? Um. We've talked on the podcast before about, you know, when it comes to difficult rules, how we don't learn or internalize rules until they need to come up. But this is almost a- it's the step before that. It's the step when you learn the game and you find that the GM is just, like, look, I'm gonna tell you a very simple bit of it, and we're gonna work through that, um, and that could be the most exciting bit of it. If you're trying to sell a game to someone, teach them the bit that makes you want to play it.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Um. And I think that that's a pretty good way to start. (AUSTIN breathes in as if to start talking) If you can.

AUSTIN: Which is to say that, like, you know, um- for me, something that's like a Powered by the Apocalypse game, the most exciting thing is that 7-9s are mixed successes.

JACK: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: I would never edit that out of trying to teach the game. Right? I would- I would edit out classes from Dungeon World (JACK laughs) before I would edit out 7-9- I would never go to a game where 7 is a full success, for instance. And finding that little sweet spot of the thing that makes it cool is- is the best thing to start with. Right, so I could imagine, in wanting to teach someone Blades, and just being like, "don't worry about trauma," right? At all. Like, we're not going to-

JACK: Mm.
AUSTIN: Like, for now, you have a stress bar, we'll, we'll- we'll talk about what resistance looks like, we'll talk about (indistinct)- You know that stress is bad, but for this first part of the adventure, like, we don't even look at that part of the sheet right now. Like, when your stress fills up, we'll talk about what happens or, you know, you'll disappear for the rest of the- the sequence.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, or, or, or, thinking the same thing about, like, load. I mean, what- one thing that we don't ever do here, but which we could do, is use pre-gens. Right? Um, um. With live games especially, I've thought in the past about, like, the value of just putting together a couple of pre-generated characters. When you're teaching someone a game, what you're trying to do is just, like, "oh, let's just try a bunch of experiments." There's- there is zero wrong with- I mean, there's zero wrong ever with using pre-gens. Like, I- if that's- if that's how you wanna play, that's a totally fine way to play. But especially when you're experimenting with new stuff, just being like, "alright, you're- here are 7 characters that these 4 people can pick between." You'll tend to find something for everybody, um, and you as a- as a, as a GM will be able to be like, oh yeah, I know what challenges to put in front of them to kind of ease them into it given that stuff. You know? Given what their skillsets are. Um, those controlled environments are not as loose and as dynamic as, like, a fully- a fully, uh, developed- uh- campaign. Or something. But they can still be really good for, like, "is there something here that clicks for me?" You know?

JACK: Yeah. And I think the games that I would always, always, always recommend as, like, go-to games for starting groups are frequently the ones that I would struggle to remove stuff from when I was teaching it. Something like, like a mainstay like The Quiet Year.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: Every- every bit of that game is so perfectly put-together that you start by saying, "oh, we're gonna be drawing a map," and then you just introduce, like, you know, small piece by small piece. Uhh, and that is a game that I feel you could, you could do straight away. But I can- I super understand how games like...

AUSTIN: Mhmm.

JACK: Blades, and games like D&D, and games like Apocalypse World, even games that, you know, are like quote-unquote "simpler"-

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: -are so intimidating. They're intimidating for me every time we have to learn a new one.

AUSTIN: (clicks tongue) Um, yeah. Totally. And I think that's fine to be intimidated.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Y'know, let yourself and let your players be a little bit- a little bit more, uh, um, nervous. Like, that's fine. Um, and figure it out as you go. As an addendum to this, Rodrigo in the chat says, "**when y'all play a new game for the book, do you read the whole book or just some- do you all read the whole book, or just some people?**" Um. I always read the whole book. Um, but my gut says it's different for different people.

JACK: I read the book up until the points where it says "this is a little secret bit for Austin." [AUSTIN laughs] "This is the secret Austin zone. Don't read the"-

KEITH: Yeah. The- a lot of longer books tend to have enormous chunks that are, like, "this is for the- this is for the GM."

JACK: "For Austin."

AUSTIN: Mhm.

KEITH: Yeah. Uh, sometimes more than half of the book will be GM stuff. Uh-

AUSTIN: There are definitely times when I say "hey, can y'all read this whole thing?" Because-

JACK: Oh, yeah yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: -I can't get my head around it, or like, I would love someone else to be able to have a touchstone for the rules, um.

KEITH: Mm.

AUSTIN: I know, Jack, you- I know Jack and Keith maybe you both did it for, um, Golden- Golden Sky Stories.

JACK: (quietly) Oh, Jesus.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, which is such a-

JACK: Yeah, the live games as well, like-

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: -I'll try and read everything in those books, 'cause I know we'll all be scrambling to, like, prepare that game.

KEITH: Because- because we only play it once, we- we all read *everything*!

[00:38:48 - Transcribers change]

(Transcribed by Ril @kaorukeihi)

AUSTIN: Right! So we're doing *more* work!

KEITH: Yeah! [AUSTIN laughs.] Actually, the- Primetime Adventures—I read all of that book two times…

AUSTIN: Right. Because we delayed so long between playing?

KEITH: The first time… It was before the first time we played, and then before one of the times we cancelled last minute.

AUSTIN: Right, right.

KEITH: So, I read it two times, and it still didn't really help! [He laughs.]

AUSTIN: No… Well, then we started playing and it's great, and we played that game, and that game is fantastic!

KEITH: Yeah, no, it's great! Oh, I really love it, I really love it! It's one of my favorite games I've played.

JACK: It does produce a great- the great moment that we've all been lucky enough to experience multiple times [AUSTIN laughs quietly] where like everybody is in the group chat going "Hang on, I don't know what this is." And everyone's like "I don't quite know…" I was thinking about the, like, detective… The detective…

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

JACK: The Noirlandia game we've played with the dice. Like, there was *easily* an hour of us all just going like "Hang on, wait, do I just?.."

AUSTIN: "Do I?.. What is this?"

ART: Oh, I still can't tell you how to play Noirlandia.

JACK: Yeah, no, I think you're absolutely right. I'd like to go back to that.

ART: Yeah, me too.

AUSTIN: I liked that game, but I don't… There are things I still don't get about it in terms o risk-taking, in terms of like wounding your own aspects, or whatever.

JACK: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah…

AUSTIN: It was very strange. But cool game. Definitely cool game.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, alright. Any other thought here on introducing a group to a new- a group to a new system?

KEITH: Um… I was just gonna say, you guys touched on this, but like it sounds like Patrick's group is down for experimenting with systems…

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: …and that's sort of the- like, the best place to be is like- treat, like… I feel sort of like trying new games the same way I feel about trying weird food that I haven't tried before, where it's just "Oh, this will be fun even if it's gross."

AUSTIN: Right. Right.

KEITH: And if you can get into the headset where it's like "Even if I don't like this it'll be fun, and we're just to try it." I think that's a good space to be in.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally. Art, do you have any tips from all the years of trying to get people to play Burning Wheel and then not playing Burning Wheel?

ART: Um… I think part of this is like don't- don't- Like, don't let your- your- your desire to play something like get you into position where it's just like "Well, we'll just do whatever", 'cause then you get into like a situation where you have eight people in the damn room, [AUSTIN: Mm.] and they're telling you like "Okay, [AUSTIN laughs quietly] we're gonna be circus performers who are really thieves."

AUSTIN: That's a great concept, and we still never played it!

ART: That's a great concept. But then they- they wrecked it! It's like… What we really needed was like four people… [ART laughs a bit.]

AUSTIN: That was just on us for not having four people instead of eight. College is hard.

ART: Hard as hell.

AUSTIN: It's hard to draw lines. It's hard to be like "Yeah, we're filled, sorry. We'll figure out a different way to hang out", you know?

AUSTIN: Alright, next question comes in from Francis. **Hello, Table Friends! I was wondering if you have any advice about changing up the sorts of characters I tend to play. I've noticed myself across several games, systems, and groups falling back into the same general character trope again and again, usually big beefy mom types. And while they're a hoot to play, it's a little frustrating. Even if I set out aiming to do something totally different, Beefy Mom Singularity has a lot of gravitational pull. I get that this happens because these sorts of themes interest me in the short term, but I do want to try new character types. Any advice on how to force yourself to stop falling into the same character over and over again? Thanks for the show. Francis.**

ART: I would just like to point out, just real quick, that Beefy Mom Singularity is a very popular restaurant in Bluff City.

[They all laugh.]

AUSTIN: Ooh… Any thoughts here? [KEITH: Try the Stroganoff.] Ehh. Y'all have done a lot of various characters, thoughts on how to push yourself to try new character types?

KEITH: I think the first time I had… I tried to push myself to push myself to try new character types was Walligan.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: I don't think I had to really try to do anything different…

AUSTIN: I guess Sokrates… [KEITH: That—] was a little bit in that direction?

KEITH: Sokrates was… Sokrates was such like a natural step for me…

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: ...that it didn't feel, it didn't- I also like have like no fucking memory of that, so…

AUSTIN: [laughing a bit] Okay. Fair.

KEITH: [laughing] Aside from this, like- It's been really long, but yeah… Sokrates from my memory feels like me tweaking the formula [AUSTIN: Uh-huh.] to just be the same character but that just doesn't feel as comfortable?

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Versus Walligan who felt for me like- was coming from a totally different place.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

KEITH: And, uh… The only thing that I can- Like, the best andice that I have I think is like… If you're the type of person that's choosing to play the same types of characters over and over again because that's what you like to do, and that's what interests you-

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: -don't settle for something that you're not really excited about. Like, don't- Like, if you're- Like, don't come up with a new idea just 'cause it's a different thing. Like, try to find something else that really, really feels like it's your thing also.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Cool.

KEITH: 'Cause if you're not excited about it. you won't have fun doing it.

AUSTIN: Right, I- There's definitely steps you can take, right? Like, you can take a little tiny step away, and still be like a big beefy character, but maybe not a beefy mom. Like, be a beefy character who isn't…

KEITH: There are lots of kinds of moms too!

AUSTIN: Totally, totally. But I get it the bit there, do you know what I mean? Like-

KEITH: Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: There is- There is- When I've heard that sort of- that sort of trope brought up there was like a degree of like parental caregiver, and like maybe a little bit of someone who can chide somebody when they do something bad, but pick them up from the ground when they fall…

KEITH: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: You know. Be someone who is beefy and selfish, right? Like, try to play Hella. Try to play a character- Or someone who is like- has that caregiving, or whatever, that maternal vibe that you like, but maybe isn't that beefy, right? Like, how do you perform those duties when maybe your character can't just like step in front of the incoming ax so to speak, you know? And that's like a kind of a slow...

KEITH: Mm.

ART: [laughing] Small mom.

[00:45:00]

AUSTIN: [laughing] Right. Small mom. Please, play small mom. And then play mall mom also, who is a mom who works in a mall. Um…

KEITH: Where does she work?

AUSTIN: Those little small steps can help a lot. Any other thoughts though? Because I know, Art and Jack, you've both played a variety of characters over the years.

JACK: I think- Um. It's important for me to think about what's important to my characters-

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: -outside of a sort of plot context. We know that what's important to Fourteen is, you know… learning the law, and we know that what was important to AuDy was sort of, you know, attempting in their own way to protect the crew of the Kingdom Come. But-

AUSTIN: [incredulously] Was it?! Hm...

JACK: Well, you know… AuDy is the- AuDy is the pilot of that ship, [AUSTIN: Fair.] and I think *they* think that the pilot has some responsibilities. They're not quite sure how to enact them, [AUSTIN laughs.] especially latterly. But beyond those things, beyond those things, what is important to- What is important to these characters? I think what is important to Lem is discovery, and is books, and is people, insofar as they can be catalogued or thought about. Um… And outside of the sort of the wider plot, keeping those things in my mind as a player is useful for saying, well, what sort of a character is this going to be. And so when it comes to trying to push towards new characters, I try and- um, I try and find the little patches where I haven't gone [AUSTIN: Mm.] in what characters are interested about, you know.

JACK: None of my characters prior to sort of post-Miracle Fourteen have been super invested in nurturing things, have been super invested in, you know, trying to- trying to make things grow, and I was interested in, you know, what does that character looks like?

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Um… And I think that that's something that, you know, like- What characters haven't I played? I haven't played a real bastard. I mean, Lem-

AUSTIN: Lem is… Lem is getting there.

KEITH: Yeah, Lem is sort of…

JACK: I mean, Lem is a sort of bastard.

AUSTIN: Yes. Yes.

JACK: You know, Lem is like a kind of bastard. There's sorts of bastards I haven't played. I think there's a version of the Hitchcocks… There's dark Hitchcocks, you know…

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

JACK: ...who have the capacity to be real bastards. So, it's like, well, it would be fun to-

AUSTIN: No, I- I always think if we ever go back to the year from- to the timejump of Marielda, and fill in more of that, that there's a way in which I think the Hitchcocks can look really fucking bad. Like-

JACK: Oh yeah! No, them- They're nasty pieces of work- I mean- So the thing is… The horrible truth about the Hitchcocks is that- There's very little difference between them and Thackeray. I mean, how did Thackeray get his nose… and the answer is the Hitchcocks!

AUSTIN: [laughing] The Hitchcocks! Right! They cut off someone's nose!

JACK: Yeah. And so- but like- It's the way Keith talked about, you know, performing a role on the show. It's often as simple as that, as simple as what, you know, you and I just did there, Austin, of saying like "Do you think it'd be fun if you do a complete bastard?"

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: And then going like "Yeah, maybe it'd be fun to do a complete bastard."

AUSTIN: Yeah. Which maybe there's another thing there, which is like: talk to your GM. And say like "Oh hey! Do you have any ideas? I can't think of a new character type to play."

JACK: And other players as well, [AUSTIN: Totally.] other players in your group! Because they- they are as- you know, hopefully, they're as invested in your roleplaying as you and the GM are. And, you know, hearing what they have to say, and hearing what directions they think that they would like to see you go in is always very exciting.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, totally. Art, how about you?

ART: Uh, it's tricky, because I have sort of felt- I guess, this is mostly like last session that I've been a little worried that Grand is- is falling into the Cassander Singularity.

AUSTIN: Mmh. I don't see it. I'm curious…

ART: I don't think it's- I don't think like- I don't think I'm *there*.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: But I was like "Oh, this is closer than it's been."

AUSTIN: What was it that made you feel like that?

ART: Well, the like- That he's- That Grand is starting to like, you know, kind of like "I'm willing to fit any role to make this plan work…"

AUSTIN: [slowly] Right.

ART: Which is less of the like- "I am just singularly better than everyone I've ever met."

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yeah.

ART: But part of that is like- The character growth I've been- I've been *doing*, and like… We can have little pitfalls, I promise that we're not done with- I promise that we're not done with "Grand Magnificent's better than everyone he's ever met"

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Um... And I think it's part of this like- But you like- But going back to your like familiar ground can be okay for a little bit, you know? In another way, the original Grand Magnificent is very close to what the characters I played in college, you know, it's a rich tapestry.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

ART: Um… [AUSTIN laughs a bit.] And like, don't see this as like "I have to get away from this thing, I have to like do this thing different than any- than I've ever done it before." Be like "How- how can I use what I've already done to inform a new choice?"

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ART: And it's not so much like your character types, so much as like- the character actions I think are more significant.

AUSTIN: In that like whatever the thing- whatever the character you've written down, is once they hit- once they hit the table, once play starts, there's lots of opportunity for differentiation.

ART: Right, and like- You know, the tragic hero is technically the same every time but- You know, you've seen enough tragedies that they all- You know, Hamlet is not- is not... the guy who kills his dad. Um. [AUSTIN laughs]

AUSTIN: Umm… Not Laertes- No, wait, who kills?

ART: Oedipus.

AUSTIN: Oedipus. Oh, I thought you were talking about other characters in *Hamlet*.

ART: No.

AUSTIN: I was like "Wait…"

[KEITH laughs.]

ART: I was just picking different tragic heroes, you know.

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

ART: But they all have like- they have a lot in common, but they're not the same. And you have to like use that as much as you can.

AUSTIN: Right. It's ironic, there's a conversation going on in the chat right now, in which Rodrigo, one of our patrons, is talking about a current situation in their group where- where all of- I'll just read this one comment. "I started DMing last year, and six out of seven of my players created traumatized revenge-seeking characters with daddy issues." [ART laughs.] And there's kind of- There's a conversation that's going into what happened there. Lots of dead parents that need to be avenged, the characters were all made at the same table, and one of the characters- One of the characters has like a fridged wife, of course.

AUSTIN: I just wanna say briefly that there is- It can be really hard as a GM to- There can be this pull that is like "Well, that's what my players want, I guess that's the game we're playing." And I do wanna say that we *do* have the ability to push back on things. Because it sounds like, Rodrigo, you're in a situation where you're like very frustrated with that. And it can be hard to be… There's almost like The Customer's Always Right vibe I get sometimes from GMs-

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: -and I wanna be clear that being a fan of the characters is not the same thing as let the characters and their players do whatever they want narratively, including crossing lines that you think are fundamentally bad, or are just disinteresting to you, or they aren't in tone with what you wanna do. There are- There are definitely times as a GM in my life where I've had to be like

“Uh, that’s too dark for what I wanna do right now.” Or- Or like “Can we go somewhere else?” Like, I think if you listen to… So, here’s- this is- I’m not throwing Darcy[3] under the bus here, but I know that there’ve been times… And I actually wanna pick up Darcy, I wanna say Darcy has done really well around this, where Darcy will pitch something, and I’m like “Umm, that’s something- I’ve heard that here or here before…” or “That kind of- There’s this other thing here that kind of bugs me about it.” And Darcy is super good at being like “Oh, you’re totally right. Here’s three other really good ideas.”

AUSTIN: And being able to develop *that* relationship with your players is so helpful, because the GM is not just a facilitator- They *aren’t* just a facilitator in most games, they are also a storyteller, and also an editor, right? Like, there is a degree to which as a GM you have the responsibility to help your players build the best versions of their characters, and I don’t only mean by taking the right perks, you know- or the right feats, or whatever. I *do* mean in terms of like, umm, if six people at the table all have a very similar backstory there’s a chance you won’t really feel satisfied when- You know, when there’s an episode in which—or, a session—in which one of those other characters gets to resolve their thing that’s so similar to your thing. Maybe we should try to find a different angle, and like- It could be a tough conversation, but- You know, there is a degree to which you can address that with authority, and feel comfortable with that degree of authority because it’s your job to make the game fun for everybody, and sometimes that does mean like looking past the immediate desire.

AUSTIN: You know, one of the things that Francis says here is that they want to— they like that short-term, positive they get to play big beefy mom singularity, but in the long term they want to try new things. And like- The GMs- One of the GMs’ goals is to anticipate those long-term goals and long-term desires, and help you push yourself in that direction, and- And- you know, I just want it to be one of those things where I’m knighting all GMs everywhere right now. You’re allowed to push back when someone says “I have a dead pregnant wife.” You can be like “Nah, actually.”

AUSTIN: Throndir is one of those characters, actually. [Quiet laughter.] We came up with better stuff. There’s definitely a tragic backstory Throndir out there, that was way too, like “Mmm…” Like, “There’s a little bit of something here that’s not great,” and Darcy and I were able to talk about that, and we found a different tragic backstory that totally worked. So, that’s- That is the thing that comes up, and trust your players enough to have those conversations with them. Um. Because otherwise- otherwise you’re going to be walking on eggshells for a year, while six of your characters all want revenge for their dads or whatever.

ART: Yeah, I think like during that character creation- That’s the thing, because when the fourth person pitches the dead dad revenge stuff you have to like- [KEITH laughs.]

KEITH: God, imagine it like a funny comedy game though.

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

ART: “We’re gonna all go for- we’re gonna all take a walk, we’re gonna have a breather, we’re gonna order Chinese food”, [AUSTIN laughs] whatever it is, like- We’re gonna come back, and we’re gonna talk about what everyone’s second idea was.” No one gets to be dead dad revenge guy, everyone has to come up with a second choice.

JACK: Oh, it’s the very much like the- “Let’s return to the table and see the mess you’ve made” of the tabletop-

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: And the answer is dads, just dads everywhere, [AUSTIN laughs] dead dads left and right.

AUSTIN: Um, okay, counterpoint. They could be just playing the best Mass Effect 2 game of all time, [JACK laughs] a game in which every single companion has a dad issue.

JACK: The other game where it’s good would be Fiasco.

AUSTIN: Yes!

JACK: A Fiasco game where everyone is trying to avenge their dead dad is very funny.

AUSTIN: [laughing] It’s *very* funny, yeah!

JACK: It’s very funny.

AUSTIN: But they’re playing like a campaign, which is like “I’ll be doing this for a *year.*” For a year!

JACK: Yeah. yeah. Jesus. Oh my God.

AUSTIN: Yeah. It’s tough, it’s tough.

KEITH: And it probably is a year of *not* treating that as a comedy, right?

AUSTIN: Right! Because- Because all like-

KEITH: It can’t just be a comedy now.

JACK: Oh...

ART: It’s like- You wouldn’t go to a movie where there are five John Wicks, right?

[A variety of doubtful noises from AUSTIN and JACK.]

KEITH: See, but the movie would be funny ‘cause Keany Reeves can do funny.

ART: What if the movie was a year long?

[AUSTIN and KEITH laugh.]

JACK: Oh! Interesting. An experimental form.

AUSTIN: And it’s called Five John Wicks.

ART: It’s called Five John Wicks, you go in the theatre, you have to sit there for a year. The movie is not on all the time, but you can’t leave.

JACK: January-February-March: John Wick. April-May-June: John Wick 2. And then it continues.

ART: No, it’s simultaneous!

JACK: Oh Jesus!

ART: It’s John Wick meets his four cousins, Jake Wick, Jimmy Wick, [AUSTIN laughs quietly] uh…

KEITH: Jack Wick.

ART: Jack Wick, uh, [KEITH: Jan Wick.] Jasper Wick, Jan Wick… Is that five?

KEITH: That’s four.

AUSTIN: Jonathan Wick.

KEITH: Oh yeah, it’s John and Jon.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh, yes.

JACK: Hm… Jonathan Wick, the witness. I mean, that would be good.

KEITH: I think- Something that I wanted to sort of connect back to- which is- I mean, we do- we literally do a show, which helps lot of this, where it’s like, well… It becomes really obvious you can’t have six characters with the same backstory when you’re doing a show. You go “Well, that’s not a show, that doesn’t work as a show.” Um- But something that helped me playing

roleplaying games *before* we had a show was also treating it as a show? And it kinda is! Like, you're putting together a story.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: It's like a show but it's just for the people that are there at the table. And that doesn't mean that's not a show. And if it helps to both Francis and Rodrigo to think if their games as shows that you're doing- that I think that putting that perspective on it might sort of- like- "Oh, here are the pieces that I've seen fit into shows before that work, that I like, that aren't big beefy moms or six dead dads." [AUSTIN and KEITH laugh]

AUSTIN: It's so amazing that that's exactly six dead dads. And it's not six different revenge stories. Because I think there's a world in which you go like "Hey, let's do a campaign *about* revenge in which we dig into revenge, and we break out of the binary of like revenge is good or revenge will make you happy." Because I think you could tell six different revenge stories where people step away with different feelings about having achieved their revenge, or having their revenge deferred, or whatever.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You could actually do that thing really well. It's just the matter of like… Six dead dads and a dead pregnant wife is a bad game. That's not a great game.

KEITH: Yeah. By the way, if you are out there killing people's dads, you can go to fuckdads.com and listen to nine minutes of music.

[Laughter.]

JACK: Wow, a targeted ad for dad murderers!

AUSTIN: [laughing] These- These algorithmic ads are just killing it, you know? They really zero in on the audience.

JACK: [laughing] Oh no.

AUSTIN: Okay, next question. Are we good for next question?

JACK: Yeah, let's do it, let's do it.

AUSTIN: This next one is gonna be pretty me exclusive, so I'll try to be quick on it, because it's a long one. This one comes in from Ben, and the reason I'm answering this is because I told Ben that I would answer this in Tips at the Table. **I'm a grad student who teaches a class on tabletop games to theatre majors that focuses on using story games to build and**

reinforce skills in them as performers, designers, and storytellers. We've played many of the games that y'all have covered on Friends at the Table. We've also spent this semester listening to Marielda timed to finish in a few weeks right as we start our final game, Blades in the Dark. Which is just the dopest thing anyone's ever told us, like… The fact that they've listened to the whole season over the course of the semester-

JACK: That's so good!

AUSTIN: It's so good! I feel so flattered! Ben continues: **I've had a great/terrible idea for Blades, and they all seem really excited about it. We're going to collectively build a new city setting in class, and each of the four groups will have a session with a crew within that city exploring some different corner of it. We once spent an entire day building a really incredible setting with The Perilous Wilds, so I know that they have the ideas and passion for worldbuilding that's still works for the kind of games these games are designed to tell. However, Blades have no equivalent supplements, and I'm worried that I might be painting myself into a corner.**

[01:00:00]

AUSTIN: **The only settings out there seem to be the rulebook, Scum&Villainy, and Friends at the Table's hacks. Do you have any advice on building an engaging Forged in the Dark setting?**

AUSTIN: Um, so that is a… As someone who's doing that live, right- As someone who- In Twilight Mirage, the Quire system is being built inside of the kind of templates that are set up in Forged in the Dark games, in Blades in the Dark and Scum&Villainy… But I don't have any sort of like… There is no guide to doing it, there's no thing that's like "Well, this is what wealth means exactly, this is what a faction strength means exactly." Um. I definitely started just by doubling down on what is already there, by looking at the various faction groups, city districts, the different kind of systems that are inside of Scum&Villainy, and started really, really just trying to like map across what that stuff is, and kind of work backwards from what's already on the page.

AUSTIN: But there's like a limit to that in terms of what I'm doing vs what this project is. Because I can do that bit by bit over the course of months, right? Like, so far I think we have Gift-3 and Skein and maybe one other planet that I have already designed out in terms of "Here are all of the locations, here are some NPCs for each of them."

AUSTIN: I'll bring up a sheet really quick, just so that people could know what the fuck I'm talking about. In fact I'll just bring up one of the ones from Scum&Villainy instead of… I'm afraid that's actually not gonna work. One second, I need to find— Do I just have it? Let's see. Let me go to Patreon.com/Friends_Table and find it there, 'cause it would be easier than digging through pdfs. Um. But there's a page that exists for each, um, for each planet—in Scum&Villainy it's each system, and in Blades in the Dark it's each city district, basically. And we didn't do that

for Marielda. We didn't have- I didn't have like a page for Quince Parish vs for Helianthus or something like that, we just kind of knew those details.

AUSTIN: The big difference- the thing that I wanna say is that like I need- I have the time and need to make things as com- as not complex, but as like, um, complete as I can. Like, here's the Skein system overview, right? Where it's like, there's a system overview with some text about what Skein is, there are a bunch of notable locations that are important, like, places— those are just short descriptions of things, there are three major locations that are a city, a location out in the jungles, and then these kind of floating corporate spaces. Each of those has a description that is like what does it do, what goes on there? And then a scene which is kind of like words about- that kind of paint you a picture, a kind of sensory picture of the place. There are notable NPCs, there are stats for wealth, crime, tech, and weirdness, and then there's a rule.

AUSTIN: And I think during all of this, for each of those four group is probably overkill, is what I would say. Um. What I would almost say is- the way I would do this would be to make a single system or a single district, and maybe add another location to it, and have each group build out one of those… Unless you have a lot of time, because even doing a single page like this… Like, this is one of those things about prep that is hard to communicate: this doesn't look like a lot of information, but this took me a day to build, right? And to think about it, and to figure out what those rules were, and to figure out who all of those characters were, and to look through all of the- You know, a lot of those characters come from prepping specific adventures that would be there. And that sort of stuff takes like hours and hours, even though that's not that many words. And the way to get there for me, or the way that, as a facilitator and teacher you can dig into this stuff, is to figure out what stuff there is the important stuff for telling a single set of stories there. Again, you don't need to run a campaign, so you don't need to build an entire city from scratch.

AUSTIN: What I would probably do is build a single district or maybe two districts across the different groups, and then maybe half of a faction list. Maybe let every single player come up with one faction, or inside of a group having each player come up with a faction that's located inside of their subdistrict or whatever- their location inside of a district. And then go from there. You know, think about Marielda—how many factions did not come up? We've talked about that a lot. There were 37 factions, or 40 factions or something in Marielda, and basically you've heard of 12 of them. [AUSTIN laughs a bit.] You know, maybe 15. The same thing is going to happen with Twilight Mirage—we have forty-some factions, they're all not gonna show up on screen, but they are all things we can pull on when we need to. And so, there isn't really- there isn't necessarily a step-by-step guide here but what I would do is start by kind of using a paper cutter and chopping away the bits that are broader, or that are necessary for a bigger campaign project.

AUSTIN: So, that's my- those are my tips. Anyone else here who's built worlds or settings and has any tips for a project like this? I know no one here has built a Blades in the Dark world necessarily… [AUSTIN laughs a bit.] That's a thing that I wish…

KEITH: I haven't done any like worldbuilding as a GM since I was doing campaigns that I don't like anymore…

AUSTIN: Well, why don't you like them anymore?

KEITH: 'Cause I was a kid, it was dumb-

AUSTIN: Okay. Fair.

KEITH: And that was- that was not great. Uh, uh, like, I'm not gonna give any examples.

AUSTIN: That bad, huh?

[ART and KEITH laugh.]

KEITH: No, no, it's that they're that bad, they're just uninteresting, and I was working with a version of D&D 4th Edition that I had like twisted around to make something that I was more interested in.

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

KEITH: 'Cause I just didn't- I didn't know about… [AUSTIN: Other stuff.] other- I didn't know about other games, like I just didn't know. Um. The only other game that I had played was Pathfinder, and I *hated* it, I thought it was awful.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: 'Cause the first- I've called out Greg before on Tips, so fuck you, Greg.

AUSTIN: Damn! Fuck Greg. [KEITH laughs.]

KEITH: Greg was like "4th Edition is bad, so what we're gonna do is play Pathfinder which is like older D&D, and it's like 3.5 Edition." And I was like "I don't know what any of that means, let's do it!" And I didn't like it. Uh. And so I was like "Oh, all there is is Dungeons&Dragons and this thing that's trying to be a worse version of Dungeons&Dragons…" But… I don't know, I really like every time that we use a different game to worldbuild for a game-

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: That's always fun for me, so.

AUSTIN: Yeah. It is a very fun process, I'm excited to do it again in the next whatever, in a year.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's a thing I wish we- Or I guess we do it pretty often with Live, right? That's a thing that's been great about Live, and about Bluff, [KEITH: Yeah.] is being like- Being able to revisit that in a much more consistent manner. Uh-

ART: I'd just like to say for the record that I think Pathfinder is basically fine.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: It- Okay,

AUSTIN: [with great pomp] Let the records show...

KEITH: Greg's story- Okay, I still have to say: Greg had a full- a binder- He came with book.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

KEITH: To do…

ART: I'm not defending Greg!

KEITH: Don't defend Greg. Maybe Pathfinder is totally fine, I'm sure that Pathfinder- You could have a good time with Pathfinder with the right GM. But, you know, when you're rolling for breathing, and [KEITH laughs quietly] you're playing someone else's fantasy novel…

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's not what I wanna be doing.

AUSTIN: Alright, next question! Final question. This comes in from {Em}, who says: **I've been playing in a couple of games, everything from D&D 5th Edition to Pathfinder** [AUSTIN laughs] **to Monster of the Week to Fiasco and back again for a while now, and I'm finally starting to get over a lot of my anxiety about roleplaying. There's still one thing I can't work out though: romance. Sometimes there's an NPC that I know my character would be super into, and I want to be able to play that out. But ending up having to play a romantic scene opposite my GM is honestly a little bit terrifying. How do y'all handle PC romantic entanglements, and so you have any advice for making that run smoother? Is y'all's perspectives changed by the fact that you have fans who are also invested in the characters' romantic lives?** Uh-

KEITH: Are there- Are there fans invested in my characters' romantic lives? [KEITH laughs quietly]

AUSTIN: [with found exasperation] Oh my fucking God. [KEITH laughs.] You're mean. That's a mean thing- You know very well!..

KEITH: Anyway I flagged- I flagged this question because this is something that I basically wanted to watch a conversation about this happen…

AUSTIN: Oh, okay! [AUSTIN laughs quietly]

KEITH: I mean I'll participate in it! This is- This is something that I have, uh- an extreme aversion to roleplaying. I don't mind-

AUSTIN: Yeah, it doesn't pop up that often, that's- It- Yeah. Go ahead.

KEITH: It's not- Well. It pops up often enough. I don't *mind* that it pops up, 'cause I can just avoid it-

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: -and some of this is really funny in a way that it gets avoided. But yeah, it's just something that I've never- I've never had any even idea on how to tackle it.

AUSTIN: Yeah, iI mean, t's a question- This is one of those questions that I'm gonna save to talk to everybody about because it's happened to different degrees I think with literally every player character to the point where like, you know, ⌜Signet⌝ is currently on like three weeks- Three weeks in a row flirting with non-human entities, it's going real well. Um. And like, you know, Lem and Emmanuel are a noted item inside of the world of Hieron. Or like, not 'noted', the NPCs of Hieron aren't just like "Oh, have you heard about Lem and Emmanuel?" Just random…

KEITH: Maybe they are.

JACK: Well, there've been- An actual god has- has- [AUSTIN: Yes, fair.] has called attention to their relationship which, you know…

AUSTIN: Totally. ...To Hadrien, who has a romantic partner we've only seen on screen a couple of times in Rosana, but also who has very close personal relationships with other characters, right? Um, and- and, you know, everything in between, right?

AUSTIN: For me as a GM, you know, it is an interesting direction to step. But for me, I also flag it to personal interest, and that can be hard, right? So, on the easy end of the spectrum is Ali saying "Aria wants to date Jacqui", [JACK laughs quietly] and I'm like "Okay, this is a thing we can have recurs on almost as a bit, and then eventually make it play out, right? Roll the dice, and see how it shakes out."

AUSTIN: On the other hand, there are definitely times when it's like "Oh, I can't tell if this is a flag or not," right? I think this season the big ones have definitely been Gig and Kent, right? And then, on Darcy's side, Even and Cascabel, even Even and Tannoy Kajj, of like "Oh, are we flirting? Is this flirting? I can't tell!" And the first thing for me to do is definitely like—oh, we should just have this conversation off mic, and be like "Hey, is this a line you wanna pursue?" Because that will then let you as a GM and as a player *know* like, okay, we're playing these characters, and we're interested in telling that story.

AUSTIN: I've seen it come up before while talking to other GMs, that there's some- there's some complexity and some concern around the notion of like romance being initiated by dice, because it can incur on a notion of character agency. So take something like the Aria/Jacqui thing, right? Which, the Aria/Jacqui relationship starts at a dice roll, right? Or I mean, it doesn't start at a dice roll , it starts with them flirting as they're fighting above a holographic Aria Joie concert. But it begins at earnest at that dice roll.

AUSTIN: But I think that there is- One, I think that there is something really powerful about the media that leaves it up to chance like that. But two, also, you shouldn't erase the idea that like, at all points both players are still agentic, and have the ability to either back off on that thing or find a way- you know, find another path forward, and can always just have an out of character conversation that's like "Oh, you know what, I'm not that interested in this. Let's just retcon it." And that's *allowed*. And so like that should be kind of like on the forefront of your mind. Um.

AUSTIN: But at the same time, I do like the notion of something like Lem and Emmanuel that doesn't emerge from a dice roll, right? Like, [JACK: Hmm!] I guess it reflected what, that reflected a bunch of bad dice rolls in a row?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or mediocre ones, where like neither of you could win that fight?

JACK: Yeah, but that sort of just came from like… It was, in a very sort of like anime bullshit way, a romantic image, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yes.

JACK: These two- these two swordsmen locked on a pirate battleship- on an undead pirate battleship, probably in the rain, I don't know.

AUSTIN: [laughing a bit] At least in the ocean spray.

JACK: At least in the ocean spray! And, and there was something so absurd and in particular way romantic about that image… That-

KEITH: And we already knew he was a baker!

AUSTIN: We did already know that.

JACK: [laughing] We already knew he was a baker because of like an offhand joke, right?

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: ...about what this guy was doing beforehand. But… And then Emmanuel grew- So, already I was like “That’s a fun image that we’ve stumbled into here, we’ve made a series of decisions and bad dice rolls that have made a good image.” But it was meeting him in Nacre, and… One of my favorite things on the show, fullstop, is that great moment when Austin, or a GM, brings a character back and everyone around the table goes “Oh, it’s you!”

AUSTIN: [smiling] Yeah.

JACK: “It’s that person!” Even if the characters don’t have that response, even if the characters are like “ Oh jeez, this is awful.” But seeing Emmanuel in Nacre was like “Alright! This is great! This is the- This is the ‘Oh, we’ve met after the work event.’ Unfortunately the work event was trying to murder each other on a pirate ship, [AUSTIN laughs] but now we’re in this city.” And that sort of flowed naturally from there. I think if we had at any point said “Alright, let’s roll some dice to see how that goes”...

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: That would have- It would have devalued that!

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: It would have felt really weird. “Oh, it turns out that they don’t like each other.”

AUSTIN: Right. Right. Well, and- and, I mean, that’s- the other thing there is there are other more interesting die rolls to happen around those characters, right?

JACK: One hundred percent! Oh, totally! It’s… It’s “Do they meet up?”, it’s “Do their paths cross in a way that you anticipate?”, it’s-

AUSTIN: Right. And there’s something- There’s something more complex than “Do they like each other?” right? Like, um-

JACK: A hundred percent! Yeah.

AUSTIN: “Do they like each other?” is a fantastic first step. Much more interesting is like “How are their lives complicated by a bunch of bullshit?”

[01:15:00]

AUSTIN: And I think like the Jacqui/Aria relationship is that completely, especially when we go into Firebrands and have Jill reenter, right?

JACK: Yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: And there was stuff there that was not about a die roll, but was about choices being made, and characterization being made, that was really, really powerful, I think, for those characters. Um.

AUSTIN: But, you know, I still think that there are lots of- There are still limits on like how we roleplay that stuff in different situations, right? Like, the one scene of Aria and Jacqui together on the ship was a recording that was just me and Ali, and it was- we knew it’d be a short recording because it was a vignette for- to play during Animal Out of Context, right? It was not a full episode where there were five people on the call, four people on the call. We weren’t like “Okay, we’re gonna pause action and *just* do this romantic scene.” And I don’t think we could have done it. Because like- We’re friends but like there is- There is something really intimate about a scene like that.

AUSTIN: Versus the scene where Emmanuel and Lem meet back up in Rosemarrow.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And that scene is brief and actually had the feeling of being with a friend when they get to meet- or when they get to see their partner for the first time in a while-

[crosstalk]
JACK: Yeah yeah yeah-
AUSTIN: -That has that vibe.
JACK: -that was- I enjoyed the awkwardness of that.
AUSTIN: Yeah, totally, totally.
JACK: Of “Oh, it’s this person!” - “Oh, it’s this person!” [AUSTIN laughs]

AUSTIN: Right, exactly. Um, and- and that super worked, but I don’t know that we would’ve paused that sequence

JACK: No, no.

AUSTIN: -to have that… And that's not… I don't think that that's prescriptive. Like, I wouldn't- If you are the sort of table where everyone can get on board for that, that's to- And you're not recording a podcast that has to go- you know, it has to meet a certain hour requirement, it's totally a thing worth thinking about, and pursuing in that way. But it is really about knowing what your players wanna do. Um. Art and Keith, do you have any thoughts on how to play this stuff?

KEITH: Um… I mean, I just want to say that Gig never flirted with Kent. Never, it didn't happen.

AUSTIN: [with slight doubt] O… kay.

KEITH: You- you said that that was- that was maybe a flag—I don't remember that ever happening. So I wanted you to know that I-

AUSTIN: [laughing a bit] You and I might have different feelings of what flirting looks like.

KEITH: [also laughing a bit] Maybe we- Yeah. Here's the- I've never flirted in my whole life. There's- That's the- So.

ART: I mean that's- That's definitely not true, [KEITH cackles gleefully] Keith. You've been on planet Earth too long for that.

AUSTIN: [obviously smiling] I think we might be flirting *right now*, I think this is…

ART: Yeah, this is smash cut to Austin and Keith's wedding, that's like… [AUSTIN and KEITH laugh]

JACK: The wedding invite says "Keith: I've never flirted in my life."

KEITH: [still laughing] I'm saying it… I've never flirt- [KEITH is laughing too much to talk]

JACK: "So, what's your meet cute?" "Oh, I've said on a live podcast that I've never flirted once."

[AUSTIN continues laughing throughout this.]

KEITH: [still laughing] I've never flirted…

ART: "We've met several times before that."

[They laugh some more.]

KEITH: I'm saying it to you, and I'm saying it to that shithead kid on Gift-3: I never flirted with Kent.

AUSTIN: [still laughing a little bit] With Kent, okay.

ART: You know it's on tape, right? [AUSTIN laughs quietly]

KEITH: You can play back the tape, I don't- I'm confident that there is no chemistry there. [KEITH is laughing a bit under his breath]

AUSTIN: He gave you that pen?

KEITH: And I had another second pen ready, there's reciprocal pens. Is that what flirting is these days?

AUSTIN: Yeah! Yes. These days.

JACK: These days, yes.

AUSTIN: I gave him my heart and he gave me this pen. You know. Um. Art, how about you?

ART: It's tricky. I've never been a person who's been like- "Yeah, I wanna have…"

KEITH: You've never flirted?

[AUSTIN laughs.]

JACK: Never.

ART: Like, I've never sought that out in a roleplaying game, I'm never like "Oh, what I wanna do with this character is to like explore this romantic thing." And part of it might be that like, I've never had really a GM that wasn't a close friend of mine.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Like, it's- you know, you know- I think it would feel a little odd. It sorta makes me wonder what the- When we had that famous lunch at the Grove where we talked about what the second half of Season 3 would look like for Hadrien, one of the options that ended up being rejected was that Rosana would come with him.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: And I really wonder what that season looks like. 'Cause, you know, we sure would have had to get there, you know.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, definitely.

ART: You know, right now, I- I think, you know, that- I think that Hadrien and Rosana have a better relationship than you see on screen because… their relationship is off-screen and it can be so many things there until, you know, we open the Schrödinger's box that causes it all to collapse in on itself.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ART: But, um- But, yeah, it's just like- We're gonna get there, and it's gonna happen but like- It's just- I've- I haven't thought of any of the characters I've played as super focused on that- on that stuff, certainly not in on screen capacity. I think, you know, Hadrien's life is for his faith, and so that's what we see on screen. Um. I think it's never-

AUSTIN: That's what makes his such a romantically… That, like- Fullstop, as a GM, that is what makes it fun for me to introduce characters who are Romantic (in a capital R like literary sense), and also romantic (like in a personal sense) for him, characters who have a- an intriguing relationships with him, who are in different power dynamics with him, who are fighting over loyalty for him, because *for him* it's so simple, right?

ART: Right.

AUSTIN: He's loyal to… He's faithful to Samothes, he loves his wife and his child, and that's it, open and close. Except that's not it. Because other people move in that world too, and make demands of him. Even if they don't say "I'm making a demand of you." And I think to that degree what I would say is... There is- One of the most important notes to have—and again, this is something that, {Em}, if you wanna talk to your GM about this—is that there are different degrees of what romance is, and different levels of abstraction, right?

AUSTIN: You know, we faded to black with- with Aria and Jacqui as they kissed, right? We *know* what happens there, there's some sort of makeout, there's something that happens there. I think we've had Em- Er, sorry, we've had Lem and Emmanuel hold hands *at most*, right? And gesture towards a hookup, and not actually showed it on screen.

JACK: I think we- No, we haven't showed it on screen, there was- There was that great bit where I get the boyfriend +1 and Keith is like "Wait, wait, what happened?" and everyone is like "They hooked up!" [JACK laughs.]

AUSTIN: Right, because we have a different degree of abstraction in what we- then- then what maybe came across.

JACK: Oh yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: But then you can go even further than that, and say like “I’m interested in having a character who is basically just flirting with characters, who is just in that mode…” I think a lot about the Dragon Age: Inquisition character…

JACK: Oh, yeah! Is it Paola?.. No. It’s…

AUSTIN: What is her name? Is it..? No… She’s the dwarf scout?..

JACK: Oh, Scout Harding! Scout Harding!

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah, Scout Harding. Who is just the biggest flirt in that game. I love her to death. She goes into new areas, you go there to meet her, you have like a few back and forth fun little-

JACK: You get like themed flirting, very themed…

AUSTIN: Exactly, exactly! “This place is a desert, but you’re a fresh- You’re a tall cup of water”, or whatever it is, right? She’s so good! And you can have that conversation with your GM that’s like “What I’m interested in is that sort of like banter.” Or you could have a conversation that’s like “I’m interested in having already had an established relationship with this character, where we have a degree of intimacy where we can trust each other, and we know we love and respect each other.” And that’s just comes out in play the way any sort of close relationship would, where you- Instead of saying “My character’s #1 priority is their faith” you’re sayin “My character’s #1 priority is my relationship with this NPC.” And you can have everything in between that, in between like literally individual moments of flirting to “We are *in* a relationship, and really the focus is on each other as partners, and as backup and as, you know, support.” And- and both of those I think are good things to try out, you know.

KEITH: I wanna go back and answer this question not as a joke.

AUSTIN: Okay. [KEITH laughs]

KEITH: So, the- And in two separate ways. I actually forgot the first way, so maybe I’ll skip to the second way.

AUSTIN: [laughing a bit] Okay. Then we’ll see if the first way comes back.

KEITH: -if it comes back. Uh… And this I guess this has a lot to do with priorities also… Oh, I do remember the first way. The first thing is that I understand and am intentional about playing characters that I really like, and so I understand different of my characters as like- like attractive, or sexual people, [AUSTIN: Hmm.] but just don’t feel comfortable like in playing that out in a regular game.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: So, when we get to something like COUNTER/Weight, and like the Tower scenes…

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Which, it's two scenes, right?

AUSTIN: It's two scenes.

KEITH: It's the dancing scene, [AUSTIN: Yeah.] and then the picking Laser Ted over Tower to rescue scene.

AUSTIN: Right. There's a third scene in the finale that is... depressing.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: But those are the two basic scenes, yes.

KEITH: Right. Those- those are the scenes where there's like- a conversation.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: But- Either between the characters or between, like, us.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

KEITH: As far as I remember the finale part was just like narration? I can't remember.

AUSTIN: Tower shows up in a- In a way that presents him as- [KEITH: Yeah.] as not a positive character.

KEITH: Right. Um. So because that stuff isn't like a priority to me, like, Tower's like "Oh, this was this really nice moment," but then I have like Lazer Ted who's like Fero's- or like, Mako's friend. Man, I just did something that I thought I'd never do! [KEITH laughs] Mess up my own characters' names!

AUSTIN: Wow! Wow!

KEITH: I guess I give people a lot of shit 'cause they get it wrong a lot, but I got it wrong there. And I actually- I've seen people before being frustrated about that decision. And I think I should- I think I'm trying to- I think I wanna get across those two things, like, I understand, like, my ideas and people's ideas of Mako vs what I'm actually want to be roleplaying, and then taking into

account that like one nice moment on screen is like different than like an elegant actual friendship relationship that that character had with Ted.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

KEITH: Which- That just goes back to what you were talking about characters that have different priorities.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Which is like… If that was a priority of mine maybe Tower was someone that I would- that I like actually for real knew, like really well. Uh, vs like Ted.

AUSTIN: Both as like in play?.. Right, right right.

KEITH: Like in play, yeah, yeah, like in my head. In my head my version of Mako's past doesn't have a lot of Tower in it.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: But like my version of Mako does have a lot of Ted in it.

AUSTIN: So, tons of Ted.

KEITH: Right, tons, lots of Ted.

AUSTIN: Which actually goes back to something else, right? Which is like, Tower was a character I invented, right? I said "There is this boy, they're named Tower," right?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Whereas, literally, Lazer Ted comes from a situation where *you* say "Can I roll to know somebody?" basically.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: And introduce somebody. And I say, "Yeah, sure, you do, what's his name?" And you go "Lazer Ted." And… [KEITH laughs]

KEITH: And there he was!

AUSTIN: There he is. Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: Any other thoughts on this, Art or Jack? Um, I will say like- One thing that I'll say is we don't do it that often but there is something really nice about walking that road with a player, and… It is, I think, a bad thing- Not a bad thing. I think it reflects a lack of familiarity with that style of play that is- That reflects a failure of cultural education, in which we don't think of romantic interaction- We feel more comfortable describing, like, a cool fight scene than we do a really interesting romantic interaction. And it's fine to have that interest, but I wish we had the vocabulary for romance that we have for magic, if that makes sense.

KEITH: Yeah, I'm bad emotionally.

AUSTIN: Right, and we're all broken people, for sure. [AUSTIN laughs] But I do think that this is like- It's a thing I'm happy to lean into. And that leans into this final question here- {Em}'s final part of the question here, which is **Is y'all's perspectives changed by the fact that you have fans who are also invested in the characters' romantic lives?**

AUSTIN: Like yes and no, right? Samot and Samothes are for *me*, do you know what I mean? Like- They're mine. Y'all can also hang out around them, but like [AUSTIN clicks his tongue] that's me, mostly. Arrell and Alyosha—they serve me, they serve my interest. Like, I wanted to write twenty episodes of epistolary romantic letters between these two dudes, like that's- That's Austin. And so, so- I don't want everybody to be like "Oh yeah, we're going down this road *because* fans wanted more romance."

AUSTIN: But what I *will* say is like—it's real nice to like know that there's a subset of fans who responds to that stuff, and who can enable us to pursue that stuff, right? Like, in seeing how many fans loved Aria and Jacqui is why we ever, you know- Not why, but like it's emboldening in some ways to be like, "Oh, awesome! That *is* something that we can deal with on the show, and those are relationships that we can dig into." People… Some people… There are fans, there have been fans who have like not liked that stuff, but overwhelmingly it has been people who really responded well to their relationship on screen, to the scenes with Lem and- and Emmanuel, and the same these last few weeks, with ⌜Signet⌝ and various characters.

AUSTIN: That stuff has been emboldening to walk directions we are interested in already, and that's really great. In the same way that it's been emboldening- It's always been emboldening that people like really interesting cinematic intros or descriptions of things, and that like our version of tabletop games, where it's not just, you know, you walk into the dungeon and here's a puzzle. Not that there's anything wrong with that, but like… It would be shitty if we were getting comments that are like "[tongue clicking] Not enough dungeon puzzles on Friends at the Table" [JACK laughs.]

JACK: God, we don't solve many puzzles, do we?

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yeah, we *don't* solve many puzzles.

[01:30:00]

AUSTIN: I've been thinking about that a lot lately, because we don't- Every once in a while I see a puzzle I love-

JACK: And if you gave us puzzles, we'd fail them.

AUSTIN: Probably.

ART: Not good at puzzles.

AUSTIN: You're not, no.

JACK: We're not good at puzzles, we're-

KEITH: I'm pretty good at puzzles.

JACK: Keith's fairly good at puzzles, we're *extremely* good at lateral thinking. Unfortunately we often think ourselves laterally out of a puzzle with a very easy solution. [JACK laughs quietly]

AUSTIN: Right, right.

ART: I have two really good- what I think are really good ideas for April Fools' Day episodes of our show, [AUSTIN sighs]

AUSTIN: Okay…

ART: that are both like too difficult to do, [AUSTIN: Uh-huh.] because- Because it takes so much time and no one would find it that funny. Should I say this out loud or should save this for-

KEITH: So you're saying the prank is that we actually have to do it.

ART: Yeah, the bad thing is that we would have to do it. Should I say it or should I save them?

KEITH: Yeah, save then, save them. I would love to hear it behind closed doors and then decide it's the worst idea.

AUSTIN: And *then* decide if we should do them or not… Okay, great.

ART: We shouldn't do it. I'm telling you now, we should *not* do them.

AUSTIN: [with fond exasperation] Okay.

KEITH: I feel maybe we should! I don't know what they are, but I'm thinking maybe we should do this.

AUSTIN: Oh my God.

KEITH: Is it too late to do it- Is it too late to do it for April Fools' this year anyway?

JACK: Yes. Keith-

ART: Yes. Is it too late to do it two weeks ago? Yes, I should think so.

JACK: Keith, that's not how April Fools' works!

KEITH: We could do it, we could put it out as April Fools' but on 4/20. The second April Fools'.

AUSTIN: On 4/20, yeah, that's exactly I was thinking. I was thinking four-twenty instead of four-onety, so… [KEITH laughs]

KEITH: Yeah, it's literally- it's the reverse of four-onety.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Uh-huh. Uh. I think that's gonna do it for us unless anyone has any more romantic interest conversations.

KEITH: Um, my last setting is: Don't ta- Austin, don't take me not being comfortable playing these scenes out as an invitation to stop presenting them because that's f-

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'll keep presenting them. Maybe one of them will hit and you'll be like "Oh, this is the one. This is the one."

KEITH: Yeah, maybe one of them will hit.

AUSTIN: Totally, totally. I mean, so. What I'll say is like, again, it's interesting to me because- The degree to when I said "yes and no" about "is it changed by the fact that you have fans who are also invested in your characters' romantic lives?"

AUSTIN: The "yes" is I feel emboldened to have scenes like the one between Cascabel and Even where they hang out and eat dinner. And, you know, there's nothing- They weren't holding hands in that scene, they weren't making out. But like, that is a domestic detail that... in a Season 1 version of that maybe what I'd've done is been like "Hey, you do- You and Cascabel have dinner together. Alright, who's next?" Do you know what I mean? And instead is was like "Okay, where is it?" I'm asking questions to kind of fill in the gap a little bit, and open that door in both the player's mind, in the audience's mind, and then just like in the focus of the space. I'm

letting the camera hang in those spaces in order to add that flare. Even if it doesn't necessarily ever become the focal point of an entire episode, do you know what I mean?

KEITH: Hm.

AUSTIN: I think that Absolute Territory, the- the- uh-

[crosstalk]
KEITH: Oh, I love that. Fuck, that's not my f- I think that's… that was my friend.
AUSTIN: The Lady Blackbird, that was really fun.
KEITH: That was so fun!

AUSTIN: It was explicit! It was explicit that {Captain Flashback} in Absolute- like really wanted Absolute Territory, and that led to some really funny and charming bits-

KEITH: Right. Right.

AUSTIN: -between the two of them, and also Half Past.

KEITH: 'Cause the two things that I get to do- The first is that I can't- I can't just give in because then I would be denying the arc of the show, like, by just being interested.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: But then the second thing is that I get to do the meta-version of the thing I do anyway.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Yeah. Exactly.

AUSTIN: Alright, this is gonna do it for us this week, as always you can send questions to tipsatthetable@gmail.com. We have 26 pages of those, but every time we do these we get new ones in that are so good that they kind of float to the top because we kind of want to address them. And seeing them in the inbox is like "Oh man, I definitely have a good answer for this one!" And so, a lot of the ones that we did this week, we get a mix of old and new. So, one of those has been in there since the very beginning of this- of the Tips streams. [KEITH hums] So it's not that we don't go back into the bucket, so to speak. But, but- you know, do keep sending us questions. Again, tipsatthetable@gmail.com.

AUSTIN: And as always, thank you for supporting us at friendsatthetable.cash. One more time, where can people find you, Keith?

KEITH: You can me on Twitter @keithjcarberry. You can find the Let's Plays that I do at youtube.com/RunButton and remember, last Saturday in April, 24-hour RunButton marathon at 7 PM Eastern Time.

AUSTIN: There you go. Also, Jack de Quidt, what about you?

JACK: You can find me on Twitter @notquitereal and buy any of the music featured on the show at NotQuiteReal.bandcamp.com. Uh, you can find me watching Keith's marathon. [AUSTIN laughs] Maybe on it for like a little.

AUSTIN: For a little bit.

KEITH: Yeah, that'd be great. I would love everyone that is here- everyone- I invented everyone that's on Friends at the Table last month, to be honest. So.

AUSTIN: That's true, you did. I keep thinking I'm missing it, and I haven't missed it yet, which is good.

JACK: Yeah, me too, I think that's why I have-

KEITH: No, no, I would remind you.

JACK: RSVPd, because I'm scared that I'm missing it.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Also joining us, again, Art Tebbel- Art Matinez-Tebbel. Where can people find you?

ART: You can find me on Twitter @atebbel, and @onesongpo on Twitter. Um.

AUSTIN: New episode of that tomorrow.

ART: Oh, great. We should- We need to record another one then. [JACK laughs] I had to listen to some Kanye West songs this week.

AUSTIN: We gotta. [ART: Yeah.] We gotta record another couple of them. This next one is rough.

KEITH: I listened to that! It's like basically my first- It's like the first time I've listened to more than like three Kanye West songs.

AUSTIN: That's good.

KEITH: Yeah, that's good.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Awesome. This next one has some rough parings, Art.

ART: Send us money, Kanye, we're getting you new listeners.

AUSTIN: Kanye… [KEITH: Yeah.] Did you see Kanye is back on Twitter yesterday- or the other day?

ART: But it's gone, right? It's gone again?

AUSTIN: He- He logged on, and his- Oh wait, [very excitedly] he tweeted 12 minutes ago!

KEITH: What was it? Can you read it?

AUSTIN: "I asked my friend to design this neck tat for me" and it just says Saint West in like a metal font. [KEITH laughs] It's *extremely* funny, I'm gonna put it in the chat.

JACK: I've got to see this right now.

AUSTIN: This is very good, this is extremely good. And then 46 minutes ago he- he tweeted "early 350 photoshop I showed Louise Wilson these last night I saw her." [AUSTIN laughs a bit] And they are like- they're Yeezies. He's been tweeting a lot today. So, he deleted a lot of old tweets yesterday, but he's back. He's back-

KEITH: Wait, didn't you reference him deleting old tweets on the episode of the podcast that I just listened to?

AUSTIN: Uh, you know…

KEITH: 'cause this is second or third time he's deleting old tweets?

AUSTIN: He's done that in the past. He did that- years and years ago he deleted a bunch of really good old tweets.

KEITH: This sucks.

AUSTIN: You saw his old tweets, right?

KEITH: Uh, a couple, not a ton. I don't follow him on Twitter.

AUSTIN: Okay. Well, you've missed out on some really fantastic ones. I'm just- I'm just gonna read them now, and these will be your inspiration to go listen to One Song Pod.

AUSTIN: Uh, here's a good one. "I hate when I'm on a flight and I wake up with a water bottle next to me like oh great now I gotta be responsible for this water bottle" [AUSTIN and KEITH laugh]

KEITH: Yeah, that's the one that you read on the show, that was funny.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay, good.

KEITH: That was really funny.

AUSTIN: Good. How about this one: "I make awesome decisions in bike stores!!!" [KEITH laughs gleefully] He was genuinely incredibly funny! He went table shopping…

KEITH: He was doing- He was doing that weird thing with Larry David too, right?

AUSTIN: What was he..? What? What was he doing?

KEITH: Larry David was teaching him how to do improv so that he could have a Curb Your Enthusiasm show. He was gonna have an improv comedy show.

AUSTIN: Oh, I didn't know this!

KEITH: IN the vein Curb Your Enthusiasm. Yeah, and so he was being taught how to do like situational retroscripting improv.

AUSTIN: Right. That makes sense. I-

KEITH: And it just, like, fell though. I would have wat-

AUSTIN: I would've watched that.

KEITH: I remember years ago when I had only heard like literally two Kanye West songs ever being like "I would watch the sht out of that!" [AUSTIN laughs] It sounded like he was for real funny, too! People who were teaching him were like "Yeah, he was good, he was funny!"

AUSTIN: He was- He was- God. "Fur pillows are hard to actually sleep on." Agreed, Kanye. Fur pillows are actually hard…

KEITH: Yeah, they're- really hard, super hard.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I bet. "I specifically ordered persian rugs with cherub imagery!!! What do I have to do to get a simple persian rug with cherub imagery uuuuugh" Good. [KEITH laughs] Just Kanye West problems, extremely, extremely good.

AUSTIN: Alright, uh, is that everybody? Is that- Jack, we talked about your music, we talked about One Pod Only… Follow me on Twitter @austin_walker. As always, follow the show @friends_table, and support us over at friendsatthetable.cash.

AUSTIN: Thanks so much, everybody! I hope you all have a great night!