

Interview with Marcus — Transcript

January 27, 2021

Finch: Is it recording? Okay, yes. Yes. Alright! Hello me in the future. It is Wednesday, January 27th 2021, 5:45pm almost exactly Eastern time. And tonight I am talking with Marcus. Hey Marcus!

Marcus: [00:24] Hi!

Finch: [00:25] Hello! First question I ask everyone is like, say a little about yourself. Like, who are you?

Marcus: [00:32] Oh, my God, (*Finch laughs*) why is this so much pressure. Um, okay I'm Marcus, I'm 23 and a gay trans man and an art student. I like cats and *Dragon Age* and also *Friends at the Table*.

Finch: [00:51] That sums it up.

Marcus: [00:53] Yeah.

Finch: [00:54] Yeah, it's really just whatever you want to bring into the space, you know.

Marcus: [00:58] Okay.

Finch: Um...

Marcus: [01:00] Just reads you my Carrd.

Finch: [01:01] Yeah! (*Finch laughs*) Oh boy, I, I'm always just tempted to be like, "Ah yes, my, my interview pitch." It took so long to get out of like job interview, informational interview mode and into talking about fandom with friends mode. Well, I guess, the second question I have is, you already kind of hit on which is like, how do you describe, just like, gender and sexuality, for you?

Marcus: [01:28] Um, alright, that's a complicated question. I'm not attracted to women, I know that, so I, I describe myself as gay but it's like men and non-women? Um... gender... I usually tell people that I'm like a binary trans man just for ease of conversation, but I definitely identify on some level is non-binary, like, mostly a guy but not entirely and I don't know if that's because of like, innate gender feelings or if it's just because I don't feel entirely like a man when compared to cis men? It's a mystery. Anyway.

Finch: [02:18] Yeah. So much that resonates both the like, sometimes it's easier to not have to explain yourself to people, especially cis people.

Marcus: [02:30] Mm hmm.

Finch: [02:31] Yeah, I didn't realize I was trans for the longest time because you want to know what middle and high school boys are? Disgusting!

Marcus: [02:37] They sure are.

Finch: [02:38] Just gross! I was like, "I don't want to do that!" Um...

Marcus: [02:42] I had an agender lesbian phase right out of high school. Anyway.

Finch: **[02:48]** Yeah, I was non-binary for a while, like just non-binary. Everyone in high school thought I was a lesbian, because I had like short pink hair and I was just like, “yeah okay sure. Whatever—”

Marcus: **[03:02]** (overlapping) I also had short pink hair for a while. (*Finch laughs*)

Finch: **[03:04]** Fellas is it gay if you cut your hair short and dye it pink? Yes.

Marcus: **[03:08]** Maybe a little bit, yeah.

Finch: **[03:12]** Yeah, well then. My third question is, so in our pre-interview, we talked a bit about, you know, you've been in fandom spaces for a while. You talked about sort of Tumblr and *Supernatural* and a bunch of other sort of... I don't know, I'd say maybe big fandoms, but, how did you get from that to actual play podcasts and *Friends at the Table*?

Marcus: **[03:35]** Um, well I listened to *The Adventure Zone* a few years ago, because I mean, um, I think I heard about it through Tumblr because it was pretty popular at the time. I started listening before the Balance arc ended so it was like... you've listened to *TAZ*, right?

Finch: **[03:53]** I've listened to Balance, yeah.

Marcus: **[03:54]** Okay, um, it was like right after *Pedals to the Metal*, I think, is when I started listening to it, um. But I didn't really listen to other actual play podcasts for a long time, I tried finding other *D&D* podcasts and there was nothing that I like really super enjoyed. And then... okay, so I followed Annie [Johnston-Glick] on Instagram like years ago and she doesn't really post there anymore, but like I saw some of her *Friends at the Table* art and I was like, “That's neat!” and I didn't know what it was, and then Ty was like, “Hey, you should listen to *Friends at the Table*,” and I was like “Oh, I know what that is!” Um, and there's also like some overlap between people who are into *Dragon Age* and people who are into the *Friends at the Table*, and specifically there's a fic author, who I really like, who has written both SamSam stuff and Dorian/Bull stuff, and I know that they know Linda because some of their fic are like gifts to her, um.

But anyway, I saw their like *Friends at the Table* content before I actually started listening to the show? So it was like, it was, it was in the periphery of my awareness. Um, and then I started listening to it in like August of 2019, I think? I still have not, like, really branched out to listening to other actual play podcasts because I feel like I've been spoiled.

Finch: **[05:33]** Yeah, yeah. What's kept you involved in the fandom?

Marcus: **[05:42]** Um... I mean, I obviously still enjoy the, like, parts of the show that are coming out even though I'm still super behind on Partizan, but like, I don't know, it's been really nice having like Twitter mutuals who are into *Friends at the Table* and I talk with Ty about it like a lot. And it also... so—how do I explain this. I find that I have a much easier time being motivated to make art when I have like a really intense like media hyperfixation. And that's mostly been *Dragon Age*, but like, it's been nice to have something that I enjoy enough that I want to make art for it. And like being any kind of content creator kind of keeps you in a fandom space to some degree, if that makes sense.

Finch: **[06:42]** No, that does, that really does. You're speaking to both the sort of social aspect and the social angle and also, you know, I don't think the art is separated from the social, it sounds like? Where maybe you get feedback on your art and that sort of is motivating in a way?

Marcus: **[07:00]** Yeah, yeah for sure, and like—I don't know it's, it's a little bit different on Twitter just because, like, content dies so quickly, and I really hate that aspect of it, but like something that makes me very happy, is that, like, my *Friends at the Table* art that I post on Tumblr as opposed to things that I post for other fandoms, like, even if it's not as popular as stuff that I post that's like *Dragon Age* content, people always leave really nice things in the tags and that makes me happy. Whereas like on Twitter, people are too scared to comment on things, I think. But like... I don't know, it's just nice getting positive feedback either over like how my art looks or ideas that I had. Like my SamSam/Hadrian art probably got like four or five different people who tagged it with something like “OP this fucks” so like, that's great.

Finch: **[07:54]** Oh, I miss Tumblr, I miss tagging on Tumblr.

Marcus: Yeah.

Finch: Hell website in a lot of ways, but I do miss being able to like, leave essays in the tags? Miss that a lot...

Marcus: **[08:09]** It's definitely like more unobtrusive than like, leaving things in replies. And there's also like no guarantee that what you say in the tags is going to be seen by the person who made it, unless they're like me and they check those things compulsively, so.

Finch: **[08:40]** (pause) What happened is, I have a list of questions and then I'll try and come up with them on the fly, so if I'm pausing for a long period of time, it means I'm trying to organize my thoughts... let's see, um...

Marcus: **[08:51]** Take your time.

Finch: **[08:57]** I do you want to hear more about what it's like to do art, because I think it's different from when I write fic? Which very often I'm just like I will spend months on a fic and I'm lucky if it gets 100 hits, because that's just not what Twitter, goes towards? So I'm curious if you have like, what's a, what's a fandom art moment that sort of stuck with you, like an interaction that stuck with you, either positive or negative?

Marcus: **[09:22]** One time Austin Walker liked the piece of art that I made and I cried. (*Finch laughs*)

Finch: **[09:29]** Could you say more on that?

Marcus: **[09:31]** Um, I mean that's most of it, I was not expecting like people from the cast to see it, it was art that I did of Adelaide forever ago, um. But I just was like in a state of shock. I'd had other interactions with people in the cast before, like one time Keith replied to me and I felt like I was going to have an anxiety attack at work, because it was so overwhelming, um. But anyway, it just was like, “Wow, Austin.” That's a whole nother level. Um. And there's, there's been a few other times that like people in the cast like my artwork, like—oh, one time, Sylvi liked art of Samot that I posted, and the caption was something about him being like a non-dysphoric trans man, and that also made me lose it. Anyway.

Finch: **[10:24]** I mean I just think everyone is trans. Like, all the characters are trans, so...

Marcus: **[10:29]** And you would be right.

Finch: **[10:30]** Yeah! Hadrian/Rosana T4T.

Marcus: **[10:36]** Exactly.

Finch: **[10:37]** Well, what you're kind of getting at is something that we also talked about in the pre-interview which is like parasocial relationships and your relationship to the cast members. So like, how do you relate to the cast members, if at all?

Marcus: **[10:51]** I mean, I follow most of them on Twitter I don't usually like, say things in their replies, because I don't want to be that guy. I guess that I have done that with Keith a few times, but that's mostly just because sometimes he posts things, like either opinions about being a barista or about like his experience with coffee and tea snobbery, and like, there's been a couple of times that I've replied to his tweets about that and he's responded simply completely unrelated to *Friends at the Table*. Um... I lost the thread of this question, I'm so sorry.

Finch: **[11:28]** Nothing to apologize for! Just generally like how you relate to the cast members.

Marcus: **[11:36]** I don't know, I guess I... I try really hard to like, um, not establish parasocial relationships just because like, especially in bigger fandoms that I've been in, that's been like a really big issue. I know we're going to talk about *Supernatural* later, but like... the relationship that people in *Supernatural* fandom have to the cast is absolutely bizarre and it's like, just... on a horrible level compared to like even other big fandoms that I've been in. And like, I don't want to make people uncomfortable by acting like I know them when I don't! So that's part of it, I guess.

[12:29] Although... I don't know, I... when you're someone who like, tries to consume a lot of content that are, that's like made by people who are involved in a thing that you like, um, you can start to feel like you know them, even though you don't and like, that's really weird. Like, um, I think it was in an episode of *Autumn in Hieron*, Keith said something about a podcast that he was doing called *How Are You Today?* and there's like five episodes of it and I listened to all of them. And one of them was just Austin, um, talking about a failed romantic endeavor that he had with some girl from his work for like literally like an hour and a half. And it was so like weird and uncomfortable to experience, and this was like just posted like years ago it was probably like 2014 or something like that, but like, I listened to the whole thing and then I was like, "I feel like I shouldn't have heard that!"

[13:35] Anyway, um, again I just think that like, maintaining boundaries and keeping awareness of the fact that you don't actually know these people, no matter how much you feel like you do, is like an important thing.

Finch: **[13:52]** Yeah, absolutely, and what you said about, you know, "I don't want to be that guy and the replies." The uh, the mythical figure of the reply guy.

Marcus: **[14:02]** Yes, exactly yeah.

Finch: **[14:04]** I'm curious, though, about how sort of... what I'm hearing from you is both kind of respecting boundaries, but then also sort of having conversations unrelated to *Friends at the Table*. And to me that that's really interesting because, like, how do you balance those sort of two things? Because on the surface, it seems like having conversations with people about things that

aren't the show is like assuming familiarity or friendship and it's not it's what's happening here but... hm.

Marcus: **[14:33]** Can't believe you're calling me out for talking to Keith. (*Finch and Marcus laugh*)

Finch: **[14:37]** That wasn't a question, which is why I like... that was a question, but like not a question so like—

Marcus: (overlapping) Okay—

Finch: (overlapping) —you don't need to respond, but if you want to you can.

Marcus: **[14:47]** It was rhetorical. Um... I don't know, I. The, the short answer is sometimes I see people talking about things that I know about and I want to weigh in, which is like... again, a terrible thing to do on Twitter but, sometimes the compulsion is just too strong. Especially when it comes to having the chance to complain about my job, so.

Finch: **[15:16]** Yeah... and I'm also getting the sense that it's like, you know, places where—that you're being very careful about it and it's not, you know... Twitter is this weird dichotomy between public platform and private conversation, and the social norms are, like, boundaries and social norms are weird, where like you can, in theory, talk to, talk to anyone, but you know.

Marcus: **[15:41]** Yeah and it's like, like you said, like it's not about *Friends at the Table* so it's like a little bit more personal than that, but it also has always been stuff that is like not actually personal and it's related to like... well I mean I guess it is, but it's not like... what am I saying... it's personal but only in the sense that like, that's something that Keith knows a lot about because it's a hobby and also something that both him and Isaac have done for work for a long time, and that he has talked about a lot on Twitter, or at least used to, like this was a while ago but, Keith Carberry also used to work at Starbucks, so.

Finch: **[16:23]** So you can both complain to each other.

Marcus: Yep.

Finch: **[16:27]** Yes, exactly. Well, this is sort of circling around a big question I have, which is, how would you describe the *Friends at the Table* fan community? Like, what's it like?

Marcus: **[16:40]** Um, it's... pretty good. I mean... we talked about this a bit in like the pre-interview thing, but it's just so much different than larger fandoms, um... Like, I feel like I have at least a periphery awareness of like, half of the people who are into it on Twitter just because like, if I'm not mutuals with them or follow them like I probably know people who do, um, cause it's pretty small. And, like, for the most part, um, I really like the fandom. I think that people are pretty welcoming. I've only ever gotten like positive feedback on stuff that I've posted. I definitely feel like there is a higher proportion of like gay and trans people than other fandom spaces that I've been in?

[17:42] But—and this is something that we've also talked about before—I do feel like it's kind of insular which is really weird because, again, like in bigger fandoms you come across a lot of people who have opinions about things that you don't share. And for the most part, like with *Supernatural* or like *Star Wars*, like... people usually avoid each other, unless you're someone who

is going out of your way to run, like, an anti-Reylo blog, or if you're one of the mods of anti-anti-Wincest, like... Anyway, um... but like, again people will have those opinions that you don't share, and you don't usually end up interacting with them. So like that thing with the Clem/Gucci fic that people were freaking out about was just really weird to witness, because I hadn't really seen anything like that happen before, besides... um, I did know some people who are involved in a *Star War* callout post, but like that was about racism?? Um, like people writing racist content, rather than like the sexual content aspect of it? I don't know if that makes sense. So. Anyway, point being, like, I definitely feel like there's pros and cons of it being much smaller than other spaces that I've been in.

Finch: **[19:21]** I'm curious, could you say a little more about what happened with the Clem/Gucci fic, just from your point of view?

Marcus: **[19:28]** Um, I mean I didn't like super understand why people were up in arms about it? And, like I, on the one hand, (*Marcus sighs*) I understand why people would be bothered by it, but like, I don't agree with some of the reasons why? Like, I remember—I think the reason that I found out about it because, like, people who I didn't know had been posting about it on Twitter or whatever um. I saw a tweet that was about like, how they didn't think that the defense of it being transactional sex was reasonable? And I was just kind of like, well, I know lots of—not lots of people—but like I've known a handful of people who have done survival sex work and, like, it really is not that much different. Like, you would have to make the argument that any of those situations where someone is, like, trading sex for food or a place to stay is the same level of non-consent as what was in that fic and like, the people that I've talked to who have done survival sex work, like an old roommate of mine or somebody else that I'm pretty good friends with like, um... they definitely don't seem to like view it as non-consensual in that way. Not that aspect of it, at least. Like, I don't know it's, it's just really difficult to draw hard lines about things like that. Again, everything I say I'm like, “does this make sense?” Um, ADHD brain means it's impossible for me to make a coherent sentence.

Finch: **[21:30]** No, you're, it is making perfect sense. I'm asking to clarify in part for recording and, in part because I sort of want to hear what, what makes you think to bring it up. And what I'm kind of hearing is that it, it felt weird because it was this—it was drawing hard lines in a fandom where those sort of lines, maybe usually go unspoken? Um...

Marcus: **[21:58]** It was, it was the first time that I had seen something like that happen, like such an overt criticism of fan contents that someone made for *Friends at the Table*? Um. And I don't know, it—like I said, it kind of rubbed me wrong, so I brought it up with Ty and [redacted], cause I was like, “Hey is this whack or is it just me?” and Ty was like, “No I think that's kind of whack” and [redacted], as someone who has done sex work before was like, “Yeah that's definitely whack.” Um. So just like, it really struck me—the person who posted the tweet that I saw, um, really struck me as like, “I feel like this person has never had a conversation with a sex worker before.” Again, just because, like I've known a handful of people who have done survival sex work and talk to them about it fairly extensively, so... um...

[23:03] But again, also like, the dichotomy between things like that generally going unnoticed or uncriticized in other larger spaces, just because people are like, “Okay, well, this is like content that I don't like, but I don't like, go out of my way to harass people about it specifically.” Um, it's

just really weird like criticizing it publicly is one thing, but also like, I know that people went and like commented on the person's fic and told them to take it down and then got mad when the comments got locked, it's like what do you expect to happen? If you don't know that person, I don't know why you would think that they would be receptive to that kind of criticism.

Finch: **[23:57]** Yeah, I think it sort of speaks to the small size of the fandom in a way, because what I'm hearing you say is that, in a big fandom, stuff that people find—I mean, “problematic” gets thrown around to mean a lot of different things. But, maybe things that people find contrary to the values that they would want to see in their media that in something like *Star Wars* or *Supernatural*, it becomes either like, “I don't really know those people so it's not—like, I can't do anything about it,” or “They're just going to go off and be, like, bad or problematic over there.”

Marcus: Yeah.

Finch: **[24:38]** Whereas, perhaps the small size of *Friends at the Table* fandom makes it so that it's like, there aren't these separate circles it's just one circle and then people kind of get defensive about their circle.

Marcus: **[24:49]** Yeah, that makes sense. Um, and like, when you get into really, really big spaces, like, you definitely have sub-communities of like, antis, and fucking anti-antis, um. But like, it's fairly easy to avoid those people if you're not trying to interact with them. I used to be someone that started a lot of fights on Tumblr, so like, I definitely am blocked by a fair handful of Wincest blogs still, but like I don't do that anymore, and I don't see Wincest content ever, so that's something.

Finch: **[25:28]** God, it—maybe fandom was a mistake?

Marcus: **[25:31]** I think you might be right. (*Finch laughs*)

Finch: **[25:35]** Yeah I, I've completely leveled the entire field of fans studies by just saying, “fandom bad, goodbye.” (*Marcus laughs*)

Marcus: **[25:41]** And you would be right.

Finch: **[25:42]** And I'd be right. Yeah it's weird, I'm... two seconds while I jot this down and see if it's actually a question, or if I'm just about to do the thing that old professors do at grad student talks, where they're like, “I have a question that's just a summary of my most recent paper, what do you think of it?” (*Marcus laughs*)

Marcus: **[26:03]** Okay. (pause)

Finch: **[26:22]** Yep, not a question, a statement. So—

Marcus: **[26:23]** (overlapping) Okay.

Finch: **[26:24]** —back to actual questions, um. Um... (*Finch hums*) trying to think of where is a good place to go...

[26:42] Well, I guess, speaking then to... large and small fandoms, or maybe how *Friends at the Table* is different, we talked in our pre-interview conversation about the *Supernatural* fandom. On a sort of broad level like, how does *Friends at the Table* compare?

Marcus: **[27:05]** Jesus Christ, it's so, it's so different. Um, I will also say, though, that like, the Supernatural fandom now is a lot different than it used to be, you know, fucking six years ago, when I was in high school and probably most of the people that I knew who were into it were also in high school. Um... (*Marcus sighs*) I don't know, it's... you have to try a lot harder to, like, establish yourself in smaller circles in a large fandom versus like *Friends at the Table* fandom. I always found it harder to, like, get to know people? In part because there's a lot of like really popular content creators and, of course, like that's who you're gonna follow first when you're just getting into something. Um, and like, usually those people don't want to be mutuals with like a 17-year-old with bad opinions about TV.

[28:15] Um, and like, consuming content is also just a very different experience, like—okay, I, it's been a long time since I've gone into like a specific ship tag for *Friends at the Table* on Ao3, but like I would say a lot of them are probably between like 10 and 100 fics, tops. And then, like, my other fandom that I'm mostly involved in right now is *Dragon Age* and like, more popular ships like Dorian and Bull or Anders and Fenris, whatever, they're like two thousand fics in that tag. And like, even rare pairs usually have as much content as the most popular *Friends at the Table* ships. Last time that I checked, Dean and Castiel had 98,000 fics in their tag on Ao3. Um, and like trying to filter through that and find content that you're actually interested in is so difficult.

[29:20] And like trying to get back into it after like not being involved in the fandom for so long has been kind of weird because, like I don't know who like any of the good fic authors are anymore, or like the fan artists are that people follow. And there's also, like... *Supernatural* is a cringe interest so I've been like, avoiding posting about it too much on Tumblr because I literally have had people complain about it. I had someone who I literally had been mutuals with for *three years* unfollow me over *Supernatural* and then vague post about me without, like, soft blocking me?! (*Finch and Marcus laugh*)

Finch: **[30:01]** OOMF is posting cringe.

Marcus: **[30:03]** Yeah literally. It was like, "Okay, you know, that's fair. Like, I guess I deserve that." But like, I don't know, it's... I'm getting sidetracked again. Um. Going back to like what I started with, um, you just have to, like—or at least in my experience—make more of an effort to establish yourself in certain like social groups. And I, like, had a very specific group of people that I interacted with, you know, forever ago. Um, and it seemed to take a lot more effort on my part to like, become friends with people or like go out of my way to talk to people, again cause like, most content creators are not going to you know follow every single person who follows them. So, like, I would, I don't know incessantly like send people asks and reply to their posts in an attempt to make friends. Um.

[31:12] I recently reconnected with one of these people, cause we've been like mutuals on other social media for a long time but haven't, haven't talked. And I just was like thinking, the other day, because I was talking to her about our respective experiences with the *Supernatural* fandom, um. Just remembering that like, one time I sent her an ask, and she responded by putting my first name in it, I was so shocked that she, like, knew who I was? Um, but like anyway, that was—talking to her about that was also an experience because, like she had a lot worse experiences with adults in the fandom not really respecting boundaries? Which, I don't know if

that's as much to do with the fact that, like it was such a large fandom as it is, like... conversations about that sort of thing did not happen as frequently six or seven years ago as they do now.

[32:11] And like... sometimes I do feel like people take it too far, in like puritanical views of sex or like saying that you should never ever interact with a minor in any way if you're an adult and like that's kind of ridiculous but, um. People definitely did not have great boundaries, at least—again, like in the circles that we were in, or that she was in specifically, and it's hard to know if that was like indicative of fandom as a whole, or if it was just that corner of the Internet that we had been in. It's like—again, fandom is so fucking huge. It was the same way with *Star Wars*.

[33:06] And again, like—I don't know as far as like parasocial relationships with cast and crew, et cetera. Um, that is something else that it's like, “Am I just more aware of how bad these things are because the show is so big that, like, even a very small proportion of fans acting this way is going to be visible?” Like, I don't think most people who watch *Supernatural* feel appropriate, like, writing RPF, et cetera, but it happens all the time with *Supernatural*. Um. So. Not just writing RPF but like sharing it with the cast, and like, why would you do that? (*Finch makes a noise of disgust*) These men are married. Anyway.

Finch: [33:52] Yeah... In a way, it might be too reductive of an argument but it's like, if the *Friends at the Table* fandom is 1% bad apples, that's not that many people. If the *Supernatural* fandom is 1% bad apples, that's a lot of people.

Marcus: [34:10] Yeah, yeah. Also, just like... having horrible violent thoughts about people writing *Friends at the Table* RPF. Bad.

Finch: [34:23] Bad, bad. And I know that cast members have... I wouldn't say stepped in, but have... guided fan debates in interesting ways? Like I heard from someone else that you know, they had missed the description of Hella as having dark skin and had drawn her with pretty light skin and then Austin was just like, “Hey, at y'all, like, everyone, just so you know, Hella does not have light skin. This is important to state for me.” And, like... you know—

Marcus: [35:03] (overlapping) That's—

Finch: [35:04] It wasn't, it wasn't like directly targeted at anyone, but you know. It was, it was still, I was like, that would never happen with *Supernatur*—well, maybe it would happen with *Supernatural*, I don't know.

Marcus: [35:14] I don't think that it would. It does happen with *Dragon Age* sometimes. Um. I very recently saw someone I think they were replying to somebody else's art, and just like being a dipshit and saying that like, “Everyone is entitled to their own interpretation of Fenris, and that includes him being a white man.” (*Finch sucks teeth*) And somebody who worked on the *Blue Wraith* comics that came out a couple of years ago that are centered around Fenris was like, “Um, no, he very distinctly is not—like he's from...” I mean it's hard with *Dragon Age* because like race and ethnicity don't function, the same way, but they were like, “He's intended to be like the equivalent of someone who is from a distinctly non-white part of the Mediterranean versus being, like, Italian or Greek.” And like, that was good to see somebody who was like part of a creative team at *Dragon Age*, like, draw a hard line on that. I still sometimes see people make arguments

for Dorian being like, Greek or Italian, or like Roman, I guess. And it just drives me absolutely bonkers. (Marcus sighs) Anyway.

Finch: [36:38] You know they don't mean actually Greek or Italian, they mean Greek or Italian as white people from the US and Western Europe like to think of Greek and Italy.

Marcus: [36:48] Yeah.

Finch: [36:50] As the birthplace of whiteness, um.

Marcus: Yup.

Finch: [36:53] Yup! How are you doing energy wise?

Marcus: [36:58.] I'm, I'm fine.

Finch: [36:59] Okay cool, then I think I have one more question, we can take a break.

Marcus: [37:04] Okay.

Finch: [37:05] It kind of relates to this like *Supernatural*, *Friends at the Table*, which is something that came up in our pre-interview conversation was fan labor, and you cited your experience with fans of *Supernatural* putting in labor to demand better representation and good writing and that was ignored. Um, have you seen anything similar in *Friends at the Table*? How does *Friends at the Table* compare?

Marcus: [37:29] Um... I literally don't think that I have ever seen someone complain about that aspect of *Friends at the Table*, at least not in a way that, um, involved the cast at all, um. I, I feel like, generally speaking, they do a pretty good job of being inclusive and in like making the cast of the show, like, diverse in realistic ways. I feel like I have a few times, like, seen people being like, "Hey, like, thank you for making this character this way, that's super cool." Um...

[38:15] But I guess I just—I don't feel like people... feel the same need to do that with a show that's already really good about representation? Although... I was not involved in the fandom when *Spring in Hieron* was airing, but I feel like I remember something when listening to the postmortem that was like, Austin talking about how people had complained that the relationship between Adaire and Hella was like not explicit or like textual enough? But like, that was not something that I was ever directly witness to. Whereas *Supernatural*, like... I don't know it's, it's hard to explain, but like... the fandom just functions on a completely different level of, um, expectation and relationships to cast and crew than other fandoms that I've been in.

[39:24] Like, here's a fun thing about *Supernatural*. Um. Most of the people who are like very involved in the fandom literally know, like, every single person that writes episodes? And you'll see people complaining all the time about specific episode writers or specific show runners that have been, like, involved for seasons of the show. Like, "Kripke Era" is like a whole thing, and when Eric Kripke he left the show and it got taken over by a different show runner, like, the tone of the show changed completely, and you'll see people complain about following showrunners all the time. And it's like, it's really weird because, when you're watching the show and you're aware of these things you can, like, *tell* when episodes are written by certain people. Like there's, there's a couple of writers for the show who... are gay, and you can tell when episodes are written by them

because they'll like, include more subtext, and then like two episodes later you'll have something by, fucking—what are their names—Brad Buckner and Ross-Leming or whatever, and it'll push back against whatever was trying to be established just a few episodes before and return things to this weird platonic stasis. And people complain about that very vocally.

[40:52] Um... definitely like, the fandom exerts—or I guess it's like the show is over, now so exerted—a lot of pressure on like people at The CW over the direction that the show was taking, people who were cast in the show, like, the involvement of certain writers or certain showrunners, um. There were like a lot of characters, especially in the early seasons of *Supernatural*, who got written off the show because fans were like crazy misogynistic? Um. And some of it is like, people being mad that these female characters are getting in the way of their, like, gay ships. In my experience, it was mostly Wincest shippers that were like that, but like, I'm also just biased. But like, there's probably like five or six female characters who got fridged just because people wrote them so much misogynistic hate mail that they got taken off the show, um, which is just absolutely bizarre. Anyway. One of those people is married to Jared Padalecki now. (*Finch laughs*) Yep!

Finch: [42:21] Yeah, I mean my first follow up question to that was you're like, "Oh, they exerted pressure", but like I was like, "Well, was that successful? It's like a network, it's a TV network," but it sounds like in a lot of cases, it was, like this fan pressure to change the show was successful.

Marcus: [42:35] And I feel like the influence on the actors was maybe a little bit stronger, like in terms of acting choices made. Like, I don't know, a lot of people definitely feel like Misha Collins specifically made an effort for fans to try and get Cas written as gay, as opposed to like, other cast responses. Jensen Ackles used to be really homophobic so like, that was a thing. (*Marcus laughs*) One time someone handed him an essay that they had written—like, college-level essay—they gave it to him at a con, and it was about why they thought the Dean Winchester was bisexual. And he just wrote at the top in red pen, "No?" question mark. (*Finch and Marcus laugh*) Anyway, um. Again, I'm losing the thread of things, I'm just... it's so bonkers.

Finch: [43:38] Yeah... well, another thing that you brought up in the, the pre-interview in relation to these like gay *Supernatural* writers was that they often didn't... even in their attempts to make more, like, to make the subtext more apparent it often ended up being, like, fridging characters of color. And it wasn't really any sort of systemic change.

Marcus: [44:03] Yeah.

Finch: [44:04] But more just sort of, trying to change from within the form in ways that often sort of marginalized other people on the show.

Marcus: [44:11] (overlapping) Mm hmm.

Finch: [44:11] Or women, how the misogyny showed up. (*Finch sighs*)

Marcus: [44:16] Right. There is also like... there was this one writer who worked on the show who went on this whole like rant on Twitter after the confession episode or whatever about how, um, dating men as a man didn't mean that you were bi or gay? (*Finch gasps*) And he was like, "I identify as straight but also I've had and loved several boyfriends." And like, what? (*Finch laughs*) Like...

Finch: [44:47] "No homo, but—"

Marcus: **[44:49]** Yeah or, or like, people making the argument that like, “Maybe Dean isn't bi, he's just Cas-sexual.” Like, well... that's cool, I guess? I—maybe it's different for cis people, but like being put in the position of being someone's exception to their sexuality is a horrible experience. Straight men are evil. Anyway.

Finch: **[45:16]** Anyway. If you're cool with it, I want to take a break.

Marcus: **[45:21]** Sure.

Finch: **[45:23]** Amazing, I’m going to pause the recording.

-----pause-----

Finch: **[45:28]** Okie dokie. So where we left off, you were talking about *Supernatural* and... um, the formula of the show, big fandoms, lots of other things, but one thing that you brought up was subtext. And something that I’ve really appreciated about *Friends at the Table* is that, like, the queer and trans stuff isn't subtext. It might be subtle, but it's not... you know, it's often confirmed, um. And I feel like that's made a difference in how the fandom has sort of interacted with the text, especially as it relates to queerness and transness. So, I guess I was curious like, how have you seen the fandom and the show, like, negotiate queerness?

Marcus: **[46:16]** In, in terms of *Friends at the Table*?

Finch: **[46:18]** *Friends at the Table*, yes, sorry.

Marcus: **[46:24]** Um... how, can, can you elaborate on that a little bit more? Sorry—

Finch: **[46:26]** Yeah! I, it's broad because I think there's a lot of different ways that it works? But I guess I’m really curious, like where do you see gender and sexuality, and like especially queerness or transness, sort of appear in the show or in the fandom?

Marcus: **[46:45]** Um, I mean it's kind of, it's kind of everywhere. Like I don't, I don't think there's a single character that I’ve come across where people have unilaterally been like, “This person is straight.” Like, there's always at least a few people who are like, shipping them with someone else who is, like, it would be gay, or they're like, “I think that this person is trans.” Happens all the time and, like people don't ever get harassed, for it, which is great.

[47:16] I—okay, I know that I said that like... in bigger fandoms people usually keep to themselves about things, but like, I definitely have been witness to a lot of people, um, complaining about other people's, like, interpretations of sexuality. Even on Tumblr, people like aggressively asserting that Dean is straight and starting fights with anyone who tries to read anything else into it, or like, um... it's not so bad now like, I definitely... the people that I follow now who like post about *Supernatural* are predominantly like gay and trans people. I don't, I don't follow a straight people, if I can help it. (*Finch laughs*)

[48:08] And like, a lot of these people have like trans interpretations of characters and for the most part that's a lot better received than it was like six years ago, but like. I’ve never seen someone in the *Friends at the Table* fandom get harassed for having a trans interpretation of the character, whereas I’ve seen that happen many, many times with *Supernatural*, which is just—I’m sorry, it's really weird to me, in part because, like. Number one, angels are textually genderless

and they're, like, they have to take people as their vessels, whatever, they possess them, um. But like, even then there are a handful of angel characters who like switch between using men and women as their vessels and switch up the pronouns that they use. So, like... they are textually non-binary, but people trying to have conversations about transness in the, like, context of angels, is something that like used to cause problems.

[49:17] I have a lot of thoughts about this specific thing that I will keep under control, but point being, um, pretty much any like, headcanon for gender and sexuality is... seems to be welcome in the *Friends at the Table* fandom, unless it is something that's like overtly going against the text of the show. Like, if someone tried to assert that Hella was straight I might kill them.

Finch: **[49:46]** And they'd get run out of the fandom pretty quickly.

Marcus: **[49:50]** Yeah.

Finch: **[49:51]** Yeah, yeah. You know Hella is straight because every time Austin introduces a female NPC on screen Ali just goes (*Finch gasps*).

Marcus: **[49:59]** Yep. See—you can see it in all of her interactions with Hadrian.

Finch: **[50:03]** Yeah. (*Finch laughs*) Well, I mean, isn't heterosexuality just when men and women hate each other, but still have to get married anyways?

Marcus: **[50:12]** Yeah! Obviously.

Finch: **[50:14]** Like, that's what I've learned from relationships.txt.

Marcus: **[50:18]** Also that a men and women can't be friends, so obviously if Hella and Hadrian are friends, that means that there's something more happening. Although—

Finch: **[50:26]** (overlapping) And that something more is not, one of them having a crisis of faith and then the other one having a crisis of also faith.

Marcus: **[50:34]** Yeah. It's not that.

Finch: **[50:34]** Not that.

Marcus: **[50:35]** Having said that though, I definitely am someone who is like, “I don't think that men can just be friends,” when I watch TV. Like, I hate it when people are like, “You shouldn't ship these characters together because it's important to see healthy male friendship.” I'm like, “No, I don't give a shit. I think these dudes should kiss.” Anyway.

Finch: **[50:57]** Do we not have enough models of healthy male friendship?

Marcus: **[51:00]** Yeah.

Finch: **[51:05]** I guess then shifting... not... it's not to shift away from the fandom because I think the fandom should still be here, but more specifically to *Friends at the Table*. Something I asked earlier was like, why are you still in the fandom? But something I'm curious about in relation to the show is like... I think the question “why do you like *Friends at the Table*” is big and overwhelming so I'm not going to ask that, but instead—

Marcus: **[51:34]** I mean, I do have some, like, ready-to-go answers. But ask your question.

Finch: **[51:39]** Oh! Amazing! No no no, you go.

Marcus: **[51:41]** Um, number one, uh, much like Austin Walker, I think that Jesus was gay. (*Finch laughs*) I just, I—as, as evidenced by my love of *Supernatural* also, I have always really, really liked, as someone who is a gay and heretical, stories about divinity, um, having like romantic interactions with humanity. Um, I also like, really like stories about divinity, where like gods are not treated as completely like infallible beings. All of the like Samtheon is very deeply flawed in a lot of ways, and I think it's interesting that there are like bad people and horrible choices made. And again, like, I absolutely love the like the space for romantic subtext between like a paladin and, and the god that he's devoted to. Like, I eat that shit up. Um.

[53:03] I also really like, um, just like the collaborative method of storytelling in *Friends at the Table*, which is something that like definitely helped keep my interest, a lot more than *TAZ*, for example, especially after Travis took over with DMing. Because, like, Balance was good, but it definitely was obvious that like, Griffin had a very specific way that he was directing the story, and like it probably was good for the people involved, especially like people who are... new to *D&D* and new to that kind of roleplaying, having sort of like a guide set rather than being expected to like make up all that shit on the fly by themselves, et cetera. But anyway, um, I really liked the degree to which the direction of the plot and the interactions between characters et cetera are something that's, like, agreed upon and directed by the entire cast, and not just Austin.

[54:06] And again I also like that, like, it never feels like begging for scraps in terms of representation in the show. Like, it's something that doesn't even have to be asked for, because it's already there and present in every aspect of it. So those are those are the main things.

Finch: **[54:28]** Yeah, absolutely. It's interesting to me that you didn't—one of the things that you alluded to, but didn't explicitly say, was like, there are trans, gay and trans characters? You did say, “I think Jesus is gay.” But um... yeah.

Marcus: **[54:46]** And I would be right! Um. Anyway.

Finch: **[54:50]** Yes...

Marcus: **[54:51]** I, I like that, like, there aren't just gay and trans characters. They're, like, gay storylines that are so integral to the show that it would not be the same without them. Like, the relationship between Samot and Samothos. (*Finch puts index fingers together in the TikTok “bashful” meme.*) Yeah. I did the same thing with my hands and then realized you couldn't see it. (*Finch laughs*)

[55:19] Um... less, less so, I guess, for gender outside of like. Nearly, I guess, as far as I can recall, there aren't any characters who have had like subplots specifically related to their gender, like something that will be... asserted frequently or like, talked about a little bit, I guess, but like.

[55:49] I don't know if—it's really weird, um, not in a bad way, but like... having stories that involve trans people where what the trans people are doing has absolutely nothing to do with their gender or transition. In part, because, like... I feel like basically every aspect of my life is influenced by the fact that I'm trans. And that that would be a factor in basically anything that I do, and maybe it would be less relevant if I was running around trying to keep the world from

dying because of the heat death of the universe, but like. (*Finch laughs*) I don't know, it's just a weird thing to conceptualize like a world in which it literally truly does not matter to anyone. Except for like on a, on a personal level. I feel like that didn't make sense—I mean it doesn't matter in the sense that, like, no one would ever give you shit for it.

Finch: **[56:50]** You're saying—like in the universe of the show—

Marcus: **[56:52]** (overlapping) Yes, like—

Finch: **[56:53]** (overlapping) —transphobia, there is no transphobia in the universe of *Friends at the Table*.

Marcus: **[56:57]** Yeah exactly. Um, which is also like just kind of a refreshing thing to encounter in works of fantasy. Even like, as much as I love *Dragon Age* and much as there are gay and trans characters who are in it, um, there still are conversations about homophobia and transphobia that people have had to endure. Um... it's nothing that really happens on screen, aside from your interactions with Krem; you can choose to be transphobic to him, if you want to, which is really shitty. It's mostly people like talking about things that have happened in the past and like, in the part of the worlds that you are in in the games, it's not an issue, but like Tevinter, for example, where Dorian and Fenris are from, like, it's a, it's a very big deal if you're gay or trans—Krem is also from Tevinter, um. Although that has a lot to do with class divide, which is a whole 'nother thing, but anyway.

Finch: **[58:10]** Yeah, I guess, my, my original question about *Friends at the Table*, though, was, what's a *Friends at the Table* moment that's resonated with you?

Marcus: **[58:26]** One second, sorry, I'm like super dehydrated.

Finch: **[58:28]** Oh, take your time! Drink water!

Marcus: **[58:31]** I'm drinking water! I have this fun pink reusable straw that I stole from work, because the cup that it was attached to broke.

Finch: **[58:43]** Yours now.

Marcus: **[58:44]** Yep.

Finch: **[58:45]** Just what I do with every character, I, I see them and I'm like, "you're trans now. Mine."

Marcus: **[58:50]** Exactly. Um... I think the, the first thing in the show that like, really caught and holds my attention was the Autumn in Hieron finale. I had been enjoying it up until that point but, um, the like, direct introduction to Samot and his interactions with Hadrian in that episode made me very much feel like, "Oh yes, this is exactly what I need from a show." And I was obsessed with it from that point on. Um. Also, like. Of course, "Four Conversations" in Marielda is something that I think about constantly. Again it's mostly, it's mostly Samot. The question "what's held your interest about this show" is mostly Samot.

Finch: **[59:57]** I am once again overwhelmed with emotion about Samot. (*Finch sighs*) This keeps happening in interviews, SamSam comes up and I just go (*Finch sighs*).

Marcus: **[1:00:12]** Understandable.

Finch: **[1:00:13]** Yeah... well um, I'm trying to figure out a way to ask this that gives you space to like not answer it? I'll just ask the question, which is like... so, you mentioned the sort of stories of divinity, and Jesus is gay, and Samot and Hadrian finale: like, why do you think that appeals to you? Like, what about that, what about those sort of stories appeals to you?

Marcus: **[1:00:41]** Um... I love defiling Christianity! That's, that's the short answer. Um, I don't know, I grew up in the church as a child of evangelical fundamentalists and coming out as gay and trans was a pretty big deal for a lot of really bad reasons. Um, and it's, it's kind of, um... I don't know why I have such an aversion to the word "reclaim" but like, to some degree, it feels like reclaiming aspects of Christianity, that I had like... enjoyed or that had appealed to me. But like, divorcing them from my experiences with the church and making them gay because that's something that's also very important to me.

[1:01:41] I also like really enjoy, um... I don't know, I guess thinking about like... Hm. I like thinking about the ways that, like, immortal beings, not necessarily divine ones—I'm thinking about the relationship between Justice and Anders [in *Dragon Age*]. But, just like the way that they relate to and love humans, because it's something that's like outside the scope of our experience. And I like constantly compare that sort of thing to like the way that Christians talk about like God's love for people. Um... anyway. Again though, it's mostly I love defiling Christianity and being blasphemous because I think that it's funny. And I love to make people upset.

Finch: **[1:02:53]** The little, the little note I had wrote down was when you talked about... I think reclaiming is a word that's been taken up in really weird ways in the last like five or six years, especially? I think it's—part of my personal aversion to the word is how it gets used in like, death of the author bullshit, where it's like, "We're going to reclaim Harry Potter from J.K. Rowling," like no you're not, you're just refusing to uncritically—you're refusing to critically engage with the, the biases in the media that actually creators—anyway. Um, what I wrote when you were talking about reclaiming aspects of like the world and religious world that had appealed to you, I was like, "Honestly that sounds like fanfic in the broadest sense. Sort of taking what you want, and making it gay."

Marcus: **[1:03:35]** Yeah! You're absolutely right. Austin Walker please read, please read my Jesus Christ superstar fanfic.

Finch: **[1:03:45]** Oh my god... Truly iconic of Austin to be like, "the first fanfic I read was *Jesus Christ Superstar* Jesus X Judas."

Marcus: **[1:03:57]** As it should be.

Finch: **[1:03:58]** As it should be. Um...

Marcus: **[1:04:01]** Ty made me watch that, like, last year, and it was absolutely life changing, I think about it all the time.

[1:04:13] I don't know, I think part of my personal aversion to it is just like, I am positively exhausted by conversations about the reclamation of the word queer and, in general, conversations about reclaiming slurs, like... and I'm just tired.

Finch: Yeah.

Marcus: **[1:04:36]** Especially because like, I think that it's less to do with Twitter being behind on discourse that happened on Tumblr five years ago, as it is like, there are so many young people on the Internet who were not like old enough to be involved in these conversations when they have happened in the past. And that's just going to keep happening probably until the end of time. It's all very circular. So... oh shit, I almost dropped a stitch.

Finch: **[1:05:17]** Oh no!

Marcus: **[1:05:19]** I got it though, we're good.

Finch: **[1:05:25]** One thing I know we touched on a little bit in the pre-interview was like, sexy fanfic and erotica. Would you like to speak at all about that?

Marcus: **[1:05:35]** Um, yeah, we can talk about that.

Finch: **[1:05:38]** We don't have to if you don't want to. The conversation about religion and making religion sexy just reminded me of it.

Marcus: **[1:05:47]** It's totally fine, I, do you have specific questions about it, or?

Finch: **[1:05:52]** I was just curious like what your experience has been especially like reading fanfic about maybe like queer or trans characters. Like what's that, what, what that's like?

Marcus: **[1:06:06]** Um, I guess... one aspect of it that's like kind of... sort of new to me, I guess? In that, like... I got into *Dragon Age* and *Friends at the Table* around the same time, and like prior to that, most of the fanfic that I had read had been about like speculative relationships between people, or like relationships that were not part of whatever the canon text was. So like, it definitely is a sort of different experience reading about characters who are actually canonically in relationships with each other. Um...

[1:06:55] And... boy, I don't know. I definitely feel to some degree, like, reading like erotic fic about trans characters has made me like more comfortable with those ideas in relation to myself. I'm a fairly sex-averse person in my day-to-day life. Um, like, it's, I don't know, it's, it's a reassuring to read, like, fic about trans people and be like, "Okay, yeah, other people think that this is sexy." That's like, that's a nice thing to feel. And it also like... I don't know, it's very obvious when those things are written by trans people and when they're not? But like, reading fics about trans characters that are written by trans people is also something that's just a nice experience.

[1:08:04] Um, I have not written... that's a lie, I was gonna say (*Finch laughs*) "I haven't written *Friends at the Table* smut." Um, I did write a Samot/Hadrian thing that I never finished and therefore never published, um. So I guess I, I haven't been involved in that really in a, from the perspective of being a content creator, although I do draw Samot sexy a lot. Um, I just think he should have his tits out.

Finch: He should have his tits out!

Marcus: **[1:08:36]** Exactly! Um. But like, I don't know, that's, that's another thing that's like, I guess been kind of—God, (*Marcus laughs*) why is the word "reclaim" so bad? Um. Just like, the, the idea that I have in my head of Samot as this like mostly non-dysphoric trans man is something that helps me like, deal with things that I might not be super happy about with myself, but that like, I either can't

change or like I don't have access to change yet, like top surgery, for example. And it's just like, I don't know, fun to think about a character who also has these features still like being comfortable with himself and also like being regarded as attractive by other people and *also* still like being respected as a man, no matter how he presents himself. Which is like, those aren't ideas that are exclusive to erotic content, but like there's just something really nice about like thinking about a man that has his tits out all the time, and everyone is still like, "Yep, that's a dude. Doesn't matter how big his boobs are."

Finch: **[1:10:02]** Exactly, just like, yeah, you can wear a pretty dress and have long hair and you're still a dude and people still treat you as such. My Samot Pinterest board is just full of pretty dresses that I would maybe like to wear but would probably make me dysphoric to wear, so I just imagine Samot wearing them instead.

Marcus: **[1:10:22]** That's... valid.

Finch: **[1:10:26]** A follow up thought I have is like, how did you arrive at Samot as a non-dysphoric trans man? Like, that's not—I mean, I'd argue that I'd like to see that as canon, but I don't think there's anything in the canon that like, supports—not that supports—let me refresh. I'm just curious like how you arrived at that? Was that alone, was that with other—in conversation with other people?

Marcus: **[1:10:47]** I genuinely don't remember. I feel like it may have been like an idea that Ty presented to me? Um, and then I just kind of ran with it? But like I don't, I don't know... Ty was definitely responsible for me thinking of Fero as trans. Um, Samot though, I genuinely don't remember at this point. Because I've thought of him as being a trans man for, like, almost the entirety of my experience like listening to the show? Like, that was an idea that I adopted probably just like a couple of months after I started listening to Autumn in Hieron. I genuinely have no recollection of why though.

Finch: **[1:11:41]** Yeah.

Marcus: **[1:11:42]** It may have just been that like I was like, "huh, here's a sexy blond man, what if he was trans?"

Finch: **[1:11:51]** Yeah. All I know is that Austin described him in literally episode three or four as "the most beautiful man you've ever seen," and I was like, that's not a cis guy.

Marcus: **[1:12:02]** Yeah, there is that also. (*Finch laughs*)

Finch: **[1:12:06]** God, I love him.

Marcus: **[1:12:07]** I think, thinking of Fero was trans might be because... this is so stupid. (*Finch laughs*) I was, I was talking to Ty when I first started listening to Autumn in Hieron about how I didn't really like Fero as a character that much, and I thought that he was, like, kind of an asshole and Ty was like, "No, he's just cunty!" I was like, "Ah! Okay, you're right in like every sense of the word." Anyway.

Finch: **[1:12:37]** Anyway. Let's get to it, one of the questions that our pre-interview sparked from me, which is you talked about wanting to see in *Friends at the Table*, like, more trans characters and especially more transmasculine characters beyond the like, "non-binary is just woman-lite" trope

that you often see, um. I think you've touched on this a little bit, but like. What, what value, do you see in that? Like, what does it mean to you to see transmasculine characters?

Marcus: **[1:13:26]** I mean, like, I feel like most people who are part of a like, marginalized, like, identity or group, like to see themselves reflected on screen, in a way that is like, respectful? Um, and like, to see characters that are like them that are not like one-dimensional or just their like token representation, um. And there's not a lot of that that exists for trans men in like popular media. Not that trans women have not also been completely like shafted in that regard, but um. I don't know my, my first experience with a piece of media that had a trans man in it was the movie *Boys Don't Cry*, which was a terrible experience.

Finch: **[1:14:14]** It's infamous as a—yeah.

Marcus: **[1:14:16]** I was probably like 15 or 16 at the time? And it was, um, very upsetting. And like, maybe I just don't try hard enough to find like queer movies, um, but I genuinely cannot think of another film that I've seen since then that had a trans man in it. It's not that hard to find like, um... like, I don't know like, web comics or like, um, queer fiction, like books and stuff that have trans men in them, but like it very rarely is something that I think exists in TV or movies. Yeah, I genuine—I genuinely cannot think of another time that I've seen a trans man in a movie.

Finch: **[1:15:20]** Yeah.

Marcus: **[1:15:23]** Anyway, I don't know that I have like any more depth to add about like what value I see in it besides that it's like, I personally think that it's nice to see people like me represented in things that I enjoy.

Finch: **[1:15:39]** No, absolutely. No, no... I don't think that's a that's a shallow answer, I think that's a really, you know, I feel the same. I know you're not caught up on Partizan, but there is a trans man character that they introduce kind of in like 40 or something-ish. And I did tear up on my walk. It was not a sad moment I just got very overwhelmed by the thought of trans guy. Who is face cast as Dev Patel, so he's also hot—

Marcus: **[1:16:06]** Oh.

Finch: **[1:16:06]** (overlapping) —which is like.

Marcus: **[1:16:08]** Very sexy.

Finch: **[1:16:09]** And of course Annie had art in like three hours. But... yeah, he's an Apostolosian...

Marcus: **[1:16:16]** Love that.

Finch: **[1:16:17]** Yeah! Gotta get caught up.

Marcus: **[1:16:20]** Gender.

Finch: **[1:16:21]** Gender! Um, yeah, you said just sort of seeing yourself on the screen in a respectful way, that's, I assume that means you would trust the *Friends at the Table* cast to like do that respectfully?

Marcus: **[1:16:33]** Yeah, um. Something that I just thought about—sorry I'm like backtracking a ton.

Finch: Please!

Marcus: **[1:16:40]** Um, just with regards to like, um, liking stories about, ah, romantic liaisons between divinity and humanity. I also really, really love explorations of, like, the way that divinity interacts with gender and sexuality. Um, just because it's like something that obviously is never talked about in Christianity, and I just am absolutely obsessed with like... the way that like, for example, in *Supernatural*, angels, who are genderless beings, being forced to like conform to human ideas of gender and sexuality? Is something that I like to think about all the time. And this is occurred to me because I was thinking about like, Apostolosian gender, which is also something that I'm like obsessed with thinking about. I just I really love reading about like or listening to podcasts that include these ideas, um. Just like alternative systems of gender and how they function and how the people who exist under those systems function in like the outside world, I guess, which is something that I think about all the time with *Dragon Age* and with Qunari gender.

Finch: **[1:18:08]** Yeah, what I'm hearing you say is, it's not just having trans characters but it's having world building that supports the trans characters, and like not just taking gender as a fixed category that can be mapped one on one from quote unquote "the real world"—

Marcus: **[1:18:23]** (overlapping) Yeah.

Finch: **[1:18:24]** (overlapping) —into a fantasy setting, but actually challenging it.

Marcus: **[1:18:27]** Mm hmm. And yeah, I really like with, with Apostolosians, like, the idea of people who are very specifically trans still existing in their society. And like being trans means something different for them than it would for humans, I guess, or like people who have other gender systems.

Finch: **[1:19:00]** Yeah. And I mean, even—I know in *Partizan* there's a—it's not a story spoiler, but they meet a ship and at one point Austin's like, "Yeah, this ship uses he/him pronouns! Cause, like, who says the ship can't use he/him pronouns!" Like, fuck it!

Marcus: **[1:19:17]** Yeah! It's *Friends at the Table*!

Finch: **[1:19:19]** *Friends at the Table*: a podcast about ships using he/him pronouns and fish people using she/her pronouns.

Marcus: **[1:19:25]** Exactly.

Finch: **[1:19:29]** So that is the end sort of the questions I have but, the closing one that I like to ask everyone is, is there anything I haven't asked about that you'd like to bring into the space? Things we haven't talked about, et cetera?

Marcus: **[1:19:47]** Um, I think, so... I'm thinking too hard about *Dragon Age* now to redirect my thoughts (*Finch laughs*) and just, Qunari systems of gender.

Finch: **[1:19:59]** Yeah. Well perhaps then a different question that—I realized, I asked, I asked several sort of related ones, but... I asked like why you like *Friends at the Table*, but what does *Friends at the Table* mean to you?

Marcus: **[1:20:14]** So broad. Um... I don't know. (pause) Hm. I, I guess, I really like the community that I found with other people through it, um. I, like, appreciate it on the level of like it being full of gay and trans stories. And I also like, I got into *Friends at the Table* in a really dark time in my life, and it was like my emotional support podcast for months. And it definitely was like, something that I fixated on as hard as I did, because I was trying to distract myself from other things in my life. So it's like something that I will probably always have an attachment to for that reason. Like, I think part of the reason that, like my interest in *Supernatural* was lying latent for as long as it was, is that, like, I was very into it also at like a bad time in my life, and it was something that brought me a lot of comfort and joy at the time, and like that's something that I'm re-experiencing now, with watching it again. So I feel like I would probably have a similar experience, were I to like relisten to Seasons of Hieron at some point, like years in the future, um. Yeah, an emotional support podcast.

Finch: **[1:21:58]** I think sense memory is so strong that—I listened to Marielda while on the job shelving books? And so every time I hear the Marielda song I'm immediately, like, pushing a book truck on the B-level of the library. Um...

Marcus: **[1:22:14]** There's, there's some like really weird things that I specifically remember. Like, scenes that I remember listening to while I was doing specific things at work. Like, I was like cleaning our pot machine while I was doing my opening tasks, or whatever, and I started crying because I was on the scene where Hadrian threw Samot's cloak into the volcano. Or, like, I made myself cry laughing once while I was doing dishes and it was that bit where they're in Aubade and Hadrian is like all depressed and Hella is trying to talk to him, like a bar. Anyway.

Finch: **[1:22:54]** It's good show.

Marcus: **[1:22:56]** It is a good show.

Finch: **[1:23:03]** I'm looking back at my notes and I realized that one thing we talked about in the pre-interview that I wanted to sort of get your elaboration on was you said of talking about being annoyed at people in the *Friends at the Table* fandom taking non-binary characters as like sapphic or woman-lite, um. I don't know if I have a specific question, but I would just be curious to hear sort of your thoughts on how the fandom takes non-binary characters.

Marcus: **[1:23:33]** I mean, my thoughts are probably the same as the last time that we talked about this, and I don't know, it just... I don't know that it would be something that bothered me as much as it did, if there was like more explicitly transmasculine characters in the show, but like. I don't know, I just I really don't like the reduction of certain characters... (*Marcus clears throat*) Valence... to have been just like woman-lite, when both of those characters have experiences with gender that are like, very much... I don't know, I feel are outside of outside of that, um. And it also like... it's, it's kind of weird. Again like, not something I would ever like go out of my way to harass people over, but like seeing people who have such vastly, vastly different interpretations of characters than I do. It's kind of weird.

[1:24:50] Like, and I don't know if this is just like me not paying close enough attention to the text of the show, but like I remember seeing some Tenfour art on Tumblr that had been tagged with a bunch of stuff that was like "femslash," "lesbian," and I was like, "I have never up until this point considered that people would think of Fourteen Fifteen as a woman." Um, and it was something

that really bothered me. In part, probably just because it was like incongruous with the idea of that character that I'd had in my head, but.

[1:25:28] And I also like don't see sort of the inverse of those character interpretations at all, and maybe that just means that I need to make transmasculine Balance content, but like. I don't, I don't see that at all from people in the fandom. Maybe I'm just like following the wrong people. Um, I have been thinking about Broun with top surgery scars for months and months, though.

Finch: **[01:25:59]** Yes, please. Yeah and I think it's kind of part of what you were speaking to where like I know I personally like seeing people that speak to like my specific trans experience and I'm sure there's other people in the fandom that like, you know, are lesbians, or are bi women, enjoy taking up the characters in that way, so it's sort of a hard balance to strike where you're like but, you know.

Marcus: **[1:26:24]** Yeah...

Finch: **[1:26:25]** One thing I've always enjoyed is that *Friends at the Table* it's like, you're not really fighting over scraps in the fandom necessarily, when there are so many characters that are so many different, like, flavors of LGBT people. Yeah... Oh my God, now I'm just thinking about Broun with top surgery scars.

Marcus: **[1:26:49]** Great, great mental image.

Finch: **[1:26:51]** Please... Yeah, that's all, that's all the stuff I have.

Marcus: **[1:26:56]** Okay.

Finch: **[1:26:57]** Amazing.

Marcus: **[1:26:58]** Fantastic.

Finch: **[1:26:59]** I think I'm going to pause the recording.

Marcus: **[1:27:02]** Okay.