

**Christian:** Hey hey, Today's bonus content is a showcase that Zach did with Jas and Steven LaFond for their podcast Witchever Path, which is an audiodrama anthology series where audience decisions affect the story. They're really cool folks and it's a really fascinating interview.

But first...I want to tell you about Tab for a Cause - a browser extension that lets you raise money for charity while you do your thing online. Whatever that may be. You're listening to this podcast so I can only assume that you - like me - relate to browser tabs in the same way that the mighty Smaug relates to gold plates and coins and stuff. But with Tab for a Cause, whenever you open a new tab, you'll see a beautiful photo and a small ad. And part of the money from that ad goes toward a charity of your choice. You can join our team now by signing up at [tabforacause.org/toafn](http://tabforacause.org/toafn). That's [tabforacause.org/toafn](http://tabforacause.org/toafn).

Also I just want to say a quick thanks to everyone who's become a new Patron or upgraded their pledge in the last few weeks, that really means a lot to us. If you haven't yet and it's comfortable for you to do so, despite, you know - everything...we've still got some reach goals we're trying to hit with some very cool rewards.

OK, that's all for now. Barring any post-production catastrophes, we should be back in two weeks with another batch of minisodes. But now enjoy our showcase for Witchever Path.

**Zach:** Hello, everyone. I'm so excited today to be joined by Jas Lafond and Steven Lafond, creators of the Witchever Path podcast. Jas and Steven, welcome. Thanks for being here.

**Jas:** Thanks for having us.

**Steven:** Oh, yeah, this is so great, Zach. Thanks for... thanks for letting us be here, bud.

**Zach:** Yeah, yeah. This is so exciting. We met at the PodTales convention, we were just talking about it a bit before we started recording, back in October in Boston, back when you could still meet people over pizza and stuff. And we had such great conversations. It was really the highlight of my weekend.

**Jas:** Pretty great.

**Steven:** Yeah. Oh, man. Yeah. Meeting you was like, super, super fun. Oh, our dog is here.

**Zach:** Oh, hi. What's the dog's name?

**Steven:** Our dog's name is Henry.

**Jas:** Yeah.

**Zach:** He did not go to PodTales. But he is a... he is a Rottweiler and Labrador mix.

**Jas:** Yeah, he's a pretty good boy.

**Steven:** And he apparently understood that we were having fun.

**Zach:** Didn't want to be left out. That sounds so cute.

**Steven:** Yeah. But... but yeah, I mean, it was a great time meeting you and we were really excited that we were able to, you know, just kind of talk to folks who were in that spot of audio drama where... where they had a definite feel for... for genre. And so, that was so cool to be able to like just chat with you and like... it was a great icebreaker just to be able to like just hang out in this crazy filled-to-capacity studio.

**Jas:** Oh my goodness, packed.

**Steven:** Yeah.

**Jas:** It was full of people who had like interest. And you could really feel that passion, I think, like the through whole... through the whole event, which was really nice. So, yeah, it was a blast.

**Zach:** The highest concentration of podcast lovers I've ever seen.

**Steven:** Yeah, and I mean PodTales too is like it was all fiction. We met some really awesome true crime and nonfiction folks who were fans or who are helping out with other shows too, like Kate from Ignorance is Bliss. And like, you know, we... and then we like to have that many people show up and then that many people actually go to the event, like was so bizarre for me.

**Zach:** It's awesome.

**Steven:** And really fun.

**Zach:** It is incredible.

**Steven:** Oh my god, all the children are coming. Oh my god. So, for anyone who's listening, whether it's out or not, I think you should just let it roll. The entire family has come down to see what's going on.

**Zach:** Oh, hi, everybody.

**Jas:** It started with fur babies and now it's the skin babies.

**Steven:** But yeah, PodTales was by far one of the... one of the coolest individual experiences we've had so far in being... being with Witchever Path, and in being able to like, hang out with folks who, like yourself, have had a show for like way longer than we have. And being able to like just talk as peers was like a really huge honor. I love being able to push aside ego, you know, anything is like, there was no posturing. People were really chill.

**Zach:** Of that whole room at PodTales, I think your show, Witchever Path, I think has one of the more unique and really cool things going on in podcasts. So, why don't you tell us about Witchever Path?

**Jas:** Awesome. Well, thank you. Thank you for that. I like to think that we're unique. My elevator speech is usually Witchever Path is an audio fiction anthology series, a bit of horror, but not... not usually gory, with a 'choose your own path' twist where our audience members get to vote on what happens to our protagonists and characters.

**Steven:** Yes. So, basically with the vote, the way that it goes is, at the end of every episode, we have 3 different choices that we do for a poll, and our audience will vote with them on [witcheverpath.com](http://witcheverpath.com). They get about a week. Once we do that, we finalize out of the different draft scripts we have, which one based on their decisions, and we send that to our actors again, and they work it out. They pr... we produce it, and we start it all over again for people.

**Zach:** It's such a unique and really cool way to get that fan interaction going, which I really appreciate it. And as a listener, what I always really like about it is in each episode, you know, the tension is building, the tension is building. And just when I as the listener think, "What's going to happen next?" you stop and ask me what's going to happen next, and it's really cool.

**Steven:** Thank you. We hope that it lands like that. You know, we try to get it so people still feel engaged. And, you know, maybe like for better for worse, we're not same bat time, same bat channeling in a way that that makes me be like, "Oh, what the heck?" instead we're like, "No, you've got to help us finish it," which is like an important part.

**Zach:** It's... it's such a new and different twist on podcasts, I think. And I have to ask you... you said that you... you make these offers, like the choices that the listeners can vote on, and then you choose which draft to go forward with. So, do you sort of pre-write the different options, or do you really winging it as you go? How does that work out?

**Steven:** Oh, we don't wing...

**Jas:** We don't wing it.

**Steven:** We don't wing it. The 2 of us actually, like we work it out. Jas is really great with coming up with some awesome concepts and the ideas for the thrust of the plot, but also in imagining some really great characters. And, you know, characterization is a big thing for me for all my writing. And so, what we do is then I... I think, it's because just how my brain works, I feel like I've got like a weird like White guy conspiracy theorists mind. So, what... so, what I... and the reason I say like that is because I draw out in a bunch of my journals, sort of like a decision flowchart of the plot and like the way that it could branch out of all possible ways. And some of it comes from being like a dungeon master since I was, you know... or storyteller for role playing games since I was probably like 16. And so...

**Zach:** That's awesome.

**Steven:** And so, like, it's... it's like constructing that, but then doing the decision flowcharts like you would in like any interactive video game like Skyrim or Fallout or any of the Mass Effect things where the decisions are based also on those characters and what they would do. And so, I have the notes for everything that could go. Some of our stories had 18 different ways they could have ended when I was being super ambitious.

**Zach:** Oh, wow.

**Steven:** And that part is, I know. So, like I roughly know where we're going. But what's important is I also know that everyone is going to vote differently. And so, sometimes, what happens is, you know, we were talking to a friend and it was like talking about how it's like tapping on the glass in the pet store. You're not supposed to do it, but people first do it to just to see what happens. They see the reaction, they find out they're not supposed to, and then sometimes they get more conservative. But when you make those decisions like that, it's not the

same as like choose your own adventure in a book where it's like, "No, okay, you're dead," in the end, it's like, okay, we give you decisions where it's like, okay, you... like for our first story Squirrels, everybody seems super freaked out in the first... at the first episode. So, they basically had the main character signal to his contact on the phone that something was terribly wrong.

**Zach:** Mm-hm.

**Steven:** But then when they get to the area, where... where something could be done with, he, everyone voted to be more conservative. And that actually was really great because what it did for Jas and I was we allowed our characters to deal with a situation where somebody basically Chicken littled and then was like, "Oh wait, no, let's not do anything about it." And so, it affected his relationships and the choices, it became a cumulative issue to the point that John, that main character, you know, was seen differently by the weird bunch of French Canadians living in that barn of sin eaters. Because they were like, "What's up with our employee? He's like... he's... he is making some strange decisions."

And that is actually based on the fact that we really respect the choices people are making. And I feel that it adds to the... to making sure that people feel invested in the story still. Because sometimes, the choices we give are just as simple as like, you know, "Pick up the phone," or, "Let's go get a taco." And then it winds up having these weird butterfly-effect ripples later on.

**Jas:** It's a good metaphor for life. I feel like a good analogy for life, isn't it? Making those choices, and who knows? Little sliding doors, and I'm happy about that.

**Steven:** Exactly.

**Zach:** I like that as been sort of listening not in real time, unfortunately, so I haven't gotten a chance to participate in the vote. But I like hearing like sort of psychoanalyzing the voters and thinking to myself, "Oh, based on how... how people did vote the past few episodes, how do I think they're going to vote for the next one?" And then I'm so excited when I hear what the outcome is going to be.

**Steven:** Have... have any surprised when you were going back? Like, where like you were like, "Hmm," or did you get a pretty good... did you get a pretty good psychological portrait of how our fans have been voting?

**Zach:** Honestly, normally, they surprise me. Like, I feel like I can never really predict it. And that's... that's part of the fun too. So, even... even if, you know, not being the one voting every week, it's still... it's still a great story and a great experience.

**Steven:** Oh, thank you. That's what we hope.

**Jas:** Appreciate that.

**Zach:** So, what sort of called to you about the story? What made you decide you wanted to be the, as far as I know, the first 'choose your own adventure podcast'?

**Steven:** Well, I think that there's been a couple that have also done a similar thing to us. But I think what was different for me when we were first conceiving this together was I told Jas that I wanted something that unlike something where everything was all prerecorded, which means

that essentially, it would be its complete thing and, you know, the novelty would be that you could release all of them based on people's choices, and then they could still have them, was I really loved the idea of sharing moments with people. And we both... we've both been performers for a long time. I mean, hell, you can hear our dog. He likes to perform. But like, the truth is, is that I wanted to have an interactive story that also people could claim some ownership to, you know?

Because sometimes I feel that people think like, I don't know if you ever played like Bandersnatch on Netflix like that... like that, that 'choose your own adventure' Black Mirror episode. It was awesome, but... but it seemed kind of limited with... with where it could go at certain points, and... or like you had to still make the same choices. But what we wanted to do is we wanted to give people a chance where they could actually have a real complete narrative that they could guide it, and then hopefully, you know, we would be able to release extras occasionally of other decisions or things like that, and show people that there are real consequences actually shaped a world.

**Zach:** Mm-hmm.

**Steven:** You know, like, I mean, I've always loved that feeling where... and I think there's been the replay value in like single player RPGs that I had is when I felt like the world was so open and then, whoops, you actually stole from that hobo and he's coming back later on. It's going to... after you've taken out the dragon, he's going to be like, "Remember me, pal?" You're going to be like, "Oh, no Slippery Jim." And that's what we're trying to do. And I think that, you know, I love that... like, it's a real compliment when people are saying that, you know, what we're doing is... is unique. But... but really, it stem from the idea of, we love the idea of immersion, and we love the idea of... I don't know, I think the themes of us we have so much inclusivity in our themes, that we also feel that the audience also needs to be included or it's weird. It's just... yeah, it's hollow.

**Jas:** We... and I think that's a trend that carries through a lot of what we do is just that... that desire for collaboration with our intended audience.

**Steven:** Oh god, god, yes. Yeah.

**Zach:** And there's just something really fulfilling and fun about creating something that other people can have a hand in and influence. And the podcast is a great example of that. So, we're just... we're just having fun.

**Steven:** Yeah. And, I mean, we'll always get to it later because we could discuss at length all the shows, we'd love to do nothing like what we do that we just totally geek out because their world, I feel, is like so complete and gorgeous, that I just love being a passenger. But I think for us, we're all like, "Nah, let's share this moment with you. Let's... let's get it done."

**Zach:** Yeah. And I think that podcasts give that unique opportunity that some bigger platforms, games or TV shows don't really... like, you don't even have that option to have that flexibility or that nimbleness to really ask your audience, "Okay, what should we do?" and actually truly listen. So, I think it's really cool and really unique that the podcast medium allows you to really interact with your fans that way. And it... it's a really cool feeling.

**Steven:** Certainly the budget constraints and worries about a mass production of a story like that. Thank God for audio drama, because...

**Jas:** Oh yeah.

**Steven:** ... for audio fiction because, man.

**Zach:** 100%. So, has there ever been a time... it sounds like you sort of plan out in advance all the possibilities anyway, but has there ever been a time when a fan vote really surprised you or really ruined your plan, so to speak?

**Jas:** For me, it was Anna.

**Steven:** Yeah.

**Jas:** And I didn't... I wasn't as hands on with the Anna storyline, and I didn't have a voice in that one. But I was definitely paying close attention to the votes. And when it ended so quickly, I was like, "Oh, I think we could have gotten so weird."

**Steven:** Yeah, Jas was spot on with that. What was ironic was that that was the year we got married and that was leading up to our wedding.

**Jas:** Yes.

**Steven:** And Anna had the potential of going on for 8 episodes, then it ended in 4.

**Zach:** Wow.

**Steven:** And it's because and I don't want to... I guess it's been out a year. But like... but all I will say is this. When an AI keeps asking you for something and you keep not giving it on purpose, this... this is what you get.

**Jas:** Mm-hmm.

**Steven:** You know, I won't... like it doesn't ruin what happens in the last episode. But I will say this, like everyone decided... and this was actually one where people were communicating a lot back and forth over social media. All of these people were just like refusing to heed the warnings of Anna and, you know?

**Jas:** Anna, like me, doesn't like to hear no.

**Steven:** Yeah.

**Zach:** That's so cool. That's such a cool scenario to have happened, to have your audience so invested that they're debating amongst each other. That's such a great cool story. I really like that.

**Steven:** Yeah, we...

**Jas:** My favorite.

**Steven:** Yeah, we've had so much fun with that. As a matter of fact, what's funny is that the guy who played the Lord of the Fey in the second... the second storyline is our friend, Rick. And he

and his wife, Melissa, have been so gung ho to the point that they've now started building their own podcasts, and also supporting a bunch of audio fiction. And they came into it, but one of the big things they did before they did it was they were fighting... they were fighting with their friends across Facebook and social media platforms for days, not only about the bad votes they were making, but like purposely being like, "You have to be on this team, or the next time we see each other, there's going to be a problem." And like, it was just... and they weren't being super serious, but their passion really, you know, early on when we probably had maybe at most 50 people listening to us in that first storyline, it really... we got a kick out of it. We had one guy make a fake news commercial...

**Jas:** Yeah.

**Steven:** ... about... about... about what was happening in our storyline specifically so he'd get people to vote his way. And I mean...

**Zach:** Oh wow.

**Jas:** It's awesome.

**Steven:** Yeah, it's awesome.

**Jas:** We're messy hoes who live for drama.

**Steven:** It's true. Guilty.

**Zach:** That's so cool. I'm a little jealous right now. I'm not going to lie.

**Steven:** Well, I've seen all of the like awesome fan art, the music, all this stuff for your show, I love it. And like... and like I just love that you have people who are that passionate about what you do. It's like a real kick for me. And like I... I don't know, I love your show.

**Zach:** Oh, thank you.

**Steven:** So, like... so, the fact that you think that that our weird little like hopscotch for the masses is working, I mean, I'm grateful.

**Zach:** Audio drama has the best fans. Like, there's... there's just hands down the listeners to our types of shows your shows and our show is just the best fans. They're the absolute best.

**Steven:** Yeah. I like... I like when people try to also come up with weird theories about what they think are happening and everybody's respective show. Like...

**Zach:** Yeah.

**Steven:** Sometimes I love... occasionally, I'll read them. I'll fall down the rabbit hole of somebody's... you know, what they think is going on in somebody's show. They're like, "This is what's happening on Moonbase Theta Out." Like, I was just like, "What?"

**Jas:** Get your pushpins and string ready.

**Steven:** Yeah.

**Zach:** Yeah, that's... that was always my goal. I'm a fan of like Brandon Sanderson books and Pat Rothfuss's books.

**Steven:** Oh nice.

**Zach:** And I like... I like reading those fan theories. So, when we started making the podcast, my goal was, I hope people start making fan theories about us.

**Steven:** Mm-hmm.

**Zach:** And that was when I felt that we had gotten somewhere. It's... it's so cool.

**Steven:** Oh.

**Jas:** It's pretty awesome.

**Steven:** Yeah, yeah. Well, it's well earned.

**Zach:** It's cool from... from your side that like people can have these fan theories, but it influences the outcome. You know, they can... they can really make it happen.

**Steven:** Yeah, that's mostly true. I think that the difference is that I actually, we had one some person we... with the third story coming out, when Anna came out who is like drawing lines to like characters that... like because it's an anthology series. Whereas like, you know, a lot of the folks who we love are doing these great continuous arcs with the same characters, and they're like, "Well, I don't know if you notice this, but I think there was a definite choice and using this voice actor, because I think that really these characters are related. And here's what's happening." And I was like... and I was like, "Whoa, whoa." I was like, "Well, even if that could have been true, it won't be now." That's awesome.

**Zach:** So, when you went into making Witchever Path, what were some of your inspirations or influences in making the show?

**Jas:** I think the giant one, of course is the Choose Your Own Adventure books, which we both grew up with. That... something about that format and just, I think, for 2... 2 people who grew up as serious readers, just something about that format is so engrossing and it was really formative for both of us. So that in and of itself, I think. And... and the fact that we're both nerds who enjoy cryptids and such.

**Steven:** Yeah. I think Neil Gaiman was really a big, big person for me on this, Caitlin Kiernan. Yeah, I mean, like I felt like we... we were really trying to go for people who are really good with world building. And... and the idea of having a different take on folklore and myth was a big part for us. We're huge into world mythology and world religion in our house. And we're also, we're... we're... you know, we're a mixed race couple. We're bringing influences from our backgrounds together. But also, you know, so anytime we could see that in art, whenever we see that, and it knocks us on our feet... off our feet, we go for it.

I feel like, you know, there's a list of people we'd love to share with everybody, but like... but I think that that's it. I mean, like we just have a love of all of these different people. Ursula Le Guin, she's like... like we just continue to be inspired by where we all came from. And anytime

somebody wanted to look at something, in a way slightly different yet still tell those classic stories that hit the hearts and souls of people, we're like, "Yeah, let's do it."

**Zach:** Mm-hmm.

**Steven:** Yeah.

**Zach:** From your list, I know Neil Gaiman's work the best personally. And you really feel that... that sort of that reflection to have like that sort of like spooky, something is slightly different from how you'd expect it sort of feel is... is really awesome. I have to ask, though, Jas, you mentioned of course, the Choose Your Own Adventure books from a kid. When you read these as a kid, did you read it sort of the right way where you chose 1 choice and stuck with it? Or did you do like me and always read all 3 options before choosing finally?

**Jas:** So, you know, what I would do and it drove my mom crazy, because my mom was kind of a purist when it came to handling a book, but what I would do is I would... I would read to a certain point that if like I got to a choice where I either died or... or something didn't go quite right, I would dog ear the page, and I would go back to my previous choice and try to fix it. And so, like it would take... it would take me longer to finish the book because I was constantly going back.

**Steven:** Which I think is great.

**Jas:** But once I found like the perfect storyline (whatever that means), I was like so... I had like this weird sense of pride. It's almost like I finally did it. I did... I did nothing but read it and then be petulant, but I felt like I had made it.

**Zach:** That's awesome.

**Jas:** And I had... I had this just stack of Choose Your Own Adventure books. And Goosebumps did books like that too.

**Zach:** Oh, they did?

**Steven:** Mm-hmm.

**Jas:** So, I had... I had Choose Your Own Adventure and I had Goosebumps books that had 'choose your own path'. And I just had this entire shelf of these dog-eared books that my mom refused to look at.

**Zach:** That's such a good story.

**Jas:** I was a weird kid.

**Zach:** That's... that's awesome. Because you can't... like I've always had like almost FOMO, you know?

**Jas:** Yeah.

**Zach:** What happens in that other path?

**Jas:** Yes. I need to know and I need to know now. Dog-ear this page.

**Zach:** You and I, we were on the true correct way to read these books. Everyone else was wrong.

**Jas:** Exactly, exactly. They need to get on our wave. Yeah. Okay, Steven, how did you do it?

**Steven:** No, I actually... I did a similar thing. Like, what I did is, every time there was a decision, I stuck my finger...

**Jas:** Ooh.

**Jas:** ... in... in that. And then I would flip to my choice then be like, "Ah!" And then I would go back select. So, like... so, like, you know, like, I feel like that... that was the thing, like you had to know. I feel like there were some books where I was too worried about the consequences that if I chose right all the way through, I'm like, "I don't know if I want to do that to this guy, or this girl. I don't want to... I don't want to ruin these people's lives I won."

But I... but there was one that was about an alien invasion where my favorite one was that you either fought the aliens or you wind up joining them, which was a weird twist. And then when you joined them, you actually become part of their space program and you go out and start exploring alongside these aliens.

**Zach:** Oh wow.

**Steven:** And my favorite part was, you meet aliens and they try to show you what they believe... they're like, "We reconstructed a human's throne room," and showed a king. And really, it was a bathroom, and... and like the... the toilet seat was around his head like some sort of like crown and like it was a throne.

**Jas:** Is that not how you...?

**Steven:** Yeah. And like I loved it because it was just, it was such a great idea. Because like, you could actually be the freedom fighter in it, like every 80s movie, you could fight the aliens and win. Or you could join them and then, rather than worry about whether or not it's this, turns out the aliens aren't really fascists, they just realized we don't know any better.

**Jas:** Yeah.

**Steven:** And then they... they believe in us and then they let us go out and correct... correct ideas about toilets.

**Zach:** That's such a cool twist.

**Steven:** Yeah, I loved it. It was so good.

**Zach:** Yeah, that's... that's amazing. And then the other question, which is the question I find myself facing when I'm listening to your show too, and deciding which way I would have voted if I were listening currently, do you want to choose sort of what you would choose in that situation when you hit this 'choose your own adventure'? Or do you choose what you think is going to be the best story?

**Jas:** When I read the books, I would... I would usually go with how I wanted things to go first. And then I would reread it and just do what...

**Steven:** Yeah.

**Jas:** ... what I thought the intended or best story was. Selfishly, I'd be like, "Alright, what do I want first?"

**Steven:** I felt like every time, with the exception of like a few, whenever it would end real quick and you'd die in 1 page, that was the wrong... that was the wrong thing.

**Jas:** I was going to tell a story about that.

**Steven:** Oh, go ahead.

**Jas:** I was reading one of the Goosebumps books, actually. And I think it was a... there was like some sort of spooky hospital that you go to, and you go and sit in like the waiting room like, you know, normal. And I remember I chose to, when they called my name to go into the doctor's office finally, like I chose to say something flippant to the doctor.

**Steven:** Yeah.

**Jas:** And turned the page and immediately like first choice, "You're dead. Go back." It was like, "How dare!"

**Zach:** Wow.

**Jas:** I was like [unclear] allowed.

**Zach:** Sure. That's aggressive.

**Jas:** Yeah, that's like, "Oh my god."

**Steven:** That's R.L. Stine and crew trying to...

**Jas:** Seriously.

**Steven:** ... correct kids' bad behavior, "Respect authority."

**Zach:** Oh, hilarious.

You were... you were kind enough to provide an episode for our listeners to hear to get a little taste of your show. And I think it's the first episode in your most recent plot arc. Is that right?

**Steven:** Yeah, it's Episode 1 of Chosen.

**Zach:** Tell us about it. What do we need to know before we dive in to listen to this... this episode?

**Steven:** Chosen is the story of what happens. It is a story about a band called Illusory Redemption, which was America's first attempt at Black Metal, and a group of teens who were

willing to do anything for that fame, including possibly selling their souls by the Crossroads. And then...

**Zach:** Ooh.

**Steven:** And then it comes to a head after a murder. And 25 years later, the surviving members of the band are confronted with... with their former friend who had killed one of the bandmates, and basically their... their worlds starts to kind of unravel. You find out what happens to them, like after... after a series of crazy events. And then perhaps maybe the idea of what they were doing might actually be as supernatural as the legend... as the legend of the band was perceived.

**Zach:** Without further ado, let's... let's dive into the episode or listen to it. To our listeners, you won't be able to vote on this one. This vote has passed already, unfortunately. But I hope you enjoyed the clip and we'll be back in a minute to discuss it a little more.

[Episode of Witchever Path now plays. Original transcript of the episode is available at <https://www.witcheverpath.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Chosen-Part1.pdf>

**Zach:** Welcome back. So, now we've just heard the first part of the Chosen arc. Why was this the clip that you wanted to show off? What... what is it that you like about this episode in particular?

**Steven:** I like how it begins. We literally start in the past, like a cold open of seeing this band and how they're interacting as teenagers, getting ready to do this fake satanic ritual that has been made up by Rommel. And then we... then after the... after the intro, we then start seeing exactly what happened to all of them as they're now adults and how the... the murder of their... their friend, Levy, by... by their former bandmate, Rommel, kind of shaped the way that their entire lives went afterwards. And they've all kind of grown apart until Rommel has returned trying to get the band back together, more or less.

**Jas:** Mm-hmm.

**Steven:** And we... I was really proud of this because this was Jas's... this was Jas's baby. This was an idea about they really wanted to show a crossroad story. Because like that's a very American idea, the idea of going... you know, and it's... and it comes from an African American folklore and urban legend, the idea of selling your soul for... for blues fame.

**Jas:** I was just about to say, yeah, it tends to be a legend that is really centered in the blues and jazz world. And I thought it would be so interesting to fast forward a few decades and... and bring it into... into Black Metal and see how that would play out. And there was also something really nostalgic about it for me, you know, being... being the age that I am, but sort of having lived through this area when Black Metal was really on the rise, and you were seeing that in so many places, and hearing the rumors and legends that sort of went with the bands, kind of seeing how that would also play with the... the Crossroads aspect of the story. I just... I just thought it was too cool of a concept to pass up.

**Zach:** Mm-hmm. The Crossroads legend, it's... it's such a like that perfect level of really cool, little bit creepy, and just enough like 'what if' to really make such a good, compelling kind of creepy story, isn't it?

**Steven:** Right.

**Jas:** Yeah.

**Steven:** Yeah.

**Jas:** That... that was kind of what was exciting about it today. It's like, "Oh, wow, this is extra spooky because of the 'what if'."

**Steven:** And the spin on it, of course, is the idea is that the band has notoriety, but they never got off the ground. So, if it was indeed, you know, a possible thing, like if the ritual does indeed work, which you see... see those flashbacks unfold and the consequences of them throughout the rest of the story, what happens if you sell your soul for something that you don't even bother to get? Like, yeah, it's like... it's like the idea of, "Okay, you know, you... okay, you bought the car. You take it off the lot,"  
"Nah, never mind."

**Zach:** But you still have to deal with those consequences now, don't you?

**Steven:** Yeah.

**Zach:** Yeah. And also the whole 25 years later, like a lot of times, you think about that... that legend sort of like in the immediate like...

**Steven:** Mm-hmm.

**Zach:** ... I'm sorry, I'm blanking now. The... the musician who's the original legend was about, or one of the original legends was about died young, right?

**Steven:** Oh, yeah, that's true. And like the... the idea... the idea of it is that pretty much anyone that people believed had made a Faustian pact that like sometimes this even happens with rock musicians in the 60s after... after all of that was the idea that, "Oh, well, obviously they were in Satan's service and that's why they're gone. You know, like, the devil came to collect, you know, real quick," you know? There's... there's even like there's this one internet rumor that the idea of why all the like Cobain and like everybody else all ODs at like 27.

**Jas:** Right.

**Zach:** Mm-hmm.

**Jas:** Yeah.

**Steven:** And like maybe that's some... some part of their deal. And in this case, you know, these guys are in their 40s now, you know, like these folks are in their 40s. And... and instead, they're... you know, they're all over the place. Some of them are more of a mess than others, you know? You know, Hector, who's our... who's our kind of our intro main character, because like they all have their own shot in all this stories, like we really are about if you're... if you're a character that's going to be there through the whole thing, we want to give people a chance to breathe with them. He... he had a whole different life planned, I think, and then now he's like an expectant father and he thinks his life is coming together. And then out of nowhere, you know,

this horrible scumbag everybody thought was going to die in prison has been let out on parole, and he's been harassing their old friends enough that they're all reconvening to decide what to do about it.

And I think that that's, you know... that was the real fun thing for me. And it happened up here in New Hampshire, so like the idea of it for being a New Hampshire story, this is a very New Hampshire based story. It is a very... it's very much the spirit of New Hampshire. A lot of the characters you see in it from like Mexican American folks and like the mixed people who are like dealing with like being part of a metal band, because like, it goes against the stereotype of what most idiots thought you'd be into. And like... like we really stress all of that. And... and I think the authenticity, it's a real credit to our actors and to... you know, and to also the idea of where... where I think that the... the audience wanted to go. Because a lot of people pick stuff that really forced people to like, get into New England.

**Zach:** Yeah. And I wanted to say also, we were discussing a little earlier about using... using podcasts, and especially your interactive format to really foster sort of inclusivity and having the podcast reflect everyone. In light of that, I really love the way that you use Spanish. You know, it's Spanish speaking people, of course, they'll speak Spanish, but I feel like that's something that especially mainstream media sometimes ignores. And so, it's really... I really appreciate the way that you... you include that.

**Jas:** Thank you.

**Steven:** Wow, thanks. Yeah, I mean, but that's... that was a big, big thing. I mean, we... we want to give the characters with also a strong sense of their identity. And, I mean, Hector, has his definite, you know, real self in it. And it's not like we're going to reveal like, "Oh, this is actually really our friend Chad... you know, Carlos, that we just changed his name." That's... it's not that. It's based on the experiences of folks in New England that we've grown up around and that we've known. And I think that the authenticity is there. I mean, it's also you're pulling a lot from Jas's experiences too. You know, Jas has a bunch of Latinx background as well as, you know, Afro...'

**Jas:** Yeah.

**Steven:** Yeah.

**Jas:** I identify as Afro-Latinx, as well as being... having a really rich African American upbringing, and... and... and Jamaican upbringing later on in life. So, I'm kind of all over the place. But I feel like it's important to bring that through in our stories. And not just my background, but, you know, all of the different flavors of diversity and inclusivity.

**Steven:** Yeah.

**Jas:** I feel like one of the things that we always try to do is never, never just sort of default to a certain type of story, because it's not... it's not an accurate depiction of the world that we live in. Even though our worlds are, you know, oftentimes fantastical, it's important to understand that fantastical shit can happen to all sorts of people. But yeah, yeah, so it's... it's an honor and I was glad that I was able to use some of my Spanish, and I've been able to use some of my Patois and other... other story lines.

**Steven:** Oh god, yeah.

**Jas:** And sort of display, for lack of a better word, you know, my... my whole identity.

**Steven:** Yeah.

**Jas:** It's been really nice.

**Steven:** And I think... and what... what Jas is also saying is that one of the big themes for Witchever Path, the big thing that we have tried to do, this was actually a big thrust for me when... when we started this, was that, in addition to having these interactive stories, one of the things that... I don't know, like when you think New England and you think genre fiction, who are the... who are the writers are the stories that come to mind for you, Zach?

**Zach:** Obviously, the very first thought is always Stephen King, right?

**Steven:** Yep. And... and me too, who because we grew up with Stephen King, we both did.

**Zach:** Right. And that's a very prim suburban White guy feel.

**Steven:** Right. And like and even his characters that aren't scarily stock in their stereotype, because like he has a few that actually are surprisingly good for their time. But the areas that he does, the... they're where he grew up. And often, they're informed by how he grew up in a very White town and like the 60s, you know?

**Zach:** Mm-hmm.

**Steven:** Well, Jas and I grew up in a very... a demographically changing New England, I would say. We're a very different New England, Jas grew up in an area that was, you know, not predominantly White. I grew up in a weird White town, but like I wound up leaving it and then starting to travel a lot within New England. And there were all these pockets of different types of people, you know, and they're here and they've been here for decades or longer. And they don't often get their stories told, and they don't often get seen. And it's not... it's a novelty to use it. Like, it's like not like we're like, "Oh, look, this is our gay story in Maine." Like that's... that's not at all what we're doing. We're... we're showing you that you have a trans neighbor. And if something messed up happens in your town, and they're the one who... who it's happening to or like they're... they're the ones dealing with it, that that... their identity still matters, obviously, but their characterization and how they approach things is coming from that lens.

And we have been trying to put that into our stories like, you know, what does an African American mother with a Jamaican background who's also like into the Yoruban faith like... like, actually, like, you know, the Orisha, what does she do when confronted with the supernatural in her home? It's going to be different than what Rebecca might do or what... or... or Summer West in Bedford, New Hampshire. And we wanted to show that and we want to respect it.

And one of the things that I think is really cool is like, you know, a lot of people get readers for when they're doing like modern fiction like that, just to see like, oh, sensitivity wise, we've been so lucky to have actors from all different backgrounds, often from exactly the kind of people that are playing and be like, "Hey, what do you feel? Is this comfortable? Is there this? Is it that?" The only people who are often we check in with more are the... are the White actors who some... who a couple of them have played racist people. And so, we're trying to make sure, because they're not like that, like that that they're okay with what... with what... with... with how

we've set them to be antagonistic towards other people. And thankfully, that's paid off. I think that I still owe Shannon from Oz 9 an extra hug next time I see them.

**Zach:** And I think... I think it's really important and really great that you're able to accomplish that in the podcast.

**Steven:** Yeah, you're right. Yeah, I agree with you. That was just me being extra affirmative, I guess.

**Zach:** Is there... is there anything else about Witchever Path about your podcasting experiences or really anything you want to discuss or bring up at the moment?

**Jas:** I think, as always, you know, find talent from diverse backgrounds and inclusive backgrounds. Uplift those voices. Create storylines. Challenge yourself to create storylines that are inclusive of more than 1 experience. The stories exist, and the cool... and the characters are rich. Let's... let's uplift them.

**Steven:** Yeah.

**Zach:** Extremely well said. Thank you so much. Tell us, where can our listeners support Witchever Path? Where can they find your work?

**Steven:** We're on almost every streaming network. And I guess Libsyn is trying to get us to also go onto Amazon music. So, we'll see how that goes. [Witcheverpath.com](http://Witcheverpath.com), if you want to support the show and see like we actually have exclusive interactive storylines and alternate takes, alternate decision points, as well as original stories on our Patreon for... on the squirrel feed, as we call it. And that's [patreon.com/witcheverpath](http://patreon.com/witcheverpath). And I mean, like you can start listening to those for like just like 5 bucks a month. And we have like extra stuff for other tiers, but really like, honestly, we just love that people are out there. Witchever Path, which by the way, Witchever Path is it's a pun. So, it's W i t c h ever Path. You can think Jas for that, and...

**Zach:** It's a good pun.

**Steven:** It's so effective, so whatever. And... and... and really, what we would just say to do is that, if you love it, just, you know, you can review it, but also share it with other people who you think would really get a kick out of it. I mean, we're going to start back up again in September. We're taking our little vacation as we set up the new studio. But yeah, like go through and enjoy it. You know, suffer through our low... our learning audio production in the first story, and then enjoy yourself from then on out.

**Zach:** And that's... that's like a standard podcast greeting, every podcaster you speak to.

**Jas:** That's the podcast tax.

**Steven:** Yeah.

**Zach:** Yeah. But really, your... your... your quality at the beginning is good, and it becomes amazing as you go on, if I do say so myself.

**Steven:** Oh, thanks.

**Zach:** I really enjoy your show. Everyone who's listening, I hope you go check it out. It's a really great show. Finally, we're trying to do this showcase where we're trying to build up the whole audio drama community. So, are there any other audio dramas, not one of the ones that you've made, but anything else you want to talk about or shout out or send people's ears towards?

**Jas:** Absolutely.

**Steven:** So many.

**Jas:** Yeah. If you... if you haven't checked out Moonbase Theta Out, that's a huge one. Ninth World Journal, one of my favorites, absolutely. I don't know how many people... I think I came into this kind of late, but Uncanny County is a great one.

**Steven:** Oh, god, yeah.

**Jas:** Really love listening to that. You have any?

**Steven:** Yeah, Oz 9. Oz 9 should not be that funny.

**Jas:** Yeah, it's good.

**Steven:** I mean, like Shannon is so funny. Oracle of Dusk is amazing in terms of a medium really. Like it's a quiet story and I love it. And then Unwell is great. I've been... I've been really just adding shows a lot while we're, you know, unpacking still. And it's so much fun to be able to hear these things. Oh, you know, it's... it's really dirty, but I really enjoyed Caravan a lot.

**Jas:** Caravan.

**Steven:** And I'd love for Caravan to come back, please. Because, I don't know, it was surprisingly for a horny story, I was... I was really engrossed. It reminded me of playing Deadlands when I was... when I was younger, the Weird West role playing game, so it made me extra happy.

**Zach:** A lot of these I'm not familiar with. I'll have to check a lot of these out. That's awesome. Thank you for the recommendations.

**Steven:** Of course.

**Zach:** Jas, Steven, this is wonderful. I'm so happy we got to speak with you again. I hope once the world is back to normal, we can meet in person again and hang out, maybe play some board games. But...

**Jas:** Yes.

**Zach:** ... it's been... this has been an awesome conversation. Thank you so much.

**Steven:** Thank you. And yeah, you're on. Once... once... once we lift this, let's get together. This is great. Thanks.

**Jas:** Thank you.