

EGSM – [Episode] – Collectables

Content Warnings

- Innuendo
- Discussions of: physical violence & death, war, guns, fascism
- Mentions of: food & alcohol, mental health, fungus

CHRIS

...and that is just full of art supplies. Just tonnes and tonnes of art supplies. There's no miniatures in there. There's nothing else. It's just me, oh, that's an interesting twig

(laughing)

[Show Theme - Intro]

HELEN

Hello friends and fans and welcome to Enthusigasm. The show where we talk about a few of our favourite things. I am your host, Helen Gould, one of the best Rusty Quillers. Today we're talking about collectables. I am multiply excited to be joined by Chris and Grant. As always, we shall introduce ourselves alphabetically which means Chris you are going first. What are your pronouns and what do you do?

CHRIS

I'm Chris. He/him and I write about elves for a living by making RPGs.

HELEN

Ah. Beautiful. And Grant, what are your pronouns and what do you do?

GRANT

Hello, I'm Grant. He/him too and also I write the same things about elves as Chris. We write about elves together.

HELEN

Do you wanna mention the name of your company.

GRANT

Meh...yeah! We are two thirds of Rowan Rook and Decard. We are Decard and Rook and we write...we've written games such as Heart and Spire and mostly importantly, Jason Statham's Big Vacation.

HELEN

Hell yeah. God that's so satisfying to say.

CHRIS

Most importantly Seven ENnie award winning Heart. I think that's an important thing.

GRANT

I suppose so but at no point is there a back page of Heart which is Brian Cranston's Big Expansion, so...

(laughing)

CHRIS

No that's very true.

HELEN

It's true. It's true. Right, we shall get on to the actual subject of this episode which is collectable and collections. One of you go first and tell me what you collect and how you started doing it. Grant, I know what you collect. I know that they're lovely little soldier boys.

GRANT

Lovely little soldier boys. I like to go around the nightclubs and the docks and pick up lovely little soldier boys.

(laughing)

CHRIS

Home and lost on shore leave.

GRANT

Oh don't worry, I'll take care of you. Come in. Would you like a blanket and a biscuit? Yes, I collect toy soldiers. Chris, why don't you take the lead on this one Chris?

CHRIS

Alright. Well we both collect toy soldiers.

HELEN

Oh!

CHRIS

Which is infuriating to a degree because we both access the hobby of toy soldier collecting in very different ways. I paint miniatures and mess about with them and Grant has recently starting building his own.

GRANT

Which is the opposite of collecting.

CHRIS

It's the opposite of collecting almost but we spend thousands of pounds a year on tiny little plastic men for no real reason.

GRANT

Is it thousands? I guess it is thousands of pounds.

CHRIS

It's thousands Grant. It's absolutely thousands

(laughing)

If not more.

GRANT

At least a...maybe a...yeah, god. I hadn't thought about it in that way.

CHRIS

Technically, technically they're for a game.

GRANT

Yeah. Shall we explain...

HELEN

And which game is that?

GRANT

Shall we explain what Warhammer is?

HELEN

Please do. Please do. I would love to hear you explain what Warhammer is.

CHRIS

Warhammer, Warhammer is a 1980s satire that got incredibly out of hand

(laughing)

HELEN

Full disclosure we did have a TTRPGs episode in which people explained to me what Warhammer was there as well. I think there was something to do with floating pyramids.

CHRIS

Oh yeah, yep there's floating pyramids. Basically...

GRANT

That's part of it, yeah.

CHRIS

...if you imagine if a load of 14 year olds discovered purple prose and rocket launchers at the same time.

HELEN

Ah, yes.

CHRIS

That's basically what it is. It's an incredibly overblown universe. Everything's too big and too masculine and too silly.

HELEN

And the orcs are mushrooms?

CHRIS

The orcs are fungus. Yes. Which is actually kind of interesting. The thing is there is a lot of really interesting stuff in there but you have to dig through 30 years of just people going hog wild with a pen.

GRANT

The important thing to realise about Warhammer is that it is...it's not a story, it's an offshoot of a company that sells toy soldiers and so they need to sell as many toy soldiers as possible and the easiest toy soldier to sell are called space marines which are also the easiest to paint and some might argue the easiest to win with. So an awful lot of the lore, an awful lot of the backstory is about basically the same guy but with a different hat...

HELEN

Oh really?

GRANT

...and sometimes he's from Space Sweden and sometimes he's from Space Rome and...

CHRIS

And sometimes he's evil.

GRANT

Ooh. Half of him is evil and there's a great deal of fiction about trying to make space marines interesting and they're just not.

CHRIS

They're not, no. They're really not. Like it started...it started a very long time ago. Like in the 80s when it was coming up, it was genuinely satire. It was actually fairly pointed. One of the...one of the...the biggest orc is named after Margaret Thatcher.

HELEN

[gasps] Really?

CHRIS

His name's, what was it, Ghazghkull Mag Uruk Thraka

GRANT

Ghazghkull Mag Uruk Thraka

CHRIS

Uruk Thraka, there you go. Yeah. And there's a lot of parallels buried in there to political scenes at the time and it's very much been forgotten now for bodybuilding space marines who hurt foreigners.

HELEN

Oh dear

GRANT

There is...they were Games Workshop were really careful to put out a statement saying, hey listen the Imperium, the sort of the main fascists in the game, the Imperium is bad. We're not bad, we don't want you to be bad, the Imperium is bad, ok. Now here's a five minute video of a space marine putting on armour.

HELEN

I see.

GRANT

It's like...ok, well...so...

HELEN

And the space marines are part of the Imperium?

CHRIS

Yes

GRANT

Very much so. Yes. They're the...they're the...

CHRIS

I think enforcement wing of the Imperium

GRANT

Sexless angels of death who are fired out of rockets...

HELEN

Oh no

GRANT

...and crash land into planets to murder people with grenade launchers

HELEN

Oh dear

CHRIS

Yeah

GRANT

But we're not here to talk about that.

CHRIS

No

HELEN

No. You're here to tell me about how you...ok so, I have seen, you get this little grey...

GRANT

Sprues?

HELEN

Er...yes. And they've got limbs and guns and heads and things in them and you have to snap them out and put them together.

GRANT

[Gasps] Snap?

CHRIS

Oh! Oh no, it is a careful and zen process.

(laughing)

HELEN

Oh

CHRIS

You need yourself a pair of very precise clippers.

GRANT

Oh! You've got a pair of the good ones Chris. I can see. You've got those one...Chris got me a pair like that for my birthday.

CHRIS

You get a very precise pair of flat clippers and then you carefully shave away all the mould lines and glue them together precisely in the way that you choose if possible. Some sets don't let you choose.

GRANT

Coward

CHRIS

So the...yeah.

(laughing)

So especially for me putting them together is maintaining a zen garden. It's getting them all perfect and all smooth and lovely and then spending far too long painting them and then just throwing them in a cabinet and never touching them again.

HELEN

I see them. Are those all ones you've made?

CHRIS

Yes that is. That is the ones I can fit. The ones behind me are the ones that fit into the cabinet. The rest are just in a box on the floor.

GRANT

And the ones that are nicely painted as well or the ones which you're proud of.

CHRIS

Yes, yes. I realise that this is technically an audio medium but my desk is just rammed with just piles of paint and handfuls of tiny, plastic grey men that haven't been done yet. It occupies a large part of my world every day and they just sort of...they just sort of sit here.

GRANT

What's that fellow's name, Chris? Chris is holding up a big demon.

CHRIS

Yes big demon. This is Bellacor.

GRANT

Bellacor

CHRIS

A big chaos demon, like a Balrog.

HELEN

Oh

GRANT

Yeah they started with Balrog and then just extrapolated out from there.

CHRIS

Yeah and as I say, went hog wild with it and then you've got your angry space dudes

HELEN

Oh yes I see. Very good.

CHRIS

And they're all very heroic. Wink.

(laughing)

But yeah the whole process is mainly what I do to not be mad. It's...it fills the quiet spaces between when I have thoughts.

HELEN

Yeah. I have House Flipper for that.

CHRIS

House Flipper's pretty good for that to be fair and a lot cheaper.

GRANT

Is that the PC game where you tidy a house?

CHRIS

Yeah you can break it down or paint it or what not.

HELEN

So for April Fool's Day, so usually if you want to demolish a wall you have a big sledgehammer and you hit the wall for it but for April Fool's Day it was a shotgun and you just shot the walls into pieces.

CHRIS

Just firing randomly into people's houses as you wander past.

GRANT

That's the Warhammer way.

CHRIS

The absolute best thing about House Flipper though, and it's such a minor thing, I've never really enjoyed screwing in a radiator before.

HELEN

Mm

CHRIS

There's something satisfying about getting that bad boy up on the wall.

HELEN

Yeah. Yeah there is.

GRANT

I exclusively play PC games where you can jump sideways holding two guns so I don't know what you're talking about.

CHRIS

That's very true.

HELEN

Oh I see. I see. My experience of PC games is completely the opposite of yours.

GRANT

Jump forwards holding one gun...weird.

HELEN

Sometimes backwards. So did you get into this hobby via Warhammer? How did you start making things?

CHRIS

Grant do you wanna go first?

GRANT

Yeah it was Warhammer for me. Warhammer, that was the first nerdy thing I did, I think. That was the first sort of game which I was exposed to. A mate of mine at primary school he bought me...he bought me in on it and he was powerfully strange and at one point there's a factions of orcs called evil sons and he said it was pronounced evil snus and I said "no, Andy it's not. We can look it up in the codex" and then he said, "you should leave my house". So that was a really strange sort of...

(laughing)

I'm glad I moved on from him but that was my first...he bought me in to it. He was very strange but I learned about...so the first thing I played was a game called Gorkamorka and Gorkamorka is a...it's like Mad Max, I think. Would you describe it as Mad Max Chris?

CHRIS

It's entirely just based on Mad Max, yeah

GRANT

What is Mad Max was full of orcs and much more stoppy starty because you had to actually play through it and so you have these big ramshackle trucks and bikes and trikes and you make all your boys and they have the weapons on. They have very small bases so you can physically jam them on the truck and then you painstakingly moving them around a board trying to outmanoeuvre each other. I then got more into it. I started buying more models around the sides and experimenting and trying to build an army. I do wanna say flash forward 12 years, Chris and I tried to play Gorkamorka against each other in the second year of university because we didn't have any money. We didn't have thousands of pounds a year money to spend on this hobby. So we clubbed together. We managed to get £10 each to get a box of orcs and then we went to a charity shop and I got...I think I got a Playmobil truck

CHRIS

You got a Playmobil truck and I got a Winnie the Pooh...

GRANT

Pirate ship

CHRIS

Pirate ship

GRANT

With wheels!

CHRIS

And we...with wheels, and we used those as the vehicles because we were...we were poor and I'd like to point out that Grant and I have played each other not that many times.

GRANT

Ten times tops. Five times

CHRIS

Like ten times, most of those games were on the floor of my parents' house.

GRANT

Yeah and we were at uni together which was weird.

CHRIS

Yeah we were at uni together but we're talking six years ago on the floor of my parents' living room.

GRANT

We happened to be over there for a BBQ and a business meeting at the same time.

CHRIS

Yeah. Using vases as mountains.

GRANT

We spent a...and I think part of the reason why we wanted to talk about collecting rather than wargaming per say is that we don't really do war games. I find...I personally find the whole competitive nature of it pretty stressful and maybe boring and the war games that I do play are much more collaborative or narrative and just a bit sillier but what we do is focus on the craft of it. I think would be how I describe it. So Chris is...Chris paints. Chris is an excellent painter.

CHRIS

Thank you

GRANT

Why don't you tell us about, maybe, just the different kinds of paint that you jam onto the boys.

(laughing)

Because I've only got the one type of paint.

CHRIS

Yeah that's fair. Sort of the standard paint that you use, that you can buy from the companies that make the miniatures are generally acrylics. They're just standard paints

GRANT

Like nice poster paints.

CHRIS

Yeah. High quality, high pigment that sort of stuff but I use oil paints.

HELEN

Oh wow

CHRIS

And enamels because you can blend oil paints and you can water them right down and use them as washes and make them all mucky and you can get things like chipping medium which is like hairspray in consistency when you spray it on and then you put another layer of paint over it and then it's water activated so you can scratch off the top layer to reveal the bottom layer and then you can make...you paint the bottom layer as rust and the top layer as the armour and you can make them all weathered and damaged.

GRANT

Don't forget the airbrush.

CHRIS

Yes I have an airbrush to do smooth, smooth blends.

HELEN

Oh I love this.

CHRIS

And like, I have...sitting next to me I have a five box chest of drawers. Like a...they're called a really useful box. Big bucket things and that is just full of art supplies. Just tonnes and tonnes of art supplies. There's no miniatures in there. There's nothing else. It's just me, oh, that's an interesting twig

(laughing)

I'm going to take that home and I'm going to put it in the oven for three hours at 150 degrees to get all the bacteria and water out of it and then maybe glue it to a base. I've got the perfect miniature. I've got the perfect miniature for this. It'll frame it perfectly.

GRANT

I haven't thrown away the roll from the inside of a tube of tinfoil for eight years and I've used none of them. I have a box full of...because they're the best kind of cardboard tubes you see.

CHRIS

They're so sturdy. They're so sturdy

GRANT

You can saw them and they don't break apart, they're great.

CHRIS

Mm, a good saw-able tube...

GRANT

I haven't used one of them! They're just in a box in my spare room.

CHRIS

That's a big box of potential my friend.

GRANT

Oh baby yeah. So I want to talk about my application of the way I do it. See Chris is very much into making beautiful models and he will build them as they come...as they're supposed to look. So there's...

CHRIS

As per instructions.

HELEN

I see

GRANT

And there's generally a nice little instruction manual and Chris will put slot a into tab b and then make them...and so it looks dynamically posed and it looks sensible and all the proportions are right.

CHRIS

The word you're looking for there is coherent.

GRANT

Coherent. Yes, excellent Chris. It stands up on its own.

HELEN

And yours are more Avant Garde

GRANT

You know that kid from Toy Story, Sid.

(laughing)

That's how I interact with the hobby

HELEN

Oh!

CHRIS

But imagine if Sid sometimes wasn't looking and just really, really liked religious iconography

GRANT

Oh yeah. Yeah, oh, I'll put a cross on stuff. I love...I love a bit of religious iconography. And what if Sid had played some Dark Souls at a formative time. That sort of thing. So I try to build horrible little guys, I really like horrible little guys and I...one of my favourite things about Warhammer specifically, but also any sort of tabletop modelling or any sort of toy soldiers thing is the human element of it. The pathetic element of it. So rather than having a huge, big powerful space marine with eight legs and two plasma fists and a steam pipe coming out of his head, my favourite...my favourite model that I have is, I'm going to say he's about 6mm/7mm tall. He's called a snotling which is not a particularly dramatic name and he has been able to save up and afford himself a catapult

HELEN

Aw

GRANT

And he's twanging his catapult at something. Snotlings are the absolute worst troops in any legion, any army. They are absolutely terrible.

CHRIS

If you imagine a scrawny and malnourished goblin

GRANT

Stupider

CHRIS

Much more stupid. They are half the size of goblins. They are designed as these...they're something that goblins can boss about.

HELEN

Aw. But I love them.

GRANT

Oh they're great. I adore them! They're wonderful creatures.

CHRIS

They're also communists.

HELEN

Oh! Excellent.

GRANT

That's the other thing about them

CHRIS

That's the other thing about them. They have...they regularly have communist rebellions and union meetings.

HELEN

Oh! Tiny goblin unions! Oh I love this.

CHRIS

Yes, they're gorgeous.

GRANT

The leader of the rebel revolutionary committee was called the Red Gobbo and the deal is every time you put the Red Gobbo on the table you'd roll his stats randomly because he'd been killed previously and so now he was a new guy.

CHRIS

It's just basically somebody picking up the hat and coat and putting it on and going, yep in charge now.

GRANT

A lot of time for that.

HELEN

Ah. The Dread Pirate Roberts of communism

GRANT

Yes precisely. And I really like making little stories. I watch quite a lot of diorama stuff on YouTube and I'll try to make something which is...I like making people who look scared or people who look like they're trying to...they're trying really hard but not getting it so there's a fairly recent game which came out in the last couple of years called Turnip28. So 28 is the scale. So 28mm is the average height of a human in the setting. Warhammer operates closer to 32 these days.

It used to be 28 but then they made everyone taller so they could fit more stuff on the models. But Turnip28 is set in the post-apocalyptic Napoleonic warfare zone where everything's mud, everything sucks, it's awful. Everyone hates it and instead of commanders you have a snob who is in charge of two toffs and each of the toffs is in charge of their own unit, their own unit of men who've they brought along for the war and everyone...it's all Napoleonic mashed together with medieval. It never stops raining, there's a mushroom growing out of your face and you don't quite understand what's going on and everyone's terrible. Like you hit on a 6 on a dice so the odds of you actually doing anything are really slim and I love that! I think that's wonderful! I want an army of really like feckless incompetence. And I really like...

CHRIS

Grant has this marvellous talent for making a model look pathetic.

GRANT

Thank you. Thank you.

CHRIS

Not a pathetic model but making them look like they're trying very hard and just not getting anywhere.

GRANT

You've both role played with me so you know that's my favourite kind of NPC.

HELEN

I do.

CHRIS

That is your jam, yeah.

GRANT

It's like...I'm terribly sorry, I've had a tremendous burden thrust upon me. I'm largely incompetent. I'm about 40% posher than Grant is, could you help?

CHRIS

Save me from myself!

GRANT

I'll give you all the money from my wallet.

HELEN

I still remember that one, I still remember that one NPC in Unbound who had forks for hands.

GRANT

Johnny Forkhands

HELEN

Yeah. Yeah. Jimmy Forkhands

GRANT

Yeah he was great. He really underlined the post...the tense post-apocalyptic mood I was trying to come up with. There was Johnny Fork...they weren't even fork... they were electric forks which span!

HELEN

Yeah they were!

GRANT

There was a lad who had an oven for a chest, I seem to remember.

HELEN

Something like that.

CHRIS

Must've been a nightmare around spaghetti. Got that solved.

GRANT

Yeah...well, so I really like trying to make human elements in models and also I really like building unique things so I consider it a personal failure if I make a model how it's supposed to look which is very time consuming and means I don't own an army. Sorry.

HELEN

I see

GRANT

Sorry, I own several armies but they're all on the sprues. They're all in different boxes. I have a cupboard...the same way that Chris has art supplies for basing and painting and different kinds of wire and different chervil grades of caulk, eight different kinds of moss, some interesting rocks he's found. I have just bins of little arms and skulls and heads and I'll leave them around the place.

CHRIS

Like six litre bins. They're not small.

GRANT

And I'm not...I don't think that I'm especially extravagant in the way that I pursue this hobby. I think that of the people who do it I'm probably on the...on the cheaper end of the spectrum

CHRIS

Alarmingly frugal.

GRANT

Mm but I'll just buy a sprue, I'll buy another sprue and I'm like I'm gonna make these kiss. I'm gonna...so I've got these horrible bird people and these witches, what if we made horrible bird witches and then the trick is you just hold the

Rusty Quill Enthusiasm – [Episode] – Collectables

sprues near to each other for at least a week. You wanna get a handle on how these go together and understand them conceptually.

HELEN

Yeah, they've got to do some osmosis

GRANT

Yeah and then you give up three days in. Which is why Chris has squads.

CHRIS

Yeah I have squads because I'm...when I do it I'm constantly trying to learn how to do something new and different and complicated painting techniques that I can't do yet because there's a lot of, if you want there to be, there's an awful lot of technical stuff you can do.

GRANT

Oh boy

CHRIS

Like the thing I'm learning at the moment which is non-metallic metal which is most...if you want to paint gold, you get a gold paint and you paint it on. It's got little flecks of mica or aluminium in it that make it shiny. So to do it without that you paint the shine

HELEN

[Gasps]

CHRIS

So you paint the shine and the reflections and there's different kinds of...

HELEN

Oh that sounds very detailed and difficult

GRANT

Uh huh

CHRIS

There's a really complicated version which is called sky earth non-metallic metal which is where anything that's facing down reflects the earth back onto it so has earth tones and everything that faces up has the reflection of the sky

HELEN

Oh my god

CHRIS

And you paint all that in at 28 to 32mm scale

HELEN

Do you have a magnifying glass?

CHRIS

Nope. I've got these terrible eyes. Terrible, terrible eyes.

GRANT

But you've got a steady hand though, Chris, I'll give you that and your eyes are better than mine. I can't detect depth.

CHRIS

He's got no depth perception.

GRANT

I've got no depth perception because I'm long and short sighted at the same time in either eye which means I see everything quite flat so Chris can paint an eye and he puts some paint on the brush and he puts the brush on the model and it goes where he wants it to whereas with me it's kind of like a game of chicken where I've got the paint on the brush and I've got the model and I just have...I have to move one towards the other until bomp. So I've had to use a much looser style. Let's say perhaps more impressionistic method.

HELEN

Ah yes

CHRIS

Grant's miniatures come out, and I do not mean this negatively in any way, they come out grubby.

GRANT

Oh thank you. I try. I try for grubby.

CHRIS

He paints them grubby and nasty and covered in mud and I do some like that but also I pride myself on being able to do nice clean shiny boys.

HELEN

Aw. Actually Chris you never said how you got into doing all this painting and collecting all these little men?

CHRIS

Oh it's true. So I first started off playing Dungeons and Dragons very, very early and then I think it was a couple of years after that I was in my local pub's carpark mucking about as a child, as I was want to do almost every weekend thanks to my parents, and I found in the carpark a tiny, plastic orc from a boardgame which has just been rereleased actually, called Hero Quest.

HELEN

Oh yes

GRANT

With a scimitar?

CHRIS

The little scimitar on his head and I was like they make models of these. I was so excited.

GRANT

And that orc turned to you and said “come with me Christopher. I’ll take you on an adventure beyond your wildest dreams.”

CHRIS

“I will show you a world of empty wallets”

(laughing)

Yeah so then I spent ages trying to work it out because this was pre internet, can’t just Google that, until I eventually found Games Workshop was a company that also had a...coincidentally had a shop opposite my father’s work at the time so I would force him to go in and buy me things whenever I had enough pocket money, and thankfully, being wonderfully middle class, he did.

HELEN

Aw. On that note, I think we’re going to go to a break.

[BREAK]

HELEN

And welcome back. So something that I have noticed from what both of you have said is that it seems like in collecting your miniatures you have also got side collections. So like Chris you've got side collections of twigs and stones and things and Grant, you've got side collections of little cardboard tubes.

GRANT

Just in case

CHRIS

There's a lot of accessories involved.

HELEN

I see. I see

CHRIS

And also it's all consuming if I'm honest

(laughing)

HELEN

Is it?

CHRIS

Yeah there has not a day gone past where I haven't at least picked up a model and thought about it. Sometimes you can't get any models and you're like well this day isn't as good.

(laughing)

HELEN

This is starting to sound like a curse.

GRANT

Oh, well I dunno

CHRIS

A bit. It's a little bit of a curse.

GRANT

Yeah like one of them Rumpelstiltskin curses. Actually that was quite a big one wasn't it.

HELEN

If you can guess Games Workshops actual name...

CHRIS

That's a fairly solid curse you've got going on...

GRANT

That was the first born wasn't it, yeah. Yeah it's a bit curse-y but I think that as young boys we are...we are told we can't be creative. I can't speak to the experience of young girls, I wasn't one. I don't know what it's like but I remember that from the age of about eight years old/nine years old you're pretty much told to shut up and sit down. Your creativity is often not punished but not created. Sorry...not desired outside of how well it can get your mark in school. Your creativity isn't especially rewarded. There are very few outlets for you to be artistic, to make something beautiful, to make something that you're proud of and all of the...even a lot of the marketing around Warhammer is around competing against each other and winning and trying to get the best army so you can fight and I think something which has really helped...something which has really helped Chris and I because we're also...we're creative in our day jobs. We write role playing games for a living and so there's this drive in that, role playing games are often a hobby for a lot of people and so it's something you can just do, lay back and relax and you don't need to worry about getting better at it but we do. We have a...I have a professional pride to uphold and I want to get better at writing and I want my next game to be better than my current game and so on and so forth. But just making toy soldiers, especially with no sort of like, I'm not here to win a contest, there's no time pressure, just something we can slowly get better at for no reason other than it's nice to get better at something, that's hugely valuable.

CHRIS

There's an achievable goal. You can get better each time you try something.

GRANT

Yeah absolutely.

CHRIS

And just continuing from Grant's point, the girls I knew when I was very young had craft boxes. They had boxes full of glitter and all sorts of other stuff that I was not allowed to because I was a boy

GRANT

Friendship bracelets!

CHRIS

Yeah stuff like that. And what you end up with is you know those face creams for men that are like "face armour, bullet proof"

(laughing)

"This moisturiser will stop a speeding F1 car." That's kind of what Games Workshop and miniatures are. It's creative but it's about guns so it's ok, boys can play.

GRANT

It's war

CHRIS

And...the least at that time especially it was an in and it was a way that was accepted and I was allowed to do that, as it were.

GRANT

Just

CHRIS

Just. And it kind of stuck and I'm not upset about that fact but I would've liked some glitter

HELEN

Yeah

GRANT

I really...I always thought that charm bracelets were wonderful. I thought they were really cool. You get bracelets and they have little...little figurines on them

HELEN

Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's another thing that you had to collect. You get the bracelet with one charm on it and then you hunt down all the other little bits.

GRANT

Yeah. Where's the Warhammer charm bracelet Chris? Imagine that.

CHRIS

Just skulls and ammunition.

GRANT

Just hundreds of skulls but you can get little symbols. I think it might look quite cute. It's just there's really no market for them I guess. If only they already sold small resin lumps which I could attach to a bracelet

HELEN

You can make your own resin lumps.

CHRIS

And he frequently does

GRANT

Thanks Helen.

(laughing)

HELEN

I believe in you.

GRANT

What I've been getting into recently is scratch building. Which is the opposite of collecting.

HELEN

And what's that?

GRANT

Scratch building is when you just get raw materials and make toy soldiers.

HELEN

Like a chunk of plastic

GRANT

No so I use putty. So epoxy putty. So you get two different kinds of putty of various stickiness, mix them together and then it hardens over a few hours but you can sculpt it in that time so you build an armature out of wire and you have all the sculpting tools and...Chris does this as well just in filling in gaps for conversion work but I am just having the most fun with it because I can make...I can make uniquely horrible little guys

HELEN

Hooray. I'm very happy that you can do that.

GRANT

It's so hard to buy a model of a fat man with his shirt off, just really tired.

HELEN

Yeah

GRANT

And I can make that from basically nothing and now I have a bunch of models of sunbathing dad grade physiques.

HELEN

I love that. I want more dad bods in, in general actually.

CHRIS

One of the nice things as well is that because it's a physical thing you've made you can chart progress on it.

GRANT

Absolutely yeah.

CHRIS

Because behind me I've got display cabinets and some of those now, the painting on them I would look at now and just I'd strip the paint off immediately. That would be an abject failure for me now.

GRANT

If I didn't steal it first.

CHRIS

Yeah. But it shows...it shows how far I've come in x amount of years because I know roughly when I painted each one so I can plot the order of getting better and you end up with this little chronology of talent. It's really fun.

GRANT

How do you feel about...about being enthusiastic around people about this sort of thing because I would get four drinks in and lean over to someone at the party and be like "do you wanna see my toy soldiers" and they pretty much always said yes because I'm quite tall.

CHRIS

Because they have to.

GRANT

Because they have to because it's my house and I'll show the big robot I made. But how do you feel about enthusing about this? Obviously we've been given a safe space to by our good friend Helen

HELEN

Yeah, it's literally in the name of the show.

CHRIS

So I don't talk about this stuff to "normal people" i.e. people...

GRANT

You're not friends with normal people.

CHRIS

No but the friends that share the hobby, understand role playing games that sort of...nerds, which mostly I know, fine, I'll talk about all this stuff quite a lot but I also know a load of people that aren't nerds.

GRANT

What's that like?

CHRIS

It's weird. And none of this comes up. There's no way to really talk about it. Oh what do you do? Oh I paint little men. Do ya? I'll be over here.

GRANT

What do they talk about? What do they do? They're so high and mighty. Is it football?

CHRIS

I don't know. I don't listen

HELEN

Stocks. Golf.

(laughing)

CHRIS

Golf. It's all golf.

HELEN

House prices.

GRANT

I'm still thinking about a chaos space marine I'm going to touch later on

(laughing)

CHRIS

But as we've evidenced from talking here it's actually fairly hard to explain what you do. If...I'm really into fixing cars, brilliant. Everybody can parse that. What do you do for a living Chris? Well I write games about elves that let you be elves but you're not actually elves and also I make tiny men out of plastic. That's such a hard conversation to have with somebody who doesn't already know a little bit of it.

HELEN

Yeah.

GRANT

When I'm not pretending to be a wizard online

CHRIS

Yeah

GRANT

Which is the other thing you do a lot.

HELEN

I want to ask if either of you have a particular piece that you're looking for? Because I feel like this is the kind of hobby where you can be like, oh I really want that dragon head to add to me horrible tree person and then...it seems like the kind of thing where you can mix and match and you're waiting for the perfect thing.

CHRIS

So interestingly this collection is not one of scarcity.

HELEN

Ah

GRANT

Well...well...

CHRIS

To a degree. So in...now we live in the age of 3d printing

HELEN

Yes

CHRIS

And things can be prohibitively expensive. Like some of these models are colossal art pieces. There's an enormous robot and I mean enormous, multiple feet tall that is £3,000

HELEN

Oh my god.

GRANT

Toddler size

CHRIS

Yeah it's...

GRANT

Like a resin toddler.

CHRIS

Yeah it's a big robot but most of the standard miniatures are fairly accessible. They're fairly cheap. You get a lot of them. But what I'm looking for is a specific

style of thing because if you want...for years I have been searching for a witch miniature.

(laughing)

I like witches, I like the broom, I like the hat. Now finding a witch miniature that doesn't look like it should be painted on the nose cone of a plane is difficult.

GRANT

It's so hard.

CHRIS

They are *all* sexy witches

GRANT

To find a non-erotic witch

HELEN

I see. I see

CHRIS

But finding a nice witch. Cauldron, broom...

GRANT

Cat

CHRIS

...some clothing would be wonderful.

GRANT

At least with her top on

CHRIS

Yeah and there's an upgraded scale as well. So the scale we regularly collect in is 32mm so they're about an inch/inch and a half. There's also 75mm which is larger big display pieces, not used in games and those are expensive. They're made by generally small companies and they are already, before you touch them, works of art and there's several of those that I've had my eye on for ages but they're almost always limited runs. So they'll make...

GRANT

And they're resin as well.

CHRIS

Yeah they're resin

GRANT

So they're more expensive to produce.

CHRIS

They're heavier, they're fragile. And there's a couple of those that I would adore getting my hands on but if you don't happen to have £150 at the time when it's coming out then you're looking at eBay and obviously it gets incredibly expensive very fast for some of the rarer, nicer pieces.

HELEN

Well Grant can you not make a witch with your putty and wire?

GRANT

Yeah but it would come out a bit lumpy

(laughing)

HELEN

Oh

GRANT

That's the thing. As Chris said all of my guys are quite grimy and lumpy and I'm going for that but also it's easier than making them not grimy and lumpy

HELEN

I dunno. I can vibe with a grimy, lumpy witch

GRANT

Yeah again, I'm happy to make a grimy...I think I've probably got a couple knocking around my desk as we stand but what Chris wants is a nice looking and respectable librarian-esque witch. I think is that right, Chris?

HELEN

Oh ok

CHRIS

Yeah. Yeah like just not sexy witch

GRANT

Yeah. Busty but not like sexy

CHRIS

Well I mean I'm not gonna turn that down

GRANT

Buxom

CHRIS

But not a pin up

GRANT

Yeah and like I have...I have...there is perhaps a difficulty of me making a beautiful witch for my friend Chris. That seems like the sort of thing that two ancient perverts would do in a Greek myth.

(laughing)

My particular thing which I am looking for is not a...so I started playing back in 96/97

HELEN

Oh wow

GRANT

And back then, he's still involved now, but the Games Workshop head rockstar designer for models, in as far as a guy who makes orcs for a living can be a rockstar, there's a chap called Brian Nelson. And Brian Nelson just made the most characterful off-model miniatures. You know how like so you'll see pictures on Twitter and it'll be here are times the Simpsons went off model and when Homer looks really odd and janky

HELEN

Yeah, yeah, yeah

GRANT

Brian Nelson didn't quite subscribe to the same guidelines as everyone else so his guys were weird and lumpy and ugly and characterful and orcs which didn't look like the other orcs but I thought they were absolutely beautiful. He made the snotling which I was shouting about earlier which I'm so proud of...proud that I own. But he has basically the...basically anything that he put out in the second half of the 90s I would gladly have but you're looking at £25 a piece at this point and it's just not worth it because they're made out of soft metal and the metal itself degrades. But just his style was absolutely beautiful and there are some pieces which I would like to have just for the...just for the sake of being able to have them around. I probably wouldn't even cut them up if you can imagine such a thing. I probably wouldn't paint them though.

CHRIS

They do all have the most twisted faces as well

GRANT

Oh yeah. And they're all having such a bad day

CHRIS

Yeah. It's like they learnt how to do faces around the year 2000 and anything before that is just guesswork. It's an armour plate with a nose.

GRANT

They're not pretty before then. There's not a lot of great stuff. Some are...like Trish Morrison's Greater Demons if I can get real inside baseball.

(laughing)

HELEN

I'm going to Google that.

GRANT

For me...for me personally, Trish Morrison defined what a minotaur should look like and they haven't bettered it since. Her Lord of Change...

CHRIS

Has her own weird aesthetic.

GRANT

But I will say the ones you can get now are better because they stick together properly and they're lighter and you can...the problem with metal models is that they don't really stick together. You have to drill a hole in every joint and then put a bit of wire in and then glue that wire in. Otherwise if you...if you so much as breathe on one of these things all the paint comes off as well as three of the arms.

HELEN

Oh no.

CHRIS

Cause they're made out of this incredibly soft pewter metal and it means that if they've got a sword that you've beautifully painted and you accidentally bend that sword by, I don't know, touching it, the paint just flakes off.

GRANT

I've got a question for you Chris. Quick question for you. How long did the sword last on your Aenur Sword of Twilight?

CHRIS

Oh...minutes.

GRANT

Minutes

(laughing)

HELEN

Oh no

CHRIS

Oh it was infuriating. It was such a gorgeous sword.

GRANT

They were giving away a free white dwarf as well.

CHRIS

It was...yeah they used to give out...it was a limited edition thing they gave away...

GRANT

A deliberately sexy elf.

CHRIS

And it basically just melted. He was a gorgeous elf.

GRANT

Heart breaking. And that was Brian Nelson. He did More Time. Oh...then you had to make weird perverts in More Time. Most of them are carrying fishes.

(laughing)

CHRIS

Back in my day

GRANT

Everyone looked like Alan Moore it was great.

HELEN

Fs chat for that sword. We're coming towards the end of the episode. I want to ask a broader question, perhaps a philosophical question. I wonder if either of you have any thoughts on why people collect things because it seems to be the kind of thing that doesn't stop. If that makes sense. There isn't a final end point or goal it's just...

CHRIS

Yeah and if you've...if you're collecting, let's say, a sticker album that has a technical final end you also find people finish that and go, oh I'll get another one.

HELEN

Yes

CHRIS

And it's almost in the same vein so they'll get all of the coins from one year and then they'll just do the next year and the next year.

GRANT

I want two copies of every Super Nintendo game. One to play and one to put on my shelf.

CHRIS

One to vacuum seal. And I think, honestly, for a lot of people it's community. Because as...just to use an example, as Grant just mentioned, Trish...I can't say

it, Trish Morrison's...Trish Morrison's Greater Demons. That's...that doesn't make any sense to anybody.

GRANT

Not even to you.

CHRIS

Except...even...I know the Greater Demons but not the Trish Morris...I can't say it. But that incredibly deep dive, that incredible specific knowledge is a part of a community and there are people who will get that reference and understand it and agree or disagree and have a reason for both of those and you've got dialogue. And that's what it is. It's that community. It's about showing off your work. It's about improving and getting feedback in a lot of cases.

GRANT

I have a counterpoint. Sorry not a counterpoint, I agree with you entirely Chris.

CHRIS

You're wrong because...

GRANT

No I think you're entirely right and I think that part of something we've learned as RPG designers, part of a games commercial success comes down to how much of a community you can build around it and part of how much of a community you can build around it is giving them enough setting to get excited about but not so much that they get scared and it's a strange balancing act but it's

worthwhile. For me I think the...ok so the older I've got, the more I start saying dad things and one thing that's fully penetrated, even my...life with strangers...I said to my therapist on Friday, instead of saying "goodbye" or "see you later" I'll say "lasers" which is short for see you later which doesn't make any sense. Nothing. It's an absolute just a part of a thing but it's a ritual that I have prepared. It is a ritual which lets me form a little sense of understanding through the world and it's like, similarly, dad jokes are oft repeated because in this nightmarish chaotic world they are an element of control and understanding. And so, you're not setting yourself the goal to try and collect one of everything or I want to get one of every Snes game although some people do that, it's more I want to understand this. I want to understand this tiny little part of the world because it is a ceaseless cacophony outside of this. It cannot be understood. Any attempt to understand it is foolish at best and so by really restricting ourselves to this and saying, right, here are the things that I'm interested in and that means that I can have a discussion about why Trish Morrison's minotaurs are better than the plastic ones that replaced them and feel as though I understand the boundaries of that. And there's a safety and there's an element of like well in these walls this bit makes sense, I've plotted out this bit. And that, I think, is a huge amount of collecting and ordering things. It's a...an extension of naming everything in the universe.

CHRIS

And from that there's an element of mastery and identity as well. I am good at this thing. This is a thing I am good at and you can reference it and people can...people can say that's Grant, he makes miniatures. And you go, yes, yes I do. I am very good at it. Thank you and that mastering your identity is a lot of why we do it.

HELEN

That's really beautiful. And do you know what I'm very glad that it's the end of the episode. That was such a thoughtful and lovely thing for you both to have said. Thank you. This has been lovely and I really like that you two already know each other and bounce off each other because I've had to do basically nothing this whole episode. I've just been like tell me about this thing and it's been great.

GRANT

Yeah I'll be honest with you Helen this is...this is broadly just similar to what we do most days except we happen to be recording it for someone else.

CHRIS

Yeah, it's not far off.

HELEN

Thank you both so, so much for coming on. I'm so glad that we could get you on and talk about something that you both enjoy so much. So listener I will see you in the next episode. But for now it's goodbye from me. Goodbye. And it's goodbye from these two. Do you both want to say goodbye?

GRANT

Goodbye

CHRIS

Bye

[Show Theme - Outro]

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[Show Theme – Outro Ends]

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