Pick Up & Deliver 876:
Top of the Stack, November 2026

Welcome to Pick Up and Deliver, the podcast where I pick up my audio recorder as I step off the train and deliver an episode to you while I walk home. I'm Brendan Riley.

[Intro music]

Well, greetings, listeners. It's a lovely evening here in suburban Chicago. The weather is a little cloudy, but it's dark enough that I can't really see the clouds, but I can tell it's cloudy. I've got my umbrella, which ensures it won't rain and it's a comfy temperature. It's. I've got a light jacket on and I feel plenty warm, so I'm walking home. It's November second. Hopefully I'll publish this tomorrow morning. That means it's time for a Top of the Stack.

For those of you new to the podcast, top of the stack is the monthly segment I do in which I talk about the games I played in the last month and what games I plan to play in the next month. It's a stat heavy conversation about numbers of games played and game titles. It's very silly, but I think it's fun to talk about what games I played and what games I'm going to play.

I always like to start with some stats about numbers, so to start with I played thirty eight plays of thirty two games in October, which is a pretty slim outcome. Usually I'm more around like forty five or fifty plays. I am up to a total of, oh my gosh, six hundred and sixty six plays this month, this year of two hundred and sixty six different games. It's fun that on Halloween, apparently I finished with six hundred and sixty six games. That's a neat little quirk there. I did get to play a number of different games this month that were delightful and fun, although the because I had lower numbers, I just had a more diffuse gaming experience. I had six different games that I played twice each. All but one of them digital plays. One of them a real life play. The digital plays. Games that I played twice. Anachrony, through the ages,. Electrify, draft and write records, and Res Arcana. The game I played live twice was Love Struck, which is a social deduction game themed around a Love Island type reality show. It was very silly, but not bad. I had fun with it.

I had three games or four games picked out in my top of the stack, which is the sort of setup of the games I hope to play this month. Generally, the rule is if I get three of them played, I consider it a successful month. So as has been the case for many months this year, this was not a successful month. My three games that I picked out were, uh, Joan of Arc Orleans Drawn and Write, mosaic, a story of civilization, Too Many Bones, and Arkham Horror third Edition. I did not play Joan of Arc or Too Many Bones. That means I did get the other ones played, which was a delight, but not enough games. I did get to try a number of new games this month, including Halloween, Lovestruck, electrify, Draft and Write Records, Arkham Horror Third Edition Spooktacular, which puts me at ninety four new games this year.

I also got a chance to play a couple expansions that I hadn't played or were. One was Game of Thrones, the Mother of Dragons. I'd never played a game with that expansion in it. And then I am logging Lords of Waterdeep, scoundrels of Skullport. This is an expansion I've played before, but this was the first time I've played it since I bought that expansion myself. So this is the opportunity to play the expansion that I owned. Although I didn't play my copy, it still counts.

I had a very productive month dusting off games. Betrayal at House on the Hill was nearly two years. Dusty. Bring Out Your Dead was nearly five years. Dusty Donner dinner party. Near nearly two years. Dusty. Beowulf. The legend. Nearly four years. Dusty. Vampire. The masquerade. Vendetta. Five years. Three months. Dusty. Last night on earth. One year. Seventeen days. Barely. Dusty. Mosaic. The story of civilization. Three years. Five months. Dusty. Game of Thrones. Four years. Eleven months. Dusty. So nearly five years. And Lords of Waterdeep. One year, three months. Dusty. It was a delightful opportunity to play these games and I enjoyed them quite a bit. The Game of Thrones game in particular was a fun time, and it reminded me just how good that game can be, although I don't think I played aggressively enough. I have been trying to play my top fifty games by the time this year is over. I started that two years ago at the end of December. I have to do a new top fifty and I like to try to play them all.

In the meantime, I got one game this month played was in that list. That was mosaic, a story of civilization, which I liked. But each time I play it, I recognize more flaws with it, and there were some significant flaws in the gameplay of it that I'm not sure. I don't think it. I don't think it'll be in my top fifty. I really did like it. But I suspect when I'm comparing with other games, the flaws are gonna push it down, so we'll see how that goes. I did get one game played on my ten for ten. This is Arkham Horror. Third edition is a game from the top five hundred that I've never played before. So that one marked up that game. But generally I'm not making great progress on my ten for ten. I think I'm going to stall out in the thirties with or in the eighties with accomplishments there. So overall, it was a really fun month of gaming.

A lot of the games that I got played were at a game day that a friend held, which was a really nice chance to play some meteor games. In fact, I just played three long games at that event that was last Night on Earth, and then mosaic and then Game of Thrones. So it's really fun when you have an opportunity to play those sort of beefier games with people who are interested in pursuing those with you. I like that option. It was a bit of a bummer. We were trying to play Game of Thrones at full player count, and we had a couple people drop out, so we didn't quite get there. I think that would be a really interesting game to play with a full table of people who've played it before. I suspect I'd do worse than I did. I got I mean, you can't get second place. You get first place or nothing in Game of Thrones.

But I was very close to winning and was stopped by a clever move by one person, who then made an even cleverer move to grab two more castles and win the game. So good on them. Of the new games I played. The ones that was perhaps the most surprising or interesting was electrify. This is a game from John de Clare. I will talk about it in a board game espresso episode coming up. I did not back the Kickstarter for it, I don't think. I think it's one of those games that I like the play of it online. I don't know how it would go over among the people I play games on the table with, so I don't know that I need to own a copy. I think more and more as my collection, you know, my collection has sort of rounded out between six hundred and six fifty. I sort of think of fifty games as kind of being in transit at any time or possible to remove. So six hundred to six fifty at that size. That's an enormous collection. I could play a different game every day and good almost two years before I had to repeat. That's outrageous. And I guess the result is that I have so many games. I really like that I barely get to play that when I'm thinking about getting a new game. The acquisition disorder, as the secret cabal calls it, cools, right? My desire to buy the newest thing is dimmed.

Also, don't go into the game store as often just to actively diminish that desire. I still like getting games at goodwill or thrift stores. If I find a good deal there, I'll often pick one up. But generally that kind of minimized effect, I think, makes it less likely that I'm going to buy a brand new game, except if it meets certain conditions, I think. You know, one of the big ones is, uh, a new, interesting looking game from Martin Wallace. We'll always get my attention, although I'm not sort of instinctively going to buy it. Uh, Vladimir Suu Kyi is still on the Insta buy list, although that's cooling. Epona was not my favorite, and I did like Rusafa a lot, but I haven't gotten it back out since I played it. So I will say Chrono Critters looks amazing. That's the new one that he brought out at spiel this year. That one looks really exciting and if the reviews are strong, I'm pretty excited for that one. He has been pairing up with other designers lately, which I think is a good move. Some of his best games are pairings, I think. Well, I don't know because I like Praga a lot. I like underwater cities a lot. Those are both solo designs, so never mind. I withdraw my objection.

It's interesting going into gaming in November as I'm trying to wrap up these lists, I'm looking at what do I have to do to finish, say, my top fifty list or my ten for ten? The hardest one again. Are the games with numbers at the beginning, I don't know. I think I'm going to have to change it next year if I do the alphabet again. I have to come up with a different. Maybe it's just games that have numbers, but they don't have to start the name. That would give me a lot more flexibility, But games that start with numbers is really hard to do. And that is the place where I am struggling in terms of completing games on my ten for ten. I think also the designer focused games are just not getting those play to help. It isn't helpful that I picked games that generally don't get played at my house. These are games I have to play at events or at game night. And while I do try to make room for myself to play games at game night, I'm not super aggressive about it. Because part of the idea is other people want to play games too. And if I'm constantly asserting what I want to play, it gets hard for them to get what they want to play done. And I like to be easygoing. I don't want to be bossy or selfish. So those things together make it hard to get my list done. But then I don't get my list done, which is a bummer.

Let's see what else to say about October. I did get to try a couple creepy games in October. That was pretty fun. Not only was did I have the new game of Halloween and dusted off Bring Out Your Dead and last Night on Earth, we also played Bloody In, which was not a dusted off, but I had. So I had played that within the last year. But is a game I don't play very often. It still feels kind of dusty, even if I have played it in the last year. Somebody played night of the Living Dead Zombicide at toggle. I sort of would have liked to play that, but I don't know, like my copy is all painted and they were bringing a. They had brought an unpainted copy. What a silly thing to worry about. But like, my copy is all nice. I want to play with my copy if I'm going to play it. So I didn't play, but I also was playing other things. I guess Donner Dinner Party might also qualify as a spooky game, and I got to play a round of betrayal at House on the Hill, though that one.

We got the we got one of the haunts where you're just fighting each other. There is no traitor. And that one was not my favourite haunt. I like the ones where something wacky happens and there's weird mechanisms that come into play. Instead, it was very straightforward mechanisms, I thought. I'm continuing to enjoy board game arena. Next month I think you're going to see a bunch of brass on there because Brass Lancashire is currently on board game arena and Brass Birmingham is being rolled up onto there. Those games are going to get a ton of play from me, I'm sure. You know, they are among my favorites. It will make it even harder to bring to the table though, because the more I play it, the better I'll get hopefully, and the better I get, the less fun it is for other people. When we put it on the table, uh, because it's not fun to get clobbered. Uh, if you're a new player to a game that said, I'm not, I'm not great at the game, I'm okay at it. But compared to people who are great at it, I'm just fine. And I have a number of times played against people who are new to it. And they did just fine. They kicked my butt, so to speak. So I'm not super worried about getting too skilled with brass, but I certainly will ramp up. I don't know, maybe like I feel like I'm too skilled with Res Arcana. I don't feel great playing Rez Arcana with people who haven't played before just because I have played a lot. That's not ideal.

November should be an interesting month for game plays. I am going to be playing a fair amount at home. I think I will have one game day where I can invite some people over. Uh, just because the schedule works out that I have some availability that way. We're going to travel to visit my family for Thanksgiving, which the family we're traveling to visit is not the super gamer family. So I'm not going to be playing fifteen games while we're there, but we'll play some, I'm sure. And then we have three meetings of the College Board game club in November or two anyway. And so I'll get a chance to play some games there that maybe I haven't played. I'll see if I can bring one game and get people to play it that they haven't played before. All in all, it's looking like it's going to be an excellent month or two. So that brings me to the big question of what games am I going to play in November? Which games do I want to put on my shelf?

So the two games that I had on the shelf this month that I did not play were Too Many Bones and Joan of Arc the Orleans rolling, right. I gotta confess that that one I'm having trouble seeing how I'm going to get it played. The too many bones. I think I can swing that, so I'm going to put that one on for sure on my list. The other one I think we'll leave Joan of Arc off for now. What other games will I put on there, you ask? Well, I think one of them is going to be Aldebaran Duel. This is a Vladimir Sushi game. In fact, I think it's the only one I own that I haven't played. I picked it up at GenCon and I haven't had a chance to get it to the table yet, but I think it looks fun. So I'm gonna put Aldebaran dual on the list. We're gonna put too many bones on the list. It feels like maybe it's time to try for faom the freedom and free card game. Let's put Fayium on. And what's going to be my fourth one? HMM. How about Cooper Island? Yeah, I'm gonna put Cooper Island as my fourth one. Future Brendan here. I've made an audible and decided that I'm going to try rajas of the Ganges. The dice Chalmers as my fourth game. Oh, actually, you know what? I'm gonna put rajas of the Ganges, the dice Chalmers as my fourth game. Well, that's about it for me today. I want to say thanks for joining me on my walk. I hope that you had a lovely month. Head over to BoardGameGeek. Yield three, two, six, nine and share the games that you played in in October and the games you're playing played in November. Thanks for joining me on my walk. I hope your next walk is a pleasant one. Bye bye.

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