

The Adventure Zone: Amnesty – Episode 8

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Griffin: Previously on The Adventure Zone...

[theme music plays]

Vincent: You gotta forget this night ever happened. You—you walk through that gate, and never come back.

Duck: Right underneath preservation of forest, my number two skill is forgettin' about weird shit. So you have—you have come to the right department, here.

Dani: We can't really live without some sort of sustaining life force. You know the springs behind Amnesty Lodge? Those have enough juice, I think, for a lot of us to keep going.

Griffin: You can tell that this light that was in the water is now just gone.

Aubrey: Good news is, I think we're safe for the time being, 'cause whatever was in that pool seems to be gone.

Duck: Alright, mission accomplished.

Aubrey: Well...

Duck: Good work Pine Guard, huh?

Aubrey: Then we've got the bad news.

Ned: Which is?

Aubrey: I think maybe it went into all the water? Like, in town?

Duck: Well... fuck.

[theme music plays]

Griffin: Y'all know Anthony Bourdain? Came to West Virginia for an episode of his show? Anthony Bourdain Tastes the World?

Clint: Yeah, where did he go?

Travis: Was he complimentary?

Griffin: He was. Y'know, he did all the stuff that we love. Um, eatin'... probably like, ate a rattlesnake at one point and was like, "Mm, now this is real country." And y'know, probably played ping pong at a church or something like that. But I'm trying to figure out how to like... is he gonna show up in the middle of a monster hunt, or is he gonna—

Travis: Ooh, okay.

Clint: That would be like his—

Travis: Is he the monster?

Griffin: Maybe he's the monster.

Clint: That would be like our third Bourdain reference in the whole series. That'd be very cool.

Travis: That would free us from the podcast, y'know.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: Okay. So, the three of you arrive back at Amnesty Lodge, and it's nearing sunset. And as you enter the lobby, you realize it's a bit emptier than usually, as you've seen it—

Aubrey: Huh, it's a bit emptier than usual.

Griffin: Yeah. And Aubrey says that. And then, so, you see Barclay through the kitchen window. He's doing some dishes. Dani is sitting in a recliner by the front window, and she's reading a Lamplighter. And both of them seem slightly on edge, and it only takes a few moments to figure out why, as Agent Stern enters the lobby from the doors leading out to the hot springs behind the lodge. And he's wearing slippers and a robe, and he looks—

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: He looks so refreshed, and just happy as a clam, and he says...

Agent Stern: Ned, Aubrey, Duck, I can't thank you enough for helping me find this place. I didn't really know what to expect during my stay here in Kepler, but these accommodations are fantastic. And I must've lucked out, too, because my room doesn't appear to have any bedbugs at all.

Duck: Well, they can be, uh, small. They're real small. Around these parts.

Agent Stern: So you think they could... uh, well, I guess I'll do an extra sweep. Thanks for the heads up. I didn't know you grew bedbugs extra small here in Kepler.

Duck: It's for your convenience.

Clint: [laughs]

Agent Stern: I actually just got out of the hot springs, where I had the most lovely conversation with a man named Jake Coolice. He is a delight.

Aubrey: Yeah, he's alright.

Duck: Coolice in the hot springs, huh? Love it. That's a day, right there. That's a day.

Agent Stern: Yeah, it's quite a name. Ned, uh, I was hoping to come by in the morning to see the full Bigfoot video. Would that work for you?

Ned: Oh, I'm speaking to the junior chamber of commerce at their breakfast meeting tomorrow. Maybe uh, maybe later in the day, perhaps?

Agent Stern: Uh, I'll find you. We'll figure something out. You all have a great evening.

Griffin: ...he says, and he goes to retire to his room. And Barclay enters the lobby from the kitchen, and he's drying his hands with a rag, and he says...

Barclay: Okay, so, how did the investigation go?

Aubrey: Oh, hold on.

Travis: And Aubrey makes sure that the agent is gone.

Aubrey: Yeah.

Griffin: He's gone.

Aubrey: Well... To answer that question, Barkley...

Barclay: Barclay. How are you—you've been here a couple months. It's weird that you—

Travis: No, that's my nickname for Barclay. Barclay, Barkley.

Griffin: Oh, cute.

Travis: 'Cause he's... I got nothing.

Aubrey: Um, Barclay, not great, honestly.

Ned: We won. Right?

Aubrey: Well...

Griffin: I think in the effort making this not an extended, in-fiction repeat of what happened in the last episode, I thought it would be a good time to

talk about what you all actually learned about the monster, about the Abomination during your encounter with it.

Travis: It's Alex Mack, one.

Griffin: It's not that.

Travis: It is Alex Mack. It's a puddle. It's a living puddle.

Griffin: It's a shape shifting—yes.

Travis: That's Alex Mack, dude.

Justin: It has the ability to like, self-replicate, I guess you could say, or like, change its mass. But it does seem to be vulnerable to weapon attacks, right? Like, we did seem to damage it by attacking it, right?

Travis: This is the thing that I'm trying to figure out. Is the creature the water, or is the creature using the water?

Griffin: There was the light in the water that, Aubrey, you could see, and Ned could see when he got very, very close to it. When viewed from outside, the light in the water is invisible, and seemed to only be controlling the water that it was connected to.

Travis: So to Justin's question, are we hurting it with weapons attacks, or are we just separating it from the water it's controlling with weapon attacks?

Griffin: I think you lay all that out to Barclay, and he—especially when you mention the light, he kind of perks up, and he says...

Barclay: Okay, actually, I know what I said, but that kind of rings a bell. Let's retire to the privacy of Mama's office. I think I might have something.

Griffin: And he walks you into Mama's office. And her office has changed in her absence. It's much, much neater, and more orderly than the last time you were in here. The maps and books that were once scattered all around the table and her desk have been organized into neat piles. There's no

dishes laying all about. You get the distinct impression that Barclay has been wanting to clean this room for a very long time, and finally got the opportunity to do so.

And he walks over to a chest in front of Mama's desk, and reaches in, and he withdraws an old Macintosh power book. And he kind of sighs as he pulls it out, and tries to get it to boot up.

Aubrey: What's that, Barclay?

Griffin: He says, as he's like, waiting for this thing to turn on. He says...

Barclay: Okay, so—

Aubrey: Let me be clear. This isn't one of those like, kids react videos. Like, I know that's a computer.

Ned: What's a computer?

Aubrey: I'm sure. Alright.

Griffin: What's a computer? Um, he says...

Barclay: Alright, so the Pine Guard was established after the Abominations first started appearing in Kepler, back in 1988. And some concerned citizens around town found out about the monsters, and about Sylvain, and they took it upon themselves to start fighting back in secret. And their ranks have fluctuated since those days. Folks, y'know, died, fighting the Abominations. Some packed up and left town.

Mama's been with 'em from the start, but she was trying to fight 'em alone for such a long time before she found me a few years ago. This computer used to belong to a dude named Thacker. He was with the Pine Guard from the start, too. He kept notes on everything they ever fought. And in this, the oldest functioning computer on this fucking planet.

Griffin: And he like, kind of slaps his palm against it, waiting for it to start. And he says...

Barclay: About six years ago, Thacker took off in the middle of the night without a word to anyone.

Griffin: And he kind of sighs, and he looks around the office, and he says...

Barclay: There's a lot of that going around these days.

Griffin: And then the computer plays its startup noise, and a few moments later, Barclay says...

Barclay: Okay, okay. Back in '97, the Pine Guard went toe to toe with... well, they called it an Elemental. It lived in fire and smoke. It could control it. It could move through it. And it took them... holy shit, it took them burning a whole mine out just to take it down. It kind of sounds like what we're dealing with today, right?

Ned: Except it's water and not fire.

Barclay: Sure, but the concept of, y'know, light inside of elements controlling it, and using it as form and as a weapon... it sounds like kind of what we're dealing with.

Ned: Was there any mention of a bright yellow bug light involved?

Griffin: He taps around, and he says...

Barclay: Yeah. Obviously, it's hard to see that in the fire, but they could see the light in smoke moving around.

Duck: And it only, uh... it only controlled fire, is that correct?

Barclay: Yeah, that's what it says.

Aubrey: It didn't move to like, earth, or heart?

Barclay: No, it didn't, uh, it didn't move to heart. That would be a wild monster, though. Somebody who could get inside'a love.

Aubrey: I just want to make sure we don't have to fight... I don't want to fight Captain Planet, and I just want to make sure.

Duck: Listen, if we ever fight a monster that can control the power of heart, we're all fucked. Because that is the most powerful element imaginable.

Aubrey: Obviously. That was the only one that had an animal friend. Wait, did water—

Duck: I mean, I'll fuckin' stab love. I don't care, I'll try. I'm just sayin', I don't think it's gonna be that effective.

Aubrey: Yeah. That's fair.

Griffin: Barclay puts on some glasses - actually, some reading glasses that were already on Mama's desk. And he says...

Barclay: So, it says here that magic and magically imbued weapons could hurt it, but not kill it. To kill something intangible, you need... an intangible weapon? It doesn't say what they ended up using, though.

Aubrey: Well, hold on. So, if it moves through the element, could we starve it? If we could separate it from a source of water, and then chop away, we could severely weaken it. And at the very least, maybe shrink it to a manageable mass?

Duck: I mean, it's a really nice thought, but you're dealing with... I mean, you still got a question of humidity in the air. I don't think that we would be able to remove water, moisture from the air, at a sort of molecular level. Right? There's no reason to think it would need a full body of water, if it could work with the humidity in the air.

Griffin: Barclay says...

Barclay: It's an idea, though.

Griffin: And he opens up a new like, document on this very, very old computer, which probably takes like, 45 seconds just to do. And he starts taking notes on the water elemental, and says...

Barclay: We could maybe use that for the hunt.

Griffin: And then he clicks back to the fire elemental, and he says...

Barclay: It says here that it was a pretty tough target to take down. Not only did it possess incredible strength in the right environment, it also marked and pursued those it viewed as a threat to its existence.

Ned: Yeah...

Aubrey: Shit.

Barclay: Yeah. It says here... man, they lost someone on this hunt. God. A guy named Mike. It followed him into his car, got in the fuel line.

Aubrey: Not Mike.

Ned: Aw, I love his hard lemonade.

Barclay: Don't know if he was the lemonade—

Aubrey: I enjoyed his run on Mystery Science Theater 3000.

Barclay: Anybody else have any famous Mikes that they want to... Duck, you got one?

Duck: I mean, they did two. I figure...

Barclay: Yeah, we're probably okay.

Aubrey: Yeah, who needs a third to be funny?

Griffin: He says...

Barclay: If y'all went toe to toe with this thing in the water, you've... we should probably keep in mind the possibility that you've been marked, too. You might want to stay out of bodies of water 'til we wrap this one up.

Aubrey: Should we send someone to check on swimmer dude?

Ned: Yeah, what did he do that harmed the water?

Barclay: I think it sounds like he was just there when this thing showed up.

Ned: Or, he peed in it.

Barclay: Another possibility.

Griffin: There's a flash that sways back and forth across the ceiling - a reflection of light against water, from outside the window, immediately behind Barclay. And he says...

Barclay: Okay, so no baths, obviously. Not in the hot springs, or your tub, or whatever. If you had any plans on—

Duck: Wait. What the hell was that?

Barclay: What was what?

Duck: Just now, right behind you.

Griffin: That light on the ceiling now, it's swaying even faster, now. Like a bright light, reflecting against the surface of water, shining in from the outside.

Duck: Hold on. Just hold on a second, Barclay. We gotta figure this out.

Aubrey: You might want to step like, over here, Barclay. Maybe away from the window a little bit.

Griffin: He stands up and faces the window, and through it, you can see down to the tall, wooden fence surrounding the hot springs behind the

lodge. And while normally, this angle wouldn't allow you to see the waters, you can see them quite clearly now. They are floating in a perfect, eight foot wide sphere, hovering above the fence's perimeter. And trapped inside, thrashing ineffectively, is Jake Coolice.

Aubrey: No!

Justin: When I said we gotta figure this out, that was me leading into attempting to read a bad situation. So I would like to do that now.

Griffin: Okay. Yeah, please.

Justin: And I got a seven, plus one, eight.

Griffin: Okay. You...

Justin: So that gives me one question. Um, what's the best way to protect the victims?

Griffin: You need to get Jake Coolice out of this floating sphere of water. He... uh, you can tell that the fact that he's thrashing and stuff means he's not like, uh, unconscious or dead. But you do not know how long he has been in that water, and you assume that he will be one of those two things if you do not get the fuck down there and get him out.

Travis: Let's do that.

Griffin: One thing we need to keep in mind with read a bad situation is, while acting on the answers, you get plus one ongoing while the information is relevant. So if you do anything to get Jake Coolice out of the water, Duck, now you have a plus one to do so.

Justin: Okay. I'm trying to clarify the situation for myself. It's outside, right?

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Out like, above the Jacuzzi, and we're inside, right?

Griffin: It is not a Jacuzzi. It is like, a hot spring. This is not like a Motel 6.

Justin: It's God's Jacuzzi, Griffin.

Griffin: It's God's. It's the mountain's Jacuzzi, yes.

Justin: Uh, I'm gonna run outside.

Griffin: Okay. Aubrey, Ned?

Clint: Oh yeah.

Justin: Is Jake Coolice...

Clint: Important?

Justin: ...from Sylvain?

Clint: Oh.

Justin: Sorry. Is he essential personnel?

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: 'Cause we were kind of getting into a groove, just discussing what was going on, and I'd hate to lose that.

Griffin: Yes, Jake Coolice is from Sylvain. The three of you and Barclay go running out of the office, towards the door, that leads out to the hot springs behind the building. I think Agent Stern actually like, pokes his head out his bedroom door, as he sees you all running. And he's like...

Agent Stern: Is everything okay?

Ned: Coyotes. Coyotes.

Duck: Got coyotes. Stay in your room. Stay in your room, partner.

Ned: Yes, please stay in your room.

Duck: We got a coyote situation.

Aubrey: But it's a protected—it's a protected coyote that we have to, uh, just kind of herd—

Griffin: Barclay's just like, gone, while you all are—he does not want his precious boy Jake Coolice to die.

Aubrey: Okay, sleep good, bye!

Justin: I'm saying this like, as we're running past him.

Griffin: Yeah. Coyoteees...

Duck: It's a forestry situation, man. Let me—I'll take care of it. Don't worry, everything is fine, partner. Just stay in your room. 'Cause they can get a little vicious.

Griffin: He nods and shuts the door, and the three of you follow Barclay down into the, uh, through the door that sort of branches off the lobby, down to the hot springs. You pass by a dressing room as you run down a set of wooden stairs, and exit out into the hot springs.

It's a... it has sort of a stone perimeter around the actual... well, where the water used to be, with like a wooden base actually inside of the pool. And it's surrounded by this tall fence, which is kind of lined with stacks of towels, and some buckets. And you are now face to face with the water sphere that Jake Coolice is trapped inside.

Clint: I need to investigate. I want to know something really important that maybe we can see by just observing. But is the water—is the sphere of water just free floating, or is it connected?

Griffin: It is free floating, off the ground.

Clint: It hasn't done that before. It had to—I mean, before, at the pool, it was connected to the water, whatever shapes it made. This is not connected in any way?

Justin: Yeah, do we see the sphere of light in the sphere?

Griffin: I think, yeah. I think this—that's a good point. I think this water is disconnected enough, and not, y'know, deep enough, that you do see this light, and it is uh, almost like swirling around Jake Coolice's form in the water.

Aubrey: Barclay, what—what is Jake?

Barclay: Does it—does it matter?

Griffin: He's like, looking around. He like—

Aubrey: It might.

Griffin: He picks up a bucket and like, throws it at the water, and it just like, gets sucked up into the form. And he like shrugs, like...

Barclay: I don't know, I threw a bucket. What do you do?

Aubrey: Here's the thing. I could maybe try to like, blast him out of the water. But I'm not gonna be able to do that without hurting him, I don't think.

Griffin: Jake is now clutching at his throat. And—

Justin: I'm—that's it. I'm gonna pull out Beacon.

Beacon: Yes. Duck Newton. This is... well, I don't really know what we're supposed to do with this one, eh, Duck? It's quite a challenge—

Duck: Okay, Beacon. Alright. Thank you for your input. That's great.

Justin: And I extend him from his coiled position, and I tell Beacon...

Duck: Hey, hold on tight, partner.

Justin: And I chuck him at the yellow light.

Griffin: Uh, okay. I think this is gonna be a kick some ass roll.

Justin: My main goal is to protect someone. I'm trying to distract, basically. I don't intend on like, trying to damage the thing.

Griffin: Hm, okay.

Justin: But I'm trying to protect Jake Coolice with this move. So like, even if it's not a direct hit or whatever, I'm trying to draw the heat, basically.

Griffin: Okay, how about this? Then it would be a protect someone roll, right?

Justin: Right. That's what I would—

Griffin: Since you're not intending to actually hurt it. So go ahead and roll plus tough.

Justin: M'kay. That is seven plus two. So nine on that.

Griffin: Okay. Protect—

Justin: Plus one, because I'm acting...

Griffin: Acting under pressure, good.

Justin: Yes.

Griffin: Okay. So you protect him okay—

Justin: No, not acting under pressure. Acting on my read a bad situation roll.

Griffin: Right, right, right. So on your protect someone, on a ten plus, you protect them okay, but you suffer some or all of the harm they were going to get. So on a ten plus, you get to choose an extra effect. You either suffer little harm, minus one harm; all impending danger is now focused on you; you inflict harm on the enemy; or, you hold the enemy back.

Justin: On your read of it, would you hold the enemy back pull him off of Jake? Like, in this particular situation?

Griffin: Yeah. I think, here's how we could... 'cause I don't know how to do it, like, you free him by just like, hitting him with a sword, and you knock Jake Coolice out of the water as you launch a sword in his direction. Here's what I think happens. I think, uh, the water fluctuates as this magically imbued sword like, jabs into it. And you get this thing pretty close to the yellow light, close enough that you don't actually hit Jake Coolice with your very good roll.

And I think, as a result, Jake Coolice kind of unnaturally just like, falls out of the water, and lands on the wooden floor of the hot spring. And the water like, shifts in the air, and uh, it moves around you, and then closes, and then sucks you into the center of it, now. And now, you are floating inside of this eight foot sphere.

Travis: So Duck is extra tough, right?

Griffin: So he has armor. And what you have to keep in mind about armor in this game is, it works in fiction like everything else. So like, if he gets pounded by a big bear, his armor is gonna help him out there. If he starts drowning, or is crushed by a supernatural weight of water, or is burned by a magic fire spell or something like that...

Travis: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Go on.

Griffin: Armor won't help him.

Travis: Ohh.

Clint: Okay. Ned, while Duck was doing that, Ned has been knotting towels together. And he has tied one end of it to one of the deck chairs sitting around the hot spring area.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: I want to take one of these chairs with the towels tied to it, and throw the chair as hard as I can towards Duck.

Griffin: Uh, yeah. I don't even think you need to roll for that. And I think because you saw Barclay throw a bucket into the water, and saw it just get absorbed, uh, that you know that that is exactly what happens here. And that is what happens. The deck chair goes into the water, and gets sucked into its form, and is now floating next to Duck.

Now, if you want to try to use this to retrieve Duck from the water, you'll have to roll act under pressure, or something like that.

Clint: Yeah, that's what I want to do.

Griffin: Okay. Why don't you go ahead and roll act under pressure, then?

Clint: Um, seven plus one for cool, so that's an eight.

Griffin: Okay. As you do this, the deck chair goes into the water, and you see Duck kind of recognize what you're doing. As you are trying to achieve this, and you are gripping on tight to the towels, you see a few, almost like, wire-like tendrils. These like, gnarly looking tendrils, like, six of them, reach out of the water in your direction. And if you, y'know, hold put and try to pull Duck out of the water, these things are gonna whip at ya.

Do you move and compromise your rescue mission, or do you take the hit?

Clint: Ooh. Well, that changes things. Um... Yeah, I'm not sure Ned is as dedicated to, uh, to old Duck as he is to, y'know, not getting pierced by water needles.

Travis: That's the thing, man. Reflexes.

Justin: Yeah.

Travis: Reflexes are hard to shake.

Justin: In the moment, you want to do the right thing. But in the heat... save your old buddy, Duck. Heat of the moment.

Clint: Eh, yeah...

Ned: You're a good man, Duck. I know you can figure this out!

Clint: And then gets out of the way.

Griffin: Alright, I like that. I think your fight or flight response kicks in, and you roll out of the way as these six tendrils like, stab... you described them as water needles, and I like that. They just like, stab in your direction, and you roll out of the way and avoid the damage. But as you do, you let go of the towel chain that you built.

And now, Duck, you are holding onto this patio chair inside of the water, and the towels connected to it are just kind of like, hanging down from the sphere. And uh, Ned, you are safe from this danger. Aubrey.

Ned: Woo, close call! [laughs]

Travis: Aubrey is going to hope and pray that Duck's toughness wins out as she blasts the sphere with some fire.

Griffin: Interesting, okay.

Travis: Well, so, I'm trying to be really controlled. I looked this up. Water turns to steam at 212 degrees. And so, I'm hoping, since it is a... uh, it was a hot springs to begin with, it's not gonna take much. So I'm not like, aiming at Duck.

Griffin: I get what you're doing.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: So go ahead and—this would be a kick some ass roll.

Travis: So I rolled a ten. Minus one for tough. Aubrey...

Griffin: No, no, no, you roll with weird for your kick some ass.

Travis: Oh! Then it's an eleven—oh, then it's a twelve. It's a ten plus two, then, for weird, for magic.

Griffin: Okay. On that, you and the water deal damage to each other.

Travis: On a twelve?

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Oh.

Griffin: On any kick some ass, you and your enemy deal damage to one another. On a ten plus, though, you pick an extra effect. You gain the advantage. Take plus one forward, or give plus one forward to another hunter; you inflict terrible harm, plus one harm; you suffer less harm, minus one harm; or, you force them where you want them.

Travis: I would like—can I force them where I want them, and push them off...

Griffin: Uh, I don't think that's how that would work, right?

Travis: Okay, then I want to grant one forward to Duck.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Yeah?

Griffin: Yeah, I like that.

Travis: So like, use it to create an opportunity for Duck.

Griffin: Sure, for him to escape.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Right. Okay. So you blast this thing, and how much harm does your fire spell do?

Travis: Two harm, plus two harm fire. And if you get a ten plus on a combat magic roll, the fire won't spread. So four harm.

Griffin: That's fine, I don't know how it would've spread. You're blasting water. It's like, essentially, it is dousing your flames you put them out, as you launch them. Um, you actually get the feeling that you are not doing as much damage to this water with your fire magic than you should be. You are creating a significant amount of steam, which looks fucking rad.

Like, it hits the surface of this water sphere, and y'know, as the fire contacts it, like, there's a ripple that travels through the sphere. Um, but it is—it does not seem super effective to combat this thing with fire, in the way that you are used to. And I think those needles that were going after Ned, like, whip around. And instead of piercing you, they just whip towards you, and lash across you, and you take two harm.

Travis: Alright.

Griffin: Duck. You are up. Now, this thing, because it turned its attention to Aubrey, uh, some of the water, it's not like a perfect sphere anymore. It's a bit misshapen, and you get the impression that, if you did want to escape, you would have an opening to do so—

Travis: Did I steam some off, too? Like, did the surface—

Griffin: Yeah, I think you steamed—I think you definitely steamed some of it off. It's hard to tell, right? You can't like, identify how much volume of water is floating in the air.

Travis: But I can tell that Duck's uniform... no wrinkles.

Griffin: No wrinkles. Perfect. Perfectly pressed.

Justin: Where am I in relation to Beacon right now?

Griffin: You see Beacon. You're right next to him.

Justin: And is he within the light? Is he near the light?

Griffin: Uh, yeah. You're both pretty close to the light.

Justin: Okay. I'm gonna grab Beacon, and try to stab it into the light.

Travis: What's plus one forward do?

Griffin: Uh, it just gives him plus one on his next roll, whatever it is. You would not get your read a bad situation bonus, because you are no longer saving Jake Coolice. Jake Coolice is... uh, Jake Coolice right now is like, climbing out of the empty hot spring, and he's like, coughing up some water as he does so. But he is safe.

Justin: Okay. A non-great roll. I rolled a six. Uh, which is a—

Griffin: Plus tough, plus one.

Justin: Plus tough, so plus two. So, an eight.

Griffin: Plus one for...

Travis: Plus one.

Justin: Oh, so nine.

Griffin: Uh, okay. What does this look like?

Justin: I reach out and basically grab Beacon's hilt with my fingertips. I think it's just in reach. And I sort of... it's tough. I can sort of make out

where the light is, and I can't really build up much speed at all. I'm still kind of underwater. But as much as I can, as I kind of grab both hands on the hilt, and just kind of jam it in the direction of the light, hoping that I can get a piece of it.

Griffin: How much damage does your weapon to?

Justin: So that's one harm for the handle, and one harm for the blade. So I guess, two.

Griffin: And your weapon has the magic tag. So it does magic damage.

Justin: Yes. And it's an area tag, so I don't know if that...

Griffin: That's for if you're fighting like, multiple things. You stab this thing forward into the light, and as you do so, the light, like... you're right up against it, so you can see it pretty clearly. It like, spasms in a strange way. I think actually, the whole—oh, this is great. Ned and Aubrey, you actually see all the water kind of like, spasm outward, and the sphere actually like, goes up in the air another few feet. And it forms this weird, abstract shape in the air, almost like this thing is like, losing control a little bit. And then, it all, in like the blink of an eye, sucks back in.

And Duck, as it sort of reforms, the pressure inside this water gets like, so intense. It is like, crushing you like you are, y'know, very, very deep in the ocean without a suit. And it actually also gets kind of hot. And you take two harm, ignoring armor, as it kind of like, crushes you. But after it does so, Ned and Aubrey, you see this sphere of water, now just sort of succumb to gravity, and fall, and splash back down into the pool.

And it obviously splashes up quite a ways as it does so, and Duck, you see the light quickly zip away and into a vent in the pool, and disappear.

Clint: So the hot springs is connected to the water supply?

Travis: Listen, okay. We could... [gibberish] How they eat and breathe... it's just a show. Just relax.

Griffin: Technically, the waste water system and the regular water systems of a city are not connected. And so like, there's a lot of ways to figure it out. But yeah, maybe you get the idea that this thing doesn't... it can... it... is weird, man.

Travis: [laughs]

[theme music plays]

Griffin: Hey everybody, this is Griffin McElroy, your dungeon master, your best friend, and your thirsty boy. We're very thirsty when recording this, and that's okay, because I am here to quench my thirst with the friendship of my brothers who are also here.

Travis: Hi.

Justin: Hello. Why are we here?

Griffin: Well, you're here because we have something, a project that we are working on, a collabo, that we wanted to talk about before we got into the rest of the ads. Juice, why don't you start us off, here?

Justin: Yeah. So a few years back, I got really into this...

Travis: Geocaching.

Justin: Geocaching. And then after that, I got into this organization called the Mysterious Package Company. And if you haven't heard about them, a lot of different people have recommended them. I know Neil Patrick Harris is a fan, and I was also a fan of the... this organization that basically tells stories through the mail. They have a lot of different, um... they call them experiences, that you can have, or give to a friend, where—and the whole narrative, the whole thing that happens, is sent to you through the mail.

Travis: Um, if I could jump in with my experience with it, Justin signed me up for one. And I didn't know, so I started receiving - and the name is pretty applicable - mysterious packages, that included letters, and like, maps, and like, pirate treasure, and stories about like, this uh, person who had gone to

do like, a salvage dive, and had found these pirate things, who was being hunted by like, marauders trying to reclaim the treasure.

Griffin: Ooh, scary, scary stuff.

Travis: Yeah. And it all comes—and not only is it letters, I also, at one point – faux, fake ivory – but like, a carved, ivory tusk. And like, a message in a bottle.

Griffin: Travis, that's uneth—it's not ethical.

Travis: It was fake ivory, Griffin. It was not—

Griffin: Oh, okay. That's better.

Travis: It was synthetic. But still, like...

Justin: Still.

Travis: Physical stuff.

Justin: The point of all this is that we have been working with them, and we are creating, with the Mysterious Package Company, our own experience that you, our beloved listeners in Bachelor Nation, will be able to enjoy. It is Taako's Correspondence School of Wizardry, Cantrips, and Other Magics. You can pre-register for this exciting correspondence school, this exciting magical correspondence school, maybe not right this second. This is a preorder. I think it's gonna be going on for a few weeks. I'm not sure on that, exactly.

Travis: Now, to be clear, Justin mentioned it's a preorder. This is the kind of thing where like, we're gonna be selling these for a while, and then, we're not going to be selling them anymore.

Griffin: And then never, ever again. Yes. Um, so, this is gonna be like, a standalone side story that it tells. If you are, uh, y'know, you don't wanna, or aren't able to pay for it and sign yourself up, or a friend up for the box, it's fine. You are not missing out on some huge chunk of the Balance lore.

But it's gonna be really neat, and it's gonna have cool puzzles, and a neat, actual, like, physical reward that's something that comes with all of the Mysterious Packages whenever you complete them.

And we're very excited about it. This is actually the first time the Mysterious Package Company has teamed up with another like, company, to create an experience. So we are happy to be working with them.

Justin: So, \$64.99 is the price for the experience. You can get it for yourself, or as a gift. There's also a uh, limited edition, I guess, like, bonus edition, that is \$99.99 that just... [laughs] I think it has, maybe, another uh, some bonus items from—it's a chef's school. Basically, you can sign up for the magic school, and Taako's now defunct chef's school as well, if you would like some paraphernalia from Taako's now defunct cooking school. That is available to you as well.

But the base package is \$64.99. And I know that's a lot of money, so if you can't get it, it's all good. Like, there's no hurt feelings here.

Griffin: But that price covers like, a bunch of really cool stuff.

Justin: You're gonna get some cool stuff. It's gonna be worth it, I promise. It's gonna be really neat.

Travis: Yes. I want to find a balance between, it's going to be amazing, but also, like, you're not gonna find out what secretly, really happened in the Balance arc. You pay for it.

Justin: It's neat. And it'll just be like, a fun thing. So if you want to do it, it'll be really fun. There'll be neat stuff. We're sort of like, crafting the story as it is. There will be some audio elements, some... a digital Stone of Farspeech that you'll use to talk to uh, Tres Horny Boys. And um, it's gonna be neat. I just think—I just thought it was a cool thing. And I think that, if you sign up for it, I think you are going to be, uh, I think you are going to enjoy it. I'm—I'm very, very, very excited this is happening.

Travis: We're very proud.

Griffin: So, the preorder length – yeah, I don't think it's gonna be live when this episode goes up. But keep an eye on our Twitter, and we will let you know as soon as it's available to preorder, and I think that's it, boys. You want to stick around for the rest of the ads?

Travis: No.

Justin: Nah, you got it.

Travis: I'm gonna go make burgers.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: I'm gonna eat Travis' burgers when he's not looking. Like Wimpy from Popeye.

Travis: Ooh.

Griffin: Can I get a burger when I'm done?

Travis: No.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: You can have one right now.

Griffin: Okay, so our first sponsor this week is Audible. Audiobooks are a great sidekick for summer activities like hiking, road tripping, enjoying downtime outdoors, and more. Like enjoying downtime indoors, or standing in a doorway. You could probably do it there, too.

Audible has the largest selection of audiobooks on the planet, which lets you fill your summer with more stories like, uh... oh! I have, on my desk right now, and it is on Audible, Haruki Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*. Hey, that's a book I know about. So that one's on there, and you can just go ahead and go listen to that one.

Audible members get a credit every month, good for any audiobook in their store, regardless of price. And unused credits roll over to the next month. Didn't like your audiobook? You can exchange it, no questions asked. Start a 30-day trial, and get your first audiobook for free. Go to Audible.com/adventure, or text ADVENTURE to 500500 to get started.

Also want to tell you about MVMT watches. That's M-V-M-T. I got me a couple MVMT watches. They are slick as hell. By which I mean, they look nice. They're not slippery, because that would be bad for a watch.

MVMT continues to revolutionize fashion on the belief that style should not break the bank. They've recently doubled the number of watch styles, and are still expanding. They even sell sunglasses and fashion forward bracelets now. MVMT watches start at just \$95. At a department store, you're looking at 400 to 500 bucks for a nice watch. MVMT figured out that by selling online, they were able to cut out the middle man and retail markup, providing the best possible price. They got classic design, they got quality construction, they got styled minimalism. Bing, bang, boom.

Get 15% off today with free shipping and free returns by going to MVMT.com/adventure. See why MVMT keeps growing. Check out their expanding collection. Go to MVMT.com. MVMT.com/adventure. Join the MVMT.

Next up, I want to tell you about Ewetopia. And this one's fun, and really hard for me, as a sort of person who talks for the advertisements, because it's E-W-E-topia. That's E-W-E-T-O-P-I-A. Waiting for your party to arrive? Ewetopia is a quick playing, handmade, artisanal board game of deceptively tactical sheep herding that's ideal for kids and adults alike. Featuring adorable sheep and pups, Ewetopia is easy to learn, difficult to master. A sheep adventure that marries gin and labyrinth, and will twist your brain into rotini.

Play it with friends, at a pub, or against three toddlers in a trench coat who will hustle you for your money. You gotta watch out for that. I'm so glad to get that PSA out there. Thank you. So you can visit EwetopiaGame.com. Again, it's EwetopiaGame.com, and order yours today. That's EwetopiaGame.com, because sheep puns are great.

Next up, I want to tell you about a new book by an author named William Bridgeman called *The Grand Tour: Travels in the Twilight of Magic*. William has this to say. "Hey, all you Adventure Zone lovers." I don't know if that means you love Adventure Zone, or you... [laughs] Y'know. "If you're looking for another great story to enjoy, check out my book, *The Grand Tour: Travels in the Twilight of Magic*. Join us as we journey through Victorian Europe with Henry and William, young men who discover the hidden world of magic, of faeries, and old Gods. But this magic is dying, and spirits will sacrifice anything to save it, including mankind. *The Grand Tour* is free to read and updates weekly at WilliamBridgeman.com. That's WilliamBridgeman.com.

I want to thank everybody who has been tweeting about the show using the #TheZoneCast hash tag. I sure do appreciate you spreading the word about the show. It's how we have found most of our audience, and so, we only have the listenership we have now because of you all, and the things that you've done. And we just, wow. It just really means a lot. Also, if you do it, you might end up as a character on the show, like Sam Thacker, who is Thacker, who's a character on the show. So deal with it.

I also want to thank the Maximum Fun network for having us on the network. You can go to MaximumFun.org and check out all the great shows that they have there. Shows like *Stop Podcasting Yourself*, and *Tights and Fights*, and *Lady to Lady*, and *Switchblade Sisters*, and so many more, all on MaximumFun.org.

And if you want to hear more stuff that we do, you can go to McElroyShows.com. Uh, and, oh yeah, we're doing a graphic novel that you can preorder right now, and it would be super cool if you did that. It is an adaptation of the first arc of the Balance campaign, called *Here There Be Gerblins*, and you can find it at TheAdventureZoneComic.com.

That is it, and we're gonna let you get back to the rest of the episode. Oh, one last thing – Travis is actually about to go on vacation, so we will not have a regular episode for you two weeks from now. Instead, we will have for you the live episode that we recently did in Dallas. It's a special episode that takes place inside the Balance campaign, that I think you're all really

gonna enjoy. So that'll be our next episode, and then, we're gonna get right back into Amnesty the episode after that.

So, the next episode is gonna go up in two weeks, so that is going to be on May 17th. And uh, it's gonna be our live episode from Dallas, and we think you're gonna enjoy it, and we'll talk to you soon. Bye.

[theme music plays]

Justin: Duck pokes his head out of the water, and he kind of like, puts two fits sort of limply up in the air, and says...

Duck: [tiredly sings Final Fantasy victory fanfare] Well... we did it.

Griffin: Jake Coolice laughs. He's like...

Jake: Haha, that was—

Griffin: And he throws up some water. And he goes...

Jake: Hurgh. That was so... not tubular.

Clint: [laughs]

Beacon: It is a shame, though. While floating in the water, I was so assured of Duck Newton's destruction, I had begun fantasizing about my next owner. Would they be exciting? Willing to take adventures? So many possibilities awaited me while I had a pleasant daydream in the water. But I was very hhhhappy to see you survive, Duck Newton.

Clint: Duck's hat is floating on the water, and Ned sheepishly picks it up and hands it to Duck.

Duck: Thanks, man. Listen, um, I get it. I do. I mean, I get it. And I guess it was... let me say this. You had a good idea.

Ned: If it makes you feel any better, I wanted to save you. So my heart was in the right place. But... my nerves, apparently, were not.

Duck: Y'know what, it doesn't make me feel better. I'd say zero sum sort of thing. It doesn't make me feel worse, but that's... it's alright. Listen, the important thing is that that thing is gone, and Jake Coolice is—

Ned: In my defense, I really overestimated the absorbency of the towels. I thought that was gonna really do something.

Duck: You thought... just so I'm clear, you thought you were gonna maybe soak the monster up. [laughs] Like the Brawny paper towel man.

Ned: Yeah. I... that was kind of on the peripheral of my idea.

Travis: To be fair, Brawny paper towels does advertise that like, Niagara Falls sucks it right up. Y'know what I mean?

Clint: Yeah, see? So I'm a victim of advertising.

Duck: Ned, in hindsight, I'd like to withdraw me saying that you had a good idea.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: While this is happening, Aubrey is just like, staring at her hands. And she says...

Aubrey: I... I hit it as hard as I could.

Duck: Yeah, me too. Um...

Aubrey: I didn't do... hardly anything to it.

Duck: I'll be honest with you all, I kind of... imagined Duck buries his magic sword in the light was something of an end game. I didn't actually... I don't actually have a plan B, beyond that.

Griffin: Um, Barclay hands all of you some towels and says...

Justin: Dry ones, I hope.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: Don't worry, they're not very absorbent.

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: He says...

Barclay: It, uh... it seems like we have a lot of stuff to figure out. It... let's head back inside, and figure out what comes next. But...

Aubrey: Yeah. So far, listen. I have like, one box to check, and if it's not fire...

Barclay: Right.

Aubrey: Question mark?

Griffin: He says...

Barclay: Yeah, we can figure that out, too. But y'all... it knows where you live now. I gotta... I gotta close down the hot springs until we slay this thing, and the folks here... they need the springs, like, to live. And so, not that this wasn't true before, but time is... time's of the essence.

Griffin: It's a few moments later, now. You're back in the office, drying off with these towels, making sure not to track water into the very clean lobby of Amnesty Lodge. And Barclay enters after the rest of you, and he is joined by a woman you've seen in the lobby several times, now. She is always dressed very proper. She's almost always sitting at the piano. And as the two of them enter and shut the door behind them, she pulls a hairpin out of her hair. And as she does, she takes on a ghostly, translucent form. And she says... what does she sound like? Should I do British on this one?

Travis: Yeah. Do it.

Griffin: She says, uh...

Woman: Oh my goodness, what a relief.

Travis: That's British?

Woman: Oh my goodness, what a relief. That federal agent has been breathing down my neck all evening.

Griffin: Should I go full cockney? "Oh my goodness, what a relief."

Travis: It just seems like, when you went British, you just kind of got very airy.

Griffin: Yeah, I think British people just speak very airy.

Travis: You went more like, Downton.

Clint: Yeah, go Eliza Doolittle. Eliza Doolittle.

Griffin: I'm not gonna maintain British. I'm just gonna do airy.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: Um, and Barclay says...

Barclay: Moira, we need to get ourselves... our hands on a magical, intangible weapon. And I don't know what that is. So I'm thinking it's our time our friends here met the enchanter.

Griffin: And Moira laughs, and she says...

Moira: Yes, I suppose it was only a matter of time. Well, then, we should hurry. The moon is large and lovely right now. We should be able to get you all to Sylvain without much trouble.

Aubrey: Sick.

Duck: Okay.

Ned: Groovy.

Travis: Is Moira a ghost?

Griffin: Yeah, it certainly seems that way. Uh, yes, she's a ghost. I don't know why I'm being cagey about it.

Travis: Yeah, I do want you to picture like, Aubrey running her hand through Moira, just at least once. 'Cause that's what I would do.

Griffin: She says...

Moira: Okay, everybody gets one. Ned and Duck, do you want to get yours out of the way?

Ned: No, I'm going to save mine for later.

Duck: Aubrey can have mine.

Moira: Okay, Aubrey, you can—

Travis: And I do it again.

Moira: Okay, that's it.

Aubrey: Can you feel it?

Moira: The idea of feeling is kind of weird for me.

Aubrey: Close your eyes and tell me if I'm doing it.

Moira: Well, you already did—okay.

Aubrey: Okay, close your eyes. Did I do it?

Moira: Yeah, you did it.

Aubrey: Ahh! I didn't.

Moira: Okay, this is not a fun game for me.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs] Stupid.

Clint: Oh, God. I love this show.

Griffin: She puts her hand through you.

Moira: Can you feel that?

Aubrey: No!

Moira: Yes you can. Don't... okay.

Aubrey: Do it again, but do it like, I'm a mech. Y'know what I mean? Where—okay, so like—

Moira: You don't want me to ghost into you. It's a—

Aubrey: Oh no, wait, do it, and then, Duck, pretend to like, open palm hit me, right? And then Moira, you go flying backwards out the back.

Moira: We're not gonna do Doctor Strange fanfiction. We got things to do tonight.

Aubrey: Come on!

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, the four of you are walking through the forest, toward the gate. And it is indeed lovely tonight. The sky is clear, allowing the moon to

pierce the canopy of the pine trees overhead, illuminating your passage through the woods with ease. The remnants of the summer cicadas are singing a quiet song from deeper in the forest, backed by the sound of the fallen pine needles that crunch beneath your feet with each step. And Moira explains...

Moira: So, the enchanter is a mysterious being. It has taken many shapes and names for as long as I've known it. It resides in the catacombs, beneath the city, where it does its work, tinkering with imbuing the light of Sylvain into various trinkets and odds and ends that it collects. If you want it to cooperate, though, you're going to have to deliver it an item of value from this world. Collecting earth artifacts is one of its favorite pastimes.

Griffin: And um, she reaches into a handbag she's carrying. She is in her human form. She reaches into a handbag she's carrying, and she retrieves a set of pearl earrings, which she hands to, uh, Ned. And she says...

Moira: I think these should suffice for what you all require. It is a crafty one, the enchanter, but it remains straightforward in its business dealings.

Griffin: She says...

Moira: I would take you directly to it if I could. But once exiled from Sylvain, we are never allowed to return. Just find your way into the catacombs, and follow the sound of the wind. You'll get there.

Aubrey: Do you eat?

Moira: Um, I do not require physical sustenance. Just a dip in the hot springs every now and then, to sort of refill my... I don't know, life force, or whatever you want to call it. We used to—

Aubrey: But could you eat, and if you did, would it fall straight through?

Moira: It would be weird. I honestly haven't tried since I took on this spectral form. But you seem intent to do some sort of—

Aubrey: Were you born a ghost?

Moira: No. When a citizen of Sylvain perishes in the presence of Sylvain's light, they... they don't die in the traditional sense. They're given a reprieve in these ghostly forms, until they've decided that they have found the peace that they require before passing on for good. That's actually what makes living on this side such a distasteful prospect for those living in Sylvain. If we die over here, we are not granted that reprieve.

Ned: And what kind of being were you before?

Moira: I was a Sylph. Much like Dani, I suppose. I know your knowledge of our—

Aubrey: A vampire.

Moira: If that's the way that you want to classify it, sure. A vampire.

Aubrey: Okay.

Ned: But we don't deal with labels so much.

Moira: I would prefer not to.

Griffin: The four of you arrive at the clearing, and you find a familiar scene. Amidst a blanket of pine needles stands the archway, lit from above by the dazzling moonlight overhead. And Moira reaches into her handbag, and retrieves a small compact mirror, which she catches the moonlight in, and directs it towards the gate. And as she does so, the span of the archway is filled with white light. And she says...

Moira: Uh, a moment, if you will. Aubrey?

Aubrey: Yeah?

Moira: I know you're searching for answers about the origins of the magic that dwells within you. If you have the time, you may find it prudent to inquire about your abilities while in Sylvain. It is a land rife with arcane

energies. It is likely that someone over there might have some answers to your questions.

Ned: Point of order. Duck, didn't the goat head fellow tell you that you could never set foot in Sylvain again?

Duck: Ah, shit, that's true. Moira, why do you think that would've been?

Moira: Uh, obviously, we... I shouldn't say we anymore. The citizens of Sylvain have many reasons not to trust humankind. But if you all are members of the Pine Guard, the arrangement, I believe you'll find, has changed significantly. You all should be free to walk around there, as long as you have your patches. You all have your patches, right?

Aubrey: Yep.

Duck: Yeah.

Ned: Yes.

Moira: Ned, you sounded like you maybe don't have your patch.

Ned: Well, I was wondering if I had had time to get my tattoo yet, but no. No, I've got my patch.

Moira: A tattoo is a novel idea, but the patch itself is crafted from Sylvan wool. There's a curse bestowed upon earthlings who enter our world, and having a garment crafted from any sort of Sylvan fabric will protect you from it. So it's important you keep the patch on you as well.

Ned: I do. I've got it on a scarf.

Travis: Aubrey is just like... bouncing to go through the big, glowing doorway.

Duck: Sure. Hey, listen, just a warning, y'all. Uh, it's weird over there. And, y'know...

Aubrey: Okay, bye!

Travis: She runs through.

Clint: Aubrey rushes in.

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: Yeah. Yeah, I follow behind.

Ned: Shit. Alright.

Griffin: The three of you step through the gate. Ned, you last, and I think you see Moira giving you like a kind of condescending thumbs up as... and that's the last thing you see as you step through. And for a moment, the three of you are all weightless in this bright, white expanse. You feel wind whipping through you, almost as if you're falling through a long tunnel. And these rings of light are pulsating around you as you fly.

And then, the three of you step out of an identical gate and into another world... into Sylvain.

[music plays]

Griffin: You're standing in a large, circular pavilion, surrounded by large, stone columns, holding up a solid stone roof, 20 feet over head. And through the columns, directly in front of you, you can see the city. And as you might expect, you've never really seen anything quite like it before. There's a long, dust-covered road that extends outward from this pavilion, and serves as a main drag through the town. And it's lined with shops and restaurants, with outdoor seating, all occupied by diners of shapes and sizes that you can't quite discern from a distance.

And off the road to the east, the town scales up the side of a steep hill, where these small, colorful cottages are piled on top of one another, leading up to the peak, where a quaint looking park sits. To the west, a series of several large buildings are arranged. Just off the main drag, you see what looks like a school, a large library, what appears to be like, this world's

version of a hospital. More functional buildings, as opposed to the residential district built onto the side of the hill.

And though you find something kind of relatable about the layout of the city, there's something decidedly alien about the architecture. To put it succinctly, where most of our world's architecture is based around clean angles and rectangular geometry, buildings in Sylvain are more round. Not Seussian, but like, with far more curves, and far less uniformity than any city you've ever seen before.

And so, the main drag, it cuts across a bridge, spanning a small river that cuts the town in half. And beyond it, you see something more surprising still: a castle of gray cobblestone. It's the largest building in sight, with these huge gardens that extend from its walls, reaching nearly all the way down to the river. And immediately in front of this castle is a large courtyard, which hosts the most eye-catching feature of the entire city: a crystal, jutting up through the ground, standing 15 feet high. There's a bright, orange light, pulsating from within this shape. It is an impressive thing, even though the side of it appears to have a large chunk missing, almost as if it's been cleaved off completely.

And as you all enter through the gate, two guards approach you from the columns in front of you, and they're both holding spears. One of them has sharp fangs that they're bearing, and bright orange eyes, not unlike the features you've seen on Dani in her undisguised form. And the other guard simply has a squirrel head for a head.

Aubrey: [gasps] Duck, get my picture with it.

Griffin: The squirrel hears you say this and says...

Squirrel: Do not move, earthlings. Explain yourselves immediately or face your doom.

Aubrey: I can do selfie mode. I don't have to move.

Griffin: The other guard kind of sighs as this other guard says this very dramatic thing, but raises their spear towards you nonetheless.

Aubrey: We are Pine Guard!

Duck: Yeah.

Griffin: They look at each other, and then look back at you with their spears still raised.

Duck: Uh...

Aubrey: Oh.

Duck: We kind of thought...

Justin: I'll, um... I dig out my wallet, and take the patch out.

Duck: Uh, yeah, we're trying—we're—we're from the Pine Guard? Do you all... does that not mean anything to y'all? We were under the impression that it would be...

Aubrey: I thought that would work.

Duck: Yeah.

Ned: Is that not a thing?

Aubrey: Pine Guard?

Duck: Is that not a thing?

Aubrey: Pine Guard? We protect earth, and... Mama? Do you know Mama?

Duck: You know Moira? She's a ghost?

Aubrey: Uh, Barclay?

Duck: Barclay? Coolice, Jake Coolice? Any of that ringing a bell?

Ned: Dani? Dani?

Aubrey: Dani? Any of this? And we're Pine Guard, and we—

Ned: Enchanter! Enchanter! Say the enchanter name. Enchanter!

Aubrey: Why would that mean—okay.

Ned: I don't know.

Aubrey: Yeah, Pine Guard? Pine Guard.

Ned: Piiine Guard.

Griffin: The squirrel turns to the other guard, and like, kind of chitters in its ear. And they like, shake their head like, "I don't know." But their conversation is broken up as a familiar face climbs the stairs to this pavilion. Um, and you hear a voice say...

Voice: I thought we had an arrangement, Duck Newton. Do you care to explain why you've returned, despite your promise?

Griffin: And it is Vincent, the goat man.

Duck: Hey, Vince. Yeah, I was trying to be... we're in the Pine Guard. I kind of thought that would be all that y'all would need to hear. That's what Moira said. But y'know what, I did... I maybe should've put her through due diligence, now that I think about it. I did just kind of accept that as gospel.

But we're looking for an enchanter, 'cause we got a lot of your people over on the other side that are gonna be in a pretty bad way if we don't get our hot spring fixed up. There's some sort of elemental creature of some sort that's making it uh, pretty inhospitable at the moment.

Griffin: Um, he listens to you. As soon as you said you were in the Pine Guard, you see a big smile across his face. And he says...

Vincent: Yes, I figured it was only a matter of time. We only met for a brief while, but I figured that this was probably in the cards. Um, I apologize for the inconvenience, but could you provide some proof of your testimony?

Duck: Yeah, I mean, I got... I got it right here.

Justin: I've still got the patch in my hand. So I show it to him.

Griffin: He nods, and he says...

Vincent: So, you've come to see the enchanter. I assume you need some help hunting down one of the Abominations.

Aubrey: We found it a couple of times now, and I think it's gonna come for us. We more need help in the killing part of it.

Vincent: And—sorry, what was your friends' names, Duck?

Duck: Uh, this is Aubrey and Ned.

Ned: Yo.

Aubrey: Hi!

Griffin: He smiles, and he says...

Vincent: My name is Vincent. I am the minister of defense here in Sylvain. I understand, you need to see the enchanter. I can take you to him.

Duck: Cool. Alright, let's go.

Vincent: I must insist I accompany you, as long as you are in our world. And I must also insist that you make your introductions to the Interpreter, as is custom for those who serve to protect Sylvain from the world beyond.

Aubrey: The interp...

Ned: Who is that?

Vincent: My, you seem to not know much about our world at all. I suppose that makes sense.

Aubrey: It's our first day here.

Duck: Yeah. Like, let me ask you about the fucking cast of Friends.

Vincent: You're talking about Matt Leblanc, and Matthew Perry, and...

Duck: Aw, fuck.

Aubrey: Damn.

Duck: Yeah, he's good.

Griffin: He says...

Duck: He's real good.

Vincent: The Interpreter does just that, interprets the will of Sylvain, which helps to form the laws that govern our world. I suppose you could think of them as a kind of ruler here. Unelected, obviously. And with checks and balances, represented by their ministers. It is custom for those who serve on the Pine Guard to at least make introductions to the Interpreter. But that can wait. She is resting now, as is. We can go see the enchanter, and then, just swing by for a quick pit stop later.

Aubrey: Um, quick question. And forgive me, 'cause I'll probably end up just like, asking everybody we rate. Um, do you have like, magic tutors? Or, a book I could read, about... Let me start here. I do magic. Both stage and real.

Griffin: He looks surprised when you say that.

Aubrey: Watch.

Travis: Snap fingers. Thumb lights on fire.

Aubrey: Boom, there.

Griffin: He gets very close as you do this, and you see like, the light of the fire, like, flashing across his face. And his eyes get wide—

Travis: And his weird goat eyes.

Griffin: His goat eyes are beautiful. He says, um...

Vincent: This is no parlor trick, correct? This is real magic?

Aubrey: No, do you want to see that, though?

Travis: And then like, card trick.

Griffin: Okay, you do a quick card trick. He says...

Aubrey: I can do both!

Griffin: He says...

Vincent: I... this is quite curious. I suppose I can introduce you to the minister of the arcane in our world. They might be able to help you out, but—

Aubrey: Hell yeah!

Duck: Is it, uh—is it Cornelius Fudge?

Vincent: From the Harry Potter books?

Duck: Goddamn, you're good, man!

Aubrey: Damn!

Ned: Jiminy Christmas.

Duck: I cannot get one past you.

Griffin: He smiles, and he says...

Vincent: Aubrey, I must ask. You are... you are not Sylvan, are you?

Aubrey: Hooman as they come.

Vincent: I see.

Aubrey: I think.

Vincent: That is quite curious. I think it would serve all of us very well to know where your powers come from. Uh, I will make an introduction to the minister of the arcane when we stop by the castle. Um, but for now, let's... let's carry out your errand.

Griffin: And he nods, and the other two guards, like, lower their spears.

Aubrey: Question – do we need to pretend to not be... is it gonna be weird that we're here? Are people gonna look at us weird?

Vincent: Oh, people are definitely going to look at you weird. But there is an arrangement that has existed between our people and the Pine Guard for some time, now. So, you will find some amount of understanding from the citizens here.

Aubrey: Okay.

Griffin: And Vincent starts walking you down that main drag, toward the hill, the residential district on the east side of town. And you pass by several blocks of these colorful, round buildings. And as you do, you get a clearer picture of the folks who reside here.

A lot of them are like Dani, and the guard by the entrance, similar to what our world would consider vampires, with these fangs and bright eyes. Some of them have that kind of ghostly form that Moira showed you all. But they seem to just be like, conducting their business in the same way as

everybody else here. You see a ghost float out of a bakery, carrying a box of freshly made pastries.

Travis: [singing] Here comes the baker with this tray like always!

Griffin: Um, and this ghost is...

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: ...is chatting happily with the shop's corporeal owner. But you also see a lot of beings with various earth animal characteristics. You see people with the fur and fangs of wolves. You see more squirrel-like people. You see some bipedal bird people. There's a lizard person, busking on the streets, playing a beautiful song on a harp.

Aubrey: Vincent, can I ask you a quick question?

Vincent: Yes, go ahead.

Aubrey: How long have people been crossing over to our world? Because this would explain a lot of stories and folk tales and stuff.

Vincent: I would not venture to say that we are responsible for all of your world's lore. That would be... that would be irresponsible of me. But, we could probably trace some of the stories of your world to Sylvans who crossed over and, for whatever reason, made themselves known to the human population. Our worlds have been connected for centuries and centuries, so I would imagine that, perhaps, some of the stories of your world could be attributed to our people crossing over.

But, your people have been crossing over into our world for centuries, too. And not just humans – animals, too, have wandered through the gates. That's where I come from. As time passed, the light of Sylvain gave the animals who wandered into our world new forms, and gave us a place in our society. Which was a rocky transition, at first, but now we're just as much valued citizens of this place as those who originated here.

Griffin: And as he says that, he like, nods to just a dog person. A person with the—

Travis: I'm a dog person!

Griffin: This is a literal... a literal dog person. Um, and finally, you reach the foot of the residential district, where Vincent directs you towards a large, stone, circular door, built into the hill. Which he slides open, and then lights a torch mounted by the door, and leads you down several flights of stairs, into the catacombs under the city. And you walk for several minutes through stone, carved tunnels, and the sound of the street and music from the city above, fade behind you, until you can only hear wind that is growing louder as you navigate the twists and turns of the catacombs.

And finally, you turn a corner, and you see no tunnels in front of you at all – just a platform, overlooking a large chasm that swallows the light of Vincent's torch, expanding into what seems like infinite darkness. And he motions you forward, and he says...

Vincent: Watch your step.

Griffin: And he kind of smiles.

Ned: Hm.

Aubrey: Okay...

Ned: Is there a safety rail?

Vincent: No. I can talk to public works to try to get one installed, I suppose, if that's a concern of yours.

Ned: No, no, I worry about my friends. Y'know, falling off the edge.

Duck: Hey, I got—I got two points of armor, man. I'm fine.

Ned: Uh, okay. Um, uh, yeah. Let's step very, very, very carefully onto the platform, as close to jumping back as I can.

Aubrey: Whoa, whoa, Ned! Whoaaa!

Ned: Vertigo! Oh, God!

Aubrey: Whoaaa, Ned!

Travis: And Aubrey's just fucking with Ned.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Aubrey: Oh, whoa, pretty far down, huh, Ned? Whoa. Ned, come look. Come look.

Ned: N-no, I'm good. Good right here. This way, I can keep an eye on—

Aubrey: Oh, it's so far. Ohh. Woo.

Ned: I want to keep an eye out with my peripheral vision. Just, y'know, in case of danger.

Griffin: As you all step out onto this platform, overlooking the chasm, it is silent for a moment. And then, I think your footsteps like, kick off some dust that you hear fall down the chasm. And then, you hear really loud breathing, coming from below. Loud, rhythmic breathing, almost like the purring of like, a gigantic cat.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: And you hear a voice say...

Voice: What business do you have with me, earthlings?

Clint: [laughing]

Griffin: And this voice just echoes through the whole chamber.

Duck: We require a, uh... a weapon that can defeat, I guess, a sort of Elemental...

Aubrey: Like, water?

Duck: Like a weapon that can kill water? That sounds stupid when I say it.

Ned: Really super absorbent towels, maybe? More absorbent towels?

Duck: Like magically absorbent, yeah.

Ned: Yeah.

Aubrey: Like a Sham... like a ShamWow.

Duck: Like a ShamWow.

Ned: Oh, yeah.

Aubrey: Yeah.

Ned: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: The uh, the wind picks up from below you as you speak, almost knocking you off your feet - which is probably pretty scary, given your position - as a massive shape lifts up from the darkness below you. And suddenly, the light from Vincent's torch illuminates two great, yellow eyes, with narrow slits for pupils, which eye you over quickly before the figure fully emerges.

It is a cat. An unthinkable, gigantic, gray, anthropomorphic cat. And it says...

Clint: [laughing]

[theme music plays]

Cat: Well, that sounds like quite a challenge. I suppose introductions are in order. The people of this world know me as the enchanter, master artisan of the arcane. You may call me by my name.

I... am Heathcliff.

Justin: [laughs]

Travis: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

[theme music plays]

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Ben: Hello. Are you looking for a new comedy podcast? In which case, can I draw your attention to the Beef and Dairy Network podcast? It's a fictional industry podcast for the beef and dairy industries. It won best comedy at the 2017 British Podcast Awards. And it features wonderful guests, such as Greg Davis...

Greg: To my knowledge, it's the only cat circus that's ever existed in this country. In rural Russia, every small town has a cat circus.

Ben: Josie Long...

Josie: You should have a beef. Have a beef with them. I have a beef with you. I will have a beef with you. Come 'round my house, and I'll have a beef with you.

Ben: And Andy Daly.

Andy: That virus never existed. There was never any such thing as a mad cow disease. That was all an illusion that big lamb came up with.

Ben: That's the Beef and Dairy Network podcast. Find us at MaximumFun.org, or wherever you get your podcasts from. And I would recommend starting at episode one. Bye!

[gavel banging]

Speaker 1: Judge John Hodgman ruled in my favor.

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John: I'm Judge John Hodgman. You're hearing the voices of real litigants, real people, who have submitted disputes to my internet court at the Judge John Hodgman podcast. I hear their cases, I ask them questions – they're good ones – and then I tell them who's right, and who's wrong.

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Speaker 2: Instead of cutting his own hair with a Flowbee, my husband has his hair cut professionally.

Speaker 3: I have to join a community theater group.

Speaker 1: And my wife has stopped bringing home wild animals.

John: It's the Judge John Hodgman podcast. Find it every Wednesday at MaximumFun.org, or wherever you download podcasts.

[gavel banging]

Speaker 1: Thanks, Judge John Hodgman.