

The Adventure Zone: Amnesty – Episode 13

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Griffin: Winter has come to Kepler, West Virginia.

[music plays]

Griffin: It is late December, and the reliable crowd of out of state tourists has nestled into Kepler's hotels and resorts, seeking an authentic, snow-bound, holiday retreat. Twinkling lights cover the town's buildings and street lights, and a freshly cut, garishly decorated tree stands in front of city hall.

It's night time, and not a creature stirs in Kepler's festive streets. But up the road, to the west, a van speeds down state route 66. The vehicle, emblazoned in the ancient logo of the Monongahela Forest Service is driven by one Rick Dannon, the agency's chief arborist. With his working day of tending to the forest's trees behind him, he has packed up his tools and left the forest to head home.

But through his windshield, the winding highway begins to vanish before his eyes, as a sudden, furious snowstorm materializes in front of him. Thick, white flakes, whipped into a frenzy by a powerful wind blanket his vision in seconds. Panicked, he bears down on the brake pedal and wrestles with the steering wheel, attempting to maintain control of the vehicle and pull over to the side of the road. And then... as quickly as it appeared... the storm passes.

The van's wipers kick on, revealing the road before him. Rick breathes a sigh of relief, then turns the wheel, pulling back onto the highway to continue his commute. The van pulls away, down the winding highway. It passes out of view behind the mountainside.

Moments later, a crash echoes through the pines.

[music plays]

Griffin: Duck Newton is pulled from his slumber, shortly before sunrise by the ringing of a telephone. On the other end is ranger Juno Devine. She informs him that Rick Dannon died last night in a car accident on state route 66.

No foul play is suspected.

[theme music plays]

Travis: But I guess any time you call Duck Newton, there's some *fowl* play.

Griffin: Oh, that's pretty good.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: See?

Justin: Is it—is it the... my time, Griffin?

Griffin: Um... [laughs]

Travis: [laughs] Is Justin finally coming into his own?

Griffin: Uh, yeah, Justin.

Travis: Is this the change?

Griffin: Your body's going through some... you're going through some wonderful changes.

Travis: [laughs]

Justin: Okay. That was not my... that was not my roll, that was my, get the command in there. But I need to do my uh, I need to have a vision.

Griffin: Uh, that is true. Why don't we uh, why don't we roll 2d6 plus weird? Or, I guess, in your case, minus weird. I love that you keep taking

stat upgrades, but you've never upgraded your weird, because you're still so spooked out by all this shit.

Justin: Here's the thing. The only thing it's good for is use magic, and I don't have magic powers, so what's the point?

Griffin: Sure, sure.

Justin: So I—

Travis: Not yet.

Justin: In fiction, I guess like, I woke up. They called me and said, "Danimal is dead," and I said, "Aw, shit. I'm going back to sleep. I have to have a vision about this. Hold on, let me do a prophecy about it, and I will be back with you around 8:30."

Travis: You guys, I had the strangest dream that I got a phone call that Danimal was dead.

Griffin: Uh, go ahead and give me a 2d6 roll. Oh my God. Justin, oh my God! Starting our three off with a fucking bang.

Clint: It's a two, ladies and gentlemen.

Justin: Uh, it's a two minus one.

Griffin: It's a one!

Justin: It's the worst possible vision that I could have. I mean, here's what I'm gonna say canonically, Griffin. I feel like with a roll of this caliber, Duck will have something bad to him. I feel like he's also pissed himself.

Travis: [laughs]

Justin: I think if he has a vision that is this bad, he has to have wet the bed during it.

Griffin: Oh my God.

Justin: Canonical bedwetting.

Travis: Like, maybe in a vision, he has a vision about using the bathroom.

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: And in real life...

Justin: He just lets go.

Griffin: Okay. No, this is gonna be a bad vision. And it also means I get to take a hard move on you in the future. Which, last time was quite bad. So yeah, I don't know exactly when I'm gonna cash in that chip. But here is your... here's your vision.

I think this is the dream you were having when you were awakened by the phone call from ranger Juno Devine. Um, and it came to you like sort of all of your visions come to you. There's something about it. There's something about this thing that you can see in your dream that makes it different from sort of the other dreams that you have. There's something very... there's something very vivid about it, but there's something also kind of um, artistic, for lack of a better term, about it.

There is something almost like you're looking at a painting or something like that. And the vision that you see is just stars. Um, not necessarily like you are laying on the ground and looking up and looking at the stars, but it's just stars. There's no moon above. You're just looking up into the stars, almost like you're in them.

[ambient music plays]

Griffin: And you see this for like, a long time. I think this is a long vision. For several minutes, you just see these stars. And then, one of them appears to be getting larger. And it's kind of at the center of your view, and

it's getting larger and larger still. And then, you realize that it's not a star at all. What is approaching you is a meteor, and it is coming the you faster and faster, and as it collides with whatever your point of view is, you wake up to the sound of a telephone ringing.

That's about as bad as these visions get, I think.

Justin: Yeah, it's like, not great.

Griffin: So, it is December. We're about to start our third arc, our new hunt, our new monster. And I think just sort of like, to set the scene and get some of that good character juice, I'm curious like, what the holidays are like for each of you. Obviously, Aubrey, this is your first sort of holiday season in Kepler, and you're living in Amnesty Lodge, and you've been there for, now, four months or so. So I think you're pretty well settled in, there.

But Ned and Duck, you've lived in Kepler for some time, and I'm just curious what the holiday season is like for each of you.

Clint: It's kind of weird for Ned. Growing up, he was always very much a big holiday guy. Loved family get-togethers, and all of the cousins and uncles and aunts and grandparents getting together and enjoying a meal. But y'know, with the way his life has developed, kind of a life on the shady side, he's kind of had to give that up. So, holidays are not a big time for Ned. He wishes they were. But y'know, he usually ends up watching the Macy's parade and, y'know, eating a cup of gruel.

Griffin: [laughs] Jesus Christ.

Justin: Cup of gruel? Where does he even find gruel?

Travis: Did he make it himself? Is it like an old, sad recipe?

Griffin: He makes it himself.

Clint: Hot Pockets gruel. I don't know if you've seen those or not. They're really nasty.

Travis: Ew!

Clint: But he just sits there in the dark with the TV on, watching the Macy's and, y'know, hatin' on that Al Roker guy.

Griffin: Yeah, good.

Clint: It's just, uh... they're just not a lot of fun.

Travis: Dig that beef deeper, Dad. Go for it.

Griffin: Yeah. Um, what about the Cryptonomica? Do you do anything special for your local business in the holidays?

Clint: I... well, y'know, a feeble attempt to decorate. Try to have like, some special events.

Justin: That's even sadder. It's like, sadder, to put up a few strands of lights.

Clint: It does make it even sadder. And y'know, nobody comes. Y'know, Ned's trying. So most of Ned... he's decided he's gonna have a uh, he's gonna have a Christmas special on Saturday Night Dead. And so, he's kind of, y'know, concentrating his energies there so he doesn't, y'know, see how sad his family-less life is on the holidays. So he's gonna have a special couple of movies on Saturday Night Dead, and just kind of throwing himself into his work.

Travis: Like what movies, Dad?

Griffin: Well, there's that... uh, what's the one that MST3K did about like—

Justin: Santa Claus Versus the Martians?

Clint: Santa Claus Versus the Martians would be a good choice.

Travis: Maybe Jack Frost? But the scary one?

Griffin: The Michael Keaton one, I don't remember being especially scary. I mean, I guess he dies, and that is inherently kind of scary. But he does come back and learn like, a very valuable lesson about, y'know, family and neglect and stuff.

Travis: He's a ghost that haunts a snowman, Griffin. What's not scary about that?

Griffin: Yeah, no. It's pretty—it's spooktacular. Duck, what about you?

Justin: Uh, so Duck's sister Jane is not in town. He would usually spend the holidays with her, but she's doing, um, mission work in Honduras. So she is not here currently. So he kind of hung out with friends. He didn't feel too sad about it. It was never like, a real big thing for his family. Um, a lot of friends were in from out of town. He spent a lot of time uh, doing like, bar trivia, and karaoke, and just kind of hanging out with pals that had come back into Kepler. People he had kind of um, lost touch with.

But, so, I mean, he didn't feel too bad for himself. Like I said, it's not normally a big deal. But with Jane not there, there wasn't really a chance to do like, family kind of stuff. Uh, he just kind of palled around with folks. But it was, y'know, it was nice. It was good to see some of those folks that he hadn't seen for so long. So...

Griffin: Alright. And Aubrey, what about you?

Travis: Well, Aubrey doesn't really do Christmas.

Griffin: Sure.

Travis: Aubrey celebrates Yule. Or the Winter Solstice. That started when she was kind of a teenager, and it was like, a rebellion against her parents, and like, leaning into the magic persona. So I would not say that Aubrey identifies as Wiccan, but over time, as she grew older, she actually like, did the research into it, and found that it seemed to be a purer form of the things that we associate now with Christmas.

Griffin: Sure.

Travis: And so, it became more traditional in her mind, and a lot more about like... more of the spirit of it, without all the stuff piled onto it. That kind of thing, and a lot less about, y'know, family. And I think a lot of that, now, is because she does tend to be on her own a lot more. So she doesn't really have a lot of traditions that kind of date back to family times.

Clint: Boy, we are a damaged bunch, aren't we?

Griffin: Yeah, no kidding.

Justin: Yeah, dude.

Griffin: Um, that's good stuff, though. And I think that's kind of the aesthetic of Amnesty Lodge. Just a lot of sort of festive, warm, welcoming sort of wintertime decorations. And in fact, let's jump to that. So, it's a few days before Christmas. I want to say it's like the 21st or so. And uh, in the afternoon, Mama has called you all into Amnesty Lodge to discuss your next hunt.

Duck and Ned, as you arrive, and Aubrey, as you go to greet them, you all enter a very festive scene in the lobby. It's decorated with garlands, and wreaths, and the hearth is roaring in the center of the room, providing some much needed warmth to combat the very cold weather outside. Jake and Dani are hanging up some more decorations here in the lobby area, and uh, Moira is tinkling away at the piano, trying to figure out some holiday standards, sort of by ear. They probably don't have the... I mean, they definitely don't have those in Sylvain, so she's trying to sort of master them on her own.

And Mama emerges from her office, and she's walking with a cane made of this dark, sort of gnarled wood. It wouldn't surprise you if she made this cane herself from some stuff she gathered in the woods behind the lodge. And she gives you all sort of a faint smile as she sees you all, and she says...

Mama: Well, looks like we, uh... looks like we got the band back together. How y'all been?

Duck: Good. Y'know, my sister Jane was doing missionary work in Honduras, and normally, I would spend the uh, holidays with her.

Griffin: [laughs]

Duck: But I had some friends come in from uh, out of town.

Mama: Oh, that sounds nice.

Duck: And I wanted to communicate this to anybody who might be listening somehow, and I thought this might be a more organic way of doing it.

Mama: Yeah, sure. I... that's a strange way of just sort of conversing with another human being, but uh...

Justin: [laughing]

Ned: I'm doing well. They have a two for one BOGO sale down at the AMP on gruel Hot Pockets.

Justin: [laughs]

Mama: Alright.

Ned: Happy holidays, everybody.

Travis: Aubrey looks up from her book and says...

Aubrey: I celebrate in like a... not really traditional so much as it is my tradition.

Travis: And back to the book.

Mama: Alright. I feel like I knew all that about all y'all already, somehow. Uh, I don't know if maybe it's 'cause we knew each other for a while, and just, I'm sort of on some sort of psychic link level with y'all. But um, thanks

for comin'. We uh... well, we gotta talk, and I'm thinking we might wanna have a change of venue, thanks to the proximity of our special guest.

Griffin: And she sort of gestures towards the dining area, where you all see Agent Stern.

Travis: We haven't killed him yet?

Griffin: No.

Travis: Man, we are slipping.

Griffin: Yeah, it's a different age from the Balance age where you all... maybe it's just because you can't find like, a good cliff side to huck a body off of discreetly. But he's drinking some cider, and he is uh, he's going over a Lamplighter with like, a red Sharpie, circling what you assume to be leads for his own monster hunt.

Travis: Oh, not just like, corrections?

Griffin: Uh, he's probably doing a little bit of that also. It's sort of a one man operation with Kirby leading up the publication, and so, y'know, there's probably not much copy editing going on there. But she leads you all down into the cellar, which looks completely transformed from the first time that you saw it, thanks to sort of your own modifications and Barclay's general cleanliness. And you catch him down here as you enter.

He's sliding a tray of food under the net that is sort of covering the kitchen area, where you see Thacker, who still looks unkempt and like, vaguely inhuman. But he appears to be a lot more docile than he was just last month. He uh, doesn't seem to respond as the tray slides to his feet. He just kind of sits perfectly still in the center of the kitchen, kind of clutching his knees and looking down.

After you all settle here in the secret HQ of the Pine Guard, Mama says...

Mama: Alright, so uh, couple updates. Um, first of all, Thacker hasn't really gotten any more lucid since I brought him back, so no real developments in

the find what's bringing monsters to Kepler and stop it department. I don't really know if he knows anything that he didn't write down in his journals, but until he snaps out of it, we're just gonna have to remain in the dark on that subject.

Have y'all managed to get any leads on seeing where all this stuff's coming from?

Duck: I should've put some time into it, honestly, but uh, I uh... I was real busy with family over the holidays. So I didn't make much, uh—

Mama: You literally just said you didn't have any family in town for the holidays.

Duck: God... damnit.

Mama: I mean, it's fine if you couldn't dig anything up, but you don't gotta lie to ol' Mama, y'know?

Duck: Damnit!

Travis: [laughs]

Duck: Damnit, Duck!

Travis: [laughs]

Mama: You don't have to beat yourself up about it, Duck. I mean, pobody's nerfect. You gotta calm down, alright?

Duck: [distantly] Fuck! God damnit!

Mama: Alright, well, Duck's having an episode.

Duck: I tried to lie. And it just don't... I just don't flow. I don't know how you all do it.

Ned: Oh, it's easy. Piece of cake.

Duck: I mean Ned. I was trying to be kind.

Mama: Alright, well, it'll probably be a lot easier to investigate that stuff when we actually have a monster on our hands. And that kind of brings us to our next subject. Um, three days to the full moon, so we're in the window now, and I keep my ear to the ground when we're in the window, y'know? Looking out for police chatter, freaky shit coming into Saint Francis, social media. I'm all plugged into all my sites.

Aubrey: What's your follower count? Are you verified?

Mama: I'm not. And I got about 31? Is that good or bad?

Aubrey: How many do you follow? That's really—you have to kind of—it's a ratio.

Mama: Yeah. I follow about 300 or so.

Aubrey: Ooh.

Mama: Ah, yeah, I know. I ain't gone viral yet. But I ain't seen nothin' on uh, through the buzzer. Nothing like that.

Aubrey: Well, you were really popular on Vine until that shut down. I'm sorry about that, Mama.

Mama: Yeah, that's a shame.

Aubrey: We're all still reeling.

Mama: Yeah, I did it a lot for the Vine. So I haven't seen or heard nothin' especially abominable yet. So, y'all got any ideas on... y'all heard anything that might be kind of out of the ordinary?

Duck: Is it safe to assume that like... well, y'know what? It's probably nothing. I don't... I don't know. It didn't seem particularly spooky to me

when I heard about it. But um, a friend of mine... sort of friend. Rick Dannon. He died last night, and there wasn't any um, foul play or anything suspected, which is not that big of a surprise, I know, in this region.

The thing that kind of tripped me out about it was that Rick... Rick and I used to work together, Rick Dannon. We called him the Danimal. Uh, and we used to work together, and he's the one, when I was first coming up, he's the one who taught me like, how to handle the vehicles, and how to be safe in the snow, and always put your chains on and everything.

And it just... I don't know. If somebody was gonna have that kind of accident, wasn't like, brought on by some drunk driving idiot or something like that, it seems... I don't know. It's probably nothing. I don't know. I'm just kind of talking out my ass. But it's the only sort of thing that has stood out to me recently as like, I don't know, a little weird.

Griffin: Mama shrugs and she says...

Mama: I mean, right now, I think it's probably the best lead we got so far. If we got a death that you think is even a little bit suspicious, I think we should probably check it out.

Duck: Y'know, honestly, Mama, even if it isn't... ghosts and ghouls or whatever, I would like to know what happened. Rick and I had a rough patch, there, at the end. And uh, I don't know. Just like to know how it all shook out.

Mama: I am sorry about your friend, Duck. And I think that's a good idea. I think that's probably our best lead we got right now. So how about this – I'll keep pounding the pavement and keep my ear to the ground, keep my eye on, y'know...

Duck: That's three metaphors. You got anymore?

Mama: Uh, I'll keep sort of uh, my head to the... my nose to the grindstone.

Ned: Ow.

Mama: And I'll uh...

Aubrey: Maybe head on a swivel?

Mama: I'll keep my head on a swivel, and y'know, keep my ear open for anything else I can hear that might sound kind of freaky. But why don't the three of y'all go check out the—

Aubrey: Mama?

Mama: Yeah?

Aubrey: Can I go to Sylvain?

Mama: Yeah, I mean, if you want to.

Aubrey: I just... in that last thing, I accessed some new stuff, and I've been reading these books, trying to make sense of it. And I feel like I'm just reading the same sentence over and over again, and there's the, y'know, Minister of Magic over there, and I... I have so many questions.

Mama: Yeah, no, I think it'd be a good idea. I mean, you won't be able to go through the gate until tonight, but um, I think if you want to head over to Sylvain, you should. You're free to come and go as you want, now.

Aubrey: I don't need like a permission slip or anything?

Mama: No, you just need to get the moonlight on the gate and head on over.

Aubrey: Okay.

Mama: But for now, why don't the three of y'all and Barclay go check out the scene of the crash and see what you can find out? See if you see anything that looks particularly monstrous.

Travis: Is it snowing, Griffin, in Kepler?

Griffin: Uh, I don't think it's snowing right now. But it's uh, it's like... it's going to be pretty cold outside for a while. And so, all the snow that has fallen is still kind of on the ground.

Travis: Oh, so there's snow. That's what I mean.

Griffin: There is snow, yeah. I think Public Works like, does its best to keep it off the roads and the highways, but I think like, this is probably an area where snow tires are kind of a necessity. And yeah, there is snow.

Ned: Ahh. I got new chains on the Lincoln, my friends!

Aubrey: Okay, Jacob Marley. Um, Mama, I have a quick question. Or suggestion, maybe. Idea. Barclay's great, but maybe we should take someone who also knows about like, snow and y'know, kind of winter terrain, and maybe see if Jake's free?

Mama: I mean, we don't usually take Jake along on Pine Guard business, but if you think we need a snow expert, um, I guess so. I wouldn't send him into the mouth of a dangerous situation. I wouldn't send him into the lion's maw. But if y'all are just going to check out, y'know, the scene of a crash, I guess you could take ol' Jake. You okay with that, Barclay?

Griffin: And Barclay like, nods.

Aubrey: He's just been a little bit down. We had a run in with some neighborhood toughs, and they kind of gave him a hard time, and I think it really got to him.

Mama: Uh, yeah.

Aubrey: I just want him to feel a little bit more part of our group, y'know?

Mama: Yeah, sure. I think that's a sweet gesture. Why don't y'all take Jake Coolice down to the uh, the scene of the crash? And I think it'll cheer him up to see a place where a man recently died.

Travis: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Mama: I like your instincts there, Aubrey. I think that'll be real good for him.

Justin: [wheezes]

Aubrey: Cool.

Mama: Just sort of confront sort of the terminus of the mortal coil that we're all standing on, and sort of realize everything that's—

Ned: Well, look at the way he leads his life. I mean, he's reckless and he doesn't care. He needs to have an appreciation of death.

Duck: Gotta shake him up. Shake him up.

Justin: [laughs]

Travis: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs] Uh, okay, so—

Justin: Hi, I'm Jake Coolice, and I'm an insurance salesman.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Y'know, death could come at any time.

Justin: I had to confront that, thanks to a dear friend that was trying to cheer me up once.

Travis: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, alright, so the three of you head back upstairs at Amnesty Lodge. I want this scene... I think Jake Coolice is like, walking to the door. He's just finished helping Dani decorate. Uh, and he's got his board, and sort of his gear on, and his goggles. His board is freshly waxed, and he sort of waves and he's like...

Jake: Oh, hey guys. What's going on? You all look like you're in a hurry.

Aubrey: Well, Jake, um, we have got a very important mission. We're gonna go investigate, and... I don't think we can do it without a snow expert.

Jake: I mean, I know a lot about snow, but...

Griffin: And he leans in close, because uh, Agent Stern is still kind of in the adjoining room. And he says...

Jake: Is this, um... is this Pine Guard business?

Aubrey: Yes it is, Jake. Yes it is.

Duck: You're getting a call, man.

Griffin: He looks fucking psyched. He's like...

Jake: Oh, man. I fuckin'... yes! I knew it! I've told Mama for such a long time, like, I've got what it takes to save the day! What are we doing? Is there like a mummy or something you need me to—

Aubrey: Slow down, Rook. We're just getting' started. This is the beginning. But we'll see, y'know? You keep your head on a swivel, your nose to the grindstone, you keep your ear to the ground...

Duck: Keep reachin' for the stars.

Aubrey: You reach for the stars.

Clint: [laughs]

Aubrey: And we'll see how it all plays out.

Griffin: He says...

Jake: Alright, let's go!

Griffin: And he sets his board down, and the four of you now head outside towards Ned's Lincoln. And as you step outside, it's the weirdest thing, because you just sort of walked in the front door as you came back up from the cellar, and this wasn't there before. But now it is there. There is, sitting in front of the door, a small card. And uh, as you sort of approach it, you sort of survey the card. It is written on sort of a uh, a fancy, white stationary with a lacy, red trim pattern around its border.

And at the bottom right corner of the card is a stamp in red ink. And that stamp has a design of a paw print inside of a thick, red circle. And written on the card are three bullet point items that...

Travis: Oh!

Griffin: Yes. If you remember, that's sort of how we're doing the economy in this game.

Travis: It was just such a threatening and scary way for it to pop up.

Griffin: Oh, was it?

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Yes. I thought you were about to introduce a serial killer character to the show.

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: The Red Paw.

Griffin: Uh, written on the card are Heathcliff's bounties, which are: a lawkeeper's symbol, a seer's spectacle—

Justin: A badge, folks. The first one's a badge.

Griffin: A seer's spectacle—

Travis: Glasses. It's glasses.

Justin: Glasses.

Griffin: And a victorious seed.

Travis: Some semen.

Justin: [laughs] From a really good sports guy.

Travis: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Get huntin', gumshoes.

Justin: Get huntin'. Go get Michael Jordan's semen.

Griffin: Michael's secret stuff. [laughing]

Justin: Get Michael's secret stuff.

Travis: Hey guys, it's me, Michael Jordan. I just moved to town.

Justin: Dad met Joe Namath at San Diego Comic Con, so we got an in there if we want his champion seed.

Travis: [laughs]

[music plays]

Griffin: Hey, everybody. This is Griffin McElroy, your dungeon master, your best friend, and your... plumber. Where do you keep the shitter? I am running out of those.

Thanks for listening to The Adventure Zone: Amnesty. It is the first episode of a new hunt, a new arc, a new chapter. I don't really know how to separate the stuff in Amnesty. But I hope that you're enjoying it, and I hope you sort of enjoy the monster we got ready for you this time. I want to tell you about some of our sponsors first, though.

First up is Blue Apron. Blue Apron is wonderful. They deliver you a box, and the box is gonna be full of sort of like food parts. Like, food... food components. Things that become food when you touch them with the right kitchen tools, and apply like, heat. And cooking is kind of complicated on paper, but Blue Apron makes it easy by delivering you farm fresh ingredients and step by step recipes right to your door.

Their mission is to make incredible home cooking accessible to everybody. They achieve this by suborning a more sustainable food system, setting the highest standards for ingredients and building a community of home chefs.

I'm a big fan of Blue Apron. I have learned a lot of very valuable cooking skills, thanks to these great boxes. You get to skip meal planning and get straight to cooking when you use Blue Apron. They got seasonally inspired ingredients, and tasty grilling options for summer. Stuff like chicken with barbecue sauce, and juicy cheeseburgers with spicy slaw. They have other chef designed recipes and exciting partnerships. They got a partnership with Bob's Burgers and Master Chef, who are gonna contribute some recipes. I'm very excited to see what those are all about.

So, to check out this week's menu and get your first three meals for free, go to BlueApron.com/adventure. That's BlueApron.com/adventure to get your first three meals for free. Blue Apron: a better way to cook.

The Adventure Zone is also supported in part this week by Casper, a sleep brand that continues to revolutionize its line of products to create an exceptionally comfortable keep experience, one night at a time.

I think throughout all the McElroy strongholds across this nation of ours, we've all got some Casper mattresses. We got one in our guest room that we always get compliments on whenever we have friends or family sleep over. I've slept on it a couple times. It's real, real comfy, and uh, yeah, I enjoy our Casper mattress a lot.

Their mattresses combine multiple supportive memory foams for a quality sleep surface with just the right amount of sink, and just the right amount of bounce. You can be sure your purchase with Casper's 100 night, risk free, sleep on it trial, and they're really affordable, because Casper cuts out the middle man and sells directly to you, the consumer.

So, to get \$50 towards selected mattresses, go to Casper.com/adventure, and use the promo code ADVENTURE at check out. Terms and conditions apply.

Got a couple jumbotrons here. This one's for Sarah, five foot seven; Marin, three foot eleven; and Bucket, huge. And it's from Jolene, six foot five. I'm not making this up. Uh, Jolene says to the other three folks of various sizes: "Thanks #BardTimes for empathizing with my feelings about dragons and very tall women, making Tiefling and Sara playlists with me," oh, that's very good, "... encouraging my consistently terrible seduction-based ideas, and being this plane's most fun outlet for my imagination. Your enthusiasm for reckless creativity inspires and alarms me. I love you, hell friends. Have dreams."

A very good message. Sounds like a very good, I'm guessing D&D party, although, it could be some other roleplaying thing. Or, this could be their real lives, in which case, that's pretty cool lives that you have.

Got another jumbotron here. This one's for Kendall, AKA Dadenport, and it's from Josie, who says, "Surprise, Daddy! Remember how you told me..." It's hard for me to say that word unironically, which I think this is. But I can't be quite sure. "Remember how you told me once that it's impossible to get a TAZ jumbotron? By now, you should really know better than to tell me when something can't be done. I'm either in Wyoming or Panama when you read this, but at least I know we're still doing the same thing every other Thursday. I miss you and love you lots. Love, your kiddo, Josie."

That's a very sweet message that really does drive home just how valuable these jumbotrons are. They are... they're worth their weight in gold, which is probably accurate, because a podcast weighs nothing.

I want to thank everybody who has been tweeting about the show using the #TheZoneCast hash tag. If you do that, you might end up as a character on the show. Characters like Eugene, named for Eugene Archibald on Twitter. Thacker, named for Sam Thacker on Twitter. Janelle, named for Crusiart on Twitter. A lot of characters there.

So if you want to get your name on a character on this show, use the #TheZoneCast hash tag when you tweet about the show, and we really appreciate you spreading the word, because that's how we have built up this audience that we have for this show, and we are just so appreciative of all the work y'all do to put it in front of other people.

I also want to thank Max Fun for having us on the network. You can go to MaximumFun.org, check out all the great shows there. Shows like Bubble, and Story Break, and the Beef and Dairy Network, and so many more at MaximumFun.org. We have other shows at McElroyShows.com. And if you want to check out the Adventure Zone graphic novel, which, thanks to you all, is, we just found out, on its third week on the New York Time's Best Seller list. It's fallen down the list a little bit, which is to be expected, but it's so cool that we're still on it, and that's all because of you all, so thank you.

You can pick it up in most book stores, or at TheAdventureZoneComic.com. And uh, I think that's it. Thank you all so much for listening. We'll be back in two weeks with the next episode of The Adventure Zone: Amnesty, so that is going to be up on the... what's nine plus 14... 23rd? 23rd? Let me check my math. Try to no scope it without looking at a calendar. Yeah, it's gonna be the 23rd. So uh, that was embarrassing, and we'll talk to you then. Bye.

[theme music plays]

Griffin: Um, so, it is around sunset, and the four of you arrive at the scene of the crash on state route 66, which is just sort of around this sharp hairpin turn, around a hillside. And about halfway through the turn, the guard rail

has just been demolished. And next to it, you see a forest service van that has been hauled out of the woods, sort of beyond the guard rail. The front of the car is just crumpled. There's bits of woodland debris that are sort of stuck to its grill, and sort of in its shattered windshield.

There's no body. That has long since sort of been carted away. Instead, there's just sort of the remainder of this crash. And parked just in front of the van is a Kepler sheriff's department vehicle with its lights flashing. And as you all sort of arrive without any troubles, because of Ned's expert driving and uh, good snow tires... I couldn't think of a great adjective there.

Clint: Chains. Great chains.

Griffin: You all, uh, exit the Lincoln—

Clint: Before we do, I want to prepare Jake just a little.

Griffin: Okay. Yeah, let's have that.

Ned: Jake, have you uh... have you had driver's ed classes at your school?

Jake: I didn't really go to school, and we don't really have—

Travis: I'm 43!

Jake: Yeah, and we don't have cars in Sylvain. So, you recognize what like, a wild...

Ned: They show these films...

Jake: Yeah.

Ned: In driver's ed class...

Jake: Okay.

Ned: That I thought might prepare you for what you're about to experience. But never mind. Never mind. It'll be fine.

Jake: Mmkay. Is there gonna be a monster when we get there, though, or what's up?

Aubrey: You never know.

Ned: That's why you gotta keep your head on a swivel, kid.

Griffin: He looks... now you've made him worried, and he continues to look worried as you arrive and get out of the vehicle. And as you do, the driver of this sheriff's department car steps out. Duck, you, and Ned maybe, depending on... you've probably had run-ins. I think we've established, you've had, not necessarily criminal run-ins, but sort of distrust from the sheriff's department. You all recognize him as Deputy Dewey, Zeke's second in command.

He's just this like, tall, awkward, uh, kind of young guy. And he's not especially well dressed for the cold. I think he's just like, wearing a short sleeved shirt, and he does not look especially comfortable out here. And he approaches you as you all step out of the car, and he says...

Dewey: Folks, I'm gonna need you all to keep moving down...

Travis: [laughs]

Dewey: Aw, shit. Duck, what's happening, man?

Duck: Hey, Dewey.

Travis: Aw, shit, why do I sound like this? [laughs]

Duck: Hey, Dewey, what's going on, man?

Dewey: Aw, y'know, just sort of camping out in front of the uh, scene of the... oh, damn! Aw, that's right, you knew Rick, didn't you? Aw, sorry. Aw, man, that's a bad beat. I'm sorry, dude.

Duck: Yeah, it's alright, Dewey. Hey, are you still doing that thing where you pretend with all your friends to do like, dungeon hunts and stuff like that? You throw tennis balls at each other?

Dewey: Oh, LARPing?

Duck: Yeah, yeah, LARPing, that's it! Shit.

Dewey: Yeah, we do a little creative anachronism here from time to time. Head down into the park and we do like a... I do a woodland elf. His name's uh, Zephius. And he uh, he's a warlock. So I do a little bit of that on the side.

Duck: Hey...

Dewey: You wanna come do that with us sometime?

Duck: Yeah. First, though, I love the sound of this woodland elf character. Can you tell me 70 hours of stories about him and his friends and all their kind of adventures?

Dewey: Um, I mean, maybe.

Duck: I got time. It's fine.

Dewey: Alright, well...

Griffin: [laughs] Are you trying to fucking make it so that Balance is a creation of Deputy Dewey's mindscape?

Travis: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: No, I just want to try to please everybody. Y'know? Some people prefer that, so I figure, here, you can have... [laughs]

Griffin: There's a shocking amount of our listener base that like, wants there to be ties between all of the different universes we make.

Justin: Yeah, there are.

Griffin: I think... I think if this is the tie between... if Amnesty is just... If Balance is just the fever dream of Amnesty's new side character, Deputy Dewey, that would maybe not be the most satisfying result.

Justin: There are connective ties. It is one coherent planerverse.

Griffin: Okay, no. Um...

Justin: It is!

Griffin: Alright.

Clint: Interverse. I like planerverse, though.

Griffin: Dewey, uh, Dewey says...

Dewey: Yeah, um... yeah, I mean, we can talk about that some other time when I'm off the clock. But um, I kind of do need y'all to um... I mean, this is like... I don't know if it's a crime scene or what, but y'know, we gotta investigate and look into it, and wait for the tow truck to come and take the car away, take it to impound, so we can take a look at it there. But um, yeah, so, it's nice to see y'all, y'all. I'm gonna head back in the car, 'cause I'm freezin' my nards off. So, um... do y'all need anything, though? Is there any trouble?

Aubrey: Coffee?

Dewey: Are you saying you want coffee? 'Cause I'm not... I'm not equipped to give you coffee. I don't know what...

Aubrey: Okay. I mean, you asked.

Justin: Do—uh, I am going to... trying to think if there's anything useful.

Duck: Hey, Dewey, let me just ask—I'll just straight up ask you before I have to start spinning dice. Um, Dewey, does anything seem, I don't know, off about this? You've seen some crash sites and stuff like that in your day. Does anything seem weird?

Griffin: Um, I'm trying to decide if... I think that you... sort of just by your conversation, I think Dewey kind of knows you, and he knows that like, this is your buddy who died. And so, um...

Justin: Let me say this, though. I do think, though, that you can make a rational argument. And I don't know why I'm trying to make it harder on myself. You could make an argument that like... I don't—I think you could make the choice that, if maybe you don't have a lot of authority, you're a cop in a small town, like, maybe you don't have a lot of power. You might tend to get kind of territorial about other like, branches of, y'know, officials, or however you want to put it.

Griffin: I think if this was Sheriff Zeke, I think that'd be true. I think Deputy Dewey, I don't think you need to convince him just to talk to him. I think if you want to actually like, investigate the car, and investigate where the car crashed, and see what like, visual clues you can find, you'll definitely have to. But I think this is just a roll an investigate a mystery, talking to Dewey to ask him questions about what he knows. I think he'll just tell you.

Justin: Okay. I will say, though, a lot of my investigate a mystery questions are specific to the creature, which he's not gonna...

Griffin: Yep.

Justin: ...have any sort of insight into, yeah?

Clint: Well, there is a what happened here. Maybe he can interpret the accident.

Justin: Ehh...

Griffin: Yeah, I mean, I'll tell you this. Dewey may not know much, but he may know one or two things. And if you ask the right question, you'll get that information. If you ask the wrong questions, he won't.

Justin: Okay. I'm gonna grill him. Six plus two. Eight.

Griffin: Okay. That's a mixed success. On a seven to nine, you hold one. So you get to ask one question. What happened here? What sort of creature is it? What can it do? What can hurt it? Where did it go? What was it gonna do? What is being concealed here?

Justin: Mmm...

Griffin: This doesn't have to be the only investigate a mystery thing that you guys do here. In fact, I sort of envisioned you doing a few, so, um...

Duck: Let me ask the broadest possible, and uh, it seems obvious. But you've seen a lot of crash sites and stuff like that. What do you think really happened here?

Dewey: I'll tell ya, just 'cause, y'know, it's your friend. It might be hard to hear. You sure you want to know about this, Duck?

Duck: Yeah.

Dewey: Alright. I mean, we can... I took a look at sort of the tracks in the ground, and obviously, we need to get a detective out here or something. At least the sheriff, to come out and give me his opinion. But my opinion of what happened, um, he drove through the guard rail, went down the hill a bit, and went into the trees, and hit the trees at, y'know, considerable speed. And uh, that... he probably died on impact. So I guess that's at least the um, y'know, the one benefit to this, is it didn't hurt much, I guess.

Duck: Okay, but wait. What was the... what was the weather like when this happened?

Dewey: It was, y'know, snow on the ground. The road was relatively clear. There was a little bit of dusting on the ground, but I mean, there seemed to

be no issues with... I mean, it wasn't snowing in Kepler when it happened, so I don't really... I don't think weather had anything to do with it.

Duck: It just doesn't make sense.

Dewey: The weirdest thing, though, Duck, is there weren't any skid marks on the ground. There weren't any skid marks on the ground. There wasn't a second set of tire tracks, so it's not like they had to dodge out of the way of something. Wasn't like they slammed on the brakes to get out of the way of like, a deer that was in the road. They just kind of just like... they just went. Just went through the guard rail, and that was it. They went through the guard rail real fast, and that was it.

So, it's hard for me to discern like, a cause. And yeah, I don't know.

Duck: Is the brake fluid intact and everything?

Dewey: I mean, the car got pretty fucked up.

Duck: Sure, yeah.

Dewey: But uh, it's hard to tell about the brake fluid.

Travis: Griffin, could I try... so, I want to do read a bad situation. Not because I want to read a bad situation, but because I want to use my third eye. Does that make sense? 'Cause it's like, tied together.

Griffin: Sure, yeah. Uh, I think you could still ask like a question here off the list, and yeah.

Travis: Not great.

Griffin: What'd you get?

Travis: It's only a five, so I can't read shit.

Griffin: On a five, I make a hard move against ya. I would say, unless somebody wants to help out, but that would only give you a plus one, and

uh, would open them up to sort of another bad thing that could happen. So you don't really notice anything, uh... you don't really notice anything bad, Aubrey. You don't seem to notice anything sort of magical. You get the sense that you didn't... you weren't necessarily attuned, but you don't notice anything.

Travis: Hmm. Then, instead, I'll turn to my friend and rookie partner, Jake Coolice.

Jake: So uh, what's the plan? You need me to take the deputy out so y'all can get a look at the crash site, or...

Aubrey: Not yet. Here's my question for you, Jake. You know this area. You know the weather. Right? You know snow and the woods and stuff. Do you notice anything, like, trees, broken limbs, uh, y'know, anything like that?

Jake: There's something weird.

Griffin: And he points to the snow. And he says...

Jake: I know snow. I know what a nice sort of uh, a nice sort of coating of fresh powder looks like, right? Cakes down, and it forms sort of a solid surface.

Griffin: And he points kind of down the hillside, not really where the car crashed, but just off to the hillside. And you do see like a, just sort of this carpet of snow, just everywhere. But it's not like... it's not flat. It's not perfectly flat. It almost looks like, pockmarked. It almost looks like there's just kind of like, there's little, very, very small divots that you definitely would not have noticed if Jake had not pointed them out to you. But there's something sort of peculiar. It's not just this perfect, flat sheet of snow. There's pockmarks.

Travis: So not like footsteps? Small.

Griffin: No, no, no. Like way, way, way smaller than that.

Travis: Is it in any kind of trail?

Griffin: Nope. It's just kind of all over. I think that's it. Ned, you want to do anything?

Clint: I have questions about the body. I have questions about what killed the Danimal, but I don't know if this is the place, or y'know, if Dewey would have any...

Justin: That seems like it would be a stretch for Dewey to like, reveal the...

Clint: Yeah.

Griffin: Well, Dewey did say he died from impact of the car crash. He did say that to duck.

Travis: What the fuck does Dewey know?

Griffin: Yeah, I mean, he probably saw the body.

Clint: Right, okay.

Justin: Ned's kind of a car guy, right?

Clint: Yeah.

Justin: Have we established that?

Griffin: Yeah, for sure.

Duck: Hey, Ned. Take a look at this van. And I know it's a little bit fucked up, but do you see any reason that the brakes in this van would not have worked?

Griffin: Um, as you all approach the van, Dewey kind of steps in front of you, he says...

Dewey: Now, hold on, guys. That is a... we do need to still sort of do a proper investi—

Aubrey: Dewey, was it?

Dewey: Yeah.

Aubrey: Dewey, do you like magic?

Dewey: Hell yeah, I like magic. David Blaine fuckin' uh...

Aubrey: Yeah.

Dewey: Yeah. He does the thing where he spits up... he barfs up the frog. I see that. Makes me want to barf.

Aubrey: Yeah, right? And like, would you like to see... I'm... I don't want to brag, but uh—

Justin: Alright, they're having this conversation. I'm gonna—

Griffin: No, I'm gonna need Aubrey to roll to probably manipulate someone. And that is the reason that you're doing... once you've given them a reason, the reason is, do you want to see some cool magic, and what you want is to distract them so that Ned can investigate more.

Travis: I rolled an eleven plus one.

Griffin: Holy shit.

Justin: Hachi machi, that's some good fuckin' magic.

Griffin: So, they will do it for the reason that you gave them.

Dewey: Aw, shit, yeah!

Griffin: Where are you like, leading them to?

Travis: I'm basically just like, y'know, whatever keeps his back to the car. That's what we're doing. I also will say, how distracted is he? Oh, I know

what trick I'm gonna do. I'm gonna make his badge disappear, because it's a lawkeeper's symbol.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: Oh, shit, I love that. Oh, it's so good.

Griffin: Alright, let's play that out.

Aubrey: Okay, now, Dewey, I'm gonna need something from you. Something important. What on you, right now, is something that you would not only hate to lose, but maybe get in trouble?

Dewey: Oh, my gun?

Aubrey: Well... maybe not, Dewey. Maybe not a gun.

Dewey: Oh, yeah, no. You're right, I'm sorry. That was dumb. I can't give you my gun!

Aubrey: Yeah.

Dewey: I don't know what kind of David Blaine trick you're gonna do with my gun, but um, I got my um... I got my wallet, I got my keys, I got my badge, I got my phone...

Aubrey: Let me uh... let me see the badge. That should be just about the right size.

Griffin: He hands it over. He says...

Dewey: Alright, but be careful. That's... I don't think I can get a replacement one, and Zeke will be pissed as hell if I lose that.

Aubrey: Oh, I totally understand. I've never blown this trick before.

Travis: So, while this is happening, Ned's investigating the car, right?

Griffin: Alright, yeah, we can jump over to that. Ned and Duck are uh, over by the van.

Clint: Okay, so Ned uh, takes off his big, puffy, red, yellow, and blue vest.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: And does, uh, an investigate check under the van.

Griffin: Uh, yeah. Go ahead and investigate a mystery. And I'm gonna give you plus one forward, because like, you have this driver tag that hasn't especially come in handy ever. But you do have like, car... auto experience.

Clint: Alright. And plus... so I rolled a six, plus the one would be seven, plus two for sharp, which I get to use here, too.

Griffin: Brings you up to nine. Duck, if you want to help him out somehow, we can get that up to a ten. If you want to roll help out, and explain like, how you are helping out. Or, Aubrey, if you want to roll help out as sort of your distraction. But I don't think we've ever done help out, but you can get this from a mixed success to a complete success if you can tell me how you are helping Ned.

Justin: Um, yeah. Let me try—do you want me to see if it works first before I waste the time telling him...

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: No, I mean, here's the thing. If you decide to help out, and it doesn't work, then there is still a thing that happens, it's just probably not gonna be great.

Duck: Um, Ned, you should know that Rick was a real safe driver, and he would've taken really good care of his car. So I'll tell you what I'm thinking. I just don't believe that he would've done something this reckless. That just doesn't seem like him.

Griffin: Um, alright, yeah. Telling him a little bit about Rick I think will help. Go ahead and roll plus cool.

Justin: I did. It's a ten.

Griffin: A ten, okay. On a ten, your help grants them plus one to the roll. So that brings you up to a ten on your investigate a mystery, so that allows you to—

Justin: Plus two, so it's a twelve.

Griffin: Oh, shit, cool. So hold two, Ned. And you get to ask two questions off the investigate a mystery roll, keeping in mind that like, you're just looking at a car, and so, there's a lot of stuff on here that's probably not gonna be especially relevant.

Clint: Alright, tell me how... how do I word... I'm going to really check out the brakes.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: Check out the brake line...

Griffin: The pedal, and just... the whole brake system.

Clint: The whole brake thing, yeah.

Griffin: Okay. So that would be like—

Travis: God, it's like listening to car talk over here.

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: What we got under the pads? Check the pads. Are the pads alright?

Travis: I'm gonna look at the brake gum, and the sticky widgets.

Griffin: Um, I think that would be a what happened here. So, yeah, you check out the brake system. Underneath the car and under the hood, there is... there's nothing wrong. The brake system is totally fine. The brake line is working, there's brake fluid, everything seems very well in just good, operating order, mechanically speaking. You go, and you check out the actual brake pedal, and the brake pedal is also fine.

But while you're down there sort of looking around... and again, the front of the car is pretty well crumpled up, and I think you probably even have kind of a hard time even getting into the driver's compartment to look at the pedals. You see something; I think even actually, it's been moved over to the passenger's side. There's some bottles of... like, plastic bottles of like, Gatorade. I think Rick was a big Gatorade fan, and so, there's just a few bottles of Gatorade.

And there's one that looks peculiar. It's over in the passenger's side floor. And you pick it up, and it's been kind of... it's been kind of crushed. It's been crushed right, like, at the center of the bottle, in like a very specific way, almost like it looks like it got stomped on. And as you are sort of looking at it, and you look at the brake pedal, you kind of surmise that the indent of the crush of this bottle is the exact same height as the brake pedal.

And so, you figure out what happened here is, this bottle got wedged under the brake pedal and probably kept Rick from being able to brake. And so, just this freak accident kept him from being able to brake the car, and sent him to his demise.

Clint: Wow.

Griffin: You have one more question.

Clint: That's some Colombo shit, there.

Griffin: Well, you rolled a ten. You got one more question.

Clint: What about the grill? As long as I'm in full blown Colombo mode, let me check out the grill.

Griffin: Um, okay. I don't think there's... yeah, there's nothing really supernatural about the grill. There's nothing especially like, weird, it just kind of looks like... and again, you're not like, a forensic analyst. But it just kind of looks like this van hit a tree very hard, and uh, got very messed up because of it.

One thing, Duck, you were sort of there talking to Ned. One thing I think you notice through the window into the van, and I don't think this is like an investigate a mystery, because it's just very, very apparent. Uh, it is not something that you would have to like, dig especially deep to realize. Uh, the van is empty.

And he was an arborist, which meant like, he was responsible for if there was something like, seriously wrong with a tree, or some sort of rot that was plaguing the trees in the Monongahela Forest, he would have like, a lot of tools that he would use to safely scale the trees and prune it, or y'know, help deal with it. There's nothing in the van. All of these, like... all of these supplies and all of these tools are gone. They are not in the van.

Ned: Duck, my friend... I'm afraid that deep down body thirst cost your friend, Danimal, his life.

Griffin: [laughs]

Ned: Looks like... looks like a bottle of Gatorade went behind the brake pedal, and so... this really does look like an accident. And I think it also goes to prove that trying to stay in shape is bad for you, so...

Travis: The sour milk has claimed another victim.

Griffin: The sour sweat potion.

Duck: I, um... Ned, I appreciate it. I really... we do need to talk about your still-held belief that Gatorade is part of a healthy lifestyle, but we'll get... I think there's time for that. I um... I appreciate you checking, anyway. Y'know, it was just a thought.

Ned: It does look like an accident, though.

Duck: Yep.

Griffin: Um, Aubrey. Let's finish your uh, badge theft, if this is something you want to go through with. Again, keep in mind; these are side missions that you don't have to do. It just helps you later on with your enchantment roll, but...

Travis: Griffin, I am a fucking completionist.

Griffin: Yeah, I know. You want to 100% this. You want to get all the towers.

Travis: You can't give me side missions. I'm gonna get all the feathers, I'm gonna get all the flags.

Griffin: Sure. [laughs] Alright. Um, so, what's this trick look like? 'Cause I can't just let you say, like, "I do a magic trick and now I have his badge." Like, there has to be some sort of challenge to it.

Travis: So I would say that there is a lot of like, palming. But mostly, it's like, "Oh, sorry, I thought it was here. Oh, is it there? Oh, are you—" Y'know, like a misdirect like, his keys are now where his wallet was, and his wallet is now where that was, and that kind of thing.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: And there's just a lot of patter. And I will say that, since he has already introduced the fact that he is a David Blaine fan, I'm gonna go for kind of a David Blaine feeling reveal.

Griffin: You're gonna eat the badge?

Travis: No.

Griffin: I mean, that's what David would do, but okay.

Travis: And, but more the reveal... well, the lie is something along the lines of...

Aubrey: Alright... and boom. There you go, Dewey.

Dewey: There... there what goes? Where's my... where is it? You're supposed to like, teleport it into an orange or something. I cut open the orange to have myself a little citrus snack, and then, bam, there's my badge.

Aubrey: Dewey, I guarantee you, by the end of the day, you, your mind, it's gonna be blown.

Dewey: What does that mean, though? 'Cause I do—I do...

Aubrey: Yeah. David Blaine.

Dewey: No, I'm tantalized. I just, like... you promise—

Aubrey: You've been Blained. I just freaked your bean.

Dewey: No, totally. But by the end of the day, you're telling me that—

Aubrey: Yeah.

Dewey: I'm gonna find my badge again, and Sheriff Zeke's not gonna get—

Aubrey: Well... I think you'll be very surprised. Wink, wink.

Travis: She says wink, wink. But she doesn't wink.

Griffin: Okay.

Dewey: Alright, well... I'll give—

Aubrey: Chaaa!

Travis: And maybe there's a little like, flash. But it's flash paper. This isn't real magic.

Griffin: Okay. He says...

Dewey: Alright, well, I'll keep an eye out. I guess I'll be in touch—

Aubrey: Chaaa!

Dewey: Okay. Alright. That actually hurts my eyes a little bit when you do it that close.

Aubrey: Yeah. Yeah, magic. Ooooh. Ooh, Dewey, magic.

Dewey: Yeah, yeah, yeah. For sure. Alright, why don't y'all head on back to town? I'm seriously gonna get in my car, 'cause I'm just so fuckin' cold.

Griffin: And as he sort of turns to walk back to the car, I think, Ned and Duck, you all are already on your way back from the van. And he tips his cap, and he says...

Dewey: Alright. Y'all have a good day. Duck, again, I'm real sorry. I hope this doesn't ruin your holidays, pal.

Duck: Yeah, thanks. I appreciate it.

Griffin: And he gets in his car.

Aubrey: Psst. Duck. I stole his badge. Am I gonna get in trouble?

Duck: Aw, man... I wish you hadn't done that.

Aubrey: It's for the—it's for—'cause on the card?

Duck: I know, Aubrey. I get it.

Aubrey: You said it was a badge.

Duck: It's just... Dewey's a nice guy. I don't know.

Aubrey: I'll make it up to him.

Duck: Alright, but Zeke's gonna have his ass. I don't know how you're gonna fix that, but...

Aubrey: Then I'll steal Zeke's badge, and I'll give Zeke's badge to Dewey.

Duck: Great. Yes. That.

Ned: Oh, this web of lies...

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, you all drive away from the scene of the crash, and uh, Dewey gets back in his car and sits there for a while. I think he looks around his car for a while, looking to see if maybe you teleported his badge somewhere in his car, but he doesn't find it, so he kind of sighs and smiles, like, "Oh, no, where's it gonna show up?"

Um, and then we sort of... we see the crash, um, from the woods, up the hill, from above the crash. And there, we see a figure on a snowmobile. And this figure is wearing a helmet, and was watching this scene intently as it played out. Saw everything that happened. Saw Ned and Duck investigating this car crash that they probably shouldn't have seen. Sees Aubrey stealing the badge of a sheriff's deputy, and as you all drive off in the Lincoln, they turn the snowmobile and drive off back into the woods.

Travis: Is it one of them fucking Hornets?

Griffin: [singing in a totally bizarre falsetto] Hard mooove. So, night starts to sort of descent as you all drive back down state route 66, and into town. You pass the turn off into the Cryptonomica, and sort of drive into Kepler's riverside. And those Christmas lights are sort of streaking by as you drive across the main drag, toward the ascent, back up to Amnesty Lodge on Cliff Side. And the temperature, now that the sun is down, has just plummeted. The streets are clear. Nobody really wants to be out when it's this cold.

And then a single flake falls on the windshield of your car.

[music plays]

Griffin: And then it is followed by a sudden, frenzied storm that starts to just completely cover your view. Outside, through the windows and the windshield, you can just barely see this storm being whipped about. These flakes are just being flung almost horizontally in your direction. And through this, you all see a figure. Just for a moment, on the side of the road.

It is a humanoid figure, wearing a brown robe that covers its entire imposing frame. And from a distance, you'd estimate it to be easily eight feet tall, with broad shoulders, and thick, muscular arms. It's got these two large bags of some sort slung over its shoulders. And you can't see its face behind the hood of its robe, but it stops, and it turns to face you as you pass, just as the storm outside finally and completely covers your view.

And then, Ned, the engine of the Lincoln sputters in the storm, and then it backfires a few times, and then it just dies. And your car rolls to a stop. And then, moments later, the storm just completely disappears. What do you do?

Travis: Was it the Krampus? [whispers] Griffin.

Griffin: I'm not gonna tell you if it's the Krampus or not. But it's probably not the Krampus.

Travis: Okay... that's what the Krampus would say.

Griffin: [laughs] I would have to tell you if I was the Krampus, or else it's entrapment.

Travis: [laughs] Okay, thank you.

Clint: I can tell you who it was. It was Michael Jordan!

Travis: [gasps]

Justin: No.

Travis: Hurry, masturbate him!

Griffin: Um... Uh, Jake Coolice actually says...

Jake: So, uh... you all saw that too, right?

Duck: Yyyep.

Aubrey: That had to two scary bags? Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Ned: Did anybody notice if the bags were moving or not? 'Cause that would be so much more creepy.

Jake: Um, no, I didn't see anything like that. Ned, is the car donezo? What's...

Ned: I don't know. Y'know, a lot of this me knowing cars is such hogwash anyway. I mean, let me... I mean, it looks like it's full of gas. I mean, the radiator thing has got radiator juice in it. I... God, where is the hood release? I can never find the hood release.

Travis: Okay, Aubrey gets out.

Griffin: Okay. As you step outside, you see that, indeed, just like, there is no storm. It is just gone completely. Ned's car has rolled to a stop in the middle of the street, sort of right in the heart of Riverside. You just passed city hall and the massive Christmas tree out in front, and the few municipal buildings surrounding it.

And on the other side of sort of the main drag that you're on is a handful of like, the town's staple businesses. There's like, a winter sport supply store. Uh, Dave's Dehumidifier Depot is here. Uh, Leo Tarkesian's general store is here. The Pizza Hut is here with its... like, it's got this like, towering, illuminated sign beckoning in drivers off the highway.

And everything is just quiet.

Travis: And so, we don't see the figure now, right? Like...

Griffin: It is gone. But you are fairly close by to where you just saw it.

Travis: Okay. Well, I guess we go check out that area.

Griffin: You say we. Is it you and...

Travis: Well...

Griffin: Duck, are you heading with her?

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah, I don't even think you need to investigate this, because I don't think you necessarily need to... again, I think it's... when there are things that are just like, obvious that you can just see with your eyes and don't require any sort of additional sort of investigation, um, you don't need to roll. You see tracks on the ground. You see hoof prints in the ground.

Travis: [gasps] I knew it.

Griffin: And as you're sort of standing there, looking at these hoof prints that just kind of disappear from the place where they were standing, where you saw this figure, uh, there is a payphone not too far away from where you are. About ten feet away. And it starts to ring.

Travis: I look at Duck.

Duck: Yeah.

Aubrey: You get it.

Duck: You get it.

Aubrey: You get it.

Ned: [yells] Somebody get the phone!

Aubrey: Okay, I get it.

Griffin: You pick up the phone, Aubrey. And a sort of pleasant, sort of lilting voice answers, and this voice says...

Voice: Hello, Aubrey. Can I speak to Duck Newton, please?

Aubrey: Uh... let me see if he's here. It's for you?

[theme music plays]

Duck: Uhh... go for Duck.

Griffin: You take the phone, and the voice says...

Voice: Hello, Duck. In three minutes, your friend, Leo Tarkesian, is going to die. He will be crushed to death, as will the two customers currently shopping in his store.

You might want to do something about that.

[theme music plays]

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Artist owned.
Listener supported.

[music plays]

Allie: Hi, I'm Allie Goertz.

Julia: And I'm Julia Prescott. And we're...

Allie: [simultaneously] Everything's Coming Up Simpsons.

Julia: We're a Simpsons podcast on the Maximum Fun network, and we've got some exciting news.

Allie: Ooh, tell me.

Julia: Ooh. We are going to be doing some live podcast shows in some of our favorite cities. We're so excited, and we want to let you guys know out there in the Max Fun universe that we are coming to youuu.

Allie: Hell yeah.

Julia: Hell yeah. On Saturday, September 15th, we will be at the North Door in Austin, Texas.

Allie: Yeehaw.

Julia: On Saturday, December 1st, we will be at the Alamo Drafthouse Sloans Lake in Denver, Colorado.

Allie: There's no basement in the Alamo.

Julia: Mm, we'll find out. Friday, December 7th, we are going to be at the Vera Project in Seattle, Washington.

Allie: Oh, God, uh, Nirvana.

Julia: Yes. And Saturday, December 8th, we will be at Mississippi Studios in Portland, Oregon.

Allie: Hey, Matt Groening lives there.

Julia: Yes.

Allie: Or once lived there.

Julia: He still lives there in our hearts. So make sure that you mark your calendars for those dates, and we will be posting the ticketing links on our Twitter. That is @SimpsonsPod, and we will smell ya later.

[music plays]

Travis: Kardashians.

Courtney: Michael Cohen.

Brent: Hash tags.

Travis: Click bait.

Courtney: Memes.

Travis: [simultaneously] Memes. Oh! [laughs]

Courtney: [laughs]

[beep]

Travis: Debunking.

Brent: Rebunking.

Courtney: Regular sized bunking.

Travis: Boaty McBoatface.

Brent: Do any of these words make sense to you? Then maybe Trends Like These is the podcast you should be listening to.

Travis: We put an episode every week on MaximumFun.org. Hosted by me, Travis McElroy...

Courtney: And me, Courtney Enlow...

Brent: And me, Brent Black.

Travis: Trends Like These, on MaximumFun.org.

Courtney: `Cause with trends like these...

Brent: Who needs any memes?

Courtney: Eh? Eh? [laughs]

Travis: Yeah, that was great.

[music plays]