

The Adventure Zone: Amnesty – Episode 28

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Griffin: Previously on The Adventure Zone...

[theme music plays]

Leo: Minerva was talkin' to us through like, uh... a little, barely there even wormhole that was sort of inside our brains?

Duck: Mm-hmm.

Janelle: And this book, you just happened to find in the woods? This word means sacrifice or transaction.

Aubrey: One of those is way worse than the other one.

Griffin: You see a figure lying in this bed. Like, their entire body is just in this cocoon of light.

Aubrey: Y'know, one last thing, Ned... before you run, you might try to clean up a little bit of the mess you've made.

Ned: Why would you stir up a fight that's gonna destroy so many lives? That doesn't make any sense.

Boyd: [slurred] Not to you, obviously. It doesn't make sense to the spider when you step on it. But some spiders need to be stepped on.

Clint: He pulls the trigger on the Narf blaster.

Griffin: This figure just effortlessly throws Leo ten feet through the air. We see Dr. Sarah Drake, and then we hear a voice speaking to her.

Minerva: Hello, earth scientist! I need to borrow your corporeal hands for a minute.

[theme music plays]

Griffin: Duck, you are facing down this being made out of this pure, white light, and it's the same type of being that you have seen every time you have defeated an Abomination; only, instead of sort of disintegrating into a peaceful mist, this one is remaining in this humanoid, four-armed form. And it is charging at you through the smoke of Leo's sideways truck that more and more smoke seems to be pouring out of by the second.

Near that, you see Leo's form, just sort of laying on the ground. He's still breathing, you can see, but he was just sort of tossed that way by this light being, just seconds ago, before it sort of set its eyes on you. Also, in the distance, you see Dr. Sarah Drake, who you had just gotten out of sort of the perimeter of the Green Bank Telescope. Now you see her just like, full blown sprinting back in, back toward the satellite lab.

And she seems to be moving with purpose as you are facing off against this four-armed monster in the shadow of the Green Bank Telescope. What do you do?

Justin: Umm... okay, is the monster between me—what is the monster between me and?

Griffin: It's between you and Leo for sure. The truck, I would say is like, kind of to the left of you guys, and the telescope is... I mean, it's enormous, but it's generally to the right of you.

Justin: Okay, um.

Duck: Alright, listen. This is alright.

Justin: I'm addressing the monster.

Duck: It's okay. You just gotta let go. I been through this a lot of um, monsters already, and you're holding onto the earth and the life and everything, and just follow the light, man. Just go ahead and like, release. Let go, man.

Travis: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs] You're trying to talk it into—

Duck: Shh. It's okay. It's alright. I've seen this happen, man. I know it feels weird, but you gotta be brave, and just know that there's something better waitin' for ya, probably.

Griffin: Uh, I have set an unfortunate precedent that you can try to manipulate this particular abomination; this particular monster.

Justin: Correct.

Griffin: Uh, unless you have some sort of normie movie that you're trying to bust out here.

Justin: No, I'm... I just kind of thought it'd be funny.

Griffin: Uh, I mean, do you want to try and manipulate someone? Is this an earnest—

Justin: No, that almost certain—no, I am. I mean, that's what I said. That's what Duck's reaction would be. That is in the—I am playing a role. And he probably has seen this. You said, specifically, twice now, that that's what happens to monsters, so like, I'm just trying to tell it it's okay, it's time to let go.

Griffin: Uh, yeah. It's not gonna... it's not doing that. It does not cont—it like, uh, it's doing kind of that Terminator liquid policeman walk, where it's like, kind of slow at first, and now he is like, uh, y'know, track and field sprinting at you.

Justin: Okay.

Travis: Just for future reference, though, Griffin, how good a roll would someone have to do to convince a monster to spontaneously die?

Griffin: [laughs] It would have to be—

Justin: [laughs] Is that a twelve? Is it a thirteen? Where we at?

Griffin: You would have to roll a seven on one of the dice.

Travis: [laughs] Okay. Welp, you make a great case, Duck. Weh!

Justin: [laughs] Anyway, I'm goin' to Beef City. Peace.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: See you in Valhalla, Duck.

Justin: I have no... yeah, I'm runnin' for... [sighs] I gotta go to the... Leo. I gotta get to Leo.

Griffin: Uh, okay. I mean, you are going to have to get around this uh, this being. Are you trying to do that with like, an acrobatic move, or some sort of—are you juking him? What's the play, here?

Justin: Yeah. I'll try to like, run around him. Use some of my like, Tony Hawk...

Griffin: Agility? [laughs]

Justin: Agility, yeah.

Griffin: Okay, act under pressure for me. That's 2d6 plus cool. And Duck Newton's cool as hell.

Justin: [laughs] Uh, five plus it doesn't matter.

Griffin: It does matter.

Justin: No, it does, it does, it does.

Griffin: That extremely matters, because that gets it out of a fail state and into a mixed success. On a mixed, I give you a worse outcome, hard choice, or price to pay. Uh, you can get past this thing, but he is going to uh... It, I should say, is going to grab you. And when it grabs you, you are going to drop your sword. You're going to drop Beacon.

That's it. He tries to like, grab you by the waist to try to stop you, and he will uh, he will take Beacon from you. Not to wield, but just to disarm you. Uh, but you will be able to make it through to Leo.

Justin: I mean, that's what's happening, right? It's not like a choice, right?

Griffin: Yeah, I guess that's a good point. Uh, then yeah, this is a worse outcome, I guess. [laughs]

Justin: Yeah, right, okay. Thank you. [laughs] I have a vision of like, "Oh man, he's gonna take my sword. Shit."

Travis: "Well, if I do this, there's only one thing that's gonna happen."

Justin: "If I do this..." It's like a fuckin' FMV game all of a sudden. [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: Were you dragon slayer over there—

Justin: I'm out of time reversal cubes!

Griffin: Okay, you try to do some fancy footwork around this charging, four-armed light person, and I think you're just not really running the math

at their just raw grabbing power with all of their arms. And you do manage to just like, escape their clutches from three of the arms, but one of them grabs you by the belt, which, unfortunately, is also your weapon, and it rips off.

Justin: My pants holder.

Griffin: Your pants are holding, 'cause y'know, they—

Travis: For now.

Griffin: For now, they are holding. But your belt, uh, you turn back, and you see that Beacon is in this thing's hands, and it just throws it down with anger and starts sort of marching towards, now, you and Leo. But you have made it past this thing. What do you do?

Justin: How did he get my fuckin' belt off?

Griffin: [laughs] Let's not think about the physics of it.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs] Alright.

Griffin: All your belt loops came flying off. They just snapped.

Travis: But y'know, if anyone's looking for an animatic, a slow motion of a monster like, pulling the belt out of the belt loops would be a pretty great animation.

Clint: Bow chicka bow wow.

Justin: So I'm to Leo.

Griffin: yes.

Justin: I'm gonna try to help him towards the relative safety of the telescope.

Griffin: Uh, okay. Uh, go ahead and—

Justin: I don't know a better option than that. Um—

Griffin: No, I will give you that. I think if you, uh... I think you can get him to the telescope. There's like a thick sort of—

Justin: I can't get him anywhere else, right?

Griffin: Right, right, right.

Justin: So I don't love my odds going to the telescope, but I like them better than running in a field and hoping that this monster quits.

Griffin: Yeah, can't catch up to you. You're right next to the telescope, so I would say like, you can get him into like, the lattice work that makes up the base that is holding up this enormous telescope. And in fact, I don't even think you need to roll for that. You are right next to this thing, so you are able to kind of like, just roll him under there before the monster sort of crashes back into you.

But now, you are kind of in the same situation again. Leo is, I will say, fairly safe for right now, because you definitely have this thing's attention. Only right now, you do not have your sword. What do you do?

Justin: I don't have my jetpack either, right? Boy, that would go down smooth right now.

Travis: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: [laughing] Do I still have my jetpack?

Travis: Try calling—try calling to it.

Griffin: Your jetpack did come back to y'all at the end of the last arc, right? It came in, and it was a luck point sort of came in and made the jetpack come crashing into one of the goat men to stop them. So y'all definitely have the jetpack. If you can make a case for why Duck would have it, and not like Ned or somebody else, and why Duck would bring it to this thing, I will give you the jetpack.

Justin: Did Leo bring it?

Griffin: Huh.

Justin: Would that have made sense?

Griffin: Roll just a straight up and down 2d6.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: We've never done like a fate roll before.

Clint: Well, we did when we played Fate.

Griffin: Yeah, that's true. We did a lot of fate rolls then. Oh—

Justin: Nine.

Griffin: Ehh—uhh, that's traditionally what is called a mixed success. Uh, you see the jetpack, and it is in the back of the delivery truck. You see the door of the delivery truck has like, slid open, and a lot of the, like... there's a lot of groceries and stuff inside, but you also see, uh, the faint moonlight glint off of the surface of the jetpack.

Since it is a mixed success, I will also say, the cab of the truck has now burst into flames, which, there's some gasoline on the ground, so it is—

those fires are starting to spread. But yeah, your jetpack is in there, and you don't know what else could be in there. But since he brought the jetpack, it could be other stuff.

Justin: I'm gonna make a run for it. That's the only chance I got.

Griffin: Uh, act under pressure again. And I'll let this one, y'know, ride if you can make it. Holy shit. Plus cool.

Justin: That's a five—you gotta say what the rolls are, Griffin.

Clint: Five.

Justin: Say it with the number. Thank you, Daddy.

Griffin: That's a five plus two. That is a mixed success.

Justin: Two, seven!

Griffin: Worse outcome, hard choice, or price to pay. This thing is right on top of you as you are about to do this. It's gonna get you. it's gonna like... it is going to hurt you, but you are going to be able to make it to the truck.

Justin: Okay, that's fine. I can take a hit.

Griffin: This thing, uh, just like, grabs onto you as you try to make it past him. It like, grabs onto your arm and yanks you backwards and manages to like, full force punch you with one of its two arms on the other side. And you just slam into the ground, and you take uh, you take two harm. But then, you're able to sort of like, scramble up, and as it reaches down for you again, it misses, and you make it to the truck and slide the door open.

And inside of there, you see uh, the jetpack, and you also see the broadsword that you have, uh, seen, y'know, you've seen Leo using from time to time, especially when the two of you were like, kind of training to keep your skills as sharp as they could possibly be right now.

Justin: Okay. Uh, I got... [laughs] I have uh... the backpack has three tags. It's quick, it's fragile, and it's volatile, is what the Flymaster has. Those are the three tags. Uh, I wanna, uh... I wanna point it at the fluorescent goro, the—

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: Flor—the floro.

Travis: Thank you.

Justin: And I'm gonna uh, just... [laughs] Just uh, blast the throttle and try it blow it to hell.

Griffin: Okay. Not wearing it, right? You're just like, using it like a missile?

Justin: Not wearing it. I can't be clear enough about this.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: I'm never putting that on my human, fragile body ever, ever again.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: We all saw what happened to Ned.

Justin: Right.

Griffin: Um, okay. What kind of fucking roll would jetpack rocket launcher be?

Justin: It's kick some ass, baby. That's all straight up and down.

Griffin: Yeah, this is definitely kick some ass. Alright, yeah. Let's roll plus tough.

Travis: Is Duck tough?

Griffin: What's with these fives, dog?

Justin: Y'know what? Fuck this. I need this to work. I'm spending a luck point, 'cause fuck this guy.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, okay. Uh, you... on a ten plus, you deal harm to this thing and it deals harm to you. I'm gonna say that you are definitely outside of this thing's like, uh, range of being able to do harm to you, so it's not gonna, like... it's not gonna getcha, because you hit it with a fucking jetpack rocket. Uh, so you do—

Clint: An exploding jetpack rocket.

Griffin: Uh, no. This thing—I mean, if this thing exploded, then Ned would be extremely, exquisitely dead right now. Uh, so it doesn't—it's not gonna explode, but it is definitely going to fuck this thing up and comically, like, take it on a magic carpet ride. You get to choose an extra effect. You gain the advantage, take plus one forward; you inflict terrible harm; you suffer less harm; you force them where you want them.

I'm gonna say like, the blunt force of this, essentially rocket that slams right into this thing's gut, it's gonna do three harm to it, and uh, you get to choose an extra effect.

Justin: Um, I'm gonna uh... I want it to just take off into the sky.

Griffin: Okay. That's forcing them where you want them?

Justin: Yes. High. Up.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: North. [laughs]

Griffin: You set off this jetpack, and it flies forward and catches this being made out of light right in the gut, and it sails backwards for a while, and you think it's about to like, crash into the latticework underneath the Green Bank Telescope. But then like, almost like a cartoon, the trajectory just arcs upward, and you see it fly higher and higher.

And then, it starts to arc again, and now, it kind of just like, loses the hold it had on this being with just pure inertia, and this four-armed being slips and falls quite some distance. You assume he's probably gonna take some more harm from it. But it falls directly into the enormous dish of the Green Bank Telescope, but it is well out of the way.

As you see that, uh, you also notice, uh, through the very, very slim window, looking into the satellite lab, you see Dr. Sarah Drake, and she is illuminated by some sort of screen. And she is messing with some sort of machinery, and she's talking to like, nobody. She's having a conversation with nobody. And as you look up, the satellite is starting to uh, move. It is starting to change position.

And as this thing is adjusting, Duck, you've had this sort of ongoing headache as you've been close to this thing. Now that it is changing where it is pointing, that headache is getting more and more powerful.

[music plays]

Griffin: And you also start to hear something as it is starting to get into position. You are hearing that acoustic blues tune again. And then, you see, through that window, the person talking to Dr. Sarah Drake is the silhouette of Minerva.

[music plays]

Griffin: Aubrey, you're in the back of the truck that Jake Coolice is driving, and Moira is in the back with you, the ghost friend from Amnesty Lodge.

Travis: Yes.

Griffin: And they are kind of like, catching up with you on the situation. Pretty much everybody is gone from Amnesty Lodge. They are either sort of um, up at the archway, or uh, y'know, trying to take cover somewhere. And they have seen like, a ton of people from Kepler passing by Amnesty Lodge and moving into the forest, heading towards the archway, as Ned instructed them to do on TV. And Moira says...

Moira: Well, uh, Aubrey my dear, it seems like... well, I feel like things are finally catching up to us, Aubrey.

Aubrey: Y'know, we're not done yet. Um, yeah... Jake, hit the gas, please? Um...

Griffin: Jake is flooring it, and he whips around the turn that leads off of the river side road, and kind of up towards top side. And he is trying to get up there. There is traffic, and that's weird, because there's never traffic here in Kepler, and Jake yells...

Jake: Yeah, Moira, stop being so doom and gloom! We can—we're the frickin' monster squad. Is that what—we're the monster squad, we can stop this!

Aubrey: That's not... no, that's a whole other thing. I'm pretty sure that's an IP that we don't own. Um...

Clint: [laughs]

Aubrey: Y'know, maybe—maybe we can... maybe we can handle this. Maybe it... listen, you know I've resisted it, but maybe we can spin it. Maybe we can, y'know, acknowledge the truth and... I don't know, save the day or whatever? We've done weirder things.

Griffin: Sure. I need you to make a straight up and down tough roll.

Travis: 'Kay. Uh, seven. Plus... oh, no. Whoa. I forgot, Aubrey's not tough. Minus one. A six.

Griffin: Um, I need you to take one harm, and ignoring your armor.

Travis: Ooh, boy.

Griffin: Because—

Travis: Oh yeah, 'cause I'm bleeding.

Griffin: You are bleeding. You have this jagged piece of wood that is still sticking out of your leg, and you've tried to dress it, but like, unless you get some sort—unless you get this thing out, and unless you get some help from somebody, it's gonna be—it's gonna keep getting worse. And Jake is uh, still driving upward, and he says...

Jake: So uh, where we going? Should we head to the archway and try and head everyone off, or what's up?

Travis: Uh, Aubrey looks at her leg and says...

Aubrey: Yeah. The archway. Head to the archway.

Griffin: Okay. He heads to the archway.

Travis: I would like to try to use magic.

Griffin: Okay. As you are like, still in the back of the car?

Travis: Yes. So one of the aspects of use magic you can do is um, to heal one harm from an injury, uh, and I'm gonna try to do that. And Aubrey closes her eyes and puts her hand on her leg and grabs the piece of wood and thinks, "Hey magic, it's me, Aubrey. Um, I would really like to not bleed to death, please." [through gritted teeth] And she pulls on the wood. Oh, goodness, I think this is gonna hurt real bad.

Uh, eight plus three. Eleven.

Griffin: Yeah, things are going well. You're down to like, one luck point I think, so like, every roll for Aubrey is starting to get—

Travis: I have two luck points, sir!

Griffin: Oh, okay, sorry, sorry, sorry. Okay, yeah, that is a full success. You pull it out, and like, it fuckin' hurts. There's no way it doesn't. You don't have sort of um—

Travis: I see it being like a shot, like, where suddenly the camera pulls way back and you see like, a bunch of birds fly out of the woods around her as she yells.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: And you're like, "Whoa, that was a loud yell!"

Griffin: Yeah, it's not—it's not magic anesthetic. Uh, you pull it out.

Travis: No.

Griffin: And you put your hand on it, and there is a sort of faint orange light that you see sort of uh, spreading across your leg that you can sort of see in the tear in your pants. And then, when you pull your hand back, the wound is definitely still there, but it seems to be fairly closed up. So remove one harm, and uh, mark yourself as stable.

Travis: Sick.

Griffin: Uh, you pull up to the archway, and you were—you're not, like—there's no roads leading there, but you see Jake drive up to Amnesty Lodge and, not being the most confident driver, he uh, pauses for a second, and then sort of surveys the situation, and then just keeps on flooring it back into the woods, and is sort of doing his best to avoid the root systems that are poking up out of the ground.

Uh, but you all do, eventually, make it to the clearing where uh, the archway is. Uh, and when you get there, it is indeed a crowded scene. Uh, you see what looks like, at first blush, kind of like, just an army. And that might just be like, a projection of your worries at this moment, because actually, what you see is just a few dozen citizens of Kepler who are all sort of gathered in loose circles around the archway.

And you can tell, just from the way that they are standing and where they're looking, they can all see it. They all know it is here, thanks to Ned's announcement.

Travis: Do they seem like, full blown like, Frankenstein mob kind of like, pitchforks and torches and shit?

Griffin: There's weapons, right? There are... some of them are holding like, it's mostly household items, like some baseball bats and shovels. I'm gonna say that all the Hornets are armed, just 'cause that's how they do, and that's what they've set up. I'd say—I think one person. I think um, let me think... Eugene brought a literal pitchfork. Like, a literal pitchfork, which seems a little bit on the nose, and I think even he gets embarrassed about it, and goes and like, sets it down somewhere in the woods.

Travis: [laughs] Pees on it.

Griffin: Pees, yeah. Uh, and I mean, there's some guns, too. Like, uh, Agent Stern and Sheriff Owens are definitely armed. They seem to be having a conversation about something.

Travis: Oh, yeah. Oh yeah, Agent Stern. Oh, yeah.

Griffin: A couple of the other folks here have, y'know, some... a couple rifles, a couple shot guns. You see one rifle, and it is in the hands of Pigeon. Pigeon is here with her rifle, and you also see that she's wearing a Hornet jacket, too.

Travis: What?!

Griffin: Which must've been a, y'know, a fairly recent conversion.

Travis: I thought Pigeon was on our side.

Griffin: I mean, a few, y'know, seven months ago, maybe.

Travis: Mmm...

Griffin: And I think Muffy and Winthrop are here and just sort of scoffing at everything and everyone.

Travis: Whose side are they on?

Griffin: God's.

Travis: Is anyone a—[laughs] Turns out, they're agents of God. So, in all seriousness, is anyone on the side of the lodge? Like, I assume Mama and Barclay are there, right?

Griffin: That is the other sort of armed person that you see through the crowd, not looking at the archway, sitting in like, a folding lawn chair is Mama, and she just has a sort of shot gun. Her shot gun resting in her lap, and her head is tilted backward, and she's kind of got her eyes closed. And Barclay is standing behind her with a hand on the chair, uh, and his face is just sort of locked in a grimace. And they are facing outward, toward the crowd. That is what you see as you pull up.

And I think Moira and Jake definitely just sort of like, run forward and start talking to Barclay.

Aubrey: I see.

Griffin: What do you do?

Travis: Do I see Hollis anywhere?

Griffin: Yeah, Hollis is definitely over with the Hornets. Uh, and uh, they are just like, not taking their eyes off of the uh, off the archway.

Travis: Okay, yeah, I think Aubrey's gonna go to Hollis first.

Griffin: Okay. As soon as you get there, Hollis says...

Hollis: I don't get why you didn't tell us about this before this.

Aubrey: Oh, really? You don't see how this might.. oh, yeah, 'cause everything is going super calmly, now! Oh, why would we not want to tell this armed mob of people about this thing? Yeah, 'cause you all took it so fucking well.

Hollis: Aubrey, if this is where the monsters that are killing us are coming from, then yeah, I think we have a right to know.

Aubrey: Okay, uh, Hollis? Let me ask you something.

Hollis: Yeah?

Aubrey: Okay. On the other side of this portal... I'm gonna lay it out of you, alright? Are you ready? 100% honesty. On the other side of this portal is another world. Just like the same scope and size of ours, with a population of people just like us. People just like us. Right? And think about this – in, let's say, West Virginia alone, not even the whole world, the whole earth. West Virginia alone, right? How many people do you think there is, a per capita ratio, that's murderers to just regular people, right?

So what if somebody said, "There are murderers in West Virginia, so we're gonna march into West Virginia and kill everyone there, 'cause they might be murderers." Right? So what if the only thing you knew about West Virginia is that some murderers came from here, and you said, "So let's just go in and wipe everyone out."

Hollis: If they were coming in and murdering my friends and family, then—

Aubrey: You would come in and wipe out the whole state and murder innocent people just in case they might be murderers? What does that make you, Hollis?

Griffin: Yeah, I think you're trying to reason with Hollis, and I think it's sound enough to roll manipulate someone.

Travis: Hell yeah it's sound, my dude.

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: Oh.

Griffin: Oh, no.

Travis: No.

Clint: It's a three.

Travis: That's a three plus one! Four.

Griffin: That's a failure. Uh, I think, uh, Hollis just sort of like, rolls their eyes and turns—

Travis: I just want to say, I, Travis McElroy, stand by that argument.

Griffin: Sure, sure, sure.

Clint: That's a great—I'm compelled.

Travis: Thank you.

Griffin: Uh, yeah, Hollis just makes it very clear that this conversation is over and turns their back to you.

Aubrey: What about you, Keith?

Clint: Oh God. [laughs]

Griffin: With this hard uh, failure, Keith looks super pissed off at you for hiding this from him, and Keith says...

Keith: So the um... the vampire thing that attacked us, you know the truth about that too, Aubrey?

Aubrey: Okay, fuck off, Keith.

Travis: And Aubrey goes to look for Agent Stern.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: Fuckin' classic Keith.

Griffin: Uh, okay. You find Agent Stern and Sheriff Owens, sort of talking, patrolling the crowd, looking kind of fairly nervous. Uh, they seem fairly comfortable together. You get the idea that like, they have the, essentially, Twin Peaks dynamic uh, between Agent Cooper and uh... oh, shit. Justin, who was the sheriff?

Justin: Sheriff on Twin Peaks?

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Oh man, you asked me too quick.

Travis: Oh no!

Griffin: Oh shit!

Travis: None of us can remember!

Justin: Uh—no, no, no, hold on, wait. Harry S. Truman. Duh! Fuck!

Griffin: Harry Truman, yeah. Duh. Uh, yeah, they sort of have that dynamic. Um, and you sort of walk in on their conversation, and you hear Agent Stern say...

Agent Stern: Do you need any help uh, diffusing this situation, sheriff?

Griffin: And you hear Owens say...

Zeke: Um, well, as I see it, this thing's either gonna end with nothing happening and folks running Ned out of town on a rail, or something happening, in which case, an alien world is attacking ours, and I wouldn't mind having folks watching out if that happens. So uh...

Griffin: And then they notice you come up, and uh, Agent Stern says...

Agent Stern: Aubrey, um... it's—it's good to see you. Are you doing okay?

Aubrey: Y'know what? No. I'm just gonna go ahead and say no to that one, because I would argue, Sheriff, if I may, no disrespect. There is a third option that you're not considering, which is that we are the alien world who is about to attack them.

Justin: What if we're the aliens?

Travis: Oh my shit, you're right!

Justin: Daaamn.

Clint: And that's where the show ends. [laughs]

Travis: What if God was one of us? Just a slob like one of us?

Griffin: Here's what I'm gonna say. With that one sentence, you see Sheriff Owens just kind of like, almost have the exact same reaction as Hollis. Uh,

Sheriff Owens like, rolls his eyes and sighs, and turns his eyes, just for a second, away from you, back toward the crowd.

Agent Stern... I don't think you know a lot about Agent Stern, despite the fact that you all have, y'know, spent months together now in Amnesty Lodge. Um, but you get the idea that Agent Stern thinks about stuff like this all the time. You get the idea that Agent Stern runs these possibilities, like, the math of them, just all the time. And so, you see him actually take a beat to what you say just with that one sentence.

Also, he sort of recognizes you acknowledging the truth of this matter, and I think he also knew that you were kind of plugged into this whole thing. And so, the fact that you are acknowledging it is also a big deal. So I will say, like... roll manipulate someone, and it is with this one sentence, you may—

Travis: Fuck me!

Griffin: Oh, Jesus. That is a snake eyes.

Travis: That's a two. That's a two!

Griffin: Yeah, no. Uh, Agent Stern looks at you and, for a second, he looks sympathetic. And then, he says...

Agent Stern: Aubrey, I... am this close to finding out what's happening here in Kepler, and it is my job. It is my sword duty to keep our country safe. And if this is where I need to be to stop that, then I... I'm afraid I just can't agree with you. Sorry, give me a second.

Griffin: And he goes and sees that like, the Hornets are starting to get a little bit rowdy, and so, he walks over to try and calm them down.

Travis: Okay. Uh, time to get to Mama and Barclay, I guess.

Griffin: Okay. Uh, yep. Mama is like, almost dozing, and Barclay kind of like, rouses her as you come close. And Mama says...

Mama: Well, Aubrey, you... uh, you're officially, I guess, relieved of duty. Thanks for all the hard work, but it seems like we are just about to wrap things up here, so um...

Aubrey: No. Well, y'know, think of this like a business, Mama. We're about to go public, y'know what I mean? We owned it privately before, and now, I think we just need to sell some shares. We need to get everybody bought in, even if it's one by one. We just need people to understand. If we can make them understand, then our organization's just gonna grow, okay?

Griffin: Mama says...

Mama: Aubrey, if we had months to do that, if we had months to put together a sort of uh, a peace... a communion of souls. A blessed union of souls across our two planets. Get together, form up a treaty. Maybe it would work. We got about... [sighs] 20 minutes before this gate opens up, and war begins, so I think it may... Aubrey.

Aubrey: Yeah.

Mama: You can get over there even when the moon's not out, right?

Aubrey: Yeah?

Mama: You could go in and warn them. You could go in and tell them what's about to happen.

Aubrey: Shit, but then we have...

Mama: I mean, it could be—you don't have to rile them up and get them all, y'know, armed and ready to fight. But they—Aubrey, they need to know. It is only fair. It is only moral that they know what could possibly happen to them right now.

Aubrey: Okay, listen. Mama, Barclay... whatever you do, don't let them through the gate.

Travis: And Aubrey takes off, sprinting through the gate.

[ambient music plays]

Griffin: Uh, it lights up for a second, and you run through it, and everybody in this crowd watches you run through one end of this stone archway and not come out the other end.

Travis: As she goes through, she flips everyone off. [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: And... I mean, there's no—

Travis: That's canon. That's not a joke. She does that.

Griffin: Cool. There's no distraction. There's no, like... there's no way everyone didn't see this. And with that, I think everybody—

Travis: Good luck following me, assholes.

Griffin: It immediately shuts off behind you. That's not the danger. But immediately, everybody sort of realizes, oh shit... Ned may have been right.

[ambient music plays]

Griffin: Ned, you are in the Cryptonomica, and uh, the sun has gone down. The faint light that was sort of coming in through the shutters has faded entirely, leaving you alone in your place of business. Um, and I will say, it is kind of a mess in here, because you just full blown Ghostbusted this big, uh, shape shifting monster that sort of Akira'd out as you were sort of blasting him backward through a rift that he managed to escape through.

Uh, and that commotion is now over, and now it's just you, alone in the dark in the Cryptonomica. What are you doing?

Clint: How long after the creature's escape is this?

Griffin: Seconds after, I'm gonna say. Like, okay—we see papers actually like, floating through the air and like, slowly sort of sliding down to the ground. It is that soon after.

Clint: Okay. Um, I think Ned sits there for a few seconds and is really thinking, because he's... he was planning on leaving. He was planning on doing exactly what Aubrey said. Get out of town. Leave everybody alone, and never be seen again. And I really think he was doing that. I think he was packing up what few things he had left. And I think he... he's really torn, now, but he doesn't know what else to do.

So he heads back to the general area where he's gonna start picking up, and happens to pass by some monitors that uh, Kirby used, with the camera drones. Because if you remember four or five episodes ago, or maybe it was just two or three, uh, he asked Kirby to use those camera drones to kind of follow the uh, Hornets.

Griffin: Oh, yeah. You are fully plugged in with your surveillance stuff for sure.

Clint: Yeah. And I think he uh, he walks past those, and looks down, and the drone is hovering over the scene at the arch.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: And he had just seen all of that happen, and realizes that a big part of this is his fault, and... I think it motivates him to screw his ideas of trying to flee, and he heads out to the, uh, Cryptonomica van and is gonna drive to the arch. Gonna drive to the clearing.

Griffin: Okay. You follow the same route that Mama's truck just drove, and uh, again, like, you get stuck in traffic on your way up that hairpin turn. But you make your way up the mountain and to Amnesty Lodge, and uh, again, like, you see Amnesty Lodge is like, completely empty. It is the first time, I

think, you have ever seen this place completely darkened with no life inside of it whatsoever.

And I don't know how sentimental you feel about it, but I think for anybody who has spent time there, it is a... it is a sad sight, because that is sort of not what Amnesty Lodge is all about. Um, but you manage to make it past it and drive your truck up to the crowd. As you approach, you see Mama's truck parked, and so you pull up the van sort of immediately behind it, and you see the same crowd that I discussed earlier.

You see the Hornets getting all riled up. It is darker now than it just was in the last scene, and uh, you see Agent Stern trying to calm them down, and you see sort of all the familiar faces around here. Only this time, when you push into the crowd, a lot of the people here, who have just seen Aubrey disappear through the gate, they stop talking now, because you're here, now. Because you are here, and you are the one who said, "Come here armed and join me in the glorious fight against these people."

Uh, you're here now, and they all turn towards you, and they are all uh, just silent. Except for Mama, who definitely looks over at you, and uh, she just starts kind of like, laughing a little bit as you appear. What do you do?

Clint: I think Ned would climb up on top of the Cryptonomica van...

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: And say...

Ned: Good! Good job! Friends, you have mobilized! You have armed yourselves, and you are ready for the terrible conflict that is about to come. I am so proud of you. I am so pleased that all of you have risen to this challenge. Here's the thing—

Griffin: As you're giving your speech, you see Barclay start sort of like, marching toward the van, not sure what you're doing.

Ned: Here's the thing! Um, I have gotten some new intel. As you know, my Cryptonomica van is loaded up with equipment.

Speaker 1: Nobody knows that! How would we know that?

Ned: I'm telling you. You trusted me to come here, didn't you? Who was that? Was that Larry? Anyway.

Speaker 1: No.

Ned: It was you, Larry. Anyway, I have gotten intel on my equipment that the creatures are trying to pull the classic flanking maneuver, and are planning on attacking, uh, out at the giant satellite dish! We must go immediately there, take all of our forces, and prepare ourselves to fight off these fiends! These evil creatures! Will you follow me one more time into battle? On again, once more, dear friends! Into the breach! Onward, to the giant satellite dish!

Clint: And I already know you want me to roll 2d6.

Griffin: Uh, this would be a manipulate someone, yes. I am also going to say, like, we are playing a game where you all get to decide what happens with the roll of dice. These people just saw a woman run through this magic gate and disappear, so like, keep that in mind as you are trying to pull them off to go somewhere else. That is the information that you are sort of fighting against.

Clint: Mmkay. And ah, let's see. What will I add to this?

Griffin: This is plus charm, which you are good at, I think.

Clint: Plus charm, okay. I think I have plus two plus charm. Okay, here we go. It's a seven plus two. A nine.

Griffin: I think a few folks are convinced. I think some people are convinced. Here's the biggest, I think most important thing that happens. Uh, I think Hollis looks up at you, and then they sort of turn over to Keith,

and uh, they have a very brief conversation. And then, Hollis snaps, and the Hornets sort of like, pedal up next to them, and Hollis gives some orders. And you see about half of the Hornets peel off into, through the woods, in the opposite direction, heading up toward Green Bank.

Which is quite—y'know, it's kind of a drive away, but... and a few other people leave, too. I think uh, Muffy and Winthrop take off, too. Uh, Eugene actually... when you mention the Green Bank Telescope, Eugene looks horrified. Eugene looks absolutely out of his mind terrified, and he just takes off. So, I think you thin out the crowd, definitely, but not enough to... you don't get everybody to take off.

And with that, I think Sheriff Owens is definitely walking in this direction, but Barclay has made it to the truck, and he says, uh...

Barclay: Ned, am I gonna have to like, fight you? 'Cause I don't want to, but holy shit, man.

Ned: I... [quietly] Do you not see what I just did?

Barclay: I see what you—yeah, I see what you—

Ned: I just—I got rid of like, a third of the people that were waiting here to wipe out everybody.

Barclay: You—but you made this bed.

Ned: I didn't make this! That was not be on television! It was whatever this Bom Bom is that can assume forms. Why in God's name—I know I got a big mouth, but I would never do that! Why would I mobilize an army? Think about it, will ya?

Barclay: You need to come talk to Mama, Ned. If we're gonna try and figure this thing out together, you need to explain exactly what's happening with Mama. I know that you all are capable, but she has been at this a long time. We've never been this close to annihilation before. We're going to need to work together on this.

Ned: Fine. Great. Let's go talk to her.

Griffin: The two of you walk up to Mama, and uh, she's still kind of laughing at your speech, and she says...

Mama: That was convincing as hell, Ned Chicane.

Ned: Well, apparently not enough.

Mama: I mean, you got some folks to peel off. You can feel good about that. The war won't have as many sort of immediate casualties. That wasn't you on TV, was it?

Ned: No, it was not me. Thank you. Thank you for knowing.

Mama: Did you steal my statue, Ned?

Ned: Yes. I stole your statue. I stole the statue. I stole the necklace. I'm a stealin' guy, okay?

Travis: [laughs]

Mama: So we're kind of like, breaking even on the karmic scale, you think?

Ned: I don't... no. No, I still think I'm on the negative side of the karmic scale. But let's—we're wasting time. We've got to do something about this. Why does nobody act quickly in this game? Yes, I stole all the shit. I'm a bad dude. Let's get on with it and punish me later, okay?

Mama: What is going on, Ned?

Ned: There is some kind of creature that can assume forms. This creature has been trying to make this war happen, I think. Apparently, I'm just a thief and not much of a thinkin' guy. Boy, I'm really running into trouble, there. But this creature is trying to instigate a war between the two sides. I

don't know why. They're just kind of shitty, and they are set out to do this by imitating people, attacking, and pitting both sides against each other.

They have made you guys look like, or the people on the other side in Sylvain, as some kind of monsters. You need to figure out who would benefit from that. Motive. It's all about motive.

Mama: Ned... knowing what we know now, I am worried that um... we don't have time to figure that out.

Griffin: And she gestures out to the crowd. And at first, you think like, she is talking about this army that is surrounding you. But you actually notice something that was not here a second ago.

[ambient music plays]

Griffin: Up against a tree, sort of actually hovering a little bit off the ground, you see that like, white light sarcophagus that you saw when you were abducted and taken into the hotel. You see this floating white sarcophagus that is there. And the crowd, I think, parts, and you hear gasps as people turn and look at this thing. This just monolith, staring at all of you, here in the middle of the clearing.

[ambient music plays]

Griffin: Hey, everybody. This is Griffin McElroy, your dungeon master, your best friend, and your snack handler. And don't even think about those Ritz crackers. Don't even touch those Ritz crackers, because I've got Chips Ahoy over here. You're welcome.

Thanks for listening to The Adventure Zone, episode 28, I believe, of Amnesty. I know it's gettin' hectic, so let's get you back into the rest of the episode as quick as possible. I'm gonna talk about our sponsors first off.

First off, I want to tell you about Quip. Mmm, Quip. They make the toothbrush. It vibrates. It's awesome. I just got my new replacement head yesterday. Fuckin' swap that bad boy on, and my teeth were like, "Aww

yeahhh." Because it feels good. It feels good to get a new brush. And they send you a new one whenever your old one wears out. You get on a little schedule. Every three months, you get a new one. It's just five bucks. It's pretty rad.

And uh, if you're thinking about getting something for father's day, or a new grad, or whatever, a toothbrush is a good one, 'cause pretty much everybody needs those. You can get them on a healthy oral health routine with Quip, and I'm a big fan of mine. It has a uh, like, a holster that you can stick to your mirror, and it comes off really easily. And then like, if you want to travel with it, you just use that little holster as a cover. Travel cover, and then it's good to go.

It's really slick. I like mine. Got over a million happy, healthy mouths lovin' Quip, and it starts at just 25 bucks. If you go to [GetQuip.com/Adventure](https://www.getquip.com/adventure) right now, you can get your first refill pack for free. That's your first refill pack free at [GetQuip.com/Adventure](https://www.getquip.com/adventure).

I also want to tell you about Stitch Fix. This is another valuable service in my life. Quip gets my teeth looking good, and Stitch Fix handles the rest. They will send you a box that is gonna have some clothes in it. Those clothes were picked out by a personal stylist that lives on the internet, and is probably real. Yes, it's a definitely real person. It's definitely not uh, like, the singularity, the AI. Y'know, I have no mouth but I must scream, torturing you with beautiful clothes.

This is a real, personal stylist that figures out what you like, you tell them what you like, and then you work together and form a very powerful bond, and then you tell them what your body needs, your budget needs, your lifestyle needs, and they'll get you going. And I've gotten pretty much most of my clothes. I think all of us McElroys are like, living out of Stitch Fix now.

You can go to [StitchFix.com/taz](https://www.stitchfix.com/taz). You tell your stylist your sizes, your styles, you try on what you want when you get the box, and you only pay for what you actually like and want to keep, and you can just return the rest. Shipping and exchanges and returns are always free. There's no subscription, you just pay for what you want. The styling fee is just 20

bucks, and that's a credit that goes towards anything you keep from your shipment.

So get started now at StitchFix.com/taz. You'll get an extra 25% off when you keep all items in your box. That's StitchFix.com/taz to get started today. StitchFix.com/taz.

Thank you to everybody who tweets about the show using the #TheZoneCast hash tag. If you do that, you might end up as a character in the show. Uh, characters like Dr. Sarah Drake, who is named for Sarah Churchill on Twitter. Thank you so much for tweeting. I'll be honest with y'all – Amnesty is pretty close to wrapping up, so I don't know how many more characters there are gonna be, but uh, I sure do appreciate you spreading the word about the show. Uh, it just—it means the world to us.

Some more quick announcements. Thanks to MaximumFun.org for having us on the network. It's a great network, and we are very proud to be a part of it. They got all kinds of great shows like *Can I Pet Your Dog*, and *Stop Podcasting Yourself*, and just a shit ton more, all at MaximumFun.org. We have other stuff at McElroy.family, and while you're there, check out the still available tickets for our upcoming live shows as part of our *Become the Monster* tour.

We're about to go to Indianapolis, and uh, Nashville, and there are tickets available still for that. We're doing a TAZ in Nashville if you want to come see us. Yeah, again, McElroy.family is where you can get those.

Also, we just announced that *The Adventure Zone* graphic novel, the second one, *Murder on the Rockport Limited*, which is coming out very soon - on July 16th to be precise – uh, to celebrate that. Well, to promote that, we're gonna be doing a quick little book tour in July. On July 16th, the release day, me and Justin and Carey are gonna be doing a book tour showing in New York. Uh, Travis and Dad on that day are gonna be in Portland, Oregon, doing a little stop there at Revolution Hall.

Day after that, me and Justin are heading to Austin, Texas, Paramount Theater, to do a stop. Travis and Dad are also, on that day, gonna be in Los

Angeles at the Ace Theater. And then, a couple days later, during Comic Con, all of us, me and Dad and Justin and Travis and Carey are all gonna be at San Diego at the Balboa Theater.

And we're gonna be talking about the book, and answering some questions. There'll be like, a moderated discussion, and then we're gonna be doing a guest reading where we're gonna get some guests together and read some excerpts from the book and uh, I've seen who some of our guests are, and I'm super fuckin' excited.

So if you want to come see us, there's still some tickets available. Tickets are a bit pricier than our usual live shows, but it does incorporate the cost of a book. So you will get a book, and it's gonna be signed by one of us when you pick it up, so we're very excited to be doing this. We had a lot of fun last year, and hope you will too.

Again, go to McElroy.family. You can find details there. And that's it. We're gonna be back in two weeks with another new episode of Amnesty, uh, and I don't have time to calculate when that is, 'cause I'm a busy man, but I think it's gonna be like the 12th or 13th or something of June. Yeah, okay, definitely the 13th. So we'll see you then. Bye!

[theme music plays]

Griffin: Duck, you see... you see Minerva in the satellite lab, and she looks up from the computer and smiles, and then, you hear, actually, from behind you, you hear...

Minerva: Hello, Duck Newton! It seems like you've kept up with your training, as with your strong, muscular legs.

Travis: [laughs]

Minerva: Tone and definition is so important, Duck Newton!

Duck: Where the fuck have you been?

Minerva: I have been... well, for a while, buried under a pile of rubble. A considerable pile, Duck Newton. Uh, but I am big and strong, as you can tell from my projected silhouette, so I managed to get myself out of that situ— Duck, it is a complicated story, and I do not have enough time to tell it.

Duck: God, it's so fucking good to see you.

Minerva: It's good to see you too, Duck Newton. Now, I need you to start climbing immediately.

Duck: Did you see Endgame?

Minerva: What?

Duck: Did you see Endgame? I didn't know if you—how much free time—

Minerva: I don't know—

Duck: You've been away for a while, so I didn't know—

Minerva: I don't know what you're talking about, Duck Newton. But every question you ask me about pop culture, I'm assuming, is a second you are spending not climbing.

Travis: Okay, but did she see Endgame, Griffin?

Justin: Okay, I'm climbing.

Clint: No, I still want to know about Endgame.

Travis: No, I, Travis, will ask out of character—

Griffin: She did, yeah. On, uh, on her planet, which I believe we titled Miralaviniax Orbital Body 5. They get all the Marvel movies like, three months early.

Travis: Aw, shit!

Justin: Damn.

Griffin: Yeah, they do a soft launch there.

Travis: What'd she think?

Griffin: It was uh, a little convoluted for her taste. Okay, uh—

Travis: Oh, no. Aw.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, Duck, why don't you uh, act under pressure?

Justin: Damn. Uh, six.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: These rolls...

Griffin: Yeah, uh, you start climb—

Justin: Rolls are beef.

Travis: I'm about to level up again.

Griffin: Oh yeah, mark experience for all... there have been... Jesus, there have been one, two, three, four, five, six failures just in this one episode. Um, you start climbing up the latticework underneath the satellite, underneath the Green Bank Telescope, and it is... it is high up.

Justin: I started climbing before I thought about it. I'm trying to get to the thing?

Griffin: Yeah, you're—I mean, you don't know. Minerva just told you to climb.

Justin: Damn, alright. Oh, I fully, by the way, fully got the broadsword, 100%, as well.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: I hope that's obvious, but I did get it.

Griffin: Um—

Travis: And I assume you picked up Beacon, right? 'Cause he was just laying on the ground after you blasted Duder away.

Justin: Was he laying on the ground? Or was he still—

Griffin: Yeah, he was laying on the ground.

Justin: Okay, I grabbed Beacon, too.

Griffin: Okay. Uh, you climbed about ten feet up, and then like, your weak human arms gave out, and you just fall to the ground, and you take one harm. And Minerva says...

Minerva: Um... maybe I was wrong, Duck Newton, about your tone and definition. Are you going to be able to do this?

Duck: Well, um... Yeah. Yeah. Uh, yeah! Yeah! Hold on. Yeah. I'm gonna... fuck, I don't know, Minerva. Shit. Look at me. I'm like a fuckin' postal worker. A gym teacher. I'm... I mean, I'm just a regular dude.

Minerva: Duck Newton, I have known you, obviously off and on, for some years now. And even when we were apart, even before you were my ward, you were never a normal dude.

Griffin: And she extends a holographic hand down in your direction.

Justin: And I grab it, and it goes through it.

Griffin: And it just passes right through. [laughs]

Justin: Passes right through it.

Minerva: It's a symbolic gesture. Duck Newton, you can do this.

Justin: Alright, I pull out Beacon and...

Beacon: Ah, finally, it's time for battle.

Duck: Nope. Time to climb, idiot.

Justin: And I whip Beacon up above me and start climbing again.

Griffin: Okay. Roll act under pressure.

Justin: This time, with advantage, because I used Beacon.

Griffin: Yeah. I think actually, yeah. I don't think we've done this before, but I think narratively, it makes sense. You are climbing with a tool that is assisting you. I think go ahead and roll with advantage, which in apocalypse world traditionally means roll 3d6, and you take the highest two dice.

Justin: Okay. Uh, that's a twelve.

Griffin: Jesus Christ. That is—

Justin: Plus one.

Griffin: Five, six, six is what Justin just rolled. That is extremely good. Uh, yeah. Using this method, you uh, whip the chains that make up the sort of

midsection of Beacon upward, and he extends, y'know, however many feet long Beacon is, and whips around—

Justin: It's not actually chains. It's like flexible metal.

Griffin: Flexible metal. That's fine, yeah. Then it sort of spools—

Justin: I just don't want the fan artists to...

Griffin: Sure. I was imagining sort of like Ivy's sword from Soulcalibur, if you remember that.

Justin: It's more like, uh, if you Google an urumi, which is like an ancient sort of Indian weapon...

Griffin: Oh, okay. Oh yeah, I remember when you were sort of talking about that as the concept. Um, okay, yeah. Then, you see like, the metal that makes up the tip of Beacon just coil around the latticework, and uh, it sort of flexes and swings up upward, and it is a weird, clumsy Spiderman climb, but you fairly effortlessly whip yourself up and into the dish.

And while you are up there, you see this being made out of light with the four hands, and it is grabbing onto the base of the antenna at the center of the telescope. And now, you see Minerva again, and she is, y'know, projected right next to you, and she says...

Minerva: Duck Newton, what is about to happen is going to be pretty wild. I'm not going to lie to you.

Justin: [laughs]

Minerva: But it's not going to happen if that thing gets what it wants and destroys the Green Bank Telescope. I need you to stop it, please.

[music plays]

Duck: Alright, Minerva. [sighs] Alright. I'll just stop it.

Minerva: Use your sword, Duck Newton, to stab and hurt it. We talked about this.

Travis: [laughs]

Duck: Yeah, alright. Man, I have missed your tutelage.

Minerva: It's like, core strategy number one.

Justin: I take Beacon in one hand and the broadsword in the other, and I'm like...

Duck: Hey... hey stupid!

Clint: [laughing]

Duck: It's me, Duck Newton. Local beefcake. And I'm gonna kill you with these. Believe it or not, as unlikely as it may seem.

Justin: And I sort of idly spin them in my hands. [laughing]

Duck: I know I sound about as convincing as, well, I probably sound to you. But y'know, I'm all out of options. I threw my cool jetpack at you, my friend hit you with a truck, so here's my cool new thing, okay? I'm gonna stab you until you die with my two swords.

Justin: And I kick its ass.

Griffin: Yeah. We see you just running on the dish of this telescope, towards the antenna at the center, while it is still moving into position. So you're kind of sliding towards this thing with swords drawn, and roll to kick some ass.

Clint: Oh yeah!

Travis: Yeahh!

Clint: There we go!

Justin: That's a ten.

Griffin: That is a ten. Uh, you are sliding towards this thing with swords drawn, and as you get closer and closer to this antenna, and as the dish itself is moving, that headache that you've had since you've been kind of close to this thing has gotten worse. It is getting more and more painful, but it does not break your stride as you charge into this thing with two swords. And you deal, well... what is Beacon's harm?

Justin: Two harm. Innocuous, messy.

Griffin: Okay. You deal four harm, because you are holding two swords. That's the only way I can think that this would play out, mathematically. What do you do? What does this like, attack look like when you finally collide with it?

Justin: Uh, it's messy. I just like—I feel like I swing the broadsword with all my strength, and just kind of chunks into it, and it just pisses me off more, and I swing with the other, with Beacon, and like, uh, coil Beacon out, and then recoil, and cut like, a chunk off. It's messy. I'm just hacking at it. There's no finesse or grace. I'm just trying to kill it with these two swords.

Griffin: Alright, with a ten plus, you get to choose an extra effect. You take the advantage, you inflict terrible harm, you suffer less harm, or you force them where you want them.

Justin: Um, I got a cool place that I think I'd love it to check out, and that's off the telescope and on the ground.

Griffin: I—I gotta—it is—you are at the center of the telescope, and it is a one hundred foot wide, perhaps one hundred meter wide. I do not remember. So that would be one fuckin' hell of a 300 kick.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: So as much as I would love to make that happen, it is not gonna happen.

Justin: Yeah, you're right. Uh, okay. So, give me my options again?

Griffin: Do more harm, suffer less harm, take plus one advantage on your next roll, or force them where you want them.

Justin: I think just terrible harm. [laughs] Just like, I'm just brutalizing it.

Griffin: Uh, you chop into this thing with both swords—

Justin: And how much harm did I take?

Griffin: Uh, well, that's the thing. As you are sort of slashing away at it, it finally sort of like, gets swords stuck in two of its arms, and manages to grab you by the throat with one of its arms, and it just squeezes and chucks you backwards, and... you land on your feet. Uh, and it deals two harm, but you actually feel like maybe it didn't?

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: You feel a bit more hale and hearty than you expected to. Uh, and the telescope stops moving, and both you and this creature I think lose your footing for a second, and now, it is leaning up against the base of the antenna, and it is kind of shuddering. It looks like it is just like, glitching out. And then, your headache, Duck, it gets... it gets so painful, and you see Minerva now, and she is right in front of you, between you and the monster, and she says...

Minerva: Duck Newton... this is going to hurt a whole bunch. Are you ready?

Duck: Yeah.

Griffin: You hear that song now, and it is like you are in a room where you're seeing it in concert, it is so loud. And then, that pain in your head, it passes the point of human comprehension. And then suddenly, you feel a sensation that no other living human has ever experienced. Your sight vanishes just instantly as this flash of pain just splits your mind in two, and you feel this feeling like, growing and buzzing now, and moving. This pain is moving. It's stretching outward, out from your forehead. And then, just like that, it is gone.

And your vision returns, and you see, hovering just in front of you, a small hole that is floating in the sky. And this four-armed being looks at it like, curiously. Its head cocks to the side. And then, it sort of takes a step backward into the antenna with clear alarm. And then, it is thrown back, as you are, by this beam of piercing green light that bursts downwards, through the clouds above, into the antenna of the telescope.

[music plays]

Griffin: And this hole that just came out of you, it is crackling with this green energy, and it's expanding. And through that hole, Duck, you see something.

[music gets louder]

Griffin: You see a vision of these ruins, of these like, toppled pillars and collapsed walls, and these like, obliterated pieces of large, inscrutable machinery, all of which are completely dormant except for one. And in front of that device, you see a shadow approaching faster and faster. And then, she leaps, and... she's here.

She's holding this massive, two-handed sword with both hands, and she's careening through the air before sliding to a perfect halt on these two large, wooden sandals. And then, she looks back over her shoulder at you, her real, tangible shoulder, and she says...

Minerva: Thanks for the lift, Duck Newton!

Duck: I had it...

[music fades out]

Griffin: Aubrey.

Travis: Yes. I am on pins and needles, Griffin!

Griffin: Yeah. You pass through this, y'know, the tunnel of white light that you always enter through as you pass through the gates. And you step foot into Sylvain, and immediately, you can tell that something is just like... something is wrong. Um, there's like—there is a storm brewing outside, which is strange. You have only seen like, a clear, dark sky, every time that you have come here. Um, and you notice that like, the storm isn't necessarily all up in the sky. It seems like the storm is just everywhere outside of the walls of the city.

It is frightening, to say the least. And then, you also see another frightening thing immediately in front of you. As you step through the gate, spears are immediately just like, at your throat. And they are held by these two guards who, I think when they see who you are, Vincent sort of taps one of them on the shoulder, and they pull their spears back, and now you sort of have time to survey what's going on here.

There are... you get the idea, like, maybe every living Sylvan at this point is standing around the gate. And among them, you see Vincent, and you see Woodbridge, who is another one of like, the ministers who uh, take care of the place. And then, you see Janelle.

And Janelle is wearing this um, what looks like a ceremonial robe, and she's not alone. There's like... there's a half dozen other robed Sylvans, all standing in a half circle around the gate. And they are all like, checking their belongings. They seem to be like, preparing for something. And then, you see a lot of guards. You see a lot of guards arranged in uh, formation around the gate, and leading back into town.

And as Vincent has his guards pull their weapons away, he says...

Vincent: Aubrey... Aubrey, what are you doing here? This—what are you doing here, Aubrey?

Aubrey: What are you doing here?

Vincent: Is this a—is this a retaliatory—

Griffin: And as he says that, Woodbridge like, comes up and just like, hits him from behind. And Vincent looks back and looks like he's about to hit him right back, but he calms himself and says...

Vincent: Aubrey, this is... this is not a good time.

Griffin: And uh—

Aubrey: Yeah, no fuckin' duh, Vince!

Griffin: Uh, and just then, as you yell that out, Janelle realizes you're there, and she is sort of aghast. And she walks up to you and says...

Janelle: Aubrey, are you... are you okay, Aubrey?

Aubrey: Well, y'know, that's a really big question considering, Janelle, so um, let me run down real quick, alright? You ready? Deep breath. [inhales and speaks quickly] There's a whole bunch of people on the other side of our gate, because something that's a shape shifter that seems to be made out of light told everyone while it was in the form of Ned that there was a gate here and there were monsters here. Also, I just got my necklace back from Ned and it turns out that Ned might've been a part of my mom dying when I was young, and also, you're doing this whole army thing on this side, too. So it's really... there's a lot happening.

Griffin: Uh, imme—as you are giving that, several groups start like... there's a lot of movement that sort of goes in waves. As you mention the army on the other side, that actually catches everyone by surprise. That actually shocks just about everybody here, and immediately, Vincent turns

back toward the officers here, and you see him pull aside a few, you assume, high ranking people to start formulating, you guess, a new plan.

Woodbridge also sort of springs into action, and starts talking to Janelle. They are listening to your conversation, but they all are also sort of reacting to it in a panic. And Janelle is protesting something with Woodbridge, and then, uh, she turns and sort of nods her head, and walks over to her and says... walks over to you, and Janelle says...

Janelle: Is it too late to stop them, Aubrey?

Aubrey: No, not at all. It's not—listen, it's not a real army. It's all the people from the town on the other side of here, and they're scared. People have died. We've had the Abominations come across. And if anything, they're more scared than angry, but that's... [sighs] Maybe worse? But it's not too late. We can fix this. We just need... I don't know. Ideas?

Wait, hold on. What's going on over here? If you didn't know about them, why are you all guarding the gate?

Griffin: There is a rumbling of thunder out in the distance, and it sends a shiver up Janelle's spine. And she looks at you, and she smiles. And she says...

Janelle: Do you believe in... [sighs] Fate?

Aubrey: Sure.

Janelle: Here's what I think, Aubrey. I think you were sent to me for a reason. And... [sighs] I don't know what that reason is, but I believe in it. And I... I haven't believed in something like that since I watched the heart of my planet shatter. And I think you... have done your part to always think about us. To always try and save us. And... now, Aubrey... now, it is my turn.

Griffin: And she vanishes. And one by one, those robed Sylvans that were with her, they all vanish as well, and then, you are pushed aside by some

unseen force, and just for a second, the gate flashes, and then goes dormant again.

Aubrey: What—what—

Griffin: And with that, Woodbridge says...

Woodbridge: Vincent, as Minister of Preservation, I'm claiming absolute authority over this mission. For the continued survival of your people, you will detain Ms. Little until Janelle has returned having completed her quest.

Griffin: And Vincent nods, and the squirrel—

Travis: Aubrey starts running.

Griffin: The squirrel guard definitely like, gets spears crossed across the gate as you get there. And Vincent says...

Vincent: Aubrey, please, just stay with us. Just for a little while, Aubrey, I'm begging you.

Travis: Aubrey runs towards the... crystal.

Griffin: Hm, okay. I mean, it's some ways away.

Travis: Yes.

Griffin: Okay. I think to break sort of through the guards here, uh, I think you're going to have to uh, roll to... I think it's act under pressure no matter what, right? This is a... this is what that roll is made for, I think.

Travis: Let's see. A nine plus zero.

Griffin: Okay. Plus zero, uh, it's a mixed. Uh, it's a mixed success. Um... you break through everybody, uh, and you make it part way down the stairs, and then a hand grabs you at the bottom of the stairs, and it's just

Vincent. It's just Vincent now. It's just the two of you at the base of the stairs. Everybody else is kind of like, still nervously watching the gate. You get the idea that they want to like, keep an eye on you, but the gate is much more important to them right now, and Vincent says...

Vincent: Aubrey, what are you doing? We—we—I just—I need you to stay here for a moment.

Aubrey: What's happening here, Vincent? Why is the sky like this? Why is everyone scared? Quick. Quick, quick, quick. Don't think, just answer.

Vincent: It's the—it's it, Aubrey. This is the end of the world.

Aubrey: Okay.

Vincent: This is the apocalypse that we have known is coming, and it is arriving several weeks early.

Aubrey: Because the planet's dying, right?

Vincent: Right.

Aubrey: I might be able to help.

Vincent: How?

Travis: And she takes off her sunglasses and looks him in the eye.

Aubrey: Uh, the crystal and I get along well, and I don't know, I could give it... I could give you time.

Griffin: Manipulate someone. And I think you have a pretty good case, here.

Travis: Uh...

Clint: It's a six.

Travis: No, it's plus one, so it's a seven.

Griffin: Uh, they'll do it, but only if you do something for them right now to show that you mean it. And I think he says...

Vincent: You can really do that, Aubrey? You can really buy us some time?

Aubrey: I don't know how much, but... I don't know. Maybe.

Vincent: We're going to have to run, probably.

Griffin: And then from the top of the stairs, you hear Woodbridge scream...

Woodbridge: Vincent, what are you doing? Seize her!

Griffin: And he throws his spear down and grabs you by the hand, and now, the two of you are running down the street, pursued in the distance by several of Vincent's own guards, and you are able to reach the garden with this now just almost completely faded, grey crystal in the center of it. The light that you have seen, the faint light that you have seen, that people sort of draw their sustaining energies from, is more or less completely gone, now.

What do you do?

Travis: She looks at Vincent and she says...

Aubrey: Try to pull me back before I die.

Travis: And she holds onto Flamebright and touches the crystal.

Griffin: Alright. [sighs] Alright. I think this would be big magic, right? I think what you are attempting to do... the first time you did it, it was like, a fun experiment to see what would happen. Now, you are trying to like, save

an entire planet; or at least, buy them some time. I think that's gotta be big magic.

Travis: I agree, Griffin.

Griffin: So I think you're going to have to roll to use magic. You're going to need people to help, and I think Vincent has done that, right? And it will have a specific side effect or danger. Those are the three things. So your place in this is to roll use magic, and we will see what happens.

Travis: It's a seven plus three. That's a ten.

Griffin: That is a complete success.

Travis: [relieved sigh]

[music plays]

Griffin: You are holding onto the big crystal with one hand, and you're holding onto the Flamebright pendant with the other. And... for a moment, the crystal in the center of Sylvain, it regains its color, just with a flush. And as it does so, you notice... it is the exact same hue as the Flamebright pendant. And both of them now seem to be illuminated by this just beautiful, spiraling light from within. And you would be able to appreciate this if you did not feel like you were dying.

Travis: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Griffin: And you feel like all of the magic that you have gained some mastery over, over the last year, you feel it just sort of draining out of you, and you feel yourself getting weaker and weaker. And then, you feel a furry hand on your shoulder, who pulls you backward.

And Vincent says...

Vincent: Aubrey, are you... are you okay? You... Aubrey, you did it.

Griffin: And you look around, and like, it's still dark out. It is still like, ominous and creepy, but like, the storm is not at the gates anymore. It is—it looks like just any other sort of rain storm. It is not sort of the apocalyptic wall of death that it just was a few moments ago.

And you actually see everybody who was like, charging in after you, they have stopped and are looking with awe, like, at your surroundings. And some of them look scared, some of them are just like, cheering. And Vincent says...

Vincent: Aubrey, what... what are you?

Aubrey: Oh, I'm bisexual.

Griffin: [laughs]

Vincent: Do all of bisexuals have this power?

Aubrey: [firmly] Yes.

Clint: [laughs]

Vincent: Aubrey, I don't... how were you able to do that?

Aubrey: Y'know what, Vince? Fuck if I know.

Griffin: With that, I think Vince takes your hand and helps you up, and he says...

Vincent: What's going on with your eyes?

Griffin: And he... you see, actually, in the glint of his armor, that they are both orange now. And as badass as that looks, you also feel like doing that took something out of you. And so, for the time being, you have a minus one, ongoing, for whenever you use magic.

Travis: Okay.

Aubrey: Vincent, I have to... Janelle, multiple times, has said about the crystal fracturing, and is there any reason I can think of that I would be connected to magic, and the only thing I've thought is, my mom gave me this necklace. I finally got it back. Is it a piece?

Griffin: He looks at it and holds it in his hand, and he says...

Vincent: Aubrey, I was here before the shattering. That is a piece of Sylvain. Where did you say you got this?

Aubrey: My... my mom gave it to me?

Griffin: He eyes it for a second and then hands it back to you, and he says...

Vincent: Aubrey, when... when our world was first attacked, when the shattering happened, your... your earth raiders came and took pieces of Sylvain as mementos. And I guess it's possible that, throughout the decades, throughout generations, one shard made its way to you.

Aubrey: Could... could we fix the crystal, if we got the pieces back?

Vincent: It was hundreds of pieces, Aubrey. It's not—I don't think that's—as much as I appreciate your caring thought, I don't think that's going to work. But fortunately, I don't think we're gonna have to worry about that too much longer.

Aubrey: Why?

Griffin: He looks around and notices that uh, Woodbridge is still a distance away. He says...

Vincent: Because... Janelle found a way to save our planet. That's what she's doing over there.

Aubrey: How... how?

Vincent: I shouldn't be telling you this, Aubrey. It's a little bit above my head, but... if anything, I think you could serve us better on the other side. Go help Janelle, if you can.

Aubrey: Okay. Um... okay.

Travis: And Aubrey runs back.

Griffin: Uh, you are passing through the crowd, and Woodbridge like, tries to stop you. Uh, and a couple of the guards sort of like, swarm in with him. And Vincent is like, chasing up to like, tell them to fuckin' chill out. But they see your eyes, and with that, they just kind of like... look freaked out, and step backward, and allow you to pass through them, up the stairs, and back through the gate.

[music plays]

Griffin: Ned.

Clint: Hmm?

Griffin: You are standing in the crowd, and uh, this white light sarcophagus has just appeared. This is not happening like, concurrently with the scene that just happened, so Aubrey is not, y'know, appearing through the gate right now. You see this sarcophagus, and the crowd has grown silent, and Mama, I think, with that, stands up from the lawn chair and starts to walk toward it, as do a couple other folks. I think Hollis and Agent Stern and the Sheriff all sort of walk closer to investigate. What do you do?

Clint: Do the same thing. Walk towards it to investigate.

Griffin: Okay. Yeah.

Clint: I assume since I'm the only one that has that move...

Griffin: Yeah, that's fair. This would be—

Travis: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: So wait, all the NPCs are... like, they're trying to look at it, but they're like, "What do we even do with our eyes?"

Clint: "What is this? I can't figure this out!"

Travis: "Our ears? What do we do?"

Griffin: Um, so, you tell me. Is this investigate a mystery, or is this read a bad situation?

Travis: Now, Ned has seen this sarcophagus before, right?

Griffin: Has, yeah, and has definitely rolled on it before. So like, I think Ned kind of knows what this thing's about. So that's why I think read a bad situation. I would argue this is more of a bad situation than it is an unknown thing, because you actually, specifically, do know what this thing is.

Clint: I do?

Griffin: Well, not what it is, but you know what you're gonna know, just from looking at it.

Travis: You know it's connected to the Abomination in some way.

Griffin: Right, exactly.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: And that it has some sort of like, read out of it, and you uh... here's one thing I will give you, just for free. When you saw it back in the hotel, it

had these like, memories flashing on the cover of it, kind of like how your memory—

Clint: Right.

Griffin: Those are not there anymore. Those are not happening on the cover of this thing. You don't really know what that means, but the memory flashing is over, but you still see sort of a digital read out on the cover of this thing.

Clint: I think read a bad situation, then.

Griffin: Okay, roll plus sharp.

Clint: That's a seven plus two, that's a nine.

Griffin: Okay. On a nine, you get to hold one, so you get to ask one of these questions. What's my best way in? What's my best way out? Are there dangers we haven't noticed? What's the biggest threat? What's vulnerable to me? And, what's the best way to protect the victims?

Clint: I think best way to protect the victims.

Griffin: I think, like... the term 'victims' is broad here, right? Um, I will give you that. Everybody is in danger around this thing, um, and I mean, I will also give you, there is a mob, an armed mob. Whatever's inside this thing is probably in danger, right? There's an army here, a small platoon, so that is something I will also give you.

Clint: It seems to me that protecting the victims is the best way to... is find out how to diffuse the situation.

Griffin: Yeah, is getting people away from this sarcophagus.

Clint: Uh... I... [laughs] I think Ned... points the Narf blaster at the white sarcophagus, and says...

Ned: If you don't mind... would you leave? Just go somewhere that is not here, so that I don't have to shoot you with this gun that I keep shooting people with even though I'm pretty much a pacifist, but not lately?

Griffin: Uh, with that, all the civvies back away from the sarcophagus, 'cause you're pointing this, I'm gonna say, huge, crazy, colorful gun at it. Uh, and Agent Stern like, turns towards you with alarm, and Sheriff Owens does the same, with one hand on his service revolver at his hip. Um, and he says...

Zeke: Now, Ned, I don't know what that crazy contraption is, but um, you need to just take it easy, alright? We don't know what this thing—

Ned: Nope. Well, I don't think it knows either, so how about not, y'know, ruining my move here, okay big guy?

Griffin: Are you threatening this sarcophagus? It doesn't—I'll say this, it doesn't respond to your speaking, right? If the sarcophagus itself, or the thing inside of it is like, conscious and cognizant of your warning, you don't know, because it just remains there, sort of floating in midair. It does not respond as much as everybody responds to you wielding this big, wild gun.

Ned: Listen. Everybody just do me a favor. Back off, because when I shoot this thing...

Clint: And I look at the white sarcophagus...

Ned: And I will shoot you! I'm not exactly sure what's going to happen, but you all need to back off just in case there's some kind of unpleasantness that occurs when I shoot it. And I will shoot it!

Griffin: Uh, go ahead and roll... [laughs] Manipulate someone.

Clint: Aight. That's a seven plus... what?

Travis: Charm.

Clint: One, that's an eight.

Griffin: Okay. Uh, on an eight, they'll do it, but only if you do something right now to show them that you mean it. Uh, the sarcophagus, again, no response. Uh, I think on an eight, everybody just like... everybody backs away. Nobody quite knows what to do in this situation. Uh, Agent Stern also now has his hand at his hip, and Sheriff Owens—

Travis: Oh, no. You don't want to see his hand where his hip be at.

Griffin: Almost certainly not. And Sheriff Owens says...

Zeke: Ned, I'm gonna have to ask you to lower that thing, alright? I don't want anybody getting hurt, and I don't know what kind of wild gun that is, so I need you to—

Ned: What do you think this giant, threatening, white sarcophagus—do you think it's a good guy? This is one of the bad guys. This was in the place where I got zapped over to. This is in league with the shape shifter thing. This is in league with the thing that's been opening rifts all over town and been attacking people and killing people. This is not some goodwill ambassador! Put your fucking gun away!

Griffin: Uh, he looks kind of shocked at what you're saying.

Travis: Because you used a dirty word.

Griffin: Because you cursed, yeah. The power of your cursing makes you not have to roll on this. He kind of like, takes a step backward.

Travis: Because everyone knows that cursing is cool.

Griffin: You also just said so much banana cakes stuff...

Travis: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs] About a shape shifter and all this thing. Uh, but I will say like, your yelling sent a shock of alarm through the crowd, who now kind of knows to be scared of this thing.

[music plays]

Griffin: And I think it's quiet for a second, and then... there's a flash of light that comes from the sarcophagus, and very, very slowly, it just kind of disintegrates into these little puffs of light that float upward and disappear. And there is a figure inside of it, and... this is all happening in like, super slow motion. You see like, guns being raised. You see people sort of just freaking the hell out as the sarcophagus disintegrates.

And then, kneeling on the ground, you see a woman. And she is wearing a parka, and she's got this tangled, blonde hair, and a brown pair of slacks. And she is hunched over. Her face is looking down at the ground. Her eyes are closed. And the crowd, I think, also kind of takes a step backward. Some of them take a step backward from her as she appears, except for those who are drawing their weapons.

And she looks up at you, Ned, and... it's Dani. Only... she is different now. She... you've only sort of slightly seen her in this form once, back when the residents of Amnesty Lodge lost access to the springs that sustain them and sort of gave them their lucidity on earth. Only, it's much, much worse now. She is completely feral. Her eyes are shining this blood orange-red, and her teeth are gnashed and razor sharp, and she leaps to her feet, and... you see Barclay starting to move in that direction. You see Mama looking terrified. And Dani is just sprinting toward a crowd that is just half afraid and half ready for battle.

What do you do?

Clint: [sighs] I... try to... I think Ned tries to tackle her.

Griffin: Act—

Clint: I don't want to shoot her!

Griffin: Yeah. Act under pressure.

Clint: It's a seven plus two, which is cool. I mean, two for cool.

Travis: [laughs] Which is cool.

Clint: Which is cool. So nine.

Travis: That's three sevens in a row, Dad. Four sevens if you include my last seven.

Clint: I should get something for that, shouldn't I?

Griffin: I... am going to give you a hard choice, Ned. And I think you know what that hard choice is gonna be.

A shot rings out from the crowd behind you as you rush in to tackle. And the hard choice that I am giving you is... who it is going to hit.

Clint: I think... I... I don't think Ned wants to be the cause of anybody else to get hurt. So... it hits Ned.

[music plays]

Griffin: And then, we see you, Ned, just for a second. And you are standing in the Cryptonomica, and it is still basked in the warm, sunset light earlier this evening, and you're in the middle of clearing out the Cryptonomica. You're getting ready to leave, and as you're loading up the last box, before you are attacked by the shape shifter, you take a beat and go to your desk, and you get out a couple of pieces of Cryptonomica stationery, and you begin writing a letter.

Ned: "Dear Duck, there's a line in Animal House where Otter says, 'You fucked up. You trusted us.' Well, I guess you fucked up. You trusted me. I am doing what I do best – getting into a bad situation, and then running like a scolded dog when it gets worse. I just couldn't go without telling you how

much your friendship has meant to be over the years. Even though you are loathe to admit it, you are a true hero, and watching you has shown me the value of protecting others no matter what sacrifice. I just didn't learn the lesson well enough, I guess, to make those sacrifices myself.

Wow, this has really turned into a little pity party, hasn't it? Boo hoo, poor Ned. Anywho, I'm leaving the Cryptonomica to Kirby. I mean, that's how I got it, right? But y'know, check in on he and the Gosling Goat occasionally, would you? To quote one of my favorite movie stars, Porky Pig, [stuttering] "That's all, folks!"

With great admiration, Ned Vamoose Chicane."

Griffin: And then we see Ned fold that letter gently and smile, and place it on the desk with Duck's name written on the outside of it, and then he picks up the other piece of paper.

Ned: "Dear Aubrey, I'm taking your advice and heading out for parts unknown. But I need you to know how sorry I am for the impact that I have had in your life. I am a thief. I have always been a thief. But I have never been a robber. There is a huge difference. I never ever wanted anyone to come to any kind of harm in any of my capers.

The fire that took the life of your mother was an accident. A horrible accident that was not supposed to happen... but it did, and I am to blame. I am not asking you to forgive me. I don't want you to forgive me. I want you to always keep in mind that no matter how small a wrong action may seem, wrong is always wrong. And it can easily cause events to quickly spiral out of control.

No, I don't want you to forgive me, Aubrey. I want you to hate me. I want you to focus all your hatred on me. And that will free up all the love in that big, remarkable heart of yours for the rest of the world. Hold tight to that pendant. Try to have Duck's back. And become a better person than I.

With love, Edmund Kelly Chicane."

Griffin: And then we see Ned fold that letter up, and write Aubrey's name on it, and leaves his hand on it for a moment before he takes it off and walks back into his inner sanctum.

You slam into Dani, and it hurts. That hurts. Um, and the two of you kind of spiral, and crash to the ground, and Dani's on top of you, and she leans backward and starts to dive her jagged teeth down into your neck. And just at the last second, Barclay runs in and grabs her and holds her under the arms. And from the ground where you're laying, you see him pulling her. She is restrained and fighting, but he is pulling her back toward Amnesty Lodge, and Mama looks at him and then looks down at you.

And then you realize that everybody is looking down at you. and then, you feel your back start to get wet. And then, you don't feel anything on your back anymore. And... then you start to feel cold, and from your position on the ground, your vision is starting to fade a bit, but you look up, and you see the only rifle that is still pointed outward with some smoke coming out of it belongs to Pigeon, who looks terrified.

She collapses. And you hear Mama talking, and she's saying something, and she's frantically gesturing to Sheriff Owens, who nods and takes off running for help. And then Mama asks you something and you can't quite make it out, and then she shouts your name, and she shouts something else, but you just can't hear it anymore.

You just hear the wind. And you just see the stars above you.

They are beautiful.

And then... they're gone.

[long silence]

[music plays]

Griffin: You see Minerva in the flesh now, and she is wearing these rad battle robes, and she is armed with this Zweihänder, like, big ass sword. Uh,

with her, y'know, big bald head that is like, glistening moonlight off of it. And she smiles when you say that you had it handled, and she looks at this four armed being, and she says...

Minerva: Duck Newton, it looks like you already handled it.

Griffin: Because sure enough, this thing is starting to, now, finally fade away. You see it start to try and flex to pull itself back together, but it is not working. And very slowly, these puffs of white light are starting to drift away from it. And it still starts walking toward you. What do you do?

Justin: Goddamn. I'm gonna chop its legs off.

Griffin: Okay. As you step forward to deliver a coup de grâce on it, you see it stop and then like, very, very quickly turn around backward and stretch an arm out with a hand extended. And as it does that, you see something appear. You see a rift. And it is different from the rifts that like, this other thing has conjured when it's needed to slip from one place to the other. Uh, the border of it, first of all, is way thicker, and it's shimmering this like, brilliant, golden light.

Uh, and as soon as this rift appears, you can see like... you can see faint traces—not faint traces. You see brilliant, brilliant light pouring out of this rift. You see, actually, like, several beams of intersecting white light. But from your position right now, you can't really see much more. And this thing begins sort of uh, very quickly and with purpose, sort of hobbling towards the rift. What do you do now?

Justin: Do I see anything? What do I see through the rift?

Griffin: Like... I think you have to investigate a mystery to see anything more. But I think that's also going to buy this thing some time.

Duck: Minerva, where is it going?

Griffin: She looks uh, agog as this rift appears, and she actually rushes forward towards it and does not answer you.

Justin: [laughs] I'm gonna uh, I'm gonna whip Beacon around its arm.

Griffin: Okay. Which one? [laughs]

Justin: One of the good ones, Griffin. What the fuck does it matter?

Griffin: Okay, alright.

Travis: [laughs]

Justin: I'm trying to hold on.

Griffin: Okay. Uh, keeping it from—

Justin: If it's going anywhere, it's taking me with it.

Griffin: Okay. What did you roll?

Justin: That's a...

Griffin: This is an act under pressure.

Justin: Eight.

Griffin: Uh, okay. On an eight, you get a worse outcome, hard choice, or a price to pay. You are not going to be able to pull this thing backwards, and you are not going to be able to follow it. But you are going to be able to kind of just like, hold it and approach a little bit closer to the rift and get a better look in there. Uh, that's sort of the mixed success here.

Justin: That's all I need.

Griffin: Okay, what do you do?

Justin: I mean, what do I see is the question?

Griffin: Yeah, you're close enough now, and I think you only have like, a moment here, because you tried to delay this thing, and you did. It did not make it through. Uh, you see... well, what you're able to see, it is difficult to surmise; not because it is so like, abstract and complicated – although, it super is.

[music plays]

Griffin: It is so bright inside of this rift that it actually hurts to look at it. But what you see is a facility. Like, this enormous, scientific facility from what you can tell. And it is... it's largely comprised of like, this one massive, tall, cylindrical chamber. And your vision through this rift, it's at ground level. And at the center of the chamber, you see this shallow dome of light that is super wide. It's several dozen feet in circumference.

And from it, actually, even from the distance that you are at from it, you hear the same kind of like, digitized buzzing language that this four-armed being appears to speak when you have hurt it and it has shouted out in pain. And this dome is flanked by these rows of massive computers, and they're just roaring. You feel a tremendous amount of heat coming out of this chamber.

But the displays on these computers have grown like, dark green and dusty with disuse, and the other thing that you see is, around the back wall of this chamber are these large, cylindrical pods. And most of them are completely empty, but a few of them have figures floating in them. And from your position, you can kind of only see silhouettes, but while you can't surmise what they are, their silhouettes look unnatural.

And in one of the pods, you actually see this mist coming out of these needles that are emerging from everywhere, and they are... this mist is like, stitching itself together to create one of these silhouettes. And then you look up from the ground floor, and... your eyes can just barely take in what you see without just searing pain.

You see beams of light. Countless beams, crisscrossing the walls of this chamber, as it extends upward, beyond what you can see. And each beam appears to be like, projecting out of a large, metal ring, and then just crossing the length of the chamber before landing in a ring like, directly across from it.

And there's just hundreds of these beams, you assume. Although, they are far too, like, painfully brilliant for you to count. And you look over, and you see Minerva, who is seeing the same things, too, and then, this four-armed being manages to shake off the sword and start to run forward. And then, that dome at the center of the room, you see it bubble upward. And then, this shockwave bursts out of it, and you see it blow the dust upward from the machinery surrounding it.

And the entire chamber shakes as this dome just screams, and then the shockwave passes through the rift and collides with the four-armed figure, and just cuts it in half. And its two halves just float upward, and disintegrate instantly like vapor, and the rift instantly disappears.

Duck: See, I had it handled.

Griffin: [laughs] You see red lights flashing in the distance, and you hear sirens, and you see, through the canopy of trees in the forest surrounding the telescope, you see an ambulance and a couple of squad cars rolling up on the telescope. And you can actually see over the rim now, you see Dr. Drake, and she's tending to Leo, who uh, is alive.

And Minerva, her mouth is open, and she sheathes her sword, and she sits down and kind of puts her elbows on her knees, sitting inside of the telescope. And she has this huge smile on her face, and you see her starting to tear up. And she says...

Minerva: Have you seen that world before, Duck Newton? That world of light?

Duck: No. No, nothing like that.

Griffin: She looks up at you and extends a hand, asking for you to help her up.

[music plays]

Justin: I do.

Griffin: She rises to her position well above you, and she says...

Minerva: I am not quite sure what that was, my friend. But I assume that they know who we are. And hopefully now, Duck Newton... now they know what we're capable of.

[music plays]

Griffin: Aubrey, you make it through the gate, and you smell gunpowder. And I think, like, instantly, you are scared of what that means, and then you notice that everybody has their guns more or less stowed away. And then, you see, laying on the ground, Ned. And Mama is with him, and uh, Sheriff Owens is with him, and the crowd here has thinned out from what it was just before you left.

But Ned is on the ground, and he's not moving.

Aubrey: What... um... a lot to take in, here. Janelle? Mama?

Griffin: Uh, Janelle is nowhere to be seen. But Mama looks up at you, and she wipes away a tear, and she says...

Mama: [sighs] How did it go on your side, Aubrey?

Aubrey: Uh... I—I—I charged up the crystal, and um... what... is Ned okay?

Mama: No. He's not. [sighs]

Aubrey: Does he need—I can try to heal him?

Travis: And uh, Aubrey tries to use magic to heal Ned. Uh, well. It will be an eleven minus one, a ten.

Griffin: You place your hands on Ned, and you see a glowing light fade over him, and... nothing happens.

Aubrey: Ned. What—Ma—Mama... what happened? Is—is this the—this is the shape shifter, right?

Griffin: She looks up at you, and she stands up from where she's at, and sort of comes around to where you are, and she just wraps her arms around you, and gives you a hug.

Aubrey: No.

Griffin: Tries to.

Aubrey: No, it's not—this is—we won, right? Like, we stopped it, because—this can't—Ned can't be dead, Mama, because I—I—[choking up] Mama, I told him to leave. I was...

Griffin: And then you feel this like, slight cool breeze coming across the pines where this crowd has gathered, this crowd that has just fallen absolutely silent. And all you hear is this wind, and it increases quickly, and then dramatically, and then the crowd turns to face where it's coming from, and that is when the super sonic boom hits.

[ambient music plays]

Griffin: And everybody assembled here is thrown to the ground, and a tree at the perimeter of the clearing is torn from the ground and topples over, very nearly missing the crowd. And then, there's a sound that follows the boom; this sickening, deep cracking noise that shakes the ground as it passes over you.

And with that, the rest of the town's residents here, they just... they fuckin' take off. They start sprinting toward the main road in fear, and you see Sheriff Owens look at Mama, and she nods, and Sheriff Owens takes off to make sure that everybody is accounted for.

And then, Aubrey, the moon disappears, and the clearing goes dark, and you see blue smoke pouring upward from the source of this sound. And through it, you make out the shape that has just blotted out the moon. It is a jagged diamond shaped rock that is floating, weightlessly, in the air.

It's huge – just this 40 foot tall, monolithic rock. And through this thick, blue smoke, you see, actually, something like, sliding off of it, and it looks like snow. And that's when you realize what you're seeing floating in the air is the peak of Mount Kepler, which has been ripped from its base and is now hovering above the mountain.

And this vision... it looks familiar, because it looks like the image that was in the book that you delivered to Janelle. What do you do?

Travis: Uh... Aubrey is gonna read a bad situation?

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: But specifically, trying to open up ye olde third eye.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Yeah. So read a bad situation is plus sharp, so it's a nine plus one, it's a ten.

Griffin: Uh, okay. I will say... what's your question here?

Travis: Oh, I don't even know about that. I was just trying to—

Griffin: What's my best way in, what's my best way out, are there dangers we haven't noticed, what's the biggest threat, what's most vulnerable to me, what's the best way to protect the victims?

Travis: Uh, I'm gonna say the dangers we haven't noticed, using the third eye.

Griffin: Okay. With third eye, yeah. For sure. Uh, well, the third eye has a question which is like, what magic has been cast here? So I'm gonna say, putting those two points together, the two things that you know is that they cloaked themselves with the same sort of uh, shimmer that used to be on the archway, right? Where you couldn't see them if you didn't know that they were there, and you figure that they managed to pass through the snow. So like, that's what you get with your third eye.

The thing that you also get is, you see a set of footprints that are leading away from like, where everybody else sort of just took off from in the snow, and you see these footprints heading toward the base of Mount Kepler.

Travis: Alright, well, just running on pure adrenaline and instinct, follow. Go.

Griffin: Okay. You sprint through the woods—

Travis: While I will say, still crying, but just adrenaline at this point, and blood, y'know, blood pounding in ears kind of deal, y'know?

Griffin: Then we see Aubrey just sprinting through the woods with this blue light from the sky, from this smoke, illuminating her face, passing through the trees with tears just streaking behind her. And shockingly quickly, you are at the base of Mount Kepler, and you follow these footprints upward, and you manage to just like, scale, y'know, half of a slope, just with the wind at your back, pushed forward by adrenaline and anger and sadness. And then, you see them. You see Janelle.

And she's flanked by those half dozen Sylvans, and all of them have their arms just outstretched toward the heavens. They are all supporting Janelle, who you see is holding the book that you delivered to her in one hand, just reciting furiously, the passages within. What do you do?

Aubrey: Janelle, what in the name of fuck are you doing?

Griffin: Uh, a couple of people sort of get distracted when you yell, and turn away from their spell casting. And in that moment, you see the smoke start to sputter just a little bit, and then they realize what they're doing, and put their arms back up. And Janelle, with the book still in her hand, says...

Janelle: I can save Sylvain, Aubrey. I can save Sylvain. I can siphon just a portion, a fragment of life from your world, and transfer it to our own. I can do it, Aubrey, and your world, it'll suffer minimal damage. Would you not make this sacrifice, Aubrey, knowing what it could accomplish for my people? Would you not do it? This is the answer I've been looking for for years, and you were the one who brought it to me.

Aubrey: Janelle... To take something from someone else isn't a sacrifice.

Janelle: Fine, Aubrey, call it theft, then. But if it's what keeps my world alive, without killing yours, this is a harmless crime.

Aubrey: That's from the book, right? This is from the book?

Janelle: Yes.

Aubrey: The book that Dani got from the shape shifter?

Janelle: I—from what?

Aubrey: [sighs] There was a shape shifter who uh, could take different people's forms. Took Dani's form, took Ned's form, took the form of a morgue employee at one point I think. That was a couple episodes ago. And that's where Dani got the book from, and you're using—

Janelle: What are you saying—Aubrey... why? Why in Sylvain's name would you not tell me this sooner?

[music plays]

Aubrey: I... I was covering for a friend.

Janelle: Aubrey... [laughs] How could you—

Griffin: And then another crack rings through the air. But this one's actually different from the first – this isn't the sound of like, an enormous thing breaking. It is the sound of thunder, very close by, and then you look up, and in that blue smoke that is coming out of the mountain, you see this light surging inside of it. Like thunder, deep inside a cloud.

And that smoke is starting to change – it is a deep, dark purple color now, and you hear these Sylvans that are with Janelle like, gasp. And she looks up at it, and looks back down at the book, and she says...

Janelle: This isn't supposed to happen, Aubrey.

Aubrey: Yeah, no, I'm getting that, Janelle.

Griffin: And then, the smoke turns a dark crimson, and then, that light that is ping ponging around inside of it, uh, it's going off just furiously, now. And then, suddenly, the light disappears. And then, this thick curtain of red smoke splits in two, and... you hear the whistling of a sharp wind above you as the peak of Mount Kepler enters a free fall. What do you do?

Travis: Jesus Pleasus. Um, I think the reaction is to grab Janelle and pull her away. We're running, and I think, to facilitate, we're gonna use some magic to do one thing beyond human limitations. We'll see.

Griffin: You're trying to just like, pull yourselves out of here?

Travis: Yeah, so it would've been a seven plus three, a ten, but I have a minus one, so it's a nine. Mixed success. Well, so that means that glitches happen, right?

Griffin: Uh, yeah. You used magic, so...

Travis: I'm gonna go with, take one harm, ignore armor.

Griffin: Okay. Here's what I'm gonna say happens, then. Uh, you do this. You try to pull them forward, and as that happens, you feel this searing pain in your leg as the wound that you managed to magically sort of close up, you feel it reopen. And instantly, you feel yourself getting faint as you just like, pull everybody away from the path of this boulder, and you, yourself, are still definitely in it.

[music plays]

Griffin: And Janelle looks down at you and grabs you by the shoulders, and starts to pull. And then, for a moment, time stands still in Kepler.

The deep, red light of this arcane storm rolling above the town is cast on the faces of her residents. Keith and Hollis and the Hornets all on their bikes, all just trying to shepherd the crowd to safety on the top side road, and Agent Stern and Sheriff Owens who are racing towards the source of the commotion, and Barclay, who is holding a half conscious Dani in the warm waters behind Amnesty Lodge. And on Mama, who isn't looking up at the light, but on the face of her fallen friend, and on Duck, and Minerva, seeing the storm in the distance. And on you, Aubrey, and on Janelle.

And then, time catches up. And the peak of Mount Kepler, once the scenic treasure of a small town in West Virginia's Greenbrier River valley, returns to it's original position with violent momentum.

[music plays]

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Comedy and culture.

Artist owned.

Audience supported.

Nnekay: Hey, James!

James: Hey, Nnekay! What we doin', gurl?

Nnekay: We are inviting the awesome listeners of Maximum Fun to join us at Minority Korner.

James: Ooh, fun!

Nnekay: But you know how we go on tangent city.

James: We're the joint mayors.

Nnekay: We're not gonna do that, okay?

James: Supes focused.

Nnekay: Okay, so, Minority Korner is where you can all come and get your pop culture takes.

James: Plus, social commentary, news, and TV and movie reactions, like Avengers: Endgame.

Nnekay: No spoilers here.

James: Ooh, snap!

Nnekay: Sometimes we dig into the vault, and we review and recap those movies you missed.

James: Looking at you, Halle Berry's Kidnapped.

Nnekay: I love how she always gives one thousand percent.

James: Like Beyonce.

Nnekay: Did you see Homecoming on Netflix?

James: She was burning it down like the mother of dragons.

Nnekay: Have you seen the latest Game of Thrones?

James: So good. Only thing missing?

Nnekay: More black people.

James: [simultaneously] More black people.

What'd you think about Mayor Pete?

Nnekay: Wait a minute, James...

James: We went on a tangent?

Nnekay: Yes.

James: Ah, well. Join us every Friday for more tangents.

Nnekay: On Maximum Fun.

Elliott: Have you ever watched a movie so bad you just needed to talk to somebody about it?

Dan: Well, here at The Flop House, we watch a mad movie, and then talk about it.

Stuart: Yeah, you don't have to do anything. We'll watch it, and we'll talk it. We do the hard work.

Dan: Featuring the beautiful vocal talents of Dan McCoy...

Stuart: Stuart Wellington...

Elliott: And me, America's rascal, Elliott Kalan.

Stuart: New episodes every other Saturday at MaximumFun.org, or wherever you get your podcasts, dude. Bye bye.

Elliott: Bye bye.

[music plays]