

The Adventure Zone: Amnesty – Episode 30

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Griffin: It's the middle of May, 1989.

[music plays]

Griffin: The wildflowers have just begun to bloom in generous patches throughout the Monongahela National Forest, attracting legions of locals and visiting hikers alike to the deepest, untamed reaches of the woods. It is, without a doubt, the busiest time of year for Arlo Thacker, founder, president, and sole employee of Kepler Expeditions.

He is an outdoorsman for hire. Sometimes a spelunker. Sometimes a white water rafter. But in the spring, he's nearly always a trail guide. We see Thacker wrapping up a wildflower tour of the Monongahela with a troupe of students from Pocahontas Middle School. Scores of children are lining up behind their respective teachers, preparing to file back toward the buses.

One teacher's count comes up short. A young girl from the sixth grade class isn't with the group, Thacker. This is bad for the sixth grade teacher at Pocahontas Middle, and very bad for KepEx's brand optics.

What does Arlo Thacker do?

Clint: Well, he's gonna have to go find the kid, obviously. What is this kid's name?

Griffin: This kid's name, the teacher tells you, is Juno Devine.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: And uh, she was with the group earlier, and they were exploring the woods, looking for patches of wildflowers, and she stopped to take notes, the teacher thinks, and they just moved on without her.

Clint: It ought to be pretty easy. Just backtrack from where they are now, and uh, he'll be able to find her pretty easily. I mean...

Griffin: Yeah, I think act under pressure. I think you're under pressure, because if you don't find her, that would probably mean the end of KepEx.

Clint: Yeah, well, we don't want that. Uh, that's an eight, plus, uh... let's see, what do I add to act under... cool?

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: That's a seven.

Griffin: Oh, you have a minus one cool?

Clint: Yep. Sure does.

Griffin: Okay. It is a mixed success. You find her, but it takes a while, and uh, the teachers and the students are all getting very, very antsy as you stumble upon her, as you sort of backtrack through the woods. It takes you... she was quite a ways back, and you see Juno, and she's sitting on a log, overlooking a small creek that's flowing through the woods. And she's wearing nearly as much outdoors gear as you are, and she's holding some kind of sketchbook, and you can see some drawings of birds and plants.

And you can see those, because she has it open, and she's trying to shake it, because it's just sopping wet all the way through. And she, uh, has some tears in her eyes, and doesn't notice your approach.

Thacker: Young lady, what in the world are you thinkin'? Wha—why did you not stay with the group? We have already egressed from this location. Um, what—what's wrong?

Griffin: She wipes her nose, and she says...

Juno: I'm sorry, Mr. Thacker. I uh... I... [laughs] I lost track of time. I thought... I didn't... I didn't want to be... [sighs] My classmates have made it very clear that they don't favor my company, and so, I thought I could just stay and take a couple more drawings. But I think that's out of the question, too.

Griffin: And she, y'know, keeps trying to wring out her ruined sketchbook.

Thacker: I understand. I'm not real crazy about people, either. I'm not a big fan of... [laughs] The human race. But you can't stay out here, especially in these conditions, all by yourself. Believe it or not, even though it is spring, it gets cold out here at night, and uh, y'know, you're kind of my responsibility. So uh, can... can I... wait a minute. Let me see what you drew.

Griffin: Uh, she hands you the sketchbook. Uh, some of the like, pages closer to the front are a little bit drier. This thing was obviously thrown into the creek by some bully types, and it's not a very deep creek, so parts of it are unaffected. And you see just these like, gorgeous drawings of uh, of wildflowers and of trees and uh, you see a few birds. And the birds have their scientific names written under them, and you just see all of this very, very detailed sort of cataloging of the Monongahela's natural treasures.

Thacker: And you're telling me that your friends threw this in the water? Young lady, you have talent. This is some... this is really nice stuff. This is really good. And how do you know the names? How do you know all the technical terms for these birds and fauna and such?

Griffin: Uh, she is... she has fully recovered, now. She's smiling actually, now that you've complimented her work, and she says...

Juno: Well, some of my classmates are... into, y'know, watchin' basketball. And some of my classmates are into New Kids on the Block. But I'm... I just... I look around here in Kepler, and I realize just how good we've got it, and I don't understand why everybody else doesn't know the names of these birds and these plants. They're not ours, but they kind of are, for the time being. Y'know what I mean?

Thacker: Absolutely. Listen, I love it out here. I spend more time out here than I do in that big city of Kepler, that's for dang sure. Well, listen, let me tell you something. If you... if you will just pack up your stuff and come back with me, I'll get you back to your group, and uh, y'know what? We'll... I'll make a point to make sure that uh, people know not to bother you quite as much.

I can't make any promises, but... y'know, anytime you want to come out here, you are more than welcome, and I'll give you the friends and family rate.

Griffin: She laughs and packs up her bag, and starts to walk back toward the buses. And then she turns, and she says...

Juno: Mr. Thacker, if you don't mind, how did you... [sighs] How did you get this job? How did you get to do, y'know, something like this? 'Cause it honestly... it seems like a dream job.

Thacker: Well, it is kind of my dream. It's been kind of a rough dream lately. Um, y'know, I just always loved it out here. I love the cavin'. I love the water. I love white water. Uh, when I was a kid, my family brought me up here, and uh, we vacationed up here a lot. And I just said, y'know what? I'd like to be one with the land and give people a chance to discover it the way I discovered it, so uh...

Y'know, and listen – people think outer space is y'know, wild and unexplored, and they think the bottom of the sea is this great big mystery. I'm tellin' you – there's stuff in these woods, in these mountains and stuff, that would boggle your mind. There is so much out here people don't even know. Some of it's wild and wonderful as we say, but some of it's wild and weird, that's for sure.

Griffin: She uh, grins and she says...

Juno: I'm gonna find it. I'm gonna find all of it. Thank you, Mr. Thacker.

Griffin: And she turns and uh, she walks back toward the buses. And you hear the, y'know, the fallen foliage crunching beneath her feet as she walks away, and then you hear that same sound behind you. And you turn, and... your life changes.

The entity standing before you is not human. It's not animal. Its body is lean, almost shriveled, and it's covered in these glistening, sharp scales, and patches of filthy, white fur. And its face is primal and gaunt, and it's locked in this unearthly, open grin. And it takes a step toward you, and also, toward the children just beyond you. Just out of eyesight through the forest.

What do you do?

Clint: Uh, well, uh... Thacker carries a machete axe, a brush axe that he uses to clear the brush. 29 inches of pretty dangerous stuff. So he takes that loose off his belt, takes it out of the sheath, because he knows he'd cut his leg off. Because in a way, he's a little bit like me. Uh, unsheathes it, and says, uh...

Thacker: Hold on there, friend, uh, sport. You uh, just kind of hold on. What... what the hell... are you?

Griffin: Uh, you hear panting. Wild panting coming from inside this thing. And you hear almost just this... this musical breathing, just these dark, haunting tones coming from inside of it. And it opens its jaw, almost like it's unhinged it fully, and it takes another step toward you, and now is... you can feel its breath on you.

Clint: He's gonna take a tentative step back, but he's also kind of waving this machete axe around, y'know, in what he hopes is a menacing way. He doesn't know if this is an animal. He doesn't know, y'know, what the hell it is, but he's hoping maybe he can intimidate it a little bit, and maybe scare it off with a little fancy machete work.

Griffin: Okay. You are doing some sick machete stunts, and uh, trying to show this thing that you mean business. And you... hear this wet thunk, and its eyes go wide, and just this breathing just stops. And it is standing

perfectly still, and then, you hear a second thunk. And then, it just goes limp, and it falls down into the creek.

And standing there, behind this creature, holding a woodsman's axe, is Madeline Cobb. And she says...

Madeline: [sighs] Welp, Thacker, uh... is there any chance I could convince you that that was a feral boar or something?

[music plays]

Thacker: Hm... I... don't think so, Madeline. I um... I'm pretty sure I've never seen a boar that looked quite like that, like it had little mirrors all over it. Um, I'm assuming this is something, uh... out of my area of expertise, but not out of your area of expertise.

Madeline: ...Yeah. Thacker... let's talk.

[music plays]

Griffin: Now it's 2013, and you have just finished packing up your big hiking pack, your biggest hiking pack. I assume you have several large ones. This one is for when shit hits the fan. For the most ambitious expedition you've ever embarked on.

The last few hunts have been... costly. For the first time in your Abomination fighting career, you and Mama have felt the weight of your responsibility. And also, for the first time, you've come to understand that weight is too much. And so, you have packed your bag, and you are leaving for Sylvain in the morning. You will cross beyond the border of the capital city there and seek out the source of the monsters that are spilling into your world.

How does Arlo Thacker prepare for this journey?

Clint: Um, actually, I think what he has in the pack... I mean, he's got the machete that he brings. He's got this hiking staff, which he's done a few little improvements to. Y'know, he's not gonna be a big tent, bedroll kind of

guy. I mean, he loves outdoors. I think he has brought along a journal. I don't know, binoculars. Just stuff for observing.

Griffin: You got some gorp?

Clint: Got a big ol' bag of gorp. He makes his own gorp. He makes it out of pretzels and peanut butter candy and pepperonis.

Griffin: That's—[laughs] Oh my God.

Clint: Yeah.

Griffin: Arlo!

Clint: Doesn't that sound good? Little pepperonis?

Griffin: No, it sounds like a nightmare. I love that you live off the land, except for your gorp, which is the most synthetic nightmare food I've ever heard.

Clint: Yeah, I don't think he's like, a hunter kind of stuff. I think he'll just fend for himself off the land. I think if he's bringing anything in his pack, he's bringing a lot of water, y'know, just in case, and a water purification kit. Probably some binoculars. And y'know, maybe... maybe that's about it. Y'know, a change of clothes, maybe.

Griffin: Sure.

Clint: I don't think that's high on his priorities, though.

Griffin: [laughs] Uh, okay. You have all that packed up, and uh, it's the night before, and where are you at? Does KepEx have like a building somewhere, or do you operate this out of... where does KepEx operate out of?

Clint: KepEx has a bivouac. Um, it's an old military, like a Quonset hut. Y'know, those big...

Griffin: Sure.

Clint: Semi-permanent things, y'know. He has plans to build a permanent facility, but y'know, business hadn't been all that great. And especially business hasn't been all that great since he has been spending so much time with Mama and the Amnesty Lodge people, doing all this hunting and stuff. The business is kind of... I hadn't closed down or anything, but it sure hasn't been thriving without his personal attention all the time.

Griffin: Right. Okay. It's the night before, and you are in your bivouac, and you've just finished packing, and you hear the... I don't know, man, flap? Is there a flap? Is there a door?

Clint: No, there'd be a door.

Griffin: Okay. You hear the door open. I guess I don't know what a bivouac is. You hear the door open, and—

Clint: Think Quonset hut. You know what a Quonset hut is?

Griffin: No! Why do you think that I don't know what bivouac is, but I would definitely know what Quonset hut is?

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, I'm just going to assume it's a building, and uh, Mama—

Clint: It's like if you cut a cylinder in half.

Griffin: Oh, sure. Oh, sure, it looks like a... folks at home, it basically kind of looks like an airplane hangar.

Clint: Yeah.

Griffin: But with a door on it. Okay, I'm with you. I got you now. Uh, okay. You hear the door into KepEx open and close. You have the closed sign on the door, so you can only assume it's Mama coming in. She's the only one who would have the sort of familiarity with you to just like, barge into your business while it's closed. Did you tell Mama that you were doing this?

Clint: No, I don't think so. He's—listen, he is not much of a joiner. I mean, he works with them, but it's almost like he's a lone wolf. He's very independent, and y'know, I think he checks in, but since, y'know, he is kind of a self-appointed archivist, y'know, he feels it more important to keep track of all this information. But he's gotta get out there and find the information. Doesn't want to waste time sitting around, talking to a bunch of people about it. So I think he just kind of jumps in.

Griffin: Sure. Uh, okay. Mama sees your packed up bag, and she sighs, and then she looks at you, and she says...

Mama: Yeah, I guess, uh... I guess someone's gotta do it. You sure you don't want to draw straws or something?

Thacker: Nah. [laughs] I do not believe that the people we associate with have the expertise to be able to do what I'm about to do, and you know that I'm the best one to find out about it.

Mama: Yeah, you um... you make it a point to not let us forget that particular fact, Arlo. Uh, alright. Damn it... Arlo, I realize we're both gettin' up there in age, so maybe this is kind of a weird thing to say out loud, but uh... uh, you're my best friend, Arlo, and if you do not come back, I am coming in after you, you hear me?

Thacker: I... I'm havin' trouble believin' that. I'm your best friend? [laughs] Seriously?

Griffin: She laughs, too, and she says...

Mama: I guess that says, uh, more about me than it does about you, Thacker. [laughs]

Thacker: [laughing] I think it says a lot about both of us, Madeline. I do believe. Listen, I... trust me, I'm in and out. I will insert myself into the situation, and I'll be right back. And I promise, I will tell you everything I see.

Mama: Well... since you promised...

Griffin: And she turns and opens the door, and then, she stops and turns back to you one last time. She says...

Mama: Arlo, there's... there's one last thing. What's your password?

Griffin: And she gestures to your old ass laptop sitting on your desk.

[ambient music plays]

Griffin: It's been nearly six years now, and you have spent most of that time just desperately lost in the blighted lands beyond the city's walls. Your supplies lasted longer than you expected, but after several months, you had to start foraging. You found yourself wildly unprepared to do so, given your lack of knowledge about Sylvain's edible flora and fauna. So instead, you turned to the ruins of just these various cities and civilizations that you discovered during your track.

You found these small outposts and cozy villages. You even found a city that like, rivals the scope of the capital in size, all just completely desolate. Long since abandoned, once the Quell took it over. And these places, they were the most dangerous that you visited on your expedition. You had to play it stealthy to avoid detection by the beings who were driven feral by the Quell.

But by far, they were the most rewarding, and you sort of subsisted on the supplies you found. And after the first week, you put some distance between you and the capital, and those roaming herds of blighted Sylvans grew less and less frequent. So I mean, you definitely still had to sneak around, but you were able to, y'know, make shelter where you could catch your breath, unassailed, for decent stretches of time.

And you scoured the countryside, looking for any signs of the monsters that have been plaguing Kepler for so long. And—

Clint: So has he been lost, or has this quest just taken a hell of a lot longer than he thought it was gonna take?

Griffin: You have been lost for a while.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: And unfortunately, after years of searching, you are no closer to finding the source of the Abominations. What you have learned a great deal about, however, is the Quell. So I want you to roll to investigate a mystery, and Arlo is... or, Thacker is a um, we're using a new playbook for him, right?

Clint: Searcher. He is a Searcher.

Griffin: Right. The fine folks behind Monster of the Week are releasing an expansion for it called...

Clint: Tome of Mysteries.

Griffin: Yes. And it's got really cool shit in there.

Clint: Yeah. It's got four new hunter classes, some really cool stuff you can do with luck, and it really kind of focuses in on weird and some abilities with weird.

Griffin: Yes.

Clint: And so, uh—

Griffin: It's got some X-Files flavor to it, which I'm also super into. And you are playing the Searcher?

Clint: Yeah, the Searcher. It's uh... I don't know how—it's just somebody who's out there, searching for these mysteries. Searching for the cryptids, trying to learn what they can about them. Kind of compiling knowledge on them. That just seemed kind of a natural...

Griffin: Right. It's perfect for Thacker, yeah. And there's also a sort of supernatural element to it, which uh, is going to make sense for Thacker here in just a moment. Uh, so roll to investigate a mystery for me.

Clint: Okay, so he rolls and eleven...

Griffin: Holy shit.

Clint: Plus two, 'cause he's a plus two sharp, so that's a 13.

Griffin: That is amazing.

Clint: I'm likin' the way this guy rolls.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: Literally.

Griffin: You get to hold two questions. You hold two, and you get to ask two questions from this list. I'm gonna say, because you got a 13 on that roll, uh, you... 'cause we haven't really worked out like, catching Thacker up on advancement with the other two characters. Go ahead and take a third question as well, and this will represent sort of the things that you have learned about the Quell.

Clint: Okay, so, of those questions, investigate a mystery... and where exactly is he? Tell me again.

Griffin: I think, in answering these questions, we are going to bounce around. We're gonna bounce around, y'know, the time of your six year expedition, and uh, the places that you have wandered and visited and seen,

and I think we're just gonna show like, flashes of it to answer these questions.

Those questions are, by the way, what happened here, what sort of creature is it, what can it do, what can hurt it, where did it go, what was it going to do, and what is being concealed here?

Clint: Okay, um, I think... I think start off, what happened here?

Griffin: Sure. So from the surface, if you were an inhabitant of this world, uh, you would've seen the following. The Quell just started to seep upward through these fissures in the ground, several decades after the crystal in the capital city, the heart of Sylvain, was shattered by those human invaders. And it looks like... it looked... [sighs] It looked like a storm that was happening on the ground.

And at first, it was a very, very weak phenomenon. Y'know, it was something that was weird, and people would, y'know, check it out, and it was a topic of conversation, but not necessarily a big threat. But uh, it grew. The fissures themselves started to grow. More fissures started to appear all around the planet, and this living storm, uh, continued to sort of just uh, y'know, boil over and grow out of it.

And any Sylvan who came too close to these fissures, who got caught up in this living storm, they would just lose their faculties completely and become just extremely aggressive. And it kept growing, and now, the only place that is safe is uh, the capital city where people can take shelter around the crystal and the last remnants of Sylvain's light, which is keeping this storm at bay.

That is what has happened here from sort of the surface perspective.

Clint: Alright. What is being concealed here?

Griffin: What is being concealed here is the true nature of the Quell. To put it in sort of simple terms, this stuff that is coming out and surrounding the city and is making people enraged, it is the symptom. It is not the sort of

like, disease itself. It is the effect that the Quell is spreading, not necessarily what the Quell is.

What is being concealed here is what the Quell is, and I think, you discover what that is from uh, some books. You find a library in one of these abandoned cities; this great, just tremendous library. And uh, you find a tome that you can read, and it explains what the Quell is. It is what Sylvain is, essentially. It's an entity that is intrinsically linked with the planet that it dwells within.

Although, y'know, despite the devastation that it's kind of currently sowing across the planet, it was never like, vilified in the text that you discovered. It's just like, a force of nature. It's just like, gravity. Where Sylvain created life, the Quell was, y'know, entropy itself. It was a necessary balancing force. Sylvain existed to nourish and protect the people who lived on the planet's surface. The Quell existed to protect Sylvain.

That is what the thing is. That is what the Quell is.

Clint: Where did it go?

Griffin: The day that you find the answer to that question is the last day in Sylvain that you can remember. You were tired. You, y'know, you had been more lost than you have been willing to admit to yourself, but after such a long time, you finally pick up on your old trail back to the capital, and back to the archway home. And your excitement clouds your usually razor sharp, y'know, cautious hiking perception, and uh, you lose your footing while you're navigating a particularly large fissure that you found, not too far from the capital.

And you fall. And you've fallen before in your line of work. It's not so uncommon, and you know what kind of scrapes and bruises and...

Clint: Yeah, I could always get up.

Griffin: Yeah. But you realize that you are falling much farther than you ever have before, and as fear grips you, you feel this cool, damp cloud overtake you, and you lose consciousness.

[ambient music plays]

Griffin: And then you just have these glimpses of lucidity, interwoven with profound, vivid dreams. You're experiencing memories and emotions that aren't your own. You feel, first, this intense, unwavering love for Sylvain. For the planet, for the entity, all of it. You remember being in her presence at the center of everything. You remember marveling at her works. So much so, that you mourned your role in keeping those works in check.

But she never harbored any spite for you. And then, one day, Sylvain answered her inhabitants' call, and she retreated to the surface, and you never saw her again. And you waited for so long. And she never returned. And once you learned what happened, once you learned who had taken her, your hesitation to destroy her works vanished. And so, you began carrying out the grim task of eradicating life from the surface of the planet, making way for something new.

And then, once that is finished, you're going to find the ones who took her from you and eradicate them, too. And then, you, Thacker... you are conscious again, and you are weightless. You're floating in this enormous, spherical chamber, deep, deep, deep underground. And you are being whipped around the room. You're caught in just this whirlwind storm, emanating from the center of the room.

And right there, at the center, you see a bright, red sphere. And it's standing perfectly still – perfectly static. And you feel the Quell's anger just become stronger and stronger, until it completely overtakes you. And then a large, furry paw scoops you out from the storm and pulls you through the earth, and that's the last thing you remember.

[ambient music plays]

Griffin: Hey everybody, this is Griffin McElroy, your dungeon master, your best friend, and your pilot for this evening. Please keep your arms and hands and legs inside the airplane. I shouldn't need to tell you that.

Thank you for listening to episode 30 of The Adventure Zone: Amnesty. We have just begun our final arc. Very, very excited to get to it. Uh, the rest of the episode is not just a Clint and Griffin affair, but we needed to sort of do some backstory stuff on ol' Arlo Thacker. Uh, so, yeah, we're getting to the end of it. We're very, very excited to see where the story ends up. I really have no idea, and uh, to y'know, talk about what we're planning on doing next.

So yeah, I think that's it for this pre-roll. Let's talk about the sponsors. Squarespace is one of them. Squarespace is great. They have all these tools that you can use to turn your cool idea into a new website, or blog, or published content. They even let you sell products and services of all kinds, using really clever e-commerce functionality. Really, anything you want to do with a website, Squarespace is gonna help you make a webspace. That's not a word. But it should be.

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Also want to tell you about Quip. That's my toothbrush. My toothbrush is a Quip. If it wasn't for Quip, my mouth would be dirty, because it's a toothbrush. Hey, it's time for spring cleaning. Quip's got an easy way to start. Clean your freaking mouth. Your teeth and your tongue and the tip of the lips. Don't—I don't actually think you need to brush your lips.

But, y'know, two minutes, twice a day, it can help pave the way to a healthier mouth and mind. And you can go ahead and get the whole family refreshed with Quip.

We have a Quip toothbrush. It's really slick, it's small, runs on a single battery, and you just swap it out. It's really easy. Uh, you can sign up for a like, subscription every three months. You can get a new brush head on a dentist recommended schedule for just five bucks. They have a kids' brush. It's the same as the original version, but it's just, y'know, sized down for littler mouths.

And y'know, it's accepted by the American Dental Association, so it's gotta be good. It's got a little holster that you can stick to your mirror, and then you can pop that right off, use it as a travel cover. It's really, really nice.

So over one million happy, healthy mouths love Quip. Add yours to the pile – the mouth pile. Quip starts at just 25 bucks, and 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).

Thank you to uh, everybody who has been tweeting about the show using the #TheZoneCast hash tag. We're in the endgame now, as the Avengers might say, and so I doubt that we'll have any new characters added to the show until we, y'know, move onto whatever's next. Who knows. But thank you so much for spreading the word anyway. People have been very, very supportive of us, especially now, as we sort of enter the midnight hour here with Amnesty. And gosh, we sure do appreciate you.

We also appreciate Maximum Fun for having us on the network. Go to [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org), check out all the great stuff there. Shows like, Can I Pet Your Dog?, and Beef and Dairy Network, and Stop Podcasting Yourself, and a bunch more at [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org).

We've got other stuff at [McElroy.family](https://www.mcelroyfamily.com). Uh, should be a new Monster Factory up on there pretty soon. New merch is always going up on there. Beginning of the month, we always have new stuff going up. I think we have

some Adventure Zone themed stuff that I'm very excited about coming up in July, so check that out.

We also have some tickets still for our book tour for The Adventure Zone graphic novel two, *Murder on the Rockport Limited*, which comes out, I believe, July 16th. That's when the book tour starts. Some of us were splitting up, and we're gonna be making stops in New York City, Austin, Texas, Portland, and Los Angeles, and then a final thing in San Diego.

We're also gonna be doing an Adventure Zone live show in San Diego the day after that. I think it's like the... oh, gosh, I'm just gonna get it wrong. But McElroy.family has all the info.

We are doing something new for our live show in San Diego, which I'm very excited about. Our Adventure Zone live show, not the book tour stop. And yeah, if you came to Nashville and you saw what we did there, which was not a Balance show, it was something else, and it was wild and wonderful, then you might know what to expect from our San Diego show.

So it'll be a different campaign, but I think very much in the—y'know what? I'm narrow casting to such a small number of people now, but thank you to the people who did come out to the Nashville show. That was some dream come true stuff right there.

Oh, and I think I forgot to mention – book two of the graphic novel, you can preorder that now at TheAdventureZoneComic.com. And that's it. I'm gonna let you get back to the rest of the episode, now. Thank you so much for listening. Next one's gonna be up in uh, two weeks. That's gonna be on... oh, no, it's next month, which means I have to look at Google calendar, 'cause I can't do the math like that in my head.

But it is gonna be July 11th, so we'll talk to you then. Bye!

[theme music plays]

Griffin: I mean, go ahead and drag me. 'Cause I know it's gonna happen, and I know we won't be able to do any more roleplaying until you drag me for my map.

Travis: Okay, cool. Thank you.

Griffin: So drag me for my map, and then we can move on with the story that everybody is so excited to get to.

Justin: Okay, but here's the thing. The map... so, in the halcyon days of Commitment, we used to mock dad for his absolutely... and rightly so. Let me say, I'm not trying to rewrite history here. They were buckwild maps that he would create with strange clipart iconography...

Travis: The ramblings of a—

Clint: A madman.

Travis: Yeah. Dad's maps looked like the map equivalent of like, when a detective finds like, a serial killer's lair, and there's just clippings everywhere.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: Yes.

Clint: And strings.

Justin: An evidence dungeon.

Clint: Yeah.

Travis: Yes.

Justin: What Griffin has done here...

Griffin: I took the good map. It was a good map.

Travis: It was a good map.

Justin: A good map. And I guess because of the unfortunate mountain incident, um, the... he has just put a... what looks to be a big turd.

Travis: Yeah.

Clint: A big, bloody turd.

Justin: Just a large turd onto the map.

Travis: It looks like he let his son, Henry, play in paint while... oops, I had the map jpeg open.

Clint: Yeah, but if you look down—

Travis: And then, I accidentally saved it.

Clint: If you look down at the very bottom corner of it that almost looks like a demonic face. So I think maybe we might be glossing over just a little bit too much.

Justin: No, it is absolutely mind bogglingly poorly constructed.

Travis: It looks like a buster sword shaped smear of raspberry jam, um, across the whole landscape. And Griffin—

Clint: I appreciate your effort, Griffin.

Travis: Griffin, how long did it take you to do this?

Griffin: Uh, about 11 seconds.

Clint: Oh, wait, he's—[laughs]

[ding]

Justin: He's updating it, as I can see.

Clint: He's updating it!

Griffin: I'll color it—I'll make it a different—

Justin: He's updating it in real time!

Griffin: I'll make it a different color if you guys hate it so much.

Justin: I didn't get a screen cap of it, though.

Clint: I loved it.

Griffin: Well, now you never will, so eat my fuckin' shorts.

Clint: Leave it like that. Leave it like that. It looks like fire.

Griffin: No, now it looks like bacon. [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: [laughs] It does look like bacon!

Griffin: It looks like a big bacon.

Justin: Okay, I got a screen cap. You can do whatever you want now. It's not gonna change anything.

Griffin: Okay, whatever.

Clint: No, leave it as bacon!

Griffin: This is the trail of destruction that the uh, the mountaintop of Mount Kepler created as it sort of fell down through Kepler. You can see it has destroyed the road that connects the river side and top side, and now, tramway is the... the funicular train is the only way to uh, get up their reliably. Although, I suppose you could also just go for a very, very long hike through the Monongahela Forest, because y'know, there is a back of the town as well.

Um, so, let's do... I mean, we got some housekeeping, other than my bad map, that we should probably get to. We've been sort of just like... rolling with it for a while, and haven't sort of uh, talked about game shit for a bit. We talked about Thacker and his... the uh, oh, what does Monster of the Week call them? Playbook. The playbook he uses.

Clint: Searcher.

Griffin: Searcher.

Clint: He's the Searcher.

Griffin: Justin and Travis, this is a new playbook from the uh, expansion for the game, where he is basically like a detective, but he has supernatural powers, which uh, come from the uh, his sort of possession.

Justin: What's the name of the expansion? We owe them the plug.

Griffin: Yes.

Clint: It's called Tome of Mysteries. And let me read you this quote. "There's still so much to be discovered and explained, even now. Perhaps only one event in a thousand is true weirdness, but I'll investigate them all to find it."

And I will tell you something about Thacker. Fun fact that you guys don't know. He rolls a hell of a lot better than Ned.

Griffin: Holy shit, he's got the fuckin' hot hand.

Travis: Oh, good.

Griffin: Uh, so, we got that. He's a Searcher. He has some supernatural, y'know, uh, sniffin' out weird stuff.

Clint: Psychic. I think psychic is better. Psychic is not necessarily supernatural.

Griffin: Eh, I would argue that psychic abilities are—

Travis: Yeah, Dad.

Griffin: It's not exactly natural, but to each their own. Um, Duck.

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: You obviously... you've got some juice back, right? From being, uh—

Justin: Yes.

Griffin: Now like, having this actual like, tangible, uh, closeness with Minerva. We didn't really talk about what that means for your playbook. You were Mundane after losing your powers. What do you want... I'll leave this up to you, right? Like, I want you to play whatever playbook you want to play. If you want to play a, y'know, strong Mundane, or a somewhat mundane Chosen...

Justin: No, I feel like he's back. He's back. He's got his abilities, uh, his skills.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: His combat skills. Um, I—but in leveling up, I uh, I think I will take, if you're cool with it, I think I will take a um, a move from the Mundane character sheet, rather than...

Griffin: Oh, that's great. Yeah.

Justin: From the Chosen character sheet.

Griffin: You can do that. That's a rule in the game. He's not just fudgin' it. That's cool.

Travis: Yeah, because we've never fudged it before. God forbid that we break any of the rules.

Justin: Uh, I'm gonna go... I'm gonna keep panic button, I think. You need to escape, name the route you'll try, and roll plus sharp. Just making escaping... he remembers what it's like to be mortal again, and that has stuck with him.

Griffin: Sure.

Justin: [laughs] The fear has not completely subsided, so...

Griffin: Okay, cool.

Clint: And for the record, I love the Mundane playbook. I think it's awesome.

Griffin: Oh, it's so great. It's so great. Honestly, like, now that we're nearing the endgame here, we uh, didn't... because we were doing these mini arcs, right, and we wanted to get through it? There's so much cool shit in Monster of the Week that we just never even will get to. The other playbooks are cool. You can be a fuckin' angel if you want to. Not like Angel from Angel, but y'know, a celestial winged...

Travis: You could probably be Angel from Angel if you rolled it right.

Griffin: Almost certainly, yeah. I mean, you can be a vampire. You could be... before we found this playbook, actually, for Dad, the Searcher, there is a um, a Monstrous playbook where you can be like, y'know, part ghost, or part werewolf or whatever. You kind of create your own—

Travis: Aren't we all part ghost when you think about it, Griffin?

Griffin: Okay, thank you.

Justin: Oh, that's beautiful, Trav.

Clint: Hey, by the way, Trav, one of the new playbooks in this Tome of Mysteries is the Gumshoe.

Travis: Oh, that's cool.

Clint: Kind of like a magic detective.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Okay, and Aubrey, just a reminder. I mean, I don't know if you have any leveling up to do, if you've got any hot new stuff. We've kind of been doing that stuff on the fly now as we go.

Travis: Yeah, no, I think I—I just leveled up near the end of that where I picked up lightning, so I think I'm okay.

Griffin: Right, sure. Uh, just a reminder, you still have a minus one penalty, ongoing, to all of your uh, weird magic rolls. Um...

Travis: Well, I think we should establish the most important thing, which is, now that we have lost access to Amnesty Lodge, um, I think Aubrey has been sleeping on Duck's couch.

Griffin: I mean, that's up to y'all. That's the question, right? Things have changed. We know some things about the world. We talked about some of them in our, y'know, little skits that we did in the round up episode.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, here are just like, some truths about the world now, post-collapse, which I think is the shorthand for what happened to Mount Kepler. And then, I want to know like, how you all have been spending... how you all have been reacting to that for the last two months. Two months have passed since the collapse.

So the mountain fell. You can see the path of destruction. Shortly after that happened, the Department of Unexplained Phenomena with the FBI has arrived in town. And basically, top side has been cordoned off from all residents. There are also road blocks on the highway out of Kepler to the west and the east of town that is keeping all non-residents out of town just entirely.

Um, another thing – Mama was taken into custody shortly after the FBI arrived, and she has not returned since. Uh, Amnesty Lodge was evacuated lightning fast before the FBI could investigate it. All your gear, as well as the residents of the lodge, have been moved elsewhere.

And now, the residents, because you remember, they kind of sustain themselves with the waters of the hot spring; now, they get that stuff from H2Whoa: That Was Fun. You all are constantly running, y'know, smuggling them up to this water park to get them topped off, and then, bringing them back into town.

Aubrey and Janelle worked together to purge Thacker of the Quell's influence, and uh, yeah, it's been two months since the last Abomination arrived. And something is coming. So those are sort of some facts about Kepler, post-collapse.

What's been going on for y'all in the last two months? I don't know, necessarily, that we will have as much to talk about with Arlo, because he

sort of just snapped out of it. But Aubrey and Duck, what are you... how have you been spending this time?

Justin: Um, I like the idea that she would be crashing with Duck, because Minerva is also crashing with Duck. So it's like, it's a pretty—

Clint: [singing] Take a knock on our floor...

Justin: I know, right? It's like, gotten to be a very uh, very crowded apartment.

Griffin: I think—I think—let's just set it up that the whole apartment complex, right? Leo is your neighbor. He's not just gonna leave everybody out on, y'know, leave everybody hanging out to dry. So I think that uh, Jake and Dani and uh, Moira are living with, uh, living with him, and it is also a similarly sitcom-y, crowded situation.

Let's also say that Barclay is living with... oh, God, what was her name? I wrote it down just in case it—Mrs. Pierson, uh, who is also one of your neighbors. You dropped that name in like, episode four, and I wrote it down.

Justin: Yes. Yeah. She didn't get to be a well-constructed, Leo Tarkesian style character.

Travis: Not yet!

Griffin: Uh, yes. She... she took in Barclay, who is uh, in the same way that he helped out, y'know, Mama around Amnesty Lodge, is sort of acting as a sort of assisted living... I think you said, Mrs. Pierson is up there in years, and so, Barclay is—

Justin: Yes, she's an older lady.

Griffin: Barclay is living with her and helping. So, you all, y'know—

Travis: He has Tuesdays with Mrs. Pierson.

Griffin: Exactly. So the Amnesty Lodge sort of uh, situation has moved entirely into the complex, the apartment complex that you and Leo live in.

Travis: Yeah, we talked about this a little bit beforehand. I think that, without Amnesty there, and just the way that it's been going, I think that there's probably a shared kind of like, between the Hornet's Nest, Duck's apartment complex, and the Cryptonomica, it's probably now like... those are probably kind of the three HQs, I would say.

'Cause uh, one of the things you talked about is like, how—how have things been going, y'know, for like, as far as with the Hornets and the Amnesty Lodge people, and just the regular residents? And—

Griffin: I'm okay—I'm okay with those conversations having not happened yet.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Griffin: I'm okay with the um, y'know, the great skits that we did in the last episode being in the middle of this finale arc, if that makes sense. 'Cause I think we need to—I would love to hear you all, y'know, assembling the troops, or making—however you want to describe it, right?

Travis: Cool.

Griffin: I think we would be doing ourselves a disservice to just leap right over that. Also worth noting – hey, look at the map. Y'all made fun of me. What's missing? The Hornets' Nest—

Clint: The Hornets' Nest.

Griffin: --was completely destroyed by the mountaintop. It was directly in the path of it. Nobody was, y'know, all the Hornets were out and about looking for monsters and shit, so uh—

Travis: Sorry, I meant Dave's Humidifier Depot.

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, also worth noting, the Hornets' Nest, y'know, is gone. The mountaintop landed right in the Greenbrier River, and has created basically a new fork in the river.

Justin: Looking at the map, also, it occurs to me. I wanted to mention, I was listening to the recap episode before we started. The great shame that we never revisited the uh, Daryl's Bait and Crossfit, the combination bait store and crossfit gym.

Clint: Put it on the map!

Griffin: Yeah, put it on the map. Okay. Where's it at, Juice? Tell me where.

Justin: Um, it's next to city hall.

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: Of course.

Griffin: Okay, there it is.

Travis: Whenever city hall is being renovated, then Daryl's Bait and Crossfit is used as temporary offices.

Griffin: Spell Daryl? Is it two As?

Justin: D-A-R-R-R-Y-L-L-L.

Clint: Three Ls.

Griffin: [laughing]

Travis: The second L is silent.

Clint: Darrylll. [rolling his R and L dramatically]

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: [imitating a Transylvanian accent] My name is Darrylll, and I'm from Indiana!

Griffin: Is he the mayor? Is that why—

Justin: [imitating a Transylvanian accent] He's the mayor! Darrylll, from Indiana!

Griffin: Darrylll from Indiana. His bait and crossfit store, he built it right next to city hall, so the commute would be good. Uh, okay.

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: And of course, he lives in his place of business, because that's how everybody lives in Kepler, we've established.

Justin: [laughs]

Travis: It just makes sense.

Griffin: It just makes sense. Okay, um—

Justin: Why wouldn't you live there? You already own it.

Travis: Right?

Griffin: Right.

Justin: Dummy. It's a building!

Griffin: It's a building. It's got a roof.

Clint: Why don't more people do that?

Griffin: Uh, okay. So... uh... is there anything else that we need to set up? I mean, you haven't heard from Mama. She is, as far as you know, under FBI custody.

Travis: But we know where she went. It's not like she—

Griffin: You know where she is, right. Some of you were probably there when she was, uh, arrested. Almost all of you have certainly been questioned at some point, and uh, not, y'know, permanently detained in the way that Mama was.

Um, what else has happened? Uh, you were also there when Pigeon was detained. She was arrested sort of on the spot by... after things calmed down a little bit by uh, by the sheriff, who—

Travis: And why was she arrested?

Griffin: Uh, for... shooting... for shooting Ned Chicane?

Travis: Oh, wait, so that's illegal now?

Clint: Yeah, remember Ned Chicane?

Travis: That's illegal now, to shoot a fictional character?

Griffin: Yeah, that's not good. And so, she is in uh, y'know, she's being held at the Sheriff's station, and the way that the FBI has sort of locked the town down, uh, she has not been, y'know, extradited to the uh, y'know, Pocahontas County prison, because as far as they are concerned, as far as the FBI are concerned, she was there when shit popped off, and so, they don't want her going too far. So she's been having an extended stay at the sheriff's station.

Travis: So when the episode we are recording now begins...

Griffin: Yes, it is two months—

Travis: How long has it been?

Griffin: Two months from the collapse. And Thacker is just now, I think, like—I think where we are hopping in is, Thacker has just been resuscitated, and um, has, I think, probably, done some light briefing on—he was gone for six years. He probably has a lot to say, but has done some catching up of the Pine Guard crew.

Before we—

Travis: Has he also gone to the restroom?

Griffin: Yes, he did. Thank you, Travis.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: Before we get to sort of the ramifications of that... Duck, I need you to roll to see your destiny. Now, before you do it, have you ever rolled anything good?

Justin: No. It has never happened.

Griffin: It has always been a very, very bad vision that has spelled disaster for the world. These are some of the most important rolls you make. Each one's been a complete fuckin' beeper. So, let's see.

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: How this final—yeah, that's a six.

Justin: That's a six.

Griffin: Plus weird. Plus weird.

Justin: Um, minus one. It's a five. [laughs]

Travis: [laughs]

Clint: Use your luck point!

Justin: Weird indeed.

Clint: Use your luck point!

Griffin: Oh my God, Justin! I was ready to give—

Justin: Okay, y'know what? I will use a luck—

Griffin: I was ready to give you the world!

Justin: I'm gonna give—y'know what? We've only got one more arc of this. I got three luck points left.

Griffin: This is the last one of these you're gonna make.

Justin: Yes. I'm just gonna use a luck point, 'cause just have one—I just want to have one fucking rosy dream before—

Griffin: You have a terrible fuckin' dream, and then you have a second dream after it, and...

Justin: I wake up, and I'm like, "I gotta piss." And then I go fall back asleep and have a better... better dream.

Griffin: Cooler dream.

Justin: The first one? Teeth falling out. Oh no!

Griffin: [laughs] The second one...

Justin: Unnerving. Not supernatural, just unnerving.

Griffin: Uh, okay. You naturally get a 12, which I think is an 11, because your special proclivities. Uh, or—no, it's just automatically like, a great success. And so, you have a dream. I think the night after, uh... maybe even the night of Thacker's resurrection, you have a dream, and you are an old hand at this, and you know instantly that there is something special about this dream.

[ambient music plays]

Griffin: It is one of your visions. And Duck, you see... you see the top side of town. As it stands right now, you have this bird's eye view of it. And you actually see, in detail, how the FBI have occupied it. Uh, you see, y'know... you see where guards are stationed. You see the fence perimeter. Uh, you see, uh, some sensors scattered around Amnesty Lodge, and um... then, you see this rigid, brightly lit canvas structure that they have uh, built up around the archway in the woods.

And then, you're inside of that structure. And you see a bunch of agents. You see uh, a bunch of folks in lab coats and uh, y'know, biohazard suits. And you see these machines that are all positioned around the archway, and monitoring activity around it. And you see, uh... you see, through a window, you see Agent Stern, and he's arguing with another agent in this adjacent room, and then you sort of zoom in on him, and you see Stern's watch. And it is 9:35PM.

And then, you're back outside, and this makeshift canvas installation just explodes. It just pops like a balloon as this raging storm springs out of it in every direction, and uh, this storm is pouring in a thick column out of the archway, and it's just covering topside. And then, it spills down the cliff, onto river side, and it blankets the whole town in seconds. And then, it spreads down the river, and around the forest, and then the state.

And then, you hear a scream, and these red, vein-like things shoot out of the archway, and they split and multiply, and they follow the path of the storm, just annihilating everything that they touch. And then... it's gone, and you see your own watch. And it's 9:31. And you're nervous, just for a moment, until you see your friends standing at your side, and they're ready for action.

And from your position, you're on top side, you see these big groups of folks down below. And they are all ready for action, too. And then, uh, Minerva nods, and she holds her blade aloft. And then, a small rift opens in front of you, and then, others all around town open, and the storm slowly emerge from them, and...

Then, you see the brilliant, red heart of the Quell. And you draw Beacon.

And then you wake up.

Clint: Or did you?

Griffin: [laughs] Your teeth fall out.

Travis: Wait. [laughs]

Clint: And you still have to pee!

Justin: My pillow's gone. I thought I was eating a ding-dang marshmallow.

Travis: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, when you wake up, seconds later, Minerva is in your room. Uh, and y'know, a minute after that, Leo is knocking on your door, and she says...

Minerva: Duck Newton? Was it the same for you? I had a teeth dream, and then a separate dream.

Duck: Yeah. Yeah, I had, uh... same thing. It was unnerving, 'cause it's like, I need to eat, right? But at the same time, there was a freedom to it, 'cause I love milkshakes.

Minerva: I—yes, I'm more concerned about the vision of Kepler and the earth being destroyed.

Duck: Oh. Yeah, I'm just so used to having bad dreams that I assumed the first one was the real one, and the second one was a fanciful, uh, firing of my neuro synapses.

Aubrey: [distantly] Hey, Duck?

Duck: Yeah, Aubrey?

Aubrey: [distantly] Can I have the last waffle?

Duck: They're not vegan.

Aubrey: [distantly] I'm not—Duck, I'm not a vegan.

Duck: What's the difference again?

Aubrey: [distantly] I—I'm gonna eat the waffle, okay?

Duck: Alright.

Minerva: So we should probably um, y'know, rendezvous with the... with the troops?

Duck: Did you—have you tried the waffle—yes. Did you try... have you tried waffles yet since you've been over?

Minerva: Um, no, I have not. Tell me, are they the divided breads?

Duck: Yeah, they're like a divided breads that gives you lots of nooks and crannies for syrup and—

Leo: [distantly] Did y'all just have that vision about the teeth, and then the explosion?

Duck: Leo, I hope you're not here for waffles, 'cause Aubrey's quaffing the last one.

Aubrey: [distantly] I could split it. Leo, do you want to split it?

Leo: Yeah, I guess it's better than nothin'.

Travis: [laughs]

Duck: Leo, they're not vegan.

Leo: Aw, damn it. You know me, I don't like to sup of the ovum of uh, my friendly creatures.

Justin: [laughs] No more game. No more adventure. It's just this. It's just this.

Griffin: [laughs] Okay. Uh, where—where do you all... when you have sort of, y'know, Pine Guard business, like, where does that take place? Is it just like, right here in the apartment? Or, I mean, I imagine it's pretty tight quarters. You got the—the four chosens, and uh, I imagine, the Amnesty residents have a vested interest in this, so they are probably in uh... they are probably present, also.

Justin: I like the idea of it being at the Cryptonomica. I really like that—

Clint: [spooky ghost voice] Coome to the Cryptonomicaaa...

Griffin: Okay, no.

Justin: Okay, no.

Travis: Yes, we will—I think the Cryptonomica makes sense, 'cause like, we could have everything set up there, and have like, all—like, a table and shit, and like, real HQ stuff, and have our equipment and stuff there.

Justin: I also like the idea that, um, Ned's little buddy... what's his name?

Griffin: Kirby?

Clint: Kirby.

Justin: Kirby like, had big ideas for how he was gonna make it super profitable, and it is just like... at a standstill, because it is constantly occupied with adventure heroes.

Griffin: I think... yeah, I think that uh, also because no... [laughs] No human beings can come into Kepler, so his uh, his tourism diversion has been, y'know, struggling.

Justin: Well, and the people that are there, I think, have probably lost their appetite for The Weird. [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: So, Bigfoot, huh? Cool.

Justin: Ooh, spooky.

Travis: I think, also, we have the Crepes by Monica truck. So maybe somebody is using that. I don't know who. But maybe that's somebody's mobile unit.

Griffin: I think you have access to that. I don't see any reason why uh, why it would be like, in impound or something like that.

Clint: No, and that's probably what you've been using to run people back and forth from H2Whoa.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Oh, that's a good idea. Okay. Um, okay. Yeah, you all, uh, the next morning, show up to the Cryptonomica, and Kirby opens the shutter, and he lets you in. Uh, and he looks—he just looks so tired. He has not... he has not been doing great since Ned's passing. Uh, and he... he lets you all in, and he says...

Does he know? Have you told him about... everything? I think—I mean, he knows what he knows, just from being a resident of Kepler. Everybody here knows that uh... generally speaking, shit's pretty weird. But have you told him—have you filled him in on like, the specifics?

Travis: I would think we'd have to if we're meeting there. Otherwise, we'd have to like, kick him out every time we met, or like, talk in code or whatever, and that just seems exhausting.

Griffin: Yeah. Okay. Uh, then, he lets you in, and he says...

Kirby: Well, if you're all here, this can't be... this can't be great news. What's going on?

Aubrey: Uh, y'know, honestly? Same. Like, I... we have a dream to discuss, apparently. We need to do some dream interpretation. Uh, need to see if we can figure out a way to get back through the gate, uh, do some recon. Uh... let's see, what else? Mama's still not here. That's, uh... that's just kind of neutral news, I would say.

Kirby: Alright. I'll put a... I'll, uh... I'll put a pot on.

Griffin: ...he says, and he walks over to the RC Cola machine and just starts pounding quarters into it to get everybody some nice refreshing RC Colas, as you all gather around and discuss things.

So, I think you all definitely have talked about what Thacker saw, and what Thacker has told you, and I think the dream, since you all basically live together now, has been uh, shared. Yeah, I think Thacker is definitely there at the Crypto—Dad has just texted me. Thacker is definitely there, right?

Aubrey and Janelle, who is also there, uh, y'know, revived you? I don't see any reason why they would keep you out of the loop now. You possess information on this thing that, y'know, they desperately wanted to know, and now they know it.

Justin: Alright, so here's what I'm thinkin'. I think that I'm gonna start and let Duck try to sum up where we're at, if that makes sense.

Griffin: Sure.

Clint: Oh boy. [laughs]

Griffin: I'd love to hear this.

Justin: Does that make sense? And you can correct me if I'm getting something wrong.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: Alright.

Duck: So here's how I understand it. The... there's a planet called Sylvain. And inside that planet, there was, uh... something called Sylvain, and it's kind of like Good Vibes, and like, life and creation, right? [sings] The spark of creation... You guys see Children of Eden? Anyway.

Aubrey: Oh, see, I was gonna say like Captain Planet.

Duck: Mmm, yeah, that's good, too. Anyway, so uh, and also in there was the Quell, was like, bad vibes and death. But like, the two of them like, y'know, kept each other... balanced, I guess. And then, they each had their own kind of home bases, right? So Sylvain had the crystal, and the Quell

had something else. And the crystal shattered, and it sent Sylvain out, I guess, out into the world.

Aubrey: Yeah, quick question. Janelle, do we... we don't know where she went, right?

Janelle: We don't know if she is even still alive, if such a thing can... you would call such a thing, y'know, 'alive' in the first place. It's possible that her spark, her energy, has dissipated entirely.

Aubrey: But then I wouldn't be able to do magic, right?

Duck: Who's that?

Aubrey: That's Janelle.

Janelle: We've met a couple times now, Duck Newton. You keep calling me Dumbledore, and it took me a while to figure out why.

Justin: [laughs] I thought Travis said, "Do we know where Janelle is?" But he was referencing Sylvain.

Griffin: Right.

Travis: Yes.

Justin: Okay. Not Janelle.

Travis: We got a lot of characters in the room. [laughs]

Griffin: Yes, it's a big room.

Justin: Yeah, and Griffin only has the three voices, so we gotta...

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs] Uh, okay.

Duck: So, uh, alright. So uh, so anyway, the Quell's been kind of running roughshod without Sylvain to keep it in check. Is that fair?

Janelle: Yes, that would describe the current devastated state of my planet, yes.

Duck: But... hey, sorry about the brevity, by the way. I'm sure that it's lacking some gravitas from your perspective. But like, so... Thacker saw sort of the heart of the Quell, I guess. Is that fair? Does that seem right to everybody?

Thacker: That is apparently what I saw.

Duck: And so, we gotta, I guess... there's two basic options that I can see to keep everything from going sideways. Um, first being, we get Sylvain back in the crystal, and then reassemble the crystal that shattered into a bajillion pieces. That seems... uh, unlikely. The second is, we find a way to get to the heart of the Quell and fuck it up, but good. Does that seem to meet everyone's criteria of our current situation? Is that—is that everyone's understanding?

Thacker: Let me pose a question to ya, there, sport. What if, uh... what if getting rid of the Quell makes things even worse the other way? I mean, they kind of balance each other out.

Duck: Yeah. I mean, I hear ya Arlo, I do. I feel like, though... unless we can get Sylvain back, and we don't really have any leads on that front. Hell, if Janelle doesn't know, then what hope do we have of pulling that off? I feel like messing up the Quell's our only real out, here.

Minerva: I agree enthusiastically!

Aubrey: I mean, there is a third option, right? Like, just because Sylvain's not in the crystal, maybe Sylvain's just somewhere else. Maybe we don't need to put back together the crystal – we just need to find Sylvain.

Duck: I mean, if you could give me just, I mean, a dimension.

Aubrey: Oh, no, that's all I've got. Yeah.

Duck: Yeah, right? So let's just keep movin—I love that. Don't get me wrong, man. If we could find Sylvain and have them just like, back inside the planet or whatever, that would go down real smooth by me. I don't... I don't hold out a lot of hope.

Um, so, assuming we are gonna just beat the shit out of the Quell's home base, Arlo, what's the best you got on a location for that?

Thacker: Um... well, I tell you what there, prince. I can, uh... I can... I can get you the Quell. It's more like a feelin'. I'm kind of... hooked up to 'em, like, through like a mental tether, I guess you could say. But we're gonna have to travel, y'know, through the gate, and go to the other side of Sylvain. And eventually, I can find 'em. I can't put it down on a map for you or anything like that. It's just gonna have to be some, y'know, uh, mental eyes.

Griffin: Uh, Janelle speaks up, and she says...

Janelle: I must warn you... at this point, the Quell has almost certainly completely taken over Sylvain. If you know where it is, and you can lead us to it, that is great, but... the amount of resistance we will face from the Quell as we seek out its heart will be... will be tremendous.

Thacker: And I don't know if y'all are up for it or not. I mean, I just met you. You may be very capable. Um, but boy, it will not be easy. I mean, it took me six years, and I ended up in like, flyin' around in this room in a storm, and... it's confusin' as shit.

Aubrey: Point of order, it kind of sounds like, from the way you described y'all's dream, that the Quell's gonna come to us.

Griffin: Uh, Janelle says...

Janelle: If that occurrence arrives, then it will already be too late. Your world is not prepared to house the Quell in the way that ours is. It would spell immeasurable devastation for your planet.

Griffin: And Leo pipes up, and Leo says...

Leo: Uh, I mean, I know y'all are worried about this uh, sentient storm or whatever. It sounds bad. Sounds real, real bad. Not gonna—not gonna undersell that. Let's not forget about the uh, y'know, well outfitted government agency that is also standing between us and the archway. We got our work cut out for us. It's not just gonna be like we can stroll right through that gate in the first place.

Thacker: That's gonna be up to somebody else. Once you get through the gate, I'll get you there. We'll take like a group of... of... we'll do a fellowship. A fellowship of the Quell. But y'know, getting past them people? You fellers are gonna have to handle that.

Aubrey: Well, it seems to me that what we would need, then, is a distraction. And what we have... is a pretty big gang that does like, stunts and shit. That seems like a preeetty significant distraction. If we can get, y'know, that government agency on their tail, like, uh, y'know, like that one part in ET when they're all chasing the kids on the bikes, and the bikes go flying through the air? Like that?

Thacker: Oh man. Yeah, the John Williams music, and we can—can we like, get that like, recorded or something? Play that back while we're doin' it? 'Cause that'd be really cool.

Aubrey: Yeah, I'll try to contact John Williams' people and see if we can get the right to do it, Arlo. Um, but, I think maybe if we can get a distract—the thing is, it's gonna be like, a one shot deal. We won't be able to like, come in and out of the gate like we used to. So it seems like we'd need to be ready whenever that happens.

Duck: It seems like it might be a one way trip.

Thacker: Oh, yeah. I guarantee ya, you don't have to worry about the return trip, 'cause odds are, we ain't gonna be makin' one. [laughs]

Duck: Well, a regular ray of sunshine, there. Y'know, it sucks. The thing I keep thinkin' about is gettin' past a group of government agents, y'know? [laughs] There is one person who would've been perfect for that. I don't know.

Um, yeah. I guess we could talk to the Hornets and see if they can come up with something.

Aubrey: Do you think it's worth talking to the Sheriff and see if we can get him to play along?

Duck: Man, he's been so heads down, just going after, y'know, parking tickets and shit ever since things went all weird. I think he hasn't had much appetite for uh, grand affairs of the supernatural.

Aubrey: There's Stern.

Duck: Yeah, I don't know whose side he's on, honestly, at this point.

Griffin: I think you haven't seen hide nor hair of him since the FBI moved in town.

Justin: Yeah, but would it be safe to assume that like, there's no reason to think he would have any... It's not like we formed a lot of bonds with Stern.

Travis: The only thing is like—

Justin: But he's a believer, right? But there's no reason to think that he...

Griffin: I think that Aubrey certainly formed a comradery with him, because they lived together for nearly a year. But also, I think um, when the FBI rolled up into town, it was instantly like, get the fuck out of here, this is

locked down, y'know, government shit. And I think Agent Stern was the only one sort of trying to soften the blow a little bit, trying to—

Justin: Has he made any effort to contact us?

Griffin: No.

Justin: In the two months since?

Griffin: He has not.

Clint: And to add to that, he probably is not real happy about having the whole case taken away from him, either.

Griffin: Absolutely not. Yes. Um, so, yeah. You are not entirely sure. Janelle speaks up again, and she says...

Janelle: I must warn you. When you open up that gate, you can cross through. But I have every expectation that the Quell, or pieces of it, are going to make their way across as well. And if we can control it, if we can defend Kepler from it while you all accomplish your mission on the other side, then perhaps we can stave off the planet's destruction. But if you open a door, it opens both ways.

I believe having the sheriff... I believe having as many people on our side as we possibly can get is a necessary precaution.

Duck: Alright, so let me see if everybody's on board with this. Seems like, first up, we gotta get the Hornets on our side, and then we gotta get them distracting the FBI so we maybe can get Agent Stern back on our side, so he can help us get Mama back on our side, and then we go over to the other side.

This got away from me, but uh, basically, we need about a million things to go exactly right before we even get a chance to go to the nether realm and die. Is that... does everybody feel pretty good about this summation of our current situation?

Griffin: You hear a voice come from the direction of the entrance of the Cryptonomica, and it says...

Voice: Yes, and it's a fine plan, folks.

Griffin: And then a sketchbook flies into the center of the circle of people gathering here, and it lands at your feet. And you see depicted within, all of these images of Kepler, destroyed, and your party being overcome by this living storm, and each one more terrifying than the last.

[theme music plays]

Griffin: And you look up at where the voice and the book came from, and you see, in the doorway, his Winnebago parked outside behind him, Indrid Cold, who says...

Indrid: It could probably use a bit more work.

[theme music plays]

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[music plays]

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[laughs]

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Biz: Yeah.

Theresa: Come on. I'm so sick of it. When is that gonna be over?

Biz: [laughing]

Theresa: Like, I want it to stop.

Biz: Theresa, you're hurting my ears. [laughs]

Theresa: I mean, that's it!

Biz: Yeah, no, that—

Theresa: I just hate it!

Biz: Yeah, I don't blame you.

Theresa: [censor bleep]

Biz: It sucks.

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