

The Adventure Zone: Amnesty – Episode 36

Published September 23rd, 2019

[Listen on TheMcElroy.family](https://www.themcElroy.family)

[theme music plays]

Griffin: Okay, hi, this is Griffin, and you are listening to the final episode of The Adventure Zone: Amnesty. Once again, we find ourselves at the end of a campaign, and like last time, I wanted to do sort of all the... y'know, show stuff before we got into the episode, so that we won't have to have any breaks, and y'know, you can just listen to the whole thing front to back without any interruptions. And so, that's why I'm talking to you right now, as weird as this is.

Uh, got a couple sponsors here. I'm'a do them real quick, and then, uh, y'know, tell you how much I appreciate the support you've given us over the years. I'll get to that, but we gotta make that money first.

Our first sponsor is Blue Apron. Blue Apron... you know what it is. They send you a box, it's gonna have farm fresh ingredients on it, it's gonna have, uh—well, in it. They don't send you a box with food ingredients on it. That would be wild, and probably not healthy. But the way they do it's healthy. They also send you a recipe.

You're not just making dinner when you use a Blue Apron box to make food for yourself and maybe a loved one, or just two portions for yourself. You're making memories. You can choose from a variety of chef-designed recipes, get perfectly portioned ingredients delivered right to your door. They take care of the hard parts for ya, and they make it fun to learn new kitchen skills with each meal.

The whole goal is to make dinner more accessible, exciting, and more delicious than ever. So, if you want to make delicious, brag-worthy meals at home – meals like chicken chili enchiladas with cheddar cheese and jalapeno peppers – you can do so without the hassle. Just try Blue Apron. Check out this week's menu and get \$60 off when you visit BlueApron.com/Adventure. That's BlueApron.com/Adventure. Blue Apron: A better way to cook.

Once you've gotten this food all up and around your teeth, you're gonna need a Quip, 'cause the Quip is the toothbrush that vibrates. It's got the sensitive vibrations. It's got a built in, two minute timer. It's got a multi-use cover that doubles as a mirror mount. What can't this freakin' thing do? Don't say 'clean your teeth,' cause it does that exceptionally well.

There's no wires, no clunky chargers, and it runs for three months of a single charge. Brush heads are automatically delivered on a dentist-recommended schedule every three months for five bucks as a friendly reminder when it's time for a refresh, and keep your stuff just, y'know, workin' so right. And check out their kids' brush. It's the same as the original version, just, y'know, smaller for smaller mouths.

Quip is perfect for getting back into a good tooth brushing routine. 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).

Alright. Uh, so, yeah. This is it. We are... going to be moving onto a new campaign that I... I don't—by the time this episode goes out, I don't know if we've announced what it is or not, so I'm not gonna say what it is here, on the off chance that I would ruin everything by doing so. But we're super excited about this next season, and we really hope you are, too.

Before we get to it, we are gonna take just a little bit of time off. The show will not be taking time off, though, because we will be putting up some live shows that we have done recently that have not been set in the TAZ: Balance universe. They have been absolutely delightful to play, and I'm so, so happy with the way these went.

We'll be putting up TAZ: Hootenanny, which is a country western space opera. We're gonna be puttin' up TAZ: Just Us, which is Travis' take on superheroes trying to pretend to be normal. It's all super, super good, and we're gonna be putting that up for a little bit in the interim while we finish getting ready for the next season.

So, that will be... we'll be announcing what that is soon, and hopefully—we'll probably find time to do a The The Adventure Zone Zone to talk about this season as well. Uh, and gosh, this has been a... this has been a wild experience for all of us.

Uh, coming off of Balance, we were all extremely, like, nervous about what we were gonna do next, and we didn't want to drop the ball, and so we, y'know, wandered around for a little while, trying out different things before we landed on Amnesty, and it has... y'know, it's been a rough process, trying to uh, adjust to this new thing. And uh, y'know, we've had our failures and our successes, but I am... I'm really happy with how this story ended up, and I am so grateful for all of the support that you all have shown us as we've worked through this, y'know, second season.

It means the world to us, seeing like, cosplayers from Amnesty always like, brings so much joy to my heart. And I am sad to see it go. I am, genuinely. But I am... I'm really excited for what comes next, and... yeah.

I think that's it, so uh, I'm gonna let you... get to the episode now, and uh, I hope you like it, and I don't know when this one's gonna be finished, and when it's gonna go up, so uh... y'know, it'll—the next one will be up in a couple Thursdays, probably. You know how this works at this point. I'm too tired to load up Google Calendars and try and predict when this finale's gonna be finally available for people to listen to.

So, we will talk to you soon, and... here is the finale for The Adventure Zone: Amnesty.

Previously, on The Adventure Zone...

[theme music plays]

Griffin: You all see these humanoid figures of white light climbs out of the trunk of the tree, and very quickly after that, they all disintegrate into these just little beads of white light that float up and off into the distance.

Minerva: My world, like yours, was tethered to an alien planet, besieged by abominations from the other side. I pushed us into a conflict with that alien world.

Duck: I have a thought. Maybe it's tryin' to start a war between us and aliens.

Barclay: Yeah, uh...

Duck: Are you writin' it? Up there?

Aubrey: Yup.

Griffin: You can see, like, on this cocoon of light, there's something being projected on the other side of it, like on the inside of it. It's almost like the same scene you saw of like your [distorted] *memories* flashing.

Duck: You're not from really either one, right? You're not from earth, and you're not from Sylvain, right? You're from some place... else?

[music growing distorted]

Duck: [distorted] *Along the way?* Like, between the two?

Minerva: That archway... it's not a rift, Duck. It is a [distorted] *tunnel*.

Travis: And Aubrey opens her eyes and says...

Aubrey: [distorted] Abracadabra.

Travis: [distorted, stuttering] And shoots the b-b-b-s-s-s...

Thacker: [distorted, distant, and echoing] Think outer space, is y'know, wild and unexplored... [unintelligible] [singing] Mountain mama, take me home, country roaad...

Mama: [distorted, distant, and echoing] Thacker? It's me. Thacker? It's me. It's—it's—I'm gonna come clo-clo-clo—

Thacker: [distorted, distant, and echoing] Please... I... I'm lookin' for [unintelligible]

Aubrey: [distorted, distant, and echoing] Excuse me, Lady Fantastique. Um, uh, I've never seen a magic show before, and that was the greatest thing I have ever seen. How can I make a name for myself as the Lady Flame? And I just, I don't know why this is the thing—[robotic stuttering] I don't want to do it anymore. I can't control it. And I just end up hurting people that I love. [robotic stuttering] Why? Every time you looked at me and didn't say it. You lied, Ned. [robotic stuttering, growing more distorted] I am Syyylll...

Minerva: [distorted, stuttering] ... called, Duck Newton, to do what they cannot.

Duck: [distorted, distant, and echoing] Yeah, I got class tomorrow, though.

Sarah: [distorted, distant, and echoing] ... supposed to be lab partners. You seem distracted, Duck.

Duck: [distorted, distant, and echoing] Hey, Sarah, I'm kinda freakin' out a little bit. Please don't tell anybody, but I can't cut this fuckin' frog, man.

Juno: [distorted, distant, and echoing] Welcome to the West Virginia Forest Service. Wayne... [laughs] Wayne Newton? Is that—that can't be real.

Griffin: [distorted, distant, and echoing] You pull up in your Forest Service truck to a campsite, about a half mile from town, well enough away from the highway... [unintelligible] ... an absolute nightmare. But in the distance, you see the reason you've been called out this evening. Whoever's staying at this campsite has built a fire that is *waaay* too big for dry season.

[normally] And you open the door to the truck, and the smell of pine and smoke overtakes your senses. And illuminated by this comically large flame,

you see a young woman sitting on a log, just kind of absentmindedly staring at the blaze. She's holding an outrageously large rabbit in her lap, just kind of idly petting it.

Duck: Right, so you don't mind—

Aubrey: Oh, god! You scared the shit out of me!

Duck: Yeah, well, you probably scared the shit out of a lot of flora and fauna, my friend.

Aubrey: Wha... I...

Duck: Hey, maybe this looks like a Jerry Lee Lewis concert, but it ain't. You gotta be a little bit more careful with fire.

Aubrey: Jerry Lee Lewis? How old are you?

Duck: He's like an entertainment icon. Jerry Lee Lewis.

Aubrey: No, I know who Jerry Lee Lewis is, but like, that's your pull?

Duck: I just—he set the piano—[robotic stuttering] —justify myself to you. You're the arsonist here. I—I'm the one getting the caller.

Aubrey: I'm—I am not an arsonist.

Duck: So where did the fire come from?

Aubrey: No, I started a fire, but I'm out in the woods camping, and when you camp, you start a fire.

Duck: Okay, so you're the arsonist.

Aubrey: I am not an arsonist! I'm a camper!

Duck: We're talking about questions of scale.

Griffin: As you are speaking to this young woman, you notice a shape that, uh, just suddenly appears, floating between the two of you. And as it comes into focus, you recognize what it is with shock. It is... Beacon, the talking sword. And this isn't how it happened.

When this happened, Beacon wasn't there, and Duck, you become aware of the fact that you are replaying your memories. You are awake in this memory. What do you do?

Justin: I guess I... [sighs] Is there anything—do I see anything else out of whack? I mean, I start looking around kind of frantically when I realize it.

Griffin: Just—just Beacon. And as you're like, looking around, like, the rest of the world is still going on around you, as if you aren't really there.

Duck: 'Ey, what are you... what are you doing here?

Justin: Oh, Griffin, you can't voice the NPC that I voice. [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: I've just realized.

Griffin: Beacon just smiles and floats closer toward you.

Justin: Yeah, so I sort of carefully... and I guess kind of cautiously, not knowing exactly what is happening, grab the hilt.

[mechanical noises in the background]

Griffin: As you grab it, you... feel like the blade is like, stuck in the air. Almost like it's stabbed into something sturdy. And then, this memory suddenly vanishes. You are encased in a sarcophagus made of this radiant, warm light, and as your memory here disappears, you see, just for a second, some sort of like, UI on the side of this thing, cataloging the event

that you've just conjured up. But just for a moment, because uh, as Beacon stabs into this thing, you see just like, some bright red, indecipherable text that appears, and then the whole thing just kind of shuts down.

And like a needle through a bubble, this sarcophagus, this small container of light, just sort of peels away from the blade, and it drops you onto a cold, metal floor.

[eerie music plays]

Griffin: The last thing that you remember was, you were hiding behind a pillar with Minerva as this burst of flame erupted from Aubrey's outstretched arm. And you're no longer in front of the archway. In fact, you're pretty confident you're not in Sylvain anymore.

The room that you're in, it appears to be some sort of like, laboratory, you think, just based on the kind of unrecognizable, but clearly like, intricate equipment that is laying around the room. And there are several, like, computer terminals arranged around like, a few work stations. But they don't have a keyboard – there's just some kind of like, orb in front of each.

Regardless, they don't have power. Nothing else in this room has power. And this room, it is... it appears ancient and abandoned. Like, it smells like the inside of a cave. There's moss and signs of decay all around. There's a fine layer of dust that is covering like, every surface in this room... except for the five other coffin-looking apparatuses that are hovering all around you.

What do you do?

Duck: 'Ey Beacon, you... you there? You still with me?

Beacon: Yes... Waaayyyne.

Travis: [laughs]

Duck: Alright, man. That's the only one, I'm dipping you in chocolate. You fuckin' got me?

Beacon: Yes, of course, Waaayyyne.

Duck: Hey, I don't want to... I don't want to panic you, my friend. But I think you and I have found ourselves... [pause] Aboard an alien craft. Fuckin' nailed it, dude! What did I tell you? I told everybody! Aliens, baby! The whole time! Aliens!

[pause] Alright, but you got any ideas of how to get them out? 'Cause I'm assumin' this is our crew, but I don't... I mean, I don't know enough about this kind of... alien technology. Genetically speaking, I may now be predisposed to interacting with the various machinations of an alien craft. It's weird just to see me and me...

Griffin: [laughing]

Duck: With a little bit of the Griffin panic settin' in...

Griffin: Yeah, yeah.

Beacon: Yes. Who I don't know this Griffin.

Griffin: [laughing] I mean, why don't you investigate a mystery, right? Like, this is—

Justin: Yeah, that's a grand idea.

Travis: Why don't you play the game? [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah. [laughing]

Justin: No, yeah, you forget, y'know? That's an easy mistake to make. Only been doin' this a few years. [laughs]

Travis: [laughing]

Justin: So that's a nine.

Griffin: Plus sharp.

Justin: He is going to give us a... plus two to sharp.

Griffin: Wow, okay. That gets you up to 11.

Justin: Nice.

Travis: You solve the mystery.

Justin: I've solved the mystery of the alien craft.

Griffin: Uh, on a ten plus, on investigate a mystery, you hold two. And you get to ask one of these questions. 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? What is being concealed here?

Justin: Um, yeah, I think I'm gonna go with, uh... what's being concealed here? To start out with. And the intent of that, 'cause it's always a little weird when you're not actually like... I think I'm saying, like, in terms of way to sort of move things forward... what is concealed from me, but not necessarily a secret, but concealed in the sense that like, I don't know it?

Griffin: Uh, yeah. I will give you this. Like, as your bubble pops, you see, just for a second, because like, obviously, you fall to the floor, and so you're not paying like, super close attention to what's going on around you. But you see all of the other pods in this room kind of like, flash in response. And for a moment, they become like, fairly translucent before like, regaining their form, and you see your colleagues in these various pods. By which I mean, Thacker, and Aubrey, Mama, Vincent, and Minerva.

That is what is being... I mean, that is what—there's lots of stuff being concealed here, but this is sort of a... I think what you get for this check.

Justin: For my other, then... I will ask... what happened here?

Griffin: I think you maybe, more than anybody else, just because you're a little bit hardier, and the blast didn't necessarily affect you quite as powerfully, you weren't like, knocked instantly unconscious, uh... you remember being pulled in through the archway with the other five folks that I mentioned.

And you were falling down this big, towering room. This big, cylindrical room. And you remember seeing like, a sight you have seen before, which is these beams crisscrossing this tower going upward. Only this time, you seem to have come out of one, and you fell and fell and fell until something started to slow your inertia, and then, that is where you lost consciousness.

So, whatever this world is in between your world and Sylvain, like, you are in it now.

Justin: So, did our plan to blow up the gate, I'm assuming, did not work?

Griffin: Uh, it did. I mean, from what you can tell, the fate that you foresaw of the sky being torn apart, uh, did not happen when you did what you did. But you definitely fucked up the gate. The gate, for all you know, is just like... is gone, but before it went down, you all were pulled in.

Justin: Okay. I will cautiously see if I can, uh... I'm gonna look at the pods to see if there's anywhere I might be able to like, wedge Beacon in, or maybe like, cut into it somehow.

Griffin: It is—it's like a... it's a perfectly smooth surface. But like, when he cut you out of your bubble, he also was not stabbed into a wedge. It seemed like he—I will also give you this. I don't think you need to roll for this. When you stabbed into the shell that you were inside, uh, Beacon seemed to like, light up. Beacon seemed to, uh... really enjoy stabbing in through this hard light material, and it was enough to, y'know, break the thing apart.

So, yeah.

Duck: 'Ey, Beacon, you think you can... [sighs] You think you can make that work from the outside without severin' anything too important in there?

Beacon: Yes.

Griffin: [laughs]

Beacon: I... absolutely. Yes. Nothing major, of course. It'll be seamless, Duck.

Duck: Hey, I really appreciate you—

Beacon: I'm sorry... Waaayyyne! I forgot! That will be the last time. Uh, allow me.

Justin: And then he does it perfectly.

Travis: [laughs] And everybody's really impressed by it.

Justin: And everybody's impressed by my cool, talking sword.

Travis: Everyone agrees, it's a great day.

Griffin: Yeah. It is so effortless for him to do this, for him to like, pop these bubbles that are, uh, scanning through these memories... you can see, actually, as—on the like, exterior of the pod, you see flashes of scenes as you see like, their memories being sort of uh, absorbed by this thing. Sort of being viewed and uploaded by this thing. Uh, and it's so effortless. Like, as soon as the tip of Beacon crosses the threshold of these coffins, they just pop. And uh, Aubrey falls out of the first one.

Aubrey: Oh! Oh...

Duck: Welcome to the outer reaches of space!

Aubrey: What the fuck, Duck?

Duck: Yeah, man, I blew us into space! Well, you blew us into space, technically, right?

Aubrey: No, we—hey. We blew us into space.

Duck: We blew—high five.

Aubrey: Okay!

Travis: And they high five. Do we need to roll for that?

Griffin: No, you're good.

Duck: I'm gonna keep cuttin' people out, so you start that noodle'a turnin'. But I think we're pretty well fucked. [laughing]

Aubrey: Cool. Um... I'm just glad we're not dead, frankly. I thought what we were seeing was like—y'know when your life, like, flashes before your eyes? Like, I was like, this is the explosion, and we're about to die... uh, welp. It's been a good run. Those were kind of my thoughts overall. Still hungry. Still haven't eaten.

Duck: Aubrey, we're either alive, or... and I shudder to even say it aloud... we find ourselves in space hell, man.

Aubrey: Oh, no—well, maybe it's space purgatory.

Duck: It could be space purgatory. It's a fine point.

Aubrey: But as long as we both agree it's not space heaven. [laughs]

Duck: I already said that I'm gettin' people out. You can look at it. It's clearly not space heaven. [laughs]

Griffin: Aubrey, what are you doing as he finishes popping folks out?

Travis: I would say like, while he's—while he is working on that, I would say Aubrey is probably looking for some kind of like, panel, or y'know, computer screen... something that you could do like, an information kind of gathering. Some uh, recon.

Griffin: What are you hoping to find out? Just like, yeah, what are you hoping to find out in particular?

Travis: Um, I mean, where we are, what they were monitoring...

Griffin: Yeah. You—you are doing that. We'll resolve that in a second, as uh, the next bubble that you pop, Duck, Thacker falls out of.

Thacker: Whoa! [laughs] Alright. What's—what is this fresh hell?

Aubrey: It might be hell. It might be purgatory. Haven't decided.

Thacker: [sighs]

Duck: I'm leaning towards alien craft, but... I'm biased.

Thacker: Aw, shit, I should'a... y'know what? I owe Eugene \$25, 'cause he said that whole alien abduction thing, and I said he was full'a shit... [sighs] That whole dog, and they took 'im, and...

Duck: Naw, naw, naw, I've heard about that, too. Everybody knows. That one was a confirmed sighting. I think even the scientists have said that that one's confirmed.

Thacker: Well...

Duck: That was confirmed contact.

Thacker: I should've not bet him at all. Alright, how do we get out'a this one?

Duck: Uh, let me get the only person who might have a single fuckin' clue.

Griffin: Thacker, what are you doing as he continues popping these people out?

Clint: Uh, I think uhh... I think he whips a notebook out of his backpack and just starts jotting down as many notes as he possibly can.

Griffin: Great. That's awesome. Okay. Uh, Duck, you are continuing to pop folks out of their bubbles. Aubrey, why don't you roll to investigate a mystery?

Travis: I sure will, Griffin. Thank you so much for the opportunity. I'm just... oh! [laughs] That's a five.

Griffin: Oppor... oppor... poot... poota... pootity.

Travis: Okay. That's a five, plus a one, uh, which would be a six.

Griffin: How about... uh, Thacker, do you want to be helping out? I think that the two of you are sort of trying to accomplish the same goal, so I think that's an easy case for help out being applicable here.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: I can't think of another sort of gameplay mechanic that would be you taking notes about everything.

Clint: [sighs] Uh... that's a six.

Travis: Plus sharp?

Griffin: Plus cool, unfortunately.

Travis: Oh no.

Clint: A minus one. So that's five.

Travis: Failures all around! Here's what I will say – I believe that means Thacker has failed enough to level up. So maybe there's a level up mechanic that happens, that now—

Clint: That is exactly—do I get an experience for that?

Travis: Yes you do.

Griffin: Uh, yeah, I mean, both of you get experience for failing. You also still have your luck points, but...

Travis: Well, I wouldn't say that I do, Griffin.

Griffin: No, yeah, you're fresh outta luck.

Clint: Well, then, I have another move to make.

Griffin: Okay? [laughs]

Clint: Are we trying to just gather information? Is that what we're doing?

Griffin: Uh, yeah. I'm still going to take a hard move, but if you have something else you want to do, then...

Clint: Well, I think he'd do his psychic event thing. His being sensitive, open his brain to the psychic environment, and try to get some kind of information. Some kind of... some kind of data.

Griffin: O...kay. Uh, I'm gonna take a hard move. But first, Duck, the next coffin that you pop is Minerva's. And she thunks to the ground, and she says...

Minerva: So, tell me, Wayne Newton. Have I finally found myself in that great battleground in the sky?

Duck: Y'know, you can just... [sighs] Yeah. I guess I—eh. Yeah, no, you're alive. I'm burying the lead. I should say that before we quibble about nomenclature, eh? [laughs] Um, no, uh, yeah, you're alive. You're, uh, aboard an alien craft, hurtling through the galaxy, uh, passing, I'm assuming, through our solar system and into the inky blackness beyond, with our only horizon is adventure.

Minerva: That is one theory, Wayne Newton.

Duck: Mm-hmm.

Minerva: Uh, I suspect we stand on the world inside of the archway. The world of light that we've encountered several times before, Wayne. But I... I like your theory as well.

Duck: [groans] Well... [laughs] If it's mine, there's a lot less for us to do, huh? [laughs] I feel like if it's mine, we can just kind of chill. Which would be kind of nice. But I'm assuming that... yeah, yours makes a lot more sense, now that I think about it. [sighs]

Minerva: I admit, Wayne Newton... I'm kind of excited.

Duck: Oh yeah?

Minerva: I suspect our destiny will soon be fulfilled.

Griffin: And right after she says that, you all hear a click, and suddenly, this ancient chamber that you all are standing in comes to life.

[music plays]

Griffin: And these overhead light panels, uh, a few of them. Most of them have been sort of irreparably damaged over time. They flick on, and sort of cast light into this unused, dormant laboratory. And Aubrey, you actually

see, because you were walking in that direction, uh, a couple of the computer monitors do click on and begin like, buzzing a low hum. And there are... you hear some fans, like in a ventilation system, that are activating, and they are just grinding in protest, uh, after not having been used for god knows how long.

And you hear a voice. A computer generated voice that says...

Computer Generated Voice: Please wait.

Aubrey: Huh.

Computer Generated Voice: We have decided to ask you to please remain where you are. Your aggressive actions have resulted in significant damage to core stability. Our current situation is unprecedented. We ask you to patiently wait in this area until a decision can be made regarding your aforementioned aggressive actions.

Griffin: You also see, as the light clicks on now, there's a metal door out of this room. It appears to be the only exit. And right now, it has this bright, red light over it, when the power comes back on in here.

Travis: Hmm. Okay. Y'know what? Aubrey's gonna smash it.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Uh...

Clint: Wait, was that the hard move?

Griffin: Yes. The hard move was... yes. This thing sort of knowing where you are.

Aubrey: Hey, um... Duck, Minerva, Vincent, Thacker?

Griffin: Yeah, let's just say you've popped everybody out at this point.

Aubrey: Uh, um... I would like to posit that, perhaps, we should not wait here for them to determine a course of action based on our, uh, aggressive, y'know, stuff. Um, we should probably.... Y'know, get out, right?

Griffin: Vincent charges the door and rams it with his head, and falls to the ground, and stands up, and he says...

Vincent: What—that wasn't it. That wasn't it.

Aubrey: Okay?

Vincent: That works for a lot of stuff. When a door gets jammed back in the castle, typically, I can do that.

Aubrey: Uh, what about this?

Travis: And Aubrey lays her hands upon it.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: I'm going to use combat magic... uh, lightning.

Griffin: Interesting. Okay. Uh, what's that look like? What do you—what's that do?

Travis: Basically, she's trying to, y'know, fry it. She's trying to hack it with magic lightning. You get it. You know.

Clint: In this metal room we're all trapped in.

Travis: Listen. There's a risk, yes. Of course. But there's a risk when we do anything, Dad. Like, we can't be afraid.

Thacker: Dad? I'm not your father. I'm Thacker!

Travis: I rolled—

Griffin: Wow, that's double sixes.

Travis: I rolled a double six, and let's see, plus three... [laughs] That's a 15.

Griffin: Yeah, uh...

Clint: [laughs] And the door opens and brings you breakfast.

Griffin: I mean, I was trying to figure out like, what this would be. But like, no matter what you needed to do here, a 15... like, the electricity is so completely localized to the door, like, it actually starts to heat up a little bit. You see it glowing red as it heats up, and it just... goes flying. You blast the doors outward, and they land in a larger room outside that you have now opened up a passageway to.

Thacker, do you still want to do your psychic event?

Clint: Yeah, I think he does. I think... even if it just gives him a little hint of what they're gonna be charging into.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: Um... `kay. So, he uh, is gonna cast psychic event. The sensitive version, uh, where he opens his brain to psychic environment. It's...

Griffin: Oh my god.

Clint: ... a three.

Travis: Oh no.

Griffin: Oh my god.

Travis: Oh no.

Clint: Plus... plus weird... which is...

Justin: Yeah, it's weird you rolled so bad.

Clint: It's, yeah... it's a five.

Travis: Oh no.

Clint: Wow. That's not gonna be... uh, one to six makes contact with something dangerous.

Griffin: Huh.

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: There you go, Griffin.

Travis: Enjoy.

Justin: You fuckin' scumbag.

Griffin: [bursts into laughter]

Justin: [laughing]

Travis: I know how bad you want to hurt our daddy.

Justin: You fuckin' nasty boy. Go for it. [laughing]

Travis: Go ahead and break our dad.

Clint: I love you, son.

Justin: G-Nasty, they call him.

Clint: I love you, bud.

Griffin: I love you too, Dad.

Travis: They finally said it!

Clint: Finally! [laughs]

Justin: Hey, end the podcast, folks! That's all we've been trying to do! Thanks for listening. Our other podcasts will still be going, but this one was just trying to achieve that.

Clint: [laughing]

Griffin: Uh, you attempted to do this thing that you have done so successfully when you were trying to sort of interact with the Quell. Only now, you are sort of not looking for a specific entity to talk to – you're just kind of opening up your mind.

You make contact with something, and it is not like... what it was like with the Quell. It is not... Uh, you know right away, whatever you're talking to is not an organic being. And that like... that fucks you up. Take, uh, take two harm, ignore armor.

Clint: Jeeze.

[ambient music plays]

Griffin: It almost feels like you just stuck a fork in a power socket. You are making contact with something that you know you are not supposed to be, uh, able to talk to. It is a... a digital mind. When you try to like, press into it to figure out what this mind is, you realize that you are not speaking to one voice. You are connected to thousands of voices that make up this one sort of digital hive mind, and that alone is enough to kind of like, knock you to the ground.

You don't really get anything from them, but you do realize that they have noticed you, and noticed what Aubrey just did to the door.

Thacker: Aw, farts! Thaaat's gonna leave a mark.

Griffin: In the room that Aubrey just opened the door to, uh, you all hear the sound of machinery beginning to activate. You pick up on one other thing, as sort of like, your senses come back to you, and it's close by. Uh, the thing that you were just talking to is further away. This thing is like... very close by. It's another mind.

This one is a single sort of digital mind, and you really can't get a beat on this one. This mind is so, like, corrupted and scattered, and you don't get any sort of sense of malice from it like you did the other one. And it is... it's nearby. And uh, it is just not as cohesive as the last one that you spoke to. And that's what you get as your senses come back to you.

Clint: Any kind of... any kind of feel of where that singular voice is?

Griffin: No. You... this thing was so overpowering you that like, I don't think you got, necessarily... it's close. But like, it is not like you could draw a map.

Clint: Okay. Well, I... he definitely marked another experience, then.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: Okay. I can't wait to level up.

Travis: [laughs]

Justin: Depending on a lot of failure, if he's gonna get to another level before the end of the show.

Clint: I've had a lot of... oh, I've leveled up. I'm just waiting to spring it on everybody. I'm waiting to do something successfully.

Griffin: Thacker, your senses return to you. What do you all do? Anybody else want to look around the room or do anything else?

Thacker: Hey, listen. Uh, we got a... a couple issues. I just tried to, y'know, brain scan, y'know, do the old mind-meld, and... there—there's some badass shit out there. Uh, I didn't get any kind of read, but it's like this, uh... great big, uh... uh, bee hive mind. So... I think we need to proceed with caution.

Duck: Yeah, what's that, uh... y'all hear that machinery or whatever it is? Some sort of grinding or some noise that just started up.

Thacker: Yeah, I think I did that. Um...

Duck: Ah, cool, man.

Thacker: Did I do thaaat? [laughs]

Duck: Aw, yeah, that was big when you... fuckin'...

Thacker: ... Sorry.

Duck: Yeah.

Aubrey: If I may, once again, um... perhaps we should, y'know, flee?

Duck: Yeah, let's truck.

Griffin: You all pass through the door that Aubrey blasted open. And when you blasted it open, Aubrey, like... there was a sort of like... [sighs] Blast of air that you felt, like, and your ears started to ache. Everybody did, in this room, as the pressure in this facility seems to like, self-regulate.

When you pass through the door, and you step foot into this other room, uh, you realize that this one has also been sort of ravaged by decay and disuse. It's another chamber filled with unrecognizable, futuristic technology. And all of it, like the room you were just in, is covered in dust and grime as if nobody had stepped foot in here for years and years.

You're on the second floor of this room. On the ground floor, you see a much more sort of informal arrangement of desks and furniture at the center of the room, flanked on all sides by these pedestals. And those pedestals have these little hollow cubes on top of them, and all—each of these pedestals is wired to these large, glass tanks; almost like a big fish tank, which are all connected to these like, containers of different materials hanging from the ceiling.

And these tanks are just like, pumping some sort of material into one of these tanks. You see it beginning to fill up with some kind of material coming from these tanks in the ceiling. Um, also, at the edge of this room on the ground level is some sort of transport pod; almost like a monorail that goes into a tunnel in the wall that is currently locked off right now, and it's docked on this platform with one of those sort of spherical control panels on it.

This room, uh, has power going to it already, and it seems like... and it seems like this glass tank has been activated and is doing something. And Mama says...

Mama: Alright, yeah. Yeah. Duck, yeah. Full on alien encounter. Eugene's gonna absolutely shit.

Duck: This is huge. Yeah, no, I don't actually think it's that anymore. Minerva says we're in the world of light, heartbreakingly. Um, so, here's—alright, so we got... [sighs] I mean, I feel like we need to get in this little car and get the hell out of here, y'all. I don't know. I—I don't like what that machine's doing. I actually don't have any clue... let me see if I can figure it out. One sec.

Justin: Uh, and I'm going to roll to investigate a mystery again. That's an 11 plus two, 13.

Griffin: That's a very good roll. Uh...

Justin: Thank you.

Griffin: Okay. Same questions, uh, available to you, Wayne Newton.

Justin: I am going to say—

Griffin: Do you prefer Wayne or Duck at this point?

Justin: I mean... if it's you...

Griffin: Duck.

Justin: Griffin.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Duck.

Travis: Only Minerva gets to call him—

Justin: Here's the only person I'm not gonna give shit to is Minerva.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: 'Cause I told her to call me Wayne, and I feel like...

Griffin: You can't take that back.

Justin: That would be confusing to her. Can't take it back. Can't unring that bell.

Griffin: Okay, Duck.

Justin: I do think, though, it's better if the others don't hear her say that, because we haven't talked about it yet, and it seems weird for everybody to just accept—y'know what I mean? Like, they don't know.

Griffin: That's true, but—

Travis: We have other things on our mind.

Griffin: Yeah, that's true, but Minerva is definitely not the type to understand that you want that, and she has definitely already blurted it out.

Justin: I just think everybody else should stick with Duck, or it'll get confusing.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: Um, what—okay, what can it do? Now, the 'it' is supposed to refer to the creature, but since there's not a creature we're currently talking about here, I'm doing it with the machine. What can it do?

Griffin: Uh, the answer for this is on the first floor, as you're kind of like, poking around there in the work stations in the center of the room. The computers here are active. They are, uh... they are working as the power has been restored to this room, and the like, terminal that is connected to this glass tank that is starting to fill up with these materials, you see some kind of text on it that you cannot necessarily read right now.

But you see a... a humanoid shape on the, uh... on the monitor. And you see this shape that is like, kind of filling up, almost like a progress bar. And as you see that, you realize, um... Ned probably told you about the stuff that happened in that like, hotel he was warped into. I can't see any reason why he wouldn't. It was such a like, vital clue. This sounds like what he described. Like, this sounds like the person-printer that the shape shifting thing used.

And I think you put all those pieces together and see this monitor, and you realize that this room, this chamber, this computer and these cases, these tanks, are designed to essentially print out organic beings.

Travis: Gross.

Griffin: Uh, print out, y'know, whatever. I think the other screens have other shapes on them that are not humanoid. You see, uh, most of them actually have fairly, like, monstrous designs on the monitor. They are not, uh, active; all the other tanks seem to be like, completely broken down, except for this one.

So, yeah, that is what it can do.

Justin: Is it printing currently?

Griffin: It is printing currently. You cannot like, make out what it is through the tank. The thing is being filled up. But like, you know it's—it is—it's going to be humanoid, whatever it is.

Justin: Uh, my other question I get to ask is, what was it going to do?

[ambient music plays]

Griffin: That is a big question.

Justin: Hmm. I'm talking specifically about this printing, here.

Travis: Like, can he get an idea of who it's printing? Is that what you're asking?

Justin: Exactly. Right? If it's somebody I recognize, or what.

Griffin: You know who it is. As the like, progress bar fills up more, this design, uh... it is... becoming more sort of vivid and specific. Uh, on this monitor, you see a woman. And... she's a human woman, and she is... wearing a Christmas sweater. And... not just any like, Christmas sweater, Duck. It is the Christmas sweater that everybody in your family received as gifts several years ago. You realize it's your sister, Jane.

[music intensifies]

Griffin: She is dressed as she was in one of the memories that you remember; you just had sort of scanned sort of your containment. She is being printed here out of this machine, and uh, the progress is like, halfway through.

Duck: Well... that—that fuckin' tears it. This isn't aliens. I am gonna rip this place the fuck apart, though.

Aubrey: Oh. Okay!

Duck: Yeah, that's—you see that, uh... that little fuckin', uh, Lego it's putting together there is my sister. And... that's fucked up. So now, me and my man, Beacon—

Beacon: Yes, yes!!

Duck: Me and my man Beacon are about to tear this place the fuck apart. And then we'll get in that little car, and we'll go see what else I can tear apart. How's that sound, everybody? Quick vote.

Thacker: Aye.

Aubrey: Aye.

Justin: Alright, I pull Beacon—

Beacon: [excited] Yes, yes!! Yes, Duck Newton! Please!!

Justin: And I just start tearing this place the fuck apart, as promised.

Travis: Yes.

Griffin: Uh, okay. What are you attacking specifically?

Justin: Uh, I'm starting with the tank. That's fucked up.

Griffin: Okay. Uh, why don't you... uh, kick some ass is only for like, a fight.

Justin: Roll to kick your half-sister's ass.

Griffin: Yeah, y'know what? We'll do kick some ass to determine like, whether or not you can shatter this big glass tank. You don't know what kind of material it's made out of, so... uh, roll to kick some ass. Uh oh.

Justin: [laughs] Three! Uh, unimpressive.

Griffin: Yeah, not great.

Justin: Not great. I'm out of luck, by the way, in case you're a listener frustrated by my—

Griffin: Oh, shit, really?

Justin: Not out of luck. Well, okay, if you put the last one—if you fill them all up...

Travis: You're doooooomed!

Justin: You're doomed. Okay.

Griffin: No, you don't have to burn that on this if you don't want to. You—

Justin: It's not worth it. I don't see why—I don't even think it's fair that I have to make a kick some ass roll. I'm hitting an inanimate object with a very good sword.

Griffin: Uh, it's just to determine, like... what this material is. Because if it was just like, glass, you would've shattered it. But with this roll, Beacon just kind of like, effortlessly bounces off of it, and doesn't even leave a scratch. Whatever this thing is made out of, it's a little too, uh... it's a little too thick for your blade to smash.

Aubrey: Um, here, Duck. May I try?

Duck: Uh, yeah, man, go for it.

Travis: And Aubrey is going to use some magic.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: To inflict harm against the glass.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: And this is basically just like, y'know, big ball of energy. She's trying to shatter it. And that is... a four.

Griffin: Oh, yes, baby! [claps] Line 'em up!

Travis: Well, well, well... a four plus weird... so that's a seven for me, plus one, because of a move I took because I inflict harm a lot, so that's an eight. Uh, so an eight.

Griffin: Okay. You see the glass start to shatter and crack, and now, it is, uh... you have broken through the like, bullet-proof seal of this thing, if you will. And now, it looks ready to go. But as you do so, Duck, now like through the smog of these like, crystalline materials being pumped in, you see your sister almost fully formed.

Clint: Thacker's turn!

Griffin: Okay. [laughs]

Clint: Okay. Thacker is going to do the whole level up thing, 'cause he's got the experience.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: And one of the things that he can do is, uh, adopt a move from another playbook.

Griffin: Interesting. Okay.

Clint: He's gonna take unholy strength.

Griffin: Holy shit.

Clint: From the Monstrous playbook.

Griffin: [laughs] Okay.

Travis: [laughs]

Clint: Which means, on kick some ass, he rolls plus weird instead of plus tough.

Griffin: Ookay. You need to paint me a pic—this is obviously some dope metagaming, but you need to explain to me like, what this means for Thacker, because he just got fucking super psychic strength.

Clint: Uh, he uh, he takes the machete out of its holder and kind of twirls it around a little bit, and just... the only change is the expression on his face. It just—it's almost like he's reverting a little bit back to his whole bestial nature.

Travis: Mmm, yes, yes.

Clint: Just like, y'know, maybe the brows look a little bigger, but he's just got this horrible expression on his face. And he rushes forward, swinging the machete down in this glistening arc. Now watch me roll a two... ten!

Justin: Ten! Nice!

Clint: Plus two weird!

Griffin: That's a 12.

Clint: That's a... that's...

Travis: A dirty 12.

Clint: 12! A dirty 12!

Griffin: A dirty 12. Tell me what this looks like. The glass container is going to shatter. What's it look like?

Travis: Tell me more about your glistening arc.

Clint: My glistening arc. I'm just bringing it down right... right where the cracks are, where he's already got the cracks.

Travis: Mmm.

Clint: It just—he just whammies it. And I think even says 'whammy.' Yeah.

Thacker: Whammy!

Clint: And he hits it.

Griffin: Okay. [laughs] You smash your machete in, and it finally passes through the glass, and it starts to like, collapse in on itself like a wall of dominoes that—

Clint: I think he stops before the blade would hit sis.

Griffin: Oh, yeah, I mean, the tank is big enough that you would not have done that.

Travis: And remember – uh, Duck's not trying to protect his fake sister.

Griffin: Yeah, sure. [laughing]

Justin: No, I—that was not my intent.

Griffin: Uh, as the glass like, falls in on itself, you hear, like, an alarm come from the terminal that is connected to this thing, and all of the like, uh, hoses that were pumping this thing with these different materials, which you, I think, now you get like, a whiff of, and they smell kind of terrible. And there's lots of them. You see now, at the top of this tank, there were like, uh, over a hundred of these hoses pumping stuff into here.

Uh, and you see the shape of your sister, Duck, it gets sort of consumed by this cloud again, and you just sort of see the silhouette, uh, of her fall apart.

Aubrey: Uh, shall we continue our tour?

Thacker: [laughs] Our tour of destruction?

Aubrey: Yes. Let us head for the, y'know, the monorail.

Griffin: You start to walk in that direction, and from the like, cloud of materials that have been like, freed from this tank, you all see a light shining inside. One of those four-armed beings made of light steps out, all four hands just kind of like, up towards you, as if to say like, "Yo, chill, chill, chill." What do you do?

Travis: Well, the hands up, chill chill chill chill, makes me think like, we would say like... like, yes? I mean...

Duck: Hey, if you're with them, you better start fuckin' talkin'.

Griffin: Uh, it—

Thacker: I feel like we oughta give him a high 20.

Griffin: What's that mean?

Travis: 'Cause he's got four hands, is what Dad is saying.

Griffin: Oh, god, yeah. That's the—that's the good shit. Oh, that's that primo uncut Dad shit right there.

Clint: [laughing]

Justin: [laughing]

Griffin: Uh, it points, like, at where its mouth would be. It is, again, like this featureless white humanoid light being, and like, shakes its head no. And then it points over at a computer, and starts to sort of like, slowly creep over in that direction.

Aubrey: Uh... okay. You can't talk, so you're gonna use the computer. Cool. I gotcha.

Griffin: Uh, it walks over to one of those spherical, like, terminals—

Travis: Oh, it should be said, uh... Aubrey just fuckin' loves charades. Loves them.

Griffin: Oh, okay, good. [laughs]

Travis: She is so excited for this. Like, it is—she prides herself on her charades abilities.

Thacker: Can I—can I point out that we've already been told that these four-armed bastards are the ones that caused the whole war between the Quell and us, and they were behind all that stuff, and we're just gonna let him walk over there to that machine, and doodily doodily doodily, and do whatever he wants?

Aubrey: Thacker, they are not all bad. Let us not forget our friend Billy.

Thacker: You knew a good one? You knew a good one?

Aubrey: Yes! Yes. He was—

Thacker: Name one good one!

Aubrey: Billy! He was the goat who loved pizza!

Griffin: You... see one of the monitors behind this being. It has its back turned. Uh, it seems to flicker as you said Billy's name.

Travis: The monitor does?

Griffin: Yes. You see this four-armed being finally like, get access into one of these computers, and uh, you hear a computerized voice say...

Computer Generated Voice: Do not be alarmed. I apologize for the rash selection of this form. It was decided it might put you all at ease. I can tell from your expression this was not correct.

Duck: Uh, yeah, no fucking kidding. What's your problem?

Griffin: Uh, it types—it doesn't type, there's not like a keyboard. It just seems to be like, maneuvering around this spherical input. And it says...

Computer Generated Voice: The facility in which you stand has been in operation for eons longer than you have been alive, and this is the first incident of its type we've ever experienced. We were trying to decide our next course of action. We ask you to stay in the room where we placed you until a decision has been made.

Aubrey: Uh, just to clarify, is there a course of action you might take that would involve us being dead, or injured, or incapacitated? Y'know, that might result in a bad kind of situation for us?

Griffin: The voice says, after maneuvering around this sphere a little bit more...

Computer Generated Voice: At this very moment, the deliberative operational mind is deciding whether or not to grant your worlds clemency, and cease pairing operations between them. If you seek to save your worlds and yourselves, you would do well to act peacefully during the remainder of your stay here.

Aubrey: Hmm.

Duck: I mean, direct and fair. Thank you so much for that. Hey, uh, you mentioned pairing operation. Y'know, we're lower life forms, obviously. Can you, um... can you dig into that a little bit?

Griffin: It sort of cocks its head, and... you see it like, look down at the computer, and move its hands around it. And from the computer, you hear a different voice, and the voice says...

Computer Generated Voice: Query: Should the invading life forms be informed of Reconciliations mission statement?

Griffin: And then you hear it say...

Computer Generated Voice: 11.03% affirm.

Griffin: And this being looks up at you, and you just hear a voice say...

Computer Generated Voice: No.

Aubrey: Huh.

Duck: Well, thank you so much for your sort of... take on this. Um... Minerva, do you have any... any thoughts? You ever—you have any idea what they're talking about? This pairing shit?

Griffin: Um, Minerva, you look over... she's been quiet this entire time. As she sees this four-armed being, as she kind of like, hears more about what is happening here, she is seething with a rage you have never seen from her before. Um, and... you remember the story she has told you about the war between her world and the one that she, uh, she destroyed, leading to sort of the simultaneous eradication of both civilizations, and you see her, uh... you see her hand where her hip be at.

Duck: Hey, maybe pump the brakes a little bit, alright? Let's just talk it. I'm pissed off as you are. Well, no, fuck. You are more pissed off than I am, clearly. I'm moderately pissed. I'm at about a six. You look like you're at a 14. But like, let's... can we just talk about it first?

Griffin: This being sees Minerva's hand reaching for her blade, and this voice says...

Computer Generated Voice: I assure you, any attempts at resistance through physical violence will pizza be futile.

Thacker: Pi...

Aubrey: Wh...

Thacker: Pizza?

Duck: What?

Aubrey: Excuse me?

Duck: What? Say it one more time. Say it again. Repeat.

Griffin: It doesn't seem to respond, and it's also like, completely stopped moving. Uh, and it's static, now. It's like a mannequin, and you watch it slowly just sort of... slide downward, and like, phase through the floor, and is gone. Uh, and as it does so, you see this monitor that had flickered earlier behind it. It comes into view, and you see it moving. You see, like... you see

activity on this monitor, as it seems to be just like, scrolling through files and uh, going through all of these different sort of operations.

Aubrey: Billy?

Griffin: Uh, it stops, finally, and you see—it stops scrolling, and you see, uh... you see some sort of file be open. And obviously, like, the text has been completely unreadable, but very slowly, the different characters begin to change shape until it is in a language that you can read.

Travis: What does it say, Griffin?

[pause]

Griffin: What you see is a text file that has mostly been translated. You can read most of it, and it is labeled 'Decision Log.' And sure enough, it appears to be a running list of the queries that the life form you were just speaking to, or at least, what that being represented has been contemplating. And... it appears to be in some sort of chronological order. You don't seem to understand the system by which it is measuring time, but it has a query from some time ago, and it reads...

Computer Generated Voice: Query: Should the history of Reconciliation be preserved in plain text? 98.02% affirm.

Griffin: And sure enough, following that query, you see a timeline of events that, though you can't really make out exactly how far along the dates are in relation to each other, the screen seems to be scrolling between like, relevant times and dates, and it presents the following as the first.

Computer Generated Voice: Locust Prime enters the age of unity. 25 revolutions and peace and prosperity follow. Population increases dramatically. Artistic achievement increases dramatically. Scientific and isospacial advancement increases dramatically.

Telioptical Research Laboratory founded. Extragalactic exploration begins.

First contact with extraterrestrial civilization. Communication failures and continued aggression force retreat of exploratory unit.

First invasion from extraterrestrial civilization.

Extraterrestrial civilization retreats. Locust Prime population dramatically reduced. Devastation to infrastructure nearly absolute.

Second invasion from extraterrestrial civilization. Defensive protocols effective. Extraterrestrial invaders defeated. Casualties limited.

Griffin: And then there's this long, long gap. And it appears to be detailing the recovery of this planet of Locust Prime, following this invasion. And you skim through it, and then, the screen seems to scroll itself to another entry, farther down the line.

Computer Generated Voice: New extraterrestrial civilization makes contact with Telioptical Research Laboratory.

Invaded by second extraterrestrial civilization. Defenses ineffective.

Griffin: And this pattern just doesn't stop. This planet, Locust Prime, it continues this cycle of achieving prosperity, and reaching for the stars, only for the stars to come crashing back down on them. Their accomplishments, they seem remarkable, but they were just constantly met with nothing but destruction from other worlds who took notice of their progress. Until... eventually...

Computer Generated Voice: Telioptical Research Laboratory decommissioned. Facility repurposed for a new defense project.

Reconciliation founded. Mission statement: To pacify the charted universe by eliminating aggressive elements before they achieve sufficient astro-navigational or isospacial advances to pose a threat to off-world civilizations. Hypothesis: By pitting two aggressive extraterrestrial civilizations against one another, elements will destroy themselves following appropriate encouragement from Reconciliation.

Dilemma: Parties raise ethical concerns, questioning the counterintuitive nature of the use of violence to promote desired extraterrestrial violence in an effort to reduce intergalactic violence. Solution: Belligerence limit established. When consensus vote from Reconciliation crew finds the projects inherent aggression has exceeded acceptable levels, Reconciliation project will be terminated.

First aggressive respondent match determined. Isospacial link successful.

First provocateur dispatched. Interplanetary conflict achieved.

Participant worlds eliminated.

Griffin: And these pairings, they always follow the same pattern. Using this wildly advanced technology, they scan the stars for planets and civilizations that they deem too aggressive, and could one day potentially pose a threat to, y'know, other worlds in existence, then finds a match for those worlds, and then tethers the worlds together and provokes a war between them that will lead to their inevitable destruction.

And the Locust Prime appears to be on the brink of collapse. They celebrate how little blood they have to get on their hands using this Reconciliation project. And then, at the end of this document, the end of this timeline detailing the origins of this facility, there are a handful of final entries.

Computer Generated Voice: Continued invasions render Locust Prime uninhabitable. Population dwindles near extinction point.

Surviving populous abandons corporeal forms. 1,183 survivors transfer consciousness footprint through Reconciliation.

Uploaded consciousness forms deliberative operational mind.

Extinction point of all corporeal life on Locust Prime. Reconciliation continues under direction of deliberative operational mind.

Griffin: And as you all finish reading this text document, you see the screen flicker, and shut off.

Duck: Can I just say something real quick? I mean, it is aliens.

Aubrey: Okay, yes.

Thacker: You were right. You—yes.

Duck: I mean, I thought I was havin' a kind of crisis of conscious there, but... it is aliens, am I right?

Aubrey: Yes.

Thacker: Yep. Well, dead aliens. Y'know.

Duck: Yeah. No, that's true. That's a fair point. Thank you.

Thacker: It's computers. Y'know what? Y'know, Captain Kirk would just ask it some question, and it would just screw it up. Think we could get away with that?

Aubrey: Sooo... I would say that, no matter what, they sound like real pieces of shit. [laughs] Am I right?

Thacker: Yeah.

Duck: Yeah, real fuckin' scumbags.

Aubrey: So they're gonna be like, "Well, please be peaceful, and we're figuring out what to do," or whatever. But like... they kind of seem like pieces of shit, and even if they let us, y'know, chill out or whatever, they're just gonna do this, like, again, to like, other places. And they've done it at least to Minerva's, which, Minerva... fuck them, am I right?

Minerva: Yes, fuck them, Aubrey Little.

Aubrey: Yes.

Griffin: And as you say that, you hear a bell chime behind you, and the transport pod is illuminated in green light as it starts to hover off of the rail that it is standing over, and the door on its side slides open.

Aubrey: Well... I believe that's our cue to go fuck it all up.

[ambient music plays]

Griffin: When the door of the transport pod slides open, there's... there's no atmospheric decompression this time. The room it opens up to doesn't resemble the rest of this ruined facility that you've explored so far. Uh, it is ancient, and it is devoid of signs of life, but... that musk of disuse doesn't fill the air. This part of the facility, of Reconciliation, is still in operation.

It's the only part, you assume, just because it's a chamber you've also seen before. You stand at the base of a towering, cylindrical chamber. All along the outer rim of this room, transport lines to other parts of the facility flank your own. On the opposite end of this circular room, you make out a row of those same, like, organic printing devices you just saw in the last room.

And then, at the center of the room are three concentric rings of desks and terminals, all arranged to face the very center of the room, all connected with these thick pipes to various pieces of machinery. The organic printers, there's the middle ring is uh, connected to this massive holographic map. It's just this big, cosmic map, swirling overhead.

And the innermost ring's wires run up and outward, high onto the outer walls. And following them upward, you see what they're leading to. Hundreds of circular gates, all tethered by the same tunnels, like the one that you just destroyed. In the distance, actually, you can see smoke and sparks pouring from one pair of these rings. All the others, however, are currently in operation.

And vaguely, through them, you can see occasional shadows flying from one world to another, undoubtedly ready for war. And at the center of this room is a dome of white light that is just peeking out of the ground. And it is the central terminus for everything else in this room; for the whole facility. And realizing that you have arrived, it flashes. And above it, uh, text appears in this holographic map, and it reads...

Computer Generated Voice: Query: Should pairing 14198, Earth-Sylvain, be granted clemency?

Griffin: And then beneath it...

Computer Generated Voice: 13.11% affirm.

Aubrey: Okay. Y'know what, I actually find that, uh, little, uh... y'know, it puts me a little at ease, 'cause I thought we were gonna have to make a big speech about, oh, even though you granted clemency to us, what about the other planets, and we still have to do it... right? But now... we don't have to bother with all that. So that's kind of nice.

Duck: Hey, is there anybody that wants to chat? I mean, I know you're all in computers or whatever, but... does anybody talk, uh, earthling?

Griffin: Uh, as you say that, you hear a bell behind you, and the transport pod you just stepped out of is illuminated in red light, and it lowers down to the rail. And in a chorus of bells, you see the other transport pods in the room do the same, locking you in.

[music intensifies]

Griffin: At the far side of the room, the organic printers all activate, and you see different materials being pumped through tubes emerging from the wall. And then, almost as an answer to your question, an arm made out of that same hard light jabs out of the dome at the center of the room.

It is followed by several dozen others, as a horde of these four-armed beings of light begin climbing out of this core, and start scrambling over the rings of

terminals toward your party. And with a flash, this brilliant white dome at the center of the room is encased in a shell of swirling, red light. And these hard light operators of Reconciliation approach.

What do you do?

Duck: Well, I guess that's a no, huh?

Aubrey: Yeah, that... yeah. That kind of reads like maybe talking is done.

Duck: It reads like... hey, y'all, this reads super aggressive. I don't know if we're at a cultural impasse, maybe. Hey, we're not lifting a hand against y'all. We're not starting anything, here. I just wanted to talk. Y'all are the original pacifists, right?

Griffin: These four-armed beings pause, and text appears again in the holographic cloud map that reads...

Computer Generated Voice: Query: Are the extraterrestrial invaders engaging in deception? 89.84% affirm.

Aubrey: Now, listen, you all don't know Duck like I do. Believe me – he cannot engage in deception to save his life.

Griffin: [laughs]

Thacker: He's also an employee of the federal government.

Griffin: It skyrockets up to 98.64%.

Justin: [laughs]

Duck: Uh, alright. Well, I gave it the ol' college, huh?

Clint: Thacker investigates a mystery.

Griffin: Uh, this would almost certainly be read a bad situation, if anything.

Clint: Okay, read a bad situation, then.

Griffin: `Kay. You don't really have time to investigate anything right now, but you can sort of take stock of...

Clint: Okay, read a bad situation. That's a nine, plus two, because he has two sharp.

Griffin: Cool beans.

Clint: Are there any dangers we haven't noticed?

Griffin: Toward the back of the room, uh, those printers have activated. Uh, in one of them in particular, you see a shape beginning to take form very quickly. You see a massive, uh, leathery paw sort of push up against the glass, almost like it's, y'know, mid-printing, trying to smash its way out toward you.

Clint: Well, I got a second question, but it's just a follow up to that. What's the biggest threat? I assume it's the big, leathery paw thing?

Griffin: The biggest threat in this room is that dome in the center. That dome, Thacker, in the center of the room, it's not just some sort of like, power source or uh, y'know, processor. It's the thing that you made contact with earlier. That dome in the middle of the room is the deliberative operational mind, which contains the consciousness of the survivors. It is the thing that, uh, is controlling Reconciliation, and that makes it not just the most dangerous thing in the room – it makes it, potentially, the most dangerous thing in existence.

Clint: What's most vulnerable to me?

Griffin: These four-armed beings that are coming at you, uh, they... they don't look like much. They don't look super tough. Duck, you especially recognize, like, they are not nearly as, uh, imposing as that one shape

shifter who like, finally came out of its form, looked. Like, these look more, uh... like you could deal with them, but probably not in huge quantities. And right now, you have like, four or five of them like, clearing the circle of workstations and coming towards you.

And also, just like... the computers in the room. Whether it be, y'know, the hardware itself, or perhaps the software, like, they are computers. So, computers you can hurt fairly reasonably. But just in general, this is an operation that has been going for, y'know, eons and eons, god knows how long. And you are probably the first tangible, uh, organic beings to step foot in here in a long time.

You get the impression that like, they are maybe not exactly set up for this. That is what is vulnerable.

Clint: Okay.

Duck: Alright. I tried that approach. So, um, let me try a different one. Uh... hi. I'm Wayne Newton. Everybody calls me Duck. Uh, I'm a chosen one, and I never really understood what that meant, and I guess I still don't... but I look around here, and I reckon I'm just about the toughest son of a bitch on this ship.

So... here's what I think I'm chosen to do. I'm gonna kill you, and you, and you, and you, and you, and I hope you got more. 'Cause I'm just gettin' started, and my sword... [laughs] Uh, well, you'll see. He's just a mean son of a bitch, too. So uh, listen, we tried to talk it out, and uh... I think we just go ahead and go. How 'bout that, weird computer? How's that sound?

Justin: And then I kill one of them. With Beacon.

Griffin: [laughs] Okay, it starts—

Justin: I cut one of their heads off.

Griffin: It starts to spell out a query overhead in the map, and you, uh, attack one of these beings of light.

Duck: Hey, I got a query for ya. Where's my fuckin' head? Oh no! That kickass human chopped it off. Fuck you! Come on!

Griffin: [laughing] Roll to kick some ass.

Justin: Uh, seven...

Griffin: Plus tough.

Justin: Plus two for tough. So a nine.

Griffin: Niner.

Travis: Uh, if I—may I help?

Griffin: Absolutely. I imagine everybody's going to help kick ass.

Travis: Yeah, I'll help out, even though I have zero cool. So... boom. Oh, nope. [laughs]

Griffin: Oh.

Travis: That's a five. [laughs]

Justin: That's a five. Aubrey yelled, "Get them or don't!"

Griffin: [laughs] Okay. Uh, okay. So, you got a mixed success, Duck. You do, indeed, behead one of these things. Uh, you—how much damage do you deal with Beacon?

Justin: Uh, I believe two.

Griffin: Uh, you feel like you have actually afflicted like... you hit this thing a lot harder. You feel the same way that you did when you pierced those uh, those sarcophagus things made of light. Beacon just like, thrums with

energy as you cut down the first of these attackers that make their way toward you.

Uh, its body, its headless body, like, mid-disintegration, like, rams into you as it was sort of sprinting at speed and knocks you to the ground, but your armor is as such that you... your natural human chitin is as such that you uh, you don't even register it.

Justin: Cool.

Griffin: Minerva draws her blade, and she's like...

Minerva: Yes! [laughing] Yes!

Griffin: And she starts running towards those rings of terminals to join in the melee between these other alien, four-armed beings. You see Vincent and Mama, who are like, unarmed, looking a little bit nervous. Uh, Mama runs over and like, finds a thin piece of steel pipe that she like, peels off of the wall where it was kind of like, rotting away, and she looks kind of nervous to be using it. And Vincent is like...

Vincent: I can... I can tackle them? With my helmet? Uh... this could be... bad.

Travis: I would like to, uh... I would like to use magic.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: For Mama.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: There's a use magic thing I haven't—I don't think I've ever used, and it is, enchant a weapon.

Griffin: Oh, you have used that. You used that to kill your very first Abomination.

Travis: Oh, right! Yes, so I'm going to enchant Mama's weapon.

Griffin: Okay, roll plus weird.

Travis: Well... it's a four.

Griffin: Good lord.

Travis: Plus three. So it is a seven. Becomes a mixed success.

Griffin: Uh, choose an—I get to choose a glitch. Uh, actually, you pick the glitch, and I tell you what it is.

Travis: The magic draws immediate, unwelcomed attention.

Griffin: Uh, okay. You see the metal pipe that Mama picked up start to glow this light blue color, and uh, it's not like it is like, electrified right now, 'cause obviously, that would hurt Mama quite badly. And she says...

Mama: Aw, yeah, now we're talkin'!

Griffin: And you see her sprint after Minerva and start engaging these four-armed beings that were coming after you. This is also the hard move that you had earlier for failing your help out roll, Aubrey. That one tank where you saw something trying to break out, uh, it finally shatters. And you see... what you may have called an Abomination just a while ago, smash out of the tank and uh, land with a deafening thud.

You see a ten foot tall gorilla. Not exactly a gorilla – it's got four large arms that it's using to steady itself as it walks like an ape, and its face just features these two enormous mouths, lined with sharp teeth. And also, its fur seems to be consumed in a living flame that is going wild as he roars. But this beast lands out of the cloud of these crystalline materials that were composing it, and it starts to charge toward you, Aubrey.

Aubrey: Cool.

Griffin: Vincent sees this thing charging at you and turns, and says...

Vincent: Well, um... time to... go to work.

Griffin: And he points at himself, and he says...

Vincent: Remember? Minister of Defense.

Griffin: And he lowers his head and charges at this ape that is coming after you. This leaves the three of you, now, at the back of the room here. Duck has sprung in front of you, Aubrey, and... but you and Thacker are next to each other, just outside of this pod, and everybody has thrown themselves into the melee. Thacker, what do you do?

Clint: I wanna kick some ass. He hasn't kicked ass in this whole thing.

Griffin: [laughing] Okay.

Clint: So, I think he's gonna unleash his machete and... let's start off easy. Uh, I think he'll help Vincent with the gorilla.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: So he attacks the gorilla.

Griffin: You charge in after Vincent. You see Vincent like, just crash into this thing's chest with his—with his horned helmet, and it kind of like, pushes him backwards. You see some like, old, uh, pieces of panel beneath him that have kind of rotted away get pushed back from the force of it. And the ape kind of slows down as you charge in to attack. Roll to kick some ass plus weird, using your super psychic strength.

Clint: Alright.

Griffin: Oh my god! That's a double six, folks!

Clint: 12 plus weird. That's a 14.

Griffin: Uh, okay. On a ten plus, you can gain the advantage. Take plus on forward or give plus one forward to another hunter, inflict terrible harm, you suffer less harm, or you force them where you want them.

Clint: Um... terrible harm.

Griffin: Okay. Uh, what does your machete do?

Clint: I think, uh... I think I'm using the machete and all of his years of hackin' down vines and brush, and really try to cut the gorilla's head off. [laughing]

Griffin: Okay. You don't necessarily cut this thing's head off, but as Vincent kind of slows the beast down, you are able to jump up as its kind of doubled over, over Vincent, and get a good, clean chop into this thing's neck. And you *really* drive it down. And it's not like, spraying blood or anything like that. You do see some like, crystalline, like, gas start to come out of it a little bit, and its form is starting to, uh, start to decompose. But it is still definitely alive.

But, as you are sort of clung onto it, it roars in pain, and as it does, you are caught in the flames of its fur, just for a second, before it falls down. You take two harm.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: How are you doin'?

Clint: I got four harm.

Griffin: Are you unstable?

Clint: Uh—

Travis: Um, I would like to—is this the opportunity to, uh, roll to protect someone?

Griffin: Yeah, I think if you want to prevent harm to another character, yes. I think, for sure, this is the moment to do it. It is a reactionary thing.

Travis: Sick. Then I'm going to roll to protect someone.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: And yes, I am unstable.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: It was an eight. Mixed success.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: And I have leveled up and taken the move 'shield spell.' When you protect someone, gain two armor against any harm that is transferred to you.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: But I'm going to use my shield spell, so I would say that like, how this would look is Aubrey going...

Aubrey: Sylvain, do something!

Travis: And like, y'know, a barrier kind of forms around Thacker for a second, that then softens the blow.

Griffin: Okay. Uh, and because you were going to take some of it, but you gain this shield, Thacker, as you are like, landing, you see the same flames that are on this ape kind of swirl around Aubrey, and she just like... absorbs them harmlessly. So, do not take two harm.

Thacker: Cool, thanks Aubrey!

Aubrey: Hey, you're welcome.

Griffin: Duck, uh, what are you doing?

Justin: Uh, who we got? Who we got now? Who's in the fracas?

Griffin: Uh, you and Minerva and Mama have cleared out most of the like... these four-armed beings that have been like, clambering over these rings of computers towards you. But you see like, more as ever are just always coming out. Uh, you see, to your left, you see Vincent and Thacker fighting this big, flaming ape.

At the back of the room, you see all the rest of the printers still going. There are four other printers still going. And inside, you hear, uh, y'know, you hear various roars and wails, and you – like, W-A-I-L-S – and you see that same sort of crystalline gas material filling up the chamber.

Justin: I'm gonna, uhh... rush the printers.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: With Beacon.

Griffin: Uh, okay. What's your... I mean, you can't really... they're these big, big machines, so I don't think you could get all of them, if you're just looking to smash `em up.

Justin: Yeah, I'm gonna, um... I'm just gonna start hackin' away at the gully works, y'know what I'm saying?

Griffin: You're not looking to like, shatter the glass necessarily. You are looking to like, disable the machines?

Justin: Exactly, right.

Duck: Hey, y'all, I got a plan! I'm gonna—I'll—uh, but I can't say it, 'cause the super smart computer. So it's gonna... I'm just gonna... do it!

Griffin: Uh, Mama—

Aubrey: Okay, thanks for sharing, Duck.

Griffin: Yeah, Mama and Minerva nod as Minerva stabs through another one of these bright, white beings, and she says...

Minerva: Do what you gotta do, Wayne Newton!

Duck: Y'know, a problem that we always struggle with at the Forestry Service? Paper jams. Y'know what I mean? In one of—y'know where you get a paper jam?

Thacker: Like a poetry jam?

Griffin: Mama blasts one of these white light beings with her electrified rod, and she says...

Mama: Duck, honey, we don't really need to know what you're doin'. Just go—just go do it, okay?

Griffin: And she gets clobbered by another one of them, which Minerva jumps in to save her. And Minerva's like...

Minerva: Yes, Duck, it's not a great, uh, like, monologue time.

Duck: Yeah, fuck, okay.

Justin: And uh, I'll slide, uh... I'm gonna jam Beacon into like... this is really hard, 'cause I'm trying to—

Griffin: Trying to visualize it?

Justin: Trying to visualize it in two different things. But like, not the tank, but the things connected to the tank. How's that?

Griffin: Sure. There are sort of pipes connecting the outermost, uh, ring of computers to the tanks, and there are also like, uh, those pipes out of the walls that are like, supplying them with all these materials.

Justin: Yeah, I'm just gonna start severing pipes. Those seem like an easy target.

Griffin: Okay. Uh, why don't you, uh... if you want to like, sever those pipes that are like, supplying them with materials, you're gonna have to get up there, and I think that there's like, enough shit here that is posing a threat to everyone that I need you to act under pressure just to get up there. 'Cause you're not gonna have to fight these pipes, y'know?

Justin: So I'm kind of stuck in the middle of the fracas, right?

Griffin: Uh, yes.

Justin: Okay. Uh, I'm gonna use the one move I still remember from being a Mundane, and that's panic button. When you need to escape, name the route you'll try and roll plus sharp. On a ten plus, you're out of danger no problem. And I could read the rest, but that's the only one I'm gonna read.

Griffin: Yeah, okay.

Justin: 'Cause I'm gonna get a quick ten plus real quick. The route I'm gonna try is, I'm gonna um, try to hit Beacon around some of the cords up there, and swing up there, and then sever the cables.

Griffin: Okay. That sounds like a good plan to me.

Justin: Eight plus two.

Griffin: That's a ten.

Justin: That's a ten.

Griffin: That's exactly the number that you needed.

Justin: [laughs] Incredible.

Travis: You've done it!

Griffin: Uh, a trio of these four-armed beings like, dive towards you, trying to just dog pile on top of you. And you hold Beacon up and whip it around the pipes supplying the material to these printers, and just very closely, very narrowly, escape from the situation as you land on top of the tanks.

Uh, describe what this looks like.

Justin: How many of the pipes can I reach from where I'm at?

Griffin: There are like—there are like, hundreds of these pipes coming out of the walls. They are... I mean, they are close enough together that you could just arc down and catch a bunch of `em.

Justin: Yeah, that's what I'm gonna do. Just kind of fling myself off and jam as—kind of a um, Douglas Fairbanks, like, jam Beacon into the wall and just slide down the wall and see how many fuckin' cables I can take out with me on the way.

Clint: [laughing]

Griffin: Uh, okay. Why don't you... [clicks tongue] I mean, you kind of already did your thing. I don't think you need to act under pressure again. I think you just do this.

Justin: Yeah. It's a stunt.

Griffin: You... you all, the rest of you see just like this diagonal line of sparks shooting out of the wall as Duck carves his way down the side of the facility, severing all of these tubes and pipes supplying the materials to the organic printers. And as he does, the flow of that crystalline gas just suddenly comes to a stop.

And you all see, inside of these tanks, these just horrific visions. Just these nightmarish Abominations inside. You see a... just like this spherical, bestial entity, covered in just jagged spikes. One of them has just a big, floating, hideous face. One of them has this bird with just this massive beak, glistening with corrosive slime.

But as you see these sparks shoot out of the wall, and you see Duck sever all these cables, they all, very slowly, just start to collapse in on themselves, until they are just this fine mist of crystalline material that seeps out of the bottom of the tank and is gone.

Duck: I meant—hey, I meant like... I meant like a printer. Like a jam you get in a printer.

Aubrey: Ohh!

Duck: That's the thing I was trying to hint... doesn't matter now.

Travis: Uh, I would like to do some big magic, Griffin.

Griffin: Okay. What's your—

Travis: I had an idea that I can completely justify.

Griffin: [laughs] Oh boy.

Justin: That's the title of Travis' memoir.

Travis: Yes.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, so... uh, I hate to just spell it all out, but I think if I just try to do it without giving my justification, you won't let me do it. One of the things you can do with magic, when you use magic, is to summon a monster into the world.

Griffin: ... Okay.

Travis: I would like to... summon Billy.

Griffin: [amused] Okay.

Travis: And my justifications are, I have within me the goddess of creation, and all around this room is the material used, floating through the air now that he severed those pipes, that one could use to print an organic being.

Griffin: Okay. Uh...

Travis: So Aubrey would like to collaborate with Sylvain to do big magic, using the materials present.

Griffin: I feel you. I feel you. I'm right there with you. Uh, I am going to choose what you need to do here. Obviously, you need five people to help. They're already helping. You need to use magic, obviously.

Travis: Yes. I also assumed you need some rare and weird ingredients and supplies.

Griffin: That is definitely true. Uh, I'm also going to say, it's going to have a specific side effect or danger.

Travis: Okay!

Griffin: Okay. Why don't you roll to use magic, big time roll? For big time... big time players.

Travis: For big time kids.

Griffin: Oh my god, Travis.

Travis: Oh! I... I have two luck points left. I'm using one.

Griffin: He got a three.

Travis: Yes. I got a three. But now I've got a 12, because I really want to do this.

[music plays]

Griffin: God in heaven.

Travis: Yep.

Griffin: You absolute dingdongs.

Travis: Uh, so here's what I imagine it looks like.

[music intensifies]

Travis: Um, Aubrey has the idea, right? And closes her eyes and says...

Aubrey: Uh, Sylvain? Can we... do this? Like, can we create, too? But y'know, for like, goo—

Travis: And before she can finish the sentence, Aubrey's eyes open... but they're not Aubrey's eyes. They're just glowing with that orange glow, and her hands start to move around. And as her hands move around, the particulate, that crystalline stuff, begins to swirl around them. And the voice of Sylvain speaks and says...

Sylvain: Billy.

Travis: And there's a flash of light.

Griffin: Yeah, when that flash of light happens, you... everybody else in the room sees that particulate matter that was just sort of like, moving like a dense fog across the floor... it starts swirling around this room, and then it starts swirling around Aubrey with her hand outstretched. And then, Aubrey just kind of like, disappears in this column of swirling, crystalline gas... and then, that column explodes outwards, and standing in front of Aubrey, with her hand on his shoulder, is Hollywood celebrity, Ryan Gosling, who looks backwards at you and says...

Billy: Pizzaaa!

Aubrey: Hell yeah, pizza!

Justin: This is probably a little late to ask if Billy has any kickass fighting techniques.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Well, no, but here's the thing—

Justin: I mean, he is just a goat that looks like Ryan Gosling.

Griffin: He looks up at you.

Billy: Ah, Duuuck!! Duuuck!!

Duck: Yeah, man. Naw, man, this is so cool. For sure, I'm loving this. But like... [laughs] You could've gotten us a ninja or something, man!

Aubrey: Duck, he's our inside guy! He knows how the computers work, Duck!

Duck: [mumbling] Fuckin' my nephew knows how the computers work...

Griffin: He points over at the core and he says...

Billy: Duck? Uh, Duck? Pizza?

Aubrey: Yes!

Duck: Naw, naw, pizza, for sure. Naw, pizza, of course!

Aubrey: Yes! Duck that pizza, son!

Griffin: You see... Billy rushes towards the uh, the rings of computers, and he begins—he like, signs onto one of the terminals in the outermost ring, and you—

Travis: What's his password?

Griffin: Uh, it's... I mean...

Clint: 1234?

Griffin: PizzaDuckPizzaPizzaDuckDuck.

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: And he moves his hands all around the terminal, and he looks up at you as a couple of those beings of light start to approach. I think he also—the dome flashes, and the ape that you, Thacker and Vincent, were fighting, uh, pushes you off and starts to clamber over in Billy's direction.

Thacker, what do you do?

Clint: Thacker runs over to the dome. Um, I'm gon—gonna have Thacker do an act under pressure. I want to try and use his psychic powers to send a message to the dome. All these psychic things that have happened to him have been one way. Just to him. I want him to try to communicate with the dome. They've already communicated once before – I mean, a couple times

before. And I want to have him run over and act under pressure to try to send a psychic message to the dome.

Griffin: I would argue this is use magic, not act under pressure. 'Cause use magic has like a, uh—

Travis: Communicate with something otherworldly.

Griffin: Communicate with another thing, right? So this is not explicitly one of your moves, so this is, y'know... we don't have to call it magic, but you are rolling plus weird to achieve one of these effects that we know you can do. So I think—I think that's the actual, uh, game mechanic for it.

Clint: Okay. 11 plus weird, that's a 13.

Griffin: Good lord. Um, okay. You close your eyes, and you are just like, instantly hit with that same shockwave that you felt earlier when you accidentally tapped into this thing – only right now, it's like, at your feet. And you can see it, like, in this psychic space. It's not just this one, tangible dome that is covered by this red force field of light. It is... it's many small lights, all sort of huddled around each other, like fireflies forming this one, larger ball.

And you feel it start to like, try and push you away. In fact, your physical body feels this force field start to repulse you. But in this psychic space, you are able to withstand the pressure and deliver a message.

Thacker: Uh, hey there, sport. Uh... we got us an invincible super warrior with a bloodthirsty sword, and his Obi Wan Kenobi, and she's got a sword. We got a magic user with a goddess in her. We got us a goat soldier, we got a artist with a pipe, and we got an academy award nominated actor.

Griffin: [laughs]

Thacker: And so, if I may suggest... you and your bunch'a Commodore 64s are just not set up for this. So why don't you stand the fuck down?

Griffin: These lights that are swirling around each other inside of this—the Deliberative Operational Mind, uh... you speaking to them directly like this seems to send them into a panic. And you are now just repulsed backwards by this force field. Everybody else in the room sees the red shell just shine, and this wave of force pushes you backwards, back all the way to like, the far wall of the room.

And you land there with a thud, but before you were sort of sent away, you saw them panicking. And everybody else in the room, when this happens, simultaneously, you watched every four-armed being of light and this massive ape just kind of... pause and glitch out for a second, almost like whoever was controlling them dropped the controller for a minute.

And the ape, in stumbling like that, just goes flying over the terminal that Billy is working at, delaying the attack. And they all sort of start to recover, and begin their movement again. And Billy looks up at the ape charging, and looks at all of you fighting these beings, looks up at Duck on top of these dormant printers, and then he looks down at his hands, and... grins at you, Duck, and presses the enter button. Or... the spherical equivalent of it.

[music plays]

Griffin: And as he does that, these rings of monitors all flash blue, and then they go dark. Uh, except for the one he's working on. And from that computer, you all hear music start to play. Like old, low-fi, like, MIDI music. And Duck, this music sounds familiar.

And then, all of the stars and galaxies in this overhead holographic map, they start gravitating inward. They are colliding and combining in a central point over the core. And you all see a query start to spell out in the display, but that holographic text is also sucked inward before it finishes typing out. And this holographic material is just being sucked into this new, massive shape, hovering in the center of the room.

And that shape, it starts to look humanoid. And it starts to gain greater detail and more color. It's a man with long hair. Long, white hair. And he's holding this long, thin sword, and he plunges downward, down toward the

center of the chamber, and his blade touches the shimmering, red shell as he plunges downward.

And all of it, the red shell, this holographic man, they are all pulled into this singularity that then explodes and fires all of these holographic galaxies around the room with violent, virtual force. And when the scene settles, this map projection now fills the room. A cluster of stars passes by and through your party, and at the center of the room, Duck, from your position on top of the printers, you see the dome is left unprotected.

It's pulsating with alarm, almost to the rhythm of this music. And in response, these four-armed beings start to pull themselves up and out of the ground to try and defend the dome.

Duck... what do you do?

Duck: Hey, I got some bad news. Not for y'all down there – you're cool. The dome? Cybertron or what the fuck? Bad news. The only one of you all I gave a shit about is now out here. So... here comes Duck! I'm tryin' it. I don't know if that's anything.

Thacker: It's not bad.

Justin: And I leap off the pipe, Beacon first, just trying to bury the sword in the... to bury Beacon in the dome. This is it.

[theme music plays]

Justin: This is what I'm here for.

Griffin: Roll to kick some ass.

Justin: Nine! Plus... two.

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: Thank god.

Justin: That's 11.

Griffin: Everyone else in the room, you see Duck soar through the air, illuminated by these panicked flashes of light coming from the dome. And Thacker, as you come to your feet, you see the dome, again, just like it did to you, start to repulse out this wave of white light to knock him away. And you actually see the other white light beings being knocked over by this force.

But you see Duck pass through it, effortlessly, as Beacon just carves a path. Minerva looks up now, and her face is illuminated by this pulsating light. All eyes are on you, Duck, as Beacon pierces into the dome. And your inertia continues, and you just slide off the edge of the dome, over, landing on the innermost ring of these computer terminals, leaving Beacon behind, planted in the middle of the dome.

And lit from below, you see Beacon smile. All of the projections in this room, all of these other four-armed beings, everything else, the ape, they all just fall to the ground. And then, Beacon just starts laughing. And above the dome, above Beacon, holographic text appears, and it's glitching and flashing. It's barely like, legible, and it reads...

Computer Generated Voice: Query: Has Reconciliation surpassed the belligerence limit? 20.63% affirm.

Griffin: And Beacon laughs, and the number changes.

Computer Generated Voice: [distorted and glitching] 41.09% affirm.

Griffin: And next to you, Duck, Minerva just starts cackling.

Minerva: Oh, Wayne Newton... I get it now!

Duck: What?

Minerva: Haven't you shared my curiosity, Wayne Newton? Of why our order was entrusted with wielding and protecting such an angry, angry blade?

Duck: Oh my god.

Griffin: She nods and points at Beacon, who is now just shrieking with laughter, his glistening, metal teeth bared to the world. Minerva smiles and says...

Minerva: There goes our destiny.

Duck: [laughs] Sorry, dipshits! Now he's your problem!

[music intensifies]

Griffin: With a grimace, he jabs downward, piercing all the way into the dome. And above, the counter registers a new tally.

Computer Generated Voice: [distorted] 100% confirm.

Griffin: Before all of it, the counter, the core, the illuminated screens encircling you, and the intergalactic tunnels overhead all disappear in a blip.

[music fades]

Griffin: The chamber is completely silent now, save for the distant sounds of wind from the wasteland outside. And... a light illuminates Billy as his computer monitor turns on, and he holds up a finger as if to say, "Hold on a second." And the rest of the monitors click on, giving this room a soft illumination, now that every other light has been extinguished. And he looks up at you, Duck, from where you landed next to Minerva. He looks all around, and... then he moves his hands around the sphere in front of the computer, and a voice breaks the silence of this room as it says...

Billy: [computer generated] Sorry, can y'all understand this? What's up? Test test test.

[music plays]

Duck: Oh my god, Billy?

Billy: [computer generated] Yeah, what's up? This is Billy.

Duck: Damn!

Aubrey: Hey Billy!

Billy: [computer generated] Hey y'all. Way to go.

Duck: Hey, yeah, for sure. Hey, Billy, can I ask you a question real quick before... did I... [sighs] Did I just delete your dad?

Travis: [laughs]

Duck: I was worried about it, man, while I was doin' it. I thought, "Well, Billy's out, chill as hell." And then as Beacon was doin' that shit, I was like, "Aw, fuck. Am I deleting Billy's dad?" So I just gotta ask if I deleted your dad.

Griffin: Uh, he moves his hands around the sphere, and the computerized voice says...

Billy: [computer generated] You probably deleted a lot of people's dads. Mine wasn't in there, though. It's cool.

Duck: [laughs] Alright. Okay, then.

Thacker: And I'd like to—I'd like to say... I loved you on the Mickey Mouse Club. Uh, you were... you were one of the best performers they had.

Billy: [computer generated] Thank you, strange old man.

Griffin: He types in something else. He says...

Billy: [computer generated] Sorry. My limited vocabulary isn't going to be suitable for this emotional moment. Y'all did good, though.

Aubrey: Hey, so did you, my dude!

Billy: [computer generated] I am happy.

Duck: Aw, good. Good. I'm happy you're here. Hey, is your body gonna be... okay?

Billy: [computer generated] I'll figure something out. Thanks, though. What was up with that sword? Crazy.

Duck: Yeah, it was... [laughs] It was crazy. I was about to say I miss him, but that's not technically accurate. But I am happy he was here. And I am unsure about how I'm gonna keep my pants up the rest of the way home.

Thacker: [laughs]

Duck: Aw, fuck, I didn't even think about that! Billy! How are we gonna get home, man?

Billy: [computer generated] Dunno. We should figure it out, though. I have no idea what you're breathing right now.

Aubrey: Oops.

Duck: A lot of like, you dust, I think, honestly. [coughs]

Billy: [computer generated] Yeah, you don't want that inside you.

Griffin: He moves his hands around the sphere, and you hear a loud whirring noise above you. And these two, thin, mechanical arms emerge from the wall, and you see them fetch two of those gateways off the walls

form the tower above, and uh, they lower them down to your level. And Billy types in a few commands, and then he looks confused, and the computerized voice says...

Billy: [computer generated] Did y'all blow up the archway?

Aubrey: Ooh. Yeah.

Billy: [computer generated] That's cool.

Griffin: He tilts his head for a second and kind of thinks, and then uh, takes a few seconds to type in a few commands, and you can see that he's working through something. And then he smiles. And then, the two rings light up, and through them, you see images of home. Through one, you see the city of Sylvain, and you are looking down on it from high atop a hill, outside of town. Over the horizon, the sun has begun to rise on this recently revived land.

And through the other, you see a dirty bedroom. And there's glass on the floor. There's signs that a struggle has recently taken place here in Billy's old bedroom, and then Billy types...

Billy: [computer generated] Hold up.

Griffin: And he runs through the gateway, and then he comes back through, and he's got the PlayStation in his hand, and he types in...

Billy: [computer generated] Gonna take this.

Aubrey: Okay.

Duck: Yeah, no big, man.

Aubrey: Take it where?

Billy: [computer generated] Here. Gotta stay here. Got a few dozen interstellar wars to clean up.

Aubrey: Yeah, that tracks. Yeah, that tracks.

Duck: Naw, hey, wait. Billy, you don't get to get off that easy, man. Like, why did you go along for that for so long? Like, why—you seem like an alright guy. Like, you had to know that pitting planets against each other... it's fucked up, man.

Griffin: He types in...

Billy: [computer generated] Yeah. Sorry. When we were all part of one mind, it was easy to go along with the plan. For some reason, the signal from Reconciliation went quiet when I got to Kepler. Let me think for myself. That was cool.

Duck: I guess. I mean... listen, you gotta... [sighs] I'm glad you're on the right side of shit now, man, but... you know you got a lot to make up for out there, right?

Griffin: He... nods, solemnly, and above you, you see one of the pairings of gateways start to light up. And a platform comes down to the ground in front of one of the printers, and he looks over at it, and then looks back at you, and he types in...

Billy: [computer generated] That's the plan.

Griffin: And then he says...

Billy: [computer generated] Anyways, there's the way home. I'll close the door behind y'all.

Aubrey: Wait, hold on. Do you mean that once we go through, we won't be able to like, go between earth and Sylvain anymore?

Griffin: He says...

Billy: [computer generated] I mean, y'all blew up the archways, so yeah, prolly.

Aubrey: Well that sucks.

Billy: [computer generated] Maybe I can figure something out. It's complicated. I'll hit you up.

Justin: [laughs]

Aubrey: Okay.

Griffin: He starts to walk toward the platform, uh, leading up to the ceiling. And then he turns around and types in, uh, a few more words, and the voice says...

Billy: [computer generated] I am sorry for what has happened. For what it is worth, I descended to your pairing.

Griffin: And then, he looks down for a second, and then types in...

Billy: [computer generated] Reconciliation agreed that your planets' bad outweighed their good.

Griffin: And then it says...

Billy: [computer generated] Prove `em wrong.

Griffin: And then he types...

Billy: [computer generated] Stay cool.

Griffin: And turns and gets on the platform that starts to raise up into the ceiling. And now it's just the six of you in this massive, empty chamber. The sound of the wind sweeping against the walls of this facility echo around you

as you stand, illuminated by the choice in front of you. These two portals. Two doorways, to two different homes.

[somber music plays]

Griffin: Thacker.

Clint: Hmmm?

Griffin: Where do you end up? And what do you... what do you do after you get back? I think we can leap forward in time, y'know, however much we want.

Clint: Um, I think Thacker... he chose Sylvain. I mean, he is an archivist. He's a researcher. He's a historian. He wants to know more. And there's plenty of people who, y'know, are on Earth, studying Earth. And he's in kind of a unique position to be the guy here on Sylvain. So I think that he takes advantage of that. I think he... he's like Caine. He wanders Sylvain.

And just is chronicling all this stuff, and y'know, I think that's been the whole motivation of his life. I don't think he'd go back to Earth just to white water raft anymore. I think he... he's committed to it. And I can see him, y'know, going to try to learn more about the Quell, and the connection with Sylvain, and y'know, the portals and the traveling, and maybe one of the things he's trying to do is discover another way, y'know, to reconnect Sylvain and Earth.

Griffin: Uh, I love that. I love that. It's not what I expected. I love it. Um... let's say this. It's a few weeks. I think things have settled down, and the city of Sylvain is bustling. A lot of the people who had been like, overtaken by that Quell thrall, especially outside of the city, have recovered. And those survivors have like, taken refuge in the city, because it's kind of like the only part of the planet—it's certainly the only like, city that, y'know, survived everything that had happened over the years where the planet was kind of falling apart.

And so, the city is not only like, vibrant and alive, because the, y'know, uh, the engine of the planet is, y'know, churning again. It's alive with, y'know... folks. And it is an exciting time to be there. And right now, like, the city's priority is just to take the planet back; to try and replenish it to the state that it once was. And basically, just start this civilization over fresh.

And um, as somebody who is like, archiving things, I imagine that that is an exciting time for you. Where are you, like—where do you... where do you stay? Where do you live? What is your lodging situation like on this planet?

Clint: I think he'd, um, reconstruct his bivouac from before.

Griffin: [laughs] Okay.

Clint: Just outside the library.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: Because there's so much still in the library, so many books and so many scrolls, and artifacts and stuff he can research. I think he, um... I think he builds himself—maybe, uh... maybe two bivouacs, in case, y'know, somebody wants to drop by.

Griffin: Okay. That's sweet.

Clint: So he's got a guest bivouac.

Griffin: Uh, I like that a lot. This library that we've talked about a couple times before wasn't actually in the city of Sylvain; it was in this sort of abandoned city. So I actually really like the idea of you, at this place, as all of these frontier people are leaving the city to try to establish civilization elsewhere, to try and put the planet back together. I like the idea of your impulse being to do that at this library, with this bivouac.

So you definitely get guests. You definitely get travelers who are on their way, maybe to their home city that has fallen apart. You help them along the way. You show them a map. You help them get home. You help them

get back to where they're going, the whole time, learning more and more about this planet.

Clint: And I'm gonna name it... New Kepler... ville.

Griffin: That's good. [laughing] That's very good. Are you the mayor of New Keplerville?

Clint: No, no, I don't want that much authority. I'll just be the power behind the throne.

Griffin: So, let's say that you are just kind of uh, in the middle of, y'know, a work day. Whatever that looks like for you, just awaiting visitors that you can help along their way, while exploring this abandoned library and learning what you can. And you've just gotten back home after finding a few tomes that you've begun to translate on your desk, in your bivouac.

While you're doing that, you kind of like, y'know, you get a little bit... uh, absentminded. And whenever you get in that state, you feel those like, psychic powers start to tingle a little bit. And as is the case, as has happened a few times now, uh, you hear a voice in the distance, trying to hail you.

Thacker: Hey. Um... yeah, open channel D, please. [snorts] Maddy?

Griffin: The voice starts to become more clear as it breaks through the psychic static, and it says...

Mama: [echoing] Yeah, that still—that still ain't gonna catch on there, Thacker, bud. Uh, what are you, uh... how you doin', pal? What's goin' on over on the other side?

Thacker: Oh, it's goin' great! Um, the—the little uh, the little Keplerville, New Keplerville is—

Mama: You gotta decide on a name and just stick with it, bud.

Thacker: New Kepler City is uh, just... it's growin'. We uh—we just got a uh, pool. Um, and uh... actually, it's just a—it's a pond. Um, but uh—

Mama: Why'd you call it a pool? That's a different thing.

Thacker: I know. Because you can also—it's also a pool hall. You can shoot pool, or you can go for a swim. And that's pretty nice. Um, and uh, it's good. A lot of new folks. I got like, five, six, seven, eight grad assistants. Uh, from uh, from Sylvain U who are helpin' me research. It's good. It's good. And yet, y'know, if I want to get away from everybody, which is often, I can just slip out and head out into the wilderness and... I'm home!

Griffin: She laughs, and she says...

Mama: Even on a far flung, extraterrestrial world full of danger and mystery, you are still very much Arlo Thacker.

Thacker: Well, guilty as charged, Mad—uh, Mama.

Mama: Well, you can call me Madeline, just not Maddy.

Thacker: I don't like Madeline. That's too formal.

Mama: Alright. I miss you, bud. Let's, uh... let's talk again soon.

Thacker: Alright. Oh, by the way – I had some interesting breakthroughs on reestablishing maybe some, uh... some lines to travel back and forth. Nothin' for sure – I don't want to go out on a limb, but... some promisin' stuff. For one thing, I gotta come and get new GORP materials. I gotta get my stuff for GORP. So I'll let you know how that goes.

Griffin: She says...

Mama: Alright, I'll tell Minerva. And uh, regarding your GORP, I'm glad to hear—

Griffin: And then, you hear the door into your bivouac slam closed, and it catches your attention, and you hear Mama's voice falling away as she says...

Mama: Yeah, I'll make sure to—oh, you're goin' away. Okay, I'll talk to you soon!

Thacker: Okay!

Griffin: Her voice is gone, and you look up, and you see a, uh, a young woman who has walked into your office here. She has, uh, short, dark hair, and she is wearing some hiking gear. She's got this huge backpack slung over her back, and she kind of drops it to the ground as she enters, and she says...

Woman: Hi. You're... open, right?

Thacker: Oh, uh... yeah! For... for what? Open for what?

Woman: I was told that you were helping out travelers who found their way here.

Thacker: Oh, yeah! Yeah, absolutely! Yeah, we're all, uh... we're all set up. Where you headed?

Woman: I don't really know.

Griffin: She says.

Thacker: That's the best way to be! That is the best way to be. Just a'wanderin'.

Woman: I... I don't know how much you can help me. I... understand you used to just do... wilderness expeditions, back where you were from?

Thacker: Yeah. Absolutely. Yeah, KepEx is what we were called. By the way, I didn't catch your name yet?

Griffin: She continues. She says...

Woman: I don't really have a home to go back to. I'm just kind of looking to... get away from everything for a little bit. Is... do you think there's any way you could help... me do that?

Thacker: Slick, if there's something I can do to help you get away from everybody, trust me, that is right in my wheelhouse. [laughs] I'd be glad to help ya out.

Griffin: She smiles, and she says...

Woman: I'd like to go somewhere... quiet. I... I've made some recent, unimaginably awful mistakes that require some deep contemplation. I—I think taking some time to walk and... to think would do me good.

Thacker: I... listen, that is what's so great about where we are right now. There's all kinds of open space, there's all kinds of quiet space, places to think, to get inside your own head... yeah, we can do that. But listen – I know this kind of defeats the purpose, but... if you want to talk about it, um... I can put down this book right now and you can... you can fill me in. Maybe I can, uh, maybe I can give you some advice.

Griffin: She... smiles, and she says...

[music plays]

Woman: I was hoping you might come with me, Thacker-er. [glitched stuttering] It would be nice to travel with a friend. Someone who might understand.

Thacker: Oh... [laughs and sighs] Yeah. Yeah. A friend to share it with? That'd be pretty nice.

Griffin: She smiles and picks up her bag, and she says...

Woman: Where to?

Thacker: Out there. Out there, my friend.

[music plays]

Griffin: Aubrey?

Travis: Yes?

Griffin: Where... where do you end up?

Travis: [sighs] That's such a good question, Griffin. I've been sitting here... contemplating. And I think... when it comes down to it... I don't think Aubrey is going to make that decision. I think she's gonna talk it over with Dani. They're going to decide together.

Griffin: You have that thought as you are standing in the middle of this, uh, this lifeless chamber, of wanting to talk to Dani about this. And as you have that thought, you feel the strangest sensation that your consciousness is existing in two different places at once. And one of these like, consciousnesses is seeing through this bright, orange lens, and you realize, you're in the center of that crystal. That new crystal that sprouted in the center of the city.

And you see Dani. And she's holding Dr. Harris Bonkers, who appears to be a little bit larger than he was last time you saw him. And she looks... she looks really, really worried as she looks up at the pavilion where the archway once stood, and now is just kind of a smoking crater.

Aubrey: Hi, honey.

Dani: [surprised] Oh my god!

Aubrey: How's your day?

Griffin: She turns around, and she says...

Dani: Why are you in the crys—what's going—are you okay?!

Aubrey: Listen, I'm—I'm absolutely fine. We totally won. Everything's great. Uh, do you remember Billy?

Dani: The... goat guy?

Aubrey: Yeah, the one who looked like Ryan Gosling?

Dani: Yeah?

Aubrey: He helped us beat the... light... y'know, bad guys, and...

Dani: I have no idea what you're—you're on a whole other level right now.

Aubrey: Listen, I know. It's not important. Here's the thing. Uh... we've severed the connection betwixt our two worlds, and...

Dani: Oh... oh.

Aubrey: And we—I—I can still get to you, or you could get to me. We can either go stay on earth, or stay on Sylvain. I'm down for whatever. Uh, you haven't been home in years. So like, I'm totally cool if you wanna live in Sylvain with me. I'm also totally cool if you want to stay in earth with me. Uh, whatever. What... what are you kind of feeling about the whole thing?

Griffin: She sets down Dr. Harris Bonkers, who is standing on two feet. Two, well, bipedal paws.

Aubrey: Gonna take me a while to get used to that.

Griffin: He says...

Dr. Harris Bonkers: [rabbit sniffing sounds]

Aubrey: You kiss your mother with that mouth?

Griffin: [laughs] She says...

Dani: God, Aubrey, that's a... you realize, that's kind of a lot to put on me, right? What do you—

Aubrey: Yes, I do. But I—I don't want to make that decision for you.

Dani: I would miss everyone back at Amnesty Lodge, but... I haven't been home for so long, Aubrey. And... I'll be honest – that's not why I want to stay here. Earth was incredible, and it was... a great place to be, and I owe everyone there so much for keeping us exiles safe, and showing us the ropes. But... Earth is gonna be fine. My home planet, Aubrey, has been destroyed. And if I don't stay to help out, then... I don't think I'm gonna be able to live with myself.

Aubrey: Would you... would you be able to live with me?

Griffin: She grins. And now, we see her grinning in the middle of a lush field. You and Dani, alongside Janelle and Alexandra, are just traveling the countryside, just putting this planet back together.

Travis: Oh, also, just so no one at home worries – Aubrey did stock up on a lot of Overtone shampoo to keep that hair red. Do not worry about it, folks. Aubrey is covered. [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah, Dani is like, equipped for this. Dani is well suited for this. She's like, traveling light and living off the land. And uh, you have a big backpack that is like, 80% shampoo.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Uh, which are you—

Travis: It just—it fades so quickly, like, in the sun, and when it rains... you gotta stay on top of it.

Griffin: You are supporting Dani, like, in this endeavor to do what you can; to like, help put the planet back together. But you, also, as the... y'know, someone who has a connection to the planet itself, like... that Sylvain part of you feels beholden to use your, y'know, considerable powers to bring life back to the world.

And sure enough, like, your power, your ability to affect this world just continues to grow over time as you begin to settle in here. And so, you're walking through this like, uh, this lush plane, and from above, like, we can see that it's actually like this fairly barren field that, as you sort of walk through it, just comes back to life as you move.

Travis: And let me just tell y'all – that's something that I, Travis McElroy, and Aubrey, share. It feels super cool to be able to do that. She is loving the shit out of it. She, from time to time, just does like a full-blown like, y'know, Maria from Sound of Music, like, run with her arms behind her as just like, flowers bloom everywhere. It's like... it's really cool.

Griffin: I think—yeah, I think this is probably a fun expedition. I think the four of you are, y'know... it is an important quest that you are going on, but I also think like, yeah, sure, you're having a lot of fun along the way. And in the distance, you actually—you see, uh... you see Janelle and Alexandra, and they are uh, they're investigating, like, this house that seems to be in shambles in the distance. And as you are sort of flinging flowers everywhere, Dani kind of turns around backwards and starts walking backwards while talking to you, and she says...

Dani: So uh, I had a thought today. We're probably gonna have to name the city of Sylvain something else, probably. Right?

Aubrey: Uh, why? I mean, I guess.

Dani: I mean, like, when it was the only habitable place on the planet, it kind of made sense to—

Aubrey: Oh, I see.

Dani: --name it after the planet. Now it's just gonna be confusing.

Aubrey: Yeah, like, we couldn't—we wouldn't want to live in a city that was just called like, Earth, on earth, right?

Dani: Yeah.

Aubrey: Yeah, it's not super creative. I get it.

Dani: So I don't know how that hap—like, do we form a committee? Or... do you get to do it?

Aubrey: Ooh! I don't know that you should give me that power, Dani. Ohh. I probably would just name it something dirty like Butt City or something, 'cause I thought it was funny.

Justin: Named her rabbit Dr. Harris Bonkers.

Travis: Yes. Yes. What the disembodied voice of Duck said.

Griffin: [laughs]

Aubrey: Let's see... um, y'know? What do you think about... the city of Chicane?

Griffin: She grins. She says...

Dani: Yeah, that's not bad.

Aubrey: I feel pretty good about that one.

Griffin: And you can see her get a little bit choked up about it. And then, she kind of shakes it off, and she says...

Dani: Hey, I'm kinda, uh... I'm kind of hungry. Could you do the thing?

Aubrey: Yep! Pchooo!

Travis: [laughing] And like, an apple tree pops up on Aubrey's right, and an orange tree pops up on her left. And y'know what? Behind that, a pudding cup tree, because she has a god inside of her, and she can do that shit!

Griffin: [laughs] Yeah, it's got this dark brown rind, and as she bites into it, it's just full of pudding.

Travis: Yes!

Griffin: And she says...

Dani: Hey, did you just... dang. Did you just make a new fruit?

Aubrey: It's called pudding fruit!

Griffin: Uh, and Dr. Harris Bonkers, like, jumps six feet up into the air and grabs one of the fruits off the trees and starts peeling it. And he looks up at you, and he says...

Dr. Harris Bonkers: [rabbit sniffing sounds]

Aubrey: No, I can't make a carrot tree. That's weird. Carrots grow in the ground. I could make a carrot tree. Dani, should I make a carrot tree?

Griffin: She's so busy just goin' crazy on this snack pack fruit, it's wild.

Aubrey: Okay, fine.

Travis: Boop! And makes like a little tiny, like, three foot tall carrot tree.

Griffin: He just starts eating the whole thing.

Aubrey: Yes. Go to town, big guy. All yours.

Griffin: Uh, Janelle walks over from the distance where her and Alexandra were investigating that house, and she says...

Janelle: Aubrey, you know, Thacker is going to want to catalog all this stuff, right? There's no need to make things harder on him.

Aubrey: Well, yes. But also, pudding tree. Janelle. Pudding tree!

Janelle: Okay.

Aubrey: Yes, right? I won't do it like, all the time. Right? I'm not gonna like, make, y'know, like, I don't know, a smart phone tree or something. Like, it's fine. I—listen. I don't know how much longer I'm gonna be able to do this kind of thing, right? So let's have a little fun with it, right? I think eventually, Sylvain's gonna be like, "Hey, cool it with the pudding trees." And that's fine. I get it.

Griffin: [laughs] She kind of discreetly walks over to the pudding tree while sort of talking to you. She says...

Janelle: I know, Aubrey. It's just... this is a strange... mission we've been tasked with.

Aubrey: Oh, don't—that one's butterscotch. Don't get that one.

Janelle: [chomp sound] Ohh my god.

Aubrey: Yeah, sorry.

Griffin: She wipes her mouth and spits it out, and she says...

Janelle: I know there's no way we're gonna put this world back together the exact way it was. And I think that's something that we all have to just accept. But... you are... figuratively and literally planting a seed that is going to grow for... eons, in ways that we will never be able to predict. And... who's

to say that some important event doesn't start right here with a new pudding fruit?

Aubrey: By the way, I'm calling this Wonka Forest. That's funny, right? Isn't that great?

Janelle: It's funny. The whimsy is wonderful. I love the whimsy. You know me, I'm down to clown, Aubrey. I'm just saying... for all of my considerable wisdom, I don't know how we know when we're making the right decisions.

Aubrey: I... right now, I have maybe the most burden of choice any person has ever had, right? I have the power of creation. I can make any kind of tree. And if I start thinking about what the right one to do is, I'm not gonna do anything, because I don't know what the right one is. So I just have to do the next thing, and the next thing, and the next thing.

And I think... my hope is that I act—if I act from a place of love, and a place of fun, and a place of, y'know, making someone smile, that the next thing I do will be the right thing.

Griffin: Dani walks over to you as Janelle smiles, and Dani gives you a kiss on the cheek, and she says...

Dani: You're so fuckin' cool.

Aubrey: Right? I know, right?

Griffin: Alexandra walks over from the house that her and Janelle were investigating. She says...

Alexandra: Uh, hey, everyone? I uh... I need some help over here.

Griffin: And as you all walk over, you see a small, dried out bush next to this house, and it rattles as you approach. And you see two small mouse folk come climbing out of the brush, and um, they're young. They're walking on two legs. They are, y'know, anthropomorphic. And they are huddled

together, Aubrey. They are scared at the sight of you, and they're dirty, and exhausted, and they start to back away as you come closer.

Aubrey: Oh, you don't have to be scared. I'm—I'm very nice. Um, I know my whole look, it's a lot. Oh – here you go!

Travis: And the bush becomes a cheese bush.

Griffin: They look around at all the cheese, and they fall backwards, away from the bush. They are scared by the sudden cheese appearance.

Aubrey: No, it's nice cheese.

Griffin: One of them timidly stands up and starts sniffing the cheese bush, and puts a small paw up into it, and retrieves a small chunk of cheese, which it devours hungrily, before it just dives headfirst, like Scrooge McDuck, into the vault. And the other mouse folk turns and walks over to your feet as you kneel down, and he says...

Mouse Folk: Is it... is it over?

Travis: And Aubrey smiles, looks at Dani, looks at Janelle, and looks back at the little mouse person, and says...

Aubrey: No, friend. It's just begun.

[music plays]

Griffin: Duck. Duck, where do you end up?

Justin: Duck, uh... Duck went to, uh, Brazil.

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: To uh, help in the reforestation of the Amazon, after the fires. I think he got home, and sat on—well, he got home, sat on his couch and kind

of turned on the TV, and thought, "Well, there's a forest I could help. A forest that needs a hand." And headed over there.

He thought he'd do okay, 'cause he took a lot of Spanish in high school. Rude awakening when he got there. No big deal. He's trying to pick up Portuguese. And uh... yeah, that's what he's up to. He's just volunteering his time to do the reforestation project.

Griffin: Uh... okay. Uh, is this a temporary move? Or have, y'know...

Justin: Um... I kind of feel like he got back to earth and didn't know—I mean, that's the thing about being—I mean, you ask if it's like, temporary or permanent, like... he was the chosen one, and he did the thing.

Griffin: Right.

Justin: And... I don't think he has a plan beyond that. I mean, y'know, he was kind of hiding for a long time, and then he did it, and... he didn't think too far beyond that, and I kind of think he feels like the universe didn't either. So he's just trying to make it on his own, I guess.

Griffin: Okay. I love this. Okay, so, you are in a forest ranger station, sort of well outside the, y'know, perimeter of the Amazon where you are currently based. I think they have a lot of—I think they have a lot of volunteers in general, including just a lot of folks came over from the US Forest Service.

And that definitely includes ranger Juno Devine, who came over with you. And she swings by the station as you are sort of recovering from a long shift. I imagine this is, uh, incredibly exhausting work. I imagine that this, y'know, trying to um, repopulate an entire enormous, ancient forest – or at least, volunteering in some small part to help do so – it will really take it out of you.

So Juno comes into the station, and... she is fairly well decorated, at this point. When you got home, you caught some stories from other folks working from the Forest Service of her acts of valor on the day that the

Quell invaded, and uh, all sort of endorsed her for a promotion out of the, y'know, the local branch at the Monongahela Forest all the way up to like a statewide supervisory position.

So even though you've come over here to Brazil, she's still giving you kind of a hard time about her outranking you. And she says...

Juno: Aww, Duck, looks like you left your walkie off the charging cradle again. Ooh, gonna have you write you up for that one!

Duck: That's fine. Write me up, put it in the file. I don't care how thick my file gets. I'm a bad boy of forestry. [laughs]

Juno: Aw, looks like you got some...

Clint: [laughs]

Juno: What is this, peanut butter? You got a little bit'a open containers of food. You know the rules, Duck.

Duck: Put it on single sided. I want that thing thick. I want to be able to throw it at people as a weapon.

Griffin: She says...

Juno: I know I'm a bit out of my jurisdiction, but this is a lot of infractions...

Duck: That's a good fuckin' point! We're in Brazil! Chill out!

Griffin: Another voice comes from outside as the door swings open, and you hear Minerva say...

Minerva: The peanut butter is mine, supervisor Juno Devine. I will take the dishonor of these demerits on my own records, Juno Devine. Please, do not punish ranger Wayne Newton for my carelessness!

Duck: Honey, calm down. [laughs] She doesn't mean it. Juno, tell her you don't mean it.

Griffin: Did you call her honey?

Justin: I did.

Griffin: How did that—how did that—how did that come about?

Justin: Well, let me try to... y'know what, I'm not gonna force it on ya. I'm gonna try to sell you on it, because it makes sense to me from Duck's perspective, but you are... uh, y'know, the creator of Minerva, and her actions, so let me try to justify.

Griffin: Sure.

Justin: And see if I can get you on board. Here's my rationale. There was obviously a tremendous amount of respect between the two. Um, and I—between the two, between Minerva and Duck. And I think that that is the grounding for a relationship. She is the person, like, they have spent so much time together, I think it's a very intimate connection that they had. Um, the—her sort of being so completely connected to him, I think, was a very intimate connection, that that makes sense would carry over.

And also, I think that there's something special to the fact that she chose Duck. I think that that—that she has, as he has sort of uh, evolved over the course of this story, I think he has kind of gotten closer to who she knew that he could be, and who she kind of saw him as.

And I think that that's a really wonderful analogy for a good relationship, because it's about the other person, um, y'know, seeing the kind of person that you could be if they believed in you. And I think that, uh, is a grounding for a healthy relationship, I think. So... it made sense to me.

Griffin: Okay. Sold. I don't know why you had to convince me. [laughs] Sold. I'm into it.

Justin: Sold.

Griffin: Yeah. I think it makes sense. Like the uh, the like... you all have sort of now abandoned the mentor-mentee relationship, I think, especially now that like, y'know, you're not fighting this intergalactic foe anymore. [laughs] So like, that relationship maybe doesn't need to exist, so...

Justin: If I had to imagine it would be... not that we're going to like, record this moment. But if I had to guess what the moment is, I would say the moment was, they realized the fight was over, kind of figured they should go their separate ways, and weren't really able to. And why? Y'know, like, what did that mean?

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: And I think that that's probably what sort of got them wondering about it, if I had to guess.

Griffin: Yeah. [pause] Juno grins. She says...

Juno: Oh, it was a... uh, that was a goof, ranger Minerva.

Griffin: Minerva walks in wearing the same uniform you've got on. Obviously, a couple sizes larger. She walks in, and she says...

Minerva: I... okay. Still... still taking me a bit to pick up on when jokes are happening. This is good—this is a good one, though.

Duck: Yeah, and besides, we technically made the sandwiches together. I mean, I don't... [laughs] This is the nice thing about being a unit, is we share all the blame for all open peanut butter. That's a whole reason you go out with somebody! Somebody to share the blame with!

Griffin: They both smile, and uh, Juno says...

Juno: Alright, I'm gonna get outta y'all's hair. Minerva, thanks. Duck, danke schoen.

Duck: [fake laughs]

Juno: Yeah, that's a Wayne Newton joke. You can expect a lot of those.

Duck: Yeah, ha ha ha ha ha, I love it. Fuckin' love it.

Clint: I'd like to point out that if I had made that joke, there would've been much ridicule.

Griffin: Well, I didn't—I didn't make it. A fictional character did.

Clint: Good point.

Griffin: Minerva walks over to you, Duck, and she puts her hand on your shoulder, sees you kind of worn out. She starts to rub your shoulders, just extremely way too hard.

Travis: [laughs]

Griffin: Just extremely very fierce. She says...

Minerva: How... how was your shift, Duck Newton?

Duck: Um... oh, god. Ow. [laughing] Um... y'know, it was good. Boy, that feels good. Man. I am so relaxed now. You better stop or I'm gonna fall asleep.

Griffin: She laughs and takes her hands off. She says...

Minerva: Aha! This is another joke! I was hurting you, wasn't I, Duck Newton?

Duck: Yeah. It was less than two harm, though. We're okay. [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs]

Duck: Uh, no, it was uh... y'know, it was good. I'm starting to pick up on a little bit of the... the language. But there's not a lot of talkin', honestly. Y'know, you plant the trees. There's a lot to plant. Um, but... it's good work, y'know? I like it out there. It's quiet, and it reminds me of home. Uh... and uh... no one... no one bothers me. It's pretty chill.

Griffin: She says...

Minerva: That has been my experience too, Duck Newton. Say, you have not responded to the group cellular text chain with myself, Leo, and Dr. Sarah Drake. They want to have a Skype conversation and talk about battle strategies, and you haven't responded, Duck Newton. Do you have a prior engagement?

Duck: [sighs] No. I mean, it's just... watching all of Lost with you on DVD, and—

Minerva: Still don't get it.

Duck: Yeah, it doesn't get better. But I was hopin' I'd pick up on something, or... you're real smart. I thought you'd see something I didn't. Um, but yeah, it's not—it's still not makin' much sense. It's just that, and then I gotta plant the trees, and... no, it's just those two things. I don't know, Minerva. I just... why? Y'know? Like, what... battle plans for what?

Griffin: She sits down. She says...

Minerva: That is a good question, Duck Newton. I suspect that our friends back home merely want to stay... in touch, but... I suppose it also can't be bad for us to be at the ready.

Duck: [sighs]

Minerva: What is troubling you, Duck?

Duck: Y'know, I just don't feel like... I can live... waiting anymore. I... I can't live... waiting for... the big, next thing that's gonna come. I can't live in fear of it coming, and I can't live hopin' that things'll suddenly get more exciting, or different, or worse, or better tomorrow. That's been my whole life, has been waitin' for the other shoe to drop. And... it dropped. And we're here. And... that's okay, y'know? I got you. I got a lot of work to do. And... for me, right now, that's enough.

Griffin: She takes your hand in hers, and she says...

Minerva: I... wish to grant you happiness, Duck Newton. I do. I read recently in one of your illustrated children's books for adults... there was this charming red suited man who could swing from buildings? Anyway, there was a thing in there about how great strength demands... great diligence. What was—

Duck: Great power—

Minerva: Something—

Duck: Great responsibility. Yeah.

Minerva: Pretty sure it was great strength and great diligence.

Duck: Okay. Either one. I get—I get your point. Y'know, you don't have to... push any harder. Great power, great responsibility. I read the books and saw the, honestly, many origin stories in which that exact phrase appeared. It's been pretty much drilled into my culturally at this point. And it makes sense, right? Great power, great responsibility.

But y'know what people forget? Is that the Green Goblin doesn't swing up to your door every day and blow your whole life away, and in one moment, you have to figure out what to do, y'know? The responsibility is every day. It's every moment. And it's... every time I pick one of those saplings up, and I put it in the ground, and I pat the ground around it, and pour water on it, and I think about our children's children's children's children will breathe the air that this thing makes. And Minerva... that's power.

That's my responsibility. I don't have to fight anymore. I did it. And now I'm gonna grow.

[music plays]

Griffin: She takes your hand in hers with a surprising amount of tenderness, and she says...

Minerva: Duck Newton... if you don't wish to speak to our friends back home, you can just say so.

Duck: [bursts into laughter]

Minerva: You don't have to do a whole monologue.

Duck: Minerva! That's a joke! You did it!

Minerva: [gasps] I did a real joke!

Griffin: She starts applauding herself.

Minerva: Oh, this feels so good! I get it! I get it now!

Duck: Right, yeah. I don't know how you lived in my head for all those years, listening to all those Jerky Boys tapes with me, and didn't pick anything up before now.

Minerva: It just—it seemed so crude. I thought it all had to be so crude, but that was just a good, well-constructed joke, Duck Newton!

Duck: It's just sayin' something different than...

Minerva: Than people expected, and—yes!

Duck: And it goes back—exactly, yeah. You think it's more challenging than that, but you'd be surprised how far you can get just...

Minerva: It's like combat in that way, isn't it, Duck Newton?

Duck: Y'know what? It can feel that way sometimes, Minerva. [laughing]

Minerva: It's like goofs combat. I feel a new power surging through me, Duck Newton! The power of goofs!

Duck: The goof power. Yeah.

Minerva: [fading out] Step back, Jay Leno! I'm coming for your throne! Your throne of jokes!

Duck: [laughing]

[music plays]

Griffin: The seasons pass, blanketing Kepler in even measures of wild flowers, pine needles, and snow. The town and its people have changed for better and worse, following the events of that fateful year. The FBI compound stationed on Cliffside has been decommissioned, restoring the Monongahela National Forest to its natural beauty.

A skeleton crew, headed by one Agent Stern, maintains a watch on the now dormant archway in the woods. He knows it's wasted effort. That archway will never activate again. Most importantly, the facility's encroaching border has disappeared. Amnesty Lodge is back open for business.

[music plays]

Griffin: We see the hot springs behind the building with an off duty Agent Stern and Barclay resting in the steaming waters, dozing on rolled up towels. We see the former underground headquarters of the Pine Guard, now mostly used for storage for Mama's side business, and we see Mama in her workshop. She's untying an apron and sweeping up sawdust into orderly

piles. She opens a window to ventilate her work space, and looks up into the sky.

Several miles away, Dr. Sarah Drake sets down a magazine. She looks at her watch, and flips a switch. The Green Bank Telescope begins to hum. We see Amnesty Lodge under a cloudless, late afternoon sky. For a brief moment, a beam of green light fires into the heavens behind the pines.

Barclay steps out of the front door, drying his hair with a hand towel. He hops into Mama's truck, which is hauling a large, cylindrical shape beneath a blue tarp that whips in the wind as Barclay descends Cliffside. He passes Sheriff Owens and Detective Megan, parked in a squad car outside the grand reopening of the Mount Kepler ski trails. Through the crowd, Barclay sees a now vindicated Eugene, leading the festivities.

He brakes as a couple crosses the street towards the ceremony. It's Muffy and Winthrop in matching ski bunny outfits. They wave, and then they watch him... knowingly... as he continues down the road. He curves around the bend, down the cliff, merging onto the main drag, passing the construction site for the Hornets' Nest Action Park, the much anticipated extreme sports facility built on the ruins of H2Whoa: That Was Fun.

The Hornets enjoy a jovial break in the parking lot. Keith and Hollis notice Barclay's approach and wave with a smile. They nudge Jake Coolice, who jumps with a start, and looks at his watch, and rushes into the passenger's seat.

And they pass through Riverside, past the sheriff's station, past a closed down Leo's grocery store, past the recently rebuilt city hall, slowing to a stop as they roll down a dirt road into the parking lot of the Cryptonomica.

The scene here is chaotic, but Kirby manages it with a veteran's ease. Several fans of Saturday Night Dead are filling coolers and laying out food for a party. Calvin Owens and his friends are gathered around the grill. This event is coming together, and just in time.

As the beam launches from the tip of the Green Bank Telescope, Duck and Minerva, still fresh off a plane, scramble into the secret sanctum. There's the sound of a blade ripping through reality... and then... the sound of joyous reunion.

The door opens, and old friends step out from the rift-lit closet. Moira and Dewey phase through the wall, laughing with glee. Vincent steps through, sweeping up Minerva and Duck in an overpowering hug. Alexandra and Dani help Janelle, who is sporting a cast on her left leg, through the rift and into the room. Janelle waves off questions about her injury, and provides snacks for the party – a full case of fresh pudding fruit.

Indrid Cold exits the closet and makes a beeline for Leo Tarkesian. He asks how he's settling into the new job. Leo pulls the keys to the Winnebago from his pocket, and dons a pair of red tinted glasses.

Duck breaks free from Vincent's embrace, just in time to see Thacker and Aubrey step through the doorway. All of them pause. A wide smile crosses Aubrey's face. She takes a step toward her old friend, only to be cut off by Dr. Harris Bonkers, who nearly knocks Duck over as he leaps toward the box of illegally imported pudding snacks. The trio's laughter fills the room.

Light pours in through the windows. Outside, a handful of partygoers activate a projector. On the broad side of Kepler, West Virginia's premier museum of the macabre, the final, unaired episode of Saturday Night Dead makes its debut.

Ned: Welcome, my weirdlings! It's me, Ned 'Su-Sussudio' Chicane, coming to you from the world's preeminent museum of the macabre, the Cryptonomica in Kepler, West Virginia! Yes, it is our final episode of the season, and oh, it's a good one. One of my favorites. 1987's *Monster Squad*, directed by Fred Dekker, starring Andre Gower, Stephen Macht, Duncan Regehr, and Tom Noonan as Frankenstein's monster.

Here's the story – a group of young people do battle with horrifying supernatural creatures! I know, totally unbelievable, right? But the best part

of this movie – the young squad members become friends with Frankenstein’s creature, proving not all monsters are bad!

As always, I am honored to be your friend, mentor, general inspiration – I, Ned ‘Middle Name’ Chicane. Now... let’s have an adventure!

Griffin: And as the movie begins, Jake Coolice helps Barclay unload the truck, standing this cylindrical object up as Barclay dramatically rips off the tarp to the sounds of applause. It’s Mama’s latest work – a statue, nearly to scale, of a great, bearded man, a walking stick in his hand, a polaroid camera strapped around his neck, looking down, smiling warmly.

And back, up above, we see through a window at Amnesty Lodge. Mama enters her office, wiping the final remnants of sawdust from her clothing. She fetches a jacket off the back of her chair and throws it on, now ready to join the others at the party. She steps onto the porch. She pauses, and takes a deep breath. A breeze rustles her thriving garden. The noise from the distant celebration echoes through the wind.

She smiles, and sets off down the dirt road toward town, the shadow of Amnesty Lodge following in pursuit, as the sun sets behind the inn, extinguishing the final traces of daylight in Kepler, West Virginia.

[music fades]