

The Adventure Zone: Graduation – Ep. 2, It’s (a) Familiar

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Travis: Previously, on The Adventure Zone...

[theme music plays]

Travis: We catch a glimpse of Hieronymous Wiggerstaff’s School for Heroism and Villainy.

Fitzroy: I am Sir Fitzroy Maplecourt.

Griffin: Uh, yeah, so I’m a half elf. I’m uh, I look really good. Like, sexy, handsome... I’m a barbarian. I’m a magic barbarian.

Higglemas: You’re the one whose magic came and ruined everything for you!

Argo: Argo Keene, here!

Clint: Uh, very handsome, very sexual...

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: No.

Justin: I see a sexy season.

Clint: He’s a water Genasi. He’s kind of a roguish looking... rogue. He’s got long, dark blue hair, a handlebar mustache.

Argo: And you would be...?

Firbolg: I... have no name.

Fitzroy: Oh god.

Justin: He is a Firbolg. Has bluish, grayish skin. He is dirty. He doesn't seem to care.

Firbolg: I will sleep on the floor.

[theme music plays]

Travis: Shafts of light begin to pierce through your dorm room window. It is just barely morning. The wee, wee hours of the morning. And Argo, you wake, not fully, just slightly wake, to the sensation of something gently brushing your mustache. Please give me a stealth check.

Griffin: A stealth check?!

Travis: Yes.

Clint: Alright, stealth check! That's a 15, plus... eight? Would that be right?

Travis: Yes.

Griffin: No—what?

Travis: Yeah. He's a rogue, my dudes.

Clint: So did I just—did I just get a 23?

Travis: You did!

Justin: No, you got a 15 plus eight. Let's not go hog wild, okay?

Travis: That's fair.

Clint: That's a 23!!

Justin: No, it's not actually. It's actually a 15 plus eight.

Travis: It's a dirty 23, as Brennan Lee Mulligan would say.

Justin: It's such a dirty 23. It's a nasty 23. [laughing]

Clint: [laughing] I will take a nasty, funky 23!

Justin: [laughs]

Travis: With your funky 23, uh, you remain calm, and you're able to just like, slightly open one eye and peer at what is happening, and you see a fuzzy cat brushing against one curve of your handlebar mustache. Uh, now, when I say fuzzy, it's not like a furry cat; though, it is furry, but more like its edges are blurred. As you look at it, you're having a hard time kind of pinning it down visually. What do you do?

Clint: Um, I think he speaks in very low tones, and says, uh...

Argo: Hi there, kitty kitty kitty. Nice kitty kitty kitty. Please don't scratch my face.

Travis: The cat turns and looks at you. It tenses slightly, but it doesn't disappear. It doesn't scratch. It just is kind of looking at you, kind of like it's still figuring out what it's about to do. What—how does Fitzroy and question mark question mark question mark... how do they sleep? Are they light sleepers? Heavy sleepers? What are we looking at, here?

Griffin: Uh, I'm half elf. Does that mean I just kind of—I think elves just go into a trance or some shit and don't have to sleep. [laughs]

Travis: This is true.

Griffin: So I'm a half elf, so I guess I just like... go into a half trance. I think it's—I think you would walk into the room and see me, and be like,

"Oh, what's up Sir Fitzroy?" But I would be asleep, I just look extremely conscious. Which is probably very upsetting. Luckily, I am two beds up, so you all don't have to witness the—the bunk bed is for your protection as much as it is for mine.

Travis: So I'm going to say, in your kind of light meditation sleep state, uh, you hear Argo making, y'know, talking and saying things. So like, you are now aware of this situation as well. What about the Firbolg? How does the Firbolg sleep?

Justin: Uh, he is not sleeping—he normally sleeps very soundly. I don't feel like he's sleeping well in this environment. Like, it's indoors. It's so—it's very, uh... the air is stale, and it is not—he's normally like, scooping up a big pile of pine needles and leaves and stuff and having a nice sleep on that. This is the stone and what have you is not his thing. I think he sleeps very fitfully.

Travis: Then I am going to say he is also. So, you are all three now, as roommates, as individuals, aware of a situation where there is a cat in the room, uh, that is difficult to perceive, that is sitting on Argo's upper chest that was most definitely not there when you all laid down to go to sleep or to zone out, depending on which one you are.

Griffin: I want to cautiously like, lean over the side of the bed and do an arcana che—just like, kind of see if I know, like, what... my experience with magic is nearly nonexistent, which is reflected by my very bad arcana score, but I do want to see if I can kind of discern like, what's going on with the—why this thing is intangible in the way that it is.

That is, uh, a nat one. Plus one.

Travis: You don't know shit.

Griffin: Two.

Travis: You're like, "Is that a cat?"

Griffin: Yeah. What's up with that dog?

Argo: Uhh... friend Firbolg... uhh... friend druiid... you—don't you have like, an affinity for animals and stuff? Could—could you get this cat off my chest?

Firbolg: Why, are you frightened? It is... cat.

Travis: [laughs]

Argo: I've never seen one before...

Firbolg: Yes. I will... help.

Argo: Okay...

Firbolg: Is cat.

Argo: Great. So... instead of like, running through phylum and genus and all that stuff... could you maybe ask it nicely to not maim and deform me?

Justin: Sure. Yeah—[laughs] Sorry.

Griffin: [laughs]

Firbolg: Yes. Cat... cat. Cat?

Travis: The cat turns and looks at you.

Firbolg: Ah, I can see you will not be reasoned with. I am sorry.

Griffin: [laughs]

Firbolg: I am... sorry, Argo. He will not listen.

Argo: Gary? Help?

Gary: Eyy, how's it goin' there?

Justin: [laughs] I roll over and go back to sleep, or at least try to.

Gary: Oh, yeah, it's one'a the castle cats! Yeah, don't—I wouldn't worry too much about that. They come and go as they please. Wouldn't harm a fly. I mean, they would, but they wouldn't harm a student, I think would maybe be a better way to put it. They're pretty cool as long as you're pretty cool to them, and that's true of a lot of animals when you stop and think about it. Good morning!

Fitzroy: Get—good—good morning, Gary. I hope that you, uh, slept well, if that's a concern of yours.

Gary: I don't sleep, I'm a magical stone kind of golem thing, y'know?

Fitzroy: I figured that, but—

Gary: But I appreciate the sentiment!

Fitzroy: Sure. Doorknobs don't need to sleep either. So—

Gary: I'm not a doorknob! I'm somewhere between that. Come on.

Fitzroy: I am actually allergic to quantumly untangled animals.

Gary: Uh-huh.

Fitzroy: Um, specifically cats. And so, I will need this... dealt with, I guess?

Gary: Okay, let me teach you a magic spell. You ready?

Fitzroy: Oh, yeah!

Gary: Shoo!

Argo: You want me to hit him with a shoe...?

Gary: No. S-H-O-O. Shoo!

Argo: Ahh. Okay. Shoooo?

Travis: And the cat jumps off of you. And as it jumps, just before it hits the floor, it disappears, almost like it was jumping through a hole you could not see.

Firbolg: I... am having a... a think. I think... maybe is good thing we are at this school, ah? We cannot make a cat go away. [laughs]

Fitzroy: Yes, I was just thinking that. Not our finest hour, boys.

Gary: Alright, well now that you all are awake, uh, there are some announcements this morning. Uh, first, if you're hungry, on your way to class – it is the first day, don't be late. That's a bad first impression. [laughs] But uh, on your way to class, you can stop in to the main hall, grab some pastries, some fruit... uh, we got plenty of coffee down there. Make sure you get good. Get a good start on the day. Breakfast is the most important meal.

Uh, also, uh, this is just kind of a general announcement for all students – there are no secret passages at Wigenstaff's. Please stop looking. There's been a lot of damage just in the last 24 hours to uh, paintings, and statues, uh, some of the tapestries have been... uh, cut up. There are no secret passages. And I know, that's what I would say if—

Fitzroy: If you were a secret passage, yes.

Gary: But I promise you, cross my little stone heart, there are no secret passages. Uh, and finally, another general announcement. For anybody planning to head out to Hope for some supplies, or y'know, just to visit the town, uh, be sure to stop at the bursar's office and talk to Asrick to set up your line of credit through the school, so you don't have to, y'know, go carrying money around or anything like that. We wouldn't want you to be a

target for any kind of pickpockets, or y'know, uh, any kind of, y'know, mercenaries or thieves on the road or anything like that.

Fitzroy: Uh, Gary, help?

Gary: Yes?

Fitzroy: Who do, uh, I speak to about setting up in-room dining?

Gary: Uhh, well... you could maybe leave that in like, the comment box, uh, at Tomas' office. But uhh, I can't imagine that would end up bein' high priority.

Justin: I have a question about Gary.

Travis: Okay.

Justin: For you.

Travis: Oh.

Justin: Is the Gary a hive mind? Does the Gary—does each individual Gary—

Travis: Is the Gary a hive mind? [laughs] Um...

Justin: Does each in—no, does each individual Gary have sentience? Does this Gary, that is in our room, know things that the other Garys do not about us? Or is all information shared between Garys instantaneously?

Travis: All information is shared between Garys. Um, it is—it is a hive mind; though, with individual consciousnesses. So, your Gary has its own individual personality, as does every Gary, but they do share information betwixt one another.

Justin: Man.

Griffin: This is gon' be some Her shit. 'Cause if Gary falls in love with me, Gary could also fall in love with everybody else, and then I get jealous.

Travis: Listen, Griffin, Gary doesn't have time for love. He's career-minded, y'know what I mean? He's out there... he doesn't have time to have it all.

Clint: And it might be a good, y'know, rule of thumb for maybe you tone down the attractiveness, if you can. Y'know, just to avoid all those entanglements.

Travis: Are you talking about with Gary? 'Cause Gary can't tone it down, honey. He's got—

Clint: No no no no. No.

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: Oh, okay.

Clint: I knew that. Just, Fitz. I thought maybe he could back it off.

Griffin: Uh, yeah. Tumblr's really enjoying the narrative of you and me arguing about who gets to play the attractive character this season.

Travis: Yes. Uh, so, here it is, the first day of class. And you all have chosen some electives for the day. Um, so, Argo, you have opted to take the blame-taking class. On your way, do you stop and grab some pastries? Some fruit? What kind of breakfast does Argo eat?

Clint: Uh, a lot of citrus. For the—y'know, the scurvy.

Travis: Scurvy is a real concern. It's starting to border on like a phobia for Argo.

Clint: No, listen. When you live on the sea, I'm tellin' ya, it's always there. Scurvy and beriberi. I've always heard a lot about beriberi. But I don't—

Travis: No, Dad, it's Mary Berry. She's a judge in the early seasons of—

Griffin: Yes. The—[laughs] The dread lord, Mary Berry, who sails the seven seas.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: She'll get you, my dude! She'll sink ya to the soggy bottom.

Griffin: I don't even know if... that was very good, Travis. I'm sorry I didn't laugh at it.

Travis: Thank you very much.

Griffin: I bet Norovirus is also a concern for Naval...

Travis: They don't call it that, though.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: I'm sure—I doubt very much that there were pirates sailing the sea like, "Arr, be careful of the Norovirus!"

Griffin: Yeah, they had some—they would call it Davey Jones'...

Travis: [laughs] Revenge.

Griffin: Revenge. [laughs] Or something.

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, can we have breakfast together?

Travis: Sure! That'd be cute!

Griffin: I want to float that.

Justin: That sounds good.

Griffin: I turn to the two of you as we're walking through the quad, and I say...

Fitzroy: Gentlemen, I apologize if I was brusque yesterday during our orientation. I found myself in a, uh, an exceedingly difficult scenario. One of the worst I've faced so far in my life, and I may have made a bad first impression with the two of you, and if we are to be living together, I figure we may as well, uh, crush the beef. And so, uh... can we start over?

Argo: So, are you referrin' to when you were, uh, y'know, so shocked and repelled by us bein' your roommates, that you decided you'd rather jump into a volcano, or wrestle a kraken rather than, y'know, hang out with us? Is that the gist of it?

Fitzroy: Uh, yeah. That's exactly what I'm talking about. Yes, I can see how you would find that unpleasant.

Argo: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Fitzroy: And what about you, Bud? Or... gosh, we need some—we're kind of dying out here.

Firbolg: I am fine.

Fitzroy: Derek?

Firbolg: Deeeeerek? This turns to ash in my mouth.

Travis: [laughs]

Argo: Der-rock? Derrock?

Firbolg: I shall not be Deerek.

Fitzroy: Okay. Well, um, Firbolg friend, can you forgive me for being so harsh?

Firbolg: I will.

Fitzroy: Cool. That was much easier than I thought it was going to be.

Firbolg: Mm.

Fitzroy: What brings the two of you to uh, to this institution? Obviously, you probably picked up on my—my backstory of uh, not failing so much as not *completing* my matriculation at Clyde Nite's Night Knight School. What about yourselves?

Argo: Um, I have a goal. I—I have a goal of bein' a sidekick. A very specific sidekick. I want to be a sidekick to the Commodore. The great Naval hero, the Commodore. It's just, uh, recently become a dream of mine, to be by his side, kickin'.

Fitzroy: Shoot... shoot for the stars, as I always say. Inspirationally.

Argo: That's my star right there.

Fitzroy: What about yourself, Firbolg friend?

Firbolg: I... am nothing. And I must serve.

Fitzroy: ... Okay. Yeah. I'll work—I'll try to work with that. Um... well, here's to a good semester, I suppose.

Travis: You arrive at the great hall. You can see, laid out, there's some various bready pastry type things. You see various fresh fruits. Uh, a coffee stand, and even... some fresh squeezed juice! It's nice.

Griffin: Travis, you shouldn't have.

Travis: Yeah. I did it with my mind chefs.

Justin: Isn't that cool? You can just say, like... there's croissants. [laughs]
And then there is.

Travis: I know, right?

Griffin: Oh, shit.

Travis: 'Cause I was thinkin' about it, and I was like, I could give you guys like, some shitty gruel or whatever. But then I was like, y'know what? Maybe I'll spring for better imaginary food. Spare no imaginary expense.

Clint: Is there an omelet bar?

Travis: Hell yeah there's an omelet bar! [laughs]

Justin: There's three!

Clint: Yeah! Yeah!

Fitzroy: Is there a crepe—is there a crepe master?

Travis: No.

Fitzroy: God... does this school have anything?!

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Fitzroy: Perhaps you could find some room in the budget for crepe mastery! You have a whole omelet station! Is everybody at this school eating omelets? It seems inefficient! Make them to order!!

Argo: If they use batter instead of uh, instead of eggs, they can make you—

Fitzroy: That's crepes, baby! Yes!

Argo: They could make you a crepe instead of an omelet.

Fitzroy: Argo Keene...

Argo: But then it'll have green onions in it and stuff.

Fitzroy: Well... that's different strokes, y'know?

Travis: There are savory crepes.

Griffin: Okay. Not for me. I like it sweet.

Travis: Oh. Okay. [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Travis: I love—man, I know it's only the second episode, but I feel like we already know so much about Fitzroy! He likes sweet crepes... uh... [pause]

Griffin: He's a failure. [laughs]

Travis: He's a failure!

Argo: So like, what, we grab a tray and go through the line, or what do we do?

Travis: I mean, this is more of a like, y'know, grab a napkin. Grab some fruit to go. Y'know, you don't want to be late for class, Argo.

Justin: Hey Trav.

Travis: Yeah?

Justin: Did you, when you were planning this out, did you think that getting breakfast would take 20 minutes? Or is this still part of your grand plan?

Travis: No, I honestly didn't, Justin. I thought it would be more of like a "let's get to the game," but now I realize, I painted such a rich picture with all of my fruit and pastries, that I should've known.

Justin: [laughing] It's Chekov's fruit, Travis. If you're telling us about the fruit, we assume it must be important.

Travis: I understand. Uh, listen. Here's what you didn't know. You're all on your way to class now. There was a key hidden in the fruit.

Justin: [laughs] Like Survivor!

Griffin: Damn it!

Travis: Yeah.

Clint: I grabbed fruit!

Justin: You knew the advantage.

Argo: Ow! Oh! I bit into a lime, and I got something hard and metallic! It's a key!

Travis: The key doesn't go to anything.

Justin: Dig into this fucking shit for a second. You bit into a lime?

Argo: Oh yeah, that's the best way to stave off scurvy.

Justin: [laughs] You're so tripped out by scurvy. Okay.

Travis: Uh, here's the problem – the key doesn't actually go to anything. Chef Stuart LaBeouf just dropped it in there on accident.

Clint: I'm gonna hang onto it anyway.

Travis: Okay. Write down 'scurvy-free key' for me. You've collected a scurvy-free key. Alright. Argo, you're on your way to class. You arrive at blame-taking class, and uh, you are running just a little bit late. Just a couple minutes, and you're the last person to arrive. There are five other students in the class, including Leon, who you recognize. Um, and four others, who you don't.

And when you enter, even though you are late, the professor turns to you and says...

Professor: Oh, hello. Uh, I am so sorry. My fault. I'm sorry that I am starting class late. Please come in. Come in.

Travis: Uh, and the teacher is a halfling. Um, who is preparing his notes, getting them ready, and you know his name is Riveau. R-I-V-E-A-U.

Riveau: Uh, please, you must be Argo. Please, come in. Have a seat. We are getting ready to begin class. Uh, alright, let me see... uh, one, two, three, four, five, six... yes, everyone is here today. This is excellent. Welcome to blame-taking. Uh, as a sidekick or henchperson, deflecting blame from your hero and villain is one of the most important services you can offer.

If your hero or villain were to cross someone important, or ruin the relationship with a kingdom, it might make it difficult for them to be able to

do business efficiently. So, you being there to say, "Oh no, it wasn't their fault, it was mine," uh, can save the day and make you a hero!

Now, blame-taking, uh, it's not... uh, everybody thinks it's going to be easy, but it is an art form. So today, we're going to have a little, uh, in-class experiment. A little demonstration, if you will.

Travis: Um, so, just a little game mechanics here. We don't, of course, there is no blame-taking skill in Dungeons & Dragons. So, I am going to homebrew it a little bit and say that you can use your deception skill, your performance skill, or persuasion skill in place of a blame-taking check. Uh, all of that will kind of depend on the scenario. Um, y'know, persuading someone that it was your fault, versus deceiving someone that you did it. Like...

Griffin: Right.

Travis: We'll kind of play with those as we go.

Riveau: Alright, so here is what everyone is going to do. Uh, one by one, you're going to come up. You are going to draw a number out of this basket, and then I will call a number, and then we're all going to close our eyes, and whoever's number we called is going to come down, and they are going to steal this gold coin off my desk. Then, it will be all of your jobs to convince me that you were the one who stole it.

Uh, so, uh, let's see... Argo, last one in, first to draw a number.

Travis: Uh, so dad, you're gonna roll a d6 for me, and don't tell me the number.

Clint: M'kay. Alright, I won't.

Travis: Okay.

Clint: I mean, I did. But I won't.

Travis: Okay. Okay. And one by one, everyone comes down, they draw numbers from out of the basket, uh, and once they are done, Riveau says...

Riveau: Aalright. I'm going to say number four. Now, don't move. Number four, don't move yet. Everybody, heads down. No peeking. Uh, and y'know, everybody try to be as quiet as possible.

Travis: And he closes his eyes. Uh, and he turns his back to the gold coin on the desk. He waits an appropriate amount of time. We'll let you all determine, in your own minds, how long that is. Maybe it's 30 second—

Griffin: A second and a half.

Travis: Well, okay.

Riveau: Uh, okay. Now, uhh, is everybody done? Alright. We're going to open our eyes. Now, one by one, uh, everybody is going to take their turns convincing that uh, that they were the ones who took it. First up, Leon, I believe it is?

Leon: Uh, yeah. Hi. Um, I... definitely took the coin. Uh, 'cause I loved how glittery it was, and I wanted it. Um, so, I went down there, and I took it, and I hid it in my sock for safekeeping, and later, I'm gonna spend it on alcohol. Um, so... yeah. I took it.

Riveau: Okay, Leon. Um, a noble effort. Very good. Okay, next...

Travis: And he looks down at the roll, and he says...

Riveau: Uh, I believe, uh, Mimi? Mimi?

Travis: And the gnome, who is in the second row, stands up and goes...

Mimi: Uh, yeah! Uh, I took it! Um... see, here's the thing. I looove gold, because I'm like everyone else, right? So I snuck down there when no one was looking, and I took that gold, uh, popped it in my back pocket. I love it. I'm gonna use that gold, and I'm not giving it back. I'm sure that this is

some kind of, y'know, demonstration. At the end of it, we're supposed to give back that gold. I'm not gonna do that. This gold is mine, do you hear me? It's mine.

Riveau: Ohh! Okay, that was very good! Uh, next, Argo Keene. Uh, convince me that you were the one who stole the gold.

Clint: So... [clears throat] Should I roll something here? To use one of those?

Travis: Well, here's what I'll say. Don't tell me what you're rolling, right? Because if you're doing deception, right? I don't want to know that you're lying.

Clint: Okay.

Travis: Give me your pitch first. Well, roll. Don't tell me what you roll. Then give me your pitch, and we'll see how it goes.

Clint: Okay.

Argo: Well... I hate to admit this, but I... I took the coin, because... I come from pretty... pretty bad state. Uh, y'know, my family... it's not rich, and it costs a lot, y'know, to come here to this academy. And my poor mum left me with nothin' when I lost her, so... I uh... I need—I need that coin. Uh, I... I got nobody to help me. I'm in with, y'know, I'm just in dire straits, and... my god, when you threw that coin out there on the desk, and... I mean, I don't even care if I pass the damn class. I could use that money so badly. So I snuck down there, usin' my amazing rogue skills, and I... I cabbled it.

Travis: Dang, Dad, that was so good! What'd you roll?

Clint: I rolled performance, and I rolled a 15 plus two.

Travis: That was very good.

Griffin: That felt like a 17.

Justin: Yeah, that was right on the money!

Travis: Yeah, that felt like a 17.

Justin: For sure!

Travis: So, the other three students go, and Riveau looks around the room and says...

Riveau: Alright, everyone. Uh, that was very good for a first time out. Very, very convincing. But I have to say... I was especially convinced by Mr. Argo Keene. I have to ask, Argo... did you take the coin?

Argo: Uh, no. I did not. Sorry.

Travis: And Leon raises his hand and says...

Leon: Uh, actually, I took it. Um, I was—yeah. I took it.

Riveau: Okay, you were not... convincing at all, Leon. And you actually took it.

Leon: I thought I was very convincing...

Travis: Um, so, class lets out. Gary says...

Gary: Heyyy, everybody! Class is over! This class is over! Head to the next class!

Travis: And the class starts to let out, and Riveau stops you, Argo, and says...

Riveau: I have to say, Mr. Keene, that was very convincing!

Argo: Well, thank you. Thank you, professor. Uh, the truth usually is, I've found.

Riveau: Ahh, I see. Yes, that was a good tactic to take.

Griffin: [laughing]

Argo: So can I... can I have the coin? Uh, y'know, or is that like a union violation or something?

Riveau: No, it—no, that—it was just an example. It's not—the money—it's not the reward. This is a test. You get grades. You know grades? Grades are the reward. We don't pay students for doing a good job at class.

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs]

Argo: Well, y'know—

Justin: To be fair, it is the first class. I guess, in Argo's case, it must be in his entire life. [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: Yeah.

Riveau: Yes, I guess we are establishing precedent, here. We don't pay students.

Argo: Oh. Okay. Well, uh, can you tell me what my grade was?

Riveau: Uhh... very good.

Argo: Wow.

Griffin: We're on some Montessori shit.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: Improving!

[theme music plays]

Travis: Uh, when I asked which class the Firbolg would choose to take, uh, Justin, could you tell me what you chose to take?

Justin: Um... [clears throat] No. [laughs] But if you give me ten seconds, I bet I'll remember.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: You chose to take accounting.

Justin: Did I say that?

Travis: Yes you did.

Justin: Yes. Yes. I will say yes, I did choose to say—I did choose accounting. You're right. Thank you. Yes.

Travis: Now, the class is completely full, and everybody is basically like, vibrating with excitement. Now, uh, Master Firbolg, are you a sit in the front kind of person? Sit in the back? Try to blend into the middle somewhere? What are we looking at here?

Justin: Probably sit towards the middle, I would guess. Yeah.

Travis: Excellent. Okay. So, uh, as the fever pitch of excitement just reaches an unbearable level, the door bursts open, and a large, white owl Aarakocra walks into the room and says...

Aarakocra: Hello, students! Today, you take the first step on the most important journey of your life – becoming a master accountant. Looking around this room, I can see in your eyes how many of you have dreamed of this day. But perhaps there is one or two among you who have scoffed at the importance of accounting.

Travis: The class reacts with disbelief and murmurs!

Griffin: [laughs]

Aarakocra: Yes... believe it or not, there are those out there who fail to see that, without accounting, the world would crumble. So let us, for a moment, pretend that we all feel this way. Let us all take a breath and wonder... why is accounting so important?

[music plays]

Aarakocra: You see, no matter what any powerful king or influential lord would like you to believe, no one has infinite riches. Whether you have one copper in your pocket, or one million gold, all finances have limits. There used to be a time when kingdoms were constantly competing to outdo one another. Sometimes, it was with lavish festivals, and sometimes, with unnecessary wars. The royals never thought of the impact this had on their coffers until it was too late.

These were highly unstable times. Kingdoms rose and fell in the spans of decades. Workers went unpaid, and whole villages would starve. Then began the golden age of accounting. Kingdoms, guided by teams of accountants, began to think in terms of cost and benefit! Rather than hurling money around, they spent strategically, and invested wisely. Wages were paid on time. Funds were set aside to cover those who found themselves unable to work, and infrastructure was maintained.

This stability saved us... except there was a downside – it was incredibly boring.

Clint: [laughs]

Aarakocra: The kingdoms no longer competed. No longer partied. And no longer held lavish festivals. There was little entertainment to break up the monotony of life, and so, a new system was put in place... the system of heroes and villains. This system created exciting stories and spectacular battles while still keeping an eye on the bottom line. The heroes and villains became celebrities, and kingdoms boomed, thanks to the tourism and merch sales.

But if accounting teaches us anything, it's that everything comes at a price. Woe be unto any hero or villain whose costs outweigh the revenue they generate for the kingdom! They would find themselves out of work! That is why it is important that all of you, hero, villain, sidekick, and henchperson alike, keep a love for accounting ever burning in your heart... and a watchful eye on your bottom line.

Travis: And the whole room bursts into applause! Cheers! They're on their feet! They're absolutely losing it!

Clint: [in a bubbly voice as if underwater] Scholastic Films presents, the golden age of accounting!

Travis: The golden age—a city on the grow! [laughs]

Clint: [laughing]

Aarakocra: Now, looking around this room, I see amongst us, uh, many nods, knowing smiles... clearly, you are all well on your way to becoming expert accountants. Uh, let's go around the room. We'll ask some questions and see what everyone already knows. I'll pick at random. Uh, there. Master Firbolg. Tell me what you already know of accounting.

Firbolg: I... [sighs] Uhhhhhh... nothing.

Aarakocra: Oh. [pause] No—nothing?

Firbolg: I... mmm... [pause] Where I come from, one does not... own... all... own. Why would one have more than the others?

Aarakocra: Sweet bird in heaven...

Griffin: [laughs]

Aarakocra: Um... where to even begin? Uh, for a system of trade. Uh, so that one might exchange one's goods and services for someone else's goods and services, to strengthen relations between communities as they share – and by share, I mean sell – what they have to someone else? Uh, for many reasons. I—what—I—I don't even know how to begin to answer this question! Um... surely, you must own something! You—the clothes you're wearing. Those are yours, yes?

Firbolg: Not if you want them.

Aarakocra: I do not. Uh, just to—I don't know if you're asking rhetorically, but just to establish, I do not want your clothes.

Firbolg: It is well.

Aarakocra: Uh... [sighs] Okay. Well, the Firbolg brings up, kind of in a roundabout way I suppose, uh, the idea of ownership. And that brings us to the first part of the accounting equation – assets. Now, Master Firbolg, surely you must know what an asset is.

Firbolg: Mmm... this is, uhh... thing that is... helping. Is good.

Aarakocra: Okay. Uh...

Firbolg: A thing you have that is helping, is good.

Aarakocra: Yes, okay! A thing that you have that is helping, that is good. Um, yes. Or to put it another way, property owned by a business that can be used to operate and generate profit, I believe is what you meant.

Firbolg: Is this... required?

Aarakocra: Is—is it re—is it required for operating a business?

Firbolg: This class.

Aarakocra: Oh.

Clint: [laughs]

Aarakocra: Um... yes, very much so.

Firbolg: Ah. Ahh. Yes.

Aarakocra: Okay. Y'know what? I'm gonna—here's an easy one, alright? This is—you don't need to know—

Firbolg: Maybe someone else?

Griffin: [laughs]

Aarakocra: No, you have become my opus, Mr. Firbolg.

Clint: [laughs]

Aarakocra: I... by the time you leave here in five years, I think you will be a master accountant, or my name isn't Bartholemus. Now, if a kingdom owns a piece of real estate worth 25,000 gold, and they owe 18,000 gold on a loan for that real estate, what is the kingdom's equity in that property?

Firbolg: [breathing heavily] This is a splitting... hmm... in here? All are feeling this, yes? Is a splitting? Ahhh.

Justin: And he's grabbing his head, as though he's trying to keep both halves of his brain together.

Bartholemus: You can do this, Master Firbolg. 25,000, and they owe 18,000

Firbolg: This is—why—why are there 25,000 of anything?!

Bartholemus: 'Cause it—'cause the property is worth 25,000—

Firbolg: What is 25,000?!

Bartholemus: Okay, how about 25? It's 25 gold. And they owe 18 gold. So what's their equity in it?

Firbolg: What is this... what is this... eq... equity?

Bartholemus: It's the interest in property after all debts have been repaid.

Firbolg: There is a sound of a clanging!!

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Firbolg: Surely, you hear this, yes? Ahhh!

Bartholemus: Okay. Um...

Firbolg: There is a fire... there is a fire behind the eyes. A splitting, splitting, splitting. It's a fire.

Bartholemus: Okay. Let's... I'm gonna put it another way.

Firbolg: This is... this is required?

Bartholemus: Yes. And you know what? I believe in you. You've got this. It's worth 25.

Firbolg: What is 25 of—

Bartholemus: Doesn't—doesn't matter. It's worth 25.

Firbolg: Acorn.

Bartholemus: Sure.

Griffin: [laughs]

Bartholemus: It's worth 25 acorns. They still owe 18 acorns.

Firbolg: Why?

Bartholemus: Because they're buying it from a squirrel.

Firbolg: The squirrel... has money?

Bartholemus: No, it's acorns. This is your set up.

Firbolg: Why would the squirrel ever give away the acorn?

Bartholemus: No no no. You're giving the acorn to the squirrel.

Firbolg: What do I get?

Bartholemus: His tree.

Firbolg: [pause] We can share the tree.

Bartholemus: No.

Firbolg: It's very big.

Bartholemus: You can't. The squirrel doesn't want to share the tree.

Griffin: [laughing]

Firbolg: Room for both.

Bartholemus: But... okay. In this scenario, the squirrel does not want to share the tree, you see.

Firbolg: Is small tree?

Bartholemus: Uh...

Firbolg: I find another. Is fine.

Bartholemus: No, it's the only tree for miles!

Firbolg: Ahh... ahh... mmm.

Bartholemus: So... 25 acorns.

Firbolg: I have this?

Bartholemus: No, that's how much it's worth to the squirrel. And you still owe 18 acorns. So you've already paid seven acorns. So how much do you have of the tree?

Firbolg: He may stay in the tree with me.

Bartholemus: He doesn't want to.

Firbolg: Upstairs.

Bartholemus: Nope. He said it's all or nothing. He's gonna take the 25 acorns you give him, and trade that to another squirrel for an even better tree.

Firbolg: I do the joke. Trees do not have stairs.

Bartholemus: Okay. [pause] You've given me a lot to think about, Master Firbolg. Um...

Griffin: [laughing]

Clint: [laughing]

Firbolg: The—ah. Ahh. Ahh, friend owl?

Bartholemus: Uh-huh? Yes?

Firbolg: Friend owl?

Bartholemus: Yes?

Firbolg: When do I get the acorns?

Bartholemus: No, that—the acorn—they are acorns of the mind.

Firbolg: The splitting has returned.

Griffin: [laughs]

Firbolg: It is a tearing wa—why did the mind make acorn?

Bartholemus: Alright, everybody, thank you so much. It's been a great first class. Um... I need to do some restructuring on my syllabus. Uh, for the coming weeks. Um...

Firbolg: [loudly] What is syllabus?!

Bartholemus: We're gonna call this one early. Uh... please... please learn about accounting. At least a basic knowledge, before tomorrow's class.

Gary: Uh, hey everybody, just real quick – we got a quick announcement, and this is a guest announcement, uh, from your friends and mine, Jimson and Crushman.

Travis: And you hear Jimson’s voice. Gary just kind of opens his mouth, and you hear the voice come through.

Jimson: Uh, hello. Uh, just a quick announcement here. After lunch, the following students need to report to the battle grounds: Rainer, Zana, Rhodes, Pip, Rolandus, Buckminster, Leon, Dip, Argo, Fitzroy, Mimi, and... uh... Master Firbolg. We’re going to practice cooperative defense.

Travis: And then you hear Crushman’s voice kick in and say...

Crushman: I believe what my husband is trying to say is... it’s time for human shield training.

[theme music plays]

Travis: Hi everybody, it’s me! Your best friend and fun uncle, Travis McElroy! I'm so excited. This is episode two, and everybody seemed to really enjoy episode one, or at the very least, you were all so very nice about it, and it made me feel great. So thank you! And y'know, if you enjoy this, we are just starting out here. We’re only two episodes in, so please, tell everyone you know. Share links to it, share links to the trailer, tweet about it, all that stuff. We appreciate the heck out of it.

Thank you all so much. A couple names this week – Ramos is named after Anna Ramos. Pip is named after @ItsPipster on Twitter. Uh, Mimi is named after Mimi Chu, who did the animation on our amazing trailer, which, once again, is on YouTube, and you can share. Also, couple announcements. Um, we... let’s see. We have a bunch of new merch up. Um, you can find that at McElroyMerch.com.

And The Adventure Zone graphic novel, book three, preorders are open now. So you can go and preorder that book now at TheAdventureZoneComic.com.

And we also have some sponsors this week that I'm so excited to tell you about.

We're sponsored in part by Quip. I'm a huge fan of Quip. It's the electric toothbrush that doesn't feel, uh, y'know, as bulky and as weird or as sometimes brutal as other electric toothbrushes do. It has gentle vibration in a compact size, so it's easy to use and comfortable to use. Uh, and it has a built in timer to let you know when it's time to switch to a different section of your teeth, and to make sure that you're brushing for the appropriate two minutes, which, listen – none of us do.

And Quip automatically delivers brush heads to you every three months, so you get clean new bristles right on schedule. Uh, it's amazing. I love it so much. I highly recommend. This isn't just me reading copy. This is me telling you, I love Quip, and it starts at just \$25, and you'll get your first refill free at GetQuip.com/Adventure. It's a simple way to support our show and start brushing better, but you have to go to GetQuip.com/Adventure, and you'll get your first refill free. Go right now to GetQuip.com/Adventure.

We're also sponsored in part by Stitch Fix this week. Listen, if you've noticed the McElroys looking more and more fashionable these last couple years, it's because of Stitch Fix. My favorite thing about Stitch Fix is, I can tell them like, okay, great, I think I'm covered for spring. It's time to start looking for fall. Or, I think I have enough fall clothes. Time to start looking at winter.

And then, you get personal styling service that then picks out clothes – not just clothes that they like, but clothes that they think you'll like, based on your preferences, questionnaires you've answered, the things you've kept from previous boxes, so it gets personally, like, tailored – no pun intended – to your style.

So, go to StitchFix.com/TAZ, and you'll tell them your size, what styles you like, and how much you want to spend on each item. And then, they'll hand pick those items for you, you'll try them on, and you'll pay only for what you keep. And you'll return the rest. So shipping, exchanges, and returns are always free. And Stitch Fix's styling fee is only \$20, which is applied towards anything you keep from your shipment! It's a great deal.

So, get started now at [StitchFix.com/TAZ](https://www.stitchfix.com/TAZ), and you'll get an extra 25% off when you keep all items in your box. That's [StitchFix.com/TAZ](https://www.stitchfix.com/TAZ) to get started today. [StitchFix.com/TAZ](https://www.stitchfix.com/TAZ). And now, back to the show!

[theme music plays]

Travis: Uh, you all show up. It's after lunch. You show up to the battle grounds, and you can see a line is painted down the middle, and all across that line, you see numerous different... they kind of look like medicine balls almost, like volleyballs painted red. You see Jimson, who is the sidekick and henchperson trainer. You see Crushman, who is the hero and villain trainer, and you also, uh, Argo and Fitzroy, you see the goliath woman that you saw the day before. You know now that she is the shield work teacher, named Ramos.

Uh, Ramos is kind of off to the side. She's more observing at this point, and this is clearly Crushman and Jimson's show. Uh, and Jimson says...

Jimson: Uh, yes. Uh, hi. Yes, everybody. Come close. Thank you all for being so prompt. This is, uh, as Crush said, uh... human shield training. I don't like to think of it that way. I like to think of it as cooperative defense. Uh, but that name has not caught on the way I was hoping, and so, we shall call it... human shielding.

Griffin: I raise my hand.

Jimson: Yes, Fitzroy?

Fitzroy: Uh, *Sir* Fitzroy. Uh, I was wondering if I could just test out of this? Because I did—I do not know if you know where I come from. I did attend, uh—

Jimson: Yes, Clyde Nite's Night Knight School? Yes.

Fitzroy: Yes, and I actually—I minored in shield work, so I do not think you will have anything to—

Jimson: Then you'll do great in this. I cannot wait to see your performance.

Fitzroy: ... Okay.

Jimson: And now, to go over the rules. Uh, Crush.

Crushman: Uh, yes, thank you. So, here are the rules. We're going to pair you up. There will be one sidekick or hench per hero or villain. Now, kicks and henches, you'll be blocking and catching. And heroes and villains, you will be throwing.

Travis: So what that means in game mechanics is, the heroes and villains will attack, and the henches and sidekicks – you guys – will defend. Um, and they're going to be contested rolls. So they'll make an attack roll, and then you will use either your uh, uh, acrobatics skill, or your athletics skill to try to block.

If you can beat the thrower by ten or more, you will catch it, and I'll tell you what that means in a second. If you beat the thrower by five to nine, you block. If you beat the thrower by one to four or tie, you block, but it's a body blow, meaning you catch it in the gut, and you're going to have disadvantage on your next check. And if you lose to the thrower, it hits the hero or villain behind you, and they are out.

Now, on a catch, your hero or villain immediately gets a free throw at the other side.

Griffin: Cool.

Travis: So you can use your powers and abilities in this game, except for direct attacks. So, get creative!

Crushman: Alright, everybody line up. I'm gonna pair you up. Uh, Argo, you're with Rhodes. Fitz, you are with Rainer.

Fitzroy: [mumbling] It's Sir Fitzroy.

Crushman: Uh, Leon, you're of course with Buckminster. Uh, Dip is with, of course, Pip. Mimi, you're with Zana, and uh, Master Firbolg, you're with Rolandus.

Travis: Uh, so Zana, who you met the week before, is a tiefling sorcerer. You can see, she's a little bit disappointed with her partner, Mimi the gnome, mostly just because of the height difference. And uh, Zana says...

Zana: I am sorry, but does anybody else see the disparity here? Like, the height difference? No offense, Mimi, but making me a target, uh... I just feel like we are going to do very bad at this game.

Travis: And uh, Mimi says...

Mimi: Oh, no, hold on! Wait, let me show ya!

Travis: And uh, they reach into their hat. Y'know, it's like a standard gnome affair. And they reach far deeper in than you would've expected. Uh, and they pull out a, like, four foot long pair of mechanical arms.

Mimi: Yeah, with this, I can take care of it! Don't even worry about it!

Fitzroy: Can I get... can I get magic robot arms, too? Or...

Mimi: I mean, yeah, on commission.

Fitzroy: Okay.

Mimi: I don't build things for people for free.

Fitzroy: I'll have my people talk to your people. I wanted them for this, specifically.

Mimi: Oh! No, sorry, I only have the one set for me. But if you can, y'know, get me materials, and then pay for labor, uh, we can figure something out.

Travis: Uh, and Rainer comes to you and says...

Rainer: Uh, hey Fitz! Um, I'm really looking forward to working with you!

Fitzroy: [mumbling] Sir Fitzroy. Maplecourt.

Rainer: Sir Fitz?

Fitzroy: Uh, you're closer. Um, but yes, I am looking forward to it, too, so long as no deceased rodents spring forth from your chair and do a dance in a mockery of death and all that—

Rainer: Are you sure? He's been working on a Charleston that's pretty cute.

Fitzroy: Pretty sure that's not what I would see it as, but yes. Yes, I'm looking forward to it, yes. Uh, I hope I do not disappoint.

Rainer: Yes, and listen – one thing... and this is so important... make sure I don't get hit in the face, 'cause that's my moneymaker.

Travis: And she kind of winks and smiles.

Fitzroy: Ideally, I wouldn't let you get hit anywhere, but we'll—yes.

Rainer: No, that was a—oh, sorry! That was a joke.

Fitzroy: Oh! Okay. I didn't... didn't hit me like that.

Rainer: We'll work on it.

Fitzroy: Okay, yes.

Rainer: Okay.

Travis: Uh, and Rolandus turns to you and says...

Rolandus: Ah, yes. Master Firbolg. This should go... quite well. You're a big fellow. I'll just stay... behind you.

Firbolg: Mmm... this seems wise.

Rolandus: Okay. Just... if it's between you and me, just take the hit, okay?

Firbolg: I will do this.

Rolandus: Good lad. Okay, great.

Travis: Alright, so let's roll some initiative!

Griffin: For dodge ball!

Travis: Uh, I'm gonna have you roll on behalf of your heroes and villains.

Griffin: I got a 14.

Travis: That's not bad.

Griffin: Thanks.

Clint: I got a five.

Travis: Okay. How'd you do, J-Man?

Justin: I got a... six, plus... the modifier. Right? For that. Plus one. Seven!

Travis: Okay. So, on either side of the line, uh, lines up heroes on one side, villains on the other. So, on one side, Rolandus lines up with Master Firbolg standing in front of him. Uh, and then you see Buckminster with Leon in front of him. And Rhodes lines up behind you, Argo, and says...

Rhodes: Now, listen here, Argo. You and I, we're gonna work together just fine, alright? You just don't get in my way. [pause] Wait. I—sorry. No, yeah.

Argo: I... I thought I was supposed to be in your way.

Rhodes: No, okay. In the—in this circumstance, do get in my way. And don't... don't get in my way by getting—y'know what? Just—just don't—okay. Forget—forget I said anything. Forget it.

Argo: I'm—I don't get it anyway, so that's fine.

Rhodes: Perfect. Okay, great. This is going swimmingly.

Travis: Uh, on the other side of the line, we see, lined up, uh, we have Zana with Mimi, and Mimi's mechanical arms. Uh, and then we see Pip. And right in front of Pip is Dip, and you realize, when you see them standing together, that they are half-orc twins.

Griffin: Awww. Wait, is one a hero and the other one a sidekick?

Travis: Correct!

Griffin: Well that must be—lead to a challenging family dynamic around the dinner table.

Justin: And an awkward Christmas.

Travis: And then we have Rainer and Fitzroy. So, up first is Zana. Zana picks up the ball, and she is going to take aim at... uhh... I'm going to say the Firbolg.

Justin: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, oh. No, she rolls five plus two, so a seven total.

Justin: What is the—what are we rolling? What is the skill here?

Travis: You can roll with either athletics or acrobatics.

Justin: Uhh, okay.

Argo: Come on, Furby! You can do it!

Fitzroy: That's not bad.

Justin: 20.

Travis: Dang, son!

Justin: 16 plus four.

Travis: Alright, that means that you catch it. And everyone kind of stops for a minute, and they're like, "Aw dang!" So that means that your hero, Rolandus, gets an immediate attack. So Rolandus is gonna throw it. He wings it right back at Zana. Mimi is able to get the block with her mechanical arm, but it bounces off. She's not able to grab it.

Uh, so then, up next, we have Rainer. So, Rainer grabs it. She is going to chuck it at, uh... let's see, at Rhodes. Oh, so she rolls a 13. Uh, so, yeah. Beat a 13.

Clint: Uhh, okay... so... I rolled a... 12 plus eight for acrobatics.

Travis: Dang, son.

Clint: That's 20.

Travis: I forgot how... acrobatic you are. So, you get the block. You don't grab the ball, but the block is successful. Everyone is on their feet now. Uh, Pip grabs it! Chucks it over at Rolandus! Oh, that's an 11 plus, uh... it's a 16 total! 11 plus five.

Justin: Hell yeah, 17! Plus... four! 21!

Travis: That's a good grab.

Justin: I'm burnin' all these good rolls when I'm playing dodge ball though.
[laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Alright, and now—and don't forget! You can use your special skills as well. You can also use it to assist when the other person is throwing. So, up next, it is, uh... let's see... Rolandus is up! Uh, so Rolandus winds back... anything you want to do to help assist, uh, Firbolg?

Justin: Yeah, I have an idea.

Firbolg: Mmm... try throwing from higher.

Justin: And I'm gonna touch Rolandus, and cast *jump*.

Travis: Okay.

Justin: And Rolandus' jump distance is tripled until the spell ends.

Travis: So he jumps up. I'm gonna give him advantage because of that, then. He jumps straight up, uh, to get kind of a top down angle on it.

Justin: It's gonna be way harder to block. Way harder.

Travis: Yeah, thank god you gave him advantage on that. He needed that. Uh, so, he's got a 23 total. Uh, and he's rolling against Dip. He's aiming for Pip. And so... oop! Nope! You pop it right off the top. Rolandus does, rather, right off the top of Pip's head. And just like that, Pip and Dip are out! The villains are down to two.

Justin: Woohoo!

Travis: The heroes still have three. Uh, and up next is... Rhodes! Uh, so that means, that's you, Argo. Anything you want to do to assist Rhodes on the throw?

Clint: Alright, yes. Standing there, he raises his two hands like a, in our reality, a football referee would do for a touchdown, to serve as like a... a sight.

Griffin: [laughs] Like iron sights?

Clint: To be a sight.

Griffin: [laughing]

Travis: Okay.

Clint: For him to throw the ball.

Travis: Give me... a... uh, straight up and down wisdom check. This is another, uh—I have added to this homebrew, a skill check called encouragement. So this is an encouragement check, which is based off of wisdom.

Clint: Okay. That would be a nat 20!

Travis: Okay. Uh, that's great. I meant to say charisma, not wisdom. Sorry. It's based off of charisma. Nat 20, hell yeah. You do super great. Um, I'm going to say... y'know what? That nat 20 is so good, that you grant advantage on this with your amazing sights. Uh, so that's a 21 total, uh, from Rhodes on this one, and she is aiming at Rainer.

Griffin: Oh. Not on my watch. Uh, that's a 18 plus five. 23.

Travis: Dang! Okay, you block it! Um, and so, then, next in the order is Buckminster, who is going to chuck that, uhh, at Zana again. This time... oh,

nope. Mimi goes to reach for it, and uh, instead, it bounces off of the thumb of her left mechanical hand, and pops Zana right in the forehead.

Griffin: Was Zana a villain or a hero?

Travis: Zana is a villain.

Griffin: Okay. So, cool team I've got.

Travis: Yeah. It's all up to you, my dude. Uh, so, next on the list, we're back at the top of the order. Well, it's Rainer now. So Rainer is gonna throw. Anything you can do to assist?

Griffin: Uh, I turn to her and I say...

Fitzroy: Hey, I'm going to use my magic to cheat!

Rainer: Okay! I'm totally in favor of this.

Fitzroy: I wouldn't normally do—I think that's probably foul play, but we're on the villain team and I'm feeling dastardly, so I'm going to use my magic to cheat. I know *mage hand*.

Rainer: Oh, sick!

Fitzroy: I mean, I don't *know mage hand*. I've been working on it. Uh, on my off time. A little bit of self-tutoring. And so, I'm gonna do that, and just sort of... push the ball even faster. Just give it a spank in the air, okay? But don't tell anyone! Okay?

Griffin: Uh, and I turn as she starts to throw, and uh, I hold my hand out, and uh, actually, *thunder wave* comes out of me.

Travis: Aw, dang!

Griffin: And I look—I look—as soon as I realize kind of what is happening, like, my eyes go wide, and uh, I look absolutely horrified. Uh, and a wave of thunderous force sweeps out from me. Each creature in a 15 foot cube originating from you must make a constitution saving throw. So... let's do that.

Travis: So is that like everyone on the hero side?

Griffin: Yeah—uh, well, it's actually originating around you. So, every—I think pretty much every—it depends on how big this stadium is.

Travis: Okay! So, all three professors, Ramos, Jimson, and Crush, they all avoid it in different ways. Ramos plants her large kite shield, and it washes over the shield. Uh, you see Jimson just like, basically do a vertical leap, and backflip over it, off of Crush's shoulder. Uh, and then, you just see Crush kind of brace, and as it sweeps near him, he roars, and a blast of frost shoots from his mouth and kind of counteracts the thunder wave, and it washes over him.

Griffin: Anybody, by the way, who fails this, takes seven thunder damage and is pushed ten feet away from me. And technically, on a successful save, uh, anybody in the cube takes half as much damage and isn't pushed.

Travis: Okay! Everybody—all the teachers take, uh, some damage. They're all pretty high level though, so like, three points of damage isn't all that bad. Uh, for them. Uh, let's see... Buckminster... uhh... what's the save? What's your...

Griffin: Uh... ta ta ta ta ta ta... it would be charisma plus proficiency plus eight, so, 12. I'm not a very good sorcerer. [laughs]

Travis: Okay, cool. Uh, so, yeah. Uh, Rainer saves. Uh, and takes three points of damage.

Griffin: Sorry, Rainer.

Travis: Buck saves and takes three points of damage, but Rhodes does not, and is gonna take seven points of damage, and is pushed ten feet away.

Clint: Could Argo not throw himself in the path of that thunder wave and try to protect Rhodes?

Travis: Yeah, y'know what? Give me, uh... give me a human shield roll.

Clint: That's a 12 plus eight acrobatics. That's a dirty, nasty, funky 20.

Travis: There we go. Alright. Uh, and oh, I guess I should also find out, did the Firbolg save?

Griffin: Yeah, you need to roll.

Justin: Oh no! I've dropped it in my pant cuff.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: Oh my gosh, it's a natural 20!

Griffin: Jesus.

Travis: Oh! Firbolg, I'm gonna say then, no damage.

Justin: Yes.

Travis: Just so sturdy. So braced.

Justin: Correct.

Travis: One with nature. The thunder simply passes through him, as it might a cloud. Or a tree.

Justin: Mm. Or a cloudy tree.

Travis: Or a cloudy tree. Uh, did Argo save?

Clint: Well, there's another 12. Plus what, constitution? 13.

Travis: That beats the 12. Uh, so, Argo takes half damage, and is not pushed, and you see that uh, Rhodes is not moving quickly enough to get out of the way. And so, you throw yourself in the way of the thunder blast, and you're going to take half of Rhodes' damage, so another three points of damage for you. But Rhodes, uh, does not take full damage, and does not get pushed.

And you see, uh, a look cross her face of maybe... she misjudged you.

Clint: So I take three?

Justin: Rhodes will remember that!

Travis: So now, you took six points of damage total. Everyone else except the Firbolg took three.

Clint: Okay.

Travis: And Crush says...

Crushman: Alright, uh, we're calling it.

Fitzroy: I thought it was *mage hand*! We were cheating!

Crushman: That... that was not *mage hand*.

Fitzroy: No kidding, yes!

Crushman: Alright. Uh, so, yes. Human shielding. You all get the basics. Uh... [sighs] Hey, I just wanted to say – Argo, good work. That was...

Argo: [grunts]

Crushman: That was a good save. Are you alright?

Argo: [grunts] Mm. Yeah. Mm. Just... [takes a deep breath] Just gotta shake it off a little bit.

Crushman: Uh, do you want to stop by, y'know, the healer?

Argo: May—maybe. Maybe. Maybe, yeah.

Crushman: Yeah, okay.

Argo: Down to—down to three hit points. [pained laugh]

Crushman: Yeah, stop by the healer. Um, and everybody—

Argo: Boy, I caught it right in the nards. Ohh.

Crushman: Oh, you hate to hear that.

Argo: Ohh, I hate it. Ohhh boy.

Firbolg: Mmm. This is the worst.

Crushman: Um, y'know what? Everybody, the first round, uh, down at the tavern is on me. Uh, Fitzroy... I think you need to go, uh, maybe talk to Festo, alright? And then maybe join us afterwards.

Travis: So, that means, Fitzroy, it is time for your independent studies class in magic work.

Griffin: I point out...

Fitzroy: Um, I do just want to say, none of this would've happened if you had let me test out of shield work. So...

Justin: [snorts]

Fitzroy: I'm not put—I'm not placing any blame on anybody. This isn't the class for that. But if I—y'know...

Justin: [laughs] Two good jokes. Congratulations, Griffin.

Travis: So, everyone else heads down to the tavern, uh, to grab a drink, and Fitzroy heads up the tower to the magic classroom, uh, to meet with his independent study teacher, Festoo!

Griffin: Festo is a fairy, yes?

Travis: Correct.

Griffin: Featured in the trailer?

Travis: Correct.

Griffin: That's how I remember Festo.

Travis: Uh, as you arrive in the classroom, at first, you don't see anyone. The classroom is empty. And then, a ball of light zips around the room before landing on the desk and growing to become a, you would guess, somewhere between foot and a half, two foot tall person with beautiful gossamer wings. And they say...

Festo: [high pitched and silly] Hellooo! Me'a Festoo!

Griffin: [laughs]

Fitzroy: Uh, hello. I'm Sir Fitzroy Maplecourt, knight in absentia to the realm of Goodcastle, and I have just—

Festo: Me'a Festo!

Fitzroy: Hello, Festo. Is that really your... is that really how you speak, or are you sort of—

Festo: This how Festo speak!

Fitzroy: Okay. Uh, so I just electrocuted my roommates, and now I think I'm in detention?

Festo: [silly laugh] Woohooohooohoo!

Fitzroy: ... It's funny?

Festo: Ah. Did they die?

Fitzroy: No. One of them came close, apparently. Um, but no, they didn't—they did not die.

Festo: Then it's funny!

Fitzroy: Okay. Uh, I have to sleep in the same room as them for, uh, I'm guessing five years? So I—I apologize if I don't find the humor in the situation. Also did electrocute my teachers, and that's obviously not great.

Festo: That's not funny! That's against school policy! Hee hee!

Fitzroy: I—I figured as much. I assume I will be receiving some sort of slap on the wrist for that. But anyway, uh, is this detention? Am I going to be writing lines, or...

Festo: No! We're going to work on your magic!

Fitzroy: Okay. Uh, the good news for you is that I can only do one of those big electricity blasts a day. So, you're cool until sun up tomorrow.

Festo: I'd like to see you try to cast a spell on Festo! Hee hee hee!

Fitzroy: Uh, as I said, I don't have any more juice in the tank, so I won't be casting that particular spell. Oh, I prestidigitate!

Festo: Ooh!

Fitzroy: Would you like me to produce an odd odor?

Festo: Not yet. Not yet. Tell Festo about your magic!

Fitzroy: It is... uhh... Festo, have you ever had a dream?

Festo: Festo dreams.

Fitzroy: No, I'm sorry, like a um... like an ambition?

Festo: Uhh... no.

Justin: [laughs] I like Festo.

Fitzroy: That's sad. That makes me sad, Festo. You've never had something that you've—

Festo: The fairy folk live in the moment.

Fitzroy: Okay. But you've never had something that you've wanted your entire life? Like—

Festo: I want to party!

Fitzroy: Festo, you're...

Justin: [laughs]

Fitzroy: Are you a teacher's assistant here, or are you...

Festo: I'm a full-fledged teacher with tenure!

Fitzroy: Wow. Okay. Congratulations. Anyway...

Festo: Thank youuu!

Fitzroy: Where I was going with that is, I wanted to be a knight my entire life. Um, and uh, so, I do not know if you know this. I was enrolled at Clyde Nite's Night Knight School, and uh, was in my final semester, training personally under Sylvia Nite, the headmaster there, and I did... uhh, catfish her... by which I mean, I turned her into a catfish—

Festo: Ah!

Fitzroy: —with a magical blast that I uh, did not know that I had inside of me, and so, I was removed from the academy, and now, I'm here. So that's kind of where—I'm getting in touch with my magic, y'know? Really looking inside.

Festo: And that was your first magic?

Fitzroy: That was my first magic, yes. What an unpleasant way for it to blossom.

Festo: Ah. How do you feel when you use your magic?

Fitzroy: I... there is a certain loss of control that is, um, the pits. Uh, and so, mostly shame? Shame. Shameful.

Festo: Ahh, so you do not love your magic.

Fitzroy: Oh, no. If you had some sort of like, orb that I could touch, and then, it would eat up my magic... like, if you had a—if you had some sort of cube that would drain my energies, um... do you have such a cube?

Festo: No!

Fitzroy: Ah, I figured that would be too easy. Anyway, once I get this under control, I will be leaving the school—

Festo: Okay, enough of your talking!

Fitzroy: Oh.

Festo: Show Festo a spell.

Fitzroy: I can produce an odd odor.

Festo: No, make light.

Fitzroy: Oh, I don't... I can't.

Festo: Close your eyes. Make light.

Fitzroy: I'm saying I literally—I—okay.

Griffin: Uh, and I close my eyes. And... I don't know a light spell, so I don't think—I don't know if anything happens.

Travis: What all can *prestidigitation* do?

Griffin: Uh, well, I can create a... well, I can create a shower of sparks, sure. Yeah, okay. I close my eyes and uh, I create an instantaneous, harmless sensory effect such as a shower of sparks.

Festo: Oh no!

Fitzroy: What's wrong?

Festo: Your magic is sad!

Fitzroy: That was a perfectly serviceable shower of sparks, I thought—

Festo: No no no no no. No no no no. Your magic knows you do not love it!

Fitzroy: [pause] That's... say that again?

Festo: Your magic knows you do not love it!

Fitzroy: I do not know if I have it in me to court my magic. Uh...

Festo: Hmmm, I see! I see! Festo sees the problem! You think of your magic as a curse.

Fitzroy: Um... accurately.

Festo: Hmmm. You must learn to see your magic, not as something to fight, but something to work with!

Fitzroy: [laughs] Uh, Festo, that is very, uh... that would be very helpful if you knew what, uh, it was capable of.

Festo: I think you do not know what it is capable of!

Fitzroy: Festo, I get you're trying to be sort of like, wise and twist it around on me. I am saying, Festo, you don't know what's going on in there.

Festo: Okay. I'm not trying to be wise. Festo is speaking literally.

Fitzroy: I am also speaking literally, Festo! There's some stuff going on in there that you do not want to goof around with!

Festo: Let me see your hand.

Griffin: Uh, I show them my hand. And it's very clammy.

Festo: Hmm!

Travis: And they take their tiny fingertip and press it hard against your palm, and your palm glows for just a second.

[shimmery sound effect]

Griffin: Does it hurt?

Travis: Uh, it's warm. And Festo says...

Festo: Now, I want you to cast. Don't think. Cast.

Fitzroy: Uh... okay.

Travis: And when you cast, floating in front of you is a glowing, magical familiar. Um, and Festo has just imparted to you the spell, *find familiar*.

Fitzroy: Thanks, Festo!

Festo: Now, I want you to care for your magic. I want you to work with your magic. You must respect it and teach it to respect you!

Fitzroy: [sighs] Festo, have you just given me a sort of virtual pet? Is that what you're saying? Is this a—

Festo: It's a familiar!

Fitzroy: Right. Is it like an egg that I have to—

Festo: But not too familiar! Ha ha ha! Festo made joke!

Clint: [laughs]

Fitzroy: I'm saying is this like a big bag of flour that I'm going to have to carry around with me at all times?

Festo: Uh, yes. But also, does magic.

Travis: So, with *find familiar*, you gain the service of a familiar. A spirit that takes an animal form you choose – bat, cat, crab, frog, hawk, lizard, octopus, owl, poisonous snake, fish, rat, raven, seahorse, spider, or weasel. They appear in an unoccupied space within range, and they have the statistics of the chosen form; though, it is celestial. It can be a celestial fae or fiend instead of a beast, and they act independently of you, but always obeys your command.

In combat, it rolls its own initiative and acts on its own turn. A familiar can't attack, but it can take other actions as normal. Uh, when it drops to zero hit points, it disappears, and you can cast the spell again later to make it reappear.

Griffin: Okay. Well, you know it ain't a cat.

Travis: So what form has it taken?

Griffin: That's a good question. Uh, I wasn't expecting this. Uh, what would be... fun to play with for an entire...

Travis: You can have it take different shapes.

Griffin: Oh, okay. Well, then, it's a crab.

Travis: Right now it's a crab? Great.

Griffin: I love that.

Clint: Yeahhh. Oh yeah. Yeah.

Fitzroy: Alright, so my magic's a crab, and I have to love it very dearly. Come here, sweet—sweet boy. Come here my—

Festo: Pinch pinch pinch!

Travis: That was Festo saying that.

Festo: Pinch pinch pinch!

Fitzroy: Okay. I will give him a kiss. I love my sweet crab.

Festo: No, you are faking it.

Fitzroy: [kiss] No, he's my best friend.

Festo: That is performative.

Fitzroy: I will tell him all my secrets!

Festo: You do not—you are not—you do not feel the love in your heart. You are performing for Festo.

Fitzroy: I'll give him a big hug!

Festo: You are a liar.

Fitzroy: I'm sorry, Festo. I didn't mean to get heated there. I will take good care of this, um, celestial crab. And then, uh, you... if you would not mind looking around for some sort of magic-eating orb...

Festo: Festo has to get to a party now.

Fitzroy: Okay, Festo. It—can I come?

Festo: Bye!

Travis: And turns back into a ball of light and zooms out the window.

[pause]

Griffin: I set my crab down. Just walk away. [laughs]

Travis: The crab follows you as you walk out of the room.

Fitzroy: Crab, just stay—I don't know how to dismiss you, 'cause I just learned the spell, but are you really—is this—do you need me to take care of you? Do you need food?

Travis: And the crab starts like, taking its claws and putting it to its mouth.

Fitzroy: Oh, Jesus god. Okay, let's go to the... let's go to the commissary or whatever.

Travis: Uh, you head down to the tavern to meet everyone else. Once you reach there, you find that everything is in full swing. They are all hanging out at the table, and Zana is actually—has a shift working at the bar, and is giving you guys a nice discount. Um, everybody, let's say, is a little miffed. Because, y'know, you hit them with *thunder wave*.

Fitzroy: But listen, it's cool now, because my magic is this crab, and as long as I love it, nobody has to get hurt.

Travis: Everyone pauses for a second, and then goes back to the conversations they were having. Um, and uh, you notice everyone's drinks are empty, and they elect that it is Argo's turn to go up and get another round. So, Argo, it's your turn to head up to the bar.

Clint: Argo has—and how many people are there?

Travis: Uh, there's about, at this point, let's see... uh, doo doo doo... 12?

Clint: Sheez-o-Pete. Okay.

Travis: There's a—you have the line of credit through the school. You can worry about payin' it all off later.

Clint: Yeah... yeah...

Travis: You basically got a meal plan. It's fake money. You don't need to worry about it.

Clint: Okay. But still. Um, okay, so, uh, Argo walks up to the bar and says, uh...

Argo: Uh, hello. Uh, barkeep? Hello?

Zana: You know my name, Argo.

Argo: Yeah, of course! Yeah. Hello, Zana. Um, listen, do you have like a... a house beverage? Uh, y'know, that uh, is kind of on the cheap? I know—I know this is on, y'know, my card, but paying it off might be a bit of a pain. Do you have something, y'know... [whispers] Cheap? Yet filling?

Zana: I will see what we have in the back.

Travis: Uh, and she heads into the back. And you hear, to your right...

Voice: Argonaut Keene?

[music plays]

Argo: Uh... hi. I'm Argonaut Keene, yes.

Travis: And as you turn, you see a Kenku standing there, who you would have sworn, uh, you would've bet a hundred gold was not there a second before. And you realize that this must be the sneaky teacher, Jackle.

Argo: Um, hello. Yeah, that's me. Argo Keene. Um...

Jackle: Argonaut... Keene.

Argo: Argo... M. Keene. Yes.

Jackle: [laughs]

Argo: [laughs] What are we laughing at? [laughs]

Jackle: I know about you, Argonaut Keene.

Argo: Um... well, what—that's good. Um... what exactly do you think you know?

Jackle: You are not exactly what you seem.

Argo: Um... look, who the—who the hell are you?

Jackle: My name is Jackle, and I listen. I pay attention.

Argo: So, um... I—I—can we have this conversation in private sometime, instead of in front of all my friends here?

Jackle: Yes. We will talk. We will discuss many things. Perhaps we will discuss... Mariah?

Argo: [pause] Alright. [clears throat] Look, uh, not—I'm—I want to continue this conversation, but just not here. Not now. Um... but—but you—you tell me when and where, and I'll meet you somewhere, okay?

Jackle: I will meet you.

Zana: Sorry, Argo, I was not able to find anything.

Argo: Ah. Oh, okay, then I guess whatever... whatever everybody's havin', go ahead and... oh, I know! Put it on my friend's tab here next to me.

Travis: He's gone.

Argo: Um...

Travis: And in his place, you see sitting on the counter, a napkin with two rings. So, there was a glass dripping with condensation sitting on them that someone moved from one position to the next, to create the image of two overlapping rings. And written at the bottom of it, in a scrawling handwriting, it simply says... "Rain and stone."

Clint: Uh, he grabs it with his rogue's dexterity and shoves it in his pocket before anybody can see it.

Travis: You return to the table, back to the laughing squad, enjoying their drinks at the end of another day.

Fitzroy: I'm thinking about Snippy. Snippy or Clippy?

Clint: [laughs]

Fitzroy: Or Gurgles? He makes a gurgle noise.

Travis: And you return to find the crab sitting on the table, eating some pretzels.

Fitzroy: He likes pretzels.

Firbolg: When have I made a gurgle nose?

Fitzroy: Oh, I'm sorry. Not... oh. [laughs] Yes. Uh, I would not choose your name—or, help you select your name with such a carefree—do you like Snippy?

Firbolg: This is of no concern to me.

Fitzroy: Okay. Well, I was thinking the crab would be Snippy. You could be Clippy if you want, then that could be a fun—we could do some—we could have fun with that.

Argo: We also have a Dippy and a Tippy too, right?

Fitzroy: Oh, dang. I think you're right.

Argo: Yeah.

Firbolg: Maybe I would be... [pause] Ippy.

Argo: [laughs]

Fitzroy: That's good!

Firbolg: This is nothing.

Fitzroy: No, it was fun!

Firbolg: This is nothing.

Fitzroy: We're having fun!

Firbolg: This is not fun.

Travis: And slowly, the conversation of new friends fades into the background den of a crowded tavern. Conversations about future plans, excitement about possibilities, worry about upcoming tests, all of it blends into one hum of crowded humanity. And it fades out, and we're left with silence.

[theme music plays]