

## **The Adventure Zone: Graduation – Ep. 6, Long Overdue**

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**Travis:** Previously, on The Adventure Zone...

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** And he points to the stall.

**Hernandez:** I found this baby Pegasus wandering outside the Unknown Forest. I fear that she has been orphaned.

**Firbolg:** Who attacked? Did you... did you see?

**Pegasus:** It... it was so dark, and it moved so fast.

**Fitzroy:** Uh, I am a transfer student from Knight School. Perhaps you've heard of me?

**Rainer:** Oh, from Clyde Nite's Night Knight School!

**Fitzroy:** I know that I have some credits I am awaiting to be transferred over from Knight School. What's up with those? Those credits, though. What's up with those? They're transferring—

**Hieronymous:** I promise you, Fitzroy, I will take that into account as you move forward through your time here.

**Jackle:** My name is Jackle. We will discuss many things. Perhaps we will discuss... Mariah?

**Argo:** I want to continue this conversation, but just not here. Not now.

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** Well, you've returned to the school. It's the same day. You've just been dropped off by Groundsy back at the school after your successful, real world mission in which you both served a subpoena to a xorn, and helped him get home. Um, and now, it's time, uh, y'know, to get an evaluation. But first... your first op is a room you've become all too familiar with – the bursar's office!

Uh, you come in, and you find the smiling, elven face of Osrick the bursar behind his shining mahogany counter. Rainer, Buckminster, and Leon have already finished their check in, and now, it's your fellas' turn.

**Osrick:** Hi, hey guys!

**Travis:** Says Osrick.

**Osrick:** Welcome back! I heard it went super well!

**Fitzroy:** We served a subpoena to a biiig fantasy monster.

**Osrick:** Yeah! We call that a number 18.

**Fitzroy:** It's so common that it ranks 18 on the number of... on the list of whatever you're talking about?

**Osrick:** Seems like it, based off the joke I just made!

**Fitzroy:** Okay... Um, so, anyway, how'd we do monetarily speaking?

**Osrick:** Um, well, of the three of you, uh, according to the information I got from Barnes and Nobles, umm... the Firbolg was the only one with, uh, any gold leftover. 75 gold leftover. But not bad! You kept it under budget, according to this. You'll get the final evaluation in a second. I'm just here, y'know, to handle the item check in.

**Firbolg:** Fiscal responsibility is my name.

**Osrick:** Yeah, you did great.

**Argo:** So we finally know what his name is!

**Firbolg:** Thank you.

**Fitzroy:** Heyyy!

**Osrick:** So if you guys just want to turn in the cloak and the spectacles and the pocket Gary, you can, uh, go and head out for your evaluation.

**Fitzroy:** Wh... uh... we have to turn in everything we bought?

**Osrick:** Well, yeah. You bought it with the school's money.

**Fitzroy:** But it was—but I bought it. I haggled a great price for it.

**Osrick:** Oh yeah, and it's gonna go into, y'know, our armory here. And, hey – before you get—I'm sorry, I thought somebody had already told you this, but... um, you can check it out again when you head out on missions and stuff. It's just gonna... y'know, it's the school's. The school bought it. Now, you can hold onto the, uh—

**Travis:** And he checks the list again.

**Osrick:** Uh, the sword and the maul, so that you can—

**Fitzroy:** Staff. Magic staff.

**Osrick:** Sure.

**Fitzroy:** But we exchanged—

**Osrick:** So you can practice fighting with those. But the cloak, uh, the spectacles, and the uh, Pocket Gary. Yeah, those need to go... uh, into the armory.

**Argo:** We've still got pictures to develop off the glasses from, uh... a New Year's Eve party.

**Osrick:** Oh, okay.

**Fitzroy:** And I have a photo session... that I will be featuring the cloak for... uh, Boy Cloaks Magazine.

**Osrick:** Yes.

**Fitzroy:** And I—that's—that's tomorrow.

**Argo:** [snorts] That sounds horrible. [laughs]

**Osrick:** No, I—I subscribe to Boy Cloaks. How dare you!

**Fitzroy:** So um, I at least need it 'til tomorrow for the Boy Cloaks photo shoot.

**Osrick:** Okay, well, you can come down and check it out, and we'll, y'know, let you check it out for a time, and then you'll check it back in any time you need it. But I can't let you keep it! That's school policy!

**Firbolg:** Here are my spectacles.

**Osrick:** Ah, thank you so much.

**Firbolg:** And I... have... glue.

**Osrick:** Well, you can hang onto the glue. We have glue.

**Firbolg:** You will take... you will take the glue.

**Osrick:** Okay, cool. I—I will—

**Firbolg:** Loss prevention is a core tenant of any successful business.

**Argo:** [laughing]

**Osrick:** You are doing so well!

**Firbolg:** Reducing shrink is all of our responsibility.

**Osrick:** It's like your quoting my handbook. Thank you so much. I will take that glue, now that you mention it. Uh, and Fitzroy—

**Firbolg:** I will keep—I will keep a small amount for myself.

**Justin:** And he squirts some into his hand and puts it in his pocket.  
[laughing]

**Clint:** [laughing]

**Osrick:** Great. And I will need your Pocket Gary as well.

**Fitzroy:** But I've—I've named him and everything.

**Osrick:** Like I said, you can take him back. But we have Garys here.

**Fitzroy:** But not when I'm on the john. You don't let—

**Justin:** Holy shit, can we move onto the next thing? Give him the fuckin' robot or whatever the fuck it is!

**Fitzroy:** Here, take the Gary. Take... um...

**Justin:** The cloak.

**Fitzroy:** Take the—

**Griffin:** I hand him like, just the oldest, dirtiest jacket that I had before.

**Osrick:** Nooo...

**Fitzroy:** Here's my cloak of magic!

**Osrick:** Fitzroy... you think I wouldn't recognize a Katie Noth? Come on.

**Fitzroy:** It lets me fly! I turn into a bird when I wear this one. So that's the magic cloak. ... Fine, take the cloak. Dag nabbit.

**Osrick:** And you don't need to worry about the money, 'cause Rainer already turned in the thousand gold. So...

**Fitzroy:** Then what are we doing anything for?! What's the point of all—any of this?!

**Osrick:** Well, the... I mean... well, listen. Before you freak out, the money earned during missions does go to the school. Buuut... here's the good news, and you'll never believe this... it earns 0.5% interest, compounded *monthly*, and when they graduate, we'll pay that out to the heroes and villains. Uh, the interest. And then, they can, y'know, if they want to, tip out the sidekicks and henchmen that helped them!

**Fitzroy:** [quietly] If they want to.

**Osrick:** So it's kind of—listen. You might get that payout in the future. So that's something to look forward to, right?

**Fitzroy:** Fisk, did you understand any of that? Was that goo—are they talking about a decent amount of money?

**Travis:** Who did you ask?

**Fitzroy:** I said Fisk, like a short, fun pet name for Fiscal Responsibility.

**Travis:** Oh, okay.

**Argo:** [laughs]

**Fitzroy:** Throwing spaghetti at the wall.

**Justin:** You asked 'Fisk.'

**Travis:** Make an accounting check, Fiscal Responsibility.

**Justin:** Who are you talking to?!

**Travis:** You! You said your name was Fiscal Responsibility! Buy into the joke!

**Justin:** Fisk. Oh, okay. I got it now. Fisk. Uh, accounting check. Okay. 16... plus... zero. 16.

**Travis:** That's not bad! Uh, you know that with a 0.5% compounded monthly over the next, if it was in there for a full five years, uh, that would earn about... 350 gold.

**Firbolg:** This is... a very good deal for us. This kind of... interest can really add up over time. We are... as they say... headed cream city.

**Travis:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Firbolg:** This is the—is this not the... this is not the saying?

**Osrick:** That's it. No, you got it. That was the saying.

**Fitzroy:** You crushed it. Uh, okay.

**Griffin:** I hand over all my stuff.

**Travis:** Okay, and you head to Hieronymous' office. Now, normally, you would go to Higglemas' office. But, you've heard it through the grapevine that Hieronymous requested this meeting specifically. Uh, and you enter his office to find him sitting behind his desk, and he says...

**Hieronymous:** Oh! Yes, come in. Come in. Fitzroy, Argo, and of course, the Firbolg. You all did extremely well on this mission. Dare I say, I am proud of you.

**Fitzroy:** That means... so much. You may dare to say it.

**Hieronymous:** Okay, I just... yeah, I did. I did. Sorry – I am proud of you.

**Firbolg:** Mm.

**Fitzroy:** Mmm.

**Hieronymous:** Uh, so I have, uh... I have your evaluations here. Uh, heroes, you did very well. So that would include you, Argo. You made everyone happy, and you resolved the situation, so you earned yourself an A.

**Argo:** [laughs triumphantly]

**Hieronymous:** Uh, villains. That's... let me see... that's you, Firbolg, and you, Fitzroy. You did even better, because you accomplished your goal, and you earned the school money! So, that's A pluses all around.

**Firbolg:** Mmm.

**Hieronymous:** Huzzah! Give yourself a huzzah.

**Firbolg:** This is... satisfying.

**Fitzroy:** So does that mean we've graduated? With honors?



**Hieronymous:** No, it... it means that you... aren't going to be kicked out of the school, and you can move onto the next semester.

**Fitzroy:** Oh. A fate worse than death, that would've been.

**Hieronymous:** Okay. That seemed a little snarky, there.

**Fitzroy:** Did iit?

**Hieronymous:** Okay.

**Fitzroy:** I just had my charisma cloak taken away, so I apologize if I'm coming off as somewhat rude and unpolished.

**Argo:** [laughs]

**Hieronymous:** Uh, well, that'll be it. Uh, you're dismissed. Go about your day. But uh... Fitzroy, if you don't mind, would you stick around for a minute?

**Fitzroy:** I'd looove toooo.

**Justin:** [laughing]

**Argo:** Boy, you gotta get that cloak back.

**Firbolg:** He's going to get detention.

**Argo:** [snorts]

**Firbolg:** Pink slip. Get a paddled.

**Travis:** Argo and the Firbolg, do you head out?

**Justin:** Sure, yeah. I'm not gonna argue with authority.

**Travis:** There you go.

**Clint:** What—what would they—what would they do to celebrate? The two of them?

**Argo:** Let's build some bonds. Let's go somewhere and bond.

**Firbolg:** Perfect. We will sit in silence.

**Travis:** Perfect.

**Argo:** [quietly] Okay.

**Hieronymous:** Uh, Fitzroy. Uh, I wanted to talk to you one on one, and I think that this might... change your tune, as it were.

**Fitzroy:** One on one, you said?

**Hieronymous:** Yes.

**Fitzroy:** Okay, hold on. Snippers...

**Hieronymous:** Oh, Snippers can stay.

**Fitzroy:** Are you sure? He's a real gossip so and so.

**Hieronymous:** I mean, it's up to you. Whatever you'd like to do.

**Fitzroy:** It's fine.

**Griffin:** I set him on my lap.

**Hieronymous:** Uh, we've, as you asked, I checked your credits that transferred over.

**Fitzroy:** [excitedly] And?

**Hieronymous:** And I spoke with Sylvia Nite, and aside from the catfish incident, she said you were a model student. And that, with your performance on this mission, uh, got me thinking. So I spoke with some of the senior staff, and starting next semester... we've decided to accept you to the heroes and villains track.

**Fitzroy:** [gasps] Do I have to pick which one I'm going to be now? Because I would choose hero, if there's—

**Hieronymous:** Oh—

**Fitzroy:** If there's spots. If there are slots open.

**Hieronymous:** Sorry. Uh, sorry for the confusion. Uh, we were thinking the villain track.

**Fitzroy:** [pause] Why were you thinking that?

**Hieronymous:** Oh, with your flair for chaos and your magic? Oh. And you did so well on this mission extorting that mine owner and the worker... it was brilliant! It was perfect, uh, for the villain track.

**Fitzroy:** Are we saying—are we calling that extortion? Would we say that—

**Hieronymous:** You... asked for money, uh, for a job that others did for free, to help them. So... mmm, perhaps. Maybe blackmail? Uh... something along those lines. We can work out the details later.

[music plays]

**Fitzroy:** But it's a sort of fluid arrangement, right? Like, a villain can decide to switch to the hero... track... just at any, whenever the... y'know, the spirit—

**Hieronymous:** Well, you may be switched by the staff. But it's either the villain track, or you could stay in the Henchperson and Sidekick Annex.

**Fitzroy:** I... may I be honest with you?

**Hieronymous:** Yes, please.

**Fitzroy:** I, one day, hope to continue my training at Clyde Nite's Night Knight School.

**Hieronymous:** Yes, of course.

**Fitzroy:** After, of course, I have graduated from this, uh, this honored institution. I worry... it will be difficult to do so... if I am a... professional villain. [laughs]

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Hieronymous:** Oh! Oh, if that's what you're worried about, fear not! There's plenty of villain knights.

**Fitzroy:** Okay. I should also explain that I am already sort of a guaranteed—I am a knight in absentia of the realm of Goodcastle.

**Hieronymous:** Of course.

**Fitzroy:** And so, I do... worry also, that they will not want... a graduate nastyman. And so...

**Hieronymous:** Well... I would also remind you that one person's hero knight might be another person's villain knight. You might defend Goodcastle with such, uh, voracity and ruthlessness that others around would come to fear you.

**Fitzroy:** Oooh, this is a toughie... I don't—

**Hieronymous:** If it helps, uh, we've also taken in consideration how well you work with Argo and the Firbolg, and how close you must become. So,

uh, we're willing to offer you the option of you continuing to work with them as your personal sidekicks.

**Fitzroy:** [laughs] That would be delicious. Uh, I would—

**Hieronymous:** And we'd be moving you, of course, into the hero and villain dorms. You'd have your own private room with the Firbolg and Argo in an adjoining chamber.

**Fitzroy:** [laughs] A smaller adjoining chamber?

**Hieronymous:** I haven't measured the square footage, but—

**Fitzroy:** You said a smaller—a much smaller adjoining chamber. You said that?

**Hieronymous:** Uh, I would have to check the floor plan, but sure.

**Fitzroy:** Oh boy. Uh... as long—villains get to use like a... like a evil sort of nom de plume, right? Like an evil sort of nickname if they—

**Hieronymous:** Sure!

**Fitzroy:** Like smash—okay.

**Hieronymous:** If you wanted to.

**Fitzroy:** I may take you up on that. I'm going to need—we're kind of deep in the hole name-wise already. So it may take me a bit. I'm worried about anyone from my family finding out about my villainship, but is—as long as you all don't send, like, my report cards home or anything like that, do you?

**Hieronymous:** No. This isn't middle hero school.

**Fitzroy:** Ehh... and you would say that the... it is faster to graduate as a hero or villain than it is as a henchperson or sidekick?

**Hieronymous:** Um... it depends on the aptitude you show, I suppose. We could jump you forward if, uh, if we found that some classes were unnecessary.

**Fitzroy:** Let's—y'know what? I'm comfortable with that arrangement. Um... I'm not. I'm kind of uncomfortable with that arrangement, but it sounds like you're... making me an offer I can't really refuse. Um...

**Hieronymous:** No, if you want to stay in the sidekick and hench—

**Fitzroy:** No, please, you've twisted my arm! Please!

**Hieronymous:** No no, this is entirely your deci—

**Fitzroy:** Ouch, ouch! The bones in my arm! Are...

**Hieronymous:** Oh, okay.

**Fitzroy:** ... bruising. Um...

**Hieronymous:** Now, we would ask that you keep this to yourself for the time being. We don't want other people requesting this kind of move or anything, so we want to just keep it quiet until the semester starts, if that's okay with you.

**Fitzroy:** ... I don't have to like, kill anybody, do I?

**Hieronymous:** Oh, no! Of course not.

**Fitzroy:** Okay, I'm in.

**Hieronymous:** Excellent.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Uh, and we cross over to Argo and Bud. Now, where have you chosen your moment of silence? Just out on the quad, or heading back to the dorms?

**Justin:** Uhh, see, I feel like I would probably want to go out into the grounds. Like, get out by myself. I guess that's not the most exciting for a podcast, though.

**Travis:** Well, I mean... if there's going to be a companionable moment betwixt the two of you...

**Justin:** Okay, I tell you what.

[music plays]

**Firbolg:** Um... Argo.

**Argo:** Yeah?

**Firbolg:** Argo.

**Argo:** Right here.

**Firbolg:** Would you like—would you like to learn... about trees?

**Argo:** Ahh! Tr—tree. I have, actually... I don't have much knowledge of trees. And it seems like we would be doin' a lot of, y'know, goin' through woods, and y'know, brambles and such... yeah. Let's do it. Teach me about the trees.

**Firbolg:** Uhh...

**Justin:** And I find a nice nearby tree, sort of away from things.

**Firbolg:** This is a tree.

[pause]

**Argo:** Yes.

**Firbolg:** Uh, you see the... uh... the fruit.

**Argo:** The... the... the frote?

**Firbolg:** You see the fruit.

**Argo:** Fruit! Ahh, yes. Yes.

**Firbolg:** Is poison.

**Argo:** Oh.

**Firbolg:** Do not eat this.

**Argo:** So not citrus. Not citrus at all.

**Firbolg:** The bark, you can eat.

**Argo:** Yes.

**Firbolg:** Eat. You may eat the bark.

**Argo:** Wh—why?

**Firbolg:** You may.

**Argo:** Well, yeah. I can eat a lot of things. But why would I?

**Firbolg:** You have a hunger.

**Argo:** For bark?



**Firbolg:** You can eat the bark.

**Griffin:** I can't believe I'm missing this tender, emotional moment!

**Travis:** Uh, and you hear hoof beats, and you turn and find, uh, the handsome centaur animal handling teacher, Hernandez, coming up, and he says...

**Hernandez:** Oh, thank goodness. I've been looking for you. Uh, Firbolg—

**Firbolg:** Now, here is a hungry boy for bark.

**Hernandez:** Oh, thank you. I've already eaten. Um, Firbolg—

**Argo:** And this—this is my bark, okay? Let him bark—

**Firbolg:** Show him.

**Argo:** Bark up another tree.

**Firbolg:** Show him, Argo. Show him you are not intimidated.

**Argo:** Yeah, watch this! Watch this, boy-o!

**Hernandez:** Oh yes, bite—bite the bark.

**Argo:** [dramatic eating sounds]

**Firbolg:** Yes. You see.

**Argo:** [garbled] Oh my god, that's horrible.

**Firbolg:** The bite is worse than the bark.

**Argo:** [coughs loudly]

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Hernandez:** That's a great joke, Firbolg.

**Firbolg:** This is a Firbolg joke.

**Hernandez:** Well done.

**Argo:** Ugh... shit. That's horri—why did—ugh!

**Firbolg:** You thought... you thought—to be fair, Argo... is funnier when it does not take seven minutes to get to punch line.

**Travis:** [laughs]

**Firbolg:** Usually mark is more accommodating. Yes, and... is important in life as well as in improvised comedy.

**Argo:** [sighs] Good one, bud. You got me good.

**Hernandez:** Uh, if you're done with your hijinks and shenanigans, would you mind coming with me? Our mutual friend has asked to speak with you.

**Justin:** Sure. Okay.

**Clint:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Justin:** I did my thing.

**Travis:** So as—as the Firbolg departs, and you head back to the dorm, Argo... Upon entering the dorm, you find on your bed, in an envelope. It is, on the front, embossed with a gold emblem. The design is simple. Uh, it is two overlapping semicircles contained within a larger circle. Uh, Argo, make a wisdom check.

**Clint:** Okay. [pause] Eight minus one. Seven.

**Travis:** It seems so familiar to you. You feel like you've seen this symbol before, but you can't quite place it. When you open the envelope, which—do you open the envelope?

**Clint:** Am I smart enough to open the envelope?

**Travis:** Yes.

**Clint:** Yes.

**Travis:** Envelope is a simple puzzle.

**Clint:** Okay. I solve your envelope puzzle! [laughs]

**Travis:** Inside the envelope, you find a note that seems very familiar, and inside are three words that you recognize all too well. And those words are, "Midnight. Balcony. Jackle." It's scheduling a meeting for you.

**Clint:** Yeah. I have enough wisdom to figure that out.

**Travis:** Excellent. Uh, we find the Firbolg entering the barn to meet with the Pegasus. Uh, the Pegasus is now fully grown. Quite strong. You can tell, uh... well, let me ask you. Firbolg, have you visited the Pegasus since your first meeting?

**Justin:** Yeah, I think so. I think ducking my head in when I have free time makes sense. Let's make sure that they're still, y'know, growing well.

**Travis:** You know that she's been training hard. She took you at your word, the idea of being big and strong, and the thing that has gotten her through her trauma is the idea of not letting it control her. And you know that she has been training to one day return to the forest to help protect her flock from whatever is attacking them. And she turns to you and says...

**Pegasus:** I... I'm ready. I think... today is the day.

**Firbolg:** Today, you will... fly?

**Pegasus:** Today, I will... return. It's time to head home.

**Firbolg:** Ah... but... do you have... a home to return to?

**Pegasus:** I don't know. But I... I can't stay here not knowing. I have to find out if any of my flock is left, and... I have to protect them if I can. I have to... I can... I can try to stop what happened to me from happening to other foals.

**Firbolg:** This is very noble. Is very kind. You will be fine.

**Travis:** Uh, Hernandez excuses himself, and the, uh, Pegasus turns to you and says...

**Pegasus:** I... I want... I want to tell you... my name. It's not something we normally do with people outside our flock, but... I think you might need me. And I want you to be able to get in touch with me. My name... is Breeze Through the Willow.

**Firbolg:** Breeze Through the Willow is... did you choose this?

**Pegasus:** It was given to me by the leader of our flock.

**Firbolg:** Ah. Is very nice.

**Travis:** Uh, and she reaches down and picks up from a shelf that he has stored several little items on, a beautiful, perfect, white feather. Picks it up, of course, with her teeth, and hands it to you. And she says...

**Pegasus:** If you ever need me... just hold the feather and say my name, and I will hear you.

**Firbolg:** Ah... I... I hope, uh, I need it soon. Ah... you will be missed.

**Pegasus:** Um... one more thing before I go. Um... Hernandez has, uh, been bringing me books and material, and... I've been doing research. Just trying to figure out what... what attacked my family. I haven't told him this. I'm telling you, because I don't know what it means. But they were demons.

[soft music plays]

**Pegasus:** Some were small and bug-like, and some... they were like ghosts, and they attacked... our minds.

**Firbolg:** Mm.

**Pegasus:** I've never seen... demons in the forest before then. It wasn't something anyone ever warned me about.

**Firbolg:** This is very troubling.

**Pegasus:** I know. I... I'm gonna... continue searching, and see if I can find any answers.

**Firbolg:** Here, I, uh... I must have gift for you as well.

**Justin:** And he roots around in his pockets.

**Firbolg:** Mm... yes. This is... glue. Now... even when you go far, we are... stuck together, ah?

**Pegasus:** [laughs quietly] That's a very lovely sentiment.

**Griffin:** [laughing] Is it just loose glue?

**Firbolg:** Is just loose glue.

**Griffin:** [laughing]

**Firbolg:** They say, "thought that counts" is largely dry. Is thought... is sentiment.

**Pegasus:** It's a lovely sentiment.

**Firbolg:** It's not lovely glue, but the sentiment is kind.

**Clint:** Little sticky, but...

**Firbolg:** Sticky thoughts. Yes.

**Pegasus:** I'm going to miss you, friend Firbolg.

**Firbolg:** I will miss you as well.

**Pegasus:** Um, would you... accompany me outside? I think it's time to stretch my wings.

**Firbolg:** Of course.

**Travis:** So, as you mentioned, she has been practicing. She has never fully taken off. She's been able to make large leaps. Um, she has been practicing for this moment, when she was ready to return.

She begins at one end of the paddock. She starts slow, but her momentum builds. Her wings stretch, scarred and beautiful. And soon, they beat. Harder and harder, faster and faster, and for the first time, Breeze Through the Willow takes to the sky.

[soft music plays and ends]

**Travis:** Hi, everybody! It's me, your kind, benevolent DM and best friend, Travis McElroy! Ugh, what a great episode so far. I hate to interrupt it, but there's a bunch of things I have to tell you! First, there's some new merch up in the McElroy Merch shop, if you go to [McElroyMerch.com](http://McElroyMerch.com). If you haven't seen it yet, we have a really cool Adventure Zone: Graduation hoodie, as well as, oh, my favorite, Adventure Zone: Graduation pins that list the

different tracks. Hero, villain, sidekick, and hench. Oh, they're absolutely gorgeous. You gotta check `em out. [McElroyMerch.com](http://McElroyMerch.com).

Also, if you're listening to this on Thursday, this is the last day to preorder The Adventure Zone: Balance board game! Go to [TheAdventureZoneGame.com](http://TheAdventureZoneGame.com) and order it today! Because Friday, the preorders will be cloosed.

We also have a couple sponsors. Oh! I should also mention, before I get to the sponsors, the preorders for the games may be closing, but you can still preorder the graphic novel. If you go to [TheAdventureZoneComic.com](http://TheAdventureZoneComic.com), you can preorder Petals to the Metal there. And let me tell you, uh, we just finished the color pages on it, and it... is... wonderful. I'm very proud of it. If you haven't preordered yours yet, go to [TheAdventureZoneComic.com](http://TheAdventureZoneComic.com) and preorder it there.

Uh, and also, one last thing. I promise, we'll get to the sponsors. You're all so eager for them. I get it. But we're doing some live shows here in Cincinnati near the end of February. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of February, we're going to be doing My Brother, My Brother, and Me, and on the 20<sup>th</sup>, we'll be doing The Adventure Zone. That's here in Cincinnati on February 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. If you haven't gotten tickets yet, you can go to [McElroy.family](http://McElroy.family) and click on tours, and go get those tickets now!

Okay. Now, it's finally time to talk about those sponsors you've been waiting for. First, let me tell you about DoorDash. If you're like me, there are evenings where you're like, "I have dinner covered." And then you look in the fridge, you look in the freeze, and you realize that no, in fact, you do not have dinner covered. But you've already got your sweat pants on, and y'know, your comfy slippers with the bunny heads, and you're like, "I don't want to do anything. I don't want to get dressed again and go out."

So what you're gonna do? You're gonna order some food to have it delivered to you, because DoorDash connects you to your favorite restaurants in your city. Ordering is easy. Open the DoorDash app, choose what you want to eat, and your food will be delivered to you wherever you are. They have door to door delivery in all 50 states and Canada.

You can order from your local go-tos, or from your favorite national chains like Chipotle, Wendy's, and the Cheesecake Factory. But don't worry about dinner – let dinner come to you, with DoorDash. I—hey. Psst. I've also done DoorDash for breakfast. And lunch. It works for basically every meal.

So right now, our listeners can get five dollars off their first order of \$15 or more when you download the DoorDash app and enter promo code 'Adventure.' That's five dollars off your first order of \$15 or more when you download the DoorDash app from the app store and enter promo code 'Adventure.' That's promo code 'Adventure' for five dollars off your first order from DoorDash.

I also want to tell you about Quip! They're makers of the Quip electric toothbrush and savers of everyone's teeth and gums, as far as I'm concerned, because they want you to know that no matter what brand you use, if you have good habits, you're good.

That—hey. That's very nice, Quip, but I, Travis McElroy, am here to tell you... mmm, I'd prefer to use Quip than any other brand. It's my favorite toothbrush out there, 'cause it has the effectiveness of the electric toothbrush, but like, the gentleness of a manual toothbrush. 'Cause I tried all those other electric toothbrushes in the past, and they beat the H-E-double hockey sticks out of my gums, so I stopped using them. So I didn't get the benefits of an electric toothbrush.

But Quip has gentle movement. It isn't gonna rattle your teeth, and it's got a built-in timer, so you know you're brushing for the correct two minutes, twice a day. And Quip now has floss that has pre-measured, like, floss lengths, so you know you're using the right amount. The electric toothbrush also has a built in 30 second pulse every 30 seconds for two minutes to let you know when to move to the next section of your teeth.

And they make my favorite toothpaste I've ever had. And – this is a double and – those new brush heads, that toothbrush, and that floss will be delivered to you every three months with free shipping. So, go to



GetQuip.com/Adventure right now for your first refill pack free. That's GetQuip.com/Adventure. Quip: The good habits company.

Okay! That's enough talking for me. Now, here's some more talking from past Travis!

[music plays]

**Travis:** Fitzroy, what did you do upon leaving, uh, upon leaving Hieronymous' office?

**Griffin:** Uh... I think... I—I, Griffin, am so conflicted. Uh, in a way that I think Fitzroy probably would be as well. Because I think that this... He is here to get back into Clyde Nite's Night Knight School. So, I think he sees this as an opportunity, like, a shortcut to that. But also, like, villainy is so far from his idea of knighthood that, uhh... he's not a fan.

But I think the thing that really shook him is the idea that this—his power comes from his chaos, which is like, something he's not super comfortable with. So I think he's probably just, uh, takin' a walk with Snippers, uh, and thinking about whether or not he just made a huge, huge mistake.

**Travis:** Is he speaking out loud to Snippers?

**Griffin:** Uh, yeah. I mean... pfft. What are they gonna do, talk telepathically? Oh wait, they can do that. I think he is talking out loud, though, for dramatic effect.

**Travis:** Okay. And... begin.

**Fitzroy:** [laughs] Oh, Snippers. You always know exactly what to say to cheer me up. Thank you.

**Snippers:** [crab sounds]

**Fitzroy:** Well, that's going a little bit far, don't you think, Snip?

**Snippers:** [crab sounds]

**Fitzroy:** [laughs] Oh, Snippers! I would never! I would never.

**Snippers:** [crab sounds]

**Fitzroy:** You're crazy. Okay. Yeah, so anyway, like I was saying, I think I just made an enormous mistake.

**Snippers:** [crab sounds]

**Fitzroy:** Wait, you're saying that it's a good thing that I'm a villain?

**Snippers:** [crab sounds]

**Fitzroy:** You sense a great evil within me?

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Snippers:** [crab sounds]

**Fitzroy:** Well... I suppose evil can mean a lot of things, yes.

**Travis:** No, he's shaking his head.

**Fitzroy:** Oh. Then I suppose... then, I don't have a great— what did you say?

**Snippers:** [crab sounds]

**Fitzroy:** Because I thought I—I *don't* have a great evil within me.

**Snippers:** [crab sounds]

**Fitzroy:** That's a very obtuse way of speaking, Snip.

**Snippers:** [crab sounds]

**Fitzroy:** Um... anyway, I guess we should go tell the boys. Go start packing up our baby dorm and get ready to move up to the big leagues, huh?

**Snippers:** [crab sounds]

**Fitzroy:** Whoa. What? You'll get—yeah, I'll make sure you have a little crab—crab house. What do crabs live in? I'll get you a crab house, I guess.

**Snippers:** [crab sounds]

**Travis:** So are you headed to the dorms to try to find your friends?

**Griffin:** I would love to find my friends. I'd like to tell 'em—I think that this is good news for all of us.

**Travis:** You turn on 'find my friends' on Snippers.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Travis:** And you get two bleeps that tell you Argo is back in the dorm... uh, no. You don't have a magic 'find my friends' app. That's too powerful. I'm not gonna give you that.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Travis:** You head to the dorms.

**Griffin:** Yeah, I would just head back there.

**Travis:** Now, uh, the Firbolg... what do you do upon leaving the barn?

**Justin:** Is there somebody on, um...

**Travis:** Campus?

**Justin:** Campus, thank you. The word for campus escaped me. Uh, that would have some context for that, maybe? Who would be the best person in the school to—

**Travis:** Well! I'm glad you asked. There is—

**Justin:** Fuckin' fell right into your trap.

**Travis:** Yeah!

**Justin:** God, I hate that.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Travis:** There is a research library on campus that is both managed by, uh, and staffed by, uh, the librarian slash research teacher named Sabour.

**Justin:** Uh, perfect. Okay. Um... uh, first off, just so I can clarify. Breeze Through the Willows?

**Travis:** Correct.

**Justin:** Was that the... okay, perfect. Thank you. Uh, I suppose I'll head over there.

**Travis:** Excellent! Uh, you know that Sabour is the research librarian and the research professor, and he is also – what fun – a turtle.

**Griffin:** A what?

**Travis:** A turtle!

**Griffin:** Is that a big, bipedal turtle creature?

**Travis:** Yeah, you bet it is!

**Griffin:** That's good stuff.

**Clint:** Ohh, I thought it was a big lini.

**Travis:** Oh, like a tortellini.

**Justin:** That's when the—

**Travis:** Oh man, Dad's battling a flu, you guys, but he's still bringin' that heat.

**Justin:** Um...

**Travis:** Turtle-ini. Do you get it?

**Griffin:** That's the—that's the fever talkin', folks. Don't judge him for that.

**Justin:** Have we talked about the name 'turtle'?

**Travis:** I didn't make that up.

**Justin:** Have we talked about how it's—no, I know you didn't. The sad thing is, someone did. Y'know what I me—like, somebody who was probably paid to do so was like, "Uhh... turtle... race... they're, um... turtles! Fuck. I just changed one letter."

**Travis:** I'm willing to give that person the benefit of the doubt and say that that was maybe an on the spot naming. Like, "Do we have any like, uh, turtle characters?"

"Yeah! Uh..." [laughs]

**Justin:** Maybe they had a weird accent. They were just trying to say 'turtle.' "Did you say turtle?"

“Uh, yeah?”

**Travis:** I love it.

**Clint:** Maybe they were trying to say tortoise and turtle, and it came out turtle.

**Justin:** They did. [laughs] They combined the two.

**Travis:** What’s it called? Y’know, the thing with the shell... uhh... turtle?

**Clint:** A tistle! A tistle.

**Travis:** “Hey, uh, Rory. Did you just call it a turtle?”

“Uh, no, I’m pretty sure I said turtle.”

**Justin:** Anyway, fuckin’ take that, Gary Gygax. Anyway. Moving on.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Clint:** [laughing]

**Travis:** Uh, you head to the research library, which is in the main building. Uh, there are, of course, stacks of stacks. And you find Sabour the turtle, where he almost always is, at the front desk.

**Firbolg:** Ahhh... hello?

**Sabour:** [slowly] Ahhh... yes? Hello, how can I help you?

**Griffin:** This scene’s gonna take fucking forever.

**Justin:** Fuck. Yeah, go ahead and hit that 1.5 speed button on your podcast player.

**Sabour:** [normal speed] Oh, sorry, I was yawning. How can I help you?

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Firbolg:** Ah, I am looking for information.

**Sabour:** Uh... of course. Why else would you be here? What are you lookin' for?

**Firbolg:** A friend... has spotted...

**Sabour:** Oh, I thought you were gonna say you were looking for a friend.

**Firbolg:** Always. A friend has spotted, um... demons in the forest.

**Sabour:** Oh.

**Firbolg:** The sort of which... I have not seen.

**Sabour:** Oh, I see. Uhh... can you give me any more information about them?

**Justin:** Uh... wait, what was it?

**Travis:** Uh, one of them is bug-like, or gives that impression, and the other one is a—a—did kind of more, uh, mental, emotional damage than physical damage.

**Firbolg:** Yes. One of them was... like the bug. And the other did, um... [sighs] Brain... damage. Did brain... hurting.

**Sabour:** Ohh.

**Firbolg:** What is word? Um... psychic.

**Sabour:** I see. Yeah... okay. That sounds like...

**Travis:** And he closes his eyes for a minute and thinks, and says...

**Sabour:** Yeah. I'm gonna say, the bug-like one... sounds like a quasit to me. And the other one... [clicks tongue]

**Firbolg:** A closet?

**Sabour:** Quasit. Q-U-A-S-I-T.

**Firbolg:** Quasit.

**Sabour:** Kind of like, uh... an imp. Uh...

**Travis:** Now, here's what I will tell you to save everyone from having to Google it. Uh, they are fairly small. They are between one to two feet tall, and they are also fairly light, about eight pounds. Green skin with tail covered in barbs. Uh, they're... some have wings, some don't. Uh, they are malicious.

**Justin:** Mm.

**Sabour:** Uh, and it sounds like the other might be... [clicks tongue]

**Travis:** And he closes his eyes again.

**Sabour:** Oh! A shadow demon. Oh, that's no good.

**Firbolg:** What is shadow demon?

**Sabour:** Well... a shadow demon is... [sighs] Sort of like... a wraith. Uh, they... they are the essence of a demon that was destroyed, but didn't quite reform correctly. So they're just shadows of demons. It's rare to hear of separate demons, let alone shadow demons and others working together.



**Firbolg:** Mmm... this is troubling, eh?

**Sabour:** Indeed. I will continue to research and look into this further.

**Firbolg:** Thank you.

**Sabour:** Did you want to check out any books, or...

**Firbolg:** I have... too many to read.

**Sabour:** Yes. The one, uh, The Comprehensive Guide of Berries? That is due back tomorrow. Please don't forget.

**Firbolg:** I... I return this already.

**Sabour:** Mmm... I'll double check my records, but I don't think so.

**Firbolg:** Please, do I very punctual. I've never forgotten. Check again.

**Sabour:** Oh!

**Firbolg:** I will fight.

**Sabour:** Here it is. Yes, The Comprehensive—

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Sabour:** Ah, I see the problem. This is Comprehensive Guide to Berries Volume One. You still have Volume Two.

**Firbolg:** This is true, and is a great shame.

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Sabour:** Well, I can just re-up the checkout—

**Firbolg:** A great shame!

**Sabour:** Okay.

**Firbolg:** I will return this book, and I will pay late fees I do not owe.

**Sabour:** It's—it's not due until tomorrow. You're fine.

**Firbolg:** Great... shame...

**Sabour:** Okay.

**Firbolg:** What if others wish to learn of berries?

**Sabour:** They could probably start with volume one. You wouldn't want to read volume two without reading volume one. You would be completely lost.

**Firbolg:** This is true. You miss many of the best jokes.

**Sabour:** Oh yes.

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Sabour:** The best jokes are set up seven, even ten minutes prior.

**Firbolg:** This is true.

**Sabour:** Okay, I need to get back to work now.

**Firbolg:** Well... I guess we should have an omnipotent dungeon master to step in and end scene, eh?

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Travis:** So! Uh, are you heading back to the dorms now, Firbolg, or what is your plan?

**Justin:** I, uh...

**Travis:** I give you permission to speak as Justin.

**Justin:** I don't have much of a plan. I don't have much of a plan. I mean, I don't know, do I have class?

**Travis:** Well, I mean, you did say you were gonna return a book.

**Justin:** Okay. Yeah. I guess I could do that. I don't necessarily want to derail your narration so I can return a library book, but I'm on it.

**Travis:** Hey, listen. We had a whole episode about you guys delivering a subpoena. [laughs] If we need to do a couple scenes about returning this library book, so be it!

**Justin:** Yes. I roll to find the library book.

**Travis:** Okay. Uh, give me an investigation check.

**Justin:** Uhh... that's an 11.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Plus...

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Justin:** Nothing. An 11.

**Travis:** You find it. It takes a little bit of searching, but you find it, and you return that book, and oh my goodness, Sabour is so excited to have the

complete two volume set of The Comprehensive Guide to Berries back, uh, that he takes the rest of the day off. And you head back to your dorm room.

And now, all three of you are back in the dorm! So let's hang out!

**Fitzroy:** I've got... big news!

**Argo:** What is—before you do, can I just say that I love how the three of us have like, come together? Y'know, life on the sea can be a solitary exi—no, that's a lie. It's not a solitary... in this case, to not be surrounded by so many other people, just a nice, tight-knit group of three... it's like we've become a... I don't know, dare I say it, a family. And I appreciate your friendship, and I appreciate you two.

**Fitzroy:** Um... that was very—

**Argo:** Go ahead. Go ahead, what were you gonna say, Fitz?

**Fitzroy:** Uh... oh, I—it's not—y'know what? It can wait.

**Argo:** No, no—

**Fitzroy:** Can we have another topic of conversation between your thing and my thing? 'Cause it'll seem crass if I immediately transition into mine.

**Argo:** Oh, that sounds ominous.

**Fitzroy:** It's just—it's, uhh... there's gonna be some changes around here.

**Argo:** That's right. The three buddies are gonna change this school, I'd say!

**Fitzroy:** How about two—the two buddies, and... their brave leader... Thunder Man? And that's the sort of villain nickname I've been working on for a bit. Like, Thunder Man. Thunder... Haver.

**Justin:** Am I still looking for the book?

**Travis:** No, you're back now. You're in the room too.

**Firbolg:** This is a excellent name.

**Fitzroy:** Thank you.

**Firbolg:** There is great power.

**Fitzroy:** Yes, that's what I—

**Firbolg:** Thunder Maaan!

**Fitzroy:** You say it, and you have to yell like that.

**Argo:** Is it Thundermen? Thunderman? Thunder Man?

**Travis:** Harvey Thundermen. [laughs]

**Fitzroy:** Raphael Thunderman. No, it's, uh... okay, so, I got—I'm—I got sort of, um, escalated. I got picked up to the big leagues, and they, uh... Hieronymous wants me to be, uh, a villain. A proper villain, and have you two be my sort of retainers. Um... isn't that exciting? We get to move to a new dorm, we get to live in the hero and villain dorm, and you all will get a spacious... I mean, spacious sort of, uh, en suite to my master bedroom, and... yeah! What do you think?

**Firbolg:** This is fine.

**Fitzroy:** Excellent. That's one.

**Argo:** And what is... uh, what do you mean a retainer? Like something that straightens your teeth?

**Fitzroy:** Uh, y'know, uh... let's say... a sub-co-villain. A sort of associate villain.

**Argo:** Wh... but, uh... [clears throat] Okay. Here's the thing... um... I—that would mean I'd have to switch to being a henchman, wouldn't it? Isn't that what I would be? A henchman? And I'm—I'm wanting to be a sidekick.

**Travis:** Uh, just your kind and benevolent DM here. Uh, villains can have sidekicks as well, and heroes can have hench people. It's more about, uh, the specialization of the sidekick or hench, of whether they are part of a team or kind of the right hand. So you can be either a sidekick or a hench, and work with either a villain or a hero.

**Argo:** Well, I, that... being as it may, I mean—but... okay, but I'm workin' on a resume here. I'm trying to—y'know, I want to graduate with honors. I—

**Fitzroy:** I already—I brought that up with the big cheese, and he put down a lot of really convincing jazz on me. So uh... I—we're all good, there. I'm trying to be a knight, Argo. You think I would go with this if I don't think we would be able to graduate with a literal capital H honors?

**Argo:** Well, I can see you likin' the idea. I mean, yeah. That really works to your goals. But... so, you're gonna be the... the boss of us?

**Fitzroy:** I—again, sub-co-villain. A chief—chief—you could be—oh! Chief executive... associate... villain!

**Firbolg:** I will be a Thunder Man franchise, and will be honored.

**Fitzroy:** Yes! That's my—that's my CFO right there. I do—I need a, a uh, what's the other ones?

**Firbolg:** Ah, no, I am franchise.

**Fitzroy:** What? I'm—I got—

**Firbolg:** You franchise the Thunder Man license to me. Is different arrangement. I will also be Thunder Man, but answering to a chief owner of

the license, to whom I will pay a fee for the Thunder Man name and brand identity.

**Fitzroy:** And this is why I love having him on the Thunder Man team. How about it, Argo?

**Argo:** Well, I like that idea.

**Griffin:** I extend my hand.

**Argo:** Yeah, I like that idea. But you're not... but we're our own bosses, right, Firbolg? I mean, is it—is that how this franchisin' works? I mean... he doesn't get to boss us—

**Firbolg:** Serve and respect. I am assuming there are not terms of license drawn up. Is very early. In a certain respect, we will be our own bosses, but of course, we will have certain duties to the license holder. The um, owner of the brand has certain rights that they can execute, I am sure. Standards that must be upheld so that the grand Thunder Man name is not tarnished.

**Fitzroy:** It's so important. It's—what is—your name is all you've got at the end of the day. So yes, you'll be your own boss, Argo. Just think of me as like, your boss's supervisor.

**Argo:** Uh...

**Firbolg:** More of a friend.

**Fitzroy:** More of a friend role, really.

**Firbolg:** Since I have become a Thunder Man franchisee, I have found the relationship to be ext—[struggling to pronounce] Mutually beneficial.

**Griffin:** [laughing]

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Firbolg:** Is like a business cousin.

**Griffin:** [bursts into laughter]

**Fitzroy:** So, I—

**Argo:** Well... I... [sighs] Well, I'm—I'm not crazy about it, but... by god, if Firbolg here thinks it's a good idea, I don't—I mean, what are the options? I mean, that you guys leave, and... I... I mean... I stay? Doesn't that kind of break up the team?

**Firbolg:** Yes, and then we can kiss those mattress dollars goodbye, eh?  
End of show.

**Griffin:** [laughing]

**Clint:** [laughing]

**Argo:** Alright. I—I'm in.

**Firbolg:** Welcome to the Thunder Man family. Now, we will divide territory!

**Argo:** Oceans! I get oceans! I want oceans.

**Fitzroy:** Listen, fellas, this is—

**Firbolg:** Thunder Man of the Sea.

**Argo:** Thank you.

**Fitzroy:** We're having a very—we're having a fun time now, Thunder Men, but um... I... this is really just for... the purposes of getting through this school, uh, alive, and graduating and going on to do whatever we want to do with our lives next. I'm not saying that, y'know, we're forming, uh, the almighty evil triumvirate that is going to conquer the world.



I'm just... uh... I'm not going to make either of you do anything that you're uncomfortable with, because I imagine that my standards in that regard are much, much higher than your own.

**Argo:** Y'know, I think we need to go back to that lawyer. I think we need to go see that lawyer and get something written up, like a prenup or something, because... y'know, not—just because, y'know, we have so much mutual respect for each other. But I just—y'know, I just wonder about this... and I'm willin' to do it! I'm willin' to go in there. But... are you—y'know, I'd like it on a piece of paper that says, upon graduation, you will forfeit your portion of the... franchise company to me and the Firbolg.

**Fitzroy:** Now, hold—this is—

**Argo:** Well, you just said it's just to get you through the school! Right?

**Fitzroy:** Let's just—let's do a verbal agreement now, and we'll strike up a formal document agreement later.

**Argo:** Can we get the gargoyle to be the—

**Gary:** 'Ey, yeah! It's me, Gary! I'll happily—

**Argo:** Hey, Gary!

**Gary:** I'll notarize anything you want!

**Argo:** You'll be a witness?

**Gary:** Oh, yeah! It's what I do best!

**Fitzroy:** Okay.

**Argo:** Alright.

**Fitzroy:** Well, I'm—Gary, I don't—were you—are you always listening, Gary? Be honest.

**Gary:** Passively.

**Fitzroy:** Okay, so, Gary knows what's up.

**Argo:** I—I mean, let's do it. Make it official. Say something.

**Fitzroy:** Uh, hands in the middle, boys. And then we'll do the Thunder Man theme song that's like, "[sings] When you hear the... when you hear the lightning strike, coming over the mountains... what's that noise? The... you better hide... your children, and your... barn animals. Here comes the stooorm. Here comes the stooorm! Thunder—uh, Thunder Man roll over the mountains! Here he—" We should get a bard.

**Justin:** How much did you make on Bandcamp last year?

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Travis:** It all went to charity, *Justin*. And there's a knock on the door!

**Clint:** It's the IRS.

**Travis:** It's the IRS!

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Justin:** It's fuck—[laughing] The fuckin' Bandcamp police. Sir, these can't have been your songs!

**Travis:** Oh, no, sorry. You're actually getting served a subpoena, because that's one of Billy Joel's songs, and you stole it.

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** [sings to the tune of 'Piano Man'] Roll over the mountains, you're the Thunder Man!

**Travis:** [laughs]

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Uh, the knock on the door, uh, seems familiar. It's still quiet, but louder than the squirrels, and you think that there is probably a small animal skeleton on the other side of that door.

**Fitzroy:** Uh, get that for me, will you, Argo?

**Argo:** What? You're not the—oh, I guess you are.

**Fitzroy:** Yeeep.

**Argo:** Alright...

**Travis:** You open the door.

**Clint:** Click click chick chack!

**Travis:** That is how a door sounds. You open the door to find the raccoon skeleton, another one of Rainer's faves, holding three envelopes, addressed one to each of you. One for Argonaut Keene, one for Sir Fitzroy Maplecourt, Knight in Absentia of the Realm of Goodcastle, and one for Dr. Mushrooms.

**Fitzroy:** I really think we need to just really nail down a—I crushed Thunder Man, in like, the course of a single evening. It's been months now. I feel like we should probably have a name for you at this point.

**Firbolg:** Um... this is not my decision.

**Fitzroy:** It's—okay. Let's... let's just... read our mail.

**Travis:** Uh, they are party invitations, letting you know that next week, there will be a birthday party for Rainer, held at the tavern at week's end.

**Fitzroy:** They're birthday invitations, y'all!

**Argo:** Yeah, I'm wise enough to read.

**Travis:** And the raccoon points a boney finger at the RSVP section and waits.

**Fitzroy:** Does anybody have a quill?

**Travis:** Snippers goes over and gets one.

**Snippers:** [crab sounds]

**Fitzroy:** Thank you, Snippers.

**Snippers:** [crab sounds]

**Fitzroy:** I'm going to say yes, and Snippers is my plus one.

**Snippers:** [crab sounds]

**Argo:** Um... yeah, I'm in. I love a good party.

**Firbolg:** I will attend.

**Travis:** Uh, and the raccoon takes the completed invites from you, and gives you a little bit of a salute, holds its hand back behind his back...

**Argo:** Oh, should we ti—yeah, we need to tip.

**Travis:** [clears throat] I don't know if a skeleton can clear its throat, but this one does.

**Griffin:** I give it a single jelly bean.

**Raccoon:** Aaaaa!

**Travis:** It goes nuts. Loves it. And skitters off down the hallway.

**Griffin:** [laughs] I know what skeletons like.

**Travis:** So! Time passes, as it so often does. And now, we find ourselves... it is late at night, here in the dorms once more. And we find that, uh, Fitzroy is in his meditative trance, and the Firbolg, once again, is sleeping and dreaming. Could you tell us about your dream again, Firbolg?

**Justin:** It's the same dream every night. He's sitting around the fire with him and him and her and him. Their leader stands, and he points into the woods. And that, almost always, is when he wakes up.

**Travis:** But in this moment, when you turn and look at the woods, you see amongst the trees, a shadowy face. So close to perception. In fact, why don't you make a perception check for me?

**Justin:** Mm-hmm... Uhh, 12... plus... six. 18.

**Travis:** You recognize in the flickering light of the campfire, there amongst the shadows of the trees, just for a second, the face of Higglemas Wigenstaff. And then, the dream fades to nothing.

And Argo, uh, you know it is nearing the time of your meeting, so it's time for you to sneak out of the dorm room. Would you make a stealth check for me?

**Clint:** Yep. Let's see... 14... plus... eight.

**Travis:** Excellent. Excellent.

**Clint:** 22.

**Travis:** Yes. You make it out of the dorm room without waking Fitzroy or the Firbolg. Um, now, you head towards the meeting, the same place you have met Jackle many times over the course of this semester. This time, though, is a little different. When you reach the moonlit balcony, you find Jackle, rather than standing on the balcony, perched on the ballast rod at the edge of the balcony.

**Clint:** I have a quick question.

**Travis:** Uh-huh?

**Clint:** How am I getting to this balcony? Am I like, scaling the outside of the tower? Is security so lax, you just have access to everybody's quarters?

**Travis:** Well, the tower is the school. Um, and with your amazing stealth check, you were able to make it, once more, into the tower, and make your way through to the classroom without it being, uh... without it being—without being spotted. The building itself is rarely locked. It's the individual classrooms, the professors lock and keep the keys after them so that their stuff isn't messed with. But everyone needs to be able to access the tower, and so, the, uh—Jackle just leaves his classroom open for you.

**Clint:** So yeah, so this is not his nest. This is—

**Travis:** No, this is his classroom. The balcony of his classroom.

**Clint:** Okay. Um, I think, as he approaches, I think he is going to, um... kind of check perce—um...

**Travis:** What are you trying to—

**Clint:** An insight check. I want to get a read on him and his bird-like body language. Eh, that's a miserable fail. That's a three minus one.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Justin:** Hatchi matchi.

**Clint:** Yeah, I've gone from feast to famine.

**Travis:** That is a two. Um... you can tell that he is physically present. But you don't need to wait long to find out what Jackle is thinking, because he says...

**Jackle:** Argonaut Keene... thank you for meeting me.

**Argo:** Your voice... I gotta say, I meant to tell you this last time. Your voice sounds so familiar.

**Jackle:** What do you know... of the Kenku, Argonaut Keene?

**Argo:** Um... you're like... birds.

**Travis:** Why don't you make a history check for me, Argo?

**Clint:** History! 17 plus two.

**Travis:** Hell yeah! So, you know that the Kenku is an old, old race. The legend has it that they once had wings like the aarakocra, but that those wings were removed from them as punishment for betraying an old god, or some sort of abyssal prince. And so, they have—they long ago lost the ability of flight.

**Argo:** Y'know, it's not a real good idea for you to be perchin' on that, uh, that balustrade there, my friend. 'Cause, uh... we're kind of high up, and uh, y'know, you're not gonna be able to just soar around, right? Why don't you come in... come in onto the balcony with me instead of perchin' there?

**Jackle:** The books, the legends, rarely include this part.

**Argo:** You're not really listenin' to me at all or anything I say. No, tell me.

**Jackle:** When the Kenku were punished, they were... left... with their wings in their dreams.

**Argo:** Ah.

**Jackle:** When I dream, Argonaut Keene, I fly. But then... I wake up, and they're gone.

**Argo:** That... that's sad. It's... that's unfortunate. That's sad. Come on, come on, just one little step down off the balustrade. Everything will be good.

**Travis:** And Jackle turns and looks at you, and steps down off the balustrade and says...

**Argo:** Thank you.

**Jackle:** And one more thing, Argonaut Keene... The Kenku are mimics. We have the ability to change our voices, depending on who we are spending time with. We rarely have a voice of our own. Did you know that, Argonaut Keene?

**Argo:** I... it sounds like I did.

**Jackle:** Well... I want...

**Argo:** You have a lovely speakin' voice, now.

**Jackle:** Hey, thank you so much, Argonaut Keene.

**Argo:** You're welcome... Jackle.

**Jackle:** So... it's time you knew, Argo. I knew your mother.



[pause]

**Argo:** [clears throat]

**Jackle:** Shebrie and I... we went to school together. Studied together. We even sailed together for a time. But of course, that was... before she took over the Mariah. We were friends for a long time.

**Argo:** Oh boy.

**Jackle:** I know. I know about your loss. I know about what happened. It... broke my heart, Argo.

**Argo:** Uh-huh. I don't ever remember... mom mentionin' anything about no Kenkus.

**Jackle:** Well, there was a very good reason for that, Argonaut Keene. I...

**Argo:** Are my father?!

**Jackle:** No.

**Argo:** Oh, whew. Oh boy.

**Jackle:** I hoped... that this day wouldn't come, or at least, not so soon, but... it's just about time for you to make... an important decision. All these missions, everything I've been sendin' ya on, everything I've been askin' you to help with... it's been for... [sighs]

There's not much I can tell you. But it's for... an organization that I belong to, that your mother belonged to. It's... an old, old organization. And as you might imagine, very... quiet. Very private. And... the only way that someone can join the organization... is if they are... invited by an existing member, and every existing member only gets to invite one person.

**Travis:** And... the Kenku flips a coin in your direction. You catch the coin out of the air. On one side is that, um... is that same symbol that you saw embossed on the envelope – two semicircles overlapping, surrounded by a larger circle. On the other side are the words, “Blood and bone, rain and stone.” And Jackle says...

**Jackle:** I invited my best friend, Mosh, to join, and I've never regretted it. And now, I think it's time for you to consider joining.

[pause]

**Argo:** The... so not the Shriners? Is this the name of the—of the—okay, who are—who are these—what's the group?

**Jackle:** Well, that I can't tell you.

**Argo:** Oh. [laughs]

**Jackle:** Not yet.

**Argo:** But that makes recruitment a shitstorm.

**Jackle:** I don't know... if this will... help convince you or not, but... as I mentioned, I already used my invitation for my friend. This isn't an invite from me, Argo.

**Travis:** And you look on the edge of the coin. You see, inscribed around its outside, “Shebrie Keene.”

[music plays]

**Jackle:** Your mother asked me to give that to you when the time was right. If I ever needed to. I hoped it wouldn't come to that. I hoped I'd be able to return it to her, and she could give it to you herself, but... unfortunately, that's not what happened.

We do... a lot of good, Argo. I can't tell you much more. But I can tell you this – this is a big decision, and I don't want you to make it right now. Because joining this group means turning your life over to the organization. You'll be a member for life, and... there will be certain rules and certain missions you'll have to answer to, but... I promise you... it will be for the greater good.

We do good things, Argo. All of this is for a purpose. But like I said, don't answer now. I want you to think on it, and I'll talk to you soon.

**Argo:** Let me ask one question. What if I say no?

**Jackle:** If you say no, you can keep the coin and go on about your life.

**Argo:** How much time I got to think about it?

**Jackle:** I'll ask ya... when the time is right.

**Argo:** Can I talk to my boss about it, and my coworker?

**Jackle:** No. That is the one thing. Unfortunately, the survival of our group depends on secrecy. I waited to talk to you until I thought I could trust ya. I need ya... to keep this to yourself. Between us, okay, Argo?

**Argo:** So... the one thing you can tell me is that you're the good guys.

**Jackle:** No. Like I said, we do good. Saying that we're the good guys... everyone thinks they're the good guys, Argo. People who do bad often think they're good. I don't... think I'm good, Argo, but I know that what we accomplish... is good for others.

**Argo:** Isn't that kind of the definition of a hero?

**Jackle:** Well... it depends on your ways and means, I suppose.

**Argo:** Okay. Let me... let me think about it, and then, uh... wow. Okay. I will study on this, and I will... think about it. I—have you got time to answer some questions about my ma?

**Jackle:** There will be time later.

**Travis:** And Jackle turns back and stares at the night sky.

[theme music plays]

**Argo:** So I... I should leave.

**Justin:** [snorts]

**Argo:** We're... we're done. I just—I wanted to make sure. It—is this the quiet—this is the quiet thinking.

**Justin:** [bursts into laughter]

**Argo:** I'm doing—okay. I'll just... I'll just let myself out.

**Justin:** [laughing]

**Argo:** I'm gonna think. Quietly. Here.

**Justin:** [laughing] Please leave, I gotta pee so bad!

**Argo:** Thanks. Thanks for the talk.

**Justin:** He's out. He's out.

**Argo:** [distant yelling]

**Justin:** [laughing]

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