

## The Adventure Zone: Graduation – Ep. 7, Secrets, Secrets

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

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** Hieronymous Wigenstaff...

**Hieronymous:** I wouldn't be where I am today if it weren't for the support of my brother and sidekick, Higglemas Wigenstaff!

**Travis:** Out of the corner of your eye, you notice that the Firbolg is picking up a green stone with silver veins, and placing it in his pocket. Leon says...

**Leon:** I'm worried that the school might not be safe.

**Fitzroy:** But you've never had something that you've wanted your entire life, like—

**Festo:** I want to party!

**Griffin:** Festo is a fairy, yes?

**Travis:** Correct.

**Festo:** Now, I want you to cast!

**Travis:** And when you cast, floating in front of you is a glowing, magical familiar. And Festo has just imparted to you, *Find Familiar*.

**Jackle:** An organization that I belong to, that your mother belonged to... and now, I think it's time for you to consider joining.

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** It's the last day of your first semester at Hieronymous Wigenstaff's School for Heroism and Villainy, and so, there is no class today. Everyone's real world assignments are completed, and the wheat and the chaff have been successfully separated. Soon, the Thundermen will be moving into their fancy new dorm set up – but, as the fantasy rooster crows to begin the fantasy day, we find them waking up, once more, in their familiar digs.

Argo, your extra dimensional feline friend sits, nuzzling your handlebar mustache. Fitz, Snippers sleeps, hanging by a claw off the side of your pillow. It's precarious, but he seems content. So, how are the three of you doing as you rouse from your sweet, sweet slumber?

**Griffin:** Um... [sighs] I'm wondering if we've been trying to concoct some sort of harebrained scheme to catch the... interdimensional cat, to bring it with us to the new room. Um, I know that Argo is very afraid of it still, and I think I take a great deal of delight in that. So if we can continue that arrangement, even after we move on up, um, that would be very—that would be very good for me.

**Travis:** Well, I think what I imagine... and listen, I'm just setting up the world. You're painting it, y'know? But I imagine, with the abilities of this cat, you probably think you've contained it many times, and then, open the box to find it's not there. It's like, next level Schrödinger's cat.

**Griffin:** Yeah, yeah, sure. Yeah, I think I'm just sort of shoppin' around for some interdimensional, um, y'know, salmon. Some sort of Frisky Feast.

**Travis:** Yeah. Absolutely.

**Griffin:** Something along those lines.

**Travis:** Yeah, some kind of fancy crystal bowl that the cat can eat out of.

**Griffin:** Barring that, some sort of magic spell that can catch a space cat like this; although, keep in mind, I still do only know, like, the three spells.

**Travis:** That's fair.

**Griffin:** And uh, *Thunderwave* ain't gettin' it done.

**Clint:** Does the cat's hairballs... do they disappear as well? I mean, do they phase out or do they stay?

**Travis:** Actually—

**Griffin:** What's the—what's the poop situation, Travis?

**Travis:** Well, both the poop and the hairballs, they're difficult to perceive as well. Sometimes, they're there, and sometimes they're not, y'know? It's hard to clean up after him, 'cause you're like, "Oh, let me get a towel," and you turn around, and they're not there anymore. And you're like, "Oh, okay, cool, it took care of itself." And you put the towel back, and then when you turn back... aw, it's back! Y'know, and that can go on for hours.

**Griffin:** Um... I think I would also reach out to Leon for, uh, help with moving, as the sort of first sort of squirely duty. I think that's how I certainly framed it when I pitched it to him. Whether or not he responds in any way to that, uh, I guess is up to you.

**Travis:** So far, you have not received a response from Leon.

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

**Clint:** Did we lose any of our friends in the latest culling?

**Travis:** Uh, no. At this point, just as luck would have it, it's all a bunch of faceless, nameless people that we never met.

**Justin:** Weird.

**Travis:** Yeah. And it's definitely decreased... there was one guy, uh, Steve, who Argo, you were actually very close with. You were beginning to consider him like a brother, but he got cut, 'cause he did such a bad job while on his real world assignment.

**Clint:** An example to us all of what can happen if you're not at the top of your game...

**Travis:** That's right.

**Clint:** Here at... Wiggle... bottom.

**Travis:** Uh-huh. Hey, that's not the name of it. But maybe it's not too late to change it.

Um, so, I assume, at this point, have you guys packed up all your stuff? Rolled up all your, uh, rock and roll posters? Pulled all the blue sticky tack off the wall?

**Griffin:** Um, from the moment I found out we were going to be moving into a nicer suite, I prioritized packing. So I've been... I've been ready and rarin' to go.

**Clint:** And I never did have anything, because I'm so extremely poor. I didn't have anything to put on the walls, or...

**Travis:** You didn't have anything to put on the walls?

**Clint:** No. I didn't. And I mean, I—I just, um... I thought about drawing on the walls the way you do, but I have no artistic ability, either. Another place where I'm poverty-stricken is in artistic talent.

**Travis:** Oh wow. Bummer.

**Griffin:** So is that the Firbolg's Air Supply poster, or what's up?

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Clint:** He's all outta love.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Travis:** Um, and Gary chimes in...

**Gary:** Hey, everybody! It's me, Gary. Uh, just a couple reminders. First, no classes for the next two weeks between semesters, so... you're free to head home for a break, or maybe earn some money over in Last Hope. Or, you could just hang out here with me!

**Fitzroy:** Is none of those an option?

**Gary:** Well, I mean... it—if you leave... I mean, I guess you could go do something else. Listen. As I've said before, this ain't prison. You can go. Just be back, y'know? Class starts again in two weeks.

Uh, next... we've got end of the semester student teacher meetings today. Uh, Firbolg, you're with Bartholemus. Uh, Argo... Jackle says you two have already talked about meeting today. Uh, and Sir Fitzroy, you have the special treat of meeting with Higglemas himself!

Uhhh... and finally, be sure to get a present for Rainer's party tonight. That's not like an official reminder or anything. It's just a friendly piece of advice from Gary. Makin' sure you all don't look like, uh, buttholes.

**Fitzroy:** Thanks, Gary.

**Gary:** Hey, you're welcome, Fitz. Now, you all have some time for breakfast before your meetings. Most important meal of the day. And hey... have some melon for me.

**Fitzroy:** How would that work?

**Gary:** It's more just in spirit. I don't eat. So like... maybe you could have some melon, and then tell me about it? I've never experienced melon before.

**Firbolg:** I will tell you the story of melon.

**Gary:** Hey, thanks Firbolg! I always enjoy our chats.

**Firbolg:** You begin by removing the husk.

**Gary:** Oh, slow down, big boy!

**Firbolg:** This is the speed at which the husk is removed.

**Gary:** Oh yeahhh!

**Firbolg:** Mmm. Then, you will slice the melon in half.

**Gary:** Oh—sorry, I'm gettin' a call! Uhh, I'm gonna have to go, but we'll pick this back up later!

**Firbolg:** Iii... will write it down.

**Gary:** That sounds great. Yeah yeah yeah. Boop boop boop boop boop!

**Travis:** And he holds his hand up to his head.

**Gary:** Oh, hello? Sorry, this is really important. I gotta take this. Yeah, this is Gary.

**Firbolg:** I... think... Gary lost interest in my tale.

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Argo:** Well, not me. I want to hear about the melon. Do you eat the husk?

**Firbolg:** This is a great tragedy. It is best used to help grow the plants.

**Argo:** Oh.

**Firbolg:** Coompost. Is what you call it here. In the forest, we call it... the forest.

**Fitzroy:** [laughs] In Soviet forest... forest is forest!

**Argo:** [laughing]

**Firbolg:** You drop melon on ground, is now forest. That—oh, that's no—not—don't pick that up. It's no melon. That is now a forest. Nooo five second rule. Forest.

**Fitzroy:** It's the forest forever, it sounds like.

**Firbolg:** Mm.

**Argo:** Well, you make it sound like such a wonderful experience. I may have me some melon later.

**Firbolg:** Gross.

**Fitzroy:** That's great and—okay. That's great in the short term. Do you boys, uh, have any plans for the break, or... what are ya—what are ya thinkin'? Headin' back to the old swamp land, there, Firbolg?

**Firbolg:** I must never return.

**Fitzroy:** Oh. Okay. So that—

**Firbolg:** I will... sssit. Aaannd... wait.

**Fitzroy:** For... for school to start again? Or...

**Firbolg:** This—this is all I have. Yes.

**Fitzroy:** I just—that literally put a chill down my spine.

**Argo:** Why—why don't we go somewhere? Why don't we go out, y'know, to the... are there beaches?

**Firbolg:** Bluh.

**Argo:** Nearby? Go to the—no? Not—it's spring break! Come on, we gotta have some fun!

**Firbolg:** In the forest, we call the beach the anti-forest. It's the least forest you could do.

**Argo:** Well, but if you can't go back to the forest, why not try the anti-forest?

**Firbolg:** The swamp. You—I can go to many forest. I am not superstitious.

**Argo:** [laughs]

**Firbolg:** I just have no home in the forest to return to.

**Fitzroy:** Well, based on my knowledge of the local sort of geography, we have our choice of the demon-filled forest, or a place literally called The Godscar Chasm. So... I don't necessarily think there's gonna be a lot of chill hang zones in a place either scarred by the gods, or it is a scar upon a god. Regardless, I don't think they're going to have, y'know, Mai Tais and the like.

**Argo:** [laughs] They really have a shitty visitors and convention bureau here.

**Fitzroy:** So um... I—

**Argo:** What are you gonna do?

**Fitzroy:** I was just gonna kick it here, I think. No need to bug the folks back home. Uh, Goodcastle is, of course, out of my reach at this moment. Uh, what with my not knowing exactly its, uh, its exact location... upon terra firma. But um, yeah. Just gonna sort of... I guess sit here with the Firbolg and... wait.

**Argo:** For two weeks?

**Fitzroy:** I mean, I gotta—

**Gary:** You guys good—hey, it's me, Gary, again.

**Argo:** Fellas!

**Gary:** Sorry to eavesdrop. Uh, you could go to—

**Firbolg:** Oh, you're back. Good. I have prepared many ways to describe the color of the melon's flesh.

**Gary:** Oh, no, I'm just on hold on my phone call, while they get financial docu—

**Firbolg:** I will begin with sunset.

**Gary:** Okay. You guys could go uh, get some, uh, y'know, two weeks' worth of work done over in Last Hope, make some money.

**Fitzroy:** Money enough to, say, reacquire a cloak?

**Firbolg:** [mumbling] Fresh blooming flower.

**Gary:** I mean, I guess it depends on how much money you get.

**Firbolg:** The... rosy flesh of a happy child.

**Fitzroy:** Okay. I'm going to go find a different Gary to talk to. Can I pick up the call on a separate Gary?

**Firbolg:** Rhododendron.

**Gary:** Oh, I don't know about all that.

**Firbolg:** A pebble weathered by the creek. Orange pebble.

**Travis:** The time has come for your... or, are you guys done with this weird conversation?

**Clint:** We haven't really settled on anything.

**Travis:** Okay, keep goin' then.

**Griffin:** I mean, I—I—

**Justin:** Let's see where it goes.

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Fitzroy:** I think maybe doing some work might be a good idea. It would be nice to have something, uh, in the old coffers that the three of us could treat as a bankroll for the new Thunderman operation. Something we wouldn't need to require the bursar's help for. So, uh... I don't know. What do you—

**Argo:** And it wouldn't hurt makin' like, some business connections, y'know?

**Fitzroy:** Mm, stretchin' our villainous legs! I think that—

**Argo:** Go to a couple'a chamber of commerce meetings.

**Fitzroy:** Sure, sure. Canvas the neighborhoods. See who needs some naughty stuff done, I suppose.

**Firbolg:** Mmm. Yes. I will travel with you.

**Argo:** [claps] Excellent!

**Fitzroy:** Now, uh, as for Rainer, do you think she has a Gary already, or... 'cause I think—I thought we could just sort of hock ours over there. It's just a thought.

**Argo:** Oh. [pause] Y'know, like those Nest things. Maybe she could have one in every room?

**Fitzroy:** Sure. You can never have too—

**Travis:** Bird's nest. I believe you mean Bird's Nest. 'Cause it's fantasy.

**Griffin:** Right, sure. Let's end this scene immediately.

**Travis:** That's good narrative. It's time for the student teacher meetings! First up is the Firbolg, meeting with Bartholemus, the Aarakocra snow owl, uh, accounting professor. Now, uh, Bartholemus has been impressed; not necessarily by the results, but by the hard work that you have committed over the semester. And though you may not be his best student, you are his most improved.

So, you enter his office. You enter his classroom. And he turns to you and goes...

**Bartholemus:** Quick! Without thinking... assets... equals?

**Firbolg:** ... Liabilities plus equity.

**Bartholemus:** Yes! Ohh! Master Firbolg, it does my heart good! Oh. Ohh, now... okay, how about this? Equity is measured... what?

**Firbolg:** For accounting purposes by subtracting liabilities from the value of an asset.

**Bartholemus:** Yes! Ohh! Ohh, you're making me so proud! Ohh, like you're my own son! Now, above all else... what is the rule?

**Firbolg:** Get paid or get lost.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Bartholemus:** Well put! Oh, I'm so very proud of you. I look forward to you retaking accounting 101, but this time, with the base level of knowledge needed to pass it. Well done.

**Firbolg:** I... Iii... wiiill... nooot... dooo... this thing!

**Bartholemus:** Mmm, well... maybe we can work out some kind of... special studies—

**Firbolg:** [gruff] Iii will nooot dooo this thing!

**Bartholemus:** Okay. Well... I thought I had you, but we'll figure it out. We'll—I'll get you.

**Firbolg:** [firmly] I wiiill take my C-!

**Bartholemus:** Okay.

**Firbolg:** And wear it. Like the badge of honor.

**Bartholemus:** Well, uh, I requested to be the one to meet with you today, because I wanted to know... how you are adjusting... to life here at school.

**Firbolg:** Is... difficult.

**Bartholemus:** How so?

**Firbolg:** Hm... [pause] I... hm. [pause] Find purpose... in my work.

**Bartholemus:** Good.

**Firbolg:** Find purpose... in... study. But... [sighs] Do not have... purpose... beyond.

**Bartholemus:** Oh, I see.

**Firbolg:** When I think about this... there is a... a great... pain.

**Bartholemus:** Hm. [pause] Master Firbolg, if... please, tell me if I'm prying. And if I am, you do not need to answer, but... it's rare to meet a Firbolg, let alone have one here at the school. They tend, uh, to stick with their clans in the forests. What... could possibly have brought you here?

**Firbolg:** [inhales and sighs] I was... exiled... from my clan. And... when this happened, I walk away, toward... the sun. I follow... 'til it begin to set, and then I kept, at my back, as I followed my shadow. I follow this way... for 13 days, and 14 nights, and the first thing I arrive at... iis... the school. So... I decide I would be of this clan. Of the school. It is... fated.

**Bartholemus:** I see. Well... is... hm. It seems to me, Master Firbolg, that you are in a somewhat precarious position. So far, it seems you have worked out that your fate is to be here; to be part of this clan, as you say. But it seems like you haven't thought... beyond that.

**Firbolg:** Mm. It... [sighs] ... is better not to think of this.

**Bartholemus:** I see.

**Firbolg:** The... Firbolg code, in your tongue, says, the tribe's honor over yours. So I... honor the school, through my work, and think not of my honor.

**Bartholemus:** Master Firbolg, that is... wonderful. That is lovely. But... I'm sorry to be the one to tell you this, but... not everybody feels that way. Most people tend to work towards their own ambitions and goals. And... you need to figure out, at least partially, what it is you want, or there may come a

time when you realize, everyone else has found their purpose with your help, and you are, once again, alone.

[music plays]

**Travis:** And we move to the meeting with Fitzroy and Higglemas Wigenstaff, the head of the Sidekick and Henchperson Annex, as well as the younger brother of Hieronymous Wigenstaff.

Now, Fitzroy, when you enter Higglemas' office, which you have been in once before, Higglemas is busy setting up an afternoon tea. Uh, the table is laid out with all kinds of tiny sandwiches and well-baked cookies, and it is set up with three chairs – one for him, one for you, and one for his dog.

**Higglemas:** Oh! Fancy lad! Yes, come in, come in! Please, join us! Join us!

**Fitzroy:** I—I have a name, y'know.

**Higglemas:** Yes, it's Sir Fitzroy Maplecourt, knight in absentia of the realm of Goodcastle!

**Fitzroy:** And or Thunderman. I'm really branching out. How's it goin', Higs?

**Higglemas:** Well, uh, it's going fine. My name is Higglemas Wigenstaff.

**Fitzroy:** Higs Wigs!

**Higglemas:** Okay.

**Fitzroy:** Yes, I figured since I've been escalated somewhat recently, we could speak a tad more formally. Informally.

**Higglemas:** Yes, well, I wanted to talk with you. But first, before we get down to business, please, tell me what you think about the tea. It's my own kind of mixture. I'm unsure. Uh, it's a dragon flower and elderberry. I've been working on it. Please tell me I've nailed the balance.

**Fitzroy:** Oh, I do enjoy a nice cuppa!

**Griffin:** Uh, I lift it up to my nose. I want to roll a—a check on this. Make sure it's... Anytime anybody sort of encourages anybody to drink anything ever in fiction, I just assume that there's some sort of poison going on there. So I don't know which roll that would be. Uh...

**Travis:** I would say... I mean, perception check, I would say.

**Griffin:** Perception. Uh, that is a 16 plus two. 18.

**Travis:** Uh, when you smell the tea, all you can smell is elderberry and dragon flower.

**Griffin:** Mm, they're stinky herbs. That could mean nothing. Uh, okay, I uh... yeah, sure. I'll take a nice, long drag of that good, hot brown stuff.

**Higglemas:** Okay, what do you think? Is it too bitter?

**Fitzroy:** It's, um... it's spicy. I will say that. And not spicy in the sort of like, uh, traditionally... good way.

**Higglemas:** Hm. Yes.

**Fitzroy:** It's hot—it's hot and it burns my mouth and my throat. And wait... yes, my tummy as well.

**Higglemas:** Yes, that always seems to happen with the dragon flower.

**Fitzroy:** And I guess my question is why you would give me this?

**Higglemas:** Well, I'm—I trust your palate, as a refined knight, and I'm trying to find the right balance. Do you want some sugar?

**Fitzroy:** Sure.

**Griffin:** I'm gonna investigate the sugar! That's a 14 plus two, 16.

**Travis:** It—and you're just like, kind of staring at it, bringing it to your eye. It's sugar.

**Fitzroy:** Okay. I'm just—listen. Can I talk—can we speak as colleagues?

**Higglemas:** Yes, of course.

**Fitzroy:** It's just, since I've been on the villain track now, for like, I don't know, six days, I've been sort of more... aware of villainy, I think, in my surroundings. And so, I'm just always keeping my head on a swivel. Where is the poison? Where is the poison? Where is the poison? And so far, I haven't been poisoned, which may mean that I'm being paranoid, or it may mean that I'm just very good at avoiding poisons.

**Higglemas:** Well, I mean, it's always the poison you don't see, right? Y'know? It's like when someone says, "It's always the last place you look." It's like, well, yeah. If you saw the poison coming, right? It's always the poison you don't see coming.

**Fitzroy:** So, Higglemas, what can I do for you?

**Higglemas:** Well, I—[sighs] I just had a couple questions for you, honestly. Okay, first thing's first. You have had a kind of sour disposition since you got here, and... it's led me to wonder what is so wrong with being a sidekick.

**Fitzroy:** Well, it's... [sighs] When you have your eyes on a certain goal, that you have uh, harbored for decades and decades, it is... difficult to have that goal stripped from your grasp when it's just sort of inches away from your, uh, quivering fingertips. And then it's replaced by another goal, which is... and I've been trying to do this slightly more since becoming a villain, uh, and I still find it, uh, a difficult task, but uh...

It is shittier. That felt weird coming out.

**Higglemas:** Yes, you don't—you don't curse well.

**Fitzroy:** Yes. Um... so, uh... yes. It was just a sort of staggering disappointment. I realize that's a harsh thing for you to hear, I assume. It's also that the school's not as good as the one that I was enrolled in. Again, I said that very bluntly.

**Justin:** [laughing]

**Higglemas:** Mm. I see. Well... [sighs] That all, uh... I guess makes sense, but... then that leads me to my next question. You mentioned a goal. I assume that's to be a knight of some sort?

**Fitzroy:** Mm. Yes, of some sort.

**Higglemas:** Why do you give two shits about being a knight?

**Fitzroy:** See, it sounded so cool when you did it.

**Higglemas:** Yes, well, I've been around the block, son. I've learned to curse.

**Fitzroy:** You have the bitter tongue of a nasty speaker. And I wish I—I—uh... I'll have to train under you for that specific ability. Why do I care about being a knight? Hm. That's a fair question that I... would... rather... not... answer to you? Or anyone. If that's okay. Is that okay?

**Higglemas:** No, honestly. It's not okay. I... What is—okay, let's put it a different way. What would it mean to you to be a knight?

**Fitzroy:** Hmm. Uhhh... [pause] It would—it means... honor. And integrity. And... chivalry!

**Higglemas:** Okay, that's all bullshit.

**Fitzroy:** Nooo, it's good!

**Higglemas:** You're just saying, like, the words—

**Fitzroy:** You get on a horse, and people look at you and say, "How noble and honorable!" And that's what I'm all about, man!

**Higglemas:** Gross. Gross! That's not the real answer. If you don't want to tell me, that's fine. But don't give that bullshit pat, trite answer. No one wants to be a knight so that people will look at them and [gibberish]. That's nothing. That's a benefit. That's not the end goal.

**Fitzroy:** It is... difficult... to... make a name for yourself in this world of... showiness and grandeur and, uh, frankly, almost hysterical amounts of inequality. And... since I was a child, there has always been something about... the knighthood... that has seemed... fair.

If you... do the work, and you stay true to whatever cause you swear yourself to, you can... become somebody. Somebody important. Somebody who may someday become even more important, in a way that is not simply guaranteed in any other sort of way of life.

And so, uh... yes. That is... why I sort of single-mindedly pursued this one thing, uh, only to lose it when it was so close. Maybe not forever. Maybe I'll work my way back there. Honestly, uh, I've come to terms with that, somewhat, since I've been here. But... you wanted the honest answer, that's it. And I realize, it's self-defeating. It's not the most chivalrous or noble answer, but...

**Higglemas:** No, I—can I tell you something? I disagree. I think that there is nobility and honesty, but I must tell you... I fundamentally disagree with what you have, uh, put forward there. Because what you're saying is, uh, that you work hard, and through your merit, you are able to lift yourself up by your bootstraps, blah blah blah blah.

I... have been in this world... for centuries, son. And... I can't remember that ever being the truth. There's... there's something to be said for hard work,

and there are those who raise themselves up, and find new opportunities. But... there's always something more to it.

**Fitzroy:** Yeah, I mean, sure. Cool. I—again, if I was sort of living under the pretense of that being absolutely true 100% of the time, then uh, well, I wouldn't have had an uncontrollable explosion of arcane energies that, um... turned my former school director into a bottom-feeding aquatic animal. So uh, yes. I am aware that what you said is also true, and Higs, I'm just tryin' to make the best of what I got. Tryin' to make sort of, uh, sort of uh, y'know, bad school lemonade, if you will.

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Higglemas:** You have brought me to my last question. And kind of brought the whole conversation to the point, which is, you have been working hard, and your hard work... set you on your path here, where you saw yourself as demoted, saw yourself as missing your opportunity... and then, somehow, ended up elevated to the villain track.

And here's the thing – I don't know if you know this, but in this school's 250 year history, no one has ever been moved from the sidekick and henchperson track to the villain and hero track. So what is it about you that my brother is so interested in?

**Fitzroy:** I mean... these guns? Pshew pshew. I mean, what do you—these—my—I'm a very good... adventurer? I'll be a pretty, um...

**Higglemas:** Tell me what he said to you.

**Fitzroy:** He said something about my righteous guns! Pchoo pchoo pchoo! These. My arms. I'm pointing at my arms. Honestly, from the moment he said that I was going to move up to a larger suite with its own personal bathroom, uh, I sort of stopped... the rest was kind of static. Um, the rest was just sort of a faint buzzing. He said—he just said I was very special, and the most special boy at the school, were his exact words.

[pause] Something on your mind, Higglemas?

**Higglemas:** Fitzroy... be... careful... in your time here. There are more ulterior motives in this school than you could count. And no one can be trusted.

**Fitzroy:** You are—I keep hearing that!

**Higglemas:** Least of all, my brother. Be careful, young Fitzroy. And congratulations.

**Fitzroy:** There it is. Thank you. It would've been—I was waiting. It would've been terribly rude if you hadn't—thank you.

[pause]

**Travis:** And Griffin, by the way, it was in the tiny sandwiches. That's where the poison was.

**Griffin:** Aw, damn it!

**Travis:** Yeah. That was the—

**Griffin:** Did I eat any? But I didn't eat any, though.

**Travis:** No, you didn't eat any. But you also didn't find it, sooo...

**Griffin:** Ah, shit.

**Travis:** Yeah. Uh, and we go to our final parent teacher meeting. Betwixt—

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Oh, sorry! [laughs]

**Justin:** I'm sure you don't mean that.

**Travis:** Student teacher meeting!

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Justin:** Surprise!

**Travis:** Well, if it—if you get detention three times, maybe then we'll have a parent teacher meeting.

**Clint:** [laughing]

**Travis:** Um, and we find Argo coming to meet with Jackle in the tavern, actually. Argo, you walk in, and you see Jackle is sitting at the bar. You can also see a small army of animal skeletons moving quickly about the place, decorating in preparation for the evening's party.

**Argo:** Creepy... Uh, hello, Jackle.

**Jackle:** I ha—[clears throat] I ha—[clears throat] I have a small challenge for ya, Argo.

**Argo:** I just got here! Just sat down, for god's sake. Can you not even offer me an offerte for, y'know, say, "Hey, how's it going"?

**Jackle:** Hey, how's it going? I have a small challenge for ya, Argo.

**Argo:** Good. It's okay. Except for all these little animal skeletons are really creepy.

**Jackle:** Oh, they don't bother me so much. I like the animals.

**Argo:** Okay. What is the challenge?

**Travis:** He points over at Tomas, the school counselor, sitting, quietly sipping his coffee in a corner booth while reading a book.

**Jackle:** I want ya, Argo, to bring me his pocket watch. Now, there are only two rules to this challenge. First, you can't steal it. And second, you can't tell him it's for me.

**Argo:** [pause] Okay. That's... okay.

**Jackle:** If you win, your drinks at the party tonight are on me.

**Argo:** And if I lose?

**Jackle:** If you lose... then you know you lost.

**Argo:** Oh! [laughs] Whew! Okay. Alright, sure. Yeah, I'll go over and talk to—what's his name again?

**Jackle:** Tomas.

**Argo:** Tomas! And uh, what's he do again?

**Jackle:** He's the school counselor.

**Argo:** School counselor. Okay. [clears throat] Um, hello! Um, Mr. Tomas. May I join you?

**Tomas:** Oh! Um, hello...

**Travis:** And he closes his eyes just for a second.

**Tomas:** Argonaut Keene. Yes.

**Argo:** [laughs] That is amazin'. I can't remember anything. I have a terrible memory. How do you do that? Do you have some kind of secret to how you remember all these students' names? Of course, I mean, not as many as,

y'know, yesterday, since so many of them got the old boot. Um, how do you do it?

**Tomas:** Oh. Well, it's honestly just a lot of practice. Um... I work hard to remember. I look at images. I uh, put names to faces. And I make it my job to remember everyone.

**Argo:** Yes. Amazing. And does it work on—I mean, not just people, but I mean, places? Things?

**Tomas:** Well, I suppose if I put my mind to it. Mostly, I've just focused on students.

**Argo:** That's interesting. That's interesting. I would—any way that you can, y'know, train me up on how to do this? Because I think havin' a good memory would really serve me well, y'know, in the Thundermen Corporation.

**Justin:** Hell yeah, Dad's playing the long game.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Training montage incoming.

**Tomas:** Sure. Let's put in three years' worth of work. No, um...

**Justin:** Here he goes!

**Tomas:** Well, there's really no trick to it. I just pay attention, and put my mind to it, and I try to work hard and keep the images in my mind.

**Argo:** Okay, here's my idea. If you could show me... y'know, let me, uh, y'know, borrow something on your person. Like the watch that you're—beautiful watch, by the way. Don't look at it! Don't—don't look at it. That would be cheating. But I was thinkin' maybe you could, uh, let me hold onto it. I'll walk away. Okay, I'll go—I don't know, I'll go sit over there with the wingless bird, and then—

**Tomas:** He has a name.

**Argo:** Yes. I know, Jackle. I know. I'm drawin' a word picture. Let me borrow your watch, walk over there, and then uh... and then, when I come back, you have to perfectly describe the watch to me. What do you think? Is that a good exercise? And then I can watch you do that, and learn!

**Justin:** Watch your memory. Watch your memory.

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Argo:** Yes. What do you say? Can we give it a shot?

**Justin:** Maybe he does some fun things with his eyes? That's a possibility.

**Tomas:** I... I don't quite see the purpose.

**Argo:** Oh, it'll be—oh, listen, this is how we learn everything at sea. You watch, and you observe.

**Justin:** If you—quick—

**Argo:** You have to watch a—there's no book learnin'.

**Justin:** Okay, quick fuckin', uh, a little bit of semantics check here. Grifting this poor person out of their watch is stealing it, right? I mean, we're—we all feel pretty comfortable with that?

**Clint:** Well, I'll be bringin' it back to him! Oh god, I'm talkin' in character voice.

**Travis:** Finally.

**Justin:** To me, Justin McElroy.

**Travis:** Um, make a persuasion check.

**Clint:** Oh...

**Travis:** Yeah, that's how—hey, Dad? That's how Dungeons & Dragons works! You are trying to persuade him to give you his watch. And so, you need to check, and see if that persuasion works!

**Clint:** That's a 16—

**Travis:** Damn.

**Clint:** Plus... plus... two? Yes. 18.

**Tomas:** Well, I suppose, as long as the watch never leaves this room. It was given to me by my grandfather.

**Argo:** Oh, don't you worry a thing about it. I'm just gonna take it right over there. I'll wait 45 seconds, and then it will come back, and we will play our game. What do you say? Yes! Good! Good!

**Tomas:** Okay.

**Argo:** Alright. Could I have the watch, please?

**Tomas:** Yes, I... suppose...

**Argo:** Thank you. I will—don't worry, nothin' bad's gonna happen. This is not one of those, y'know, Vegas magic tricks where I pretend to smash the watch. That would be awful. Terrible of me to do.

**Tomas:** Why would you even bring that up?

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Justin:** That's such a weird thing to bring up at this point in the grift.

**Tomas:** You already got the watch, why would you now even plant that idea in my head?

**Argo:** Yes—

**Justin:** [laughing]

**Argo:** I'm trying to make you feel better!

**Tomas:** You're trying to make me feel better by bringing up the very idea of smashing my grandpappy's watch?

**Argo:** Not on purpose. Accidents happen.

**Justin:** [laughing]

**Tomas:** Why would you accident—give it back, please.

**Argo:** I'll be right back! Oh no, that's five seconds into my 45! I'll be right back! I'll be right back! Hang on!

Okay. Look. Check it out. Watch. I got his watch. Tomas' watch.

**Jackle:** How did you get it, Argonaut?

**Argo:** Uh, I borrowed it. Didn't steal it. Didn't cheat him. I just borrowed it. I'm doing an experiment with him.

**Jackle:** What did you say to him?

**Argo:** I uh, told him that I wanted to learn how to memorize things by him showing me how he memorizes things, so it's uh, observational. I'm trying to do some observational humor here with him. I figure that would come in handy for a uh, for a sidekick or a henchman or whatever the hell it is I am now.

**Jackle:** I see. Are you gonna return it to him?

**Argo:** Well, yeah. I'll return it to him. You didn't tell me it was for keeps. You just said, bring it to the table, so I brought it to the table. There it is.

**Jackle:** What if I told you not to return it to him?

**Argo:** Well, I think I would have to, uh... tell ya to get stuffed, because I gave the man my word, and I'm gonna stick to it.

**Jackle:** What if I told you I'd give you five gold not to return it to him?

**Argo:** Mmm... five? No. No! I still wouldn't do it. I still—no! My word is my bond.

**Jackle:** It is... a joy to hear you say that, Argonaut. Go, return the watch to him.

**Argo:** Here you go, Tom! Your watch, not broken, as you can see!

**Tomas:** O-okay. Did you want a—did you want a les—I—did I miss the part—

**Argo:** No, you're supposed—no, describe it to me before I hand it to ya! Come on!

**Tomas:** It's a gold pocket watch.

**Argo:** Yeah, and what's inscribed on the inside?

**Tomas:** To Tomas, from Grandpappy.

**Argo:** Ohh. Oh, *grandpappy*. Okay. I thought it was grandpoopy, so... here, I thought it was like a joke—here you go.

**Tomas:** Why would you say that?

**Argo:** I'm just—I'm just—I'm—

**Griffin:** [laughing] What a terrible thing to say!

**Argo:** I'm hammered!

**Tomas:** My grandpappy was a hero!

**Justin:** [laughing]

**Argo:** Here you go.

**Tomas:** He saved a cart full of children from falling off a bridge! Why would you say that about him?

**Argo:** And... and here's the watch. Oh, that—you must have memories of him... again, we're back to memories. And it's wonderful that you remembered that story, thereby proving that I'm learning memorization from the right person!

**Tomas:** May I please get back to my book and coffee, please?

**Argo:** Sure. Here. Here's your watch. It's lovely, and I didn't even wind it or anything. Um... have a great day.

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Argo:** Enjoy your book and your coffee.

**Justin:** Was that...

**Griffin:** [in a Boston accent] Hey, enjoy your coffee!

**Justin:** Eyyy! [in a Boston accent] Enjoy your coffee!

**Travis:** [in Gary's voice] It's me, Gary, just jumpin' into possess Argo for a second! Enjoy your coffee!

**Griffin:** get down to Dunkin' and get you some coffee.

**Justin:** [laughing]

**Jackle:** Very good, Argonaut. That was a very good job. Now, to the matter at hand... have you thought about what we discussed?

**Argo:** Uh, yeah. And I've made a decision. I think you're gonna be... a little surprised.

**Jackle:** Oh?

**Argo:** Yeah.

**Clint:** And he rolls up his sleeve on his right arm, and reveals to you a tattoo. Brand new, fresh. I mean, the skin's still all red and blotchy. And it's like a compass, but at the four points of the compass, instead of north, east, west, and south, says, "Blood, bone, rain, and stone."

**Argo:** I'm in. I want in.

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Argo:** If that's what my ma wanted, by god, that's what I'll do. So there you go! Look, that's commitment, right there!

**Justin:** Dad's like the guy who got the fuckin' tattoo of that cat the first time he heard Hook by Blues Traveler. He just got that album tattooed on his back. "This is my fucking jam!"

**Griffin:** [laughing] "This is my life!"

**Jackle:** Oh, I should've told you sooner, Argonaut.

**Argo:** But now, to be fair—

**Jackle:** The blood bone thing, that's just a joke that we tell each other. It's code for poop.

**Clint:** [laughing]

**Griffin:** [laughing]

**Argo:** Well, there are the Genasi symbols for blood, bone, rain, and stone, so...

**Jackle:** Nooo. Actually, Argo, that's very good. Uh, very good to hear.

**Argo:** Don't ever get anything right there on your wrist, 'cause boy oh boy, that uh... I don't know if that's like, close to the neural receptors, but it hurts like crazy.

**Jackle:** It is. It's right there. There's a lot of tendons. Yes.

**Argo:** Oh, boy.

**Jackle:** Uh, well, Argo, then we're going to pause this meeting, and we shall continue it tonight after the party. Meet me—

**Argo:** Oh my god...

**Jackle:** —at the forge.

**Argo:** [sighs] Okay... jeeze, you're really tyin' up a lot of my free time with your meetings. But okay. I'll see ya at the forge. I'm gonna have to go put a little antiseptic cream on this, 'cause it's startin' to puff up.

**Jackle:** No, don't put antiseptic on it. You're gonna want to use some vitamin D. Maybe something Vaseline-based, nothing water-based.

**Argo:** Fan—fantasy—Fantaseline? Yeah, I'll go find some Fantaseline.

**Jackle:** No, Vaseline. We have that.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Justin:** Weird.

**Jackle:** Yes.

[music plays]

[ad break]

**Travis:** Hi! It's me again, your best friend and kind, benevolent dungeon master, Travis McElroy! Just a couple announcements before we get back to the show. First, we still have some tickets for the Cincinnati shows. We're doing My Brother, My Brother, and Me, and The Adventure Zone, February 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. That's MBMBaM on the 19<sup>th</sup>, and TAZ on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Sawbones is going to be opening for My Brother, My Brother, and Me on the 19<sup>th</sup>. So if you are anywhere near the Cincinnati area and you want to come, you can get those tickets over at [McElroy.family](http://McElroy.family) and click on 'Tours.'

Also, speaking of tours – we're going to be announcing some new dates soon, so keep an eye on the McElroy Family Twitter. Also, if you head over to [McElroy.family](http://McElroy.family) and click on 'Merch,' you're going to see some new stuff in there, including a bumper sticker to show your pride if your student is a—if your child, excuse me, is an honor student at Clyde Nite's Night Knight School. Get yourself that bumper sticker, as well as a bunch of other fun TAZ stuff, and just other McElroy stuff. So check that up at [McElroy.family](http://McElroy.family), or [McElroyMerch.com](http://McElroyMerch.com).

Okay! Oh! One more thing, and then I promise I'll be done. You can still preorder the The Adventure Zone graphic novel by going to [TheAdventureZoneComic.com](http://TheAdventureZoneComic.com). It's *Petals to the Metal*, book number three. It is our best one yet. I love it, and I'm so very proud of it. If you haven't preordered yours now, go do it. [TheAdventureZoneComic.com](http://TheAdventureZoneComic.com).

Okay, now, for real. Back to the show.

[music plays]

**Travis:** It's party time! It's time... for Rainer's birthday! The three of you—well, let me ask you this. Do you dress special?

**Griffin:** I always dress special, Travis. I think I actually have gone out to the bursar and said, "I need the cloak for a special mission."

**Travis:** Yeah you did.

**Griffin:** "I'll bring it right—I'll bring it right back. It's time for my photo shoot for Boy Cloaks. I gotta get it. I'll bring it right back as soon as I have finished said job."

**Travis:** As soon as you invoke the name Boy Cloaks, Osrick is sold. Osrick, he's been a Boy Cloaks subscriber since he was three. Of course.

**Griffin:** Where else are you gonna find out about the new cloaks?

**Travis:** Yeah, right? And all of the cloak-based advice columns that are in there.

**Griffin:** Right. Yeah.

**Travis:** There's the cloak joke page. You're not gonna get that anywhere else. Uh—

**Griffin:** I huff it deep.

**Fitzroy:** Oh, I've missed you, friend. I've missed you, my—

**Travis:** I've missed you too—no. [laughs]

**Fitzroy:** [gasps] Son?!

**Travis:** [laughing] What about you, Firbolg and Argonaut? A lot of people seem to really like the name Fiscal Responsibility, by the way. How do we feel about that?

**Griffin:** The problem—what I didn't realize is Fisk sounds a lot like Fitz.

**Travis:** That is true.

**Justin:** Too close.

**Clint:** Even funnier.

**Justin:** Too close.

**Clint:** Um, I uh... Argo made special party clothes for he and the Firbolg out of bed curtains.

**Travis:** Oh, that's lovely!

**Clint:** Yeah.

**Travis:** It's like Sound of Music!

**Clint:** Yeah! And y'know, so... y'know, from all of his experience, y'know, mending sails and stuff. So he made them each party tunics to wear out of the uh, out of the curtains.

**Travis:** Y'know, I'm actually kind of disappointed in myself, because I went with Sound of Music, but they also did the same thing in A Knight's Tale, and I could've made it... ugh. Fuck!

**Justin:** And Gone With the Wind.

**Clint:** True.

**Travis:** Okay. Okay. [sighs]

**Griffin:** A Knight's Tale, arguably, would've been the least sort of, uh, cultural reference to make out of that.

**Travis:** But maybe the most applicable to the scenario.

**Griffin:** Yeah, fine.

**Travis:** Anyways. Most of the school's students and teachers alike are here. In the corner of the tavern, you see the skeleton crew is playing music. Germaine is playing the lute, Victoria plays the accordion, and Rattles plays the drums. And here's the thing – they're really good at it.

**Griffin:** Does any of them play the ribs like a xylophone?

**Travis:** No. That's offensive.

**Clint:** [laughing]

**Travis:** That's their ribs. Do you go into a band and play your tummy like a bongo?

**Justin:** [snorts] Yes.

**Travis:** Oh.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** I do, actually. I was in the...

**Justin:** This is Griffin.

**Griffin:** I was in the Polyphonic Spree for a bit.

**Travis:** Well, who wasn't, Griffin?

**Griffin:** They didn't know I was there, but I was doing—

**Travis:** For a while, the only way to not be in the Polyphonic Spree was to opt out.

**Griffin:** Opt out. Yeah.

**Justin:** [laughs] You had to send a card into the government.

**Clint:** [laughing]

**Griffin:** They listed me as 'alternative alternative percussion.'

**Travis:** Uh, Rainer comes and greets you at the door. She has on a beautiful white dress with pink and gold accents. Her chair's ground effects are on, and pulse lightly with the music.

**Rainer:** Oh, I'm so glad you could make it! Oh, and Argo and Firbolg! You look stylish as hell!

**Firbolg:** Behold, this fantastic garment!

**Rainer:** Yes!

**Firbolg:** Never have I worn it equal. It has been hewn by my friend, Argonaut Keene. It is the finest garment... I have ever worn. Feast upon it. I do not say this of ego. This is a beautiful thing. See how it sways as I turn.

**Clint:** [laughing]

**Firbolg:** Watch the fabric move.

**Rainer:** ... Yes, it's—

**Firbolg:** Do you see now?

**Rainer:** Yes, it's very nice!

**Firbolg:** Many do not appreciate beauty when it is before them.

**Rainer:** No, it's great! You look great.

**Firbolg:** I'm still turning.

**Rainer:** Okay.

**Firbolg:** Now I'm done.

**Rainer:** Okay. You look wonderful!

**Fitzroy:** [clears throat loudly and dramatically]

**Rainer:** Yes, and oh my god, that cloak! Is that...

**Fitzroy:** It's the one I told you about.

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Fitzroy:** Better—back and better than ever! I do need to, um... technically, I do need to take some photos for Boy Cloak, unless I want to be caught lying. But wait, we're villains now, aren't we, Rainer? So lying is part of the—

**Rainer:** What?!

**Fitzroy:** Oh, you didn't hear the news?

**Rainer:** No, it hadn't made its way to me, yet! Congratulations!

**Fitzroy:** Oh, shoot, I wasn't supposed to... I mean, shit. Ass. I wasn't supposed to tell anyone.

**Rainer:** That was really awkward. You need to get better at cursing. Fuck.

**Fitzroy:** I'm as good as a hell bastard at cussing.

**Rainer:** Ooh.

**Clint:** [laughing]

**Rainer:** That's some really shitty cussing.

**Fitzroy:** It sounds cool when everyone else does it... Uh, but yes, please don't tell anyone else. I'm uh, I've been... accelerated. So, uh...

**Rainer:** Well... I'm not gonna lie, I'm a bit disappointed. I was hoping you would become my sidekick, eventually. But now, maybe we can work together as partners!

**Fitzroy:** Yes! And maybe—ooh! We can influence each other's villainy styles.

**Rainer:** [gasps]

**Fitzroy:** Right? You can teach me more about magic, and maybe I can show you sort of the error of your... ways... vis-à-vis... small woodland life.

**Rainer:** Oh, I see. Listen. Can I tell you something? You're great. You're never gonna take my animal skeletons. You can pry them out of my cold,

dead hands, y'know what I mean? Even then, good luck, because I am a necromancer, so even when I die, I'll probably still be kickin'!

**Fitzroy:** Man, that's so twisted!

**Rainer:** Thank you!

**Fitzroy:** It's really F'ed up, and I'm not ready to say that one yet.

**Rainer:** Sooo... I hate to just kind of put the tire on the table, but presents?

**Griffin:** Uh, I hold out a present that is, uh, wrapped in fine papers.

**Travis:** Ooh!

**Griffin:** Fine, glimmering papers. Uh, and—

**Travis:** Would you say, the finest papers?

**Griffin:** Uh, no. [laughs] God.

**Travis:** Oh.

**Griffin:** But it's pretty good.

**Travis:** Medium fine.

**Griffin:** It's book shaped and sized.

**Rainer:** I can't wait to see what it is!

**Travis:** And she unwraps it. And what does she find?

**Griffin:** What does she fi—no.

**Fitzroy:** Uh, I got you... I learned recently about this wonderful little invention, uh, called a Notebook of Farspeech, and you can write little things in the back of it, and it'll show up in other connected tomes, and uh, I've got one. I think Argo's got one. I'm not sure how he ended up with one, but uh... yeah! I figured, y'know, now that we're co-villains, if we ever get, uh, y'know, lonely, feelin' like some pen pal action, want to spread some villainous tactics back and forth, I figured this would be a good way to keep in touch!

**Rainer:** That's wonderful! Thank you!

**Travis:** And she gives you a big hug.

**Fitzroy:** Ah, it's my—my pleasure. I didn't know if you were leaving for the break, so I figured it'd be good for us to have a line of contact.

**Rainer:** Oh yes, I'm planning to go and visit home, but I'll be back!

**Fitzroy:** I shall await your return!

**Rainer:** Thank you.

**Clint:** Um, Argo hastily stuffs, back into his tunic, a gift that was wrapped, and exactly the same size as that gift that he—

**Travis:** Oh, awkward.

**Clint:** Yeah, really bad. He stuffs it in his tunic, and then starts going through his pockets, and... has an idea, and then, reaches out and gives, to Rainer, ten beautiful gold rings. Um...

**Rainer:** Holy shit!

**Argo:** That... came from the curtain rod.

**Travis:** Oh.

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Argo:** Um, but they are beautiful, and um, there's one for each finger, and uh, one for each thumb. And uh, just, y'know, it's from the heart. And... the curtain rod.

**Rainer:** Oh, that is absolutely wonderful. Thank you so much. I really appreciate that, Argo.

**Argo:** Eh, y'know...

**Rainer:** And Firbolg, it's okay. I know that you're not really the material sort, so if you—

**Firbolg:** Iii... have never been... to a party... of this, uh, of birthday. I... did not know of gifts. It is... a great shame.

**Rainer:** Your—your presence is present enough. I'm just glad you're here.

**Firbolg:** This word play has fallen on deaf ears. I will not grant. It must be righted. One moment.

**Rainer:** Okay.

**Justin:** And he rifles through the tunic.

**Firbolg:** I have... only one gift. It is very... embarrassing. I do not wish... it is not good.

**Rainer:** No, what is it?

**Firbolg:** No, is—you will not... like.

**Rainer:** I bet I'll love it.

**Firbolg:** It is an incredible melon story I wrote for Gary.

**Argo:** [laughs]

**Rainer:** May I read it?

**Firbolg:** It is a—it is terrible. It is just a story of what a melon is like! Why would you wish this?

**Travis:** And she—

**Firbolg:** You have had melon!

**Travis:** She begins to read, and she says...

**Rainer:** [gasps] This is beautiful!

**Firbolg:** I did the pictures.

**Rainer:** You drew these?!

**Firbolg:** In—yes.

**Rainer:** I would've said that they were photos!

**Firbolg:** No, I used charcoal to draw the flavor of a melon.

**Rainer:** This is incredible. Thank you so much, Firbolg. I will cherish this. I might have it bound!

**Firbolg:** [pause] Well... don't fold—you're folding the corner a bit. If you would...

**Rainer:** Oh—sorry. Let me straighten that.

**Firbolg:** Yes. Thank you.

**Rainer:** I would ask for one other present, Master Firbolg.

**Firbolg:** Oh no! The tunic! Yes...

**Rainer:** No, no!

**Firbolg:** I knew this would come...

**Griffin:** [laughing]

**Clint:** [laughing]

**Rainer:** No, Master Firbolg! No no no.

**Firbolg:** Take this beautiful garment!

**Rainer:** No no no. No, may I—may I have this dance?

**Firbolg:** I did not deserve—oh. This is—you have asked for something I cannot give.

**Rainer:** Oh?

**Firbolg:** This is a terrible—I will not shame you with my dance.

**Rainer:** Oh, come on.

**Travis:** And she pulls you onto the dance floor. Now, how do you all party?

**Justin:** Let me see how I do at dancing.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Justin:** I'm gonna roll a dance die. [laughs]

**Travis:** [laughs] Let's say a dexterity saving throw.

**Justin:** Oh, I like that. Yeah. Life or death. [laughs]

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Uh, I rolled a 12...

**Travis:** [gasps]

**Justin:** Plus... one.

**Travis:** You dance okay. You dance... let's put it this way – for how everyone was expecting you would do, you're doin' great. You are out there—

**Justin:** Okay. I can live with that. I'll take that. Yes.

**Travis:** You move in time. You have rhythm.

**Justin:** I will take it.

**Travis:** Now, what about you, Argo? How are you partying?

**Clint:** Um, I think Argo is moving from group to group, doing uh, magic tricks.

**Travis:** What?

**Clint:** Doing—yeah. Hand magic. Y'know, sleight of hand, y'know, kind of making coins disappear and pulling them out of people's ears, and...

**Travis:** So, just to be clear, because it exists... fake magic, right?

**Clint:** Well, yeah.

**Travis:** Okay. Now, do—

**Clint:** I'm not doin'... go ahead.

**Travis:** Do a sleight of hand check for me.

**Justin:** You walked right into that one. [laughs]

**Clint:** 18...

**Travis:** [gasps]

**Clint:** Plus six.

**Travis:** Damn!

**Justin:** Damn!

**Travis:** Damn! You... are really good at it. [laughs] You are just blowin' everybody's mind. They've seen lightning called down from the skies, they have seen angels summoned in battle, they have seen the undead destroyed with a holy flame, but never before have they seen a peanut disappear as you are making the peanuts disappear. Never before has a red fuzzy ball jumped from one cup to another like you are now.

**Griffin:** [laughing]

**Travis:** You are the life of the party. Where—where did the coin go? [gasps] "It's behind my ear! Are you some kind of old god?" They say.

**Argo:** No. [laughs] No, and I can't give away my secrets! I'm sorry, the magician never tells his secrets.

**Travis:** Surely, you are the greatest wizard of our time!

**Argo:** Yes, yes, okay. Okay, I... probably. But uh, y'know, I'm not here for that. I'm just here to make ya smile. Just here to make everybody have a

good time, and y'know, basically to make some friends beyond just my two other friends.

**Travis:** Uh, and Fitzroy, you see a ball of light—

**Griffin:** Mmm. Yeah, I know.

**Travis:** —come zooming up to you.

**Griffin:** Yeahhh. That's what I was gonna do. You know I'm lookin' for Festo.

**Festo:** Oh! Hello, Fitzroy!

**Fitzroy:** Festo! I knew you—

**Festo:** It's'a me, Festo!

**Fitzroy:** I know, I'm aware! There's no other sort of, uh, fairies of your luminousness at this institution.

**Festo:** Ooh! Thank you!

**Fitzroy:** And I don't know how to put this other than to just say it out loud. Festo, I want to party with you!

**Festo:** Hell yeah, my dude!

**Fitzroy:** Hey—hill yeah!

**Festo:** Oh, that was very bad.

**Fitzroy:** So let's do this thing! Show me how—show me your ways! I—

**Festo:** Well, I came over to see if I could have this dance!

**Fitzroy:** Oh, of course.

**Festo:** Oh, not with you, silly! With Snippers!

**Fitzroy:** [pause] Yeah. Sure. Yes. That's fine. We share a telekinetic link, so maybe it'll be like, uh, I am partying... with you? Uh...

**Festo:** Well, we can all party together. But I want to dance with Snippers!

**Fitzroy:** Yeah, let me just, uh—

**Festo:** He's the cute one!

**Fitzroy:** Right, yes. Do not let your arms get in his pincer... area.

**Festo:** You don't know what I'm into!

**Fitzroy:** Alright.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Fitzroy:** Snippers... Snippers.

**Snippers:** [crab sounds]

**Fitzroy:** Be... um... be nice out there. Don't get stepped on.

**Snippers:** [crab sounds]

**Fitzroy:** Uh, don't, uhh, don't hurt them with your... with your mighty pincers.

**Festo:** You don't know what he's into!

**Fitzroy:** Okay. So, anyway, here. Here's my crab. Have fun, Festo.

**Festo:** Let's do this, Snippers!

[techno music plays]

**Travis:** And they began to dance! It is a whirlwind. Everyone clears out a circle, and it's like the dance from House Party. Everyone is blown away. It's incredible.

**Fitzroy:** [yelling over the music] That's my crab!

**Festo:** Hell yeah!

**Fitzroy:** [yelling over the music] We have a telekinetic link!

**Festo:** Their dance is your dance!

**Fitzroy:** [yelling over the music] It's exactly what I'm saying!

**Travis:** Uh, and you feel a tap on your shoulder, Fitzroy.

**Fitzroy:** I—please, I need complete concentration on the crab.

**Buckminster:** Um... sorry. Uh, sorry to bother you. Um... Fitzroy, I, uh... um, sorry.

**Fitzroy:** Aaand... done. Okay, yes. Can I help you?

**Travis:** It's Buckminster.

**Fitzroy:** Buckyyy!

**Travis:** For the first time since you've met him, you would describe him as looking disheveled.

**Fitzroy:** What's the scoop?

**Buckminster:** Um, this... uh, this may be something of a weird question. But... have you seen Leon?

**Fitzroy:** I was looking for Leon yesterday. I had a squirely, um, duty for him. And I must say, he has been delinquent in his service to me. Uh, so that is, uh, that's gonna be a no from me, Buckminster. Why haven't you seen him? You're like his boss or whatever.

**Buckminster:** Um... yes. It—it is quite strange. He—he hasn't come home... in a couple of days, and that is not like him, and I had hoped that he might be with, uh, his friends. With you—with you fellows. Um... um, I'm quite worried about him.

**Fitzroy:** Uh, well, have you uh... have you spoken to the administration here? I don't know why I'm the first...

**Buckminster:** No, I have—I asked, and um, they said, y'know, the grounds are quite large. Maybe he was in Last Hope. Um... there were some who said that maybe he might've just dropped out, but he wouldn't leave... me. He wouldn't leave me.

**Fitzroy:** Um... yes, I checked the enrollment list, and it seems like Leon made the cut. Uh... should we... I mean, we're at a party right now, Buckminster. Do you think we should—are you this worried about it? Should we go look around right now?

**Buckminster:** Um... I've—I've looked everywhere. Um... y'know what, maybe he's here. I-I-I'll look around. Um... I'll continue asking around. If you see him, or hear about him, please, um... let me know right away.

**Fitzroy:** Um... sure. Buckminster, I feel like I should tell you – Leon was acting... somewhat... uhh, cagey? Last—when last we spoke. Somewhat nervous. Scared, even, one might say.

**Buckminster:** O-oh.

**Fitzroy:** So I'm—yes. I rarely would use this word to describe myself, but I am somewhat alarmed.

**Buckminster:** Oh my. Okay. Um... wh... this isn't the place to discuss this, then. Can we meet during the break, and... make a plan?

**Fitzroy:** Um... certainly. I was just going to do some odd jobs in Last Hope, so y'know, catch—catch me there.

**Buckminster:** Okay.

**Travis:** And he slips away.

**Griffin:** I don't see Leon at this party, right?

**Travis:** Correct.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Travis:** Uh, the party winds down. Um, and it's time to head home. But Fitzroy and Firbolg, as you begin to leave, you can't find Argo anywhere.

**Fitzroy:** Okay. Firbolg...

**Firbolg:** Yes?

**Fitzroy:** Pal.

**Firbolg:** Yes?

**Fitzroy:** Have you noticed that Argo's just sort of been... creepin' out from time to time?

**Firbolg:** Mm-hmm. It is... very strange.

**Fitzroy:** He thinks that I don't see him, but I sleep with my eyes open, and so, he appears in sort of my dreamscape. And he's not half lobster, so I know that he's part of like, the actual, tangible world. And he just always seems to be creepin'. I'm wonderin' if Argo has, uh, taken a lover?

**Firbolg:** Hmm. Or... no, yours is best.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Fitzroy:** I don't want to pry, but I just find it somewhere curious. I thought we were... y'know... friends, at this point.

**Firbolg:** Maybe he must... hm. Bathroom.

**Fitzroy:** I—sure. I'm not really sure how, um, how Genasi sort of physiology works. He is water Genasi. I would think that his sort of... his urinating game would be on point, but...

**Firbolg:** Still, he must do this.

**Fitzroy:** Yes.

**Firbolg:** In the—he is not peeing all the time.

**Fitzroy:** That we know of.

**Firbolg:** He must have special room. You all love this special room where you go to make the dirt and water.

**Fitzroy:** They made a—they made a—

**Firbolg:** So fancy, like a regal king of pooping and peeing.

**Fitzroy:** Well, they made a whole thing of it, day one. Um...

**Clint:** [laughing]

**Fitzroy:** Should we... this is the second time I've had this exact conversation at this party. Uh, should we look for him?

**Firbolg:** Um... seems rude to pry. If he wanted us to know where he was, he would tell us, yes?

**Fitzroy:** This is, uh, a good point. Well, uhh... Snippers!

**Snippers:** [crab sounds]

**Fitzroy:** You uh, first of all, tore it the heck up out there.

**Snippers:** [crab sounds]

**Fitzroy:** And uh, I didn't know you had it in you, and um... just—thank you for a wonderful evening. And um, also, can you—

**Firbolg:** Ah—Fitzroy.

**Fitzroy:** Yes?

**Firbolg:** Could you ask... Rainer... to ask him? With this, um... book?

**Fitzroy:** Mmm! Yes, that's a—that's a good point! I mean, I have one as well. Uh... let's uh... let's hit him up. See if he answers.

**Griffin:** And I scribble in the back of the uh, the Notebook of Farspeech. "What's... what's up? Where you at? Love, Fitzroy."

**Firbolg:** This is good.

**Travis:** How do you respond, Argo?

**Clint:** Travis, am I at my secret meeting?

**Travis:** You are heading there now, yes.

**Clint:** "Dear Fitzroy. How R U?" And he wrote it, 'how', and then the letter R, and the letter U. Uh, "I am fine. Running some errands. Getting tattoo finished up down at the Hedgehog Pin. See you back at the room. Friends for life, Argo Keene."

**Griffin:** "Sounds cool. Have a cool summer. Love Fitzroy." Yeah, I don't feel the need to really... press him on—like, obviously, he's been sneaking out at night, but I have no reason to believe that it is... anything like, below board.

**Travis:** Cool. We find, uh, Argo finishing his response, as he stands outside the door to the blacksmith class. As it's called, the forge. Now, you have not been in the basement. You have not been to the forge since your first day, when Buckminster took you on a tour. As you make your way in, this time, uh, the forge is blazing bright, and you see Jackle there. But you also see a male Goliath, uh, who stands about eight feet tall, and he is at the mouth of the forge.

**Jackle:** Oh, Argonaut Keene, you came and you joined us. Please, come in, come in. Uh, I'd like you to meet my friend, Mosh.

**Argo:** Ah, Mosh. Hi, Mosh. Listen, any way to turn down that heat a little? Heat and water Genasi... we're just not real fond of each other. I mean, even if it's just, y'know, lay off the bellows for a minute. It's hot in here. Hot, hot.

**Mosh:** Argonaut Keene. If you will give me a moment, I will turn down the forge. But first... you and I... need to talk. Now, Jackle is your sponsor to join. And that means that it is up to me, another member, to vet you a little bit.

**Argo:** Okay. Didja see the tattoo?

**Mosh:** No, I know all that.

**Argo:** Here. Here, look. Look, see, look.

**Mosh:** Please. Uh, it's a bit of a spiel, if you don't mind. Just some things to tell you. Some things you need to know.

**Argo:** Gotcha. Okay, shutting up now so you can give me the spiel.

**Mosh:** You are about to join an organization that is as old as human memory. It is called The Unbroken Chain. Now, The Unbroken Chain exists with one simple principle in mind. There must be those who take responsibility. Those who, when they believe someone needs help, or something needs doing, or someone needs stopping, that they are the ones who step up. There must be someone who doesn't wait for someone else to be the one.

That is what we do. Simply put, The Unbroken Chain does what needs to be done, whatever that may be. Ours is not to keep order, or enforce; merely, to move forward, and to do what is called for. As such, you becoming a member will mean that there will be missions and tasks and the like. These things... must be done in secret. Our work isn't for notoriety, isn't for fame, but even more so, without anonymity, we would not be able to operate with the light touch that we do.

In fact, you will only be aware of the members of this branch of The Unbroken Chain, but we are many. Now, you may wonder why the name. Why The Unbroken Chain. It is because we select the next member, and the responsibility continues on. But more than that, we are all equal in the chain. There is no weak link. We all bear each other's burdens. We all take care of one another. We are all responsible – not only for the world, but for each other.

So, for one last time... does that sound like an organization you would want to join?

**Argo:** May I ask a question?

**Mosh:** Of course.

**Argo:** Will this interfere at all in my goal of completin' my trainin' and movin' on here at this school?

**Mosh:** You will, from time to time, need to answer the call, and handle a mission or two. But no, it will not interfere with your regular life.

**Argo:** [pause] So this is entirely in secret? I can't even share it with my roommates?

**Mosh:** No.

**Argo:** Alright. I'll, uh... out of love for my mom, and in her honor... it's—I am—I'm happy to accept this burden and... and be a link. The missing link in your chain.

**Mosh:** Please present your coin.

**Argo:** My coin?

**Travis:** Yes, it's the coin that Jackle gave you with the inscription.

**Argo:** The coin. The coin. Oh boy. Uh, wait a minute, hold on... here is the coin.

**Mosh:** Excellent.

**Argo:** Blood and bone, rain and stone. And stuff.

**Mosh:** Thank you.

**Travis:** And he takes the coin, and he places it into a stone crucible, and places it into the forge, and begins to melt it. And he says...

**Mosh:** Repeat after me, Argonaut Keene. Blood and bone, rain and stone.

[music plays]

**Argo:** Blood and bone, rain and stone.

**Mosh:** Your burdens now shall be mine own.

**Argo:** Your burdens now shall be mine own.

**Mosh:** No longer shall I walk alone.

**Argo:** No longer shall I walk alone.

**Mosh:** I vow by blood to work unknown.

**Argo:** I vow by blood to work unknown.

**Mosh:** Rain and stone, blood and bone.

**Argo:** Rain and stone, blood and bone.

**Travis:** And he finished what he has been working on and places it into a vat of water to cool, and he raises a chain with the emblem that you have seen now a couple times, the overlapping rings, encircled, that you now recognize as chain links. And when you see this pendant, you finally realize why it seems so familiar to you.

When you and your mother were alone, when you were a small child, she would reveal to you this pendant that she kept hidden from others. And in fact, when you were very small, just two or three, she would even let you hold it and ask questions about it and catch the sunlight with it. That's where you've seen it before.

And Mosh places the cool, metal pendant over your neck.

**Mosh:** You are now the newest member of our branch of The Unbroken Chain. And so, I can reveal... our first, and pretty big secret. Do you

remember, early on in the semester, when Gary made such a big deal out of there not being any secret passages in the school?

**Argo:** Uh, yes. Barely.

**Mosh:** Well... that's not entirely true.

**Travis:** And he slips on a heavy, runed glove, and reaches up into the forge, and you hear a clunk, and the fire dies away, and you realize that it is actually a path. A tunnel to a metal door.

**Mosh:** Come with me, Argonaut Keene.

**Travis:** And you and Mosh and Jackle move to the door, and he uses that runed glove to open it. And inside, you pass through the shimmering doorway, and you find a large table. And at this large table is seated, uh, Dakota, the drinking teacher, Sabour, the turtle researcher; Ramos, the shield work professor; a female Dwarven woman that you don't recognize, as well as a young looking, silver-haired elven woman that you don't recognize. There are three chairs for you, Jackle, and Mosh, and they invite you to sit down.

**Mosh:** Now, let's get right to business. For your first assignment, Argonaut Keene... tell us everything you know about Fitzroy Maplecourt.

[music plays]

**Travis:** And across campus... Fitzroy and the Firbolg have laid down to sleep. When the Firbolg closes his eyes and drifts off, the dream begins again – only this time, you don't find yourself in a forest by a campfire, surrounded by your clan. You find yourself in Higglemas Wigenstaff's office.

You are standing in front of his desk. He holds, in one hand, the stone that you picked up from the magical ore cave. He is wearing the camera spectacles that you used to photograph the rift in space, that the xorn moved through.

**Higglemas:** This is very interesting. You say... the rift just appeared?

**Firbolg:** Yes.

**Higglemas:** That is interesting. You have done well. This is exactly what I asked for and more. Hmmm...

**Travis:** And there is a knock at the door. And he says...

**Higglemas:** Ah! That must be my next appointment.

**Travis:** And smiles at you, Firbolg.

**Higglemas:** Yes, come in.

**Travis:** And the door opens, and Leon enters.

**Leon:** Uh... yes, you wanted to see me?

**Higglemas:** Ah, yes. Uh, Firbolg, that's all. You may, uhh, forget.

**Travis:** And the vision begins to fade. But before it does... you hear Higglemas say...

**Higglemas:** Now, I understand that you've made a report to the Heroic Oversight Guild, Leon. That is... very disappointing.

**Travis:** And then... it all goes black. A bright flash of light, a whiff of smoke, and the dream fades.

[music plays and fades]

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