

The Adventure Zone: Graduation – Ep. 26, Little Gray Cells

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Gary: Heyyy, it's me, Gary! Previously, on The Adventure Zone: Graduation...

[theme music plays]

Gary: So, there's a demon prince named Gray. He runs a layer of hell that can poison your mind. Just ask Argo how he felt when he was there. Gray has been masquerading in our dimension as school administrator slash hero, Hieronymous Wigenstaff, for the last 50 years. He then declared war on three dudes names Fitzroy, Argo, and Master Firbolg.

In said declaration, he warned them not to sneak off, or there would be consequences. Fast forward to the last episode, when Fitz, Argo, and Rainer got back from the crypt, and discovered said consequences in motion. There's a dozen hellhounds tearing towards ten unconscious students, and they're without their Firbolg friend.

[theme music plays]

Travis: So, Fitzroy, Argo, and Rainer have just returned to the school. The three of you stand at the foot of the stairs leading to the main entry. At the top of the stairs is demon lord Gray, and he has just sent a dozen hellhounds tearing towards ten unconscious students.

The hellhounds started about 50 yards away, and you are about 20 yards away. And you're pretty sure, if you ran at full speed, you could get there before they do. What do you do?

Griffin: Um... I look at Argo, in a way that... y'know, we've been friends for a while now. I think that we operate on this level where you can just tell by me looking at you, uh, like, "Hey, you're way faster than me."

Clint: Really? You really think they have that kind of... hm. Okay.

Griffin: I mean, do you not? Do you not?

Clint: Yeah, a little. Yeah, I think there's some. Like, 62% of what you're getting at, I get.

Griffin: All the students are dead now. That's how—that's—and that's it, Dad. You've gotta be on your toes. You've gotta be—you gotta think on your feet.

Clint: Hellhounds are fast.

Griffin: That's true.

Clint: Hellhounds are really fast. Okay.

Travis: So you've acknowledged that he's faster than you.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: And? [laughs]

Griffin: Uh... I mean, I'll start sprinting towards the tree.

Travis: All three of you begin moving towards the tree. Rainer follows at the top speed her chair will carry her, which is about the same as your running speed.

Griffin: Can I, while I'm running, pull out the notebook of Farspeech and just write... "Back to school now"?

Travis: You sure can.

Griffin: Okay, I do that.

Travis: Um, the three of you reach with like 30 seconds to go before the, uh, hellhounds reach the students. So I'm gonna give you like, one round,

unfettered, to prepare, because there's 12 of them, three of you, and these students are completely defenseless. So you're going to need to set up some kind of something; otherwise, nine of them, at least, are gonna get past you.

Griffin: Do... do we know the students? Do we know any of the students?

Travis: Um, from where you are... I mean, it's pretty dark, and you don't recognize any of them. You probably have seen them around school, but no names that you know. If you want to roll a perception check, you can be sure.

Clint: Uh, let me do a perception check. 'Cause I have plus three. I have plus three on it.

Travis: Ooh la la!

Clint: And it's a seven. Sooo, I perceive *nothing*.

Griffin: I got a 16 plus four. I got 20.

Travis: Uh, there is one you recognize with that roll. Unconscious, you see Moon.

Griffin: Uhh... I know he was uh, recovering from a pretty gnarly injury. How does he look right now?

Travis: It's been some time. He's doing good. I mean, he's got some pretty cool scars that everyone agrees looks pretty cool, and he wears them hella well, y'know?

Griffin: Sure.

Clint: Now, they're unconscious, right?

Travis: Correct.

Clint: Are they attached to the tree? Shackled to the tree or anything?

Travis: They are. They're kind of tied in a round, y'know, like one might see in a Peter Pan movie, where all the Lost Boys are tied to the mast.

Griffin: With just a rope?

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: I mean... cut the rope. I don't—I don't have a—my weapon is a sort of uh, a crushing instrument. But uh, you got knives for days, right?

Clint: Oh yeah. Yeah, that's what I was thinking. I cut 'em with the uh... cut 'em with the daggers.

Travis: Okay, make a strength check for me?

Clint: Eh, not great. That's a 12... plus one, so... 13.

Travis: Uh, you're able to make it through, but it's taking you some time. So this is gonna be your entire turn before the hellhounds get here. What do you do, Fitz?

Griffin: That's a good... question. Um... I mean, I want to pull... I want to pull attention away... from the tree. I mean, these are beasts, right? I mean, they're demons, but they're like—they're not, uh...

Travis: They're bestial in nature.

Griffin: Okay. Uh... okay, I... drop to a knee and put my hands on the ground and try and cast a spell I've never done before. So, who knows. Uh, called Erupting Earth.

Travis: Ooh!

Griffin: Uh, a fountain of churned earth and stone erupts in a 20 foot cube, centered on that point that I choose. So I'm gonna just try and put it between us and the dogs. Um... and you can attack like that? I don't know if this makes—I don't know if any of the dogs are in range of this attack. But basically, it also makes the area difficult terrain.

Travis: Uh, let's say like, the lead four are in range.

Griffin: Alright, well, have them make a dexterity saving throw.

Travis: Uh, it—they fail.

Griffin: Okay. Uh, alright. So, they are gonna take 3d12 bludgeoning damage... so let's do that up real quick. Uhh... five... uhh... another five... and an 11! So, that is 21 points of bludgeoning damage.

Travis: Very good.

Griffin: And now, the ground between the dogs and the tree, uh, is difficult terrain, which means it takes twice movement to go through.

Travis: Okay. So they're slowed, which is a good call. And then, Rainer kind of makes sure that your flank is protected on the left, opposite where you came from. She casts, uh... her eyes glowing green, and you see a flash of that same green fire that her father casts with, and a spray of acid shoots from her left hand, covering the ground to your left flank, so that they can't sneak up on you over there. So they're all comin' straight at you. They're slowed down.

So let's roll for initiative!

Griffin: Ooh! A dirty 20.

Clint: Nat 20!

Travis: Ooh!

Griffin: Whoa, shit!

Travis: Okay, Argo first!

Clint: Great! [laughs] Okay. Um...

Travis: You have now freed the students, so you are ready to go.

Clint: Okay. Are they... [sighs] How would I... okay, no. I'm gonna create water.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: A classic.

Clint: I'm going to create water. I can make it rain. I can make it rain!

Travis: Yes you can. I'm proud of you, Dad.

Clint: So... I make it rain, and this is... a... third level. So it's... 20 gallons of water.

Griffin: That's not very much for rain.

Clint: And I'm makin' it rain in a... in a column around the tree they're tied to, so the rain is falling on... on the students. In an effort to wake them up.

Travis: Ahhh! I see, I see, I see! Very good! Um... sure! Yeah, y'know what? I like that. And so, that works. They sputter. Some of them are quicker to return to their feet than others. Um, they're, y'know, pretty groggy, but they are like, somewhat aware. We're gonna say they're all still prone, but they are now, uh, y'know, waking up. So, good move.

Fitzroy, you are up.

Griffin: I wanna... so, the students are awake?

Travis: Uh, they—yeah. They're rousing.

Griffin: Okay, and they're still around the tree.

Travis: Yes. They are no longer tied, though. So they are, uh... you feel like maybe, next turn, they'll be able to like, flee.

Griffin: Okay. Okay, how about this? We got a big fight ahead of us. Uh, I'm going to... put a hand on Argo's shoulder and say, uh...

Fitzroy: Are you ready for this?

Griffin: And cast Haste.

Travis: Ooh!

Clint: Ooh!

Griffin: Until the spell ends, the target's speed is doubled. It gains plus two bonus to AC. It has advantage on dexterity saving throws, and it gains an additional action on each of its turns. That action can be used to take, uh, a single attack, dash, disengage, hide, or use an object.

Travis: Nice! Did you get all that, Dad?

Clint: Uh, I will. When he repeats it.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: [laughs] Plus two to AC, double your speed, advantage on dexterity saving throws, and you get an additional action on each of your turns. And it lasts up to a minute, so...

Travis: That'll be a while. Uh, now, Griffin, go ahead and roll against that there chaos magic table for me?

Griffin: [snorts] Okay. Roll to see if it activates, or roll to see... roll because it activated, and you want—

Travis: It activated.

Griffin: Oh, fuck. Okay.

Travis: Yeah. I mean, you did the Disrupting Earth, and you caught me unawares, and I didn't think about it, but...

Griffin: Uh, 66. Sooo... uhh... okay. Up to three creatures you choose within 30 feet of you take 4d10 lightning damage. [laughs]

Travis: Oh boy!

Clint: Whoa! [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah, alright! Rarely are those uh—last time, I just turned into a fuckin' plant! That's actually pretty good! Uh, yeah. I'm gonna choose the dogs that I, uh, already got with the ground. Right?

Travis: Okay, yeah. So, you got—

Griffin: Well, three of them, anyway. Uh, ten... oh my goodness. Uhh... two. Ehh... eight. And... nine! Twenty-fuckin'-nine points of lightning damage! [laughing]

Travis: Yeah. So um... the three you hit, they are charred, and go down. They are deceased.

Fitzroy: That wasn't even an action, Gray! Did you see that?

Travis: Um, so that's gonna—[laughs] You're now down to, I'm going to say, eight and a half hellhounds.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Um, okay, so. The hellhounds—

Griffin: That's my favorite CBS sitcom.

Travis: Yeah.

Clint: How many were there to start with?

Travis: A dozen. 12.

Clint: Ahh.

Travis: So now, we've got, uhh... nine hellhounds coming in. But, because of the uneven ground, um, because of the acid, they are funneled a little bit more. So, the only, uh, four of them are able to get through on this round. One of them is going to attack you, Fitzroy.

Griffin: Yeah, I had that coming.

Travis: Um... that is 14, uh, plus...

Griffin: That hits. It hits.

Travis: 14 plus five?

Griffin: 14 is my AC.

Travis: Okay, yeah. So you're going to take, uh... seven, uh, piercing damage, and seven fire damage.

Griffin: Mmm. You really, uh...

Travis: Um, and then, one of them snaps at the student closest to them. Uhh, but that fails. Just barely. And then, the third one... that fails. Uh, and that fails! Okay, great! You're very lucky! It was three bad rolls.

Um, so, up next is Rainer. And Rainer... is going to animate one of those dead... hellhounds. Um, so, it's still smoking from where you hit it. Uh, and it rises back to its feet with a green flame glow in its burnt out eye holes, and comes charging in at another one. Let's say, the one that is already at half. Uh, and tackles it to the side, and they go off rolling together. So now you have eight, uh, hellhounds to deal with.

Fitzroy: This is the only scenario in which that is palatable and acceptable!

Travis: Uh, and so, we're back at the top with Argo.

Clint: They're freed. They're awake. If I say—yelling at them is not gonna be my action, right?

Travis: No. Speaking is always free.

Clint: Okay. So I'm gonna tell them...

Argo: Climb the tree! Climb the stupid tree! Up the tree! Everybody up the tree!

Clint: And then I'm going to attack the poor, pitiful looking one... I'm gonna pick the smaller hellhound left.

Travis: Okay. You pick the runt.

Clint: Yeah. Well... I'm a rogue.

Travis: Yeah, I know.

Clint: And I'm going to, uh, attack with Florence.

Travis: Okay.

Clint: 'Kay. So...

Travis: And I want you to know, Dad... you are flanked by, um, by your friends. You can sneak attack if you want.

Clint: I was saving that!

Travis: Well, don't save it anymore, you precious, beautiful butterfly.

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: Oh, okay. Well, I've been dying to use sneak attack!

Travis: Yeah.

Clint: Okay! So I'm gonna use Florence on the runt hellhound. So that's a 13 plus six with Florence. That's 19.

Travis: That hits.

Clint: And Florence does... 1d8 plus seven.

Travis: Pretty good.

Clint: So that's an eight! And seven, that's 15.

Travis: That does some damage. It's still not down. So...

Clint: Sneak attack! Sneak attack!! See how I did that?

Travis: Here's how I—I do. Here's how I picture it, right? Florence. You bury Florence in. But what's that in your left hand? It's your bracelet dagger, turned dagger! And you bury that in it—

Clint: Slapsidian!

Travis: Slapsidian is buried into its neck while not looking, um, and now you have its full attention, which is also going to be good for those students as they climb the tree.

Clint: So I have to do an extra d6 damage, right?

Travis: Correct.

Clint: That's a four!

Travis: Nice. Okay, uh, up next is Fitzroy.

Griffin: Uh, did you take your second bonus action that I gave you?

Travis: Oh, right!

Griffin: Or did you already forget?

Clint: Oh! Can I stab somebody else?

Travis: Yes you can.

Clint: Alright! Then, I'm gonna use my regular ol' rapier on the same hellhound.

Travis: On the same hound? Go for it!

Clint: I'm going to use the other rapier.

Travis: Okay.

Clint: Uh, to also stab this poor, innocent hellhound.

Travis: Okay.

Clint: Alright. So that's an 11, plus eight.

Travis: Nice.

Clint: That's 19.

Travis: That hits for sure.

Clint: And it's 1d8 plus four. That is a seven! So that's 11.

Travis: Oh, this one's lookin' roughs-a-daisy right there! Okay. Very good. Uh, now, Fitzroy, you are up.

Griffin: How many are left?

Travis: Uh, there are eight left. Um... and the one that Argo, uh, double—triple stabbed is lookin' *rough*.

Griffin: And the—

Clint: And isn't another one—yeah, another one's fighting with the reanimated dog, right?

Griffin: Yes.

Travis: Correct. But that one, now, is plenty distracted over there.

Griffin: Yeah, I don't think he's counting them. The students, uh... what's the status on them? Are they climbing the tree? I know Argo told them to.

Travis: Yeah, they're climbing the tree real well. At this point, uh, about half of them are up. Moon is helping people get up the tree. Um, but you would say, of the ten, like five of them are already up in the first kind of level of branches.

Griffin: Cool. 'Cause they're not gonna wanna be... on the ground for *this*. Uhh... I, who—Fitzroy, who is apparently the fuckin' Avatar, uh, stomps on the ground and conjures a tidal wave. With his final, third level spell slot.

Travis: Oh boy!

Griffin: Uh, a wave of water comes crashing down on an area within range. The area can be up to 30 feet long, up to ten feet wide, and up to ten feet tall. I'll probably just do all those. Uh, and uh... if uh, if Gray is in that area too, that's pretty cool. Uh, and everyone in that area is gonna make a dexterity saving throw.

Travis: Okay. Uh, while—okay. Let me do the saving throw, first.

So, I'm going to say, of the eight in that area, of the bad people... uh, three of them saved, and the other five did not.

Griffin: Okay. Uh—

Travis: And now, I think Argo should probably go ahead and save, too, right?

Griffin: Yeah, that's only fair. But, you have uh, advantage on dexterity saving throws!

Clint: Well, that's not real great. That's an eight.

Griffin: But, you have advantage.

Clint: Plus eight. That would've been 16.

Griffin: 16 ties.

Clint: And that's a 13 plus eight.

Griffin: Oh yeah, you're good.

Travis: There you go.

Clint: Plus, I would also think, since he breathes water and he's under water, he would also have even more of an advantage.

Travis: And good news, Griffin – the students save as well.

Griffin: Well, I wasn't aiming—I mean, I was aiming it away from the students, right? In a 30 foot line away from...

Travis: Okay, fair.

Griffin: I just figured that—

Travis: So tell me what happens?

Griffin: Uh, I conjure a big ass wall of water. Uh, all of the creatures who did not save take 19 points of bludgeoning damage.

Travis: Ooh!

Griffin: Uh, yeah, baby. It's a third level spell. Uh, and they are knocked prone, which means they have to spend their move standing up. The ones who saved only take eight bludgeoning damage, and they are not knocked prone.

Travis: Okay, great. Uh, go ahead and roll that d100 for me.

Griffin: Oh shit, that includes—that includes Argo, sorry. [laughs] You take eight damage.

Travis: Yeah, eight damage for Argo.

Clint: Wait, I just—I avoided it!

Griffin: Yeah, but you take damage on a save. For this spell... this juicy spell.

Travis: Half damage.

Clint: Well, alright...

Griffin: Alright. Uh, so I need to roll 1d100.

Travis: Yep.

Griffin: I've figured out how to do that. Ooh, that's a high number! That's an 85.

Travis: Is that good or bad? Higher is better?

Griffin: I don't know, I don't know. I know if you roll a 100, or... it like, lets you—you like, roll on it every turn for the next like, ten minutes or something wild like that. Uh, 85. You cast Mirror Image. I don't know what that means, but let's see. Three illusory duplicates of yourself appear in your space!

Travis: Ooh!

Griffin: Until the spell ends, the duplicates move with you and mimic your actions, shifting positions so it's impossible to track which image is real. You can use your action to dismiss the illusory duplicates. Each time a creature targets you with an attack during the spell's duration, roll a d20 to determine whether the attack targets one of your duplicates.

Travis: Okay. Cool! Well, up next is the hellhounds! The first one, because the five of them are prone, so they're gonna spend that turn getting up. So we have one left. One is gonna take a bite at illusory Fitzroy...

Fitzroy: Come at us, bro!

Fitzroy: Yes, bro, come at us!

Fitzroy: What have you got, bro?

Fitzroy: Let's see what you've got, bro!

Griffin: So, you're trying to attack me? Okay. If you have three duplicates, you must roll a six or higher to change the attack's target to a duplicate.

Travis: Oh, you roll. Okay.

Griffin: Yeah, I roll. So I rolled a ten. So I'm gonna divert him to a duplicate, and then, the AC equals ten plus my dexterity modifier, which is plus two, so 12. And if you hit—if you hit a duplicate, it is destroyed.

Travis: Oh okay, now I get it.

Griffin: So you didn't roll a 12, right?

Travis: Uh, well, I rolled an 11 plus five. So 16.

Griffin: Okay, then I—one of the fake Fitzroys explodes.

Travis: So, uh, the hellhound takes a bite out of the illusory Fitzroy, and it just... pfft! Into air!

Fitzroy: Fitzroy 3! No!

Travis: Was that your favorite, least favorite, or middle?

Fitzroy: They're all my favorite. Don't make me choose.

Travis: That's beautiful. So, the two hellhounds close on Argo, and they are both about to lunge at him when a shadow briefly crosses the moon.

[music plays]

Travis: Your attention is drawn upwards, but all you see is a silhouette. A silhouette that grows larger and larger as a giant eagle swoops down and slams into one of the hellhounds targeting Argo... and the Firbolg has entered the fight.

Griffin: Hi Justin.

Clint: Yay!

Griffin: It's a really fun fight.

Justin: And Justin has entered the show.

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: Everybody catch me up. What are we fighting? Zombies? Skeletons? I am ready for anything.

Clint: Dogs.

Griffin: It was 12 dogs. Now it's like, seven, or...

Clint: Puppies.

Griffin: Yeah. But they're bad.

Travis: Um, and we're gonna say it's your turn, Firbolg. Interrupting the hellhounds' turn.

Justin: So who do we have on the battlefield? Lay it out for me. Pretend, if you will, that I... pretend, uh, that I have, uh, zoned out and uh, needed you as I played video games in an adjoining room.

Travis: Oh boy. Hey, thanks. Um, I'm going to say...

Justin: No, just for a moment, I got to be a listener of The Adventure Zone, rather than a participant. What a rare—

Clint: How was that experience?

Justin: Uh, without Justin on the show, it really went downhill.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, you are currently in bird form, in giant eagle form. I will let you transition out of that for free, since I made that choice and you didn't.

Justin: Hell no! Giant eagle?

Travis: Yep. Um, you've got one—

Justin: I shall play the role admirably!

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, you got one hellhound targeting Argo, one targeting Fitz, one you just knocked prone, and five other ones that were prone, and are now back on their feet, and will soon be attacking the tableau in front of you, which is, uh... there are students climbing into the tree to safety. Most of them now reached at least the first level, and you have, uh, Rainer, Fitzroy, and Argo fighting off these hellhounds.

Fitzroy: There's three of us now!

Fitzroy: There's three of us—

Fitzroy: There's three of us now! Don't get freaked out!

Firbolg: [makes an eagle noise]

Justin: Giant eagles are un-freak-out-able.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: Um... I'm going to use my incredible... uh, beak, to begin, on whichever hellhound looks the weakest.

Travis: Um, that's going to be the one you just battered. Uhh...

Justin: Perfect.

Travis: Yeah. Which is now bloodied.

Justin: Okay. So, I will roll a... sorry sorry sorry... 14 plus five. 19.

Travis: That hits.

Justin: Okay. And that is uh, 1d6 plus three piercing. Oh, six! Nice! Nine points.

Travis: Okay, yeah. That hellhound goes down. So now there are seven left.

Justin: Alright, whoever is next... next to me gets the talons!

Travis: Uh, that's going to be the one targeting Argo.

Justin: Bad news for you, idiot! I got multi-attack! And a 17...

Travis: That hits.

Justin: ... plus five, 22.

Travis: Then it definitely hits.

Justin: Uh, and that's gonna be... 2d6 plus three. Six, two, eight... 11.

Travis: Okay. Solid hit. That one is bloodied now, too. Uh, and up next is the hellhound targeting Argo, who now is going to turn and try to attack the giant eagle that is swiping at it. Uhh... and that is a 16 plus, uh, five.

Justin: Uh, his armor class would be different from...

Travis: Yeah, I'm gonna say, because you're flying, I'm gonna say disadvantage as well.

Justin: Okay. It's 13.

Travis: Well, that's an 18 plus five, so it's going to hit you either way.

Justin: [laughs] Most assuredly.

Travis: Uh, so you're going to take 14 points of damage, total.

Justin: Okay.

Clint: That's gonna cost you some feathers.

Travis: It is.

Justin: Yeah. Gonna cost me half my life. Giant eagles are beautiful and majestic, and very susceptible to hellhound attack, it would seem.

Travis: Uh, up next is Rainer. Rainer points her hands towards the hellhound that the Firbolg has been swiping at with its talons. Her eyes glow green once more, and this time, a beam of black energy shoots out from her hands, and lashes towards the creature... uhh, and that hits. Um, and you see it immediately look a lot more sickly, as it takes 12 points of poison damage, and it rots away before you! So that one's down now, too!

Griffin: Makin' short work of these pups.

Travis: Uh, so, you got six left. You've got half of them down. And up next is Argonaut Keene.

Clint: What happened to all the water in the tidal wave spell?

Griffin: Uh, I mean, it's probably splashed down to the ground. Made a big muddy mess of the earthquake that I did earlier.

Clint: Do I still have bonus action?

Travis: Yes.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: I'm going to... cast Shape Water... on the water underneath the uh, hellhounds.

Travis: Okay.

Clint: I'm going to freeze that water.

Travis: Nice.

Clint: And... that's what I'm gonna... do. [laughs]

Travis: Okay. Um, so you free—

Clint: Just to hamper their speed and slow `em down a little bit.

Travis: Okay. I'm gonna do a dex saving throw for them... oh my god! That's a one. That's a one, folks. So yeah, that ground gets all slippery. Now it's some frozen mud. And the five that had just stood up... oh, they slip and go prone again! Oh, boy!

Griffin: Dad, that could just be your standard action.

Clint: Y'know, I was just thinkin' that.

Griffin: 'Cause you have a—and now you can do the bonus. The bonus Jonas.

Clint: Who's the most wounded of the hellhounds? Am I near it?

Travis: They're all pretty equal at this point.

Clint: Y'know what? I'm gonna do the one that hurt my bird buddy.

Travis: Okay.

Clint: I'm going to, uh... I'm going to stab it.

Justin: Yes. Stab.

Clint: With uh... with Florence again!

Travis: Okay.

Clint: Um, so that's a 26.

Travis: Oh, that hits for sure!

Clint: That does... a 1d8 plus seven...

Justin: [sings rhythmically] A 1d8, a 1d8, a 1d8...

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: [laughs] So good!

Clint: [laughs] Six plus seven is 13.

Travis: Uh, that one goes down! There are five left standing around you.

Clint: And I disengage.

Travis: And you disengage. Yeah you do, son.

Justin: Yeah, hey, listen. As a guy that did that for half the episode, let me tell you – it is sweeeeet!

Clint: Okay. I'm gonna sit back and have me a pop!

Travis: Make a wisdom saving throw for me?

[eerie music plays]

Clint: Can I do a dex saving throw, maybe?

Travis: No.

Clint: 17 minus one, 16.

Travis: Um, so... with a 16, uh, you feel... a pressure behind your eyes. Uh, and you are—your attention is drawn to where Gray is standing, and you realize that he has been focused on you for the entirety of this battle. And he has one eyebrow quirked, and he's kind of half-smiling and nodding. And you take... five points of psychic damage.

Clint: And his smile? Oh, that's so sad!

Travis: And up next is Fitzroy!

Griffin: Um... do I see this happen? I guess it would be pretty tough to see this happen.

Travis: I mean, roll a perception check for me.

Griffin: Uh, that's a 15 plus four. 19.

Travis: Yeah, you register that, for some reason, Argo has now looked at uh, at Gray, and is kind of like, distracted for a moment.

Griffin: Yeah. Okay. Uh, I'm gonna... I'm gonna point two fingers toward Gray. This is something I've been wanting to do this whole fight. Just to really kind of test the fight waters with Gray. And I'm gonna cast Mind Spike.

Travis: Whoa!

Griffin: Yeah, it's a cool sounding spell. I reach into the mind of one creature within range. The target must make a wisdom saving throw, taking 3d8 psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Uhh, there's some more stuff it does on a failed save, but...

Travis: Uh, that... is a failed save.

Griffin: M'kay. So... he is going to take... 12 psychic damage.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: And uh, for the next hour, I'm gonna know exactly where he is at all times.

Travis: Oh!

Griffin: Just for the next hour.

Travis: I like that! So, the spell hits him. Tell me what it looks like.

Griffin: Uh, I don't think it looks like anything. I think, uh, he reacts to it like something—like I just threw a fucking volleyball at his face. Uh, but it was... it was an invisible volleyball. But I threw it—I imagine just kind of

like... because maybe it's just because it's called Mind Spike, I was imagining sort of just a lawn dart. So just a lot of outdoor sport activities in this reference.

Travis: I think, uh, he is surprised to have felt damage, period, let alone like, psychic damage. That's not the kind of thing a demon prince like Gray is used to experiencing, so he is both furious, but also... y'know what? Roll one more perception check for me.

Griffin: Watch this one be a stinker. Yep, this one a stinker. Two plus four, six.

Travis: There's some other—there's some other emotion that you can't quite place, before he—

Griffin: Horny.

Travis: —makes a swipe with his hand.

Griffin: Horny.

Travis: It's not horny.

Griffin: Hungry?

Travis: And makes a swipe with his hand, ripping open reality, and stepping through, and he's gone. But you still know, he has retreated to his sanctuary in his hell dimension.

Griffin: Okay. And I know—I mean, I already knew where this was. It's not like I'm getting sort of extra, uh... extra deets. I mean, I don't know. I think I've given you... what the spell can do. Is there any sort of... we haven't seen the inside of this building.

Travis: No, but I will give you that... I mean, it's a pretty large, um... it's a pretty large structure. Um, and so, you feel like you kind of know where he

retreated to, and that you might be able to, uh... you might be able to access that information again if you needed it.

Griffin: Okay, cool.

Travis: Um, and up next are the hellhounds. But... with Gray disappearing, and them rising from prone and losing over half their number, uh, and they're all damaged... they all turn to retreat.

Um, now, they have some distance to go before they make it into any kind of clearing. If you guys want to take any last shots at `em, please do.

Griffin: I mean... that feels in bad sport. That feels a—y'know, they're still sweet puppies with their cute, adorable toe beans. And I don't want to hurt a puppies.

Clint: I stab the one just in front of me.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Okay. Okay. Roll—roll an attack, I guess.

Clint: That's a ten plus... let's see, who am I stabbing it with? With my—the rapier. That's an eight. So that's 18.

Travis: How many hands slash rapiers do you have? Because you keep saying `other rapier,' and it makes it seem like you have used four different rapiers.

Clint: I have two! I have two rapiers!

Travis: Oh, okay. Cool.

Clint: Don't you remember? They're crossed on my back like Deadpool?

Travis: I've forgotten, I guess.

Griffin: Cool! God, he's fuckin' funny.

Travis: Yeah, Deadpool's so funny, you guys. Um, yeah, you—

Clint: Did you know he was Green Lantern, too? Did you—yeah.

Travis: Oh! You mean Ryan Reynolds, not Deadpool. I was very confused for a moment.

Justin: Deadpool knows he's in a movie.

Travis: I love that.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: But does Dad know he's in a podcast?

Travis: Oh, right. So go ahead and roll damage for me, Dad!

Clint: Okay! Uh, let's see... that...

Justin: [laughing] I'm thinkin' about Deadpool.

Griffin: Yeah, man.

Travis: Yeah, right? I like how he says 'fuck.'

Griffin: Yeah. He calls somebody like, a bag of dick tips.

Clint: Oh my gosh, I've lost my eight.

Griffin: Funny.

Clint: Five... plus... uhh... four.

Travis: Yeah, so that one goes down, sliding across the frozen mud.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, as the four others skitter off into the forest, wounded and whimpering.

[music plays]

[ad break]

[music plays]

Travis: Uh, the battle has finished. Uh, the students dazedly make their way back inside, and when you turn, standing in the entryway of the school itself, of the main building, is a broad-shouldered Warforged. It is six and a half feet of dented, but well-polished metal and living wood, and it gestures to where the fight has concluded and says...

Warforged: Not entirely disappointing. Meet me at Jackle's balcony tomorrow at the midday bell if you would like to win your war.

Travis: And it turns and walks back inside.

Firbolg: Skreeeeeeee!

Fitzroy: Oh. God. Can you...

Argo: Yeah, he needs a...

Fitzroy: Do you need to—

Argo: Can you turn him back?

Fitzroy: Do you need to go back, or... do you want to stay bird for a while?

Firbolg: Cawreeeeee!

Fitzroy: Hey, where did you go?

Justin: That's bird for "don't watch," 'cause you will not enjoy the visuals of what is about to happen.

Clint: Oh, he's gonna eat those dogs, isn't he?

Firbolg: [makes awful gurgling noises]

Fitzroy: Good lord.

Firbolg: [continues making atrocious sounds]

Argo: Oh my god. I wish I hadn't looked.

Fitzroy: What is that?! Are those bones?!

Argo: Where are the feathers goin'? Oh, that's horrible.

Firbolg: [makes some more awful sounds] I am sorry you had... observed this. It... feels worse than it looks.

Fitzroy: Impossible.

Argo: Must have felt like hell, then.

Justin: It's not listed in the spell description how incredibly painful...

Griffin: Can't feel good.

Justin: ... Wild Shape... no. It's horrific. To get those thin—to get those thin bones, y'know what I mean? To get the thin bones. Like, your bones hollow out. Can you imagine?

Clint: Ooh! Man.

Fitzroy: Uh, we're glad to have had your assistance, uh, Master Firbolg. How fares the homestead?

Firbolg: I will not speak on this. [sighs]

Fitzroy: Oh. Okay. Um... well... good work out there.

Firbolg: Yes.

Travis: And Rainer says...

Rainer: I'm goin' to bed. I'll see you guys at breakfast.

Fitzroy: Yeah. That's all...

Travis: And she floats off.

Fitzroy: I think we... I mean...

Firbolg: I must retire, too.

Justin: And the Firbolg starts flapping his arms.

Clint: [laughs]

Firbolg: Oh. This is... ohh, great shame. I have been eagle too long.

Travis: You've all returned to your dormitory and laid down for slumber, or half meditation, be it whatever your weird way of sleeping is. And Argo... almost as soon as you close your eyes, you are back in the hell dimension. And Gray stands before you, smiling. And he says...

Gray: Oh, Argo... I am so very, very happy. I know the effect of my hell when I see it.

Travis: And suddenly, he is standing right in front of you, pressing his thumbs to your temples.

Gray: This is going to be a lot of fun.

Travis: And your vision takes on a slight green tint, but quickly grows greener until you can see nothing else. Your brain is on fire now, and you can stand it no longer. You wake up screaming, but try as you might, you can't remember what you were dreaming about.

But Fitzroy, you wake at the sound of Argo screaming. And for a second, your mental image, your map of where Gray is, reads as him standing at Argonaut's bed. But when you look, there's nothing there... and that's when the hour ends, and you lose track of Gray.

Griffin: Fuck. Okay.

Travis: At breakfast, things feel different. Word has gotten around about the hellhounds' attack. Even the completely oblivious folks have started to notice that things are going wrong. It registers that the hall is less full than normal. You guess that some folks decided to stay safely locked in their dorms this morning.

However, there does seem to be an extra attendee this morning. Heroic Oversight Guild investigator, Althea Song, has entered the room, and you see her scanning, looking for you. And when she sees you, she quickly, but discreetly, makes her way over.

Althea: I'm sorry I haven't been back sooner, guys. I had everything ready to go to make the full inspection of the school, but at the last minute, it was cancelled by my boss's boss. Some bullshit about wasted resources. I had to wait for an excuse to get back here, and I can only stay for a day or two. How are you holding up? How are things here?

Fitzroy: Mmm... alive. Most of us.

Althea: That's good.

Fitzroy: Yeah. There was a big fight last night. Uh, Gray attempted to kill ten students, but ended up getting zero. 'Cause he's a real dunce.

Althea: Thank you for that.

Fitzroy: You're welcome? Um...

Althea: I was going to say thank God, but now I can't remember if God exists in this fantasy universe or not.

Griffin: [laughs] This, or any deities.

Fitzroy: Yeah, we're not doing great, Althea. I mean, it would be better if we weren't in a war with a demon king prince. Um... yeah. You got any good news for us?

Althea: Uh... all I can say is, whatever I can do to help, I'm at your disposal. Do you need—is there anything I can do?

Fitzroy: You are an administrator for a guild of heroes. There's like, wicked a lot of things you can do.

Althea: I mean, the problem is, as is shown by whatever red tape I'm running up against... I think Gray might have some powerful friends over at the guild.

Argo: Well, we wouldn't want you to cheese them off now, would we?

Althea: Well, it's not about that. It's... I don't want to make things worse for you!

Firbolg: With all due respect... [laughs] Things... could not be much worse.

Althea: Okay. Uh... I will try to find... people that I trust. Um, and see what support I can drum up around the guild.

Fitzroy: Yeah. It's just... what is the point of having a guild of heroes... if they're not going to stand against the literal apocalypse? It—what's the point, Althea?

Althea: I mean, the guild is there... [sighs] ... to make sure that registered heroes and villains follow the rules that are established by the Heroic Oversight Guild. It's not... it's been a long time... since the guild was there to complete heroic deeds.

Argo: I think you should uh, cut her some slack. I think she understands the political situation much better than we do, and if she says that, uh, they can't help, they can't help.

Althea: Well, it's not that we can't help.

Argo: No, I know. I'm on your side. I understand completely.

Fitzroy: Okay, Althea. Sorry. Yes. Argo is right. It is not your fault. It's just... the—Gray and his folks don't have this kind of bureaucratic road block ahead of them, and so, that's why they're able to do things like... tie up ten students to a tree and try and kill them with dogs. Um... there's no good guy vers—

Firbolg: Maybe we should try this.

Fitzroy: Oh. You think?

Firbolg: Perhaps. Um... we tie up... ten, um... demons? To a tree? And... put good dogs... to... get—sic—sic them.

Fitzroy: Yeah, I mean, it's worth a shot. Do you wanna—

Firbolg: Do you have ten good dogs?!

Fitzroy: I'm sure we could scrounge up ten good dogs. Would you mind spearheading this effort, or...

Firbolg: I will be one dog. You must find nine.

Fitzroy: Okay. [laughs] Well why don't you, as a dog, entice other dogs into your dog army?

Firbolg: Mmm! The Rough Riders.

Fitzroy: This is a—it writes itself!

Justin: [laughs]

Fitzroy: War Bud! We can—War Bud. Is this anything?

Justin: [laughing]

Fitzroy: Uh, anyway, Althea, yes. Uh, get some good heroes together. Talk to, uh... talk to, uh... the Bloodhawk Barb. Yeah. Uh, y'know. See who she knows. Get the—get the network going, y'know? Spearhead your own little heroic guild of actual heroes who do hero shit.

Althea: Oh. Um... yeah. Yeah! You got it! Um... I'm on it.

Travis: And she heads off.

[music plays]

Travis: Um, you finish your meals, and you head out of the hall, and Crabtree the artificer stops you in the hallway and says...

Crabtree: You boys got a minute? I finished up those glasses you had me workin' on Fitzroy, and uh... I got a few more surprises for ya that I think you're gonna like.

Fitzroy: Uh, more like, accessories? Like a brooch?

Crabtree: Well... something like that.

Travis: Uh, so you follow her down to her, uh, artificery. And she first says...

Crabtree: Okay, so uh, these are the uh... I call 'em True Sight Lenses. Now, these stylish spectacles... uh, you wear these, you can grant yourself true sight. Now, it's only gonna last for like, a minute. We don't wanna go longer than that, or the runes will burn out. So, after you use them, it's gonna take some time for them to recharge.

Travis: They charge back up after one long rest.

Griffin: Yeah, I got you.

Clint: [laughs]

Crabtree: Um, and I got one pair for each of the three of you, so you can match!

Fitzroy: Oh, great! I don't know if this is gonna be everyone's style, but um... yeah. Y'know what? I don't really want them to match. Ooh. Is that our thing, guys? We didn't talk about this.

Argo: Mm... y'know, I really like a goggle lookin' thing, y'know? But I'll go along with whatever.

Crabtree: Okay. I thought you guys would be a little more excited than this, but okay.

Firbolg: I am extremely excited.

Crabtree: Thank you. But that's not all, because I've been thinkin' about some things.

Travis: And she pulls out like, a velvet-lined tray with three rings in it. And she said...

Crabtree: I made one for each of you. Uh, this first one here is called The Ring of Truth. Now, this ring, I imbued it with sympathetic psychic magic. So, this one's for you, uh, Fitzroy.

Travis: Argo, make a wisdom saving roll for me.

Clint: That would be a seven, minus one. That's a six.

Travis: You are overwhelmed by irrational jealousy.

Griffin: I mean, it doesn't help that it looks fucking good, and I like, flex. It looks nice.

Argo: I could really—I—it—fine. Okay. Great. Yeah. Go ahead, now. Give me my shitty ring.

Fitzroy: Wow.

Crabtree: Okay, well... yeah. Hold on, Argo. I'm gettin' to you. So, Fitzroy, uh, while holdin' hands with someone with this ring on, you ask them a question, and if they believe their answer to be true, the ring will vibrate. Now, it is important to note, because of the nature of sympathetic magic, you can only use this ring with the informed consent of the second party. So you're not gonna be able to trick anybody into like, y'know, a lie detector test. You gotta tell them, I'm using this ring, and they have to agree.

Fitzroy: Yeah, I can, uh... yeah, I'll for sure do that. I'm definitely gonna use this and not forget about it.

Crabtree: Now, for you, Argo, I didn't forget ya. I call this the Eavesdrop Ring. Now, you place your ringed hand against a wall, door, or window, and voila! You'll hear just as if you are standing in the next room for 30 seconds. Now, results may vary depending on the thickness of the wall, but... and

y'know, the materials used, or if there's any kind of like, magical warding in place.

Travis: Uh, and that also is one charge per long rest. Same with The Ring of Truth.

Griffin: `Kay.

Argo: [flatly] Fine. Yeah, that's great.

Crabtree: For the Firbolg, I'm particularly proud of this one.

Travis: Argo, make a wisdom saving roll for me.

Clint: That's a four minus one. [laughing] That's a three.

Travis: Once again, even before you hear what it is, the fact that the Firbolg is getting something and you're not makes your blood boil.

Argo: Does—does it not make much sense to give all the rings to one person? I mean, to—to kind of combine all the... fine.

Crabtree: I mean, I kind of created them for each...

Argo: Yeah. I'll use my x-ray ring. My x-ray specs ring. Go ahead.

Crabtree: Okay. Uh, anyways, uh... sorry. Uh, Firbolg, you get The Tangled Web. Now, the ring on your finger is a triggering device for this.

Travis: And she holds up her hands, uh, and it appears to you that she is holding... nothing. And she says...

Crabtree: This is a spider silk veil, almost impossible to detect, especially if they're not looking for it. And it hangs just like this.

Travis: And she like, hangs it over your ears. Once again, still seems like nothing.

Crabtree: But, when you activate the ring, for five minutes, when you speak, illusory magic in the veil will translate it to lies. So you don't have to lie. You can speak the truth all you want, and the veil will do the work for ya. Now, I have to warn ya... the lies are fairly simple. It's not sophisticated enough to, y'know, establish elaborate lies, so there's no guarantee that the listener will believe that you're tellin' the truth.

Firbolg: Hm. I... thank you for this.

Travis: And that is also one charge per long rest. You squeeze your fist to activate it, and while it is activated, as long as you are squeezing your fist, it will act as a lie filter.

Justin: And what's the name of that?

Travis: Tangled Web.

Justin: Alright.

Argo: Hey, either of you gentlemen wish to trade rings with me? I mean, I—this is pretty cool. This ring, uh, will, like, let you listen through walls and be like a spy!

Fitzroy: I mean, I'll—

Argo: Either one of ya?

Fitzroy: If it's that important to you, Argo. You seem very up in arms about it. I'll trade rings with you.

Argo: Well, no, it's just that I—y'know, I just... I think I would... forget it.

Fitzroy: No, let's do it. Come on, let's do it. Let's trade.

Argo: No, no! Fine! No! It's fine!

Travis: You hear the midday bell sounding, and it's time to head for your meeting with Azamondelius. You find it standing on the balcony of Jackle's office. It turns to face you as you walk out.

Azamondelius: You are late.

Fitzroy: Mmm... I don't think so.

Azamondelius: I said to meet at the midday bell, and the midday bell rang two minutes ago.

Firbolg: This is not our fault.

Azamondelius: [sighs] My name is Azamondelius. I am a Warforged. I am a war hero. And I have fought, won, and killed more than I care to count. And I am very good at counting.

Firbolg: Congratulations. This is an important skill.

Azamondelius: I say this not to impress you, but as a matter of fact, so that you will—

Firbolg: Too late, I am already extremely impressed with your counting!

Azamondelius: I do not have much time before I have to return to not talking to you. Please listen.

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Firbolg: Abrupt.

Azamondelius: Jackle and Mosh caught me up to speed about what you are facing, and the war you are to fight. If you want to have any hope of winning, I am to advise you. Do you accept this?

Fitzroy: Can I just... can I just do a thing real quick? Can I just do a thing real quick? Real quick.

Azamondelius: What is the thing you are going to do?

Fitzroy: I'm gonna make sure that you're telling the truth, using this ring.

Azamondelius: Is this a test?

Fitzroy: It... I mean, yes. I have to make sure that you are not actually an agent working against us. Because we already got caught up in one of them traps. So... just real—it'll take two seconds.

Azamondelius: Very well.

Griffin: And I grab its hand, and I say, uh...

Fitzroy: Are you in league with the demon prince, Gray?

Azamondelius: No.

Travis: And roll an insight check for me.

Griffin: Uh, 14 plus zero.

Travis: That does it. The ring makes it really easy.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: You feel a buzz on your finger, and you know that Az is telling the truth.

Fitzroy: Okay. Alright. Uh, it's on the level. Let's do it.

Azamondelius: It is up to you to decide the best course of action. But there are five questions that you need to answer if you are going to win. Question one: how are you going to mask your true plan?

Fitzroy: That's a tricky one. We're going to actually prepare a war effort, and we could use your help with that, but that's not actually the plan. So that—the war is the—is the façade. Do you understand?

Azamondelius: Excellent. Question two: how will you distract Gray during your assault?

Fitzroy: I mean, the... here's the plan as far as we've got it. We're gonna wait 'til he's asleep in his bed, but we're not gonna be asleep, and we're gonna like, just get him.

Azamondelius: This brings us to question three: how can you ensure that Gray is in his palace when you strike?

Fitzroy: Wait 'til night. Easy. Next.

Azamondelius: How do you know Gray sleeps? That's a free question. That's not even included in my five.

Fitzroy: Yeah, that's a good point. I don't even sleep, really, so there's precedent. Uh, okay. We'll circle back on that one.

Azamondelius: Question four: how will you get the weapons needed from the Heroic Oversight Guild?

Fitzroy: [whispers] Oh shit, we should've asked Althea for help with that.

Firbolg: Yes... in retrospect.

Fitzroy: I'll send an owl or something. Uh, yeah, we have friends there.

Azamondelius: And this brings us to the fifth and most important question... why six months?

Fitzroy: I mean, we didn't set that time table.

Azamondelius: That is the question. Why did Gray set the time table of six months?

Firbolg: Why?

Fitzroy: I assume it's because he thought that's how much time we would need?

Firbolg: Hm... but wait. What if... this is how much time *he* needs?

Azamondelius: Indeed, Master Firbolg.

[theme music plays]

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