

The Adventure Zone: Graduation – Ep. 29, Princi-Pal

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[theme music plays]

Travis: The three of you approach Hieronymous' office. This is your first time making it to the top of the school. All three of you make a perception check.

Griffin: I thought you were gonna make us roll athletics for like, all of the many many stairs.

Travis: That's up to you guys. Yeah. You can decide how winded you are.

Griffin: Ooh, that's really good.

Justin: Uh, 24.

Griffin: Uh, that's a... 18.

Clint: 19 plus three. 22.

Travis: Uh, you guys percept the hell out of some stuff.

Griffin: Jeeze!

Travis: So, first, you see that the door is hanging off of its hinges. Not that it's been damaged, but rather that the door frame has warped and twisted, and the door simply no longer fits. Second, you are being hit by waves of pure, white hot rage. They're not directed at you – they're simply radiating out from where you are approaching. And the force of will behind them is such that you can see them make visible ripples in the air. And just as you realize this, you hear a roar, and it says...

Voice: *You!*

Travis: And all three of you make a strength saving throw.

Griffin: Wow!

Clint: You're throwin'!

Griffin: Oh baby. That's a 16 plus seven, 23.

Clint: Um... 19 plus...

Griffin: Wicked!

Clint: One! 20! Dirty 20!

Griffin: Also good, Juice, right? Justin also did good.

Justin: Um... 19 plus two! 21!

Travis: The three of you feel a pull towards the room, but you're able to resist it by bracing your feet and grabbing the walls. But clearly, Gray wants to talk to you just about as much as you want to talk to him.

Griffin: Okay. I knock tenderly on the bad door.

Travis: The door doesn't take much. It's barely on there, and so, you knock, and it falls inwards, revealing the room that was formerly Hieronymous' office has now been corrupted by decades of Gray's presence. It's as much like his hell dimension as the dimension itself. However, it is also, in a word, trashed.

Not what you would expect from the power of a demon prince; more like what you would see from a petulant teenager throwing a tantrum. There's destruction everywhere, and in the space below the ceiling – the ceiling is much higher than it should be – you see swirling debris. Rocks, chunks of furniture, bits of stone from the walls, all swirling like a slow, angry tornado.

And in the center of the destruction is Gray. Gone is any resemblance to Hieronymous. He towers over the three of you, his wet slate patterned skin pulled tight over unnatural muscles. His horns twist and turn back on themselves. Long, obsidian talons flex at the end of disturbingly thin fingers. And one more thing – his eyes are filled with hatred, and they are focused on you, Fitzroy. And he says...

Gray: You did this! You *hypocrite!*

Fitzroy: What did I—what—I just got here! You saw—I just came up the stairs! What did I—what could I possibly have done?

Travis: Make a dexterity saving throw.

Griffin: He's gonna keep throwing stuff. I'll just leave. 15 plus two, 17.

Travis: A piece of furniture broken from the swirl above you flies down, smashes into your shoulder, and does four points of damage as you dodge out of the way. Clearly, he was aiming for your head.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: He says...

Gray: You attack me with corrupted chaos magic so that I can't defend, and now this? You use that magic to bar me from my home! And you come here to what – to gloat? I... will... *kill you*, Fitzroy!

Fitzroy: Wait, wait, wait wait wait. Uhh, first of all, we're gonna come back to the corrupted chaos magic thing, 'cause I need—some gaps that need to be filled in, there. As for the other thing, I think we did know that that was gonna happen – but Gray, I'll be honest, I did not even think about the side effect that you would not be able to go home to hell.

The good news is, you're here. In the, y'know, the material world. And we got lots of good stuff up here, baby! We got, um... uh, we got... what do we got? We got crepes! Uh, we got music! Music!

Firbolg: Mmm.

Fitzroy: Poetry!

Travis: All three of you make dexterity saving throws.

Griffin: I did not think that would be a—

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: Particularly persuasive argument. Now we're talking! Five plus two. Seven.

Justin: I got seven plus two, nine.

Clint: I got 14 plus... I believe... my dexterity is off the—is eight, so that's a 22.

Travis: Okay. So uh, Firbolg and Fitzroy, uh, rubble that has broken off of the walls slams into you, knocking you to your feet for 11 damage.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: You, Argo, are able to dodge out of the way just barely, taking zero points of damage as a chair smashes where you were just standing.

Gray: How dare you come in here and gloat and make flippant jokes! I will kill the three of you, and then, I will bring you back, and I will kill you again, and again, *and again!*

Firbolg: I... notice your rage has extended beyond Fitzroy.

Fitzroy: Sort of a splash damage effect.

Firbolg: Splash effect.

Fitzroy: Um, can you do me a favor, Gray? I know you're pretty peeved right now, but... I imagine your grasp of the arcane is fairly strong. Take a real good, long look at me.

Travis: And Gray walks over and says...

Gray: Much obliged.

Travis: And picks you up, and brings you face to face with him, so that you are dangling in the air now, and you can feel his hot breath on your face as he pulls you close and snarls. And just as it seems like he is about to snap your face with his pointed fangs, he stops... and stares at you.

Fitzroy: Yep. Yep.

Travis: And looks closer, and pulls you close, and says...

Gray: What... what... where is the chaos?

Fitzroy: Um, I'm going to answer that. But first, I need a no-more-throwing-detritus guarantee from you, because the last one actually hurt quite badly. [laughs] Um, so can we talk, or...

Gray: You have two minutes.

Fitzroy: That's not very long. Uh, okay. [pause] I don't have it anymore. I don't have the chaos powers. So whatever visions you had of me being the, y'know, sacred chosen one who would battle against you in glorious warfare, you can pretty much banish that thought right away. Um...

Gray: Then how did you block me from my home? What ritual, what spell, what powerful god have you partnered with?

Fitzroy: Oh, none. None of those things. Um... [sighs] Can you hold this for me?

Griffin: And I hold out the ring of truth.

Fitzroy: And it's not a trap or anything. It's just a—it's a truth ring. And I want you to know that I'm not lying, or coming at you with any amount of deception at all, 'cause I really, really need you to hear what I'm saying, Gray.

Gray: If this is a trap—

Fitzroy: It's not—

Gray: I will kill anyone who's ever brought you a moment of joy.

Firbolg: He actually told you it wasn't a trap, so it cannot be a trap, or that is entrapment.

Gray: Firbolg, is it a trap?

Firbolg: It is not a trap.

Travis: Okay. He puts on the ring.

Fitzroy: Okay. Um... you're a pawn. But don't take that so bad, because like, we—we all are. And by we, I mean, basically every living person. Chaos is a... an entity with a will of its own, and it wanted to basically mess up the whole world, via a war between the two of us. This is the part that is particularly important for you, Gray, and I really need you to hear this and know I am not lying.

You are going to lose. I don't know how. I don't know what deus ex machina we're going to tap into to thwart you. Maybe a magical, I don't know, blessed arrow that has been dipped in the waters of the highest—like, I don't

know. But you're gonna lose. And the world will be fractured, but it will rebuild itself into something new.

Gray: Just to clarify...

Fitzroy: Yep.

Gray: You think I am going to lose because of some masterful strategy you have?

Fitzroy: Oh, no.

Gray: Or you know I am going to lose?

Fitzroy: Um, bud, if you could see my intelligence sort of rating, by which I mean, I guess my grades, you would know that I—a master strategist I am not. You're going to lose because that's part of the plan. Not my plan. The plan of the actual embodiment of chaos and order. So... those are the—that's the path we're on right now. And we don't want to be on that path, and we're assuming that you, now, super don't want to be on that path. Do you follow me so far?

Gray: Yes. So if, according to what you're saying, if this war goes forward, I will lose.

Fitzroy: You will lose, and hell will be the dominion of the winners. Which, I guess, is us. You lose everything.

Firbolg: I don't know what I would do with hell.

Fitzroy: I don't know what I'd do with hell either! We could turn it into a pretty badass rec room or something.

Firbolg: Income property?

Gray: So if I wanted to avoid that fate, all I have to do is kill you now?

Firbolg: Damn it.

Fitzroy: I didn't think about that, Gray, I'll be straight with you. But if you do that, you're never going home.

Gray: Explain.

Fitzroy: I mean, who do you think allowed the barrier between our worlds to be pierced? I think you're—I take your silence as a sort of slow, uh, coming to grips with the truth of the matter.

Gray: Why would Chaos and Order lock me from my home? How does that benefit the war they desire?

Fitzroy: I'm gonna be straight with you. I don't think they care about you at all. So where you end up, whether you live or die, it's not necessarily the most important thing to them. I'm sure that you were an afterthought when they patched up the hole, so to speak.

Argo: The players are gettin' played, my friend.

Fitzroy: Yep. What he said.

Gray: I...

Argo: Actually, the players playing the players are getting... that's confusing.

Gray: I... am going... to *destroy them*. And you and everyone who gets in my way. This! Will! Not! Stand!

Firbolg: I... would... caution you, Gray. This is a plan that has been... constructed... for... trapping you, and us, specifically. They have the advantage of... infinite intelligence and time. The only way you are going to change this now is to be very, very smart. The one thing they want from you... the *one thing*... is chaos.

Gray: Master Firbolg, I am a prince of hell. I control *three planes*. I have an army of demons and monsters and fiends! Do you *think* I need advice from a *child*?!

Firbolg: I am a Firbolg working on a minor in accounting. We can all change our stripes.

Travis: And he turns in a rage and continues to demolish the room, smashing desks and chairs and bookshelves. But... the one thing he is not attacking, notably, is the three of you, which seems like progress.

Griffin: A victory, yeah! [laughs]

Justin: Yeah. It's a win.

Griffin: I think we beat the final boss!

Travis: And after... let's say, far longer than it should've taken for him to expend a bit of his energy, he turns, huffing, and says...

Gray: So. Why come to me? You have friends, you have powerful allies, and I think more than anyone on this plane of existence... you have no reason to come to me. I want you *dead*. And the *only* thing stopping me from killing you right now is, I want Chaos and Order slightly more dead than I want you. So... your time is almost up. Explain to me why I shouldn't hurl you out of the window.

Fitzroy: Have you ever heard the phrase "the enemy of my enemy is my sort of tenuous, extremely tenuous associate"? Because I think that's an arrangement we could come to. We have an idea that could potentially satisfy Chaos and Order's desires. Um... it will not involve much bloodshed. So, if we—

Gray: I don't—I don't like that.

Fitzroy: I assumed that you wouldn't. But... you help us, we thwart this plan that Chaos and Order have, and... then, we go back to our own planes. You keep hell, we keep here, and... that's the end of the story.

Argo: I have a question for you, Gray. Y'know, you've said all along, you want this war. You wanted this war. You wanted this war. Um... why?

[eerie music plays]

Gray: For blood, and chaos, and conflict, and victory. The same reason anybody goes to war!

Argo: So... well, now, there are other reasons to go to war. Sometimes...

Firbolg: Sometimes, it's for oil.

Argo: Oil, yeah. Um... y'know, to—sometimes, war brings a little bit of peace, y'know, after. After the war. But you said for chaos. So like... chaos is your boss? Chaos pulls your strings and tells you what to do?

Gray: Lower case C chaos, Argo. I am—do I need—one more time, for those in the back! I am a fucking demon prince! Do you think I wanted to go to war because I was trying to achieve some kind of equilibrium?! Some kind of structured peace settlement?! Or could it be that I, a prince of hell, wanted to murder and slaughter and cause the death of as many people as I could because it's fucking fun?!

Argo: And then what?

Gray: I do it again! I would go from place—

Argo: No, wait a minute! How do you do it again? How do you do it again if you've killed everybody? How do you do it again?

Gray: I would move to the next continent, and I'd kill everyone there! And then I'd move to the next continent, and I'd kill everyone there! And when everyone in this plane was dead, I would go to a different plane, and I would

murder everyone there, and so on, and so forth, because there are endless planes and endless flows of blood, and that's what I want, and I get what I want! Do—what is there not to—

Travis: And he launches into another rage and continues smashing more furniture.

Firbolg: I thought we could forge... an alliance of sorts. I see... that is not working. This will not be. We should go. Enjoy your private war on furniture.

Justin: I start walking away.

Gray: [sighs] I didn't say no.

Argo: I guess we were readin' your body language a little bit.

Firbolg: Yes, non-verbal signs.

Argo: It was implied.

Firbolg: Implied no.

Fitzroy: What we are doing, Gray, will have... opportunities to bring... unimaginable harm against innocent people of this realm. And I have to make this explicitly clear – our goal is not to harm people as much as it is to harm... certain institutions. Before we have any kind of agreement between the two of us, we need to know that you will follow that rule. That you will not bring unnecessary harm to anyone. Because if you do, we'll find some way to beat you, because we have it on pretty good order that that is a thing that is possible for us.

Gray: Define 'unnecessary.'

Firbolg: Mmm...

Fitzroy: Okay, um... like, if we wanted to like, I don't know, destroy a building or something, we would probably—

Gray: I'd blow it up.

Fitzroy: Yes.

Firbolg: Well...

Fitzroy: But...

Firbolg: Okay...

Fitzroy: But think about what you just said, and say it back again.

Firbolg: Before you blow it up, you would...

Gray: Probably plant some kind of charges, or... detonator, or plan a spell ahead of time—

Firbolg: Inside the building.

Gray: Oh, is there treasure?

Fitzroy: Um... sort of like a treasure of life. Y'know?

Firbolg: Mm. God's treasure.

Fitzroy: God—God's—[laughing] So, um... you're almost there, and I feel like we could walk you there eventually. But just to cut to the point, uh, you would evacuate the building first.

Gray: So, just to clarify...

Fitzroy: Yep.

Gray: In your plan, I get to cause destruction, but not death.

Fitzroy: Yeah, yeah! And let me say – you're really, really good at that. Just looking around this room, like, you're gonna absolutely, no pun intended, crush it.

Argo: Are there other parts of demon life that you'd be interested in besides just like, killing? I mean, like, you just mentioned treasure! Is there a lot of greed kind of in the whole demon makeup?

Fitzroy: Oh, yeah, I'm sure the coffers of certain institutions are well-lined.

Argo: Boy oh boy could you clean up on treasure with our help, woo-hoo!

Gray: Treasure would help fund mortal wars.

Argo: There you go!

Fitzroy: But... not with...

Gray: I'm lost.

Fitzroy: Not with us.

Gray: Sure.

Fitzroy: Okay.

Gray: I will agree to your terms on one condition.

Fitzroy: I feel like it's gonna be pretty gnarly. But go right ahead.

Gray: Part of your plan... in fact, a *main* part of your plan must include getting me access to my hell dimension.

Fitzroy: I have a condition for that condition. That gateway, whatever it ends up being, is gonna be one way.

Argo: In business terms, that's a codicil.

Fitzroy: A sort of appendices, yes.

Griffin: And I hold out my hand.

Clint: And I get my notary stamp ready!

Griffin: [laughs]

Gray: I think... we can come to an agreement.

Travis: And he shakes your hand.

Justin: I take a picture.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: I still have a camera if you remember.

Travis: Yeah. He definitely turns back. He does the like, "Uhh!" Y'know, kind of face as they're like, shaking hands.

Justin: Right.

Travis: It's a moment.

Justin: "We just made a business deal" face.

Clint: I do the rabbit ears thing behind his head.

Griffin: We have a banner hanging up behind us that says "mission accomplished" on it.

Travis: Yeah.

Clint: And a big fake check.

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: And he turns back, and he says...

Gray: So. What's the plan?

Firbolg: Damn. We hoped you would have...

Argo: Ah, yeah. What we have is an outline.

Firbolg: A rough sketch.

Argo: A sketchy outline. Um...

Fitzroy: We're doing a little coalition building, so we'll get back to you on that plan, once we know what we'll be able to achieve. But you being on, y'know, team Thunderman is *huge* for us. Huge!

Argo: Oh, that's a big get. Big get.

Gray: [sighs] If I may offer a suggestion, *boss*...

Firbolg: Look at this. Already paying dividends.

Argo: A get! Woo-hoo! [clapping]

Firbolg: We need a title for you, by the way.

Gray: How about 'demon prince'?

Firbolg: Mm, the DP.

Griffin: [laughs]

Argo: Look good on a business card. The DP.

Fitzroy: Yeah.

Firbolg: Well, you could be the vice president demon prince, or the VPDP.

Gray: I—I already very much am regretting this. I want you to know that.

Fitzroy: Okay.

Firbolg: The president of regret.

Fitzroy: Come on, this is—

Firbolg: Vice—VPDPR.

Fitzroy: This is a safe—this is the imaginatorium. That's what your office is called. Let's do a little blue sky. What you got?

Gray: When you say institution...

Fitzroy: Yes.

Gray: I assume you are referring to *the* institution, the Heroic Oversight Guild. Am I wrong?

Fitzroy: Damn. You cracked the code.

Argo: Oh yeah. Yep.

Gray: While I may not be able to open a rift back to my dimension, I can still open rifts between locations in this dimension. I can send you to the Heroic Oversight Guild, and save you two weeks of travel.

Fitzroy: Right now? I didn't pack like, an overnight bag or anything.

Gray: Go collect whatever the fuck you need and come back here.

Firbolg: Ahh, this is very kind of you. Thank you very much.

Argo: See, already contributing. See?

Gray: Get the fuck out of my office!

Fitzroy: Yep. Yep yep yep.

Justin: And we do.

Argo: Okay.

Griffin: And I try to shut the door on the way out, but it's still all broken and fucked up.

Travis: It just falls the other way.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: So I just very gently set it back down.

[music plays]

[ad break]

[music plays]

Travis: So you now have some time to get your shit together. Uh, before heading to, uh, the HQ of the Heroic Oversight Guild to, uh, progress the story.

Griffin: Yeah, I'm assuming this is going to be a reconnaissance sort of... [laughs] Explora—are we on the same page about that? Like, this is not us walking through the final door to, y'know—

Travis: Are you asking me? Yes.

Griffin: No, I'm ask—I'm asking Juice and Dad. Like, we're not imagining this as the final confrontation as much as it is us sort of... scopin' out the joint.

Clint: Um... well, I don't know. Um, I think we—

Justin: If we're gonna go there, we're not gonna have an easy way back that I know of. So we should have a plan.

Griffin: I mean, we got flying—flying horse friends. So I'm not necessarily worried about transit.

Justin: We should talk to Althea, though.

Clint: That's what I think. I think we need to have a little rap session with Althea.

Travis: The last time you talked with Althea, she and Hieronymous headed to the Heroic Oversight Guild to try to work on getting you the blessed weapons.

Griffin: I assume she'll be our sort of contact on the ground. Um... uh, I'd like to see Festo to talk about my missing skillset.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: Just because I—magic is basically all I—I'm a level three barbarian on top of that, but even then, I'm a magic barbarian, so...

Travis: Well, let's start there, then. Let's start there.

Uh, so, as you're heading back to your dorms, the three of you are heading that way, and you, Fitzroy, see Festo in the fantasy quad, and it appears that they are playing with a tiny hacky-sack.

Clint: [laughs] Full of magic beans!

Travis: Oh, obviously.

Fitzroy: Sweet sackin', bro!

Festo: Thank you!

Fitzroy: I hope you don't mind my use of the colloquial bro.

Festo: No, I know that 'bro' can be unisex in this fantasy world in which we live.

Fitzroy: Fantastic. Uh, y'know, I'm known to sack around. Down at the uh—I'll tell you who's wild about sackin', is basically everyone at Clyde Nite's Night Knight School.

Festo: Oh yeah? Let's sack, bro!

Griffin: Then we sack for like 35 minutes.

Travis: Yeah, it's nice. And then Festo leaves.

Justin: The world ends.

Travis: Yep.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Fitzroy: Wait wait wait, don't leave!

Travis: Not with a bang, but with a hacky-sack.

Griffin: Yeah.

Fitzroy: Hey, real quick, before you go.

Festo: Yes?

Griffin: I imagine we're like, sitting in the shade of a tree as I like, rub the sweat off my forehead.

Travis: All post-sack, yeah. We've got that post-sack glow.

Griffin: Yeah. Um...

Fitzroy: Okay, so this is gonna come as probably quite a shock to you. Um... but, I...

Festo: No, I won't go on a date with you. I'm a professor! That would be wildly inappropriate!

Fitzroy: Hugely, hugely unethical, but that's—that's for sure not where I was going with this. Uh, I lost my powers.

Festo: What the fuck?

Fitzroy: Yeah, see?

Clint: [laughs]

Fitzroy: Um... yes. I found out—

Festo: Snipperrrs!!

Fitzroy: Yeah, that was my first thought, for sure, too, and it weights heavy on my heart, soul, and stomach. But it's... I found my patron... of magic. And they sort of cut me off from... their supple udder of magic. And so, that was the worst imaginable way for me to put that, but...

Justin: Horrid.

Festo: Yeah, that was disgusting.

Fitzroy: I can't—I can't do magic anymore, Festo. And...

Festo: Well, just use your own magic.

Fitzroy: Uh, yeah. Let me tap into the magic inside me... and that's like, what, gonna help me win the big basketball game? 'Cause I looked down in my heart, and... I don't have—I don't have sort of my own... brand.

Festo: Well, I've been thinking about it. What you said about using magic in the crypt? And without your own source of magic, you wouldn't have been able to. So just use your own magic!

Fitzroy: [sighs] I don't really know how to do that, Festo.

Festo: The... same way... you use any magic? Close your eyes, clear your mind, and just cast!

Fitzroy: This is literally a Michael's Secret Stuff situation. And I just want everyone to recognize that.

Griffin: Now I should speak as Griffin, because I don't think Fitzroy would know about the movie, Space Jam. But...

Travis: Well, unless there's a fantasy version. Some kind of like, perhaps, like a pantomime, uh...

Griffin: Yeah. Omniplane Jam.

Travis: Well, I mean, maybe there's like, a Punch and Judy show where they do Space Jam.

Fitzroy: Okay, so just so I'm clear... I was able to cast magic in the crypt with my own magic, and I just did it naturally, 'cause I didn't know that I didn't have the chaos magic?

Festo: Yeah.

Fitzroy: Okay, but how do I get my brain back in that space? Like, now I know I don't—

Festo: I don't know, dude! You're the fuckin'—[scoffs] I don't know!

Fitzroy: [laughing] This is—Festo! You have changed my life in incalculable ways, but this is the least helpful you've ever been!

Festo: Well, as a faerie, my magic is natural. I don't think about—I've never had to worry about it?

Fitzroy: Right, right.

Festo: So this is—I know how to do a spell. I don't know how to access my own magi—I mean, stop getting in your own fucking way, I guess.

Fitzroy: ... Alright.

Festo: Sorry for all the cursing! I'm drunk.

Fitzroy: It's been a lot, yeah.

Festo: Yeah.

Fitzroy: We just—we were just talkin' to Gray, and Gray cussed up just a cloud of dark funk. Um...

Festo: I was having some morning dew before my hacky-sack. And that's what I call whiskey!

Fitzroy: Okay!

Clint: [laughs]

Fitzroy: Um... alright, Festo. I guess I'll try and find the magic within me. I thought I already did that, but I guess I only made it down to like, my torso. I'll dig down deeper. Maybe there's something in my like, lower thigh that's like, "Ooh, there it is."

Festo: Close your eyes.

Fitzroy: Yep.

Festo: Cleaaar your mind. Take a breath. Are you ready?

Fitzroy: Yep.

Festo: And... cast!

Griffin: Yeah, I don't think anything happens.

Justin: Griffin, it's Dungeons & Dragons. Just say something did happen.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: I think—okay—

Justin: At least try!

Griffin: Okay, yeah.

Travis: Yeah, come on! Try to cast!

Griffin: How about we roll for it?

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: What do you think?

Travis: Uh, roll a d20 and add your spellcasting modifier.

Griffin: Okay. [laughs] Not great! That is a five plus four, a nine.

Travis: Okay. So, you roll, and uh, you close your eyes.

[magic plays]

Travis: You clear your mind. When you open your eyes, you feel a little, uh, tickle on your hand. And you look down, and on the palm of your hand, there is a tiny spectral crab. Very small, about the size of a spider. But you'd know it anywhere. It's a tiny Snippers.

Fitzroy: Oh my god.

Travis: With a different color. What color is your magic? *Your* magic, Fitzroy.

Griffin: Umm... golden.

Travis: A tiny, golden, spectral crab, and it scuttles in your hand back and forth, and waves its crabby claws in the air, as if saying hello!

Fitzroy: Are you the same Snippers as before?

Snippers: [tiny crab sounds]

Fitzroy: I—what—was that a yes?

Snippers: [tiny crab sounds]

Fitzroy: Okay. You—my sweet son! I didn't think you could get anymore adorable and perfect, and yet, here you are!

Festo: So I guess just keep practicing that?

Fitzroy: Yeah. Yes. I imagine I'll be able—the ballistic properties of this little guy are goin' to be out of this world. I can really chuck him through a bad guy now, so I thank you for that. And I guess I'll start workin' on fireballs and stuff, too.

Travis: So, moving forward, Griffin...

Clint: And so, from behind, I slap him in the head.

Griffin: Another crab comes out.

Fitzroy: What the fuck?!

Travis: What?

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Travis: So uh, moving forward, whenever you wish to cast a spell...

Justin: You must be slapped in the head.

Travis: You must be slapped—no. You're going to roll a d20 and add your spellcasting modifier, and anything that you can think of that would help

Fitzroy to clear his mind and do anything like that will grant you bonuses, and advantage, anything like that.

Griffin: Okay, cool.

Travis: But it's going to be all about Fitzroy learning, uh, to deal with his anxieties and his blocks and everything.

Griffin: For sure.

Travis: And conquer the magic within.

Griffin: I think that makes a lot of sense.

[music plays and fades]

Travis: So, what's your prep look like as you head for this recon?

Justin: Do I have all my earthly possessions at all times on my character sheet?

Travis: Um, you still have, uh... so, a lot of your stuff, if you remember, like, magical items, that kind of thing, you had to check in with the bursar. And y'know, most of your stuff—Firbolg, you don't have a lot of shit. So I assume, probably, you are able to carry a lot of the things you have. But if there's anyone you want to talk to, anybody you want to check in with, anything you want to grab before you go, this is the time to do it.

Justin: I—I kind of—I feel like we should check in with Rainer.

Travis: Cool.

Justin: Does that—doesn't it make sense to have—if we're gonna teleport into a pretty dangerous sitch, doesn't it make sense to have somebody back here who knows what's going on?

Griffin: Yeah, I mean, we've been pretty straightforward with Rainer thus far. So, I don't see why we would keep this from her.

Clint: And I would like, uh, to talk to Barb at some point.

Travis: Hmm. Well, Barb's not here on campus, and she's a little far away, but you could probably send her a letter if you wanted to.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: That was the bartender...

Travis: Bloodhawk Barb, yeah.

Clint: The bartender who was—

Griffin: Bloodhawk Barb.

Clint: —good friends with Althea.

Griffin: Ooh, yeah, good point.

Travis: Correct.

Clint: They had, uh—they went to the academy together, and something happened. So I—let me work on composing that letter in my mind.

Travis: Ooh, your mind's eye!

Clint: [in a silly voice] "Dear Barb, how r u?"

Travis: [laughs] [in a silly voice] "It's me again."

Clint: With an R and a U.

Griffin: Sorry. For our listeners who are new to the show, our daddy can't think. So he says...

Justin: [laughs]

Travis: [laughs]

Griffin: He says the stuff. He can't think—his brain doesn't think. And so, he just says stuff. So... it's gonna be bad audio. It'll be confusing, but...

Clint: Just for my information, how far away is Barb? Where is Barb?

Travis: Uh, she is in Last Hope.

Clint: I thought the bar was on campus.

Travis: No, she's in Last Hope, the town right outside of school. It's about a half—y'know, an hour or two by cart.

You go in search of Rainer, and you find her in the dining hall having lunch. She is playing with a squirrel skeleton, throwing, y'know, little bits of food and having it go get it and bring it back to her.

Argo: That squirrel does creep me out, though...

Fitzroy: Of course.

Rainer: Oh, hi! Hi, guys!

Firbolg: Greetings.

Fitzroy: Heyyy!

Griffin: And I casually drape my cloak over the squirrel skeleton so I don't have to look at that.

Travis: Now your cloak is just kind of moving around.

Griffin: Better. It's better—

Travis: That's better? Okay.

Griffin: Way better than bones. Yes, so much better. 'Cause I can pretend it's like a cute ghost with stylish fashion.

Travis: Fair.

Fitzroy: Uhh... developments... have occurred.

Rainer: Oh?

Fitzroy: Yes.

Rainer: We're still going to war, right?

Fitzroy: Ooh. Um... guys, do you want to try and... sort of condense down what's up?

Firbolg: I... will attempt this.

Rainer: Okay.

Firbolg: So... Chaos is a... is a person. And Order is a person.

Rainer: Okay.

Firbolg: Sort of person gods. Yes?

Rainer: Okay.

Firbolg: They want us to... do the war... to shake things up. Mm?

Rainer: Okay...?

Firbolg: Because then... is for balance. Is to keep things... is confusing. They want the war to... make things... bad. Hm? But... we will not do this. Too many will die.

Rainer: Okay.

Firbolg: So we... we will make things bad *our* way.

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Rainer: Okay... um... that wasn't as helpful as you might've thought. Um...

Firbolg: ... is a lot. [laughs nervously]

Rainer: Yeah. So, what... hm. So, is there anything actionable in there for me? Just, I want to know what I'm—okay. So... no war.

Fitzroy: Uh...

Rainer: Right?

Fitzroy: Right. We can pretty much guarantee that at this point. Because the warring parties have... in some small capacity, reconciled. Which may be the wildest sort of news update.

Rainer: Okay. Do you still want, like, my dad's skeleton army on standby?

Firbolg: Oh, that seems wise regardless, eh?

Fitzroy: Yes. Um, yeah. Y'know what? The parties have reconciled, but there's always chances of takesies backsies.

Rainer: Okay.

Fitzroy: So, yeah, I think keep `em on speed dial. Um, what we're doing next... I am starting to think, maybe, you would be—you would benefit from some plausible deniability? Um... but we're going... somewhere... to do a big thing...

Rainer: Okay?

Fitzroy: And... you're in charge of the entire school, I guess, is...

Rainer: Oh, wow.

Fitzroy: Yeah.

Firbolg: Is a lot.

Fitzroy: I don't know why I have the jurisdiction to say something like that.

Rainer: But it does—it feels right, doesn't it?

Fitzroy: It does, absolutely.

Rainer: Okay, so...

Firbolg: It feels, um... necessary.

Rainer: So basically, you guys are gonna go do a big thing, and you want me to keep an eye on everything while you're gone?

Fitzroy: Ye—yes.

Firbolg: Yes.

Rainer: Okay. Is there anybody I can trust to help me?

Fitzroy: Uhh... Hig—Hig—well, I was going to say—you can trust Higglemas, but he's... y'know... useless.

Rainer: Okay. Cool.

Firbolg: You can trust... Sabour?

Rainer: Okay. So... that's one.

Argo: Jackle? I think Jackle's on team us, isn't he?

Fitzroy: Yeah, I think we've pretty much weeded out the... uh... unwholesome element.

Firbolg: Garys are a crapshoot, eh? [laughs] We are—no one is sure what team the—the one Gary you can trust, which is strange, because they is a hive mind, is Cool Gary.

Rainer: The one with sunglasses and a hat?

Firbolg: Indeed, yes. This Cool Gary.

Rainer: Yeah, everyone knows Cool Gary. Yeah.

Firbolg: He knows how to hang.

Fitzroy: I would trust him with my life.

Rainer: Okay.

Firbolg: But he is connected to several other Garys of, uh, questionable motive.

Rainer: I might end up—I might end up getting some of my dad's skeletons, just to kind of help me... y'know, like, keep an eye out and keep things safe. Like, think of them like guards? Is that... is that anything?

Fitzroy: Long as we don't gotta see `em... sounds cool to me.

Rainer: Okay!

Fitzroy: I don't want you to think we're benching you or anything, Rainer. We're not going to do the big bad thing quite yet. Uh, and I imagine we will need all hands on deck.

Rainer: Listen, I'm just happy to be included, y'know? Havin' a great time. Um... I trust you.

Fitzroy: I trust you, too, Rainer.

Rainer: Okay! Um, let me know if you need help, I guess? Or if you need bail money?

Fitzroy: [fake laughs] Do you have that?

Rainer: We could probably figure something out.

Fitzroy: I didn't—guys, I didn't even think about—sorry, sidebar real quick. [quietly] I didn't even think about... like, jail.

Firbolg: Yes. Jail is a distinct possibility.

Fitzroy: Yeah!

Argo: So you think disrupting the entire economy and sending the world into financial ashes would... not be illegal?

Fitzroy: I've just been thinking about, y'know, death. Like, getting blowed up or something. But jail is a real—

Firbolg: Or other bad things that there are.

Fitzroy: The longer I think about it, the more I think jail is not just a possibility, but the—by far, the most likely outcome! Yeah, bail money would be good.

Rainer: Okay, yeah. I'll... I guess I'll, uh, y'know... wait to hear from you and see what you need!

Griffin: Does she have the book still?

Travis: Yes, she does.

Griffin: Okay. Okay.

Travis: I believe she has had the other end of it since her birthday.

Griffin: Yeah.

[music plays]

Travis: You head back to your dorm to collect some supplies, and Argo, you have it in mind to send a letter. And when you get there, sitting in front of your dorm room door is a package. A box about four feet long, and about two feet wide, and about two feet deep, and it is addressed to you, Fitzroy. And it says it is from Gordy, AKA the Lich King, and the address says “the crypt.”

Griffin: Yeah. I rip that bad boy op—wait. Nice try. Investigation check.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: Four minus one. Three.

Travis: You—

Justin: [laughs]

Travis: You think it's a box. You've determined, y'know, you feel the roughhewn wood. You look at the dimensions. You smell the cedar. You look at the hinges, and you think, "This is a box."

Justin: And even that, he's about 80% sure.

Travis: Yeah, you're not sure. I mean, you've seen other boxes before, but you wouldn't put money on this. But if somebody else asked if they should put money on it, you'd be like, "Yeah."

Fitzroy: Argo, how are you with—

Clint: I think Argo needs—

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: I think Argo needs to check it out.

Fitzroy: Yeah, use your thieves' tools.

Clint: Use my thieves' tools and do a, uh... you know the check I wanna do, Trav. Right?

Travis: Investigation?

Clint: Investigation check! Yeah!

Travis: The one Griffin did 30 sec—

Justin: You might remember investigation from 30 seconds ago, when Griffin did it. [laughs]

Clint: Uh, 11 plus three. That's a 14.

Travis: You're even more certain it's a box. Like, you would totally put money on the fact that it's a box. And with a 14, I'll go one step further and say, there's definitely something in it.

Griffin: A fuckin' bunch of scorpions.

Clint: But no traps, right?

Travis: With a—

Justin: I open the box.

Travis: Out spring two skeletons!

Firbolg: Shit!

Travis: It is, uh—one of them—

Griffin: Oh, you're serious!

Travis: —has gold teeth, and one of them is wearing a merkin.

Clint: [gasps] Tibia!

Travis: It's Tibia and Gerkin, your skeletal friends from the crypt.

Griffin: Which I don't think Argo and the Firbolg have met, right?

Travis: No, correct. So how do you react to this, Firbolg and Argo?

Firbolg: Fuck!

Fitzroy: Uh, no. It's—listen, these two remind me a lot of you guys. I think you're gonna get along great.

Travis: And they have a little note pinned to them from Gordy that says, uh, "You requested them back at school. They're at your disposal."

Fitzroy: This is excellent! Okay.

Griffin: So, I write back a letter like, "I don't know—thank you? I don't know what to do with them, how to take care of them. Do they eat? Do they need to drink stuff?"

Travis: Now, Griffin, do you really—do you really need to know that—hey, this is Travis, your brother. Are you really worried about if skeletons eat and drink? You can't put that together from everything you've ever seen or watched?

Griffin: But they need to be sustained somehow.

Justin: They're sustained through magic.

Travis: They're sustained through magic! Read a book!

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: Yeah.

Fitzroy: Um, alright!

Travis: I'm sorry, Griffin, I love you. That was mean.

Griffin: No, I just—

Justin: Wow.

Travis: I shouldn't have told you to read a book.

Griffin: Real asshole.

Justin: God, Trav.

Clint: Yeah, usually they say things like that to me, Griff.

Travis: Yeah, I shouldn't have told you to read a book. That was outta line.

Justin: Shoe's on the other foot.

Griffin: Alright.

Fitzroy: I guess this is a party of five now. Let's, uh... I'm feelin' ready and rarin' to go! Hey, do you two fight?

Travis: Uh, they have rusty scimitars that they kind of wield at you, but they're just doing their idling animation at this point. So you're betting that they do, but you don't know how effectively.

Griffin: Can I, without having a whole scene about it, just take them to get some non-busted ass gear? I mean, if we're gonna be rollin' with two skeleton friends, I don't want them wielding rusty scimitars.

Justin: Embarrassing.

Griffin: That's fucking humiliating.

Travis: Yeah, I'm gonna say that you've got some—you've got some school-issued weapons in your dorm room that you guys never use, because you've got, y'know, better stuff at this point.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: But y'know, you've got some nice scimitars you can give them. They're still school-issued, right? So these aren't top-of-the-line magical ones.

Clint: That would be a cool WWE name, too. Rusty Scimitar.

Travis: It sounds more like a weird sex move, but...

Griffin: Well, it sounds like a fin—it could be a finisher.

Travis: Sure.

Griffin: For like a... okay, anyway.

Travis: And y'know? Finisher, sex move, not that different.

Griffin: Another thing, yeah.

Travis: So yeah, now you got these guys with you. Now, you don't need to take them with you. If there's anything, uh, you need them to do around school, you can. Or you can take them with you. They are at your disposal. You don't need to have eyes on them at all times, is what I'm saying.

Griffin: Right.

Travis: Um, so, uh, Argo, you retire to your desk and your stationery set from the desk of Argonaut Keene.

Griffin: He's written a lot of letters, eh?

Travis: He does. Yeah, it's his thing. He believes in the power of the written word. And Argo, what does your letter to Barb read?

Clint: Um...

Justin: This is gonna be great. He wrote it down already.

Clint: I wanna stick with an old gag.

Travis: Oh good. That's not at all a scary thing to hear our dad say.

Argo: "Salutations, Barb."

Clint: See, you start formal, and then you hook `em.

Argo: "Salutations, Barb. I hope you remember me, Argo Keene, from a few weeks ago. Deucedly handsome, spiffy, mustachioed, somewhat cavalier attitude. I really had the best Harvey Wallbangers ever at your bar, and that really kind of made me feel a connection to ya."

Travis: I want you to know that right now, in the future, as Barb as reading this, at this point in the letter, she dead-set believes you're about to ask her on a date.

Argo: Uh... [clears throat] "And I really hope you felt it too..."

Travis: Oh boy.

Argo: Um, "I'm planning a roast of your friend Althea. Y'know, she's—"

Griffin: [claps and laughs] You fuckin' mad lad!

Justin: [laughing]

Argo: "She's doing such a great job here at the academy. Now, I know that you, obviously, had some kind of fallin' out. I know the academy is not your favorite place. But y'know, I know you think the world of Althea, and she thinks the world of you. So I was wonderin', maybe you could share some hilarious anecdotes from your time at the academy about Althea that we could then, y'know, turn around and use in the roast."

Justin: I'm reading over his shoulder.

Firbolg: Anecdote or weaknesses. Say this. Say this, "weaknesses."

Argo: Well, that's what—that's where the funny comes in, y'know? "And maybe you could cater the roast. Y'know, a couple of kegs. Y'know, wet bar."

Uh, but y'know, please, y'know, I... the juicier, the better. Let's hang 'em out to dry.

And y'know what, y'know how it always works in these roasts? If you take shots at somebody else, that makes it even funnier, so any kind of dirt, or anything at all that you've got, that you could send along to me... I'm kind of under a little bit of a time crunch, because this is comin' up in just a couple of weeks, and uh, I'm still puttin' the guest list together, so y'know, if you've got anything we can use in the roast, Barb, it would—we would love to have you involved, and thank you so much. And I can't wait to share another one of your Harvey Wallbangers.

With great affection, Argonaut Keene.”

Firbolg: Argonaut Keene. I have read this letter as you have asked for typographical errors, of which there are many, and they have been corrected. But I must ask you... as your friend...

Argo: Yes?

Firbolg: How will we be paying for this incredible event, and where will we find the time with all these other activities? We are supposed to host a roast for someone of such high regard?! All expenses must be cleared through the CFO or one of his subordinates, of which there are none. You cannot justify these expenses without the proper paperwork and discussions and letting me, as we say, run it up the chain.

Argo: Well, here's the thing. I was thinking she, if I really hook her, and I really get her interested, she could underwrite it. Y'know, uh, sponsored—sponsored by, Barb's bar! Bartender Barb's bar.

Firbolg: So when you said you could cater it, what you meant was...

Argo: Donate.

Firbolg: “Please send sandwiches, we have nothing.”

Griffin: [laughing]

Argo: Donate. Well, yeah. Y'know.

Firbolg: Donate.

Griffin: I'm over training with the skeletons in the corner, like...

Fitzroy: Just take it out of petty cash! We have petty cash!

Firbolg: But this is a viable business expense that must be accounted for! Petty cash won't cover this! Also, when will we find the time? Who will we invite? We don't even know who wants to kill us!

Argo: We'll stream it! It's okay, we can work it all out!

Firbolg: Streaming it... you want to do it at the stream.

Argo: Fantasy streaming!

Firbolg: Excellent. So peaceful there by the brook. It's an excellent notion, and much cheaper than renting a venue!

Argo: And I'm spitballin'. I'm spitballin' here. So, y'know...

Fitzroy: We need to—if this is what the order of the day is, we need to get back up to the thinkatorium.

Argo: Well, this is all I got, so... [laughs] It worked for me before, so hopefully it'll work again.

Fitzroy: Yeah, when you hit up my mom.

Travis: [laughs]

Fitzroy: When you hit up my mom to find out—

Argo: Your mother is a very—your mother is a very handsome woman.

Fitzroy: Yes, and she told you my great weakness, which is the kind of gum I like. So yes, the master—the master spy!

Argo: Well, she gave me a little bit more but I never sprung it on ya! I never hit you with it.

Fitzroy: Moving and shaking!

Justin: But he could at any moment. That gum you like may be about to come back in style.

Griffin: He finally found a way!

Argo: I've got a note right here on my fantasy whiteboard. When you least expect it, I'm gonna mention hot mint gum!

Fitzroy: Okay.

[music plays]

Travis: You head back—the three of you head back towards Gray's office. You've established some backup plans. You've let someone know, y'know, roughly, that you're going to go do something dangerous, and so, if you don't return in a reasonable amount of time, they may need to help you. Y'know, all responsible things.

And... you've collected some skeletal buddies to travel with you. And you've put some dark, secret machinations in order, in play, to set up a fake roast. So...

Clint: Sounds like a full day to me!

Travis: A real good day. A real good day, fellas. I mean, you didn't get any weapons or money or armor or anything, but that's okay.

Griffin: I mean, we're going to talk to a bunch of bureaucrats. Like, I am so not afraid.

Clint: And we were goin' to talk to them about giving us weapons and armor!

Travis: So you head back to Gray's—

Justin: So the only thing we know about them for sure is that they have a bunch of kick ass secret weapons that we don't. [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: You make your way back to Gray's office. He has calmed down; though, obviously, his office is still a mess, and he doesn't seem at all perturbed by it. And he says...

Gray: When you arrive in Prosperity, look for a tall, black-haired woman named Taren. She is one of my moles within the Heroic Oversight Guild. Tell her I sent you, and she will help you in whatever way she can.

Fitzroy: Do you have any moles here at the school?

Gray: I'm not going to tell you who all my moles are! That's my bus—those are *my* moles!

Fitzroy: I just thought we were, y'know... since we're on—

Firbolg: Feel like the trust is...

Gray: No! We just both want to destroy the same, like, people's evil plans or whatever!

Fitzroy: Wow. I fully—

Gray: I'm not gonna share all my toys with you!

Fitzroy: Okay. Can I have my ring back?

Gray: No! Yes.

Fitzroy: Really?

Gray: Yes.

Fitzroy: Thank you.

Gray: Ugh.

Travis: He gives you back your ring.

Fitzroy: Thanks.

Gray: Whiny baby.

Clint: It's all gross and demon-y.

Fitzroy: Alright.

Gray: I just thought it could be like, our friendship ring.

Fitzroy: You just said that you didn't want us to be friends.

Gray: I want you to be friends with me! I don't want to be friends with you!

Fitzroy: Right, okay. Rip it and grip it. Let's get this portal goin'.

Gray: Okay. Prosperity, here you come.

Travis: And he rips, y'know, a rift in the air, and gestures you towards it.

Argo: Y'know, that would be a great motto for our company. Prosperity: here we come! Thunderman's!

Fitzroy: Yeah, I don't know how to break this to you, Argo, but I don't know that our company is going to outlive our sort of rebel operation.

Firbolg: You shut your mouth!

Fitzroy: Okay, I'm sorry. Yes.

Gray: Any day now, fellas.

Fitzroy: Okay.

Argo: Oh, sure.

Firbolg: Of course.

Justin: And we leap through the portal.

Travis: Welcome to the city of Prosperity! The streets are not paved with gold. That would be ridiculous. The lamp posts, street signs, and mailbox are, however, gold-plated. You emerge just inside a café. The sign on the window reads The Drip and Sip. Across the street, you see an ostentatious building, the face of which is covered in art deco style gold relief panels, depicting the epic battle between heroes and villains. The platinum lettering over the entry confirms that this is the Heroic Oversight Guild's main headquarters.

Inside the Drip and Sip, there are only two others. There's the halfling barista, bustling around and cleaning the counters. They don't seem to have noticed your sudden appearance. Standing at one of the high top tables is a tall centaur woman with long, black hair. She seems so familiar, and when she looks up and makes eye contact with you, you immediately realize why.

She was there. She was one of the centaurs of the Scarlet Woods. Roll an insight check, all three of you.

Griffin: Sneak preview, that's not gonna—oh, 19 plus zero! 19!

Justin: Uh... ten.

Clint: Nat. 20.

Griffin: Woo!

Justin: Wow. Very insightful.

Travis: Fitzroy and Argo... you realize and remember... Fitzroy and Argo, you now remember her clearly. She was always near Calhain. Every time you saw him, she was nearby. And with that nat 20, you see in her eyes a fury that goes beyond bystander, and you put together that she must have been connected to Calhain in some way, and her eyes go wide, and then they narrow... and she pushes past you, into the street, and she yells...

Centaur: Guards! Help! Murderers!

Fitzroy: No no no! No no no no no!

Travis: And you see several helmeted heads turn and make their way towards you.

Fitzroy: We're not—oh, beets.

Firbolg: We should've gotten knives.

[theme music plays]

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