

The Adventure Zone: Graduation – Ep. 30, Take Your Firbolg to Work Day

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Gary: Heyyy, it's me, Gary! Long time no see, eh? Previously, on The Adventure Zone: Graduation...

[theme music plays]

Well, it all started when three students began their time at Hieronymous Wigenstaff's School for Heroism and Villainy. Since then, it's been quite a ride for Fitzroy Maplecourt, Argonaut Keene, and the Firbolg. First, they were dragooned into helping Higglemas Wigenstaff cure his brother, Hieronymous, who had been turned into a dog.

Then, the demon prince, Gray, found out about that, was none too happy, and forced the boys and the Wigenstoffs into a war against him. War prep was going fine until the embodiment of Order told them that the war was actually just an excuse to create enough chaos to launch a new system. The problem is, that war was gonna result in a lot of people dying.

So now, they're working *with* Gray to destroy the Heroic Oversight Guild, in the hopes that that will start a new system without all the death. Now they're on a fact-finding mission to figure out how to take it down from the inside, and they hope to convince their friend, Heroic Oversight Guild investigator, Althea Song, to help them.

But first, they need to deal with a pissed off centaur named Taren.

[theme music plays]

Travis: There are four guards headed your way. They haven't drawn weapons, but their hands rest on the hilts of their swords. The halfling barista has pressed himself against the shelves of mugs and glasses. It is unclear whether he is afraid for himself, or for his glassware.

Taren, the centaur woman who Gray sent you to meet, stands between you and the front door. She has just called the guards in retribution for your actions against Calhain. There is a combination smile and snarl on her face. The café, known as The Drip and Sip, isn't a large place. There are five small tables and two chairs each.

At the back of the room is a hallway leading to restrooms. Beyond that, the hall turns a corner, and you can't see where it leads. What do you do?

Justin: Real quick side bar. Did Gray, um... is this a setup?

Griffin: Oh nooo!

Justin: Man...

Griffin: Man, he seemed so cool last episode!

Justin: It did seem—it seemed so cool. This is disappointing.

Clint: He's a demon prince. I mean, it's...

Justin: No, Dad, you're absolutely right. Shame on me, I guess. Horse can't change its whinny.

Griffin: To water.

Clint: Shame on me.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: The scorpion, and the frog, and the frog is like, "Aw, shit, dude! Why did you—aww."

Griffin: The turtle gets there faster... stitch in time...

Justin: Aw, dunk.

Clint: Now I feel bad. I'm sorry.

Griffin: Are the guards—

Travis: Y'know, that scorpion and frog thing, no one's ever like, "Well, frog, what the fuck?" And the frog's like, "It's my nature to be too trusting!"

Griffin: Yeah. Um... are the guards inside the building?

Travis: Um, they're making their way over. So, um... you can see there, it's a busy street. Here in Prosperity—Prosperity is very populated. And so, they're kind of having to wait, make their way, uh, through a crowd to get to you. But you have probably like, y'know, 15, 20 seconds. Not long.

Griffin: Can I do the thing where I put something between the door handle and the wall to try and stick it, just to buy a little bit of time? Maybe it's a big aggro crag, this suggestion. But... unless it's saloon doors. You can't really do that to saloon doors.

Travis: I would never put saloon doors in my world, Griffin.

Griffin: Thank you. Yeah.

Travis: They are the least practical door.

Griffin: I would bet dollars to donuts there were saloon doors in Dust.

Clint: Could we lock the door... ?

Griffin: Oh, shoot. That's a way better thing.

Clint: Yeah, I mean, just thinkin' off the cuff, there.

Griffin: Are there keys? Are there keys anywhere in sight?

Travis: Well, so, the door, I mean, it has a lock built into the door. Y'know, you turn it from this side, you unlock it from the other side.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: The question is, are you trying to do this, uh, in such a way as to say like, "Hey, leave me alone," or try to do it without them noticing?

Griffin: [laughs] This is entrapment. Um... I mean, I don't—

Travis: I mean, you have a rogue, guys.

Griffin: Yeah, that's true.

Clint: I say that, uh, I stealthfully lock the door, so that—just to give us like, a minute or two to talk amongst ourselves and come up with some kind of plan. How's that?

Travis: Uh, roll a sleight of hand check for me.

Justin: Thought that's what we've been doing...

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: Sleight of hand. That is a ten plus 12, that's 22.

Travis: Um...

Clint: Yes, plus 12, you heard me.

Travis: Wait. Plus 12? So uh, you make your way over, uh, and looking like you're trying to figure, like, "What's the commotion?" And you make such a big face and such a big, like, deal out of looking out the window, that everyone is distracted as your hand, like, whips up, and you click that lock, and you go back to the other guys like, "I don't know what's going on!"

Clint: Womp womp woomp!

Travis: And the door—the door is now locked.

Griffin: Um... I want to try to intimidate Taren.

[eerie music plays]

Griffin: Which... might be... shooting the cannon indoors a bit.

Travis: Well, why don't you tell me what you're doing first, and then we'll roll to see if it works?

Griffin: Sure. Um, I say...

Fitzroy: Okay, Taren. I can probably take a wild guess, and land on the exact reason why you're ticked at us. But if those guards walk in here, I'm going to tell them everything about your allegiance to the demon king, Gray. And I betcha that they'll be more interested in hearing about that, don't you think?

Firbolg: It's still a murder. I think that they can divide their attentions.

Travis: Now, roll and see how that goes.

Griffin: I have a plus eight intimidation. I rolled a ten.

Justin: And pretend I didn't neg him.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: I don't want to give disadvantage.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, I have a ten plus eight. 18.

Travis: Man, that's a great idea, Justin. From now on, any time one of you makes a snide joke that undercuts something the other one just said, I'm gonna make you roll with disadvantage.

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: We don't want to gamify ass-hattery, though. [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: The last thing we need.

Clint: Let's just keep it natural, yeah.

Justin: Yeah. Just real chill.

Travis: Uh, and Taren says...

Taren: I—I'm—I will happily go down if it means—if it means taking you down with me!

Travis: But you can tell, her resolve is not there. She is definitely wavering, leaving her wide open to your machinations.

Griffin: For an attack! Oh.

Firbolg: We are working in parallel with Gray.

Taren: Ha! Yeah, sure. And I'm, uh, not just a centaur, I'm a Pegasus. Fuck you.

Firbolg: But this is amazing!

Fitzroy: [snorts]

Firbolg: Where are you hiding your wings? Do you know Breeze Through the Willows?

Taren: [sighs] You guys are the enemy. I have been working with Gray to try to destroy you. You murdered my fiancé, after, oh, that's right, showing up to my herd and threatening us, making fun of our spiritual beliefs, using Thunder Wave against us, cutting off my fiancé's hand and threatening him with it, and trying to steal our apple.

Firbolg: Okay, two things. One, Thunder Wave is a very low level spell. That's not that impressive that we used Thunder Wave on you. That's like using harsh sarcasm. That's thing one.

Clint: [laughs]

Firbolg: Thing two. You are taking a gamble now. You are choosing one of two options. One, I, a Firbolg, am telling you the truth, that we are working with Gray. And he would be very, very upset if we were taken into captivity. That is one.

Two, I, a *Firbolg*, am lying to you. And... well... you will have your vengeance, such as it is. But I ask you... you have seen what we are capable of. Are you so sure that these four guards will be enough to stop us?

Griffin: [snorts]

Travis: Man, there was like three different tactics in there! Um...

Griffin: [laughs] It was investisuation.

Travis: Yeah! I'm going to—I'm gonna say make a persuasion check with advantage. Uh, because one, you are a Firbolg, and that does carry some weight. And two, you make a solid argument all around. So, go for it.

Justin: 'Kay, we have... well, that one's a seven. Let's, uh... [laughs nervously] ... see if, uh, we could do any better. Okay, 18 plus eight. 26.

Travis: That is better. That is good. And she looks from you to the door...

Taren: [sighs] Fuck.

Travis: And uh, all this time, the guards have been kind of trying the handle, and like, pointing at it, going...

Guards: Can—the—the door—can somebody—the do—

Firbolg: My apologies.

Clint: Argo's looking back and forth, and...

Argo: What?

Clint: Mouthing.

Argo: Oh, is it locked? Did I lock it? I'm sorry. Did it—

Guards: The door? It's locked?

Argo: I didn't mean it. I didn't mean—I'm sorry.

Guards: If somebody could—if somebody could get—okay.

Argo: Yeah. Let me—I'll get it, just a—

Firbolg: I didn't lock it!

Justin: He announces very loudly.

Travis: Uh, so, Argo, do you unlock the door?

Clint: Uh, yeah. I look at it a little bit like I'm confused, and then...

Argo: Oh, okay!

Clint: And then I unlock it.

Griffin: Sorry, it's a button fly. It's so tough.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: And you unlock the door, and the guard says...

Guard: [extremely heavy Canadian accent] Oh yeah, there are these things, oh, they lock themselves sometimes...

Griffin: [bursts into laughter]

Justin: [laughs] That was some really good sleight of hand, Dad.

Argo: Sorry, I apologize. Sorry about that.

Guard: Uh, so, uh, Taren, there, what seems to be the problem there with the... you said, uh, murderers? You said the boys were murderers, there? Is that what you said there?

Justin: I'm retroactively regretting flipping Taren, 'cause we could've whipped these guys' fuckin' asses.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: [laughing]

Travis: You say that. They are all rippling with muscle. Absolutely glistening.

Justin: Shame on me. Judging.

Clint: It sounds like they're lobster fishermen.

Travis: Listen, don't let the accents fool you. Lobster fishing can be very—lobster fishermen are huge dudes, Dad! What are you saying?

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Just say lobster fishermen. Like, Dad, any lobster fishermen ever born could beat you in a fight.

Travis: Yeah, what are you talking about?

Justin: And you're like, basically the strongest guy I know.

Travis: Yeah, Dad.

Griffin: [laughing]

Clint: Yeah, it's true.

Travis: You got big ol' Dad muscles!

Clint: Yeah, look at these!

Justin: You have Dad strength.

Clint: You need to see our new pics. Yeah.

Guard: So uh, yeah, what uhh... what seems to be the problem there?

Travis: And Taren says...

Taren: I'm... [sighs] I... I... this is so embarrassing, uh, Captain, but I was mistaken. Um, I—I, uh... I had seen... faces like theirs, uh, in a wanted poster, but it wasn't them, and um...

Guard: Oh, that's a pretty big mistake to make there, eh, uh... what do you boys know about this?

Argo: [imitating the guard's accent] Oh, jeezum crow, I don't know!

Firbolg: Mmm...

Guard: You makin' fun of me, son?

Argo: No, no! I'm with ya! Look at these muscles! I'm a lobster man!

Guard: You're no lobster man.

Argo: I'm a lobster man, yeah!

Griffin: [giggling]

Guard: I know lobster men, son, and you are no lobster man.

Firbolg: No, it is... he is... mm. Argo is of the sea. Mm.

Argo: Aye.

Fitzroy: And also, I think I'm pretty sure she yelled "bir—birderers." Because we're all here on a—to scout out some cool lookin' pigeons we heard about.

Travis: Make a deception check for me there, Fitzroy.

Griffin: Fuck. I don't—well, my deception's really good, but that was a really bad... uh, six. Plus eight.

Justin: Give him disadvantage, ref. [laughing]

Griffin: Eight, 14.

Guard: Birderers?

Fitzroy: Yeah, she just mumbled, I guess.

Guard: Whoa there, I didn't hear no birderer. I heard murderer. But uh... I happen to be a bit of a birder too! Why don't you tell me... tell me. I don't know what my accent is. Ohh, now I'm Irish!

Fitzroy: Ohh. [laughs]

Argo: Well, we were lookin' for the ring-tailed swallow. And uh—

Guard: At this time of year?

Argo: Oh yeah.

Guard: Ohh no. Those aren't native to these parts. They only fly through during the winter.

Argo: No no, this is the wring-tailed, W-R-I-N-G, wring-tail. They fly through really bad weather, and it really puts `em through the wringer.

Clint: And I'll make a deception check.

Travis: Good luck.

Clint: 19 plus six.

Travis: Wow, that's good!

Guard: Oh, I've gotta go...

Griffin: Are we all just making fun—

Fitzroy: And by the way, I beat Michael Jordan at basketball in 1996!

Travis: Roll.

Fitzroy: At the height of his powers!

Travis: Griffin, roll deception.

Griffin: That's an 18—

Travis: This is Griffin. This is Griffin rolling.

Griffin: That's an 18 plus eight, and that's how I beat Mike.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Guard: Oh, sorry! I must've, uh, misheard ya.

Fitzroy: Yeah, dunked on him and Scotty and all the boys.

Guard: Now I've gotta go tell, uh, my 18 sons about how I met the man who bested Sir Michael of Jordan.

Fitzroy: Mm-hmm.

Clint: [laughing]

Justin: [laughing]

Guard: And I've gotta find a new bird! If you'll excuse me...

Travis: And he leaves! Man, that was some great Dungeons and Dragons. You guys did a great job.

Griffin: I feel fucking—I feel terrible, though, that we just added an imaginary bird to this man's Pokedex that he will never—

Justin: [laughs] He's gonna hunt it for the rest of his life!

Griffin: He will go mad.

Guard: They promised me!

Clint: Well, it just gives him something to do.

Justin: Maybe he was just lying. "You didn't see his face!" [laughing]

Travis: "You don't understand!"

Justin: "He rolled a 26 at least!"

Clint: It'll distract him from all the devastation that's coming soon.

Griffin: Um...

Travis: So now you have a few more moments with Taren here. Um, so, you would, uh... let's roll an insight check, everybody.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: Wow, that's a... that is a two.

Justin: Grimy one. Just a filthy, filthy roll.

Travis: Okay, both of you forgot where, like, where she was. You tried to look at her face, and you ended up—

Justin: We started talking, and it's like a cor—that's a mop.

Travis: What are you doing?

Clint: Okay, so mine was a ten minus one, that's a nine, but... I have advantage with my monocle of misdirection... and that is an 18 minus one. 17.

Travis: That is better. Um, so, Argo, you get the feeling that, um, while you guys were able to kind of get her past that moment, uh, her—her kind of help is, right now, tenuous at best.

Griffin: I walk over to her and I say...

Fitzroy: When was the last time you were in con—hold on one second. Um, barkeep? Can you just earmuffs or some—do you have like, a back room—gosh, this is really gonna sound like we're robbing the place, but can you just be somewhere else right now?

Barista: That does really sound like you're—

Travis: Wait, hold on. He's—I'm gonna go against my impression of a halfling and do this.

Barista: [deep voice] Uh, that does kind of sound like, uh... like you're robbin' the place. Uhh... but I do need to do inventory, and I've been looking for an excuse...

Fitzroy: Oh, is that what you call it? You dirty—

Barista: Hey, are you—are you gonna steal anything?

Fitzroy: No.

Barista: Firbolg, are you guys gonna steal anything?

Firbolg: No.

Barista: Okay.

Argo: Ask me.

Barista: No.

Fitzroy: Don't ask him.

Barista: I'm not gonna ask you. You already said you were a rogue when you—I saw you lock the door, but I'm cool, so I didn't say anything.

Fitzroy: Cool. The thing about the demon thing that I yelled earlier? You're cool about that, too, right?

Barista: Uhh, yeah, I'm a pretty cool guy. Listen, I'm not tryin' to get involved in nothin'. I'm just a small business owner tryin' to make it in these harsh times.

Justin: We've spent too long on this person.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: We gotta give him a name if we're gonna hang around that long.

Barista: Y'know, I remember back when I was growing up...

Fitzroy: I'm so sorry. We are actually on an adventure, so...

Barista: Oh, that's—okay. I just used to be a great warrior in my time, and I also do lots of cool magic. But... I'll go back and count my coffee beans or whatever.

Justin: Thank you, Patrick Shortburton. It was so nice to have you here.

Clint: [laughing]

Barista: Okay. I'll miss you. I feel like we've really formed a bond.

Fitzroy: [interrupting] So, Taren... um...

Barista: [singing] Countin' the beans, countin' the beans...

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: [laughing] I want him out of the podcast!

Travis: He is. He's just singing very loudly. He's still in the stock room.

Justin: We have 30 seconds before he becomes a fan favorite, and I need him gone! I'm not gonna deal with it!

Barista: Where did all these tea bags—whoaaa! [crash]

Travis: And he's dead. He was crushed by tea bags.

Justin: I'm so angry right now. I'm furious.

Clint: [laughing]

Griffin: Well, hold on. I go in the back room and I start lifting up the bags.

Travis: He is flat Stanley'd.

Griffin: I'm gonna use, uh, medicine check.

Travis: Oh, he's back!

Justin: To reinflate him?

Barista: Oh, you saved my life! Now I owe you a life debt. I'll travel with you forever.

Griffin: And I shut the door behind me and I lock it.

Justin: Goddamn it.

Clint: [laughing]

Barista: I love you.

Fitzroy: Okay. Thank you. Taren, uh... what was the last time you heard from Gray? 'Cause the situation's changed quite a bit.

Taren: Uh, it... it's been a day or two.

Fitzroy: So do you know about the whole Chaos/Order thing that is happening? I guess not, because that literally happened earlier today, huh?

Taren: I know that we're working with Chaos for war.

Fitzroy: Ohh, nooo! Ohh, jeeze.

Firbolg: Okay, you are behind.

Fitzroy: Um, let's do a walk and talk, maybe? And we'll fill ya in on what's happening now.

Taren: Um... o—[sighs]

Fitzroy: Sorry about your fiancé, by the way. But really, if you want to get super technical about it, it was definitely Gray's fault. So... you can take that up with him later, I guess?

Taren: All of it?

Fitzroy: [sighs] Weeell... we didn't kill Gray, we—

Argo: Maybe we enabled. We enabled.

Fitzroy: We didn't kill—we did not kill Calhain. Gray definitely did that. Like, wicked did that in front of us. So...

Argo: And we're really sorry.

Taren: So if Gray sent you...

Fitzroy: Mm-hmm?

Taren: Why?

Fitzroy: That was gonna be part of the walk and talk, but—

Taren: I'm not going anywhere with you until I know why! For all I know, you're, y'know, here to kill me.

Fitzroy: No. Um... we would've done that already. We're here to—

Taren: What?

Fitzroy: [slowly] We're here to... oh, the earlier part. Uh, we are aligned with Gray right now because our interest is in the Heroic Oversight Guild. And its... disruption.

Taren: Huh.

Fitzroy: So you're uniquely positioned to really land yourself on Gray's employee of the month wall. If that is your interest.

Taren: So Gray sent you...

Fitzroy: Yep.

Taren: To find me...

Firbolg: Mm-hmm.

Taren: So that I could help you...

Firbolg: Mm.

Taren: ... disrupt the Heroic Oversight Guild?

Firbolg: Even if you don't believe us... it sounds like fun, right?

Taren: No, I do believe you, actually. That sounds exactly like something Gray would do.

Fitzroy: So are we cool, or...

Taren: [sighs] Okay, I'll put it this way.

[pause]

Travis: Uh, well, actually, everybody, uh, make a persuasion check. All three of you.

Griffin: Ooh. Uh, that is a 14 plus eight. 22. Don't let me down, boys.

Clint: That is a 16 plus two, 18.

Justin: Mmmm, golly. This isn't gonna go good for Hoops. I can just feel it. I'm gonna be going, draggin' everybody down.

Griffin: What did you—what did you get?

Justin: Well, sir, it's a 19!

Griffin: Okay, so you were just waiting for the prestige there. Okay.

Justin: Plus one. 20.

Travis: Okay.

Taren: Alright. I—let's put it this way. Right now, I am gonna help you, until such a time when it turns out that you're all still pieces of shit. And then, I'm gonna kill you. Or get other people to kill—something like that, right? So let—can we agree to those terms?

Argo: That's fair. Yeah, that's fair. Yeah.

Firbolg: Very fair.

Fitzroy: Sounds good to me, yeah.

Taren: So what do you need from me right now in this moment?

Fitzroy: To engage with us in a walk and talk!

Taren: To where?!

Firbolg: Give him his walk and talk, please.

Fitzroy: To HOG's—[sighs]

Argo: I think we want to go to the HOG place.

Taren: Thank you.

Fitzroy: To HOG city.

Argo: The HOG trough.

Travis: So you make your way across the street, and uh, you can see the opulent, the shining façade of the Heroic Oversight Guild, with its art deco designs on the front, looming, two story tall golden heroes and villains

engaged in epic battles. You can see up and down the streets, banners hanging from light posts, the home of the Heroic Oversight Guild. Y'know, 200 years of Heroic Oversight Guild. You see, y'know, images of some of the most famous heroes and villains in history strewn about, hanging from posts. You make your way into the lobby—

Griffin: Well, wait. Before we go in, I want to percept to see where I can see where like, the sewer exit is that we can sneak into.

Travis: Ooh, okay! Yeah, give me one of those.

Griffin: I want to know where the crack in the fence is. Uh, that's a... that's a 12 plus four. 16. Where's that crack, baby? Where is it? I know it's there somewhere!

Travis: So, um, I will say, there is, uh... the Heroic Oversight Guild takes up what we, here, in the US of A, would call a city block. Um, and you can see, uh, as you're kind of, y'know, making your way across the street, that there is definitely kind of a service alley down one side. You assume where, y'know, all of the deliveries and whatnot are going. That, y'know, the mail truck... something like this place, you know they've got a lot of paper stock going in and out. Uh, and all that's gotta get delivered and taken away somewhere.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Uh, you make your way into the opulent lobby. High ceilings, and y'know, it kind of—one of those like, two story, three story lobbies, where, around the outside, there are offices, and you can see like, y'know, kind of uh, walkways on the second and third floor, with even more office space. But here in the middle, it's an atrium. Y'know, there's big fantasy lookin' trees reachin' up towards a domed skylight as you make your way across white marble.

You're taken to, uh, the reception desk, where Taren guides you through the incredibly lengthy process of filling out forms, and signing waivers, and what—well, I shouldn't assume. Do you sign the waivers? Are you reading?

Justin: We're not reading a single word of them, guaranteed.

Griffin: I sign them Stink Buttsman.

Travis: Huh.

Clint: Oh, good. Yeah.

Travis: Now, is that your legal name, or...

Griffin: I'll never tell. [giggles]

Travis: Hmmm!

Griffin: No, it's uh... Dougie Goodname. I sign a different—I sign a different name each time. I'm cuttin' up. You guys are fuckin' bustin'.

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Everybody else in the room is bustin' up at my fuckin' funny names.

Travis: But it's super magic ink, so every time you sign, no matter what name you sign, it reforms back into...

Griffin: Yeah, darn it. Yeah.

Travis: ... Fitzroy Maplecourt.

Griffin: Yeah, I sign.

Travis: Uh, Argo?

Clint: Uh, I rubber stamp 'em. I've got one of those rubber stamps. And I notarize myself.

Travis: Okay. Uh, so now you are past the lobby, and now, it's just you and Taren inside the Heroic Oversight Guild. What's the walk and talk plan? What do you need?

Griffin: Oh, I thought we had already done the walk and talk. 'Cause I didn't want to explain everything about Order and Chaos and the war again. [laughs]

Travis: Oh, okay. Yeah, you've walked and you've talked. You've made it inside. You've explained everything. She's... y'know, she's kind of accepted it. None of it—all of it tracks, right? All of it seems like something that would happen. She still, because of your previous behavior up 'til now, you've done nothing to really ingratiate yourself to her.

Griffin: Quite the opposite, I would say.

Travis: Yeah. But she... she has gotten you this far, and at this point, she's like...

Taren: Okay. I feel like I've done what you needed. Um... I kind of need to take some time to process this. If you need me, come find me. I work in the archives. Just... I guess... y'know...

Fitzroy: What are the archives? I mean, I guess it's self-explanatory. You archive. You keep older things there.

Taren: Yes. This is—yeah. It's where we store, like, paperwork and stuff.

Fitzroy: Um... I mean, do you—

Argo: Where exactly is that? I mean, is that like, in a basement or something?

Taren: It's here in the building. It's at the center of the building, where I am going to go, and probably have a stiff drink, and maybe just put my head down on my desk for like an hour.

Fitzroy: So can we ask you for like, a set of keys now, or do you think we should do that after the hour?

Taren: Do it after the hour, please.

Fitzroy: Okay. Yes yes yes.

Argo: Okay. Here's our card. Hang onto that. And if you think of anything else, give us a communication.

Travis: She's gone. She's down the hallway.

Griffin: No, but keep goin'. Maybe you'll get through to her.

Argo: These cards are expensive! They're embossed!

Taren: Embossed? Wait, hold on.

Griffin: [laughs]

Taren: Okay.

Travis: And she takes one. And she goes...

Taren: Oh, good weight!

Travis: And she takes it, and she heads off down the hallway. So what do you do now?

Griffin: Um... is... have we talked—I gue—have—I know we want to talk to Althea. Have we—we haven't seen her or anything yet, right?

Travis: No, not yet.

Justin: Can we try to find her, like... she probably has an office, right?

Travis: Uh, yeah. Do an investigation check for me.

Justin: Oh, me. [laughs]

Travis: No, all three of you.

Justin: Okay.

Clint: Uh, five plus three. That's eight.

Justin: I got a 17 plus zero.

Travis: Okay.

Clint: [whispers] 17.

Travis: What about you, Fitz?

Griffin: Investigation?

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Don't worry about me.

Travis: Okay.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Don't worry about what I got.

Travis: Um, so, Fitzroy and Argo, they start actively looking for Althea. By which I mean, like, stopping people walking by and like, looking at their

faces. And they're not having any success. But you, master Firbolg... you kind of like, very easily spot on the wall a directory! With everyone's names and office numbers on it!

Griffin: Oh, that's helpful.

Travis: I mean, it's an office building.

Griffin: Yeah. Is there a map with this directory?

Travis: Uh, no. But you see—

Clint: You are here!

Travis: —Althea Song, office 315.

Griffin: Um... hey, can we go talk to the receptionist again real quick?

Travis: Sure.

Griffin: Just sayin', let's—

Receptionist: Ehh, what can I do for yas?

Travis: No, I'm not gonna. [laughing]

Justin: Oh, I regret this.

Clint: [laughing]

Receptionist: Uh, yes?

Fitzroy: Hi, we just came through here, and we signed all the things?

Receptionist: Yes. Stinks Buttman, was it?

Fitzroy: Oh, please. You didn't see that. It's my real name. But... or did I? Anyway...

Argo: It's pronounced "boot-mahn."

Fitzroy: Yeah. Uh, it's Elven. So, uh... we're lost. And I was wondering if you maybe had... like a map of the premises that you give to visitors, um, so that we may locate where it is that we're—

Receptionist: Uh, who are you looking for?

Fitzroy: We are looking for... Althea Song?

Receptionist: Office 315. Third floor. Just head down the hallway. The offices are numbered. You can't miss it.

Fitzroy: I know, but we already tried, and we got lost!

Receptionist: I saw you! You walked into the lobby, you looked at the directory, and you came back over to me.

Fitzroy: We tried—

Argo: That's how lost we are.

Fitzroy: [whining] We tried it. A map would be—would go down so—

Receptionist: The stairs are right over there.

Travis: And she points at the stairs.

Fitzroy: Where? Which ones?

Receptionist: Those stairs right there.

Fitzroy: Do we go up 'em or down 'em?

Receptionist: Do you need an adult?

Fitzroy: I need a map! Of the premises!

Receptionist: We don't have maps of the premises! This isn't a theme park!

Fitzroy: Doodle one! Doodle it, please!

Receptionist: Okay!

Travis: She draws on a piece of paper an arrow, and then writes "stairs," and then puts "up to three," and then puts "walk down hallway" and hands it to you.

Fitzroy: I was thinking something that would show, like, the ventilation system?

Receptionist: What?

Fitzroy: A map!

Argo: I have asthma, and I gotta make sure, wherever I go...

Fitzroy: Okay, this is... this isn't...

Argo: Yeah, of course.

Fitzroy: Useless.

Griffin: Um, is this—are the people in this building wearing any kind of identifying... thing?

Travis: That is a great question, Griffin. Yes.

Griffin: Like badges or something? Okay.

Travis: Yes. Um, you see that everyone has, uh, y'know, on a lapel, on a jacket, on whatever, right? Is uh, little shields of different colors. Each one labeled HOG. And the differing colors, y'know, they range different hues of metal. And you can kind of put together, because we've all seen anything with badges and stuff before, that the differing colors have to do with like, the departments they work for, that kind of thing.

Griffin: M'kay.

Travis: Um... now, uh, let's see. As you make your way, I assume, to Althea's office... um, roll a perception check for me, all three of you.

Clint: Eight.

Griffin: That's a crit. 20 plus four!

Justin: I got one from cha boy.

Travis: Alright. With that crit, Fitzroy, you're keeping your eyes peeled. You're looking for anything that you could use, y'know, to your advantage in maneuvering around these halls at a later date.

Griffin: Let's find some facts.

Travis: Um, the one that really jumps out to you is, you see people, uh, with bins, delivering paperwork, delivering mail, delivering packages to the various offices. And not only that, but what you also see is that nobody seems to pay much mind to them. They're moving up and down the hallways with these oversized bins, and nobody really seems to give them the time of day.

Griffin: Can I try and do something kind of silly?

Travis: Griffin, I would never stop you from doing something kind of silly.

Griffin: Um... I wanna... see if I can slip a little crab in a bin. Just to see where all this stuff goes.

Travis: Just slip a crab—the ol' bin crab. The ol' crab slip!

Griffin: I can share his senses, so I wanna know about the gully works, y'know what I mean?

Travis: Okay, tell me how it plays out.

Griffin: Uh, the old trip. I look at the Firbolg.

Fitzroy: Hey, quick, trip me. Trip me! Just trip me near—trip me! With your feet?

Travis: [laughing] Firbolg, what do you do?

Justin: Exactly what he asks. I don't even hesitate.

Travis: Okay. Uh, make—both of you make a dexterity check for me.

Griffin: It's fake. We're faking it.

Travis: Yeah. I know.

Griffin: 14 plus two. 16.

Justin: Oh my god, another one. [laughing]

Travis: Um, so, Firbolg, you trip him, but a little too hard. And uh, you—you really do go sprawling. Now, you're able to catch yourself with a 16, so, you don't take any damage. But you are—you are down.

Griffin: I was trying to fall onto one of the carts, as we were near it.

Travis: You have—you've fallen, and you definitely drew the attention of the person pushing the cart, and he—and he says...

Person: Are you okay?

Clint: And as Argo helps him to his feet, Argo uses sleight of hand and slips the crab into the bin.

Travis: Ohh, so there's a crab handoff, huh?

Griffin: [laughing] This is like that fuckin' scene in Now You See Me. We're just throwing the crab between us in an unlikely sort of ballet.

Travis: Yeah, give me a sleight of hand check there, uh, Argo.

Clint: How about 15 plus 12?

Travis: Yeah, so you palm that crab, and you slip that crab right in that bin, and now, Fitzroy, you've got yourself a little stow away.

Griffin: [snorts] Okay, that'll come in handy. When I forget about it. In five... four... three...

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, now, I assume you've made your way to Althea's office?

Griffin: Yes.

Justin: Yes.

Travis: Uh, what do you do?

Griffin: Just kick it. Cold lamp. Does she have any brews?

Travis: Um, you knock on the door. There's no response.

Justin: I think—is it locked?

Travis: You try the knob, and it opens, but she is currently somewhere else, it seems.

Firbolg: Well... I'm sure she wouldn't mind if... we waited.

Travis: Uh, you head inside, and y'know, there's a couple chairs that you can rest at. What are you doing while you wait?

Fitzroy: May I recommend, before we get into the extremely tenuous conversations we're probably about to have with our friend Althea song... maybe we just poke around this office? See if we can't—obviously, put everything back where you found it, but maybe we find, like... the engine room. The boiler room has one spot that you can, y'know, blow up the whole building. Not that, exactly, obviously, because we don't want to blow up the whole building, but do you know what I'm saying? Like, the weak point? Maybe we find incriminating photos of the—of the chief? I don't know.

Argo: Well, we certainly can. Um...

Firbolg: I am not comfortable doing that behind Althea's back.

Argo: Yeah, I tell you what. I think we have enough incriminating evidence. I think we ought to just lay it out for Althea. Not the whole thing about Gray and all that other stuff, but... I think there's enough to bring down the Heroic Oversight Guild. And—and she has—she has been known as the hardest working, most devoted HOG person, but she's devoted to their principles, see. And they screwed the pooch on all these different principles!

Fitzroy: Definitely, definitely. I'm just saying—

Firbolg: We've gone through this.

Fitzroy: Uh, yeah. Just as a safety net, though, um...

Griffin: And I want to just look around the office real quick. Why not?

Justin: Okay, go for it.

Clint: Sure.

Griffin: Can I roll an investigation check?

Travis: Sure you can.

Griffin: 17 minus one, 16. I don't know what I'm looking for here. I guess I'm just looking for... I think the discussions we've been having are more, uh, sort of... how do we dismantle the—the structure of the Heroic Oversight Guild, and not the building of the Heroic Oversight Guild, if that makes any sense.

Travis: Gotcha. Yeah yeah yeah.

Griffin: So, any ledgers...

Travis: Uh, you find something that you were not expecting to find. Uh, it wouldn't have been the thing that you set out to look for. But what you find in Althea's top drawer, uh, is a folder. And the folder is well worn. It has clearly been thumbed through many times. And the thing that is most surprising to you about it is, it seems to be a folder about Althea herself.

[eerie music plays]

Travis: And when you open the folder, the first page shows a portrait of a younger Althea, and it is labeled 'Avenging Angel.' And it is clearly her file for when she was an active hero with the Heroic Oversight Guild, but across it has been stamped, in bold, all-caps letters, "EVIL." And you hear the knob turn.

Griffin: Mmm... flip a coin mentally... uhh, I tuck it in my bag.

Justin: Hm.

[music stops abruptly]

[ad break]

[eerie music plays]

Travis: The door swings open, and Heroic Oversight Guild investigator, Althea Song, enters her office. She is surprised at your presence. She looks around the room, and says...

Althea: What are you doing here? Why are you in my...

Travis: And then she sees you standing by her desk with the drawer open.

Y'know, uh, why don't you roll a sleight of hand check for me?

Griffin: Fuuuck. Uh, that's 11... plus... two. 13.

Travis: Uh, she sees, uh, you closing the desk drawer.

Griffin: Oof.

Althea: What are you doing in my desk, Fitzroy?

Fitzroy: Um, I dropped my keys. Couldn't find them, and I thought I might've dropped them into the open desk drawer.

Justin: The keys to what?

Griffin: My... my fuckin' Lambo, baby.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: My Bugatti Veyron. Parked it out front.

Althea: Fitzroy, why are you going through my desk?

Fitzroy: I do it to everyone's desk. It's not just you. Right, guys?

Travis: She moves over, and she opens the drawer you just closed, and she says...

Fitzroy: And the folder—

Althea: Give—

Fitzroy: Yes.

Althea: Give it back.

Fitzroy: It fell into my bag while I was... okay.

Althea: That is mine. You had no right.

Fitzroy: We're starting on a bad foot. [laughs]

Firbolg: I can't think of a worse way for us to begin.

Fitzroy: [laughing] Okay. Um... why did it say evil, though?

Althea: I don't want to talk about it, okay?

Fitzroy: Let me cushion this by saying... if you knew what kind of jazz we've been up to over the last 48 hours, I do not think you would be so trepidatious to tell us about your evil history. [laughs]

Althea: It's not like that. I was... I was a hero with the Heroic Oversight Guild, and... there was, uh, an incident. And... it—I got placed in, uh... in a

city, and the villain there was... y'know what? I—why were you going through my desk?

Fitzroy: If you had finished that story, I think, then, it would be very logical for us to tell you why we were going through that drawer.

Althea: You—excuse—you are in my office, going through my things! I don't owe you an explanation, Fitzroy!

Argo: Actually, you kind of do. You do kind of owe us an explanation.

Althea: Excuse me?

Firbolg: Even better. This is good.

Argo: Yeah. You really, and truly... do...

Firbolg: Getting pumped now.

Althea: After everything I've done for you?

Firbolg: Althea. [clears throat] [sighs] We... know that... labels... are... not very valuable. At least, they are not to me. Evil, good, hero, and villain. As we've learned, even chaos and order are not necessarily as they seem. Please, tell us the story so we can see beyond a label.

Althea: I'll tell *you* the story, Master Firbolg.

Firbolg: They will pinch their ears closed.

Althea: Let them listen. I... I graduated as a hero, and I went to work in a city. It was a pretty good position. It... I got paid well, there was a lot of notoriety... but... the villain that I was assigned to... [sighs] He... he was sloppy. He was too flashy, and showy, and... he was more about the performance. And people got hurt. Innocent people. People who shouldn't have gotten hurt. Bystanders in the crossfire, for the sake of a good show.

And that's what I, at the time... and that's the whole reason for the Heroic Oversight Guild, is to make sure that things like that don't happen. And so, I filed a complaint with the guild. And they sent an investigator. But rather than do a thorough investigation, he just went to the governor of the district, and asked him about it. And the fact of the matter is that this villain... was famous, and put on a good show. And that meant tourism, and that meant money.

And so, the governor lied and said that I was lying, and that I just didn't want to do my job. He told the investigator that I hadn't shown up for a couple battles, that he had talked to me, and that I had refused to do my duty. And y'know, I haven't been able to prove it, but I am almost certain that there was money exchanged between the governor and the investigator. And... just like that, the Heroic Oversight Guild ruled against me. And I was fired, and I was blacklisted. They... listed me as evil, and I couldn't get work as a hero anymore.

And so, the obvious path would be to become a teacher. But... I... I wanted to make sure that what happened to me wouldn't happen to anybody else, so I worked hard. And I worked my way up through the Heroic Oversight Guild, and made my way to investigator. Only to find... that it didn't matter.

Because no amount of good intention, no amount of thorough investigation could overcome all the red tape. I was able to do some good, but... [sighs] It's just not how I thought it would be.

Firbolg: Mm. What do you care the most about? Do you care about... making the world better and safer? Or... do you care about propriety?

[music plays]

Althea: [sighs] I guess I... of course, I want to make the world better.

Firbolg: You have never needed to prove anything to anyone, Althea Song.

Althea: [laughs] That... I'm sorry, Master Firbolg, but of course I have. I've had to prove things to people. Everyone has to prove things to people.

Firbolg: The people that are in this organization do not deserve you, Althea. They do not deserve to have you toiling endlessly so that your efforts to make the world better and safer can be thwarted by bureaucracy and number crunching and penny pinching. They have forgotten goodness. This organization, Althea, claims to fight against mind control or possession, yet, they sit by and let it happen. They allow their ranks to be infiltrated by vicious thugs that want nothing but their own gain and safety. They do not care about the rest of this world. They only care about the Heroic Oversight Guild, and there has been very little oversight to speak of.

Althea: Master Firbolg, everything you say... yes, obviously. Obviously, this system is hugely broken, and doesn't take care of anyone but itself, but... when the system is all you got, you have two options. You can either be crushed by it as it rolls over you, or you can be crushed by it by being stuck inside the machinery.

Fitzroy: Mmm... [laughs]

Firbolg: There is one other option, Althea Song!

Justin: And he stands to his full Firbolg height.

Firbolg: Is that you become the one doing the crushing!

Althea: Um... this took a turn.

Fitzroy: Let's just sit in it for like, a second, though.

Firbolg: Sit in it for a second, and then tell me if this place has Garys! I should've asked that first!

Griffin: [laughs]

Althea: Um... what exactly... you guys aren't here about the weapons, are you?

Firbolg: We are here about the weapon of a different kind, Althea Song!

Fitzroy: I mean, if you did swoop some like, badass weapons for us, that—we would not say no.

Firbolg: We will take them.

Argo: We'd always take `em.

Firbolg: You never know when things will turn nasty.

Argo: Love weapons. Holy weapons.

Althea: Um... what did I miss?

Firbolg: Okay, so...

Justin: [sings a silly tune]

Argo: Play back your brooch.

Althea: Wow!

Argo: Play back your brooch!

Althea: That sure is a lot!

Justin: [laughs] You're telling me! Sorry, that's Justin. He was walking past as he tries to keep up. [laughing]

Althea: Um... okay, so, just... um...

Firbolg: Yes?

Althea: You guys have this habit of just like, suddenly telling me whole big things that are going on. It's a lot to... oh, boy. Um...

Firbolg: There is a name for it, Althea Song. Market disruption. We are disruptors! We are not content to follow in the conventional wisdom laid out by our predecessors! We are disrupting the market!

Althea: So, the three of you... um...

Firbolg: Mm. Disruptors.

Althea: Sure. The three... you three disruptors...

Firbolg: Mmm!

Althea: You, um... one of you is a villain about halfway through school.

Fitzroy: I've actually been—I've been doing pretty well. I—there's a chance I might graduate next spring.

Althea: And you've lost... a lot of your magic?

Fitzroy: Most of it. I can make a tiny little golden crab.

Althea: Okay, great. Um, and you two hench people... are going to... if I'm getting this right... uhh, sometime within the next, like, four months... completely undo a global system of... power.

Fitzroy: Mm.

Firbolg: Mm.

Argo: Mm-hmm.

Althea: By... so far, your plan is to point out the flaws in it, and ask people to kind of stop doing it.

Firbolg: Uh... as you were listing our, um... [sighs] Market advantages... you forgot one very important key player! I will give you a hint. She is the Avenging Angel!

Fitzroy: I thought you were talking about Gray.

Firbolg: Oh, yes. Also... ooh, fuck. This was in the thing, eh? You know the list we kept in the song? Uh, we should—when we set it to music, we weren't thinking about, uhh... comprehensiveness. Yes, also Gray is a part of this.

Althea: Oh. Okay, you're working with... the demon prince.

Firbolg: "With" is a funny word. "Alongside" is maybe better.

Fitzroy: Not against.

Althea: You're working within the same sphere...

Firbolg: In parallel, yes.

Althea: Uh, as Gray.

Firbolg: Co-branding.

Althea: Okay. And Gray sent you here?

Argo: And—and you.

Althea: Well, don't—let's not—

Argo: Well, no no! I'm just saying, that's the proposition, I think, that Firbolg is laying out there, as we would—

Firbolg: Right.

Argo: —like to do this with you.

Firbolg: You understand how to kick these guys in the nuts better than anybody. And we would like very much to have your help doing the kicking. We could try to take it down from the inside, but so far, our plan has gotten to “take apart from inside.” There is a two with a period after it.

Fitzroy: Literally the first thing we did in that endeavor was get caught reading shit out of your desk, so... I don't think the inside by ourselves thing is gonna happen.

Althea: Okay. Um... before I even consider this...

Firbolg: Eh, you've already considered a bit. I can tell from your—

Althea: Okay. Okay. Is Taren in on it?

Argo: Hmmm.

Fitzroy: This is a... this is like...

Firbolg: Not... sort of...

Fitzroy: Little bit. Well, we mentioned we're working with Gray, right?

Firbolg: Right.

Althea: Yeah.

Fitzroy: So then... by the transitive property... [laughs] Yes.

Althea: Is Taren working with Gray?

Fitzroy: It's—we're all one family now, aren't we? Under the—under le revolution, aren't we?

Althea: So, yes.

Fitzroy: Ye—uh...

Althea: I knew it!

Fitzroy: Yeah. Right, right? She's always been... right?

Firbolg: Okay.

Althea: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Since—since the centaurs of the Scarlet Woods thing, and Calhain, I... knew it!

Fitzroy: Something in the air, right?

Althea: Mm-hmm. It's just, I love that feeling, y'know? Where you're like, right. Where it's like, you're right, y'know?

Fitzroy: Yes.

Althea: And like, wh—ooh. Mm!

Fitzroy: Sanctimoniousness is the name of that feeling. It's a—ooh, it's a heck of a drug.

Althea: Ooh, it's good.

Argo: Vindication. Vindication is another word.

Althea: Okay, I'm—I'm gonna speak in hypotheticals for a second. Because maybe... this might be something... because this might be something that someone who, hypothetically, has worked for the Heroic Oversight Guild for a while, and maybe, hypothetically, hates their job. And maybe,

hypothetically, daydreams a lot about destroying said job. That maybe, hypothetically, she might have an idea.

Fitzroy: [inhales sharply] I'm hypothetically half-mast right now. I cannot wait.

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Althea: Well, first... gross.

Fitzroy: Yeah, I...

Althea: But second, the thing you have to understand, the reason... and this won't surprise you at all, when you really think about it. But the reason the Heroic Oversight Guild wields so much power... is money...

Fitzroy: Mm.

Althea: And... the use of it as leverage. Right? So if you think about the heroes and villains all over Nua, the flow... of power, in the form of money is simple, right? The cities pay it to the Heroic Oversight Guild, the Heroic Oversight Guild pays it back out to the heroes and villains and hench people and sidekicks and all of that, right?

And so, the Heroic Oversight Guild is, uh, like the heart, right? Pumping the blood. And at the center of that, the chamber at the middle of that heart... is... the archives. That's where all of the contracts are stored. That's where we keep track of what money needs to come in from where, and go out to who.

And... if you can get in there, and fuck shit up... it would be pretty goddamn disruptive.

Firbolg: The language, I'm not crazy about, but I like the thought.

Althea: Here's the thing, though... the paperwork... um, the files?

Fitzroy: Mm-hmm.

[theme music begins]

Althea: It's pretty well-guarded. Um... it's not like we could just walk in and, y'know, throw a match and be done with it. Um... it's gonna take some doing to get in there. Hypo—hypothetically, I mean.

Fitzroy: Hypothetically. Yes. Don't worry... I've got it all figured out.

[theme music stops abruptly]

Althea: Oh, what is—what—how—what are you gonna do?

Griffin: I thought that would be the end of the episode, and then there would be like, two weeks from there...

Clint: Yeah, that's what I thought, too.

Justin: [laughs]

Travis: [laughs]

Griffin: Something.

Fitzroy: Um... okay. Well, um... can we pretend—can we hide inside of some big—and this is just first thought. 'Cause we're blue skying it here. But if I could tuck myself into like, a big manila envelope... and then you can just drop... like you're doing a regular deposit?

Althea: If we could flatten you in some way...

Fitzroy: How—what kind of guarding are we talking about? Is it—are we talking about like a dragon, or a...

Althea: Mostly security systems.

Fitzroy: Oh! Cyber. I've heard of this.

Althea: I mean, magical.

Fitzroy: Oh, sure.

Althea: Um... just so I'm sure... because the explanation was pretty quick. If we don't do this... a lot of people are gonna die, right?

Argo: That's our main reason for wanting to do it, is to keep a bunch of people from dyin'.

Firbolg: Yes.

Althea: [sighs] Alright. Let's figure this out.

Travis: And she unrolls a big blueprint on her desk!

Fitzroy: I knew it!

Clint: [laughs]

Fitzroy: I knew you just kept one of those around!

Clint: [laughing]

Travis: [laughing] The Thundermen will be back in Ocean's Twelve!

[theme music plays]

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