

The Adventure Zone: Graduation – Ep. 35, Multiple Choice

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Travis: A room. Designed not for comfort, but for presentation. There are decorations, but it seems that the decorating choices were made without a specific style in mind. Without a... personality. Rather, they were made to give the impression of a personality. The impression of opulence.

We've been in this room before. Last time, we found a nine-foot-tall being. This time, there are two of them.

[music plays]

Travis: Though they are identical, they both give off very different energies. One carries themselves younger, more hesitant. The other, older, more confident, more self-assured. The younger of the two stares out the window.

Younger: I just... [sighs]

Travis: It seems we have caught them mid-conversation. The older one says...

Older: Just liste—we can't deviate from the plan, Chaos.

Travis: The younger one – Chaos – says...

Chaos: Yes, but... how do you know? How do you know that what they're doing won't work?

Travis: The older one, who we can assume is Order, responds.

Order: We *don't* know, and that's the point. We know *our* plan will work. Now, we don't have much time. We can't deviate now. In the olden days, before now, we trusted mortals. And look where that got us. Stagnation. No change, no growth! Nothing! We can't trust them on their own anymore.

Travis: And Chaos says...

Chaos: Yes, but is this really our job to—[sighs] To impose our will this much?

Travis: And Order responds.

Order: It's what is required. I don't enjoy taking this much liberty. It simply is what we must do to move things forward. You'll see – after this, everything will change. Maybe it will be better. Maybe it will be worse. But it will be different again. And then it will be different again. And then, it will be different again. We can be careful this time. We can guide things with a stronger hand to make sure this never happens again.

Travis: Chaos casts their eyes down.

Chaos: It just feels like we're taking... so much away from them.

Order: Yes, but it's the only way that they will grow! It's the only way. We have to protect them from themselves.

Chaos: Let's let the three of them keep working, and see what changes based—

Order: No! Chaos, who do you trust to handle this? These three mortal children, or us?

[music plays and fades]

[theme music begins]

Travis: And Althea says...

Althea: Did you say... Goodcastle?

[theme music plays]

Reginald: Yes, yes, Madame! I am, as I said, sir, Reginald Thistlewhip of Goodcastle! Uh, I believe you sent for us?

Travis: And Althea says...

Althea: I mean, I cut a—I put out like, a general call for help. I... what... I didn't think Goodcastle was... real?

Fitzroy: I'm—I am—my mind is broken.

Griffin: My mind is so broken that I, Griffin, I think, just spoke as Sir Fitzroy Maplecourt.

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: Knight present, now, in the court of Goodcastle.

Clint: Then in keeping with the theme of the show, somebody should give him shit about appearing as himself in the podcast.

Justin: No, it didn't bother me.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: No, it's fine. It's not...

Justin: In this particular instance, it didn't bother me.

Travis: It wasn't weird.

Clint: [laughing]

Travis: Yeah, it just—it didn't really—I didn't even catch it, honestly, y'know what I mean? It's just not that big a deal.

Clint: I love you guys.

Travis: And uh, Reginald says...

Reginald: Yes, of course Goodcastle's real! Who else would be sending the letters? Come on! Come on. Obviously, Goodcastle's real. You think somebody's just making it up? A whole realm?

Fitzroy: I—it—the—

Reginald: Tell her, Fitzroy!

Fitzroy: I—it had—it had been intimate—intimated to me... as such, and I do—and do—duly, I uhh... should I—do I kneel? Do I kneel?

Firbolg: I would kneel.

Reginald: Oh!

Griffin: I kneel. I kneel.

Reginald: No! In fact, if—well, no, if anything, I kneel.

Travis: And Reginald kneels to you.

Fitzroy: No, no, no! That's—no, please, no! Stand up, please!

Griffin: I lay on the ground.

Reginald: You're the on-site commander.

Fitzroy: I'm the what?!

Griffin: I'm on my belly.

Fitzroy: I'm the—

Reginald: You're the—you're the on-site commander. Y'know, it's standard Goodcastle protocol that, whichever knight is first on the scene, uh, gathers the details, and then becomes commander of the situation. We're all equals. Didn't you read the handbook?

Fitzroy: I didn't—no one ever sent me a handbook!

Reginald: You didn't get the handbook?!

Fitzroy: No, I didn't get the handbook! I got a letter asking me for—

Reginald: It comes with your confirmation letter after you accept the application!

Fitzroy: Oh, then maybe I did get the handbook. It's been a wild couple...

Reginald: You get sent the application saying, "Would you like to join Goodcastle?"

Fitzroy: Right.

Reginald: Right? Then you send it back...

Fitzroy: With money. With like... yes.

Reginald: Right? With money. And then it's confirmed. And then you get like, a whole welcome package, and it explains everything!

Fitzroy: Didn't get that. Didn't get the welcome package.

Reginald: You didn't get the welcome package?!

Fitzroy: No. I also never—a list of things I never got. One, a coat of arms. Two, sword on my shoulders thing. That was like, half the reason I wanted to be a knight, is so I could—

Reginald: Oh, that's virtual. That's done—they do it, um, and it's just—

Fitzroy: Like a DocuSign knighting.

Reginald: Yeah, very much so. Yes.

Fitzroy: Okay. So—so I'm in—so I'm in charge... Reginald?

Reginald: Sir Reginald Thistlewhip.

Fitzroy: I mean—

Reginald: Advanced scout and knight of the realm of Goodcastle.

Fitzroy: Knight to knight, can I just—can I Reggie you up? Can I just Reggie?

Reginald: Excuse me? No, my full title—

Fitzroy: No no no, I know. But knight to knight, and you can call me Fitz, and I can call you Reggie.

Reginald: Can I call you Fitzy?

Fitzroy: Yeah. That's how bad I wanna call you Reggie.

Clint: [laughs]

Reginald: Okay. You can call me Reggie.

Fitzroy: Okay, Reggie. Now, what's the score?

Argo: You can call me Al.

Reginald: So tell me—okay, Al. it is a pleasure to meet you. Uhh, so tell me, uh, Commander. What is the plan?

Travis: And Gordy steps up and says...

Gordy: No, hold on, excuse me. Um, I've brought my whole skeletal army here, and I think I should get to ask the question first. What kind of danger is my daughter in?

Fitzroy: Ohh. Uhh... a bit. We—can we reflect on the fact that we also just got here? So, I would just—

Gordy: Oh, I'm sorry. I thought that this was kind of your whole... dance, commander.

Fitzroy: Dance commander? I don't hate that.

Firbolg: I used to be a dance commander.

Griffin: [laughs]

Argo: That's cool. Dance commander!

Fitzroy: Um... yeah, I mean, we had a deal, I thought, with the force of Chaos and Order, but it's not, uh... apparently, it wasn't legally binding.

Gordy: Okay, so whatever thing you're playing at here, right? Um, and we had a whole deal, you and I, that I was going to like, send my skeletons to help. You also then... just went ahead and left my daughter here.

Fitzroy: Ye—

Gordy: Uh, without an army. Without letting me know that you needed the army. And now, there's, uh, about a bajillion demons between me and her.

Fitzroy: I mean, there's not a bajillion.

Gordy: Okay.

Travis: And Hieronymous steps over and goes...

Hieronymous: Okay, much bigger question – and I'm sorry about Rainer, but she's incredibly capable. She's going to be just fine. Why is my brother working with Prince Gray?

Fitzroy: Oh man.

Hieronymous: What... the fuck... is happening?

Griffin: We explain it thoroughly, and like, really, really, comprehensively. And then I—and then Fitzroy says...

Fitzroy: Now, repeat that back to me? So I make sure you got it.

Hieronymous: [sighs] Okay.

Travis: And then he explains it back to you.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Comprehensively and completely. And then Festo flies up, and Festo says...

Festo: I just woke up after a party in the woods. What day is it?

Fitzroy: Judgment day.

Festo: Oh shit!

Fitzroy: Yep.

Festo: That's—holy shit!

Fitzroy: Yeah.

Festo: That's some heavy stuff!

Fitzroy: I—yeah. Yeah. Was it a good party, I hope, at least?

Festo: Oh man... I mean, standard.

Fitzroy: It was a Festo party. I don't know why I asked.

Festo: Yeah, it lasted three days.

Griffin: Um, Travis, can you sort of set the stage, uh, geographically again, of what it is we are—what it is we are facing right now?

Travis: Sure. So, think about concentric circles, right?

Griffin: Right. I'm always thinking about concentric circles.

Travis: The center—like a target. Right? The center of the target, the bullseye, is the school. Uh, it has the dome of kind of translucent energy netting that is being woven by Gray and Higglemas. Um, and it is a protective barrier around the school proper. The actual like, center tower that encompassed the main building. Right?

Then, you have the next ring out, is the ring that would include like, the dorms, the battlegrounds, Groundsy's hut, everything around the school proper. That's where the demons are housed, right?

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: And they are wrapping around in such that you could not get past them. They are touching where, uh, the forest starts, and covering kind of the flank of where the Godscar Chasm used to be.

Griffin: Wow, so there's a lot of these bad boys, then!

Travis: Yeah, about ten thousand.

Griffin: [laughs] That's a lot of dice you're gonna have to roll, Trav! You sure about that? Initiative order alone is, uh...

Travis: Yep yep yep. They're all just gonna go at once, so you guys will have a nice break. I'll have one episode where each of them goes individually, and then the next episode will be your guys' turn.

Griffin: To give each other funerals for how dead we are.

Travis: Yes. And then there will—there's another open ring of space. This one's a pretty beefy ring, uh, separating your camp from them. So that camp is where all the skeletal soldiers are, where you are waiting, now, for the Goodcastle army to arrive. Gordy the lich king is there, Hieronymous is there, Festo is there, Althea, and you.

Griffin: How—have they taken notice of us yet?

Travis: The demons?

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: They are all positioned facing you.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: They are meant to keep you out of whatever's happening.

Griffin: And can we see Chaos and Order? They are huge, right?

Travis: You can't—well I mean, they're like ten feet tall. But they are not currently on the battleground. You would see them if they were.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Uh, roll a perception check, all three of you.

Griffin: I got a six plus four, ten.

Justin: Oh, critical failure for me.

Clint: Uh, six plus three, nine.

Griffin: Okay. So a ten is gonna be...

Travis: Man. You guys.

Griffin: ... the big—the number.

Travis: Um, okay. So uh, with your ten... uhh... you notice that everyone is looking at you. What, why, what expression they have, what their feelings are... any of that is completely lost to you. But definitely, everybody is staring at you and waiting.

Fitzroy: Like... so, are we in charge here? The three of us? I don't—someone explain to me what the hierarchy is!

Travis: And uh, Hieronymous kind of... y'know, is a little bit sheepish. Uh, roll—since you asked the question, roll an insight check, Fitzroy.

Griffin: Yeah. No, a two.

Travis: Oh man. Yeah, he's feeling a little sheepish, and looks around a little bit. And Althea says...

Althea: Uh, can I talk to you for a second, Fitzroy?

Fitzroy: Anything you have to say to me, you can say in front of this large group of skeletons and strangers.

Clint: [laughs]

Althea: Okay. You're obviously—the three of you are running the show. I mean, everything here. All of these people – the skeletons, and Hieronymous, and me – our connection is you. I mean, Goodcastle wouldn't be here if you weren't here. None of us would be here if the three of you weren't involved in this. So... I think it's kind of... whether—I don't know, whether it's fair or not... I guess we kind of thought you would know what to do.

Fitzroy: [snorts]

Argo: [laughing] You have no idea.

Fitzroy: Yeah, um... Master Firbolg? Do you know what to do?

Firbolg: Uhh... umm... it's—[sighs]

Fitzroy: See, this is about where we're at, vis-à-vis knowing what to do. Um...

Travis: And Hieronymous says...

Hieronymous: Okay, well, then let's... let's break it down, right? To basics, right? Let's not solve the whole thing at once. We'll do individual pieces, right? So, it—if they don't want us to get in the school, right?

Fitzroy: Right.

Hieronymous: Right? We need to get in the school. Right?

Argo: Makes sense.

Travis: Everyone's nodding.

Hieronymous: So... how do we do that?

Travis: And Gordy is like, surveying the scene, and says...

Gordy: Okay, well, I mean... ground is out. Right? Unless we want to do a full-on battle. But it seems like, if they're there to keep us out, the battle is kind of what they want, right?

Argo: Don't we have somebody that does portals?

Hieronymous: I mean, yes, it's Gray, and he's in there.

Fitzroy: He's inside.

Argo: He's in there...

Fitzroy: Yes.

Gordy: And the air is out, because they have the barriers up, and of course, there are flying demons. [sighs] And... the ground is out, unless you know someone who can, y'know, dig through rock. Solid rock, like it was nothing.

Fitzroy: Uhh, we may have... we may have a connection there. We may have worked with someone with that particular area of expertise in the past. Not 100% sure how to get ahold of them, but uh...

Gordy: Where are they? Are they in Hope, are they back in—where are they?

Fitzroy: They're not necessarily on this, uh, exact plane of existence right now.

Travis: And Gordy, his eyes immediately light up. And he says...

Gordy: Oh! A different plane of existence, you say?

Fitzroy: Uh, yes. Is that—is that—I mean, are other planes of existence accessible to us?

Gordy: Um... I have a bit of expertise with planar travel. It runs in the family. I could probably make a connection. I would need a little boost of power. A little bit of extra magic. Uh, but I could make a connection.

Fitzroy: And one of us must sacrifice our lives to power the spell. I understand.

Gordy: No—

Firbolg: I will take this.

Gordy: No.

Fitzroy: No! No.

Firbolg: Terrible sacrifice.

Argo: I'll do it. I will sacrifice my life.

Fitzroy: No. This is my terrible burd—

Gordy: No, no! I just—I was gonna ask the—

Justin: It's fine, guys. I actually have other stuff I need to do. So if uh, my character can just sacrifice his life, then I'll just move on with some other stuff.

Clint: [laughs]

Gordy: No no no, I was just gonna ask the faerie to help.

Justin: I have to turn my laundry over, so if you want to just kill my guy, then I'll just go downstairs.

Clint: [laughing]

Gordy: I was just gonna ask the faerie to help? Festo, will you?

Fitzroy: No, no! Festo will not lay down their life for this cause! This is our bed, and we will sleep—

Gordy: No, it's—nobody has to die! No!

Firbolg: Why must we pay this terrible price?!

Gordy: No, nobody has to—no, guys. Nobody has to die. I just needed the extra energy, and we'll open up the portal, and it'll be fine!

Fitzroy: Oh.

Argo: I will give you all of my magic energy to make water.

Gordy: I don't need any water right now. Thank you.

Argo: Oh, okay. I just thought it was just general concept magic, and it was—

Fitzroy: He's always trying to make water. It's fine.

Travis: And Althea says...

Althea: Okay, but clearly, I mean—how—well, okay. Two things. We need somewhere to create this portal that's safe and secure. And then, we need somewhere that's close enough to the school that, when we dig whatever

this tunnel is, right, that it won't collapse over a great distance, and we can make a fast exit. So is there anywhere on school property that's not in the bubble, that is very secure, that will—but is like, closed off and we would be able to hide safely in there?

Fitzroy: Would we be able to get up into Groundsy's place?

Travis: Hieronymous looks hesitant.

Hieronymous: Uh, we're not supposed to go... into Groundsy's hut. He's asked that nobody...

Fitzroy: Is he in there?

Hieronymous: Y'know, I haven't seen him in a while. It's been a really long time since I've seen Groundsy.

Fitzroy: It's been a long time since any—

Argo: Since like, the second episode!

Fitzroy: Yeah! It's been a minute, Groundsy! He could be a dead ass body in there!

Firbolg: We thought he would play a larger role in our day to day lives.

Clint: [laughs]

Hieronymous: I mean, I guess. It's an emergency. I suppose he would understand. Oh boy...

Firbolg: Unless he has already laid down his life for the terrible curse.

Hieronymous: I don't think he's dead.

Argo: Well, there's only one way to find out. Let's go break into his hut.

Fitzroy: Yes. Using a big, like, space mole or something.

Argo: No, I can use me lockpickin' stuff!

Fitzroy: You're not—were you not listening to the first part of everything that we said about the big space mole?

Argo: Oh, right, yeah.

Travis: And Althea steps forward and says...

Althea: Okay. Guys, fellas... faerie... we have a plan. These three –

Travis: And she gestures to you guys.

Althea: - did a heist this morning, and have kind of had a bit of a big day already. Let's let them rest. Gordy, you work on the spell. Festo, you help. Hieronymous, you keep scouting. You three, we have a tent set up for you. Go take yourself a rest, y'know? Recharge a little bit.

Fitzroy: Uh...

Travis: And in the entryway of the tent you are in, in steps Tibia and Gherkin, ready to help you to your tent!

Clint: Aww! Our skeleton buddies!

Fitzroy: Tibs, Gherks!

Travis: They do a little dance.

Fitzroy: Why are you dancing?

Justin: Clackity clackity clackity.

Fitzroy: This is terrible.

Griffin: I would love to catch a few Zs. I'm hurt. My stats are not doing so great.

Travis: Uh, Gherkin does a very fancy, like, bow, like, "Come this way!" Do you guys have any bags, anything you want Tibia to carry?

Justin: [laughs] Yeah, that's right. We're going to deal with encumbrance for the first time in Adventure Zone history.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: I mean, I'm just saying, if you're tired, he's there to be a little skeletal bellhop. A belleton. And he's ready to go.

Argo: I could go for a foot rub.

Travis: And he kind of like, snaps and points at you, and goes over and immediately starts rubbing your feet, just there on the ground.

Griffin: That can't feel good.

Argo: I should've been more specific.

Travis: Uh, you make your way into your tent. It's set up with three cots. Um, you guys, this is also a chance, the three of you, uh, for the first time in a while, since you last slept – which, admittedly, was last night, but feels forever ago – to have a little chat before you drift off to the land of nod, if you wish.

Fitzroy: Can we just team meeting? We did a heist. And we did it.

Firbolg: Did do a heist.

Argo: Y'know, the thing is, it was more like pranking, because we didn't really take anything.

Fitzroy: You're right. It was vandalism, if anything.

Argo: We were vandals! We did some vandalizin'!

Fitzroy: But we did have deadly weapons with us, so they are going to upgrade that... to a burglary, if we get caught.

Argo: Not a misdemeanor.

Fitzroy: No, it'll be a big boy, if anything. Hey, are we gonna get caught?

Firbolg: Well... I believe the plan is to not. But... by the time they realize, maybe things will be very different.

Fitzroy: Right.

Firbolg: They have bigger fish to fry, is what I mean.

Fitzroy: I'll admit, I glued a mask of my face on the Commodore, which was so funny. But also, I believe is going to be... [laughs] Hugely incriminating, and I'm not 100% sure why—it seemed like a fun idea at the time.

Argo: Yeah. In retrospect, maybe we should've gone with the 'kick me' sign.

Fitzroy: Yeah.

Argo: Because all those people kicking him, surely that would...

Firbolg: Classic.

Fitzroy: Do you still have a boat, Argo?

Argo: Do I have a boat?

Fitzroy: Do you have a boat?

Argo: Y'know, well, there's uh... [sighs] Technically, yes. I think—I mean, I haven't seen the paperwork in a long time, but I believe I have—I own the boat that, y'know, The Commodore uses, because it used to be, y'know, Ma's boat.

Fitzroy: Right. In the sense that we could steal it easily, is what you're saying now. It is your boat.

Argo: Yeah, it would be much easier to steal, I would think.

Fitzroy: We may want to hit—

Firbolg: This is a strange thought. But... almost anything we want to steal would be easier than what we have just done.

Fitzroy: Yeah.

Firbolg: We could steal pretty much whatever.

Fitzroy: Right. Um...

Argo: Are you wantin' to run away?

Fitzroy: I mean, it may not be a bad idea for us to hit the ol' international waters once we wrap up this particular project.

Argo: I'm in favor. I've got all these sea-worthy skills that, in retrospect, I really haven't used in the entire arc. So... yeah, we could do that!

Firbolg: We have wanted to make chaos. What could be more chaotic than the three of us just sort of leaving this story?

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: [laughing]

Firbolg: Mid-way through.

Fitzroy: I'm just saying, our friend, Master Firbolg, doesn't even have a name. There's no paperwork—it would be pretty easy for us to just disappear.

Justin: Yeah. They actually can't arrest the Firbolg, if you think about it.

Griffin: Right.

Clint: I thought it was Grimlow, or Bud, or... we never did formally—

Griffin: He's had many names.

Fitzroy: Yeah, let's just—just something to keep in mind. Something to sort of make peace with. I would love a nautical adventure, if it means that we don't get, uh, locked up.

Argo: Let me ask you – why don't we do it now? I mean, we were supposed to do chaos. We did some chaos. We did a little dollop of chaos. And y'know, there's obviously still gonna be a big ol' war, so... what's my motivation for breakin' back into the school?

Fitzroy: We do have friends in there.

Argo: Yeah.

Fitzroy: And they are in a not inconsiderable amount of trouble.

Argo: Okay... well, I'm a rogue, so y'know...

Fitzroy: Fair.

Travis: [snorts and laughs]

Fitzroy: Your job dictates—

Justin: That's actually classist, Dad. Just to assume that rogues are gonna do bad things.

Clint: Ohh, I gotcha. Okay.

Travis: There are many lovable rogues, Dad, and you know that.

Clint: Yes, I know. Um, George Segal. Fantasy George Segal. Anyway!

Argo: Okay, so we go. So, I mean, I was just throwing it out there. Devil's advocate. That's what a good CEO is supposed to do, is throw out options. Am I the CEO?

Fitzroy: Gave yourself a little promotion, there. Yeah, not sure that that works.

Travis: Did you just promote yourself?

Argo: What am I? The CPO? Is there such a thing?

Travis: I thought you were the CCO.

Argo: CCO. CCO, yes.

Fitzroy: I also don't know how to break it to the two of you, but we are going to have to dissolve this company. [laughs] We've just destroyed the sort of total infrastructure of the hero system in this world, so I'm afraid Therman is, uh, gonna have to hang up the ol' cloak.

Argo: Could we be a nonprofit? I mean, we have been so far. [laughs]

Fitzroy: Yeah, nothing we've done has been particularly profitable. Aside from our chain of, uh, spectral crab wear.

Argo: And our vandalism.

Fitzroy: Right.

Travis: And so, with that, the three of you lay down for a long rest. I think the Firbolg's already asleep.

Firbolg: [snoring]

Travis: And you dream.

[music plays]

[advertisements play]

Travis: Argo, you dream of a jail cell. Sitting on the cot is The Commodore. His uniform is gone, and he is dressed simply, and two things draw your attention. First, there is a clear, red mark of irritation around his neck, and your best guess is that it looks like, maybe, the glued on mask was forcibly removed.

Griffin: Mm.

Clint: Mm.

Travis: Second, second... in short sleeves, you can see that his left arm... there's something wrong. There are streaks of what look like frostbite damage running from his shoulder down to his wrist. And an image of the Firbolg hurling an ice knife into his shoulder at the tribunal flashes through your mind, and suddenly, The Commodore looks up, through the bars, and

at you. He stands, walks towards you, and stops at the door for just a moment before ripping it from his hinges. He smiles at you, and walks out the door.

Firbolg. You dream of The Unknown Forest. When you laid down to rest, it was midday. But in your dream, the night sky is above you. But that's not the only difference – there's snow on the ground. You'd guess about four inches. And when you entered the tent, it was well into spring, and there hasn't been snow on the ground in a while.

In fact, the last time it snowed was... well, it was two days before your father died. And even as you make this connection, a glint of moonlight bounces off a hard, shiny surface, moving just beyond the tree line, and you hear the voice of the guardian of The Unknown Forest say in your head...

Guardian: Master Firbolg?

Firbolg: Yes.

Guardian: What are you doing here? Is everything okay?

Firbolg: I am having a dream. You are in my dream. Welcome.

Guardian: Um, no. Oh, did you sleepwalk here? You're in my forest.

Firbolg: Yes, in the dream, I am in your forest. Listen – if your teeth begin to fall out, this is normal. Is part of dream. Do not panic.

Guardian: This isn't a dream. Are you alright?

Firbolg: Ye—yes. I—well... there is much on my mind. But I am fine.

Guardian: Did you need something from me, Master Firbolg? Is there something I can do for you?

Firbolg: If this is real, I owe you a thanks. The message you delivered to me... ah, helped me to have the time to say goodbye... to... someone very important to me. And I thank you for that.

Guardian: I'm sorry. I'm glad you got the chance, but what message, Master Firbolg? I don't know what you're talking about.

Firbolg: The message that... my clan was in danger, and there was no time to hesitate, and that I must go then.

Guardian: I... are you injured? I... [sighs]

Firbolg: You don't... what is the season?

Guardian: Uh, we are near the end of winter.

Travis: Oh yeah, and in—you, when you went to sleep, it was about mid-spring. It was like, late April, early May for you.

Firbolg: I am having the thought that... the... [sighs] This is the time, then, that I tell you... now, to send a message to me later, that I... will receive soon. Then.

Griffin: [laughs]

Guardian: Oh. I...

Firbolg: Have you ever... mess around in time?

Guardian: Um... no, Master Firbolg. Our reality has pretty strict rules about cause and effect.

Firbolg: Ah... well, then, I must take a... Argo says, "wild swing." I need you to find me. Not me now, here, but... me that is...

Justin: I guess I'm at the school right now, right? In this timeline?

Travis: Uh, you will be shortly, yes.

Justin: Okay.

Firbolg: Find me at the school. Give me that message that my clan is in danger, and I cannot hesitate. It must be now, it must be soon, because time, for you... is running short. I know this does not make sense, but I think this is when I told you.

Guardian: Okay. Um...

Firbolg: I have prepared a brief PowerPoint.

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: And you wake up.

Justin: That's good, 'cause I wake up, and my first thought is...

Firbolg: What is PowerPoint?

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Fitzroy, you dream of a room. A room that you have dreamt of before. You stand in a world of former opulence. Beside you are the shattered remains of a comfortable, richly upholstered wingback chair.

Griffin: [gasps dramatically]

Travis: Above you, dark wood beams, splintered and gouged with deep scratches. On the walls, shreds of masterpiece paintings hang loose in their frames, and between them are scraps of velvet drapes, barely covering shattered windows. On either side of you are the Firbolg and Argo.

But staring out one of the windows is Chaos. But not like you've seen them before. First, they only stand at six feet tall, meaning that you, Fitzroy, are looking slightly down at them. Second, they are dressed rather plainly, compared to their previous elaborate outfits. And the third difference isn't anything you can specifically put your finger on; they're simply carrying themselves differently.

And after a moment, Chaos sighs deeply and says...

Chaos: I just don't understand.

Fitzroy: Um, I could explain it to you. Like, slowly, if you need.

Chaos: Please. Please explain it to me. Why... why are you doing this? There is a plan. We told you the plan! If you follow the plan...

Fitzroy: Right.

Chaos: ... everything would be fine. Why are you doing this?

Fitzroy: And did that plan involve... the slaughter of a bunch of innocent people? [pause] That's a yes. You don't have to answer that. That one's a yes. Um, so the—it was, to be frank, not a very good plan. So we started doing our own thing.

Chaos: So what's your plan? What—you three, tell me right now. What's your plan?

Fitzroy: Hold up, guys. I think this may be a trick.

Justin: [laughs]

Fitzroy: This may be a trick. Because you're feeling like an antagonist right now, Chaos. Or are you Order? Have you switched over yet?

Firbolg: I... I will answer.

Justin: And I step right into their face.

Firbolg: [whispers] We don't have a plan.

Clint: [laughing]

Chaos: [sighs] Then how do you know that what you're doing will make any difference?

Firbolg: We don't.

Clint: [snorts]

Firbolg: I thought you would appreciate.

Chaos: You misunderstand me. I want change. I want the chaos of change. I want to know that change will happen. Change, so that we can move towards something else! I, and Order, have thought about this... for longer than the three of you have been alive. We know our plan would work. And if you would just follow it, things would change. Perhaps it would be better. Perhaps it would be worse. But it would be different, and then things could change again, and maybe that would be better. Maybe that would be worse. But then things could change again!

There's no way of knowing if what you're doing will change anything.

Fitzroy: Well, I mean, you were doing your plan, and we came along and stopped it from being effective. So, right back atcha.

Chaos: I can still make my plan work.

Argo: Then what do you need us for, then? I've asked this before. If you're—

Chaos: Because the plan revolves around Fitzroy! We have put work into Fitzroy! We have planned! If you plan as much as we have planned, you can't just... swap in elements!

Argo: Sidebar. Fitzroy, Firbolg... I think we've got some leverage with this entity.

Fitzroy: I mean, not much.

Argo: No, not much, but...

Fitzroy: It's the reason that I imagine we haven't been, uh, smashed into oblivion. Uh, so yeah, I mean, that is how useful our leverage has been so far.

Um, Chaos, listen. This morning, we dismantled the entire system of governance for heroes and villains across the land. We did that this morning. And none of us are particularly smart or capable. So... give us an afternoon, and let's see what other worldwide systems we can dismantle! Bloodlessly, I might add. I think we hit a couple security guards a couple times, but they will go home to their families.

Chaos: How do you know it's enough?

Fitzroy: You don't. But it will be different, and it'll be different on our terms.

Chaos: I wish I could believe you. And I do.

Argo: I wish I could, too.

Fitzroy: I wish I could believe me. [laughs]

Chaos: I have seen so much. I have seen... [sighs] ... whole nations rise and fall at the whim of a madman or hero. I have seen ages of wisdom and fear collapse in on themselves, because of one speech given at the right moment. But it has been so long since anything like that has happened. I

don't know that the world can change, because of the actions of even three well-meaning heroes. I wish... but it's too late.

Things are in motion, now. Look...

Travis: And they gesture towards the window.

Griffin: I look.

Travis: What you see is, you see through the eyes of Order. You see the cavern that used to be the Godscar Chasm, and the portal that Order has been tearing in the universe takes over the entire cavern. The entire length and breadth and height of what was the Godscar Chasm is a huge, gaping wound in reality.

And Chaos says...

Chaos: I don't think we could stop this if we wanted to. Change is coming. And you three can either be on our side, or you could keep making trouble. But our way will work. I know it will. Order... has told me it will work. And change is necessary. And... I don't know that your way will work. I wish—
[sighs]

This might be the last time we see each other.

Argo: Oh, thank god.

Griffin: Can I uh—can I roll an insight check? 'Cause I feel like this is definitely a different vibe than anything we've ever gotten from Chaos before.

That's a flat 19.

Travis: Fitzroy, I want you to put on the rose glasses that you built.

Griffin: Uh, I think I'm already wearin'—I mean, it's a dream, right? I put them on. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah. You look at Chaos, and what you see is a child. A child standing on their tip-toes to look out the window. A child who has trusted another counterpart for as long as they can remember. A child who has done the same thing for all of time, to continue existing the way they have always existed. And they are scared.

And you look around the room, and what could have been mistaken for anger, for destruction... was a tantrum. They don't understand why you're not playing right. And then the three of you wake up.

And... Fitzroy, when you wake, you can see through the opening of the tent that it is night outside. But it's not dark inside the tent. There's a ball of light hovering a half an inch from your face. And you realize that Festo has been slapping you awake.

And Festo says...

Festo: Oh good! You're awake!

Fitzroy: Your hands are so little, but they hurt a lot.

Festo: I have slap magic.

Fitzroy: Can I have some of that?

Festo: Ooh, it will take a long time to learn!

Justin: Travis, will you roll to see if Festo really has slap magic, or if it's a joke?

Travis: Uh, yeah. Oh, I rolled a 35?

Griffin: Oh, shit!

Travis: What? Oh my god.

Clint: [laughing]

Fitzroy: Um, Festo, I was in the middle of probably the worst dream I've ever had. So... did you need something?

Festo: Yes! You have a very big challenge ahead of you!

Fitzroy: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah! Like, yeah!

Festo: And your magic is still broken.

Fitzroy: Broken's a not great way of—I could still, uh... I could still play the hits.

Festo: Really?

Fitzroy: I got the crab, and sometimes I can do an illusion. But a lot of the times, it doesn't come out right.

Festo: You are wound so tight, we are going to have to take desperate, drastic measures to fix your magic!

Fitzroy: What are you suggesting?

Travis: And Festo looks around at the three of you and says...

Festo: Pack a bag. Something that you can move in. We need to get moving!

Fitzroy: I mean, aren't we gonna go on a sort of mole adventure?

Festo: Yes, but first... we need to get to the fairy circle before midnight! It's time to party!

Fitzroy: Yes!! Boys, wake up!! Yes!! It's happening!!

Festo: We need to move! Hurry!

Firbolg: Uh... what is happening?

Festo: We're going to a party!

Firbolg: Mm... okay.

Argo: Eh, yeah. Why not?

Festo: Do you have any like, fun hats you can wear?

Fitzroy: Do we have fun hats?

Griffin: I pull out the box that says "the boys' fun hats" on it.

Travis: Describe to me the fun hats each of you wears to a party.

Griffin: Um...

Clint: Uh, mine is a straw boater.

Travis: I said fun hat! Hey! I said fun hat!

Clint: Hey, listen. Don't tell me how to have fun, Travis!

Travis: Okay, I guess Argo's on his way to a barbershop quartet practice?

Clint: That is fun!

Travis: Oh my god. Okay. What about you, Firbolg?

Justin: Uh, it's a... just a bunch of leafs. [laughs] It's just a bunch of leaves I grabbed on the way, and I'm really sorry, and I feel bad about it, and I know it's bad.

Travis: Uh, what about you, Fitzroy?

Griffin: Um, it's like—it's basically like a Jamiroquai hat.

Travis: I knew you were gonna say that.

Griffin: But it has—it's got antlers for some reason.

Travis: Ohh!

Clint: Is it made out of balloons?

Travis: What a twist!

Griffin: And the antlers wave around, and they all have lights on their—on the tips of the—on the points of the antlers, and they wave around when I flex a head muscle.

Travis: Oh boy!

Festo: That's a great hat!

Fitzroy: Thanks.

Festo: It's time to mooove!

Travis: And Festo heads out the tent.

Clint: I follow them rapidly!

Griffin: I've never—I've never run so fast.

Travis: Uh, as the three of you run behind them, Festo distributes three vials and says...

Festo: Hurry! Drink this!

Fitzroy: Now—no, boys, don't! I've—no, Festo!

Festo: It's drugs!

Justin: I'm already drinking it.

Argo: Okay, yeah.

Firbolg: What kind of—I—my bo—

Argo: [glugging]

Festo: Drink it!!

Fitzroy: There's another Goodcastle knight, like, here!

Festo: Don't make me magic slap you!

Fitzroy: Okay.

Griffin: I drink—I drink the drugs under threat of violence from the teacher at this school!

Travis: Yeah, it's a cool sip.

Clint: It's like an episode of Walker Texas Ranger.

Travis: It's like a reverse health class movie.

Griffin: A reverse one. Yeah.

[bouncy music plays]

Festo: It's a mixture of like, ecstasy and LSD and shrooms!

Fitzroy: Okay, fun fun fun.

Travis: Um, you reach the fairy circle in The Unknown Forest, as the drugs kick in! And suddenly, you're surrounded by fairies, but they are all your size. Or, are you their size? It's hard to tell as lights and music fill the air. And Festo says...

Festo: [echoing] Come! Let's dance!

Travis: And you see Festo is dancing with fairies of all shapes and sizes and colors. Their wings have different patterns. Some of them have dragonfly wings, some with butterfly wings, some appear to be some kind of metal wing. And all of them seem to know the steps. And they're all waving for the three of you to come join.

Griffin: [echoing] Um... I'm nervous.

Clint: [echoing] I tilt my straw boater rakishly to one side, and start singing under my breath in tune, kind of a harmony to the music that's playing. Y'know, like a good barbershop quartet guy would go, and I kind of jaunt my way over there.

Travis: As you begin to move, Argo, your body becomes like water. And whether for real, or it's all in the drugs, it's hard to say. But you begin to flow and move, and you feel this relief. You didn't even know you were carrying tension up 'til this moment, but all of your movements become smooth and flowing. And you have never felt as sure on your feet since leaving the deck of The Mariah and walking on dry land.

But now, it's like you're back at sea, and everything feels right as you move to the music. And they gesture to you, Firbolg, gesturing for you to come join.

Justin: [echoing] I just kind of saunter on out there.

Argo: [echoing] Come on, buddy!

Justin: [echoing] Ooh. It's primal. The moves are primal. Primal moves. Highly sexual.

Travis: As you move out to the dance floor, Firbolg, you can feel the earth beneath you. You can feel the movement of every animal for miles around. Their feet, their hooves, everything, their paws, you feel the rhythm of life all around you. You hear the music of the leaves blowing, and you are the leaves, and you are the animals. You are the wind, you are the moon, you are nature around you, and you feel a connection to the world like you have never felt before.

And every move you make connects you deeper and deeper, not only to nature, but to your friends, and to yourself, and to your clan. And the fairies gesture to you, Fitzroy.

Fitzroy: I'm nervous!

Travis: The music swells. The lights flash, and suddenly, the fairies are gone, your friends are gone, and before you, there's one being. And it's you. But it's not you – it is a glowing, golden representation of you. And they reach out their hand for you.

Fitzroy: [echoing] Yeah, now we're cooking with gas.

Griffin: [echoing] And I walk over and take my hand.

Travis: You take your hand, and the two of you move in perfect synchronicity, moving in circles, slowly at first, eyeing each other. But then, they wink – or you wink, first. It's hard to tell, and the two of you begin to move faster and faster. And suddenly, it's unclear where you begin and they end, or where they begin, and you end. You don't know which one of you is you, and which one of you is the glowing, golden representation. And suddenly, it doesn't matter.

The two of you are so in sync that you are one body. And the three of you wake up on the dew-covered ground, and it's dawn. And you look down at your arms, Fitzroy... and they are crackling with energy.

Griffin: Um... where are we at?

Travis: You're on the forest floor. It's morning.

Griffin: I... are they—are my compatriots asleep still?

Travis: They're there with you. They're asleep. The Firbolg, to your left, sleeping peacefully, their hat covering their eyes. And over there, you see Argo with his straw boater pulled down over his eyes, asleep against a rock, smiling happily.

Griffin: I get a good distance from them, and... sort of squinting, unsure of what it is I'm even doing, I... clap my electric hands together, and cast *Thunder Clap*.

Travis: Without a pause, energy ripples out from you like you have never felt before. It doesn't take will. It doesn't take concentration. It happens as easy as breathing, as easy as your heart beats, the magic flows out of you, more powerful than ever before.

Fitzroy: I guess you could say that the magic was inside—bluuugh!

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Fitzroy: [dramatized vomiting sounds] Water! Water! Water, please! It all burns! Water, water, water, water, water! Water, water, water! Festo, water! Argo, do water magic on me! I need it! It burns everywhere in me!

Justin: [laughing]

Firbolg: You need the chill out tent. It looks like you're freaked out again.
Let me get you an orange slice.

[theme music plays]