

The Adventure Zone: Graduation – Ep. 37, Investment Opportunities

Published on April 8th, 2021

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[theme music plays]

Travis: The members of The Unbroken Chain join you on the balcony, and for a moment, there is silence as you stare at The Commodore with his two bare hands, tearing apart a magical net like it was nothing. Then, Rainer comes rushing in.

Rainer: You all are never going to believe what’s happening out there, but... oh! Hi guys! When did you get back?

Fitzroy: Gosh, it—either like ten minutes ago, or a week ago.

Rainer: Well it’s good to see you! How was, uh—how was the bank thing? Or the heist, or whatever it was?

Fitzroy: Well... it—

Argo: Shenanigans.

Fitzroy: Shenanigans were definitely executed.

Rainer: Nice!

Fitzroy: We did it, but we did—

Argo: Tomfoolery.

Fitzroy: We did not make, let’s say, a clean getaway. So...

Rainer: Ooh. How did you get back?

Fitzroy: Magic.

Rainer: Nice.

Argo: A mole. A big mole.

Rainer: A big mo—oh, yes. This big mole. Hi, big mole!

Xorn: [Xorn noises]

Travis: Hey! You're not the Xorn, I'm the Xorn, buddy.

Clint: [laughs]

Rainer: So um, what are we gonna... y'know, do?

Fitzroy: Okay. Um... well, we gotta get the demon prince here, all the way down to the Godscar Chasm. But there's like, a lot of bad stuff between us and that goal. So... that's just like, brass tacks, vision board, like, first little post-it note that we can slap up there.

Travis: Uh, and then you hear another voice come through.

Reginald: Ah, yes! Field commander Fitz! There you are!

Fitzroy: Reggg!

Reginald: I've been looking all over for you!

Fitzroy: Yeah, well, here I am. You got Fitz, Reg. What are you gonna do with him?

Reginald: Yeah, Gordy told me you went through the tunnel, and I followed you here.

Travis: And Rainer says...

Rainer: Gordy? My dad's here?

Fitzroy: Oh yes. Like, everyone's here, Rainer.

Rainer: Oh, cool.

Reginald: So, field commander... what are your orders?

Fitzroy: I mean, how many other of the Goodcastle... y'know, army—

Reginald: Oh, sorry! Yes, that's what I came here to tell you. They're all here. The rest is here. We're ready.

Fitzroy: How many are your numbers? Our numbers?

Reginald: I would say uh, close to five thousand?

Fitzroy: *What?!*

Reginald: Yes.

Fitzroy: This is gonna be easy! I thought, like... am I the only one who thought we were pretty boned until this very exciting development?

Reginald: Yes, no, it's the full force of the Goodcastle army has come from the four corners of Nua to support one in need. That's what we do!

Argo: So is that like, five thousand squirrel skeletons and stuff? 'Cause, y'know—

Reginald: What?

Argo: It's a matter of perspective. I'm just—I mean, every time we turn around, we're running into some kind of wildlife skeletons. But this is like... real, not skeletons, right?

Reginald: I... I don't—I'm not entirely sure how to answer that? No, we're not wildlife skeletons. We are knights of the floating realm of Goodcastle.

Firbolg: I think I recognize some of the knights. There's Deus. I see Ex. Wow, there is Machina right there.

Clint: [laughs]

Reginald: You know the knights of Goodcastle?!

Firbolg: Just those three.

Reginald: Ah, I see, excellent!

Justin: I don't know why I sounded like Triumph the insult comic dog.

Travis: There was a little bit of that.

Griffin: You did a little bit.

Justin: Little bit. Little bit of flavor there of Triumph.

Clint: [laughing]

Fitzroy: Well, we'll—let's rouse them, and um... I mean, I don't think we need to smash our forces into their forces, 'cause that's unnecessary. We just need to clear a path.

Reginald: I mean, they will need to get here. They're kind of in holding now.

Fitzroy: Where?

Reginald: Y'know, back at camp. Uh...

Travis: And uh, that's the thing. So you can see here, from the perspective of the balcony, that the demons are like, right on top of you.

Griffin: Right.

Travis: And the field camp that you all had set up is like, two or three football fields away. So when that barrier comes down, you're not gonna have much time between that and the demons being like, right on top of the school.

Griffin: M'kay. Um...

Fitzroy: Alright, well, we need them to start moving right now. Can you send a message or... do you have Gmail?

Reginald: Geology mail? No, no. That only works on the earth plane. But I uh, I can skedaddle on back to them and tell them your orders are to move.

Fitzroy: Um... yeah, actually, we can—I can uh... I can do that myself.

Griffin: And I pull out my falconer's gauntlet, and summon Leon.

Travis: Ohh, yeah you do. That proud bird lands swiftly on top of that gauntlet and looks at you like, "This is what I've been waiting for."

Fitzroy: Yeah. Just to check, are you still okay being... definitely a bird?

Travis: Um, roll an insight check.

Griffin: [snorts] Okay. I'd have to be pretty insightful to read the body language of a bird. Uhh... that's a 19.

Travis: So with a 19, you get from the body language that, basically, he is saying, "Y'know, you've asked me that a lot, and yet, I am still a bird. So I would say that, after this one thing, I would like to stop being a bird, please."

Fitzroy: Okay, but do you mind just delivering a quick message, and then... you can, y'know, deanimorph?

Travis: "Yes, but then I would like to be a human again, please."

Fitzroy: You got it. You got it.

Travis: Okay, great.

Fitzroy: That definitely won't get lost in the ol' narrative shuffle.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: So, Leon the hawk flies off with your message, heading towards the forces of both the skeletal army of the lich king and the army of the floating realm of Goodcastle.

Justin: Is Gordy around now?

Travis: Well, so, you left Gordy back at the hut.

Griffin: At Groundsy's.

Justin: Right. Who's the most ma—in the gathered party here, who's the most magical motherfucker?

Travis: Uh, that would be Festo.

Justin: Can I holler at Festo for a second?

Travis: Of course.

Justin: Okay.

Firbolg: Festo, uh, a moment, please?

Festo: Okay! A moment's about what we got, so... yes.

Firbolg: I wouldn't bother you if it weren't important.

Festo: I doubt that that's true, but go on!

Firbolg: I had very strange experience.

Festo: Oh, at the party? Yes, that will happen! The faeries can get a little wild!

Firbolg: I think was after? This is getting confusing for reasons you will understand. I... hm. I back up.

Festo: Okay.

Firbolg: Last season or so, the guardian came to me. Guardian of the Unknown Forest.

Festo: Oh yes, I know them well! We've partied together!

Firbolg: This is the least surprising revelation.

Clint: [laughs]

Firbolg: They came to me and told me that I needed to return to my village, and that they were passing on a message from... me.

Festo: Okay.

Firbolg: Well... recently—

Justin: I don't know, it was a couple nights ago. Two nights ago, three nights ago, last night. It's hard to say. But y'know. That amount of time.

Festo: Yeah.

Justin: That was me talking to you.

Travis: Oh, yeah.

Justin: I would never drop my character voice. Ever.

Travis: I know. I know, Justin.

Justin: Um... until I do, occasionally.

Travis: Yeah.

Firbolg: But the message I sent back... I just gave myself the message, but the Guardian was in the past? Yes? But I spoke to them... now.

Festo: Oh, okay. I've seen this happen before.

Firbolg: I sent a message through time into the past to myself. Yes.

Festo: I think that maybe some of, uh, y'know, that party stuff, wink wink, might still be in your system, Master Firbolg. Because time manipulation is quite impossible.

Firbolg: Mm... but this did happen.

Festo: Nnno, I don't think it could've happened, because everything, reality, is based off of cause and effect. Something happens so that the next thing could happen. And what you are describing is that it only happened because it had happened before? And that is... that... that's... that would mean that reality is quite broken.

Justin: [laughs] Dad just did a stealth check for some reason.

Griffin: He's taking a nap, and he doesn't want to get caught.

Justin: [laughs] Stealth nap.

Fitzroy: Um, Festo...

Justin: No, actually, I think it just popped up in my game log. Anyway.

Fitzroy: Festo, do you remember who it is you're speaking to?

Festo: Oh. Right. Oh, yes, no. Doesn't lie. Well, fuck.

Firbolg: I could be confused. Is possible. Seems very strange to me. I would accept almost any explanation other than time being all... stupid.

Festo: Well, I, um... I'll think about it? Um, but if what you said is true... it's very, very, very, very, very, very bad.

Firbolg: Hm.

Festo: So I guess... y'know, try not to let it happen again?

Firbolg: I will keep my feet firmly planted in now.

Festo: Okay. And if you ever see any more weird time shit, let me know, okay?

Firbolg: This is fair.

Festo: Okay.

Travis: Um, so, things are as—this is gonna be a little table talk here. Things are absolutely about to pop off.

Griffin: `Kay.

Travis: Is there any... and then we're like, end game world. Right? Is there anything y'all wanna do or talk to or set up before we go?

Clint: Um, I would like—Argo would like to take a look at The Commodore. It seems like, y'know, he pops up and starts tearing apart this netting, and... he's undergone some changes. I think—I don't know if that would be an insight check or a perception check, or... what kind of check would it be?

Travis: Um, give me—

Clint: Just to kind of look at him.

Travis: Give me an investigation check.

Clint: 'Kay. Uh, that is an 18 minus one, so that's a 17.

Travis: Yeah, luckily, right now, you're kind of surrounded by people who know a thing or two about magic. And so, by conferring with Festo and Gray and Higglemas, um, but especially you, Fitzroy... with your experience, The Commodore is basically, at this point, radiating. Almost like a blinding level of... it's almost chaos magic. It is like, the same sort of—if it was music, right, it's the same song, but in a much different key, right?

Griffin: M'kay.

Travis: Um, and he is overflowing with it.

Griffin: Okay. More than I was? And don't say yes, 'cause that's...

Travis: Mmm, yep. Yep yep yep.

Griffin: Aw, man. Okay.

Travis: Yep yep yep yep yep.

Griffin: That's fine. I got good magic, now. The magic of self-confidence.

Travis: Um, and seeing that, I'm going to say, it kind of spurs you all on that... it's beginning to be a little bit more, uh, imperative that you get on the move than it was before.

Griffin: Okay. Is Reg still here?

Travis: Yes.

Griffin: Can I talk to him real quick?

Travis: Sure.

Griffin: I know we have to hurry, but...

Travis: Precious little time, but y'know, talking is a free action, Griffin.

Griffin: Why don't we have Reg walk and talk with us? That's good.

Travis: Okay. Yeah, you're headed down the stairs towards the front, and you hear Higglemas and Festo kind of speaking very quickly behind you, and not quite finishing their sentences as they're like, making some kind of plan behind you. And you head down the stairs, followed closely behind by Rainer, and you've got Reg there right next to you.

Griffin: M'kay. Um... while we're hurrying down the stairs, I try to discreetly like...

Fitzroy: Hey, Reg? Reg?

Reginald: Yes? Yes, Fitzy?

Fitzroy: I've got—that sounded so natural, by the way, coming out of your mouth. I have something to talk to you about, and it is sensitive, and—but I don't think we're gonna have time to have like, a whisper zone to speak about it in.

Reginald: Oh no, ask away. Ask away. Anything, my friend.

Fitzroy: So this is gonna have to do. And this conversation's gonna be much shorter than I think either of us would like.

Reginald: Okay.

Fitzroy: But I do have to – and I will confess to not knowing how this works...

Reginald: Uh-huh?

Fitzroy: I have to tender my resignation... as a knight... of the realm of Goodcastle.

Reginald: [gasps] Why is that?

Fitzroy: It's—it's not you, and it's not the king or queen or regent or... I'll be straight with you, Reg. There's a lot of stuff I still am not that sure about, which is why, honestly, this doesn't feel like such a big deal for me. Like, I never got a pamphlet, or... do you know what I mean? There were some lines of communication that got dropped there that is making this maybe less of an emotional experience.

Reginald: Yes, but why? Why leave... it's almost unheard of for a knight to decide to stop being a knight of Goodcastle.

Fitzroy: Well, for one thing, like I did just say, I do kind of feel like I never got started. But I... just feel like, after everything we've gone through... and everything we've had to suffer... I am just not really... cut out for knighthood. And I don't mean that in any kind of self-deprecating way. I just... I am not who I thought I was. Do you understand, Reg?

Reginald: I do very much so, Fitzroy.

Fitzroy: So do you have to de—

Reginald: No, I will accept your resignation. How about tomorrow morning?

Fitzroy: But I do—I'm just saying, if these five thousand people are going to fight with me as their field commander, I would like to kind of... let them know sort of where I'm at, vis-à-vis being their leader.

Reginald: I see. How about, I will take over as field commander, and we will be something of, um... independent contractors, working for Thunderman LLC. But we'll keep that between you and I for now. How about that?

Fitzroy: That's great, and I will tell you where you can send the invoice when we're finished.

Reginald: Excellent. Excellent. Um... Perhaps we should get on with saving, uh, the world.

Fitzroy: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, I'm glad we had this talk.

Reginald: Excellent. We—

Fitzroy: [shouting] Everyone? You don't have to call me Sir anymore! I'm just regular ol' Fitzroy!

Firbolg: You already seem more down to earth.

Fitzroy: Tell me about it. Check this out. Ass.

Argo: [guffaws]

Reginald: Wow!

Firbolg: Whoa.

Argo: You are real today! You are really real!

Travis: Yeah, I was not expecting that, frankly.

Fitzroy: Shit.

Travis: So you've reach—oh.

Fitzroy: Is that right? Did I say that one right?

Travis: So close. So close. Uh, you've reached the main entryway, and you exit, and you can see that The Commodore is almost through. The army of Goodcastle is mobilized, but they are not going to get there quite in time, and Higglemas says...

Higglemas: Don't worry. We have a plan. Festo and I will buy you some time.

Travis: And you see the two of them close their eyes and begin making patterns and shapes. And then, the air fills with a low hum. It's very reminiscent of a dragonfly's wings, but lower and louder, and it sounds like it's coming from all around you. And then, you realize why.

[chorus of distant Garys is heard]

Many Garys: `Ey, it's me! Eyy, it's me, Gary!

Travis: Coming from every window and doorway on campus is a flood of gargoyles. The Garys have taken to the sky.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: And for stone statues, they are surprisingly graceful. They're ready as the barrier between you and the demons finally breaks down.

Griffin: Shit.

[intense music plays]

Travis: The three of you, the Xorn, Althea, and Gray begin to run. Everyone else is gonna buy you as much time as they can. The Garys dart in amongst the demons, drawing their focus, tripping and generally slowing them however they can. You've got a bit of a lead, but it's not much.

Griffin: If we lose a single Gary, I will never forgive you.

Travis: I understand, but they're both magical and stone. It's going to be okay. At very worst, you can superglue them back together with your magical glue.

Griffin: That's fair. Okay.

Justin: Okay, how far do we need to go?

Griffin: Yeah, paint us a picture of sort of spatially what we're—where we're at to sort of set the stage.

Travis: Um, so, you are at the main entrance of the school. The entrance, like... where you need to get to for the Xorn to be able to like, dig to the cavern, uh, is basically like, right on top of where the cavern is. So you have a pretty far way to go. Like, two or three football fields to get there.

Griffin: I want to try and hide us.

Travis: Okay, great.

Griffin: Uh, as we move. Um... what's the weather like?

Travis: Uh, y'know what? Roll a d20 and tell me what you get.

Griffin: Uhh... I got a 16.

Travis: Uh, it is partly cloudy.

Griffin: Okay. That does nothing for me.

Travis: Oh.

Griffin: Uh, yeah. Let me see... yeah, y'know, I don't actually have anything for this. Never mind!

Travis: Okay, great.

Griffin: I can turn myself invisible, but that does very little for anybody else.

Justin: I'm going to cast *Pass Without Trace*.

Travis: Okay. How much does that cover? Who does that cover?

Justin: It's a veil of shadows and silence. Radiates from you, masking you and your companions from detection. For the duration, each creature you choose within 30 feet of you has a plus ten bonus to dexterity, stealth checks, and can't be tracked except by magical means. A creature that receives this bonus leaves behind no tracks or other traces of its passage.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: Right there what it says on the tin.

Justin: Does what it says on the tin. Pass with no traces.

Travis: Um, you see, swooping down, faster than the demons behind you, is a set of Erinyeses, which you've faced before. These are like, uh, evil angels? Y'know, demonic looking angels. You've fought them before. But with this spell, all of you... so that would be, what, six total, are going to make a stealth check.

Clint: `Kay.

Griffin: And how much extra bonus did we get on that?

Justin: Plus ten.

Griffin: Okay. Then that's a 15.

Justin: Uh, I got a 23.

Clint: Uh, I got a 29 plus ten, that's a 39.

Justin: Jesus Christ.

Griffin: If you get a 40—

Justin: Is that the highest TAZ roll ever?

Travis: It might be.

Griffin: I think so.

Clint: [laughing]

Justin: In TAZ history. Dad's so fucking gone.

Travis: Um, so, all three of you succeed, and you make it past the Erinyeses. And you leave them searching the area, because you have left no trace. And then... about, mmm, 30, 40 yards in front of you, a veil drops, and three pit fiends appear. And uh, the pit fiends, you will remember...

Griffin: They're bad boys.

Travis: And they also have true sight.

Griffin: Ohh, yeah. God. They really cut out a lot of potential for shenanigans with that. That one spell.

Travis: Yeah. So the three of them raise their maces and smile clearly, liking their odds, and the lead fiend steps forward to engage. But before he gets more than two steps, there is a bloodcurdling sound that stabs into the ears of all present. And a raging form, the size of a barn, moves like lightning out of The Unknown Forest, and the Guardian slams into the fiends, sending them flying.

Griffin: Uh oh!

Travis: And you get your first good look at the Guardian, and it's something you are not likely to forget. Its body is like that of a millipede, except with long, multi-jointed, fleshy legs. Two arms the size of tree trunks bend at the elbows, and extend far beyond what could be considered normal. But perhaps the most unexpected thing is the face. It's almost human, but the proportions are all wrong... and then there are the eyes. Round and bulging, and red as blood.

Griffin: I look away—I don't want—I look away.

Justin: Yeah. Don't like to look at it.

Travis: Yeah, it's very upsetting. You hear the Guardian's voice in your head.

Guardian: Master Firbolg, I'm so glad I found you. I know what brought you to me all those months ago. Our reality is... [sighs] It threatens to shatter. There are cracks forming throughout the forest, and the bonds of cause and effect, the very tapestry of existence, threatens to unravel. You have to stop this, or we may never recover.

Travis: And before you get a chance to respond, the pit fiends are back on their feet and swarming the Guardian. And the fiends are outmatched, but they are enraged, and you need to hurry. And Gray says...

Gray: As soon as I am in my dimension, everyone will be safe. We have to move!

Griffin: I don't think I even slowed down. The look of this creature was so upsetting, I—

Travis: That's fair, yes.

Griffin: I instinctively just ran faster.

Clint: Maybe even ran, yeah, faster, to get away from it.

Travis: You've reached the location of the Godscar Cavern, and in fact, you are right on top of it. If there is any chance of the Xorn breaking through, it has to be here, and that is when you hear the roar of a jet engine behind you.

Griffin: A roar of a what now?

Travis: A jet engine.

Griffin: I heard that.

Travis: You turn to see a figure speeding towards you. The air ripples around him, and he leaves a gouge in the ground behind him. And before you can even fully understand what is happening, The Commodore comes to a stop six feet behind you.

The Commodore: Hello, boys. Good to see ya.

Travis: And he looks over at Gray.

Commodore: You too, Gray. Or, don't you remember me? I signed on with ya, and then ya chucked me as soon as I wasn't useful. No hard feelings. I've moved onto bigger and better things.

Travis: Everyone make a dexterity saving throw.

Griffin: Uhh, 14 total.

Clint: 18.

Justin: Siiix.

Travis: Uh, a blast of energy ripples from The Commodore's hand and tears, basically, between the two sets of groups. There's the three of you on one side, and then there is the Xorn and Gray and Althea on the other. And instinctually, the Xorn begins to dig to safety, and Gray follows him without hesitation. And Althea looks at you and says...

Althea: What should I do? Go with them, or stay here?

Fitzroy: Get Gray to the dunk hole. To the—dunk Gray in the hoop!

Althea: Okay, uh... don't die!

Travis: And Althea follows them, and you three roll initiative.

[music fades]

[ad break]

Justin: Fuck yes. I got slots galore. I'm gonna fuck this old idiot up.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: I'm gonna kill the—guys, I've been thinking about this a lot. I'm gonna kill this guy.

Justin: Got a three.

Griffin: I got a 21.

Justin: Let Dad kill him, though, if we're gonna kill him. Or let Dad be killed by him. Beautiful.

Griffin: Ooh! And then I kill him after he—yeah.

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: Dad, let him kill him—

Justin: And then I kill you.

Griffin: Let Dad—let him kill you, make it extra sad, so that when I kill him, people are like, "Yeah!" And then when Firbolg kills me...

Clint: Ohh, that'd tug the heart strings.

Justin: People will be like, j'accuse! Didn't see that coming!

Clint: That... that is... that is moving.

Justin: Say what you will about Grad. It had some fuckin' twists at the end! Shit!

Travis: Yeah, dude. I like the way it just ended, with a total [??].

Justin: It just ended! They all murdered each other, and then it was over!

Clint: [laughing]

Travis: Dad, what was your roll?

Clint: It is a 16.

Travis: Excellent. So you are up first, Fitzroy.

Griffin: How did he get here? Is he riding on something?

Travis: Noo. He was just kind of... blasting himself—

Justin: He has a jet engine. I thought you said he had a jet.

Travis: He was magically propelling himself forward.

Justin: That's cheating.

Clint: Can you set the scene just a little bit?

Travis: Okay. The three of you are standing with your backs to the school, facing The Commodore. The Commodore stands between you and the tunnel down into what was once the Godscar Chasm, that is now the Godscar Cavern. In order to get into the Godscar Chasm and assist in whatever Gray and the Xorn and Althea get up to, you're going to have to get through The Commodore. But chances are, with the speed that he reached you, getting past him is not going to be enough.

Griffin: Okay. Uhh... I say...

Fitzroy: Uh, I gotta be honest. I liked you a lot better when you had my face glued on your face.

The Commodore: Yes, that was a very funny joke. I laughed all the way to the jail cell. They caught me and assumed I was part of whatever you were doing. So it's very clever. Didn't leave me with any kind of frustration or grudge to take out on you three at all.

Fitzroy: Good. Well, stop me if you've heard this one before.

Griffin: And I clap my hands together, and instead of just sort of letting out a blast of thunder, uh, a lot more of a coordinated storm comes out. In fact, one might call it a sphere of storm.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: That uh, just sort of... appears around The Commodore. It is a 20-foot radius sphere of whirling air that, for the spell's duration, every creature in the sphere when it appears or ends its turn there must succeed on a strength saving throw or take 2d6 bludgeoning damage.

Now, here's the thing.

Travis: Yeah?

Griffin: This storm is a storm. There's wind and rain and all this nasty stuff. But it seems to just kind of move around the three of us, because I'm also... going to use some meta magic to use Careful Casting, so that we automatically succeed on our strength saving throws.

Travis: Ooh! So you're being a careful boy. I like that.

Griffin: So we've created a turbo-storm here that only seems to hit him. And also... actually, how about go ahead and have him make a strength saving throw?

Travis: Okay. Oh! That is a nat 20.

Griffin: Okay, that's fine. This is also difficult terrain now, so it'll be harder to move around in. But here's the other thing – I see him not get knocked over, and I say...

Fitzroy: Oh, that's a shame. You're pretty fast there, Commodore.

[music plays]

Fitzroy: Let's see how—sorry. I'm like, new to this like, being competent at magic thing. I'm just gonna...

Griffin: And I snap my fingers, and a bolt of lightning comes out of the center of this sphere and crackles toward The Commodore. And uh, I have advantage on the attack roll since he's in the sphere.

Travis: Ooh! So it's like an attack!

Griffin: Yeah, it's an attack. So that's, uh... three plus nine, 12? No.

Travis: That doesn't—no, that does not hit.

Griffin: That's more like it. 14 plus nine, 23.

Travis: That does hit.

Griffin: Okay. And... that's gonna hit him for 4d6 lightning damage.

Justin: Jesus!

Griffin: Uh, so let's roll that.

Travis: Oh, 4d6. For a second, I thought you said 46.

Justin: I thought you said 46. That's so many.

Griffin: Oh, no. That would be a lot. No. Uh, I got 14. 14 lightning damage.

Travis: Um, it hits him solidly, and you see him do a pretty, uh, snarky like, shoulder brush-off.

Justin: Oh.

Travis: And then, uh, I would like you, Fitzroy, to make a... let's say, constitution saving throw.

Griffin: M'kay. I'm good at those. Well... uh, that is an eight plus seven, 15.

Travis: Um, a sphere of water forms around your head.

Griffin: Uh-oh.

Travis: Uh, and you begin the process of drowning.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Um, and then, he is going to move forward across the difficult terrain. So, he's going to move at half speed. So, he closes some of the distance, but he's not quite on top of the three of you yet. And...

Griffin: I want to just—yeah, I just, real quick though, I do need to look at him right in his face in this bubble of water, and then go... [inhales deeply] And give him a big thumbs up, because I now have a storm soul, which is attuned to the sea. And so, I do have resistance to lightning damage, and can breathe underwater.

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: So this is actually just kind of a refreshing like, mm, like a Sierra Mist that he's given me. So... but that's okay. It's fun, still. We're having fun with it.

Travis: Roll a perception check for me.

Griffin: M'kay.

Justin: It's a little stinker check.

Griffin: It's a little stinker check. Uh, that's a 15 plus five, 20.

Travis: Uh, so you see with that 20, he's definitely frustrated that that did not work. And uh, yeah, I'll also roll into that some insight, as well. You know that The Commodore is something of a clout chaser.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Travis: And he definitely rolled into this thinking he was going to tear through the three of you, and so, moments like this are seeming to fluster

him, and make him angry in a way that, perhaps, maybe he isn't even aware of. And up next is Argo.

Clint: Um...

Griffin: I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. He does also need to take three bonus lightning damage, 'cause every time I cast a spell that does lightning or thunder damage, creatures of your choice within ten feet of you take three lightning—

[music fades]

Travis: Just like, three points of damage?

Griffin: Just like, zap, yeah. A little one. Not a bad one, but y'know, they add up over time.

Travis: Got it.

Clint: So the water around Fitzroy's head is not hurting him in any—

Griffin: Oh, I'm fine.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: It's great. Unless he throws some piranhas in there, like, I'm totally cool with it.

Travis: How did you know about that spell?

Griffin: I'm sorry that I denied you a chance to have shape water be useful in some way.

Clint: No, that was alright. Some—maybe in the next arc.

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: So um, I'm gonna use sneak attack on... how close is he?

Justin: [laughing] How the—I can't wait to hear how to distract him!

Griffin: I mean, he's in a storm. A spherical storm.

Justin: That's true. That's a good point, actually. It's gotta be distracting.

Travis: Yeah yeah yeah. I'm gonna say, at this point, I said... let me see what I wrote down originally... that he... uh, I said he stopped, like, six feet away from you. So at this point, after blasting that sphere, I would say he's now back to like, four feet away from you? I mean, he is basically like... I'll say arm's reach. You can attack him if you like.

Clint: Okay. I'm going to uh, actually... I'm gonna dash towards him.

Travis: Okay?

Clint: I'm not gonna use sneak attack. He knows I'm there.

Travis: You can still sneak attack him! Listen, I've denied you sneak attack for too long, Dad. You have a skill that lets you attack him if he's flanked, and at this point, there's three of you and one of him, so... you could sneak attack him if you'd like.

Clint: Okay. I'm going to, uh... I'm gonna use sneak attack. I'm going to uh, use my sling. And uh, and uh... hit him with it!

Travis: Okay! Roll!

Clint: What do I roll?

Travis: Uh, you got your sling there, plus ten? Just click that plus ten, baby.

Clint: Okay. Sling plus ten... well, there we go. That's a 12.

Travis: That does not hit. So uh, you fling the stone at him. He catches it.

Clint: Okay. Um, I can take a bonus action, right?

Travis: Indeed you can.

Clint: Yeah, I'm gonna dash towards him.

Travis: Okay.

Clint: And trust my initial instincts.

Travis: You've done that. You've dashed towards him. You are now like, right up in his grill, and up next is the Firbolg.

Justin: Uhh, the Firbolg is going to... man, I got some good spells now. Now, I've already—I've already used my jar of bees.

Travis: Correct.

Justin: This is settled law at this point. Um... and what's going on? Where is he right now? What's he—vis-à-vis the water?

Travis: He is—the water is around Fitzroy's head.

Justin: `Kay.

Travis: And uh, The Commodore is inside a storm circle. Sphere. Uh, and Argo has just dashed towards The Commodore, and is up in his grill.

Justin: Alright, I'm gonna call down the lightning on old Jerkface McGee.

Travis: Uh-huh. That's his name. How did you know his real name?

Justin: [laughs] What a tapestry you've woven here.

Travis: Thank you.

Justin: Um, uh... so yeah, I'm gonna call lightning. [sings a triumphant tune] The bolt of lightning is gonna flash down, and uh, he's gotta make a dexterity saving throw.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: He's probably pretty good at this.

Travis: Yeah, uh, that is a 21 total.

Justin: Dang. Dex'd it. No problem, huh?

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: Alright, so he's gonna take half as much damage. Um, 3d, 5d... okay. So the damage roll is... 5d10 for a total of 30. 15 points of damage.

Travis: 15 points?

Justin: Not bad, y'know? That's not bad.

Travis: Yeah, yeah. Deffo deffo deffo. Uhh, Fitzroy, you are up.

Griffin: Okay. Uhh, I'm going to... um, I put my hand on Argo's shoulder, and I say...

Fitzroy: [bubbly] Do not. Waste. This opportunity.

Griffin: And I cast *Haste* on him. Uh, and his speed is doubled. He gains a plus two to his AC. He has advantage on dexterity saving throws, and he gains an additional action on each of his turns.

Travis: Ooh!

Griffin: Which can be used to attack, dash, disengage, hide, or use an object.

Travis: Nice. I like that.

Griffin: Uh, and I say...

Fitzroy: [bubbly] In case you forgot which way the knives go...

Griffin: And I snap again, and another bolt of lightning comes out of the storm sphere towards The Commodore. Uh, that is an eight plus nine, 17?

Travis: Uh, I'll say this – that just misses.

Griffin: Okay. Well, it's a good thing I have advantage. 14 plus nine, 23.

Travis: That hits!

Griffin: Okay! That's 4d6 lightning damage. Uh, that is a – oh, not great – ten. Ten lightning damage, plus three lightning damage for the uh, my little bonus. My heart of the storm.

Travis: Excellent.

Griffin: And I shout...

Fitzroy: [bubbly] Hey, Commodore, y'know the difference between me and you?

The Commodore: Are you going to say "I make this look good"?

Fitzroy: I make—I'm—[sighs] Yeah.

The Commodore: Okay.

Argo: Aw.

Fitzroy: But don't worry about it. I'll think of something.

Justin: God, that guy does suck. He even steps on your fuckin' punch lines.

Clint: Yeah!

Justin: God, The Commodore sucks!

Clint: We should kill him. We really should kill him.

Fitzroy: [bubbly] May I suggest stabbing him three times on your next turn?

Argo: Got it.

Travis: He, uh, is getting pretty pissed now. Uh, and you are, uh, taunting him, and that's not quite helping. And he goes...

The Commodore: Ah, so you can do storms, eh? Well, I'm an old salt, and I know something about storms at sea.

Travis: And he closes his eyes, and I need each of you to make a constitution saving throw.

Griffin: Ooh!

Justin: My strong suit.

Griffin: 11 plus seven, 18.

Travis: Okay.

Clint: 18.

Travis: Firbolg?

Justin: Ten.

Travis: Um, so, uh... the two of you—so, Fitzroy and Argonaut, you are able to cover your ears and close your eyes and protect yourself from this storm. But it strikes you, Firbolg. You get hit for... one moment... uh, you get hit for 23 damage.

Griffin: Whoa.

Justin: Yikes.

Travis: Uh, and you are deafened.

Justin: Oh! And then I reach my hand out, and you see that there's a small gold pocket watch in it, and I press the button, and then that's undone, and I get to roll again.

Travis: What?

Justin: The Pocket Watch of Second Chances that you gave me? I figured it was a good opportunity to use it.

Travis: That's a great opportunity to use it.

Griffin: Yeah!

Justin: Of the opportunities, that seemed like a good one.

Clint: [laughing]

Justin: You watch, I'm gonna fuckin' beef it again. I have no constitution, but let's see. Four, baby!

Griffin: Jeeze.

Travis: [laughs] Oh boy.

Justin: And it happens again, and it's worse?

Travis: Yeah.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: Like, I know what's gonna happen.

Travis: Now, here's the question. Do you want me to roll damage again, or do you want to take the 23 you had before?

Griffin: Well, we don't know how many dice you rolled, so 23 might be quite low.

Justin: Maybe 23 is good. No, roll it again, because I made it happen twice. You get a second chance too. Everybody gets a second chance.

Travis: Oh, it was less. 16.

Justin: Alright! See? Good item usage!

Travis: Sure.

Justin: Incremental and unexciting!

Travis: Um, and then, for his bonus action, he's going to evade you, Argonaut. And he's basically going to move out of your reach. Uh, and then, I believe... the—yep, now it's your turn again, Argonaut.

Griffin: Actually, go ahead and make a strength saving throw for him.

Travis: Oh, right right right.

Griffin: 'Cause of the storm. I forgot to have you do it last time.

Travis: Oh! Another nat 20.

Justin: Dang.

Griffin: Some bull—I've never had the Travis McElroy dice luck weaponized against me.

Travis: I'm so sorry.

Griffin: Yeah, it's fine.

Clint: So how far away is he?

Travis: Uh, at this point, I'd say he's about like, ten feet separate from you.

Griffin: May I remind you that your speed is doubled. So...

Clint: Right.

Griffin: Okay. You're quite fast now.

Clint: Okay. I kind of—under my breath, I say, uh...

Argo: Now, little friend!

Clint: And the projectile that I hit him with in the sling was the Hummingbard.

Argo: Okay! Get a'peckin'!

Clint: And the Hummingbard...

Travis: That's what you're going with? Okay. Get a 'peckin'? Just so our transcript writers can get it right... get a 'peckin'?

Clint: Get a 'peckin'!

Travis: Okay. Great. Cool cool cool.

Clint: And the Hummingbird starts hovering all around the uh, Commodore's head, pecking at him and just pestering him. Moving faster than he can even—just bothering the shit out of him, and distracting him enough that, um, Argo can approach him and, using two-weapon fighting, stab him in the eyes.

Griffin: Oh Jesus!

Travis: Okay.

Clint: With Slapsidian and the uh, Serpent's Tooth.

Travis: Okay, so roll the Slapsidian attack first. Uh, and I'm going to say that you have advantage, because of the Hummingbird.

Clint: Slapsidian is... that's a dagger, right?

Travis: Correct.

Griffin: I mean, it's a slap bracelet, if you want to be...

Travis: Yeah, I mean, if we want to get specific, it's a slap bracelet that can form into a dagger. Still one of the coolest things I've ever heard about.

Clint: Okay, 29...

Travis: Sorry, what was that?

Clint: 29.

Travis: Oh, y'know, that just misses. No, I'm kidding. Of course that hits! Uh, go ahead and roll damage for that for me, please.

Clint: 2d4, so that is five.

Travis: Okay, five damage.

Clint: Except a—oh, plus six.

Travis: Okay.

Clint: So that's 11.

Travis: Yes it is.

Clint: Okay. What are my numbers—I don't know what the numbers would be on the Serpent's Tooth.

Travis: The Serpent's Tooth? Uh, we'll say—I mean, it's another dagger, so we'll put it just like Slapsidian. Identical numbers.

Clint: That is an 18 plus—29.

Travis: Excellent.

Justin: Dang.

Travis: Um, so, here's what happens. You swipe at him with Serpent's Tooth, and he smiles as he begins to initiate what he considers an easy parry. Then, reality distorts for just a second. Extending to your left and right are an infinite number of Argos and an infinite number of Commodores. The incalculable web of every possibility of how this moment might play out. Your brain becomes a jumble as you attempt to take in the sight, and it's clearly overwhelming both of you.

Then, reality begins to snap back as the Argos and the Commodores are pulled back to only one instant. And when that instant clears, you have pierced his flesh. It doesn't appear to be much; it's a fairly small knife. And in retaliation, he moves to cast a spell. And nothing happens.

Griffin: Let's get him!

Travis: Roll for damage.

Clint: Okay. That says ten.

Travis: He reaches down, and where you had stabbed him with Slapsidian, no blood had flowed. And in fact, where you had hit him with lightning, where he had been damaged before, there hadn't been any blood drawn. But now, his hand comes away from his newest wound covered in blood. And the water around Fitzroy's head falls away. And he isn't as confident as he was before, and Firbolg, you are up.

Justin: Yeah, this'll work. I'm staring down the, um, Commodore, and I swing my fist back to punch him. And he—let's say he closes his eyes just for a second, and the attack that comes is not the meaty fist of the Firbolg. But rather, the um, slippery tentacle of a giant octopus.

Griffin: Alright alright alright alright alright.

Justin: I thought that would be funny, 'cause he likes water so fuckin' much.

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: Not for long!

Justin: Yeah. So now I'm a giant octopus, Trav.

Travis: Oh, sorry. I missed literally all of that, 'cause I got disconnected, and literally, I clicked back in to hear "now I'm a giant octopus, Trav."

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs] Yeah, I don't see what other supplementary information you need.

Justin: He's a giant—listen it's a new—it's a hit new character. He's a giant octopus. His name's Kagel, and he's gonna have a huge role to play in this narrative, I'm sure.

Travis: Okay. Y'know what, Justin? Uh, I wasn't here. So I have to take your word for this.

Justin: It's Wild Shape, baby. I just say it and it happens. I'm a big octopus now.

Travis: Okay. How big an octopus, Justin?

Justin: Well, Trav, according to this fuckin' sheet, 'giant.' [snorts]

Travis: Okay!

Justin: Well, sorry. It says giant octopus is its name, but it says large beast, so you tell me, buddy. [laughing] Large? Giant? Make up your mind, Gary!

Travis: I mean, yeah, you're quite large. Okay, you're a large, giant octopus now.

Justin: Yeah.

Travis: And that's your action, right?

Justin: Yeah, I guess so. Do you think it's weird that the giant octopus has a plus five to stealth?

Griffin: Well, they can camouflage!

Clint: [laughing]

Travis: Justin, if I may, I assume that they assumed you would use it underwater.

Justin: Yeah, fuck, joke's on you.

Travis: Okay! Uh, you're up, Fitzroy.

Griffin: Uh, so he's not lookin' as, uh, suffused with chaos powers?

Justin: Yeah, that's about where you would put your money, yeah.

Griffin: Okay. Then I try to time it out that I stop concentrating on the storm spell, the storm sphere, as I charge headlong into it, and... get ready to bring my maul down right on top of his head, and right as I do, I activate my rage. But it's a new, special kind of rage.

Travis: Ooh!

Griffin: Electricity and lightning just sort of streaks out from behind me as I rush forward, and uh, just as my blow hits, a bolt of lightning actually comes out of me, arcing towards him. So I need him to make a dexterity saving throw.

Travis: Okay.

Justin: It's weird that in spite of all that, you're still just a rat in a cage.

Travis: Hey, Griffin?

Griffin: Yeah?

Travis: Griffin?

Griffin: If you got another nat 20—

Travis: Nat one.

Griffin: Yeah, there we go!

Justin: That's more like it.

Griffin: That's more like it. Okay. Uh, so this is gonna be... just... not much. 2d6, but I got a six and a five, so that's 11. Uh, plus three. Right?

Travis: Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah.

Griffin: So 14.

Travis: Uh, make a uh... make a uh, strength check for me. Just straight up and down strength check for me.

Griffin: Ten plus nine, 19.

Travis: Yeah, uh, you get him, I'm going to say, with a solid uppercut swing.

Griffin: Oh, I haven't even—oh, no no no, bud.

Travis: Oh! That's just the lightning!

Griffin: I haven't even hit him. I haven't even attacked yet.

Travis: Okay, yeah yeah yeah. Then here's what happens. That lightning hits him, and the sheer force of it, uh, knocks him off his feet, and he is in the air while you are swinging your maul at him.

Griffin: Good good good. Okay, so yeah, then I swing my maul at him for the—ooh, god, razor's edge! I got a 19 plus ten, 20-fucking-nine!

Travis: Uh, yeah. So, uh, as he's still in the air, your maul comes swinging. What form do you take as you are swinging said maul at him? Is it a baseball swing? Is it more like, driving at a railroad spike swing? What are we talking here?

Griffin: I think I'm gonna get into some straight up Devil May Cry juggling action if he's already up in the air. So I'm just gonna sort of—

Travis: Oh, so you're coming from underneath?

Griffin: From underneath, just kind of trying to knock him up back up in the air.

Travis: Excellent, excellent, excellent. Roll damage for me.

Griffin: Yeah, that's 13 damage, bludgeoning damage, as I smash him up into the air. And then for my second attack, uh, I'm going to... this one's going to be a sort of downward volleyball spike.

Travis: Okay. Cool cool cool.

Griffin: Uh, 14 plus ten, 24.

Travis: Yeah, that hits.

Griffin: Uh, and that's gonna come right down on him for... another 13 points of damage!

Travis: Yeah, okay, oh boy. Um... one second... okay, yeah. So, he has failed his constitution saving throw. So, you uh, let's see... one, two, three, and he is slammed to the ground. And the wind has clearly been knocked out of him, and quite possibly, uh, several broken bones in result of this shattering electric strike you have received. Uh, so he is—his action, his turn, is foregone.

And now, laying before you, Argonaut, is The Commodore. A slightly broken figure. He spits out a tooth, and a little blood, and his eyes fill with vitriol,

and um, he's—he's saying something, and at first, you can't understand what it is. And then, you realize he is just saying, "No, this isn't how it's supposed to go. They promised."

Argo: Um... they might've lied to ya. Just a tad. 'Cause this is the way it has gone.

[somber music plays]

The Commodore: I am the greatest naval hero the world has ever known. I have become unto a god, and I will *not* be stopped by a *Keene!*

Argo: Y'know what? I'm not a hero. [laughs] There's been a lot of debate about this. But I'm not a hero. I don't even think I'm a villain. I'm just kind of a vindictive little shit. And so, all this time, y'know... I don't want to plot. I don't want to scheme. I don't want to overthrow governments or wreck economies. I just... [laughs] I just want to kill ya.

Clint: And uh, I stab him with Florence, my rapier. Right in the heart.

Travis: Yeah, I'm not gonna make you roll for that. You bury Florence into his heart, and y'know, sometimes in movies and TV shows and stories, you read about someone who seeks vengeance. And then, when they achieve it, they realize that they still feel hollow inside. But that's not what happens here.

Clint: No, no!

[music fades]

Travis: Yeah, you stab him and you feel great. He dies uncelebrated. He dies here, alone, miles and miles away from the sea. Just an absolute and complete abject failure. And it feels pretty fucking good.

Firbolg: [octopus noise] Gwaaaa.

Travis: Oh yeah. Uh, and the Firbolg is still a giant octopus.

Firbolg: [octopus noise] Gwaaaa.

Clint: [laughs]

Fitzroy: What he said. We're very proud of you.

Justin: Does anyone know the giant octopus word for 'pointless'?

Travis: I believe it's 'gwaaaa.'

Clint: You held him still! You held him still so I could stab him!

Justin: Took no actions. Just turned into a giant octopus, and then you stabbed him. And so inspired were you by my incredible octopus visage, that you found the strength to defeat him. Inspiring.

Fitzroy: Well, you could just stay an octopus, and—

Firbolg: [octopus sounds]

Travis: You could eat him if you wanted to.

Fitzroy: Yeah, eat him.

Firbolg: [hesitant octopus sounds]

Fitzroy: No, listen. We all really need to desecrate this dude.

Justin: Alright. I attempt to eat him as a giant octopus, but it doesn't go well, 'cause gross.

Travis: Okay. You only get a foot.

Justin: Uh, but I do—okay, so I transform back, but I do loot the corpse!
We never do this!

Griffin: Yeah!

Travis: Oh, okay.

Justin: We always forget. Loot the body!

Travis: You find a gun! A powerful chain gun!

Justin: Come on.

Griffin: Whoaaa!

Travis: No. You find... y'know, I can't think of what the fantasy equivalent is, but basically, it's the keys to the Mariah.

Justin: Great.

Griffin: Oh!

Justin: Now I got a car.

Travis: It's a ship.

Justin: Sorry, jet.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: I forgot. They should have keys for boats, really.

Travis: I know, right? Is it a deed to it, or... y'know, it's that kind of—

Justin: It's a deed! [laughing]

Travis: It's a deed to the Mariah? It's the—y'know, the thing! It's, uhh... the combination.

Griffin: It's the, um, the wheel.

Travis: Yeah, it's the wheel. He takes it with him.

Griffin: You take the wheel with you when you leave. Right.

Travis: That's actually where the saying came from, because whenever people used to leave their boats without taking the wheel, someone would go, "Jesus! Take the wheel!"

Griffin: Yeah, exactly.

Clint: Take the wheel! Oh, god.

Travis: And then it would become—that's how it became a thing.

Argo: Hey, fellas?

Fitzroy: Yeah?

Argo: Thank—thank you!

Firbolg: You're welcome.

Argo: Thank you for making that possible for me!

Fitzroy: And like, it—

Argo: I feel great!!

Fitzroy: Yeah. And that's murder for ya, baby.

Argo: That's murder!

Fitzroy: They won't teach you that in school, but there's a rea—

Argo: Who'd'a thought?

Fitzroy: There's a reason why people do it!

Argo: [laughs] Who'd'a thunk it? I did—ohh, and I couldn't have done it. You guys aided and abetted! And I appreciate you aiding and abetting me.

Firbolg: I think you should have this.

Justin: And I hand him the deed to the Mariah.

Argo: Oh. Whoa. Um... thank you, Firbolg. Um... y'know, I... I think about my mom every day. And uh... I hadn't really realized... y'know, to this moment, how badly I wanted to get The Commodore, y'know, for her. And you guys helped that happen, and you made it happen, and... whew. I—I—I love ya guys! Thanks. I appreciate it.

Fitzroy: You—

Firbolg: It was the least we could do.

Fitzroy: Yeah. You'd do the same for us, right?

Argo: Probably.

Firbolg: I have one request. Just a suggestion.

Argo: Mm-hmm?

Firbolg: Perhaps, since I give this to you, you name the boat after me.

Fitzroy: [laughs]

Argo: [laughs]

Firbolg: You name it... boat. [bursts into laughter] Did you hear this?

Argo: Ye—yes!

Firbolg: Did you hear this?

Argo: Because you're a Firbolg who we call Firbolg, I would call the boat... boat.

Firbolg: So you have receive this! [laughing loudly] This is wonderful.

Argo: Oh, Firbolg. Firbolg, you are our Kramer.

Fitzroy: Um... for real, though, there is a mean man who killed my dad. And so, he's next.

Argo: Oh, right.

Fitzroy: No, I'm just kidding. My dad's fine.

Argo: Well, no, let's get him! Let's get him!

Fitzroy: No, he's fine. I was joking. My dad's fine.

Argo: Your dad the truck driver guy?

Fitzroy: Yeah, he's doing—

Firbolg: Right. First, we should save the world.

Fitzroy: Right. Yes, let's—right. Save the world, murder each other's dad's murderers, and then we'll... I think, at that point, we really will need to bug

out into international waters. Again, I am still a big proponent of that fan. We have angered every hero and villain in existence, and I think there is just one safe place for us to be, and that's out on that great big—great big blue wonder.

Clint: So Argo pulls Florence out of his chest. [makes a gross squelch noise] Didja—do you—so we already searched the body like thugs, right?

Griffin: I do want to look it over. There's something that's kind of bothering me about him, which is that I also had this chaos power, but it did not, like, hit me in the same way. And it's been bothering Fitzroy, and obviously, now, I can't ask him. But I want to see if there's just anything I can figure out.

Clint: Want me to slice him open some more?

Griffin: No! God.

Travis: Roll an arcana check. Are you good at that?

Griffin: Uh, better than a few other things. That's 12 plus four, 16.

[music plays]

Travis: Okay, yeah. With a 16, this is not chaos magic, what he was wielding. He was wielding entropy magic. And it's a similar vein, but chaos is kind of a... I mean, so in Nua, right? In Nua terms of magic, chaos is kind of a sustainable, like, everything is unexpected. Right? Where entropy is the slow destruction of things, heading towards ultimate obliteration of existence.

And this—his kind of leaning into it, right? This is what chaos always was trying to push you to do with their magic, which was give yourself over to it. Open yourself up to it, and just let go. Right? Instead of like, fighting it, just giving into it to fully embody this. But this is a different flavor of magic than you had before.

Griffin: Okay. Well, glad I stuck to my guns on that one.

Travis: Uh, so, the three of you make your way down the Xorn's tunnel, hoping to meet Gray and the Xorn and Althea along the way. But they seem to have made it to the cavern already, and ahead is an opening through which you can see Order with their back to you, about 50 yards ahead, facing this cavern-wide rift they are making.

Griffin: Wait. How did we come across them before we came across everybody else?

Travis: Great question.

Griffin: I'm sorry to take your shit apart, I just literally don't know how that would work.

Travis: No no no, I mean, you don't. You don't know.

Griffin: Oh, okay. So this wasn't a whoopsie Travis made that I caught on.

Travis: No, this was not a whoopsie. No, this was not a whoopsie I made.

Griffin: Alright. Um... are we still being sneaky?

Clint: I can be.

Justin: Yeah, no reason not to be. We still got the buff, right?

Griffin: Yeah, let's get a little bit closer. Let's sneaky up there, see what's going on.

Travis: Okay. Uh...

Clint: [sings a stealthy tune]

Travis: I'm not gonna waste your time rolling, because as you cross the threshold, you trigger a magical trap, and stone grows up around your feet.

Griffin: Oh. We forgot to check for traps.

Travis: Now that you are inside of the threshold, you see, pinned against the wall, is Althea and the Xorn and Gray with stone manacles over their hands and ankles, and covering... y'know, they have stone gags covering their mouths. And as you struggle, the stone grows up and pins your hands as well, and Chaos steps forward from the side and says...

Chaos: I am sorry, boys, but we are so close now, and we can't have you interfering. And any moment now, the alignment will be complete, and we can get this war started in earnest. And I know that this is hard to understand from your mortal perspectives, but you see, this destruction is the only way to keep your world safe. And it seems grim now, but pretty soon, everything will be back on track.

Fitzroy: Well, you should've said that way earlier!

Argo: Yeah, lead with that, pal!

Firbolg: Sounds fine to me.

Fitzroy: Everything's going great, then, huh?

Chaos: Wait, so... you're suddenly on board with this?

Fitzroy: Yeah. I didn't know that you had like, a capital-P plan. But that sounds—

Firbolg: It was a question of respect. You respect us enough to tell us what's happening.

Chaos: [sighs]

Fitzroy: And I'll be honest with you – we just engaged in what ended up being mortal combat with The Commodore, and—

Argo: And we kicked his ass. Let's add that.

Fitzroy: We did that. And I have to be honest with you, Chaos... I want that flavor. That's—I didn't know—when you kept telling me, "Let yourself over to the—" You'd say that like, "Let yourself over to the magic and take it!" 'Cause that's what you sound like to me. Uh, I didn't know that that's what it would do! And I feel like a real boob for not taking you up on that. So like... juice me.

Chaos: Fitzroy? How dumb do you think I am?

Fitzroy: I am not lying to you. I am not lying to you.

Chaos: [sighs] Okay. As soon as the alignment's complete, you can have your chaos magic back.

Fitzroy: Awesome! I can't wait. I have to go to the bathroom, though.

Justin: [laughs]

Fitzroy: And I don't want to have all this new magic, and newfound purpose...

Chaos: Do I need to seal your mouth as well?

Fitzroy: Could you at least seal up... my bathing suit area? So nobody has to—

Chaos: [sighs] Just stay here and let us finish this. And then we can get back to fixing things, okay?

Fitzroy: Hmm, excellent my lo—lord. My liege.

Travis: Um, all three of you, uh... Firbolg, roll an insight check.

Justin: Uhh, okay. That's a good one for me. That's a five plus eight, 13.

Travis: Um, you don't know exactly why. But a couple times now, uh, Chaos has talked about 'fixing things.' And they seem sincere about it to you. But everything you've heard from folks today would seem to indicate otherwise.

Justin: But you're saying that Gray really does—you're saying Chaos really does think they're going to fix things.

Travis: Correct. At least, as far as you can tell.

Justin: Wait. Wait. [sighs]

Firbolg: Chaos.

Chaos: Yes, what now, Master Firbolg?

Firbolg: This... doesn't work.

Chaos: Excuse me?

Firbolg: What you are about to do... I know your intent is pure. But I also know... it doesn't work.

Chaos: How—how do you know that, Master Firbolg?

Firbolg: Because... time... is broken. I spoke to myself in the past. This should not be. Time is broken, and it... this my brain, it is hurting. If this stands to reason, that time is broken... then if time was fixed, *later*, by what you are doing... time would not be broken. Yes?

Travis: And Chaos takes in what you've said, and turns, and says...

Chaos: Order? Is this true?

Order: No, of course not, Chaos! They are lying to stop us!

Chaos: Order. The Firbolg cannot lie. What... is... happening?

Order: I don't have time for this. Yes, there is a very large chance that this reality will not survive the process, but... if that's the case, it's not that big a loss. A different reality will start, or it won't, but at least I won't be stuck there any longer. Now, let me work!

Chaos: Order, this is not our plan!

Order: Yes, you are right, Chaos. This is *my* plan, and you have always been too soft with the mortals.

Chaos: Don't... make me stop you, Order.

Order: [laughs] Come now, Chaos. You aren't even fully manifested on this plane yet, and you couldn't stand against me if you tried. Besides – you'd only be attacking yourself.

Travis: And Chaos moves in a blur, but it is still not fast enough. They get within ten feet of Order, and a wave of force blasts them backwards. They hit the ground, roll several times, and stop at your stone-encased feet.

Order: Now, before you think of trying anything else...

Travis: And Order waves their hands, and three large demonic dragons – one red, one green, one blue, followed by about a thousand hellhounds – walk through the portal and place themselves sentry between you and the rift. And Chaos comes to and says...

Chaos: What... what happened?

Argo: They kind of, uh, sucker punched ya, buddy.

Chaos: Or—Order did this?

Firbolg: To be fair, not a very orderly thing to do.

Chaos: I'm not really sure what... what is happening.

Fitzroy: You're immortal, right?

Chaos: Uh... for all intents and purposes, yes.

Fitzroy: Great. So you're going to have the rest of eternity to think about this exact moment, when I tell you... letting us go is the only way to fix this. And you can either do that, and see what happens, or spend, again, the rest of eternity wondering what might've happened if cooler heads had prevailed.

Travis: They hold your eye for a second, Fitzroy, and then look away. And then... they seem to come to a decision, and they turn to the three of you. And they say...

Chaos: Yes. If you three are ready, I believe I am ready to invest in Thunderman LLC.

[heroic music begins]

Travis: And every fiber of your being comes alive, as the three of you feel chaos magic surge through you. Argo, you become acutely aware of the moisture in the air, underground rivers deep below your feet, even the water of your own body sings to you. And this is no mere metaphor – the ocean flows in your veins, and demands to be released. And with the unstoppable force of a flash flood, you shatter your stony pawns.

Firbolg, your skin feels as solid as bark, and tiny berries begin to sprout from your hair. You are drawing power and healing wounds from the nutrients of the soil. You break your arms and legs free without pause. You are as uncontainable as nature itself.

And Fitzroy, you have felt this power before, but never on this scale. A hundred sorcerers could not generate power like this. Even better, it feeds into your own newly discovered power perfectly. The lightning dances just

beneath the skin of your arms, waiting for the music to start. They begin to laugh, and it sounds like the roll of thunder as the storm begins. Your bonds simply turn to dust. One might as well try to contain an atom bomb.

And the three of you move forward, the power of a god coursing through your veins. And then...

All hell breaks loose.

[guitar music plays]

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