

The Adventure Zone: Ethersea – Prologue I: Our Wasted World

Published on May 6th, 2021

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Brother Seldom: A brief history of our wasted world: a primer, by Brother Seldom.

I have witnessed firsthand the deep and restful slumbers that my sermons have induced amongst our congregation. So, I will attempt to keep this succinct. Should you find yourself dozing off during this lesson, well, I wouldn't worry too much. By the time you hear this, the world I'm about to describe will have long since been scoured from the map.

[theme music plays]

Brother Seldom: Let us begin with the vestiges. One could accurately describe them as gods; though, they'd certainly prefer not to be called as such. When they crossed over into our world eons ago, some of our ancient ancestors considered them patrons. Others found them to be merciless oppressors.

Civilizations sprouted around these beings' feet, and immediately – and perhaps unsurprisingly – they began vying for superiority. For all their differences, though, the vestiges that claimed our world agreed upon one thing: an oath, forsworn, that their power, their magic, would never be shared with mortal-kind.

The vestige named Benevolence so furiously coveted the adoration of all living creatures that, well... he broke that oath. He shared with his people the secrets of magic, founding a new kingdom, Hominine, and building an army of sorcerers powerful enough to challenge even the gods.

Benevolence's army swept the land like wildfire, purging the rival vestiges who stood in his way. His war campaign was devastating and spectacular, and after the dust settled, it split our world into four quarters.

The kingdom of Hominine occupied most of the realm, stretching from the western coastline, well into the fertile heartlands. Its citizens lived prosperously, devoting themselves to the study of the arcane gifts bestowed upon them by the vestige, Benevolence.

Their dominion, however, halted at the sheer face of the Einarr Plateau. There in the highlands, overlooking the realm, the few surviving other vestiges lived amongst their mortal followers. Not as spiritual rulers, but rather, as collaborators.

Though some zealous practitioners of the old ways dissented, the Einarr forged a new pact between the vestiges and mortalkind. There were also those who denied the vestiges and all of their otherworldly gifts.

A war-weary sect of Homininians defected to the resource-rich Delmer Wilds, to the north. They shunned magic in exchange for industry, building an acropolis of lumber and steel to rival Hominine's great citadels.

And then there were those who tired of the mainland's petty squabbles entirely. They found a home in the Southern Archipelago. With war merely a distant memory, the island's inhabitants worked to make remarkable strides in trade, art, fashion, leisure. The fun stuff, not to put too fine a point on it.

For about a century, this world settled into a quiet, comfortable stalemate. The war had ended, but while its people may have recovered from this conflict... our planet, we've learned, never will.

You see, magic has a cost. And when it goes unpaid, as it so often has, even the simplest of spells can produce a kind of volatile exhaust. This raw and dangerous arcane energy suffused the soil of every battleground, the sky over every citadel, the banks of every river, until convening – as all things do – in the sea.

Our oceans turned against us. Great, glowing waves heaved onto the land, swallowing everything in their path. And hanging over the waters, a maelstrom far beyond measure, and visible from our shores, grew wider and stronger with every passing day.

And so, the four kingdoms scrambled to find their own means of evading extinction. But over the din of their toil, over the storms' ceaseless reports of thunder, a voice called out from the sea. And with a simple stanza, it offered salvation.

When kingdoms fall, the sea provides. A home for all, beneath the tides.

Hundreds of us, hailing from all corners of the realm, would heed this call. We abandoned our respective kingdoms, putting aside generations of differences, all for the promise of a new life. A better life. Leagues below the gnashing fangs of apocalypse, here in a home of our own creation, deep within the Ethersea.

[music fades]

Griffin: Hail and well met, adventurers! And welcome for a brand new voyage! I am the wizard Balthazar. Take my orb. And walk with us on a new voy—on a new journey.

Travis: Wait. Why did we have to take the orb to walk with you?

Griffin: Um, it's so funny that you say that, Travis, because if you had read the preparation notes I wrote for you, I told you that you could not walk on the spectral sidewalk if you weren't holding the orb. You'd fall right through.

Travis: I fell right through. Yeah, I fell right through.

Griffin: And to the demon Crabazal's infinite mouth. So, yeah.

Travis: I'm dead. My character's dead.

Griffin: And Travis is gone off the show. Juice and Dad, um... hopefully you'll have a bit more staying power.

Well, thanks for tuning into The Adventure Zone, fam. We're doing something kind of different with this episode as we sort of build out the world for our new season, that's...

Travis: This one's a cooking show. It's a bit different.

Griffin: It's a cooking show. It's, uh—we got hot recipes. Uh, I hope you guys like... stew, 'cause that's what you're gettin'.

Travis: It's all stew.

Griffin: So you got all the rowdy McElroy boys here, and we're gonna play a different game to build the world that we're gonna be playing in next season, where we will be returning to Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition. And that game is The Quiet Year.

It's designed by Avery Alder, and you can find a link to where you can purchase it in the episode description, uh, for this episode and all of our setup episodes here. I would thoroughly recommend it to virtually anybody. I think it's an amazing game, and I hope you feel the same way after you hear us do a bad job playing it here. [laughs] So that's what we're playing. It's great.

I should mention that I uh, essentially got this idea from Friends at the Table, who did this with uh... if you've not listened to Friends at the Table, their Marielda arc takes place in a city that was built in The Quiet Year. So we're gonna do, uh, y'know, something similar here.

Travis: Can you give us a quick, like, 30-second rundown on how A Quiet Year works? I mean, we'll definitely—

Justin: Maybe not 30 seconds. [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, we'll go as quick as we can. But we will go in rounds, basically playing through a year, and on each of our turns, we will sort of introduce, uh, complications, and discoveries, and things that are taking place inside of this settlement that we are going to be playing in. Uh, and by doing so,

we're basically, with a bird's eye view, going to be fleshing out a town.

We are going to be doing that on a map that we are going to be drawing on in Roll 20. So this will have an inherently kind of visual element to it. We will be sharing these maps, I assume, sort of as we draw them, as you hear these episodes. I should also mention, I don't know how many episodes this is gonna take to get us through a whole year.

At the current pace we are operating at, it'll be 60 episodes. Of just this world building arc.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Yep.

Griffin: Um, yeah. So, we are going to be making stuff. What you just heard at the beginning of this is essentially the, um, like, macro-level world history of where this, y'know, settlement is. And I've outlined sort of the broad goal of what it is we're doing here, which is making an underwater city. That was sort of like the initial design that I had for the season, as sort of a—I liked the idea of doing a space opera, but like, what if we could do that inside of a magical ocean?

And like, I didn't really come up with a whole lot beyond what you have heard, and so, everything else, we are essentially going to play out and figure out through the lens of uh, of *The Quiet Year*. But I just wanted to say, I guess, at the top, sort of tonally, and as a sort of guiding light, I... I really don't want to make like, a *Bioshock*, uh, god... what's the city in *Bioshock*?

Travis: Rapture!

Griffin: Yeah, I don't want to make a Rapture. I don't want to make an Atlantis.

Travis: But Griffin, is a man not entitled to the sweat off his brow?

Griffin: To the sweat of his—no, unfortunately not. And I don't know if you're doing a Bioshock thing or an Ayn Rand thing there, but both are equally unwelcome in this house.

Travis: Okay! Got it, got it, got it. Cool cool.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Um... yeah, I want us to try and lean away from—

Travis: Do you know that the guy who played Andrew Ryan is also Quark?

Griffin: I did not know that! But I don't know why I—

Travis: Yeah, from Deep Space Nine.

Griffin: But I don't know why I would know that.

Travis: I don't know why I know it.

Griffin: Um, I basically just want us to not lean on sort of underwater fiction tropes, if we can. I also don't want us to go like, too hot and heavy serious high fantasy with it, because I've sort of envisioned it as, hey, this is an ocean that is irradiated with magic and chaos, and there's weird shit to be discovered everywhere, so let's go have fun in the deadly ocean in our ships or whatever.

Travis: Griffin, I've one question before we begin.

Griffin: Please.

Travis: So, looking at the map that you have there, it's about 50% land and 50% sea.

Griffin: Yes.

Travis: What do you envision is like, the primary surface? Because it seems like, from the intro, and what you've told us, that this is a city kind of transitioning to a safer... like, is the safer option under the sea? Is that what we're going for?

Griffin: Yes. The goal of this—we're—maybe this is a, we are using The Quiet Year not in the exact manner it was intended, right? Because we are essentially going to be building this settlement where all of these, uh, nomads and travelers from these four different kingdoms have come together to make this underwater city.

So there is a land map where, basically, these several hundred people are going to have to sort of make a place where they can live while they build this underwater city in—and they have, y'know, a year to do it.

Eventually, once we've, I don't know, discovered how to explore underwater, and find a place to build the city, and how to actually like, make a city underwater where people can live, and all that stuff, we will start drawing on the sea side of the map. But yes, the goal will be, essentially, in a year, the land half of the map is going to be swept away. And so, it is just sort of a launch pad.

Let's get started. Uh, we are doing this in Roll 20 where all of us are going to have access to drawing tools. And everything that we add to the map, every sort of narrative element, and everything that we outline, we are going to represent visually. We are going to draw on the map. You are encouraged not to use words when you write on the map.

And before we get started, everybody is supposed to add sort of one topographical feature. I went ahead and drew the coastline of this beach that, essentially, the settlement is gonna be on, where out in the water is—on this side of the map is the water, and over here is the sand.

So that's all I've drawn is the coastline. So, who wants to go next? Drawing a sort of broad, topographical feature. This can be things like—in the rules of the game, it's outlined as like, there is a mountain range over here. Or, over here is... we're going to get more granular and say like, here is the, y'know,

ant lion nest or whatever the hell. But first, we should be sort of establishing the topography.

Travis: Uh, so, Griffin... sorry, one more question before we go.

Griffin: Please.

Travis: Technologically speaking, how advanced—like, if you were going to compare this to a time period in our actual real world history, where would we be at?

Griffin: Yeah, um... I mean, that's one of the things that I have left a little bit blank. What I can say is that the, um... the Hominine, that kingdom is like, very magically advanced, while the Delmer folk are more, uh, engineering advanced. So like, I don't know, not steampunk, not sort of... y'know, I would say more weird magic technology than actual industrial revolution style stuff.

Travis: Okay, great. So the idea of like, having to build a habitable undersea world is not like, "Let's cross our fingers."

Griffin: We don't know how to do that. Yeah yeah.

Travis: But we're like—we have some building blocks to work from, right?

Griffin: Yes.

Travis: We're not completely inventing it, right?

Griffin: Right. I mean, we will be completely inventing it, but we should assume that, y'know, there is some level of like, engineering expertise here that we can use. But they are also going to be figuring it out, because nobody has built an underwater city before.

Travis: Got it, got it, got it.

Griffin: Or else that would make this game very easy, I think.

Travis: Um, I'm—okay, then I'm going to, just to start off with, up here in the... oh, I gotta remember my cardinal directions... northeast, I am going to say there is... let me do the right color...

Griffin: Ooh yeah, please don't use a off-white on the white map.

Travis: Yeah, right? There is this color. There is, uh, a little magical spring thing.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Like a little lake, with maybe some... magic to it.

Justin: We're not making our game world, right? This is not where we will play. The game. The next game.

Griffin: Correct. This is the settlement where everybody has sort of followed this voice to the shores of the ocean, where they have been brought to kind of build an underwater city. Right now, that is the land side of the map, yes.

Travis: Uh, and I am just, just for clarity's sake, it is a magical lake, but the kind of magic and properties and everything, we do not know. We've just arrived here.

Griffin: Is it fresh water?

Travis: Yes.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: That's why I set it in land from the ocean side. This is not like, a spring that ran over there, y'know?

Griffin: Okay, cool. I mean, that's weird in and of itself. Because the ocean being irradiated with magic has made it like, really volatile and dangerous. So the idea that there is also another version of that that is maybe not as wild is something to for sure explore.

Travis: Yes. This is—I'm, uh, worth noting... I think it's probably a different kind of magic that has irradiated the thing.

Griffin: Hm, okay. Sure. Um, Juice, you wanna draw something?

Justin: Tell you what I think would be cool.

Griffin: Yeah, baybee.

Justin: I'm gonna draw something cool. Let me do it. It'll be cool.

Travis: Yeah, dude. Like a big skull.

Justin: I'm gonna draw—

Griffin: Draw a fuckin' skull, dude.

Travis: Yeah, a big skull.

Justin: Out here... this has also just emerged, and it's a black spiral staircase, that goes down into the ocean. It's never been there before.

Travis: Okay.

Justin: And it's made out of rock. And nobody knows where it came from, and nobody knows why it's there, and it's a beautiful spiral staircase. It does kind of look like a snake, but you try and draw it.

Griffin: It's like a spooky snake that is under the—

Justin: I'll keep working on it, but you get the idea. It's like a cool, black, spiral staircase.

Travis: Is it reachable from the shore, or is it something you would need to like, swim to or take a boat to?

Justin: No, no, no. You'd need to take, uh... probably—I mean, like, it depends on how good a swimmer you are, right? I would say it's probably like... maybe 200 yards out.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: I think that is rad, and I also think, draw something on the land side of the map. And maybe we'll all also draw something on the sea side of the map. Because it seems like, what happens over here is going to be like, the first...

Travis: What happens over in the land...

Griffin: What happens over in the land until we can figure out how, like, people actually explore the sea to start building shit down there. Like, this will be the thing that maybe we should flesh out a little bit first. But leave your black spiral staircase.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: 'Cause that's tasty.

Justin: Well then, that was my cool one. Dad, you make something.

Clint: Yeah, I've got an idea. I'm going to, uh, construct a... giant sinkhole...

Travis: 'Kay.

Clint: That...

Griffin: This is gonna look like an anus, and I want Justin and Travis to be ready for that.

Travis: No no no, Griffin, I was already there. [sings] I'm aaalready there!

Clint: This sinkhole is huge.

Travis: A dead daddy long legs. Sorry, go on.

Clint: And people, uh, for centuries, have been using it as like, a landfill. They've just been throwing garbage in it, throwing junk in it.

Griffin: Interesting.

Clint: Y'know, it's like a giant junkyard, but they throw it in, and it's gone. And nobody quite knows where it's going.

Griffin: Oh, interesting!

Travis: Oh okay, so it's not like there's a pile of junk there that you can see.

Clint: No.

Travis: It goes down to a point where we can't see it.

Clint: It's right there... and yep, and then this giant hole...

Travis: You're making it look more like a butthole, Dad.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: That was my intent. I thought that's what we all wanted.

Travis: Nooo.

Griffin: I'm gonna stretch out this map real quick. It's a little bit blurry, because—ah, there we go. Can y'all see that?

Justin: Yep.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: So you can see where we are building is essentially where these two kingdoms kind of intersect here. Hominine, which has basically conquered the world, and the Einarr Plateau, where sort of more naturalist society has been built. So, this sinkhole is essentially like, right flat in between the two of those things. I like leaving it so that we don't know who used that sinkhole to make things disappear.

Travis: Griffin, is it your turn?

Griffin: I mean, I drew the coast, but as long as we're all kind of drawing bullshit... uh, I'm gonna draw like, a...

Travis: I mean, it's all bullshit, Griffin. We're scribbling on a map.

Griffin: It's all made up BS. Um, I'm gonna draw like a tide pool.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: Here-ish. That is, y'know, just crags and rocks and, uh, shallow water, with like a weird, diverse array of wildlife in it, as is the case with tide pools. We'll just kind of... flesh that out.

Travis: Uh, can I—

Clint: Got that up in the upper northwest area?

Griffin: Yeah, the northwest quadrant of the shore. It is a sizeable thing.

Travis: Can I add something to the seaside, now?

Griffin: Uh, sure.

Travis: Um, I am going to... uh, say that here, uh, slightly west of the spiral staircase, there is a patch of water that you can see from the surface, that doesn't have the same, like, wave structure as the rest of the sea. So like, as the waves move over it, they decrease, and the waves around it are higher.

Griffin: Okay. So you're drawing something on the surface of the water.

Travis: Correct.

Griffin: Maybe draw that on the land side, then, so that we can kind of keep these two things distinct. If it's something that you can see from the land, like—

Justin: Well, the black spire, you can see. It's coming out of the sea.

Griffin: Oh, it's coming out of the sea! Okay.

Justin: That's why it's so cool. Why are there stairs going into the sea?

Griffin: Okay, okay. I dig it. Alright. Then yeah, let's just keep that there, then. It's just a section where waves don't happen?

Travis: Yeah, where the water seems calmer.

Griffin: Do waves like... hit it and then just, vanish?

Travis: Yeah, they like, break around it.

Griffin: Interesting! Okay. And that's next—and that's near the spiral staircase?

Travis: Yeah. The spiral staircase is between the land and that patch.

Griffin: Okay. Uh, Dad, you wanna draw one more thing? And then that's probably enough for us to, uh, start out with.

Clint: Um... Travis, this is a—you built a pool?

Travis: Yeah, it's uh—

Griffin: It's not as pool as much as it is a plot—a section of the surface of the ocean that is calm.

Travis: No, so, on land. Do you mean on land or on sea?

Clint: No, on land.

Travis: Yeah. On land, it's uh, like... bigger than a pool. I would say it's like, uh, kind of like large pond size.

Clint: M'kay. And these are only natural things we're putting on the map right now?

Travis: Yes.

Clint: Right?

Griffin: That's right.

Clint: Okay. Um... a river. I think there should be a river that leads to the sea. So... a nice river that actually... runs... from the west coast, and runs in a curve up to the north.

Griffin: Whoa. Okay. Now wait, water is flowing into the ocean, yes?

Clint: Correct.

Griffin: Or is it—okay. 'Cause if it was doing the opposite, that would be fuckin' bonkers.

Justin: What a magical world.

Griffin: I guess so. Uh, okay! Uh, I guess one more thing that we should sort of figure out, generally speaking, uh... we have this thing here. Is this all beach? All of the stuff that we have not outlined as water, is it just all... is it all sand and beach, or do you think there's other sort of biomes?

Clint: I don't think there would be that much beach, do you? I mean...

Travis: No, and I mean—allow me to posit, Griffin.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Uh, P-O-S-I-T, that perhaps it is not sand beach, but more like a pebble... pebbly kind of beach? So this isn't like, a vacation spot.

Justin: Maybe it's fat beach.

Griffin: Maybe it's P-H-A-T phat beach. That's possible. Okay.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: But it's kind of a pebbly thing. So there's a reason that people were not settling here before. This is not like, a come here to relax kind of thing.

Griffin: Yes. One thing about the sort of world map I drew is that this area is fairly secluded, because y'know, while all the world powers are sort of trying to formulate their own, uh, way to not die in the apocalypse, y'know, they are still these contentious world powers. So they may not be wild about the idea of just this like, construction happening here.

Clint: And we're not doing this to scale, right?

Griffin: No, I think that that would be a lot to ask of us. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah. And we're all dummies, so...

Griffin: Yeah, so we could not make that work. So we could say like—

Clint: Why don't you do some kind of grayish, beachy thing?

Griffin: Yeah. I'm drawing a very faint line here to illustrate like, that's just the beach. And then, beyond that, y'know, there's—I would imagine, there's some green around the pond. So, we don't have to fill in every single sort of, um...

Travis: And we'll fill it in more as we go. That's the point of the game.

Griffin: That's true! That's the whole point. Okay. Uh, so, the next thing we have to do before we really get started is decide what resources are important to our city. And again, I think this is a thing that we can have two lists of. For the seaside, I think it's probably just a static, like... list of questions we have to answer. Right? Like, what are we breathing? How is—how are we getting water?

Travis: How do we sustain food? Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah, food. How are we staying—what's the shelter situation? Energy?

Travis: I mean, light and power—yeah, exactly.

Griffin: Yeah, there's the things that you need to sort of make a city underwater. So, maybe we can just keep track of that ourselves.

Travis: Yeah, I think it just—we can just label it as like, kind of survival is like, the primary thing. And then like, thriving is the secondary, y'know?

Griffin: Well, yes. Yeah. Let's—

Travis: Just as far as categories of resources go.

Griffin: Categories for the seaside. Right. But for the land side, I mean, it's—we're essentially playing the game, right? So we have to decide things that are important for our society here, to build a city underwater. So, and these things will be—start out in scarcity, save for one of them. So we all decide something.

Travis: I would like to make a pitch.

Griffin: Yeah, please.

Travis: Uh, for the abundance one.

Griffin: Well, let's do all the important resources first, and then we'll all decide on what the abundance is.

Travis: Well, the number one is knowledge, right? We're trying to figure out...

Griffin: I can't spell the word kno—there's a D in knowledge. That's embarrassing. That's fucking embarrassing.

Travis: Yeah. It's like know-ledge. You gotta know a ledge, y'know?

Griffin: Um, knowledge. Yeah, sure.

Travis: 'Cause that's the thing, right? If we're trying to figure out how to do it... then it seems like the number one resource is knowledge.

Griffin: I would like—I think maybe—[sighs] Because I don't—

Justin: It's so broad.

Griffin: It's so broad, and it's also something that like, how would that become a scarcity? Knowledge isn't exactly fluid, right? We are getting sort of, y'know, ostensibly, the best and brightest from the four kingdoms who like, are able to bring their various shit. So maybe instead of knowledge, maybe it's like, the cooperation to like, use that knowledge. Because that is—that is something that could be dynamic. Like, there could be—do you know what I mean?

Travis: Oh, yeah, okay. I like that.

Justin: Diplomacy maybe is a way of putting it? Like, the ability to—for these different groups to cooperate?

Griffin: Um, maybe we just say like, unity, as like, a bucket thing.

Travis: Unity, yeah. Unity works for me. Because if we're saying, inherently, the knowledge that everyone is bringing is not necessarily a resource—that we might be able to find new information later, but people are coming in with their own knowledge. But it's whether or not they want to work together to use it. That makes a lot of sense to me.

Justin: I'd like to suggest something that I think could be interesting. Something I've been thinking a lot about is, um... the idea of culture. Like, we're like, trying to get a whole society – in fact, four different societies – down under the sea, and basically like, abandon the land.

Griffin: Right.

Justin: And I like the idea of like, cultural... like, the amount of our cultural history that we're able to bring with us. Because it seems like that could be something that would be interesting to balance against survival. Um...

Griffin: Let's go ahead—let's cheat and just make that like, diversity of culture? Like, in abundance? Because again, like, I don't see how that is something that then becomes scarce, unless, y'know, something genuinely horrible happens. Like, a diversity of culture. Is that what you're talking about, or are you talking about like, a...

Justin: I'm talking about cultural works.

Clint: Artifacts, art.

Justin: Artifacts, art, like...

Griffin: Oh! That's a good—okay, yes.

Justin: Like, the culture of our people, like, that we're preserving, not just like—y'know how you send up a space shuttle, and you put like, records in it and stuff, like, so the aliens can like, lay out some tracks? Like, what are you... what are we saving from society?

Clint: So there will be no access to the land after we... right?

Griffin: Yeah, I mean...

Clint: Is that impossible?

Griffin: The season that we're going to be playing, when we actually start the season in earnest, is going to be entirely underwater. Above the surface of the land will be like, uh, an extremely—

Justin: Not the season. The Quiet Year has four seasons.

Griffin: Sorry, yes. The season of The Adventure Zone, uh, tentatively called Ethersea, is going to be purely underwater. Everything above the water will be like, unsurvivable, essentially.

Um, I'm gonna just add like... building resources, which I could—

Travis: Yeah, yeah.

Griffin: Like, because I could put like, metal, or wood, or whatever. But we could do a ton of those. Right now, like, we don't know what the fuck the city's gonna be made out of. It could be made out of any of that stuff.

Travis: What about structural resources? Structural material, right? Because it's not just like...

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Y'know, food or cloth that we would use for like, y'know. Those kind of resources. Literally like, things you could build with.

Griffin: Um, Dad. You have not gone.

Clint: What about air? I mean, aren't we gonna need to figure out the key to living underwater, is how we're gonna breathe?

Griffin: Let's add—okay, so if we do those, we can do like, uh, air. Underwater. Uh...

Clint: That seems like the starting point for...

Griffin: Yeah. Water. Underwater. Uh, food. Underwater. Also, food above water, right? Like, food is important. We are building a mini-city, essentially, and so there are things like food, shelter, uh, that like... when you come here on a mission from a voice in the sea that you don't necessarily like, prioritize...

Travis: Um, sorry, just one last one that just kind of clicked to me that might be interesting to play with. As a fluctuating resource, leadership? Because you have these four different groups, right, who aren't necessarily going to agree with any one person. And it could—

Justin: That feels closer to unity.

Griffin: Yeah, it feels like a push and pull thing. Like, if you had a strong leader that everybody was like, down with, like, that's a unity.

Justin: I'm gonna pitch a concept that I had.

Griffin: M'kay.

Justin: That I had for this arc, and would—might play into this resource conversation. Um, we know that magic here has a cost, and basically like, a...

Griffin: A material cost.

Justin: A material cost, right? It like, is creating something that is basically, uh, analogous to a pollutant, that has been seeping into the sea. I wanted to pitch you all on the idea of... what if the ocean, or the sea, is purifying or somehow condensing that sort of magical byproduct into a source of energy? Like, a physical... maybe it's like, cubes. Maybe it's like, crystals. Something like that that we are like, finding.

Travis: Like the way you could boil salt water to get the salt out of it?

Griffin: Ooh, what if it's just salt? Like, magic salt, and that is a go-to like...

Justin: It's basic—it's called prestige. And I think that it's like, an energy source. Like, you could use it to like—you need a certain amount of this stuff to, um, to get down... we find that we can use it for energy. The question that I think we don't have an answer to right now, and that I think is very interesting, is... like, the sea has been taking our magical pollutants and basically recycling them into prestige. Like, what happens when we burn it?

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: Like, what happens when we use it? Is it bad? Is it good? Is it pissing the sea off more? Is it dangerous? Is it renewable? How much is there, like, all the uses of it? Whatever.

Griffin: Right.

Justin: Like, that seems like an interesting idea to me.

Griffin: Uh, one thing to note about the game and sort of how it is meant to be played is to not sort of give yourself easy answers to questions. And that's—I don't think that's what this is. I think there's a version of this where it's just like, a mysterious thing. Uh, y'know, we have discovered a somewhat sustainable way to do magic without having to go out and hunt for a fuckin' eye of newt or whatever, right? There's this prestige that we can use to do magic responsibly. And as far as we know, we're the only ones who have discovered it.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: But maybe it's not a gift from a sentient ocean that loves us and wants to take care of us, as much as it is just like, some weird shit. And so, therefore, like, the answers we can find for how to make a city underwater, like... now we have magical energy for days to kind of do that with.

Clint: But I would also—I would—I love this idea, and I think that's very cool. I would not make it quite... I wouldn't make it too accessible. I think that there needs to be some kind of difficulty to obtain it.

Griffin: Absolutely.

Clint: Whether it's something like coral, it forms coral, or something like that.

Travis: Like a process.

Griffin: We're kind of getting into the game accidentally a little bit in sort of the pre-pro-phase. Like, this is the kind of thing that we are going to be doing in the game.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: I think just leaving it at, without going into where it came from or what we know about it, just..

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: There—we have found salt present.

Justin: Magic salt.

Griffin: Albright, prestige, magic salt.

Travis: Okay, great.

Griffin: And then we can go from there. And then we'll figure out like, what the fuck that means later. I think that that's the thing in abundance though, right? That's the thing that..

Travis: Yeah, right? Like, it's—

Justin: Yeah.

Travis: There's a resource there.

Griffin: I don't think unity, inherently, like—these are four formerly warring cultures who are here because they heard the same voice, but like, I feel like you gotta earn that a little bit.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: And culture is something that maybe they need to get more people to come and join this project. Like, that is—

Travis: I also think that that is a very contentious thing, right? Where there'll be people like, "You're worried about art while we're trying to figure out food?" Like...

Griffin: Yes. Yeah, I also like, super want to... in terms of tone, like, I don't want to make things... y'know, I don't want bigotry or anything like that, like, because they used to be rivals.

Travis: Absolutely.

Griffin: We have a chance to—

Travis: I think it's more about prioritizing, like, their own things, right?

Griffin: Right.

Travis: Where you're gonna get the people who like, magic has always been their like, go-to answer for things.

Griffin: Right.

Travis: And then you have people who are like, "No, we're gonna craft it with our hands, and it's more reliable that way." I don't think it has to do with bigotry so much as it's just, uh, like... the way we do things. That's—no, you can't trust magic, you can trust, y'know, wood and stone and metal and stuff. And I think it all plays back into the things we were saying. Y'know, unity, culture, these things...

Griffin: Gotcha.

Travis: Where they're going to have to figure out how all this stuff overlaps in a successful way.

Griffin: Um, I am going to—you're supposed to draw this stuff, uh, as you do it. So like, prestige might—I might just... draw these magic... sort of silvery waves... well, that's confusing, 'cause it's the fuckin' ocean.

Travis: I would, Griffin, shade it in around the edge. Like, maybe it was discovered, like, coated on the rocks that are like, near—like, that's where it's dried.

Griffin: Oh, like, maybe near the tide pools. Like, because of the way that the water kind of comes up into the rocks there, that's like, where we first find it. That's good.

Travis: Right, and then as the water has like, y'know, evaporated, it's left this like, crystalline coating on it.

Griffin: Okay. Um... yeah, I'll draw that up near here. Uh, and then, we're also supposed to draw the scarcities, but some of these are so sort of, uh, high-minded. Like, I don't know how to draw a scarcity of culture. [laughing]

Justin: Draw two hands shaking.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Hands shaking, and like, a statue.

Justin: A copy of Borat on DVD.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah. Okay, so, we got our basic starting map here. We have our resources. And now, we are going to get into the game! So, let's now go over what we're actually going to be doing as we play through the game. Uh, rounds are basically separated into weeks. That is the basic unit of play. And each week is a turn taken by—I'm just gonna read straight from the thing here.

"Each week is a turn taken by one player with play proceeding clockwise around the table." We don't have that, so maybe we just go left to right based on our little icons here. "Weeks should take an average of two to three minutes to complete." We'll see about that.

Um, so, during each week, three things happen. The first thing is that we draw a card from this deck. The Quiet Year provides basically 52 prompts, uh, y'know, 52 weeks in a year, 52 cards in a deck of cards. And we will read the prompts. The prompts will give us two options, essentially, and we get to choose the option that we want off of that card. Or rather, the player whose turn it is gets to choose the option, and it's usually a question that needs to be answered, or a direction that needs to be sort of followed.

That will—we'll explain that as we go, but again, those cards are sort of separated into four seasons. We start in spring, we end in winter. One of the cards in winter is the—called the Frost Shepherds I believe is what it's called. And when the Frost Shepherds arrive, the game immediately ends. So it probably won't go 52 weeks. We will get into winter, and then once we're in winter, at any point during a player's turn, it's done, and the game is over, and that's—we have what we have. Just something to be aware of.

But also, in spring, things are kind of okay. We will figure out what things look like, and in summer, we'll shore up our resources, and then things will get harder from there.

So, you draw a card, you resolve it. You then will take down—there's a countdown essentially on projects that we start, which is... maybe I should read that step of the thing first. The last thing you do is, the active player gets to do one of three things. They can discover something, which then, they just get to add to the map. Hold a discussion, or start a project.

For hold a discussion, what we did starting out, talking about like, what would be cool to do with magic? Or, what resources are important? Or, what's our priority here? We can't do that once we start playing. We are meant to be sort of omnipotent, uh, in... what's the word I'm looking for?

Travis: Entities?

Griffin: Uninvolved sort of entities that are like... we can't be rooting, necessarily, for the thing to succeed, and for us to like, give ourselves softballs. Like, we are—

Travis: And the other way around, too. You're not necessarily trying to punish them or cause failure.

Griffin: No, we're not trying to screw ourselves over. So like, if we start going in different directions, it may behoove an active player to say like, "Let's talk about this." But when we talk about it, we are going to talk about it from the perspective of members of the community. And there's a very specific way that you have to talk about it.

Travis: Like you're holding a town hall.

Griffin: Right! Um, start a project is a, y'know, represents a concerted effort amongst the community to achieve something. Um, and it's very important that you don't discover something that should be a project, right? Like, oh, we need food. Oh, I just discovered a fuckin' McDonald's up on the—like, no. Like, we would need to start a project to, y'know, build a farm or go out on hunting parties.

Travis: Yeah, don't be like your friend Debbie who's like, "Oh, I discovered the cutest—I found the cutest little restaurant the other day." Like, you didn't find it! It wasn't hidden in the woods, Debbie!

Griffin: You didn't find it. It was on Yelp.

Um, so, those are the three things, right? We will draw a card, resolve it, count down the project dice, and then either discover something new, hold a discussion, or start a project. And we can go over the rules of those as we like, as we get to them.

That's more or less it. We will cross the roads of like, what else, y'know, we will be doing. But that is the basic round, is the week.

Travis: Let's do it.

Griffin: Let's do it. If you guys would like, I can go first to kind of illustrate...

Travis: Uh, yeah. I'm horny for these cards, Griffin!

Griffin: Yes, I'm drawing the first card.

Justin: Families listen to this.

Griffin: Yeah. I got the Queen of Spring. What's the most beautiful thing in this area? Or, what's the most hideous thing in this area?

Travis: Well, we have both a magical lake and a butthole already, so...

Griffin: Right, but these prompts are not things that you answer with shit that's already out there.

Travis: Oh, I know.

Griffin: It's something that you need to—

Travis: I just wanted to say 'butthole,' Griffin.

Griffin: —figure out. Um, what if there is a... cave... uh, down the shore, sort of like, right at the foot of the Einarr Plateau, where the land kind of runs into. So like, right here is a cave... um, that... nobody can go inside. And it's not like a—it's barred up. It's that like, when people try to go into it, whether it's fear or whatever, they are physically incapable of going into this cave.

Travis: Is there some kind of like, barrier you can see?

Griffin: That is the most hideous thing, I should say.

Travis: Yeah. Is there like a barrier you can see, or is it just like, something—

Griffin: No, no barrier. It is a mental barrier.

Travis: Got it. Okay.

Griffin: It's like a, oh, let's—I think kids will go down there to dare themselves, like, oh, let's go. But y'know, they never do, because nobody actually is able to go inside.

Travis: Okay, so now you get to choose to discover something, start a project, or have a discussion, right?

Griffin: Well, the first thing I do is, I need to, uh, count down on the clocks. And you'll see, I have a special little clock up here at the very top.

Travis: I did see that one, yes.

Griffin: Um, and so, I'm just gonna... first of all, delete this little dot I accidentally made... oh jeeze. Oh jeeze. Oh jeeze. There we go. Uh, I'm gonna count this down. So this is now gonna be... a seven. This is, uh—this is a special event clock that I got going.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: And when that counts down, something in the world is going to happen to the other four kingdoms.

Travis: Everybody gets a Toyota Camry!

Griffin: Yes. Okay.

Justin: Hell yeah.

Griffin: So, uh, yes. Now, the last part of my week, I get to discover something new, hold a discussion, or start a project. I think just like... a good project would be... like, shelter.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: There's enough like, camping supplies here for folks to, uh... for folks to, y'know, not die. But especially if they're going to try and—if more people, y'know, heeding the call, start coming down here, then we're gonna need some... we're gonna need some more housing. So maybe like, just long houses. Just like, super-efficient, uh, bunk houses. Nothing like, super fancy, but just to save us from the elements.

Travis: Makes sense.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: So I'm gonna draw this right here.

Justin: And this is really gonna be something—just to clarify, this should really be something that is as ephemeral as possible. We're talking about like, survival.

Griffin: Yes. We're not building—

Justin: This is so temporary.

Griffin: This is so—this is gonna last—I think everybody here knows that they are building a construction site and nothing else. Um—

Justin: Can we call it The Shithouse?

Griffin: The Shithouse?

Justin: Because it's gonna be bad. Like, nobody likes it, and we didn't work very hard on it.

Travis: Maybe that's not what it was called right away, but it's what everyone just keeps referring to it as.

Justin: [laughing] Just keeps calling it The Shithouse.

Travis: Over at the uhh, Shithouse. Y'know.

Griffin: Uh, yeah. So, the thing that you have to do whenever you start a project is decide how many weeks it takes to complete it, all the way up to six. Six weeks is the most that something can take, one week is the least.

I think for the number of people that are already here, I think this one shithouse represents a lot of shithouses, where hundreds and hundreds of people can go. Because I think everybody here is banking on... many, many,

many more folks actually being here when they start to head underground. I'm gonna say a month. I'm gonna say four weeks to like, actually get it going.

Travis: That makes sense.

Griffin: So I'm gonna put the four here, and that is the end of my turn. Um, Dad, you are in, on my screen, next in the order, so why don't you go next? You will—oh, that's right. I will draw a card for you.

Clint: Okay. That is the ten of hearts.

Griffin: Of spring.

Clint: There's another community somewhere... correct. Ten of hearts, spring.

Griffin: Yeah yeah.

Clint: There's another community somewhere on the map. Where are they? What sets them apart from you? Or, what belief or practice helps to unify your community?

Um, I think I'll go with the belief or practice helps to unify community.

Travis: I think that's great. Yeah.

Clint: Seems to me that everybody can see this descending layer of death coming, correct?

Griffin: Yeah. There is an enormous storm that everybody can just see, sort of hanging over the ocean some, y'know, number of miles away.

Clint: Right. So, we know... this society knows that devastation is coming, and that they—I think the belief is that they realize they all—the only place they can go is under the sea.

Griffin: Right.

Clint: The only place they can go is to build something that allows them to live underwater.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Clint: They don't know how long this storm's gonna last, if it's permanent...

Griffin: Right.

Clint: But they can tell it's coming, and so, that's going to alleviate a whole lot of, uh, of argument.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: Everybody knows that's the goal.

Griffin: It is a fear-based unity that everybody has right now.

Clint: Yeah!

Griffin: Okay. I'm going to move, um, unity over to abundance then, right?

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: Because—and y'know, maybe it's not long-lasting unity, but y'know, I think everybody—

Justin: At least at first. It's like post-9/11, right?

Griffin: Yeah. Well, this is the—you gotta remember, this is the second week that this group of sort of nomads have been here. And by week two, I think they've all been like, "Okay, we're gonna die if we don't start really working together."

Clint: Post-9/11, too, is a great analogy.

Griffin: Yeah. This is a fun topic for the podcast, too, is the feedback we get a lot.

Justin: Just history. Just history.

Griffin: I should've thought about this, though. I was not being particularly, uh, a good steward of the rules. I said we're building these houses, but building material is something that is in scarcity. So like, I don't know... I should've thought about—these are going to be shitty houses, then. Like, we're essentially making sand—sandcastles is what they are.

Justin: Well, maybe this is something that could be interesting, where... I mean, that's very human, to start a project and not have the materials of how you're gonna finish it. That becomes like, something we have to solve very quickly.

Griffin: Yeah. Okay. So, next... Dad, do you want to draw... I feel like the storm is so hu—

Clint: Here?

Griffin: Well, the storm would be it, right? Like, that's the thing they're afraid of.

Clint: Right. Let me see what I can...

Griffin: Make it maybe in the corner here, because we don't want the storm to occupy like, the entirety of this side of the map.

Clint: Well, I'm going to add a little bit of, uh, nauseating green.

Griffin: Whoa. So it's like an iridescent storm?

Travis: Like an aurora borealis?

Griffin: I'm into that. I've been thinking a lot about like... it's magic water. Like, it doesn't have to be, y'know, gray or blue ocean water or whatever. It can be that kind of, uh, oily, like, iridescent sheen that could, y'know, when it gets sucked up into this big storm, just turns into a beautiful... we like brightly colored deadly things on this show, I've discovered.

Travis: We really do!

Griffin: Brightly colored forces of apocalyptic destruction.

Travis: I think we also like multi-syllabic words that describe like, a shiny thing. Y'know, it's iridescent. It's opalescent. Anything like that. [laughing]

Clint: Alright, there's your storm. There's your storm of evil nauseatingness.

Griffin: Okay. Uh, we reduce project clocks, which I will do right now. And then, Dad, you get to choose whether to discover something, hold a discussion, or start a project.

Clint: Um... hold a discussion.

Griffin: Okay. This discussion will take place from the perspective of members of the community. When you hold a discussion, you choose to open with a question or a declaration, Clint. Starting with you and going clockwise, everyone gets to weigh in once, sharing a single argument comprised of one to two sentences. If you opened with a question, you get to weigh in last. If you opened with a declaration, that's it for you.

Uh, discussion never results in a decision or a summation process. Everyone weighs in, and then it's over. This is how conversations work in communities. They are untidy and inconclusive affairs.

Clint: And it should be associated with what I just created.

Griffin: It has to be asso—no. I just shared the rules for hold a discussion with you. It has to be shared with something on the map. Right? And then we mark it with a little dot, just to note that a discussion was had about the thing. So you can have a discussion about anything right now that's on the map.

Clint: My question is, how do we know that this storm is dangerous to us? How do we know that it's not something that's going to be beneficial? That it's going to... y'know, give us superpowers, or do something like that? How do we know it's bad?

Griffin: Do you have an inkling, based on just the intro, like, of which of the four sort of world powers... like, the person who held this discussion would've come from? This essentially climate change denier. [laughs] That you've just sort of willed into existence.

Clint: Um... give me a second, 'cause I actually made notes.

Justin: There he goes.

Travis: Nerd.

Clint: I think it would come from Hominine.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: That makes a lot of sense.

Griffin: I mean, they have magic in their—magic is their whole shit.

Clint: They study magic.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: Yeah, they study magic. But this thing has mystified them. How do we know this is gonna kill everybody?

Griffin: Um...

Travis: You heard the call just like I did, or you wouldn't be here. Clearly, there's something wrong, and there's nothing your Benevolence is doing to fix it. We got the call, so you came, so you must have your doubts already.

Griffin: Um... the people of the Southern Archipelago have already lost quite a bit to this storm, and it has only grown more intense in the passing months. So, the writing is on the wall.

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: [laughs]

Griffin: That's cool, Juice.

Clint: Is that the Firbolg?

Griffin: We're not supposed to make characters in The Quiet Year, but I'm really curious about that dude.

Justin: [laughing] Uh... uh, I'm... I'm busy. I've no time to talk. We have to get back to work.

Griffin: Uh, and Dad, you get to close out with a statement.

Clint: Um... excellent points.

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: And especially the last guy. We got work to do. Thank you, Delmer.

Justin: I was gonna be from the Southern Archipelago, and Griffin messed me up, 'cause he picked Southern Archipelago, and then I didn't know anything about the other ones. So I just kind of...

Clint: [laughing]

Griffin: I think that was very Delmer sort of sensibility.

Justin: It felt Delmer in the moment.

Travis: Felt Delmer. That was Delmer as hell.

Justin: Yes, absolutely. Very Delmer. That dude's name was Delmer, and they're his wilds.

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: Y'know, I came from my wilds...

Griffin: Remember, we don't come to a tidy conclusion in the discussion.

Clint: Right. Yeah. I appreciate everybody's viewpoint, and I think there's some valid points in there.

Griffin: Alright.

Justin: Oh, Dad was there too.

Griffin: Cool.

Justin: Barely. [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, let's not do that in the fuckin' setup game for the new season. We'll figure out how to get janitor Clint in there.

Justin: 'Cause he would be dead by the time the game began.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Uh, Travis.

Travis: Yes! Draw for me, Griffin!

Griffin: Ah, yes. Travis has drawn the King of Spring!

Travis: Ah. Yeah. So, that is, "King of Spring..."

Justin: [sings] Once, I was the King of Spring!

Travis: Alright.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, the King of Spring. A young boy starts digging in the ground and discovers something unexpected. What is it? Or, an old man confesses to past crimes and atrocities. What has he done?

I think I'm gonna go with the young boy. So he's digging in the ground and discovers something unexpected. What is it? Uh, I am going to say, he is digging in the ground, uh... he is digging in the ground along the kind of pebbled shore, and starts finding metallic stones mixed around in the regular pebbles.

Griffin: Metallic—when you say metallic stones, are you talking about sort of, uh, natural-looking rocks that just happen to be made out of metal? Or are you talking about fragments of a thing?

Travis: More like hunks of ore.

Griffin: Okay. Um... are they corroded? Are they rusted in any way, or are they, uh...

Travis: They're not processed. These are just like, naturally occurring hunks of ore.

Griffin: You're right. We shouldn't—this is a—that's the kind of thing that a project would be is like, what do we do. Okay, yeah.

Travis: This is just—he's just discovered some hunks of ore. And not just like, one or two. I mean like, once you find them under the first layer of pebbles, there appears to be many of them.

Griffin: Doodle that on the map for me, while I count down the clocks. Two on the... shithouses. And five for the world clock. Uh, okay! And now you get to, after you've drawn your things...

Are they, uh... are they concentrated in any way on a certain part of the beach? You've drawn them close to the scary cave.

Travis: I mean, they're—yeah. They're definitely along the south coast, primarily.

Griffin: Gotcha. Now, you get to discover something, start a conversation, or start a project.

Travis: I am going to start a project. I think that there needs to be some elections.

Griffin: Whoa.

Travis: We need to organize, like, one representative from each of the four landmasses. Each of the four kind of peoples, so that we can smooth out the decision-making process.

Griffin: I'm going to do something that I haven't talked about yet called contempt. And that is, because sort of each of our turns, we are a fully individual thing. If you ever disagree with something that somebody else is doing, you take a point of contempt. And it is mostly a sort of social signifier. It's not like, at the end of the year, we add up our contempt points,

and that many people die or whatever. It is just a thing that is sort of a tracker for, y'know, player unity in the thing.

Travis: You don't like my... elections, Griffin?

Griffin: Uh, I don't like the idea of—wait, I don't get to say. We would have to hold a discussion to talk about that.

Travis: Okay, fair fair fair.

Griffin: It is so hard to fight against your instincts to like... okay.

Travis: Uh, I'm going to say, because it's mostly just discussion and not construction, I'm going to say, uh, two weeks.

Griffin: Okay. Go ahead and draw it. Uh, you gotta draw it on the map, so I don't know how you draw an election.

Travis: X's or O's.

Griffin: X's or O's. Okay, that's fine. And I'll add a date. How long did you say it would take?

Travis: Two weeks.

Griffin: Two weeks. 'Kay.

Travis: I mean, how long does an election really take?

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: Okay. Uhh, Juice. Your turn.

Justin: Yep. The Jack of Spring. You see a good omen. What is it? Or, you see a bad omen. What is it?

There's a, um... a pier that had been—there's a—sorry, I should probably use something that's already on the map. I can't just like, make something up.

Griffin: No, you can.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah, that is the thing. But again, I would encourage you not to make it a solution for a thing. Like, add complications and fascinations and mysteries to the map, but it is... it is...

Justin: There is a pier that has been used for fishing, off of the coast, right on the coastline. And the—everyone just goes out and takes their turns, and um, cast the lines in. They keep the fishing poles there. And the lines are all cut with the bait, the floaters and everything, is uh... bobbers are specifically cut for the fishing. And they go out, and they—everybody casts in, and they realize that their lines don't reach. And the water is lower.

Griffin: Hm.

Justin: Right around the pier. And they think it's their mind playing tricks on them at first, but they check again and they realize, like, no, it's right. Something is changing. The water is, um... being dragged away from right here.

Griffin: But then they realize it's low tide, and that they've been silly geese.

Justin: Fuck, it actually wasn't that bad. My bad.

Travis: [laughs] Oh wait, is it six? Oh, okay.

Griffin: Oh, oh shit, that's it.

Justin: That actually makes perfect sense.

Griffin: So that's a bad omen, then.

Justin: I mean, I think it's a bad omen.

Travis: Uh, on the south coast, or the west?

Justin: Especially combined with the storm. Our, uh... our drawing here is absolutely...

Griffin: Whoa. Whoa, fuck. Justin just...

Justin: [laughs] Sorry. I just drew an incredible purple line. Our, um—our map is kind of—I'm still trying to wrap my head around it. It's a real thinker.

Griffin: It's beautiful. It's really cool.

Travis: It's coming together!

Justin: Well, it's just that we have a coast—there's a line between the land—okay. For people listening at home that aren't directly looking at this, there's a line between the ocean and the land. And it is perfectly straight. And then there's another line, farther back from that line...

Griffin: Oh, Juice. These are two different maps. This is not—oh no.

Justin: Okay! That makes sense! Okay! Yes.

Griffin: These are two different maps.

Justin: That wasn't the ocean on the other side. That's two different maps.

Griffin: No. Right.

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: In a classic style, it's just two maps set next to each other...

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: ... and not indicated as separate maps.

Griffin: M'kay. It seems like everybody else got it, though. Which is weird.

Justin: Classic cartography.

Griffin: Classic stuff.

Justin: Classic cartography. [laughing]

Griffin: Alright.

Justin: Okay. That makes sense now. Alright. Let me put a little dinky pier out here, then. Now it all is adding up. Probably would've been good to flip these, y'know what I mean? If we're gonna—

Griffin: Oh my god, I get it now. Yeah.

Justin: If we're gonna put the ocean over here, it would've been good to put the ocean map. [sings, silly] There's a pier here... a tiny pier. And their lines don't reach anymore!

Griffin: I'm guessing this is not gonna do much to help our food scarcity.

Justin: Nope. Unless you guys know where to get longer lines.

Griffin: I also think that if you—whoa. If you eat fish from the Ethersea, you have to cook the—there's like, a very, very specific...

Travis: But it's already salted, which is nice.

Griffin: All fish is fugu fish, essentially. Like, you fuck up eating Etherfish, and you're donezo. Uh, okay. And that's a bad omen, I assume.

Justin: Yes. That's a bad omen.

Griffin: Uh, okay. Now you—I have counted down the clocks, and now you get to make your choice.

Justin: Uhh, and those actions again are... remind the listeners?

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, discover something new, hold a discussion, or start a project.

Justin: I feel like I just discovered the pier. Yeah, so I'm just gonna go with that.

Griffin: No no no. You do a different thing also.

Justin: Oh, okay. Um... alright, I want to hold a discussion there.

Griffin: Okay. You can start with a statement—

Justin: I have to make a declaration!

Griffin: `Kay.

Justin: Our lines are too long! All of us fishing guys were pretty fucked up about it, and I want to it out to here in front of everybody. Our lines were too short to reach to the ocean, and we're all kind of fucked up. So we're gonna need some time. If you see me or Doug or Flip... or Timby...

Griffin: [laughing] Yeah.

Justin: Or any of us, we're gonna be pretty fucked up for a while, because I don't know why our lines are so short. And also...

Griffin: This is the longest single statement I've ever—

Justin: Kevin? If anybody would like to come forward and uh, admit to sort of fuckin' around with our string, our line and the parlance of fishin'... I would appreciate it, 'cause we are also all fucked up right now. We can't figure it out, what exactly is happening, but that is the announcement for everybody today.

Clint: I think if you remember, I said something about, "Why don't we build some boats?" Remember that? Remember me saying why don't we build some boats?

Justin: I'm not allowed to respond per the rules of—

Griffin: No he is not.

Travis: Listen, we can't lose focus worrying about the fish and the boats or any of that. That seems like we're trying to find a permanent solution to an impermanent living situation. If the lines are too short, let's just find food on the land.

Griffin: We—it will be far too unsafe for us to continue eating Ethersea fish when we are living under the water, so it's high time that we find a different food source anyways.

The end! Uh, okay! Now we're back to the top of the order.

[music plays]

[ad break]

Griffin: It's my turn. I will draw a card. Eight of Spring. An old piece of machinery is discovered; broken, but perhaps repairable. What is it? What would it be useful for? Or, an old piece of machinery is discovered, cursed and dangerous. How does the community destroy it?

As interesting as that second prompt is, I feel like we've been taking the nasty option with every card. So maybe, uh...

Travis: I discovered ore! What are you talking about?

Griffin: Um, I guess that's true. Uhh... mmm... I'm going to say... an old piece of machinery is discovered, broken, but perhaps repairable. What is it? What would it be useful for?

Because this is sort of on a coastline at this junction between these two kingdoms, uh... maybe during the war, there were some sort of naval combat experiments that were taking place here. And so, the community finds, it just washes up on the shore one day, in probably a um... a bathysphere, which was like... I will admit, that is a Bioshock thing, but it is also the like, very very first way that deep sea explorers were able to do their shit. It's a dangerous metal ball with windows that you plonk down into the ocean in.

And it is not usable in the state that it's in, but it is sort of a, uh, y'know... a ancient piece of deep sea technology that, uh, is probably Hominine in origin. And that washed up. I'm just gonna plonk it down—I'm gonna plonk it down near the pier, I guess. And then... we will... do our countdown timers.

That little inner tube looking thing is the bathysphere.

Travis: Yeah, no, I know. We got the donut of power there.

Griffin: So with this round, two projects have completed. And when a project completes during somebody's turn, the player that started that project is the one that decides sort of what happens with it. And I think, with... as was sort of suggested, like, the um... the longhouses here are just like, in really—really poor shape.

I think there's probably some people who are like, let's use this ore to make something that is more habitable. This is leaky, it rains a lot, nobody here is happy. Like, there are people who come and are like, "Oh yeah, I heard the

voice too," and then they see the houses, and they're like, "Actually, fuck off, I'm done." So we're not like, bringing in a lot of heat with this.

But there's also people who are like, "No, we need that ore for underwater stuff." So... that is what is up with the longhouses. Uh, the election! How does that go, Travis?

Travis: Uh, so, it goes well. But what we end up with is a council of four, and nobody really like, landslided in. Um, and so, you have a council of four that everyone is kind of begrudgingly willing to listen to.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: So, it has improved the idea of unity, but definitely not solved it. It's not like, "Yeah, whatever you guys want!" It's more like, "Okay..."

Griffin: I would actually argue—I mean, it sounds like more stuff is getting done, but unity is maybe not in abundance anymore, if it was that sort of contentious a thing.

Travis: Yeah, that's the thing. It's maybe going to make... maybe streamlined project time?

Griffin: Yeah, maybe we just keep that in mind whenever you decide project times in the future, is like, we're getting shit done now. Oh, and I'm going to add, uh... in abundance... I should've done this when you first brought it up, like, weird ore.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Okay. Got it. Alright. Um... so, and then we wrap up... oh, my turn. So I get to discover something, start a project, or... um... hm. I think there is a sect of like, Hominine scholars who can't stop thinking about the cave, and are just trying to figure out a way to trick their brains or whatever sort of magic that is keeping people out, trying to like, figure out the source of that, and going in. 'Cause I think that they are convinced that that—this cave is the reason why they were brought here.

I don't think it's a large contingent of people. I think there are a lot of people who are like, "Yeah, go waste your time with that shit, y'know, magic friends. But we're gonna be over here doing the real work." So I'm going to draw... a little... I don't know, like, magnifying glass towards the cave. It looks like a sperm, and so, I've fucked up.

Justin: Happens. It happens.

Griffin: I'm gonna say—I'm gonna say, y'know, I would say longer, but I think... well, no, they wouldn't really benefit from like, the streamlining of shit.

Travis: No no no. They're off on their own.

Griffin: I think this is probably thoroughly against the orders of the community. So, I'm gonna say this is gonna take five weeks. Uh, and it's onto Dad.

Clint: Okay. Four of hearts, spring. What important and basic tools does the community lack? Where are you—or, where are you storing your food? Why is this a risky place to store things?

Okay, I'm gonna go with what important and basic tools does the community—but haven't we already dealt with that?

Travis: Well, this is more on the specific end, right? This isn't just like, scarcity, but it could be like, "What we don't have is this tool and this tool." Y'know, get a little more granular with it.

Griffin: Yeah, or you could answer the other one. Which is a—y'know, maybe more straightforward.

Clint: No, I'm gonna stick with the basic tools that we lack. Um, I think we're, um... I think we don't have a lot of weapons. We don't have a lot of like, um... and I mean, I think there are basic blades and clubs and

everything else, but I don't think we have a lot of range weapons. That we don't have a lot of, um... uh, projectile weapons.

Justin: These mainly for hunting, or...

Travis: Or like, defense?

Griffin: Or defense from something? We haven't really talked about like, the environment that we're in.

Justin: Yeah, I don't know what the threat would be. I could see that for hunting. What would the, like—are you saying for like, hunting for food, or for defense?

Clint: Like siege weapons.

Travis: Martial. Martial weapons.

Clint: Well, yeah. I'm thinking like, cannons and things like that. If they've all had to evacuate in fairly short order, I would think, one of the things that I would think would be left behind were cannons and, y'know, anything big like that. I think that they still have...

Justin: That's interesting, too, because we don't know what the fuck is in the sea. So like, we certainly did not bring any... [laughs] Any sort of... like, I don't think we've spent much time inventing like, cannons. Sea cannons. [laughing]

Griffin: Let me pitch this, then. Let's have a scarcity of defense weapons, I think is a good way of putting this. And y'know, just to keep things equal, maybe on abundance side, like, hunting gear. Like, we have an abundance. Like, we got that. We are hunting. We can do that, if a—y'know, if we're swimming in the water and there's a, y'know, a barracuda or something coming at us, we got a spear or a harpoon or whatever. But like, anything bigger than that, and uh oh!

Travis: That makes sense.

Griffin: I don't know—do you think we need to draw that on the map?

Clint: Well, if I can—no, I can't... how much can I amend this? Because I was thinking that it—maybe they dissembled all of those big weapons that they wouldn't, y'know—and then packed up as much of the pieces. 'Cause they knew that they were gonna need—they were gonna need items to work with. They were gonna need materials and stuff. So, y'know, maybe they've hauled all the pieces of these larger weapons... back to this area.

Griffin: I like that. Yeah, I don't think it has to change anything that we have on the board right now, though. We don't have defense weapons, because we dismantled them to make the shithouse. [laughs]

Clint: Yeah.

Griffin: Okay. So while you're in the shithouse, you're like, maybe going to sleep on the top bunk, and you look up, and there's just like a... y'know, a sword that's just like, right there.

Travis: A catapult.

Griffin: A catapult that you're sleeping under.

Travis: You're sleeping in the bowl of a catapult. Yeah. [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah, that's fun.

Clint: Yeah, you're sleeping in that.

Griffin: Uh, okay. I'll take the numbers down if, Dad, you want to decide what your action is now.

Clint: I'll start a project of, um... of cataloging all of these pieces of the broken down weaponry in anticipation of reusing them for our rebuild on the bottom of the ocean.

Griffin: Are you saying like, when that project is done, we will then have dismantled the longhouse and have big weapons? Or are you saying, like...

Clint: No, to figure out how to use them... okay, to start using those pieces to build things that will be used under the sea. How's that?

Griffin: Okay. Yeah, that's good. I'm gonna take contempt for that, 'cause I don't want you to dismantle my shithouse.

Clint: No, I'm assuming the shithouse was already built out of stuff.

Griffin: But if you want to—but we love it. And you want to use pieces of it to make big, underwater cannons and shit. That's your prerogative.

Clint: No! I don't want to build underwater cannons, but we're gonna have to have structures, we're—

Justin: Dad, every time you say underwater cannons, I get so much more excited.

Griffin: Yeah. [laughing]

Travis: I think—if I may, I think we're discussing this all too much.

Griffin: Way too much.

Travis: I think the project has started, right? And it might not work, right?

Griffin: That's a good point. How long does this take, Dad?

Clint: Uh, three.

Griffin: Got it.

Justin: Some good scientists.

Travis: Well, you have the unity. The council is leading.

Griffin: Yeah. This is probably Delmer shit. The Delmer are probably like, "This is great. We don't need to be comfortable." They think the shithouses are already like, palatial. Uh, cool! Okay! Travis, you are up.

Travis: Flip my cord!

Griffin: Let me flip your cord.

Travis: Seven of spring. Where does everyone sleep? Who is unhappy with the arrangement, and why?

Griffin: [laughing]

Justin: Oh my god.

Travis: There's also, what natural predators roam the area? Are you safe? Which, is also a good one, and something we've talked about. But... the first one just seems so applicable.

Griffin: But didn't we also just—

Travis: You're right. Okay. I'm gonna do the natural predators roam this area, are you safe. And while my first inclination is to do land... I think I'm gonna go sea.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Um, I'm gonna say, with the pollution, uh, that there are—there are sharks, kind of uh, more along the lines of like a hammerhead kind of thing. But they definitely have, uh, a little bit of like, kind of natural magic... uh, mutations.

Griffin: I think everything in—all sea life—and I think I hinted at that in the intro, or maybe not. But like, when we take place in this—when we actually do the seas and exploring underwater, like, animals are gonna be fucked up

down there. So like, a little teaser of that, of something that is like, actively harassing us on land, is rad.

Travis: I think that with uh... so I think with these, um, these sharks, it is manifesting as like, super heightened senses, and the ability to like, uh... almost like, seemingly teleport forward in short bursts.

Griffin: Fuck yeah.

Travis: So when they strike, it's like, zoot! And then they're just kind of there.

Griffin: I've written 'blink sharks.'

Travis: Blink sharks! That's great. Yeah.

Justin: Hell yes.

Griffin: On the uh—in 'abundance.' [laughs] We have an abundance of blink sharks. We should do something about that. And now, everybody is all about team "let's take the shithouse apart for underwater cannons."

Justin: [laughing]

Travis: Y'know, now that we've discovered blink sharks... my priorities have shifted.

Clint: Too late!

Griffin: Okay, let's count down. We are getting close on some of these. Alright, uh, and Travis, you get to make your turn. Or your choice.

Travis: I am going to begin a project.

Griffin: Cool.

Travis: I think the council pulls, uh, a representative from each of the four, uh... each of the four, from Hominine, Delmer, Einarr, and the Southern Archipelago, like, specialists to study the ore that was found, and attempt to discover like, its properties, how to work with it, if there's any value to it... all the kind of specialties of the different locations.

Griffin: I would suggest, because of the sort of unity... or not unity, but the way that everybody is working right now, of just like, full boar, not prioritizing discomfort, that maybe this wouldn't take as long as you might think.

Travis: Yeah. Like, I think maybe... I mean, really, if you're just kind of— this is not like, actually molding it or shaping it or anything. It's just kind of like, well, let's check it out.

Griffin: What could we use this for? Right.

Travis: Yeah. I think like, a week.

Griffin: Okay. Uhh...

Travis: As much as, like I said, we're pulling specialists. Like, the people who have been elected to the council are like, "Oh yeah, we're gonna get Danny on this. Danny knows rocks. Right, Danny? You know rocks. Right? Like..."

Griffin: Alright. I'm just gonna add one down here where you've drawn the ore. Okay. Uhh, Justin.

Justin: Uh, five of spring. There is a disquieting legend about this place. What is it? Alarming weather patterns destroy something. How and what?

Travis: This is my favorite thing, by the way, about Quiet Year, is like... the cards stay the same no matter what, but there will be cards where it's like, "This feels perfectly suited to the situation we're in."

Griffin: Right, yeah.

Justin: I feel like it's alarming weather patterns destroy something, how and what. Um... I think that there was a uh... a earthquake. That can be weather, right? Earthquakes are basically weather.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Um, there was an earthquake, and it split the trash hole right in twain.

Griffin: Whoa.

Justin: And the stuff from the trash hole started coming up back out of the trash hole.

Griffin: Oh fuck! What kind of stuff?

Justin: I don't fuckin' know! Nobody's been over there yet! Where there was one boy, little... P... Peter. [laughs]

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Justin: And little Peter – that's his full name – Little Peter saw the stuff starting to emerge after the quake. He saw the refuse starting to emerge back out of the trash hole, just being blasted out. [laughing]

Griffin: Fuck. That rules.

Justin: Just being blasted out of the trash hole. [laughing]

Griffin: Okay, so the trash hole is now like, a trash... hill.

Justin: Cannon.

Travis: Trash cannon.

Justin: Yeah. It's a trash cannon.

Griffin: Okay. Uh, is it safe to... is it something that people can just walk over to and say like, "Oh, a toaster oven!" Or is it like...

Justin: They're counting on—there's stuff there, right? But they don't know when it's gonna blast again. And they don't know how heavy the object it will blast—

Griffin: So it's a trash geyser.

Travis: Like trash geyser.

Griffin: It has activated the trash geyser.

Justin: It's a trash geyser that you can't—there are goods, and there's some good quality stuff.

Griffin: But you might be in there scavenging, and then, all of a sudden, like, a fuckin' television blasts you apart.

Justin: [laughing]

Griffin: A fuckin' old can of soup just like, launches through your torso.

Justin: [laughing] Exactly! And it's not even the comin' up that's such a big problem, but the coming down of the trash is huge.

Travis: Coming down.

Griffin: That's really rough. Okay. Uh... I mean, is it spraying stuff into—is this a danger for... I mean, you can see, we have the shithouse.

Justin: I think it's not close enough to like—okay, it's not close enough. It's very worrying.

Griffin: Right.

Justin: Because—and there's like—and there's at least a few people in the society, I think, that are like, "Uh oh... I hope there—there's some stuff down there I put there I kind of wanted to stay down there..."

Griffin: [laughing] Okay. Please draw that, and have a fun time doing that, 'cause that sounds like a real hoot. Um... we are going to count down. Travis, the ore project finishes. What do they discover?

Travis: Uh, so, I don't want to like, make too many solves. But...

Griffin: No, but I mean, we gotta move the game forward at some point.

Travis: I think—uh, so there are two things I think that they discover. I think the uh...

Griffin: That anus with trash shooting out of it sure has...

Travis: I'm trying not to look at it, y'know?

Griffin: Hits different now.

Travis: I think the Hominine expert, uh, and the Delmer one is the one that works with their hands, right?

Griffin: Right.

Travis: So I think each of the experts discovers something, right? I think that the Delmer expert finds that it is fairly malleable.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Like, when it is hot, right? It is malleable. Um, the Einarr finds that it is also like, then, once it's tempered, very durable. And the Southern Archipelago has never seen anything like it before in their trading, so they

surmise it'll be pretty valuable. But the winner, the one that is most interesting, is the Hominine found that, because this seems to be sourced from the sea, it seems to be kind of pitted a little bit, and it seems to be that there is prestige, like, in it.

Griffin: Okay!

Travis: Like, there are veins of prestige in the rock. The ore itself is not magical, but it does make it very, uh...

Griffin: Resilient.

Travis: Susceptible. It makes it susceptible to magic.

Griffin: Okay! That tracks.

Travis: You can magic it good.

Griffin: Okay. I have changed 'weird ore' to 'magic ore' in the abundance stack. Now, um... Juice, you get to actually take your turn now that you have finished drawing this horrible...

Travis: Oh my god.

Griffin: ... this horrible thing.

Justin: Uh, I am gonna start... a shipyard.

Griffin: Okay! Yeah, probably a good idea for us to... get that going.

Justin: You would think, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: Um, I'm gonna build it on the sort of like, tributary that's like, uhh... cuttin' through the land here. I feel like that makes the most sense.

Griffin: This guy up here, the tide pools?

Justin: No, the blue...

Travis: The river.

Griffin: Oh, the river. I forgot what a tributary was for a moment.

Justin: That's alright. I know like... I just don't think it makes sense to like, start the boats like, uh... like, I feel like we don't—I'm looking at this map. I don't see a place to build boats. And it's gonna need to be a big boat. And I don't even think we know exactly if it's gonna be like an undersea vessel, or what exactly... how we're gonna get down there.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: But I think like, a facility for building boats.

Griffin: I mean, it could be related to the bathysphere, right? Like, you can't just kick the bathysphere into the ocean. You gotta launch it off of a ship. So maybe it is a surface thing to drop this, or y'know, whatever.

Justin: Yeah. Okay.

Griffin: How long is that—

Justin: That's gonna be a long—I mean, I feel like... six weeks? Does that sound right? I mean, five weeks?

Griffin: I would argue five, just because I think we're still sort of pushing the pedal to the metal in terms of like...

Justin: Okay. So it's not a good shipyard.

Griffin: I think five weeks is a pretty fucking good shipyard.

Travis: That's a good shipyard.

Griffin: It's the biggest project that we've done now that we have magic ore, right? Like, we can make shit now. I'm actually gonna get rid of building material as a scarcity, because we... y'know, this doesn't have to be what we make everything out of, but finally, we like, can start making shit in earnest.

Uh, okay! Uh, the world clock has ticked down to zero, which means something in the world is about to happen. And that thing is related to sort of an exodus plot that has been hatched by one of these kingdoms. From your position down here on the shore, I don't necessarily think... I think your settlement is too close to the Einarr Plateau to actually see sort of what happens to it. I think the community is more like... out in the heartland that have the Einarr Plateau on their vista saw it very, very clearly.

The... basically the top of the Einarr Plateau disappears.

Travis: Huh.

Griffin: And there's not a flash of light or like, a cataclysmic explosion. It was just there one moment, and then it was gone the next. And... all of the Einarr and everything living on the plateau disappears with it.

Travis: Now, Griffin, as a result, do we get more sunlight?

Griffin: Yeah, sure, there's probably more sunlight.

Travis: Nice.

Griffin: And the Einarr among you... I think there's a handful who kind of know what happened. Because they are sort of a, uh, y'know, nomadic group of people, there is a diversity amongst the Einarr. None of them have the exact same beliefs about which vestiges are, y'know, good, or what their roles are in the world.

But there's a handful of Einarr among you who know that there were sort of a group of very, very zealous devotees to the vestiges that managed to just spirit the entire plateau back into the plain that the vestiges first game into our world through.

They basically went back to where the vestiges went, and they also know that... living mortal beings can't maintain a physical form over there. So when the Einarr people passed through the veil, as the plateau disappeared, they became sort of intangible. Like, echoes of themselves.

And the ramifications on that, for you all, is... a couple days later, the people living in this settlement experience a few odd phenomena. Items, y'know, moving on their own around camp, or whispers heard in the dark. And soon, they pile up so much that they become undeniable. These echoes of the disembodied Einarr who were spirited away have found their way back into our world, and have begun haunting, essentially, the area around the camp.

[haunting music plays]

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