

The Adventure Zone: Ethersea – Prologue V: The Weight of History

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Griffin: Hey, folks. Quick pre-programming announcement. Thanks for listening into our setup episodes for The Ethersea. We're playing The Quiet Year, a game by Avery Alder, that's all about map making, and making wild choices to help build a community. You can find a link to where you can find and purchase and learn more about the game on the episode description.

And also, if you want to follow along visually, we are uploading all the maps at the end of each of these sessions at bit.ly/EtherseaMaps. And I think you need to capitalize Ethersea and Maps in order for that link to work, 'cause that's how bit.ly works. We heard some folks say they were having some trouble following along sort of visually, and uh, if you, y'know, need a little help with that, go to that link.

I also think that, if you go to our Twitter page, we will be uploading those maps alongside the episodes there as well. That's it. Here's the episode!

[music plays]

Brother Seldom: Our final lesson: the weight of history's presence. The importance of our mission was clear from the start. From the very first nail driven into the very first shitho—first... housing... in the settlement... we knew that what we were doing would shape the future of civilization itself.

However, during those last few weeks above the surface, the gravity of that responsibility became nearly unbearable. We understood, I believe, that future generations would examine our priorities, our work ethic, our decision-making skills, all in excruciating, critical detail. And for good reason – the end, when it came, it caught us by surprise.

Projects were left unfinished that could've altered the course of history dramatically. What if we'd had time to bolster our defenses? What if we'd uncovered the fate of the Vanguard? How much heartache could we have avoided?

I do not know how kind history will be to us. But imagine, if you will, those final, frigid days. Imagine the backbreaking labor, the uncertainty of our departure, the terror of the storm. And imagine shouldering those burdens, knowing full well that history was watching and judging intently.

I will not make excuses. Mistakes were made. But on this subject, I shall remain resolute. Considering the pressures our community faced, it is a wonder that we were able to stand upright, take tools in hand, and get to work at all.

[music plays]

Justin: [sings] And the loom begins to spin.

Travis: What?

Justin: [singing] The tapestry, almost complete. Sit on down, listen in, you are in for a treat! The world is formed around you, spun into real with just our words. Sit, let us astound you!

Travis: Uh-huh.

Justin: [singing] It's Ethersea, and iiit... begins!

Griffin: [claps] That's great. I actually—I am running out of space on my computer. I don't know that I'll have enough for this episode, Juice, so if you could just keep going while I do a little spring cleaning, that would be, uh...

Clint: [laughing]

Justin: Sure. [singing] Griff's cleaning up his hard drive... a lot of glossy JPEGs heading for the grave!

Griffin: I think my license expired to Daisy Disk. That's okay. Alright, we'll figure this out later. Um, alright. Let's finish this thing.

Justin: [singing] Renewing his license to Daisy Disk!

Griffin: [laughing]

Justin: I'll get as specific as you want.

Griffin: Yeah, please.

Clint: Don't interrupt his channeling of Harry Chapin here.

Griffin: It's—

Justin: [singing] Clearing his cache!

Griffin: Uh, so, looking at the map, two things. One, I fucked up and had to—

Justin: Such as it is. [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: —uh, redo the water side of the map. Uh, but it looks, hopefully, more sort of spatially legible. On the land side of the map, or as I call it, the fuckin'... the turbo zone... [laughing]

Travis: [laughing]

Griffin: The chaos cube. Uh—

Travis: It's more and more starting to look like just a collection of every doodle ever drawn in a textbook ever.

Justin: I feel like—y'know what this image is? At the parent teacher conference, the parents sat down, and the teacher doesn't say a word.

Griffin: Just puts that? Yeah.

Justin: They just bring out this image, like... eh? Okay. Okay? Alright. You get it.

Travis: We need to send your child to a special school.

Griffin: Right. You know where the failings are, just looking at this.

Okay, so, to recap the current projects. Uh, The Biggest Baby is nearly finished! One week left in the Cradle. Um, we got the dive suit project that, uh, Justin started last episode. And the bathysphere, in which a comatose Fineas Caul and a dead Vanguard arrived, along with some water, with some cool sort of super-oxygenated spirochetes or whatever the fuck.

They are researching that. That also has one week left. So we're gonna finish that, and hopefully, finish this game today. And I'm gonna go ahead and flip the next card. Uh, it is seven of autumn. Travis, it's your turn.

Travis: Seven of autumn. "A project just isn't working out as expected. Radically change the nature of this product. Doesn't modify the project die. When it resolves, you'll be responsible for telling the community how it went." Or, "Something goes afoul, and supplies are ruined. Add a new scarcity." Huh.

Griffin: I have just outlined the three projects that you could, uh, chop and screw. Or, you could go with the second option there.

Travis: Okay. The uh, bathysphere project, right? Is that meant to study those, uh, spirochetes? Those little—

Clint: Phytoplankton.

Travis: Phytoplankton?

Griffin: Phytoplankton.

Clint: Uh-huh. Yep.

Travis: That's what the project is, right? Studying the phytoplankton?

Griffin: Uh-huh.

Travis: Okay, great. Yeah. Um, that, uh, is just not going... they don't have the technology. They aren't able to like, understand this microscopic level. They understand how it works, but they can't scientifically seem to utilize, uh, what the spirochete's ability is.

Griffin: Phytoplankton. I'm so sorry. I said spirochetes as like, a joke, but now I feel like I've poisoned the well a little bit.

Travis: You have. You've ruined it.

Griffin: It is phyto—it's phytoplankton.

Travis: They can't seem to scientifically capitalize on the phytoplankton. And so, the church of Hominine steps in, and offers to magically manipulate it.

Griffin: Oh! Okay. So they're saying, we don't know why these weird bugs make this good air, but we sure do like breathing it.

Travis: Yep.

Griffin: And Hominine's like—the church is like, "Don't worry, we'll..." They roll up their sleeves. "We'll scare these little bugs into farting out all that good air that we loove to breathe down there."

Travis: Indeed.

Griffin: Okay. Uh, I dig it. Let's do an—and in fact, that's great, Trav. Why don't you just go ahead and tell me what happens with that project? 'Cause now, that countdown clock is done.

Travis: Um, so, they are able to cast Enlarge. They do Enlarge on the phytoplankton.

Griffin: Whoa!

Travis: And it multiplies their ability to filter air, like, tenfold. Right? So, uh...

Griffin: Big plankt—*biiig* plankton!

Travis: It creates, uh—yeah. At this point, like, um, phytoplankton the size of like, dolphins, right? And sharks.

Griffin: Fuck off! That's so scary!

Justin: Yeah, it's very scary.

Griffin: That's a pretty scary little image!

Justin: It's Wes Craven's new nightmare. It's the newest nightmare.

Travis: And so, they are able to basically create this filter system using these large phytoplankton, and uh, containers of seawater, to create an oxygen filtration system. Magical filtration system.

Griffin: Okay. That's sick. Yeah, that's fully radical and totally upsetting and tremendous. Uh, cool. So, I mean, does this solve the breathable air problem, then, for the community?

Travis: If we can get air down there to start off with, this filtration system will be able to keep it fresh and usable. Yes.

Griffin: Okay, cool. Just a reminder, in the last episode, we basically—our settlement here received an ark from the ark fleet, and that is—y'know, they have solved—those are submersible vehicles. They have solved for, y'know, some degree, air, there. But these big plankton now are gonna sort of keep the engine running.

Uh, the other project that finishes this week is the building of the Biggest Baby. Which pushes off from the Cradle with, uh... y'know, it's been, god, what, it took ten weeks to make this thing? And so, I believe there was a lot of deliberation about who was going to be in charge of, y'know, actually sailing it. And so, I think an all-star team of boat masters, uh, was put together to drive this thing.

But, what they discover is that... it has a will of its own.

Travis: What?

Griffin: This ship, because it was made out of Kodite entirely, y'know, bow to stern, uh... there is some trace of will that still exists within the ship. And it's not like a talking—a talking ship!? It is nothing like that. But it is, uh—the steering sort of instruments that they built into this thing do not work for just everybody. There are only, I think, maybe a petty officer on the ship, like, one ended up being the one who could steer this thing. Because it was able—he was able to have like, a conversation with it.

So, there's only a few people in the community who can actually pilot this enormous battleship, because they are able to somehow interface with the will that is built into the metal of this thing. Uh, and so that kind of shakes up the naval defense program that they'd spent the last ten weeks creating.

But now, the community has this enormous battleship. The blink sharks are already gone, but knowing that Hominine has naval forces out in the water, this is a big relief. Uh, and... yep, that's it. Travis, take an action.

Travis: Uh, I am going to make a discovery.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: So, as we have been building down here under the water, we've sunk the Crystal Ascension, we have brought down this ark from—that was given to us by the Archipelago people, um...

Griffin: I figured out, by the way – we're just gonna call them the Arch Fleet, and arch—it works both ways there. Like Archipelago, ark like a Bible.

Travis: As we've been placing more and more of these, uh, like, manmade, artificial material structures in there... I mean, even though, granted, the ark is made from natural things and the Crystal Ascendance... but y'know what I mean. As we have been, uh...

Griffin: Right.

Travis: Uh, it has attracted starfish. It has attracted these like, magically-infused bioluminescent starfish to the area, that don't seem to be doing—they're not hurting anything. They're not like, dangerous in any way. But they do give off, like, different levels of light, and different like, shades of light.

And it provides some lighting down there, but it could be fairly eerie in the dark by yourself.

Griffin: Okay, why don't you draw some beautiful stars, here? Or I also learned how to drag in clip art. You can do that.

Travis: I don't want you to drag in clip art of the stars, Griffin. That's a little weird.

Griffin: You're right, that's cheating. Okay, uh—

Travis: Oh! And the bioluminescence, um, it seems that it forms in the face—like, face shapes, as a defense. So that something swimming to attack them would see what looks like a large face on top of it and veer away. And that's part of the reason that it is quite eerie to see floating around in the dark, 'cause it can look like just a spectral face staring up at you.

Griffin: Creepy! I hate it.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Uh, Dad. Next card. The four of autumn.

Clint: The four of autumn.

Griffin: Oh, how come Dad always gets the 'someone dies' ones?

Clint: The death ones. I'm a...

Justin: A harbinger.

Clint: I'm like the Flying Dutchman. "The strongest among you dies. What—"

Justin: Oh—oh! Guys!

Griffin: Oh, no, Justin! Oh no!

Justin: [strangled] Guys, no!

Clint: "What caused the death?" Or, "The weakest—"

Justin: [weakly] Too many muscles...

Clint: "The weakest among you dies. Who's to blame for their—"

Justin: Griffin!! Griffin, what's wrong?! Answer me!

Griffin: [bursts into laughter]

Travis: Oh no! Griffin IBS'd himself to death!

Justin: Griffin—[laughing] Griffin! Your precious bones!

Clint: [laughing]

Griffin: Very good. Yeah, I like it.

Clint: Well, he did it to himself. All those hot sauces he consumed when he was a child.

Griffin: If only I'd known.

Clint: Oh, lozzy.

Justin: Permanent, lasting damage.

Clint: The strongest among you dies. What caused the death? Okay.

Travis: Oh, I see. Oh, now, what Griffin has done here is...

Justin: Is cheated. Griffin's a cheater.

Travis: He's made the plankton into Plankton from SpongeBob. [laughing]
And I didn't think our little map could get worse?

Justin: Yeah, it's worse.

Griffin: It looks dope now.

Justin: This—actually, just one piece of competent art makes it worse.

Griffin: [laughing]

Travis: Suddenly, now, we're decorating our skateboard in 1998.

Justin: And what is that again, Trav?

Travis: These are starfish.

Justin: Can you blow it down into like, half a sentence? What is plankton there for?

Griffin: Y'know, big plankton.

Travis: Yeah, they enlarged the phytoplankton to create a—

Justin: To do what?

Travis: Create a magical oxygen filtration system.

Griffin: To make good air.

Justin: Thank you.

Griffin: Yeah. Dad, who dies?

Clint: Um, the uh... the weakest among you dies. And that's gonna be Fineas Caul.

Travis: [gasps]

Griffin: Oh shit!

Clint: He's in a coma. So, I mean, I think that probably...

Griffin: He just doesn't come out of it?

Clint: Relegates himself to, uh, to death. Yeah.

Travis: Sorry about all your Fineas Caul merch, Justin.

Griffin: Wow! I'm surpri—no, I mean—

Justin: I—if there's one thing I know about Fineas Caul, it's you don't count that guy out.

Clint: You don't ever count out Fineas Caul.

Griffin: Except now that Fineas Caul, it sounds like, has died.

Travis: Yeah, 'cause we haven't introduced spirits into this game at all, Griffin.

Griffin: Yeah, that's fair. Uh, how does the community react to this?

Justin: Happy.

Clint: Well, his immediate—well, no, the marketing people are bummed. The branding people are bummed.

Griffin: Right.

Clint: But I think that the ecological—by the way, I've decided to call them the Deep Thinkers.

Griffin: Deep Think? Deep—well, that's getting very close to Deep Deep Thought. Isn't that an AI?

Justin: Exactly.

Travis: Deep Blue. Isn't that what you're talking about?

Griffin: Oh shit. Okay.

Justin: Deep Thinkers is what it's called. Everybody stop kibitzing my dad.

Griffin: Deep Thinkers. Gotcha.

Clint: Thank you, Justin. I appreciate it. Uh, yeah. The Deep Thinkers have decided, they are going to see if there's any way possible to use the soul of Fineas Caul, and put it into one of the...

Griffin: Oh!

Clint: Put it into one of the coral robots.

Griffin: Okay. Uh, sick. I mean, this card doesn't—is not a prompt for a project or anything like that.

Clint: Well, I get to make a project, don't I?

Griffin: Yeah, I guess so, at the end of your turn. Uh, we can—

Clint: Well, I'll just hold onto that.

Griffin: Yeah, hold onto that, because—

Travis: I wonder what Dad's gonna do with his turn.

Griffin: [laughs] Uh, Justin's project finishes with the dive suits. Uh, how does that go, Justin? This was a sort of... uh, this was a project to sort of bolster underwater construction, because most folks just can't really go down there.

Justin: Yeah, and also, too, um... to give us the ability to basically do, like, be able to journey undersea without the use of a bathysphere. Like, on an individual level.

Griffin: Or a ship. Yeah.

Justin: I'm not thinking of these as like, a distance thing. I'm thinking more like, space suit type deal.

Griffin: Yeah, absolutely.

Justin: Where you're like, doing a... outside the vehicle.

Griffin: So what not Big Daddy looking thing does this look like?

Justin: They're actually—it's actually really cool. They look like, um—the suit itself looks like, uh, sort of a collar that blows—makes sort of artificial gills. So it blows like a stream of air up around you, almost like, shielding the face. But there's like a curtain of bubbles that you can inhale from. And the—but there's also these like, lines. And they're like, really hard, and sort of like an exoskeleton that protects you from the deep pressures of the sea.

Griffin: Ooh! Like a vec—like vector art style.

Justin: Exactly, exactly.

Griffin: That's radical.

Justin: Hard lines that are basically making a sort of, um, exoskeleton, I guess? But like, pretty literally, where it's just like, these rails that protect your body from contraction underneath the sea.

Griffin: This is—I mean, this represents—

Justin: Hard, angular lines. I'm thinking like Rez, sort of. That sort of vibe for the suits.

Griffin: Yeah, absolutely. Um, I mean, this sounds like a sort of broader technological, uh, thing. I love the idea of like, hard lines being a, y'know... not a material, but like, how would you describe—like, a force that you can use to do something like this.

Justin: Yeah, and I think it's specifically... I like the idea, aesthetically, of it being a way to signify, like, we're protecting some sort of flesh with these hard angles. Rather than something that, necessarily, will like, contour to the human body. That is a sort of signifier that like, fleshiness is being protected.

Griffin: Sure. I'm fully, fully fuckin' into that. Is this a new technology? Because I have to—is this something that one of the kingdoms brought to the table, or is this something that, y'know—

Justin: No, it's a collaboration with the fleet that was there leant their technology. And y'know, there's a little... I don't know if there's magic in it or not. Yeah, there's probably magic in it. It seems crazy to not have magic.

Griffin: Yeah. [laughs] Uh, cool! That's awesome. Okay. Uh, Dad. Now you can—

Justin: Wait.

Griffin: Wait?

Justin: They call them, uh, Vapor Suits.

Griffin: Vapor Suits. Cool. Into it.

Travis: So if you were gonna go into the water, you'd say like, "I'm gonna go vape," right?

Justin: No, "I need a vape."

Griffin: Right.

Travis: I need a vape. Okay.

Griffin: Oh no, my vape rig—

Clint: And there's all kinds of different scents and aromas.

Justin: I need a rig.

Griffin: Yeah, my vape rig has busted, and now I have the bends super bad.

Justin: There's actually different tanks you can outfit them with.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Justin: Where the supply of tanks... the tank has actually been, uh, magically imbued.

Travis: Okay.

Justin: So you can take like, a different tank out with you...

Griffin: [laughing]

Justin: ... that can like, enhance your strength or your defense, or...

Griffin: Sure, sure.

Travis: Oh, it's like a buff!

Clint: Nice.

Justin: It's like a buff vape.

Griffin: Now, does it have to be a collar, Justin, or can it be a sort of tubular object that is really big, and you can hold it with two hands? And ride it, almost like a broomstick or something like that?

Justin: No no no, it's nothing like what you've just said.

Clint: [laughing]

Justin: [laughing] No, it's more like kind of—

Griffin: Can we make it that everybody else has this dope, vector art, hard line shit, except for Ol' Joshy, who has a broomstick vape rig that he flies around? [laughing]

Clint: [laughing]

Griffin: Okay, that's great. Okay, Dad.

Clint: Yeah, I'm gonna start a project.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: I know this comes as a surprise to you all. But they, um... The Deep Thinkers are going to try to grow another coral robot. Tessellation has proved to be a pretty decent success. Y'know, prototype.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: They're still having some trouble incorporating all the different facets of it, but they're going to try to grow another coral body. A coral robot for Fineas Caul's spirit.

Griffin: Cool. It sounds like—I mean, it sounds like the growing of the coral bodies is not the issue, as much as it is the melding...

Clint: Yeah, that's been the tough part.

Griffin: ... the spirit. Right.

Clint: Yeah. With Tessellation, I mean, that's kind of what they're doing. So they're experimenting with that.

Griffin: Okay. Uhh...

Clint: I'd say four weeks. Do we have four weeks?

Griffin: Let's hope we have that long. We don't know how many weeks we've got.

Clint: Well, true.

Griffin: But... gonna put a four right there. Cool. Uh, next card, Justin.

Justin: Uh, "A project finishes early. Which one? Why?"

Griffin: This is the jack of autumn.

Justin: The jack of autumn. It looks like we only have one project going right now.

Griffin: Yep.

Justin: Correct?

Griffin: [laughs] Yeah, that's right.

Justin: Um... so, that's the uh... how would you sort of describe that, if it was just sort of a picture?

Griffin: The thing that Justin—oh. That's Tessellation, there. Uh, this is the project that Dad just initiated to put Fineas Caul inside of one of these bodies.

Justin: Holy shit. Okay. [laughs] Uh... why does the project finish early? It's late at night, and um, everyone's asleep. And you hear—except for the guards, of course. Natch. And then, uh, someone nearby hears...

"Hello? Hello? Is anyone there? I can't seem to move!"

And the spirit of Fineas Caul has been absorbed into one of these machines, and he is now haunting it. And the—his sheer force of will, his unwillingness to die, uh, has reanimated this project, and uh, finished it early.

Griffin: Okay. So now that Fineas Caul is sort of back in the land of the pseudo-living, uh, we should probably figure out what it was that he saw during his sort of journey to find the Vanguard and get the bathysphere back. 'Cause when he, y'know, resurfaced, he was in the bathysphere with the water, with the plankton in it, and another dead Vanguard, and there

was no—we had like, no idea how he got in there, and how he made his way back, and what he found down there.

So, what did—Dad, I guess. What did Fineas Caul... what does he remember of his journey?

Clint: I tell ya, I think Fineas has always dedicated himself to life. I think he's always been all about sustaining life, and y'know, ecology, and y'know, seas and everything else. And I think whatever happened down there has just left him so traumatized, um... I don't think he really can focus in... I think he can't remember. I think, y'know—maybe he has dreams of flashes of stuff, but he can't remember the things in the morning. But I don't think he knows. I don't think he can remember what happened.

Griffin: Okay. So he is now inside of one of—we need a name for these frames, uh, and... let's do a quick brainstorming session, because we've talked around—we call them coral bodies a lot, uh, when they are like, uhh...

Travis: May I pitch? Husk.

Griffin: A husk? Eh...

Justin: Husk is kind of... it's less cool.

Griffin: What about Proxy? Like uh, a...

Travis: That's a little bit like—oh, what was the Bruce Willis movie?

Griffin: Oh, god. Surrogates?

Travis: Surrogate!

Griffin: Yeah, I don't... I'm not gonna use—that's literally the Bruce Willi—that's *literally* the plot of the Bruce Willis movie.

Travis: I mean, shell, 'cause it's underwater, a shell...

Justin: Yeah, but...

Griffin: Reefer would be sick. Is there reef... I think Reefborn is a Destiny thing. Which is a shame.

Clint: Now, I suggested Reefer in the last episode, and was shouted down...

Travis: I don't remember that.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: I think you called—you said The Coral Reefer Band is what you wanted to call it.

Travis: That is exactly what you said, Dad.

Justin: Yeah. Uh...

Griffin: The Reefturned?

Clint: I like the Reefers.

Justin: I'm looking at different types of shells. How do you guys feel about Strombus?

Griffin: Strombus?

Travis: I feel like I'm never going to be able to say it without giggling.

Griffin: Yeah... I was thinking like, Reefturned, because they've returned, and they are made out of the coral. [trying not to laugh]

Travis: No. 'Cause even as you're saying it, Griffin, listen to your voice, where your voice went.

Griffin: I know...

Justin: There's so many types of coral. Did you guys know that?

Griffin: Alright, we're gonna keep calling them Coralbodies for a little bit. Inspiration will strike us, I'm sure.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: Uh, okay. So, he's inside of one of these now, is what you're saying?

Justin: Barriers.

Griffin: Barriers?

Travis: Like Barrier Reef?

Griffin: That could be something...

Justin: Ehh, it's not quite there. I'll find it.

Griffin: Uh, okay!

Travis: What about just Seaborn?

Justin: We're not gonna be able to move on from it. Griffin, you can keep teasing yourself.

Griffin: Okay, you're right. I know.

Justin: But we're not gonna be able to move on from this.

Clint: How about... senard—

Travis: What? [laughs]

Clint: Wait a minute. The technical name for coral is C-N-I-D-A-R-I-A.

Travis: Kuh-nid—what?

Griffin: No. That's impossible to say out loud.

Travis: What about Brineborn?

Justin: Okay, here's what we should figure out first. Are we coming up with a cool name for these inhabited bodies? Or, are we coming up with like, a name to refer to, collectively, the population?

Travis: Breinarr!

Griffin: Breinarr is not bad. Uh...

Clint: I like Breinarr.

Griffin: Uh, yeah, I mean, they are still Einarr, right? But—

Justin: Breinarr is excellent.

Clint: Yes! The Breinarr!

Griffin: Breinarr it is. Uh, okay. I'm glad we've moved on. So...

Justin: I'm not. I had a great time.

Travis: [laughs] It brought me closer to you, my brothers and Dad.

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: So dead-ass Fineas Caul is now inside—is now a Breinarr, essentially.

Justin: There we go.

Griffin: Okay. It seems like, if Tessellation can help with that, this issue they've been having with putting Einarr inside of Breinarr bodies is now going to be a thing of the past. But let's continue on. We're close to the end of autumn.

Justin: Okay. Uh, so wait, do I do a project?

Travis: Yes you do.

Griffin: Oh, did you not? Oh, I'm sorry.

Justin: No, I just started the Breinarr.

Griffin: You're right, you're right, you're right. Uh, yeah, Juice. Project time, or discover something, or hold a conversation.

Justin: Um... how about a—the Big Baby is done. What about—but is it project-worthy to like... is taking the Big Baby out to sea...

Travis: I'm sorry, the Biggest Baby.

Griffin: Oh, it's out to sea. This map is so fucked that I couldn't drag and click and grab the Big Baby without moving, y'know, everything. But the Big Baby is done and out to sea.

Travis: The Biggest Baby.

Griffin: And is patrolling the waters. Like, Big Baby's good to go.

Travis: The *Biggest* Baby.

Griffin: Biggest Baby.

Justin: What do we do—so, the question—

Travis: Guys? We spent a whole project nailing down the name.

Griffin: You're right. It's the Biggest Baby.

Justin: Is Biggest Baby—is the plan with Biggest Baby, and I know—I feel like we've talked about this. Once we're out where we're going, is the plan with Biggest Baby to sink it and live in it?

Griffin: No, I mean, that's never been the conversation. The conversation is, our city will need to be defended. And right now, Biggest Baby is this like, bonkers thing that is the hardest anyone has ever worked on anything here, made out of god metal. So it is a—it is a absolute beast out there.

And even though it is sort of the sole line of naval defense for the city, it's a fuckin' goooood line. So that's where you're at, now.

Justin: Do we have a plan—I mean, here's a—like, Biggest Baby is gonna get us out there. Where are we living when we get there?

Griffin: Right now, we have the ark, which is probably not enough for everybody in this settlement to live in. But it is sort of the, uh, y'know... a pretty good starting point.

Justin: Okay. I have an idea for you guys.

Griffin: `Kay.

Justin: I actually... but it's a big enough thing that I want to know how you feel about it.

Griffin: Then we should hold a conversation.

Justin: Okay. I submit that, when we, uh... we need to develop a technology that basically lets us adapt bathyspheres into dwellings. Single-family dwellings. Basically, mobile homes that will—that will comprise our new settlement.

Travis: That can like, lock into place and lock into port?

Griffin: We're having a conversation! There's rules!

Justin: Uh, I'm imagining that they could lock into place and lock into port.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: Uh, and uh... be able to connect with each other, temporarily, to allow gatherings and stuff like that, and transportation between the two. But basically, bathysphere homes. Mobile homes. Floating homes.

Griffin: [in a weird voice] I am a fancy art man! And I think this will look like grapes, and I find that aesthetically interesting! I'm in! You have my paintbrush! Me, an art man!

Travis: Mm-hmm. Art man. I believe that this will solve a lot of questions about how to move everyone down to the civilization, and how to move belongings down there in a quick and orderly fashion, and allow us to rearrange as necessary. I think that this is an excellent idea.

Clint: I believe that it is a terrific idea. My only concern is, what are we gonna build these bathyspheres out of, since we didn't build the first one to start with? We need to do a little research.

Griffin: And that's something that this community, so far, has been extremely good at.

Travis: Yeah, researching stuff. We're great. Okay!

Griffin: Alright! Uh, nine of—

Clint: Justin, wrap it up?

Griffin: Uh, no, because he started with a... assertion.

Justin: Yeah, I only get to wrap it up if it's a question.

Clint: Right, okay.

Griffin: Uh, okay. Uh, nine of autumn. "The community works constantly, and as a result, a project finishes early." Or... [laughs] "A group goes out to explore the map more thoroughly, and finds something that had been previously overlooked." Oooh boy.

Travis: I mean, we don't have any projects going. We finished—that four is from Fineas Caul.

Griffin: Yeah. Oh, you're right! There are no projects to finish! There are no projects going right now. We need to do something about that. Um... okay.

In the ocean, in Fineas Caul's expeditions, he had sort of taken note of these weird sort of visual phenomena. These just sort of anomalies that he sighted underneath the water, where different sort of weird shit was happening around each one. Like, one, the water would boil just around this anomaly, and you couldn't get too close to any of them, because they seemed to just be these very active spots where arcane energy had condensed into these really, really powerful effects.

Um, and so, he had not really had time to categorize those, or do any kind of further study on, y'know, what each anomaly had been. But, there's a... a kid is playing in the trash hole, 'cause kids are kids, and the trash hole is largely dormant, now.

Travis: And kids love trash, man. That's what I've learned.

Griffin: Yes.

Travis: I'll spend all kinds of money buying my kids the newest Pokemans toys, and all they want is the box it came in!

Griffin: Yeah. Uh, and by digging down in the trash hole, this kid finds one of these anomalies where space folds in on itself. And that is what was powering the trash hole in the first place.

Travis: Oh!

Griffin: Yeah. He—

Travis: It's your classic quantum trash hole.

Griffin: It's your classic quantum trash hole. The kid isn't hurt – but this anomaly has been thoroughly weakened by, uh, I think it was an earthquake that like, tore through here. And so, y'know, folks are able to get close to it and study it, and people are now taking the kind of time to do that. That is what is discovered.

And the clock finishes.

Travis: The world clock.

Griffin: This clock is the last world clock. So there is no more world clock.

Travis: Now it's bedtime.

Griffin: Now it is bedtime for the world. Um, so. After weeks of taking safe harbor in the community, the rest of the Arch Fleet that was away, sort of holding off the Hominine naval forces, has regrouped with the ships in the waters off shore. And those ships, their numbers have dwindled, but the ships that came back are in fairly good shape. And the news that they carry brings relief and concern in equal measure.

Hominine has recalled all of its ships. So the seas are safe for the Arch Fleet to begin their journey. But, Hominine wouldn't pull back their forces like that without a reason. So, whatever they're planning, whatever their exodus entails, it's going to happen, and soon.

But yeah, the Arch Fleet departs. It's, I think, painful for people on both sides of the community. They've been together for such a long time, now. And they have, ultimately, kind of similar goals, right? The Arch Fleet is gonna be in this fleet of large, submersible vehicles, and this settlement is building an underwater city.

But there's sort of this underlying ideological difference that separates the two groups. Where the settlers are hearing this call, and following destiny, and that has sort of fueled their efforts from the moment they arrived on the beach. While the Arch Fleet, composed of folks from the Southern Archipelago, they do not sort of acknowledge a calling like that, and have no direction, save for the one that they will determine on their own.

Clint: So they're just gonna lead like, a nomadic existence?

Griffin: That's it. Yep. Um, so, in the shadow of this growing storm, these two communities have forged these individual paths forward, and this is the day where those paths diverge. And so, they forge this meaningful bond, and make agreements to help one another after the surface world's end. But for right now, the Arch Fleet casts off.

[music begins]

Griffin: And once they do, the settlement grows quieter. The fleet's ships no longer break up the horizon. The majority of actual work that is taking place right now is taking place at sea. And the silence is joined by an encroaching chill in the air.

[music plays]

[ad break 38:20 – 39:50]

Griffin: The fall is over. It is time for the very scary winter deck. Before we get to that, though, I do need to take an action. And I am going to start a project to, um... I think the project has to be this new sort of bathysphere lodging plan. The sort of—to mass produce these things. And I think The Cradle is the place that makes the most sense for it.

The question is, what resources do we still have? Let me open up the setup notes. Let's see. Can't build them out of seaweed flakes. Um...

Justin: Says you!

Griffin: [laughs] No, I mean, I think it's the way that they kind of learned this natural construction method, with the salt glass and the clay. I think that that is what they're able to make these things out of. So they are this thick, extremely strong glass, like, light green, light brown natural glass, sea glass sort of colors.

I say natural. Sea glass is not natural. Do you guys know that? It's just fuckin' glass. It's like, broken bottles and stuff.

Travis: It's just glass that's been worn smooth. Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah. But this is not that.

Travis: Also, just to remind you, Griffin, if you look at the bottom right corner of the land, there's also a giant skull thing.

Griffin: There is a giant skull thing. But we also established that that's a cave, so I don't know how one... how one sort of moves a cave.

Travis: That's fair.

Griffin: Yeah. I think that's what the project is. And I think – here's the thing – these things are easy to make. They know how to make something that looks like the bathysphere, that can, um, have sort of life support. Enough life support to like, use these as escape pods, to launch them with people in it, down into the water to connect.

Travis: I would also, to support how easy it is – you're not just building them with science, right?

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Because at this point, they can be magically propelled, so we don't have to worry about like...

Griffin: This is—yeah. This is all hands on deck. I'm gonna say five weeks.

Travis: Ooh, are you sure?

Clint: And there's no privacy, obviously, in these homes, if they're made out of glass. [laughing]

Griffin: [laughs] Maybe there's magical means for doing some.

Travis: You could paint the inside of them. Are you sure five weeks, Griffin? 'Cause I was thinking like three.

Griffin: Nope. To make enough of these things to everyone...

Travis: Five is so risky!!

Griffin: Five is quite risky. But that's the number I have decided on.

Travis: Oh boy...

Clint: We have yet to have a project go full term. It's always either cancelled, or...

Travis: Oh, but we get into winter, buddy...

Griffin: That's not true. We've had a few. Okay.

Clint: And is there a five up next to that boat, still?

Travis: That's what he just did.

Griffin: Yeah, I'm gonna put The Cradle here, and I'll uh... I'm just gonna move Plankton out of the way, and I'm gonna sort of move the bathysphere up here to designate that we are building a bunch of these boys. A lot of them. A whole lot of them.

Okay! Uh, goodbye autumn deck... hello winter. Here is how winter works. We mentioned this, I believe, in the first episode, and have alluded to it a few times here. But... if anybody draws the king of winter, the game immediately ends. And we resolve what needs resolved, and tie up our loose ends, but...

Justin: And you definitely did pick *five weeks* for the bathhouses?

Travis: Yep.

Griffin: There's 13 cards in this deck.

Clint: Bathhouses. [laughing]

Travis: By the way, bathhouse is great. Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: [clapping and laughing]

Griffin: Okay. I have shuffled the deck. Travis...

Travis: Yep. Flip it.

Griffin: Okay!

Clint: [sigh of relief]

Travis: Okay. Two of winter. "A headstrong community member takes charge of a community's work—" Er... "A project fails, and then a different project finishes early," or, "A headstrong community member tries to take

control of the community. How were they prevented from doing this? Due to the conflict, project dice are not reduced this week.”

Griffin: [bursts into laughter]

Clint: Oh god.

Justin: Son of a...

Griffin: Oh, that’s dope. Um...

Travis: Well, we only have the one project.

Griffin: Yeah. I think, uh, to give you the narrative leeway that you need, I think you can do the first one. It’s just, it will just fail the bathhouse project.

Travis: Well I don’t want that! Okay. Okay. Here’s what it is. Uh, the uh... the not baroness. What’s her name?

Griffin: The Boyar Hermine?

Travis: The Boyar Hermine says, five weeks... we could do this faster if we—with the right leadership. Right? She thinks that this is being mishandled, so the Boyar Hermine attempts to take charge of this project, just by sheer force of will, and is backed by Fineas.

Griffin: Right. Oh, I imagine there are a lot of people who would back her on this.

Travis: Right. Basically saying that, if we were to rush it and take this seriously, we could finish it faster. Um, but the, uh... and this is—I have no idea how this is going to end up... hoo... being. The council, the four leaders from each area, decide that even though there’s definitely risk to taking their time, that doing it right, we only get one shot at this.

Griffin: Oh man.

Travis: So we need to spend our time to do this right instead of rush it. And they refuse her help.

Griffin: To draw a through line here, I think this is—I think people, after this decision, have had fuckin' enough of the council. 'Cause I think, at this point, the council has made a few unpopular decisions.

Travis: Yeah, very much so.

Griffin: At this point. Uh, so... okay! Alright.

Travis: And I think that this, uh, causes so much disgruntled, like... this causes such a funk in the community, as it's kind of split down the line, of basically, the people who want to get the party started right, versus the people who want to get the party started quickly.

Griffin: Right.

Travis: Uh, that the tension basically draws work to a standstill, as both sides are trying to wrest control from each other.

Griffin: Woof. Okay! Uh, so, that is the only clock on the board, and it's not gonna go down. So Travis, take your action.

Travis: Uh, I am going to start an action. Uh, a project.

Griffin: Yes. Need to delete the ark from...

Travis: The existing bathysphere, Tessellation, Fineas Caul, the suits... we are going to start moving the resources we've built to the ark.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: And the children first.

Griffin: Oh, okay!

Travis: So we're gonna take the filler fish down, we're taking the seaweed processing down, we're taking the children, and I'm going to say the children's horseshoe crab pets.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: We're moving the documents that the curator—all of that stuff. Basically everything that, while we're building these things, there's stuff we can go ahead and start moving down there.

Griffin: Okay, absolutely.

Travis: The plankton filtration systems, everything. Right? We're moving that down to the ark and preparing it for installation.

Griffin: Alright. How long is this taking?

Travis: Uh, I'm going to say... because... okay. You can disagree with me. But I think because we have built all of these different ways to access the underwater, I'm gonna say one week to transport this stuff down and load it up.

Griffin: [sighs] Uh, is this—is that—are they using Biggest Baby to move things down?

Travis: Yes.

Griffin: Is that—okay. I mean...

Travis: Basically, yeah, they're loading it on, and then like, Tessellation and the suits, basically they drop everything down, load it in...

Griffin: I mean, you're talking about—how long does it take to load up a bunch of shit onto an enormous ship, and I think one week is a fine answer for that.

Travis: Yeah, 'cause they're using the bathyspheres to move the children, right? So they're safe.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: And I'm going to say, the teachers from the school are going, too, to like, oversee the children, right?

Griffin: Okay. Alright.

Travis: So we're keeping the workers up here, and moving all of our resources down.

Griffin: Okay. That's, uh... that's a good plan. Let's see if that one can even get done. Flipping it now. [laughs] Pretty close, there! Clint, ace of winter.

Clint: Alright, let's see. Ace of winter. "Now is the time to conserve energy and resources. A project fails, but gain an abundance." "Now is the time for hurried labor and final efforts."

Travis: Oh!

Clint: "A project finishes early."

Travis: Yes yes yes!

Griffin: But...

Clint: "But gain a scarcity."

Travis: Mmm.

Griffin: I'm going to say. Yeah, we only have two projects; the bathysphere, and the moving project. Uh, but at this point, I want us to keep something in mind – once things go under, like, I'm pretty certain that

the underwater city is going to inherit whatever abundances and scarcities sort of exist now. So this is, y'know, even though we're nearing the end of this game, this is not an empty decision.

Clint: So does the scarcity have to be something that's already on the abundance list?

Griffin: No.

Clint: And what are we making the bathyspheres out of?

Griffin: Uh, salt glass and clay. Kind of the things that—the same stuff that the ark is made out of. The people of the Southern Archipelago Arch Fleet kind of just showed you how to use that.

Clint: And what is Grotto?

Griffin: Drugs.

Travis: Delicious, delicious drugs.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: Yeah. But again, you don't have to move an abundance over into the scarcity pile.

Clint: Well, the only logical move would be to um... to finish the bathhouses. I think the bathhouses... I mean, just in case.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: So I would say the bathhouses finish early. And one of those two abundances; obviously, we've used the materials to make the bathhouses. Wouldn't you say that the glass or the clay would now become a scarcity?

Griffin: Well, I mean, the thing about the ark is that it was made out of salt from the water, and clay from the sand. So I don't think that a resource is going to become the scarcity here, because the resources are so hugely abundant.

Travis: Mmm.

Clint: Okay. And can the scarcity be something like an emotional...

Griffin: It can be whatever you want. Yeah. I mean, we have culture and shelter and unity. We need to update this list quite a bit, but yeah.

Clint: Well, I would say that there's a... if we finish the bathhouses early, I think that there will be a scarcity of fear. Because...

Griffin: Okay... [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: I guess my problem is that I care too much!

Justin: [laughing]

Clint: Well, I mean, people have been wondering, where are we gonna live? Am I gonna be able to keep my family together?

Justin: Can I—would you mind—Dad, would you mind if I... I feel like scarcity of fear is kind of cheating.

Clint: Okay.

Justin: Right? 'Cause it's like... that's like saying scarcity of hunger. Like, well, okay. Kind of cheating. What would you think about this? I was thinking about it with the bathhouses. Uh, because of the way we've decided to do this project, with the housing, um... maybe a scarcity of community. Because these are isolated housing. You can't just like, walk over to your neighbor's house. It's a big thing.

Clint: It's almost like you're quarantined.

Justin: Ohh, yeah.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: And it works, too, because in the previous card, it was the council saying, "No, we need to work on this together," and everybody got kind of frustrated with the council. And the council kind of represented the four heads of the four communities, working together.

Griffin: Okay! I feel like it's clicked, now. The community that there is a scarcity of is the community that has lived on this beach, and sort of been getting everything done, and now, like...

Travis: And it was the fear to bring it back. To Dad's thing, the fear was the thing that connected everybody. We established that in like, week two. Right?

Griffin: Right.

Travis: Everybody had this shared fear, and that's why they were driven to work together. And by having this project complete, it does alleviate that, where they're no longer driven to depend on each other as much.

Griffin: Okay. Uh, yeah. I think that's good. I mean, unity... unity is still in the scarcity pile, but I think that we probably should've removed that a long time ago. And I think the thing that is scarce now is just...

Clint: A sense of community.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: I'll go along with that.

Griffin: That's awesome. That's cool.

Justin: Cool.

Griffin: Okay. Uh, so, the bathysphere project finishes, then! And it's... I mean, miraculously, this beach, this like, horrid map of a apocalypse-evading construction site that we've put together here, is kind of perfect. The Cradle was just mass producing these bathyspheres and floating them down the river, and just lining them up on the beach. And so, now, like, uh... like wave breakers, they are positioned on the beach, ready to launch at a moment's notice. And there are—I mean, I would say... I mean, a hundred of them, just to—

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: And each one being kind of like a household, essentially. Each one being roughly, um... y'know, a small family could live kind of comfortably within a bathysphere.

Travis: Like a bunker.

Griffin: Right. Uh, okay. That project finishes, and so does the... uh, relocation project. Travis? What—how does that go?

Travis: Um, yeah. So, they move their resources down to this main ark, kind of a central ark, if you will. And just in the settling in and moving those things, I think it begins to make sense to the leaders of the school that, as a centralized hub, they will continue to do lessons there.

Griffin: Sure.

Travis: So that centralized hub also becomes, like, partially used for the school. Because none of these bathyspheres are going to be big enough to hold all the students at once, so this is um...

Griffin: Right, of course.

Travis: Same with like, y'know, meetings and...

Griffin: This is the quad. This is like—this is the community center, is the ark right now.

Travis: Yeah yeah yeah. This is the town center, is this main ark here.

Griffin: Uh, right now, I have the ark. I don't think I mentioned this in the last episode. The ark is kind of sitting at the top of the Crystal Ascension, in this ravine. 'Cause I was thinking of like a diving bell, where, y'know, it could keep the air in as it circulates with these big-ass plankton. And then, any sort of expansion that this, y'know, civilization is gonna do in the future would be way easier to do downward than it would be to build upward. If that makes any sense.

Uh, I could be talking completely garbage nonsense there, but um... okay! So, do we want to take a minute to kind of—I mean, let's move big plankton.

Travis: They call me big plaaankton!

Griffin: I'm gonna kind of just put them near the ark. [laughs] Uh, the... I mean, what else? What else is going?

Travis: Uh, the school and the kids. And the horseshoe crabs.

Griffin: I've been trying to grab the school. I can't grab the school without grabbing the fucking river, too. Alright. We're just not going to be able to do that. We'll have to draw shit in later.

Travis: Uh, the filler fish.

Griffin: The curator, and all his great works are down there... the filler fish... where is that? Oh, these red tables?

Travis: Those are the red squiggles, clearly.

Griffin: Yeah. We lost one filler fish, but that's okay.

Travis: Uh, I think we can go ahead and put the Tessellation down underwater.

Griffin: Hey, here's something we haven't really talked about. Can the, uh... uh...

Justin: Not the Tessellation. The Breinarr.

Griffin: The Breinarr. Uh...

Travis: Well, the Tessellation is that specific Breinarr, right?

Griffin: Right, yeah. Their name is Tessellation. Is... can they move around freely underwater?

Travis: Yeah.

Clint: Oh yeah.

Griffin: The Breinarr? Okay. Cool. I mean, I assumed so much. Uh...

Travis: I think what we said early on, if I remember correctly, Dad, what you said was that they moved better underwater. And if they spent too long outside of the water, they would dry out.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: Yeah.

Griffin: Uh, schools, Travis... I think that, y'know, everybody agreed, the council agreed, yes, school is important, so we are going to make sure that school makes it to the ark early. And I think Ol' Joshy probably shows up on the day that it's time to leave, and he's like, "Oh, I thought you said schools. 'Cause... I run a very respected educational facility."

Travis: Oh. Indeed, yeah. Yep yep yep. And I'm also going to say, uh, The Benevolence. The Church of Benevolence. Or the parish of Benevolence, rather.

Griffin: Yeah, absolutely. To what extent it... y'know, exists there. Okay. Uh, oh, the stage coach. I mean, that is one of the cultural works. I gotta delete this river. We'll redraw another river, but it's really harshing my mellow.

Travis: Well, I just made a discovery, Griffin. The river dried out.

Griffin: Oh no!

Travis: Yeah, it was a big discovery. So big, I didn't even need my turn to do it.

Griffin: Crazy.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Okay. Um, god, uh... fucking, whose turn is it even? Dad's? I think Dad's turn, still?

Travis: Well, Griffin, did you start a project? Oh, Dad. Yeah, Dad needs to start a project. That's whose turn it was.

Justin: Or hold a discussion, or what's the other thing?

Travis: Make a discovery.

Griffin: Uh, yeah.

Justin: Make a discovery.

Clint: During the relocation, Fineas Caul, in his new coral body... it was really, really difficult. It was a terrific strain on him. And he has come to the conclusion that he really needs, uh... he can't just run one of these forms by himself. So, he's going to infuse additional Einarr souls, giving more home to Einarr souls.

Griffin: Whoa.

Clint: Uh, in his form. It's too difficult for him to manage. It's causing him to... there was an incident in place in one of those bathyspheres where he almost lost it, and it could've been disaster. And so, Fineas has decided he is going to infuse, um, more Einarr into his...

Griffin: Okay!

Clint: ... Breinarr body.

Travis: Just so I'm clear on these Breinarr bodies, right? They *can* be run by one, but it's incredibly difficult, right? Easier with multiple?

Griffin: Um, I mean—

Clint: Well, and Fineas is an exemplary... I mean, obviously, you're running on mental, y'know, power, for the most part. But to coordinate this, it's extremely difficult for one person, one soul, to run the whole thing.

Griffin: Yeah, I think that this project establishes the rule, Trav, that it is so hard to be piloted by one thing. And so, that is why the Einarr—that's why Tessellation became this new persona with, y'know, the power of six Einarr spirits. Okay, cool. How long?

Clint: I think only a week. I think he only needs a week.

Griffin: Yeah, I think so too.

Clint: To do that. Because they've established the ground rules, they know how to do it, the protocols are all in place.

Griffin: I'm gonna copy and paste Tessellation here, and I'm just gonna stick Fineas Caul's logo on his head.

Travis: That'll teach him.

Griffin: And I'm gonna put a one next to that.

Travis: Oh, and I don't want to forget to move the horseshoe crab dogs down there.

Griffin: Yeah. Well, Trav, why don't you work on that while we keep...

Travis: I don't know how to move them. I don't know how to move things.

Griffin: Oh, okay. Uh, okay, next card. Cross your fingers.

Clint: Please...

Griffin: Oh, okay! Juice, three of winter.

Justin: Uh, let's see here. Let me enhance. "Someone comes up with an ingenious solution to a big problem, and as a result, a project finishes early. What was their idea?" Are we done with projects?

Griffin: We have one right now, and it's the one week one to get Fineas Caul infused with other Einarr.

Justin: Or, "Someone comes up with a plan to ensure safety and comfort during the coldest months. Start a project related to this."

Griffin: Just so, uh, everyone is also aware... there is some terminology that The Quiet Year uses that we don't necessarily, and have not been following to the letter. Sort of metaphorically, the coldest months. I guess it is pretty cold under the water, but you don't have to plan for—

Travis: You said there was a chill!

Griffin: Yeah, I guess that's true. I mean, there's a chill on the land. But y'know...

Travis: It's like Griffin the player is arguing with—

Justin: How about, instead of coldest months, uh... when your ass is deep, deep underwater.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: [laughs] That's fine. Okay. Um, yeah, those are your two options.

Justin: Well, uh, I have an announcement to make. I am repurposing uncle Joshy's blink shark fighting academy, uh, into a new business that's gonna turn your bathhouse into a bath home. That's right – I'm offering customizations on bathhouses.

Clint: [laughing]

Justin: Make sure you have the prettiest one underneath the sea. Uhh, and uh, the grass is always greener when it's back on land. But you can have fake AstroTurf covering your bathysphere. Turn your bathhouse into a bath home with Uncle Joshy's custom bath homes.

So what this is is a business that's gonna let, uh—where Uncle Joshy, before you set into the sea – and this is a limited time offer, because we actually don't fuckin' know where everything's gonna end. [laughing] But it is a limited time offer. Uncle Joshy is gonna repurpose his expertise into a bathhouse personalization and customization.

Griffin: Okay. How long?

Justin: One week. It's basically the same facility.

Griffin: [laughing] Yeah.

Justin: I know someone *dunked it into the ocean*, but that was against... [laughs] I don't think he needs—I think that was probably more the metaphorical building than a school we pushed into the sea.

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: So uh, he's gonna repurpose—there it is. It's back on land now. So he's gonna be repurposing that into a bath home customization and show room.

Travis: Ooh!

Clint: [laughing]

Justin: Yeah, he's got some of the latest...

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: I love that!

Justin: Yeah, he's got some lovely designs.

Griffin: What I love about that is, he says, "Welcome to Uncle Joshy's bath home refurbishments customization warehouse, and also, it's a going out of business sale. Because the apocalypse is upon us."

Justin: [laughing] Literally.

Travis: Just opened, and soon closed!

Clint: And right now, all the powers that be at HGTV are saying, "Why didn't we think of that?!"

Griffin: Yeah, it's so good. Okay, cool. Uh, so, the project to—for Fineas to sort of undergo, y'know, ego death voluntarily concludes. Uh, why don't you

paint a picture of like, what that is like? I don't want to, uh... y'know, it's your thing. Maybe it's not as dire and dark as that, but uh, what's it like?

Clint: I think, um... he has taken five other souls into the operation of this... into this being. And in keeping with the whole philosophy that these were to provide new homes to these disembodied spirits, and it's not a punishment, it's to free them up... um, Fineas and—has decided that he's gonna timeshare with the other souls. He calls it—uh, he renames himself Ampersand. Ampersand Five.

Justin: Nice.

Clint: He's now Ampersand Five, because it's him and the other five souls.

Travis: Yes.

Clint: And they are going to have to work out a way to coordinate and work together...

Travis: With his best friend, Interrobang Jones.

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, okay, so—

Travis: And who's that? It's Bracket Steve!

Griffin: So, we established that Tessellation is like a single personality that is—had been born from these six souls fusing. This sounds more like he is maybe not able to fuse with the Einarr like that, because he's not like... that ain't... he didn't get sent the same way. He died, and was—his ghost was brought into this body, so he can't...

Clint: And I don't think we ever said that Fineas was Einarr.

Travis: Nope.

Griffin: No, I don't think so either. That's what I'm saying.

Clint: So maybe that has been the difference, then.

Griffin: Yeah. This is something else, right? The other shit is, hey, the Einarr got spirited away without their consent, and now they have these new bodies to come back to. This was, this dude died, and we put him in this new body, but he's not strong enough to do it, so he tried to blend with—he tried to fuse the same way that Tessellation did, but it didn't necessarily go so well. Uh, okay.

Travis: He tried to drift, is the problem, and...

Griffin: Ampersand Five. Okay. Rad. Uh, what is—I mean, what's the takeaway from this? Is it... what I want to be careful about is like, to not, uh... unless we're gonna be very thoughtful about it, talk about, uh, dissociative personality... I don't know the—

Clint: No, I think this is a melding. I think this is going to be—

Travis: Seems like roommates to me, but...

Griffin: It seems more like room—yeah, it seems... yeah.

Clint: I think that's what they have the work out. I definitely do not—no, what you said, I don't want to do that.

Travis: These are distinct individuals, right? And not like, one person sharing six personalities. Right? Like...

Clint: Right. They've got to form a gestalt. They've gotta take qualities from all these different—

Justin: Like Firestorm.

Travis: Yes.

Griffin: Okay. I got you.

Clint: That's good! I hadn't even thought of that.

Griffin: Right. Do the—the five Einarr have fused, though, right? So essentially, we're talking about two things in here. One is Fineas Caul, and the other is these five Einarr that have fused into one. Right?

Clint: Well, I don't know. I think that—to me, that was part of the quest. Part of the whole thing.

Travis: Yeah, I don't think that's something that needs to be figured out right now, right?

Griffin: Okay, fine, yeah. That's right.

Travis: 'Cause this is such a new thing.

Griffin: So he tried fusing, and it wasn't right, but there are more spirits there now, and that's his thing to figure out. Cool. Uh, okay!

Travis: Oh, and it's still Justin's turn.

Griffin: Uh, yes. Justin.

Justin: Um... I'd like to have a discussion.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Griffin: 'Kay.

Justin: Uh, I just wanted to say to everyone that, uh, I think it's gonna be extremely difficult to tell our bathhouses apart from one another once we're

underneath the sea. Uh, and I hope that some local entrepreneur can cook up some way to solve this problem for us.

Griffin: If this is our last action—

Clint: Well spoken!

Griffin: If this is our last action before the fuckin' meteor hits, that would be beautiful and poetic.

Clint: Yeah. I think you're on the right track.

Justin: Okay, let me make a discovery.

Griffin: No no no, I love this!

Justin: No no no, I'm changing it! I'll change it!

Travis: Justin, if you discover that a local entrepreneur has started a business—

Justin: No, I'm changing it. I'm changing it.

Travis: I'm burning you alive. Okay.

Clint: You do you.

Justin: I'm changing it! [laughing] Be quiet. Everybody, I'm making a discovery.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: Uh, hi, everybody, I'd like to make an announcement. I have discovered loads of overstock bathysphere customization materials.

Travis: Ah, Jesus...

Griffin: You fuckin'...

Justin: These must go.

Travis: God bless.

Justin: I am losing my shirt on these just on the storage. Folks, you could have them at cost. Just come on down to Uncle Joshy's Bathhouse Customization Depot, and uh, we're gonna get you fitted right up.

Travis: Oh my god.

Justin: That is the discovery that I made, and uh, it has huge ramifications for my bottom line, and your bottom dwelling.

Travis: Oh, that's good, though! Okay.

Justin: Come on down.

Griffin: That's great.

Travis: You redeemed it with that last line for me.

Griffin: Okay. Uh, next card...

Travis: Let's see...

Griffin: Ten of winter. Still going. "In preparation for the coming year, the community begins a huge undertaking. Start a project that will take at least five weeks to complete." Okay!

Clint: Oh my god!

Griffin: Yeah, cool. Great.

Travis: How many weeks do we have left, Dad? You're doing the math.

Griffin: Uh, don't count the cards.

Travis: This is our fourth winter card.

Clint: You have like five left.

Griffin: Exactly five weeks left. Okay. Uh... okay, a huge undertaking. The uh...

Clint: You actually have eight cards left.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: Okay, I got it. The sailing crew, the like, naval officers who were ousted, right? Because they did not have this sympathetic link with the Kodite ship, with the Biggest Baby? They are... y'know, kind of sore about that. Kind of miffed about that.

And so, they begin decrying the Biggest Baby, saying that it's not enough, it's not gonna defend the city. There needs to be more. And so, they think back to that very first week, when the community just walked out onto the beach and found this cave that nobody could seem to go inside. And then, we later learned was the skull of this dead god, Koda.

They want to haul that entire skull down to the city to use whatever warding powers it possesses to keep things away from the underwater city.

Travis: Ooh! Yes, please. Yes. Yes.

Griffin: And that is, uh... that is a big project. I think it is also contentious, because people are like, "We are trying to move the *kids* down into the water right now." But these disgruntled naval officers are like, "No, this is more important."

Travis: I mean, not only that, but you got both Einarr and Hominine have a certain amount of respect for these gods.

Griffin: Yeah, for sure. Uh, okay. Uh, that's it. Clock counts down, fuckin'... go ahead, Justin. What happens?

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: Uh, in preparation—wait, what?

Griffin: Uncle Joshy's school—Uncle Joshy's Psychic Shark Fighting School and Interior Design Firm has completed the project to...

Justin: Oh, yeah yeah yeah! Uh, the sign above—uh, above it, that said...

Griffin: Mission accomplished?

Justin: Mission accomplished. It has that scribbled out, and now it says, "Huge deals!" So it just says HD. Huge deals.

Griffin: What was the outcome of this pro—I feel like—is that—

Justin: The outcome of this project is that... when we encounter bathyspheres in our game later that we play, they won't need to be one size fits all, generic, like, just gunmetal spheres. They're gonna have personality and flair.

Travis: Yeah yeah yeah, and comfort.

Justin: And comfort!

Griffin: I got you. I love it. Okay. Uh, I'm going—

Clint: And a higher resale.

Justin: Yeah, a higher resale value. Thank you.

Travis: Especially—

Clint: S-A-I-L.

Travis: Especially, uh, connected with all the work we did preserving culture. I think you will also have like, Einarr specific, and Delmer specific, and Hominine specific looks.

Justin: Yeah! Make it feel like home!

Travis: Right right right right right.

Justin: Y'know what? This is the slogan. 'Cause these people came from their lands to the settlement, and now they're going underwater. "It's your home away from home away from home."

Travis: There it is. Yes yes yes yes yes.

Griffin: [laughing] Uh, that's great. Um... okay. Hm. I'm gonna start a project.

Travis: And also, Griffin, you can reduce the skull one, right? Because...

Griffin: No, you do not reduce the clock on the same turn that you got a card prompt.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: I'm gonna start a project, and the project is... Boyar Hermine is going to restructure the entire government. I think that the council has been... I think the city is split up, effectively, right now, right? There's the people in the ark that have already been evacuated, and then there's the people on the beach still like, doing the work there. And I think with the divide here, she sees an opportunity to finally say, "This era of having four representatives from our four kingdoms is now done, 'cause we are no

longer inhabitants of four kingdoms. We are the builders of a new society. So, this is now defunct.”

So that is—it’s not a war thing, it is a literal, uh... like, let’s get a lot of members of the community together in a room, and like, figure out how we are going to have representation and stuff like that.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: And I’m gonna say this takes... two weeks. [sighs] Okay.

Travis: We’ll see! Flip it!

Griffin: Next card... ope! Nine of winter!

Clint: Woo!

Justin: Woo!

Travis: Nine of winter. Oh, this is fun. “Someone goes missing. They're alone in the winter elements. Choose one: the community organizes constant search parties, and eventually, the person is found. Project dice are not reduced this week. Or, no one ever hears from them again.”

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: So you have a license to kill, Travis.

Travis: Well, I’m trying to remember all the different individuals we have here.

Griffin: So—right. Uh... let’s—I mean, NPCs, there’s been Brother Seldom, who has been doing intro monologues from the future. So...

Travis: Not them. Got it.

Griffin: Uh, there's Ampersand Five, there's Tessellation, there is the Boyar Hermine, who is leading this sort of government thing. The curator, um... am I forgetting anybody? Um...

Travis: I mean, there's even more unnamed people, right? There was the artist and the architect who designed the thing.

Griffin: Right. There's Ol—

Justin: There's the Vanguard who went out to try to make a new home that no one ever heard from.

Travis: There's Uncle Joshy.

Griffin: Uncle Joshy. There's also Enos.

Clint: You've got the four members of the council, too. Enos, too.

Travis: Wait, who is Enos?

Griffin: Enos was Mint—

Clint: Enos Clackleroy.

Griffin: Mint Clackleroy's son.

Justin: [laughs] Stupid. This one's already stupid and it didn't even start yet.

Griffin: Yeah. Yeah. Um... and...

Clint: But he was a—he was a boat captain.

Griffin: Yeah. Uh... yeah, that's um... that's all I can think of. It could be also somebody that we've like, hinted at in the periphery that you could sort of explain why their departure is important.

Travis: Okay. Oh, this feels like such a big one, y'know?

Griffin: Yeah, they all are.

Travis: The representative from Hominine... uhh... that was the member of the council from Hominine.

Griffin: You gotta give this fuckin' person a name. Because it feels like they're about to be... persona non grata.

Travis: His name, uhh... is... Declan. Declan Cern, C-E-R-N. Declan Cern.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Declan Cern, of the four members, right? Was the youngest, the most charismatic. He is the one that people, like, most listened to. As the council made these difficult proclamations, he was the one that everybody looked to to smooth things over.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: And so, they're expecting that to happen again with this issue. But, as all of this is transitioning down, and everything's being taken down, his eldest son goes missing. And he attempts to drum up the help of getting people to help search, to do the search parties. But unfortunately, everything is so stretched thin, getting everything set up, that there is no search party arranged. And he loses faith in the community and withdraws his support for the council.

And it leaves the space for Boyar Hermine and her kind of supporters to take over.

Clint: Nice! Oh, I like it!

Griffin: For sure. Okay. And I imagine that's gonna be a tough pill to swallow for Declan.

Travis: Yeah. And Declan has two other sons. Two younger sons.

Griffin: Named... named Ravis and Ustin.

Travis: No. [laughs]

Justin: So what's going on?

Travis: So Declan makes the decision to withdraw, more or less, from public life.

Griffin: Got you. Uh, the—Justin, the public representative from—

Justin: This is not just for Justin. This is for the listener. I feel like sometimes when we're talking in circles for a while, trying to find out what the nut is, it helps to like, re-condense exactly what's happening into—

Travis: Let me sum it up.

Justin: Okay.

Travis: The member of the council that represented Hominine, named Declan Cern, the young, charismatic representative... uh, his son is lost in this transition period. And the community doesn't rise up to help in the search, and the search fails. And so, Declan withdraws from the council and kind of withdraws from public life. And that means the council, uh, fails to defend itself against the Boyar Hermine's kind of coup.

Griffin: Reorganization attempt. Yeah.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Uh, cool.

Clint: Could I add something? Just a suggestion?

Travis: Yeah.

Clint: Just a suggestion. Perhaps, instead of wandering out into the winter and vanishing, we've already made the connection between the cold, deep, blue sea...

Travis: Oh, yeah, no. He's lost in that process. Like, there is an accident.

Clint: In the relocation process.

Travis: Yeah yeah yeah. Like his suit malfunctions, or something like that.

Clint: Yeah, okay.

Travis: Uh, they just lose track of him in all the chaos of trying to rush people down there.

Justin: Don't say the vapor rigs.

Griffin: No.

Travis: It's not the vapor rigs.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: No, I think what—I think we have to leave it that nobody knows. Like nobody knows what happened to him.

Travis: They lose track of him, and perhaps a search could've yielded something, but it's unsure.

Griffin: Okay. Uh...

Clint: And I think this is gonna have an emotional impact on the entire community.

Travis: Uh, yeah.

Clint: Not just Declan.

Justin: Yeah, it's a boner.

Travis: It's an absolute boner. Everyone agrees.

Griffin: So, I reduce clocks, but nothing hit zero. Travis, you get to take an action.

Travis: I would like to hold a discussion.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: So, the leader of the parish of Benevolence... her title is The Hand of Guidance.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Um, and every—the like, high up leaders get “Hand Of something,” and she chose Hand of Guidance. Because they are representative of the will of Benevolence.

Griffin: Okay!

Travis: So she is Benevolence's Hand of Guidance, right, is the idea of it. So she—

Griffin: Is this a fairly high up position in the church?

Travis: Yeah, she's like a leader. She would be like a cardinal kind of deal, y'know what I mean?

Griffin: Okay. So it's wild that she's here in the first place, and not in Hominine.

Travis: Yeah yeah yeah.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Yeah, especially considering... she sees her role as guidance within the parish.

Griffin: Yeah, she's the Hand of Guidance, but she ain't guiding Hominine right now. Yeah. Okay.

Travis: Right right right. She's here. The Hand of Guidance comes forward and says...

Hand of Guidance: Um, though we of the parish and the Ordos Spiritus disagree on many, many things, we agree on this: there needs to be certain rules and restrictions in place of which spirits are contained within the Breinarr. Because the soul is sacred, and we cannot play god with who remains dead and who is resurrected.

Griffin: Tessellation speaks up. Uh, and they say...

Tessellation: The spirit is sacred. And that is why it is a crime that the spirits were torn from the Einarr without their consent. Anything that follows after that is a step toward reconciliation.

Justin: That may be true. All I know is that, this afternoon, I was able to speak with my son. My little boy. And I don't care whose body it is. I was able to speak with my son.

Clint: And one of the Deep Thinkers pipes up and says...

Deep Thinker: Our research has shown that this is a unique situation. Because of the way that the Einarr were wiped out, this makes it a very unusual situation. This doesn't mean that souls are gonna be able to constantly be recycled. It just means, in this case, it was able to happen.

Griffin: `Kay. Next card for Dad. Oh my god, this is unbelievable.

Travis: We're getting there! We're doing it!

Griffin: We're doing this. Six of winter, Dad.

Clint: Six of winter. Alright. "The time has come to consolidate your efforts and your borders. Projects located outside the settlement fail, and all remaining projects are reduced by two this week."

Griffin: Hm.

Clint: Or, "Someone finds a curious opportunity on the edge of the map. Start a project related to this discovery." [laughs]

Travis: Now, are we considering the settlement... settlement's the land, right? Like, that's our setup. That's where we've been settling. Or, is it the underwater?

Clint: That's the way I would take it.

Griffin: You could also, I think you could also interpret this as the beach skull... exhuming of the skull to use for defense is not necessarily in the settlement center. So I think if you did want to use the first option, I think that would qualify for cancellation, but... yeah.

Clint: Okay. I'm going to, uh... no, I'm—here's—I'm going with uh, finding a curious opportunity on the edge of the map. Uh, in the process of relocating and still scouting out, y'know, the area... discovers, at the bottom of the sea, this hideous mound of bodies. And it's what's left of the Vanguard, and they've been slaughtered in incredibly brutal ways.

Griffin: Whoa, fuck.

Travis: Oh, shit.

Griffin: So what's the project?

Justin: [laughs] Forgetting it.

Travis: [laughs] Yeah.

Justin: [laughing]

Clint: To investigate this slaughter, find out what happened, and determine if there's some kind of threat under the sea that we didn't know about. 'Cause it doesn't look like blink shark work.

Griffin: Okay. Okay.

Travis: This is no blink shark attack! This is a boating accident!

Griffin: So, uh, a bunch of Vanguard dead bodies. And how long is this investigation gonna take?

Clint: Four weeks.

Griffin: No, I don't think there's four cards left in the deck. But if that's what it—if that's the number you like, I'm gonna put it...

Clint: Well, there are things included in the deck that say that a project finishes early.

Travis: Aw, see, we got to reuse that dead body! What a score! Thanks for leaving that there!

Griffin: This is—I think this is a Vanguard, because we said the collectors have cool hair. Uh, so that is, uh... that's the body. Okay, cool. Uh, project

clocks count down. Okay. Now I have to come up with a system of government. I'll be honest, I did not think we were gonna make it to the end of this project.

Travis: Yeah yeah yeah, no no no, yeah yeah.

Griffin: Um...

Justin: Can't you just say "there is one"? [laughs] And we can figure it out later?

Griffin: A new system of... uh...

Justin: We've been recording for so long already. If I have to sit here and listen to you come up with a government...

Griffin: Okay. The—rather than establishing this, uh, system where people with certain skills are forced into filling roles, filling jobs for those skills... ooh, maybe—no, maybe that's it. Maybe it's just, each of those sort of specializations now have a representative. So there's like, a um... y'know, for the folks who make their life out of finding resources under the sea, they have a representative. And the folks who are spending their energies trying to preserve the past and preserve the ecology of the former world have a representative, and the ones who are studying the ecology of the underwater world have a representative.

Instead of it being tied to the four kingdoms, it is tied to the main, like, pillars of this community, in terms of like, what they are trying to protect, and what they are trying to build toward. And all of these positions, all of these representatives, are called Balusters. And the seat of government is the Ballast.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Yep. Yep yep yep.

Griffin: That's... oh, Travis, you get an action. I think. Right?

Travis: No, that was Dad.

Griffin: Oh, you're right, sorry. Dad, you get to take an action.

Clint: Hmm.

Travis: I think the thing you gotta ask yourself is, are you feeling lucky?
[laughs]

Clint: A discovery.

Griffin: `Kay.

Clint: We discover that the storm has—is getting closer. Rapidly closer. It's amazing, and that those forms inside the storm that we saw before, the giant flying whale-sized creatures... are gone.

Travis: Oop!

Griffin: Uh-oh! Alright! Justin? Oh my god, unbelievable.

Justin: [groans]

Travis: Jack of winter. We're gonna play through this whole deck.

Justin: "An infected outsider arrives, seeking amnesty. They have some much needed resources with them. Choose one: welcome them into the community, remove a scarcity, but also introduce an infection into the community. Bar them from entry. What scarcity could they have addressed?" Sorry. I somehow clicked the `print' button. That's not gonna help.

Uh, how does it... "What scarcity could they have addressed? How does its need become more dire this week?" Let me check out our scarcities here. Uh...

Griffin: And I would also add, infection doesn't—like, if you want to interpret that also in a different way, just because of pandemic feels and stuff...

Travis: It could be the infection of troubling ideas!

Griffin: Yeah, or y'know... the disease turned into catfish whiskers. There's ways of, I feel like, talking about this without having to have fucking fantasy COVID.

Clint: And if they're seeking amnesty, just tell them they've got the wrong arc.

Travis: Yeah, there you go.

Justin: Uh, an old man. An old, old man.

Travis: How old?

Justin: He's... if you could believe it... and this is gonna sound basically kind of disgusting. Like this couldn't even be real. But he's 65 years old.

Travis: Oh, gross.

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs] I know. A 65-year-old man.

Clint: [laughing]

Travis: And he loves Steely Dan.

Justin: And he—[laughs] No, it's not Dad! Not every old man is Dad!

Travis: Okay.

Clint: [laughing]

Justin: An old man shows up at the gates of the settlement that exist. And he says...

Old Man: Hello, it's me, uhh... old Mitchell.

Justin: And they say... I'm sorry, bud. Listen. We are actually wrapping things up right now and cannot open a new—

Old Mitchell: It's me, Old Mitchell, the storyteller. I have a wide collection of stories that I have carried with me this some 65-odd years, and I long to share them with a new community. I've collected a tale from all across the Einarr Plane, and the Southern Archipelago, and the Hominine... uhh, grand tales that I would love to share with you if you could just permit me. I am so hungry, and extremely, extremely old.

Justin: And they say, aw, bud, that sounds so cool. And I actually love your voice. It's very cool. But um, we are just kind of wrapping—we're in sort of like a buttoning down sort of period right now, so actually, I can't let you in. And also, uh, you are cough—

Old Mitchell: Oh, the coughing. Yes, you've noticed. Yeah... [coughs loudly] I am coughing a great deal. I believe it's just a bit of... I'm out of breath from runni—[coughs dramatically]

Griffin: [laughing]

Old Mitchell: I'm just out of breath from my—

Justin: Yeah, absolutely. But you can hear it. You get it.

Old Mitchell: I get it. I get it. I do.

Griffin: [laughing]

Old Mitchell: It's fine. I'll take my, uh, I'll take my fantastic stories.

Justin: Yeah, I heard there's another settlement.

Old Mitchell: Where?

Justin: Overrr... it's sort of more away. From here. Than here. It's sort of more away.

Old Mitchell: Okay. Sort of a northern—

Justin: Yeah, northerly direction. If you could just head north, you should—you'll run smack dab into it.

Clint: I find this story remarkably compelling.

Griffin: Yeah. So, Old Mitchell sets off into... maybe Old Mitchell can complete the trek all the way across the fuckin' continent to make it to the Delmer Wilds, and maybe seek, uh, seek shelter with the Delmer there. But... ooh, not with his 65-year-old ill frame. I don't know. I don't know.

Uh, okay. Yeah, nothing hit zero, so Justin, you get to take an action.

Justin: [laughs] I'd like to make a discovery.

Travis: Oh boy.

Griffin: `Kay.

Justin: [snorts]

Travis: Yeah, don't love it.

Justin: [trying to hold back laughter and failing]

Mitchell: Hello, everyone. Um, as you all know, my name is Mitchell. And I heard that you denied my father access, and I didn't even know I had a dad until now. I've discovered that I, too, am a story keeper, as my father, Old Mitchell, before me. From now on, I will be referred to as Young Mitchell, and I have discovered my true destiny as story keeper.

Justin: And Young Mitchell is—has named himself story keeper, and he'll be collecting tales from all throughout the world, and making them available for everybody as—in his work.

Griffin: Yeah. Now, I want you to know exactly *why* I'm angry, Justin.

Justin: Okay. [laughs] I'd love to hear it.

Griffin: It's not that you've introduced a character named Young Mitchell into our campaign that is about to begin really in earnest. It's that the framing device for this entire sort of setup series has been, uh, a story being told by a character named Brother Seldom.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: If only I had known that *Young Mitchell* was going to exist. If only I had known that Young Mitchell...

Justin: No no no no no. Okay, I should make it clear. Young Mitchell traffics in fables. They're metaphorical tales.

Griffin: I see, I see.

Travis: And not necessarily good, Griffin. There's no guarantee that they're good.

Justin: Not even that good. He was supposed—he could've apprenticed under his dad, Old Mitchell, and he would've learned how to do it right. But instead, Young Mitchell is a purveyor of terrible fables, that sometimes have a lesson, but more often, don't. And they are a huge waste of time. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah. And he's also—he's immortal, so that's important.

Justin: No. You can't just say things.

Clint: Can we call him Mitchell the Younger?

Griffin: No. It's Young Mitchell, and his terrible fables has been added to the abundance list. Thank you, Mitchell.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Okay, next card. Oh... the king of winter. "The frost shepherds arrive. The game is over."

[music begins]

Griffin: It's the middle of an unseasonably warm day, giving a much-needed reprieve from the constant driving snows that the settlers still working on the surface have suffered. The community's leaders have gathered in the small chamber where the, uh... formerly the council of four, and now, the Balusters have conducted their work. They are having sort of the rough equivalent of a town hall meeting here on the surface.

And several issues are raised at this meeting. There are concerns about mounting exhaustion over eating filler fish and seaweed flakes for every meal. There are requests for relocating larger personal belongings down into the city. Some noise complaints, directed at Ol' Joshy's Interior Design Firm and Psychic School for Battling Sharks, just 'cause I think some kids have started using that building for illicit rock shows and stuff.

Sitting quietly throughout this whole meeting is the... well, now the Baluster Hermine. And she stands, interrupting the proceedings, and she asks the attendees here a question.

Baluster Hermine: For nearly a year, we've been building a city beneath the waves to escape the encroaching storm. And now we're well on our way

to accomplishing that goal. But a city is just a bunch of buildings. We've not decided what that city will mean.

Is this our civilization's permanent new environment, or just a temporary shelter from a storm that we will, one day, learn to contain? Is it a shelter, or a chrysalis in which we will become something new? It is not enough for us to have a place to merely be alive. It has to mean something more.

Clint: I think we have to approach it as if it was permanent, because we don't know anything about the storm. We don't know how long the storm is gonna be here. We don't know what it's gonna leave in its wake. I think we have to look at it as being there for a while.

Travis: I think along those same lines, waiting means tension. We need to decide instead of waiting for it to be decided for us. We need to decide that this is our home. And then, if something changes, something changes. But we shouldn't wait for something to change.

Justin: [in a strange accent] Y'know... according to the legends... our ancestors' ancestors' ancestors climbed out of the seas, and found a way to live on land. They... grew legs to live on the land. Maybe it's just a legend. I don't know. I know I've doubted. I've stood in the way. But I've watched you all do... amazing things, this last year. I think it seems like there's nothing you can't do. And me, if you'll still have me... our ancestors grew legs. So now, we return to the sea. But their blood still beats in us, eh?

They grew legs. We'll grow gills.

[music plays]

Griffin: The Baluster Hermine opens her mouth to speak, and she's smiling. But she is interrupted as light floods in through the windows of the room. It's as if a switch has been flipped outside. A light has been turned on. And from these chambers, you can hear a variety of responses from the people working on the beach.

Terror, wonder, confusion, joy... and this meeting quickly disperses as everyone runs outside, and turns their faces towards the heavens to discern the cause of this uproar. And for the first time in years, the settlers here feel the warm glow of sunlight on their skin.

And then, their eyes adjust... and they realize that the source of this radiance pouring down from the sky is not the sun. It is the capital city of Hominine, and it is floating through the air.

[music ends]

Brother Seldom: The settlers on that beach were the last among us to breathe surface air. I had already submerged. Subsequently, I must rely on secondhand eyewitness accounts to explain what happened next.

[eerie atmospheric sound begins]

Brother Seldom: It was as if the earth below Hominine had been scooped with a great spoon, and emblazoned with thousands of intricate, glowing sigils. It sailed over the beach slowly, casting a suffocating shadow over the settlement. And those present, they watched in a breathless stupor.

They were not quick to act; not at first. Not until they saw the four figures flying alongside the city as it hovered toward the storm at sea. They were... something new. We'd called them cloud whales for shorthand, back when we could only see their silhouettes. But these were not whales.

They had wings, for one thing. Four conjoined wings that flapped arrhythmically. Short, vestigial appendages hung from their bellies, waving lazily in the wind, which had grown more and more furious with each passing second. I did not see these beasts, but they were apparently terrifying enough to send the settlers off in a sprint for the bathyspheres, ready to begin their emergency evacuation.

They had just minutes to do so. For as the city and its companions approached the storm, the cloud whales broke formation and began flying into the vortex against the wind. Their shadows gained speed, slowing the

rotation of the storm in exchange. And for a moment, our community held out hope that Hominine had discovered a way to undo the damage our magic had wreaked upon the world.

But... it was not so. The sea began to accumulate around the vortex, pulled into its form like it was being sucked through an enormous straw. And then... when the cyclone had nearly slowed to a halt, Hominine floated into the wall of the vortex and... vanished into this column of water and fury that stretched between the sea and the heavens.

And then... all the water that had accumulated fell. And a wave, taller than the Einarr Plateau itself, began screaming toward the shore.

That was the last thing any of us saw of the surface. The final few bathyspheres deployed as the tidal wave took form, and they sank into the Ethersea. It was quiet as they watched an unfathomably large line of rolling sediment pass overhead. And then it was gone.

[music begins]

Brother Seldom: Their vessels reached the city and locked into their assigned spots across its hull. The doors opened, and the final passengers disembarked. Rarely do chapters of our history end so distinctly.

[pause]

Brother Seldom: Addendum: a generation at sea.

In the days that followed, we sent a handful of ships toward the surface to survey the storm's behavior. But those ships would not reach the shore. The storm's fury is incomprehensible, now. The wind and waves have shattered the land. Remnants of our civilization now roil overhead, forming an unnavigable shelf of debris.

That shelf is held aloft by an ethereally-enriched halocline, which for all intents and purposes, remains the ceiling for safe undersea exploration. We

grieved tremendously those first few days. And then... we got back to doing what we'd been doing for the past year.

We began to build. The ballast ark, perched atop the Crystal Ascension, kept us alive that first year. But it was far too small to support our entire civilization for much longer. So, we expanded downward, building a sprawling shell around the Ascension to host our many, many bathysphere dwellings. We called this new structure The Cradle, in honor of the shipyard that delivered our stalwart protector, The Biggest Baby.

We had troubles those early days, but defense was not one of them. The Biggest Baby saw to that. Its pilots developed their sympathetic link with the remnants of Koda built into the ship's very framework. They called themselves chaperones, and harnessing Koda's storied, marshaled prowess, they protected us from dangers within and without.

Those naval officers who were ineligible to serve aboard The Biggest Baby formed their own outfit – the Iron Whelks. And they... helped out, too, I guess.

While most of us looked to the future, several influential parties were concerned with preserving the past. And so, to the bottom of the ballast, we affixed a new structure – The Conservatory. With its scenic viewports, greeneries, and menageries, it's our city's crowning aesthetic achievement.

The Curator and his agency maintain The Conservatory, while the Benevolent Parish, with all its influence, is the main benefactor of said beauty. Not all were in favor of The Conservatory's prioritization. Several Balusters, including the High Baluster Hermine, decried the decision, arguing for residential improvements first.

She would get her wish, as we constructed an even larger shell around The Ascension, called The Forecastle. Thousands of bathyspheres of wildly varying designs now nestled neatly across its outermost wall. The Cradle, in turn, became home to the city's maintenance facilities, processing our valuable resources and maintaining the health of our precious, enormous phytoplankton.

We also realized that cultivating those resources would require more space than our cliffside city could ever provide, and so, we looked above the ravine in which we'd settled, to a sprawling undersea plateau that we call The Gunnel.

There, we could appropriately scale our fisheries, farms, and salt refineries; though, errant chunks of debris do occasionally fall among these facilities. At the bottom of the ravine, the coral spire continued to thrive, and our production and infusion of the Breinarr bodies escalated rapidly. Shepherded by Tessellation, any Einarr spirit seeking to reenter our plane can do so. Though, more often than not, those spirits must first combine with others, obtaining the necessary strength to inhabit their new shells.

Built into the base of this spire is a laboratory, operated by Ampersand Five, and the rest of his Deep Thinkers. Together, they seek to discover and study the Ethersea's many, many secrets. There was a time when the Thinkers took residence in the city proper, in a ring-like compartment at The Forecastle's base.

However, disruption from the Ordos Spiritus caused their separation, and in the void they left... Ol' Uncle Joshy and his misanthropic disciples found a new home.

On the subject of Joshy, I will say this: he is, perhaps, the most proficient opportunist currently living. The needs of our people are seen to. The Balusters have ensured that. But, the wants of our people? The seasoning of our rations, the comforts of our homes... Ol' Joshy can provide these luxuries, provided you possess enough of the currency he's devised. Lucks, the only coin that matters under the sea.

Those who began squatting in this compartment named it Joshy's Knuckle. And there, you can find psychic shark-fighting practitioners, interior designers, and far more illicit... look. If you wanted to hear all about Joshy's Knuckle, you should tune your tone wheel to a different frequency.

And that brings us to our city's final, newest district. At the bottom of the Crystal Ascension, we built a wide dome, filled with docks reaching out from the cliff face in long radials. Ships returning to the city can drift beneath the dome and surface alongside these docks. From below, this structure resembles the underside of a mushroom cap. That's why we named this district The Gills, thus fulfilling a declaration made during our final meeting on the shoreline.

In the 25 years that have passed since our submersion, our city's needs have evolved. Now, nearly every facet of our civilization has need of ships and crews to voyage out into the Ethersea, for exploration, or reclamation, or transportation. You get it.

Few were the clients who looked out for these voyagers' wellbeing, and so, the seafarers of our society formed The Blue Span Brokerage. All work that goes beyond the city's borders goes through them, as must any contractor seeking said seafaring labor.

This is the work that we have done. Not only to survive within the Ethersea, but to make something better than the world we escaped. I hope, with wholehearted sincerity, that knowing more of our history will, in some way, temper the anger that you might feel for the state of the world you were born into.

However – and let this be my final, most imperative lesson – do *not* let that anger go completely. The avarice of our world's founders, their hubris, their militarism... these are blights beyond any of our individual control. They have eroded the very ground we once walked upon, dragging us down to the bottom of the ocean. That word – founder – has another meaning. To founder is to sink. To drown. We live in the aftermath of Armageddon.

But we were not the only thing purged by the storm. In building something new, we celebrate the death of a paradigm that led to our ruination. We celebrate the barrier of the architects of our unjust world. That is how our city earned its name.

That is why we live in the city of Founders' Wake.

Class dismissed.

[theme music plays]

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