

The Adventure Zone: Ethersea – Episode 23

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Griffin: Previously on The Adventure Zone Ethersea:

[“The Adventure Zone: Ethersea Theme” music begins]

Hermine: The three of you, unintentionally, brought something into the city, that is not safe. ...Do you remember the sallow?

Devo: So this was the disease that gave people fish-like features, yes?

Hermine: We had a system that... helped everybody in our city to breathe, and provide everybody in our city with potable water. And it was built on the backs of five enormous phytoplankton. Now we have one, who’s trying to hold back the sallow, single-handedly, while also providing air and water into our city. ...Have you all met Finneas?

Zoox: Cawl?

Hermine: They came up with his comatose body in a bathysphere, from who-knows-where.

Devo: My friend Zoox here. Let him go in, to this Finneas person’s mind.

Griffin: It’s so easy. And then you remember something else. You remember... a dark place. A quiet, dark place. And then when you come to... Devo looks up at you first. You notice that emerging from underneath his chin, there are two small webbed fins now. And then Amber meets your gaze... and she’s looking back at you with fish eyes. You realize what is happening to them is happening everywhere. The city of Founders’ Wake is transforming.

[Ethersea Theme music plays out]

Travis: So Griffin, here as we start, should Justin and I introduce our new player characters, or...?

Justin: [chuckles] Yeah, right.

Griffin: Um—

Travis: Mine's called [silly fantasy voice] Lord Professor Legume!

Clint: [giggles]

Griffin: And he's a... he's a, he's a, what? What's his story? I'm actually—

Travis: He's—

Justin: Hey now careful, that's— hey! Oh! Guys, that's one.

Griffin: Yeah that's true, we can't Beetlejuice this—

Travis: Oh! He's a living green bean.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: Two. Don't do it, Travis—

Travis: I'm gonna stop.

Justin: Please I'm begging you, nobody...

Travis: Stopping. Stopping right there.

Griffin: He's got a strained relationship with his father. Uh, it's...

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Okay! Amber.

[Wistful music fades in]

Griffin: You open your eyes and you are looking at the ceiling of... a clinic here in Founders' Wake. You've almost certainly had occasion to go here in the 25 years that Founders' Wake has been established. It is... very antiseptic, which is, I guess, good for a healthcare facility.

Justin: [cracks up wheezily]

Griffin: Uh... [laughs]

Justin: [mock disgust] "It smells like a hospital!"

Travis: [laughs] "Aw, it's too clean!"

Griffin: It is definitely the noisiest you have heard it. Um. But like, all of your... all of your senses are kind of taking a backseat to your sense of sight. Because when you open your eyes and you look up at the ceiling, you are also kind of looking at the walls? Around you? And can almost see the floor, below you. You are seeing things with a field of vision that is dramatically, dramatically, increased to what you had, before you... before you blacked out, um, in the... in the cafeteria. You see Devo, who is seated, up, in a bed much like the one that you are currently resting in. And you see Doctor Shaq...

Travis: [gasps]

Griffin: Looking at his vitals, checking in on him. And you also see Zoox. Who is seated, like a sentinel, in the corner, in a chair.

Justin: To what extent is this... like... am I able to process this visual stimuli? Do I have a... a, places, like, patches of vision where I can't see because I'm not genetically designed to have this sort of thing? Or is it like, vertigo? How am I feeling?

Griffin: Uh, I mean, you would have to tell me about, like, your reaction, to your sight? I will say that it is...

Justin: I'm thinking maybe a constitution roll.

Griffin: Yeah, just to see how you're getting your bearings. We won't put a whole lot of weight, or repercussions on this. But just like... this is your first time opening your new eyes.

Justin: [sound of dice rolling] Okay, 16 plus two.

Griffin: Yeah! You—

Justin: 18.

Griffin: You are... um...

Justin: I'm gonna stop putting the answers, 'cause I think it would make this show more educational.

Griffin: [laughs] You feel like your sight is improved, right? It's kind of like when you... obviously, to a much more heightened degree... and Juice, you are actually the only person on this podcast who may not know this sensation. The first time you put on a new pair of glasses? And you realize, like, "oh man, my prescription has actually gotten much, much, stronger." And you are—

Justin: Why would I put on glasses, Griffin?

Travis: [grumbling] Oh my god...

Justin: I have these beautiful perfect peepers. Of mine.

Griffin: Right, sure... Um—

Travis: It's like when you put on your blue-blocking glasses, Justin, to protect your gamer eyes.

Justin: Ohhh! I forgot to get those.

Griffin: The thing—

Justin: I'll be right back.

Griffin: The thing that does bother you— it's not so much your seeing, or how much you can see, or how you're processing this, like, bigger field of vision. The light, is... your eyes are very sensitive—

Justin: Letting in too much light. Okay.

Griffin: Yeah. 'Cause your pupils are now, like, a completely different... like, shape. Devo! You're doing okay. You woke up a bit before Amber. You know that it has been a few days since what happened in the cafeteria happened. And Zoox, obviously you know it as well, because Zoox, you never lost consciousness. You were there, um... when chaos broke out. And you helped get your friends to the clinic that they have been resting in now, for a while. Devo, the extent of your sort of like... physical... change? Is that your throat feels a bit... tight? Almost like you are recovering from a sore throat, in that it doesn't sting, it doesn't hurt anymore, but it just feels like it is a little— it takes a little bit more effort for you to... to make sound, out.

Travis: And is there— there's a, a... a... a physical, like, an outward change as well, correct?

Griffin: Yes, you have... you have these two kind of like webbed fins, that go down from your jawline, basically down kind of to your collarbone?

Travis: Hm.

Griffin: They're not like, enormous. But Dr. Shaq maybe had to cut your shirt a little bit—

Travis: [gasps]

Griffin: To sort of make room for these. Um. Not your fancy new jacket. But...

Travis: No, I just undid a button. I would not...

Griffin: Oh okay, that's fine too.

Travis: I would not cut my shirt.

Griffin: Yeah, other than that, like, yeah, it's a little bit harder for you to talk. That's... as far as you... can tell that the changes have gone. Um, and Zoox, you now see that both of your friends are awake. And Dr. Shaq is... putting a... y'know, a, what's it called, an otoscope? In your mouth, looking in there to see... about your lymph nodes. And he says,

Dr. Shaq: Oh. Okay. These don't— these nodes... these nodes are dope. Um. Dope nodes. Uh. And... oh, gosh, Amber, good morning.

Griffin: And he walks over to you, Amber, and starts shining the same thing, in your eyes, now.

Amber: [odd wobbly voice] Awww, careful, doc, aw, that feels terrible.

Dr. Shaq: Why are... what— d— have you had some sort of change to your vocal cords? What's...

Amber: Awww... oh. I haven't tried to talk yet. [coughs, clears throat, but continues with wobbly voice] Oh, that's better.

Dr. Shaq: You just cleared your— you— okay, so no, you don't have like a frog... situation... in— I feel like you're—

Amber: How would that even happen?

Dr. Shaq: Um... well... what do you remember?

Amber: Uhhh... [exhales slowly] It's all really fuzzy. Uhhuhuhuhhhh...

Griffin: [chuckles]

Justin: I— I was trying to make a choice that she had gills. But I think that I'm... I'm... gonna retcon it. [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: [cracks up]

Justin: It's unpleasant to do, and unpleasant to hear. So I'm retconning that.

Travis: Are you sure you don't wanna commit to it—

Justin: Nope!

Travis: The entire podcast? That's what I hear.

Justin: Nope, no no no no no, in an exclusive one-shot comic...

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: [laughing] We got...

Griffin: You're joining us in the middle of a T-TAZ-Z, in the middle of an episode of TAZ, of Justin saying—

Justin: [laughing] An exclusive one shot—

Griffin: "Yeah, that's a big fuck up I did, and so I decided to change it—"

Justin: No no no, it's not a fuck up. It's been ret-conned!

Griffin: Oh, I see.

Justin: In an exclusive one-shot comic, true fans track down.

Clint: [giggles]

Griffin: Right.

Justin: Where they found out that Amber was actually in another reality, she met Waverider...

Griffin: Okay...

Justin: Who took her into this reality, and cured her gill-itis.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: [laughing] So that's not a thing that is anymore—

Travis: And that was unrelated to the swallow.

Justin: That was— yes, right.

Griffin: Um. He holds up a... um, like an eye chart.

Dr. Shaq: Uh, can you read, uh, what's the lowest line on this that you can read?

Amber: [back to her real voice] I guess...

Justin: Uh. Griffin!? I'm sorry— [through laughter] You just gave me the most, like, the most improbable... DnD prompt...

Travis: A completely immaterial thing—

Justin: Yeah! Read this— [bursts into laughter]

Travis: Read this imaginary chart.

Justin: I know you! If I'd been like, "X," you'd been like, "Nope!"

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: [through laughter] "That's not at the top!"

Griffin: Um. He... he just kinda shakes his head. He says,

Dr. Shaq: Can you see good?

Amber: Uh. It's weird, like, the... [sighs] Things are really bright? Like... oh, man. Actually... does anybody...

Justin: Whoa. I was gonna ask if anybody has sunglasses. There's no reality...

Travis: Nope!

Justin: In which that would exist here!

Travis: The sun

Griffin: De— uh, yeah—

Travis: Question mark!?

Griffin: He actually points at his own eyes, and he says,

Dr. Shaq: Oh yeah, I get it.

Griffin: 'Cause he— he's got... he has fish eyes as well.

Amber: It's fine! It's fine.

Griffin: He reaches in his pocket, he pulls out one of those, like, plastic pair— again, Justin, a thing that you will not recognize. Like those rolled up plastic... sunglasses? That they give you at the eye doctor when you've had your eyes dilated?

Justin: Mmm.

Griffin: That look like—

Justin: That makes sense! Okay, yes.

Griffin: And he hands those to you. And he says,

Dr. Shaq: That should help. They just look pretty dumb. Um...

Amber: Bad news for fan art: I'm never taking them off. [laughs]

Dr. Shaq: Okay... yeah.

Devo: [hoarse] Doctor...

Dr. Shaq: Yeah?

Devo: Doctor.

Dr. Shaq: Yeah.

Devo: When will this go away?

Dr. Shaq: When will th... um. Well, here, let me show you.

Griffin: And then he reaches into his back pocket, and pulls out his wallet, and shows you one of his, like, high school senior pictures, from 20 years ago. And he has pufferfish face there, also. And he says,

Dr. Shaq: It doesn't... it... it's...

Amber: So at least 20 years.

Clint: [laughs]

Dr. Shaq: [small chuckle] At least... it doesn't go away. This is a, um... this is your... new... life. This is your new form. Um. It's not... it's not all bad. I've found there to be many beneficial things about my... my... sallow blessing. And, um, I'm sure you will too—

Devo: Yes, now—

Justin: Um, I would to take and do a quick, um, I guess it would be a perception roll.

Griffin: 'Kay.

Justin: To see if I notice any other... like, obviously the eye thing.

Griffin: Mmhmm.

Justin: Got that. I'd like to do a quick run-down...

Griffin: Sure.

Justin: Through... for Amber. [laughing] To see if there's any other... uh, changes.

Griffin: Yeah... I don't think you need to roll a perception check for that—

Justin: 20!

Griffin: Oh, okay. Well, you have rolled a very good perception check. No, it's— it is just the eyes. It is the only thing that you... have experienced. You actually know, because like you were on the beach when the sallow hit, it usually is just one... thing. Although, you also get the impression that whatever happened here in Founders' Wake was a much more, sort of, like, potent version of what happened, just based on how wide-spread it seems like it was.

Devo: [hoarse] Uh, Doc... okay, Doctor...

Dr. Shaq: Mmhmm?

Devo: What is the, um... the transformation, and then, what are the other... symptoms? What goes along with the sallow?

Griffin: He... walks over to the door out of the room, and cracks it open, and grabs a chart from outside, and starts flipping through it. And he says,

Dr. Shaq: Um. It's not like any other illness, where you have a set list of symptoms. There's— let me see, hold on. Here is... a... uhh... some barbles. Lot of barbles. There's, um, let's see, a blowhole? A few blowholes in here. Uh...

Devo: It's... this is still physical transformation. What are the internal... what is the sickness part of this?

Dr. Shaq: You're... there is... there is no... there is no sickness part of it. It is just— it is a physical... change. That is usually not... eh... entirely detrimental. Um. How— how are you feeling, Devo? Point— point— give me a— point at the face that looks like your face. For pain, I mean.

Justin: That is... quite a sentence you said there, Griffin, do you want to take another run at it? [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: No, I actually— Sydnee— I've been doing some consulting with Sydnee about Dr. Shaq's character, and she says that that's how they say it in most hospitals.

Justin: [bursts into laughter] Okay, good!

Clint: [guffaws]

Devo: Uh. I am... do you have a face that, uh, portrays being very pissed off at generations of people before you, that could have looked into a cure for this, instead of just accepting that this is a thing that wouldn't happen again, and so now I'm stuck with having these fins on my fucking face? What face is that face?

Dr. Shaq: That's not on the chart. It's mostly about pain—

Devo: Yeah, this is what I thought. Okay.

Dr. Shaq: This... you... Please understand, that these feelings you are feeling are not only valid, they are currently... in vogue for pretty much everyone in Founders' Wake. That is to say, the people who survived their transformations. Which is not a lock. So at least you have that going for you.

Griffin: He says.

Amber: Have you seen... other people, that... comin' down with this lately? Or is this a new thing?

Griffin: He—

Amber: Just us?

Griffin: He walks outside, and he grabs like, as many charts as he can carry, and sets them down. He says,

Dr. Shaq: What happened a few days ago was a sort of instantaneous transformation of every breathing creature in the city. So it's... You all should see something.

Griffin: And he opens the door and gestures you all to come towards it. And you all see, like... hallways filled with people. You see rooms with people who all look different. Like they all, y'know, some of them have scales, some of them have like this new kind of like, vibrant coloration. Some have— you see a blowhole or two. You see fins, and you see, um, sort of bioluminescent flecks, and lanterns, and just all kinds of things. The people— everyone that you see here, has some new... y'know, feature.

Devo: Doctor... uh, Doctor Shaq, was it?

Dr. Shaq: Don't pretend like you don't know my name.

Devo: I know. Dr. Shaq? Are we free to go?

Dr. Shaq: I... guess so? I mean, I am curious about you...

Griffin: And he looks at you, Zoon, and he says,

Dr. Shaq: Have you felt... any... anything?

Clint: And Zoon bursts into tears.

Griffin: Oh!

Clint: Just completely... falling apart, wracked with sobs—

Devo: [angrily] What did you say to Zoox!?

Clint: He is crying, he is... he goes running up, and even though they're reluctant, he pulls Amber, into a hug, pulls Devo into a big group hug, and just starts going on and on, and says,

Zoox: I am— so— so sorry! I hate that you're sick! I am... I... [sobs]

Devo: Hey, don't make this about you, man.

Zoox: I am sorry—

Amber: It's really not that bad, I mean...

Zoox: No! This is all my fault! [sniffs]

Amber: Okay, Zoox, how—

Clint: Zoox has had a major revelation.

Griffin: Oh.

Travis: Okay?

Justin: Oh.

Clint: Um. Devo... you're Carrie. And...

Devo: Excuse me?

Clint: And Amber, you are Miranda.

Devo: What the fuck are you talking about.

Griffin: [laughs]

Amber: What on earth...

Clint: And Zoox is Charlotte.

Travis: Hey Dad? Hey Dad? Time out. Dad—

Justin: No way. [Low, grumbly] If you interrupt him, I'll never forgive you!

Griffin: Gotta— have to let him continue—

Justin: I need every dollop of this he's got. I live for this shit!

Clint: Charlotte is the emotional one, Charlotte is the one that feels everything and blames herself for everything. And Miranda is kinda the, the cold clear vision of what's going on.

Travis: What is happening.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: And Carrie is the natural leader.

Justin: [quietly] Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Clint: You guys... do you guys not...? Do you not?

Travis: What's... hey, what's happening? [laughs]

Griffin: Dr. Shaq is more of a Samantha, I think, the...

Justin: [cackles]

Clint: Yeah! Yeah. Yeah.

Griffin: Travis, as much as you've made us listen to you talk about Entourage, you do not have a leg to stand on.

Travis: It's— no, listen!

Justin: You have no—

Travis: But never in character!

Griffin: I—

Travis: Magnus has never—

Clint: That wasn't in character! He just—

Travis: What!?!

Clint: Was crying! He was crying, I'm telling you what Zoot was feeling.

Griffin: Okay... uh...

Travis: Zoot was feeling the feeling that one feels when they realize their friend is a Charlotte.

Clint: Well—

Griffin: Right.

Clint: In essence, Zoot somehow blames himself for this. He— I— I mean, he had the vision, he saw the vents in the floor, and he is still confused about how much... how involved, you know, Finneas Cawl is, with his own psyche—

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: And he feels a tremendous amount of guilt. And...

Travis: How much of that do you think, Dad, just character to character— or, player to player, how much of that do you think is... absorbed from Finneas, and how much do you think is like Zoot's own... feelings? Is it hard to tell?

Clint: I... I think it's... I think it comes from Finneas, to be honest with you.

Travis: Yeah?

Clint: But I...

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: I mean, there's so many questions left unanswered. But at least now we know... y'know, a little bit about what happened on the floor of that bathysphere. So...

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: But I think... and also, in all seriousness, I really think Zoox feels this... guilt, this weight upon him. And, and... I'm not trying to be funny, but I mean, it— I'm kinda channeling the whole... having the... one roll.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Clint: Into this.

Travis: No, your own— how bad you, Clint, fucked up, is...

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Oh, I get it. Yeah. A hundred percent.

Clint: [laughs quietly]

Travis: Um. Zoox—

Devo: Zoox, I understand that... you are feeling a lot of feelings right now. And I can relate to this very much. But... were you able to connect with the memory of Finneas Cawl?

[Wistful music plays softly]

Zoos: [sniffing] Yeah. Yeah, right. I did. I did. I saw this... it was a very dark place. It was... there were these vents? In the ground? Big crack, in like this sandy floor? It was very quiet, it was very dark. And there was all this pressure. So I'm... I'm assuming it had to do with depth. So I'm thinking it was very deep. But it still had a sandy bottom. It had a vent. Um. And I knew... or at least, Finneas knew, that it was a very sacred place, that all life came from this... this vent. And... and... and then there was a voice? And I cannot remember what it said, because then... all the alarms started going off, [voice rising with emotion] and you guys were all sick, and—

Devo: No— yes— oh— yep.

Zoos: Okay, sorry. Um.

Devo: Keep it together.

Zoos: And... and so then, we... we rushed you over here. I tried to, you know, pick you guys up, but it was... it was kinda gross, and scary, so I ran along with the people who brought you in here, and I've been sitting there, ever since, except for the times that I've, y'know, went to get a little something to eat, or, y'know, go dunk...

Devo: Something to mush against yourself?

Amber: Yeah man, you can't expect— you normally—

Zoos: But I sat there, I would say—

Amber: Brinarr...

Zoos: I sat there, I dunno, probably two or three days, and out of that two or three days, I sat in that chair for at least half a day. Watching over you.

Devo: Zoos?

Zoos: Your silent sentinel.

Devo: I want you to know...

Zoos: [choked up] 'Cause I love you guys!

Amber: [whispers unintelligibly]

Devo: Zoos...

Zoos: [crying] And I don't know... I don't like... I don't want you to die, or...

Devo: Zoos, I want you to know something very important.

Zoos: Yeah?

Devo: If these circumstances were not as dire as they are, I would spend about 20 minutes on the phrase "sandy bottom." And it's... it is so important to me that you know this?

Zoos: [giggles] Right. Right.

Devo: But now we have to move past it. And, um... you... have...

Zoos: Right.

Devo: Uh, what we might call a lead. We need to talk to... someone in this complex who knows the area better than anyone else, and see if this idea of a vent in the ground... a crack... um... where life comes from, if this connects to any locations in their mind. And then, once all this—

Zoos: The venti-vent. I called it the venti-vent.

Devo: We're not going to do this.

Zoos: Okay.

Devo: Um. But, um... we can call it... the life crack?

[Someone snorts]

Justin: [laughing] Nope! Sure can't!

Devo: The life crack— the life crack, in the sandy bottom...

Zoox: [mumbling] Not in the same...

Justin: Can't!

Zoox: Not in the same phrase, with sandy bottom.

Amber: It's pretty big, right? Maybe it's the venti-vent.

Devo: No, it's the life crack, in the sandy bottom. And then, um, when—

Amber: Well let's call the whole event the— 'cause it was a big deal. The, it's the Venti-Vent Event.

Devo: Okay, the whole vent is the vent-hole...

Zoox: And there is— there is a hole for that. Yeah.

Devo: Okay. I—

Griffin: There's a—

Devo: I hate everything. [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs] There's a knock, on the open door—

Justin: Thank fuck.

Griffin: And you see Ampersand Five, holding Finneas's lantern in his hand. And the lantern flashes and says,

Finneas: I don't think we called it the Venti-Vent Event. Life crack... feels good?

Devo: Thank you.

Finneas: But I also don't think that's right either. Um.

Devo: So now you do remember something?

Finneas: Oh, I... I know all of it. I just... I just can't, um. I just can't seem to recall that info. It's in here, though.

Devo: So...

Amber: Wait, if we keep naming bad suggestions, [laughs] of information, will it jog your memory about the correct ones?

Zoox: [giggles]

Griffin: He says,

Finneas: Um, that, um... that will probably take a little bit longer than the time we've got.

Griffin: And Ampersand Five brings him into the room and sets the lantern down, and kind of waves, quietly, at the three of you all, and Dr. Shaq. Finneas's lantern lights up and says,

Finneas: Listen! I... I know... that I... possess the information that we need to save the city. And... it's probably because I am not really a living... uh... thing? In the traditional sense? That I can't seem to pull that, pull that out. And...

Griffin: Ampersand Five closes the door. And Finneas says,

[Deep music plays quietly]

Finneas: I want to... I want to go with you all, to... figure this out. Not only so we can... let this city, uh, breathe deeply and safely again, but also so I can figure out who killed me and what happened in the last moments of my life. And I want to figure that out, soon. Because I'm... I am... I am...

[sighs] I don't know a good word for it other than 'dying?' But I am not going to... be able to stay here much, much longer. And...

Devo: Well, bummer.

Finneas: Yeah. It's complicated.

Griffin: [snickering] He says.

Finneas: To be half alive, and risk losing that. But that's going to happen no matter what. I just... I want to go on one more adventure before my light goes out. So... what do you say we team up, and figure this thing out together?

Amber: Um. I mean, I don't have any problem with it, I guess. Um. Right?

[Music fades out]

Devo: If it gets us to the point of it, then yes, this is fine.

Finneas: Okay!

Zoox: So will I be lugging around your lamp? I mean, I wouldn't mind.

Finneas: No, I've— Ampersand has agreed to come along as well.

Griffin: And Ampersand's body language is kind of like, very... very reserved. You can't tell, but like... he only— he almost seems sad, about like, having this conversation out loud. Um.

Devo: We are wasting time.

Finneas: Right.

Devo: So yes, this is fine. We need to get to the Coriolis, maybe if there is somebody— and maybe you would know this better than us, Finneas, if there is somebody in this city who knows the surrounding ocean floor, and might be able to recognize a description, or has, I don't know, maps? That

we can reference, to try to figure out where this place you remember is? Then we need to get moving, now.

Finneas: The ocean's big. I—

Devo: No fucking doy!

Finneas: Yeah, sorry, no, I was... I was sort of the... O.G. Ethersea cartographer, so I... I know... I'm kinda the maps guy. [chuckling]

Griffin: He says.

Finneas: The problem is that it was 25 years and one death ago. And so, I— it's not a question of who has the right map, it's a question of how do we get memories out of my... brain? Without going through the usual sort of neural pathways.

Amber: Hmm.

Finneas: Any ideas?

Devo: [sighs]

Zoox: Well...

Devo: Will you... yes. Come here.

Zoox: Hm?

Travis: I am going to cast Detect Thoughts.

Griffin: Oh, okay!

Travis: Um. And so... I can... uh... I can probe deeper... the target would make a wisdom saving throw, but he could choose to fail it. Um... and, let's see... [mumbles]

Griffin: I don't think this spell does what you think it does.

Travis: Yeah, I'm reading it now...

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: Why don't you just fuckin' cast it, just see what happens?

Travis: Oh I know! Wait, yeah, yeah, no, is it— this would work!

Griffin: [slowly] Okay...

Travis: Yeah! That I would then ask questions, and read his mind, basically. Magically. And not... uh, through the neural pathways. Right?

Griffin: Okay! Sure! Yeah, let's try it.

[Vast ambient horn music plays softly]

Devo: [takes a deep breath] Okay. Finneas, I want you to try to clear your mind. And I want you to focus on the questions I am asking. Not what you think I want to hear. Not what you know. But listen to... the actual question. And think about the question more than anything else. Okay?

Finneas: Okay!

Griffin: He says. When you start to cast this spell... I guess you have to vape in order to get this, to get this going.

Travis: Yep.

Griffin: I think everybody else in the room notices first, before you, but those fins on your neck glow, a very faint light blue. They light up with little tiny specks of light blue light. And they kind of like... shudder, a little bit.

Devo: Oh, fuck yeah. I'm even more beautiful than before. Eh? Not all bad...

Griffin: You feel like— you feel like this spell is a bit more... is a bit more potent. Obviously he's like, electing to fail, so you, y'know, maybe you can't gauge it— or Devo can't necessarily gauge it directly, but these fins have given you a plus one to your spellcasting modifier.

Travis: Aw, fuck yeah. Okay.

Devo: Hear me, Finneas Cawl. Hear my voice. And let it guide you. Remember your journey. Do not worry about numbers. Or guidance. But remember what you saw, and felt.

Travis: Am I getting anything, Griffin?

Griffin: I— how about we do this. Why don't you... roll... a wisdom saving throw, for... for Finneas? And it's not to contest the spell, it is to... summon up deep forgotten memories.

Travis: Oh...

Griffin: Because this is— this is not how this spell is used in the traditional manner, I don't think.

Travis: Mmhmm.

Griffin: Uh... that is a five.

Travis: That is a five. Not great.

Griffin: Here's what I will give you... for a five? You start to detect thoughts. And it is... thoughts of... [giggles] A party. Uh... a party, here in the city, a long time ago. You are like, looking around at people at this party, and they are... like, their style is different from the clothes that people wear now. And you can also tell that it must be early days of the city, because they are in the Ballast, and it's like, all that there is. Like it's a very— it's a much smaller city, basically. And some people are, like, taking droppers? And like, taking some drops on their tongue? And they start to hand it toward you. And when you reach out to take it, you notice that your hands are a bit, like, orange, and scaly? And that's when you realize that

you are actually detecting Dr. Shaq's thoughts of a college party he was at one time. Where—

[Music stops]

Devo: Dr. Shaq, leave? Could you please leave the room?

Griffin: He looks up at you, and like his eyes go wide when he realizes... what it is that you just saw. And he says,

Dr. Shaq: Uh— uh— what— uh— why—

Devo: Get out.

Dr. Shaq: Uh, uh, oh, um, okay.

Griffin: He walks out of the room, and you realize as his memory fades away, that the people in this room at this party are taking grotto, um, in this like, weird condensed form. And having like, a real... having a real trip on it. And he—

Travis: Yeah, Devo's gonna store that away for later! [laughs] Okay!

Griffin: And he leaves the room.

Devo: Okay. Finneas. [sighs] I want you... to push. And there is something stopping you, from remembering this thing. Someone has taken this, or something is stopping you, from doing it. And the only way that we are going to be able to help these people is for you to push against this thing. And if it hurts, you just push harder. And that is how we are going to be able to help these people. Now remember... this journey. Think about what you felt. As your bathysphere went deeper, and deeper. Remember how you felt when you saw this crack in the ground. Remember how you felt, when you heard someone behind you, and turned. Remember these things. And push. Through it.

Griffin: Alright, go ahead and cast Detect Thoughts again, I think this is just gonna cost you another spell slot.

Travis: Yeah, I think that's worth it.

Griffin: And roll another... another wisdom saving throw, to see if you can... if you can crack into this guy's inception mind palace.

Travis: [whispering to himself] Wisdom saving throw... [sound of dice rolling] Okay, that's better, 19 plus two, 21!

[Vast ambient horn music begins again]

Griffin: Okay. Um... You... You start to see things in the same way that Zoox saw things. At least what Zoox has described to you. You see the vents, on the ocean floor, that are just... shooting up bubbles, and light, and warmth, and speaking in a voice that you— it's— you remember this thing, you remember the shape of it, you do not remember the words that it said. But you—

Travis: Do I recognize the... the... the language?

Griffin: Um... it's not even a question of if you recognize the language. Like that data isn't in Finneas Cawl's head, to a degree where you—

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: You did not pull that. With this spell. What... you do see... is... a bubble. On the ocean floor. And it's, it is pitch black down here, it is abyssal. But except for this bubble is lit up like a city. It is— it is strange, because it makes it seem like this little self-contained city is floating in like, the emptiness of space. And you see... through the cockpit of a ship, arriving in this city, and just passing through the bubble, and landing on solid ground. And there are so many people down here. And the people all look so familiar. And in the back of this city, there is just this monolithic building. With... what look like sort of water towers, enormous water towers, sort of surrounding it. And you look around, and there are also those cracks, all over the ground, in this city. Not as if like the city is in a state of disrepair; it is almost like they were plotted out, to be all around here. And that voice is

speaking to everyone in this city. And you feel like you are in immense danger, the likes of which, you have never imagined before. As Finneas.

Devo: Finneas, I can feel what you felt, and I know that you were scared, and you are scared now. And there is something that is stopping you from remembering more. But there are people in danger. And you are partly to blame for this. You can act now, to save them, and to fix whatever it is that you have done. And to fight whoever it is who hurt you. But you have to push through.

Griffin: You're in that building now, you're in that huge building now, and you're alone. And... you pass through a door, and the doors in here are these weird ovular, like, passageways. And inside of one of these doors is a circular room, and all around it are these tubes, that are three feet in diameter, stretching from the floor to the ceiling. And when you look inside those tubes, you see familiar faces. And Finneas remembers that... they are... the Vanguard. Who disappeared, from the city on the coast, in the previous months before this expedition. And he walks up to one of the tanks, and as he looks up into it, his memory cuts to black. And the connection is broken.

[Music ends]

Devo: Why did you stop?

Griffin: The light is dim for a while. And... Ampersand Five looks down into the lantern and says,

Ampersand Five: Um, Finneas, are you... Finneas, are you okay?

Griffin: And after a few sort of uncomfortable moments, the light flicks on again, and Finneas says,

Finneas: Yeah. Um. That's... that's where it stops.

Griffin: He says.

Finneas: That's where my memory stops.

Devo: But where does it start, Finneas?

Finneas: I need to rest.

Griffin: He says.

Devo: No! We have to fix this. You, and those that you began this with, are hurting people now. And you need to fix it.

Finneas: I don't know what you think I've done? But I did not come and poison the entire city. From what I understand through the grapevine, that was you guys.

Devo: Let me ask you this, Finneas. Years ago, you found these phytoplankton, you put them in the filtration system, and then you stopped worrying about it. You didn't think, "We don't have a way to get more of these phytoplankton, we should have a fucking plan B?"

Finneas: I... I'm... This was a mistake.

Griffin: He says. And Ampersand picks him up and walks out of the room.

[Vast ambient horn music fades in]

Amber: Well... I guess... that makes me the good cop? [chuckles]

Zoox: [snickers]

[Music plays out]

[Advertisement break]

[Wistful music plays]

Griffin: Dr. Shaq walks back into the room looking very nervous. And he shuts the door behind him, and he says,

Dr. Shaq: Look. I don't know what you think you thought you saw. But. I didn't do— I didn't do any of that stuff. It's—

Devo: Dr. Shaq?

Dr. Shaq: Yeah.

Devo: There is a magical illness giving people fish fins and blowholes—

Dr. Shaq: [sarcastic] Oh really? You're telling me, the doctor—?

Devo: I don't give two shits about you taking some drugs in college.

Griffin: He sighs, and he says,

Dr. Shaq: Look, I only know this because I know people who did it. But... When condensed down enough... [sighs] When condensed down enough, grotto can produce a sort of hallucinogenic effect, that can... send you on a... they called it Memory Lane. So when you were talking about all the stuff with the memories, it made me think about that. And I'm so straight-edge now, and would definitely lose my license if people knew that that was a thing that I... had... that I dabbled in. So. That's all I have— that's all I know, that's all I have to say about it. And I'm sorry—

Devo: Wait, no, stop, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. Taking a condensed form of it can create a hallucinogenic effect... of shared memory?

Dr. Shaq: Yeah. Yeah. Yes.

Zoox: Ohh...

Devo: Well shit.

Dr. Shaq: But I don't party— I don't party anymore.

Amber: Oh man. [exhales]

Zoox: [exhales]

Devo: Okay—

Amber: Well, there's egg on your face, huh?

Devo: [sighs] ...Thank you, Amber, yes. Where do we get this grotto?

Dr. Shaq: [laughs nervously] Whoa! Whoa!

Zoox: Whoa! Wait! Whoa, wait!

Amber: Hell yeah.

Devo: What?

Dr. Shaq: Um...

Amber: Now I'm in. What's up? Yeah.

Dr. Shaq: You're talk—

Devo: What is the matter?

Dr. Shaq: You're talking to the wrong pufferfish man.

Devo: Why? It is a drug, and you are a doctor, and...

Dr. Shaq: Yeah, um, not that kind of doctor. You'll have to... pound the pavement, so they say—

Amber: [sighs heavily] Fuck. Oh, there's— we don't— we don't need to pound the pavement, I know a guy.

Dr. Shaq: It's—

Devo: I am confused.

Dr. Shaq: I'm not talking about just your everyday snicklefritz, I'm talking about incredibly... like, chemist-level... stuff.

Amber: If we need crunko...

Dr. Shaq: It's not—

Amber: We need jib-jab.

Clint: [giggles, laughs]

Amber: Stink crystals. What do we need?

Dr. Shaq: God, don't—

Clint: Oh please let him keep going. More! [laughs]

Amber: What do you need? What do you need? You need gribbub?

Dr. Shaq: Not shribbub...

Amber: Do you need beef gravy?

Dr. Shaq: Not trimbleflecks...

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: [giggles wheezily]

Amber: You need trunk garlic? Whatever you need, baby!

Dr. Shaq: Oh, trunk garlic— you're gonna get all of us busted, big time!

Amber: [stifling giggles] I know a guy— [wheezes] I got a trunk garlic guy.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: Is it cut with Skunknuts? [laughs heartily]

Justin: [laughs, then takes a deep breath]

Amber: I got a laser train guy. I got whatever— I— I know, I'm not big into it—

Devo: What are you talking about?

Amber: [whispering] Different drugs I know about! You guys, haven't seen things I seen, you don't understand. You lived in like a... some sort of... religious nursery your whole life?

Devo: Yes.

Amber: And I got an... I seen... I've seen some things, alright? I know people that got access to whatever kind of drugs you need.

Zoox: Is the idea that the three of us take drugs, and then... share memories with Finneas?

Devo: It sounds like we would... take the drugs and then more or less from our perspective, be in the memory?

Dr. Shaq: It's... it's... very... [laughs nervously] This is a... dangerous thing that you are talking about. It's not a—

Devo: Okay, yes—

Dr. Shaq: It's not so much a recreational thing as much as it is a... [chuckles] experimental thing. Um.

Devo: Yes—

Amber: Oh yeah, I wouldn't do it! Oh, god! No, I've seen some people get pretty... pretty cranko on that stuff.

Dr. Shaq: Yeah.

Devo: Now Doctor, here's what I don't understand. My friend Zoox here, did a, like, mind meld thing. And this did not work. I did a, like a magic interrogation, and this did not work. So how is this grotto any different from this?

Dr. Shaq: When you do those things, and I have a faint understanding of how all of that... magic... stuff, works. You are talking to the mind of the person that you are attempting to scan. But doing that isn't enough to re-awaken these dead parts of their psyche. You need something... a... a little stronger than that. Something that can... [stutters] actually re-adjust... how they conjure up their memories, to begin with.

Devo: Alright.

Dr. Shaq: So... good luck. Please leave me out of this. Your old buddy Dr. Shaq didn't say... nothing.

Travis: And then he backs out of the room. [laughs]

Griffin: He slowly backs out of the room.

Devo: Alright, Amber, who do we need to talk to?

Amber: You're not gonna like it.

Zoox: Oh, don't say Uncle Joshy.

Amber: No! No, no, Uncle Joshy doesn't do any of this stuff. He actually won't even let anybody deal. [sighs] We gotta go see Shret.

[pause]

Devo: Who?

Zoox: Shrek?

Amber: Who? No, Shret.

Devo: Who's Shret?

Amber: [sighs] Come on. I'll show you. But listen!

Devo: Oh?

Amber: You're gonna need to talk to her, okay?

Devo: Okay.

Amber: And don't mention you know me.

Devo: Okay.

Zoox: Okay!

Devo: Can I mention Nermal's Pile? This is very important and contractually obligated.

Amber: You're contractually obligated...

Devo: Yeah.

Justin: [bursts into laughter]

Griffin: Okay! Hey, where does Shret live?

Justin: What?

Griffin: Uh—

Justin: I don't know. It's your world. You tell me. What's worse than Joshy's Knuckle?

Travis: Joshy's Toe Knuckle.

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: No.

Griffin: Um... why don't you— why don't you—

Justin: I only control Amber! I'm not in control of Shret, that's Griffin's job.

Griffin: Okay, look into Amber's memories and tell me... how she knows Shret.

Justin: Um. Are you sure? 'Cause once I say it, it's permanent, and you're handing me a lot of power.

Clint: [bursts into laughter]

Griffin: Yeah, that's fine.

Justin: 'Cause I'm— if you're letting me say it, then, I get... I'm... 'cause I know.

Griffin: This is—

Justin: I mean, I've— I feel like this is one of those things, where like, I've always known?

Travis: Right, yeah.

Griffin: This is the TAZ character rule of threes, that is manifesting in a helpful way for the first time? Where anything you can tell me, just as a foothold, for Shret, would be...

Justin: Shret was... Amber's next door neighbor. And they went to school together. Topside.

Griffin: 'Kay.

Justin: Up in the... in the... and they... they were, y'know, they went to school together, they were friends for a long time, and then Shret decided she wanted to live on her own, and be her own woman. So she... was a sort of like... uh... for a while she was sort of like a mercenary? Sort of like, doing whatever needed done. And then she got into... dealing. And, um. She only deals, like, she tries to avoid stuff that's really dangerous? She deals like, recreational stuff mainly. And tries to keep a very clean organization. But... that— she and Amber have a troubled past, which, of course...

Griffin: Sure.

Justin: Will be revealed, at a later date. I know it like I know the back of my hand, but, um. That's, that's the story with Shret. And she is very hard to find. She doesn't like to be found. But she does know where to get whatever... whatever you need.

Griffin: Does Amber know where to find Shret?

Justin: Y— yes.

Griffin: Okay. Um...

Justin: I— I can tell— I can tell you where I think it is. Where a lot of people who don't want to be found like to go.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: And I'm just gonna spit this out, 'cause it seems like a cool idea to me? And you, like, you let me know.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: An area called the Marsh.

Griffin: Okay?

Justin: That is... an artificial wetland. So like, if you are... like, it's a place where like, water and aquatic life, where you don't have to go out into the ships? Sort of like, a reservoir that houses plant life and stuff like that. And it's on the, uh, there's some patches of like, dry ground where people have set up shops or whatever...

Griffin: Yeah!

Justin: But it's a large, large indoor wetland.

Griffin: That— that's definitely up in the Gunwale. Like that top surface level, sort of industrial, harvesting area.

[Sounds of crickets and swamp life begins in the background]

Clint: Oh yeah! Yeah.

Griffin: And it's like a big chunk of it, right, because it's an artificial biome, essentially, that is... so... profoundly different from the rest of the city. Just by nature of it being its own kind of... its own biodome.

Justin: Mmhmm.

Griffin: And it's so humid. Like even more than the city, which is already— you know, it's an underwater city, it's got moisture. Here, just by nature of what they have set up, it is sticky, when you all walk into the Marsh. And... I think there's just narrow wooden walkways that go all over it. And, y'know, normally you would need a map in order to navigate something like this. But this... because you know Shret, you know exactly sort of which of these pathways— how to sort of circumnavigate this maze, between these little elevated shacks that some people are living— sorry! S. H. A. C. K.

Travis: Oh thank you.

Griffin: [chuckling] These elevated Dr. Shaq's, that everybody's living in. Where she makes her home is actually a... a boat. In... y'know, a particularly aquatic part of the wetlands.

Travis: This is perfect, by the way, because I don't know if you guys remember or not, but grotto is a byproduct of like, the drying—

Griffin: The kelp? Yeah, sure.

Travis: The dehydrating of the kelp.

Griffin: That's—

Travis: So the fact that it's like, coming from the wetlands, like, marsh, and foliage, and stuff, it's perfect.

Griffin: Yeah. It's... yeah, it's... yeah. Uh... I don't know that kelp production is what is happening here, as much as it is like, y'know, fish and... even bugs? I think there's a lot of sort of like... y'know... raising bugs here and harvesting them in huge numbers, for their incredible proteins. But this boat is like a, um, like a ship restaurant. That does a lot of sort of like... low country boil, essentially.

Justin: Nice.

Griffin: And she is the proprietor, of this... very wide, but shallow, sort of skiff. And that's what it's called, it's Shret's Skiff... Shret's Skiff. No, let's just call it—

Clint: Oh, man.

Griffin: Let's just call it the Skiff, because otherwise that's the most phonetically unpleasant sort of... arrangement of words.

Travis: Shret's Swamp.

Griffin: Are you going— [laughs] Are you going inside, Amber?

[Swampy soundscape fades]

Justin: Uh. Here's what I think would be the most fun. I would like to go, but like, in incognito. Like separately from them, maybe just kind of slip in? So I can keep an eye on things, without sort of announcing my presence.

Griffin: Okay!

Clint: Did we keep the 3D vape suit projection things that went around our neck?

Griffin: Uh, no. Those definitely would not be functional here, anymore. Um. You have— I mean you have your actual vapor suits, but those only work when you're actually submerged in Ethersea water. Um. Sorry, Amber, you are... hiding your... appearance in some way?

Justin: Yes. I... y'know, I'm wearing like... uh... let's see if I got anything in my inventory...

Clint: Disguise! Disguise! Disguise!

Justin: Um, I actually don't have a disguise... kit...

Devo: You can borrow my jacket.

Justin: Ooh, yeah, I'll wear his jacket.

Griffin: Okay. For a moment, you are a proud brand ambassador for Nermal's Pile.

Travis: Griffin, I think you'll find that the brand is on my vest? But...

Justin: I also am probably gonna look pretty different from the last time that... Shret saw me.

Griffin: That is fair, yes! Uh.

Clint: Big fish eyes.

Justin: That's right, Dad. Yes.

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: That is what I was alluding to.

Travis: Very good, Daddy.

Justin: In a much more subtle way! [laughs]

Clint: I am here to state the obvious, son!

Travis: And I actually do have a disguise kit, as a bard, slash actor.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: So, I'm gonna give you... uh, I dunno, fun... fake black eye? Um...

Clint: [crosstalk] ...black eyes...

Travis: Maybe a smokey eyebrow?

Justin: Love that. Love that.

Travis: Um...

Clint: Maybe a hat?

Travis: Maybe a hat—

Griffin: Just dress up like a construction worker.

Travis: Yeah? Do you want to be a construction worker? Do you want to be...

Justin: I'd rather not.

Travis: A biker? Do you— what do you want to be?

Justin: Uh. Yeah. Like a cool biker.

Travis: Okay, great.

Griffin: Um, yeah, actually, when you walk in here it kinda does have biker bar vibes? There are a bunch of personal hovercrafts parked in front, that people ride around on the wetlands, for fun and for work, that are sort of just two pads instead of wheels, that let them sort of hover about.

[Soundscape of creaky wood and restaurant noise fades in]

Alright! You all walk in, and it is... pretty quiet in here. It's, I would say, it is equivalent to the Cloaca, albeit even grungier. There's, in fact, there's just one table that has people sitting at it, but it's like a big table, with like, eight... y'know... big burly folks, all sitting around a big pile of, y'know, crawfish and kelp, and sea-corn, and all kinds of stuff, just having themselves a blast. And as you walk in, there is a... a chef. There is— it is a man. Who is... let me think, what's he got going on? Uh—

Travis: He's Favreau-esque, maybe?

Griffin: No, he's not Favreau-esque. He... he's got... black and blue streaks. Almost like a— almost like a blue tang, that are just sort of sweep over his cheeks, and up to his forehead. That is his feature. And he looks up at you and says,

Chef: Yeah, can I... can I help y'all? You want a table?

Zoox: [whispering] Will you guys let me take the lead on this? I have an idea.

Devo: What— why— okay, but my whole thing is, like... talking people into things—

Zoox: I know, but— I was just trying to soften him up—

Amber: Yeah, but like, you gotta let the Brinarr stretch his wings a little bit.

Zoox: I was just gonna soften him up a little bit. Okay?

Devo: Yeah, it's just what I trained to do, but yeah, go.

Zoox: I— no, no, you'll—

Devo: No, no, no, please...

Zoox: I'll be the icebreaker, and you follow up!

Devo: Yeah.

Zoox: Trust me, I— I've been thinking about this—

Devo: I think I see another way I— okay, yeah.

Zoox: [clears throat aggressively] [loud gruff voice] I'm here to kick ass and suck heads! And I'm all out of crawfish!

Devo: Whoa... I am not with him.

Justin: [snorts] Buy in, Travis!

Devo: No... he had me on the "kick ass" part, and then...

Zoox: Come on!

Justin: It's a restaurant! He wants to eat food!

Griffin: He—

Devo: He could just say this.

Zoox: And kick ass! I had the kick ass part.

Griffin: This chef looks at you, and says,

Chef: You fancy yourself a... a crawdad... blaster? Eater?

[Someone snorts]

Zoos: That's what I meant by suck the heads!

Devo: I am not with anyone here. [laughs]

Chef: You're not ready—

Zoos: [scoffs] Yeah!

Chef: You're not ready for the spice of these, these bad puppies.

Zoos: Oh ho ho! [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Zoos: Oh, I correct you, my et tu fey— making friend!

Chef: Uh, alright. I mean, this here is a hard joint for hard folks. After a long day of marshin' it. And I don't think you've got what it takes.

Zoos: What if I were to B.Y.O.C?

Devo: What?

Justin: [snorts]

Chef: What— we don't really want—

Clint: And he extends his hand, and he uses Mage Hand, and crawfish... come out of his hand.

Travis: You're gonna eat your own...?

Griffin: Are these real crawfish that come out of his body?

Travis: You're gonna eat your own swarm?

Justin: [cracks up]

Griffin: This is the implication—!

[Crosstalk as everyone speaks at once]

Justin: —Like all maniacs, I've brought my own food to the restaurant!

Griffin: These are so— this is— the implications of this are so—

Travis: You should see me at a steakhouse!

Griffin: Okay—

Justin: [cackles]

Griffin: So are you producing—

Travis: As I produce a live cow from my buttocks.

Justin: [continues laughing]

Clint: I produce a bunch of crawfish, and they lay there on the bar.

Travis: Now, now just, Dad... just to clarify—

Justin: You guys remember—

Travis: What are you trying to prove?

Justin: [laughing] Do you guys remember that time that I went to Ruth Chris's steakhouse, and I brought my own cow— [wheezes] And I was like, "I'm gonna butcher this guy right in front of you."

Travis: To show you how hard I am!

Justin: "And you're gonna cook him up for me!" [laughs]

Griffin: He says,

Chef: We usually don't encourage people to bring outside food into... how...? How did you do that?

Zoox: I... have... skills.

Chef: Yeah, okay, how about this—

Zoox: I'm diversified! I've diversified my holdings.

Griffin: He sweeps—

Zoox: Can you cook them or not!?

Griffin: He—

Zoox: Are you afraid?

Griffin: In one motion, he sweeps them into a pan, that he smashes down onto the stovetop, and like tilts it so that the whole pan goes up in flames, and he squirts this huge bottle of bright pink liquid into it, and stirs it around, and then slaps it down—

Travis: I feel like Zoox should have to take damage. 'Cause his swarm...

Griffin: Slaps it down in front of you.

Travis: Just got cooked.

Griffin: No. He's going to roll a con— if you want to eat this, you're gonna roll a constitution saving throw. You have come into this man's place of business, and challenged him... so he's going to make you eat his spicy crawfish, and we'll see how you handle that.

Clint: Alright! Just like in Man Eats World. Okay...

Travis: No, not like that at all!

Justin: [mumbles]

Clint: That would be a five!

Travis: Yep.

Clint: What? Five!?

Griffin: [giggles] Oh...

Travis: I would also say, Dad, I don't know the last time you watched a competitive eating show? Rarely does the host walk in, and say like, "Hey, fuckhead!"

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: "Give me some spicy food!"

Griffin: "Hey fucks—!"

Travis: "You piece of shit!"

Griffin: "Cook this, hot! And let me eat it!"

Travis: "I brought my own crawfish in! [laughs] What are you gonna do about it!?"

Griffin: You put the—

Clint: I'm challenging them to an eat-off!

Griffin: Okay—

Travis: [laughs]

Griffin: You put the crawfish—

Travis: But it's not— it's usually an established eating competition, Dad, it's not a lone man, charging into just a—

Justin: [laughs uproariously] He's like— "I'm starting an eating competition!"

Travis: I brought my own food and I want you to make it!

Justin: [unintelligible through laughter]

Clint: I've got underwriters, I've got suppliers!

Travis: "How many hot dogs can you make!? This is a reverse eating challenge! How fast can you make the food I want to eat!?"

Justin: [still laughing] "Here's the rules, if I finish all this food I brought in, then I get it for free!"

Griffin: [laughs heartily]

Clint: And a ballcap!

Justin: Yeah, you brought it in!

Clint: And a ballcap!

Travis: "And I'm gonna put my own picture on the wall! I brought it!"

Justin: [wheezes]

Travis: "Don't worry, I already— I printed it off at home! I'm a little light on the yellow, so it's kinda weird looking!"

Griffin: Uh.

Justin: [cracks up again]

Griffin: You... you're going to take...

Justin: This is a Denny's.

Griffin: You're going to take 11 points of fire damage.

Travis: Are you hungry?

Griffin: Um. 11 points of fire damage. And... like... the coral inside of you is like, dying? And you can feel that— it's almost like they are saying, like, "Why did you do this, Zoos!? This... it sucks so bad in here!" You hear other members of your swarm, like, "What the fuck! You just pulled these dudes out of here, and then make them spicy and dead, and then you put them back in here, and now they're killing us! How could you do this to us—"

Travis: Is that Spicy Bruce? I loved Bruce!

Griffin: I think if you are going to try and keep a... like, not let on how bad this sucks shit for you right now...

Clint: Yeah, I am.

Griffin: Okay, I want you to make... [chuckles] a... uh... Make a performance check. Of you performing to pretend like you are not— your soul has not just been immolated.

Clint: Alright. Performance check indeed! There it is. And that would be a nine.

Travis: Mmm.

Griffin: It's like a cartoon wolf has just eaten dynamite, only there's so many holes in Zoos for steam to be coming out of. And you can tell he is like, trying to hold it together, but you can also tell that this is a dying... person. Who is in a tremendous amount of pain.

Zoos: [coughs painfully]

Devo: Uh. Zoox? Have you softened them up now? May I? Try?

Zoox: [whispering through whimpers] Yeah! They're soft! They're really really... they're really soft.

Devo: Excellent. Excuse me—

Zoox: They feel so sorry for me! [sobs]

Devo: That's great. Uh. Excuse me, everyone, we are so sorry to interrupt your meal and your respite from work. But we are looking for Shret.

Zoox: Is there any milk!? Can I have a glass of milk? [whimpers]

Amber: [low cartoonish voice] Shret...

Justin: There's a voice from across the bar.

Amber: [low voice] Shret's not real. It's just a name.

Devo: Okay, we are looking for Shret? Where is she?

Amber: [even lower cartoon voice] Tell him. Shret's not real. It's just a name.

Travis: Where is that voice coming from— is it coming from Amber??

Justin: Yeah, it's Amber.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: [chuckles]

Clint: [guffaws]

Devo: Okay, what... [sighs] We are looking for Shret. Where is Shret?

Griffin: You hear the sound of chairs scooting backward as the Chef looks across the restaurant at that table full of people—

Justin: Wait, Dad, are you okay?

Zoox: [pained] Restroom! Mmm—

Griffin: Yeah...

Justin: Oh, oh oh oh okay, it's in fiction, gastrointestinal distress. On this show you really can't be—

Griffin: Yeah, you can't be too sure!

Justin: Quite sure—

Travis: Do Brinarr has to shit!?

Clint: Oh, has anybody— There's a hole for everything, Travis! [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Travis: No, not even for that! As well-established, you just mush food against your face! What are you shitting?

Clint: [laughs weakly]

Justin: That's a... I don't want to talk about this right now.

Griffin: Uh... you see—

Travis: Ethersea is going to become subtitled: Discussing How Different Things Poop.

[Tense music begins to play]

Griffin: Yeah. Uh. At that big table, where a bunch of folks were working, you see a few of them stand up and just kinda stand behind their chairs, just

watching the— the— the Laurel and Hardy routine happening across the room. And that chef looks at the table full of people, and then looks back at you, Devo, and says,

Chef: Nobody here by that name, friend. I'm afraid you might be in the wrong place of business.

Devo: I understand. Um. I was trying to be polite, and ask very nicely. And so I will ask one more time. We need to speak with Shret. And it is time sensitive.

Chef: Yeah, like I said, pal... don't know anybody like that—

Travis: Okay— I cast Thunderclap.

Griffin: Whoa!

Justin: What?

Travis: Uh, "Create a burst of thunderous sound, that can be heard up to a hundred feet away." Um... each creature within range other than myself has to make a constitution saving throw.

Justin: Alright.

Griffin: Uh, that includes Amber and Zoon.

Travis: Yep.

Justin: Mmhmm...

[sound of dice rolling]

Griffin: What's the—

Clint: [exclaims] Uh, nine! [laughs]

[sound of dice rolling]

Justin: 13!

Griffin: What is your spell save, Trav? And remember add one—

Travis: It is 14.

Griffin: [mumbles]

Travis: Oh, plus one, it's a 15, yeah.

Justin: Eyyy! Great, great team!

Griffin: The... Chef saves.

Clint: Plus! Plus Zoon almost poops himself.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Okay.

Justin: Hmm.

Griffin: The chef saves. Uh. What is the— what is the effect on a save?

Travis: Uh, then nothing.

Griffin: Nothing. Um...

Travis: But I mean, there's still a big thunderous burst of sound, okay?

[Sound effect of thunder]

Griffin: The... the three people who were sitting at this big table, who stood up, do not save. Roll damage.

Travis: So that would be a one—

Griffin: To your friends, and the people across the room.

Travis: Oh, one plus one—

Justin: Former friends.

Travis: It's a two! It's just two, guys.

Griffin: That could have been much worse.

Travis: Yeahhh.

Zoos: [groans in pain]

Justin: It's a pretty bad, still—

Travis: It's only two points!

Justin: Like, from a—

Griffin: From a, like a sort of— on the principle of the thing.

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: When the three people across the bar drop down to their knees, the other people who were sitting at that table stand up. And...

[Tense music transitions to Ethersea theme music]

The chef reaches down, and grabs a huge butcher knife. And grabs that bottle of pink spicy fluid, that was sitting on the cook top just a moment ago. And he says,

Chef: So you... you want to get spicy, huh?

Griffin: And he sprays the knife with this pink bottle, and all of a sudden, his butcher's knife catches on fire. And he says,

Chef: Well then. Let's make it spicy.

[Ethersea theme music plays out]

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