

The Adventure Zone: Ethersea – Episode 26

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Griffin: Previously on The Adventure Zone Ethersea:

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

Shret: Y’all are rolling deep with Finneas fuckin’ Cawl?

Amber: I— I need grotto. You’re the only person I know that can get it.

Devo: Now our only hope is to reach the source of the original phytoplankton. But those memories that are in Finneas’s head are... unreachable. And we have been told that with concentrated grotto, this is possible.

Shret: There may be an option. But it’s gonna involve all of y’all. It requires you to sort of suppress... the part of your mind that tells you that you’re you.

Griffin: And you all are aboard a ship, that is diving down deep, into the heart of the ocean. These are your two most trusted compatriots, who have departed on a mission, with you, to find the Vanguard, and the bathysphere that they stole. And most other people would be scared, embarking on a mission like this. But not you. Not Finneas Cawl.

[Ethersea theme music plays out]

Griffin: Dad, why did you say you need your nail clippers?

Justin: Wait, yeah, why did you— stop the show. [laughs wheezily] Right before we started recording, Dad says, “Oh. I have to get my nail clippers.”

Griffin: It’s horrifying.

Clint: Inside joke! I’m gagging ya.

Justin: Was it an inside joke?

Griffin: Yeah...

Clint: I'm pulling your legs! I'm pulling on your legs!

Griffin: Definitely...

Travis: Is it an inside joke if none of us thought it was a joke?

Clint: Well, the listeners—

Travis: That seems a little outside!

Justin: To the most inside.

Clint: You don't— Sometimes people don't get my humor, guys.

Justin: Yeah...

Travis: That— but that's— that's not how an inside joke works though! Like, the definition of an inside joke is that the people you're telling it to get it. You can't—

Justin: I'm gonna start doing that, when I say something that bombs—

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Just be like, "Eh, inside joke."

Travis: It's an inside joke for the voices inside my head, like the movie Inside!

Griffin: Hey Dad, I took a big dump inside your PC.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Ahh, it's an inside joke, you wouldn't get it. You don't... you don't know...

Clint: An info-dump?

Travis: Oh!

Griffin: That's... fun.

Justin: Wow! That's actually funny.

Travis: That was good.

Griffin: Alright, let's get into today's episode. It's gonna be... it's gonna be messy. It's gonna be a fun time. I want everyone—

Travis: What, like a double-dare challenge?

Griffin: I want everyone both on the call and listening at home to keep a open mind.

Clint: [chortles]

Griffin: 'Cause I think this is our first time... doing a... a fl— Well, you know what, I was gonna say a flashback episode, but we did quite a bit of those back in TAZ Balance, if memory serves. You all are... taking a trip into the memories of Finneas Cawl.

Travis: Uh, could you play some music to set the scene now, Griffin?

Griffin: I— I actually have an intro to this scene. Do you have a joke you were gonna do? 'Cause I can save my intro for after your joke.

Travis: No, I just wanted some music! I thought, we don't do enough, like... kinda meta music cues? So, I thought I would say, like, "Can we have some music?" And then the music would start playing. And it would make it seem like it was happening in the moment.

Griffin: Yeah, sure. Okay, well, let's start that right now.

[Music from the Prologue, "Our Wasted World," begins playing]

Griffin: Okay. The first—

Justin: The Griffin McElroy story. [laughs]

[Music stops]

Travis: [snickers]

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: [chuckles]

[Music resumes]

Griffin: The first of many challenges facing the shore-side community during their final year on the surface, was the disappearance of the Vanguard. Once well-respected laborers in the community, the Vanguard stole a valuable piece of technology to begin their undersea migration before the rest could follow: the ancient bathysphere. As the community developed methods to sustain an underwater city, Finneas Cawl, the legendary explorer and adventurer, realized the bathysphere held answers to many of their logistical problems. And so, in late summer, Finneas Cawl and a small crew dove beneath the waves in search of the Vanguard, and the vehicle they'd stolen.

Their voyage was sabotaged. Weeks after their departure, the bathysphere returned to the shoreside, its sole inhabitants being a comatose Cawl, a dead body, and a standing pool of water filled with oxygen-rich phytoplankton. Now, the details of their doomed expedition will finally be revealed, through the memories of Finneas Cawl.

So, in today's episode, Dad is playing Zoox, is playing Finneas Cawl. Uh... and your mission, during this memory journey, is to find the bathysphere, and recover it. Justin, playing Amber, is playing a character named Bertrand

Bay, who was a Delmer soldier, who also became Old Joshy's student. One of many students who joined this mission, as a sort of security detail. And Travis, playing Devo, is playing Ona Ward. He is a Hominine biologist, going to study the deep-sea life, as this mission is going to take everyone sort of deeper than any person has ever travelled before.

You all are travelling in a ship called The Nightcrawler, named for its deep-sea exploration capabilities. And it's a far cry, from, y'know, more modern ships. It is... there's not a lot of bells and whistles. It is completely unarmed.

Now, while this episode, and this sort of memory dive, is going into something that is effectively set in stone, uh... there will be things that you all will decide in this episode, that will have ramifications on what happens in the future. The things that are set in stone is that... basically, the bathysphere returns with a comatose Finneas Cawl, a dead body, and the phytoplankton. Everything else is more or less completely up in the air. Any questions before we start?

[Music fades out]

Travis: Yes, I have a question, and maybe we were going to get into this here in a moment, but...

Griffin: Sure.

Travis: Is this... a... for lack of a better example, a, um, Quantum Leap scenario? In which Devo is Devo playing these characters?

Griffin: No. So... so, in the last episode, you all kind of went through your own memories, in order to essentially dissociate, and become... these, these people, inside of...

Travis: Okay, so we ARE them.

Griffin: You ARE them—

Travis: Got it.

Griffin: You are not aware that you are them...

Travis: Got it.

Griffin: Um... it's not a "we can change the past" because it's just a... it's just a memory, right?

Travis: Right. Right, right, right, right, right.

Griffin: Alright! Uh, if there's no other questions, let's start.

[Music, "Our Wasted World," plays again]

So, the three of you, Finneas, Ona, and Bertrand, are on the bridge of the Nightcrawler. And it probably has the same sort of aesthetic that the Coriolis has, because they're both kind of older ships. The rest of the crew, which is almost entirely made up of Ol' Uncle Joshy's School for Defeating Blink Sharks... uh, y'know, enrollees... is sort of back in the main cabin. And it's been a few days since you all departed. And... we'll start you here.

Finneas. You have piloted the ship down, several hundred meters, over the last few days. And you've been following a tracker that you have thrown together, that can sort of follow the energy signature of the bathysphere that was stolen. And, uh, it's already dark, because you've gone down so far. But this sensor that you have been following toward the bathysphere says you've still got quite a ways to go. So you've descended into this abyss, and found your ship moving down a ravine, with these jagged nooks and crannies.

And nestled in one of them, the light on the front of the Nightcrawler, shines across... bodies. Dozens, dozens of bodies. Bodies that would later be discovered by the rest of the shoreside community, once they start building Founders' Wake. But of course, you don't know that. Yet. Um... you just found a big pile of bodies. What do you all do?

[Music ends]

Travis: Um—

Finneas: Well! [claps his hands and rubs them together]

Travis: Hm. It's Ona, is it?

Griffin: Yes.

Travis: Uh, well, I, Travis, have seen enough CSI... I think Ona is going to... uh... try to see if he can recognize any kind of, like, y'know, clean-up...? It wouldn't be bugs, but like, fish, and worms, and that kind of thing? To see how long these bodies have been dead.

Griffin: Okay, are you doing that from the bridge, or are you...

Travis: Well, if we can see 'em, yeah, I'm just trying to visually... scope it out, see if I can... y'know. Check out...

Griffin: Yeah, sure!

Travis: The deterioration? The...

Griffin: Yeah. Make an investigation check for me. And you all, because you all are kind of similar to the characters that you are inhabiting in this memory, you all are just going to use your standard character sheets.

Travis: [sound of dice rolling] Um, that is an 18 plus three, a 21.

Griffin: Good God Almighty! Yeah, that's a good one. Okay! With a 21, Ona, you are able to figure out that these bodies are not, like... are hardly decomposed. They are relatively fresh, within a matter of weeks. You would estimate. You also notice a few other things, with that good of an investigation check. Um... they have... mutated. In places. Not dramatically? But every few, like, people that you look over, have these very narrow gills? Or, uh, like... one of them, you notice, has super sharp teeth. A few of them have scales. A lot of them are just people. Dead— dead people, obviously. But some of them look kind of... different. And I will also give you this: you notice what appear to be a few sets of twins. There are some people in this pile who are almost identical to one another. That—

Travis: Okay, I relay all this information.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: To Finneas. And to Bertrand.

Clint: Let me ask one quick foundation question. Do we have—

Griffin: Sure.

Clint: Vape suits? Do we have...

Griffin: Um, you probably have, like... old—

Clint: Do we have an arm, like we had on the other...

Griffin: No, I will say that you all probably have like, a dive suit? Like a heavy-duty sort of diver's suit. But vape suits don't exist yet, I'm pretty sure.

Travis: I have one more foundation timeline question.

Griffin: Please.

Travis: Where is this at in relation to the shore community getting hit by the sallow?

Griffin: It had— that has not happened yet.

Clint: And we've never seen this before, this sallow?

Griffin: No, no, no, no, no.

Finneas: Hm. Well! [claps his hands and rubs them together] Alrighty! Let's, uh, let's see what we can do, let's see what we can stir up here. Bertrand?

Ona: Now—

Finneas: Um... what... what does that look like to you? Do you recognize... any of those specific people out there?

Bertrand: It's all... like nothing I've ever seen, boss.

Finneas: Hmm. Hmm. Ona, what do you think? Any faces, anybody look like somebody you've seen before?

Ona: It is hard to tell from here. Um. They have deteriorated, not much, but the facial region is one of the first to be affected by decomposition. But I will say, Finneas, this... [sighs] This does not seem to be natural? And I don't know if this is something we need to meddle with? So much as it might just be a guidepost that we're headed the right direction, with our investigation?

Finneas: Mmhmm. Mmhmm. Yeah. Yeah. I gotcha, I hear ya. Um... well, I think we need to go out and investigate it, up close and personal. Maybe—

Ona: That is going— [sighs]

Finneas: Maybe bring some— Well, I say we, but I actually meant you, Bertrand.

Bertrand: Yeah?

Finneas: I mean, you got all that shark fighting experience, right? So I mean, you probably know how to swim around and stuff?

Bertrand: Right. I'm a strong swimmer. Yeah.

Finneas: Yeah. You don't like that idea, Ona?

Ona: It just seems to be... [sighs] taking us away from the primary mission of discovering the bathysphere. Not to mention the fact that whatever has caused this death, we are unsure of, and so it still might be a concern. Some sort of contaminant, or maybe even some sort of creature, nearby, that killed these people? And we are merely putting ourselves in danger.

Finneas: I hear you. I hear you. I'm— I'm gonna take that into consideration. But don't you think it's kinda a big coin-ki-dink if this is not related to the, the whole thing we been looking for since we been kinda... tracking that whole... that whole schmear?

Ona: I do see your point.

Finneas: Yeah. I really think we need to... y'know, we need to bring it on board here, and, y'know...

Ona: Now—

Finneas: Kinda take a look at some of `em. Or at least get up close and kinda check it out.

Ona: Yes, I... I think I could be persuaded to go out and investigate. But to bring something like this on board the ship, without any of our equipment, anything to first determine the cause of death, seems like we're really inviting trouble. I think that we need to be very careful, approaching whatever this is, and try just for visual examination.

Finneas: Okay. Okay. Never let it be said that Finneas Cawl doesn't compromise. What do you say, Bertrand, you wanna go out there and kinda... check it out real close and in person? And while we're doing that, Ona, maybe you can keep an eye on that tracker machine thing, and see if there's any kind of connection, or anything at all? [pause] Bertrand, you cool with that?

Bertrand: Yeah, I suppose.

Finneas: Well! [claps his hands and rubs them together] Let's get to it!

Griffin: Okay... why don't we do this in a couple different rolls. We can start—

Clint: We're already in a couple of different roles!

Travis: [appreciatively] Ahhh! Words sound like other words! You ever notice that?

Clint: [pleased] Yeah! They rhyme.

Travis: Yeah. Well. They sound— they're hom... homonyms?

Clint: Homonym-in-nim-in-nims.

Travis: Sure.

Justin: Hominine.

Travis: Yeah!

Clint: Hominine, homonyms—

Griffin: Yeah, that's actually the name of the community—

Clint: They're Hominine homonyms! Yeah.

Griffin: Okay, Bertrand, you suit up in this, uh... y'know... EVA suit? I don't know what it's called— it's— what's it called for a deep-sea suit? Just a diving suit, I guess.

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: And you are able to get right up into this big pile of bodies. And... Ona, you are keeping an eye on the tracker. Um. Let's start with Bertrand. What are you— how are you sort of trying to gain more info here?

Justin: So I'm like, outside in the suit. Um... hmm... I guess I would kind of... um... poke around?

Griffin: Okay. [laughs]

Justin: I don't know, I'm not like an investigator.

Griffin: Yeah, sure, sure.

Justin: Like, he's just kinda like, moving stuff around. Like, I don't— he's not exactly sure what he's looking for, I think.

Griffin: Yeah. Okay—

Clint: Well I figured he had the most familiarity with the seas, and you know, the life under the seas, maybe he could pick up some kind of...

Griffin: Well, Bertrand's also the biggest, I would say, by far, the biggest boy...

Clint: Yeah.

Griffin: In your sort of crew here—

Travis: Not the Biggest Baby, though.

Clint: Not the Biggest Baby.

Griffin: No, not the Biggest Baby, that's someone different. Why don't you make an investigation roll for me, Bertrand.

Justin: Okay. [sound of dice rolling] Two.

Griffin: [snorts and snickers] Yeah. Bertrand looks around and—

Bertrand: Right. This all looks... ship-shape.

Clint: [bursts into laughter]

Bertrand: This is all good stuff.

Griffin: [laughing] Just a bunch of dead bodies. Uh. Let's see... Ona, why don't you make a... [vocalizes a thinking noise] chkchkchkchkch... I'm wondering what a navigation, like... uh, why don't you just make an intelligence check?

Travis: [sound of dice rolling] A 17 plus two. 19.

Griffin: Uh, okay! Yeah! Here's what you will get for that. You... are looking at... the sensor, right, that gives you a general bearing on which way the bathysphere is. And while you're looking at that, you can also see out the front viewport, of the ship. And while you're able to see both those things, you notice another body that is coming, in a current, down this ravine, and it too hits this sort of, uh, trap, that the rocky walls of the ravine are making, and just tosses another body onto the pile. I would say narrowly missing Bertrand, who is out there.

Ona: Uh. Finneas?

[pause]

Finneas: Oh— uh, yeah! Hmm? Sorry.

Ona: If... if I'm not mistaken, I think we may be... at the end... of some kind of like, pipeline? Some kind of current. Someone is dumping these bodies, and this just happens to be where the water is taking them. Like— and I'm sorry to sound callous— like flotsam on a beach, that would wash up, and get caught in the same outcropping? I believe that's what we're looking at. We should be able to follow this current, to find the source.

Finneas: Hmm.

Clint: Are we in contact with Bertrand?

Griffin: Yeah, sure. I— you can yell down his hose, or whatever.

Justin: [snorts] Yell down his hose.

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: Okay...

Finneas: Yo, yo, yo, Bertrand, my friend! Can you, uh, can you detect any kind of current, out there? I mean, if you just floated around, would you be moved in any way?

Bertrand: Hold on. [pause] ...No.

Ona: Finneas, we have sensors. We can track the current.

Finneas: [quietly] Well, I know, but I'm just trying to let Bertrand... you know...

Ona: Oh, you were trying to include him, yes, I see—

Finneas: Include him— involve—

Ona: This is very kind of you, yes.

Finneas: Well, you know... it's all about helping you young men develop, and become better people, so...

Ona: I did notice, he's just kinda standing out there staring at the bodies.

Finneas: Oh! Uh... [calling through the hose] Bertrand, you wanna come on back in?

Bertrand: Yes. I'll head up.

Justin: Did I bring any tools with me or anything? Like, do I have any...

Griffin: Yeah, we can say there's a tool— like, uh... you know... a compartment for tools, in the dive suit.

Justin: Okay. Alright. Uh, Bertrand starts swimming back towards the... y'know, goes underneath the ship and starts swimming back up towards the hole.

Griffin: Back in the airlock...

Justin: Mmhmm.

Griffin: Okay! Um, alright, so—

Travis: Do we have any kind of decontamination?

Griffin: Any kind of decontam— nah. I don't think so.

Travis: No. Dammit. Okay.

Griffin: Alright! You have gotten back on board the ship. And you... make your way to the bridge. And now you all are back together in the bridge, and sort of have found this current, that is bringing bodies to this point.

Ona: Now, Bertrand, could you relay your findings to us? What were you able to detect? Were you able to figure out any sort of cause of death?

Bertrand: Uhh... it's all real... spooky, right? Um... There was a... one dead person. And another. And they were just so dead. It was... *really* bad.

Ona: I see. Okay.

Bertrand: Spooky, it was.

Ona: Ah, spooky. Okay, I'll write that—

Bertrand: Reminded me of my eighth birthday.

Griffin: [laughs]

Ona: It did?

Bertrand: Oh, god, that day...

Finneas: I'm... I'm afraid you're gonna have to give us a little detail.

Bertrand: I'd rather not. It shaked me to very core, didn't it.

Finneas: Well, you know what, we'll save that for our next fake séance, up shoreside.

Griffin: Yeah.

Finneas: Um. Listen, let me ask you something, Bertie. Do you get the impression that this is their natural state? Or, I mean, did they look like they was... people... turning into fish? Or fish turning into people? Or do you think this is just the way they are?

[Foreboding high ambient music fades in]

Bertrand: I think... whatever we're doing, we need to go now. I'm worried, whatever did this, might still be around, eh?

Finneas: Uh huh. Yep.

Ona: I... I agree with mister Bertrand.

Finneas: Okay! [claps his hands and rubs them together] Let's follow that current, and let's make it so, fellas!

[Music ends]

Griffin: Alright! You start the ship back up, and turn in the direction of the current. And... it is slower going, now. Because you all are essentially piloting your ship against the current. You feel like you're going about half as fast. Um. But then the drag, on the ship, becomes, like, kind of extreme. Like, way more than, y'know, just piloting a ship against the current should be doing. And after fighting this, this drag, for a few minutes, you realize that the tail end of your ship is starting to, like, almost drag on the floor of this ravine.

Finneas: Hmm. Well... we gotta make sure we're not doing any damage there, right? You want me to pull up a little bit?

[pause]

Bertrand: You... You're the... captain...

Finneas: Oh, that's right! I know, I know... um...

Justin: What would— what would it be like if a pilot came back into the plane—

Clint: [starts laughing]

Justin: And just like, tapped you on the shoulder, and is like, "Hey, we're getting pretty close to the ground. Do you have any..."

Clint: [laughs harder]

Griffin: [cackles]

Travis: "Just like... gut check? What do you think?"

Justin: "I wanna take a quick vote, actually, with everybody."

Clint: Um— okay. So we gotta raise up a little bit, right?

Griffin: Sure—

Ona: Just be careful that we don't lose the current, as long as we can keep, um, y'know, some sort of track of it? I don't want to lose our lead.

Clint: So are we following— going against the current? Or are we...

Griffin: You are going against the current, yes. When you pull up... Finneas, you realize, now, what is wrong. The ballast of this ship, which is the chamber that kind of balances air and water, to affect the, y'know, ascent and descent of the ship, is like, completely flooded. There is no air left in the ballast whatsoever. And so, the only force keeping you off the ground right now is the... just sort of general thrust of the engine. Knowing that is enough for you to be able to get the ship off the ground, but now you're going at sort of a wild diagonal angle, sort of pointing upwards, that you can sort of keep your butt off the ground.

Ona: Bertrand, you're an engineer, correct? Have we taken damage? Is something... How did this happen without us noticing?

Bertrand: Hard to say. Uh... I don't... know...

Justin: [laughs] Now, this is the thrilling overlay between Justin and Bertrand.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Ah—

Justin: Where finally they are one! "I don't know!"

Clint: [laughs harder]

Justin: "I have no clue—" [laughs] "what is happening—"

Travis: Justin! There's a whole mechanical set of, quote-unquote, "skills," that you can roll against and then Griffin has to tell you what happened!

Justin: Okay. Uh... well, see, Amber's not really good at that, and I was using Amber's stats— where is it, mechanical...?

Griffin: I mean, it's not— I don't— there isn't really a "mechanical" skill. I mean, go ahead—

Justin: What would it be? Like, investigation? Or...

Griffin: Um...

Travis: This is something you would know, right? So...

Griffin: I would say you are proficient in this. So I'll say it's like your wisdom plus three and your initiative plus two. So go ahead and roll with a plus five.

Justin: Plus five, okay. [sound of dice rolling] Uh, three. Great.

Griffin: Plus five. [giggling]

Justin: Great! There— on fucking fire today. This is good.

Griffin: Um...

Justin: I'm going to— I'm going to Reno. [chuckles]

Griffin: Alright. Are you just trying to think of this in your head, or are you going back there to investigate, or?

Justin: I'm going back there to investigate.

Griffin: Okay. Yeah, I mean, with an eight... you are not necessarily any wiser. If there is, like, damage here, you are not seeing it.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: Um... but—

Justin: I'm— this is like the interior, right?

Griffin: This is on the inside of the ship, yes.

Justin: I don't see interior damage.

Griffin: Uh, yes.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: Correct. It's just... it is just completely flooded.

Justin: Okay.

Clint: Hmm. And we don't have any kind of pumps or anything like that?

Griffin: Uh, no. This is not supposed to happen. So, like—

Clint: Alright.

Griffin: The— In many ways, the ballast is the pump. So, I think just like the thing you realize, is unless you, y'know, find some place to repair this, and take some time to repair this, this ship is not going to reach the surface.

Travis: Yeah, we can't surface without that ballast.

Griffin: Right, exactly.

Bertrand: Alright. Here's the plan.

[Foreboding high ambient music fades in]

Bertrand: I'll keep working on it. And you all keep... heading towards our destination.

Ona: Okay! I... think...

Finneas: Yep! We'll do that. It's gonna be slow going though, 'cause we're having to kinda go in kind of a diagonal, zig-zag...

Justin: And I rolled an eight. In engineering. Although maybe repair will be a better roll.

Griffin: Cool.

[Foreboding music plays softly for a few moments]

[Advertisement break]

[Foreboding ambient music fades in]

Griffin: So, you all follow this current for a while. And when I say a while, I mean like... another, another week. A week of, I would say, pretty uncomfortable sailing, right? The ship is at an angle, it's not like you guys have artificial gravity, so everybody is just kinda... [chuckling] constantly leaning backwards as you all very slowly push forward. It is taxing on the ship in so many ways. The ship is not supposed to move like this. And so there are just kinda constant groans of protest coming both from the hull and the crew of this ship. Um... so—

Justin: Do I have light back here?

Griffin: Uh, yeah, yeah! I would say the ship is lit.

[Music and soundscape fades out]

Justin: Okay.

Travis: Oh, this ship is lit!!

Justin: This ship is so lit.

Griffin: Definitely. But after about a week, you all finally reach the end of this ravine. And it opens up into this huge clearing, with what appears to be a cavern, moving sort of further downward. And down in that cavern, you all see light.

[Slow celestial music begins to play]

You get closer to it, and you all see at the bottom of this cavern, a city. Or something that is like approximating a city. It's organized in a semi-circular pattern, around this huge central building, that almost resembles, like, a church, or a temple. Like a basilica, with a huge round central building, with a bunch of different towers and stuff coming off of it. And then fanning out from that huge temple, you see these rows of what appear to be just kind of like simple buildings, that look like just rows of small identical lodgings. And the curious thing about this city is that it is not submerged. There are a dozen or so of these large overlapping barriers, almost like huge bubbles, surrounding the city infrastructure. And those bubbles appear to be keeping

the city dry. And also are presumably, are providing breathable air to the people, that are just walking around inside of there, that you all have seen. You are seeing this with, I would say, like, telescopic... tech... just, I guess, maybe just a telescope.

Travis: Yeah.

[Music fades out]

Griffin: So they have not— they have not taken notice of your ship. But you all have found this city, that you have followed all the way from the current, and so you assume is where the... [chuckles] the trail of dead, were coming from.

Ona: Well this is wonderfully fortuitous, isn't it! Because now— we were looking for, one: a place to repair our ship. But more than that! We have found a city under the waves! Our, our— everything! [huffs with excitement] Is fixed! We can simply move from the shore to whatever this city is!

Finneas: Well. I know I'm Captain Finneas and not Captain Obvious, but don't you think that's a little... coincidental? That doesn't set off a few alarm buttons in your head?

Ona: I mean... uh... coincidence, or fortune? Um... you know, the... gods have guided us to this moment!

[pause]

Travis: Right? I'm right in thinking that Hominine... like...

Griffin: Yeah, sure—

Travis: Is cool with the gods, right? Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah, I think— I mean, I know hardly anything about these new characters that I made up for this episode, so if you want that to be true, that's absolutely true.

Travis: Well, I just, we don't have like a Homininian... character. And so I'm trying to make sure I understand their relation to this. But I think—

Griffin: I would say— yeah— I would say, if this person is as learned as they are, a lot of that probably comes from... like... the religious institutions...

Travis: Yes.

Griffin: Of, of Hominine.

Ona: The gods— the gods have led us to this moment! This is— we were brought to the shore by a voice, that said, y'know, this is the plan, and then we have found salvation!

Bertrand: [grunts] Well... hm. Let's try to... hail them. Then we can feel them out, eh? See how they sound.

Finneas: That sounds good. That's a good idea. What— how... how exactly do we tail 'em?

Justin: Good question. What do we think, like— long distance communications would be? Like... uh... Morse code type light blinking? Or do you think there's like a—

Griffin: Yeah, I would say—

Justin: I mean, radio waves don't make sense, right?

Griffin: No, I mean, there's the tone, tonewheel— we've talked about tonewheels, but I don't think that those exist yet. Um.

Justin: Probably some sort of rudimentary, like, maybe like a... yeah, like a Morse code type deal? Or...

Griffin: A Morse code? Sure!

Clint: Flash exterior lights?

Justin: Yeah, exactly!

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Um. Yeah! Alright. Uh, so, I guess Finneas, you're at the helm. What are you... what are you flashing?

Clint: Umm... [blows small thoughtful raspberry] Well, we've got a lot of exterior lights.

Travis: [snorts]

Clint: Um. So I thought maybe we would pull a "Close Encounters" kind of thing, where we would flash them in different sequences?

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: To show that we are intelligent beings, and intelligent creatures.

Travis: I mean, we're in a ship.

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: I mean yeah, but we're pretty far away—

Travis: I don't think they're gonna think, like, "There's some dogs in there."
[laughs]

Griffin: [cracks up]

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: They haven't seen us yet! [also laughs] Sea dogs! Arrrr!

Travis: I'm just saying, any— just flashing the lights is probably enough—

Justin: "Captain, you're not gonna believe this. We, we have assumed, we are assuming, these hyper-intelligent dogs..."

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: "How do you know they're hyper-intelligent?"
"Because how else would dogs pilot a ship!?"

Justin: "We're assuming it! They must be hyper-intelligent, otherwise..."

Travis: "How'd they get in it!?"

Justin: "They don't have thumbs!"

Travis: "I mean, maybe they— they might have sat accidentally on the gear shift, and moved it into neutral, and then the ship rolled down here, I guess that's possible?"

Clint: Well then we got us a name! We're the Descendent Dogs. We're gonna descend down there—

Griffin: Alright.

Clint: And flash our lights.

Griffin: Alright! Um. So you're just flashing it in a pleasing pattern, then?

Clint: Yes! [laughing] Something that's appealing to the eye.

Travis: As if to say, "Hey, stranger."

[Curious light music begins]

Griffin: Okay! You do that, for a few seconds, honestly, and that is enough for some of the people down inside of the bubbles to look up, and see you all, and a few of them go running toward that central building; a few of them, like, run back into one of the little residential, like, rows. And after a few seconds, the main sort of barrier covering up the basilica starts to shoot

a few bubbles up. And like, you cannot... this is not any kind of code that you are aware of. But it does seem like the city is responding to your flashing.

[Music ends]

Ona: Ah! See!? I— they are welcoming us, I have to assume!

Finneas: Yeah. Bertie, you think they're welcoming us?

Bertrand: I think it's the best chance we've got, right?

Finneas: Well. Let's... let's go down. Let's keep an eye on their bubbles. [chuckling] And we'll go— let's descend real slow.

Clint: We don't have much choice in descending though, right?

Griffin: Uh, you can descend.

Clint: Yeah!

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: But can we control the speed of the descent?

Griffin: Umm... I—

Clint: He's been working on it for a week, right?

Griffin: Yeah I mean, you've been piloting the ship for the week, so I will give you advantage, but I will— that is— you will need to roll for it, because this is the most you've HAD to descend since you realized your ballast was all fucked up.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: So... why don't you roll... um...

Clint: Acrobatics?

Griffin: N— no. You're piloting a ship, right? So this is almost like a vehicle proficiency roll.

Clint: Should we— should I use the ship sheet?

Griffin: Um—

Clint: Ship sheet. [snorts]

Griffin: Speed— that would be plus speed. Uh. Why don't you actually... we'll just do dexterity, and since you are, like, you have been doing this for a while, take also your proficiency. So that is a plus six, total, with advantage.

Clint: Okay... so... dexterity... [sound of dice rolling] That is a 12. Um, plus three, which is a 15...

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: And you said... plus another six?

Griffin: Plus another three. So it's a 18— you got an 18 total.

Clint: 18! Okay.

Griffin: And then you have advantage if you want to roll again.

Clint: Well, wouldn't hurt! Um... okay... go, roll again... [sound of dice rolling] Um... that'd be a big ol' three, so I'll stick with the 18!

Travis: That's a good idea.

Griffin: Okay! Um... where are you trying to descend to?

Travis: It's nice because, you know, often times we say, if you want to learn how to play, like, role-playing games, don't— we're not the ones to go to. But I do think it's an important lesson to take away, that if you're rolling—

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: And you have the chance to choose between a really high number or a really low number...

Griffin: Oh, sure, yeah.

Travis: Take the high number.

Griffin: A lot of people don't know that! Isn't that fucked up?

Travis: Yeah. Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Take the higher—

Griffin: I mean I know we—

Clint: I didn't know 'til just now! I'm glad Trav pointed that out.

Travis: Sometimes on Critical Role, Matt Mercer will be like, "Take the low number!" and just to see who he can trick into it.

Griffin: And we're the ones who get shit, on Reddit!

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: Yeah.

Travis: Yeah.

Clint: Yeah.

Griffin: Even when Matt Mercer's like, "Take the low number! You missed."

Travis: "Take the low number. 'Cause it's like golf."

Justin: "Somepimes— somepimes it's better—" And they're like, "Did you say somepimes?" [giggling]

Clint: [cracks up]

Griffin: [chuckling] Okay. Where—

Clint: Alright, I say, towards the cathedral. That seems to be the main structure. Right?

Griffin: To like a, clearing? Near the cathedral?

Clint: Well I'm...

Griffin: You're not gonna land on top of the cathedral... I'm asking

Clint: No—

Justin: Stunts!

Travis: Well, 'cause remember, there's no water, inside the thing. So once we go through the barrier...

Clint: I was just saying, towards the, whatever bubble, and maybe... with our sensors? And our sharp eyes we would be able to detect some kind of... you know... bay, or some kind of opening, or something along those lines.

Travis: Oh yeah, that's a good question. Do we see any kind of like...

Griffin: No.

Travis: Other ships?

Griffin: No! You don't see any other ships here. Um... it's just, it is just this, um, sort of like, uh, almost ancient looking city? Like the houses, as you are descending and get closer to them, they just look like they were made out of... like... the clay, found at the bottom of the ocean. Like it is not, this is not some sort of technological sort of marvel. As far as you can tell. So there's no, like, hatches or anything to— no hangars, to bring your ship down into.

Clint: Where were the bubbles coming from, that— the communicating bubbles? Which structure?

Griffin: They were just popping out the top of another bubble. Like, just air was being expressed—

Clint: Yeah, but I mean what was that bubble around?

Griffin: The basilica. Coming from like, the top of the church.

Clint: Okay. Well then I say we try to find some place to set down...

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: Oh wait a minute. Once we set down, we ain't going back up.

Travis: Not without help!

Griffin: I would say, with the 18 that you rolled, you can find a spot at the end of one of those, like, rows of houses where you can kind of, like... park half in the water, half in the bubble.

Travis: And also at this point, if we don't... get somewhere dry, we can't fix our ship all the way?

Griffin: Right, exactly.

Travis: So it doesn't really matter.

Clint: Okay. So there's a place where we can set down, that is at least partially inside the air bubble...

Griffin: Right.

Clint: Without disruc— disrupting the air bubble.

Griffin: Yeah. Exactly.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: You can— you can put it down so basically the airlock opens up into the bubble.

Clint: Okay!

Griffin: And you're... you... yeah.

Clint: Alright.

Griffin: Okay!

Clint: That works. And would that be the end of one of those long buildings?

Griffin: Yeah, outside— out— at the end of one of those long rows, of buildings leading away from the church.

Clint: Okay. ...Then...

Griffin: Um, okay! You bring it down there, then. And land...

Clint: Perfectly! I mean—

Griffin: Well, I mean, you've got a busted ballast—

Clint: Textbook.

Griffin: And you're landing half inside of dry land. So it's not— you don't—

Travis: And it was a— it was an 18, a dirty 18—

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: It's not like...

Griffin: Yeah...

Clint: That's true.

[Ambient music begins with soundscape of a chugging engine]

Griffin: So you get the ship down, but it has not... I mean the ship hasn't felt right in a while. But you bring it down. And when you do, and you all approach the airlock, you can see through a window that there are people who are starting to gather around your ship. And they are looking at your ship, not like— there's no pitchforks or torches, like— they look very curious. And what's— [stutters] I guess, what's everybody doing? Is everybody leaving the ship? Are some folks staying behind? What's, what's the plan here?

Travis: Oh, yeah, man, Ona's going. If, like...

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Yeah, I think we should stick together.

Griffin: Okay!

[Music fades out]

Clint: Yeah, I say the three of us go, and we put Lieutenant... Somebody...

Travis: Yeah.

Clint: In charge of staying behind—

Travis: Lieutenant Red.

Clint: With the bathysphere. Yeah! There you go!

Griffin: Lieutenant—?

Clint: And I also would like—

Griffin: Lieutenant Bread?

Travis: It's short for Lieutenant Red Shirt. [chuckles]

Griffin: Oh, I thought you said Lieutenant...

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: I thought you said Lieutenant Bread. Which...

Clint: [giggles]

Griffin: I would ask that is actually who we change it to, if you don't mind?

Travis: Yeah, it's Lieutenant Bread, yeah.

Justin: [laughs] Why—!? Who else is on this ship?

Travis: His name is—

Justin: I didn't realize—

Griffin: There's Lieutenant Bread, there's, uh...

Travis: His name is Ryan Bread, and everybody just calls him Rye Bread.

Griffin: And he hates that!

Clint: Ohh! [laughs]

Griffin: So that's why he's joining the, the, the military. Uh—

Clint: I am writing down, right now! Rule number five, of Ethersea: Hominines love homonyms.

Griffin: Yes. That's—

Clint: I'm sorry, that's in as Rule Number Five.

Griffin: I don't think that's a homonym as much as it is a rhyming word? But that's... that's good...

Travis: I think it's just a pun? Actually?

Griffin: It's nothing.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: I regret saying it. Because of how much show it just took up.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Um— there's about a half dozen of, uh, Joshy's... Joshy's acolytes, who have come along with you, at the request of Finneas Cawl. Some of them stay behind. How many of them do you want to stay behind? You got six, in total.

Justin: I mean, six, right?

Clint: Yeah.

Justin: They're not gonna be very interesting in the story.

Griffin: [amused] Okay, that's fine.

Travis: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh—

Clint: Yeah. Leave them here, and—

Bertrand: I think it should just be the three of us.

Ona: The— the brain trust!

Clint: And I would also like to suggest that... I don't know what kind of signal it sends... We are explorers, obviously, but I think Bertrand ought to be armed.

Justin: I— oh, I have a— I have a...

Bertrand: You all go ahead, I forgot my... tools.

Ona: I—

Bertrand: Wink.

Ona: I don't know that we should be approaching... them with any kind of... weapons? I— I—

Justin: I'm just getting my tools— I'm getting— I just said "my tools."

Ona: Yes, but then you winked.

Bertrand: I have something in my eye.

Ona: Okay...

Finneas: Oh, here, wait, let me— let me get that for you. Here ya go.

Ona: That was a very tender moment!

Bertrand: Thank you. Really tender. Thank you.

Ona: So gentle!

Justin: Alright. [laughing] Bertrand runs back onto the ship, to grab his bag of tools.

Griffin: Okay.

Finneas: Okay! That's good. That's good. And— and listen, I understand what you're saying, Ona, but listen, we... We don't know what the situation is out here. We don't know these folks. We need— we need to at least have some kind of back-up, just in case things get a little... y'know...

Ona: Finneas?

Finneas: Messy. Mmhmm?

Ona: I don't know how to tell you this. Um. And I know that sometimes you say I'm too cautious. But it is worth noting, we have a busted ballast. We are under the ocean in their dome, and there are way more of them than there are of us. If we have to resort to a back-up plan, it's going to get very bad.

Finneas: Well, yeah, but a back-up plan, to me, would be running away?

Ona: How?

Finneas: And if we're running away, back to the bathysphere or back to the ship, just, y'know, to be safe... um... I think I'd like to know Bertrand was there with his... [clears throat] tools.

Ona: Now see you did it too! Is it tools or is it weapons?

Bertrand: I just got tools.

Finneas: It's— it's tools! Wink.

Bertrand: Wait, wait wait wait. Uh—

Justin: I locked the ship from the outside. So they... in case anyone tries to come along, they don't... uh, they don't get in.

Clint: [imitating a car locking] Beep beep!

Griffin: Okay! You all step outside, then. And descend down a stairway that has popped out of the side of the ship. And you are now standing in front of a crowd of people. Who—

Travis: Ona is pretty tall, and kinda lanky—

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: And he is doing some deep bows!

Griffin: Okay!

Clint: [giggles]

Travis: Very, like, “thank— oh, what— thank you for having us!” Like, as gracious a guest as one could hope for.

Griffin: Then... um... make a... make a charisma check. Just a straight up charisma roll. To see how this influences their reception of you.

Travis: [sound of dice rolling] Uhhhh... a ten total?

Griffin: They all look at each other, and kind of laugh. Because you can actually already tell, these folks here are pretty excited, to see the three of you. But they also seem a little bit nervous to actually step forward and initiate actual conversation with you all.

Travis: I’ve just decided, as we are figuring out these characters for this little side trek here. I think that I’m gonna say that Ona is the kind of biologist where he studied a lot of animal behavior...

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: And totally thinks he knows how to handle...

Griffin: Oh, great!

Travis: Situations like this. Right?

Griffin: Awesome, great. Yeah, sure.

Travis: And so he makes himself... [laughs] Kinda small. And non-threatening. As he says,

Ona: Thank you so much for allowing us into your home.

Travis: And he's avoiding eye contact, so as not to seem threatening.

Ona: Please allow me to introduce my, my very good friends. This here is Bertrand. [pause] [quieter] Bertrand, say... say something.

Bertrand: Hi.

Ona: Okay. And this is Finneas Cawl!

Finneas: How y'all doing?

Ona: Um... And you might be?

Travis: And he bows again.

Griffin: They all look at each other, and whisper. And one of them walks forward. It is a young woman. Probably in her early 20's. And she steps forward. I think all— you all realize that none of the— this would be totally obvious if it wasn't true. None of these people have any kind of, like... fish features. Like the bodies that you found earlier.

Travis: Also, Griffin, are any of them recognizable as the Vanguard, that left?

Griffin: Umm... [vocalizes a thinking noise] Why don't you all make a... uh...

Travis: Noticing check?

Griffin: Make an investigation—

Travis: Oh, okay.

Griffin: Yeah, an investigation check.

Travis: Ugh, no. It's... I got a seven. Oh no wait, that was intimidation, excuse me.

Griffin: The words look very similar.

Travis: I have a 15 total.

Griffin: Uhhh... Zoox? Or, Dad? A 15 total also...

Clint: Uhh... 15.

Griffin: Uh... Bertrand?

Justin: Intimidation or investigation?

Griffin: [laughing] Investigation.

Clint: Investigation.

Travis: I— yeah, I hit the—

Griffin: Although if—

Justin: You guys all— you guys got me all confused. [sound of dice rolling] Uh... six. Plus. Zero.

Griffin: Uhh. So. Ona, and Finneas, you all do recognize a couple of the people here as the Vanguard, who left. And the Vanguard were like, pretty standoffish? They were kinda assholes, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: They thought, “we are the gatherers of this community, we aren’t treated with enough respect.” So like, they were very insular, before they stole the bathysphere and left. But, I mean, with a 15, you all do recognize a couple of those people, and you do put it together that they are Vanguard. Uh. I will also say, you do also notice a couple sets of twins here.

Travis: Cool.

Clint: Uh—

Griffin: Um—

Finneas: Uh, hey—

Justin: [nasally] Twins!!

Travis: [laughs] Twins!

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: [shouting distantly] Sorry! I actually held it in for four and half seconds—

Clint: [cracks up]

Justin: Which is a new record for me!

Griffin: Yeah, I’ll say, yeah!

Justin: That’s huge.

Finneas: Hey, fellas? Ha— hang on one second, folks. Fellas, uh, huddle up here real quick.

Travis: Ona bows his way over to the huddle.

Griffin: [giggles]

Finneas: [softly] We... we know some of these folks, don't we? Don't they look...

Ona: Yes! They're the Vanguard, that we've been looking for?

Finneas: Yeah, but I mean, remember anybody by name?

Ona: Oh, I'm not good with names.

Finneas: Remember any of them, Bertrand—?

Ona: I'm not good with names...

Finneas: Um. Well, they seem to like you. Why don't... can... how... I mean, surely they talk our language, then, right?

Ona: Well— yeah. Maybe... let's talk to them? And find out?

Griffin: Finneas—

Finneas: That's good.

[Gentle music plays]

Griffin: Finneas, you feel a tap on your shoulder. And—

Finneas: Hm!

Griffin: You turn around to see that young woman, who—

Finneas: [surprised] Whoa! Hey!

Griffin: Who, now you recognize her, as one of the Vanguard. That was, uh, on the beach. You probably never spoke to her or anything like that, but you have seen her around, and she says,

Woman: Hello, Finneas. I, uh... I was wondering if we would ever see you again. We're so excited that you and your friends have come to visit.

Finneas: Oh... oh, yeah. Go on, go on.

Woman: I'm Naomi. And... well...

Finneas: Naomi! Aw, Naomi, yeah, of course!

Naomi: Welcome to... welcome to our domain! We, um, how was your... was your journey? Was... are you all okay? Did you experience any problems making your way down here?

Finneas: Um. We had a little bit, a little bit, a few technical issues. That, to be honest with you, if we could get y'all's help, we would really appreciate it. A little trouble with the old craft.

Naomi: Oh.

Finneas: The old... with the wheels...

Naomi: Yes.

Finneas: So to speak.

Naomi: Our journey down here was pretty, uh, pretty trying, as well. What— what have— what brings you all here? To the ocean floor?

Finneas: Um. Well. Um. To be honest with you, we... [chuckles] Was looking for you! [laughs]

Naomi: For us?

Finneas: Yeah! Yeah! I mean, y'all left and were gone... and, y'know, we never... never seen you again! We were, y'know, to be honest, you kinda... y'know... borrowed our, our ship.

Naomi: Oh...

Finneas: And... I mean, it's all, y'know, water under the bridge, of course, or water over... [laughs] the bridge. Um. But... y'know, we coulda used it. A little bit. Little bit. But yeah! We were looking for you and our boat. We wanted to know what happened to you, why you never came back!

[Music fades out]

Griffin: She stops and smiles, and says,

Naomi: Okay, I think I understand now. I... One of our great regrets is that we stole the bathysphere when we did. It was foolhardy, and immature, of us. And we can of course return it to you. We obviously don't need it anymore; we've arrived at where we need to be. Um, we appreciate you coming to find us though. But this is... this is not really a situation where we need to be rescued.

Ona: Well, no, sorry, if I— if I may, it seems quite the other way around! This is perfect. We'll fix the Nightcrawler, that's our ship here. And then we'll take the bathysphere, and with those and some of the other ships, we will be able to start ferrying down the people on shore down to this, uh, new home, this salvation, that you found! It's perfect!

Griffin: She is like— everybody is— everybody just starts cheering. You see twins grabbing each other and looking at each other, just so excited, barely able to contain their joy. And Naomi says,

Naomi: I— [audibly smiling] That's... that would be a dream come true. I— Okay! I'm getting way ahead of myself. Um... there's someone that you should meet before we move any further. And— [stutters] if we do anything else, I feel like they will be upset that they are missing out on this moment. So, we'll leave some people here to start looking at your ship. And see what they can fix up. And you all come with me, and we can make your, y'know, make everybody very comfortable, and— but we should— we should get moving!

Ona: [quietly] Oh, yes, uh, Finneas and Bertrand, this is where they will take us before the leader.

Finneas: Hmm.

Ona: Perhaps some sort of alpha, if you're familiar with this term? And then we will supplicate ourselves to them. To show that we are submissive, to their leadership. And then they will accept us, and we'll be able to join them, here! In their herd, or pack, or however, whatever you want to call it.

Finneas: Mmhmm. Yeah. That, that's one way, it would... could probably go. One way it looks like it's gonna go. Um.

Clint: Alright. I need to say something out of character for a second.

Griffin: Sure!

Clint: Just, just— kickin'— [pause] I... I don't want to split the party up, but I'm wondering if Bertrand would stay behind to kind of supervise these repairs? Or is that...

Griffin: I mean, you can ask him.

Clint: No, you know— I don't— let's— I withdraw that. I withdraw that.

Griffin: M'kay.

Clint: I was following... I was following too logically!

Griffin: Sure.

Clint: Too story-wise...

Justin: I think it makes sense, but I feel like Bertrand would be— would stick with Finneas.

Clint: M'kay.

Justin: Maybe I could stick with Finneas, and, um... I'm sorry, Ona, could like, see what they could learn?

Clint: Okay.

Justin: And make sure nobody got in and tried to fuck with our shit?

Travis: Yeah, I think we should go meet this, this person, first.

Clint: Okay.

Travis: Um, but there's six other people, ostensibly, on the thing, so... And since, I think we can assume that Bertrand is not the only engineer-person there?

Griffin: Sure.

Travis: So, I don't think we need to worry too much about it.

Clint: Okay. I would... at the very least, and this is a complete sidebar. I would say that, just like he ran back to get the tools, maybe Bertrand runs back to the ship just to kinda tell the rest of the crew, "This is okay, these folks are gonna be working on the outside..." Right? Are they gonna be working on the outside? Of the ballast?

Griffin: Uh... yeah!

Clint: Okay. And just, is that okay? Do you mind if we just insert that little nugget in there, that that happened?

Justin: Yeah. He— Bertrand ran back and told them.

Clint: M'kay.

Griffin: Okay. Um...

Clint: Alright, let's go meet the... meet the high horse!

Griffin: [amused] Sure! You all are making your way through the city. And Ona, make a... make a perception check for me. Actually, everyone make perception check.

[sound of several dice rolling]

Travis: 17 plus three, a 20.

Clint: Ooooh, dirty 20!

Travis: A nasty 20.

Justin: 18 plus... well. Uh. Three. A 21.

Clint: Ooooh!

Griffin: And what did you get? Uh, Finneas? [pause] 14?

Clint: Finneas got a... 15.

Griffin: Okay! So...

Clint: So a 15, a 20, and a 21! We're perceiving the hell out of this!

Griffin: Yeah, everyone crushed it. You all saw... *everything*. As you are walking down this radial, toward the basilica at the back of the, y'know, the city...

[Wistful soft music fades in]

You all see a lot more, now not twins, but, y'know, triplets and quadruplets, and et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. You are seeing a *lot* of the same people, as you walk through. And at first maybe you think it's déjà vu. But there's one younger guy that you have seen, easily 15 of, just on this one walk.

Travis: Needless to say, because I'm sure everybody is in this group, but Ona is fascinated by this! Very excited...

Griffin: Yes.

Travis: By this.

Griffin: With a 20, and a 21, Ona and Bertrand, you also notice that these radial, sort of, pathways, leading back toward the basilica, there are what appear to be huge almost streetlights that are sort of positioned every 20 feet or so. And you notice that the bubbles that are overhead, surrounding the city, are sort of centered on those streetlights which have these huge glowing glass globes – ooh, that was fun – on top of each one. And, actually from your position inside the city, walking around in here, you notice that the bubbles appear to be moving, gently, like, expanding and contracting, just barely, but enough for you to notice it. Almost like they are being sort of inflated and deflated, in rhythm.

Ona: Naomi? I'm so sorry, I have— I— [stutters] Clearly this has been here long before the Vanguard arrived. How... old? How long has this city under the sea been here?

Naomi: That's a tough question. Because are you asking about the City, or the buildings and infrastructure that make up the city? Because—

Ona: Is it different? Oh! Um. I suppose, whichever's oldest.

Griffin: She says,

Naomi: This domain has existed from... [chuckles] So far back that our minds couldn't comprehend it. Not necessarily the dawn of time—

Ona: Fascinating.

Naomi: But awfully close to it. The buildings are always being expanded outward, as our community grows. And so, defining the exact age of that, would also be quite difficult. But—

Bertrand: Sounds like they're old.

Naomi: Yeah. Especially the Basilica. That is...

Clint: Griffin, how long has the Vanguard been gone?

Griffin: Uh, I don't know the exact amount of time, but it has been... I think you have only known that they have been gone for just a short while. Um.

[Music fades out]

Travis: Like two weeks?

Griffin: Because that is how—

Clint: Years? Months?

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Weeks, weeks. Like, the pickaxe thing, washed up onshore at the end of episode three of the set-up episodes?

Clint: 'Kay.

Griffin: And then this expedition is taking place in the middle of the fourth episode.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: So it's...

Clint: Then...

Griffin: They've— they left on this mission months ago. You've realized that they have been... something bad happened to them, weeks ago.

Clint: I wanna— okay, then I want to ask Bertrand a question.

Griffin: M'kay.

Clint: Um...

Ona: You mentioned the community. This is also fascinating to me! How long have the other residents been here? It seems well-established! But somehow, we've been completely unaware, of this underwater marvel! How long have they lived here? How did they get here?

Griffin: She looks around, and she says,

Naomi: Umm... that's a great question that I don't really know the answer to. But I'm sure Cambria will be able to fill you in on all the details.

Ona: So much to be studied! This is amazing.

Naomi: Yeah.

Griffin: She says,

Naomi: We're proud of it.

Finneas: Mmhmm. Cambria, I assume that's the high horse, we been talking about?

Naomi: Y— yeah, the Cambria is the first.

Finneas: Okay.

[Wistful music plays again]

Griffin: You all continue making your way down this pathway. There appears to be like some systems of irrigation, that you have started passing, that look like streams of algae, that are sort of moving across the city. You can actually see some in the neighboring radials as you get closer to the basilica, that are all sort of leading, like the branches of a tree, back into... back underneath that core, central building.

Travis: Oh! Ona's into that!

Griffin: Yeah, sure! There's a lot of stuff here that is probably quite fascinating to Ona. And you all make your way inside, of the basilica. And when you get in there you are standing in a big foyer that, despite the fact that this building is made up out of clay, it is SO ornate. So, like, intricately carved, this clay is. And there are doorways leading off into different sort of passages in this room. But Naomi leads you up these two curving stairways to this higher platform, with an enormous opening in. And she says,

Naomi: Okay! Um. Is everyone ready to go in?

Ona: I could not be more ready.

Bertrand: Uh... Could I talk to you, Ona, for a second, before we go in?

Ona: Um... uh... yes. A quick second, yes.

Finneas: Yeah, y'all have a— I wanted to talk to Naomi here a little bit too, so—

Bertrand: Alright.

Finneas: Y'all go ahead and have a little confab.

[Music fades out]

Bertrand: [quietly] Listen. This is bad. I can tell. This is bad. It may be bad, I dunno, listen, kinda bad. I'm going to leave my tools with you. And I'll go in with the boss. You hear anything— I mean anything— I got a cocking laser in the bag. Now, you don't have to use it as a weapon. Remember when I went back to tell— talk to the boys? I told 'em to keep an eye out for it, in case of trouble. You hear anything, you shine this cocking laser at the ship. They'll see it, and get over here, real quick—

Ona: But—

Bertrand: And real well-armed.

Ona: But I want to go in!

Bertrand: I understand, and I don't want to die, we all got wants, don't we?

Ona: But why would you think that this is bad? They've been wonderfully pleasant, and welcoming, and—

Bertrand: [heavy sigh]

Ona: Maybe you're just worried about nothing, and—

Bertrand: You haven't been through what I've been through. Eh? Trust me. You don't want to go in there by yourself. I'd stay out here, but if something goes wrong in there, I need to be there to protect the boss.

Ona: I... I... I will wait one minute while you go in, and get the lay of the land. But after a minute, I'm coming in. I have to find out, my curiosity is absolutely bubbling!

Bertrand: Give me five. I'll get a good read on the guy, I'll give you a shout, eh?

Ona: Two.

Bertrand: Two... and a half.

Ona: Two minutes and fifteen?

Bertrand: You drive a hard bargain, Ona.

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: [cracks up]

Justin: [snickers] So pointless. We'll be sure to track this exactly.

Travis: Yeah. We'll set a timer.

Griffin: Okay.

Finneas: And clarified— clarified butter! See, that's the key. If you clarify the butter before, leaves it all flaky, see?

Naomi: Yeah. Unfortunately, no cows. Alright!

Finneas: Oh!

Griffin: She opens up the doors, and Ona, Bertrand hands you the tool bag, as he walks inside, with Finneas. Um... as Finneas—

Ona: Yeah, sorry Naomi, I'll be right in. I feel a sneeze coming on? And I don't want to embarrass myself, inside. So I'm going to get my sneezes out... uh... here.

Griffin: She nods, and says,

Naomi: Oh, uh... okay. I'm not sure that's necessary, but, uh... okay.

Griffin: Uh—

Clint: Okay, this throws Finneas a little bit, so he makes eye contact with Ona, and then glances over at Bertrand. Trying to figure out what's going on.

Justin: And he, Bertrand mouths,

Bertrand: [softly] Two fifteen.

Finneas: Oh! Gosh! Okay, yeah, we gotta get a move on, it's 2:15 already. Alright!

Griffin: [laughs]

Finneas: In we go!

Travis: Hey Siri? Start a timer for two minutes and fifteen seconds.

Griffin: Don't actually do that.

Travis: No, not ten minutes and fifteen— Jesus!

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Naomi shuts the door, as Bertrand and Finneas walk in. And when that happens...

[Wistful music plays again]

It's like Ona just vanishes. Because this memory is happening in real time, but you are seeing it through the eyes of Finneas Cawl. So when Ona is no longer on Finneas's camera, so to speak, we don't know what is happening to them. The two of you, Bertrand and Finneas, make your way into this large chamber. And it is... it is cavernous, and it is dimly lit. And it's not quite as intricately carved as the rest of this facility. It is just the dome, that you can see from outside, like at the very center of this basilica. And the only light in this room is coming from a hole, in the very center of the room, that is maybe like, 80 feet in... diameter? Yes. Wait...

Justin: Yes.

Griffin: Yes. Uh...

Travis: Yeah, diameter is across the middle.

Griffin: Right. And it is... it's not just a flat hole, it's more like a volcanic, like, mound? And coming from it are these bright, hot, bubbles that are coming up out of nowhere, and just floating upward through the air. And they are hot enough that actually you can feel the temperature change in this room as you walk into it. And you hear a voice, coming from not just the hole, but like... it reverberates around the walls. It sounds like it is coming from absolutely everywhere. And the voice says,

Voice: [echoing] Welcome, Finneas. I've been anticipating this meeting, for quite a while.

Finneas: Um. Well... I have been too. Um. Who am I speaking to, right now?

Voice: The others have taken to calling me Cambria. I lived without a name for so long when there was nobody else, to name me.

Finneas: Hmm. Um. Well. Um. That... I'm glad you got a name now, that's a step forward. Um. Do you mind coming out here so we can see ya?

Cambria: Some find my form to be alarming. But know that I do not wish you or your people any harm. Quite the opposite: I want to save you.

Finneas: Good. Good. From, uh, what exactly?

Cambria: Hmm... from the end of the world. I am the progenitor, of every living thing...

[Music suddenly shifts, becomes dramatic and dark]

Cambria: For eons, I drifted below the ocean floor, a stew of organic compounds. And then, one day, the mosaic took form. I am the first two cells who decided to work together to form a higher purpose. I am... the first life.

Griffin: And from that vent, a blast of hot air shoots into this room. It hurts your eyes, and you feel like you're getting a sunburn. And then, it emerges, from this mound. And you see a towering, easily 40 foot tall pinkish white flatworm. With translucent frills, that undulate in the air. It's not even entirely out of the vent and it is towering 40 feet over you. And it leans down and says,

Cambria: Welcome home, children.

[Dramatic music plays out]

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