

The Adventure Zone: Ethersea – Episode 27

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Griffin: Previously on The Adventure Zone Ethersea:

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

Griffin: Finneas Cawl and a small crew dove beneath the waves in search of the Vanguard, and the vehicle they had 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.

Dad is playing Finneas Cawl. Justin is playing a character named Bertrand Bay. And Travis is playing Ona Ward.

The light shines across dozens of bodies. A few of them have scales. A lot of them are just people. Dead, dead people, obviously.

Ona: A city under the waves! We can simply move from the shore to whatever this city is!

Finneas: Don't you think that's a little... coincidental?

Griffin: You all do recognize a couple of the people here, as the Vanguard. You do also notice a couple sets of twins here.

Naomi: Hello, Finneas. We're so excited that you and your friends have come to visit.... There's someone that you should meet.

Cambria: The others have taken to calling me Cambria.... Some find my form to be alarming.

Griffin: And then... it... emerges. From this mound. And you see a 40-foot-tall, pinkish white, flatworm with translucent frills, that undulate in the air. And it leans down, and says,

Cambria: Welcome home, children.

[Ethersea theme music plays out]

Griffin: Finneas and Bertrand, you all are standing in front of the largest living organism... I— you know, I don't want to make decisions for your characters, but I'm gonna say, pretty decisively: this is possibly the biggest living thing. On the planet.

Travis: Could you give us, like, in, like, in stories? Feet? Like, how big is this— what we can see— what THEY can see of it, 'cause Ona—

Clint: Forty feet of— forty feet of pink undulation, is what we can see.

Travis: Forty feet. So, uh, roughly like—

Griffin: And that's just—

Travis: A four story tall building.

Griffin: That's just what's sticking out of—

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: This, like, this mound at the center of the room.

Travis: Got it, got it, got it.

Griffin: You can't detect, like, eyes. There are no sort of recognizable features, that one would traditionally kind of look for, when speaking to a thing that is able to speak. Um. It just seems to be craning over the two of you.

[Dreamy music begins playing]

And... it... is... it is... [laughs] I was about to say, after saying that it doesn't have eyes, that it's looking at one of you. Um. But it seems to be sort of

pivoted slightly in your direction, Finneas. Almost like this explanation, they are delivering, to you. It hovers over you, and it says,

Cambria: [slow and echoing] For an epoch, I have spread life throughout the ocean, and onto the land. And everything in this world was my brood. And then the vestiges appeared, in a hole in the sky, and changed everything. Poisoned everything. I refuse to allow the eradication of my mortal children, at the hands of those interlopers. And so, I have... a humble objective. And that is to transform my children into something that can thrive in the harsh and irradiated world that the vestiges have left for them.

Finneas: Mm. Okay. That... is... um... very eye opening. Very, very, uh... Bertrand? Wouldn't you say that's eye-opening? That's eye-opening, innit?

Bertrand: I'm riveted, boss.

[Dreamy music fades out]

Finneas: Yeah! Um. Can we... This, this thing about children, you know when you said "welcome home, children," was that, like, just... speaking in a broad way? You know, like when a cartoon TV host says "come on in, children, sit down on them bleachers." I mean, you're not like claiming to be like our great great great grandparent or something... [laughs] Are ya?

Cambria: We do not have time for me to enumerate the number of "greats" required—

Finneas: Mmm.

Cambria: To describe my relation to you.

Finneas: Hmm. Mmhmm. Not much family resemblance, though. I mean...

Cambria: Perhaps not from your perspective.

Finneas: Oh-kay! We should probably, uh, go out, into the world, and... and be fruitful and multiply. Um. Right?

Bertrand: This is a new one on me, boss.

Finneas: [quietly] Yeah, I'm not even sure what an epoch is. Um.

Bertrand: It's like... 30 years?

Finneas: Oh, okay.

Bertrand: I think?

Griffin: [laughs]

Bertrand: Four— maybe 40?

Finneas: And a Vestige? What's a Vestige?

Travis: No, you know what that is!

Bertrand: It's like—

Griffin: These are the— the literal Gods of this planet.

Justin: Some people who might have missed the earlier episodes—

Griffin: That's fair.

Justin: Might be missing a little bit of the lore. I think what Dad, who understands the lore completely—

Clint: Yeah.

Justin: What he may be trying to do here, is illustrate... like...

Griffin: Oh, that's nice.

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: Dad—

Clint: I want—

Travis: That's really kind and thoughtful of you!

Griffin: That's very generous—

Justin: It's about trying to give— to give Griffin an opportunity to remind people.

Clint: It's about the listener, yeah, yeah.

Griffin: The vestiges were, essentially, visitors from another world, who came to this world through a hole in the sky. When they got here, they possessed powers that essentially allowed them to... like, overnight, conquer the world. And civilizations sprung up around their feet. Um. And, you know, life was like that, for a very long time, until the vestige Benevolence sort of gifted the mortals of this world, the power of the vestiges. And that is where magic came from. And, of course—

Travis: And it poisoned the oceans.

Griffin: All of that sort of— right— irradiated the land and sea and sky, and led to the storm that would destroy the world and force everybody to go below the sea.

Clint: Yeah! Right. Well, thank you for telling the listener. I knew that.

Griffin: Of course.

Travis: Of course.

Clint: [mumbling] Always good to reiterate.

[Dreamy music plays again]

Griffin: Uh. Cambria now sort of coils, a little bit. And you see more of its body, kind of, with surprising quickness, kind of emerging from the hole.

And they sort of lay across this coil of themselves. And they get pretty close to you, Finneas. And they say,

Cambria: I have been waiting for you, Finneas Cawl. I... follow your exploits, just as I follow all of my children's. And I believe you have knowledge and skills that would be most useful, for me to accomplish my objective. I was hoping that you might agree to stay, and work alongside me, to save the rest of your mortal brethren.

Finneas: Oh... aw, that is... that is extremely flattering. [laughs nervously] I... I... uh, I don't know if I'm worthy of that, but, uh. I'll be honest with you there, Cambria, we've kinda got a... we kinda got a plan? A strategy, in place? Um. And, you know, um, I know my good buddy outside, uh, was— Ona, was talking about, maybe we could move down here and live in your bubble town. And, you know. You know, if that is an option, and if we end up doing that, I'd be glad to sit in on a meeting here or there, kinda kick things around a little bit.

Griffin: The room vibrates, and there is a sound...

[Horror string music plays alongside the dreamy soundscape]

Griffin: That is so low, that you can actually— you can barely hear it. And... these flecks of white light kind of come off it the frills around Cambria. And it seems like this being is, is excited by that. And they say,

[Horror string music ends]

Cambria: We would need to expand our city to make room for those in your community, but this would be most equitable.

Griffin: They say.

Finneas: See, Cambria... that is... that's good. Um. We kinda had this idea, of kinda, you know, moving down under the waves. Uh, but we sorta need our bathysphere, to kinda get that, you know, kick that off? And that's why we're down here, ya know the whole thing about moving into Bubble Town is just kind of a... a backup plan.

Griffin: With that, they retreat back down into the hole, even more than they were, before. Now just a little— little nubbin of Cambria is sticking out. And they say,

Cambria: Uh— oh. I... understand. I know about what your community is attempting to accomplish, and I am very proud of the ingenuity and refusal to die. But you will fail. And this is the only way. So I'm afraid I must insist.

Griffin: And when they say that, the door opens. And...

[Music changes]

You don't see Ona out there anymore. But you—

Travis: Because he's turned invisible! Little did you know, this whole time!

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: He was a vampire! Mummy. Magic invisible man. Uh. No, there's, there's like a dozen people, down here. All the people down here, by the way, are wearing... sort of tatters? They seem to be wearing, like, leather? Although it's not really any kind of leather that you have seen before. It's like a pale greenish leather. And they got— they got some big folks standing in front of the door, sort of menacingly. And Cambria says,

Cambria: I would like for your community to come and join us. But I am hoping that you will volunteer to stay by my side, Finneas Cawl.

Finneas: Um... You know, I'm gonna, I'm gonna level with ya, Cambria. Um. I— I'm not too keen on that idea? Um. The folks, folks back topside, need me to help with this whole transition period. Um. And, uh, and Bertrand. Bertrand too. Bertrand's a big cog in the machine as well. Just like me. And so's Ona. Speaking of Ona, where, uh, [chuckles nervously] where is... Ona?

[Music fades out]

Griffin: One of the— one of the folks standing by the door walks forward, and says,

Guard: Uh, Ona asked for a tour. Um. And so we offered to show him around.

Finneas: Hm. Well. Um. I'll be honest, I'm... like I said, I'm very flattered. Bertrand? Are you flattered for me?

Bertrand: Yeah, boss. Real flattered.

Finneas: Um. But, you know, Bertrand's really a stay-at-home kind of guy. I mean, we're tickled we even got him to, y'know, come out here on the Nightcrawler, to do all this, on this... this mission. 'Cause he really likes, you know, putting the ol' feet up at the end of the day and having him a nice hot toddy. Isn't that right, Bertrand?

Bertrand: Oh— yes. I love... drinking.

Clint: [wheezes with laughter]

Finneas: So I tell you all, we're... We'll just head out. And we're gonna keep looking for our bathysphere. And we will come back, as soon as possible. To... to, uh, you know, strike up communications again with y'all. Maybe be, like, really good neighbors and friends and everything else? But... no, I'm, I... I'm not... I'm not gonna stay. I've got, I got things to do.

Griffin: [slowly] Make a dexterity saving throw, Finneas. [stifling a giggle]

Clint: Ooh!

Travis: Oh, no.

[pause]

Justin: Adventure's going good.

Travis: Yeah, never a good sign, is it.

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: There's never been like, a fun dexterity saving throw.

Travis: Yeah, except for like, "Make a dex— oh you failed, you get a good hug out of nowhere!"

Clint: [sound of dice rolling] That was 17!

Travis: Oh, yeah!

Griffin: Uh...

Justin: Something hits you in the back of the head! And it's a fresh ham and cheese sandwich!?

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: What!?

Justin: [laughing] Wow!

Travis: Just what you were thinking of!

Griffin: You hear a whistling—

Travis: Something hit you! It's inspiration! [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: [wheezes] It's a great new melody! Your career is saved!

Travis: [chuckles]

Griffin: Uh... [laughs] You hear a whistling sound coming from behind you, and you register it just fast enough to duck out of the way. And you see what appears to be like a bolo just kind of fly right over your head. And it

actually bumps into— it whacks, full force, into Cambria, who does not register it, or flinch, or anything at all. As it sails over your head, you turn to see the guard who was just speaking to you about Ona is the one who threw it. And now... he looks, “oops!” Um...

Travis: “I was just playing with my fidget spinner!?” [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: [laughing] “I accidentally threw it at you...”

Griffin: It is not... it’s not just the dozen guards, that were standing by the door, now, that are coming in. It is, it’s like, Black Friday at Target in here. There is a swarm of people, now, starting to walk into the room. And Cambria retreats, down, into the ground.

Finneas: Easy, folks... [laughs nervously] Oh, ho, ho... I just, uh, ‘scuse us. Could we just scoot right through here? Just, uh, find— looking for our friend... we, uh... Oh, wow, look at the time! It was 2:15 earlier, and now I know it’s gotta be later than that! So, um. Bertrand, why don’t you, uh, find a way through this crowd, and I— we’ll get out of here. Okay?

Bertrand: Ye— yeah. Everyone... clear out. Or... that’s it. For you. Curtains. Aye?

Clint: [chortles]

Griffin: [giggles]

Bertrand: I’m sorry, boss, I’m real bad—

Finneas: I know—

Bertrand: Under pressure.

Finneas: I know it, it's alright, but you're big, and just— I think if you just kinda push your way forward, they'll very politely part the sea and let you through.

Justin: Okay. Um, I'm gonna int— so I'm trying to intimidate them.

Griffin: [laughing] Okay!

Justin: That was me trying to intimidate them.

Griffin: Alright.

Justin: [sound of dice rolling] [sighs] A seven.

Travis: Yeah, that tracks.

Griffin: Yeah, no. They're not particularly intimidated by Bertrand. In fact, Bertrand... uh... the big guard that threw that bolo, is— has now gotten to you. And is trying to put you basically in a full Nelson. To kind of secure you, for the rest of the people that are almost, now, on top of you. Let's do a strength contest.

Justin: Okay. [sound of dice rolling] Eight!

Griffin: Uh. That is a 16. Yeah. They, they have you pretty well grappled, at this point, and—

Justin: Alright!

Griffin: And a few other people are starting to—

Justin: That's— I got 'em right where they want— um— I got 'em— right where I'm—

Griffin: [cracks up]

Travis: Yep!

Justin: Got 'em right where I'm gonna get 'em! This time...

Griffin: [laughing] Right.

Travis: Oh, yeah—

Travis: Well, they can't attack Finneas, if they're holding you!

Justin: [triumphant laugh] Hehehehe! I've eliminated one from the— one, one piece has been removed from the board!

Travis: Ah ha ha!

Griffin: There's maybe... there's maybe 30 people in here right now.

Travis: Well. Now there's only 29 to worry about!

Justin: Yeah, which leaves 29 for Finneas!

Griffin: Sure.

Travis: That's like when Robin takes one henchman...

Griffin: Right, sure—

Travis: And Batman's like, "I'll get the rest."

Griffin: Yeah, let's see— let's see what Batman does.

Travis: Except if Batman was Alfred. [laughs]

Griffin: Right. What are y—

Clint: So I assume I have all of Zoox's spells I can use, right?

Travis: Yeah, you're thinking that Finneas is gonna shoot some crayfish out of his nose?

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah, I don't know about spells. I would say your stats and probably your equipment could be the same.

Clint: Okay. I... I believe he's gonna scoop up the bolos, and whack the guy over the head, that's holding onto...

Griffin: Bertrand?

Clint: Holding onto Bertrand.

Griffin: Okay! Uh. Go ahead and make an attack roll. Why don't you just roll your hand crossbow, since it's a ranged weapon.

Clint: Okay. [sound of dice rolling] That is a... 12!

Griffin: Shoo. Is that— does that include the plus eight? Oh it does, unfortunately.

Clint: Yep.

Griffin: Um. Okay. With a 12, you bash this bolo, against this dude's head. The rope on the bolo was a little bit shorter than you thought it would be, so it doesn't really connect with, like, y'know, the crown of his skull or anything like that. It just kinda scrapes across the side of his head. And when that happens, it dashes what appears to be, like, green goo, down to the floor. And a portion of his head is just like, missing? Where you cracked into it. And you see that same green goo there, and then it sort of... re-forms. Only his head is like, a little weird shaped now? But it is, it is essentially sealed back up. Um...

Finneas: How did this guy beat you in a strength check? Look at him! It just— I just barely touched him, big chunks of him came off, Bertrand!

Bertrand: We all have bad days, don't we, boss?

Finneas: Eh, I suppose.

Griffin: Uh—

Travis: Hey, maybe you guys should stop real quick and have a talk about Finneas's management style?

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: [chuckles]

Travis: Finneas. That is not a way to talk to your employee!

Griffin: At this point, another guard— in fact, a twin of the one that is holding Bertrand— has tried to just grab you by the neck, Finneas. So let's have ourselves a strength contest.

Travis: Yeah, see how you like it!

Clint: Alright!

Travis: Boss man!

Justin: Oh, you better pass it or else you'll never hear the end of it.

Clint: That's a strength saving throw?

Griffin: Uh, no, just a strength contest, just roll your strength check. You're gonna have to... you're gonna have to nat 20 it, I think to succeed here.

Clint: Strength check...

Travis: Yeah, just click— uh—

Clint: Yeah, I got it, I got it! I see it. Yeah. Strength... [sound of dice rolling] And that would be an eight!

Travis: Woo!

Griffin: No. You are... you are... I think with the sheer number of people in here, you are held by this huge guard. Just for a few moments, and that is all that you— that is all that is required for you to be pulled down to the ground, by now this big crowd of people. And you feel—

Travis: Now that they're dead, can we jump over to Ona real quick, and see what he's up to?

Clint: [giggles]

[Quiet dreamy music begins]

Griffin: You feel another sort of heavy impact, on your temple. And you are unconscious. And as you are unconscious, the memory vanishes for all of you, y'know, watching it, for a moment.

[Dreamy music plays out]

[Advertisement break]

[Ads end]

Griffin: The image starts to come back on.

[Tense string music begins]

Griffin: And you, Finneas, can see just green. You see shapes in green light. And... I think it takes Finneas a little bit longer to realize, than Zoox, and the rest of the people watching this memory, that he is not breathing. He's not being, y'know, suffocated, he does not seem to be dying, but he is... he is not breathing air. In fact, he is suspended, in a cylinder of green fluid. Um. And you have regained consciousness. You can see some shapes through this green fluid, but you are, like... you are... uh... wearing just sort of your skivvies? And that's it. But you are conscious now. What do you do?

Clint: Um. I can see, out of the tube?

Griffin: Barely. Barely. Your eyes can not see through this, like— it's fairly viscous, this fluid, so your eyes are not able to really see out of it very well.

Travis: Are you saying like he's getting, like, shadows, or outlines, or? How much is he getting?

Griffin: He's getting... uh... you can see that there is room, out there. You can tell sort of the dimensions of the cylinder that you are in, and you can see that there is more happening outside.

[Music fades out]

Clint: Well I think initially he would test the walls of the cylinder. You know, to see, y'know, what they're made of.

Griffin: Yeah. Uh...

Clint: Uh... perception check?

Griffin: Uh...

Clint: Well, I mean, if he can't see anything.

Griffin: Okay, yeah, an investigation check, I would say, would be sufficient. Yeah! It's small enough, this chamber, that you can feel around it, so I'm not gonna make you roll with disadvantage or anything like that.

[sound of dice rolling]

Clint: 'Kay. 12.

Griffin: Yeah, it's— there's some give, to this cylinder. Like, as you press your hands against it, you feel it kind of stretch. Like there is some sort of, um... uhh... I'm trying to find a word other than "mucus-y?" What's... membrane! There's a membrane there. That feels pretty... I don't know, pretty lightweight. It's not like you are actually in, you know, uh, thick glass,

or something that would be... y'know, that you would need some sort of tool to smash out of.

Travis: Dad! Use Finneas Cawl's famous knife-sharp penis, to cut your way out.

Justin: [bursts into laughter]

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: [snickers] Well, that would fit in with "everybody's got a knife!"

Travis: Yeah!

Griffin: Yeah...

Travis: That's where it came from! Everyone knows. That Finneas Cawl had his penis sharpened [laughs] to a fine edge.

Clint: Um. I think the obvious thing is, he tries to push through the membrane.

Griffin: Okay! Um... make a—

Clint: Or eat through it, but I'm not ready to go there yet.

Travis: No— hmhhh.

Griffin: So you're trying—

Travis: Let that be Plan B.

Griffin: Plan B? Okay. Give me a— give me a strength check.

Clint: Come on, come on... [sound of dice rolling] Nat 20!

Griffin: Fuck yes!

Travis: There it is!

Griffin: Uh... you—

Justin: Proud of you, Mac.

Clint: Thank you, bud.

Griffin: You, with that, you just shove both your hands through it, and rip it open. And ride this wave of green jelly down to the floor, which you land on, on your feet.

Travis: Now just in case anyone was curious, that tally now brings us to two times someone has come out of a goo-filled chamber, basically naked—

Griffin: Technically three—

Travis: In Adventure Zone history.

Griffin: Technically three, we had two in Balance. Right?

Travis: Oh I guess that's true! Yeah, so three!

Clint: Yeah!

Travis: Yeah yeah yeah!

Griffin: Yeah. You are standing in—

Travis: Hey Griffin, what's your thing with goo-filled chambers? Huh?

Clint: It's a motif!

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: Let's not invent another kink for Griffin.

Travis: Okay—

Clint: It's a motif!

Justin: The man's carrying enough.

Griffin: Another— yeah—

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Boy, I sure do love: that nasty stuff.

Travis: [cackles]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: You are in a—

Travis: If we could find a goo-filled elevator, Griffin would be in heaven!

Griffin: Mmhmm. [giggles] Then you realize that this chamber has been moving up and down! To various levels!

Travis: [bursts into laughter]

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: [cracks up]

[Low ominous music begins]

Griffin: You are in a room that is solely lit by faint lights inside of dozens of similar cylinders, like the one that you just broke out of. Which, by the way, as you breach that cylinder, you realize like, "Oh shit! I haven't breathed, in a while." And some pretty gnarly stuff comes out of your, of your throat, before you are able to sort of really get your bearings again.

Clint: Oh! Eugh! [coughs, retches]

Griffin: Yeah, it sounds like that.

Clint: No, I'm really gagging. Thinking about it.

Griffin: Oh, okay.

Travis: Oh. Gross.

Clint: [gags and retches]

Griffin: With the dim green light in this chamber, you can see that there are these cylinders all over. And in... I would say about half of them, you see silhouettes, that are vaguely person-shaped. And r—

Clint: Are any of them really big person shaped? Like, a very big person?

Griffin: Um...

Travis: Like Bertrand shaped!

Griffin: Like Bertrand shaped? Um, why don't you roll an—

Travis: Or like— or like a very tall, as we said, Ona is very tall and lanky.

Griffin: Sure, why don't you roll an investigation check.

Clint: 'Kay! I will. [sound of dice rolling] Ah! The magic continues. Four!

Travis: Ooh.

Griffin: Umm... I mean, there's all kinds of shapes, man.

Travis: [snorts] That's beautiful, Griffin.

Clint: Okay—

Griffin: With a four—

Justin: That's really nice.

Griffin: With a four, you— I mean, I don't even think you necessarily need to investigate to... we'll say this. The pod next to yours, just like, the first one that you see, as you investigate. You can see pretty clearly that there is a sort of humanoid shape inside of there. But as you get closer, you realize you can see through the shape. And that that shape is not, in fact, a person body like your body. It is... a nervous system. And...

Travis: Whoa.

Griffin: Uh... sort of... a few beginnings of a skeleton, happening in there. This is a—

Travis: Micro-bones!

Griffin: Micro-bones, sure. This is a... this is a pre-person. [chuckling] Essentially. That you see in the tank.

Clint: Eugh.

Griffin: There are other folks sort of around the room. You do see like, complete bodies, in the room around you. But that's what I will give you with an investigation roll of a four, like that.

[Music fades out but ambient soundscape continues]

Clint: Alright. I wanna look around and see if there's any kind of technology, or any kind of controls, or machinery, or anything like that.

Griffin: Um... okay! Why don't you make another investigation check.

Clint: [sound of dice rolling] 13!

Griffin: Okay! Uh, there isn't any kind of machinery, or anything kind of control apparatus, that you can see. What you do put together is that on the floor, there is a, um... like, a canal, of this green algae that enters the room through the sole entrance into the room, and in fact you can actually see,

following that algae out of the room, that this connects sort of back into the main foyer of this, this huge temple that you walked into. As it enters the room, it branches off, and then basically there's like one little tributary that goes to each of these tanks, seemingly feeding into it. And... yeah. That is all you can see. Everything that is happening in here— I think Finneas is sharp enough to figure out— is like, an organic process.

Clint: Mmhmm.

Griffin: That does not appear to need any kind of input from, you know, some lab technician, or anything along those lines.

Clint: Okay! I got an idea.

Griffin: 'Kay.

Clint: Um. Finneas strips off his skivvies. Completely. All of his skivvies.

Griffin: Okay?

Clint: And jams it into the canal, at some point...

Griffin: [giggles]

Clint: Where it will stop filling the tributaries.

Travis: Classic. Classic Finneas.

Griffin: Okay. Uh...

Travis: That dude uses his underpants for everything!

Clint: Uh! Skivvies could be an undershirt too! Just wads them all up...

Travis: Hey Dad? Hey Dad!? You know you weren't thinking of an undershirt.

Clint: Ahh— I—

Travis: You know you were thinking of underpants. You know you were! I know you!

Clint: Underpants, and an undershirt! As a matter of fact, I envisioned kind of a onesie, kind of thing.

Griffin: Okay—

Travis: Okay, yeah! Still.

Clint: And he's jammed it into that canal, before it splits in the tributaries, to keep the flow from those tubes, in the hopes that they'll drain out, and reveal which one of these people is Bertrand... maybe Ona...

Griffin: Um...

Clint: Maybe Jimmy Hoffa, who knows! [chuckles] Amelia Earhart.

Griffin: Okay! Yeah! That's a fun idea! You... uh, I'm not gonna make you roll for this. Because— mostly because you've just debased yourself so thoroughly.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Uh, you wad up all your clothes, and jam it into a bottleneck in the algae stream that is going into this room. And it doesn't stop it, because that's not how fluid physics works? But it, like, instead of it following these pathways cleanly, it starts to, like, pool around the, the, floor. Like it overflows the canal coming into here. It doesn't necessarily immediately drain out all the tanks in this room. But you... you do start to— You get the sense that things are happening, because the pods are starting to swell and compress, like very gently, but rapidly. And as you are looking at that, you hear a voice behind you, say,

Voice: Uh, what are you doing there?

Griffin: And you turn to see a person wearing the same sort of pale green leather garb, looking at you. And they say,

Person: Did you... did you just pop out? Do you— we weren't scheduled for any arrivals today.

[Soundscape fades out]

Finneas: Um.

Clint: And Finneas just, uh, looks at him, and kinda... winks at him.

Travis: [snorts]

Person: What's that— what's that supposed to mean?

Finneas: Uh... Hey there.

Travis: Huh!

Clint: And winks again.

Travis: Huh! This is interesting!

Person: Hey... uh... well, hey there. Listen, you— you... Which pod did you just... did you just come out of that pod there? What did— what— [stutters] I didn't think that people were supposed to be able to— be able to do that!

Finneas: Mmhmm?

Travis: Maybe wink harder?

Clint: Wink— wink— I'm blinking with both eyes.

Travis: Ah, nice.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: Really nice.

Griffin: Uh. As you are—

Travis: Do it in like a confusing pattern.

Griffin: As you are trying to... I don't know what the fuck Finneas is trying to do right now—

Clint: He's looking confused! He's like, he can't answer, he doesn't—

Griffin: Okay!

Clint: "Oh, what happened? How'd I get out of here? Wha— Uhh?"

Travis: Oh yeah, I like this.

Griffin: This guy—

Clint: And he's naked!

Griffin: Sure!

Travis: He's naked, right?

Griffin: Uh, as he—

Travis: That's not threatening!

Griffin: As he starts to walk toward you, you can see this dude is—

Travis: And he says, "Put that knife away! Oh wait! Oh God!"

Griffin: "Wait, that's your dick!"

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Um. He looks just as confused. And he kinda gets close to you, and looks down at you. As you are looking at him, you see, behind him, sort of standing with his back flat to the door, the door that this guy just came into, you now can see Ona. Who appears, uh... harried. Uninjured, I would say, but clearly not the chill-est you have ever seen Ona, who is sort of behind this dude, who has not noticed that Ona is there. And just like that, our vision of Ona is, like, exists again. Now Ona is sort of back on the board, as we are viewing him through the memories of Finneas Cawl.

Travis: So, Ona... this might not surprise anybody. He got bullied a lot as a kid. For being a bit of a nerd. And he is going to, in classic fashion, he's going to get on his hands and knees right behind this guy.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: And kinda nod at Finneas as he quietly gets in place. Like, right, you know what I mean? Perfect. Perfect position!

Griffin: Yeah. Okay!

Clint: And Finneas is gonna go running at this guard guy, saying,

Finneas: You saved me! Thank you!

Clint: And runs full at him.

Griffin: Okay... uh, make a... huh. Make a performance check. I want to know how off-guard you're gonna catch this guy.

Clint: Ten.

Griffin: Ten? You know what? Uh... uh... I... that's fine. Given that this is a teamwork attack, I will say a ten—

[Fast dramatic music begins playing]

Clint: I am naked! I mean, you know—

Travis: Yeah!

Griffin: Yeah, it is— it is surprising, what you are doing. You run towards this guy, and he kinda puts his hands up, like, “whoa whoa whoa whoa whoa!” But as you sort of bump into him, he falls backwards, over Ona. And... [laughs] Ona, I bet you’ve had this done to you, more than once. Um. But the result is different. As this guy falls to the hard stone floor, his head smashes into that same green goo.

Travis: Mmhmm.

Griffin: And scatters, like... ten feet out, in every direction. And—

Travis: Now— As Devo does not know, because Finneas does not know...

[Music fades out]

Griffin: Uh, you mean—?

Travis: So I will have to ask you. Is this the first time, in this experience, that Ona has seen...?

Griffin: You— Ona definitely knows some shit is up. Like—

Travis: Right, okay.

Griffin: Like, definitely, knows some shit is up.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: They won’t let Ona go back to the ship; that’s for fuckin’ sure.

Travis: Uh huh.

Griffin: They are very forceful about that.

Ona: Finneas! Oh! Finneas. Um... here!

Travis: And he hands Finneas his cloak. His coat. What have you.

Finneas: Oh! Right. Thank you. [laughs] Eh... okay...

Clint: And he wraps it around him backwards. You know. So it covers his... you know. Knife. Area.

Travis: Yes. I— yes, we get it.

Ona: Um. Are you... and I know that this is gonna seem relative at this point, but are you okay?

Finneas: Yeah! Yeah! I mean, I just coughed out a... y'know, a lime jello shot out of my lungs, five or six or seven, but... somewhere in one of these tubes, I think, is Bertrand. And... since he hasn't pushed out, I gotta figure there's something wrong. We gotta figure out which one of these he's in.

Ona: Huh!

Griffin: As you say that, you hear the sound of one of those membranes rupturing, and the liquid inside come pouring out. And you see...

[Ominous music begins]

A small man, not— definitely not Bertrand. You can tell in an instant that that is not what Bertrand looks like. But he is sort of on his hands and knees in this slime that poured out. And he is gasping. And he looks up at the two of you, and you see a face unlike any you've ever seen before. He has these huge like, gaping gills, on his neck. And his lower jaw seems to be much, much, much too big, covered in scales, and his eyes are pitch-black. And it— these features that he has kind of look like the ones on the corpses that you saw down in the trench, back out in the ocean. But way more sort of advanced, in terms of like, fishiness. Uh, and he stands up, and tries to just breathe. And he can't. And he falls over, dead.

[Music fades out]

Travis: Uh, Ona wants to do— is going to study that person and the tubes real quick.

Griffin: Okay! Make an investigation check?

Travis: Based on a theory... yes.

Griffin: Okay!

Travis: [sound of dice rolling] So, a 15 total.

Griffin: Sure! What is your theory— what are you investigating for?

Travis: Um. So, I think the thing that these tubes remind him of are test tubes. Uh...

Griffin: 'Kay.

Travis: Seeing this thing, right, is gonna immediately connect to the bodies that they saw. So what he wants to see is, is it in the same state, as those dead bodies that we found in the Nightcrawler, or is this different, more advanced, what are we looking at?

Griffin: Uhhhhh... Hmm. Uhh. So... it's... it is— I mean you didn't really get a chance to inspect the bodies that you saw down in the trench, right? Visually—

Travis: Only visually, yeah.

Griffin: Visually, like, it's... it is very very similar. The body itself seems to have sort of the same kind of, like non-solid make-up as the dude that you just dashed to the ground...

Travis: Uh huh.

Griffin: Who just seemed to turn back into the algae that is on the floor. This body though is a bit more solid than that. And you are, like, a physician, right, a biologist, you know shit about bodies?

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: This thing's physiology is like... not the physiology of something that can survive. It...

Travis: Got it.

Griffin: Because of the fish-like features that were just heaped on top of these person features.

Travis: Right, right, right. So we got like, gills connecting to lungs, and it's just not working.

Griffin: Right! It's like, it does not— it does not make sense.

Travis: Got it, got it, got it.

Griffin: Um, so, you know that, like, this is... these are test tubes, in that they are experiments. But that this being that just came out of this tank, and died, was like, alive, for a little bit. Um. I would also say that you also know that this goo, that was in there, with them was sustaining their life. Like, it is a... it is a... a fluid that they were breathing. And assumedly, Finneas was breathing, even though it is a liquid. And you have never seen—

Travis: Well I'm taking a sample of that!

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: That's fascinating!

Griffin: Okay.

Ona: I... Finneas, I... okay. I am forming a hypothesis, but I believe the bodies that we found out there, on our way here? Those are failed experiments. They're working towards... something! They're— [stutters] um... This may not be... uhh... the underwater utopia that I had first took it to be. We should go!

Finneas: Mmhmm! Yeah! I think so! And—

Ona: Oh, this explains all the twins! They're making people! Okay, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes...

Finneas: Yeah, Ona, good! Good, good! And... uh... way to go! Way to figure it out! Now help me find Bertrand, dammit!

Ona: And you were in the tubes?

Finneas: I was in the tube!

Travis: Ona maybe is feeling a little paranoid right now, but like, the topical—

Griffin: Understandably so!

Travis: Understandably so. Uh. So Ona is going to try to, as surreptitiously as possible, he wants to kinda like, scratch, kinda gouge Finneas's arm? With like, his fingernails?

Clint: What?

Travis: Well—

Griffin: It's a normal thing. To do.

Travis: You don't— you, Dad, hear this, but Finneas doesn't know yet.

Griffin: Why don't you make a sleight of hand check, to see... [laughs] if you can... I don't know how one surreptitiously gouges somebody's forearm—

Travis: Well, he'll see when I do it! He'll know when it happens.

Griffin: Right. It's a, "easier to ask for forgiveness" situation.

Travis: Uh, that is a 14 plus two, a 16?

Griffin: Uhh...

Clint: It better not mess up Finneas's extensive tattoo sleeves. I'm just saying.

Travis: Ohh!

Griffin: Yep. Let's contest this. Finneas, make a perception check.

Clint: Perception... check...

Travis: It's the one with a "P."

Clint: P...

Griffin: There's actually a few skills that start with a P...

Travis: Well there's three, yeah, there's three...

[sound of dice rolling]

Travis: It's very confusing.

Clint: Well, I got news for ya! This is a six-TEEN! ... [laughs] I don't know why I said it like that! A six-teeEEEN?

Travis: Hm.

Griffin: Okay, with that, uh... you put your hand on Finneas's forearm, you get your nails on him, but he pulls away before you have a chance to execute this. And now, Finneas, you have [chuckles] realized that Ona was just doing something weird.

Finneas: Whoa! Hey! [laughing nervously] Wha... What's, what's the deal there, bud?

Ona: Doesn't it all seem a bit— a bit strange, to you? Fin— I— sorry, I'm—

Finneas: You were just trying to give me a little, uh... arm scratch? Yeah, a little—

Ona: Well—

Finneas: That was kind of strange, yeah!

Ona: Oh, you know, it's like when you, you know, you— “Oh, am I dreaming? Pinch me.” Kind of thing.

Finneas: Oh! Oh, okay. Uh, I'm not familiar with that. Also not comfortable with it. So...

Griffin: [chuckles]

Ona: Ah. Sorry. I'm just being weird. Yes. I... this place has got me all turned around.

Finneas: Uh— yeah. Okay.

Griffin: You all hear racing footsteps coming in, in your direction, through the foyer. And moment later, you both see Bertrand sprint into the room. He—

Justin: Probably not sprint.

Griffin: Probably not sprinting.

Justin: Like, a quick sidle. [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Oh, okay, like a— like a crab! He crab-walks into the room. Uh... Bertrand, you suddenly appear, and now you are back in the memory.

Finneas: Hey, Bertie!

Bertrand: Hey. This is weird, right?

Finneas: Ye— uh...

Ona: [sighs]

Finneas: Uh. There is nothing about this situation that is not weird! [laughs]

Ona: Are you—

Bertrand: Feels weird.

Ona: Finneas, why don't you, uh, scout ahead real quick, while I fill Bertrand in on everything that's happened since he's been gone.

Finneas: Yeah, alright! Um. Which direction did you come from, left or the right down the hallway there, Bertie?

Bertrand: Left. [Justin stifles laughter]

Finneas: Okay, so I should go right. Okay! I'm headin' out!

Ona: Don't go too far, we'll be right behind you, okay?

Finneas: [growing distant] Oh, don't— don't worry, I ain't going too far!

Bertrand: Why are you giving the orders all of a sudden?

Ona: [whispering] I'm... I'm just concerned. I... He came out of one of the pods, and the pods— they're using them to clone people, that's why there's all the twins and triplets and everything, and I'm starting to worry that perhaps Finneas isn't Finneas.

Bertrand: Who would it be, then?

Ona: It would be... it would be a copy of Finneas? But not the original Finneas, it would be a copy? He would be part of whatever this thing is, here.

Bertrand: Ohhhh, right, that'll happen.

Ona: So if you— if— if he starts to act strangely, um, we need some— some sort of code word? Something that lets us know, like, hey, it's time for us to, like... grab him and hold him... and... y'know... whatever, so he can't...

Bertrand: Right.

Ona: Betray us?

Bertrand: Call sign. Secret, secret code phrase.

Ona: Yes.

Bertrand: [clicks tongue thoughtfully]

Ona: I'm thinking maybe...

Bertrand: I got—

Ona: Uh— what do you have?

Bertrand: "Clone."

Ona: Well, that might be on the nose. What about—

Bertrand: Mmmmmm.

Ona: What about "amoeba?"

Bertrand: Amoeba... what's an amoeba, then?

Ona: Well, it's a really tiny thing— that's not the important thing! The thing is that we use the word—

Bertrand: Burger.

Ona: ...Okay. You would rather have it be burger, that's fine, we can use burger. Perfect. So if you say burger, or I say burger—

Bertrand: Wait.

Ona: What?

Bertrand: What if I see a burger?

Ona: Then don't say it out loud, I guess.

Bertrand: Impossible.

Ona: Oh, boy.

Griffin: [laughs]

Ona: What about... um... um...

Bertrand: I'll float on the lines of the smell, like Wimpy from Pop-eye, right?

Clint: [laughs]

Ona: I don't get the reference, is that—

Bertrand: Impossible not to— why wouldn't I say burger, if I see a burger, right, I'm gonna say burger!

Ona: Then why did you suggest it as a word?

Bertrand: Hungry.

Ona: Ah. How about... um... um... we... we just say... uh... "get him."

Bertrand: How do I know— hey, wait! How do I know you're not a clone, right?

Ona: Well, I didn't come out of a tube.

Bertrand: Says you.

Ona: I mean, sure, do you want to scratch me? If I'm a clone then I would turn into a bit of goo.

Bertrand: Why didn't you scratch Finneas?

Ona: Well I tried to! But he caught me.

Bertrand: Caught you scratchin'.

Ona: Yeah.

Bertrand: Oooh, that's rough. Alright. Uh. Code word is... sabertooth.

Ona: Perfect!

Bertrand: It's cool, right?

Ona: It's— yes, it's very cool.

Bertrand: Like a tiger, like a cool tiger—

Ona: We need to go now, though? We should go.

Bertrand: Alright!

Griffin: I just thought of something. And it's gotta— it is something that has to be true for the, uh, for the entire sort of conceit of these episodes, to make sense.

Justin: 'Kay.

Griffin: Finneas, you heard all of that.

Clint: Oh, I know! I'm just right outside—

Griffin: You had—

Clint: In the hallway.

Griffin: Yeah! You *had* to have heard all of that, or else we would not be hearing that right now.

Justin: Yep!

Griffin: Okay, fantastic. [laughs]

Justin: Fun!

Griffin: Cool! Uh... you all start to—

Finneas: Hey, y'all done?

Ona: Oh, yes! Okay, so, let— you lead the way, Finneas! Well, Bertrand, you know where the...

Bertrand: Sorry, I had to tell him an embarrassing story.

Finneas: Oh!

Ona: Yeah.

Finneas: Well... yeah! Well, I'm gonna—

Ona: He told me that he got so scared when they all jumped you, that he...

Bertrand: Did a bathroom.

Finneas: Oh—

Ona: He did a bathroom.

Finneas: Oh. That's terrible.

Bertrand: Shameful, really.

Finneas: Alright, well—

Ona: Well, it happens.

Finneas: I scouted out, so you want me to lead the way? Down the hallway?

Ona: Well, Bertrand knows where the bathysphere is, why don't you two go together?

Griffin: Hhhhh— that— he hasn't— he has not volunteered that. Yet.

Travis: Ohh, okay, right.

Ona: Yes! You lead the way. Um. And we will follow closely behind.

Finneas: Alright, I will be stealthy. Like the great sabertooth, I'll just go crawling down the hallway.

Bertrand: Did you go left?

Finneas: No, I went... You told me you went left, so I went right.

Bertrand: No, I said you should go— ugh.

Travis: Also, just to be clear— okay, so are we making our way out?

Clint: Yeah! Let's get out!

Finneas: Come on!

Travis: As they go, Ona is just like... whatever he can grab, be it the dirt, um, be it like, a chunk of whatever the clay is from the building— he's grabbing samples left and right.

Griffin: And you're putting that inside of Bertrand's...?

Travis: All the samples are going right in there. With everything.

Griffin: Okay, cool.

Travis: As he's running.

Griffin: As you all step back out into the foyer, you start to hear a lot of activity coming from Cambria's chamber.

[Ominous low music begins playing]

And moments later, the doors fling open, and out step a dozen guards, all wearing that pale green leather gear. And they all start shouting and racing down the stairway toward the three of you.

[Music fades out]

Finneas: Ye— let's go, lead the way, Bertie!

Justin: [pants] This is me running.

Travis: Yeah. This is Ona running: [pants melodically]

Finneas: [grunting rhythmically] Yeah... uh... yeah... uh... yeah... uh...

Justin: I wanna keep an eye peeled, as we're running though, for the bathysphere, 'cause I feel like that's our egress, if we can find it.

Griffin: Um, okay. Are you running— are you leaving this temple building?

Travis: Yes. I doubt we'll be able to escape in the bathysphere from inside a building. Just... I'm no, I'm no mariner.

Griffin: Sure.

Travis: But I think the bathysphere would need to be in water...

Griffin: Right.

Travis: In order to operate.

Griffin: Okay! Um—

Travis: I've played Bio-Shock quite a few times.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: [amused] Right, of course. You all crash out of the doors out of this main temple building, and out into this sort of, like, center square of the settlement. And from this position, you can see down, all the way down all of these radials, sort of where all of these makeshift houses are built. And you also see y'know, dozens upon dozens of people who all sort of look up from the work that they were doing, and then look over at the three of you, and all in sort of eerie synchronization, all rise to their feet.

Bertrand: Alright. I checked all these, except for that one right there. It's gotta be there, it's the only place left.

Justin: Got a little Australian.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: [laughs]

Bertrand: [less Australian] It's the only place left.

Travis: [Australian accent] That's not a bathysphere!

Clint: [laughs] [also with Australian accent] That's a bathysphere!

Bertrand: Right. It's gotta be this one, then. It's the one I didn't check before I came you get you all. Let's check right down here!

Ona: Wait— uh— [sighs] Okay, first, give me a boost!

Justin: What?

Travis: Up the— one of the streetlamp things, right?

Griffin: Yeah, sure!

Bertrand: Right!

Justin: Okay, boosted.

Travis: Okay, I'm grabbing samples!

Bertrand: Nice!

Griffin: Uh, okay, you lift him up to one of the globes that is up there. Once you are that close make a... make an investigation check for me.

Travis: I will! [sound of dice rolling] That is a six plus three, Griffin, a nine!

Griffin: You get up there and you realize that the globe is not fastened, right? So you are able to sort of pick it up, off of it's, uh, off of the pole that is holding it. As you do, a considerable amount of water just seems to fall down from the... y'know, whatever barrier is holding the ocean at bay. As you move it, it seems like the bubble that this thing is seemingly creating, is sort of moving around with it. Uh. And a bunch of water splashes down onto the top of the temple, and, y'know, crashes down around you. Some of it just falls straight o just a pile of people and, y'know, crashes down on them, knocking them down to the floor.

Ona: Well, that's lucky! Anyway!

Travis: And I slip the globe into the... bag.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: And I, uh, fish out of the bag that laser, that Bertrand told me about, and hand that over to him.

Griffin: Okay.

Bertrand: Right, thanks.

Ona: Let's— we should go now. Anything else, anything else we should collect?

Finneas: Well, I mean, yeah, I mean that's kinda your gig, right? You're the one collecting all these things and making us stop, so, if you're done? Maybe we could go?

Travis: Is there anything else of interest, that Ona hasn't... scraped?
[laughs]

Griffin: [laughing] No, I would say Ona has scraped a fair deal of things.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: Uh— I mean, one thing of interest is y'all's ship. Which is down, like... which is down a different sort of avenue, than the bathysphere is, as—

Ona: We should get to the bathysphere and loop around, and signal... the Nightcrawler.

Finneas: Good idea! They're probably on orange alert, ready for us. Let's go! Come on!

Ona: Yeah!

Finneas: Come on, fellas!

Bertrand: Lead the way!

Finneas: Alright. Beat feet!

Justin: Doot doot doot doot— [laughs]

Travis: [pants loudly and melodically]

Clint: [cracks up] Alright! We run down that corridor to the bathysphere.

Travis: Assumedly.

Griffin: Okay! Okay, you all take off in a sprint down the avenue that Bertrand sort of pointed towards. And at this point, the guards that sort of popped out of Cambria's chamber, have made their way out of the temple, and alerted basically everybody else. You are now in a full sprint away from everybody, essentially, in this city, who is chasing after you. But sure enough, at the end of this avenue, there is a shallow pit, that is filled with a few inches of murky water. And sitting in that pit, is the bathysphere. It looks like it is in fine condition. There is some, um, some slime sort of growing across it, just from, y'know, being down in this, uh, this dirty water, for however long it's been down here. But maybe twenty feet away from the edge of this aquatic barrier, away from essentially the ocean water, that these globes are keeping at bay.

Bertrand: Right! Finneas!

Finneas: Yep!

[Low ambient music/soundscape begins playing]

Bertrand: Get on, start booting up! We'll hold 'em off just long enough for you to get started, then yell when you're ready!

Finneas: Uh— alright, fellas! Well— are you sure?

Bertrand: Yeah— hurry, hurry!

Finneas: Ye— yeah, yeah! Right right!

Clint: So he goes splashing up, through the murky water.

Griffin: `Kay.

Clint: To the bathysphere. And... pauses, just for a second, going,

Finneas: [adoringly] Ohh, I've missed you so much! [laughs] My— oh, look at you!

Travis: Gross.

Griffin: Weird.

Justin: Once Finneas is out of sight, I cut off Ona's head with the mining laser.

[pause]

[soundscape stops]

Clint: What??

[pause]

Clint: W—WHAT??

Griffin: [exhales nervously] Uh... okay...

Clint: Wh—

Griffin: Uhhhhhhhh... okay...

Travis: Well now hold on, you gotta give me some kind of check!

Clint: [bursts into laughter]

Travis: [laughing] You can't just— I'm pretty sure that in Dungeons and Dragons, you can't just say that—

Justin: You literally handed me the mining laser, and you were like, "I just wanna—" You rea— You brought it up again! "I just wanna narratively confirm that you are in— this is in your hand and you're ready to go!"

Griffin: Alright. Make... alright, here's what we'll do. Ona, make a dexterity saving throw.

Travis: [sound of dice rolling] [voice cracking slightly] 16 plus four, a 20!

Clint: Dirty 20!

[Low ambient music begins again]

Griffin: Yeah. No. He... he... you sweep this mining laser toward Ona, but he ducks down and dodges through it, and lands, down on the dirty floor, basically right next to one of these streetlamps. And at this point, there's— the people who are chasing after you all are maybe 20 feet away. Finneas, you— you see this happen from inside the bathysphere. Um. But you can't... you cannot hear anything, inside of here, as you're going through the start-up sequence. You just see Bertrand sort of swipe the mining laser toward Ona, who ducks out of the way, and is now laying on the ground, as a wave of these people are about to overwhelm them. What happens next?

Travis: Ona's probably pretty... uh, shocked? And upset? And speaking in an upset manner!

Justin: Uh. I'm going to grab the bag and run. And shout, loud enough so that, uh, Finneas can hear.

Bertrand: I tried to make this quick, whatever you are! Now you're theirs!

Justin: And then I run towards the bathysphere and hop in.

Griffin: [chuckling] Okay!

Travis: Ona's gonna get up, and try to... follow?

Griffin: Okay. Uh... then the door to the bathysphere opens. Finneas, Bertrand climbs in...

Finneas: What the hell!?

Bertrand: It was—

Finneas: What in the holy hell!?

Bertrand: It was— hey! No time to explain! He was a clone!

Finneas: Wh— Ona was?

Bertrand: Yeah, he admitted to me, he thought we were both clones! So he was trying to lay out his secret plans, right?

Finneas: Wh—

Bertrand: But I, I told him, I'm the genuine article!

Finneas: Yeah...

Bertrand: I tried to off him real quick, but... no dice.

Griffin: And now Ona, you are at the door. As a huge crowd of people are about to overtake you.

Travis: Okay, I write on my hand, "Not Penny's Boat."

Griffin: [amused] Yeah, right?

Travis: I put it right in the glass... Um. Oh! Okay! I think with the door closed, you can't hear...

Griffin: Right, of course.

Travis: Um. But I think Ona is just screaming, "sabertooth." Over and over again.

Justin: Ohhhh! Brutal!

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh... and—

Clint: Ohhh, that's brilliant.

Griffin: And... that's... that is the last that you all see of Ona, as the crowd finally catches up. And the crowd is moving, in like... again, like perfect unison, like one... like one organism. And as they crash into the bathysphere, like you all see some green algae sort of appear on the glass, like, viewing pane, of the hatch into the bathysphere. And then Ona is pulled into the crowd, and you don't see him anymore. And now, the crowd is just sort of pushing against the bathysphere, trying to open it up. And they're... just furious, and wild. And then you all see the lamppost that is closest to you, the one that you knocked Ona down in front of, start to teeter. And then the globe topples off the top of it, and crashes to the ground.

[crashing glass sound effect]

And the ocean just swallows up everything in a 20 foot radius. All of the people who were outside. Uh, and the bathysphere, which kind of bounces, and you... you all are now floating. You are off the ground, in control of the bathysphere, as all the controls light up.

[Music and soundscape fade out slowly]

Travis: [sadly] Is Ona okay?

Clint: [snorts]

Griffin: Uh.

Justin: I think it's actually kinda cool to leave Ona on the board. Who knows, right? I mean...

Travis: Aww...

Griffin: Yeah, we don't know. I don't think we see... we don't— you— you don't see Ona. Um. Actually if—

Travis: I am Ona! [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Finneas— [laughs] Finneas, why don't you make an investigation check? Just to see what you see, like, in this...

Clint: Alright. [sound of dice rolling] That would be...

Griffin: This mess.

Clint: A... nine.

Griffin: Um... okay... with a nine, you do not see Ona anywhere, in the... y'know, the chaos, of what just happened. Um. But... as you start to pilot the bathysphere, sort of circling back around toward the ship, you do see a body float right in front of you, and it's one of the people in the sort of pale green leather. And it's only there for a second. But you could swear that it looked a lot like Bertrand.

Finneas: Huh. Uh.

Bertrand: We need to hurry up.

Finneas: ...Yeah. Yeah, ab... Tell me exactly... why you thought... he... was a clone? Why Ona was a clone?

Bertrand: You can tell, right? You look in someone's eyes, somebody you've known for a while. You can just tell the difference.

[Ominous music fades in]

Finneas: Huh.

Bertrand: Like— look at me.

Finneas: Yeah.

Bertrand: Right?

Finneas: Yeah...

Bertrand: You can tell. Can't you?

Finneas: Um...

Clint: He reaches out and tries to scratch Bertrand's arm.

Justin: Uh...

Griffin: Bertrand, are you going to...

Justin: Uh, I punch him in the nose.

Griffin: Uh. Let's take— let's make a dexterity, just contest, to see who moves faster here. Uh... yeah, both of you just make a dexterity check.

Justin: [sound of dice rolling] 13.

[sound of dice rolling]

Travis: [laughs in disbelief]

Clint: 15.

Griffin: Ooooh! [chuckles nervously] Uh. You... I think both things happen, then. You go first, and you scratch your hand against his forearm, Finneas. And as you do, uh, you see just a flash of green. And then a big meaty fist

collides with your face. And you are staggered backwards, you feel, y'know, the warmth of blood, sort of starting to stream down your nose and your chin.

Clint: I say that he reaches out in desperation to the control panel, and hits, uh, an automatic pilot setting. And then, uh... [chuckling nervously] turns back around, and, uh, raises his fists. In a... in a very non-convincing way.

Justin: Alright, I take the laser out while he's doing this. If we're both just talking here.

Griffin: Sure, sure!

Not Bertrand: [suddenly a high, reedy, vaguely English voice] I need you to stay alive just a little bit longer.

Griffin: [wheezes and chuckles]

Finneas: Yeah... you're, you're... you're not my Bertrand, are you?

Not Bertrand: Ohhh, congratulations, that's wonderful.

Finneas: Uh...

Not Bertrand: You've pieced it together.

Finneas: You one of them... them, uh, clone things. Right? And that— and that was—

Not Bertrand: You're on— you're on fire.

Finneas: That was the real Ona back there, wasn't it?

Not Bertrand: Another beautiful deduction.

Finneas: Yeah. Yeah. I've kinda... fucked this up a little bit, haven't I?

Not Bertrand: Just a tad.

Finneas: Yeah.

Not Bertrand: But, to be fair to you... I'm very good at my job.

Finneas: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

Not Bertrand: I'd like you to take a seat now.

Finneas: Um.... shooooo...

Not Bertrand: I need you to stay alive just a little bit longer.

Finneas: Um. And why... why is that? Why are you doing this, anyway? What's the big deal? I'm just taking back what belongs to me!

Not Bertrand: I am not in a position to answer your questions. Rather, I am not in a position to *have* to answer your questions. I, as you'll notice, in this impressively meaty hand, am the one holding the laser. Please have a seat.

Griffin: As you are being ordered around, by this... Non-Bertrand, the auto-pilot sort of function takes you past the ship that you brought down here. And...

Clint: The Nightcrawler.

Griffin: The Nightcrawler. And the... the lights on the bathysphere shine down, and through a few of the large viewports on the side of the ship, the light flashes in through it, and you see a couple of bodies of your fellow crewmates, that you came down here with. Just laying on the ground.

Clint: Okay, so he's sitting down at the control board, right?

Griffin: Um—

Clint: That's where he told him to sit down, right?

Griffin: Yes.

Clint: I think he turns off all the lights inside the bathysphere.

Griffin: Okay! Uh... why don't you make a... [vocalizes thinking noise] This is something you're just trying to do super-fast, before Bertrand notices?

Finneas: Yeah.

Griffin: Why don't you make a sleight of hand check?

[sound of dice rolling]

Griffin: Oh, yeah!

Clint: 21!

Justin: Damn!

Griffin: Contest that with your... uh... with your perception, please, Bertrand.

[sound of dice rolling]

Griffin: No!

Justin: Nope! A 13.

Griffin: 13, okay! Uhh... you... Finneas just is very familiar with this piece of technology, and just swats at a switch, and all of the lights inside of the bathysphere instantly go dark.

[Music fades out]

Justin: Um. I'll reach to where I most recently saw his head, and try to slam it into the control board.

Griffin: Uh, make an unarmed attack roll, with disadvantage.

Justin: 14... or 11!

Griffin: An 11—

Clint: Damn, this really has consequences!

Griffin: That misses. Yeah. You reach for where he was, but... [chuckles] he is not there anymore. Finneas, you have ducked out of the way. Of Non-Bertrand's blow. And now, what do you do?

Clint: Oh, I think he's gonna attack him!

Griffin: [laughing] Okay!

Clint: I mean, how much— I mean. He's like a cellophane bag full of green jello!

Griffin: Sure.

Clint: How tough could he be?

Griffin: Uh—

Clint: I think he lunges for him, in the dark, he knows this bathysphere inside and out. And I think he leaps at him, and... tries to... throttle him. Tries to grab him around the neck.

Griffin: Make an unarmed attack roll.

Justin: With disadvantage!

Griffin: Uh... yeah, with—

Justin: It's dark for him too!

Griffin: [amused] Right, with disadvantage.

Clint: Alright! Alright.

Justin: Mister, fuckin', let's fight in the dark.

Clint: Alright! Let's fight in the dark! Here we go! Unarmed strike! [sound of dice rolling] That would be a—

Travis: But now you're equally disadvantaged.

Clint: That would be a 14. And... [sound of dice rolling] a 22.

Justin: Fuck me!

Griffin: Yeah! Uh, 14 does hit. Uh... you... you... let's not—

Justin: On who's armor class!?

Griffin: Amber's?

Justin: 15!

Griffin: Oh. Well then, [chuckles] no, it doesn't hit. It— it's... I think that we... this all happens in the dark, right? The lights do not come back on inside the bathysphere. And... so... Amber, and Devo, and Zoox, sort of viewing these memories, this is where things start to get abstract. And confusing. Because this fight... it just doesn't stop.

[Low soundscape fades in]

Finneas and Bertrand just continue to take swings at each other. And try to throw each other around. And there is... there are, y'know, heavy blows against Bertrand, and the feeling of, of fist being smashed into... y'know, your face. And then there's the feeling of Finneas swinging his fist at Bertrand, and just catching a, y'know, a fist full of slime, essentially. And, at a certain point, Finneas picks up Bertrand and manages to shove him around, and his bag just smashes against a wall, and the contents come spilling out to the floor. And then at a certain point, after a few minutes of fighting like this, still in pitch black, Finneas loses his footing, and he falls

backwards, and then there's a sharp blow at the back of his neck, as he falls and hits himself on something that we never get to see. And then he lands in the water. And the memory stops.

And... there's one last thing, that we don't see as much as we hear as the bathysphere surfaces, and eventually arrives onshore.

[Soundscape fades out]

And Finneas hears the hatch open up. And smells, y'know, the warm salty air. As it pours into the atmosphere of the bathysphere. And then he hears the sound of screaming, coming from someone outside. And then...

[softly crashing waves fade in]

You all see the ocean. Past this scene. And it is... it changes. The storm disappears. And you're on a boat. A long... a schooner. A small sailboat. Bobbing up and down with the waves. And now the sky is pretty beautiful. You're sailing toward the sunset. The land is well behind you at this point. You're just going towards open ocean. That's a new thing, too, land. You have never seen... [chuckles] a world above the water, before. And you've never seen the sky, before. This, just this orange pink gradient. And...

That is when you realize that you are not Finneas Cawl, anymore. And you know this because he is in front of you, at the wheel of the ship. You are Zoox again. And he looks over his shoulder at you, Zoox, and he says,

Finneas, now and hereafter played by Griffin: Welcome aboard. I, uh, I didn't know I'd have company for all this.

Zoox: Um. I guess I'm kind of a party crasher? Because I didn't know I was going to be company? For this?

Finneas: Yeah.

Zoox: Um. I had kinda hoped I'd get a chance— wait a minute! You can... you can hear me? You can see me?

Finneas: Yes...? Why wouldn't I be able to hear or see you?

[Ocean waves soundscape fades out]

Zoox: It's really complicated, but I mean, we've been... I've been having flashbacks and memories, and...

Finneas: Right.

Zoox: I wasn't really me, I was you...

Finneas: Ok—

Zoox: But this isn't you talking to you, right?

Finneas: No, I think we can simplify this a bit. This, this is... this is another memory, of mine. Much— a much better one than the one that you just witnessed.

Zoox: Yeah, I would hope so.

Finneas: I... I imagine.

Zoox: Yeah.

Finneas: But, uh, no. I'm me, and you're you, and... right now... [sighs]

Zoox: We are all together! Yeah.

Finneas: That's beautiful. Did you just come up with that?

Zoox: Goo goo ga-choo, my dude! Goo goo ga-choo, baby.

Finneas: I don't speak whatever fantastic language that was.

Zoox: Fair enough. Fair enough.

Griffin: He looks out over the waters, and gives his ship a good once over, and he says,

Finneas: If my memory is accurate, and I suppose it is since we're inside it right now, it's... it's about 30 years ago and we are sailing for the Night Markets, in Estival. [smiling] And uh, this... this is gonna be a fun night.

Griffin: And he reaches down next to him, and there's a bucket full of ice, and some bottles, and he pops one out, and he says,

Finneas: You want a beer?

Zoox: Yes! Oh, god, yes, that would be wonderful.

Griffin: He cracks it open and hands it to you, and he says,

Finneas: So while you were plumbing my depths, I just happened to be relegated to your memories, Zoox. And, uh, let me tell you, I know you probably saw some stuff, back in my old memory banks. But, uh... yours was a... yours was a wild ride, start to finish.

Zoox: Really?

Finneas: A pretty short ride, all things considered, but uh...

Zoox: Okay. Okay.

Finneas: A wild one nonetheless.

Zoox: The... that's kind of what I want to talk to you about. 'Cause you're the... you're the closest thing to, you know, a relative, that I have, I guess. Um...

Finneas: Why are— why would you s— whoa!

Zoox: Well, I think that all the, all the things that you did, all the things that you accomplished, all the good that you did, and the things that you did to help our, our community, our civilization...

[Meditative wistful music begins playing softly]

You know, I feel, I feel very close to you, because I... I have always had trouble accessing whatever it was that went into me, to make me alive. I— whenever I tried to do what other Brinarr had been able to do, which is... look at past lives, and the, the things, the spirits inside of them had done, or accomplished, or knew, or had experience with? I could never find anything. And... nothing! There was nothing I could access! All my, you know, my Brinarr brothers and sisters and others, would just be able to— boom! There they are! And they would say, “Yes, I remember when I did thi—” And I’ve never been able to access that. And I... I have a theory. And I thought if I ran it by you, you could confirm it, or help me with it.

Finneas: Sure, I... [chuckles] What is it that you think you are, Zoox?

Zoox: I think... I mean, ironically, to quote Pop-eye the Sailor, I am what I am. I... The reason I don’t have one or two or three or four or five specific memories is because I have millions of memories. I’ve been looking for a voice here and there, and it’s countless voices. I think something brought the very coral that I’m made of to life. And created a whole new kind of consciousness! A whole new... unique being.

Finneas: Is it that... that unique, though, Zoox? If you think about it?

Griffin: He outstretches his hand, and holds it in front of him. And he says,

Finneas: I am a body. Well... [laughs] I used to be, I suppose.

Zoox: Right, yeah.

Finneas: Made up of microscopic motes of cells, forming tissue, and bone, forming respiratory systems, circulatory systems, all sorts of systems. All working in tandem to form a higher purpose.

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

Finneas: Is that so different? From what you just described, Zoox?

Zoox: No, I guess... it really isn't.

Finneas: We... [sighs] Since the dawn of magic, mortal-kind has been so preoccupied with questions of the soul. And even now, I ponder it, [laughing] even in my intangible form that I have taken after the memories that you just witnessed. But... why does it matter, if we know we're alive in the first place? You said you're hearing billions of voices, Zoox, all speaking in tandem to form you. What if that's what a soul is? Our bodies are choirs. And we are the song they are singing.

Griffin: And he looks down at his beer, and he says,

Finneas: I have had a few too many of these, I think.

Zoox: No, no, no, no, no, no! Although I do like this. Is it an IPA? Anyway, listen, I... Thank you! Thank you, Finneas! Whether you really are a relative or not, I... I appreciate— You have shown me, maybe it's time for me to stop worrying about the song, and just start singing it!

Griffin: He smiles, and tips his beer sort of at you. And, uh, and actually, he cheerses you. And he sets his half-drunken bottle back down into the bucket, and stands up. And he raises a sail, and you see now, the sun has nearly set. And in the distance there is an island. And there are...

[Melody from the Prologue plays softly]

You know, soft streetlights and house lights that you can see from your position. And you can hear the sound of music and revelry as you approach it. And he looks at you, and he says,

Finneas: Do me a favor. I want you to thank Ampersand for me. And Hermine, while you're at it.

Zoox: Ok— and thank them for what?

Griffin: He smiles, and he says,

Finneas: My debt to them is so enormous... I expect they'll know.

Griffin: And then he goes quiet, and you see him one last time, standing in front of this city, with a gentle breeze blowing through his hair, and against the sails. And then as the sun sets, he vanishes, and this whole scene vanishes.

And then you wake up, Zoox. And you are reclined in a chair, and the first thing you see is the lantern above your bed, this sort of IV bag that was up there; the blue flame inside of it is extinguished. And you look around the room, and everybody else is already up and about. You see Amber, and Devo, and Shret. And all of them are congregated around where Ampersand Five is seated. And they are all looking in Ampersand Five's lap, where the lantern that once held the spirit of Finneas Cawl has gone dark.

[Solemn ambient soundscape plays out]

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