

The Adventure Zone: Ethersea - Episode 41

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Griffin: Previously on *The Adventure Zone: Ethersea*.

It is a vision that he is trying to send to you to communicate with you. And you see... the Gate. It is all that this being cares about, it's all that any of these bleached coral beings cares about, is the Gate. They are driven solely by instinct to produce this passage leading to another world. And then they show you... the sort of crude shape of a man. You know it to be Benefactor Orlene.

Zoox: Orlene has... kinda taken over a chunk of their buddies, and they want us to get into that dome and free their friends, so we've got— We've got back up!

Griffin: One structure just looms high above the trees here. It's a tower made of white coral and it is easily four stories tall.

Make a Dexterity saving throw, Devo.

Justin: Come up with new animals! I'm so tired of these motherfuckers!
[chuckles]

Griffin: Hey, you're the one who decided to tie your fate to them.

In its last moments, the Alpha Blink Shark turns its gaze to you, Zoox. And when it does... you feel— Even without direct contact, you feel its intent. You feel it communicate one last thought to you. And it is this.

Alpha Blink Shark: It falls to you now. Stop your friends. Save our world from devastation. Acknowledgement?

Griffin: And then it looks to you, Amber. With... unbridled hatred. And then its head hangs low. And the last blink shark is gone.

[intro theme music plays]

Griffin: Amber, you stand above the... the corpses of your mortal enemies. I don't know if you know that that was it, that you have slain the last blink shark, but

how does it— how does it feel to have... so thoroughly have succeeded where few have— have succeeded?

Justin: Hmm... This is hard because... I mean, it's not how I would feel about it, but I think Amber does feel a sense of like satisfaction every time she takes one out, and this is a nice batch combo. I don't think she recognizes the loss, like I think she's more practical than that.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: She grew up... You know, her family's livelihood was... was fishing.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: So like, I don't think it hits her necessarily that like... The— You know, the — the ethics of this I don't think are that muddy for her.

Griffin: Yeah. Kodira sheathes her shortsword that she was wielding in battle and she walks up to you, Amber, and she says...

Kodira: Well, that was weird.

Amber: Yeah. Have you seen 'em before?

Kodira: Have I seen, uh, magical teleporting sharks before? I have—

Amber: Blink shark. Blink sharks, blink sharks.

Kodira: I have— I have not experienced blink sharks.

Amber: It's weird, right?

Kodira: But, I'll be honest, I kinda thought they were like a ghost story, and that you were... kinda LARPing this whole time.

Amber: Oh. Wow. I bet this really colors your perception of me, huh?

Kodira: It su— It certainly does. Those things were... extremely spooky.

Amber: Savage, yeah.

Kodira: Yeah.

Amber: Yeah, if you never see another one— Well, I mean if you see one and I'm not there, you're gonna beef it, but I hope— I hope that this is maybe the end of it. I haven't been seeing `em, you know, very often. Not like it used to be.

Kodira: Well, there's three less of `em now, so let's, uh, get on with it.

Amber: That's three— three steps closer to perfection, I say.

Griffin: How are you, Zoox? Seeing what you have seen.

Clint: I think Zoox is a little shook. I— I think um... I would assume that he senses that this was [wheezes] an extinction event!

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: And... that on the heels of, you know, that prophesy that, you know, that they made about, you know, Amber being the be all and end all of the race, I think he's a little rocked.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: Not quite sure what to think. And... [sighs] Maybe looking a little askance at Amber.

Griffin: Sure.

Clint: Just a lot of questions now. He's got a lot of questions in his mind.

Griffin: Okay. That's understandable. And Devo, you are seeing this scene from up high. You have had a brief brush with falling to maybe your death, but you did not and your plan succeeded. And you in particular, although all of you can hear it now. The same sound that you heard from your ship's tone wheel, that sort of knocked you on your asses, except for you, Zoox. Your— Your ass was un— unknocked.

Clint: Unknockable, yeah.

Griffin: Unknockable. You can kinda hear it.

[a single, prolonged tone plays]

Griffin: In— Like reverberating through the coral. And it is not... You know, it's not nearly as loud as it was when you like tuned into that signal, but the closer you get to this tower and apparently the higher you get in this tower, the sort of more noticeable it becomes. What do you all do?

Travis: Devo looks down at the scene, and yells down...

[somber background music plays]

Devo: I— I think I'm just going to go on from here. Uh... Uh, I expect you two will, uh, attempt to follow, but, uh... The— This is up to you. Uh, I am going to go on by myself now, I think.

Zoox: How would we get up there? Can you drop us a rope or anything?

Devo: Oh, I— I thought I was clear. Um... I'm going to do— I don't want to go with you. I don't want you to come.

Zoox: [sadly] Oh... Oh, um. Mm. Why?

Devo: Uh, well, Zoox, you have a death wish, as demonstrated, uh, by our entrance to the coral. And Amber, um, you only care about yourself. And frankly I don't know that I like myself any more with you than I liked myself with the Church. And frankly this is probably on me, but, um... I also have a better chance, I think, of stopping Orlene, uh, with my powers. And, uh... If I fuck up, uh, then I assume you three will be coming behind me anyways, and then you will get a chance at it. But right now, I think I would rather, uh, just go on by myself.

Amber: [shouts] Alright, good luck!

Kodira: Wait, are you really gonna let him— He— He *will* die. Like...

Amber: As he so— so clearly reminds us at every turn, he is a big boy and he can make his own decisions. And frankly, this is also weird, this is not in my skill set. I got big arms, there's lots of people back home who'd play— pay big money

for big arms, that'll be my slogan. I'm done. And you know what? Maybe we'll—we'll, uh, we'll come clean up the mess after he's torn asunder, so.

Kodira: Yeah, okay. Um, alright. Well, how 'bout some skin in the game?

Griffin: She says, and she jumps an *outrageous* height into the air and grabs onto the coral on the side of the tower and she starts to climb.

Justin: Hmm.

Travis: Devo sees that and— and starts going.

Griffin: Okay.

Amber: [calls after them] Careful.

Griffin: She's like—

Kodira: Whoa.

Zoox: [whispers] Which one are you telling— Which one are you telling "careful"?

Amber: Eh, both.

Zoox: Okay, okay.

Amber: [mutters] Live and let live, that's me.

Griffin: Alright. So Devo, you're going in?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Okay, cool. You enter the tower through this entrance in the side of it. And you walk into what appears to be a sort of like wide-open foyer.

[ominous ringing background music plays]

Griffin: It's comprised of the same, you know, glowing coral as the rest of the tower, but you notice some things are a little bit different here. For one thing, there's apparently some living coral beings in here, who have not been sort of

integrated into the tower. There's maybe like a dozen of them, all scattered around the room.

Travis: Still— Oh, wait. Are they bleached, or are they like colorful Brinnarr?

Griffin: They're bleached, but they are like, you know, they are mobile. They are living, individual forms, unlike the trees and the tower, which have been sort of, you know, shaped. And the dome, which have been sort of shaped to fulfill these different purposes.

Travis: Got it.

Griffin: And most of them are like sitting and, you know, kinda cradling their heads in pain. And most of them are positioned around this room's other sort of unique feature. All around you in this foyer are ring-shaped coral structures, in varying states of disrepair. I would say only a, you know, a handful of them are complete rings. The others have either collapsed or were never finished in the first place. And at the rear of the room, there is a spiral staircase that leads upward through the ceiling and into another floor.

And when those coral beings see you enter, I think that they... to the best of their ability, kind of like crab walk backwards away from you.

Travis: Devo, uh... So, we can hear the sound, right? That sound is getting louder, you said?

[single, prolonged tone fades in again]

Griffin: Yeah, and you can definitely hear it from the... Coming from the floor above you, through that, you know, entrance from the spiral staircase.

Travis: Devo starts singing under this breath.

Griffin: 'Kay.

Travis: And makes his way up the spiral staircase.

[footstep sound effects play]

Griffin: Okay. You reach the first step of the spiral staircase and you hear some scuffling behind you, and then you hear Kodira shout...

Kodira: How often do people tell you you're an asshole?

Devo: Oh, fairly constant at this point. I— I—

Kodira: Okay.

Travis: Yes, I— ... I was trying to— I— Why are you following... me?

Kodira: Oh, um, because the city of Founders' Wake is clearly under threat and it's my job to make sure that that doesn't happen. If you can believe it, there's, um, lots of people who want to do what's right.

Devo: Uh-huh.

Kodira: For this world, and it's not just you. And two of those people you left behind, down at the bottom of this tower. And—

Devo: Okay, and do you have advanced training in resisting, uh, being mind-controlled by a very powerful member of the Church? Uh, did you go through, you know, like 17 years of this as well? Because the last time that I faced Orlene, uh, with Zoon and Amber, um, Zoon was mind-controlled to point a crossbow at me. So can you— You're going to resist this?

Kodira: I don't know— I don't know, man. Give it a shot!

Devo: [sighs] Agh, Jesus. Okay. Benevolence. Okay. Um... Just stay close to me and if—

Kodira: No, come on. Take over my mind.

Devo: [sighs]

Kodira: Let's go.

Devo: I'm trying to cut back on this. But you stay close to me, and—

Kodira: I am inviting you to do it.

Devo: Listen to me, please! Sometimes I'm—

Amber: [grunts loudly from physical exertion]

Devo: Oh my god!

Amber: Hey, sorry. I thought he was about to get owned and I had to see. Tellin' people what to do is so [crosstalk]—

Devo: [yells] I'm trying to protect you!

Amber: I know, but I'm— I'm a big girl too. I just wanna see you get—

Travis: But if I tell you not to go, then you will fight me! But if I piss you off, then I was hoping you would let me go!

Amber: I—

Zoox: [grunts loudly from physical exertion]

Amber: Hey. Oh, hey!

Devo: [yells] Goddamnit!

Zoox: Hey.

Griffin: [giggles]

Zoox: Oh, no. I just wanted to tell you good luck!

Amber: Yeah. Now—

Zoox: I'm gonna hang back here, and while you go do your thing.

Devo: No, you can't hang back— If you're going to come—

Amber: He's really strong, he could probably hang for a while. Hey—

Devo: Stay— Please! Just listen for two seconds.

Zoox: Okay.

Devo: Stay close to me.

Amber: Okay, now I have a question.

Devo: And if he tries anything, if Orlene tries anything, focus on me singing. Do not listen to him, listen to me, okay?

Amber: [sighs]

Zoox: Okay.

Amber: [softly] I have— I have one question that I want you to think about.

Devo: Uh-huh.

Amber: If you fuck up trying to control Kodira's mind, will your head explode, like in *Scanners*?

Devo: I'm not gonna try to control Kodira's mind! This is [crosstalk]—

Kodira: Oh, he's afraid to.

Amber: You don't—

Kodira: He knows he'll lose.

Amber: Yeah, and I don't wanna clean up brains.

Kodira: He was all like [mockingly] "Have you ever had something powerful try to control your mind?"

Amber: I heard, yeah.

Kodira: And it's like—

Amber: Yes.

Zoox: Mm-hmm.

Kodira: Uh, yeah. Like how `bout—

Zoox: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Amber: Classic.

Kodira: How `bout a god? That like—

Amber: Hey, watch—

Kodira: I let ride around on me.

Amber: Hey, watch this. Four arms for climbin', let's go. [makes various climbing grunts]

Travis: Wait, are you swinging from the spiral staircase? [wheezes]

Amber: I'm not even tired! I'm not even tired!

Griffin: Uh—

Amber: [sings playfully to herself]

Zoox: I was just thinkin' to hang back and you— You go do your thing, and then if you need us, we're there to come ridin' in!

Amber: [yelling from a distance] Are y'all comin'?

Devo: Uh, Zoox.

Amber: [yelling from a distance] Hey, y'all comin'?

Devo: I'm already on the stairs, yes!

Griffin: [chuckles]

Devo: Zoox, please. You are very, um— and I say this, uh, as respectfully as I, personally, can manage. You are incredibly susceptible to mind control. It has

been demonstrated several times now. I need you to focus on sense of self. Please please please, Zoox. Please try to retain your Zooxness.

Zoox: [getting choked up] That is... the nicest thing...

Devo: Just— Okay.

Zoox: You have ever said to me. I am going— I am Zoox. [yells] I! Am!

Devo: Shhh!

Zoox: Zoox!

Devo: Shh! We're trying to sneak up— Ugh!

Zoox: [whispers loudly] I am Zoox!

Devo: You're so loud!

Zoox: [whispers loudly] I am Zoox!

Griffin: When you— When you shout that, Zoox. A couple of the sort of down and out coral beings in this room start sort of crawling towards you. Reaching—

Devo: No, stay back. Ah, ah, ah.

Griffin: Reaching out toward you.

Devo: Okay, let's go. We need to move now, before this becomes... creepier than it is.

Amber: Yeah. Alright, come on. I'll lead the— I'll lead the way.

Zoox: Oh.

Griffin: They are reaching for the hem of your garment, Zoox.

Zoox: [whispering] I am Zoox. I am Zoox.

Travis: We're moving.

Griffin: As you are like, [chuckles] whispering that, Zoox, you see these two... coral beings try to climb up on their feet and sort of fail. And then you see one of them touch the ground and... it... does something, some sort of magic action that you can't quite understand, and a sort of spire appears.

[a cracking growth sound effect plays]

Griffin: Just like a six-inch-tall spire of coral comes up out of the ground, and there's little sort of barbs sticking out of the left and right side of it, in like very sort of specific-looking intervals.

Zoox: Hmm.

Devo: Do you know what this is?

Zoox: Um...

Devo: Is it their penis?

Zoox: Oh... You know, I'm so young, I haven't quite gotten to that phase yet of discovery.

Clint: Okay, I would like to make, um... An Insight— Would an Insight check...? Perception check?

Travis: Investigation.

Griffin: Uh, Investigation probably.

Clint: Investigat— Not History?

Travis: No!

Griffin: Mmm...

Travis: This isn't hi— a historical six-inch spire that just appeared out of the ground.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: No, yeah. This is some— is something else.

Clint: But I would think he would know— Okay. Alright. Investigation.

[sound of dice rolling]

Clint: That would be a... An 11.

Griffin: Alright, you get right up on this thing and it is clear.. that they are try— That this coral being is trying to communicate with you. But it can also tell that you are sort of stymied by this.

Clint: Is it— Is it the bleached color?

Griffin: It is.

Clint: Or does it have color?

Griffin: It is. Every— Everything in here is the bleached color. The... other one, the one that didn't create this spire, looks at the— at the other and sort of nods. And then it holds a hand out that glows very brightly for a moment, and then that coral being falls and his body starts to... slowly integrate into the floor of the tower.

And then you look at this spire and you *all* can read it. It is a language and this other coral being has just cast *Comprehend Languages* on you, with the last of its power.

Travis: Aw, sick.

Griffin: And... this spire, as you read it, it says "Orlene deceiver".

Devo: Y— Yes.

Travis: Oh no, Griffin. I feel terrible that one of the coral beings gave their life to something so—

Justin: [laughs] So incredibly obvious!

Travis: Yeah.

Devo: Hey. Yes, we— we know this.

Griffin: It makes another spire and it says...

[a cracking growth sound effect plays]

Bleached Coral Being: Are you helpers?

Devo: If by helpers, you mean like are we going to stop Orlene? Then yes.

Griffin: It looks up at you, Zoox.

Zoox: Yeah.

Clint: Would touching the spires... enhance the communication?

Griffin: Um, no. I mean you—

Clint: Between Zoox and them?

Griffin: You can read it pretty clearly and you can tell that it just understands you, you know, telepathic field thing that Zoox has goin' on.

Clint: Okay, well then I'm going to, uh, draw closer to the— the other coral being, and... nod. And... say...

Zoox: Yes. We are helpers. How can we help you?

Griffin: It... creates another spire.

[a cracking growth sound effect plays]

Griffin: And a smaller one next to it, and you all read...

Bleached Coral Being: Orlene creates broadcast machine.

Griffin: And the smaller spire says...

Bleached Coral Being: Send message to world left behind.

Griffin: And then it looks at the small spire and collapses it and creates an even smaller one that says...

Bleached Coral Being: Sends command.

Devo: We need to go. Whatever this is, this cannot be good. Uhhh... Is—

Zoox: Why—

Devo: Li— Little—

Zoox: He must be sending it back to the... the lands... everybody left? The surface?! Why would he be sending messages to the surface?

Devo: Because Hominine...

Griffin: It whips up another spire.

[a cracking growth sound effect plays]

Griffin: And it says...

Bleached Coral Being: Orlene... has regret. So terribly sad.

Travis: Mm...

Clint: [chuckles]

Amber: What does Orlene regret?

Griffin: Um, it makes a very small spire that just says "Unknown".

Travis: [clicks his tongue in thought]

Griffin: And—

Travis: Do *I* know?

Griffin: Um... Golly.

Travis: Listen, here's what I'll say, Ditto.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: I got a passive Insight of 18.

Griffin: [chuckles]

Travis: Am I like "Oh, he always seemed kinda fuckin' off"?

Griffin: Yeah, I mean, okay. I— I will let you roll an Insight check.

[sound of dice rolling]

Travis: 24 total.

Griffin: Jesus, okay.

Travis: That's a 16 plus eight.

Griffin: Yeah, that's exceptional. Okay, I will give you this. Something has always been off with Orlene, beyond his sort of ass— asshole nature.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: And I think you are specifically attuned to this because like he essentially helped raise you, in the Cloister, right? He has always had a sort of sorrow about him that you never quite... understood. And that sorrow always seemed to... be lessened whenever he would teach you all about like Hominine history.

Travis: Mm.

Griffin: And what life was like in— in Hominine before...

Clint: [laughs knowingly in the background]

Griffin: Everything fell apart.

Clint: [continues chuckling]

Griffin: And... I don't know that you have any more to go off than that, but when it says, you know, "Orlene has regret, so terribly sad", that is— that is, I think, what comes to mind.

Justin: Dad, I know what you're sort of like seeming to feel like you're realizing, obviously, but like do you wanna explai— talk about what you're thinking, for the listeners?

Clint: Uh... No.

Justin: Oh, okay.

Clint: Not at this time.

Justin: Then can— wait!

Griffin: [snorts]

Justin: Then can I do a knowing chuckle too, and then later be like "I knew it!".

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: Dad used to do this—

Clint: No, I—

Travis: — when we would watch movies. No, hold on. I wanna air this laundry, Dad.

Griffin: Yeah, let's get him. Let's get into it.

Travis: Dad used to do this when we'd watch movies.

Travis: He would be like "Aha, okay", and we'd be like "What is it?".

Justin: "Okay."

Travis: And he'd be like "You'll see". And when I was like 12, I'm like "My dad knows everything. My dad know—". And now, as an adult with kids, he's fucking bullshitting, dudes. Dudes, he's not—

Justin: No.

Clint: No! No no, I— Okay, I just didn't wanna derail anything that, you know... It just seems to me that he obviously left someone behind, that someone didn't... You know, or somethi— I mean obviously the—

Travis: Someone or something or somewhere or somedid. Somewho?

Clint: He's communicating with somebod— He's trying to communicate with somebody, so obviously not everybody got killed by the storm? I mean that's—

Travis: Well, there's a whole Hominine—

Justin: Hominine are still alive.

Travis: Yeah, there's a like floating land of Hominine or some shit that's like out there in the world. Hominine survived, to some degree. The rich and—

Griffin: And nobody knows— Nobody knows where it is today.

Travis: Yeah, but the rich and powerful of Hominine, there was a plan in place that would save them, but not necessarily all the Homininians.

Clint: My guess was that the regret is that he... [chuckles] You know, did this plan and not that one.

Griffin: It... nods, as you all sort of discuss what it has told you. And then it... climbs over to you, Amber.

[a cracking growth sound effect plays]

Griffin: And it makes a spire. And... it says...

Bleached Coral Being: Are you here to open the Passage?

Amber: Oh, yeah. He— Zoox already opened the passage. He used his, I don't know. He communicated with the coral I think, and he opened the passage. That's how we— That's how we got in.

Zoox: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: It adds to the spire, and now the sentence ends with...

Bleached Coral Being: To the new world.

Amber: Oh, dang. Um... no? I don't think so... I—

Zoox: I— I mean, I'm willing to try. I mean, if—

Justin: They're talkin' to her.

Griffin: They are— Yeah, they are specifically talking to Amber right now.

Amber: Um, no. I hadn't planned on it. Any— I mean, I'm— This one's fine. Ish. I don't know.

Griffin: It makes a new spire, and it is looking pretty dog-tired at this point.

[a cracking growth sound effect plays]

Griffin: And the new spire says...

Bleached Coral Being: This world collapses, as the last world collapsed.

Griffin: It makes another one.

[a cracking growth sound effect plays]

Griffin: And is barely moving now, and it says...

Bleached Coral Being: You will become the new Remnant. Vestiges were the last Remnant. You will be the next Remnant.

Devo: Okay. Um... Or, counterpoint. This world, maybe we make it not collapse? Huh? And we just continue and regrow? You know, like a plant. There are periods

of dormancy and then it grows back, and we do this instead of just being like “Well, what are you gonna do? Let’s move on”.

Griffin: The other bleached— the coral beings in this room are like climbing towards you, Devo, as you are saying all this. And they look kind of aggressive.

Devo: Oh, okay. [in a warding off tone] Hey. Okay. Let’s be cool. I’m just saying that this is also an option. You all have clearly had it tough and I understand that you are a little upset. We are helpers, remember? Not here, uh, to fight you. We’re gonna stop Orlene, and then maybe we’ll figure out from there about the Passage and all of this stuff, okay?

Griffin: Roll a Persuasion check.

Travis: I’m pretty good at that.

[sound of dice rolling]

Travis: An 18 total.

Griffin: Okay. This holds off the advance, but that— The one who is communicating with you is just looking into your eyes intently, Amber.

Amber: I don’t know what you want me to say. I— [sighs] We’re helpers. Yeah, we’ll help. We’ll help, I guess.

Griffin: You see the coral in its face kind of contort, almost in a grin, and then it — it very gently lays its head on the ground and then gets consumed into the floor, and the spires follow along with it.

[a creaking collapse sound effect plays]

Griffin: And Kodira walks up to you all, and she says...

Kodira: Okay, um... So, I’m gonna hang back, just in case these guys get froggy again. Because the last thing y’all are gonna need, while you’re facing down a sort of... mind-controlling megalomaniac, is action from the rear. Um... So, you let me take care of... *this* situation.

Griffin: And she gestures to just like everything in the room. And she says...

Kodira: And holler if you get in a bit above your head.

Devo: Oh, Kodira? Um... You might have been speaking metaphorically, but, uh, you should find a way to plug your ears. I know Amber can do this and I can do— We can communicate psychically and I'm pretty sure Zoos can do this too, uh, but what you don't want to hear is Orlene's voice.

Griffin: Um... She looks at you, Devo, and she's fuckin' annoyed. And you see a red eye appear on her forehead.

Devo: [nervous] Okay.

Griffin: And she says...

[steady electronic beeping plays]

Kodira: I think I know a thing or two about which voices to listen to and which ones to ignore. But I appre— But I appreciate your concern.

Devo: Okay. Fine. I— Yeah, sure. Okay.

Travis: And Devo starts up the stairs.

[walking footsteps sound effect plays]

Justin: Okay, before we move any further, can someone— I'm trying really hard, I'm just not a very smart person.

Travis: That's not true.

Justin: And I'm— Well, just in this sort of kinda thing. I get very in my head about what my character is doing and what— and so sometimes I don't— It's hard for me to do that and comprehend, like... Like narrative stuff, is something I've realized about myself as a— as someone doing this. Can someone sort of like encapsulate for me your take on what is happening right now?

Travis: If I may... Um, this— And—

Justin: That's probably better than— Yes, if I just— I don't need a Griffin-level understanding.

Travis: Right.

Justin: Just a Travis and Clint-level understanding.

Travis: This is how I understand it, right? So, this has escalated quite a bit, right? What all began as... Guidance died, right? And we suspect that this was a, uh, forced move, and not a free-will move, right? The person that we suspected that this would be is Orlene. Orlene is very strong and on the run, we are after Orlene, right? And we were given, uh,— We got a tracer spike to go hunt him down.

And when we arrived, we found that he is working with those beings, with the dried coral. The dried coral had some battleships outside, we thought to protect the place, but actually they could not get in without destroying, you know, basically their home. They told us "Hey, this dude Orlene rolled up, said he would help us to build this Passage. But actually he had his own thing to do, and he's taken control of us, and we want you to stop him".

Now we also know, from Zoox's conversation with the blink sharks, the blink sharks were of the opinion that whatever this passage was, or whatever this would do, that Amber would be the one to trigger it, to open it, and it would be like the end of their world. Be that this world or what, we do not know, but they wanted Zoox to kill Amber, rather than have Amber activate this— this Passage.

Griffin: Or have— Or have Zoox annihilate basically all of the white coral.

Travis: Yeah, that something about this Passage was not great.

Griffin: And I think you would know that like rumors of like a promised land, of an escape from this ruined world that would lead you to like a world that had not been destroyed by magic, is like, a thing people talk about. And for whatever reason—

Travis: We have also heard this from Tolliver.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: And the, uh, place with the endangered animals, where he was like “Nothing that we do here matters, because we’re working towards moving to this other world”, right? And so “This world is dying, and we need to find a way out of this world to the next”.

Griffin: And I think Amber would be confused because like, this is the second group of beings in this world who have thought that *you* were going to be the one... to... for whatever reason, open the door to this new world. And I don’t— I don’t think Amber would have any fucking clue why they thought that.

Clint: So, Zoos is staring at the spot where the coral beings kinda melted back into the floor and the spires melted into the floor... And... He kneels down. And using his power and his connection to the dead coral, I think he tries to make a spike of his own. That says “promise”.

And I— I mean, he has been watching his... species-mates, you know, die and get tormented and, you know, be controlled and I— I think he’s pretty sick of it. And I think this... is his purpose. I think he sees this as being something that... in one way or another, he’s gonna try to fulfill the promise to these coral beings.

Griffin: Okay. Make a... Make a Constitution save.

[sound of dice rolling]...

Clint: Oh, that’s a nine.

Griffin: Uh, it’s hard for you to do this.

[ethereal music plays]

Griffin: Even with the sort of— this enchantment that is very quickly fading now that these two coral beings are gone. And you feel and see a bit of your color drain out, and you take nine points of necrotic damage.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: But you do create a spire. And you can tell that it does say “promise”. It is crude, I think it’s much larger than the other spires. You probably didn’t have any control over that. It’s—

Travis: The “r” is backwards.

Griffin: [chuckles] Yeah, right.

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: It looks like a *Little Rascals* logo.

Clint: The “p” is not, you know, capitalized, yeah.

Griffin: It is... It is there and it is *incredibly* colorful. It is— It is prismatic. And... you see all of the coral beings in this room sort of sit up straight when you create this. And they see it, and... you hear them just kind of humming and glowing a little bit brighter than they were a minute ago.

Clint: Well, every artist loves to be appreciated by their audience.

Griffin: Sure.

Clint: So thank— thank you all very much. No, I think that’s very sweet. I love it.

Griffin: Cool.

[ethereal music grows louder then fades out]

[ad break]

[ominous pulsing music plays]

Griffin: Do you all, as you are going up this spiral staircase— I’m gonna say that it leads into sort of a big kind of hollow chamber—

Travis: Yes, we take an eight-hour long rest, Griffin.

Griffin: I was gonna say, maybe it’s—

Travis: Thank you for asking.

Griffin: I don't think you have time for an eight-hour long rest, but if you wanna just kinda like kick it on the steps for a few minutes and catch your breath, this would be I think the time to do so.

Travis: So you're thinking like short rest?

Griffin: Yes.

Justin: I— Yeah, let's have a brief conversation.

Griffin: And you can also heal up, I'm not gonna worry about hit dice. No, uh... Well, do you recover ki points when you take a short rest?

Justin: Yup.

Griffin: You do.

Justin: I... I don't know. I don't know, do I? Let me take a short rest and see if they fuckin' recover. Hold on.

Griffin: [chuckles]

Justin: I have a button for this.

Amber: So, um... Devo, you know him better than anybody. Who do you think he's trying to get a hold of.

Devo: [sighs] Listen, this will not surprise you, I didn't take a great interest in his personal life. I didn't maybe ask eh question about him, as much as um... Well, I basically, uh, hate him. And he, I'm almost certain, hates me. And so, uh...

Amber: Statistically.

Devo: Yes, right? This is, uh... Yes, I get it. People do not like me, yes. Well played. And so... Here is the thing though. Here is what's throwing me off, and I— [groans in frustration] I have been thinking about this all the way here. I don't think he's evil. Um... So much as, uh... he is self-centered, and self-focused, and narcissistic, and an asshole. And so I...

Amber: Wait, are you saying what I think you're saying?

Devo: No, he's not my dad.

Amber: [mildly shocked] He's your dad?

Devo: No, he's not my dad.

Amber: Oh, okay!

Zoox: That's where I was going too.

Griffin: [laughs]

Amber: Alright.

Devo: No.

Zoox: Yeah.

Devo: No, Amber.

Amber: I thought for sure.

Zoox: [disappointed] Oh...

Devo: He's not my dad. I'm just saying that—

Zoox: Uncle. Maybe an uncle.

Devo: He's not my uncle.

Amber: Yeah, close uncle.

Devo: I mean, maybe in the kind of found family way of like, he was *like* an uncle to me? But, uh... You know, he— Mostly what I'm saying is [sighs] maybe we can talk to him?

Amber: Can I ask you another question, and this... I really just kinda need to know, because... [sighs] Well. If you need to... take him... out. I don't know what we're walkin' into, but if you need to take him out, ca— could you?

Devo: Do you mean like magically, or like could I kill him and it wouldn't hurt my conscience?

Amber: Well, I hope it—

Zoox: Always, yeah!

Amber: I hope it hurts your conscience, Dexter. [chuckles] I'm just sayin', do you —

Clint: [laughs]

Amber: Do you— Will you be able to do it?

Devo: Oh, yeah. Yeah yeah yeah yeah.

Amber: Oh. Alright, come on!

Devo: Yeah, I—

Amber: Oh wait, hold on. [breathes in] Oop. Just felt my vibe refreshed. That's delicious, alright. We can move on.

Devo: Let me also just say, if— if you are going to fight him, if you have the option, punch him in the throat first.

Amber: [whispers] Oh, that's good.

Devo: Right in the voice box. This is a good place to start.

Amber: That's right, yeah.

Devo: He's not so good at like the hand-to-hand combat, so if we can just like [makes a splat noise].

Amber: Right.

Devo: Larynx.

Amber: Over. [imitates splat noise]

Devo: And then...

Amber: `Kay, yeah.

Devo: He should be pretty easy to just like, whoop, slap him around a bunch, at this point.

Zoox: Now I— I'm not that familiar with, you know, humanoid anatomy.

Amber: Sure, yeah.

Zoox: But the throat is that part down the—

Amber: That part here. [vibrates her voice box]

Zoox: Reproductive— Oh! Up there, higher.

Devo: Yeah, right—

Amber: Yeah. [vibrates her voice box]

Devo: On the neck.

Zoox: Oh oh oh oh!

Devo: It's right under the chin. But above the chest.

Zoox: Oh, yeah!

Devo: Right in the middle, front of neck.

Zoox: Okay. The mouth hole and then down about six to eight inches.

Devo: Yeah yeah, thereabouts.

Zoox: Okay. Done deal! Let's go get him.

Devo: Yes.

Griffin: Six to eight inches feels long to me.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: That feels longer.

Travis: More like three. Three inches.

Griffin: Long for a neck.

Travis: No, here's the thing, we've never discussed it. Orlene, he's a giraffe.

Griffin: He's a giraffe man, yeah.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah, there's lots of sort of— Well, most people here have sort of, you know, fish, piscine features, but for whatever reason!

Travis: He's the one giraffe.

Griffin: He's the one giraffe man! Okay.

Zoox: So— So we're just kinda set on goin' and snuffin' him.

Amber: No.

Devo: No, I just said—!

Zoox: Even though they said he was kinda sad.

Devo: I— Zoox, I just said talk to him!

Amber: Yeah, if— I just meant if we— I need to know the situation in case we end up in the— You know, fail to prepare and you prepare to fail. I just wanna know—

Devo: Did you just make this up?

Amber: It's good, right?

Devo: That's very good.

Amber: I was working on it last night when I was tryin' to fall asleep.

Travis: Mm.

Amber: Here's a good— Here's another one I came up with. You ready for this?

Travis: Yeah.

Amber: Tragedy plus comedy equals time.

Zoox: Whoa.

Devo: Mm, that one doesn't make as much sense.

Zoox: Do we have— Do we have TED Talks?

Amber: It's actually really good if you think about it.

Zoox: Under— Underwater?

Amber: Alright, let's go.

Zoox: Okay.

Griffin: Alright, you all finish climbing the spiral staircase.

[footstep sound effects and somber music plays]

Griffin: Or rather you pass through another floor as you go up the spiral staircase, and—

Devo: [pants heavily]

Griffin: Yeah, it's— it's probably pretty exhausting. You all enter through the floor of... the final chamber in this tower. You look up, you can see— you can see the ceiling above you. There are no more sort of stairs going up, save for the spiral

stairs that you're on right now kind of continue on in like a diagonal, up to a platform. A coral platform that's maybe 30 feet above you.

It's a sort of wide, semi-circular platform, at the very top of the room. And on that platform, from your position, you see— first and foremost, you see Orlene's ship. It's that same sort of small, spherical vessel that you saw when you first encountered Orlene back inside of the big ol' clam.

And... it seems to be cradled in some sort of coral structure that kind of boggles the mind. All of these different sort of branches of coral that this ship is nestled in kind of branch off of it and curve upward, straight up into the air, like lightning rods sort of laid out in a pattern kind of like a pipe organ. It is not an actual pipe organ though, he is not fuckin' Ganondorf.

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: And as you all enter the room, you hear that sort of formerly ear-splitting tone coming from these rods. You can see them vibrating.

[single, prolonged tone plays]

Griffin: And you recognize it as the sound that concussed you onboard your ship earlier. And standing inside of his ship, you see through the viewport, Orlene. And... he has his back to you, but as you all enter— Well, actually, are you all trying to get the drop on him?

Travis: Uh... Yes, I think so. But—

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Well...

Clint: Well, if our initial move is to try to communicate with him.

Travis: Yeah, then we probably wanna like, *not* surprise him.

Clint: If we go sneakin' in, yeah.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Devo— Anytime Devo is not talking, I wanna make this clear, Griffin. He is singing under his breath.

Griffin: You're— You're singing.

Travis: Yes.

Griffin: Got you, got you. Okay.

Travis: Is it like the door open— Like is it open?

Griffin: It is closed. It is closed.

Travis: I think... we knock on the hatch. [sighs]

Amber: Really?

Devo: I don't know. [chuckles] I— I— I'm not going to lie, I am unsure what to do at this point. 'Cause it's— I'm tempted to, just the three of us, for us to try to push it, the whole ship, off of the platform. But I think that this is maybe aggressive?

Amber: Eh.

Devo: Um...

Zoox: I have a... slightly modified solution.

Devo: Okay.

Zoox: If you want to knock, why don't you let me knock with *Mage Hand*?

Devo: Oh, from a distance, this is good.

Amber: I love this.

Zoox: From a distance.

Amber: Yeah, oh yeah!

Zoos: And.

Amber: Ding dong ditch, let's go.

Zoos: Get this. [whispers loudly] It's a cantrip.

Devo: Oh.

Zoos: [still whispering loudly] I don't use any spell slots.

Devo: Okay.

Zoos: [laughs mischievously]

Devo: Now are spell slots like holes that you have for spells? In your body?

Zoos: Yes.

Devo: Okay.

Zoos: I have spell holes.

Devo: Oh, that's weird, and it's weird to just find this out now, but okay.

Zoos: And I have unlimited spell holes.

Griffin: No, you don't.

Devo: I don't know if—

Zoos: I just wanted that—

Devo: I don't know—

Griffin: You have a very specific number of spell holes that increases when you level up.

Zoos: Alright.

Clint: Alright, so he manifests *Mage Hand*.

Griffin: What's it look like?

Clint: I think he goes with— I think he goes with, uh, something that'll have a little substance to it, so I think it's little hermit crabs.

Justin: [snorts]

Travis: And then you slam those hermit crabs against a metal door!

Clint: And they got— And they got the little shells. No, but I mean there's a lot of 'em.

Travis: Oh.

Clint: So, they don't have to die to do it.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: They don't *have* to.

Clint: But— But they go— They do the old [knocks to the "shave and a haircut" rhythm] And see what happens.

Griffin: He turns. And see a fist made out of hermit crabs. And is sort of taken aback for a second, and then as the fist sort of dissipates and the crabs go crawling all over hither and yon, he looks down the stairs and sees the three of you at the bottom. And he says...

Benefactor Orlene: Yeah, that— that... That tracks. [sighs] Um... You had to come right now.

Devo: Yes?

Benefactor Orlene: What are you doing here?

Amber: We could ask you the same question.

Zoox: Nice. Oh, I love it when people say that.

Devo: [crosstalk].

Amber: I meant— I meant that literally in this case, like what are you doing here?

Devo: Oh, yes.

Zoox: Oh.

Devo: This is— yeah, we did come to ask questions, basically. Yeah.

Benefactor Orlene: What I'm doing here is... very personal.

Devo: Okay.

Benefactor Orlene: And... does not involve the three of you, or anyone else. I—

Devo: Here's the thing. You and I... We have history. Not great. So... ah... I'm just going to come right out and say it, Hand of Guidance is dead. And, uh, it appears to us that this was done through manipulation and mind control. And there are very few people in Founders' Wake who are powerful enough to do this. And so we think "Ah, we need to talk to, uh, Orlene about this", and then we find out that you, uh, have run away.

Benefactor Orlene: [chuckles] Sorry. Um...

Devo: Hm?

Benefactor Orlene: Uh, you're telling the truth.

Devo: Yes.

Benefactor Orlene: [wheezes in amusement]

Devo: Oh, was that a question, or was that a statement.

Benefactor Orlene: [in an amused tone] It— It— I guess a statement. Sorry, that's, um... Oh, that's... That is too bad. She um... She was an ambitious woman and um...

Devo: [annoyed] Okay.

Benefactor Orlene: She will be missed. By some. I— I assume.

Devo: Oh, god. See, this is the problem. Can I tell you the problem, Orlene?

Amber: Yeah, I get it. Honestly, I get it. If I could just say to you, I get it.

Devo: To me?

Amber: Yeah.

Devo: Okay.

Amber: I get it. I get it.

Devo: This is the problem! I— I... keep trying so hard to not be an asshole, and then everyone else is an asshole. And like— I— Like—

Amber: His own— His own father!

Devo: It's not my father. This is not my father.

Benefactor Orlene: I'm not his father.

Amber: Sorry, yeah.

Devo: Yeah, I know. I— So I came here, and like at first I was like "I'm gonna fucking kill him", then I was like "You know what? I'm gonna talk to him and I'm gonna give him a chance, not just rush in there and be like, 'This guy is evil'". And then I tell you Guidance is dead and you're like [mockingly imitates Orlene's chuckle]. And it's like, okay. You're not—

Benefactor Orlene: I didn't sound like that. That's not what I sounded like.

Devo: It—

Zoox: [quietly] It's kinda like what you sounded like.

Benefactor Orlene: Really?

Devo: You're not, like— Do you *want* us to like, fight you?! Are you— I'm going to give you a chance now, right? Before we like fuck all this up and like start fighting you and, you know, make whatever you were trying to do stop working, or at the very least cause a lot of trouble for you, right? Do you wanna just like tell us what's up, not be an asshole about it, not be all like mysterious and [in a mockingly dark voice] "This doesn't concern you", and instead just like tell us what's up?

Benefactor Orlene: I... am going to correct... an error in judgment. That... has sent the course of my life spiraling well off track.

[ethereal music fades in]

Benefactor Orlene: You three... are going to... fling yourselves off of this tower.

Griffin: And I need all of you to make Charisma saving throws.

Travis: With advantage.

Griffin: Sorry?

Travis: Because I have been humming Countercharm, whenever I am not talking.

Griffin: Ooo! Okay. I was wondering what that was. Is this a new thing that you can do?

Travis: This is, thank you level seven! Yes, uh... Me and any friendly creatures within 30 feet that can hear me gain advantage on saving throws against being frightened or charmed.

Griffin: Okay. Everyone roll with advantage.

[sounds of dice rolling]

Travis: Oof.

[sounds of dice rolling]

Travis: Good.

[sounds of dice rolling]

Griffin: Seein' a lot of low number— Oh, not from Devo. Devo crushed it.

[sounds of dice rolling]

Justin: I got a nine, but I'm rolling with advantage.

[sounds of dice rolling]

Justin: That second one is a... 16. But wait, what was the— What was the thing?

Griffin: Charisma save.

Justin: So it's a negative one for me, 15. That tracks.

Travis: And what was Zoox's best number?

Clint: 18.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Okay, great.

Griffin: All— You, Amber and Zoox, I think you both feel this sort of like morbid instinct to do exactly what he said, but it is drowned out by the song that Devo is humming.

Clint: [chuckles smugly]

Travis: Which, by the way, is "Blue Skies".

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: Aww.

Griffin: He... looks down at you Devo and smiles, and says...

Benefactor Orlene: Well, that's new.

Travis: And he's gonna make an Intelligence saving throw.

Griffin: Oh, okay.

[sounds of dice rolling]

Travis: Trying to beat a 14.

Griffin: That is a 13 plus four, a 17.

Travis: Okay, so he's gonna take half damage on 7d6.

Griffin: Jesus Christ!

Travis: As a *Psychic Lance* pierces his brain. So... Let's see, 7d6. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven.

[sounds of dice rolling]

Travis: That's a lot of dice.

Griffin: What's— What is the spell called?

Travis: It's *Psychic Lance*.

Griffin: Jesus Christ.

Travis: So he's gonna take eight points of damage.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Eh, could be better, but.

Clint: *Psychic Lance* also one of the most popular entertainers in Las Vegas.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: [chuckles] Yeah, he's amazing. He knew my birthday.

Travis: It's actually called a—

Griffin: Like, what?

Travis: Called *Raulothim's Psychic Lance*, but I'm gonna call it *Guidance's Psychic Lance*.

Griffin: Okay. Alright, you s—

Travis: [in a perky voice] I learned it from her book!

Griffin: He— As he smiles, he is sort of looking at you with like *max* condescension, and then you see him almost like physically get hit with this wave of psychic energy, and he like has to catch himself to keep from falling down. And he holds his head and says...

Benefactor Orlene: Oh, okay.

Devo: This is new as well.

Benefactor Orlene: Okay. Well. I'm not doing this anymore.

Griffin: And he waves his hand forward and the 30-foot diagonal staircase of coral explodes outward.

[explosion and falling rubble sound effect plays]

Griffin: Sending a shower of massive coral chunks down on the three of you. I need you all to make Dexterity saving throws.

[sounds of dice rolling]

Travis: Ohhhh. It was almost on the 20.

[sounds of dice rolling]

Justin: Ugh.

Travis: I got a six.

Justin: 10.

Travis: It was on the 20, and it rolled to that two, baby.

[sounds of dice rolling]

Clint: 12.

Griffin: Jesus Christ, guys.

Travis: You're the one— You can't be like "Make the Dex saving throw. Oh no!"

Justin: You can't play both sides.

Griffin: You did a bad job rolling. You did a bad job with the numbers.

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: Enormous chunks of jagged coral fly down toward the three of you and you— They come so quickly and you do not have a chance to get out of the way of them.

[smaller impact sound effects play]

Griffin: And you all... feel... the crushing weight of these chunks of debris.

[debris piling and falling over sound effects play]

Griffin: Land flat on top of you. And then you awaken, like from a dream. And... You are standing in front of the coral staircase. And you see him reeling backwards. And he looks down at the three of you and says...

Benefactor Orlene: I'm not doing this.

Griffin: And he waves his hand outward and the staircase explodes outward, sending large chunks of coral sailing down at the three of you.

[explosion and falling rubble sound effect plays]

Griffin: I need you all to make Dexterity saving throws.

Travis: Griffin, I'm losing it.

Justin: This one will be better.

Clint: I think I have a glitch in my recording? [chuckles]

Travis: It feels like— Yeah, it feels like you just said that. Mine wasn't that much better.

[sounds of dice rolling]

Travis: But this time, before it goes, I do cast Bardic Inspiration on myself.

Griffin: Oh yeah, I think absolutely you have a moment, in the, uh... In the window here. I don't know that you know exactly what's going on, but you definitely have time to send out a wave of Bardic Inspiration, if you so choose.

Clint: Okay, wait a minute. Hold on. Paint the picture for me. How much higher is Orlene?

Griffin: He is 30— He is 30 feet up.

Clint: Okay, cool. Alright. So a Dexterity saving throw again?

Griffin: Um, yes.

Travis: And with my Bardic Inspiration, a 16 total for me.

Griffin: Okay, are you giving e— But wait, before you roll, do you give everyone Bardic Inspiration?

Travis: Oh, I don't know, I only have three. Yeah. Well— Yeah.

Griffin: Okay. So expend two of your Bardic Inspiration. Zoox, you're not gonna need it, that's a 24.

Clint: 24.

Griffin: Uh, Amber?

Justin: Got a...

[sounds of dice rolling]

Justin: 10 plus five, 15.

Griffin: Okay. Do you wanna add you Bardic Inspiration to that, or let it ride?

Justin: I think 15's good.

Griffin: It is *just* good enough.

Justin: Ha! I knew it!

Travis: Got him.

Griffin: The three of you feel like you've just had some sort of... premonition. Or — or something. Because you know what he's about to do and you know the trajectory of the coral chunks that he's about to send sailing down in your direction. And you dive out of the way and these massive, jagged coral boulders smash down just where you were standing in a large pile.

And the three of you sort of climb to your feet after jumping out of the way, and you are... unaffected. And he sees this through his viewport, and he goes...

Benefactor Orlene: Hm.

Griffin: And then he turns around and walks away from the viewport. And now he is still inside of his ship, attached to this coral broadcast apparatus, on this platform 30 feet up, but there is no, uh, staircase leading up there anymore.

Clint: Zoox turns to— [chuckles] Amber and Devo and says...

Zoox: So it's safe to assume we've moved beyond the negotiation phase of our plan?

Devo: We're just not going to talk about like the time jump we just had? Okay. Yeah no, we're past that point. It's time to fuckin' like kill him. He tried to kill us, right? Tried to make us jump off then tried to squish us. Yeah, let's, uh, fuck him up.

Amber: I— Did you all feel that?

Devo: Oh, yes. Yeah? Yeah.

Zoox: I just thought it was déjà vu.

Justin: I wanna do Perception— a Perception check to see if... I can tell of anything that is awry.

[sounds of dice rolling]

Griffin: Uh, okay.

Justin: I got a 12.

Griffin: You got a 12?

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: I mean, you definitely picked up on the— the apparent premonition that you just had. Um... The coral pile behind you is still like sort of rattling, settling maybe. Um... But the source of it, I mean— Okay. Amber, I think maybe you're a little bit attuned to this stuff in a different way, just because of the power that you have.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Something's up with that— that signal.

[single, prolonged tone plays]

Griffin: What that noise that you heard on the ship, and something is up with just the sort of ambient tone that those, uh—

Devo: Oh. Shit!

Griffin: That those like towers are giving off.

Devo: Y'all! The— The person he's sending a message to is himself back in time!

Zoox: Oh, boy.

Amber: What?

Griffin: And— And as you say that Amber, I think you realize that the coral pile behind you is not just settling after flying in your direction, it is moving. And it is reforming. And...

[rubble moving back together sound effect plays]

Griffin: The bannisters of that staircase stretch out to the side and form sort of smaller spires that branch out behind it. And... one particularly large piece of coral floats to the front of the pile. And you see a sort of rigid line of coral line up right behind it, elongating a few feet backwards, to create what looks like a ribcage. And then you see this shape fully take form, and standing behind the three of you, between you and the staircase, is a massive coral dragon. Let's roll for initiative.

[outro theme music plays]

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