

The Adventure Zone: Ethersea — Episode 44

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

Zoox is gone, you know it. For sure.

Travis: I want to use my will to try to will the coral into a new body for Zoox?

Griffin: And then you are awake, and you are the tower.

Clint: Zoox opens up the floor of coral and engulfs Kodira.

Travis: And he is going to recite the words that he knows so well, from listening to Brother Seldom's historical broadcasts. And he is going to repeat the call to the sea.

Devo: [in a reverberating voice] When kingdoms fall
The sea provides
A home for all
Beneath the tides.

And bring your family.

Justin: They just hear a shout.

Amber: Kella sai, guppies! Momma's home!

Griffin: And... the rest of you see her... falling down into the water. And the Biggest Baby sinks down to the floor of the ocean... Completely inactive.

[intro theme music plays]

Griffin: Zoox. You are still a building.

Clint: [snorts]

Griffin: And that's— that's weird, huh?

Clint: Mm-hmm!

Griffin: That's still—

Clint: But— but!

Griffin: But...

Clint: Kinda— Kinda cool.

Griffin: Sure, sure. You're a proud [chuckles] virile tower at the bottom of the sea. You—

Travis: I just wanna say, I feel like I kinda paved the way for this with my trying to turn the dragon into stairs thing. Anyway.

Clint: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: You planted the seed, sure.

Travis: I'm just saying.

Griffin: You're still conscious, Zoox. You are still... you. You're still self-aware. But your... senses and the body that you occupied, and its sort of way of seeing and navigating the world around it is gone. And... through these sort of unfamiliar senses, you know a couple of things to be true. One, Amber and Kodira are— are just gone. In one moment, they were inside the foyer with Devo, they were battling, and then the next moment just poof. They are not there anymore.

The second thing that you know is this. You have... awakened, well and truly. Your consciousness fills the walls and floors and stairways of this tower. But that is just what you are right now. That's just matter, that's just form. You, Zoox, are something more than that now. What would you like to do with that information?

Clint: Hmm. Well, what can I see? What can— I mean, what—

Griffin: That's an interesting verb to use. You can't s—

Clint: What can I sense?

Griffin: Sure.

Travis: What can he experience?

Griffin: Um, why don't you roll a [sighs in thought] Wisdom check for me. I would also accept Perception, although I don't think you are... uh proficient in that, so it's essentially the same thing.

Clint: Well, let's see. Uh, yeah, okay. I'll make a Perception check.

[sound of dice rolling]

Clint: That is a 19.

Devo: 19 plus one, a 20. I'm— With a 20, I mean, you are completely self-aware. You are a coral consciousness, and you are within a large coral form, right? When you were absorbed up into it, your consciousness sort of became this new form. With a 20? You get the impression that you could be whatever you wanna be right now. You can— You can make—

Travis: Go to college!

Griffin: You can go—

Travis: Dad! Make Zoox go to college!

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: To— to Phoenix Online University.

Justin: Whoaaaa.

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: You are able to take whatever shape that you want to take. Your consciousness is as such that it, you know, can only be in one sort of place at a time, but... You know, this tower is just a form that you are taking right now. And though you've never like consciously done this before, you think that you could make a body, you could make whatever you want to inhabit. As long as you've got the cor— the living coral to do it.

Clint: I think I am going to form um... A... Bigger, faster, stronger version of Zoox. [wheezes]

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: There you go. I was gonna ask, like if you had said like "another Zoox", I would be like "Well now, hold on".

Griffin: Uh—

Travis: This is an opportunity here.

Clint: This is gonna be— This is gonna be a super Zoox.

Travis: Zoox 2.0.

Griffin: Zoox Prime. In Zoox's mind, in your consciousness, as you are trying to make this coral take form, what does that look like?

Clint: Um... I think it would almost be— I'm— Are we in water right now or not?

Griffin: You are not, no.

Clint: Oh. Okay. Um... I think—

Griffin: I mean— Okay, wait wait wait. Yes, *you* are. Your base of the tower is in flooded water, so sure.

Clint: Okay. Zoox takes the form of almost like a Transformer.

Travis: Hell yeah.

Clint: I think he's going to become larger, and he's going to become something that if someone were going to want to use him for transportation, like ride on him, they could.

Travis: Wait, what?

Justin: He's turning himself into David Hasselhoff in *The SpongeBob Movie*, is what he's doing.

Travis: Okay, yeah yeah yeah. Got myself a steed—

Justin: Hi folks, Justin McElroy here.

Griffin: [chuckles]

Justin: What a pleasure it is.

Clint: [chuckles]

Travis: [snorts]

Griffin: Uh... Okay.

Travis: Special guest, Justin McElroy.

Griffin: So like what— In humanoid form, how big a boy are we talkin'?

Clint: I would say he's gonna have to be at least, uh... 12 feet... Long.

Griffin: Fuck.

Clint: 12 feet.

Griffin: Jesus.

Travis: 12 feet *long*?

Clint: 12 feet.

Travis: And how tall is he?

Griffin: [chuckles]

Clint: [chuckles] 12 feet.

Griffin: 12 feet. That's a big fella, okay. This— you are start—

Devo: Holy shit! Zoox!

Griffin: [chuckles] Well, hold on. You are self-aware, this is the first time you are consciously trying to form a new body. I will give you advantage because of your great 20 roll, but I am going to need another Wisdom check. Which is gonna be another d20 plus one. Or, yeah, d20 plus one.

[sound of dice rolling]

Clint: Well that is a five.

[sound of dice rolling]

Clint: That is a 17.

Griffin: Plus one, an 18. Okay. I'll give you 10 feet.

[cosmic electro music plays]

Griffin: I think with a 17, you feel like you can... move the coral. That's the first thing you are kind of like awakened to, and you bend it first. And Devo, you look down at the ground and that first spire that formed that message "promise", the like different little thorns on it kind of begin to slide up toward the top, forming almost a hand. And then it bends at 90 degrees halfway and props itself against the ground and you see, using this one long arm, Zoox just pushes himself up from the floor.

Only he is... I mean he was already big, he is hulking now. His like still suit that was made of the coral is more like— more like plate armor at this point. He is bigger in all dimensions, but there is enough, with his like coloration and the different types of coral that are comprising his body, that he is still recognizably Zoox.

Devo: Zoox? Have you—

Zoox: [in a booming voice] Hi there.

Griffin: [snorts]

Devo: Have you been working out?

Zoox: [booming voice] Well, yes I have.

Devo: No. Please.

Zoox: [booming voice] Working out my spirit!

Devo: Okay, I don't know what this voice is, but could you...

Zoox: [booming voice] I was tryin' to do a little Patrick Warburton.

Griffin: Yeah.

Zoox: [booming voice] I guess I didn't succeed very well.

Justin: You fucking crushed it, actually.

Griffin: Yeah.

Devo: I think that was very good.

Griffin: I was actually good.

Zoox: Wait a minute, hold on. [coughs loudly] [in Zoox's regular voice] No, it's me. Hi! How do I look?

Devo: Uh, bigger.

Zoox: [chuckles] Yeah. Yeah.

Devo: Yeah.

Zoox: Better believe it, yeah!

Devo: So right now—

Zoox: And you guys see how fast I probably am, because my boots are bigger, so my boots jets are stronger.

Devo: Okay.

Griffin: He just starts running circles around the room. Just [imitates heavy, rapid footsteps]

Devo: Okay, you— you're a very fast boy, yes. Um... Eh...

Travis: Griffin, am I right that at this point, if my math serves me, Zoox and I are like the only people in the room?

Griffin: Well, actually you hear a hatch open and then the sound of two tiny little feet slap against the ground.

[hatch opening and footstep sound effects play]

Griffin: And walk towards you. And you hear a voi—

Devo: Urchin?

Griffin: You hear a voice say...

Urchin: Uh... Damn. Zoox? Those gains though! [pause] Um, where's Amber?

Devo: [sighs] Amber jumped through a portal into the next world.

Urchin: She jumped through a portal in— What about the cop?

Devo: Cop jumped through a portal.

Urchin: Okay. Um, is that a... bad thing? A good thing?

Devo: Uh, y— I— Urchin, at this point, I have no fucking clue. Here's what I know, let me tell you something I do know, I'm really tired. Um, so here's what I propose. Zoox, you, with your magic coral powers. Let's figure out a way to get this portal onto our ship. So we can, I don't know, work on that later. Um... And then... Zoox, are you connected to like the coral warships as well?

Zoox: Hmm. I probably could be because I'm pretty huge right now. You want me to try to, you know, send out some hailing frequencies?

Devo: Yes. Because I'm thinking without the Biggest Baby... [sighs] We're gonna need some help back at Founder's Wake, and maybe this is something the— the Drynarr can help with.

Clint: Okay, Zoox uses his coral-shaping powers and on the outside of the tower...

[creaking growth sound effect plays]

Griffin: Mm-hmm.

Clint: ... spires shoot out that say "help".

[piano music plays]

Griffin: Instantly, you see coral warships that just push through the big coral dome surrounding this tower. And it looks like they're phasing through it b— I mean... That is essentially [chuckles] exactly what they are doing. Their ships are pressing into the outside of it, forming into the dome, and then reforming on the inside. And one by one, they just sail in through the dome and take docking positions all around the tower. And—

Devo: Well this is— That was fucking sick, actually. This was— That was cool.

Griffin: And from one of the ships at the, um sort of front of this formation, you see that same big Drynarr that approached your ship when you first arrived sort of on the scene here. And he... ho— pulls himself up into the tower, and walks towards you and looks around. And sees the destruction that has happened here, but then sees this one remaining gateway that is still standing. And his is just kind of looking at it with reverence. And then he turns back to you and forms a spire on the ground that says...

Drynarr: What happened here?

Devo: This is a—

Zoox: Tell you what.

Devo: Yeah.

Zoox: You tell him, and I'll translate.

Devo: [chuckles] Okay.

Zoox: Into Spire-ese.

Griffin: Sure.

Devo: Uh, short answer? Good news, bad news.

Justin: Spirish.

Griffin: [quietly] Spirish is better.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

[creaking growth sound effect plays]

Devo: Uh, good news? The portal was opened. Ey! Yeah, we put some— god blood was splashed on it during a fight. It opened. Bad news? Then Amber and the only god we had immediate access to... went through the portal and then the portal closed. But the takeaway here is that, you know, on paper, the portal system works. Uh, we just need a new supply of god blood to reopen it.

Griffin: Um... It nods and a spire forms. And it says...

[creaking growth sound effect plays]

Drynarr: We are complete now.

Griffin: And another forms that says...

Drynarr: Thank you.

Griffin: And outside you see what look like masts appear on all of these warships, only they are also messages, mimicking the one that just formed. And all of these ships are saying thank you.

Devo: You are welcome. But, uh, we need something from you. Here's— Here's the deal that I will make. I will work on figuring out how to open this portal, and I

will work with you, but I need you to work with us as well. Would you be willing to act as guards and sentries for Founder's Wake, the city that we come from, while I figure out how to activate this portal once more.

Griffin: He... looks at you, Zoox. And then turns and walks back to the doorway out to the open water where all the warships are positioned, and... There's a brief moment where you feel this tower sort of resonate for a second, and then he turns and faces the rest of you again and forms a spire that says...

[creaking growth sound effect plays]

Drynarr: We will follow wherever you lead.

Griffin: And with that he turns and... jumps back down into the water and forms into the side of the warship that he exited.

Devo: Okay. So let's get this portal onboard the Coriolis and then... collect Orlene's remains. [sighs] And we can go.

Griffin: You hear another voice come from the Coriolis and Dylan pops out of the hatch and says...

Dylan: Uh, hey. Um, what's up? Um...

Devo: Dylan, was it?

Dylan: Yeah, you know. Yeah. It's Dylan. You know me. Um... The like phone? Is blowin' up. And there's a bunch of people... that are like screaming, and they're like "[bored tone] Oh god, oh god, God is dead. What happened to God? God's dead, oh no".

Devo: Sure.

Dylan: Um, "Why has our Lord forsaken us?". Um and it's coming from the Big Baby, so um they're asking for a lift.

Devo: Yes, they can get onboard the coral warships.

Dylan: Right on, right on. Um...

Devo: I'm sure Zoox can help facilitate the... the pick ups.

Zoox: Oh, yeah.

Dylan: Okay.

Zoox: Yeah.

Dylan: Shitter's broke, by the way.

Devo: Aw, Dylan...

Zoox: [sighs]

Griffin: And he hops back down into the ship.

Zoox: Oh wait, what do I care?

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: Yeah, you don't care.

Griffin: And he hops back down into the ship.

Travis: While that's happening, I'm gonna go back up to Orlene's ship to uh... You know, collect that body. And also any information I can find regarding Benevolence and that book that we got for Orlene and all that cool shit.

Clint: Well you do that and Zoox will move the portal onboard our ship.

Griffin: Okay, I think it's— It is— This is becoming more natural for you. You— Your feet are touching the floor of the tower as you walk, and you are still tethered to it. And so you can feel like your consciousness rejoin the tower, but your body is still a part of it too, and then you just kind of scoot that ring, inch by inch, toward the Coriolis, and—

Clint: Oh, I make it like a big conveyer belt.

Griffin: Yeah, for sure.

Clint: Just moves right on down, right on the rollers. Takes the rollers all the way.

Travis: That's some fucking Gumby shit.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: And I love it.

Griffin: It is very, very Gumby shit. And... Urchin hops back in the Coriolis and turns it around and opens up the cargo hatch. And you are— You are, with surprising ease, able to load this gateway onto the ship.

Devo, you return to the top of the tower. And the coral here is starting to like writhe a little bit. It is starting to move a little, and you see a few like coral beings just kind of like climb out of the walls and floors and just like brush past you, walking back down the stairs. Like nodding at you as you go.

Travis: [in a deep voice] "Hey, how's it goin'? Hey, what's up?"

Griffin: You also get the impression— You see some water begin to drip into the tower as they kind of like take themselves out of the tower to be something else. You find the scene though, pretty much as you left it. You see his body lying sort of by the entryway of the ship, and... The machine that it was plugged into has gone dormant. In fact, it has almost fully eroded at this point. Why don't you roll an Investigation check for me?

[sound of dice rolling]

Travis: Well that's a two plus three, Griffin. That's a five.

Griffin: There is nothing else here, that—

Travis: What?

Justin: [snorts]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: That you see. [chuckles] That would—

Travis: What would it have been, Griffin? Just uh hypothetically, if it had been like a 25.

Griffin: Oh, I would've given you some great s— No.

Travis: Agh! Damn.

Griffin: It would have— There is— He is travelling with sort of spartan means. Um there—

Travis: So it's not that I can't find the things, it's that there's not things there.

Griffin: Um... Right. There aren't—

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: There aren't things there. Whether or not he had some other sort of hideaway where he was squirrelling stuff away. Like, curiously there is no— the journal, where he sort of found the blueprint for this machine, like, that is not here. Um, and—

Travis: But we already have a copy of that, right?

Griffin: You do. You have a copy that was created by the mysterious Beholder.

Travis: Right.

Griffin: Whose identity shall forever remain a secret.

Travis: Yeah. Yeah, it's a complete mystery.

Griffin: But you are able to— I would say it's a bit laborious, but you're going downstairs, so you are able to drag him back to the ship also.

Travis: And I assume eventually I can wave down a coral person and be like, "Hey."

Griffin: Sure. Yeah, they help you out too.

Zoox: Do you need some help?

Griffin: Right.

Zoox: I'll send some help.

Devo: No, I got it. Thank you. He ain't heavy.

Zoox: I was thinking of a big hand come out—

Travis: [shouting to interrupt] H— Oh— Ah!

Zoox: Oh!

Devo: He ain't heavy. He's my Benefactor.

Justin: [snorts]

Clint: [chuckles quietly]

Griffin: We're havin' a lot of fun with dead bodies today.

Travis: Wee! And then I make him go "Yeah, what he said! Wakka wakka wakka wakka".

Griffin: Okay. Grotesque. Uh—

Travis: I don't really do a *Bernie's* with him!

Griffin: Sure sure. You... get everything aboard the ship, and—

Travis: I miss Amber. I wonder what Amber would have to say about all this.

Griffin: Well—

Travis: I bet it would go a little something like this.

Griffin: We'll check in with Amber here in a second.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: Um—

Justin: I'm in the bathroom.

Travis: [laughs]

Justin: I've moved on to another podcast.

Travis: [laughs]

Griffin: [chuckles]

Justin: I'm cool now. Bye.

Griffin: Okay. You all load up into the ship. Zoon, do you do— You see that the tower is starting to deform down into a sort of more primordial coral shape. Is there anything else you wanna do before you board the Coriolis?

Clint: Yeah. Um... As far as— As far as he knows, Amber's gone, right?

Griffin: Yup.

Clint: I think he wants to make a coral statue of Amber.

[dramatic music fades in]

Griffin: It's... It's... so easy. Partially because you are now very good at sort of morphing this coral to your will. But also because you travelled with Amber, and you do not forget a face. You leave it here and as you board the Coriolis, you see the tower, once all the sort of like oxygen-breathing lifeforms aboard it are on the Coriolis, it very quickly just kind of falls away, as does the dome that is surrounding you. And it starts to take shape, it is a bit more of a slower process, almost like an egg hatching into these big warships.

You can see that there are these little pods that are emerging from the belly of the Biggest Baby that are floating up into these warships, and several of them have already departed, heading in the direction of Founders' Wake. And you see behind you, as you sail away, a very big statue of Amber. And... Give me... Both you and Devo, give me a... Gimme a straight, up and down Wisdom check.

[sounds of dice rolling]

Clint: 19.

Travis: A nat 20.

Clint: Whoa!

Griffin: Both of you realize, as you sail away, that it is a touching tribute to your lost friend. And you also realize that it strikes a pretty remarkable resemblance to the statue that you discovered while you were on route to this location. The one that Amber touched and seemed to bolster her power.

Clint: Whoa, wait a minute. [makes impressed noises] Wooooow.

Griffin: It is—

Travis: Hey Griffin, is time a flat circle?

Griffin: It's a bit later. You have been, um—

Justin: That's a no.

Griffin: No.

Justin: 'Cause if it's later...

Griffin: Yeah. [chuckles] It's not a flat circle.

Travis: Yeah yeah, but is it earlier? Hmm?

Griffin: It's been a couple hours and you all are sailing in this like armada of coral warships.

Travis: Devo has been sleeping real hard.

Griffin: For sure, for sure. How— How soon after you board the ship did you, um...

Travis: As soon as possible.

Griffin: Okay. As you—

Travis: Do you remember how many times he like fell down and had to get back up—

Griffin: [from a distance] Yup.

Travis: — 'cause a magical ray healed him for like three points of health?!

Griffin: Okay then. Very soon after you leave the tower, you have, um... Your head begins to hurt very badly, very quickly. A headache sets upon you that is indescribably painful, and you feel— It feels like your vision is blurring? But that is not the best way of describing it. It feels like the world is blurring, Devo. I need you to make a Wisdom saving throw.

Travis: [mutters] Probably not great. Let's see.

[sound of dice rolling]

Travis: Ugh, an 11 total.

Griffin: [amused] Phew, okay.

Travis: Could be worse, Griffin.

Griffin: It could be much worse.

Travis: Statistically.

Griffin: Yeah, that was a coin flip. You... feel like your head is about to burst open. And just as suddenly as it set upon you, the headache is gone. As is this weird blurring of reality that was happening.

[eerie piano music plays]

Griffin: And... then that moment passes, and... You know, though it was agonizing, the pain is gone too. And you settle back in for... a well-earned rest.

Amber. You awaken on a beach. And you hear the sound of waves crashing below you. You are nestled amongst some brush, and as your eyes open and adjust, this — this whole scene, this whole world is bathed in this deep emerald sunset light. And as you sit up and you sort of fully observe this beach and the sort of lavender-tinted waters that are splashing up on it, you realize you are not alone.

Because also sitting on the beach is Kodira. And she is sitting on the shoreline, her feet just sort of resting in the water, and... she turns when she hears sort of the brush moving, and you can see that barely glowing on her forehead, probably visible only because of how it kind of contrasts the— this dark green light, is the red eye of Koda. Make a Perception check for me.

Justin: 16.

Griffin: She is seated next to what appears to be some sort of like *weird* banana tree? [chuckles]

Travis: [snorts]

Griffin: It's like— It's not like our banana trees. It's— It is—

Justin: Damn, that's evocative.

Griffin: It is—

Travis: Not like our perfectly normal, absolutely not strange banana trees. No no no.

Griffin: Yeah, these bananas? They like curve in two directions.

Travis: Whoa.

Griffin: They— They—

Clint: Oh, that's bananas.

Griffin: They crazy.

Travis: B-A-N-A-N-A-S.

Griffin: Just these delicious-looking— They're red. And they just look like lower case "y"s. But that's not what's important.

Justin: Where do you come up with this? [chuckles]

Griffin: I get— I got— I'm super high right now.

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: What is peculiar is not just the color and shape of these bananas, but the fact that this tree is— appears to be just inches tall next to Kodira. And you... sort of put together as you— this fog leaves your mind, that the trees are not small, Kodira is gigantic. And then you realize that the brush you're sitting in is not brush at all, it is a jungle. And you are gigantic also.

Amber: [clicks tongue in thought] I'll be damned. I'll be damned.

[waves crashing sound effect fades in]

Griffin: She looks at you and... eyes you up and down, and she says...

Kodira: Don't freak, it's— it's me.

Amber: Prove it. [burps]

Griffin: She sighs and says...

Kodira: Um... One time you almost broke your tailbone tryin' to fish a kaiser blade out of an infinite trash hole for me.

Amber: Yeah. "Tryin'", had to throw that in there. Yeah, alright. Where's uh... Where's the big guy?

Griffin: She holds a hand out toward you to help you up, to join her on the shore.

Justin: Yeah. I do that.

Griffin: You walk over and sit down on the shore with her, and from this perspective, you notice something else. There are glowing lights in the water.

There are blink sharks, easily thousands of them, arranged in just this vast pattern. And they all are flashing this green light. And... She says, um...

Kodira: He's uh... He's here. But only... sorta.

Griffin: And she winces in pain, and she says...

Kodira: I think he's— I think he's dyin'. You ever, uh, you ever had a god die inside you? It's not particularly fun.

Amber: I've eaten some burritos that have made me *feel* like a god's dyin' inside me.

Kodira: Oh my goodness. Are you talkin' about Chester's Roll 'Em Ups? What were we—

Clint: [laughs quietly]

Amber: Burrito was pretty generous.

Kodira: What were we thinking?

Amber: Now that I think about it.

Griffin: She says...

Kodira: Koda w— Koda was never really whole. Not really. Y'all... [sighs] You just cleared out a lot of him, but you know, there's still more Kodite here. Or I guess... there? I'm pretty confused, but—

Amber: Yeah.

Kodira: There was more—

Amber: It's disorienting.

Griffin: She says—

Kodira: There's more Kodite out there than what was built into the Biggest Baby, but... I think being separated from that ship is... proving to be a little bit more than he can handle.

Amber: Hey, bubba. Di— [sighs] Did I do the right thing? It felt right, in the moment, but... It was all kinda confusing.

Griffin: You see... that tears are streaming down her cheeks. And they are illuminated every time this just, this choir of blink sharks flashes their lights. She says...

Kodira: I was aware of what was happening during all that, which by the way, thanks for the punches.

Amber: [laughs smugly]

Kodira: I mean, I don't have a leg to stand on.

Amber: I tried not to.

Kodira: But holy ssshit. You did what you had to do to save your friends. Is that about the long and short of it?

Amber: I was trying to save a lot of people. We're— See, this is what's trippin' me up, right? I was tryin' to save people, but... I don't know if magic's as bad as Koda made it out to be. I mean... Maybe I should've let him do his thing. I don't know, it just didn't seem right.

Griffin: She winces again and takes a moment to compose herself, and she says...

Kodira: I'll tell yah... He seems pretty convinced that we are gonna make a right mess of things here. I feel strong. Do you feel strong?

Amber: Do *I* feel strong?

Kodira: Yeah. God-like?

Amber: I feel... big. And... that's not always the same thing.

Griffin: She makes a fist and clenches it tight. And... you see very, very slowly, and painfully it seems, that red eye fades and fades, and then is gone. And she takes a huge breath when it happens. And kinda shakes her head and looks at you. And she says.

Kodira: Okay. Well... I guess it doesn't matter what he thinks, 'cause he's dead as hell now.

Amber: Did you have to fight him, like in your mind palace?

Kodira: No. What?

Amber: Like, did you have an embodiment of you in your mind and he was there in your mind too, and you had to like c— like fight him in your mind? And then it's like you beat him and he's like... You know what I mean?

Griffin: She says...

Kodira: You been readin' some of Young Mitchell's old tall tales? You been dippin' into that— dippin' into some of that sci-fi?

Amber: I've been on some long trips.

Kodira: Okay.

Amber: [crosstalk] Ain't much else to do.

Griffin: She says—

Kodira: Nah, it— it wasn't nothing like that. Um... Hey, I think we're in charge.

[pause]

Amber: Oh, shit. Huh.

Kodira: Yeah.

Griffin: The blink sharks are... continuing their pattern of flashing lights, and they seem like, nervous to approach you. But you see... one small light swim toward the shore. It actually blinks toward the shore a couple times, and then... it

flashes as it blinks one more time, and it... is just a little blink pup that has beached itself, kind of at your feet. And it is looking up at you, Amber, and it is kind of writhing, trying to move itself. It seems a little panicked. And some of the lights move a bit closer to the shore as they see, you know, a member of their herd endanger itself so foolishly, just to kind of touch the hem of your garment. What do you do?

[pause]

Justin: I think I rise up my foot to squash it. Um, sorta instinctually. And I think I see the light blinking, and kinda stops. Like I've never seen it blink like that before. You know, like scared. They're such alpha predators. There's something about the light, I think, that seems panicky. And I think right before I squash it, I kinda scoop my hand... underneath it, and— No, you know what I do? I use my giant finger to just draw a line through the sand that creates a stream. And the stream goes all the way back to the baby blink shark, so it can get back to its family.

Griffin: You... You do that and it works perfectly. The ocean just comes and pulls the blink shark back in. You see about a dozen of those lights swim toward the pup as it reaches the water, and then that smaller herd just swims right up to— a safe distance toward you. And it starts blinking, and then another row of sharks line up behind it and start blinking, and more and more. And you get the... pretty, um, authoritative impression that you are being worshipped right now. And Kodira looks at everything that just happened and looks at you, and says...

Kodira: I think you just passed the vibe check.

Griffin: And she smiles and says...

Kodira: But also, I... I believe that you are now the favorite. And so I have to topple you. Um... I have— I have— Now we are warring. I am an extremely jealous and fickle god? And—

Amber: [scoffs] Yeah, well best of luck. I've got an army of very small blink sharks at my disposal. I'm gonna look around. I bet this place has got fuckin' tigers!

Griffin: She leans down and just rip—

Amber: [shouts excitedly] Yo! We're gonna see a tigerrrr!

Griffin: [chuckles] She leans down and just rips the banana tree out of the ground, and she says...

Kodira: I'm gonna throw this whole banana tree at you if you keep acting like—

Amber: I'm gonna eat an entire tree! 'Cause I can!

Kodira: Yeah, that's a good point. Hey, we're gonna need cooler names, aren't we? We can't be a couple deities named just Amber and Oxana. That's not very god-like.

Amber: Alright, you can be "Bubba".

Oxana: I— We— We'll work—

Amber: Bubba the god!

Oxana: Okay.

Amber: Bubba-ho-tep. [laughs]

Oxana: You—

Clint: [snorts]

Oxana: You can be... Banana Face.

Amber: No.

Griffin: And she just kinda throws the tree at you.

Amber: That's nothing.

Griffin: And it— it just—

Amber: We'll work on it.

Griffin: It just dinks off of you. And the sharks are in the water, just like— You can tell from the way they're blinking, they're just like [reverently] "Banana Face. God bless you".

Travis: [laughs]

Justin: [wheezes]

Travis: "Yes."

Griffin: And...

Amber: Alright, now y'all get on out of here, non-believers! I'll probably eat y'all in the mornin'.

Griffin: And some of them swim away, and she says—

Oxana: Oh, we should actually probably um... [chuckles] We should probably be careful about that. I could go for some, I don't know... If they could do a offering. We're very big, so I don't know what we can eat now, but um...

Amber: Do we eat light?

Oxana: Oh man, I haven't—

Amber: Ahhhhh. [makes open-mouthed eating noises] No.

Oxana: [chuckles] It was a good thought though.

Amber: What— What's big enough to eat around here?

Griffin: And as you start looking around the world for a big sandwich, uh... The lights continue to flash in sacred unison, as the last of the suns in the sky slips over the horizon.

Zoox and Devo. The Coriolis... docks. Back at your chosen spot in Founders' Wake. And you arrived with a, you know, motorcade of giant, what appear to be bone ships behind you.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: And so there is a flurry of activity as you all make your way out of the ship. There are... no Chaperones to be seen, which is peculiar. I mean, maybe not to you, since you probably understand why, but peculiar to everyone else here, as they are sort of the de facto, you know, security force in the city. Instead, you just get a bunch of sort of dock workers and other contractors gathered around to... see what is happening. Do you explain what is happening?

Travis: I am making a beeline for... I wanna say the Citadel? Is that what it's called?

Griffin: What is that?

Travis: Wherever the Ballasters hang out.

Griffin: We'll say that the Ballaster Hermine is like at the front of the crowd. So as you hop off the ship, she requests a... a debrief, essentially. And we don't have to do that whole thing for like the third time this episode.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Griffin: But how transparent are you about everything that happened?

Travis: Oh, I think I'm very transparent.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Um... For just so many reasons. But like... Yeah. Uh, lay out as many specific details as I possibly can.

Griffin: Okay, so you're not trying to be cagey about anything.

Travis: No.

Griffin: Okay. Um—

Travis: That's a— That's a young man's game, and Devo has aged a lot.

Griffin: [quietly] Sure.

Travis: In the last day.

Griffin: With the like past few months that this city has had, I don't think the Ballaster Hermine like blinks an eye at what you say. I think it's just like "Oh, okay. Weird existential crisis shit that's threatening reality and we beat it? Okay, cool". But she sets up a time for you to come up to the Ballast in the morning to fully sort of walk her and... I guess the only surviving Ballaster at this point, the only other one is Declan Cern.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: So she makes an appointment for that. Zoox. Tessellation approaches you and... in a similar way, Tessellation wants to know why there are [chuckles] a bunch of white coral ships outside.

Zoox: The— Um. They're kind of, um... [sighs heavily] My, um... supporters?

Travis: That's a good choice of words, Dad. I was wondering where you were gonna go with that.

Clint: Yeah, I was leaning towards "worshippers".

Travis: Oh, ew.

Clint: But I don't think that— that's it.

Travis: Ugh, no no no.

Clint: They're like, um...

Travis: Entourage.

Clint: They're like my posse?

Travis: No, not that one.

Clint: Oh, okay.

Justin: Certainly not that.

Clint: Supporters. They're supporters.

Griffin: Okay.

Zoox: They um— They're here to— They wanna be friends, and they've agreed to kind of protect us. And uh, it's kinda cool, actually! I— I have uh discovered a lot about myself. Not everything, but um... I've got some [chuckles smugly] Pretty cool powers. At least I did. I think I— I don't know if I still have them or not. I'll have to talk to the DM.

Griffin: You do. You—

Zoox: Find out.

Griffin: [amused] You still do.

Justin: [snorts]

Griffin: Tessellation walks over to the edge of the pier that you're standing on and looks over at you and says...

Tessellation: Would you mind... making a brief introduction?

Zoox: Oh, no, uh-uh! No, I'd be glad to.

Griffin: And they dive into the water. And begin swimming toward the— this Vanguard warship.

Devo: Yeah, Zoox go with Tessellation. I'll see you, um... In the morning, when we meet the Ballasters.

Zoox: Okay.

Devo: Rest up, okay?

Zoox: Yeah. Hey, um... You okay?

Devo: Uh...

Zoox: I mean— I mean, you know, you've been through a lot. And, you know, are you...

Devo: [sighs] I... am filled with purpose, and I think that for me, it's the best I can do. Uh, that I know— that I feel... connected? That I feel like I know why I am here, and I know... [sighs] I am beginning to understand why... why. I'm beginning to understand why. And it is helping a lot, but I am, not going to lie, tired as dog shit.

Zoox: I get that... Well. You— You know what Amber would say to you right now?

Devo: Uh, no?

Zoox: Go kick some ass, guppy!

Devo: It's— Okay. It's very cute when you say it. It is not the same kinda—

Zoox: Thank you.

Devo: It's cute. But I will see you in the morning.

Zoox: That's 'cause I'm, you know, I'm like a sea creature, so me calling somebody else "guppy" I think is kinda— It resonates.

Devo: No, it's more—

Zoox: Right?

Devo: It's more that you are like a sea otter.

Zoox: Yeah, okay. Yeah.

Devo: And your energy is— It vibrates.

Zoox: Playful, yeah.

Devo: Yes.

Zoox: Okay.

Devo: But thank you.

Zoox: Well, just, you know, do good!

Devo: Okay. I will see you at the meeting in the morning, okay?

Zoox: Okay!

Clint: And he does this great phoon into the water.

Griffin: [chuckles] Okay.

Travis: Okay. Now other people don't know what that is, Dad.

Clint: Alrighty, then—

Travis: Unless they're—

Griffin: Unless they listened to *TAZ: Amnesty*.

Travis: Oh right, yeah.

Griffin: In which Ned did an epic phoon to destroy a water monster.

Travis: That's true.

Clint: That's right.

Griffin: Okay. You splash down into the water and begin to follow Tessellation.

Travis: I think— And Devo hands— heads back to the Parish? I wanna say.

Griffin: You— As you start to sort of make your way through this crowd, as it dissipates... You see Beck.

[piano music plays]

Griffin: And she is... sitting at an empty space on a pier. There is no ship docked where she is sitting. And she's sitting on top of a big, rectangular, leather chest. And you can see that it has the hand and scales insignia of the Benevolent Parish.

Devo: Uh, Beck? Wha— Where did you get this chest? What is this?

Griffin: She... does not answer. She is just looking down at this empty spot in the water. Um... Make a Perception check for me.

Travis: Um... You know what? I'm going to... do that.

[sound of dice rolling]

Travis: 13, total.

Griffin: It is the way that her eyes—

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: — are kind of glazed over... that you can tell that she is... she has been, um... orated to.

Travis: I am going to begin to sing quietly in Countercharm. For her.

Griffin: It just takes a few notes and she snaps out of it. And she looks up at you, and she says...

Beck: Hey, Devo.

Devo: Beck, what happened?

Beck: Um... I think I sold my ship.

Devo: To who?

Beck: To— To Seldom?

Devo: [sighs heavily] I see.

Griffin: She... hops up. She seems as surprised to be sitting on a church chest as you were to see it, and she cracks it open, and you see inside of it. It is heaped to the top with golden plates and cups and all of these sort of like golden ritual place settings. You probably would recognize these.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: As like very, very precious and ostentatious tools of the church that, you know, when you had just the one plate and couldn't exactly find a vendor for it, probably wasn't worth the most money. But it is not the worst deal that she got on this ship, that apparently Seldom purchased from her.

Devo: Uh, Beck. While you, uh... sell this stuff off and buy yourself a new ship, do you want to... crash at the Parish and get this all figured out?

Beck: I guess so...

Griffin: She says.

Devo: Okay.

Beck: This is a lot of gold. Is this my gold?

Devo: It would seem so, yes.

Beck: Alright, kickass. Um... Can you help me carry it?

Devo: Uh, I will— I will get some of our new friends to do it.

Travis: And I ask two Brinarrs— or Drynarrs very politely to help carry this—

Griffin: I don't think there's any Drynarr aboard the— I think that they have been sort of trepidatious and are awaiting this introduction.

Travis: Mm.

Griffin: Just as eagerly as Tessellation was to make it.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: But it's not—

Travis: Then as tired and sore as Devo is.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: He helps carry it.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: You bring it back up to the Parish and settle in. She... has her own room for the evening. And as you are sort of preparing... for bed. Where are you— Where are you sleeping at the Parish? Yeah.

Travis: Well, I think I'm gonna go to what was Guidance's office, and I'm like sitting at her desk.

Griffin: What are you doing while sitting at her desk?

Travis: I think I'm lookin' at the book.

Griffin: Make... an Insight check for me.

[sound of dice rolling]

Travis: [chuckles] A 14 total?

Griffin: Alright, I'll give it to you.

[tense music fades in]

Griffin: You are seated in the office of your former instructor, mother figure, with whom you had a pretty contentious relationship.

Travis: Yeah, I think that may be a bit of an understatement, but sure, yeah.

Griffin: Okay, you are sort of in this moment where it is the first time in a while where... you have not been under some sort of... terrible threat, since her passing. And... with everything else kinda squared away, you turn your thoughts back to... what happened to the Hand of Guidance, and you are struck by a thought. Some of the last words that Benefactor Orlene told you was that he asked you if you had her book. And then he said that he tried to warn her.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: And... you flip to the front of the book, and on the inside cover you see handwriting. You see Orlene's handwriting. And he has... written an inscription in here. And it says... "To my sister in the Light, I pray this tome should help you lay the path that... our city's children shall follow. When this world would inflict its falsehoods upon you, I pray that you shall endeavor unsilenced. May you never forget this core truth of those who are bestowed with the mantle of Hand". And then there is a space, and then it reads... "Great orators seldom whisper".

[ad break]

Travis: Hi everybody, it's me, Travis McElroy. Thank you so much for listening to this finale of *Ethersea*. I love it and I hope you do too. I think it's really exciting and I think, ooo, can't wait to see what comes next. Speaking of what comes next, uh this is our schedule for upcoming episodes.

So next week, August 4th, we will be off because Griffin is still moving. And then August 11th we will be airing one of our live shows. And then August 18th will be a *The The Adventure Zone Zone*, so if you have questions for that, specifically about *Ethersea*, but I— I mean, you can ask other ones too. But if you have questions, email that to adventurezonecast@gmail.com, with "T-T-A-Z-Z", or "The The Adventure Zone Zone" in the subject line. And on that *TTAZZ*, we'll be announcing what comes next, and it's very exciting. I think you're gonna like it.

Also! Pre-orders for the *TAZ: Eleventh Hour* are open now. It comes out February 21st, 2023. You can go to theadventurezonecomic.com to pre-order. Let's see, what else? Thank you to everybody who came out to see us in Salt Lake City and Portland and San Diego, they were wildly fun shows, we had such a fun time. We got more shows coming up. Tickets for all these shows are available at bit.ly/mcelroytours. We've got shows in November in Washington D.C., Detroit, Michigan, and Cincinnati, Ohio. Mask and proof of full vaccination or negative COVID test within 72 hours of event start is required.

Thank you so much, and now, back to the show.

[ad break]

[calm music plays]

Griffin: The weeks that follow your return to Founders' Wake are... to say the least, ones of great transition.

Travis: Yeah, that seems right.

Griffin: [laughs] I think in the absence of the... the sort of power vacuum that Koda and the Biggest Baby and the Chaperones left behind is filled by a se— by several different factions. The Iron Welks, which were... The Iron Welks are stoked. They were these sort of like jaded, ex-military leaders who were not chosen by divinity to serve Koda aboard the Biggest Baby, and so they very quickly begin sort of politicking to become new sort of security for— for the city. And that is a— that is a contentious thing, but it is sort of the conversation on everyone's lips.

There is also conversation about these Drynarr, and... you know, this ocean's track record for throwing weird, magical stuff at this city is mixed enough that there are some people who are obviously trepidatious about this idea, and then there are others who are like stoked. There are others who trust what uh... Tessellation and now Zoon and the Deep Thinkers kind of have in mind, as they have sort of taken these, you know, white coral beings into their coral tower to try and figure out the best way that they can help and uh, you know, save the city.

Another sort of big vacuum that takes place now is that because Seldom is gone, the... the schoolhouse no longer has... an instructor. It no longer has a headmaster, and so... the... big garden space of the Conservatory has kind of fallen silent, as children are no longer brought up here to be instructed by Brother Seldom.

Travis: Well you needn't worry about that, Griffin.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: I think Devo has been opening the Parish up as a new training grounds and new very, uh... let's say specialized school.

Griffin: Okay. Is it... a religious institution? Wha— How does it—

Justin: "Very specialized" means ninja shit.

Griffin: Oh.

Travis: Yeah. Well I was thinking more like Charles Xavier's School for—

Justin: Oh, right.

Travis: Very Special Kids, which I don't think is what it's called, but.

Justin: No no no, you have it right. Charles Xavier's Schools for Very Special Kids.

Travis: Yeah, for Very Special Boys.

Clint: LLC.

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: [laughs wheezily]

Travis: No, this is more of we're teaching... Less religious, but more we are teaching about magic. We are teaching with the idea of "This is how magic works in the world, this is how magic affects the things around you, this is the impact magic has had... on these things". Basically, everything being taught with the point of view of the past is important, but we are also teaching about the future and how we can affect it by understanding this thing that has happened to our world.

Griffin: So a much less— I mean, Seldom was a historian.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: And that is the bulk— You know this better than others because you learned from his broadcasts, right? About the world around you. You're saying that your school is less about the past and more about the present and future.

Travis: I mean, here's the thing. I think that a school should exist to train people to exist in the world that they are in. Right? And so we are working to train the kids to exist in the world that currently exists.

Griffin: [from a distance] Yeah.

Travis: And improve it to the world we want it to be, instead of, I don't know, teaching kids to worship a world that once was.

[hopeful music plays]

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: That's Devo's take on it. I think the past is awesome, don't get me wrong.

Griffin: Sure, sure. I think then that— I think the Parish is slow to transition to this vision.

Travis: Yeah, sure.

Griffin: But also, you were not wrong when you stated that you are the sort of reigning figurehead of the Parish, now that uh... Gosh, Seldom and Devotion and Benefactor Orlene are all gone.

Travis: Guidance.

Griffin: Guidance, yes. You are Devotion. And so... I— Even though they are reluctant to do so, the Parish falls in line behind you. And... this school opens up. And... I think that the parents of this community are hesitant at first also, but— Aw, screw that man. We've been in a pandemic for a hundred years and it's— childcare is tough to come by. I think the parents are stoked.

Travis: Yeah, fuck yeah dude.

Griffin: And the parents are like "Oh, what's that? School's open again? Alright, go on, kids!".

Travis: Yup.

Griffin: And... the... the city's young people find a home there. It is different from the one that they knew, but like I said, it's a time of transition and they are game for that as well.

Zoox, what do you do in the following weeks? I think that Tessellation continues to sort of lean on your help as they sort of integrate these coral beings into the—their, you know, various projects that they have running in the scientific institute of the Coral Spire, where the Deep Thinkers have sort of made their base of operations. What's your— what's your role in everything?

Clint: I think he helps them get set up. I think he... You know, the initial agreement was that they would help protect the community.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: I think they set up a series of installations. Kind of a ring around the city, to not only protect, but also as kind of an outreach. An exploration thing.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: And informally called it the Reef.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: And, you know, it's there for protection, but also if somebody needs to send somebody out into the outliers, that— to, you know, check out situations, to go beyond what is established as, you know, the safe areas.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: That the Reefers will be sent out.

Griffin: [amused] Okay. [pause] Do you sort of— [sighs] Does this mark an end to... your... Both— I guess as a question for both of you, from your travels away from the city? Does this terminate the—

Clint: Oh, no.

Travis: No. Absolutely not.

Clint: No, not for Zoox, no.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Yeah.

Clint: He's a very Captain Kirk kind of commander, in the fact that once he gets it set up, he resigns his commission. He wants to be out there, be— to be one of 'em.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: And I would— I would also say that what we have reached between— I thi— Okay, so here's what I'm thinking. The fact that Devo now knows that he is responsible for everyone being in Founders' Wake...

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: I think it hit him— I think that hits him really hard. And I think that he has decided that... it's no longer just about surviving, and the conversations he had had with Tolliver about like "We gotta move to the next world".

Griffin: [from a distance] Yes.

Travis: And everything that happened and like the regrets that Orlene had, I think... Devo is kind of sick of everybody thinking about the past and mourning what they lost.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: And it's time to find a way to fix the world.

Griffin: I guess my question is what happens to the Coriolis?

Travis: Oh, we still— We use it all the time.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: I think at this point it is— Zoox and Devo have ma— I mean, I don't wanna speak for Zoox, but I know Devo has lots of projects and research and trying to find magical shit and other god blood, that I think he has plenty of opportunities where he would need Zoox's help to go— And yes, even Urchin, to go out and do it.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: And plus, at this point, it is now an official vessel of the Parish.

Griffin: [chuckles] Sure.

Travis: Operating under the Parish's banner, so I can also send people out under my command and under Zoox's command, to go out on these—

Justin: [quietly] And also park—

Travis: What?

Justin: You can also park wherever you want, which is cool.

Travis: I can also park wherever I want.

Griffin: That's huge. So huge.

Travis: Oh my god, yeah. I got a bumper sticker that says like, you know, that I'm a member of the church and I can get—

Clint: Oh and Candles shopping season. You need that so much.

Griffin: That's so big.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: I don't— I don't think Zoox— And I don't think Devo does either. I think Zoox feels a very strong compulsion to try to... find Amber, so I think he's very much dedicated to this research too.

Travis: Yeah.

Clint: To find a way to reactivate the portal, because in his mind, he doesn't know if Amber's...

Griffin: Sure.

Clint: Did it willingly or ch— All he is knows is Amber basically sacrificed her life for him and... everybody in that tower.

Travis: Oh, Devo's got a room set up at the Parish where that portal is established.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: And he spends a lot of time in there, studying the book that we got from the Beholder and any book he can find, and like trying to communicate with the Drynarrs and talking with like Zoox about it and trying to activate it. Um... And, can I tell you, Devo's plan... He's gotta find, and at least collect blood from, Benevolence.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Griffin: It is... It's a few months later then, and you all have settled into these roles. And Zoox, you are summoned by Tessellation to the... to the coral tower. The Coral Spire. And when you arrive there, they are waiting for you in front of the... the doors into the Shepherding Pool, which is where sort of the Einarr spirits, from the Vestigial Plane, wander into this world to inhabit the bodies that are created for them. And they summon you here and, without saying anything, they open the doors and... invite you inside.

As soon as the doors open, you can see that this room has changed dramatically. It is... drab and grey and dark, and the water in this, you know, big circular pool in the middle of the room that once just shimmered this brilliant golden color is now just water. And... Tessellation puts a hand in the water and stands back up and looks at you and says...

Tessellation: This is uh... This is an important day, I think, Zoox. The pools have gone dormant. And... As shepherd, I worried that I had done something wrong, but I've come to a realization. Everyone in the Vestigial Plane who was going to come through... has come through. There... There will not be any new Einarr. Not from this time forward. And I don't know how you receive this news, as we've [chuckles] discovered, you were never Einarr, but... This is... This feels like the ending of a chapter to me.

Zoox: Can we do anything about it?

Tessellation: [sighs] We did. This— [sighs] This role... is ended. I am no longer a shepherd of lost sheep, and I think it's time that... I fully turn my attention to... to your goals, Zoox. It is time that I join you in dedicating myself to the protection of the souls that have come through and everyone else living in Founders' Wake.

Griffin: And the door opens again and the Ballaster Hermine walks in. And she sees that you're there, and she says...

Ballaster Hermine: Did you... Did you tell him about it yet?

Griffin: And Tessellation says...

Tessellation: I was getting to it. Um... Come with us. Do you have a— Do you have a moment?

Zoox: Oh, yeah! [clears his throat] Sure.

Griffin: He leads you out of the Shepherding Pools and together with the Ballaster Hermine, you all make your way to an elevator. And you are in the base of the Coral Spire, so it is a bit surprising when the elevator goes down? A ways. And... as you are going down, he says...

Tessellation: Since the discovery of... what we are able to do with these bodies. [sighs] A thought has occurred to us several times. And it wasn't until I saw your new, big, beefy form that... it occurred to me that it is— it could be a reality. Um... This city, as you know, needs a defender, and the Reef and those who serve upon it have formed an incredible... bulwark against the [chuckles] many, many dangers in the Ethersea. But I think that we both know, all of us know, that it does not hold a candle to the massive defensive power presented by the Biggest Baby. Can we stop calling it that now?

Travis: No, you have to call it that extra hard now.

Griffin: The [emphasis] Biggest Baby.

Travis: With a sense of reverence, you know?

Griffin: [quietly] Sure, for the dead. [normal] And the door to the elevator opens, and Tessellation says...

Tessellation: But... But you, Zoox.

Griffin: They say.

Tessellation: You can take any form that you wish.

Griffin: And... they walk through the doors of the elevator, as does Hermine, and as you step through, you see that you are in this... colossal room that stretches up 80 feet, easily. And there are... girders and metal latticework positioned all around the center of the room, holding up this huge cylindrical tank filled with water. And also... filled with... a figure. Filled with a... a humanoid-shaped entity, that seems to be crafted both from the sort of living, organic coral from the Spire outside, but also sort of woven into it the Drynarr bleached coral that you have interfaced with so many times now.

And it is forming this gigantic what appears to be knight. It is this huge armored being, with these long legs that end in spikes. It's got these, you know, its still suit almost resembles your own kind of like bulked up armor, but with these long sort of blade-like fins that emerge from its elbow guards and from its pauldrons. All sort of building up to this sort of long pyramid-shaped head. And it— it is— it nearly fills the tank. It is about 65, 70 feet tall. A truly imposing-looking Brinnarr. But it is floating in this tank and it is lifeless. And... the Ballaster Hermine speaks up and she says...

Ballaster Hermine: The Reef is doing all it can, but this city needs a defender, Zoox. And... I do believe that you are the only one capable of filling that role. We... don't understand your powers. But we are hoping that you do, at least enough to bring this dream to fruition.

[pause]

Zoox: [chuckles excitedly] Seriously?! Really?! This is mine?! This— This—! Nah, you're kid— Are you kidding? This is for me?!

Griffin: Uh...

Zoox: This is for me?!

Griffin: They look at each other kind of surprised by your excitement, and...
Hermine says...

Ballaster Hermine: This is for the city, Zoox.

Zoox: Ye— Yeah! Oh, yeah yeah! But I mean, for— Oh... Um, hell. Yeah. Yeah!
Yeah yeah yeah! I'll do it!

Griffin: As soon as you say that, a couple of like non-coral scientists walk up to you and gesture for you to follow, and all of you start to walk around this big cylinder at the center of the room to a hatch on the back side. And Tessellation says...

Tessellation: I will warn you. This... suit, if you wanna think of it that way, is... It is tremendously powerful, as lifeless as it is. I cannot guarantee that you will be able to incorporate into it before it incorporates into you, if that makes any sense?

Zoox: Oh, yeah, trust me. Been there, done that.

Tessellation: Knowing that, are you still so eager.. to agree to this?

Zoox: [eagerly] Yes.

Travis: [snorts]

Zoox: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Griffin: And the hatch opens up. And... Hermine says...

Ballaster Hermine: Then good luck.

Zoox: [chuckles] Alright. Can I do it?

Griffin: You swim into the tank, and now you are in the water with this huge form. And through the glass, you can see every eye is on you. Every scientist assembled here, every Drynarr, Tessellation, the Ballaster Hermine, they are all watching you with bated breath to see what happens.

Clint: He swims around it a lot.

Griffin: 'Kay.

Clint: Kinda that Captain Kirk moment in the *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* where he just admires the Enterprise from every angle. Looks at it. Doesn't touch it. Just really inspects it, looks at it with a huge smile on his face hole. And eventually swims up to the pyramidal face, the head.

Griffin: Mm-hmm.

Clint: And swims right up to the face.

Griffin: 'Kay.

Clint: And... He looks back at Tessellation, everybody else, and gives a big coral thumb up. And then wraps himself around the face... and just absorbs right into it.

Griffin: Make an Animal Handling check for me.

[sound of dice rolling]

Clint: That would be a 16, plus four. 20. A dirty 20!

[hopeful, floaty music plays]

Griffin: You place a hand on the pyramid face and... just branches of coral immediately shoot out of the sides of the pyramid and wrap around you. And you feel it violently trying to pull you in and trying to almost devour you. But you hold strong, just for a moment. Enough for you to assert who's in charge here.

Clint: I think he uses the experience with the clam and all those other times where he got sucked in. I think he even uses the experience of when Orlene took over.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: And he fought and fought and fought. I think he uses all of that experience to fight back this time too.

Griffin: It is second nature for you to assert yourself in this way now, and that was not true before you joined the crew of the Coriolis. But as it is now, you gently integrate into the pyramid. And then a few quiet, nervous moments pass out in the lab. And then... everyone out there sees, inside of the tank, two bright yellow eyes appear on the pyramid head.

Devo.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: I wanna take it back a minute. Actually, more than a minute. I wanna take it back several months.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: And you have just left the tower.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: And... you are resting aboard the ship. And moments before you drift into unconsciousness, you have a headache.

[eerie piano music plays]

Griffin: And it is a brutal headache that feels like the world in front of you is being torn apart. And it feels like it will never pass. But it does, after a few moments, and when it does... you... come to. And... you are... sitting in a nice velvet-lined seat, inside a Thanksgiving booth. And you are receiving gratitude from a child in the other side of the booth. And you hear him say...

Child: Um... Yeah, uh my mom made fudge. And that was awesome, so I'm— I was super thankful for that. And um... My big sister popped my balloon, and that was— that made me super mad, but then she made me a bracelet, and it was really nice and it just made me remember just sorta how um thankful that I am to have such a, you know, such a nice sister who... You know, she's— she's a little rough sometimes, but she watches out for me, and that's um, that's pretty cool, so I'm thankful for that too. And is that enough?

Devo: Uh, sorry, enough for what?

Child: Is that enough gratitude?

Devo: Oh, uh... yes?

Child: Okay. Well, um... thank you, Father, and um... How often am I s'posed to do this? 'Cause it's just— am I— Any time anything cool happens, I come here and...? How's it work?

Devo: Uh, yeah. Let's say this, uh, when something cool happens.

Child: Okay, bye!

Griffin: And you hear the door to the booth swing open.

[door creaking sound effect plays]

Griffin: And little footsteps go running away.

[quick footsteps sound effect plays]

Griffin: And through the sort of mesh screen on the door into your side of the booth, you see this little boy run out of your office here. In the Benevolent Parish, in the city of Founders' Wake.

Travis: Oh, so was I like dreaming? Is it now— Wait, when is it now, Griffin?

Griffin: You are fully aware that you have just awoken in a different world. This is not a dream that the real Devo is having. You were aboard your ship after defeating Orlene aboard the coral tower.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Griffin: Like moments ago, and then you had a super bad headache, and now you are in... what appears to be Guidance's office? But it's not Guidance's office, it's *your* office, here in the Parish. And you know that just because like *your* stuff is all over. It is— It is not her room anymore. It is yours.

Travis: [uncertainly] Okay... I'm gonna go— I wanna find somebody.

Griffin: You step out of the Thanksgiving booth, and... You know, you walk into the office, and you can see through the windows that you are in the Conservatory... And it is pretty similar to how you left it. The... You can see through the window that the— the Menagerie is closed up. There doesn't appear to be anybody coming and going or inside of that building, it seems— There is a sign in front of it that reads "Derelict. Caution: do not enter".

And you can see Founders' Wake outside, and... there are a lot of people up here. There are a lot of people hanging out up here. A lot of fancy people up here, more than you have seen in the Conservatory in some time. You look at those people and you realize that they don't have any kind of piscine fish features. They are— They are b— You know, they have— They have the bodies that they had before the sort of like Cambrian [chuckles] explosion that happened aboard the city of Founders' Wake.

And I think that's when you realize that your gills are also gone. And as you're observing this, you see a puddle on the ground that begins to rise up and take form, and then moments later, Tolliver is standing in front of you. And... he says...

Tolliver: I'm guessing it worked then.

Devo: [sighs] Fuck. I'm— You, okay. What worked? Oh, the thing with Orlene?

Tolliver: Oh boy, uh... Okay. I know that you... loathe vagaries, so um... May I have a seat?

Devo: Was that you being direct? Um, yes?

Tolliver: He sits down at the desk, that apparently belongs to you. And he gestures for you to sit—

Travis: Oh, you didn't ask it— did y— Okay. I was gonna say.

Griffin: He gestures for you to sit in your own chair.

Travis: Okay. Yes, I sit in my chair.

Tolliver: Alright, so uh... I'll be as direct as I can. I'm an embodiment of the will of magic. You get— You—

Devo: Yes, I know that, Tolliver.

Tolliver: Okay, cool cool cool. Cool cool cool cool cool. You did something with magic that I've never seen before, and... I'm still trying to figure out what that means. But basically... You did something you weren't supposed to do.

Devo: Oh, when I changed the past?

Tolliver: When you changed the past.

Devo: Yes.

Tolliver: When you invited Orlene's family to come with him to Founders' Wake.

Devo: Yes, I'm kind of an asshole.

Tolliver: [while laughing] It's bigger than that, Devo. [normal] I mean yes, but on a... existential level, you're an asshole!

Griffin: He says—

Devo: Yeah.

Tolliver: So because of that, he never joins the Cloister. He leans on his family instead. He never pressures you, Devotion, and so you graduated from the Cloister and became a Hand. And never became a freelancer as a result. And so you didn't meet Zoon and Amber.

Devo: Mm-hmm.

Tolliver: And that whole thing never really happened.

Devo: Yes.

Tolliver: Sadly, you weren't there during their first job when they were crossed by Guthrie and they— they perished at sea, never seen again.

Devo: Mm-hmm.

Tolliver: The whole clam thing clearly didn't happen because Orlene didn't go out to sea, you probably pieced that together yourself.

Devo: Yes.

Tolliver: Bonus! The Coriolis never brought the pathogen to Founders' Wake.

Devo: Mm-hmm.

Tolliver: So no-one died there. Of course, Cambria is still out there somewhere so it's only a matter of time, but still, small victories. Um... What else? Oh! Crescendo continues to destroy the past, but as a result the Church seems to have gained even more power, so congrats.

Devo: Oh, you mean here in this— What's happening now. This is what's happening now, yes.

Tolliver: Yes.

Devo: Okay, yes.

Tolliver: Um... You are being *really* chill about all this, by the way, and I—

Devo: Well, yeah.

Tolliver: I appreciate that. Because I feel like our relationship has been contentious in the past.

Devo: Oh! Um, yes. Something has changed.

Tolliver: Yes?

Devo: So for a long time, right? My relationship with other people was that they thought that I thought that I knew more than them, right? So a lot of their perception of me was that I was an asshole because I was a know-it-all and I knew more than them. But the realize— Uh, the realizations that I have had is that I do not know more than them. They know less than they think they do. So you're sitting here and you began this conversation saying I did something that no-one has done with magic before.

Tolliver: Yeah.

Devo: But then you are going to tell me about how I fucked up.

Tolliver: Oh—

Devo: But how do you know I fucked up?

Tolliver: Y— Sorry. You're jumping to conclusions again. I'm not— I have no intention of saying anything along those lines.

Devo: Okay. My point is this. You do not know as much as you think you do, I do not know as much as I think I do. No-one knows as much as they think they do. So the idea that anything is certain or that uh... Someone is supposed to do something or isn't supposed to do something, whatever. That's all just as our tiny brains understand it. And also, one more thing, if I changed all of that, then Orlene wouldn't have been there and I wouldn't have been there and I wouldn't have changed the past.

Tolliver: Yeah, you're getting it now.

Devo: Yeah.

Tolliver: So, um... Have you ever found it peculiar.. I guess in the, uh moments since you made your fateful broadcast to [chuckles] the whole world um that no-one ever mentioned that the voice that called them from the sea had an accent thick enough to mortar bricks together?

Devo: Okay, ow. But also, I just assumed, you know.

Travis: And Devo waves his hands in the air.

Devo: Magic.

Tolliver: [dismissively] No.

Devo: Oh. Okay.

Tolliver: That's true in this world. You spoke to this world, and I did n—

Devo: Ohhh! I made a second world?

Tolliver: Something... You're right about one thing, I— I don't know as much as I put on. I'm f— I'm playing it by ear. What I do know is that *your* world almost unraveled. But because Benefactor Orlene learned how to send messages to the past, so did I, and I called out from the ocean to your—

Devo: Ah, we're not so different, you and I, eh?

Tolliver: I think that that is more true than you... know. That world's still—

Devo: Oh no, I'm— I'm actually not that surprised by this.

Tolliver: Okay. That world still exists.

Devo: Mm-hmm.

Tolliver: This world does too.

Devo: Mm-hmm.

Tolliver: *You* are now in both of them.

Devo: Awesome.

[pause]

Tolliver: I don't— [sighs]

Devo: Oh, was that not what you were— Is it bad?

Tolliver: It's just that you are currently occupying the shoes of a very, very, very different Hand of Devotion.

Devo: Oh, you know, I don't really like this title anymore. I've— I've decided to actually chan— I don't know about here, but back in uh what I'm calling "My World A", I'm going to change my title, I think. What do you think about the Voice of Hope?

Tolliver: [stiffly] That's very— That's very good. Um...

Devo: Or I could just go by my real name, if you would prefer. And I could just be Damien Cern.

Tolliver: [scoffs]

Griffin: He smiles when you say that, and he says...

Tolliver: You've really got layers, don't you.

Clint: [giggles]

Devo: Yes, like an onion. Or an ogre.

Griffin: He says...

Tolliver: Well, okay. I just came to give you a heads up, but I was not expecting this um... I was not expecting you to be so receptive to the news...

Devo: Well so, here's the thing. If you're the embodiment of magic, my new purpose in life is to... fix magic. So I'm going to, I think, need you more on my side. I'm in fact going to need, I think, a lot more people on my side. Because I imagine the only way to fix magic, and to... save our world instead of just, you know, trying to slow the decay. The only way to save our world is, I'm going to bet something along the lines of killing Benevolence.

[eerie piano music plays]

Griffin: Tolliver, even in this moment where he has admitted that he doesn't know as much as he's letting on, still seems pretty uh... cocky. When you say that, he... is taken aback. And then he just kind of like looks around the room in a panic, like he's trying to think his way through it. And he says...

Tolliver: [shaken] Wow, you've... You've *really* got layers, um... Hm. Okay. I can help you with that. And in exchange, maybe you can help me too. Because... I... I am pretty powerful, but I am only doing what I am called to do. I'm acting on instinct, doing what I'm supposed to do, and you were not supposed to call out to the family of Benefactor Orlene, but you did.

Devo: Mm-hmm.

Tolliver: And in doing so, you defied fate itself, and that makes you very, very interesting!

Griffin: He says.

Devo: Uhhh... Yeah. You know what? I'm gonna try something different here and I'm gonna try to go with making friends. And maybe even influencing people.

Travis: And he— Devo shakes his hand.

Griffin: And he smiles, and says...

Tolliver: The times, they are a-changing.

Griffin: No, he doesn't say that.

Travis: [chuckles]

Griffin: He says...

Tolliver: You are... just full of surprises.

Griffin: Back in My World A, as we are calling it, we see the shattered surface of the world above the Ethersea. And I don't mean shattered in any kind of poetic way. The parts of the land that the sea has yet to swallow up have been rent into thousands of gigantic pieces. And some of them remain sort of resolutely attached to the land beneath them, but many of them are just floating in a spiral around the storm in this just chaotic orbit.

[peaceful piano music plays]

And as we move in closer to the storm, we pass through the outer wall of the cyclone, and pass by cloud whales that are just effortlessly sailing through the vortex, unbothered by its violence. And then we are through it and into the eye of the storm, and there, floating high above the debris-strewn surface of the Ethersea, is the divine citadel, Hominine. There is a wall that surrounds the island upon which the city is built.

And the city sort of raises up in a cone from the island's perimeter. At its base, there's just a— innumerable humble but well-maintained sort of residential neighborhoods that are all bustling with life and just sort of content-looking citizens, without a trouble in the world. And moving upward from there, there are businesses and universities and municipal buildings, all laid out on these very precise rings, all sort of operating at maximum efficiency.

And at the very top of the city of Hominine, there is an ivory-white palace, with golden spires that glisten in the sunlight. And there are dozens of just sort of monastic clergy people tending to lush gardens. There are very stately scholars that are studying ancient scripts within these sprawling libraries, and down every hall, there are just psalms of righteous gratitude echoing around the building.

And then there is a long hallway, not nearly as ornamented as the rest, leading toward a dungeon. And there is a full regiment of golden-armored guards positioned in front of the door there, and the sound of psalms does not reach this place.

[peaceful music stops]

Griffin: Inside that dungeon, lying on the stone-wrought floor, lying in a small pool of blood is Brother Seldom, who is writhing in anguish. And across the room, an inquisitor rinses his hands in a silver basin of water, looking down at Seldom with sort of more annoyance than pity. And as he begins to sort of pore over a selection of vicious-looking instruments of pain, the door to the dungeon swings open. And all of the assembled priests and soldiers here just reflexively prostrate themselves in front of the figure who strides through them.

It is a golden-haired man. He is— He is wispy, but with a presence commanding enough to just suck all the oxygen out of the room. And he walks through the rows of kneeling mortals with total ambivalence; his attention is not on them. It is solely on the broken and bleeding man lying on the ground. And he kneels down next to Seldom and he slowly slides a stole off of his own holy vestments and with it he begins to dab at the wounds on Seldom's face. He is cleaning him, to the shock of a few of the guards here in attendance. And Seldom looks up and sees the face of his god. The Vestige Benevolence is tending to his wounds and he says...

[peaceful music fades back in]

Benevolence: [in a reverberating voice] Easy now. It's finished. You have endured this mortification and shall suffer no longer. This gift of mercy is yours. Should you be willing to accept it.

Griffin: And Seldom lays there for a moment, just barely clinging to consciousness, and then he lifts himself up to his hands and knees, supplicating himself before Benevolence. And Benevolence speaks once more and says...

Benevolence: Your transgressions are hereby forgiven. I will prepare for you a place in my enclave. Welcome back, Brother.

Griffin: And he looks at the inquisitor, who is similarly on hands and knees, trembling. And Benevolence shakes his head and says...

[music swells with gravitas]

Benevolence: You must forgive your fellow acolytes, just as I have forgiven you. They... do not understand the bravery that you have exhibited. In slaying Sister Guidance, you prevented her from revealing this citadel's location to those who would bring our paradise crashing into the sea below. And it is for this brave action, this excruciating sacrifice, that you will... not only be absolved of your sins, but celebrated for your heroism. But, first...

Griffin: And he takes Seldom's chin in his hand and lowers his face. And says...

Benevolence: First... You're going to tell me everything you know about the city of Founders' Wake.

[electro outro music plays]

[chord]

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