

## The The Adventure Zone Zone: Max Fun Drive 2023

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[Steeplechase theme music plays]

**Travis:** Hey, everybody! Welcome to The The Adventure Zone Zone, Max Fun Drive edition, 2023. Man, that was a lot of subtitles. But we're here, basically, we're focusing on Steeplechase this time around. Very excited, we haven't done a TTAZZ for Steeplechase yet. And as I mentioned, it is the Max Fun Drive. If you haven't already, you can go to [maximumfun.org/join](https://maximumfun.org/join) to support The Adventure Zone and all the other Max Fun shows there. Help us keep the metaphorical lights on. You don't really need lights to make a podcast, but you know what I mean. Justin, are you ready for lots of questions?

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Okay! First, let's start right here, "In the past, you've said that you did not want to GM, and mentioned anxiety as a reason. What inspired you to overcome that anxiety to GM Steeplechase? And now that you're in it, do you think the anxiety motivates you or hinders you?" That's from Ty, they/them—

**Griffin:** They also said, "Personally, I think you're doing an amazing job." I don't know why you would leave that out?

**Travis:** I was ending with that!

**Justin:** Oh, wow.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** I was gonna say, "And Ty says that they think you're doing an amazing job."

**Justin:** I think that my anxiety is about— but not like anxiety like, capital A. [chuckles] It's more just like I hadn't done it before, so I didn't really know

what I was doing. And I think that it seems very, very hard. And it is very, very hard, in the sense that it requires a lot of work. I... I finally decided to do it 'cause like honestly, I just needed a new challenge, I needed something new, like creatively, to do, to try to push myself. And I realized that like if I...

Deciding to do Blades kind of opened it up for me, 'cause I realized like, if we did a completely different system, I could... I could... that was a little bit more streamlined, that's been like the biggest sort of hold up, is being able to do all that stuff. And honestly, once I started thinking about heists and Disney, the... it kind of like, I don't know, it just all sort of started to congeal. And that's been the weird—

**Travis:** Were you are— were you a heist kind of fan before? 'Cause I know you're a Disney fan, but was heists like a big thing for you before that?

**Justin:** No. I mean, I always like a heist? But who doesn't like a heist, right? Everybody likes a heist.

**Travis:** Well, the victims, Justin.

**Justin:** I like—[chuckles] Yeah, that's true.

**Griffin:** The victims don't like it.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** Except sometimes you can kind of tell like, "Oh, you..." You know?

**Clint:** You rascals!

**Justin:** You scamps! I was unprepared for how much of it would just sort of come when it felt like it. That's kind of annoying. [chuckles] You know? Normally, we have the pressure of having these microphones in front of us and you have to start talking and doing jokes. I was unprepared for how much of the DM world-building type stuff would be like, I don't know, I'm in the shower and then, oh, there it is. Okay, great, thanks. Okay, I'll go write that down or something.

**Clint:** One of my favorite things that happens during the course of Steeplechase is at some point in almost every episode, either Griffin or Travis will follow a Justin complaint with, "Yeah, bud!"

**Travis:** Yeah, man.

**Justin:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** It's genuinely brought us closer together.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Knowing that you're familiar with the plight now.

**Travis:** Let's see, this is from Nelson. And you'll never believe this, my question is for Justin. "What, if any, amusement parks, apart from Disney Land or Disney World, did you draw inspiration from for the setting? And how did that influence the specific layers, as well as the larger Dentonic family plot?"

**Justin:** So, Disney's... Disney looms large. I think other big influences, theme park wise, are just the ones that we spent a lot of time at. Camden Park is like a local amusement park in like the Huntington area that has like a lot of old, classic rides. Like a very sort of nostalgic sort of park. If you saw the MBMBaM TV show, it's where we filmed a lot of the intro sequences. And King's Island was a big one for us growing up. And that's just like a theme park ass theme park. Like it's... it's... you know, in the grand tradition of any Cedar Fair parks, or places like that. So, those are the two big ones.

But honestly like, my fixation with like immersive theater is probably—looms larger than those other parks. Like, the idea of like thing like Sleep No More and... The Burnt City, The Drowning Man, other Punch-Drunk stuff. As well as like more... like ARGs, you know, things like that. Any sort of like immersive alternate reality experience like that. I've always been sort of into... into those sorts of things. That's another big, big influence on it.

**Travis:** How do you see that? What's the influence there? Like, can you give some examples?

**Justin:** It's the idea that you would be— Like, Disney doesn't do what we pretend they— like, that Dentonic does, which is create these like immersive experiences. And I'm very interested in the idea of like your... Survivor's a good example, right? I think about this a lot. Can you have— and I think this is applicable, but I think though that's more of a reality TV show. Can you have morality within Survivor? Like, can you be, in a game where it's a completely immersive game, and it's set up to be this thing of betrayal, can you make an immoral choice?

I mean, outside of the obvious. An immoral choice that's like within the bounds of the game. Like, can you— is there a morality to that? If you're just trying to get to the top. And I think about that a lot with like Immersive theater, like... is... what am I bringing of myself to this? What— you know, how does this change— how does the idea of like losing my identity in this world change who I am and how I conduct myself? And I think that's a really interesting question that I've thought a lot about with Steeplechase.

**Clint:** And that's kind of an increased... a boosting of the whole appeal of live theater, is the fact that you make a connection. And if the people on the stage do their job, and behind the scenes do their job, you are brought into the story. And it's one of the things that makes live theater unique as an art form, and it just connects with you.

**Justin:** Mm-hm.

**Travis:** This one's from Freddy. "You stated in the past that you were unwilling to GM a long-form game on the podcast. I was overjoyed when I heard you had changed your mind and were going to run a whole campaign. Has it lived up to your expectations, running the game, I mean, whether good, bad or neutral? Have you gained a new perspective in general?" And then a follow-up question for anybody, "How do you like GMing compared to being a player?"

**Justin:** I will say, I... I think— and this is probably applicable to something in your life, listener. I think that I was, in my original fear about it, I was

trying to like sort of eat the whale, all at once. Like, I was trying to eat the whole airplane. Rather than just like taking it off piece by piece and you know, cutting off a bit a of the wheel, and then eating it that way. Like, you can't—

**Griffin:** The normal way to eat an airplane.

**Justin:** Yeah, the normal way to eat an airplane. And I was trying to eat the airplane all at once. And I was thinking like, "How do I open up my mouth and just consume an airplane?" It's like, the answer is you don't. You just sort of start slowly chipping away at it. And I think that is... I have had moments of a lot— different self-doubt, but it's like specific. Like, "I don't really know what to do with this." Or, "I don't really know what I'm doing with this."

Or... because it is like a collaborative thing, and it's something that is ongoing, I actually like have had to get comfortable with the idea that like not knowing what I'm doing with this is maybe more useful than being wedded to something that I'm trying to achieve. My style is much more like— and this is only— this could only be sort of earned through the amount of time that we've done this together. My style is much more like, I'm putting out several different things that I think are interesting and cool, and seeing where they sort of take it. And I really enjoy that back and forth. It is disconcerting sometimes to not be able to prepare more, weirdly.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Justin:** And that's part of what I liked about Blades and what drew me to this is like, I couldn't sit there and write down a 40-page story doc, when like we're kind of making it all up, you know, together, and I have to be reactive to what you're doing.

**Griffin:** It's great too, 'cause that is a thing that we always struggle with, I feel like, and yet is when the show is at its best, is when we're playing that way. And it's why I think Blades is such a great fit, is like all the stuff about like not planning a heist before you actually do it. Like, all of those things are kind of perfect for the way we wanna do the show.

**Travis:** As far as like which we prefer, I think I like being a player better. Just 'cause I like the ability to kind of be more reactive to things that interest me, specifically. Like, that I— and I know, “Man, listen, that really sums up Travis McElroy as a person, doesn’t it?”

**Griffin:** Right.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** But like when something happens and I’m like, “Oh, I’m hooked on that, I wanna find out about that.” And that can be... like, that can be difficult, to completely jarring, if you’re the DM, who’s like, “I wanna follow this thing 'cause it’s interesting to me.” That said, I played some not on the... not on the air... I’ve DM’ed some stuff since graduation. And it’s a skill that I feel like I’m developing more at. And like doing Dust 2 was part of that and stuff. So, the more I practice at it, the more I enjoy doing it. Because I get more into the— God, this is so— I’m so sorry, the more jazz feeling of it.

**Griffin:** Oh boy.

**Travis:** Than when I— I know. Listen, I know. But that like following the riff and being in the moment of like what everybody’s like hooked into and everything. It’s just— man, it’s so much more draining, I think, to be the GM, than to be the player, obviously. And so, I don’t think it’s something that I could do regularly, if I’m not like fully hyper-fixed on it and fixed on it in the moment, at all, you know?

**Clint:** How about you, Ditto? Do you like— do you have a preference?

**Griffin:** It’s hard to say, it’s... Being a player is more fun, from a— like, from a traditional definition of the word fun. But I also— I don’t know what anything really scratches the creative satisfaction of GMing and feeling like it’s coming together.

**Travis:** “How do you spell Shlabethany?” That’s from Pat. “And when is she gonna—” Pat says, “When is she getting her own movie?” But I mean like

cereal, or story, or clothing line, I think Shlabethany could be a multi-level integration.

**Justin:** S-H-L-A-B-E-T-H-A-N-Y. Jupiter is on our team, he's like our executive office assistant, who makes everything— and is also sort of my co-DM, my scribe for all the stupid shit that I say.

**Travis:** There it is.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** And Jupiter will often come to me and be like, "How do you spell..." I don't know, 'Shlabethnay' or 'Paul Pantry's Perfect Porridge,' or whatever goofy stuff I'm saying at that moment. So, it's... you know, you talk and you don't really think about it, like, "Oh, somebody's gotta write that down." But yeah, that's Shlabethany. I mean, Shlabethany's around.

**Travis:** Yeah. A lot of people, apparently, have asked who everybody's favorite Steeplechase NPC is. And I think Shlabethany is a very powerful frontrunner. So, I'm going to just say, besides Shlabethany, who is everyone's favorite NPC?

**Griffin:** Hm... God almighty...

**Clint:** I have to go with Deep Dark.

**Griffin:** Deep Dark's pretty good.

**Travis:** Deep Dark's great.

**Griffin:** Deep Dark's pretty good.

**Clint:** Deep Dark kills me. I mean...

**Justin:** Deep Dark is weird because Deep Dark is one of those that like, that just started happening. Do you guys ever have that, where like—

**Clint:** Mm-hm, oh yeah.

**Justin:** He just started. Like, it sounds stupid, like... I don't know, it probably sounds dumb, but like that just started happening. And I was actually just not second guessing it, 'cause it's like, "This is weird, I wonder why this guy is here." [chuckles] I get to— I joke about that a lot, but it's pretty true to my creative process. I just started talking and that guy started doing his thing. I was like, "Oh, man, that's weird. Okay, fine." [chuckles]

**Travis:** There's this thing happening, I don't know if you're doing it intentionally. And I'm even worried that saying something will ruin it. But like, in— it reminds me of, in Parks and Rec, there's this thing where every time they would have like a townspeople stand up at like a meeting or something, they like all had the same last name randomly, right. And there's something about that from a writer's perspective that's so funny to me, that they were just like, "Yeah, just make it another one of this guy." And so, you just calling NPCs that you think are gonna have like two lines, just calling them Justin, is so funny to me.

**Griffin:** It's good.

**Travis:** Of just like, he's just— don't worry about it.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** I'm a Scott Boldflex stan 'til I die. I love that dad just has a little sexy button.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Yeah, that's true!

**Griffin:** When he presses it sometimes and he gets a sexy guy to come out. That's like a... that's not like a D&D spell that I have heard of before.

**Travis:** This is great too because I think about it every time dad uses Scott Boldflex in a moment where Scott Boldflex has gotta be thinking like, "I was promised I was gonna be integrated into some kind of arcade experience.



But it seems like this old creep just brings me out to seduce people all the time.”

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** “When do I get to be in my game?”

**Clint:** Well, here’s the beauty of using Scott Boldflex, all I gotta do is push the button, call on Scott Boldflex, and then Justin has to take over again!

**Travis:** Yeah, man.

**Justin:** Yeah, right?

**Griffin:** That’s true.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** Here’s one from Sierra, for dad. “Dad, Clint, do you have a notebook again like you did for Zoox?”

**Clint:** Oh, yeah, yeah. As a matter of fact, I am... about 35 pages in on this notebook.

**Travis:** Wow.

**Griffin:** That’s impressive.

**Clint:** And just looking through it... just pollen broth... and let’s see... the Fighting Bed Bugs... So much in here... Delphi Reynolds...

**Justin:** I have no idea what any of this is...

**Travis:** Yeah, can I ask you a question, Dad? Do you ever worry— and I mean this sincerely. `Cause I would worry about this. That by like taking notes— like, by writing stuff down and focusing on writing stuff down, that you’re like either missing something or that you’re not internalizing it, you know? `Cause, like that... that would be my worry, is that I’d be so focused

on writing stuff down, that I'm like catching you know, one thing and missing two.

**Clint:** No, I really don't. Because my... now, this sounds like a gag, but it's really not. My journalism background was always taking notes while listening to a press conference or a conversation or a discussion. Along with things like you know, reading memos upside down on a mayor's desk. You know, the stuff. You know, Fletch.

**Griffin:** The usual terms and stuff.

**Clint:** Fletch kind of, yeah. Yeah, Fletch stuff. But no, and I usually jot something down in shorthand and then go back in and fill it in later, with more degree. But it's come in so handy. It came in so handy with Zoox, so many times. And there have been quite a few times in this game where you know, it's come in handy. Like remember Scott's parents' names and stuff like that. So—

**Griffin:** That was hysterical. I was feeling like such hot shit when we started the dating show arc.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** And then the very first thing that was asked of me, I completely fucking failed.

**Clint:** How about the one from Abby? "When you're recording, what are you looking at? Is it full theater of the mind, do you have a visual reference as to where your characters are in the space? How does that affect the way you play your character specifically, in terms of battle heist scenarios, as opposed to plot-moving role-play heavy parts." I think one of the things I really had to get used to is, unlike D&D, Blades in the Dark is not combat-centric.

**Griffin:** No.

**Clint:** And when we do combat, it's a lot more solution-based than you know, beating up— it's kind of like— I kind of—

**Travis:** Maybe for you?

**Griffin:** Yeah, I was gonna say.

**Travis:** I beat people up left and right, my dude?

**Clint:** I look at it like Dark Souls. You know, you face a boss and it's not necessarily how fast or how strong you are, or your spells are, it's... there is a way to beat this boss, and figuring that out and... you know... And maybe this is just 'cause I'm not playing you know, a brawler, or playing a tank in this game.

**Travis:** Yeah, it's interesting 'cause I think for me, I— so, I... I think benefit a little bit both from just the way I picture things in general. But also, I listen to a lot of audiobooks. Like, I can't really sit down and read anymore. So, like, I listen to audiobooks. So, I've gotten pretty good at like picturing the scenes in my mind, just like naturally. So, as we're describing like the Gutter City laundry chase, right, like, I don't need to like draw out positions of the car. Like, I can picture it. And then, for me, as far as like figuring out the next thing to do, it's usually a matter of like, 'that thing clicked of an idea, I don't need to think anymore if there's different options or—'

It's the same way I pick what to eat at a restaurant. As soon as I see something that looks good, I stop looking at the menu, 'cause I don't wanna like start to confuse and be like, "Well, I could do this or this or this." It's like, "Nope, that's the thing you chose to do, and that's what we're gonna do." And so, I'm usually just kind of picturing in my head... I think it would be hard to— we've started filming My Brother, My Brother and Me, to put up video clips and stuff, I don't think I can do that with Adventure Zone.

**Griffin:** No.

**Travis:** Because of how much I'm just like staring into the middle distance, like picturing what to do.

**Griffin:** Yeah. I mean, we also use Roll20, which like, we don't use it necessarily for a heavily like visual purpose. But I do like having our multiple

sheets in front of me. And also, I have the Blades in the Dark, like reference site up, 'cause we are still kind of figuring that one out. But it's hard, I try to get— I try not to get like tunnel vision on that stuff, 'cause I will just fully start ignoring what is being said, which isn't good.

**Travis:** Darby asks, "Been loving getting to hear you all explore the different genres with each level. Is there a particular genre you'd most likely try to explore, either in Steeplechase or a future mini-campaign?"

**Griffin:** There's a— is there like a future sci-fi layer? There is, I think, right?

**Justin:** What do I call it, Infanitem, is that what it's called?

**Griffin:** Something like that, yeah.

**Justin:** I had two names for it. I just don't have my doc up right now. It's Infanitem or... oh, The Siderial Age. That's what it's called.

**Griffin:** That's good.

**Travis:** The Siberial age?

**Justin:** The Siderial Age.

**Travis:** Siderial Age, got it.

**Griffin:** That's a cool ass name, man. Juice, you have a lot of cool ass names, man.

**Travis:** Yeah, you're really good at that. You're really good at not being embarrassed by saying like made up bullshit.

**Griffin:** Fantastic shit.

**Justin:** Yeah, no matter how goofy or dumb it sounds, I'll just say it.

**Travis:** Yeah, you're very confident, and I can't do that. Yeah, Griffin, I was actually thinking the same. I would love to do like a... not even like space, but like hyper... like...

**Griffin:** Cyberpunk?

**Travis:** No, see, I was gonna say more like you know, the original Star Trek series.

**Clint:** Like space opera.

**Travis:** Of like space... Yeah, but like space rangers kind of like, 'very swashbuckling space heroes!' I think that would be absolutely wild.

**Clint:** Well, we've talked a lot, every time we start talking about what are we gonna do in the next season or what are we gonna play. We've talked a lot about doing kind of a swashbuckling you know, space opera kind of thing.

**Griffin:** Space adventure, yeah, yeah.

**Travis:** Yeah. I think it's just like that idea hasn't like... All of us like that idea, and none of us have had that like core that everything pulls around and gives you. Like, "Oh yeah, it'll just solidify right there—"

**Clint:** All right, I'll start working on that.

**Griffin:** Thanks, Mac.

**Travis:** You would be the one to do it. Justin, is there like... well, I don't know how much you wanna give away, or can I ask if there's like a genre coming up that you're like, "I can't wait to do this one." But if you don't wanna give it away, you don't have to.

**Justin:** Yeah, I mean, if somebody wants to give it away to me, I would love that.

**Travis:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** No, it's really— I can't think that far. I mean, it... it depends. I don't know how you guys are gonna do what you're trying to do right now! [chuckles] So, it seems a little... I have to be... And that's not even like a question of not having enough time or whatever. Like, I can't— I have some like very general ideas for layers that would be fun. But like, it really is just kind of all dependent on what you guys do next. It's very reactive.

**Travis:** I think that, frankly, is one of like my biggest kind of learning takeaways, both from *Blades in the Dark* and watching you run it. Is I think one of the things that I've gotten caught up in, in the past, of like DMing something. Of like, if I'm gonna set up a challenge for the players, I also should be responsible for like knowing the way to solve it. So, because— like, but then, with *Blades*, it's more just like— it's not about that. It's like, if they find a way that works for them to solve it, you just have to say yes to it, right?

**Griffin:** Right.

**Travis:** So, it's not like I figured out the answer to my own puzzle, and so you have to figure out what that answer is. It's much more of just like, "Here is a mountain to climb, and as long as you're moving towards the top, you're doing it right."

**Justin:** I try to put myself in the mind of player— I used to play a lot— so, I mean, I used to only. So like, I know that I never— I don't think there's any episode where I said like, "I don't know, this is too hard. I quit. I don't know, this is impossible!" So, I don't know. We'll figure something out. It'll probably be better than whatever I come up with in a vacuum.

**Clint:** Both David and Steven ask questions about Krystal with a K.

**Justin:** Okay?

**Clint:** David wanted to know if, "Was it always an idea for her to have a mini sub-plot?" And Steven really wanted to know how Autumn Seavey Hicks became involved in the podcast. And the development of her character.

**Travis:** Well, you see, back in high school I started riding the bus with this girl named Autumn, and she and I became friends. And then Justin asked her to be on the podcast. And that's basically it, I think.

**Justin:** We have kind of a shared— our families both have like a shared interest in Disney stuff. We've gone to Disney before and have had like different Disney-type discussions. And they're very into watching these sorts of like Disney fan videos from like vloggers, people who cover Disney for a living. And there's a— there's one named AJ, who does a site called Disney Food Blog.

**Travis:** Oh yeah.

**Justin:** And Autumn just did like this killer AJ impression one time that I thought was so funny. And then it's like wait a minute, like, it's funny, but it's like not the kind of like wide-reaching... not everybody's gonna be like, "Oh, god, that's AJ from Disney Food Blog!" But that is the sort of thing where I was like, "Well, wait a minute, she— that could be a fun way to do like— catch people back up." And it's sort of become more than that. Krystal with a K kind of like creates like themes, sometimes she'll like foreshadow stuff that's coming up. I think like, I've just never been very interested in like recaps. So, it kind of feels like... I try to kind of basically remind you what's going on. But like, by and large, you know, we'll... we'll pick it back up.

So, Krystal with a K is— that's kind of... And it's also like I don't exactly know what's going on with Krystal with a K, obviously. So, it's just one of those that... it's just another thing that I have there, in case it becomes useful, basically. Oh, and Autumn does a great job, by the way. If you don't listen to Autumn's intros, she always makes the text like so much funnier than I wrote it. Also, if you want more Autumn, Autumn has a great YouTube channel that you should go subscribe to. Where she posts lots of like fun lifestyle stuff, and stuff about doing VO and everything. Autumn's the best.

**Travis:** And speaking of reminding you what's going on, I wanna remind you, it's the Max Fun Drive!

**Griffin:** Very good, Travis.

**Travis:** And it's your chance to support—

**Justin:** Really nice, dude.

**Clint:** Good. That was good.

**Justin:** Really nice.

**Travis:** Thanks, bud. Thank you, guys. It's your chance to support shows like this and creators like us, and the network that we are a part of, [maximumfun.org/join](http://maximumfun.org/join). Does somebody wanna tell them about the reward levels and entry levels of support?

**Clint:** Oh, sure will!

**Justin:** Daddy.

**Clint:** Yeah, \$5, you get the bonus content, over 500 hours of it. \$10, you get the bonus content and one of 37 reusable stickers, by artist Olivia Fields. These are gorgeous, high-quality, and low-commitment stickers, 'cause they can be unstuck. Think about that. Also, you get your own letterpress Max Fun membership card. \$20 gets you all that, plus the Max Fun Culinary Kit, or Rocket Hat. The culinary kit has the Max Fun Family Cookbook, designed by Tom Deja. Featuring recipes from your favorite Max Fun shows. And a jar of bespoke Maximum Flavor Spice Blend. And if you're not into the culinary stuff, you can opt for the eco-friendly cap with an adjustable back, and the Max Fun Drive rocket logo embroidered on it.

**Justin:** Wow.

**Clint:** Now, for 35, you get all that, and an apron, designed by Sabrina Volante.

**Justin:** Wow.

**Griffin:** It's a very nice apron.



**Clint:** And for 50, all of the above, and a custom metal membership card.

**Griffin:** Hell yes.

**Clint:** And if you go all the way for 100 bucks—

**Justin:** He's gone too far, he's gone too far.

**Griffin:** Please stop.

**Clint:** All of the above, an HQ access pass and immortalization at Max Fun HQ. And if you go for 200, all of the above and—

**Travis:** Wow?!

**Justin:** No, no, no, this has gone— you've gone too far.

**Clint:** [panting] Oh god...

**Griffin:** It's okay, dad.

**Travis:** Dad, come back! Come back!

**Griffin:** Dad, come back to us!

**Justin:** Come back to us, man.

**Clint:** Help me!

**Justin:** You're okay, dad, just come on back.

**Travis:** He's seen the void!

**Clint:** The Max Fun Treasure Box... okay.

**Travis:** Okay, great, cool. [Maximumfun.org/join](http://Maximumfun.org/join), help us keep making this show! Let's see... okay, so, Rowan wants to know, if we were employed to work at Steeplechase, which layer would we want to work in?

**Griffin:** It seems like Ephemera is the place to be.

**Travis:** See, I like Gutter City. I like the idea of Gutter City. That's probably been my favorite genre of layer we've done so far. 'Cause I'm like way into noir and detective and that kind of stuff. And so like, I love that.

**Griffin:** I'm way into detective— I'm always saying stuff like that, for sure.

**Travis:** That I'm way into detective stuff? I believe is what I said, Griffin. I believe there was another noun there?

**Griffin:** Like noir and detective, those are my two big ones.

**Travis:** Okay...

**Clint:** The one I've been most wanting to go to, we haven't even touched, and that's Backseat Blast. You get to be my age, and nostalgia's a very strong motivating thing.

**Travis:** Now, hold on...

**Clint:** What?

**Travis:** Backseat Blast is in Ustaben, you know that, right?

**Clint:** Yeah, I know, but I'm zoning... I'm zooming in on that.

**Griffin:** Oh, okay.

**Clint:** It's where you sit in the back— the oversized back seat of your parent's car, and it's raining and you... listen to your Disk Man. And I just really flash back to you know, long trips in the back of a station wagon with a stack of comic books and car sick bag. 'Cause when I read comic books—

**Travis:** Yeah, dad, how come you never took us?

**Clint:** What, just three in the back of a station wagon?

**Travis:** You never took us on any car trips when we were growing up. Why is that, do you think?

**Clint:** Well, I have a picture of the three of you crying and screaming in the backseat of a car, during a car trip?

**Travis:** You can photoshop anything, I don't wanna hear it!

**Griffin:** With AI, anything's possible.

**Clint:** [chuckles] But I'd love to go to Backseat Blast and just sit there and feel small.

**Griffin:** I'd love to get blasted in the backseat.

**Clint:** [chuckles] Pff.

**Justin:** I'm too old for Kidadelphia, so I don't actually know which layer I'd pick. Probably Ephemera, it seems pretty fun.

**Griffin:** Justin, what player's choices have surprised you the most so far? Also, if possible, please rate them on a one to five Shlabethany scale, five being the most surprising.

**Clint:** And that's from whom?

**Griffin:** That's from... Justin.

**Travis:** That's from Justin.

**Griffin:** Probably not ours.

**Justin:** Dad's sort of wanton disregard for his own personal safety, physically speaking, is a constant thrill. I am constantly sort of... the extent

to which Griffin will go to avoid any sort of physical confrontation is always fun.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** 'Cause a lot of the times, Griffin will be the one that wanders into the situation and I'll be thinking like, "Wow, you're gonna have to talk your way through this. I legitimately don't know how you're gonna convince a brick wall to like separate, or whatever it is. So, that's... that's always fun. I was surprised by how I didn't— the stuff with..."

**Griffin:** Hank?

**Justin:** Emerich becoming sort of like more... cognizant of Hard Light as a possible like entity is something that I like, didn't expect. In fact, I had kind of actively not wanted to wander into that sort of like Westworld, I, Robot territory. But like, the more we messed around with it, the more it just felt like we kind of have to. Like we... that question is just like hanging out in the open air. And it's an interesting one, I think, with everything going on in the world. So yeah... But it's— but they're always so full of surprises, these boys.

**Travis:** I'm glad I've been a nice, predictable boy for you, Justin. You're welcome.

**Justin:** No, well, I mean, you've just got these big muscles.

**Travis:** Yeah. And my character does too.

**Justin:** Yeah! [chuckles]

**Griffin:** That's funny.

**Justin:** That was funny.

**Travis:** Anderson asks, because Anderson's family had worked at a small amusement park in Ohio, "Is there any chance we will get to meet employees of Steeplechase that are not like customer-facing entertainers?"

Because Anderson can assure you that maintenance guys probably know about The Butter Cream, because they know everything.

**Clint:** Well, there's Justin?

**Griffin:** There's Doug Manzetti.

**Clint:** And then there's Justin, too.

**Travis:** Wait, now how do we know I— how do we know Doug Manzetti's not— I mean, he's an entertainer, he's filming, he's there. Right? If you are participating in... this is where it gets weird, right. If you're in Passion's Cove, you're watching Doug perform.

**Griffin:** Wow, that's something else. I can't think of my man Doug like that.

**Travis:** I know, right? You don't even know the real Doug Manzetti?

**Griffin:** Who's the real Doug Manzetti, Justin? Tell me now.

**Justin:** It's me, I'm doing the voice for him.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Holy shit.

**Justin:** Surprise. It is— you— I mean, it's hard because... Okay, for starters, they know about the Butter Cream. The Butter Cream is not a secret. Like, Dentonic knows about the Butter Cream. They just don't— they just kind of leave it be. For the most part, because it works out for them. It's not like a secret to them. Secondly, it's hard because if you are— like, we are usually bringing them into like having a guest experience within one of the layers. And you just simply would not— like, it's all so... built into the— like, you wouldn't see the maintenance people.

Like, that is part of the thing, is like they would not be incorporated— they probably would be incorporated in some like in-world ways. But like, as far as like someone who is clearly not a part of the layer, then I don't think that

you would necessarily encounter them as much. But there are people that I think would fit that description that are around, that just hasn't been... hasn't been someone we've run into much.

**Travis:** Abby asks, and we talked about this a little bit, but are— Abby asks if— as we're changing game systems and campaigns and stuff, along with genres and settings and combinations, is there any game systems or anything like that you've been looking at? I will say like I have just started— like, the idea occurred to me, looking into like Kids on Bikes and that kind of like you know, kids getting together, going on an '80s style adventure kind of thing, is very interesting to me. Potentially pursuing that and doing a game around that kind of thing might be fun?

**Griffin:** Honestly, I don't... I don't keep up with it very good. I don't keep up with games very good. So, I don't know. I wish I had something cool to say to you. I've looked at lots of game systems, but I haven't thought about DMing since I finished season one of Ethersea. So...

**Travis:** So, from Tom, "How does a system like Blades in the Dark compare with previous systems when it comes to creating and then role-playing a character? For example, Balance had character classes background that influenced the character choices for Magnus, Merle and Taako. Whereas the Steeplechase characters seem less tied to a particular style of play." I would agree with that immensely. Like, so much of Magnus came out of the prompts, like when we first built the characters for like the— what was going to be like that one episode-bonus kind of thing. And it had the like, "And what's your character's like core belief? And what's their biggest flaw?" And that kind of stuff.

**Griffin:** And it's great for a certain type of playing.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** What I love about Blades in the Dark is this idea of like having these huge, empty gaps that you fill in while playing. It also extends, I feel like, to character development. Like, I don't— there's a lot I don't know about Montrose. Like a lot, a lot, a lot. And it's been fun kind of just having that stuff appear, while we've been in the middle of just like a scene. And I think

that is one of the— obviously, you can do that with any game system. But I feel like with *Blades in the Dark*, it's just really easy to do that.

**Travis:** Oh, I was just gonna say, I think that also is like part of it. Where if you think about like heist movies-like, think about *Ocean's 11*, right. The only things you know about those characters is like the stuff they're good at on the team, and like the people they get along well with on the team. Like, you usually only learn— you don't know like, are they married? Like, do they have kids? That doesn't matter, don't worry about that. We're just worried about like what they're doing right now and how they work with everybody else.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Clint:** And I think *Blades in the Dark* lends itself to— I think that there is some predetermination, if nothing else, just because of the way that you operate. I mean, you've got your skills, you've got, you know, what you're able to do. You... you know, maybe you're stronger in insight, prowess and resolve, or one of those. And I think that, if you're trying to play it well, and I don't—

I think we're all playing it better than when we first started. But I think when you're playing it correctly, it does lend itself to that, because I... Emerich is not going to turn around and you know, fight with somebody. He's not gonna win an arm-wrestling contest and you know... and he's not very good at swaying people. And I think that has you play to your strength, and also kind of refine that.

**Griffin:** Yeah, it's much less likely for you to do really, really good at something you're not skilled in, in this game, than in like *D&D*, for example.

**Travis:** Yeah. 'Cause I mean, the less dice you have... It's not like a numbers skill, you know what I mean? It's... the— because also, what's interesting is the— in *D&D*, the DM can decide how difficult a thing this. Like, "Oh, that's a 12, that's a DC. 15, that's a DC," whatever.

**Griffin:** Right.

**Travis:** Whereas this, it's like, man, if you rolled a 4, the DM gets to decide— or the GM gets to decide like what a mixed success looks like. But it is a mixed success. And so, it's very interesting, because I think it is less of like, "You know what? I'm gonna try something bold and wild. But not— my skillset is not what that's for." Which I think is really interesting.

**Justin:** Mm-hm.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Justin, Carlie wants to know, how challenging was it to adapt the game to an original setting? For anyone who doesn't know, Blades in the Dark is supposed to be set— and now I'm trying to remember, what's the name of the actual place?

**Justin:** Duskvöl.

**Travis:** Duskvöl.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Travis:** And it's supposed to be like tied to like Duskvöl, and like when you talk about factions, there are predetermined factions in Duskvöl, and all that. Justin, were there concessions that you had to make in the vision of Steeplechase to fit the game? Or did the mechanics serve as more of a guide? Like, what was the—

**Justin:** Yeah, lots, lots, lots. I mean, Duskvöl is a really cool world that's very well-detailed. But like, I knew that I was gonna have to keep so much in my head already, that I had to like jettison all of it. Because I couldn't keep track of like somebody else's thing that they had already made up. And it didn't just click with what I was doing. So, there's a lot of really cool stuff within Duskvöl. And it would've been nice to be able to use, but it's also sort of like weird to sort of lift that from our buddy, John Harper, I will say, though. [chuckles] It is our podcast now, John! But I—

**Travis:** You're allowed to use that story, John, if you want.



**Justin:** Yeah, you can use that story, John.

**Travis:** We'll talk about rights and stuff.

**Justin:** There's some stuff— you know, so, similarly, there's some supernatural elements to Duskvöl. The presence of ghosts and like the way the electrical grid works and stuff like that, that is in-built to the game's system, that I've had to sort of graft. I think we've talked about this before, but like, graft those ideas onto technology, on to—

**Clint:** Yeah, Hard Light's a good example. 'Cause we had to kind of... take— you know, make that up from whole cloth.

**Griffin:** Control a ghost in the rules document, and then replace—

**Clint:** And sense a ghost, trap a ghost, you know, all that kind of stuff, we've kind of had to adapt.

**Griffin:** The first character I was looking at doing before I came up with Montrose was a Whisper, which is the class of Dad that Emerich is. But I was worried about trying to kind of like do that constant replacement in my head while I was playing the character, and got turned off of it. But I'm glad Dad did, 'cause it's like a really cool sort of tool to work with. But—

**Travis:** Yeah, it's interesting 'cause like... you probably also wanted to know about like building characters, and especially playing like a Cutter, where the idea of like 'I'm gonna sneak up behind this guy and like cut his throat, or like you know, throw him off a bridge or something,' like, I'm not gonna do that in this— 'cause like people, they're just working at the park most of the time? And it's not like— you know, I'm not gonna like shiv Shroog to get his key card or something, you know what I mean? Like, that's— it's a different thing. So, thinking about it more—

**Griffin:** You can fuck'n try! You can fuck'n try.

**Clint:** Yeah! [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Shroog would destroy you.

**Travis:** Griffin, I never would. I never would. Out of respect, if nothing else.

**Griffin:** I know you wouldn't. And fear.

**Travis:** Yeah. But it's also like a bit of like them building a character who's very physically imposing and uses strength to solve problems. But not necessarily violence? Like, more strength-based than violence-based, of like submission rather than you know, killing. I think made for... I think it's more fun than if I was just playing a solid, murderous brute.

**Clint:** Well, you made that conscious choice, to change him and make him— it was like a Wonder Man choice of you know, he's not— I know Beef's not a pacifist. But you know, it's much more creative, what you've tried to do.

**Travis:** Yeah, just trying to do— I mean, and I think one of my favorite moments we've had so far is when like we all kind of simultaneously suffered trauma during Gutter City. And I think those traumas— and I think that this is the way it's supposed to work within the game, were very informative to like how we were playing the characters.

**Griffin:** They were the first major signposts, I think, for where we should take literally all of our characters.

**Clint:** Mm-hm.

**Travis:** Yeah! And it just really informed Beef's— of like... I don't want to like... "I don't know how much more I can deal with this like violence and threat and like seeing people get hurt," and that kind of thing. Of like, okay, cool, that's there, man. That's in his brain and he's trying to find solutions and everything. And so like, having a brute basically that doesn't really wanna get hurt or see somebody get hurt... yeah, it's made it more interesting for me.

**Clint:** The stress, the trauma, all those things have— you gotta applaud this game, that really has shaped all of our characters. You know, you can't just take a potion and you're healed, or cast a spell and you're healed. You gotta make conscious choices about what you're gonna do.

**Travis:** Yeah, there's no like long rests or whatever, yeah.

**Clint:** And I love that. And I think it has informed all three of our characters.

**Griffin:** Mm-hm, yeah, it is a great—

**Travis:** Especially me. Yeah, the stress and indulge vice, man, is so cool.

**Griffin:** Yeah, I feel like I was really struggling to figure out what kind of character Montrose— like, I wanted him to be, until he got that reckless trauma. And now it's like, "Oh, okay. Now, I get to— Now, I have permission to make the most fun, arguably worst choice," just any time I'm presented with the option to do so. Which is a great gift.

**Travis:** Justin, Nelson wants to know, how much do you feel, percentage wise, or however else you wanna phrase it, do you think that you've had to make up on the spot because of curveballs that people have thrown at you?

**Griffin:** It felt like that one scene with Hank came completely out of left field.

**Justin:** Who was Hank?

**Griffin:** Hank is the other Hard Light—

**Travis:** Hank was the creator of Scott Boldflex.

**Justin:** That was completely out of left field.

**Griffin:** That was fuck'n—

**Justin:** That was terrifying.

**Clint:** I really thought that's where—[laughs]

**Justin:** That was completely out of left field, I had no idea.

**Clint:** Oh...

**Justin:** I just like, I had no choice, right? Like, I started doing it. Like, I fuck'n... I'll be straight with you, for the first minute of that, I had no idea who Hank Heart was, I could not remember any of that. And I was like madly trying to talk to you while I was looking through my reference documents. And I was like, "Ah, okay, yeah, yeah, yeah... Okay, maybe if... sure, yeah..." But it's also like—

I'll tell you what's nice about this, guys, though, that works well for me, is... it's as good as anything else I had, which is to say nothing. I mean, I... it works just as well as me coming up with something on the spot, as Dad coming up with something on the spot. And I don't have a bunch of stuff... It's not like I've planned 18 steps ahead of this, to where him being this person is gonna fuck up anything. It's really like, "Oh, that seems really interesting. Let's see— I mean, let's see what happens. Cool."

**Griffin:** I've really enjoyed kind of drinking from that cup a little bit, when we first showed up in Ephemera and I was like, "What if... what if Montrose just knew a lot of stuff about Ephemera because he was like a big Ephemera geek?" But then that's been fun because now it's like the SNL sketch that Bill Hader and Kristen Wiig did, where they sang the song at the same time? Like joking at each other?

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Justin:** [laughs] Oh, no, no, no, it was...

**Griffin:** No, it was... ah, fuck, who was it?

**Clint:** Fred Armisen!

**Griffin:** Fred Armisen, yeah.

**Clint:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Yeah. Kath and Kim, I think it was.

**Griffin:** It's been fun, 'cause it's like I... And Justin I think has been a good steward of it because on one hand, I recognize like, you can't just make it so that like there are no surprises. I can't be surprised by anything here, 'cause I've done it all. But it's been... I also like Disney shit, and so it's been fun to kind of get to flex some of that as well.

**Justin:** Speaking of Jupiter, when I knew we were doing Ephemera, I went to him and I said, "Listen, I need help coming up with fantasy garbage. And it can't be good, and it can't be really mean anything. I need like lorem ipsum version of lore. And Jupiter's like, "You know what? I have my degree in this." And I had no idea. I was like, "Are you shitting me?"

**Travis:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** He was like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, no problem." And he cranked out this like fucking lore document for Ephemera that is unhinged! All the stuff about the...

**Griffin:** The viscounts!

**Justin:** The viscounts, of The Seven, all that stuff is like... [chuckles] Jupiter churned that out in like a few hours and like dumped it on my desk. He's like, "Here's a bunch— you asked for garbage, boss! Here's a bunch of garbage!" And it's like...

**Travis:** I love that.

**Justin:** That's why it's so— that's why that stuff is so wild. [chuckles] Is 'cause I purposefully like didn't want it to be interesting enough to try to pursue. But I wanted it to be implying that there's like a lot of it. And there is... there's a lot of it. [chuckles] There's a lot of it.

**Travis:** You know, so, I don't— I think it was when Griffin said, "I'm into Disney shit too." Justin, I'm gonna request now, just if there could be a layer at some point that is like a Toontown-esque feel?

**Justin:** Oh, that's fun.

**Travis:** I wouldn't fuck'n love— I was just watching a documentary about like— or whatever, a video about the Mickey's like Toontown, rise and fall, at Disney World. And now it's, I believe, the circus. But like that was one of my favorite parts of like Disney World when I was a kid. And I was thinking about that, I was like, "Ah, fuck, there's gotta be..." Think about having a like strong man brute in Toontown, where there's like Squash and Stretch and shit, I would love that.

**Griffin:** Are there any other good'ns?

**Justin:** I'll tell you a good'n, it's the Max Fun Network. It's a good podcast network, full of a lot of great podcasts like ours, this one you're listening to here. If you have noticed, we used to do these during Max Fun because the show was— would only come out every other week. But now, thanks to your generous support, it comes out weekly.

Because we are able to do that, because you all have been so kind to us. And your contributions to the network and to our show specifically really help us to make all of the stuff that we make. And we— and it's... it's really the reason that we're still doing all this stuff. So, it's a direct one to one, if you like what we make, if you could go to [maximumfun.org/join](http://maximumfun.org/join), and help us make it with your financial support. It really is a huge help.

**Travis:** And it— and listen, it's not just us. At this point, we've been doing this for over a decade. Justin's mentioned Jupiter, there's also Sarah and Amanda. And if you like the merch designs, that's Mackay. We've got our editor, Rachel. We've got Tom helping us do more video stuff now, doing the virtual live shows. We've got Danielle, we've got Alice...

**Clint:** Shannon!

**Travis:** Shannon. Like, there's a team of people that help us make good stuff and tell you about it, and get it in front of your ears and eyeballs. And we wouldn't be able to pay those people, we wouldn't be able to work with them if it wasn't for the support that you've given us over the years. It's been able— given us the option to not only grow this as our jobs, but grow it so we're doing more and more stuff, that we're able to bring you more stuff, and all of that, we wouldn't be able to do without the support that you give

us every year in Max Fun Drive. It means so much to us and so much to the team. Thank you, thank you so much for that support.

**Clint:** We talked about the bonus content that's available, you know, when you do make that commitment.

**Griffin:** What is it this year, for TAZ?

**Clint:** For TAZ, it's Charlieverse 2, Cartoon, Cartoonier and Cartooniest. [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Which is a real... a real treat. If you— We appreciate all the nice things you've said about Steeplechase so far, but I think Charlie has some sort of once in a lifetime gift. And if you wanna support that, then I think, you know, this is the way to do it.

**Clint:** Yeah, and if you liked Everything Everywhere All at Once, the Charlieverse is lightyears beyond that.

**Griffin:** It's basically like that, yeah, sure.

**Travis:** Yeah. Woah? Okay. Not overselling it at all!

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** And if you're interested in the making of it, we did— Justin and Charlie, did a making of the Charlieverse audio, as an extra piece of bonus content. You can hear the making of the Charlieverse.

**Griffin:** The power is in your hands.

**Travis:** Justin, is there anything else you wanna say about Steeplechase before we wrap up?

**Justin:** Basically, any feedback, anywhere—

**Travis:** Do you want me to look it up? I'll read it to you—

**Griffin:** We're gonna look up feedback and tell it to Justin while he wraps up here.

**Justin:** I'd super rather you didn't. But you know, if you're enjoying it and you wanna tell other people like, "Hey, this is good, you can listen to it," that's cool. I would appreciate it. Because I feel really proud of it, and I think it's... it says a lot about the— the whole thing feels like a little bit of me, that I'm like encapsulating in this arc, which is cool. The sense that like I'm able to put a little bit of myself into this thing, and crystalize this person that I am right now. And the fact that people are into it is very... it's very nice. I'm assuming they're into it just based on these questions, because it would be weird to ask questions like this if you don't care about it.

**Griffin:** Right.

**Justin:** So yeah.

**Griffin:** Hey, one last question from me, as we wrap up. Did you always have plans for the Creaky Man, or was that a joke that became a real boy?

**Justin:** I can't talk about that.

**Clint:** Oh! Why?!

**Justin:** Because—

**Griffin:** That's fine.

**Justin:** I can't talk about that.

**Clint:** [sighs] Man...

**Justin:** I have very few things that I know.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** I have very— I have so little that I know anymore, Mac. I can't. I can't.



**Clint:** I know.

**Justin:** No, I—

**Clint:** Oh, trust me, I'm there, bud. I'm there.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Griffin:** Okay. Well, next TTAZZ.

**Justin:** Thanks for listening, though. And thanks for donating, [maximumfun.org/join](http://maximumfun.org/join) is the URL.

**Clint:** And thanks for all the questions, too!

**Justin:** Yeah, yeah, that's very cool of you, thank you so much. We'll be back at this exact same like time slot, 'cause that's how podcasts work.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Justin:** With a new episode of The Adventure Zone: Steeplechase, next time! And as Griffin says at the end of every episode... of the—

**Griffin:** Oh, I thought you were gonna quote— No, you go ahead and say—

**Justin:** As Griffin said—

**Griffin:** You know what, Juice? You can say it this time.

**Justin:** Justin is my hero!

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** [chuckles]

[Steeplechase theme music plays]

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