

## The Adventure Zone: Steeplechase - Episode 27

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**Krystal:** And existing bookings to the two-night Infinitum Hyper Cruise Experience will be honored! But its final journey is currently set for late September. I gotta say, Steepies, this last story is a new one to me. Gutter City PI, Darla Davis, has been promoted, with a gigantic pay bump, or so I hear. To lead investigator for the Dentonic Customer Satisfaction Team. I guess I always assumed that Darla was a character, but not only is she real, she got her masters in criminology and criminal justice from the University of Maryland! [chuckles] Who knew?! This promotion is great news for us law-abiding Steepies, but if you're looking to get away with anything... untoward under Dentonic's roof, we hope you never know when to stop dreaming!

[Steeplechase theme music plays]

**Weaver:** No, no, not to the boat... Only one... one node per layer... I tried to maintain hopping... but it's too taxing... too many... noises...

**Justin:** Hello, everybody, and welcome to The Adventure Zone: Steeplechase! An exciting adventure and a mystery.

**Travis:** Ooh! A thriller!

**Clint:** You know how Carrol really worries about the presentation of animals on TV shows? That she's always worried they're gonna die and she's always worried something bad happens to 'em.

**Travis:** Sure?

**Griffin:** Yeah?

**Clint:** So, she won't watch the show.

**Justin:** Sure, yeah.

**Clint:** Well, she is worried to death. I have to go online every week to websites and look up to make sure Shookles is okay.

**Travis:** Now, Dad, you're on the show, why do you have to look it up?

**Clint:** Oh, I don't have access to that information?

**Travis:** You get the information before anyone else does?

**Griffin:** Well, no, I think dad's references the Shookles ARG.

**Travis:** Oh, of course.

**Griffin:** That Justin has been sort of spiraling on, in secret...

**Travis:** And I don't know why we need a Shookles assault rifle gun, but like everybody—

**Griffin:** Yeah, that's what it stands for.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Justin:** So, you guys done?

**Clint:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Yeah!

**Travis:** Yeah, sorry, Justin.

**Justin:** Yeah, sorry. No— this is the NFL, No Fun Left, okay? [chuckles]

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** I want you guys to keep it between the navigational beacons.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Justin:** Okay... okay... all right... So, at the end of the last episode, Darla Davis, in modern attire—

**Travis:** Like a pant suit?

**Justin:** Yeah. And with a Dentonic patch on the sleeve.

**Travis:** Ooh?

**Justin:** Is what you notice after she walks into the room.

**Travis:** You can't do better than a pant suit, Justin?

**Griffin:** It was your idea.

**Travis:** Yeah, but he agreed to it so quickly. I was just trying to give like a starting point for him to give me something better.

**Justin:** What— oh, did you want her to be in a dress? Okay, I guess. Okay, so, Darla Davis is in a fancy ball gown—

**Travis:** No, but like a cool pair— like a cool—

**Justin:** Travis likes—

**Travis:** A cool pair of trousers—

**Justin:** Travis thinks women should be in fancy ball gowns.

**Travis:** No, but there's like slacks—

**Justin:** Okay, she's in a fancy, elegant ball gown.

**Travis:** And maybe like a cool jacket.

**Griffin:** She's got a cape and suspenders—

**Justin:** If you say slacks and jacket, you're describing a pant suit, Travis!

**Travis:** No, but they don't go together—

**Justin:** I'm gonna come through the fuckin' screen!

**Travis:** They don't— they don't go together. Like, their— they definitely compliment—

**Griffin:** A mismatched pant—

**Travis:** No, they complement each other—

**Justin:** I don't know— I don't know anything about clothes. Everyone imagine the best clothes! Okay?!

**Clint:** Hey, wait a minute.

**Justin:** Okay?!

**Clint:** Wait a minute, it is prom season.

**Justin:** No, everyone— everyone gets to imagine their own best clothes, okay?

**Griffin:** Okay, the giant cat suit that Jared Leto wore to the Met Gala. Got it, yeah, we're good.

**Justin:** That's fine!

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** And I'm in Jared— I'm Jared Leto carrying the head of Jared Leto, okay?

**Griffin:** Yeah, okay.

**Travis:** Yeah! Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Griffin:** Good, good, good, good.

**Justin:** Next year, next year, he's gonna dress as Boz Scaggs and tell everybody it's the Leto Shuffle.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Justin:** Everybody's gonna be like, "I don't get it?" And he's like, "Think about it... The Leto Shuffle?"

**Griffin:** Like this was it— this— this was too far!

**Travis:** But then, then he'll disappear 'cause he's too far up his own ass, he'll just turn into a singularity.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** All right, listen, I love making fun of Jared Leto as much as the next guy, but let's adventure.

**Montrose:** First of all, Darla, that is an amazing pant suit/dress/suspenders/cat mask sort of situation you have.

**Beef:** Fashion overalls.

**Montrose:** Very fashionable.

**Darla:** Thank you. That doesn't seem germane, but thank you.

**Montrose:** Second of all, this was your... detective work?

**Darla:** Hold on a second, hold on a second. Don't rush, let me take a look at you... Ah! Still as fine as a baby's hair.

**Travis:** [chuckles]

**Emerich:** Thank you. Thank you very much.

**Darla:** Fine as a baby's hair.

**Montrose:** What is that in reference—

**Travis:** Beef blushes.

**Darla:** The three of you, just gorgeous! I can't believe— okay—

**Beef:** Thank you.

**Darla:** I'm ready to be in this conversation. You had some second—

**Beef:** Hey, wait, wait, before we get into it. Darla...

**Darla:** Yeah?

**Beef:** I'm really excited to see you. Like, I hope you're doing good. Like, it's— I don't wanna blow past the like excitement of like, "Whoa, Darla's here."

**Darla:** I wish the circumstances were a little bit better, but tell me, what's your... what's your problem, boys?

**Montrose:** Well, we seem to find ourselves tied up in a murder case... I say tied up, we are not really materially invested in it. More of a sort of... overly cautious sort of bearing that we have about us. But we... we are a little bit worried about Paul Pantry's death bringing to light certain horrible secrets that he may have been hiding, and may in fact have been the reason for his slaying.

**Darla:** Mm-hm... And this relates to you three?

**Montrose:** Well, that's a great point, Darla. Give me a moment while I think of how to respond to what you just said.

**Darla:** Maybe the three of you should have a little bit of a chat before we—

**Beef:** Yeah, can I talk to Montrose real quick?

**Darla:** Let's all finish our sentences and then we'll move on to another sentence.

**Montrose:** Yes.

**Darla:** I think the three of y'all should have a chat before you dive any deeper than this particular rabbit hole.

**Montrose:** Sure, sure. One moment, please.

**Beef:** Hey, Montrose?

**Montrose:** Yes?

**Beef:** Why did you decide there to just go with like pretty much just laying out the entire thing pretty openly?

**Montrose:** Oh, because I am not one to waste time. And Darla has proven that any attempts to misguide or misdirect her would be foolhardy and pointless in nature.

**Beef:** Okay, great. But you're someone who like can tell when people are lying and everything, right?

**Montrose:** Yes.

**Beef:** Could we maybe try not lying, but not necessarily using words like you know, horrible truths and like terrible things that people have done?

**Montrose:** Sure, sure, yeah—

**Beef:** Yeah, maybe not— yeah, not coloring—

**Montrose:** Yes.

**Beef:** Yeah.

**Montrose:** Let's do a rewind, Darla. If you don't mind?

**Darla:** Oh, you wanted to do a conversational rewind?

**Beef:** Yeah, do like a Brennan Lee Mulligan in there and just—

**Darla:** Oh?

**Montrose:** Yeah, we're gonna do one of those.

**Beef:** Take a Mulligan.

**Darla:** I'm not a big golfer.

**Montrose:** We don't think this thing went down the way that everybody else seems to—

**Darla:** You know who you mean by 'everybody else'. So, let's put the tiger on the table and yell at it.

**Montrose:** We don't think this went down the way you seem to think it has gone down, Darla.

**Darla:** Excellent.

**Beef:** But—

**Justin:** Darla has a faux leather binder that she unzips and unfolds. There's a stand that holds it up and you see a digitized screen. And she says:

**Darla:** Okay, this is the park, here.

**Justin:** And you see the image of Paul Pantry strolling through. He's got keys in his hands like he's about to go and lock up. You see what very clearly appears to be Gravel, out of nowhere, like, there is no hesitation, no discussion, no chatting, you see her just kind of dart past him, basically a



blur. And then even in the grainy footage, you can sort of see blood dripping out of Paul's throat. You see him drop to his knees and then kind of just fall backwards, limp, as he tries to hold his throat closed. And then you see Gravel, just standing. Just standing and watching until he doesn't move anymore. And that's when Gravel escapes the frame.

**Montrose:** Hm.

**Beef:** Darla, if I may, we... I wanna be up front and recognize that we respect you very much. And the work that we've done with you, it's always gone— like, you... you're solid, right. So, I ask this question—

**Darla:** Oh, you can imagine my relief.

**Beef:** I mean, I wasn't trying to flatter, that was sincere. But it's sometimes hard for me to sound sincere, I get that. This is a sincere question, let me preface. Is it possible when viewing security footage, for security footage to either be doctored, or is there a way to tell a difference between seeing like the real person, versus somebody who's been programmed, like a Hard Light version of that person, is there a way to tell the difference?

**Darla:** Oh... I imagine, if you were looking hard enough and you had enough time with the footage, I'm sure.

**Justin:** And then she slams the binder closed.

**Darla:** But as a rather high-up ranking security officer in the Dentonic Corporation, it is in my best interest, and by extension all of our best interests, for this to be a closed case. So, I don't need the three of you poking around too much because I am trying to look good in my new job. Do you understand?

**Beef:** I do understand. But I also... I understand wanting to look good in your new job, but I also understand... are you really gonna be comfortable just closing the case without knowing if you're right?

**Darla:** Oh yes. Absolutely, yeah. I am paid very well to... keep things moving.

**Beef:** Oh, okay?

**Darla:** And they thought that I could handle this job.

**Beef:** Okay.

**Darla:** And I am going to do it.

**Beef:** And you'll still look good if someone else gets murdered, even after you arrested a quote-unquote "culprit"?

**Darla:** Hm... hm... Well, that sounds to me like, first, something of a flight of fancy. But second, quite a bit of job security.

**Emerich:** Mm-hm.

**Darla:** Now, boys, you understand this has been so nice for me. I do have a lot of guests to make happy and I believe I need to be moving along, if you... if you don't mind?

**Montrose:** Do you have access to the rest of the security footage that this clip was taken from?

**Darla:** Oh, I'm sure I could request it.

**Montrose:** Hm... You haven't watched it, though? You've only seen this one—

**Darla:** I've watched the relevant scene.

**Montrose:** Okay.

**Darla:** Listen... boys, I know that you're not exactly what you appear to be. I may not know all the letters, but I have a basic idea of the script. And here's the thing, I don't care. As long as you don't get in the way of having incredibly satisfied guests at every visit, then we have no problem. But if you are going to make this job difficult, if you're going to jeopardize

something that I've worked very hard to achieve, then we are going to have a problem. And I'm going to start to have to ask a lot of questions that I'm sure the three of you would rather I not... poke around in, huh?

**Beef:** I... I would like to posit a third option.

**Justin:** Okay, let's freeze.

**Travis:** Okay?

**Darla:** Okay, we paused it.

**Griffin:** [chuckles]

**Darla:** That's a joke.

**Beef:** Oh, I see.

**Darla:** You can still laugh, right?

**Beef:** I would like to put forward a third option.

**Darla:** Mm-hm?

**Beef:** Your worry, right, is you said stay out of the way, right, or that we'll make things difficult. But what if we could offer you that in the future, we make your job easier? We have certain connections through the work that we do, and I don't think we have to get any more specific than that. That if, say, there is a case that you're working on where you might need some insight into some regular players that may be... helpful if questioned. We would be willing to help you with that, from time to time, if you are willing to help us in this scenario by just letting us review the footage. We don't wanna get in your way, we just have, you know, some personal, you know, qualms, that if we can just review the footage— you don't— you can even just make us a copy. Then that will help relieve our doubts.

**Darla:** Beef, look at me. This is not 12 Angry Men. This is not Law and Order. You are not going to find the evidence that frees this woman. You are

in the sovereign state of Steeplechase. My job is to find a palatable story that can keep this park open another day. I have found it. My job is done. Beef... do you ever graduate school and then maybe you have a free day and you go back to the school, and you're in college and you're on the next level of your life, you're doing bigger things than you ever dreamed of. And then, you go back to your school and your old classmates try to talk to you about drama. Try to talk to you about all the big changes and who's seeing who. And you stare at `em and you listen to `em talking and you realize that no matter how hard you try, you cannot give a shit? I don't know what made me think of that, Beef, but I do have to be going.

**Justin:** And then Darla spins on her heel and walks out the door.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Montrose:** God dang, that was like the coolest sort of exit burn.

**Emerich:** Very on point.

**Justin:** And then the lights flip on and the doors swing open. And the music that always accompanies the Prize Pantry starts cranking. And then the door flies open and there stands before you mother fucking Paul Pantry.

**Montrose:** Case closed! Case closed! It was a mistaken identity. Paul, it's so good to see you, my friend! We were so worried about you!

**Paul:** I don't know what you were worried about? I'm...

**Beef:** Okay.

**Paul:** Totally fine.

**Beef:** All right.

**Justin:** Okay. And then you see him start to crack his knuckles and you notice that he's wearing gloves. And then you look at his face and that's when it occurs to you, they recast Chad Touch as Paul Pantry.

**Griffin:** God damn it.

**Montrose:** I would recognize that voice anywhere.

**Chad:** What about these... sticky fingers?

**Beef:** It's not really a good Paul Pantry vibe. Just like, I don't wanna give notes on another performance, but like...

**Chad:** Listen, I am flailing. So, I'll take whatever you can give!

**Beef:** A little more whimsical, a little more...

**Chad:** I never— I'll be honest, I haven't done the briefing yet. What's the massage schedule for this Sticky Fingers Paul Pantry? Is that part of the service or...

**Emerich:** You may be confusing the term sticky fingers, I think it may take on a different connotation—

**Beef:** Yeah, I don't think it was literal at all, first of all. I don't think—

**Emerich:** I don't think his fingers are sticky.

**Chad:** A little nastier?

**Emerich:** Yeah, and you're being—

**Chad:** Mm-hm, okay.

**Emerich:** No, it...

**Beef:** Hey, Chad, can I talk to you over here for a minute?

**Travis:** And I just kind of take one step to the right. [chuckles]

**Chad:** Yeah?

**Beef:** The Prize Pantry is for people of all ages. There will be... children here?

**Chad:** Oh, no...

**Beef:** Yeah!

**Chad:** I don't... I don't rub that way.

**Beef:** You don't have to— hey, Chad, can't stress enough, you don't have to rub anyway.

**Montrose:** It's a rub-free zone, actually. We mostly just—

**Beef:** This is— yeah.

**Montrose:** We give out prizes.

**Chad:** That's why I'm just... just offering the kids up a few suites.

**Emerich:** Yeah, no—

**Chad:** From a jar. You know, like a—

**Emerich:** Oh...

**Chad:** With my fingers, I get a little bit of that sticky—

**Beef:** Oh, god.

**Emerich:** Do you have a van with a shag carpet on the inside, too? Because that's really—

**Chad:** Why yes— why— why yes, I do.

**Emerich:** Yeah, I thought so.

**Chad:** I call it my home. I live in a shag— in a van.

**Emerich:** Oh, this is repulsive. Oh...

**Travis:** This is like when they redesigned like classic— like you know, you see like, “Oh, we did a redesign of Tony the Tiger and now he’s like all svelte and stuff.” And you’re like, “Why?”

**Clint:** That’s wrong.

**Travis:** “Why did you make him sexy?”

**Justin:** Okay, so, that’s just— that was just a joke. [chuckles] I mean, it’s like real, that’s what’s really happening. But like, that’s not like part of the story, really, that’s like important.

**Griffin:** You can’t decide that.

**Justin:** Oh? Okay.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** [chuckles] Well, he’s... he’s staying silent and motionless and closes his eyes.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Travis:** We tip him over and he falls back into the crate that he came out of and we seal it up.

**Justin:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Cool—

**Justin:** And the crate is labeled ‘fingers and dreams.’

**Travis:** Yeah. I don’t wanna— I don’t wanna let Darla— I wanna ignore Chad ‘cause this... creepy boy. I’m gonna try to get her one-on-one, outside.

**Justin:** Okay. You actually notice when you go out there that she is just sort of scoping out the place. Probably filling out some sort of like— finalizing some reports, dotting some Is, whatever. Checking for some— well, you don't know what she's doing, just by looking at her. But that's— she has that same tablet out and she's got a stylus and she's making some notes.

**Beef:** Okay, Darla, can I be straight with you? Just like straight-forward, honest? I don't give two shits about justice or freeing the client or anything like that, right? Like, I'm looking at a jigsaw puzzle where the pieces have just been slammed together and glued in place and it's not matching up and it's really bothering the fuck out of me. So, at this point, I don't care about justice. I'm saying it doesn't add up and it bugs the fuck out of me. And that's all I care about. I'm not some child who is trying to save the day and be a white knight or whatever. I just wanna solve the puzzle in a satisfying way.

**Darla:** I get that, Beef. I do.

**Justin:** All right, Trav, give me a sway roll. Let's see how much— to what extent she gets it. [chuckles] This is going to be risky and limited effect.

**Travis:** Okay. I'm gonna push myself.

**Clint:** Are we there? Did we go out with him?

**Justin:** Yeah, I think you can if you wanted to.

**Clint:** I think— this is important, so I think... Emerich is going to... use foresight.

**Griffin:** You can't, we're not on a job.

**Travis:** You could just help?

**Clint:** Okay, I'll just help and take the stress. Emerich is going to help by reminding Beef that Darla did once give them two extra suites out of the goodness of her heart. And because rewarding them for their honesty. So you know, if he— if he—



**Travis:** Oh, right, 'cause she didn't tell us the whole deal with the job. Right, right, right, right, right, right.

**Clint:** If he's honest, that will help him. So, that's how—

**Travis:** Up and on, yeah.

**Clint:** That's how— that's how Emerich is going to help.

**Travis:** Submit. And I'm pushing myself. Submit.

[sound of dice thrown]

**Travis:** How'd I do? Oh shit... Okay, Justin, 1, 2, 3, go.

**Clint:** Wait a minute, you pushed and took an extra dice?

**Travis:** Yeah, I did, dad. That's how I got 3— and that's how I got 1, 2, 3.

**Justin:** I'm not in the—

**Griffin:** Awesome.

**Justin:** I'm not in the room yet, Trav, hold on.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Justin:** I wasn't in the Roll20 room, so I didn't see that room.

**Travis:** Oh, no, no, no, sorry. That was a different game, I was... I'm playing parcheesi with my friend, Dave.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Which Dave, do I know him?

**Travis:** Cool Dave?

**Griffin:** He's rolling bones and he actually just won.

**Justin:** Oh, there it is. Sway, 1, 2, 3, now I see it.

**Travis:** No, no, no, that was a different one.

**Justin:** I see it! [chuckles]

**Clint:** That was Dave! That was Dave, man!

**Griffin:** He got a short run on Yahtzee. Dave did that.

**Travis:** Oh, there we go. So, it's a 5, 2, 4.

**Justin:** No...

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** No?

**Justin:** I don't think so.

**Travis:** It was desperate, right? You told me to take a desperate one? Come on!

**Justin:** That was a risky— Trav, we can all see it? There in the thing.

**Travis:** Man... Damn you, Roll20. [chuckles]

**Justin:** Okay, I'm not gonna—

**Clint:** Wait a minute! Roll20 was being honest. So, you should be rewarded for that.

**Justin:** Oh, right, you should be— no. Okay. Oh... I'm not gonna make you take anything. I'm just gonna— you're just gonna lose the opportunity.

**Travis:** Eh...

**Darla:** Beef...

**Justin:** She like lures— like sort of puts her hand on your shoulder and walks you a little closer— or farther, rather, from the building. So, you're sort of like in an open area where if there is a mic somewhere or something, you don't know what it would be able to pick up, right? Some place a little more secluded.

**Darla:** Beef... you gotta understand, I'm not trying to play hard ball here. I could give you this footage, I could let you look over it. I mean, I'm telling you, it looked fine to me. But you are not... you could find fingerprints, you could find clues, you can find... anything that says somebody else did this, it doesn't matter. You're not gonna prove anything that's gonna make them change their minds. They want this over with. And that— this is their house. They take the ball and none of us get to play.

**Beef:** Yeah but like, I still wanna know. Like don't you wanna know? Don't like curiosity, wanting to know— like... If they said, "You can keep working on this but it's not gonna change anything," right, but you could actually figure it out instead of just like walking away from it. You wouldn't wanna know?

**Darla:** Honestly, Beef, I'm just trying to get my legs in this gig. I'm sure there will come a day when I'm really fixated on making sure all the pieces fit together, but right now, I'm just trying to figure out what picture they're making.

**Beef:** Well, sure. Yeah, that seems like a solid start. You'll definitely become more honest and more direct and more thorough in the future. I understand.

**Griffin:** I look around to make sure we are— I am within range of some sort of security camera or microphone or something.

**Justin:** Okay?

**Griffin:** I wanna see that I'm— I wanna make sure—

**Justin:** So, maybe you two have been kind of like watching from the porch?

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Griffin:** I shout:

**Montrose:** Give it up, Beef! We're... it's fine, we'll just go over what we found on his flash drive and see what leads we can get from there.

**Travis:** So, I— hearing that, I immediately drop it and like fall back, following.

**Clint:** Hm...

**Darla:** All right, the three of you, back inside.

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

[theme music plays]

**Justin:** Darla leads you back into Paul Pantry's office.

**Chad:** Hey, hey, hey, I'm still kind of getting my sea legs underneath me here...

**Justin:** So...

**Darla:** Get out of the office! Chad, get out.

**Chad:** I get you, I get you.

**Darla:** Not good enough—

**Chad:** I knew this was too good to last—

**Darla:** No, you still have the job, just get out for now!

**Emerich:** Chad, have you met Poppy? Have you— do you know Poppy?

**Montrose:** You guys would get along so good.

**Emerich:** You would get along famously!

**Chad:** Oh, yeah, I've— I've— listen... Poppy has stopped by, if you know what I mean.

**Beef:** Ugh, eh.

**Chad:** Poppy's has— no, come on...

**Emerich:** Here—

**Chad:** We're all friends—

**Emerich:** Let me give you this—

**Chad:** In Gutter City—

**Emerich:** This—

**Chad:** If you know what I mean.

**Emerich:** Here are 10 free Skee-Ball tickets.

**Chad:** Oh my?

**Emerich:** Take these back to Poppy's Place and play a little—

**Chad:** Okay?

**Emerich:** Two person Skee-Ball with Poppy.

**Chad:** So, the way your Skee-Ball table works is there's tickets and there's a ticket taker that's like 'admit one to play Skee-Ball?'

**Montrose:** Oh, it's a... this is an elite, prestige experience.

**Emerich:** Yes, this is very— it's VR. It's VR Skee-Ball.

**Chad:** Whoa?!

**Emerich:** VR Skee-Ball. We call it—

**Beef:** Yeah, man.

**Chad:** Very real Skee-Ball, excellent! [chuckles]

**Emerich:** We call it— we call it V-Ball. It's... it's...

**Chad:** Hey, you can stop selling, Chad is in!

**Montrose:** All right.

**Justin:** And Darla looks around... and doesn't immediately notice any sort of recording devices or anything.

**Darla:** All right... let's lay it out on the table. What is it you boys want? What is your problem? What is the issue that this... person going up the river? She's not even on the crew sheets? We don't know what these people are capable of?

**Beef:** Montrose, is now the time to be completely honest? Or...

**Montrose:** Yeah, I've been trying to— again, it's been 20 minutes that we could've spent eating pizza... doing some online shopping... you know what I mean?

**Darla:** Do you have the drive?

**Beef:** Like the determination, the grit? The...

**Montrose:** The power.

**Emerich:** The go-get-it-ness.

**Beef:** Yeah!

**Emerich:** The vim, the vigor!

**Montrose:** No, we don't have the flash drive. Whoever killed Paul Pantry did abscond with that. But if my suspicions are correct, then someone thinks we have the flash drive, now that I have shouted that outside, which makes us prime targets for the next slaying. So, I figured that might put a little bit of fuel on the fire for trying to figure out who actually did this dang this because, well, I like to think we've endeared ourselves to you at least a little bit, Darla?

**Darla:** So, where is the— where was the drive?

**Beef:** Oh, stuck up underneath his desk. There's like a Velcro patch right here.

**Emerich:** Or it was a pack of gum.

**Darla:** God damn it! We don't have Velcro! So, I didn't even think to look there. How would it be on the underside of something?!

**Beef:** Yeah...

**Darla:** Damn it!

**Montrose:** We don't have Velcro— oh, in Gutter City?

**Darla:** It's taken me a while to catch up to all these modern conveniences.

**Montrose:** Sure, yeah—

**Beef:** We also call it hook and loop, to be fair.

**Darla:** Whoa?! Two names?!

**Beef:** Well, Velcro is like a brand name, but it became so synonymous with it that it became its name.

**Emerich:** Like Xerox. You know how Xerox and Kleenex...

**Montrose:** Some people call it the devil's felt.

**Emerich:** Mm-hm.

**Beef:** Yeah.

**Emerich:** Which reminds me of Poppy, too, but let's not even go—

**Beef:** Some people call it grippy strips.

**Montrose:** Grippy strips, anything.

**Darla:** Stop stalling.

**Beef:** Oh, okay. Yeah, so, also, it should be noted that on that flash drive, there was stuff that would incriminate us. So, we're invested in that way as well.

**Darla:** Right, this was my assumption.

**Beef:** Uh-huh.

**Darla:** Okay. So, here's the thing. I wasn't lying. I mean, I...

**Montrose:** I would know if you were.

**Darla:** I have to put on a lot of the hard-bitten, heart of gold stuff when I was, you know, in Gutter City. But I am an employee of the Denotic Corporation, this is my livelihood now. And I... Kenchal Denton himself came



to me and recruited me. Me. Darla Davis. Took me out of the slums of Gutter City and brought me into the inner fold. And I can't fuck that up.

**Beef:** Hey, Darla, take it from me, from my own personal experience, when someone wants to be in control of you, one of the easiest way to do that is to elevate you and make you feel beholden to them. And it's the quickest way to compromise a lot of your morals because you feel like you only got to be where you are because of what they gave you. Not because of your own hard work and the things that you are— can do on your own. I've been there and it ruined my life.

**Darla:** I'm not a martyr. I'm not gonna throw myself on a fire just to prove that I'm willing to do it. You boys need to tell me what I can do that will actually be worth a damn here, that won't mean me losing my job, but also, will have some impact. 'Cause I swear, boys, as far as they're concerned, this is over.

**Emerich:** I have a request. You have already let us have a very brief peek at the footage, at the security footage. If you would extend that, you've already done that, you've crossed that Rubicon already. If you would just give me a somewhat longer opportunity to study that footage, I don't see how you would be violating any kind of moral code or... order coming down from on high. You've already shown it to us briefly, let me study that video so we can at least perhaps have a chance of figuring out whether or not there were Hard Lights involved in the— in the slaying.

**Darla:** I... I can't do that. I'm sorry.

**Justin:** And she sets the notepad down on the table.

**Darla:** I'm sorry, but I can't... [sighs]

**Justin:** All right, Dad, make a sway roll.

**Clint:** Whew, okay... I'm gonna push it, too. [chuckles] All right, so... Desperate? Feels kind of desperate—

**Justin:** No, it's risky... Yeah, okay, desperate. Yeah, it's desperate. Desperate and standard.

**Clint:** Okay. And one extra bonus die... All right, here we go!

[sound of dice thrown]

**Clint:** 6, 3, 1! 6!

**Griffin:** Love it.

**Clint:** 3, 1! 6! 3,1.

**Darla:** I'm sorry, I cannot help you. Now, I need to go finish my interview. And by the time I get back in this office, you all better be gone.

**Justin:** And then Darla stands up and walks out.

**Travis:** Leaving the pad?

**Montrose:** Oh, you forgot your pad!

**Emerich:** Oh, shh!

**Beef:** No, no, ooh—

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Montrose:** I'll watch the door, you do what you need to do.

**Emerich:** Yes, of course, yes.

**Justin:** Okay, Dad—

**Clint:** Study the video.

**Justin:** Study the video?

**Clint:** Mm-hm.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Clint:** And I'm— anybody wanna help?

**Griffin:** I will help because I wanna try and see if I can clock that knife. I gotta—

**Travis:** Yeah, I'll watch the door 'cause I'm—

**Griffin:** Yeah, that's a better—

**Travis:** I'm already eating up my stress.

**Montrose:** What was I thinking?

**Beef:** Yeah.

**Montrose:** [chuckles] Yes, one of us is door-sized. That's you!

**Griffin:** Yeah. So, I will help. I'll take the stress.

**Justin:** Guys, can I tell you something that's a little bit embarrassing?

**Griffin:** Yeah?

**Justin:** But just like a little bit. I'm out of coffee and I had this moment. Just then, I had the thought, "Well, I'll go refill my coffee while they watch this video." [chuckles]

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Oh, Justin...

**Justin:** I really just thought like, "I'll let them—"

**Griffin:** No, you go— you go— we can do that, Juice.

**Justin:** "I'll let them peruse—"

**Griffin:** You go ahead.

**Travis:** Like a hungover middle school teacher. "Go get your coffee, ma'am. We'll take care—"

**Justin:** "I'll let them peruse the footage while I go get the coffee." [laughs]

**Griffin:** Ooh? Oh, wow.

**Beef:** Oh? Oh! He put on Mr. Holland's Opus for us so he could go—

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Montrose:** Whoa?

**Justin:** [laughs] God, it's embarrassing! Okay... [laughs]

**Clint:** So, this is probably not risky, right? This is probably controlled?

**Justin:** This is controlled.

**Clint:** And...

**Griffin:** Take one bonus from me.

**Clint:** Okay. So, is that standard? Or...

**Griffin:** Effect?

**Clint:** Yeah. Standard effect? He went and got—

**Travis:** Justin went to go get coffee, yeah.

**Justin:** Yeah— no, I didn't go get coffee. No, I can't. The... it's in my mind's eye!

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Clint:** Standard?

**Travis:** The coffee's in your eye?

**Justin:** Yeah, standard.

**Clint:** Okay, standard... And take a bonus die... Griffin...

**Griffin:** You got it.

**Clint:** Shit, I'm gonna push myself, too.

**Griffin:** Getting a lot of stress for this not-job.

**Clint:** I know, but I think it's important.

**Travis:** We'll take a nap later.

**Justin:** We will have some way of relieving the stress. It doesn't seem fair to—

**Griffin:** Yeah.

[sound of dice thrown]

**Justin:** Make you go right into a—

**Griffin:** Holy fuckin' shit, Dad!

**Justin:** Wow, holy shit!

**Clint:** 6, 6—

**Griffin:** What does that mean?!

**Clint:** It's the devil! It's a sign of the best, 6, 6, 6! Oh god, I've called out—

**Griffin:** 6, 6, 6, 1.

**Clint:** Oh god, I've called up the rapture. Oh god...

**Travis:** That's okay.

**Justin:** Okay, that's huge.

**Travis:** It was due to happen.

**Justin:** Okay. So, Dad got a double 6.

**Clint:** Triple 6!

**Griffin:** Triple 6.

**Justin:** Triple 6, okay.

**Travis:** He solves it.

**Griffin:** The murderer walks into the room and is like, "It was me."

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** "Put me away, I feel so bad about this, dudes."

**Travis:** Also, you can travel through time now and save Paul Pantry's life!

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Yeah! A portal opens up.

**Travis:** And here's a sandwich.

**Justin:** Double 6s...

**Clint:** Triple.

**Travis:** Triple 6.

**Clint:** Triple 6s?

**Justin:** Triple 6s is not a thing. Like, you can't have triple 6.

**Travis:** Yeah, but I mean like—

**Clint:** But I do have a triple 6.

**Travis:** It feels— it feels like a thing, though, doesn't it, Justin?

**Justin:** It may be worse and it may come back around at you.

**Clint:** No, nah-uh. No, it won't. No—

**Travis:** Like, if I rolled a—

**Clint:** I take my stand here!

**Justin:** Okay, hold on.

**Travis:** You two fight—

**Justin:** Emerich, you are reviewing this footage and like something like is off, something is bothering you about this. And you know computers, so you start like... you pull up the file that they have on Gravel. It's not much, but they do have some photos of Gravel that they've captured. There's one that you get a kick out of, kind of. It's the picture of Gravel hanging upside down from the roof— from the ceiling of Ustaben, right before she met you all.

And there's something, like, it's in the back of your head, this is good work. But then, you pull up the photos next to each other and it is Gravel. I mean, it's Gravel. In the security footage, it's Gravel. Except her eyes are the wrong color.

**Griffin:** Do I see the knife in the footage? As I am looking over his shoulder.

**Justin:** What knife?

**Griffin:** The knife that was used to kill—

**Justin:** Yes.

**Griffin:** Paul Pantry, that I clocked through the crack in the door and saw that there was something familiar about it.

**Justin:** Yes, yes.

**Griffin:** Now that I have more of an uninterrupted look at it...

**Justin:** It is a close facsimile of one of the knives Gravel carries. But you can tell, even from a cursory glance, it's not exactly right. And Mac, you... you, by looking— let's see, with a double 6... you take a look and realize that this footage is mainly on the level, but something has been edited. And you can tell by some of the code fragments that are left over that it's been edited on a Dentonic work station. Most people would not get— like, this is— that is buried. But you've been around for a while and you are able to unearth that, with a double 6.

**Emerich:** Fellows, this is... this is bogus. This is—

**Beef:** Whoa!

**Emerich:** This is beyond bogus, this is heinous. This is... this footage has been doctored by someone in Dentonic! This is... this is phoned up! This is a frame job!

**Montrose:** Can we copy this video somehow?



**Emerich:** Hm... hm... well...

**Clint:** That would be a tinker roll?

**Travis:** With a triple 6—

**Clint:** Wouldn't it?

**Justin:** I'll tell you what, dad, you can do— you can do— yeah, you can do a tinker roll.

**Clint:** Okay?

**Justin:** But... if you fail...

**Griffin:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** It's gonna be bad.

**Clint:** Well, we've kind of established that if Emerich fails at a tinker roll, something explodes. [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Something bad, yeah! [chuckles] That would be fucking hysterical if Emerich was like, "Yeah, let me just CTRL+C, CTRL+V—" [mouths explosion sound] "Oh, shit!"

**Clint:** Okay. I'm gonna try it. I'm gonna do a tinker roll!

**Justin:** Okay!

**Clint:** Anybody wanna help?

**Travis:** Nope.

**Clint:** So, is it—

**Griffin:** Yeah, sure, I'm hanging— I'm leaning over your shoulder, like—

**Clint:** Is this risky? Desperate?

**Justin:** This is... desperate. And... standard. But it is desperate.

**Montrose:** I'll make sure that you... Is your hard drive formatted? 'Cause that's important. It's gotta be exFAT, sort of 32 bit—

**Emerich:** Shh, shh, shh, shh, please, please, please... Oh God, okay...  
CTRL+ALT—

**Clint:** And he holds up his wrist band, activates the Give a Ghost Projector—

**Montrose:** No, no, no, no, it's just— you're just copying a file.

**Beef:** Yeah.

**Montrose:** You'd don't have to project some sort of—

**Beef:** Just put it into the cloud! What are you doing?! [chuckles]

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Beef:** Just put it in the cloud!

**Emerich:** Here it goes, here we go!

**Beef:** What? No!

[sound of dice thrown]

**Clint:** 1, 3, 6, 1!

**Griffin:** Thank Christ.

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Clint:** 1, 3, 6, 1, baby!

**Justin:** Unbelievable.

**Clint:** Shit!

**Justin:** Unbelievable. Okay, Dad—

**Travis:** I love the image of like both Montrose and Beef like, “No, no, no, no!” [mouths electric sound] And then it works.

**Justin:** Yeah. Yeah, you can see it’s like getting hot. Like as he’s typing, you can see the—

**Montrose:** Why is hot? Why is it getting hot, Emerich?

**Beef:** I can smell it from the door!

**Emerich:** Blow! Blow! Blow on it! Blow! Everybody blow! Everybody blow!

**Justin:** And you start to hear from the hallway, clonk, clonk, clonk from the hallway. Clonk, clonk, clonk and the door flies open. And as it’s revealing you, you slide a duplicate USB stick that you always keep in the Give a Ghost Projector, you slide that USB stick out of the computer— the laptop, close it and are just standing.

**Darla:** So... you boys have just been standing here in silence? Y’all don't have hobbies?

**Emerich:** You gave us a lot to think about.

**Beef:** I felt a sneeze coming on and then I was trying to like chase it and I couldn’t get it.

**Darla:** Hey, maybe you better go?

**Beef:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Montrose:** Yes, that’s the best idea I’ve heard all day.

**Emerich:** We should be going! Yes.

**Griffin:** Let's regroup at the— at Poppy's, maybe?

**Justin:** Let's do the cut where you guys have had the footage out, you've been going over it and we— like, you've been sort of like chatting about it. Where is that conversation— let's pick up that conversation.

**Travis:** In the Darkade.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Travis:** I also wanna say, I like have called James, my best friend/techno wizard, to be like, "What are your thoughts on this?" And I've gotten some feedback from him too, 'cause I would feel so guilty not including my techno wizard best friend in—

**Justin:** Hold on, let me— I'm just searching the reference document to see times that we've talked about— okay, James DeBarge, yes. Everyone remember James DeBarge—

**Clint:** Mm-hm.

**Travis:** My best friend

**Griffin:** You have to say his last name like... you have to say his last name.

**Justin:** So, James DeBarge, you are sharing the fact that you have stolen murder investigation evidence.

**Griffin:** Yeah, actually, as I see you texting James DeBarge, can I say:

**Montrose:** Let's not endanger the lives—

**Justin:** [laughs] I feel like—

**Beef:** This is my best friend, guys!

**Montrose:** Yes, yes, yes, yes—

**Justin:** [laughs] I feel like Beef is typing James DeBarge and Montrose just walks over and slaps the phone out of his hand.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Beef:** But he's my best— oh—

**Montrose:** Maybe let's have our own sort of conversation before we expand the circle of trust any further.

**Beef:** Okay—

**Justin:** I will say this, you guys, Dad got a triple 6, you're not getting any more information out of this video. [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Yeah, sure, sure, sure, sure. As we walk into Poppy's Place, I want— I'm like looking at the corners, I am eyeing the... I would assume sort of primitive security measures that exist inside of this building because I am now going to be at sort of like... as paranoid as my reckless nature will kind of allow me to... to have.

**Justin:** That's... that's good. We're entering into a phase of this where you guys need to— we're not always gonna need to say that, but you do need to start thinking about it.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Because you have... you have touched some dangerous things.

**Griffin:** Yeah. So, now that we're in a safe spot, maybe—

**Justin:** But let me grant you this, because you do need these sorts of refuges, right. This place is safe.

**Griffin:** Okay?

**Justin:** You guys are smart enough, you know, between Emerich and Montrose, I think the two of you— like any sort of like deception or whatever, tracking, nothing is getting through into here.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Justin:** And honestly, nobody really cares, right?

**Travis:** Ow.

**Justin:** I just— you know what I mean.

**Travis:** Yeah...

**Griffin:** Right.

**Beef:** What do we know?

**Emerich:** Well, look here. Eyes are a different color on this representation of Gravel. The knife looks like one of Gravel's knives, but I have been able, with my demonic three 6s, to determine that it is a facsimile of Gravel's knives. And—

**Beef:** And the fact— the—

**Emerich:** And it's been edited. I can... I guarantee you. This has been edited by someone with access to a Dentonic editing portal or station or whatever. This has been changed and I don't know why Gravel was just naturally accepting that. Did either of you happen to notice when we saw Gravel being taken away, the color of Gravel's eyes? Is that at all— I did not notice—

**Justin:** Okay, I said that you had gotten all the information out of this video that you could have. And I thought that I made something— like, I sort of hinted towards something. But I— you— there is one more sort of element of the video that you have not apparently discerned.

**Montrose:** Let's watch it again.

**Beef:** Yeah!

**Griffin:** [chuckles]

**Montrose:** I guess.

**Emerich:** Okay!

**Montrose:** I don't know where—

**Justin:** Okay. You're— you decide— there's something— you ask that question with the eyes, Emerich, and there's something about it that is bothering you.

**Clint:** Okay?

**Justin:** And you watch the video again and that's when you notice that when Gravel— quote-unquote "Gravel", is standing there, waiting for Paul Pantry to die. You notice that her face is completely implacable. There is no emotion. She's not even really watching, she's just kind of standing there... waiting.

**Emerich:** Ah... So, what do you fellas think of that?

**Justin:** What do you— what do you think, Dad? You're you.

**Clint:** Yes.

**Justin:** Okay? So, what do you think might be happening here?

**Emerich:** Um... perhaps this is a Hard Light representation of Gravel?

**Justin:** It is. Yes, you are able to discern that. Normally, you would tell, but since it's a video and not great quality, you'd know right away. But after watching it many times, you are certain of it.

**Emerich:** And the ads. Oh my god, did we have to sit through a lot of ads.

**Justin:** [chuckles] Yeah, why—

**Travis:** It's not YouTube?

**Montrose:** Who puts ads in their security footage?

**Justin:** I feel like you guys are very frustrated that Emerich refuses to pay ad-free.

**Travis:** Yeah, it's a Disney— there might be like a crawl on the bottom of Disney's security feed, I don't know.

**Clint:** You know, he's someone who sells the scents of Steeplechase and candles, yeah.

**Emerich:** But fellows, I'm... I am convinced this is not Gravel. This is some kind of Hard Light representation of Gravel.

**Beef:** Okay, so, if we're talking about someone who has access, right, to the Hard Light technology needed to program a fully like formed like person, right, that acts in this way, and then also could edit the video on a Dentonic like console, right? This isn't just like some person, right? This is somebody with access.

**Montrose:** And somebody with an Adobe Suite membership, which is not cheap.

**Beef:** Not cheap!

**Emerich:** And fellows, I think there's something you need to understand that perhaps you don't understand about Hard Light technology. The fact that this person has programmed a Hard Light to do a person physical harm, that... that is... that is... that is extremely sophisticated! Because the laws of Hard Light Optics is the fact that first they cannot— they can do no—

**Justin:** The rule— the first rule of Hard Optics.



**Emerich:** The first rule of Hard Optics is they may not kill a human?

**Beef:** The second rule of Hard Optics is sun's out, guns out. You know what I mean?

**Emerich:** Yeah!

**Beef:** Yeah.

**Emerich:** So, whoever has done this is... has weaponized Hard Light.

**Beef:** Did Hank do this?

**Emerich:** Oh...

**Montrose:** I mean, Hank isn't the only person capable of whipping up something like this, right?

**Emerich:** Well... there aren't many, but he would definitely be— I would say he would be one of the possibilities. I would be the other. I don't think I did this?

**Griffin:** Is that something that— I mean, is that a— I said that and Dad said that, is that... is that the truth? Like, is there—

**Justin:** What?

**Griffin:** Is this...

**Justin:** No, hold on a second. [laughs] Wait, Griffin! I have to put some limits on your— you can't have people make declarative statements and then be able to tell the future from that. [chuckles] No, this work is... I mean, it's not perfect. You know what I mean? Like, so, it is not necessarily— it wouldn't necessarily have to be Hank or Dad, but it, I mean... whoever made this video and made the Hard Light projection, like, they know what they're doing. But I would say also, Dad, you're smart enough to know it probably ain't the same person, right, who would be able to make

some changes to the video and also be able to make a Hard Light program like this.

**Clint:** Okay. And also, may I assume one more thing? That since we actually saw the physical representation— I mean, we saw Gravel being taken away, that Emerich would know that the person who was taken away was not a Hard Light projection. Would that be safe to say?

**Justin:** Yes, correct. That was real-ass Gravel.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Travis:** Ass Gravel.

**Beef:** I... Listen, and I'm not saying this is gonna be easy, or smart, frankly, but man, I'm itching to really corner Kenchal on this one. I really wanna talk to him about this.

**Montrose:** Ooh...

**Emerich:** Look, Montrose—

**Beef:** I know!

**Emerich:** Montrose, may I add something to the equation?

**Justin:** Wait, can I hear Montrose?

**Clint:** Yeah, go ahead.

**Justin:** And then Dad does his counterpoint?

**Montrose:** Oh, just, he's an incredibly powerful man who could—[chuckles] I mean, he could come in here and stab us to death on video and probably be okay with it. So, let's be careful talking about cornering Kenchal Denton.

**Beef:** Ah, I mean, yes, obviously. But like... ooh...

**Emerich:** I think we should and here's why. Montrose, you have a life debt to Gravel. Gravel saved your life on the Butter Cream sled.

**Montrose:** Oh...

**Emerich:** If it hadn't been for Gravel, you would have died. You owe it to Gravel to clear her.

**Montrose:** Let's take a beat, boys.

**Beef:** Give me the beat, boys. Free my soul.

**Griffin:** I turn the—[chuckles]

**Montrose:** Let's free my soul—

**Griffin:** I turn my chair around, like cool teacher style.

**Travis:** Oh yeah.

**Emerich:** Ooh, are we gonna have a— let's have a rap session.

**Beef:** Yeah!

**Travis:** Do we have to roll to resist that charm or how does that work?

**Justin:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** It's not charm, this is... this is business time.

**Montrose:** I do not know at what point I have sort of carried myself in front of you as a sort of virtuous man, but I owe Gravel no such debt. That was a job and it went kind of silly and Gravel saved me, and I sure do appreciate that. But my concern here is not for Gravel's wellbeing. She is a criminal like the rest of us, and sometimes you get pinched. My concern is that forces so much bigger and so much stronger than us... they probably have us dead to rights for one of our many capers.

**Emerich:** Yes.

**Montrose:** Whoever killed Paul Pantry was very much in the same boat that we were. And in some ways, maybe we... maybe we owe them? Maybe they have done us a great favor by ridding the Earth of what I can only describe as a chronic blackmailer. But I don't think it's that clean and simple for us. We need to find out who did this, not so we can exonerate Gravel... Even if we were to solve this crime, they could just keep Gravel locked up for whatever fuckin' reason that they wanted to. We need to get to the bottom of this because if our lives weren't in danger before we started poking our nose into this, they certainly are now.

**Emerich:** Beef?

**Beef:** Yeah, you know what? I know that I've been... hesitant, resistant and all day I've been thinking about it. And talking to Darla and trying to get the attention of Kenchal and trying to get something done. And you know what? It finally clicked for me what was bothering me. I think it's... when do we get to make the decisions and be in control? We've put work in, Ustaben is ours. And somebody came in and killed someone here, framed someone, stole something and like... we... there's nothing we can do about it? In our... in our layer? In our... in Ustaben. This is our home. And someone came into our home and I'm not saying we're the biggest shits, you know, on fuck mountain or whatever, but Ustaben is ours. We've earned it. And I'm ready to kind of plant a flag a little bit harder than we've been doing.

**Montrose:** Fuck yes!

**Emerich:** Oh... [applauds] I... concur!

**Justin:** You're sitting there, in silence. And then from the How to Win Friends and Influence People game, you hear a static crackle. And everyone freezes and pivots towards the game and you hear...

**Weaver:** Act... quickly...

**Griffin:** Oh shit!

**Justin:** And that's where we'll stop.

[Steeplechase theme music plays]

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