

The Adventure Zone: Balance — The Suffering Game: Chapter Seven

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Griffin: Previously, on The Adventure Zone...

The—it seems like the undead, or I should say, the living dead are immune to the Voidfish's powers. This apparition, this red-robed lich, it starts to lose its composure, it starts to lose—and I mean that literally, like the spectral form starts to jerk violently, and a bolt of energy kind of like whips off of it. Taako, your bra staff turns inside-out and sucks that wand in, and devours it.

Justin: Mm-hmm?

Griffin: You remember the bra staff is capable of consuming the magic essence of your defeated foes.

Cam: Listen, I'm... I'm pretty sure you guys are gonna get out of here. So, I'm gonna part ways with you now.

Magnus: What?

Cam: When you see Lucretia again, tell her... I don't know, make up something... heroic for me, I guess.

Merle: Nope.

Griffin: You jump back up, onto the catwalk. And as you do, you hear fake Magnus go:

Edward as Magnus: What?

Griffin: Wearing a plate of very, very, very fashionable elven scale mail, you see one of the mannequins, standing right next to you.

Justin: [laughs]

Magnus: I'll be having my body back, you undead fuck.

Announcer: Ah dang, what a cool cuss! I think you might be doing some cussing of your own by this episode's end! It's The Adventure Zone!

[“Déjà Vu” by Mort Garson plays]

Griffin: Let's roll initiative! That's always a really exciting way to start a podcast, is the sound of dice hitting some table.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: I wish I had wooden—

Griffin: And then also the math, like people love it when it's just like, “Welcome to the story! Now let's do math time!”

Clint: [chuckles]

Travis: I wish I had wooden dice, that'd be very fitting.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Nine.

Clint: Oh my god... Oh I have advantage, don't I? On initiative.

Griffin: Yes.

Clint: That was one.

Travis: I have a 13.

Clint: That was my fifth one.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: And a two! Awesome!

Justin: Hey, much better.

Griffin: What'd you get, Taako?

Justin: Nine.

Griffin: Okay! So, before... Before we get into the fight, something happens. That black smog that's all surrounding the ceiling of this gigantic, cavernous room that you are all in, standing on this catwalk in the middle of it, it starts to take shape immediately above the three of you. And it forms into a massive steel beam, that just after it takes shape, it becomes sort of... affected by gravity, and it starts to fall towards you. And just before you sort of reflexively prepare to leap out of the way, with varying levels of success, I'm sure, you hear a crash.

And you look up and you see two human-shaped statues have also formed out of the smog, and their arms are held up over their heads, and they've caught this big, heavy beam that was about to fall on you. And all of you can see the Red Robe now, not just Magnus. Because Magnus, you don't have True Sight anymore, because you don't have your body anymore. But all of you can see now, plain as day, the Red Robe. And its hand is outstretched in the direction of these statues. And all of it, the statues and the beam, revert back into black smog that lifts up into the ceiling.

Magnus: Listen, Taako, Merle, I know that's a little weird, and you're just gonna have to trust me on this one... he's with us, I think, more or less.

Griffin: He gives you a big thumbs-up, with a—

Travis: I give him a wooden—like, a salute.

Griffin: Taako and Merle, are you guys cool with that?

Taako: Yeah, I've watched TV before, I know how these things go.

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: All right, seeing this new entrant into the fight, and seeing that this trap made out of smog didn't land, Magnus, or fake Magnus, Edward inside of Magnus laughs and he says:

Edward as Magnus: Well, this fight just got a lot more interesting.

Griffin: And then he reaches a burly arm up into the air and snaps. And suddenly, the cylindrical chambers that are surrounding the central platform, they all start emitting these different-colored beams of neon light that shoot up and onto the ceiling of this massive chamber. And that outer ring of cylinders begins to rotate around the central platform, the floor of which has also turned into a checkered neon light. First in the order is Lydia, who is... she is floating up into the air and... I think on her first turn, she casts a spell.

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: And she heals Magnus!

Travis: Oh, that's—Oh?

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: She heals Magnus for 38 points of damage.

Travis: Super cool. Not me, though!

Merle: Wait a minute, I thought healing didn't work in here?

Griffin: She says:

Lydia: Oh, that's only a one-way street, dear!

Merle: Wow...

Griffin: Next in the order is real Magnus—or, yeah, real Magnus, mannequin Magnus. Now, Travis, do you wanna tell everybody what I made for you? I made you a little present.

Travis: Griffin made me a mannequin sheet. I would like to read a little bit of it, just the right-side column. Personality trait is a mannequin. Ideals, "To be a mannequin." Bonds, "Very few, because is mannequin." Flaws, "Splinters."

Clint: [chuckles]

Travis: And then under features and traits, "Is a literal mannequin." Super great.

Clint: Fears, "Termites."

Griffin: You'll notice under languages you can speak Common and Mannequin, so, we'll see if that—

Travis: Then I turn to all the mannequins around the table, and I say:

Magnus: Hello.

Griffin: Yeah, I guess there's a bunch of—I guess there's a bunch of mannequins in the audience. And when you talk to them, they all start clapping and applauding, and cheering for you.

Magnus: Any help?

Griffin: They all shake their heads 'no.' And shrug.

Magnus: Super cool! Got it, got it, got it, got it.

Travis: You know what? I'm gonna jump onto Magnus.

Griffin: Okay? Let's—what are you trying to do? What's your goal here?

Travis: I'm trying to get the Chance Lance away.

Griffin: Okay, so, I think you're gonna have to overpower him. I think that's gonna take two checks. I think you're gonna have to overpower him first and—

Travis: That's gonna be hard, I'm very strong.

Griffin: Yes, you are. [chuckles] You're gonna have to overpower him first and then I think maybe sleight of hand? To try to like get the—actually get the thing out of his hand?

Travis: Damn it!

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Okay.

Justin: Is there any chance that Magnus's body is having any sort of allergic reaction to healing magic? We wouldn't know before this point, so...

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: [laughs] What did you get on your Strength check?

Travis: I'm trying to think if there's anything I know about my own body that would help me here.

Justin: [laughs] You have a fuckin'... a weak point—

Griffin: A trick knee?

Travis: Yeah, I've never said it before, but like, I have a blind spot!

Justin: [spoofing Magnus] "One thing about me is my soft spot never closed over. I hope no one ever finds out."

Clint: [chuckles]

Travis: "I've got that trick knee!"

Griffin: [spoofing Magnus] "My adult fontanelle!"

Travis: I rolled a 15, plus three, 18.

Griffin: Okay, well, I rolled a 14.

Travis: Yeah?

Griffin: But it's gonna be higher because—

Travis: It's like plus nine or some shit.

Griffin: Yeah, he's a strong boy. So, you jump onto real Magnus, you jump onto—I'm just gonna use names and not like refer to body. That's gonna—or else this fight's gonna be garbage. But you try to jump onto Edward inside of your body, but he very easily shrugs you off. And I think you kind of—make a dex save for me.

Travis: Nine, plus three, 12.

Griffin: Okay, you keep your footing as he brushes you off. You aren't like thrown to the ground. Next in the order is Edward. And he draws Railsplitter, and he says:

Edward as Magnus: Let's see what this baby can do!

Griffin: And he does a goading attack to you, Magnus.

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: That is a 21 versus AC?

Travis: I mean, that hits!

Griffin: Yeah, so—

Travis: I will say, Griffin, I'm confused here. 'Cause I don't seem, as the mannequin, to have any advantages, whatsoever.

Griffin: No, it's almost like you're a mannequin.

Justin: [laughs]

Travis: I don't know what I'm supposed to do with this body to make this fight not one-sided.

Griffin: Work with your friends! So, I add a superior—a superiority die to the damage roll, so that's...

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: 16 damage, and you have to make a wisdom saving throw!

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: Oh that's gotta be good, right? 17, plus...

Griffin: Yeah, that does it. Okay, you are not—you are not goaded. For my second attack—

Travis: There should be—I'm gonna make, just an argument here, Griffin, that because my body is made of wood—

Griffin: Mm-hm?

Travis: I should take decreased damage.

Griffin: No, I don't think so!

Travis: You would that, being wood, I would take less damage than a flesh body hit by an axe?

Griffin: Yeah. Merle, he's gonna come after you with Railsplitter.

Travis: This is bullshit.

Griffin: And he got an... 18 versus AC?

Clint: Yeah...

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: And I just wanna remind all of our listeners, if you're sitting there going, "But Railsplitter against wood!" That's only against trees. It has very specific magic.

Griffin: Yes, yes, yes. Yes, yes. That's only nine damage.

Clint: I'm dead.

Griffin: Whoa, really?

Clint: Yup.

Griffin: Well, we've had a lot of fun here with—no, that's not how death works. But you are unconscious.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: Merle drops to the ground as... Taako, this is probably pretty upsetting for you, and you, Magnus!

Clint: I've just been killed! Is nobody gonna be upset?!

Travis: You're not killed, you're unconscious, you baby!

Justin: [chuckles]

Griffin: You just saw... you just saw, like Magnus. And it's not really Magnus, but like you saw your friend who you've been traveling with for a year just cut down your other friend. I imagine it's pretty brutal. But yeah, Merle, you are down on the ground. Next in the order is Taako.

Justin: I am going to cast...

Griffin: Now, I've reached a point where when I hear Justin say, "I'm going to cast," I assume the next words are like, "A thing that's gonna break the sequence of the shit that you've written down."

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: No, I'm not gonna... No, that's not gonna happen. I'm gonna cast Animate Objects on—

Griffin: [groans] Okay...

Justin: I'm gonna cast Animate Objects on the mannequins. And I can animate up to 10 of 'em.

Griffin: Holy fucking shit, what?! Jesus Fantasia! Jesus Fantasia Barrino!

Justin: [chuckles] Yeah.

Clint: [mouths tune from The Sorcerer's Apprentice]

Justin: Yeah, I'm gonna animate all of them, and command them to just like tackle Magnus.

Griffin: Okay? Flesh—okay, yeah, yeah, yeah, all right, all right. So—

Justin: So, they have—let me tell you—

Griffin: Let me do this first, let me do this first, 'cause fair play. They are also right now under the control of, probably, Lydia, since she's like in Lich form still. I will let you attempt this, but I think this is like—I think this is a fucking like contest of wills, right? So, think we—

Travis: Can I give Taako advantage by speaking to my wooden brethren?

Griffin: Yes, absolutely, yeah, what do you say?

Magnus: Friends, mannequins!

Clint: "Lend me your ears."

Magnus: Help us! My wooden brothers! Join me in this fight against your captors! Your controllers, they have used you for evil. And we shall use you—we shall free you from their bonds. And after this, we'll totally take you with us, 100% guaranteed.

Griffin: Okay. They're into it. Let's do a straight-up-and-down intelligence contest.

Justin: Okay, cool.

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: [whispers] I got a five.

Justin: I got an 18, suck it.

Travis: [laughs]

Griffin: 10 of these mannequins are now under your control, and they kind of like shake their heads, and they climb up onto the stage. And you're just having them just tackle... tackle Magnus outright?

Justin: Yeah. They have—

Griffin: Or Edward outright?

Justin: They have 40 hit points.

Griffin: Wow!

Justin: 13 AC, plus five to hit, two D6, plus one damage. Strength is 10, dex is 12.

Griffin: So wait, you can actually—they're all—wait, they're all attacking?

Taako: What's up?!

Griffin: So, this horde of—okay.

Taako: Go, my beautiful army!

Justin: I should clarify, actually, upon further reading of the spell, if they're medium, I can only do five. So, there's five.

Griffin: Okay, okay. So they—five—I'm gonna do five attacks then?

Justin: Five attacks against Edward, that's right.

Griffin: Why don't you roll 'em? Just roll five D20, and we'll do an average for damage and add it up like that, so we get through it fast. Fuckin' shit!

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: 18.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: 11.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: 15.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Five.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: 11. Plus five to hit.

Griffin: Oh. Well, then... I think three of those hit?

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: So, yeah. And what's the damage?

Justin: Two D6, plus one.

Griffin: Just roll two D6 and we'll...

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Five.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Four.

Griffin: Okay, so 10... so, fuckin' 30 points of damage?

Justin: Yeah, that sounds about right.

Griffin: Okay, so five of these mannequins climb up out of the audience and just start bludgeoning Magnus. And he uses Railsplitter to fight off two of them, but three of them get the better of him. And that was a pretty good—that was a pretty fucking good turn of events that just happened!

Merle, you're up next. Roll a D20 for me, 'cause it's time for a death save. Have we ever done a death save in the two and a half years we've been making this show?

Travis: No?

Justin: I do not think so...

Travis: I don't think we have.

Griffin: Okay. You just roll—

Justin: We got knocked—in Petals to the Metal, we got knocked out—

Griffin: Taako got knocked out, yeah.

Justin: I got knocked out. But I think we got rescued, right?

Griffin: I think so, before this had to happen. So, roll a D20—

Justin: We're—please—what we need—[chuckles] There has to be a competent woman somewhere! That's what we always lean on! We're in dire straits, is there a competent woman?

Griffin: [chuckles]

Travis: Where's an adult?!

Griffin: Roll a D20, Merle, and you don't add anything to it.

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: And you wanna roll good.

Clint: 15.

Griffin: All right, that's one success. If you get to three successes, you're stable at zero hit points. If you reach three failures, you are dead forever. Merle is gone.

Justin: Now what can we do to impact that scenario?

Griffin: You can heal him, but uh-oh... The other thing you can do is make a medicine check, and with a roll of 10 in medicine you stabilize him like he has had three successes, but it takes your action up.

Clint: Am I allowed to know what the number is I gotta beat?

Travis: 10.

Griffin: It's 10. Straight-up-and-down 10. If you roll a 20, it counts—if you roll a crit 20, you pop back up to one HP.

Clint: [chuckles] I am as dead as dead can be.

Griffin: On her next turn, it's Lydia's turn... Actually something happens before her turn, a big iron wrecking ball swings out of the black smog, manifesting from the smog, and it starts to swing in your direction, Taako. And at the last second, another one, another wrecking ball forms out of the smog, swinging in at a perpendicular angle. And it smashes into the other one, and it sort of sends them both sailing off-course, like splitting the uprights around you. And as they both sort of pass you, missing by a few inches, they turn back into smog.

Justin: Cool, cool, cool, cool, cool.

Griffin: So, Lydia's up next. She is going to cast on mannequin Magnus, Ray of Enfeeblement.

Travis: Uh-huh, and then?

Griffin: "A black beam of enervating energy extends from your finger. Make a spell ranged attack roll against the target. On hit, the target only deals half damage with weapon attacks that use Strength until the spell ends."

Travis: When's the spell end?

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: You make a constitution save. That's an 18 versus AC.

Travis: Yeah, that hits.

Griffin: All right, so you do—

Travis: Half damage on attack?

Griffin: Half-damage, save ends.

Travis: Got it.

Griffin: You are up, Magnus.

Travis: Okay. You know, I never thought about this before, where does my body keep its items?

Griffin: All over, but as you just saw, it's gonna be tough for you to get a weapon from your body.

Travis: Definitely. Definitely, definitely. I wanna run up and kind of like throw my arms around myself.

Griffin: Okay? [chuckles]

Travis: And in doing so, I want to attempt to activate my Magnetic Charge.

Griffin: What does that do?

Travis: Magnetic Charge, I have never used it before.

Griffin: Okay?

Travis: For a very specific reason, that I will describe now. It flings away metal objects from the owner of Magnetic Charge, up to 10 feet. Metal objects, like Railsplitter or the Chance Lance or the shield. "A fist-sized glass ball with a blue button on top. Once the button is pressed, the ball will begin to glow and produce a magnetic field. The field repels any metal object within 10 feet from the ball. Take one day for enough charge to build up to use again."

Griffin: All right, cool. Yeah, so I think instead, here's what I'll do for this, 'cause I like it a lot. Instead of making you overpower him first, I think this is just a sleight of hand. Like almost like you're pickpocketing him. And—

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: That's an 18, motherfucker!

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah, do you have any bonuses to add to that?

Travis: Plus dex, that's three, that's 21!

Griffin: Yeah. That's definitely a success. Okay. This is fucking cool. This is only a one-time use deal, though, right?

Travis: Correct.

Griffin: So, I guess it's all been—yeah, this is—I can't not let this happen, this is too good.

Travis: It's once per day, but yeah.

Griffin: Yeah, okay, you manage to sort of get within range and dodge—I think he's at this point fighting off the other mannequins that Taako has sicced on him. And you sort of get around behind your body and see this clipped into your belt. And you manage to get your mannequin hand on the object and click down on that blue button. And sure enough, I think... I think his armor wouldn't go flying off, it's probably tied and secured onto him. Also, if memory serves, it's that cool raven armor.

Travis: Yes, the feather leather, yeah.

Griffin: But... yeah, the Shield of Heroic Memories goes flying off the catwalk and into—I think all this stuff goes flying off the catwalk and into the crowd. So, the shield goes flying off, Railsplitter goes flying off, the Chance Lance goes flying off, and actually hits one of the mannequins in the crowd, which collapses. Merle, your eyeglasses go flying off.

Clint: Woo!

Travis: It's only a sphere of 10 feet so if Merle was—

Griffin: Yeah, and they are on the cusp of it, so it's not as dramatic in effect. You can see where they landed, 'cause they're not corrective lenses, you can see they're pretty close to you. And Taako—

Clint: I can't see anything, I'm dead, remember?

Griffin: Oh, that's right! And Taako, the Flaming Raging Poisoning Sword of Doom falls off your back and skitters a few feet. There's probably some other metallic stuff that I—

Justin: That's heart-breaking, by the way, 'cause it's of no use to me if it's not looking cool on my back.

Clint: Yeah, that's the whole thing, it's like...

Griffin: Next in the order—

Travis: And then, using my real-ass voice—

Griffin: Okay?

Travis: I call Chance Lance to myself.

Griffin: Oh my god. Okay, are we gonna do a fucking Star Wars Episode VII? Like—

Travis: Fuck yeah!

Griffin: All right! So, I think you're both gonna do it. I think he's—here's the thing, he's also going to try to call back the Chance Lance. 'Cause he kind of has your voice also? Like we've had that in the fiction, so it's gonna be fucking both of—

Justin: How does he know that, there's no fuckin' way!

Griffin: Ah, it's too good to not do it, though, guys!

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: Make a... make a charisma? I think that's what it is.

Travis: I feel like charisma would remain the same no matter what body I'm in, but sure!

Griffin: [chuckles]

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: That's a 16, plus one, 17.

Griffin: That's an 11 minus garbage, 'cause I don't think Magnus's body is very charismatic. All right, you both reach your hands out, and yours is the one that the Chance Lance flies into. And he looks over and actually smirks when he sees how things have gone. And it's his turn—

Travis: Who does? Who does?

Griffin: Edward does.

Travis: Oh.

Griffin: It's his turn. What does he do... Hm... Oh my god. I know what he does! This is so good! I'm so delighted by all of these things I didn't even think about! For instance, Magnus-Edward is going to make a strength check to try to rip off one of your fucking arms!

Travis: Oh no...

Clint: [gasps] Oh, that's so poetic!

Griffin: Do you think that—I'll ask you, just to—fair is fair, do you think this would be a contest? Or do you think this would be just he checks to see if he can do it? Like, would you use your own strength to like—I think you would, to fight him off from—I know this fight has been all contest, but like I kind of like the way it's going so far. I feel good about my roll, though.

Travis: Oh, no. Okay.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: Whoa, off the table.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: Yeah, I rolled a three.

Griffin: Okay, yeah, he rips off your right arm. And he says—

Justin: Not, not his flesh bod, right? His wood bod.

Griffin: His wood bod, yeah, he rips off your mannequin arm.

Justin: Okay, okay. I had an image of him like ripping off his own arm!
[laughs]

Clint: “Ha! There! Take that!”

Justin: “Take that.”

Travis: Now, Griffin, how does that—if I don’t have blood and veins and stuff, how does that affect damage to me?

Griffin: Well, I’m gonna just roll some dice, and then I’m gonna tell you the number.

Clint: I would say it wouldn’t?

Justin: You get—when you animate an object, it gets stats.

Griffin: Yeah.

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: That’s 21 points of damage.

Travis: For unarmed?

Griffin: Yeah. Well, it's a special unarmed 'cause he ripped—he didn't punch you, he tore your arm off.

Travis: I'll keep that in mind, every other time I've ever done it, Griffin.

Griffin: Magnus.

Travis: Uh-huh?

Griffin: Got something for you.

Travis: Yes?

Griffin: You just got your ass kicked. And when that happens, you feel a vision sort of wash over you. And suddenly, you are miles away from this fight.

Travis: Meditating.

Griffin: Well, no, you're r... you're remembering. But this act of remembering is so like powerful that you are just like in another state. And so, you just got your ass kicked, and you remember another time where you got your ass kicked. And it was a time where you saved a dog from some bullies that were kicking it around. And you remember this memory really well, it was one of the things that you saw when you spoke to the Chalice in the last arc.

But there were parts of it then that you remember were kind of foggy. Parts of this memory that just seemed a little off. And you didn't realize it, what was off until this moment, and in this particular vision, one thing that was kind of foggy was a big one, it was the sky. And as you look up in this memory, you're like lying on the ground, and I think that you've just like gotten beaten up by these kids, but you scared 'em off. And I think the dog comes and licks your face before it also kind of ungratefully takes off.

So, you're laying on your back and you're looking up at the sky, and the sky is this unnatural light purple color. And as you stop to think like, "Wow, that's weird," you realize that there are two suns in the sky. And they're nearly overlapping each other right on the horizon. And you think, "Oh that's... that's weird." But then you remember, "Oh, well, it's not weird at all," because that's how it is here, in your home. This world that this memory is taking place in, this is your home. This world that you're on now, this place you're at and have been for a while, it is not where you're from.

Clint: It's Dagobah.

Justin: [chuckles]

Griffin: It's kind of Dagobah—well it would be Tatooine, but it's not any of those wonderful licensed properties.

Magnus: Holy shit!

Griffin: And just like that, you're back in the fight, just having had your arm ripped off. Next up is Taako!

Travis: So, that was just like a fun memory, it didn't help me in this fight or nothing. Just a fun little, "Huh, that's weird! Anyways, back to where I'm getting my ass handed to me."

Justin: Can you—Griffin, just so we—because I feel like a lot has been going on. Can you re-describe the scene?

Griffin: You have a fleet of mannequins, and are the mannequins still going? Are the mannequins still attacking?

Justin: Yeah, I got 'em for an hour. Or no, sorry, for a minute.

Griffin: Okay, yeah, you still got 'em then. So, three mannequins are fighting Magnus, who's just had his metallic weapons and shield thrown from him, floating above him, about 10 or 15 feet up is Lydia, who is casting spells down from the sky. You have a nearly dead Merle lying next to you—

Clint: Oh, I'm dead.

Griffin: And you—you're not dead.

Travis: Mostly dead.

Griffin: And you have Magnus standing in front of Edward with his arm torn off.

Merle: I'm not dead yet!

Griffin: Oh, that's good!

Justin: [chuckles] Love that.

Travis: Now, Griffin, can I assume that he took the arm that didn't have the Chance—like I was reaching for the Chance Lance and he pulled the other one?

Griffin: Yeah, you still got the Chance Lance.

Travis: Okay, cool. That's something, I guess.

Griffin: Yeah. Go ahead and roll your D20s real quick for... actually, just to streamline this, 'cause I don't know how long this fight's gonna go and I don't want you to have to roll like 80 dice every turn. I think just roll... roll a D10 and we'll knock the number in half, and that'll be how many mannequins hit.

Clint: You weren't talking to me, the dead guy? Right?

Travis: You're not dead, Clinton. You are unconscious. You are betwixt the state of live and dead.

Griffin: You know how you go to sleep every night and you dream your dreamy-dreams? You're not a dead man, you're just sort of—

Clint: This is an ex-dwarf!

Griffin: Okay...

Travis: You're not—

Clint: Who has passed beyond—

Griffin: Dad? dad? We have a three Monty Python joke limit before you're banned from the podcast.

Clint: Oh, right. Okay, good.

Justin: Okay, I rolled 10, out of 10.

Griffin: Oh, Jesus.

Justin: So all five hit.

Griffin: Okay. All right, cool. Go ahead and roll two D6 then.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Three.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: And five.

Griffin: Eight, so, fucking—

Justin: Plus one.

Griffin: 45 damage. [chuckles]

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: Okay, Jesus.

Justin: And they're loving it. [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah, they're—everybody's loving it. That goes without saying.

Justin: Everybody's loving it. The other mannequins are like, "Finally. It's our time to shine."

Griffin: All right, Edward is not looking so good, by which I mean Magnus is not looking so good, kind of I guess.

Justin: I'm gonna cast—

Clint: If we kill his body...

Justin: Hm...

Clint: What happens to Magnus?

Justin: Well, he won't die right away.

Clint: Oh yeah, that's true.

Justin: He should be fine. Man, this is about to become the Taako show starring Taako, hey?

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: Taako and his wooden buddy, No-Name!

Griffin: [chuckles]

Clint: Pinocchio!

Justin: Taako and his friend, Pinocchio!

Clint: The little wooden boy. [chuckles]

Justin: [laughs] And the ghost of their friend, Merle. These three jokester. This isn't that cool, but I wanna try to do what I think would be the most practical. And I'm going to cast Protection from Evil and Good, on the mannequin Merle. The mannequin Magnus, mannequin Magnus.

Griffin: Okay, what does that do?

Justin: "One willing creature is protected against certain types of creatures, aberrations, celestials, elementals, fey, fiends, and the undead. It grants several benefits. Creatures of those types have disadvantages on attack rolls against the target."

Griffin: Okay?

Justin: "Target can't be charmed, frightened, or possessed by them. If the target is already charmed, frightened, or possessed by such creature, the target has advantage on any new saving throw against the relevant effect."

Griffin: Okay, cool.

Travis: And just in the interest of being—I didn't roll to see if I broke the enfeeblement, was I supposed to?

Griffin: Oh, yeah, go ahead and roll a D20, yeah.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: I rolled a 15?

Griffin: Yeah, you're good. Merle...

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: Before you do your thing. I heard you just roll—I just heard you roll your fucking comical jumbo dice.

Travis: Did you roll the giantest dice? What the fuck was that?

Clint: Yeah, that's the massive D20 that they sent us.

Griffin: Merle, you see a small shape appear above you. Or rather, I guess you're just kind of—you don't see, right? Your eyes are probably closed because you're unconscious, but you... you feel a presence, I guess. And Taako and Magnus, you do see what appears right above Merle, and it's Cam's floating head. And he still looks really scared, he doesn't have a wand, he is completely unarmed. But he says:

Cam: Hey! Hey, Crimson Wonder! Were you the one that cooked up that door earlier? I got an order for you. Can you make me up a Healing Game?

Griffin: And the Red Robe nods. And suddenly, Cam's pedestal, from the Healing Game that you all played in the last round, emerges from the floor in a column of black smoke. And Cam looks down at Merle, and then he looks up at you, Taako and Magnus, and he says:

Cam: I... I thought of something heroic to do.

Griffin: And a Mage Hand appears in front of Cam and slaps down on the pedestal. And just a beam of light shoots up from the ground beneath the pedestal, consuming him and the pedestal, which disappears in a puff of black smoke. And Merle, you are healed for six hit points. And you're back awake.

Merle: Hey, awesome!

Taako: Cam!

Griffin: [laughs]

Taako: Cam!

Justin: In Merle's defense, he didn't see any of that happening.

Griffin: Yeah, sure!

Travis: He doesn't know what happened!

Merle: What the hell!?

Griffin: Merle, you are awake and you are prone.

Clint: All right.

Travis: [laughs] Yeah?

Clint: I am... prone is okay. I am going—now, go with me on this. For once, let me do something in this game.

Griffin: Okay?

Travis: You fucking summon Della Reese all the time, what're you talking about, "For once?!"

Clint: And look, they bumped her off! It's not like it was Roma Downey! Okay. I'm going to... use the Ring of the Grammarian—

Justin: Yes!

Griffin: Oh my god!

Clint: To change Divine Word into Divine Wood.

Griffin: [chuckles]

Travis: [laughs]

Griffin: And you pop the most righteous boner!

Travis: [laughs hysterically]

Clint: And this imbues marionette Magnus...

Griffin: Okay...

Clint: With divine power. And heals him for 20 points.

Griffin: And heals him for—oh... how about roll... roll... roll a D20. And that's how many you heal. Plus wisdom.

Clint: Okay.

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: I'll give you the rest of the shit and we'll figure out what divine power is in a second.

Clint: I rolled an 11 plus three wisdom, so that's 14.

Griffin: All right!

Clint: So it gives him 14 points, and he is divine!

Griffin: All right, and we'll figure that out in a second. We'll get to that real soon, actually. Lydia's up next. And she is going to cast Death Bolt at... Taako.

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: And that is a... 17 versus AC, Taako?

Justin: Yup...

Griffin: It's gonna be a bad hit.

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: That is... 19 points of damage, Taako.

Justin: [sings] Been a good run, for your buddy Taako...

Griffin: Are you at zero?

Justin: [sings] I'm at negative five...

Griffin: Oh my god! Okay, Taako goes down!

Justin: Adiós.

Griffin: Taako goes down, but this time his soul didn't fire out of his body to go on a rescue mission. It is still in there and it is asleep. Magnus you are up.

Travis: Okay, so, I'm holding Chance Lance...

Griffin: Mm-hm?

Travis: A weapon given to me by a goddess.

Griffin: Yes.

Travis: And I am imbued with divinity.

Griffin: Yes?

Travis: I am going to channel that divinity into the Chance Lance and stab Magnus in the back.

Griffin: Okay. All right, yeah, make an attack roll.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: Off the table...

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: 15, plus nine, 24.

Griffin: It wouldn't be plus nine, 'cause that factors in your human fighter strength. But it's... plus your—yeah, I think it's plus five, 'cause it's plus three with your strength and then—

Travis: Yes, so 20.

Griffin: Yeah. That's good! Yeah, that hits. Roll... three D10 damage.

Travis: Okay... 10...

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: Two.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: Four. So, 16, plus five, I think, for the weapon, right?

Griffin: Mm-hm.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Okay. You rear back the Chance Lance and jab it forward, and before it even makes contact, a faint light emits out of the front of it, like you're shooting a beam of—very faint, but it's there, holy light out of the end of the Chance Lance. And that's what hits Edward. And Edward flies forward, and because you were behind him, Magnus, he kind of lands almost perfectly in-between all of you. And you hear him say—he kind of gets up on all fours and he says:

Edward as Magnus: Huh...

Griffin: And then he falls over. And almost like a cartoon dead person, you see Edward's spectral Lich form rise up out of Magnus's body. And he says:

Edward: Did you really think—

Griffin: And before he finishes his thought, Taako, your umbrella has turned inside-out, and it's pointing in Edward's direction. Because whenever you defeat a magical enemy, the Umbra Staff consumes the magic essence of that magic user. And unfortunately for Edward, he's all magical energy.

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: Only Taako could do away with an enemy while he was unconscious! [chuckles]

Justin: I just killed somebody while I'm dead! What's up?! Taako rules!

Griffin: Yeah, so your fuckin' Umbra Staff like rears up in your sleepy, sleepy hand, and eats Edward whole, like full-blown fucking Ghostbusters style. And Edward is pulled into the mouth of the Umbra Staff and disappears into it. But he doesn't go down quite as smooth as the wands and staves that the umbrella has consumed in the past.

Justin: A lot of body—a lot of body to that one, huh? Bitter... some tannins!

Clint: [chuckles]

Travis: [laughs] It's very hoppy! It's an IPA!

Justin: It's a hoppy spirit.

Griffin: It feels actually like he's getting tossed around inside of there, like he's banging against the walls of the Umbra Staff. And it actually goes flying out of your unconscious hand, like really, really quickly. And is just kind of like bouncing around the floor as he is just getting like tossed around inside of it. And after about 10 seconds or so, the Umbra Staff turns inside out again and shoots him out. And he slides about eight feet down the runway, and then disintegrates into ash.

Justin: Nice.

Griffin: And Lydia screams when this happens, and she drops down beside her fallen brother. And like immediately, you can tell, like something is

wrong with her, because like she's losing shape, she's losing like the clarity of her lich shape. And these bolts of crackling black electricity are like encircling her as she's losing her form. And she's—right now, she's just back in her basic black robe form, like no fancy garments whatsoever. And she's coming apart, kind of like you saw the Red Robe fall apart once before back in The Eleventh Hour arc. Only this time, she is not pulling herself back up together. And she picks up some of the ash in her hands, and she says:

Lydia: I guess... I guess we still needed each other after all.

Griffin: And then she points a finger towards all of you, and she says—I don't actually think she actually says anything. I think she just... just screams. And there is a flash of darkness, and there's this deafening roar. And you feel this like dark, crackling energy blowing around all of you like a sandstorm. And when it passes, she's gone. And sitting in a pile of ashes, another pile of ashes at the end of the runway, you see a small, copper bell inlaid with a diamond pattern across its body where she lay. And you hear the Red Robe say:

Red Robe: Oh my god.

Griffin: And he points down at the ground on the runway. And Magnus, all your belongings, your—well, the belongings that you didn't knock away are piled up on the ground where Edward fell. But your body is gone.

Magnus: My beautiful body!

Griffin: With her last, furious act, Lydia destroyed your body.

[theme music plays]

[ad read]

Griffin: I have a personal message here for this Jumbotron, and it's for Angus McDonald, boy detective. And it's from our first Jumbotron guest DM, Chris Callison-Burch, who says, "You are in the bargain isle of fantasy Costco. A sign reads, 'Incomplete set, now only 10,000 gold.' You see a familiar glint. You pull a fork from your pocket to compare. This is your

grandfather's silverware. Your emotions swirl. Joy, confusion, realization, betrayal. You smell brimstone and turn to see Garfield, the deals warlock. What do you do?"

And I guess—am I supposed to—hm... I think the better thing for me to do, instead of playing this as Angus, is just sort of pitch this to the audience. And then I don't know how you're gonna continue this correspondence with the entire listenership of The Adventure Zone. But you'll figure something out. Man... but what would Angus do? Shit, I don't know. You're putting me on the spot here. Thank you for this wonderful conundrum, though. I feel like it's fleshed out Angus as a character.

And I have a commercial message here, it's for NecronomiCards, which is a horror card game. Now available at necronomicards.com. And they say, "Is your idea of a good time matching together arcane magic symbols to summon horrific monsters and ancient Lovecraftian deities? You're in luck! NecronomiCards is a fast-paced, cut-throat indie card game of pattern recognition and back-stabbing for two to four players.

Beautifully illustrated and extremely fun and easy to learn, it is the perfect game for any fan of horror or mythology. Buy it now at necronomicards.com, and keep an eye out for NecronomiCards volume two, coming to Kickstarter in March 2017. That's next month! We got sent this game, thank you very much, NecronomiCards. It is... it's really cool! And too spooky to be forgotten.

[ad read]

[theme music plays]

Griffin: All of you are still on the catwalk. The bell is right in front of you, and you feel it sort of calling all of you. Merle, you're up, but Taako is down. Which you may need to rectify.

Clint: Do we think our healing powers are back? Can I—

Griffin: You can give it a shot?

Clint: I have a spell called Raise Dead.

Griffin: I mean—

Travis: He's not dead!

Griffin: He's not dead.

Justin: Not dead!

Clint: Not dead.

Justin: I'm only mostly dead.

Griffin: Oh my god!

Justin: See? We got Monty Python, Princess Bride, this show's got it all!

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: "Too blave!"

Justin: Blave? Wait.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: So, the—did we beat the Liches?

Griffin: Yeah!

Travis: [mouths tune of "Final Fantasy Victory"]

Justin: Taako's dead, but somehow, there's an amazing spectral... something... [chuckles] And he raises up, just enough, like just the energy of eating Edward gave him enough strength to say three words. And Griffin, does that sound right—

Griffin: Just, have somebody heal you before you do this fucking like, 'you are just revived by your cool catchphrase!'

Justin: I can't say hard-ass shit 20 minutes after we kill someone.

Griffin: Okay, fine.

Justin: And with the fuckin' Marx Brothers here it could be upwards of 30.

Griffin: [chuckles]

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: All right, go ahead, go.

Clint: A Marx Brothers reference!

Griffin: Yay. It doesn't—it's not a reference if you just say—

Justin: Don't laugh so hard, you're Zeppo.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Taako what do you say—what do you—what do you astrally project in the atmosphere?

Taako: Liches... get... stitches!

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: And I then black back out.

Magnus: Now to be fair, Merle, I think we will both agree that Taako would want to die after making that joke, so we should just let him go peacefully.

Clint: Good night.

Justin: [chuckles]

Travis: The first thing I do, before we do anything else—

Justin: Is heal Taako!

Travis: I check through—I check through my belongings—

Justin: Heal fan favorite Taako! [chuckles]

Travis: I check through my belongings to make sure Steven the goldfish is okay.

Griffin: He's fine. Yeah, you got him. He's just, he's blubbing around.

Magnus: Ah!

Griffin: And you recover—everybody recovers the belongings that were knocked away by the magnets.

Justin: Except presumably me, because I'm unconscious.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Also, in my possessions are healing potions that I bought and never used. I give Taako a fuckin' healing potion.

Griffin: Okay. It heals him some hit points.

Merle: Thank you, pal!

Griffin: The number doesn't matter. And yeah, he gets—

Taako: Oh, thank god! I had a dream that I said the coolest shit ever!

Magnus: I actually said that. Weird, but I was the one who said it, if I remember correctly.

Taako: Oh?

Griffin: Okay. Yeah, so the healing is—the healing worked. You are healed. And you are back awake, although you are still very bad off. And now you just have the Bell, laying in a pile of ashes. And the Red Robe is kind of pointing towards it.

Justin: Ugh... okay—

Magnus: Should I get it?

Travis: I'm talking to the Red Robe.

Magnus: Like, should I grab the Bell?

Griffin: He nods.

Taako: Should I get it?

Griffin: He shrugs.

Clint: Aren't you still a mannequin?

Travis: Yeah.

Merle: You'd probably be safest to pick it up.

Travis: Yeah, I pick it up.

Griffin: Okay. You hear a voice in your head as you pick it up with your one remaining arm, and this bell says:

The Animus Bell: How would you like to live forever?

Magnus: I'd hate it. Shut the fuck up.

Griffin: [chuckles] You got other stuff, let's just roll a wisdom saving throw.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: That was an 18, plus whatever my...

Griffin: It's not good for your mannequin body, but the 18 is sufficient. You pick—

Clint: Well you know, all he needs is a coat of varnish and he is gonna basically live forever?

Travis: [chuckles]

Griffin: That's not a bad point. He... you hear the bell say:

The Animus Bell: Oh, okay!

Travis: [chuckles]

Griffin: As you shut it down. And you have reclaimed the sixth grand relic, the Animus Bell. And—

Travis: Just to make that clear, I've been thinking about this a lot since Magnus almost died, and like his great reward is looking forward to being with his wife—

Griffin: Yeah, sure!

Travis: After like living—So like, the idea of living forever is like the least interesting thing to Magnus, ever.

Griffin: Yeah, absolutely, that all totally tracks. As soon as you pick up the bell, you—

Justin: And also, you did die.

Clint: Yeah, can we point out—

Justin: I mean, I don't wanna get technical about it, but you... you are dead.

Clint: Yeah, your body got destroyed, so you're dead!

Justin: You're dead.

Clint: [chuckles] I'm sorry.

Griffin: As soon as you grab the bell, you feel a—all of you feel this fierce wind blow through this big chamber that you're in. And it knocks over the mannequins in the audience. Taako, it knocks over your friend mannequins. These mannequins also were kneeling by you, as you were unconscious, like checking on you, making sure that you were all right.

Justin: [spoofs mannequin speech]

Travis: [spoofs mannequin speech]

Griffin: Yeah. And this big—this strong wind knocks over a light hanging from the ceiling. And you see some black smog get caught up in the wind storm, and it's just whipping off the walls and off the floor that you're standing on. It's sort of pulling—it's absorbing the cylinders all around the room, which are all turning into black smog. And this smog in the wind is now just so thick that you can't see anything, you're just surrounded by this deafening, black windstorm.

And then the wind shifts directions. It just starts going straight upward, and the smog is lifted. And Wonderland is just... gone. You're all standing back in the middle of that circular clearing in the Felicity Wilds. And those billboards that were lining the path into the center here, they're just gone. And it's just the three of you and the Red Robe, and about 20 other folks who are all standing in this clearing. And everybody looks understandably pretty confused, a lot of folks look understandably pretty miserable. And Taako.

Taako: Yeah?

Griffin: You feel a hand on your shoulder and you're healed for 36 hit points.

Taako: Nice!

Griffin: And standing behind you is Antonia, your elf friend, one of the three folks that you met in the woods on the way in. And she has a sash tied around her eyes and her hair is now streaked with white. And she says—I don't remember these voices, I apologize. But she says:

Antonia: Rough day?

Taako: Yeah... yeah... It's been a hard one. I died twice... I guess... So, I'm— And... that's been all the things that have happened.

Clint: [chuckles]

Magnus: That's about it!

Taako: I didn't push... How was your thing?

Clint: And to help you out, Griffin, she talked like Eva Gabor.

Griffin: Okay, I don't think that's true, and nor could I replicate that. She says:

Antonia: My day was pretty shit.

Taako: Mm-hm...

Magnus: Are you a mannequin?!

Antonia: No—Oh my god, is that Magnus?!

Magnus: Yeah! Yeah, so, maybe like keep your shit to yourself, unless you're a fucking mannequin.

Travis: And I storm over to the Red Robe:

Magnus: Answers, now!

Justin: Hey, I do have a question.

Griffin: Yeah?

Justin: Amongst the retrieving our belongings, Magnus did get himself an arm, right? He got his arm back?

Travis: Yeah, plugged it back in like a GI Joe!

Griffin: I think Magnus has his arm, but it's not attached. I think that would take some time to fix.

Justin: Okay.

Travis: I hit the Red Robe with it!

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: He catches the arm as you swing it at him. Let's finish this first, we'll get to that. Antonia says:

Antonia: Well, you... I take it that this was all your guys' doing? Saving all these people, getting us all out?

Merle: You mean destroying the entire building? Wiping out a bunch of—
Yeah, that was us!

Magnus: That was us.

Taako: Sounds like us!

Griffin: She says:

Antonia: No matter what you did in there, I think this is all that matters. Really, you saved all these people. They wanted us to believe that we are

who we are when we're at our worst, but you know that's not true, don't you, Taako?

Taako: Yeah. I guess, I really did save the day!

Merle: At the end of the day!

Taako: At the end of the day, I guess it doesn't matter who pushed what buttons, and who betrayed who, really. The important thing is that we're all family. We're all part of this thing called life.

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: As you say—

Taako: By the way, you're welcome!

Merle: Hakuna matata to you!

Griffin: As you're saying that, Sterling approaches you, Merle. And he looks like he looked when you saw him in that screen, he's in like his late 30s, with this early silver hair, and he looks gaunt. And for—like, he's silent for just a moment and then he drops to a knee in reverence, and he says:

Sterling: Merle, I... I made a terrible mistake—

Griffin: Maybe he sounds cool now, actually.

Sterling: Merle, I made a terrible mistake in that place and it's what I'm gonna have to live with for the rest of my days. I was the one who chose to forsake you in the first round. I knew I was sending you all to certain doom, and I didn't care. And... well, that's not very lordly of me, was it?

Clint: My son...

Travis: What?

Merle: My son! Say three Hail Marys, and six push-ups, and all is forgiven.

Griffin: He says:

Sterling: I'm so sorry for you, for what I did to you, Merle, in there. And I vow to you that someday I will use my considerable power to make it up to you.

Merle: Oh, I didn't know you had considerable power?

Sterling: Yeah, I'm the Lord of Neverwinter, I'm the most powerful man in the world. I don't like to brag, but...

Merle: And you were a giant douche before? That's awesome!

Travis: Hey, hey Griffin? Can we deal with the Full Metal Alchemist situation I find myself in now, please?

Griffin: Yeah, sure, your buddy Rowan is there, too. And—

Travis: My jerky buddy, it's great. I'm so happy to see him.

Griffin: Okay—

Taako: You used to have to eat food, do you remember that?

Magnus: Yeah! I used to be able to enjoy food, yes, I do remember that! Yes!

Merle: Now you live on sap!

Griffin: He actually started to approach you, Magnus, and when he heard you like having a fit and being all angry—

Travis: "Having a fit," Griffin?!

Griffin: I think, yeah—

Travis: I lost my damn body!

Griffin: I think he's—

Travis: Oh, just having a real hissy, getting all up in a tizzy.

Griffin: I think... he's staying away from you.

Clint: [chuckles] You didn't just lose an arm!

Griffin: Magnus, before you have your conversation, you approach and you swing the club at the Red Robe. You swing your other arm at the Red Robe. And right as he like kind of catches it and keeps it from hitting him, you have another vision. It's another memory that you are remembering so like powerfully and vividly that you just aren't here anymore.

And this one's not like the other one where it was just like kind of fuzzy and it cleared up, this one is just static, until it isn't. And you are walking through some badlands. It's this arid landscape of cracked, red rock and clay as far as the eye can see, with a few shrubs poking through. And you are lost, you are so lost in this unforgiving environment.

And you came here to hide something? Like, that part is still a little bit foggy. You've made something and you're terrified of it. And so, you came to this place to hide it, but you got lost, and now you're so thirsty. You've removed the jacket of your uniform, which you've kind of sweat through. It is a bright, crimson red uniform with an insignia patch over the left breast pocket. You've taken that off because it's just too hot to have a jacket on right now. And you're just stumbling through these badlands, and you see a stranger.

You actually see two strangers in the distance, a man and a small girl. And they approach you and they offer you a drink, and they offer you kindness and hospitality. And they're really good people. You spend some time with them and they're just really good. And so, you decide that you're gonna hide your creation with them. Because they're gonna be the ones who are gonna be able to keep this cup safe.

And it takes you a while to come to, and you're just sort of in this like fugue state because you've been quietly walking with the rest of the group. You're all walking with the Red Robe, back through the Felicity Wilds, following him. And he stops you all in the Wilds, he says:

Red Robe: I don't blame you for not trusting me right now, but I promise, everything's gonna make sense real soon.

Magnus: I literally have nothing to lose. So like, sure.

Griffin: You all hear a crackle of what sounds like static. And the Red Robe goes quiet, and he really quickly puts a finger up to his hood. And he extends a finger and an illusory object appears, and it is in the shape of your Stone of Far Speech, and he holds out a palm. He is requesting your Stones of Far Speech. And you can hear the voice of Angus on the Stone of Far Speech, he's saying:

Angus: Sirs? Sirs, are you there? You've been out of—Sirs? You've been offline for a while, are you there?

Griffin: And the Red Robe is requesting your Stones of Far Speech. And even though you can't see his face, he seems like urgent.

Travis: I give it to him. I look at Taako and I look at Merle and I say:

Magnus: Do it.

Merle: [groans] I want a receipt. I want a receipt. All right, here's mine. I didn't wanna talk to the kid anyway. [chuckles]

Griffin: Taako?

Taako: Yeah!

Griffin: Okay, you all hand over your Stones of Far Speech. And he crushes them in his hand.

Merle: Oh...

Taako: Hell yeah, going rogue! Been waiting for this the whole time! Fuck yes! Off the grid!

Clint: [chuckles]

Justin: I pull out my credit cards and shred `em.

Taako: Fuck yes!

Travis: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: I move to Portland!

Taako: Taako's always ready for this! I'm ready to go off the grid at any fuckin' moment!

Griffin: And Angus's tiny voice is drowned out as these stones are shattered. And right as he shatters them, something like thunder roars overhead. And only then do you notice that the sky above is... it looks like it's storming, but it's not raining. It looks like it's storming in terms of like the look of it, but it's not... it's not actually... there's no precipitation. And the Red Robe says:

Red Robe: That was close, I... I forgot about that. About your stones. Listen, there's not much time. Night's gonna fall soon and we need to make some headway before it does, because... well, tomorrow's going to be... fateful.

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

Red Robe: Oh, I forgot something else.

Griffin: And he conjures up another object. This one's not illusory, though. It is a small coin-shaped object that appears in his hand. And you hear him whisper into it and he says:

Red Robe: You'll need to disguise Magnus, obviously, and don't let anyone touch him, or we'll be discovered.

Griffin: And then he waves his hand over the coin and it disappears.

Travis: Wait, am I now like... am I covered? Am I disguised?

Griffin: No, no. He just like took a note or something into this coin, and then it disappeared.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: Make a survival check, which is fun, 'cause I don't think we've ever done this one?

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: I mean not great. Five?

Clint: 19!

Justin: Hell yeah, Bear Grylls. 15.

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: Merle, with your survival check, you are sort of leading the party through the Felicity Wilds. You are making your way towards sort of the main road to the east—

Clint: And I'm eating rotten rabbits that I find on the road.

Griffin: God, Jesus! What? No!

Clint: Hey, listen, life's tough.

Magnus: We've been walking for two hours, Merle! There was no need to resort to that!

Merle: [chuckles] I have appetites!

Magnus: Dark, dark appetites!

Griffin: With your really good roll, you—when it comes time to make camp, you stumble across a clearing, and it has a really well-crafted fire pit in the middle. And there are three stumps carved into surprisingly comfortable-looking chairs. And you know this place, because this is a campsite that the three of you made a little over a year ago on one of your first nights together.

And you realize that you're really close now to the road that connects Neverwinter and—well, the ruins of Phandalin. And you're close to the gerblin hideout and Wave Echo Cave. You're close to all that stuff. And you make camp quickly in your familiar campsite, and all of you get a—well, a good—a hard-earned good night's rest.

Magnus, you dream some wild shit. Too many things actually to remember all of the next morning, but there are two visions that stick out, and they are just as like powerful as the ones that you've experienced so far.

And the first is you're standing on the deck of a silver ship. And there are some other red-robed figures standing around you, although you can't quite make out their faces. And this ship is soaring into the sky, and it's flying away from a land that is being consumed by this wave of darkness, with these ribbons of bright green and red and blue inside. It's just being swallowed up. And the other vision that you can recall is really simple, it's the Voidfish. Floating up into its tank is a thick book bound in blue leather and silver trim. And that's—

Clint: Is it the Noidfish?

Griffin: It's the Voidfish's brother, the Domino's pizza-ruining Noidfish.

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: And you, all—the next morning—the next morning you all make your way through the woods, past the main road—

Travis: And I don't recognize the book at all? I just know like, "Hey, look."

Griffin: No, yeah.

Clint: I have a question, I know you're on a roll and I don't mean to interrupt, but these visions he's having, are they from his point of view? He doesn't see his own—

Griffin: They are first-person, yes.

Clint: He has not seen his own face in this vision?

Griffin: Yes. And also, he is—he, you don't know—Merle doesn't know about them, these are just Magnus visions.

Clint: Well, this was your dad asking.

Griffin: No, yes, yes, yes, yes, I know.

Travis: Who? I'm just so wrapped up in the fiction.

Clint: It's me, Larry Burnside!

Travis: I forgot we even had a dad, you know what I mean? Like I'm just so deep in this story.

Griffin: Y'all, I'm sorry, my heart's racing 'cause this next shit is like shit I've been wanting to get to for a year.

Travis: Go, go!

Clint: Go! Go!

Griffin: The next morning, you wake up and you finish your journey through the Felicity Wilds. You go past the main road. You're actually not far now

from where you found those dead horses, where Barry Bluejeans and Gundren were attacked. And you go past that road, and you go through more woods, and you follow the Red Robe now, as he leads you towards your destination. And he leads you to the mouth of a well-hidden cavern carved into—actually the very same stretch of foothills where you found that Gerblin compound, where Klarg was.

It's a few dozen miles from that cavern, but it's the same foothills, and there are some similarities. The Red Robe leads you into this cavern. And through a winding, narrow path, deeper into the cool depths of the foothills. And after a few minutes of spelunking, you find yourself in a room cleft into the stone. And it's obviously the lair of something that has been cleared out by this Red Robe, which is its current occupant. This room is lit by several dozen candles, all arranged on a desk, piled with magical tomes and maps.

And behind that desk is a large, wooden board displaying the whole of Faerûn, with strings connecting images and diagrams at certain points on the map, in towns like Phandalin and Armos, and Greenhold, and Rockport and Goldcliff, and Neverwinter... And it's the board of somebody who has been tracking the Relics and the Bureau intently. And there's another source of light in this room. There is a six-foot tall, glowing pod on the opposite end of this room from the desk. And it's full of a swirling green fluid, and inside we can see something growing. Or rather, someone. There is a body being created inside of this pod, but the liquid is too opaque for you to see who it is.

And on the desk there is a scroll unfurled and held in place by several candles, and it is an incredibly detailed map with a route drawn through it in red. And it's a map depicting, with perfect accuracy, the headquarters of the Bureau of Balance. And there's another thing in this room that catches your eye: a small, plain, wooden chest. And draped over that chest is a red robe. Like an actual, tangible red robe, not the personification that you've been talking to. And sewn into its breast, you see a familiar sight. You see a circular patch, with a design containing 12 multicolored circles, and a sort of like shifting, imparsable text in the middle of it. Only Magnus, you can read that text as plain as day. It's an acronym, and it says: "I.P.R.E." And the Red Robe speaks and says:

Red Robe: Events that have been in motion for over a decade are about to reach critical mass. There are gaps in your stories that are unimaginably massive. But before the end of this day, I promise you, they will be filled.

Griffin: And he drifts over to the tank, and says:

Red Robe: I acquired this invention years ago, and I've used it to recreate my physical form several times now in pursuit of my goal. I've come close, but I've never reached that goal. It's because once I'm in my body, I'm gonna forget all of the truths that I know now in my Lich form. And I can try and convince myself to follow my own commands...

Griffin: And he shows you that coin-shaped object that you saw him speaking into earlier, and he says:

Red Robe: But, well... I can be pretty stubborn. And I also don't have any of my potent magical abilities inside of my body, 'cause I'm not gonna remember the fact that I'm a Lich at all.

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

Red Robe: Magnus, I see your wheels spinning, but I'm sorry, it takes months for this device to grow a new body. And we don't have months, fellas. We have hours.

Griffin: He says:

Red Robe: I'm gonna go into that tank and into my body, and then the four of us are gonna head back to the Bureau of Balance, and we're gonna get the truth that we deserve. And it's gonna be... uncomfortable here in a bit, perhaps, 'cause you're gonna recognize me, but I'm not gonna recognize you. So, I apologize in advance for my rudeness.

Griffin: And he drifts towards the tank and he says:

Red Robe: If we all follow my commands, we will be successful. I have been planning this for some time and I believe wholeheartedly in my preparations.

Griffin: And he sinks into the tank, and you see one last time the cowl of the Red Robe poke out of the tank, and he says:

Red Robe: Hey Merle, would you be a bud? I'm gonna be naked as a Jaybird when I come out of here. Can you fetch me a change of clothes from that chest?

Merle: Be glad to, buddy!

Griffin: And he lowers down into the tank. And at this time, Magnus, you're struck with one more vision, and this one's a doozy. You have your back up to a cliff's edge, axe drawn, an army of shadows approaching. And the sky is pitch-black. So black that the sky can't contain it all. It looks like there are columns of tar illuminated with streaks of red and green and blue, just falling, just dripping out of the sky and plowing into the ground. And in the distance you see a silver ship weave between those columns and fly out of sight.

And when you see it fly away, you feel this sense of immense relief. And next to you, you see a human man. And he is wearing the same crimson uniform that you've got on, with the same patch. Only, instead of a jacket, he's wearing a full robe. And he looks at you as this horde is about to overrun you, and he drops the wand that he's holding, and a black spike shoots from out of the horde and into his chest. And he staggers but he stays on his feet. And he turns, and he looks at you, Magnus, and he smiles. And he says:

Barry: Well, we'll get 'em next time.

Griffin: And Merle, you crack open the chest and retrieve the clothes within. A white cotton shirt, a studded leather belt and a pair of pants. Sturdy, denim and blue.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: The membrane encasing this pod splits, and green, brackish fluid splashes out and onto the floor. And a stout, naked human man steps out of the pod. And you recognize his face instantly. It's the face of a man who you

quite reasonably assumed you would never see again, because the last time you saw this face, it was being swallowed up in the righteous fire that destroyed the town of Phandalin. But here he is.

Barry's back.

[theme music plays]

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[ad read]