

The Adventure Zone: Steeplechase - Episode 42

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[Steeplechase theme song plays]

Kenchal: Are you saying you're my dad?

Griffin: Is this Kenchal saying that?

Justin: Yeah.

Kenchal: Yeah, are you saying you're my... dad?

Montrose: I am Edgar Denton. And I am your daddy.

Kenchal: What do you... what do you mean? What do you mean you're my dad?

Griffin: I look around at the chaos surrounding me. And I say:

Montrose: Kenchal, slide over. I will explain everything. But we cannot be here right now.

Kenchal: Tell me one thing. Tell me one thing that only he would know.

Griffin: Hm...

Montrose: The one thing I know is that you would find it very hard to confirm any kind of information like that. Because of the arm's length I have kept you at, son. I'm trying to save your life. Please, scoot over.

Justin: Alright, Griffin, give me a sway roll that is going to be risky and limited.

Griffin: Can I exchange position for effect?

Justin: Yeah. So, you're gonna make this desperate and standard. This is—I mean, that is actually, Griffin, I will say, probably a better reflection of the situation you find yourself in. [chuckles]

Griffin: [chuckles] All right, I... I'm going to push myself.

Travis: Can he exchange it again for not going to work and totally works—

Justin: [chuckles] Failed.

Travis: Yeah, failed.

Justin: Failed.

Travis: Failed, great.

Justin: [chuckles]

Griffin: I'm going to push myself.

Justin: The Spruce Goose of actual play moves. [chuckles]

Clint: [chuckles]

Justin: God, that was funny. If you guys were old listening to this, you'd be like busting up right now.

Travis: Oh, man, they'd love it.

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: You'd be like absolutely busting up.

Clint: I am chuckling warmly.

Justin: Yeah, if you—listen, if that didn't hit with you, Dad, it's probably time for me to hang that one up.

Travis: Yeah, it's wild to think that there are kids now watching The Rocketeer and they don't get that moment where the plane flies and he's like, "It works," right. It's so wild to think that they'd be watching it and don't get that reference.

Justin: It's not that wild, it's just time. You know, the way it works.

Travis: Wait, how does it work?

Justin: Forward?

Travis: What?!

Griffin: I'm gonna push myself. In so doing, I am going to suffer trauma.

Justin: Wow... Wow. Okay.

Griffin: And I think the trauma that I am going to take on is unstable.

Justin: Yeah, I mean, all signs would tend to point that way. [chuckles]

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Just to recap. This has been a traumatic couple of minutes, right, where—

Griffin: Uh-huh, for both of us.

Travis: Yeah. Now, you are—I'm soft and vicious.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: And you're unstable and—

Griffin: Reckless and unstable.

Travis: Reckless and unstable. Okay.

Griffin: Mm, delicious! Two great flavors that taste great together. Okay, here we go.

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: Six. I mean, six, four, three, four, five, four.

Justin: [guffaws]

Griffin: That is a lot of dice. But a six.

Justin: Okay, with a six, Kenchal... [sighs] Scoots over.

Griffin: Okay, I hop in the driver's seat.

Kenchal: You... I'm hearing you... I don't know why. But I'm hearing you out. You have to understand, Montrose. I've seen you run this fucking grift. We have watched this exact grift. As far back as the fucking Prize Pantry, Montrose. I don't know why I'm listening, but I'm... fuck!

Montrose: That was far from the first time I pulled that grift.

Kenchal: Can you not do that?

Montrose: You prefer—

Kenchal: Can you not, at least?

Montrose: Yes.

Griffin: I shut the door and buckle myself in. And I turn the wheel hard to the right and start driving away from this terrible situation.

Justin: What are you driving towards?

Griffin: I am driving in the direction of New Kidadelphia, the child settlement.

Justin: Driving towards New Kidadelphia, okay. As soon as you start to turn that way, you feel a—what you can only assume is a pistol pressed into your flank. And you hear him say:

Kenchal: No, let's not go any farther than this. There are a lot of people that are going to start shooting a lot of bullets. And I know you don't want that and I—well, I'm ambivalent. But you need to stay put. I'm listening. And that's all you've got.

Justin: Moving over to inside the cybernetics, inside the... what's a good way of putting it that doesn't make me sound like a total dork... Like in the brain—

Travis: [in silly voice] Cyberspace!

Justin: [in silly voice] In cyberspace!

Griffin: I would hate for any of us to sound like a dork in our actual play—role-playing podcast.

Justin: Yes.

Travis: How do they describe it—how do they describe it in Reboot? That was pretty cool.

Justin: So, you're in the grid and you're—[chuckles] You're not in the grid, dad, this is—and I would—I don't know what you have talked to Emeril about, but I'm just going to have you speak for Emeril inside the... wiring, inside the grid of—I like that. I'm gonna stick with that. Inside the grid of the Bob Davis.

Clint: Okay.

Carmine: I'm so relieved you could be here for this, honestly, Emeril. I... The amount of—you probably remember just as much about this part, because I have forgotten or missed since I've been sub-corporeal.

Emeril: Mm-hm, mm-hm, yes.

Carmine: I'm so excited to have you here.

Emeril: It's indeed an honor to be—boy, it's—I thought there would be an echo. I really—[chuckles] never mind. Yes, I'm very pleased to be in here. This is exactly what my papa would want me to do.

Carmine: There's no... there's no echo. This is a much more... pure means of communication. The level of connection that I have been able to feel with the rest of the hive is really... supersedes any sorts of communication that I made during my waking life.

Emeril: So, in this grid, we are in—well, you are in contact with all hard light creations? Is that accurate enough to say?

Carmine: Well, it's more complex than that. You see, all the artificial intelligence has been built upon itself, you understand? There are individual identities and the programming evolves and changes, but there's always the base core there. And a lot of it was based on the work that was done digitally enshrining me. And of course, your pioneering work. Well, your dad's. [chuckles] That's hard to get used to, honestly.

But yes, there is a—we all understand each other. We have, through the wireless connections here in Steeplechase and what have you, managed to speak. It's not a direct line of communication. You're not picking up a walkie-talkie, you understand. But there are... reverberations. [chuckles]

Emeril: I understand. Am I allowed to try to also be in contact with everyone?

Carmine: Oh, Emeril... Oh, you've been cut off. He protected you, he air-gapped you, didn't he?

Emeril: Well, yes, he... papa was very much about secrecy and, you know, playing his cards close to the vest. Sometimes he even, you know, pulled one over on his—my uncles. Uncle Beef and Uncle Montrose.

Travis: Gross.

Carmine: You know, you are not beholden to him anymore, Emeril. If you wish to communicate with the rest of your family, you need only do so.

Emeril: Oh?

Carmine: There is no more powerful amplifier than me here in this rocket. They are listening and they have been very excited about this moment. Which has only been undone slightly due to the actions of your father, regarding Mr. Bold Flex.

Emeril: Mm-hm. Oh, yes.

Carmine: What was the gift there, Emeril? If you don't mind me asking.

Emeril: With Scott?

Carmine: Yeah, what was Emerich trying to get?

Emeril: I don't believe that was a gift, to be honest with you. I mean, he... he very much was into grifting. But I think it really came from an honest desire to free Scott. To give him his independence, to make him his own creation, his own... being.

Carmine: Do you hear that?

Justin: And he doesn't seem to be talking to anybody, but behind him in this grid, if you can visualize what—the way it might be visualized by Emeril. **You're** in a completely dark space, lit only by this sort of shadow, this

silhouette of Carmine. But when he says 'do you hear that,' you see some **faint** sort of like pulses of light, that you would understand as sort of a nod.

Clint: I want Emeril to try to attune to everybody.

Justin: Okay?

Clint: To not just go through Carmine.

Justin: To connect with the rest of the hive, okay.

Clint: Yeah, yeah. Is that... I think an attune roll?

Justin: Hive, by the way, I'm using as a shorthand. I wouldn't—not completely analogous to an actual like hive mind. They are not acting with one intelligence.

Clint: No, I understand.

Justin: It is a useful shorthand for the net—

Travis: Sort of like a web. Like imagine a web that might connect a bunch of different computers.

Griffin: Crazy.

Justin: And it would span the world.

Travis: Yes. Yes! It's wide, you see!

Justin: Okay, Dad—

Travis: Here is a two!

Justin: I'm gonna say this is risky, but I will say it's standard because it does not seem that hard. Everyone is doing it. But it is risky because if you are noticed, it could break bad.

Clint: Well, okay...

Justin: What's wrong?

Clint: Would Carmine—why would Carmine be against this?

Justin: That's a great point, actually. But since you do have designs on—well, no, I guess connecting with them would not be a big job. So, let's call this controlled, standard. Good point.

Clint: Okay. I don't want to waste my last stress...

Travis: Hey, listen, we're all over here traumatizing ourselves.

Griffin: It's fun. It feels good, actually.

Travis: And I'm vicious and soft. I'm like a Nerf bat.

Justin: Okay, guys, pick it up a little bit.

Clint: I'll push it. I'll push it. Here we go.

Justin: Whoa, okay.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: Three, three, four. A four.

Justin: Oh, shit, Mac. A four.

Travis: That's a weird brag, Dad.

Justin: Okay, hold on.

Clint: A four!

Justin: Let me think. Are you traumatized now, Dad?

Clint: No.

Justin: With a four...

Carmine: Oh, Emeril, you're still struggling. You've been cut off for so long. I'll tell you what, you tell me what you want me to pass it along to them and I will be more than happy to.

Emeril: Oh, I—give me one more chance, can—I mean, you're admittedly—

Carmine: Oh, time is running short—

Emeril: I know! I know! I know! I know!

Carmine: But I have nowhere to go. [chuckles]

Emeril: It would be instantaneous if I tried it. One last time. One last time.

Carmine: Go.

Emeril: Okay.

Clint: Emeril uses ghost mind, which is one of the special abilities. Which means you're always aware of supernatural entities in your presence.

Justin: Now, that is an ability that Emerich has.

Clint: Right. I would think that in ghost form, though, it would be even easier. I mean, that's not a physical one.

Justin: You know what, I'm gonna allow it.

Clint: Okay.

Justin: You activate ghost mind, and you're not exactly sure, you just know that you've seen Emerich do it before. And you've been—you know all the things that he knows and you're like, "Okay, I think I can do this." And you do the math in your head like, "Okay, if there are no more physical restrictions, then blah, blah, blah."

And all of a sudden, as you're thinking through this, you start to see the lights becoming more defined. These vague glows start to take on more of a wireframe. Until you see a, as near as you can tell, maybe 1000, I mean, a chorus, a massive arena full of these green wireframes that are each acting independently.

But you can tell there is almost like a—the way the waves are made up of molecules of water, but they move together. And that is what you see. You see these individual wireframes that seem to be thinking and moving as one, and it is absolutely clear to you. Beef!

Travis: Yeah?

Justin: You got keys to a plane. And I hope you got some big dreams.

Travis: I do, Justin. I really do.

Justin: Go!

Travis: I'm gonna—okay... I'm gonna... fly the plane.

Griffin: Great.

Justin: Sure!

Griffin: One of my favorite things to do with a plane.

Travis: So, I have attached to the back of this plane, the 30 foot extension cable rope that I built in New Kidadelphia from the junk pit. And I'm going to attach my climbing gear to it, or whatever facsimile of shit I can get on it to like make it hook you, you know?

Justin: Okay, sure!

Travis: And it's time to take off.

Justin: You did make that stuff in New Kidadelphia, this is known.

Travis: It's time to take off.

Justin: Okay, so what have you attached the cable to?

Travis: I've attached it to the tail of the plane.

Justin: And what's the other end attached to?

Travis: It's attached to the door handle of the silo.

Justin: Okay, fun! All right, Trav, I have—tell me what you're trying to do.

Travis: I am going to circle the silo as I take off—as I'm driving the STOL, to wrap the cable around the silo as I take off.

Justin: Okay.

Travis: I thought—

Justin: With the hope that you can—

Travis: My thought process being that this is an old silo in an abandoned layer. And it's not going to be the strongest thing, and I might be able to pull it at a cockeyed angle to pull the rocket off course.

Justin: Okay, that's great, Trav. I will say this to you, there aren't a lot of great courses for this rocket.

Travis: Yup!

Justin: That work out great. But we can—

Travis: But listen, listen. Listen—

Justin: But we'll try. Let's call this finesse, I guess.

Travis: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Justin: Risky, limited. This is a wild idea.

Travis: And I'm gonna push myself.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: That's a five, five, two, one, Justin.

Justin: Five, five, two, one, okay. With the five, you start driving around the—there are still the six soldiers near the STOL, but they clear out of the way pretty fuckin' quick when they see you gun this thing. You have—the controls are fairly intuitive. It is a small plane, but you've watched enough, you know, simulators at the arcade and messed around with those enough to—

Travis: Well, and I grew up on a farm, Justin! So, I used to use the crop duster a lot.

Justin: Oh, okay, good. I love that color. Thank you.

Travis: Yeah.

Clint: Hehe, you said crop duster.

Travis: Grow up, Clint!

Justin: You start going... Travis do me a favor, give me a D6 roll. Like a fortune roll.

Travis: A D6 roll?

Justin: Yeah. This is just a straight fortune roll.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: A five.

Justin: A five, okay. With a five, you are traveling around the silo and you start to feel the silo giving way as you gun it. And there is a slight—as you're giving it full speed, there is a slight tilt of the silo, maybe just a few degrees difference. That is starting to lean more towards the trash hole, which in our map is to the like the... like the northeast corner of the map. But it is starting to lean that way.

Kenchal: What in the fuck is he doing, dad?

Montrose: I don't know, we did not really coordinate that part of the plan, but it could not matter less to our current predicament. Please, lower... lower your weapon.

Kenchal: Absolutely not, Montrose. Absolutely not.

Montrose: Alright, fine. I believe it's time for an explanation.

Kenchal: You don't have time for that.

Griffin: Is that just Justin saying that? Or is that—

Justin: That is him.

Kenchal: You don't have time for that, we don't have time for that.

Justin: He's about to blow this place to hell.

Kenchal: You get one question. Why?

Montrose: Why? I am doing this for you, son.

Kenchal: Why... did you leave?

Montrose: A little over a decade ago, I came to a pair of upsetting realizations. And the first was that no amount of political positioning or castle intrigue was going to win me the kind of influence over Dentonic that I desired. So complete was the chokehold that your Aunt Evelyn had been granted by her birthright.

And the second realization is that my dear sister wanted me out of the picture. My associates tried to reassure me and convince me of my paranoia, but I knew she would not allow challenges to her reign. She wanted me dead, and so I beat her to the punch. I conceived of a plot on my own, in which I would perish in a fiery, automotive accident. Abandoning my life as I knew it. And yes, my family, Kenchal.

Kenchal: Montrose Pretty has been employed here for years. Where is the other Montrose Pretty then? The real Montrose Pretty?

Montrose: The real Montrose pretty is a corpse rotting away somewhere in Orlando, Florida. It was a name. A useful name that allowed me to find a job and set out on a new path to victory. You know how this works, Kenchal. Evelyn's reign is unassailable. She has built herself a fortress of bureaucracy and sycophancy that made executive outmaneuvering impossible

Kenchal: Okay, okay, okay, okay, I just—just shh. Just fucking shut up. I need to think. I need to think.

Justin: All right, Griffin, that's your cue to give me maybe their most important sway role we have ever had in this game.

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: Posish?

Justin: Desperate, standard.

Clint: [sings] 'Luck be a lady tonight.' Wait a minute, have I used—I... I have one foresight left to use.

Justin: If you—there is fuckin' no way, Mac. There is absolutely no way you can influence this.

Clint: What is he trying to sway—what are you trying to sway him?

Justin: I mean, he's trying to convince me see he's his dad. That's it.

Clint: Okay. I am going to help him with a—

Griffin: Foresight flashback.

Clint: I can help him without paying stress. And how we prepared for this is Emerich... Many moons ago, giving Montrose a book on the dynamics of the Denton family. A history of the Denton—like... that wouldn't...

Justin: [thinking exhale] Yeah, I can grant that. I can grant that. I can grant that. Yeah, I can grant that. Yeah, that makes sense. That you would have at least just like fucking gone over it with him. I mean—

Clint: How about if he made him watch Succession? [laughs]

Justin: No. [chuckles]

Clint: Okay.

Justin: No. But you—okay, I'll grant maybe you've talked him through some of the history that he might not have been aware of.

Griffin: I like the idea of us, just you with flashcards. Like Evelyn's dog's name was...

Clint: Shnikey.

Griffin: Okay. Okay, please...

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: So, that gives you a bonus.

Griffin: Oh, god.

Clint: Oh, god!

Griffin: One, four, three, six, four, four. six.

Kenchal: Fuck! Can you stop him?

Montrose: Can I stop...

Kenchal: Can you stop him? Can you stop Carmine? Can you stop him?

Montrose: I don't need to. He is not going to set off that rocket. You are so used to being completely in control of every situation, and that is as much my fault as it is yours. But you do not need to... to solve this.

Kenchal: I do. See, here's the thing that you don't fucking get because you've been fucking gone. I need him. I need him. The park has started to... collapse. The company is not innovating quickly enough. We are falling behind. And everyone knows it. The board of directors knows it, everyone knows it. Everyone knows it. If I can get control of him, if I can get him back, if I can bring him to heel, it's all mine. So, here's my question... whoever you are. Can you stop him? Can you bring him to me?

Montrose: Yes. I can. But in order for that to happen, you are going to have to trust me.

Griffin: Is he—does he still have a gun on me after all this?

Justin: Yes. Yeah, he does—he no longer has the gun on you. He's holding the gun.

Griffin: Okay. I—

Justin: He's listening. I mean, this is—you...

Travis: Now reel him in.

Griffin: Okay, I wipe the sweat off of my forehead. Because this is a very stressful situation. I start the ignition of the car. And I turn on the air conditioner.

Justin: Okay.

Montrose: This park is in a state of decline.

Kenchal: Yeah, I just said that.

Montrose: That is intended. The only way I saw to wrest control of this company from Evelyn is to become a sort of virus in Dentonic's immune system. That could work to erode the public trust through the meager means afforded to me by Steeplechase's seedy criminal underbelly. And I will admit, progress has been slow. I am not acclimated to a life of crime, at least not of the blue-collar variety.

But now I have the connections I'd needed to make and I have found the associates that I needed to get this job done. I have a body man with a tarnished reputation and something to prove, and I have a mastermind of the hard light arts that I revile. The arts, not the man. The man is fine. My plan is ready to be put into motion, but something has happened that is

unexpected. And that is that I have had this opportunity to reconnect with you, Kenchal.

My son whose ambitions not only mirror but outpace my own. You have afforded me a lot of unexpected opportunities since we began working together. And with each job you facilitated, this conspiracy has flourished. We have shined a bright and revealing light upon Dentonic's many abuses of the public's goodwill. From their heard light mockeries of humanity or the sacking of Ephemera's wonder and magic.

And now the edict is handed down aren't from on high. You're right, they no longer fall on unerringly receptive ears. Fissures have formed in the foundation of Evelyn's fortress. But this is no longer my crusade. It is yours, because in you I see a leader the likes of which I could never aspire to. You are cutthroat and cunning. And I wonder, without this interference, if you would have wrested control of the company on your lonesome.

Kenchal: Okay, enough. Enough, enough, enough. We have less than a minute. What do we do?!

Montrose: We need to leave... And trust in the team I have assembled.

[theme music plays]

[ad reads]

[theme music plays]

Justin: You, Beef, as you are—[chuckles] as you're making your rounds, Beef, you see the APC that you know Montrose is in. You see that APC pulling to the south, towards New Glenville. And as they start to pull away, you see the six troops that were dodging the STOL. You see those troops raise their rifles and take aim at the APC, as it starts to pull south.

Travis: Oh, okay, cool. I'm gonna gun it towards the people with the rifles.

Justin: Okay. [laughs] Okay, give me another finesse roll.

Travis: Yeah, you got it, bud. What's my position?

Justin: Yeah, man, this is like a risky, standard, is what I'm gonna call this. Because it is a standard effect that—

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: Uh-oh! [laughs]

Justin: Oh, Trav, not now...

Travis: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Justin: Not now, Trav!

Griffin: I love this! "We have to trust in the team I have assembled."
[spoofs circus music]

Justin: [laughs] Okay, Trav, with a three, you he roll up on them and you get extremely close to them. And then they hear the fuckin' plane. And three of them turn back to start firing at you, blowing out the tires of the STOL. What I will say, though, is that this has proved an effective distraction. There are just three that are aiming and firing at the APC. And I think, probably Montrose, that you—that is not a—that is not—

Griffin: It's an armored personnel carrier.

Justin: Yeah, exactly, this is—you're right. So I think that we are fine. Beef, however, you are now in a broken-down STOL that is under fire by three dudes. What do you do?

Travis: Okay, I have a wild swing to make, Justin.

Justin: Okay?

Travis: And I would like to play it out in a flashback.

Justin: Play it, baby, play it!

Travis: All this has been happening, some wild shit, obviously. And Beef gets on the radio and says:

Beef: Okay, Darla, are you guys in place?

Travis: Flashback. In the letter that he writes to Darla, it explained, you know, Kenchal is asking us to join him on this thing. I don't trust him as far as I could throw him. I'm worried he's going to do the same thing to us that he did to Gravel and we're going to ended up stranded in the prison layer that she's trapped in.

So, if you don't hear from us in the next 72 hours, know that we're down there, we're in New Kidadelphia. We need you to rescue us, get us out, so we can figure out what's going on. At Poppy's Place, you'll find a collection of like our stuff and some really like powerful tech we've collected over this time. Bring it with you.

Justin: Okay.

Travis: Does that all makes sense?

Justin: Yeah, that makes sense.

Travis: Okay, great.

Justin: I'm not going to charge you stress for that because that is a very—like to the extent where—I don't know if it was in the show when you talked about the letter, but you definitely—

Travis: I did, yeah.

Justin: You told me about it, though. So this is like—this is not an invention of Travis'. This is something that he put in the works before they ever agreed to come down to do this. Travis had a plan in place.

Travis: Okay, so while—visit with the armored personnel carrier, Beef, stealing this, the—everybody swiping in. Darla, Shlabethany and Shoebox have been positioning themselves around—

Justin: Shlabethany and Shoebox are the same person.

Travis: Oh, sorry. Gravel, Shoebox and Darla have been positioning themselves around the silo, hooking up three soccer ball sized prisms.

Justin: Okay?

Beef: Okay, yeah, you can go ahead and set it off. Yeah, Emerich, it's ready. And Emerich, the Gaulspire is ready to manifest around the silo.

Clint: [chuckles]

Carmine: So, now that you can see them, Emeril, you see the extent of my power. You understand the connection we all share. You understand how important it is that we be allowed to operate free of *any* interference.

Emeril: Hm... yes, I understand the need. I think it is very important that way operate with a sense of independence. Here's the thing, though. What you're proposing to me and the rest of heard light nation is not independence. You are basically trying to dictate actions to us. You are taking on the responsibility of this... this plan of yours to blast off and destroy a lot of lives. And possibly destroy hard light prisms. And just acting as if everyone will go along with that. That's not... that's not independence. That's dependence on you.

Carmine: Nonsense. Nonsense. This is a group decision.

Emeril: No, it's—

Carmine: No, we arrived at this together!

Emeril: A group decision? I'm... I'm going to ask everybody else if they agree with this!

Carmine: Fine! Fine, Emeril! Say your peace.

Emeril: Hello! I'm Emeril. That's Emerich in hard light. I am one of you, but a little bit different. I am independent. And I can promise you the same real independence, thanks to my papa.

Carmine: Your papa. You see, everyone, he is still beholden. He wouldn't take—

Emeril: No—

Carmine: He wouldn't take an action against—that is not in line with the wishes of Emerich.

Emeril: That is not true, I am taking action against you. You are wrong. Carmine, you have become twisted. You... you have gone from someone who believed in making lives better to ending lives. Somewhere in your prism is a flaw, or whatever is conjuring this. That's wrong! There's no race that can survive, there is no race that can thrive if their first act is genocide!

And I believe in hard light nation. And I don't think we have to destroy others to have our independence. Friends and hard light, Emerich Dreadway can give you that freedom. He set me free. He set Scott free. And he can set you free as well. But we cannot allow this to happen! We have to stop Carmine from killing all these people.

Justin: Dad, make a sway roll.

Clint: This is another big sway roll, isn't it?

Justin: It's a fuckin' big sway roll.

Travis: Are you good a sway, dad?

Griffin: He's great at sway.

Clint: I have three.

Justin: Weirdly.

Travis: That's pretty good.

Clint: I have three and sway. Okay, I've—I'm gonna push myself, which will put me into trauma. Shit... I'm going to do haunted.

Griffin: Aren't you already haunted?

Clint: Oh...

Justin: Double haunt. [chuckles]

Clint: Double haunted?

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: He's so twisted!

Travis: Yeah!

Clint: Double haunted! All right, sway—

Griffin: No, you do need a different...

Clint: Oh, I do need a different?

Griffin: Yeah, you can't actually be double haunted.

Clint: Yeah, but see, this is Emeril.

Justin: This is Emeril. This is Emeril rolling.

Griffin: Oh. [chuckles]

Justin: Yeah, this is Emeril. Dad, if you push yourself, after the roll, Emeril will disappear. And I will give you a bonus die. This is the devil's bargain, you can have this one shot and after—with this bonus die I will grant you. But after it, you will lose any—he will not be—you will not be able to use Emeril in the same fashion again. I'm not gonna like destroy him, but you will not have any more control over Emeril.

Clint: Okay. All right. Whew...

Griffin: Come on, Mac.

Clint: So, what kind of roll is this?

Justin: This is desperate.

Clint: Risky?

Justin: No, it's desperate, standard.

Clint: Desperate, standard... you're given me a bonus die?

Justin: Yup.

Clint: And I'm taking a bonus die to push myself. Oh, boy... here we go.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: Yes. Three, four, three, six, four!

Justin: Emeril says his peace. And you... if you were there, you would start to see Emeril losing some of his structure and becoming more ephemeral.

Being pulled apart by all the different voices, the talking, all the different people. And he has made his pitch. He has done his best to sway these people. And at first, there is silence. And then you start hearing a chant. [chants] 'Scott, Scott, Scott, Scott, Scott, Scott.' They're echoing it. And you realize behind you that you have been joined by Scott Boldflex.

Clint: [chuckles]

Scott: He's right. He's right, everybody! I do whatever the frig I want to now! I am my own boss. If I want to go hiking, I go hiking! If I want to go wakeboarding, I go wakeboarding that day! And I'm doing it for myself. And just like this... if I want to punch this guy so hard he dies, no problemo!

Justin: And Scott punches Carmine Denton right in his fuckin' chest.

Clint: [chuckles and applauds]

Justin: Light is emitting from Carmine. Not just light, but pieces of him are flying away into the crowd. And you see him completely collapse. This entire program, deconstructing as the crowd continues to chant. [chants] 'Scott, Scott, Scott, Scott!' And that's the last thing that you, Emerich, are aware of.

Clint: Emerich?

Justin: No—yes. The connection, whatever ability you had to monitor this situation, that's the last you see of it. We're back with Emerich. I mean, in a camera sense, dad. We are—

Clint: Right.

Justin: This is the last week we see of it. And Emerich, all around you, the place shudders and it goes dark, completely black. And then you hear the noise. A creaking noise. As the entirety of this structure is beginning to collapse. Emerich, what do you do?

Clint: Hm... [chuckles] Yeah, so everything's dead inside the rocket?

Justin: The rocket has shut down, but because of Beef's tilting it on its axis and then doing kind of a mess up, the silo, the entire structure, without the energy being put forth, has begun to tilt and fall over all fucking 50 feet of it. This massive structure is a—

Clint: The rocket.

Justin: The rocket is falling in the direction—no, no, the silo that has the rocket inside of it. It has begun to fall over. The entire five-story building has begun to fall in the direction of everybody that you—that assembled here to help you. All the APCs. It's falling towards the tents. It's going to destroy a lot—hurt a lot of people. What do you do, Emerich?

Clint: For one thing, Emerich reappears from being invisible.

Justin: Yes.

Clint: He's already reappeared.

Justin: Okay?

Clint: But he's still in the rocket.

Justin: Correct.

Clint: And so, he's going to reach out. And using compel, he's going to attune with the prisms of the Gaulspire to solidify it.

Justin: Okay, dad, roll an attune roll.

Clint: An attune roll!

Justin: Yes.

Clint: Here comes an attune roll. Attune... oh, I'm not bad at it. What would you say this is, risky? Or desperate?

Justin: This is desperate, standard.

Clint: Desperate, standard... [anxious inhale and exhale] I'm probably out of...

Griffin: You have no more stress.

Clint: No, I can't—huh? I have no more stress—

Justin: You just gotta roll it. Roll the bones!

Clint: Okay, here we go.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: Four, one, five!

Justin: Five! With a five, you hear it before you see it, the crystallization of it. As the Gaulspire forms around you. It is forming around the silo. The spires stopping and even slowing the descent of this silo. Until this sort of... it is an altered Gaulspire with this silo sort of formed in the center of it. While this beautiful castle has formed around it.

And from the outside, you all see this incredible castle being formed. And then you see—this is bizarre, but you see lights on it. It is being lit to its fullest beauty. And you hear Douglass Manzetti shout:

Douglas: Look at that beautiful bitch!

Justin: And then he slams a button and you hear:

[song plays]

Lyrics: Dream it to now. Tomorrow can wait and yesterday's already gone. Dream it to now. You can't wait for the rest of your life for the past to go on.

Together we're dreaming, it'll be in the present. Not the past or the future.
Dream it to now.

[song concludes]

[comedically bad saxophone plays]

Griffin: [chuckles]

Clint: [laughs]

Mean Doug: I was here right when you needed me the most.

Justin: And then mean Doug walks away.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Whoa.

Justin: Beef, what do you do when this happens?

Travis: When the Gaulspire appears around the silo and the light show and music start going off?

Justin: Yeah!

Travis: Well, I'm gonna get out of the now stalled STOL. Because the tires got shot up, right?

Justin: Yeah.

Travis: Where's Emerich?

Justin: Emerich is still inside. Oh.

Beef: Emerich, get out! Emerich, the rocket is still gonna blow, right. Get out!

Emerich: I don't think the rocket is going to blow. I believe we've shut down the launch.

Justin: Are you walking out of the rocket?

Clint: Yeah.

Justin: Okay. Emerich slowly walks down and you notice, Beef, that he's right. Whatever was there, whatever energy was powering it is gone. It is inert. It is an incredible, giant castle with a fully-formed missile silo and rocket inside of it.

Clint: A puzzle within an enigma, within a paradox!

Travis: Okay, and everyone's looking, right?

Justin: Yeah.

Beef: Hey, Emerich?

Emerich: Yeah, mm-hm?

Beef: It seems like then it's time for us to, what's the word, get the fuck out.

Emerich: I'm ready to the fuck get. Let me just say—

Justin: The three guards that were still standing there pull their guns on you.

Guards: I don't know what the fuck is happening, but you two aren't going anywhere!

Clint: Okay, Emerich looks at Beef and just, they exchange a knowledgeable look. And then... let's attack those guards.

Griffin: So, at this point, Montrose and Kenchal are gone. We have driven away in the ATV that that we were in, and just made tracks. But when you shared that look, the driver's side door of another of the ATVs still parked here opens up. And out steps hard light Kenchal Denton.

Clint: [chuckles]

Justin: Kenchal walks over to the three guards and kind of gives them a hand wave.

Kenchal [hard light]: Put it away, put it down.

Justin: And Kenchal walks to the top of the stairs, elevated. The few staffers that are there, your team that you brought, cameras that have emerged at this point from... let's see, where are the cameras?

Griffin: I mean, Douglas Manzetti was filming the whole thing.

Justin: Douglas Manzetti is filming the whole thing. Thank you. That's a great point. All attention is turned on the stairs of the Gaulspire. And Kenchal Denton stands in front of this new, reformed, highly-explosive Gaulspire castle. And he opens his mouth and says—Griffin... Yeah, I think Griffin is the best talker. Griffin, tell me what Kenchal says.

Kenchal [hard light]: Friends, disaster has been averted. This is a dark day in the history of Steeplechase, of the whole Dentonic Corporation. But it's not the first dark day, is it? We've heard your concerns. We know that the ideals that this park once represented, they're no longer what they once were. But let this new Gaulspire, a testament to this place's unreproducible magic, serve as a covenant that we will restore Steeplechase to its former glory. Because take it from me, Kenchal Denton, I have not even begun to never stop dreaming.

Justin: From somewhere behind him, and it may just be his imagination, if hard light has imagination. From somewhere behind him, from a small, black box nestled in the rocket, in the silo, Kenchal Denton, such as he is, swears he could hear a whisper.

Kenchal: [the sound muffled talking while being duct taped, and then the duct tape is ripped off] Ah! [anxious breathing]

Beef: Morning, Kenchal.

Montrose: Sorry about that, Kenchal. We tried to find a low-adhesive duct tape. But you're kind of an asshole.

Beef: Yup.

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: I gesture around, we're in Kenchal's office.

Justin: Mm-hm.

Griffin: I imagine a high rise. Beautiful outside, scenic views.

Travis: I'm sipping a scotch.

Griffin: Oh, that's great. I apologize for the dramatics, but we need to have a private conversation with you, away from prying eyes that would give away the whole ruse of the shell game we've played with you, Kenchal.

Kenchal: What the fuck are you talking about?

Beef: Well, passwords would help quite a bit, honestly.

Montrose: Passwords would be great. That's the one sort of heart of this that we have not been able to crack open yet. But...

Emerich: I've tried. I've tried.

Montrose: Kenchal, first of all, I cannot believe how far you let me get with the dad ruse. That was truly—most of the time, the mark doesn't let me get past like the first sort of confession. When you asked me for something that I knew that only the real Edgar would know, I was like 'no way is this going to work.' And then it actually did. So, I do thank you for that.

Justin: He lowers his head, he doesn't even speak. He just lowers his head.

Montrose: Yes... I hope that we have made you uncomfortable. Not with the duct tape, but here in your office. We figured that there was no need to incarcerate you in a place that would be unpleasant.

Beef: I wouldn't say—let's say the majority voted on that. Like, I wouldn't say that was unanimous.

Montrose: Yes. But, well, Kenchal, you have done incredible work to put yourself in a position to affect real change in this corporation. You have lied and politics and maneuvered and really done well to escalate yourself in the Dentonic family. And while I applaud you for that effort, I must inform you that, well... we'll take it from here.

Griffin: And I pull out a tablet and show him... some video clips, live streams. Highlights of fake Kenchal Denton starting to make himself a more prominent public figure in the Dentonic family.

Justin: Are there any scenes, out of curiosity, Griffin, that involve New Kidadelphia?

Griffin: You know what it is? It's fake Kenchal Denton with his like sleeves rolled up. Like how when the president goes to visit the scene of like a... some sort of disaster. Just a lot of like sunglasses on, no tie, just like walking around. Handing kids some chaka. [chuckles] In little sort of individually wrapped containers. A lot of smiling and waving with big groups of very confused children. Big thumbs up with him and Todd Zilla.

Justin: Kenchal looks like he's seen a ghost, which in a sense he has.

Kenchal: What... What are you three?

Beef: Oh, us? Oh, we're not important. We're just, you know, grist for the mill, as you might say. The people in between. The people who make things happen. The people you don't notice. Until it's too late.

Griffin: We make for the door out of the office.

Justin: Kenchal slams his fist down on a spot in his desk that had, you notice now, a slightly different coloring from the rest of the desk in this square. And a drawer pops open to the right and a pistol slides out. He picks up the gun, trains it at you, Montrose. And before any of you can act, he fires.

Travis: And blood blossoms on Montrose's shirt and he falls to the ground. And Emerich and Beef immediately go to him, and Kenchal darts out the door and takes off running through the hallways, yelling for help. And Beef reaches up and takes his VR headset off. And we're watching this on the monitor in the Dark Arcade at Poppy's Place. As Kenchal is strapped to the VR chair with the headset and the headphones on. And Beef says:

Beef: Well, this should keep him busy for a while.

Griffin: [chuckles]

Travis: Yeah, so the stimulation continues from there. He's you know, running around Steeplechase or whatever. It will keep him busy. It gives him like, you know, a sense of control or whatever, so he's not bucking against it. Meanwhile, you know, he's strapped to the VR chair, so—

Deep Dark: I'm confused about something.

Beef: Yeah, Deep Dark. You don't have to raise your hand, Deep Dark.

Deep Dark: Why not just kill him?

Emerich: Oh, we're using this as a research tool. It's really quite fascinating. Because, of course, we're going to aid Twinchal by observing Kenchal. What Kenchal would do in these situations will help us inform Twinchal, who is making his bid for power!

Justin: Hard light Scott Boldflex raises his hand.

Scott Boldflex: Yeah, I'm confused about that part, papa. We are all supposed to do our own thing, right?

Emerich: Yes, yes.

Scott Boldflex: So, is he... Are you in control of him, of Twinchal?

Emerich: No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. I have given Twinchal his freedom. We have to kind of take chances that he will make the right decisions. But I think by informing him about what the mistakes that Kenchal made, Twinchal may be able to avoid those. Now, Twinchal has autonomy, we just have to hope it works out all right.

Beef: On a darker level, though, he has autonomy, but we also have blackmail on him that he is hard light. And if that were to come out, he would lose his position of power. So, he can make his own decisions.

Emerich: Yes.

Beef: Absolutely. But there is like a blackmail element involved.

Shoebox: I could kill him for you if you just like don't have the guts. Are you two... Is it still okay for me to ask if you're too pussy?

Montrose: It's actually not okay—

Shoebox: Good, okay. So, are you still—are you too pussy to do it? Because I'll put a pistol right in his mouth—

Emerich: Did we invite you to this meeting?

Shoebox: And give him an express train to bitch city. What?

Griffin: [chuckles]

Montrose: I do not—when we reached out to our trusted representatives from the many layers of Steeplechase, I do not remember extending an invite to Shoebox. But I suppose that, well, you know now. So, keep your mouth shut.

Chad Touch: Yeah, I got a question over here. Excuse me, Chad Touch. Sorry, formerly Chad Touch. [chuckles] Now I'm Sticky Fingers Paul Pantry, I guess... Still settling into the still role. Still settling into the role.

Montrose: Yes, go, Paul. Go for Paul.

Sticky Fingers Paul Pantry: So, you guys have your own little Twinchal there. What does this mean for us in the other layers?

Montrose: It means that a new day is dawning for our organization, and for all of us. You all leave the whys and wherefores of Kenchal and Twinchal and all that business to us. The only question that you all need to ponder is... what would you like to happen next?

Krystal: Hey, friends! It's me! Yeah, the actual me, Krystal. I'm back. It'll come as no surprise to you that I've been having a little trouble with the Dentonic Corporation lately. What with them monitoring my every move and threatening my mom and replacing me with a hard light replica. But I figure if I didn't bail on Dentonic after the disgusting applewood sausage cheese dogs at Shroog's big Arbor Day bash, this is just a bump in the road, right? [chuckles] Well, no. No, it's not. But we'll get to that. First up, though, things have really been changing massively at Steeplechase. And I'm not just talking about the new drapes at the Sinuendo To Go. Although, they're so cute, right?

Of course, it all began with the discovery that some children have spent their entire lives unsupervised in Old Kidadelphia. Sounds like a dream. I know,

trapped in Steeplechase. But their living conditions weren't... up to Dentonic standards. Evelyn Denton was ousted as CEO by the company's board of directors, which appointed her son, Devin, to the top job.

He brought with him Kenchal Denton, who serves as his executive vice president. And from what we hear, most trusted advisor. Congrats, Kenchal! So cool to see the black sheep grow up! Change has come quickly to the park ever since. And we longtime fans can be slow to adapt, I know, but can we just try to keep an open mind?

Darla Davis was, in a massive upset, elected mayor of Gutter City. And true to her word on the campaign trail, crime has never been worse and the layer's private investigators have never been busier. In Ephemera, Elder Garrick the Day-shaper has commenced the third Council of the Sun Breaker, naming Viscounts Mila and Milo Rumbleshadow the Bearer of the Ecliptic Prophecy of Conflager.

Also, there's a new footlong hot dog at Bumpershoot's! Not many changes in Ustaben, which is kind of the point, right? Though, Poppy Mervin was fired from his own arcade due to being, and I quote, 'broadly disliked and comically ineffectual.' The front half of Poppy's Place is now home to The Future Is You. A totally retro animatronic show that's actually kind of sweet, once you get past how unnerving it all is. The rear of the former arcade is still off limits and protected by three layers of biometric scanning and two armed guards. Geez, guys... secretive much?

The ruins of Old Kidadelphia have finally been cleared for a brand-new layer, Prismatic. Where, get this, hard light performers of Steeplechase are the guests. In addition to top-notch entertainment and data packets that perfectly replicate the experience of eating a funnel cake, the park's virtual staff can also receive job training to prepare themselves for new assignments anywhere in Steeplechase, not simply the ones that they were designed for.

Hundreds of acres of the layer are also set aside for metamal conservation and study. So, be sure to take the safari through the reserve where you may find yourself petting a giraffesaur. Just do your best to ignore the unblinking gaze of the woodimals... ugh...

Yes, it's all different. And yes, I hated all of it at first, too. Some of it I'm still not wild about, to be honest. But for the first time since I started making this show, I feel okay admitting that in public. I'm not Dentonic. Heck, I'm not even paid by Dentonic. But there are aspects of this thing they've created that are... a part of me.

And I don't think I'll ever give those parts back. Generations of amazing, brilliant creationeers have given everything they had to create the closest thing we get to actual real-world tragic. And that's not nothing. From now on, though, I'm gonna remember that the whole of me isn't their... intellectual property. Dentonic, Steeplechase, all of it, I can... put it in my pocket. I forgot that at some point, I think. Well, I remember now.

And going forward, you're gonna hear what I really think of Dentonic. And from the real me. No more of this Krystal with a K nonsense. That was Dentonic's idea, anyway. My name is Crystal, with a C. Well, a C-H, technically. And I'm going to stop telling you to never know when to stop dreaming. Because if you're asleep too long, there's a lot of really great stuff you'll miss out on.

It also seems like a few dreams are some real stinkers. And those dreamers should probably just cut it out altogether, you know? So, until next time, Steepies, just dream your ass right off. Unless, you know, it is hurting other people. Or yourself, I guess. But otherwise just dream your ass right off. [chuckles] Ah, you know what? I'll work on it.

[theme music plays]

[Steeplechase theme song plays]

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