

**The Adventure Zone Balance: Lunar Interlude V: Reunion Tour –
Part One**

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[ad break]

Griffin: Previously on *The Adventure Zone*.

And Magnus, all your belongings are piled up on the ground, but your body is gone.

Travis: My beautiful body!

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

You all hand over your Stones of Far Speech, and he... crushes them in his hand. And they—

Taako: Hell yeah, goin' rogue.

Griffin: And—

[Clint wheezes]

Taako: Been waiting for this the whole time.

[Clint chuckles]

Taako: Fuck yes.

Griffin: There is a six-foot-tall, glowing pod, and inside we can see something growing? Or rather, someone?

[Clint cackles]

Griffin: The membrane encasing this pod splits.

[Clint claps]

Griffin: And green, brackish fluid splashes out and onto the floor. And a stout, naked, human man steps out of the pod.

[Clint continues cackling]

Griffin: And you recognize him instantly. Barry's back.

Narrator: Like Chilean miners rising, our comfy casual champion has returned. What other twists await us in *The Adventure Zone*!

[intro music plays]

[slow, dramatic piano music plays]

Griffin: We see a wheat field on the outskirts of Phandalin. And it's about a decade ago. Long strands of wheat are blowing gently in the wind, and nearby a family of halflings are doing some farmwork.

Barry Bluejeans falls from the sky and is dead before he hits the ground. And from behind the wheat, a bright red apparition leaves the body. He takes a moment to collect himself, losing his composure for just a moment, but not enough to alert the nearby farm. He bends down, collects some blood from his fallen form, and then ventures away.

It's a few months later now and he's followed some leads to an auction, run by any number of dark necromancers and warlocks and sorcerers, who deal in unsavory artifacts. He's hoping to find one of the Grand Relics here, maybe even Lup's, but he's unsuccessful in that regard.

What he does find is a lot with several pods that, when fed a person's organic matter, can regrow them a body within a few months. He decides to make the purchase, since his old ways of revivification aren't really accessible anymore. The bidding war is fierce, but he comes out ahead. He feels a chill wind move through him as he leaves with his prize, and he's felt this a few times now since his fall.

She's found him again. He's stayed outside in this lich form too long, too easily detectable, and now she knows his whereabouts. He finds a crypt to camp out in until the chill subsides. Soon, in his new body, she won't be able to find him anymore. He hopes.

We see his lich form entering the chamber that you're all in right now, only at this point in time, it's inhabited by a small band of nasty-looking gerblins. He absolutely destroys them, then gets to work setting up his chamber, warding it from magical detection, collecting his research on the Relics' whereabouts, unloading the pod and beginning the formulation of his body. And for months, while it forms, he does not leave this cave. He works on his map, endlessly triangulating.

And he's lonely. He misses his friends horribly, but he knows that they wouldn't recognize him now. His only hope is to find Lup. With her help, he can take back the ship that brought him here.

It's months later now and Barry's reconnoitering the foothills around Phandalin, searching endlessly for the location where Lup ended up. And he's alive again, and following instructions he doesn't remember leaving for himself. Because he can't remember he's a lich.

He's climbing a particularly treacherous, craggy incline and loses his grip and falls, and is dashed on the rocks below. And his lich form sits up from the body and screams a curse. It would be more months of waiting now, more hiding, more time away from his family.

And we see this cycle a few more times; waiting, reviving, obediently searching, dying, raging, hiding. But his lich form never gives up. His living form never fails to obey, even though he doesn't know who or what he's searching for.

And then a breakthrough. A dwarf named Gundren Rockseeker is hiring a body man for his quest to Wave Echo Cave. It's an ancient Dwarven vault, containing artifacts of immeasurable power. It is exactly where Lup would've hidden the gauntlet. He leaves himself a new command; find Gundren and stick with him, no matter what it takes.

And the last thing we see is Phandalin, already a perfect circle of black glass, still warm. In the sky above we see your sphere floating away, up and into the Bureau. And his form rises, with some effort, up and out of the glass, and he almost loses it. He was so close this time! Close to the Relic, close to his friends, close to finding Lup. Why wasn't she with them? If they had the Glove, where was she?

He couldn't do this alone anymore and he knew it. He could not do this without his friends. Even if they don't remember him, even if she vilified him. It would take some convincing and a whole lot of waiting, but relying on these people, his family, was the only reason he was still here, half-alive as he was. And he sees no reason to stop believing in them now.

[pause]

Griffin: And now we're back in present day, you can make the *Lost* noise now Dad, if you want.

[Clint imitates the sound effect from the *Lost* title screen]

Griffin: And Barry Bluejeans is in front of you—

Travis: Now do a TARDIS noise.

Griffin: Oh, what else—

[Clint imitates the TARDIS take-off sound effects]

Griffin: You sound like a sick cat.

Justin: So either The Doctor is arriving to save the day, or my Dad is having an asthma attack.

[Clint sound effects become more strained]

Travis: It also kinda does sound like the Cowardly Lion. A lot going on there.

Clint: [imitating the Cowardly Lion from *Wizard of Oz*] Put 'em up! Put 'em up!

Griffin: A naked Barry Bluejeans is in front of you.

Clint: Oh!

Griffin: And he says...

Barry Bluejeans: I'm— I don't remember what I did last night, but I must've partied pretty hard to end up like this. Who are you guys and, um, also can I have those pants that you're holding there, dwarf guy.

[Magnus sighs]

Merle: Oh god, yes. Yeah, take `em. Here. Put `em on, Put `em on.

Griffin: He—

Merle: They're still warm, like right out of the drier.

Griffin: He puts on—

Barry Bluejeans: Yeah, it's a magic chest, I guess. I don't know why I'd know that. So, names? Who are y'all?

Taako: My name is Taako. The little fella is Merle, and the brawny one is Magnus.

Magnus: Well, I'm actually a wooden mannequin now, so not—

[Justin chuckles]

Magnus: I'm not as brawny as I used—

Barry Bluejeans: Okay..

Magnus: Picture this but brawnier, you know what I mean?

Taako: But actually, don't waste your time with that.

[Griffin laughs]

Taako: Because [chuckles] that's no longer a going concern.

Magnus: Yeah.

Merle: Imagine a pile of ashes.

Taako: Imagine a pile of ashes.

Magnus: Fair enough.

Griffin: He holds his head and he's like...

Barry Bluejeans: I don't— I don't remember any of this. Do I know you guy— Where are we?

Magnus: Well Barold, we had a run-in, uh... several I guess months? I don't know, I haven't kept track of the time.

Griffin: It was— It would've been over a year ago. Phandalin was probably about like 14 months ago or so.

Magnus: Over a year ago, we worked together on a thing. It didn't end great for you.

Barry Bluejeans: I don't remember. I don't remember any of that.

Magnus: I feel like you were—

Taako: Well just take our word for it then.

Magnus: Yeah, you've got a coin or something, that I think is gonna talk to you.

Griffin: He reaches into his pocket and sure enough, there's that coin. He says...

Barry Bluejeans: This?

Griffin: And as soon as he like lifts it to the sky, you all hear his voice and it says...

Clint: Eggs. Buttermilk.

Griffin: [in Barry's voice] [chuckles] "Eggs, buttermilk."

Clint: Beans.

Barry Bluejeans: Make sure to get the pinto beans.

Griffin: Is this Barry's voice? I don't remember it sounding as like... nasty mobster.

Clint: He's s'posed— He didn't sound like— I thought he sounded like Tom Arnold.

Griffin: There's no way I can—

Travis: No, he looks like Tom Arnold.

Justin: He looks like Tom Arnold.

Clint: Looks like Tom Arnold, right.

Griffin: This voice inside the coin says...

Barry Bluejeans: [from the coin] Your name is Barry Bluejeans. You are afraid of the dark. Your very favorite thing in the world is swimming in very cold water on a very hot day. You get ill when you drink milk or anything with milk in it. Your father, Gregor, died when you were too young to know him. Your mother, Marlana, had soft grey hair when you were born and was the most wonderful woman who ever lived. You remember them but you have forgotten so much. And right now, in this moment, you feel a dull weight in your chest. It's the weight of a love that defined and redeemed you, but you've forgotten who that weight belongs to. Barry, I'm you, just moments ago. And I remember who that weight belongs to, and I can help you remember it too.

Griffin: And Barry—

Magnus: Should we be here for this? [wheezes]

[Clint laughs]

Magnus: Does it— This seems very intimate.

Griffin: Barry in his human form says...

Barry Bluejeans: Yeah, alright.

Griffin: And the coin addresses you and says...

Barry Bluejeans: [from the coin] Boys, this is my true form, and now that you know that, your brains are gonna try to start to remember other things about me, and as much as you can you need to resist that urge. Because for nearly a year now, I've had to play a part that I'm uncomfortable with in order for you to not remember. In order to avoid not raising someone's suspicion. But believe me when I say I've been watching out for you the whole time.

Taako: Okay, I—

Magnus: So you need us to not remember. Got it.

Griffin: You c— So this coin can't talk back to you. It is pre-recorded. Which will be a challenge, I think.

Taako: So I only have one question, Barry. And I know you're just getting your sea legs again. Why did you feel it necessary to remind yourself that you're afraid of the dark?

[Clint chuckles]

Magnus: Yeah.

Taako: It seems like that's the anti-secret. You're doing reverse visualization right now. It seems like maybe you go in the dark and you just see how things go. I don't know why you'd have to—

Magnus: Yeah, are you worried you'll get to the dark and be like "Why do I feel this way"?

Taako: "What is this feeling?!"

Griffin: So, that was the coin trying to prove that it is Barry.

Travis: Oh, I see.

Justin: Ohhh, okay.

Griffin: Right? Like the coin knows these intimate details and so it can trust that—

Justin: Got it.

Griffin: Yes.

Justin: Got it.

Griffin: The coin says...

Barry Bluejeans: [from the coin] On my desk is a map of the Bureau of Balance headquarters, showing you how to gain access to Lucretia's vault. It was incredibly difficult to obtain that information. I can't step foot on the base in my lich form so—

[Clint gasps]

Barry Bluejeans: [from the coin] — I had to temporarily possess one of the Bureau's members in order to do some reconnaissance some months back. It was unfortunate collateral damage, but... it was necessary. Take me with you, follow my map, don't raise any suspicions, and you'll find what you need to fill in the gaps of your story. And keep me alive, 'cause if I go lich form up there, I'm toast.

Magnus: Uh—

Clint: Wait a minute, wait a minute. Wait wait wait wait wait. So— Now we're gonna work against the Bureau of Balance?

Travis: Yes, Dad. Surprising no-one on Reddit, we are now going to work against the Bureau of Balance.

Justin: Wai— I don't—

Griffin: I think this conversation should be happening in the game.

Travis: Yes.

Taako: I'm not convin—

Justin: Yes, I'm trying.

Taako: I'm not convinced by any of this. I mean I was reluctant to help anyone, but the Bureau of Balance is like—

Magnus: Boys.

Taako: W— I have no reason to distrust them.

Magnus: Barold? Will you excuse us for just one second?

Barry Bluejeans: I'm— This— I guess so. I think this is my cave, but I can give y'all some space, if you want.

Magnus: I mean, we can just—

Merle: And finish puttin' on your clothes.

Magnus: We'll scoot to separate parts of the cave, if you want. Um... Merle, Taako. I wasn't sure when to bring this up, but in Wonderland... The reason I was so... keen, uh to trust... the Red Robe... Well, I'll just show you.

Travis: And I pull out the rolled up parchment that I got from June.

Griffin: M-kay.

Travis: Or— Yes, right? From June.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: And unroll it.

Magnus: I— At the end of it, in... In Refuge. [sighs] June gave me this, and this... This was the Red Robe that helped set up the town and save the town. I— I don't remember any of it, but—

Griffin: Yeah, so you're showing it to them, and Taako and Merle, you're seeing this parchment for the first time, and you can see it's Magnus in a red robe, but you are having sort of the same sort of cognitive dissonance, where you just can't— You cannot form the thought in your

mind “Magnus is a Red Robe”. But you can see it, and it’s kind of fuckin’ with you a little bit.

Taako: What am I looking at?

Merle: What i—

Magnus: I don’t know! But—

Merle: Is this like one of those *MAD Magazine* covers you gotta fold together?

Magnus: It’s more—

Taako: Oh yeah, let’s try that.

Magnus: It’s more like a magic eye.

[Clint imitates paper folding sound effects]

Magnus: You gotta unfocus your eyes and then you can see it.

Merle: Oh. I always sucked at those.

Magnus: But I— I don’t— I, honest to God. Honest to Pan, Merle. Have no idea.

Merle: Shh, don’t even bring him up.

Magnus: I don’t know what this means, but it means... something, and I’ve been... remembering things. I can remember knowing Barry before now. I can remember being somewhere that had two suns.

Griffin: [interrupting] Woah— Uh uh uh. When you say that... Taako and Merle, you hear [makes static noises]

Magnus: I remember things... But I have no idea why or how. And [sighs] all I know is that there’s— There’s so much more going on.

Taako: Okay, so here's my theory. I think there's another Voidfish. It's not a big cognitive leap. When you were describing whatever it was you were just describing—

Justin: Which can he... hold it in his mind?

Griffin: Yes.

Justin: Whatever he's saying? Okay.

Taako: When you were describing what you were just describing, I heard the Voidfish crinkle tinkles. My ASMR was goin' buckwild.

Magnus: Yeah. It— It makes complete sense because...

[Clint wheezes]

Magnus: I swam with the Voidfish? And they sang to me.

Taako: [singing] Under the sea!

Magnus: Yeah.

[Griffin laughs]

Taako: [singing] Under the sea! Less than a sea, more of a tank, full of our filth!

[Clint, Griffin & Travis laughs]

Magnus: And when the Voidfish sang to me, it sang two words. "Egg" and "babe".

Merle: [pensive] Egg babe...

Taako: [thoughtful] Egg babe. Egg— Caviar...

Merle: Easter...

Magnus: I think it means that the Voidfish has a baby. I don't think that this is an intricate, like, you know.

Griffin: Yeah, this is not a fuckin' puzzle, it is essentially a junior jumble.

[Clint and Justin laugh]

Magnus: And the one last thing that you should probably know. Uhhh... Before we left the moon...

[Clint chuckles]

Magnus: I... broke into... the Bureau of Balance prison. To talk to Pringles.

Taako: Okay.

Magnus: And... found out that Pringles was there because something took over his mind, which I think all signs point to lich Barry. And he—

Clint: Which is a beautiful town in Connecticut.

Travis: Yeah.

Magnus: And it used—

Justin: [snorts] It's where *Gilmore Girls* was based on.

Clint: Yeah, Lichberry. [chuckles]

Magnus: And used his body... to break into the Director's vault. Uh, I should also probably say, so long as we're coming clean here, that I kidnapped the two guards to the prison. They were in our sphere when it got destroyed by the dragon, so they're totes dead. Um... so like—

Griffin: It was a chimera, but that does not change the fact that these—

Travis: Sure.

Griffin: — two boys are gone.

Magnus: So uh... The moon may be already very suspicious of me. Uhhh... Though they might have a hard time identifying me now, so we might already have a bit of a difficult time getting in there. But one way

or another, it does definitely seem to me that there's something in that vault.

Merle: Can I offer up an idea? Why do we have to break in and sneak in? We have the Bell, we have completed our mission, and we are supposed to report back.

Magnus: Well—

Merle: Why make it a... a heist?

Magnus: I think when we're there, the other fact of the matter is I'm not gonna be able to walk in there with y'all. Right?

Griffin: You hear the coin chime in actually, from across the room, and it says...

Barry Bluejeans: [from the coin] You'll need to disguise Magnus, obviously. And don't let anyone touch him or we'll be discovered.

Magnus: Ohhh.

Taako: Okay, that tracks. Listen. I have an update from Taako Central. I have updated my list of people I trust and things I believe to no one and nothing.

[Clint chuckles]

Taako: Not a joke. I don't trust you, half-pint. I don't trust Jeff from today's special. I don't trust Barold, whatever his name— Nobody. I trust nobody and nothing. And I'm— I have— You've convinced me to add the Director and her crew, her coterie, to that list, but it does not extend— It is no one. There is nothing and no one.

Magnus: Is it at least a sliding scale, Taako? Do you trust us like a little less or a little more than the Director? Where we at, as far as like placement on the spectrum?

Taako: It's a big ol' void, that— all orbiting Planet Taako, of non-trust.

Griffin: I think at this point Barry has collected his supplies from the chest and gotten dressed, and sort of rolled up the map to the Bureau of Balance and tucked it under his arm. And he says...

Barry Bluejeans: Hey uh, I— I don't wanna rush y'all, but the coin just said we should get the lead out. So um... I know I don't really know y'all, but I feel like I should? And I feel like I should trust ya, so I'm gonna chase that feeling for now, and um... I'm ready when y'all are.

Taako: I just want everybody to know I'm convinced of nothing.

Magnus: Fair enough, Taako.

Taako: I'm onboard, I'm along for the ride, but just because I don't wanna start my own podcast.

[Clint and Travis laughs loudly]

Magnus: Fair enough.

Griffin: The coin chimes in and says...

Barry Bluejeans: [from the coin] When y'all are ready, just step outside and summon a lift back to your base, using that bracer. Barry, usually I have you leave a bit of blood behind in the tank in case, well, the worst happens, but that won't be necessary this time because... Well, this is our last chance.

Magnus: There was talk of a disguise?

Merle: You are disguised! [chuckles]

Justin: Yeah, nobody's gonna fuckin'—

Clint: You're a wooden man!

Magnus: Yeah, that's not suspicious at all.

Clint: Well.

Travis: "What happened to Magnus?"
"Nothing. Don't worry about it. Also, here's our new friend."

Merle: What happened to Magnus? His body got destroyed.

Magnus: No, I can't be there, Merle!

Griffin: Let's talk—

Justin: He can't be Magnus.

Griffin: Yeah, let's talk in like... Let's come up with a game plan. How—
What are you all doin'? What's your prep? What are you doin'? Like I
wanna get this thing movin'.

[Justin sighs quietly]

Merle: Okay. If... If Taako's going along neutrally, I'm going along...
pessimistically. I don't like it. But... I'm pretty sure that without my
invaluable aid, you won't be able to pull off whatever it is you're gonna
pull off. So I will go along, for now.

Magnus: Fair enough.

Taako: Okay, fir—

Merle: But I'm not happy about it.

Taako: I gotta think through this.

Justin: I'll unroll a big scroll on the table of something.

Taako: The first thing we have to figure out is we need a plausible
backstory for... not Magnus. Magnus died. Pretty objectively. This can't be
Magnus, this wooden man. This Kim Cattrall that we have tailing us.

[Griffin laughs and claps quietly]

Justin: That's it folks, by the way, those are my two—

Griffin: That's it, those are the only two mannequin references you can do.

[Clint laughs]

Justin: Those are the only two that I have.

Griffin: Legally. Or the FCC will come shut us down.

Magnus: Point of fact, you got a Pocket Spa.

Taako: [sighs] You wanna live in my [wheezes]

Merle: [disgusted] Ugh!

Taako: You wanna live in my portable Hilton?

Magnus: I'm just saying—

Merle: Okay, how 'bout this. How 'bout this, how 'bout this.

Magnus: Barry and I could hang out in there, have a schvitz.

Merle: Alright, I got a— I have an idea. I have an idea. This mannequin is something that... Magnus carved along our travels. And then we knew we were gonna need somebody to pick up the Bell without being affected by it.

Taako: Ooo!

Merle: So Taako used his *Animate* spell. So this is basically just like a servant. This is like a wooden bell boy carrying our baggage.

Justin: That's a lovely story and I'm actually gonna go along with you, but I do wish I had been when we had discovered [snorts] fuckin' Magnus just carving a human man.

Griffin: Carving a full-scale man. [laughs]

Clint: I— Well that's— Wait.

Justin: [imitates Magnus' voice] "Well this is a man I made."

Clint: No, that's why he kept collecting arms. So he would have a model.

Griffin: Oh, that's good. That's, yeah. I'm into that.

Magnus: Well, I mean, the Director's been... to the— to Wonderland, right? So she knows there are mannequins there. [chuckles] I don't think we have to make me super creepy to sell this story.

Merle: Come on, tie in with the story.

Magnus: Okay.

Merle: Ties the threads.

Magnus: Okay, fine. Fine fine fine.

Griffin: Are you doing anything about Barry, or are you just gonna bring him up there too?

Merle: Jeez, we've gotta do everything?

Justin: Um...

Griffin: Just wanna have this figured out before we roll.

Justin: Yeah, no—

Clint: Why not let him—

Justin: We need a plan. I mean, I think the Pocket Spa could work for Barry. Let's do that.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: Barry, are you—

Taako: Barry, are you comfortable with that? You wanna live in my Pocket Spa?

Merle: Cucumber sandwiches.

Barry Bluejeans: I was not—

Taako: Raoul. Raoul is in there, he's got firm hands.

Barry Bluejeans: I was not into that until I heard you've got cucs. Let me at those green little guys.

[Clint chuckles]

Taako: Hop in.

Griffin: Okay, he hops in your Pocket Spa, which shrinks down Pokéball style, and you now have a pocket Barry.

[Clint snorts and wheezes]

Taako: I have a Pocket Barry.

Griffin: Alright.

Clint: Which we're gonna have to have a doctor look at.

[Justin snorts]

Griffin: It sounds like you guys are ready?

Magnus: Sure.

Taako: Hell yeah.

Merle: Yeah.

Griffin: Anything else— Any other details you wanna iron out?

Justin: Can I actually— You know what? Just for shits and giggles, I'm actually gonna run a Perception check. I have a 17 plus two, on the tank that Barry was in. Like anything I can pick up off of it. Investigation, I guess, should be actually the check.

Griffin: Arcana would be more appropriate. It's a—

Justin: Okay then, it's an Arcana check.

Griffin: It's a very super magical object. Yeah, it is a um... It's necromantic in origin. It is uh... currently sort of expended and it takes some time to recharge, but essentially it takes a person's biological material and can grow a new body out of it. But it's not like a cloning machine, like that body is essentially a corpse. And so Barry has been using this to grow new bodies that he can sort of pop into in his lich form, to continue his quest.

Travis: Cool.

Justin: Okay.

Clint: So there's no magic in it that the Umbra Staff could absorb.

Griffin: No. No.

Travis: I'm also gonna scope—

Griffin: The Umbra Staff defeats— absorbs— When a magic user is defeated, it absorbs their essence.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: I also wanna scope up this map that he's been laboriously working on to figure out the best path to get to the vault once we're actually in the moon base.

Griffin: Yeah, sure. It's pretty straight-forward. It's leading straight into the sort of central dome that the, like, the Relic...

Travis: Disposal?

Griffin: Disposal chamber, yeah. And like the main sort of throne room type area leading into the Director's office. It's in that room, and it gets a

little bit more granular once you're inside there, but I think we should just move in.

Travis: Yeah, as long as we can reference it later.

Griffin: Yeah, for sure. You've got that.

Justin: Yeah yeah yeah.

Clint: Okay.

Travis: Okay, let's do it.

Griffin: Alright, you all step outside from the cave and it's kinda rough out here. Those storm clouds are now overhead, but again it is not raining, it is not storming. And sort of weirdly, these clouds are still? They are not blowing and moving, they are just kind of still. Another thing you— Everybody roll a Perception check.

[sounds of dice rolling]

[Clint wheezes]

Justin: Uh, 12.

Travis: I rolled a nine plus something.

Justin: Nice.

Clint: Yip. My luck continues. I rolled a one.

Travis: Nine plus zero.

Clint: Alright.

Griffin: Taako, it is very faint, but you notice that like... [clicks his tongue] The grass ain't as green. And... the trees nearby, they look like they are... kinda wilting a little bit. Like it looks like the color is being drained from the world around you.

You are outside and if you want to summon a lift up to the Bureau, you know how to do it.

Travis: I don't know, Griffin. Is this the right time?

Clint: Punch—

Travis: There's gonna be an increase of like 200% cost. [pause] That's a joke about Lyfts. No? No one? Okay.

Griffin: Yeah, I gotchu.

Travis: Okay.

Clint: Alright, I hit the Uber button on the bracer.

Griffin: Sure.

Magnus: Uh, before it gets here, I should also say boys. One, keep in mind, you're probably gonna have to explain the Stones of Far Speech being gone. Two, I'm probably not gonna be able to talk. So I'm gonna just like, you know, automaton it pretty hard. You know, wooden statue and all that. So you might have to do the talkin' for me.

Merle: Okay, one. You done a pretty good job of not talkin' up to this point by filling us in on all this crap!

[Justin chuckles]

Merle: And two, okay.

[Griffin laughs]

Justin: Luckily, I reach into my Bag of Necessity here. Not my Bag of Necessity, just my regular inventory, sorry. I reach into my inventory and pull out my Band of Telepathic Thought.

Griffin: Mmm! That's good shit.

Justin: That lets me communicate with uh... Magnus. Why— Can we just— Okay, listen. I know we've been doing this show for a couple of

years. Can I just like... tell you guys fuck you for picking names that start with the same letter?

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: It's pretty—

Justin: Literally every time I talk about you—

Griffin: It's cruel.

Justin: — I have to remember which one of you is which one. It's really miserable for me. T! Taako. Tah. Taako. Easy to remember.

[Clint & Travis wheezes]

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Mu mu mu mu— Who knows?!

Clint: Well you know what, we're just learning all kinds of stuff about each other today, aren't we?

Justin: It just kills me. Okay, sorry. But I'll use— I don't remember, Griff. That was something I bought at Fantasy Costco, I think?

Griffin: Yeaup.

Justin: Oh, you know what? It was a fantasy gashapon. Yes.

Griffin: Okay. Let's not worry about it. You can communicate with Magnus telepathically.

Justin: But the other cats can't.

Griffin: No.

Justin: Can we just make it so they can, because I think it'd be weird...

Griffin: No.

Justin: No. No, you're right, you're right.

Griffin: When you slip on the telepathic band... You hear a voice? And it is a very, very familiar voice. And when you hear it, your heart swells up. And you don't know why. And you don't— Again, you don't know who it belongs to, and you don't even know where it's coming from. But it's close by and you hear this voice, and it sounds like somebody is sort of whispering to you from... a few hundred feet away in a cave, and you really have to listen for it. But this voice says...

Voice: Trust Barry. Love Barry.

Griffin: Those are the only words that you can kind of hear repeated, "Trust Barry. Love Barry". It's trying to like communicate something to you more like panicked now. But as it is talking to you, you hear the Voidfish's static. She's— And you hear this voice say...

Voice: Taako. It's me, it's [static]. It's me, trust Barry!

Justin: Is it Kravitz?

Griffin: It's not, no. It is a— It's a woman's voice.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: It's that same dissonance again where... this voice is so special to you. And it's like infuriating, like you can't remember who it belongs to. You can't remember why it's so familiar.

Travis: Is it like a sense memory? Where like you smell a smell and you feel positive and you don't know why. Like you don't know what it's connected to.

Griffin: Yeah. It's like that, yeah.

Justin: Okay.

Clint: What about Merle? No, I'll tell you what. No, let me answer that.

Merle: If you two guys are goin', I'm not gonna let ya go without me, so let's go.

Griffin: The orb, you see it come down from that stormy sky, very sl— very quickly, but then its inertia sort of slows down and it tumbles to a stop, right sort of in front of you. Point of order, Magnus. You're not wearing your bracer. It's not— you have it, it's in your inventory, but it's not on your body. Which is not, I guess, of note, although it is kind of worth knowing. Your bracer was on your body and then when your body got ashed, it was just sort of sitting in the ash. And now you just kind of have it but you can't really put it on 'cause it's still like closed in.

Travis: Yes.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Am I wearing my stuff? Or is it like all wrapped up in... like a bundle on my back?

Griffin: It's up to you. Are you wearing— Are you wearing your stuff?

Travis: I think it probably makes more sense, if I'm trying to sneak in and not look like myself.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: If I'm wearing whatever the fancy elven armor the mannequin had on was.

Griffin: Alright, cool. We're good.

Travis: But I'm still gonna keep it like all with me, you know what I mean?

Griffin: Sure. Yeah, absolutely. The hatch on the orb pops open. There are four seats and the little control mechanism that you've used a couple times now to get back up into heaven.

Travis: We get in.

Taako: We pull the lever.

Griffin: Alright.

Clint: And off we go.

Griffin: And—

Travis: It's awesome.

Griffin: Up.

[Clint sings travel music]

Justin: Griffin composes music for this program, Clinton.

Clint: Sorry, right. I forgot again, sorry.

Griffin: No, that's it. That was it— He actually got it like note for note, that's exactly what I was gonna do some—

Justin: Note for— That's exactly— What he sung—

Griffin: I was gonna do some clown bullshit.

[Clint laughs]

Griffin: I actually have it written down in my notes right here.

[Clint claps]

Griffin: It says "BPM 128, 4/4 time, clown bullshit".

[Justin laughs]

Griffin: A full—

Clint: Let me finish. [continues singing travel music]

Travis: I think that's— I think people got it.

Clint: Okay, good. Good.

[somber transition music plays]

[ad break]

Griffin: Got a few jumbotrons for this week's show. We've had an influx of folks asking us for birthday shout outs and stuff like that, and unfortunately we kinda have to stick with the Jumbotrons system, even though we're sold out, to accommodate those. Otherwise it would be unfair to the people who paid. And also like we can't spend this whole Money Zone spot just doing like a billion shout outs, so thank you to everybody who has supported this show with your Jumbotrons.

I'm talking about folks like Elaina, who has this message for Travis, and she specifies "Mine, not yours", who says [chuckles] And Elaina says "Dear future husband, happy four year anniversary (March 1st) and 30th birthday (March 15th)." Hey, I'm kinda in between there. "You are a bomb-ass chef, an awesome DM, and a very handsome boyfriend. How did I get so lucky? Remember that time you surprised me by bringing home two sweet kitties? I love you. Marrying you in May is gonna be the best. Love, your always wife." That's so much sweet stuff in that message. The lea— Not the least of which being the two kitties. "Surprise, here's two kitties!" I never get surprised with two kitties. I'm just kidding, I have a newborn baby, I alre— I don't want any more kitties, or really responsibility of any kind, so— But I'm happy for you and these kitties and this great, great love that you have, so congratulations.

Here's a message for— oh. For Team McElroy and it's from Team Avadon Sutton, who says "So this was supposed to be a sweet nerdy love note celebrating our exceptionally nerdy marriage, but seeing as how y'all have been so busy getting your own nerd love on, and it's now solidly six months after we got married, we've decided to— just to congratulate you on your awesome new nerdy babies. You guys are like the podcast soundtrack of our love." Well thank you, Team Avadon Sutton. Boy, I hope our babies are nerdy. I will not even know what to do with a jock baby. Just kiddin', I'll get real into Texas high school football. Hell yeah, are you kidding me? Yes, I'll live that *Friday Night Lights* dream, just me and Tammy Taylor. Just drinkin' white wine on a Sunday. [chuckles] That's everything to me.

[ad break]

[somber transition music plays]

Griffin: We see the Astral Plane. Just a few hours ago. The scene is, no pun intended, dead. There are no lights below the surface of the endless lake, no movement from the water at all, no sounds of spirits drifting beneath. There's only the motionless storm overhead, the thick layer of black ooze with ribbons of bright color sitting atop the water.

We see the Eternal Stockade, the prison in which ill-tempered souls are kept, where escapees from the Astral Plane are detained and rehabilitated. It is a large, cold fortress, hewn from stone and reinforced with steel, sitting on a solitary island on this dead black lake. And it is disquietingly still and silent for a long time.

And then from far away, we see a hand punch up through the oil slick surface, sending the only ripples out from this scene for miles. Kravitz has thrashed his way out of the water, fighting through God knows what to break free. He hoists himself up and onto the island the Eternal Stockade is built upon, cutting strands of thick slime away from himself with his scythe, which he retrieves from the ether as he takes his reaper form. Hands attached to long, tenebrous arms materialize in the slime and fly in his direction, but he's too fast now, too aware. They won't catch him off guard again.

He clears a few with a decisive swing of his scythe, then dashes backwards, throwing open the door to the Stockade and barricading himself inside. It's dark and still in here too, but it's always dark and still in the Stockade. Kravitz had seen so much during his time as the Raven Queen's charge, things that most adventurers given ten lifetimes would never even dream of. Arcane cults worshipping dragons made of light, cities of vast machinery and towers of gilded iron, crystallized laboratories rescued by lovable doofuses. But this scene, the world made ink black and frozen, he's never seen anything that could do this before.

And if it's happening in the other planes, he knows he has his work cut out for him today. He raises his scythe and cuts a familiar slice through the air, but no gateway to the living world opens up. He tries again and then a third time, to no avail. He hurriedly falls to one knee, pulling a fistful of black feathers from a pocket inside his robe. He lays five feathers out in a circle, attempting to commune with the Raven Queen, seeking

comfort and guidance. But for the first time since he joined her retinue, the Raven Queen doesn't answer.

Kravitz does not know what's happening, but now he knows two things at least. He is trapped, and he is alone.

[somber music swells, then fades away]

Griffin: You lift up into the hangar. And actually, on your way up the coin chimes in. And— Actually, I think Barry probably handed you all the coin, before he went into the Pocket Spa.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: Just so you could continue having this sort of line of communication with his spectral form.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: And the coin— Who's got it? Who has the coin?

Clint: I'll take it.

Griffin: Okay, Merle you hear the coin—

Clint: Is there a mute button, 'cause that could be a problem?

Griffin: There is— Yeah, there's not. The coin chimes in and it says— You hear Barry say...

Barry Bluejeans: [from the coin] Now listen, you gotta trust me here. You gotta give over the relic if they ask for it. We don't wanna raise suspicions. If we do this right, it won't matter who's got 'em. But, and this is very important, you can't let the Director see me with you up here.

Magnus: Okay.

Barry Bluejeans: [from the coin] Or else she's gonna figure it out.

Merle: [pained] Aww...

Griffin: Alright.

Clint: [imitating Shaggy from *Scooby-Doo*] I don't like this, Scoob!

Griffin: You're up in the hangar now and you pop up into sort of the launchpad, and you pop up there. And... Avi is like gob smacked to see you step out of the sphere.

Merle: Oh, wooden servant. Bring along our bags, and be quick about it.
[laughs mockingly]

Griffin: You— Avi like runs to the front door of the hangar and he shouts...

Avi: Guys, they're back! They're back! They're all here!

Griffin: And he runs over to the three of you and he's like...

Avi: Where have you been?! We lost contact with you! We thought you all died! We— Wait, where's— What happened to Magnus?

Taako: No, he did die.

Merle: Yeah.

Taako: You were one third right, my man.

Merle: Yep. And at one point, we both died, but we got better.

Taako: But we got better. Yeah, it's— It was very...

Griffin: He's—

Taako: Magnus didn't make it.

Merle: Yeah, no.

Griffin: He doesn't— He's like— He is in shock.

Merle: I know.

Griffin: And the doors to the hangar get thrown open, and you see Killian and Carey and Noelle and Davenport.

Clint: Oh shit. Shit shit shit.

Griffin: Walk in. And Carey runs towards the three of you and says...

Carey: Guys! You're back! I didn't— Wait, where's Magnus? What happened to Magnus?

Merle: Um... Uh...

Taako: He didn't— He didn't—

Merle: He didn't make it.

Taako: He didn't make it.

Merle: [choking up] We lost him. He's gone.

Griffin: She like—

Merle: [in a wheezy voice] He's dead. He's gone, turned to ash.

[Griffin wheezes]

[Justin chuckles quietly]

Griffin: This is a very—

Merle: He never knew—

Griffin: This is such a sad—

Merle: He never knew— [tearfully] He didn't know I loved him so much.

Griffin: She kinda like— She's— Oh, man. She takes this really rough. She kinda like collapses, and Killian has to like, rush in and kinda grab her. And Killian looks up and says...

Killian: What— What happened? How did it— How did it happen?

Taako: He, um...

Merle: Mm..

Taako: He was in the— We had to do battle with some...

Merle: [quietly] Battle.

Taako: Pretty tripped out liches.

[Merle sighs heavily]

Taako: And in the process of fighting them, Magnus wasn't— he heroically—

Merle: Oh, it was so amazing.

Taako: Heroically died.

Merle: [quietly] Yeah.

Taako: With his whole body.

Merle: Yeah, every last ash.

Taako: There's nothing, we couldn't even bring him back.

Merle: No.

Taako: You know what? In retrospect, we could've brought him back.

Merle: Yeah, maybe.

Taako: There wasn't a lot to pick up.

Merle: You know, we really didn't try.

Taako: We should've swept him up.

Merle: Yeah, that'd be—

Taako: I regret this now.

Merle: And we coulda scattered his ashes somewhere.

Taako: [choking up] Somewhere beautiful, he woulda liked that.

Clint: Is there an Academy Awards for podcasting?

[Griffin laughs]

[Travis chuckles]

Griffin: Or for— Or for roleplaying. Killian says...

Killian: Well, what happened to you guys? We lost contact with you. What happened to your Stones of Far Speech?

Taako: There was a— When we entered Wonderland, there's a lot of very strange magics that the liches who run it were using, and one of the side effects was our Stones of Far Speech were uh—

[Merle imitates an explosion sound effect]

Taako: Basically made inoperable, at some point.

Griffin: Roll a Bluff check on that one.

Travis: But that's true!

Justin: That's— I mean it's largely true.

Griffin: It is fairly true.

[sounds of dice rolling]

Justin: [snorts] Three.

[sounds of dice rolling]

Clint: 13.

Griffin: Well, you weren't talking.

[Justin wheezes]

Griffin: Killian says uh...

Killian: Well— Well, we were just trying to talk to you like a minute ago, where— Why aren't they working now?

Taako: We had to leave them behind there.

Merle: Yeah. Here's the thing, in Wonderland, they kept asking us to give things up and give things up, and we just decided "You know what? You guys would be there, all we had to do was hit our bracers at the end of the mission. And if we were dead, it wouldn't make any difference", so we gave up our Stones of Far Speech pretty quick because, well we needed our weapons and stuff, right?

Taako: For sure. For sure, for sure.

Merle: Yeah.

Griffin: Killian says...

Killian: Well it sounds like you all had a really... awful time.

Merle: Oh.

Killian: I'm so sorry about Magnus.

Griffin: And she— She kinda scoops up Carey, and Noelle's sort of helping Carey out too.

Clint: Aww.

Griffin: It's sort of a— It's a sad scene. And in the back of the room, towards the door, Davenport just kinda...

Davenport: [clears his throat] Daven— Davenport. Davenport.

Griffin: And he is— He's flanked by two guards. And he is standing next to a tray with one of those big lead balls on it, that you all have plopped the Relics inside to be destroyed. And Killian says...

Killian: Oh, yeah they wanna get the Relic blown away as quickly as possible. The Director's really eager to get her hands on this one, so. Um... Let's just get this taken care of and... I guess figure out a funeral? Is that, I guess next—

Taako: Seems about right. We can launch him into space like Spock.

Merle: Oh, man!

Taako: It'd be sweet.

Merle: That would be very cool.

Griffin: How's—

Taako: But I do have to warn you though, please be careful. This— The mannequin you see, I reclaimed—

Merle: Woody. His name's Woody.

Taako: Woody. Hm. Clever.

[Griffin snorts]

Taako: I reclaimed him from Wonderland to try to study more of their magics and advance my own understanding, but please be careful and don't touch him. There's some very powerful, dangerous magics that this mannequin has been under the influence of.

Griffin: Now this is a fuckin' big old lie.

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: Ah, is it a— I mean, it's a lie, so this is gonna have to be a Bluff.

Justin: It's a semi-lie.

[sounds of dice rolling]

Justin: And I got a [snorts] four-arino [chuckles] on that one.

[Clint laughs]

Griffin: I think Killian kinda stands up, and now sort of Noelle is helping Carey out, and she says...

Killian: You brought back some dark... wizardry artifact back to our home?

Travis: I think telepathically to Taako.

Magnus: I'm holding the Bell, and make it something about like transporting the Bell safely.

Justin: Okay.

Magnus: It's the most powerful thing, something.

Taako: Okay. Hey, listen. That makes perfect sense, but Davenport's right fucking here, so as soon as we give them the Bell, they're gonna put you in the fucking furnace, okay? So I'm trying to have a little bit of a long game here, so you don't get turned into matchsticks, my dude!

Magnus: Fair enough. Uh...

Griffin: Davenport clears his throat again. [clears his throat] And kinda points to the orb.

Merle: Well, we knew that one of us couldn't handle the Bell. It's just too strong. So that's why we— That's why we used the Woody here.

Taako: Right.

Merle: And you know, with his woodness and stuff, he uh— You know, he could handle the Bell safely.

Taako: And—

Merle: And we've become quite fond of him, too.

Taako: I am also a member of a coalition of wizards that is studying these sorts of poorly understood magics. I'm the vice-president of the organization.

Griffin: Bluff a fuckin'— Bluff o'clock! What is this? Persuasion— Okay, it's— it's half-past Persuasion time!

Justin: Well, I know but by pretending that I'm in a position of authority—

[sounds of dice rolling]

Justin: — within this organization, I can use my Plastic Sheriff's Badge.

Griffin: Okay, okay.

Justin: And add three to these Bluffs.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: And I rolled a 16 on mine.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: So, I'm gonna Bluff on that one.

[sounds of dice rolling]

Justin: And I'm gonna add three to get 18.

Griffin: Okay. She says...

Killian: Okay, that all— That all makes—

Travis: [laughs] Alright!

Killian: No, that makes sense.

Justin: A double-bluff.

Killian: Sure.

Justin: You rebluffed and [laughs] undid the other one.

Killian: Well, let's just— Let's just... Just load it up and hand over the Relic and— I'm sorry, I've gotta— I've gotta go. And Carey, let's just— Carey, let's get out of here.

Griffin: And they— The three of them head out, but Davenport is still there with his retinue and the orb.

Travis: I clunk my way over.

Griffin: 'Kay.

Travis: Or, wait.

Taako: Wait, are you sure? Magnus, are you sure this is a good idea?

Griffin: Is this telepathic?

Justin: It should be assumed that if I'm talking to Magnus.

Griffin: Yeah sure, gotchu.

Justin: Just as a contrivance.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: We're talking telepathically.

Magnus: It's— It's the only thing we got. I— We have to play this out, one way or the other. And frankly Taako, at this point, we're not at the point of no return yet. When we get there, we'll have some decisions to make. But right now, this is what we'd be doing anyways.

Taako: Davenport, can I ask you a favor?

Davenport: [eagerly] Davenport.

Taako: [unamused] I get it. Um—

[Clint and Travis laughs]

Taako: The— [chuckles] The— I've always wanted to see where these bad boys go, and since this is our last shot at it, can I follow you and see what happens to the Relics?

Griffin: He sort of taps his foot and he thinks for a second, and he... Hmm. He... He shakes his head no.

Davenport: [sadly] Davenport. Davenport.

Taako: Okay. Well, you know, you can't blame a—

Magnus: Taako.

Taako: An elf for trying.

Magnus: Taako.

Taako: Yeah?

Magnus: Tell him I am also a powerful artifact and need to be destroyed.

Taako: Are you... sure?

[Griffin chuckles quietly]

Taako: That's— Listen, kitty-kat. I don't know how many lives you got left in there, huh?

[Clint giggles]

Magnus: Alright. Well, hold on to that. We'll save that if we need to get into that chamber.

Taako: Yeah, good idea though. Keep it on the back-burner, for sure.

Griffin: Davenport like insistently like...

Davenport: [clears his throat aggressively] Davenport!

Taako: Give him the Bell.

Magnus: Say it out loud.

Taako: [dramatically annunciating] Give him the Bell!

Travis: I clunk my way over. To give—

Griffin: That was a good fuckin' catch [chuckles] Magnus.

Clint: Wow.

Griffin: Okay, he— He just points into the ball hole.

Travis: I wait.

[Clint wheezes]

Taako: [exasperatedly] Put the Bell in the thing!

Travis: I do it.

Griffin: Alright. And Davenport shuts the hatch on this orb and starts to wheel the cart out of the chamber, with his two guards. And the doors close behind him. And Avi is like— Avi's really bummed out. He's the only person still in here with y'all. He's just kind of— He's polishing one of the spheres and he actually pops open a flask and he's a little bit weepy, and he raises it towards you all and he says...

Avi: To Magnus. He was uh... He was a good dude.

Griffin: And he takes a drink of it.

Avi: Do you guys want— Do you guys want any?

Merle: Hell, yeah. Yeah yeah yeah.

Avi: 'Kay.

Merle: [slurps loudly] Ahhh, good. Taako?

Taako: No thanks.

Merle: Oh and by the way, Avi. You know, we'd like Magnus's share of the rewards so we can make sure it gets into his—

Avi: I'm not the guy to talk to about that.

Merle: The hands—

Avi: You know that.

[Justin snorts]

Travis: Yeah.

Merle: I know, but I figured you'd know who to talk to because, you know—

Avi: [irritated] I don't know, the Director or somebody. I don't know.

Magnus: Taako. Taako.

Merle: The Director. Sure.

Taako: Yeah, what's going on?

Magnus: I think it's time to move on.

Taako: Okay.

[Clint chuckles]

Taako: [loudly] I think it's time to move on!

Merle: I agree with Taako!

[Griffin chuckles]

Taako: That's what Magnus would've wanted.

Merle: That's exactly what Magnus would've wanted.

Avi: You're right.

Taako: Trust me on this one.

[Justin laughs]

Merle: And it's almost like he's here.

Griffin: [claps] Avi says...

Avi: You're right. [choking up] He would want us to all move on!

[Clint, Justin & Travis chuckles]

Taako: That's so sweet, little fella, but I'm actually talking pretty literally [chuckles] in this case.

Griffin: Alright. You're heading out?

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: You step out to the main, big, grassy quad, in the middle of the Bureau Headquarters. There's a few people milling about, but most folks are actually inside, 'cause where you are in the moon base, you're pretty close to the— to this storm above, and so I think folks are just like "Oh, I don't wanna get rained on", so they are hangin' out in their respective dormitories or wherever indoors. And following the map, you are— You walk out of the hangar and towards the other end of the base.

And on your way there, you walk fairly close to the entrance to Fantasy Costco. And the doors slide open automatically. Automagically.

Travis: Ooo!

Griffin: But the theme song doesn't play. And it kinda looks like it's been ransacked in there. And that's all you can see from your position of the Fantasy Costco.

Taako: What the hell happened in there? But— Can we go take a look?

Magnus: Yeah, let's check her out.

Taako: You— Oh, who's—

Merle: Who said that?

Taako: You're just tellin' me.

Magnus: Yeah.

Taako: Perfect. The— I think Magnus would want us to look in the Fantasy Costco to see what's happening.

Griffin: Okay. You head inside and you realize it hasn't really been— It's not like it's been raided or anything like that, it's just like there's nothing on the shelves. There's big crates of stuff that have been sealed up, and there are some bags that have been packed up. And Garfield is just leaving. You can tell like Garfield is shippin' out with all this stuff.

And you see him sort of drifting to and fro. We've never described Garfield fucking at all, which just explains why like most of the fanart of him it literally the orange lasagna cat.

Clint: [wheezes] Garfield. [laughs]

Griffin: And I'm not about to start now, but he's drifting around and sort of getting things packed up. And he sees you three come in, and he says...

Garfield: Oh! Uh... We're— We're closed. Thank you for coming to Fantasy Costco though. [singing] Fantasy Costco were all your dreams come true! Got a deal for you! [speaking] Alright, see yah later!

Taako: Uh, hold on just a second, Kemosabe.

Merle: The sign says open 24 hours.

Garfield: Well, that doesn't really take into account the apocalypse, so I'm gonna— I've gotta get the old road, Jack. But uh—

Taako: What—

Garfield: The deals—

Taako: What's happening? Wait, what's happening?

Garfield: I'm not a hundred percent sure but look outside. It's clearly fuckin' pretty— about to pop off in a pretty fuckin' bad way out there. And it's also, I mean what's— Also what's the point of— Damnit, Taako.

The last time you came in here, you thwarted me in a test of mercantile wits, and that I'll never recover from. So... my days as a shopkeep are over, I've been humiliated. I'm out of the game. I need to go hold up somewhere, just try to start a new life, I guess, because apparently vending isn't my game.

Magnus: Taako.

Taako: Yes?

Magnus: I need my blood.

Taako: What?

Magnus: Garfield has my blood.

Taako: Why?! What?

Magnus: I sold it, remember? In the trade. He got some of my blood and my hair.

Taako: Okay.

Magnus: And I—

Taako: Hmm, yeah sure.

Magnus: I need it.

Taako: Okay. Listen, Garfield.

Griffin: He turns and says...

Garfield: Yeeees?

Taako: Just one mome. Can— Listen, I need something from you before—

Garfield: I told you, my trading and selling days are over.

Taako: I know.

Garfield: I'm a joke!

Taako: I understand that you may think—

Garfield: I'm a sham!

Taako: I [chuckles] understand. I— Listen.

Garfield: [sadly] I'm a wiener boy.

Taako: I got beaten too before, and I know it stings, but I'm gonna need Magnus's blood. He died, and we just really would like to have something—

Griffin: He jerks his—

Taako: To remember him by.

Griffin: He jerks his head towards you as soon as you say that.

Justin: Mm.

Griffin: And he says...

Garfield: You need... Magnus's blood.

[Clint wheezes]

Garfield: Hmm! [giggles mischievously] Delightful.

Griffin: He strokes his chin and he says...

Garfield: Well. Maybe we'll do one last trade. What will you give me for it?

Taako: I... will give you something very special.

Justin: And I pull out a glossy five by seven.

[Travis gasps]

Clint: [chuckles] You couldn't even go eight by ten? [laughs]

Justin: No, I was— I bought it on the cheap, this was all I had left.

Taako: Look at this. And guess what? I'll personalize it with your first... name. Just to you. [dictating while writing] To my friend—

Clint: William—

Griffin: He laughs.

Clint: H. Garfield.

Taako: And I underline "friend" here, you can see that, so they know it's legit.

Clint: Did you put a little heart in the "i"?

Taako: Garfield, the— I dotted the "i" with a heart.

[Clint wheezes]

Taako: [dictating] Garfield. Keep reaching for the stars.

[Clint wheezes]

Taako: Nothing's finer than eating in your diner. Sincerely, Taako.

Clint: Wow.

Griffin: He grabs it and he just kinda cackles. He's like...

Garfield: You know you're going to have to do much, much better than this! What am I gonna do with an eight by ten from a former cooking TV show host?

Clint: It's not even an eight by ten. [wheezes]

Taako: It's a five by seven, first off.

Garfield: Oh, much better.

Taako: "Former" is very judgy. Maybe you can see into the future, but I certainly can't.

Griffin: He says...

Garfield: I'm disappointed, I guess. You so thoroughly out-vendored me in our last transaction, I thought you were hot shit. I thought I'd finally found somebody who could stand up to my test of mercantile powers, but apparently I was wrong!

Taako: Okay. Okay. I need a moment to myself to really think about this. Give me just a second.

Merle: You weren't even— You didn't even react to him telling you that our buddy Magnus was dead. [choking up] How about cuttin' us a little bit of a break, you jerk.

Justin: Just so everyone knows, uh... I have— I am using a sixth level spell slot currently.

Griffin: Okay?

Justin: I have used a sixth level spell.

Griffin: You gonna tell cha boy what?

Justin: Yeah, I'll tell cha boy. Yeah, I guess it's hard 'cause you know you always wanna keep that dramatic tension, but I guess you do have to say what spells you're casting. It's kind of the part— one of the gameplay issues. I'm casting *Drawmij's Instant Summons* on the Flaming Raging Poisoning Sword of Doom. It— I touch an object whose longest dimension is six feet or less. It leaves an invisible mark on its surface and invisibly inscribes the name of the item on a sapphire I use as the material component. And at any time thereafter, I can use the action to speak an item's name and crush the sapphire and summon it to be instantly.

[Clint wheezes]

Taako: Okay, Garfield. You win.

[Clint snorts]

Taako: Fine! Here is the Raging Poisoning Sword of Doom.

Merle: No!

Taako: I know.

Merle: Taako, don't!

Taako: I know. Listen, I've thought this through.

Merle: You love that sword!

Griffin: His eyes light up. He's like...

Garfield: My sweet! My love! You're giving it back to me?

Taako: Yes, you can carry it for me.

Merle: Taako! Don't!

Justin: [laughs] I just conned this dumb son of a bit—

Taako: Hold on, let me finish and then I'll gloat.

Merle: Okay.

Taako: Here we go, I am going— This hurts `cause it's just some blood. It's probably coagulated, but here. Please, go ahead and give me some blood of his, Magnus's blood, and you can have the sword.

Garfield: Sword first, please!

Taako: Okay, here you go.

Justin: And I hand it over.

Griffin: He smiles and he says...

Garfield: You have no idea what I went through to get my hands on this priceless artifact.

Griffin: He says...

Garfield: A deal's a deal. The blood is yours.

Taako: Yeah.

Griffin: And he tosses you, Taako, a ring of keys. And he says...

Garfield: You'll find it in the back room, it's one of those.

Taako: Fuckin'—

Garfield: Well, I'm gonna go before you change your mind. Thanks, sucker!

Griffin: And he twirls his cloak around him, and in a puff of smoke, he is gone and all of these crates and bags of stuff also burst in a puff of smoke and are disappeared, and you are standing in an empty Costco with the keys to the place.

Justin: Nice fuckin' customer service, Jesus.

Clint: No follow up, no receipt.

Travis: Yeah, he didn't even offer like a five-year protection plan or anything.

Clint: No.

Justin: Okay, so do I— I guess I'll head to the back. Is there a back? Is that where this blood is?

Griffin: Yeah, there's a door. It's just like an office door.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: With a doorknob on it, and the doorknob has a lock.

Justin: Okay, I open it with the keys, I hope. I guess I try 'em until I find the one that works, I dunno.

Griffin: Yeah it take— On like— There's about 30 keys on this ring, but on like the sixth one—

Justin: Well, let me roll on that.

[sounds of dice rolling]

Justin: 'Kay, I got a 12. So yeah, it sounds about right.

Griffin: Yeah, about the sixth. And you open up the back room to the Fantasy Costco. And back here are some more emptied out shelves, and there are some freezers back here, some storage freezers. Just a lot of different sort of storage things. There's a desk with like an accounting notebook on it, there's a cash register that's emptied out, there's a safe that's been opened and emptied.

[Justin sighs]

Griffin: But then there's a... long table. And sitting on this long table are a few items that have not been taken out of here. And you see a battleaxe, and you see a shield. And the shield has a little bit of blood on it, although it looks like some of it's been scraped off. And there's a deck of Cheatin' Cards sitting on this table, and then there's some beakers and

a centrifuge sitting on this table. And uh... next to this table with all of Magnus's sold back gear and lab equipment on it... is a pod. And inside of it, you can see, through this green, brackish fluid, you can see Magnus's body.

And then I think we get another cutscene and it's actually that auction cutscene. And we see Barry there and he's placing bids, and we zoom out just a little bit, and we see Garfield sitting immediately right next to Barry, also bidding on these items. And in front of you is a pod with a good, fresh Magnus body inside of it.

Taako: Well this presents some unique challenges.

[Clint chuckles]

Magnus: Not for me. [chuckles] I want my body back.

Taako: Um.

Magnus: Do— Is there a button we pu— Like how do— I want— I want it? I feel like a kid at Christmas— at Candenights. Please, let me have my body.

Taako: Wait, hold on. Now, wait a second. Magnus—

Merle: We've already said he wasn't there!

Taako: Magnus, you've gotta think this through. Now hold on a sec, you've gotta think this through. You... You'll lose everything. I mean, not your gear and your weapons and your items and Steven, but you'll— you'll be starting from scratch.

Merle: No memories.

Magnus: But I'll have my body back.

Taako: Hey, remember this one? I want my body back body back—

Merle & Taako: [in chorus] Body back, buh buh buh.

Taako: Remember? Chilli's? No, but seriously. You'll lose it all. Is it the beard? 'Cause I'll draw a beard.

[Clint & Griffin chuckles]

Taako: I'll even use some yak fur and spirit gum and getcha a nice simulacra.

Magnus: It's—

Merle: And we have already explained that you're dead. That you got turned into ash!

Magnus: I—

Merle: If they see you, the gig's up.

Magnus: I can't feel anything.

Taako: So you can't feel sad that you don't have a body, right?

Magnus: I— I'm not hungry, I don't breathe, my heart doesn't beat. Do you under— Do you understand?

Taako: Mmm... I do. I do understand, I see where you're coming from. I mean, honestly—

Magnus: And that's me! That's me! Right there.

Taako: It's sort of you. It's your body, but is that really you? I mean, honestly?

Magnus: Those are the arms that have held my wife.

Taako: They— They're a clone. It's not you.

Magnus: I can't fight. I can't protect. I can't do anything in this body. I have—

Merle: Could we take—

Magnus: I have worked all my life to be able to fight and protect and do good.

Clint: Could we take the pod with us?

Griffin: It—

Clint: Could we put the pod in the Pocket Spa?

Griffin: It would be a— It would take a lot. I'm so in love with this that I'm not gonna interfere and tell y'all.

Merle: Leave him up— Leave it up to him.

Taako: It's your call, man.

Merle: Really and truly, but really think about it. Really and truly think about what's the most important thing to you.

Taako: And honestly, really and truly think about the potential of uh [wheezes] Taako and Merle being your fuckin' uh John G here.

[Clint wheezes]

Taako: Just tryin' to reeducate you about the world. There's some pret— Like you are coming back as the a, number one fan of Taako, and also my personal assistant, for sure.

Griffin: The only thing I wanna say here, and I wanna sort of put this doubt in your mind. You guys are making some assumptions about what he will and won't remember. It's not like he's a— gonna be like a newborn baby. You know what I mean?

Taako: I mean, you're running— I should clarify then, you're running the risk of that, for sure.

Magnus: Here's what I've got. Seems to me like what I've got... is an extra life. And it would be... wasteful to burn that now. I have a perfectly good body sitting right here and I'm in a bit of a disposable one right now. Am I wrong? Am I missing something?

Taako: No, that— that tracks, to me, as I understand it.

Merle: And think about it, it's to our benefit, for once! In this lousy podcast, we're thinking about somebody other than ourselves. We'd much rather have meaty, beaty, big and bouncy Magnus around.

Magnus: Got it. Boys.

Merle: But we're trying to think about you.

Magnus: Boys. Head on to the Director's office. Taako, you let me know when, and I'm gonna make a whole hell of a lot of noise.

Taako: Okay, but you have to think through this. If we're not with your body, you are going to wake up with no idea of what's going on. You don't have a fancy-schmancy cool coin. You will wake up and have no clue.

Magnus: Leave me the map, leave me a note, but I can help. This is something I can do with this stupid shell of a body. If I go in there with you now, as this mannequin, I can't do anything. But this, this I can do for you.

Taako: Okay. Alright.

Merle: You know, next time you see us, you won't know who we are, probably.

Magnus: I know.

Taako: That's a— That's a kind of a mixed bag, honestly. [chuckles]

[Clint laughs]

Taako: There's a little of column A, little of column B in that one.

Clint: Are we leaving? Are we gonna leave him here? Do what he said?

Travis: It's up to you.

Justin: I guess, yeah.

Clint: Okay.

Justin: I think we have to.

Clint: I put my hand up. I gesture for the mannequin to bend over, and I look him in the eyes and I say...

Merle: See ya, good boy.

Magnus: Okay, weird.

Merle: Yeah, a little bit.

Magnus: Okay.

Griffin: Why did you say that?

Clint: I didn't real— I didn't really think that out, I really thought that would sound like more—

[Griffin snorts]

Travis: You could've just gone with "That'll do, pig" and it woulda been better.

Clint: Yeah, that'll do pi— Oh, man.

Justin: That'll do, pig.

Clint: Can I do it again? That'll do, pig.

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: I think so.

Travis: Perfect.

Griffin: I think—

Magnus: Now go. Go go go.

Griffin: And I think, in fiction, you just do both things, back to back.

Justin: [cackles] Okay.

Merle: Okay. Come on, Taako.

Griffin: Anybody— Anybody else have a last thing they wanna say to each other before you guys split up the party?

Justin: I will do this though. Uh... Just before we leave, I leave a sapphire on the table, next to the note.

Travis: Aw, shit!

Griffin: What's the note?

Justin: The note explains the situation and everything that he would need to know about the situation that we—

Griffin: What's the note— Give me— I— This image is too good 'cause I imagine you had to write this very quickly. What does the note say?

Justin: The— It says— On there it says "Trust the voices in your head and open your mouth, and let the first words you speak be 'Flaming Raging Poisoning Sword of Doom'."

Griffin: And you leave that behind and leave—

Justin: Oh, and at the very end it says "PS (That means post-script, in case you learned that after you forgot)."

[Clint laughs]

Justin: "PS means post-script. You're gonna wanna smash that bad boy too. Smash that— Smash that bad boy".

Clint: And put some clothes on.

Justin: And put some clothes on.

Griffin: And the two of you walk out of the room and into the empty Costco, leaving Magnus behind with his body.

Travis: And as they walk out, I just want— This is what I want you to picture for the mannequin body. I'm laying out all of Magnus's armor and clothes and goods on the table, like laid out, you know like this— these are yours. I pick up the old shield, I pick up the old battleaxe, and I start walking for the Voidfish's chambers.

[somber music plays]

Griffin: We see the floating Bureau of Balance headquarters. And it's now. We see Magnus laying out his possessions in front of his new body, his mind still addled with memories he cannot quite process or explain. We see Merle, the dwarven cleric, and Taako, the elven wizard, departing a large, emptied out megastore and walking towards the main dome on the far side of the complex, still unsure in their stride.

We see inside that dome, the Director, making preparations to destroy the Grand Relic as Davenport delivers it. We see Angus McDonald, the world's greatest detective, watching this process intently, as he watches most things. And we see Carey, inconsolable at the unceremonious death of her best friend. She's in her private quarters with her girlfriend, Killian, and her robotic teammate, Noelle, neither of whom know exactly what to say. What do you say? We see Johann, who just finished restringing a fiddle, which he plucks happily as he begins composing a new meal for the Voidfish, which floats nervously in its tank.

And then we're back outside and we pan up. And up and up. Past the sky, past space, beyond the boundaries of the Prime Material Plane in which this story takes place. And we see more planes now, the Astral Plane, the Plane of Thought, the Elemental Planes, all of them. All 12 planes that make up our planar system, moving in perfect orbit, perfect synchronicity, sustaining each other in a meticulous, demanding dance.

And then... we pan up. And we see a 13th plane descending. It is a disc of shimmering, living darkness. Crossed with ribbons of bright blue, red, green, gold. It is larger than the other planes combined. And as it lowers, slowly, bright white eyes begin to open all across the underside of this plane. Millions of them, burning with malice and... hunger. All focused

inward and down, back down, all the way back down, on the floating headquarters of the Bureau of Balance.

And somewhere inside of that living plane, we see a smile flash across someone's face.

[music ramps up to an abrupt end]

[ukulele chord]

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[ad break]