

## The Zone of Adventure: Imbalance - Episode one

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**Aabria:** A woman sits in a warm and quiet room, knitting. Her face serene and furrowed slightly with focus on her craft, is framed by long white hair that reflects the soft glow of some unseen light source. The clicking of her needles goes unbroken for minutes, hours, eras. Until their eyes open suddenly, with alarm.

She looks... she looks at her piece with dismay. Dropped stitches, holes. Flaws in her great work is to size. And looks over at the bearded vulture perched beside her. The past is... it isn't pristine. It's not an immutable record of our triumphs or our failures. It's just as in flux as the future. Just as vulnerable. If not more so. Because the shape of it is already known.

=The bird slowly blinks its eyes and drops its beak in a knowing nod. And the lady of fate, satisfied with her few, cryptic words resumes her knitting. Queen warrior as ever. Watches and waits.

[Imbalance theme music plays]

**Aabria:** And we move from that hidden place into the world, into the future. Where our camera alights on Merle Highchurch. It's been about 10 years since the day of Story and Song. Where are you? On an unclouded, like very neutral morning in the mid-summer.

**Clint:** In a cabana. On a beach.

**Travis:** I should hope so! Not like in a cabana, at Walmart.

**Clint:** In the Antarctic. [chuckles]

**Griffin:** [chuckles]

**Aabria:** [laughs] Like, you don't know how Merle rolls.

**Travis:** That's fair. I hope I do at this point!

**Aabria:** [chuckles] He's different now.

**Clint:** That's right! It's 10 years, man! I can be completely different.

**Justin:** Gritty.

**Aabria:** Yeah, this is the dark reboot.

**Clint:** Listening to Kenny Chesney music. I think he's kind of chilling, got his toes in the sand. Relaxing.

**Travis:** You know, it just clicked to me, I don't think we've ever discussed this or maybe even made this connection. But with the Planer Connections that were explained through all of this, maybe Merle is a fan of the actual Kenny Chesney.

**Griffin:** It's possible.

**Aabria:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Not like fantasy Kenny Chesney.

**Aabria:** Actual Kenny Chesney.

**Travis:** But like, yeah, it's somehow bled through riffs or whatever.

**Justin:** I like that idea, that he's getting like a lot of iTunes downloads, that he doesn't understand where they're coming from.

**Griffin:** Well, it would be Zune.

**Aabria:** It would be on a Zune, yes.

**Justin:** Zune, yeah.

**Aabria:** There's this like incredibly meticulously etched like copper circle. And you see some like arcane words in a language you don't speak, because common isn't English. And it's just the full display of a Zune and it's playing Kenny Chesney and you are vibing right now.

**Justin:** It's The Adventure Zune.

**Aabria:** No! No. [chuckles]

**Clint:** Oh!

**Justin:** Yeah... We should sell that.

**Clint:** Oh, wow.

**Aabria:** That's very good.

**Travis:** We could probably get the rights to sell Zunes pretty easily.

**Griffin:** Probably.

**Aabria:** That's gotta be free.

**Justin:** Sure, yeah.

**Aabria:** 100%.

**Justin:** Public domain.

**Aabria:** [laughs]

**Travis:** "We have a bunch leftover in the warehouse!" [chuckles]

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Aabria, in your notes that you prepared for this, did you have set five minutes aside to talk about Microsoft's failed mp3 player, the Zune?

**Aabria:** I did, I am incredibly thorough.

**Griffin:** Okay, good.

**Justin:** That's good.

**Travis:** Amazing, the prep!

**Aabria:** [chuckles] Merle, you are sitting, as these like slick tunes waft through the Cabana and kind of out onto the beach in front of you. And your view of this lovely, pristine shore is suddenly blocked as a like bright green, like gecko green lizardfolk, holding a little tray—with that like, you know the little towel that always lets you know that's a server? I don't know what actual servers wear, because I don't go outside—leans into your view and just...

**Server:** Can I—are you—do you need anything else? Would you like another drink?

**Merle:** Oh, no, Maury, I feel pretty good. That last Harvey Wallbanger kind of... [chuckles] you know, knocked me out a little bit. So, no, I'm good. I'm good. I'll tell you, if Rosemary wants to bring out some more of those little... what are they, the things with the little weenies, with the bacon wrapped around them?

**Maury:** Yeah, yeah, it's a double pig. We can bring—

**Merle:** I'll take some of those. Yeah!

**Maury:** We'll bring more of those. Yeah, that's not a problem, okay.

**Merle:** Double pigs, yeah.

**Aabria:** And he kind of gives you like a little like... he curtsies, he doesn't really know why. He doesn't know how to leave effectively. And so—

**Travis:** He's waiting for a tip! You gotta tip him!

**Aabria:** He was 100—yeah, I'm not even gonna make you roll insight. He was 100% like vamping for a tip.

**Griffin:** [chuckles]

**Merle:** Here, this is for you.

**Griffin:** Was that a grape?

**Aabria:** [chuckles] What is that?

**Clint:** Oh, that's right, I forgot about the focus. No, it's just a... 10 sided die.

**Aabria:** Okay...

**Griffin:** That's a weird tip.

**Clint:** Of course it is!

**Aabria:** He takes it and you can hear him kind of like biting on it and gnawing on it as he—

**Travis:** It's just like my 18 month old! No, don't eat it!

**Aabria:** [chuckles] Immediately in the mouth. He's got to explore it with his teeth.

**Clint:** And Maury is a lot cuter than Geico lizard.

**Aabria:** Love it.

**Griffin:** Right, sure.

**Aabria:** That guy was extremely cute. But different strokes for different folks. And yeah, a couple of minutes later, Rosemary, who has been like completely creeped out by your advances, sends the lizard folk back over with her regards. And a massive plate of bacon wrapped... what was it, a bacon wrapped hot dog? Yeah.

**Clint:** A little, tiny—yeah. Cocktail weenies!

**Aabria:** A little cocktail weenie situation for you.

**Travis:** If someone kept asking me to give them the double pig, I would also be creeped out.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** Easily misinterpretable.

**Aabria:** She named it that but regretted it upon saying it, and has not been able to eat those words back into her body and move on with her day. So, what are you doing? Is this like, is this your life now? Are you just like a cool, retired adventurer? Like why are you here? The fuck is this?

**Clint:** He is bored as shit. Mavis has gone off to college. Mookie is in a fantasy military school. And he's got nothing to do. The adventuring for higher, you know, the academy that he started is kind of on autopilot. He didn't have to do anything at all. And he gave a little attempt at writing his memoirs, or his mem-wars.

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Clint:** But you know, it just wasn't coming to him. And yeah, he's really got nothing to do and he's got no projects. And Merle needs projects. And maybe I'm projecting the projects a little bit. [laughs]

**Justin:** [chuckles]

**Aabria:** [laughs] Merle, you spend the next like 20 minutes flipping through notebooks of like... like trying to come up with ideas of what to do next. Like what your next big thing is gonna be. You consider reaching out to friends and family a little bit. But eventually, you eat enough of those double pigs that the meat sweats hits.

**Clint:** Oh, yeah.

**Aabria:** And you begin to—yeah, you begin to fall asleep a little bit. Go ahead and let's... let's call this a religion check. Give me a religion check as you sort of fall—like begin to fall asleep.

**Clint:** Okay, religion check. [chuckles] Off to a great start! That's a two!

**Travis:** You don't get any pluses?

**Griffin:** We're back, baby!

**Clint:** No, it's a one plus one. So...

**Justin:** Plus one. [laughs]

**Aabria:** I love that, I was like, I'm gonna do a—he's a cleric, he'll be good at religion. That's on me for not—

**Clint:** You need to put air quotes around that, so...

**Travis:** Papa, you are a level 17 cleric that has plus one in religion.  
[chuckles]

**Aabria:** That's hurtful...

**Clint:** I'm not a *devout* cleric!

**Travis:** Yeah!

**Aabria:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** He's more spiritual, really.

**Clint:** Yeah!

**Aabria:** [chuckles] Oh, no!

**Clint:** I'm a dabbler. I'm a dabbler.

**Aabria:** He's got a lot of crystals now in his old age.

**Griffin:** Right, exactly.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Aabria:** That's cool. You begin to fall asleep and—

**Travis:** You die!

**Griffin:** [chuckles]

**Aabria:** [chuckles] Yeah, and you're dead and we're done. Good night.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Aabria:** Your sort of like last thoughts as you fall asleep, you think that you see someone walking across the sands. But they're shimmering and kind of moving in and out of focus, like a heat mirage. And the figure stops and turns and looks at you. And they sort of raise their arms. And it's a full Goro situation, like a second set of arms is there.

And then you see... your eyes can't make it out but what your brain has decided in that dream way, is the dissolution of this humanoid figure, as they seem to be slowly burned away. Like putting a cigarette on the edge of a piece of paper where it just sort of consumes it out, in these like fractal, circular patterns.

And then you sort of fall asleep in that violence that a lot of people wake up into, where you suddenly seem—you have that feeling of being rushed by the figure. But instead of being thrown awake, you are pushed into sleep. And eventually, you'll wake up in a couple hours when everyone at this like all-inclusive resort is like, "Sir, your booking is over! You have to get out. It smells like farts and Dorito chips in here. You gotta go."

**Travis:** You already said farts. You didn't have to say it again.

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Aabria:** Doritos or just farts with like a little spice on them. A little Tajin.

**Griffin:** A little crunchy.



**Justin:** Unless they're currently sponsoring us. In which case they're—

**Clint:** The best! Delicious!

**Aabria:** Oh, yeah. Then they're great, and thank you so much for the money.

**Clint:** Delicious.

**Aabria:** Appreciate it. And that's where we sort of leave Merle and drift across the land... to find Magnus. Magnus, where are you right now?

**Travis:** Magnus is at his dog training school, Hammer and Tails, I believe is what I called it. And at this point, he's in the room that's basically kind of set up like a laser tag arena. But it's like him versus about 10 dogs of varying breeds and sizes. And he's like ducking around corners, trying to get a jump on 'em, to basically hug attack them, which is basically just like puppy cuddles. But it's very intense.

There's a lot of like—I work—"Well, you go this way, I go this way," as the puppies all come together. It goes very well but then devolves into a big puppy cuddle pile, as it often does.

**Aabria:** Amazing. So, we kind of push in on this moment. In the subsequent 10 years of fantasy, blacklights have definitely been invented.

**Travis:** Oh, yeah.

**Aabria:** And the lighting here is very cool. As you are like kind of looking out around a corner and you see like a Rottweiler kind of gives you like the nod. And then like gestures around the corner. I need you to make a perception check with disadvantage.

**Travis:** Oh? Okay... Oh, because of the black lights? Well, that's a four—

**Aabria:** I'm not gonna tell you why. [chuckles]

**Travis:** Yeah, I don't think it's gonna get worse than that. It's a four and an 18!

**Aabria:** Oh, you hate to see it.

**Travis:** Remind me, which one is the bad one?

**Aabria:** The four.

**Travis:** Oh...

**Aabria:** Yes. So, you like begin to kind of move on to all fours to follow the lead of like this very good boy who's trying to get you to a pile of puppies. When you hear just at the very last second, the scratch of claws. And you look over your shoulder to see like a very small but like, thick as hell Corgi, is flying through the air to... not—I mean, to attack you. What do you do? He got the jump on you.

**Travis:** So, Magnus is gonna attempt to roll to the left at the last second.

**Aabria:** Okay, cool.

**Travis:** So that would be, what, a dex check?

**Aabria:** Here's the thing, I rolled for my sweet boy. He got a natural 20.

**Travis:** Oh, no!

**Aabria:** And in defiance, he does a double jump. Which is definitely a thing that all things can do.

**Travis:** No!

**Griffin:** Wow.

**Aabria:** And changes direction in midair and lands directly on your face, Magnus. And he's just licking the spot where your like forehead and hairline meet. It's like weirdly a little sensitive, like that's his point of attack and he is just...

**Travis:** Well, he's learned well. I'm gonna say like, I'm actually pretty proud, you know. Because Corbin at first was kind of the last... you know, the runt of the litter, if you will. And he's come so far, you know. One, to get the jump on me. And then two, to literally change directions midair without anything—that's good work, Corbin. That's a good boy.

**Aabria:** Just full Celeste.

**Griffin:** There's no way these dogs are going to respect you if that's the way you run your ship. I'm just saying, you need to no-no can.

**Travis:** No, hey, I don't run that kind of place! Right, we're all about positive reinforcement.

**Justin:** Even a no-no can is too much? I use a no-no can on my kids.

**Griffin:** Frickin' millennials, yeah.

**Aabria:** [chuckles] I use it on my husband, that's fine.

**Justin:** Yeah, yeah.

**Clint:** Remember, you also have to do that anal gland cleaning, Trav.

**Justin:** I would honestly at this point appreciate the kind of structure in my life that someone else having a no-no can would give me.

**Aabria:** Yes.

**Justin:** I would love those sorts of boundaries, honestly.

**Travis:** Yeah, that is fair.

**Justin:** Everything is shades of gray anymore, I would love a no-no can.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Well, but he did good. That's the thing. If he had missed or if he had like, oh, god forbid, bit me? Oh, we would be done. We'd be done. We'd be done! I'd put him in the no-no hammock. Which is kind of like timeout for dogs because they sit there and they run for a bit, but they can't move—

**Griffin:** It's a hammock, what are they doing.

**Aabria:** That feels very dangerous.

**Justin:** This seems worse.

**Travis:** You guys were just saying I needed to be stricter!

**Aabria:** I don't like that.

**Griffin:** No.

**Aabria:** Structure, but danger. I just... I don't feel good about this and I will not send my crazy dog—

**Travis:** I'm training them! Listen, I'm not training 'em for home usage. I'm training them to be adventurous companions.

**Aabria:** Okay. Well, with that then, this is the moment in which your training dissolves into a puppy cuddle puddle. I need you to make an insight check, as you see a furtive glance exchanged between Corbin and the Rottweiler.

**Travis:** Oh! It hovered on the 19 and ended on the one!

**Justin:** Oh!

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** My rolls are dunk! Oh, boy...

**Justin:** Really bad.

**Aabria:** [laughs] Hey, can we just stop this whole filming? Can y'all get your fucking dice together? I'm trying to tell a story.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Travis:** This is fuckin'... D&D Beyond is like, "Oh, The Adventure Zone's back! Awesome, awesome, awesome!" one, one, one!

**Justin:** This is gonna be over in 15 minutes and Aabria's gonna be like, "Well, you guys are all dead, fart men who pooped your pants and died. The end. End of story." [chuckles]

**Aabria:** [laughs] I'm not above that. It's also in my notes. You are sort of taken into this like beautiful pile, and you don't see the furtive glance between Corbin and Roslyn, who have been planning this moment. Corbin's triumph and proof that he will make an excellent rogue's compatriot someday. Like, they did it. And there's a vast conspiracy within the ranks of your dog training facility that you know nothing about.

**Travis:** That's fine. Listen, that's—

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Aabria:** Oh? You hate to see it.

**Travis:** But it's fine because I'm trying to get a deal reality show from Hammer and Tails. And this is really going to actually cement that pretty well. So, that's actually not as bad as you might think.

**Aabria:** Nice. So, you sort of finish up here and are met at the front with a couple of your staff members. They're like young humans, a lot of them are like fighters in training. And people from like local villages that, well, they've sort of eschewed the like going into the city guard. And they're hovering somewhere in that precipice between like full-blown adventurers that travel the world and kind of just wanting to be strong enough to like protect their homes. Like they've learned a lot from you as a folk hero.

And so, there's a cohort of like five or six people from this village that kind of swing in and volunteer and intern, at Hammer and Tails. And one of them

runs up to you, a young human woman. She's got—she's completely bald, but there's a little bit of blonde stubble coming back in. And looks at you with these like bright, like purple-arcane, purple eyes. And she's like:

**Woman:** Magnus, I did the... I pushed all the buttons, like you asked.

**Magnus:** All of 'em?

**Woman:** Okay, I may have left four or five dogs out—I really don't like expressing anal glands. That's not my favorite thing.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Woman:** I'll do it because you saved the universe—

**Aabria:** I'm too close to my own hands.

**Woman:** You saved the universe, and that's great. But can we switch? Can there be some sort of system to see who does it next? I feel like I shouldn't... I don't want that on my chore wheel anymore, sir.

**Magnus:** Well, the problem is we spin the wheel and whatever it lands on, that's what you gotta do. And it's been your bad luck to land on anal glands every week.

**Woman:** I think there's something wrong happening here... So, if we could just have a conversation about it because... I've got a lot of anger issues and...

**Magnus:** Oh, yeah. Yeah, I get that.

**Woman:** And I'm very close to doing a fight about it. So, I'm just like—

**Magnus:** Oh, no, don't a fight. Don't do a fight.

**Woman:** I'm gonna! I'm gonna.

**Magnus:** All right. Hey, Derek! Derek!

**Woman:** Yeah, Derek!

**Aabria:** And she immediately falls in behind you and is like peeking around your body. And like you can kind of see from your peripheral vision, she's gesturing and like sending rude gestures in Derek's direction. And Derek kind of turns around from mopping.

**Derek:** Yes?

**Magnus:** You're on anal glands for the rest of the week. Ty was going to take over on mopping.

**Derek:** What the fuck? I didn't... but I spun the wheel good? I spun the wheel good!

**Magnus:** Well, I mean, it's not about good or bad. I mean, it's hard to like—

**Derek:** I'm not touching buttoholes!

**Aabria:** And he snaps the mop in half.

**Magnus:** It's not about touching buttoholes. Like, have I taught you nothing, Derek?!

**Derek:** No one taught me how to do that part. I just was left with a pile of dogs to find my own way.

**Aabria:** And he throws down the two pieces of the mop and like storms out.

**Magnus:** Oh, then there's no way you're doing it right. Oh, boy...

**Aabria:** And yeah, you look up and she kind of gives you a little:

**Woman:** Thank you so much. I'm gonna...

**Aabria:** And she runs from around you, goes and picks up the broken mop and you see her cast a little spell. And purple light stitches the two halves of the mop back together. And she gratefully picks it up and starts mopping.

**Magnus:** Just next time, Tywah?

**Tywah:** Yeah?

**Magnus:** Mage hand the anal glands. Just use mage hands.

**Tywah:** Oh my god...

**Griffin:** [chuckles]

**Aabria:** I'm too close to my own hands, fuck.

**Tywah:** Thank you, sir! I appreciate you!

**Magnus:** Yeah, no problem. Creative solutioneering, that's what we teach here.

**Tywah:** Thanks... okay. What are you—I...

**Aabria:** I don't know how to end this interaction. This is a lot of attention and eye contact from you. So, I'm gonna linger in it for as long as they get. How's your day going?

**Travis:** No, we're done—

**Aabria:** What are you doing—

**Travis:** No, we're done.

**Aabria:** What do you do for fun?

**Travis:** It wasn't weird—

**Tywah:** Okay, sir, bye-bye!

**Magnus:** Yeah, it wasn't weird until you made it weird, Tywah. So...



[group chuckle]

**Clint:** I think mage handling the anal gland made it weird, bud.

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** I don't think so. I think that solved it.

**Justin:** For sure.

**Aabria:** I think you changed some lives in that moment.

**Clint:** Especially the dogs'.

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Aabria:** [chuckles] So, as you move out of your place of work, what generally fills your days?

**Travis:** So, when he's not working, you know, he's got a home that he built. With two hands, you know. And it is—he's got a bench swing in front of his house, just fully kitted out. Just any kind of upgrade you can think of for that bench swing. And he spends a lot of time carving/working out. So, one of those two things he's doing. He's taken up cooking recently. He's really bad at it. Really, really atrocious at it.

**Justin:** That's kind of my thing. I don't know why you needed to infringe on my thing.

**Travis:** Well, he's really bad at it is the thing.

**Aabria:** That's how it's different. It's failure.

**Travis:** Because he's really bad. He's also taken up clerical work.

**Griffin:** [chuckles]

**Clint:** [laughs] Is it clerical work or *clerical work*?

**Travis:** He's not sure.

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Clint:** He can be good at that.

**Griffin:** I think Magnus probably has a higher religion modifier.

**Justin:** Yeah, I was gonna say, he's got a plus one religion.

**Aabria:** He probably does.

**Justin:** It's basically clerical work.

**Travis:** Magnus at this point basically has like three closets worth of briefly begun hobbies. That then was like done, you know. Because basically for 100 years he was on the ship doing a thing. And then for like 15 years after that he was doing a thing. And now he's like, "Ah, awesome, free time." And he basically has no patience to learn anything at this point.

**Aabria:** [chuckles] I feel personally attacked by this. Very relatable.

**Travis:** Yeah. I personally attacked myself. [chuckles]

**Aabria:** [laughs] So, you walk into your house. And sort of as you're passing the threshold of the door, you look out and see some of your workout equipment sort of scattered across the lawn. Big, heavy weights, fantasy kettle bells. And you notice that they're all extremely rusted and corroded. And even as you touch the handle to the door, you feel that little bit of grit that comes away, as the doorknob itself is extremely rusty and oxidized.

**Travis:** I am going to make an investigation check.

**Aabria:** Yes, please do!

**Travis:** Okay. I'm going to roll a real dice.

**Justin:** Popular detective, Magnus.

**Aabria:** [chuckles] He's taking everyone's spot.

[sound of dice thrown]

**Travis:** Oh my lord. A seven plus zero.

**Aabria:** Okay, so here's what we're gonna do. I need all of you motherfuckers to start with advantage because this is hurting my feelings.

**Griffin:** Getting rough, yeah, absolutely.

**Aabria:** [chuckles] Yeah, it feels bad now I think—

**Justin:** Truly, true momentum killer.

**Aabria:** Yeah. [chuckles]

**Justin:** Yeah, true momentum killer.

**Travis:** That is a 15 plus—yeah, so a 15.

**Aabria:** Okay.

**Justin:** You know what sucks the worst is like this the first time we're doing this with video. So like the assumption is like, oh, so now that we can cheating, you were rolling this bad all the time. This is how it's always been.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Aabria:** Oh, no! You can lie, I can't see your dice.

**Travis:** I'm just gonna say that this beautiful, crystalline red dice just sucks.

**Aabria:** [chuckles] Oh, no!

**Griffin:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** So, we'll switch to this light up dice. This is huge. Okay, but a 15.

**Aabria:** Okay, with a 15, I will give you some general information and then you can ask a follow up question in whatever direction you want. You're sort of looking out over your stuff. And even as you pass into your house and kitchen, you see your cast iron pan. Burned up and poorly seasoned, though it is, is also rusted through to the point where like you can see that it's almost like thin and open at the center. Like a terrible cast iron doughnut.

**Justin:** [laughs] The Iron Giant would love that. Can you imagine? He'd lose his mind.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Ah, he'd be so excited.

**Justin:** Ah, [spoofs Iron Giant] Super good.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Aabria:** [chuckles] So, literally anything in here that's like metallic is rusted through with like a decade's level of disuse level oxidization. So, follow up questions, what would you like to know beyond that?

**Travis:** Oh, the first thing he does is check his weapons. He's gonna check Rail Splitter and Flaming Raging Poisoning Sword of Doom, and the Chance Lance.

**Aabria:** This is my one chance to let you avoid what you know is coming. I can't imagine that you would keep both of your weapons on you while you're working with dogs. Because that's... that's a hazard. Dogs are low and easily scraped up. So, you probably took one of them with you. So, which one did you leave home?

**Griffin:** [gasps] Oh!

**Justin:** And you be honest, because if you're the sort of dog trainer that takes the poison fire sword to work...

**Travis:** God damn it!

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** There's no way I took the Flaming Raging Poisoning Sword of Doom to work.

**Justin:** [laughs] There's no way!

**Travis:** There's no way!

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** There's no way I was like, "Well, better travel light. I'm just gonna take this giant, flaming sword with me."

**Clint:** That kills everything!

**Justin:** Yeah!

**Travis:** God damn it...

**Aabria:** I was like, I didn't want you to break my encounters up top. So, where do you keep it? In what like private place in your cottage?

**Travis:** It's over the fireplace. It is fully like—I built a huge like plaque for it. It is mounted up there. Yeah.

**Justin:** Aabria wants you to perfectly imagine the exact moment that you watch it disintegrate. [chuckles]

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Right. And maybe there's a garbage can placed *immediately* underneath.

**Justin:** [chortles]

**Aabria:** Yeah, you close the door to your cottage. And that's just enough like of a rumble and momentum throughout the walls, that you see that the hilt of the Flaming Raging Poisoning... Sword of Doom, whatever the fuck it's called. I've never watched The Adventure Zone.

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Justin:** Don't blame you.

**Aabria:** God, what a nightmare. I can't believe I just tripped over that immediately. The hilt falls out of the scabbard. And like clatters off the mantel in front of the like cold fireplace. And you see just a little bit of like rusty detritus and debris pouring out of the scabbard behind it.

**Travis:** Okay, but Rail Splitter and Chance Lane are okay, right?

**Aabria:** If you brought 'em with you to work, I'll let you keep 'em.

**Travis:** Those I take. Those are light and I've established before that those fit on my back. The Flaming Raging Poisoning Sword of Doom you have to carry.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Clint:** Wow.

**Aabria:** Accepted. Okay.

**Travis:** And Magnus just sees that and goes:

**Magnus:** Well, fuck.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Aabria:** [chuckles] A perfect wipe, as we move from whatever the hell is happening to Magnus, and move again across the land and over to... Taako. Taako, where are you, bud?

**Justin:** Hold on, wait. Let me get my...

**Aabria:** [gasps] Ah!

**Clint:** You said no cosplay!

**Aabria:** I didn't know we were cosplaying. I could've dressed up like a good DM.

**Travis:** Well, we weren't. That's just Justin's hat.

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** This is my regular hat. I'm actually—this takes up too much of the shot.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Aabria:** It's a big ol' hat.

**Griffin:** It's a very big hat.

**Justin:** I'm realizing now it's like, too much of the shot is—eh?

**Travis:** It's kind of looks like a joke hat, like almost. Like you would get for somebody's like retirement party.

**Justin:** It never worked on stage because this is the view from the balcony, right.

**Griffin:** Right.

**Aabria:** That first flop looks like all of my girlfriends, they got those oversized like poolside hats.

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Aabria:** Just, it's a basic bitch thing happening in the front.

**Justin:** Okay, so Taako is at a photo shoot for his magazine. He's not the one being pictured, it's for his lifestyle magazine. Taako, make your own magic. Now, the highlight with Taako is he's done with magic. He wants to teach you how to make your own life magical without having to use powers. Not everybody's got powers.

So, he's taking you through design, cooking... meditation is huge for him. Goal setting, you know, that kind of stuff. How to make your life magical without having to tap into the different influences. So, he's at a photo shoot right now for a mutton recipe that he is including in the magazine. They're doing like the product shots of it.

**Aabria:** Amazing. You're sort of working arm-in-arm with the art director.

**Justin:** Susan. Susan is their friend. Susan is Kravitz's friend, technically. He doesn't care for Susan.

**Griffin:** Right.

**Justin:** But...

**Aabria:** She's very good at her job, though.

**Justin:** She is, but he's extremely demanding. I think it's like:

**Taako:** Susan, if you don't spray the munch down, it looks dry! And people think it looks dry, that's on me, Susan. I don't care whose friend you are, you'll be out.

**Susan:** Okay, I don't know why he needed to bring up my friendship with Kravitz. I'm very good at what I do. And what you see—

**Taako:** No argument—

**Susan:** Excuse me! What you see out of the camera is not going to be the final product, and I don't know why I have to continuously tell you that.



**Taako:** Let's just say you're really lucky I don't use magic anymore.

**Susan:** Is that a threat?

**Taako:** Harrumph!

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Susan:** [gasps] Ah!

**Aabria:** And she turns in storms out and away from you. And the sort of like background vignette that's happening, it's just full... Taako, you are the Miranda Priestly of like your little cohort. And they're all like kind of cowering and running away.

And as your eyes sweep over this photo shoot and everyone that's working busily, every time your vision catches someone in the crosshairs, you see a little drop of sweat. You see like a little... some nervousness.

**Travis:** Wait, like instantly? Like you make eye contact and it just goes— [mouths gushing liquid sound]

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Aabria:** Yes, it just shoots out. They have not invented like wicking technology yet, so all that sweat is just immediate.

**Travis:** Oh, boy.

**Aabria:** And you see that like Susan is now—she's removed herself and is screaming at a bunch of people behind the scenes. And she holds up like a little communication... like rune to her mouth. And you hear some squawking to the photographer. They are now communicating remotely, trying to fully circumvent you in this process.

As the photographer like kind of shrugs and this like massive, Goliath man, who's probably like 65, just gruff, built like a brick shithouse, sort of leans

over this tiny white table. With like some—honestly, it does look kind of dry, mutton, trying to get some good shots.

**Justin:** That's what I'm saying, thank you.

**Aabria:** [chuckles] Yeah. He gives you a little look over his shoulder as he's taking photos. And he refuses to hit the shutter again until you say something. And get the approval.

**Taako:** Yeah. You know what? I don't care that much. I just decided.

**Justin:** And I walk away from this... this tableau. I'm over it.

**Aabria:** Nice. Antoine gets back to work. He sort of like shakes off the anxiety of like getting your approval and goes back to it. And in this flow of maybe five or six dozen people under your direct area of effect, like you flow through it like Moses parting in the Red Sea.

As everyone gives you like a 10 foot berth, as you head in whatever direction you're heading. You're a very big deal now. And that comes with some distance that you've noticed over time. Give me... yeah, let's go with insight check.

**Justin:** Okay. This is my die—oh, that's not gonna zoom in. It's pretty, right?

**Aabria:** It's very pretty.

[sound of dice thrown]

**Justin:** That is a three.

**Griffin:** God almighty!

**Justin:** I shit you not! I shit you not! I thought I was gonna come in hard. I thought I was gonna come in hard. It's a three.

**Aabria:** Look, you showed off the die, it was a cold shot.

**Justin:** I know.

**Aabria:** I saw that.

**Justin:** Plus seven.

**Aabria:** [laughs]

**Justin:** 10.

**Aabria:** Cool. Yes, with a 10, you've noticed the sort of... the tenor around you. Especially in like the last year, has been one of reverence and respect, which is great and you love it. But there's a lot of like pedestal setting, that you have no ability to control or even like... even if you wanted to, they like sort of setting you at a distance away from them and looking up to you and kind of building this aura of approachability and sort of infallibility.

So... I'm not going to tell you how your character feels, but it's been pretty isolating. That even as like you've grown in acclaim and reached in hundreds of different directions with your brands, that it has netted more people around you and less connection.

**Justin:** And I think what's also isolating is it's always so successful. I mean, it's barely any effort and this magazine's massive. The school is basically on rails at this point. Ren I think is running the day to day and he's just kind of collecting checks.

**Travis:** Did we all three start schools?

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Travis:** Ah, man!

**Justin:** I mean, let's... to be fair, my school was in existence first. It was during the actual adventure. And everyone else decided that's a very good idea.

**Aabria:** You're a trendsetter.

**Justin:** To steal.

**Aabria:** So yeah, as you sort of move through this space, you get a little notification on your fantasy phone. Which is now a thing I've decided is here and around—a little message from Kravitz. It's just a little emoji. It's just a little fried shrimp emoji. It's just saying hi.

**Justin:** It's just a—maybe it's just a—I mean, it's just an Adventure Zune, right. I mean like, why couldn't the Zune in this reality have become a phone and a digital messaging—is that okay?

**Aabria:** I love that. I would like to retcon this. You feel a little vibration and you pull out your Adventure Zune. A little circular copper situation with like a green crystal and screen. And you look at it and you see a little hieroglyphic depiction of a perfectly fried shrimp. Care of your paramour, Kravitz.

**Justin:** I send him back that dancing baby that he loves. It's like a cat baby. He gets such a big kick out of it, because it's like a baby's body with a cat's head. And he think it's so funny.

**Aabria:** Nice. He immediately calls you.

**Taako:** Hey, what's up?

**Aabria:** [chuckles] Once again, this is Kravitz's unaffected accent. And he—you just—you can hear the laughter he's like trying to stifle as he...

**Kravitz:** Hi, how's it going? I just got a weird... I got a call from Susan. What are you doing?

**Taako:** Okay. I don't know, actually, that's so weird because Susan said she was gonna prank you with a fake—yeah, I kind of yelled at her. I'm sorry.

**Kravitz:** Look, it doesn't bother me. I love being the tool in your arsenal to threaten our mutual friends with. It makes me feel important. It makes me feel special and seen and a part of it. Even though I'm busy at work—

**Taako:** Right.

**Kravitz:** We're a dual income household. And it's just nice to know that I'm top of mind while you're working. That's great for me.

**Taako:** Oh, good. Oh, tragically, I lost my ability to detect sarcasm. So I'm loving this. This is all great.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Taako:** We're totally in sync, babe. Loving it.

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Kravitz:** So, all right, I'll level with you. I just... this is the third call in as many weeks that I'm getting from Susan. So, what's going on? I'm in the middle of, you know, just—

**Aabria:** And you hear like a scream get suddenly like kind of cut off and he's like:

**Kravitz:** I'm at work, but I'm trying to like hold some space for you.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Kravitz:** In this moment. So let's talk about this.

**Taako:** Sure. Susan sucks. I don't know.

**Travis:** [chortles]

**Kravitz:** She doesn't suck. She's very good at your job. That's why you hired her and give her money to do her work.

**Taako:** She's probably bad at her job.

**Kravitz:** Okay, then fire her!

**Taako:** I will fire her but you'll be mad at me.

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Kravitz:** I love you.

**Taako:** I love you too. It's not Susan. It's kind of Susan.

**Kravitz:** Okay, okay...

**Taako:** But I think I can handle—I've proven that I can handle Susan day in and day out. I just haven't been in the best... you know. You know, what we talked about.

**Kravitz:** Yeah. To that end, do you want to reach out to your friends? Like do you need... do you need some time? It's been a while. Maybe if you just—

**Taako:** Okay. The last time I had to try Magnus' cooking and pretend to like it.

**Kravitz:** He's working so hard. Do you know how many texts I get? Where he's like, "Do you think Taako will like this?" And I just lie. And if I can lie, babe, you can lie.

**Taako:** Yeah, well...

**Kravitz:** He's just trying to reach out to you.

**Taako:** And then—okay. And then Merle has gotten like... What's the—where you—the pleasure of the flesh, like you know.

**Kravitz:** I don't know where this is going and I'm afraid to answer.

**Taako:** The people get together—what's that thing where people get together?

**Clint:** Hedonism.

**Kravitz:** Hedonism.

**Taako:** Yeah! Merle's gotten like hedonistic. I don't know the last time that had achieved anything. It's just about the pleasures of the flesh with him.

**Kravitz:** Every time you say that, I die a little. Which is a wild feeling for me specifically. So that I get, absolutely.

**Taako:** I don't know, they're not doing stuff? Like I'm doing stuff. They wouldn't understand this kind of pressure. This Midas Touch that I have—

**Kravitz:** Okay... all right, you've disappeared up your own—

**Taako:** Of succeeding constantly. It's devastating!

**Kravitz:** Mm-hmm...

**Taako:** I'll call him! Just, I'll call him!

**Kravitz:** Look, I'm not trying to bully you in—call him or don't! Just stop threatening to fire Susan.

**Taako:** Tell Susan to stop sucking.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Kravitz:** She's coming over for dinner tomorrow, so figure it out.

**Taako:** Ah!

**Kravitz:** Yeah!

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Taako:** I should get—I'll get Susan to help me cook.

**Kravitz:** Oh, she said she's gonna bring over some dry-ass mutton for you.

**Taako:** Oh, that's good.

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Kravitz:** Okay, babe, this is like a whole horde of people. I do have to go.

**Taako:** Kill 'em with kindness, or with regular—you know, the regular way you do it.

**Kravitz:** Look, little column A, little column B. Love you! Bye!

**Taako:** Love you! Bye.

**Aabria:** You hear another like strangled scream as he hangs up.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Taako:** Susan!

**Aabria:** And there's a long beat...

**Susan:** Am I fired?

**Taako:** No, I'm sorry.

**Susan:** I'm so sorry, what was that?

**Taako:** [mumbles] I'm sorry.

**Susan:** I couldn't hear you, I'm in this other room being incredibly good at my job.

**Taako:** I'm basically sorry and I'm under a lot of stress! And thank you so much in advance for being understanding.

**Susan:** Shit, that was very good. I am... I am also sorry.

**Taako:** Oh?



**Travis:** [chortles]

**Susan:** I will add some... I will fix the mutton. I apologize.

**Taako:** Thank you. Thank you. It's the—you're—you know your business, I'm sorry.

**Susan:** I'm sorry, too.

**Taako:** Okay, go—

**Susan:** I really like your hat.

**Taako:** Let's not get...

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Susan:** Okay. I'll see you at seven.

**Aabria:** And just sort of storms off in another direction. And you see her like pushing aside racks of clothes. And like throwing like—she is off—letting off like a small tantrum. And sort of leaves you to walk and go away.

**Travis:** Real quick, your Adventure Zune starts ringing and it's Magnus calling. Calling you real quick.

**Taako:** Yes?

**Magnus:** Hey, sorry to bother you. Do you know anything about like fixing magic—well, you do like magic stuff and things, right? Can you like fix magical weapons?

**Taako:** What kind of weapon?

**Magnus:** Imagine it's like a sword that is like—

**Taako:** Is it a magic sword?

**Magnus:** Oh, yeah, very magic. Very magic.

**Taako:** Hm... Now, what kind of sword is it?

**Magnus:** It's a magical sword.

**Griffin:** Oh my god.

**Taako:** A magic sword, hm...

**Magnus:** Yeah, it's a real magic sword.

**Taako:** Magic sword...

**Magnus:** Yeah, it's magic. Can you fix a magic sword?

**Taako:** I don't do magic anymore. And you can't fix magical weapons without magical abilities. And as you well know, if you've been keeping up with my lifestyle magazine, Taako, Make Your Own Magic, I make my own magic.

**Magnus:** I read every issue!

**Taako:** Yeah, you should pay closer attention to the cooking parts. Gotta go!

**Magnus:** What...

**Clint:** [laughs]

[theme music plays]

[ad reads]

[theme music plays]

**Aabria:** And on that incredible dunk, we move past our lovely Tres Horny Boys, still out in the world, and we move across the continent one more time. And we alight on our fourth figure. Davenport, what are you up to right now?

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** As you know, if you've followed the live shows, Davenport sort of took a Captain Ron turn, where he...

**Aabria:** Yes, I'm aware. [chuckles]

**Griffin:** He missed being a captain, so he just set out to sail and never looked back. Just wanted to see this big, beautiful world he helped save. But that got a little boring. And you know, after Story and Song, the world got a little bit more peaceful. But there were some parts of it that... some crime, let's say, sort of grew unchecked. And one of those places was the ocean.

And so, Davenport, a former sort of just wayward sailor, turned his attention to keeping the seas safe from buccaneers, corsairs... bad privateers, I guess.

**Aabria:** Give me one more pirate name. Thank you.

**Griffin:** Did I say pirate?

**Aabria:** Oh, shit!

**Griffin:** Okay, pirates, yeah. And sort of earned a reputation for himself as the sort of almost Batman-like figure who has been keeping the seas safe from organized crime.

**Travis:** Do you think that there's come a time where Davenport has seriously said to another person like, "I'm kind of the Batman of the sea."

**Griffin:** Yeah, I don't think he has to tell people that. I think people... I think his reputation precedes him.

**Aabria:** Yes, okay. So, we begin at sea, too. In the like heat of a naval battle. Your beautiful ship is taking on heavy fire from this like massive like war frigate that you've come alongside. It's flying its brigand colors, red and green. And their sort of like dark gray sails are like blotting out the sun. And then like one little beam of light shoots through a gap and lands on you, rope in hand, about to swing across to go do some daring act of bravado.

Can you, Griffin, please paint me a word picture of like hot ass Davenport right now? Thank you.

**Griffin:** I mean, he... he's shaved, first of all. He went from having a—

**Travis:** All over?

**Griffin:** Yeah, perfectly hairless, like a porpoise.

**Aabria:** God...

**Griffin:** No. He had a... you know, he had his big mustache when he was traveling with the crew, and then it sort of got a little unkempt. But now he's definitely got a top knot, for sure. He's the only gnome with a top knot. And he's got a sort of salt and pepper, short beard. And he's not wearing—all he's wearing is just sort of like some suspenders over a half buttoned white shirt. And he's got a big backpack on. And just some brown—

**Aabria:** A backpack? [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Just a big, bulky backpack on. No weapons that you can see, of any kind.

**Travis:** What about pants, Griffin? You've just described suspenders.

**Griffin:** Yeah, he's just got some brown trousers.

**Aabria:** What is a loose suspender, Travis? Like just flapping straps?

**Travis:** No, listen. I didn't want to assume, this is a weird show.

**Aabria:** That's fair.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Aabria:** That's fair. So you're like a little Skimblehanks with a backpack on.

**Griffin:** A little Skimblehanks with a big JanSport.

**Justin:** [chuckles]

**Aabria:** And you grab this rope and swing across to the other side. Of course, landing right in front of the enemy captain. This woman with like long, flowing, like bright green dreadlocks. That like go all the way down to her waist. It that looks like kelp. And she's got a very... like yeah, she exploded in like the nautical section of Pier one Imports. Like she's just selling you—seashells everywhere, little dangly bits. She kind of smells like patchouli.

**Travis:** She sells seashells?

**Aabria:** By the sea—[chuckles] I can't even finish it because I have a lisp.

**Griffin:** That's rough, yeah!

**Aabria:** That is hurtful. I'm having a bad day.

**Travis:** [chuckles]

**Aabria:** I'm doing my best. And this is the famed Captain Inara. She's the head. She's called Captain, she is an admiral and is running like a ring of piracy that's been disrupting this like trade lane, for maybe two or three months. She looks down at you and like pulls out this like wicked looking scimitar and just sort of levels it at you and says:

**Inara:** Davenport? We meet at last.

**Davenport:** Davenport.

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Davenport:** Is my name. That is correct.

**Inara:** Are we... are we going to... you have a backpack on. I'm sort of throwing a—I'm doing a sword thing here. Are you going to—

**Davenport:** I can see that, yes.

**Inara:** Are we... hold on.

**Aabria:** And kind of as this—like a group of enemy fighters was like sort of surrounding you and closing in, she kind of puts her hand up to stop them forming a little ring.

**Inara:** Are you... Are we going to... are we fighting? I don't... I don't understand—

**Davenport:** Sorry, we don't have to. Eversummer is about... nine clicks that way. Just, if you all take your whole sort of armada—is it an armada or a fleet?

**Inara:** I use fleet. I think they're pretty interchangeable.

**Davenport:** Okay. Yeah, you could all just sort of go to Eversummer and turn yourselves in, is the other option that we could do.

**Inara:** Oh, okay...

**Davenport:** And I know this—no, but this probably sounds like I'm trying to sound badass.

**Inara:** Yeah.

**Davenport:** I'm actually, I'm genuinely explaining what the options are.

**Inara:** I feel like you're trying to curate a cool moment. I'm going to stab you to death. You have a backpack on, and not even frontways. Like you don't have access to your pockets. I'm gonna kill you.

**Davenport:** Oh, right. It's a fatal flaw in the backpack design. If only there was a small backpack that one could wear around one's waist, where all of

their possessions would be accessible, sort of in their crotch area. That's a great idea and I'm gonna get to work on that.

**Inara:** Look, I've been at sea for a while. I can't tell if that's like a sarcastic—it is a good idea.

**Davenport:** No, I know! It's a great idea.

**Inara:** What is your whole deal?! Are we fighting? I'm gonna fight you. I'm gonna fight you.

**Aabria:** And she leans in to attack you.

**Griffin:** Okay, when that happens, my backpack unfolds like a starfish. Like towards me, it like spasms outward and wraps around my arms and chest and legs. And I am wearing a full suit of magical super powered armor. Because I am a... I'm an artificer.

**Aabria:** Amazing.

**Griffin:** A guardian artificer.

**Aabria:** [chuckles] What does this armor look like?

**Griffin:** You know in Iron Man, where he creates the armor and the cave, it's kind of—I think it's a little bit more like that, than like the you know, fancy nanoweb Iron Man armor. It is bulkier with a more sort of menacing façade, to try and scare away pirates who would step to. Or you know, try and kill people out on the seas.

**Aabria:** Amazing. You hear and feel, as you kind of like settle your feet, as this suit sort of erupts around you, like the wood of the ship below your feet on this deck just begins to like give way a little bit and splinter and groan. And you see that Inara's eyes like immediately look down and looks back up at you.

**Inara:** That's... that... okay.

**Aabria:** And she just slowly leans down and just goes and puts her sword on the ground.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Inara:** All right. Okay, we can have a conversation. I think.

**Davenport:** Cool! What do you want to talk about?

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Inara:** I hate you!

**Aabria:** [chuckles] And she immediately like, arounds and turns her back on you, and starts like gesturing to the rest of the crew to like power this fight down. And you see that like in a ripple around you, the fight immediately like dies down. And like all of your crew begins like cheering a bit and yelling.

And like, people immediately start like pulling out instruments and like playing songs because they were... they were barely holding weapons. They were like, "We were just waiting for him to put the suit on. That ends it all entirely." So, some dude that was like wielding a lute, like a blunt instrument was like, "Okay, vibes."

And like goes back and starts playing his little lute. And they immediately commence to partying while Inara like calls for a chair and a table to be brought in front of you. And she's like:

**Inara:** All right, let's have a conversation about terms of surrender.

**Griffin:** I'm holding my steel drum and I'm like:

**Davenport:** Oh, do we have to do this right now? Because I was about to go jam with the squad.

**Inara:** Yeah, go ahead...

**Davenport:** Awesome, great.



**Griffin:** It's actually a panel in my armor that just turns into a steel drum that I could just... [spoofs musical steel drum sounds]

**Aabria:** [laughs] Give me a performance check.

**Griffin:** Oh, that's not gonna go well.

**Aabria:** Come on, we gotta get—like, you could be the one, you could be different, Griffin.

**Griffin:** Okay, that's a 16, plus zero.

**Aabria:** Ah, thank god. Yes!

**Griffin:** This is just... this is the roll that—

**Justin:** This is the one.

**Aabria:** [chuckles] This is the one.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Aabria:** What song are you playing the steel drum like cover of?

**Griffin:** I mean, I think just Hot, Hot, Hot. Because it's... it's like the first song you—it's the Hot Cross Buns of steel drums. It's the one you learn.

**Aabria:** [chuckles] Hot, Hot, Hot Cross Buns, yes. So you start like grooving and jamming. And as like your crew gets louder and more like into their celebrations, and the other crew—like the enemy crew just sort of like moves into the corner and is sort of talking loosely amongst themselves, see, Davenport, even within—like sort of locked into your armor as in play, like a little floater, a black moat of light sort of drifts across your eye.

Can you please make a... make a perception check for me. I'll give you advantage because you're an artificer.

**Griffin:** Okay.

[sound of dice thrown]

**Griffin:** That's a nat 20.

**Aabria:** Shut up!

**Clint:** Ah!

**Justin:** Nice!

**Aabria:** Yes! Amazing. Your mind sort of follows that little floater in a way that your eyes can't really track because vision is weird. And it sort of like moves across and appears to land on the edge of the steel drum panel, on your suit. And you feel it before you see it. You kind of smell it. This like heavy rain and rust in the air. And you see as like a little speck hits the corner and begins to rapidly corrode your steel drum.

**Griffin:** God, I think we can all agree this is the worst thing that one of us has lost in this adventure so far.

**Justin:** No question.

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Justin:** No question. We'll never recover from this.

**Travis:** Hate to lose your steel drum.

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** I reflexively just tear the steel drum off before this corrosion can spread to the rest of my suit here.

**Aabria:** Yeah, you sort of rip it off and throw it on the ground in front of you. The force of that throw actually does like tear up some chunks of the plank of the deck of the ship, and Captain Inara's like:

**Inara:** Whoa! Watch it. Okay, that's just hurtful.

**Aabria:** And then she gets cut off make complaint, as she sees that steel drum rapidly get consumed by rust. And is in very short order a pile of like rusting detritus.

**Davenport:** Was this—did you do—was this you? Because that was my favorite steel drum. It's a baritone steel drums. Do you know how hard those are to find?

**Inara:** They come in different types?

**Davenport:** It's like talking to a child!

**Inara:** Look, if I don't know the difference between steel drums and I surrendered immediately, do you think if I had the ability to do that to you, I would have given up so quickly?

**Davenport:** No, probably not.

**Inara:** I have no idea what this is.

**Davenport:** Cool.

**Inara:** Are you gonna die? If you die can I be a pirate again?

**Davenport:** Yeah, that is the rule. That is the arrangement that I've made. Can you... sorry, I know I have to like give off this imposing like... a paragon of fear, but I need to go like sort of figure this—

**Inara:** Mixed signals, at best. But go.

**Davenport:** Yeah, okay. BRB.

**Griffin:** Can I... can I arcana check, I guess, this little—

**Aabria:** Yeah!

**Griffin:** Okay, is the moat still there or has the whole thing kind of—

**Aabria:** You saw it sort of land and then consumed it. You don't really see the moat anymore. I mean, you can go and try and dig in the pile and see if you dig it up? And then nothing bad will happen.

**Griffin:** Yeah, I'm not going to do that. That's a 10, plus 11. A 21.

**Aabria:** Holy crap. Okay, what are you trying to find out?

**Griffin:** I mean, have I seen anything? Obviously, there's rust spells and stuff like this. Does this—I'm trying to see if this is something that I have—you know, I studied magic for over a century. Like, is this something I've seen before?

**Aabria:** [chuckles] Yeah. You've seen so many things in your time, Davenport, and this very—like the very first thing you think and feel is this feels like time magic gone awry. And you know some of your friends have dealt with... a little bit more like timey-wimey things than you have.

**Griffin:** Sure.

**Aabria:** Like, back when you were sort of sidelined at the Bureau. But you haven't seen anything specifically like this. But you know it's very powerful. And it's closer to like artifact magic than it is any given spell. Like you couldn't dispel what's happening here.

**Griffin:** Hm, okay... I think I head back to my ship to find my—

**Travis:** The Wave Pumper.

**Griffin:** The Wave Humper I think is what it was called in the live show? Yeah, unfortunately. Yeah. I head back over to... the Wave Humper and—

**Aabria:** Your crew is like out here like throwing it back. They're all completely lost in the sauce, in this operation.

**Griffin:** I need to find Loomis, my first mate.

**Aabria:** Yeah, you know what? Loomis is definitely at the center of like a krumping circle, and he's just losing it—like, body, done. And sees you sort of stomp over. I'm assuming you're still in the suit, yeah?

**Griffin:** Oh, yeah. It takes it looks when it kind of does it's like spasm snap on thing. But to take it off actually takes hours.

[group laugh]

**Justin:** Wait, wait, wait, this is me looking into the future at you really, really regretting that you said that. Okay, good!

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** It has to—it looks rad but there's like spirit glue on the inside that kind of like has to fasten to you. There's a solvent that needs to go on and the solvent smells very poor. So...

**Travis:** Oh, boy...

**Justin:** That's gonna make for a great scene here in a little bit.

**Travis:** Yeah. [chuckles]

**Aabria:** Amazing. Yeah, Loomis, go ahead.

**Griffin:** Yeah, I just want to find Loomis and pull him aside real quick.

**Aabria:** Yeah, he—like as you're walking up, like he's still dancing and getting it. And then he starts to do like the little like robot thing as you walk over. And sees that you don't immediately jump into, you know, fully getting it, assumed something is wrong because he can't read your robots expression. And runs over to you.

**Loomis:** Sir? Captain?

**Davenport:** Yeah, I'm crying pretty heavy in here. I know you can't see my emotions, but it's—I am crying a lot.

**Aabria:** He sort of just taps your whole...

**Loomis:** There, there...

**Davenport:** Stick your finger in my eye hole.

**Loomis:** I will not.

**Davenport:** Stick your—that's an order.

**Griffin:** [chuckles]

**Loomis:** Slowly...

**Davenport:** Feel the tears? Feel the tears?

**Loomis:** Oh, god, it's gross.

**Davenport:** Yeah, it's very wet. So, I am crying because I just lost a very precious friend to me, which is my... my steel drum. So...

**Loomis:** The baritone?

**Davenport:** The baritone...

**Aabria:** And he just hugs around you.

**Loomis:** I'm so sorry.

**Davenport:** Oh, thank you! [weeps] Oooh-oo!

**Loomis:** Let it out. Let it out, buddy. Let it out.

**Davenport:** So, if you could call up Silly Sal's Steel Drum wholesale supplier and get a letter out to them and start getting a replacement in the works...

**Justin:** Now, wait. Stop for a second. He's getting these wholesale? [laughs]

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Justin:** How many drums does this guy go through that he's gonna get it in bulk? The kind of bulk that a wholesaler—why does he need to cut out the middle man? [chuckles]

**Travis:** Now, hold on, Justin. Because this way, Davenport can pass the savings on to you.

**Justin:** [laughs] Do you know how hard independent steel drum retailers have it right now that you go behind their back?

**Travis:** The mom and pop steel drum shops.

**Justin:** Yeah!

**Griffin:** Here's the thing; this alloy that Silly Sal makes these steel drums out of is so strong, it's the best thing he's found for making his mechanical armor out of. It's all steel drums, head to toe.

**Travis:** Every piece of your armor is a steel drum?

**Griffin:** Is reclaimed steel drum, yes!

**Travis:** Okay.

**Griffin:** Thank you.

**Travis:** If you ever get caught in a hailstorm...

**Aabria:** Yes, it's melodic!

**Griffin:** [chuckles] It's beautiful.

**Clint:** [sings] Clinkidy, clinkidy, clinkidy, clink, clink. Clinkidy, clinkidy, clink.

**Griffin:** I say:

**Davenport:** Do you think you could wrap up here? Because there's something... and this is me saying this. There's something weird going on magically that I need to get a second opinion on. Do you think you could, you know, finish up here, get the crew back to shore and all that stuff. And I'll let you wear this special hat?

**Loomis:** Can I wear it for a week once you're back also? Please?

**Davenport:** You can wear it for four days once I'm back. Unless I get back on like a Friday, because I do—you know I need it on the weekends.

**Loomis:** But... [sings] Okay, I get to wear it for half of Sunday.

**Davenport:** Okay, fine.

**Loomis:** Yes! Got it.

**Aabria:** And he immediately turns and starts yelling at the group, and is trying to shout them down while they're in the middle of like just a full Yub Nub situation. And he kind of like leaves the crew to it and is going to go ahead and like swing on a rope. But it's not as majestic or as interesting, it's a very like—he does like a cool flip and lands with a three point stance. But because it's so like rote to him, he just kind of gets up, brushes himself and heads over to the enemy captain and begins negotiations.

**Griffin:** Okay, I see that my work here is done. I nod to the crew and I activate my boots, my winged boots. And blast off into the air from jets firing on my feet. And as I go, I cast Sky Write. And leave my trademark catchphrase, which is, I write, "Pirates find out," in cursive. And then I blast off heading back to civilization.

**Aabria:** [chuckles] Amazing. You hear the cheers of your crew as you like head on over. Where do you head, Davenport?

**Griffin:** Hm... If it's magic stuff, I think I'd go to Lucretia.

**Aabria:** Nice.



**Griffin:** I think I would go to wherever the Bureau is now. Like the Bureau is, I believe, stationary now, right? Or I forget where it ended up.

**Clint:** Vegas!

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Vegas.

**Aabria:** Fantasy Vegas. Actually, as you're all sort of en route, you pull out your Adventure Zune.

**Griffin:** Yeah, of course.

**Aabria:** And you call up Lucretia. And she says:

**Lucretia:** Bureau of Benevolence.

**Griffin:** [spoofs flying sounds]

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Lucretia:** Hello, Davenport!

**Davenport:** Hold on. Just hold on. Hold on.

**Griffin:** I find like a rock I can sit down from flying.

**Davenport:** Sorry, it's so loud.

**Lucretia:** Yeah. How are you?

**Davenport:** Good. Hey, do you know anything about like a time magic thing that's happening right now? That is sort of eroding a sort of... entropic... Any of this sort of hitting for you?

**Lucretia:** Not specifically, but... I'll put in a call. I'm going to drop a pin. Meet me at Taako's house. I was going to swing by for dessert. Kravitz invited me.

**Davenport:** All right. I'll see you there! And like I always say when we talk on the phone, which happens very often—

**Lucretia:** All the time.

**Davenport:** All the time. I say—[wind sounds] oh, no, the wind's picking back up again. Oh, gosh! I gotta click...

**Aabria:** And she just sort of—

**Travis:** I love when Griffin creates those moments for himself. He puts himself on the spot and then escapes the spot he put himself in.

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** I remembered halfway through that, that Lucretia did sort of brainwashed Davenport to a degree where he could only say his own name for a decade.

**Aabria:** Like a little—it was the Void Fish?

**Griffin:** Yeah, I guess...

**Aabria:** It wasn't him.

**Griffin:** Yeah, I think halfway through that phone conversation he was like:

**Davenport:** Oh, wait, this is awkward. Yeah, I'm getting off.

**Aabria:** Amazing. So yeah, she like hangs up and stares at her Adventure Zune for a while, before sighing. And she like puts down this like lemon tart that she was very excited to show off, and starts sending out texts to Magnus and Merle to all meet up at Taako's place, at everyone's—she says earliest convenience and follows it up with—

**Justin:** They know what that means.

**Aabria:** Yeah, exactly.

**Justin:** Yeah!

**Aabria:** Exactly. She does not tell Taako.

**Justin:** [chuckles]

**Aabria:** She assumes that it's fine and everyone just constantly like infringes on your goodwill.

**Travis:** Magnus texts Lucretia back, "Do you know anything about fixing magical swords? Anything about that?"

**Justin:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** I text immediately after, weirdly, "Do you know anything about fixing non-magical baritone steel drums?"

**Aabria:** She gives you like the boomer ellipses, of just like three dots and then they go away. And then three dots and then they go away.

**Griffin:** Oh, god...

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Aabria:** And then like a minute break, and then, "No."

**Griffin:** Great.

**Travis:** Great.

**Clint:** And Merle texts, "Do you know anything about season two of Ted Lasso?"

**Aabria:** And you receive, Merle, just a wall of text of all of her thoughts and speculation. Because she's only a couple episodes into season one, but she has feelings and instincts about it.

So then, we pick up Taako. You and Kravitz and Susan, who has just been—she's been that like super-fake nice. Like she's trying too hard to like rebuild the bridge. You've had a lovely dinner. What did... you knew that she was going to be bringing the mutton that was like the featured recipe that you guys were shooting. Did you make any like accoutrement with it?

**Justin:** I ordered Thai.

**Aabria:** [gasps]

**Justin:** What do I care?

**Griffin:** [chuckles]

**Aabria:** Oh my god...

**Clint:** What has he got to prove?

**Justin:** I wanted to eat Thai. Didn't feel like cooking. Ordered Thai food.

**Aabria:** Amazing.

**Justin:** It was good, too. I ordered it from the good place. It takes like an hour and 15 minutes to get there, but it's like worth it. [chef's kiss]

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Justin:** And she brought the mutton and she's like, "Hm?" And he's like:

**Taako:** I forgot! I'm so sorry.

**Aabria:** Oh, god. You know what? Poor Kravitz is sitting there like... just reluctantly eating the set mutton, while occasionally whenever Susan isn't looking, like trying to steal some of your Pad Thai, like:

**Kravitz:** Please, just let me have a little, it's... this is dry. I don't—let me have some of your—I have to eat both. I'm in the middle of this. I hate this! I hate this.

**Travis:** I'm sorry, I'd use magic to make your mutton taste better, but I don't do that anymore.

**Kravitz:** What?!

**Travis:** I'm out of the game.

**Kravitz:** What? Just... that's a conversation for another day.

**Aabria:** And then Susan like picks up again, and she's probably like two or three glasses deep into a very buttery fantasy Chardonnay. And is just picking up in the middle of like—

**Susan:** And then so, I was telling everyone for the shoot that we were going to do for wizard ropes. But no, we're not going to do silver stars and a blue rope. Everyone just does silver stars and a blue rope. You know what I mean, right Taako? I can call you Taako, right?

**Taako:** Yeah, for sure. Yeah, that's my only name.

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Taako:** Yeah, for sure. Yeah, some ropes, absolutely. [gag sound]

**Susan:** I can see you.

**Justin:** That's the hard thing about doing a podcast. Like you're used to podcasting and people can't see. And then you have to remember this is a visual medium now, too.

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Taako:** Yeah, well... you know, I got a allergies. That's what people say, right? Yeah, allergies.

**Susan:** Uh-huh.

**Aabria:** And she drains the glass, kind of sets it down. And now you guys are locked into a terrible loaded silence. When... let's see, Merle, you're the first to arrive. How do you enter? I'm not going to assume for you. What do you do?

**Merle:** Hello, party people! Hello?

**Aabria:** She just gives you a look.

**Clint:** Party people? Hey?

**Kravitz:** Babe, what is this? I'm hearing Merle. Why am I hearing Merle? It's open!

**Merle:** Ah! Hey! Let the fun begin!

**Taako:** Merle, you remember Susan?

**Merle:** Oh, hello.

**Aabria:** Susan gives you a little—

**Merle:** Susan.

**Taako:** Susan, she watched our cat before and now she's a photographer, because she and Kravitz are pals.

**Merle:** Oh, right!

**Kravitz:** It's so nice to see you, Merle. How are you?

**Merle:** I loved that cat.

**Kravitz:** Such a shame.

**Merle:** Yeah, that was too bad.

**Justin:** You don't get to kill my cat?!

**Griffin:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** You two don't just get to kill my cat!

**Clint:** You're inferring! You're inferring!

**Aabria:** Hey, Justin. Justin, look at me.

**Justin:** Yeah?

**Aabria:** I'm the fucking DM. I do whatever I want.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Aabria:** The cat's dead.

**Justin:** That's fair. Okay, well, I didn't... It's been a while, actually.

**Aabria:** [sings] It's been a while!

**Merle:** Wait, wait—[sniff, sniff] Is that mutton? Oh!

**Susan:** It is, would you like some? Hold on.

**Aabria:** And she immediately sets down her glass and sloshes some wine over the side and starts like carving you a piece. She hops up, just no boundaries in your kitchen. Like grabs a plate, pulls up a chair for you, Merle. And like proceeds to—

**Taako:** Yeah, please. Hey, Susan, you spilled a little wine. You could probably use some of the mutton to blot it up. It seems super absorbent.

**Susan:** I didn't hear that because I'm trying to be a good hostess, Taako.

**Taako:** Sure. For sure. For sure. For sure. For sure.

**Merle:** I actually didn't want any mutton, I just recognized the aroma. I was jonesing for a little... Pad Kee Hoo, if you've got any?

**Taako:** Yeah, for sure. We ordered from the good place.

**Merle:** And what's the stuff that smells like a sneaker but tastes real good?

**Taako:** Oh, larb?

**Merle:** Larb, yeah. I would love some larb.

**Taako:** Love a larb. Love a larb.

**Merle:** Ah, love a larb.

**Aabria:** It's right about right about this time when, Magnus, you rock up.

**Magnus:** Hey! Am I early?

**Taako:** Hold on! We're talking about larb!

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Magnus:** Oh, y'all were talking about larb? Love a larb.

**Taako:** Love a larb.

**Merle:** Is this low-carb larb? Or—

**Taako:** It's low-carb larb.

**Magnus:** Oh, love that.

**Merle:** I do too.

**Magnus:** I brought a salad niçoise.

**Taako:** It was supposed to be for Barb, but she didn't come.

**Magnus:** Oh, that's Barb's low-carb larb?



**Taako:** So, that—it's technically Barb's low-carb larb. [chuckles]

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Magnus:** Oh, right, right.

**Merle:** See, this is that team thing we do so well!

**Magnus:** Yeah! Love it. I brought a—

**Justin:** Arguable, at this point. Arguable. [chuckles]

**Magnus:** I made a salad niçoise, but I think I've burned it. So...

**Susan:** That's not what that's called.

**Taako:** You burned a salad?!

**Magnus:** Yeah...

**Susan:** What part?

**Magnus:** Like the middle?

**Susan:** Look—

**Magnus:** I think it's still good, the outside's still good. Oh, is that Susan?!

**Susan:** Hi, Magnus. It's so nice to—do you want some mutton?

**Magnus:** Hm...

**Travis:** And Magnus looks at Taako and Merle.

**Merle:** No.

**Magnus:** No! I'll have some Thai, though. Is there extra Thai?

**Taako:** Sure, for sure. We ordered from the good place.

**Magnus:** Oh, yeah?

**Susan:** [groans] Ugh!

**Taako:** Yeah.

**Magnus:** Yeah, it takes about an hour and 15 minutes, but it's worth it.

**Taako:** It's worth it.

**Magnus:** Yeah, man. Any more of that Chardonnay, though?

**Susan:** So much more. I'll grab you a glass?

**Magnus:** Yeah, make it a big glass. I don't like having to do like refills a bunch of times. It's easier if you just like get a big glass the first time and sip on it.

**Justin:** Trav. Trav, I would appreciate if you let Magnus, not Travis answer the question.

[group chuckle]

**Travis:** No, I don't drink Chardonnay! [chuckles]

**Clint:** I'll take it!

**Travis:** But if you have any sparkling water, I'll take a sparkling water.

**Aabria:** [sighs] Gah...

**Justin:** We should get back to adventure. [chuckles] There's gotta be some adventure somewhere.

**Griffin:** And not talking about foods that are good.

**Aabria:** [chuckles] So, yeah, Susan's running around trying to grab stuff for you. And Davenport, you land at roughly the same time Lucretia's walking up. And you both have that like awkward moment outside the front door. You're still in the suit, yes?

**Griffin:** Oh, yeah.

**Aabria:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** I mean, yeah.

**Travis:** He didn't have the four people it requires to help take it off.

**Aabria:** Yeah, four people and four hours to get that off of his body.

**Griffin:** I say:

**Davenport:** We supposed to bring something? Where are we supposed to bring food?

**Lucretia:** Shit, I left the tart... No, don't worry about it. It's Taako, he's probably made a bunch of very delicious food.

**Davenport:** Hold on.

**Griffin:** I dig around my bag. I have some rations that I like get out. And I take out one of my plates, like a steel drum plate, and I like arrange the rations on it. Like I just got a spread from the fantasy Costco. And I hold it as we approach the door.

**Lucretia:** Like some very dry charcuterie—can we say it's from both of us?

**Davenport:** God almighty...

**Lucretia:** Thank you!

**Aabria:** And she knocks on the door, and it just immediately swings open. And you guys are both—everyone is now here, in and amongst the scene.

Taake, you're in here all night, just sort of overtaken by your friends. What do you do?

**Justin:** I feel like he's maybe being like weirdly disconnected, like busying himself too much with like dishes and straightening up. You know what I mean? Like not really like dialed in to the thing. And like not being rude, necessarily. But not necessarily like... engaging, I guess.

**Aabria:** Yeah, so you, in your sort of like laps around to try to like grab stuff and keep tidying and like bringing chairs in, you look out of like one of the windows of your home. And you see movement in the bushes.

**Justin:** I'm gonna roll a perception check.

**Aabria:** Please do!

[sound of dice thrown]

**Justin:** Hey, 18.

**Aabria:** Let's go!

**Justin:** Plus...

**Aabria:** Oh?

**Justin:** Seven.

**Travis:** Whoa.

**Justin:** 25.

**Aabria:** Yeah, this was an incredibly like brief flash through the bushes. Sort of in that, like you see a thing and then your brain contextually like puts it together afterwards, you realize a couple of things. One, that person didn't walk through your field of vision from the window. Like from left to right, coming around towards your side door. They emerged from the bushes. The hedge that like terminates at the wall of your home. So, there's maybe some questions about where your bushes go to.

And you see like just a flicker of like, it's a very tall, live humanoid form. And long, green hair, sort of tucked under like a blue beanie. And like the one thing that sticks with you, even though you didn't get a good read on this person's face, or like really anything else about them in this like flash of movement, was that the like very edge of their hair where the beanie sort of was sitting on the hair, seems to fade out to an almost white color. And then they disappear from view, moving past the window.

**Justin:** Hm.

**Travis:** Back in the living room, Magnus is talking with Kravitz.

**Aabria:** Yeah.

**Magnus:** So, have you given any more thought to adopting a dog? Because I think I've got the perfect one for you. Smart as a whip, his name is Pokey. He's a Pomeranian. Yes. Oh, but listen. Super smart, easy, like trainable dogs.

**Kravitz:** Aren't they very yappy, though?

**Magnus:** No! No. And this might be presumptive, but I did—

**Aabria:** I'm gonna roll an insight check.

[sound of dice thrown]

**Magnus:** I did bring him.

**Kravitz:** You brought... you brought...

**Magnus:** Yeah.

**Travis:** And Magnus opens up his bag and pulls out Pokey the Pomeranian.

**Kravitz:** Oh my god.

**Magnus:** But listen, I'm just so sure you're gonna love this guy. He's great!

**Davenport:** Did you have a dog in your bag?

**Magnus:** Yeah.

**Davenport:** That's not... that's not acceptable?

**Magnus:** It's designed for that. It's a dog carrier.

**Merle:** You have a giant starfish in your bag? [chuckles]

**Magnus:** That's a good point.

**Griffin:** It's not a real—Hold on, wait. Mac, you know it's not a real starfish, right? I was just describing the shape—

**Clint:** It's fantasy!

**Griffin:** Okay?

**Travis:** No, but it's not a fantasy star fish either.

**Griffin:** It's not a real fantasy star fish, though. I was describing—I should've just said star... okay.

**Clint:** Right now, there are all these fan artists, they're scratching—

**Griffin:** There's no one who thought it meant an actual big star fish made out of steel drums.

**Clint:** That's fair.

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Aabria:** [chuckles] Amazing. In the like couple of moments where you guys are arguing with Magnus about the like moral grayness of a dog bag—

**Magnus:** It's a dog carrier! People use them all the time!

**Aabria:** Kravitz has already like soul bonded to this dog and just like, he's lost. He's in it and about it, and just very into this dog.

**Justin:** Taako is now like very focused on the growing awareness that they will probably have this dog. That this dog will probably be living with them.

**Aabria:** You actually see Kravitz like lifts the dog over his head so the dog can make eye contact with you. And it just gives a little like... [bark]

**Taako:** Great...

**Travis:** [chuckles]

**Aabria:** I need everyone here to make a... let's call it a charisma saving throw.

[sound of dice thrown]

**Aabria:** As the door is thrown open.

**Griffin:** That's a 12.

**Travis:** Mine is a 14 plus two, 16.

**Aabria:** Beautiful.

**Clint:** Mine is a 13 plus five, 18.

**Travis:** Damn, Merle!

**Justin:** 16 even.

**Aabria:** Oh? Everyone—

**Travis:** Taako has a plus zero charisma?

**Justin:** You know, I made the sheet before I made the guy. What can you do?

**Aabria:** You hate to see it.

**Justin:** It's just how it works. It makes him even more inspirational.  
[chuckles]

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** Look how far he's come!

**Justin:** Against all odds, against his genetic makeup.

**Aabria:** [chuckles] So, everyone but Davenport... well, Davenport and Lucretia, you all feel and smell like mint and flowers that are so ripe that they're about to rot. And like fresh, running water. And like honey. Just sort of pushes in on the wind as this door is thrown open.

Davenport and Lucretia, you guys are both stunned for the next minute. As you are hit with this just wave of visions, of like massive plants that are grown over. Like monstrously sized flora and fauna. And this creeping dread and fear and awe of nature simultaneously, as you are getting visions of the Fae Wild.

As a person who, Taako, you are now getting a full view of them, sort of pushes into the room. And they adjust the like incredibly shiny, like thin drop of sage green hair. They tuck it behind their ears. Their skin is... it's got—it's very pale, but it's got an almost lilac cast to it. Very angular features. Sort of rose gold colored eyes with pupils of pure white that seem to almost glow and burn at the center of their gaze.

They're long and tall and wearing like an open, sort of like jaunty linen shirt. And you can see sort of like in their chest and neck, these like incredibly intricate vine and flower tattoos. And just sort of fold their arms very calmly in front of them as this like brunt of magical energy washes over all of you. And they just give a little nod and say:



**Unknown:** Oh, you're all in one place. That's... that's great.

**Magnus:** Hey, Merle, shot in the dark, they with you? I'm just guessing. Is this like your date?

**Merle:** No, but I like the giant floral approach. That kind of, you know—

**Magnus:** Okay, nope, that was my fault, yeah.

**Taako:** Yeah, this charming. What are you doing in my home?

**Herald:** I'm the Herald of Istus, and we need to talk.

**Magnus:** Oh?

**Taako:** Shot in the dark, good? Good stuff?

**Herald:** No. No, of course not.

**Taako:** Yeah...

**Merle:** Well, Herald, come on in.

**Herald:** Sweet.

**Aabria:** And they sort of push in and immediately go to like the open seat that Susan's vacated while she was also trying to run around and be a good hostess. And immediately sits down and starts eating. I think there's maybe some like wonton soup? There's like a soup situation happening.

**Justin:** Yeah, for sure.

**Aabria:** Yeah, they immediately help themselves to that. And in the intervening time, Davenport and Lucretia, your stun effect wears off. And they're just sort of gently like ladling some soup into a bowl and they like look at you. Both the herald of bad news and deeply unbothered in this moment, like simultaneously

**Merle:** Then try this burnt salad. [chuckles]

**Magnus:** Only the middle. Listen, I don't want to tell you how to do your job, but... if there's anything we need to take care of, just tell—like we were going to have like a whole kind of dinner thing, it was shaping up to be. And this is kind of in the way of it. So, if you would just like tell us the message, we can fix it and then get back to, I don't know, the whatever we were doing.

**Kuo:** Sure. My name is Kuo, by the way.

**Magnus:** Okay.

**Taako:** Hey.

**Kuo:** Hey. Have you—

**Davenport:** Davenport! Is my name.

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

**Davenport:** Sorry, I didn't know if you knew all of our names. Do you know our names?

**Kuo:** I've been caught up to date on all of you, yes.

**Davenport:** Okay, I wear the suit of armor. I didn't know if you—you can't see my face underneath. But it's Davenport in here.

**Kuo:** Well... I mean, can you take it off so we can have a normal conversation? It smells a little weird.

**Davenport:** It's about to smell even weirder.

**Magnus:** Do you want me to start working on it while we get—

**Davenport:** Yeah, I'll tell you what, everybody take an appendage and grab some solvent, and just start pulling. This is sort of the fast way to get out of this.

**Magnus:** Okay.

**Griffin:** [chuckles] And then I'm drawn and quartered as they help me take off my—

**Justin:** [chuckles]

**Aabria:** [chuckles] Kuo just stares at you. And eventually is like:

**Kuo:** Actually, maybe leave it on.

**Magnus:** No, once I started, I'm not stopping. It's like unwrapping a present.

**Davenport:** Yeah, this glove is almost off. [groans] Uah!

**Kuo:** Highly recommend—

**Aabria:** And they sort of twist their fingers. And you see like a little vine erupts out of the crevice of your armor and wraps itself around your hand, Magnus. And kind of holds it there.

**Kuo:** Again, highly recommend that maybe you leave it on and hear what I have to say.

**Travis:** Strength check.

[sound of dice thrown]

**Travis:** I don't like being bossed around.

**Aabria:** Yes!

**Travis:** So, that's a 19 plus five. A 24.

**Aabria:** You immediately tear through and—

**Davenport:** Ow! Fuck!

**Travis:** No, the vine. Tear through the vine, not the—

**Aabria:** The vine!

**Griffin:** Still, the vine was—

**Davenport:** Ow!

**Clint:** There was still a tug. There would still be a tug.

**Griffin:** There's still a significant tug happening.

**Travis:** Oh, yeah. No, no, you're gonna feel it.

**Aabria:** And Kuo kind of gives you a look, Magnus, like, "You want to do this?" Like...

**Magnus:** Well, I don't know if you know this or who you're talking to. But the people in this room saved not just this universe, but every plane. So, maybe don't condescend and maybe don't grab people without their permission.

**Davenport:** And that's a good rule whether you're dealing with sort of demigods like us or just folks.

**Taako:** And my thing that I'm gonna say is I don't use magic anymore. So, I'm kind of just watching this whole thing go down. And don't—Magnus, I would recommend not writing checks that your proverbial weapons kit cash. Because there's no magic assistance coming from T.

**Magnus:** Okay.

**Clint:** And Merle says:

**Merle:** Did you bring that vine back?

**Magnus:** Oh, god.

**Merle:** I mean, that's okay. That's all right.

**Kuo:** I don't like the way you said that, so absolutely not.

**Justin:** Hard pass.

**Kuo:** I'm gonna need you to focus, Merle Highchurch. So, here's the thing. Taako, I was not aware that you're not doing magic. That's going to be a problem in—

**Magnus:** He says that a lot. We haven't tested it, if we're being honest. So...

**Kuo:** Okay. Well, let me put it this way, you're about to be tested... right about now. And all of you can feel sort of under your feet, the rumbling of the approach of several figures. And you hear the clattering of armor. What do you want to do?

**Griffin:** I very suddenly take my glove back from Magnus and snap it back into place.

**Travis:** Yeah, Magnus is going to draw Chance Lance and Rail Splitter, and square off with the door, I guess.

**Justin:** And Taako takes a crossbow off the wall and says:

**Taako:** This is a crossbow.

**Magnus:** Yup.

**Taako:** Yeah, I know how it works!

**Magnus:** Okay.

**Clint:** And Merle finishes the bottle of buttery Chardonnay.

**Aabria:** Beautiful.

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Travis:** It was three quarters full! [chuckles]

**Aabria:** [chuckles] Susan is heartbroken. But she doesn't say anything as she sort of like is staring at the window and like slinks back into like a back room. As you all sort of turn and look out the door, and you see a horde, a small troop of these like soldiers in dark, black armor that's sort of matte. And in the evening, like even the moonlight doesn't really reflect enough off of it. So, you're sort of losing them in the distance.

But then you see little bits of what looks like burn across different parts of their body, as they're slowly being consumed by fire or entropy, or something else. And Kuo picks up the empty bottle, kind of tilts it into their face, is disappointed and sets it down and says:

**Kuo:** You're about to meet the legions of the slow burn. The time drake. You're gonna wanna fight.

**Magnus:** Okay.

**Aabria:** And I need all of you to roll initiative. And that's where we're going to leave off, and we'll pick up next time.

**Griffin:** Yeah!

**Justin:** Yeah!

**Aabria:** [chuckles]

[Imbalance theme music plays]

**Griffin:** I got a two. We'll do this next time, I guess.

**Travis:** Okay, but I rolled a—

**Aabria:** You rolled so bad, I'm gonna pretend I didn't hear that. And we'll roll it before we start next time.

**Travis:** But I got a 19, can't we just—

**Aabria:** Okay...

**Griffin:** Ah, man.

**Aabria:** I'll write it down!

**Griffin:** Don't write down my two.

**Aabria:** [chuckles] I didn't hear it at all.

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