

The The Adventure Zone Zone - MaxFunDrive 2017

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[“Déjà Vu” by Mort Garson plays]

Griffin: I guess I’ll walk us in?

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: Yeah, do it. Wait, no, let Dad do it.

Griffin: All right.

Justin: Dad’s a radio guy.

Travis: Yeah, Dad can do this.

Justin: Give us a nice, cheesy—

Clint: Okay, you want a nice, cheesy open?

Justin: Yeah.

Travis: Yeah.

Clint: Okay. [in radio voice] Hi, everybody! And welcome! We’re back with another TTAZZ, that’s right. The The Adventure Zone Zone!

Griffin: Oh my...

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: [in radio voice] That’s where the guys get together, have a little confab, answer you queries. Right here!

Griffin: Agh...

Clint: [in radio voice] The The Adventure Zone Zone! Take it away, fellas!

Justin: I wanna thank our father, who is cosplaying as every Simpsons character you've ever hated.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: You know, it's funny, somebody asked us—

Justin: All together in one human.

Travis: Somebody asked us why Dad, both his character in Adventure Zone and Adventure Zone: (K)nights, is kind of like sleazy. And it's like, "Oh, well, that's just our dad if you tell him do a voice."

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: He's a sleazy, sleazy guy.

Travis: "Do a voice, Dad!"
"Okay..."

Clint: [in Casey Kasem voice] I could've done Casey Kasem?

Griffin: You couldn't have, actually. Legally.

Travis: No.

Justin: You couldn't have.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Hey, everybody. Welcome back to The The Adventure Zone Zone. It's been a minute since you've been here, huh? Like a year, maybe?

Justin: The show within a show.

Griffin: A show within a show, this... What's the show on Twin Peaks called that everybody watches? The like... Oh, whatever. It could not be less important.

Justin: Oh... Appointment to...

Griffin: Yeah, shit, that's gonna kill— I said that specifically to torment Justin for the next hour and 20 minutes. Or however long we go here on The The Adventure Zone Zone.

Justin: Invitation to Love.

Griffin: Invitation to Love.

Justin: There it is, oof.

Griffin: We're gonna answer a bunch of questions that people sent in, talk about making the show. And I think it's maybe a little weird timing, considering there's not that much left in this campaign and maybe it made more sense to do this once everything was completely over. 'Cause I imagine a lot of the questions I, as the DM, won't be able to answer. 'Cause I still have a few tricks up my sleeve.

Travis: I tried to be very careful— I wanna say, I tried to be very careful. It's so funny to me that like when we announced this, we were like, "We won't be doing spoilers." The sheer number of people who are like, "What's gonna happen?" [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah, "Who dies? Who's gonna die? Tell me all of them. I want a list of all the deaths."

Clint: Safe to say... safe to say that you had at least, what, 20 responses? Trav?

Travis: 20, 22... No, it was probably in the range of about 4,000. No exaggeration, it took me about three hours to go through the questions. A lot of duplicates.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: But we tried to go through the questions and ones that we could actually answer without ruining too much. I will say, there's some stuff in here that's probably gonna touch on what's happened up 'til this point. So, if you aren't caught up to episode 59, this is just kind of a preemptive like, we'll probably talk about stuff—

Griffin: We'll definitely talk about stuff.

Travis: ... That's happened in all 59 episodes. So...

Griffin: Yeah, I think we're gonna need to like, unpack a lot of stuff that actually happened in episode 59, to sort of set up the next episode of the podcast. So, if you haven't listened to 59 yet, don't listen any further to this one until you go back and finish it. Seriously.

Clint: And why haven't you?

Griffin: Yeah, it was a pretty good episode.

Clint: Yeah, it was.

Griffin: Should we get going? Or... I don't— I forget the format of this, like who asked—

Travis: Well, this is different. I think last year we asked each other questions that we had. And this year, we kind of put it out to the audience. So, how about this... Let's just all kind of take turns grabbing questions and asking each other.

And I'll start off with this, 'cause this is kind of a softball for Griffin. This is from Neil D, "What's the production process like for an episode? How long does it take to put each one together?"

Griffin: So, we record usually a couple days before the episode goes up. And we go for... what do you think? Like, I think most episodes are like on average like an hour 15, or something like that.

Justin: Yeah, when we record. I should mention, just as a caveat, we haven't gone back and listened to the original The The Adventure Zone Zone...

Griffin: Yes.

Justin: So, in case we're doubling up on answers, uh, tough shit.

Griffin: Yeah, sorry.

Travis: [laughs]

Griffin: I cut a lot out when I edit. Which I usually do the day, or sometimes the night before. Because my life is in shambles. And I cut like a lot of... I cut a lot of stuff out. Like, this is the most heavily edited thing I make.

And so, just like cutting down the recording to something that is listenable without like long, long pauses for rule checks and like decisions on what actions to take. I cut like maybe a fifth to a quarter out of the whole recording. And that takes a really long time.

And then, I record the ad break. And then, I levelate that, get that sounding good. I cut the intro together, which can take a long time if I have to pull— For episode 59, I had to pull a clip from episode 28, I think. And like, fucking finding the needle in a haystack took me a really long time.

Justin: What was it?

Griffin: It was the clip of Johann talking about being like, sad about the idea of being erased. And so like, that can take a while. And then, music recording varies pretty wildly. I recorded the... I think the fastest I've ever done it was the TAZ (K)nights bonus theme from this year. Which I knocked out in like a half hour.

Mostly using like premade loops in Garage Band. If I lean on those, it's a faster process. Other songs, like the Chalice song, took me fucking days to

get that one going. Usually, the music I have a bit longer lead up time. And then, cutting all that stuff together can also take a really long time.

Just like mixing all of the different tracks and sounds and shit together. Especially like episode 59 had... I wanna say like 15 different music cues in it. And it took me like half a day to make that. So like, some episodes take me days and days, and days.

Justin: It doesn't help that my brother, Griffin, refuses to break out of the 50 Shades of Grey style relationship he has with Audacity.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: He will not free himself from its beautiful, fuzzy shackles.

Griffin: Audacity sucks, but like, I've gotten to a point now where I've gotten pretty good at like doing it fast. Like, I—

Justin: Just let me open your eyes to the power of Reaper.

Griffin: I know. So, the answer to that question is like, it takes a long time. I work harder on this than like, anything and it's just because like... And I'm working harder and harder and harder. Like, the past couple episodes, like I've doubled the amount of production time that went into it.

And I'll probably keep doing that to the point where like the very last episode of this campaign will probably take me like— I will need all two weeks to like, get it going. 'Cause I wanna stick the landing.

Clint: And let me add something to this too, that I think will also answer a lot of other questions, that we got in kind of a roundabout way. Most of, if not all, I would say, of the editing that you do, Griffy, is to clean things up.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: And it's never ever to change the story. That's one thing I— A lot of people ask about like, did we know Griffin was gonna do this or did we know— No. There really is none of that involved.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: It's really making it up on the spot, as we go along. Not on Griffin's part, but on ours.

Griffin: Right.

Clint: And Griffin doesn't— is anal about not letting us know what is coming. And so, there's never any editing, I don't think, you know, to change a story element or take something out.

Griffin: Yeah, like... Yeah, I get what you're trying to say. There's no me saying like, "All right, Merle, do this!" And then you do it and I erase my prompt or whatever.

Clint: No, we don't... That doesn't happen.

Travis: Well, that's one of— one question of about 50. So, we're on— We're averaging seven minutes per question.

Justin: We're doing good.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Doing great.

Griffin: All right, how about another one?

Justin: Are you deleting these as we read 'em, Trav?

Travis: I'm marking them. So, you'll see a bunch of dashes on each one we do.

Griffin: Cool.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: Can I read this one from Tickle Pickle Disamon on Twitter. Who says, "How early in the campaign did you have the whole plot sorted out in your head properly? When did you start dropping hints?"

And the issue of that one's kind of tough to come by. But like, I really did have most of the structure of the plot done by the end of Gerblins. Like, I knew most of that.

Travis: Well, let me ask you this, Griffin. Let me turn it a little bit. At what point in there— 'Cause we start— Here There Be Gerblins started with like the prewritten like, box, you know, the Red Box campaign.

Griffin: Right.

Travis: What was the first kind of divergence from like, the prewritten where you were like, "Okay..." And just did it.

Griffin: So... The Lost Mines of Phandelver, there I followed— Here's how we followed it. "You find the dead the horses in the road." Yes. "You go to the Gerblin cave." Yes. "You fight the bug bear." Yes, although like, I don't think about the bear's name is Klarg in the book and I don't think you're supposed to like have tea with him and hang out.

And like, that's where things were like, "Oh, it's more if we do it this way." And then like, "You go to Phandalin." Yes. And then like, I think we jumped straight to Wave Echo Cave after that. And that is the end of that book. And we skipped the middle 90% of that book. Where you go and hang out with like an emerald dragonling and like, there's a big castle.

Justin actually— Okay, this is fun. When I was in Huntington for the— When we were all in Huntington for the TV show shoot, Justin ran a game of D&D for the Smirls, that I played along with. And you actually did some of the stuff in that book. Like, we went to that castle...

Justin: Yeah, it was fun! You missed all the good stuff when we were there.

Travis: [laughs]

Griffin: Well, yeah... But I mean, the thing is like, I think by like episode three, I realized I wanted to get off the book. And so, we jumped ahead to the end of the book, essentially.

Justin: Now, this is my question though, Griffin. And this is something that I've always been kind of curious about. When you— What was your plan when you started... Like, did you plan to just hop from prewritten campaign to prewritten campaign? Or what was the...

Griffin: I don't think... I don't think I had a plan. I think... 'Cause when we... When we did the first episode, it was under the guise of you were on paternity leave. And so like, this is a filler. And we didn't even know this was gonna be a podcast.

So, when we started, my mind was in this mode of like, "All right. Well, let's just get an episode done, so Juice can have a break." And I think that's been a detriment, I think, to the show because there are... It's tough, like going back and listening to those— that first arc.

And like, some of it, I've had to kind of try to work into the bigger campaign. But like, I really didn't have that bigger campaign until after that first arc was over. And I think that did us maybe a little bit of a disservice. 'Cause it did take me a while to start dropping hints, right?

Like, Crystal Kingdom is when I realized like... I had the idea in mind for like what the structure of the arc was gonna be. Crystal Kingdom, I started to do some fuck'n work to drop hints.

That's where you guys did like the whole like Cosmo-Scope and learning about the idea of like other planes. And this other maybe evil plane that was coming, and like the Red Robes showing up. And all that stuff started really hitting the pavement in Crystal Kingdom.

Clint: Wait a minute, though. I'm gonna call you on that. Because you know, going back and adapting Here There Be Gerblins for the graphic novel, I've

noticed a lot of things that either you were brilliant in adapting or you were brilliant in just stick— Like, there's a Red Robe in—

Griffin: Yes.

Clint: You know, and you... And so, you know... But there are elements that I pick up all the time. I will leave notes for Callisto, our editor, in the side that says, "I swear to God, this was in the episode."

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: Was that more you just going back and retconning or was it—

Griffin: No, that's one very specific example of like me dropping— I guess that was technically the first hint. Although like... That was like the first Red Robe we see, right? And the Red Robes are sort of integral to the secret plot that you all learned about in the last couple of episodes.

So, yeah, I guess that was sort of the first hint. But really like, the last thing I wanted was for all the stuff, when it was revealed, for it to have no hints leading up to it whatsoever.

Like, no— Like, oh— I fuck'n hate it in like video games, like JRPGS where you're playing it and then the final thing happens and it's some big bad that you like... that has never been referenced before, you know what I mean?

And it's just like, "I'm the big evil... force of evil that you didn't know about until just this moment. And I'm the one you have to kill in order to win." I didn't want that to happen. Like, I wanted there to be some lead up.

So, there's stuff like the patches you first got during Crystal Kingdom, as a Candlenights present. That was a hint. I tried to... Crystal Kingdom was like, every episode I was trying to drop stuff on y'all that would set this up.

Travis: So, this next question I guess ties into this, 'cause it's for Dad but I think it's also for Griffin. And I think it's a good example of what Griffin's talking about, as far as like the stuff from the first arc. And Ian asks, "If

Merle came from another set of planes, how could he have been related to Gundren Rockseeker? His blood opens the doors?"

Griffin: I got a good— I got an answer for that. But it's not— But that's... my answer for that sucks. And you'll learn about it in the next couple of episodes. But it sucks. But that... that's the kind of show I'm talking about, yes.

I've set up this thing where like you guys are from another reality, right? You're from another dimension or whatever. How can you have cousins in this world? And it's like, well... yeah. [laughs]

Travis: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: You got me.

Clint: That doesn't bother the DC Multiverse. You got Supermans from Earth 1, 2 and 3, all living on Earth Prime. And they're still related to other... Ah, I don't know if that's—

Griffin: That's one... No, I mean, it's... They got me there. That's a good loophole. Here's the thing, if you go back and you look for loopholes— And this is not a judgment. Like, yeah, you got me, fair play. 'Cause that one, I realized it like fuck'n 1:00 AM on night.

I woke with a start like, "Ah, shit! He can't have relatives here." There's gonna be stuff like that. And that's what I'm talking about. That first arc, I just didn't have it yet. I didn't have— I didn't know...

At that point, I didn't really know that they were from this other reality. And so like, I would just say some shit. And I'm sure there's a lot of stuff like that and... I regret that. It's a bummer. But what can you do? Pobody's nerfect.

Clint: All right, let me ask one. Can I ask one?

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Please do.

Justin: Yeah!

Clint: I got one that I think all four of us can answer. And it's from Frilly Ice Cream.

Justin: Finally, I get to talk and not just eat chili.

Clint: Frilly Ice Cream says—

Griffin: Are you eating chili again? 'Cause you were eating chili during the last recording.

Travis: God damn, Justin.

Justin: I'm on slow carb, baby. I only eat chili!

Griffin: That's a good life. That's good work, if you can get it.

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: "How did the popularity of the podcast affect your outlook on the story and characters? When did you become invested yourselves?"

Griffin: I'm curious to hear your boys' answers to this.

Travis: This is a really good question.

Justin: I'll tell you when I became invested was after... Okay so, I made Taako. And there was not a lot of elements to Taako that I had figured out early.

Griffin: Well because you and Dad took the pre-gen character sheets that came with the starter kit.

Justin: Right.

Griffin: And kind of put names on `em. And there's your guys.

Justin: And some have argued that I decided to name him Taako in the exact moment that I opened my mouth and said Taako.

Griffin: Yeah...

Clint: You didn't?

Justin: Some have argued that. [laughs]

Clint: I would argue that.

Travis: Historians have theorized...

Justin: Historians have theorized. And there was a period where I just made him... dumb? Does everybody remember the period when I made him like wicked stupid—

Clint: Oh, yeah.

Griffin: Yeah, he was just a trash bag there for a bit.

Justin: And I didn't— And I did that because I... I didn't think he was funny enough. So, I thought it would be funny to make him dumb. And then... And it wasn't until I tried to do that, that I started bumping up against like, oh, wait a minute... Like, that's not right.

Like, that's not who this character is and that's not who the person is. And... So, that made me feel ownership. The weird thing about the show getting bigger is that, in a way, I feel less ownership now. In a good way, I think, in a healthy way.

But like, I see all these different permutations of Taako. And he's like, still a character I made up and that's cool. But I also think it's cool that other

people have their own spin on Taako and their own sort of take on him. And I think that's really neat. And I wanna encourage that, I think that's—

It used to irritate me, I think from a consumer perspective, when I would see creators do that. Like, I don't know, the decision is yours. It's up to you. But as a creator now, I find that really interesting. Like, I find it really cool to let that space exist.

Griffin: I struggled with that for a bit 'cause it felt... to be like non-committal about canonical look and design and aesthetic, and all that, like felt... I don't know, fan service-ey in a way. In a way that I think I kind of struggled with for just a little bit.

But I kind of realized like, I don't think it's us dodging some sort of essential question about what these characters look like. I think it is us actually taking advantage of what is a pretty singular benefit to this being an audio medium, an audio only medium.

Travis: Right.

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: If this was any other— If this was any other kind of medium, like, we couldn't do that. And I think... It's important to me that this show has good representation. 'Cause that's important to me and I know it's important to our listenership. And I feel like— And I try to do that with the characters, the NPCs that y'all come across.

But like, I feel like this is a really cool way of doing that. Of just saying like... Whatever interpretation you have, go for it. And because this medium doesn't have these canonical visual takes, then just let it ride. And nothing is wrong, everything is permitted.

Travis: Yeah... I hope this doesn't sound like a dodge, 'cause it's absolutely true. I don't picture anything when I picture Magnus. Like, I just don't think that way. So like, I see a lot of—

Justin: When I think about it, you're seeing it from— When I envision scenes that are happening, I'm seeing them from my perspective.

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: Like, I'm seeing them from... I don't see Taako doing stuff, I'm envisioning myself looking at the stuff that is happening—

Travis: Yeah, it's like Myst, you know what I mean?

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Like, I don't see my PC. And so like, when I see fan art and I see people's drawings, I'm like, "Yeah, that could be Magnus. [laughs] Like, yeah. In a universe, that's Magnus. Like, yeah, mm-hmm." And so—

Clint: And I think we— Go ahead, I'm sorry.

Travis: It's just never for me like, this is my— And so, it's more like for me... One of the weirdest things— As far as like the popularity and like investment in the characters goes, one of the weirdest moments I ever had was... I used to look through the Reddit. I don't anymore.

Not because I begrudge anybody posting on Reddit, but it started to bleed into decisions I made and I wanted to remove myself from that. But like, after an episode went up, I saw somebody post a comment, "That's not what Magnus would do." About something I did, as Magnus.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah?

Travis: And I was like, "Wait, what? What do you mean that's not what Magnus— I am Magnus? What I do— What Magnus does is what Magnus would do?" And it was like I could not pretzel my brain around it. And it was like, okay, to this person, this is what Magnus does. And anything that...

But the thing is, is people don't work that way in real life. It's not like, "This person is good and so they never mess up, they never do anything bad." Like, that's just not... And so like, when I first started making Magnus it was pretty one-note, heroic meat head who rushes into things.

And like, somebody talked about like the rogue... Like, "That's very un-Magnus-like, that he would train in rogue." And it's like, yeah... But after a while of just rushing into things and almost dying, there's a certain amount of learning that comes from that. So, characters grow and change.

Griffin: I think, generally speaking, the investment that you all sort of had— And this is just my perspective as the DM. But I also think when the listeners became more invested in your characters— And this is definitely something that we need to take to heart whenever we do whatever the next thing is for The Adventure Zone.

That investment came when you all expanded— when the definition of your characters expanded beyond your Dungeons and Dragons character class. Because when we started, you were a wizard and you were a fighter, and you were a cleric. And that was pretty much it.

But I feel like your characters really took flight. And the show, frankly, got pretty good, when you were the disgraced former TV chef and the carpenter... the carpenter whose town and home was destroyed. And the deadbeat dad who is kind of a hippy cleric with shaken faith.

That's stuff that goes beyond you just playing your roles, is when shit got really, really good. So, no matter what we play next, if we play some you know, fuck'n... space game. I don't want you guys to just be like, "Well, I made an alien." And, "I made a pilot." And, "I made a gun fighter." Like...

Travis: I will say, Griffin, not to judge someone else's game, but if there's an RPG game where there's a class that's just 'alien,' it's not... I don't know about that game.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: Yeah, it's sounds like a—

Griffin: Yeah, there's—

Clint: I will tell you— I will tell you a crystalizing moment for me. And it's not the joke you think I was gonna make.

Travis: Aah!

Justin: Ah!

Clint: I think by the time we got to this moment, we knew something special was going on. And with my hand to god, I think Abraca-Fuck-You was a turning point. Because that was one of the hardest I've ever laughed at anything we've done.

Travis: Yeah.

Clint: And it was... [laughs] I know that sounds strange. But to me, that was kind of a distillation about what was so special about what we were doing. To me, that was a big— That was a big turning point.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: I did— I saved the show. Here's another question.

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: Saved you from mediocrity, we would still be soldiering on to our grave if not for me.

Clint: Sure!

Justin: Here's a question to me.

Griffin: Do you want me to ask it?

Justin: Yes. Why don't you ask me that and then I'll ask one of you guys the next question to you.

Griffin: Which one is it? This one's from Taakos's boyfriend, Goldcliff Trust, who says to Justin, "How much satisfaction do you get from blind-siding Griffin with new spells?"

Justin: None!

Clint: Next question!

Travis: [laughs]

Justin: No, I mean... The very short answer is, I wanna do... Taako's life is dope and he does dope shit. That's fact. And there are a lot of spells. Every time I do a spell like that, it is a balance for me of doing some hard-ass stuff that is cool. But also, like, I don't wanna mess up the thing.

Clint: Mm-hmm.

Justin: And as much as Griffin says you can't mess it up, you definitely can mess it up.

Griffin: No, you can super fuck it up. Defo, def-def-defo. Yes.

Justin: But he always tells us that he'll figure it out. But I don't wanna break his thing. So, that's always the balance for me. It is in no way about blind-siding Griffin with spells. If anything, it is a professional and familial curiosity—

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: ... As to how he will course correct to what I am doing in any given situation. But it is never with the intent of, "Take this, Griffin!" Because we could do that. There is a much nastier version of that.

Clint: Yeah, oh, gosh!

Griffin: Ah, dude, you could... Your first episode on the Moon Base. It's like, "Okay, I attack the director."

"Okay, that's it. Thanks for listening everybody. Bye!"

Travis: Let's spin that into... There was a lot of people that wanted to know, Griffin, if there were moments that were kind of fucked up of your planning, based on stuff that we did.

Griffin: Sure. This ranges... The answer to this is, "Ah, yeah!" Here's the thing, and I could spend a really long time talking about this. But the biggest thing I struggle with doing, being a DM and also being the DM of an actual play podcast. And those are two different jobs with two different sort of demands. And I think every DM has to make up this decision in their mind.

Is how much control over the whole narrative, the macro narrative do you give the players and how much do you keep for yourself? And I talked about it in the last The The Adventure Zone Zone, about how I try to give the micro story over to you guys and like do whatever you want while still trying to keep my hand firmly on the wheel of the bigger picture.

And so, that gets me in trouble. Sometimes there are episodes, like I think all the Lunar Interludes have been an example of this. Where just, I kind of need to take the wheel pretty much entirely. Because fuck'n episodes... This last Lunar Interlude, 58 and 59, I had a million threads that I had to pull together.

And so, that meant I was talking a lot of the time. I saw some people say like, "Well, geez Griffin, just give the other boys a script if you're gonna do that." Which I don't appreciate, necessarily. Because y'all still— I still— I feel like I still give you the opportunity to do your own stuff.

Not only that, like when you guys had this conversation about Magnus, "You shouldn't get back in your body." I was like... "Uh... fuck!" That wasn't... I kind of thought you would. And then, all of a sudden, that next episode was completely different from what I thought it was gonna be. So, I don't think you're necessarily completely on rails. But...

Justin: Griffin has never forbade us from doing anything.

Clint: Nah-uh, no.

Griffin: No. So...

Travis: If anything, honestly, one of the things is like... D&D is a very collaborative game, in my experience. And like, if your DM— And not to judge anybody's playstyle. But if you feel like... The host of One-Shot RPG commented on that I apparently said in an episode, "This is important to me." So, Griffin went along with it.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: And like, that's how the game should work? So, there's stuff that we've wanted to do and Griffin says yeah. But also simultaneously, we see our DM is crafting a storyline. So, why would we fuck with that, just to fuck with it?

Griffin: Well, that's—

Justin: Here, let me give you an example of this in action, right? In the beginning of... I guess it would've been towards the end of 58, beginning of 59. Dad and I were in a scenario where Travis knew... Travis had some idea...

Griffin: Oh, and that made... Magnify all of the— Like, multiply the complexity of all this by a billion, thanks to the fact that I made it so that one of the characters knew kind of what was up and the other two didn't. And I kind of expected all of you to go along with it. And you did not.

Justin: Yeah, well, we said to Griffin... And I don't know— This probably wasn't in the episode. But at one point, we had to say to Griffin, "Listen, we know we are headed towards something happening in the Moon Base. But we don't... We're not there. As characters—"

Clint: We were not down with crossing, going against the Bureau of Balance.

Justin: We just had no... We didn't have the motivation yet.

Clint: Right.

Justin: And we could feel the narrative wanting to go there. But we, as arbiters of our characters, in order to be true to them, could not roleplay that.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Because it was like, we just weren't there. We didn't have it.

Griffin: Which let me... When I envisioned that sequence, I just thought, "Well, if they're down, it's gonna be this cool sneaking mission." And that's not really how it approached— also, you told me that and I'd kind of try to give you a little bit more justification with the—

Clint: Yeah.

Justin: Right.

Griffin: ... You hearing that voice, telling you trust Barry. Which I don't know if I should say who that was, but I'm pretty sure everybody gets it. And giving you that stuff with Angus, who kind of like backed you up.

I was like, "Oh, okay. Well, I need to course correct and do a little bit more stuff." And also, you didn't take the scene the same way I thought you did, you fuck'n walked straight into him. You were like, "Yo, Director. What's up?"

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Part of me thought you might just be like... If you had been like, "Hey, Director. Somebody's trying to cross you, we're not down with it." I would've had to figure out something on the spot and I would've freaked the fuck out. But... I would've had to figure it out.

Justin: Well, we wouldn't have turned on— This is the problem, is we couldn't— And where we sort of had our hands tied is we also didn't wanna leave— We couldn't have left Magnus hanging.

Griffin: Sure.

Clint: Right.

Justin: The problem is, we didn't have time for literally an entire episode of talking about it between the three of us, to try to figure out what was going on.

Griffin: Yes.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Justin: And also, it didn't matter because we didn't have all the parts.

Griffin: The clues, yeah.

Clint: But at the time— And each arc really and truly is a who-dunnit, for us. It may not be a murder, but there's always a mystery—

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Right.

Clint: ... That we're trying to figure out as we go through it. I'll tell ya, this kind of ties in with one of the things— And nobody asked this question. But one of the toughest things for me... And yet one of my favorite things about this story, these stories.

Are those, "Jury will kindly disregard the witness' testimony," kind of things. Where not only... There are moments where our characters are not supposed to know what the other characters know.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: But then, we as the player, are not supposed to know.

Griffin: Yeah...

Clint: But listen, that's a level of complexity that I think makes it special because it does make it harder. And it forces us to be better actors.

Griffin: I've been listening to a lot— And I talk about this a lot on Twitter, and I may have talked about it in the last The Adventure Zone Zone. But I listen a lot to a podcast called Friends of the Table, that Waypoints' Austin Walker runs their game.

And they work in dramatic irony in a way that is just delectable. And so like, I think we... There's definitely been a lot more of that in the last few episodes. Of just like, Clint knows shit that Merle can't and trying to play around that. As so often happens in Friends at the Table, like is really, really good shit.

I wanna get back to one last thing about this subject. 'Cause I mentioned this spectrum. And there's been talk about like you guys fucking up my plans or whatever. And I think the reason you're thinking like that is because we've been doing this, this way.

And I think it's— The way that it's worked for us, in which I am mostly guiding where the narrative goes and you all are reacting to it. But there is another way of doing it in which I say, "You guys are at a bar and these people are in the bar. What do you do?" Episode one, that's it. And then you set fire to the bar. And it's like, "Okay. Well, I know what episode two is gonna be."

And I'm reacting to the things that you do. And I feel like that isn't the best way... That's just not the right way for us to do it, right? Because I don't know, I, the DM— I, the person running the game. I don't know how to make a good story out of that. Because it's just... it's gonna be a lot of cooks in the kitchen.

And it's gonna be like, unless we do all get together at that point and say like, "All right, what are we doing with this thing?" Then it's not gonna be this cohesive narrative. It'll be you guys being just murderous bandits as you run across the countryside. You know what I mean?

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Like, it's really... And so, I get really defensive about people saying, "I wish Griffin would let the boys make more of a big decision." Because to answer the thing that we haven't even talked about, which is the point of the question, of things you guys did.

The whole Arms Outstretched sequence, where Taako soul jars and you guys pull Magnus from death... I'm not kidding, I had a whole thing in the Astral Plane, gone. Like, fucking gone. That was probably the biggest most brutal thing.

The chalice episode, which I think is maybe the most important episode of the season, the series so far. Where we finally get into your guys' back stories and then the chalice tries to tempt you. I fully fucking thought that Magnus was gonna take the offer and I had two episodes worth of stuff...

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: No bullshit, of parallel worlds and alternate timelines. And like dark... the darkest timeline style shit happening and you all trying to pull Magnus from the brink, or... I thought Magnus wasn't gonna make it through 11th Hour, full stop. But you didn't take the offer and so I was like, "Oh. Okay. Walk away from that."

And then there's littler stuff, like I mentioned in the last The The Adventure Zone Zone. Like, I had a cool battle on top of the train that Magnus kind of did away with, with this wild acrobatic stunt. So, I definitely take the reins in some episodes more than others when I need to really get things tied down and tied back in.

Because I'm trying to do kind of a complex thing and I don't wanna let anything go unresolved. But at the same time, it is not you guys reading scripts. I have definitely tailored the big picture stuff to suit the things that I think you all are enthusiastic about, about your characters. And that's the way I try to justify it.

Travis: So, before we answer more questions, the whole reason we're doing The The Adventure Zone Zone is we are in the middle of the MaxFunDrive.

And so, let's talk a little bit about that. And we're gonna fly through this and get back to your questions. And then, we'll do like a lightning round question section.

So, Maximum Fun is a listener supported network. That means that we do some ads, but primarily, the network and these shows exist because of listeners like you. So, once a year we do a two-week drive where we ask you to consider supporting the shows and the artists that you love.

We have a bunch of different levels that you can give at. For \$5 a month, there is something like 100 hours of bonus content that you get access to. There's... I DM'ed a couple of episodes of what we're calling Adventure Zone: (K)nights. In a whole new world—

Griffin: Hey, and let's establish canon. Let's establish canon. Is it knights with a K?

Travis: It's nights with an— Like, it's a play on Baywatch Nights.

Griffin: No, I know, I know, I know, I know. I know, I know. But it's... This could also be a play on a play on 'knights.'

Travis: Okay, sure. Fuck it, yeah. It's Adventure Zone: (K)nights with a K. But it's also in a quantum state where if you've ever spelt it with an N, you are also correct, retroactively.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Which by the way, Steven the Goldfish is also in a quantum state, where it is both with a V and with a P-H, depending on if I remember how—

Griffin: It's an audio medium, folks.

Clint: And Steven's okay, right? Steven's okay?

Travis: Oh, we'll talk about that in a second.

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: Okay.

Travis: Don't get it twisted. But so, for \$5 a month, you get all that bonus content. And not just for Adventure Zone, for all the other shows on the network. And not just for this year, all the past years. It's such a bargain. And in The Adventure Zone: (K)nights, it's a whole new world with new characters, that I DM. Griffin—

Griffin: [sings] A whole new world...

Travis: Griffin, Justin and Dad play as new characters. Justin plays as Troth, and she's a Monk Tiefling. Griffin plays as an eldritch bartender named Tom Collins. And dad plays as kind of a disgraced, black-balled bard named Lenny Manolito.

And because we've hit 10,000, there's going to be a part two to this year's Adventure Zone: (K)nights, coming out very shortly. We're recording that tomorrow. So, that's at \$5. At \$10, you get the bonus content—

Justin: By the time you're hearing this, we've already recorded it.

Travis: That's true.

Justin: Twist!

Travis: So, at \$10 a month, you get access to all the bonus content. You also get your choice of an enamel pin. There's one for every show on the network. And because we're past 10,000, if you are a \$10 donor after the drive, you're gonna be able to purchase more pins. With the proceeds of that going to charity.

Justin: Nice.

Travis: So, at \$20 a month, you get a pin, you get the bonus content. You also get a Keep in Touch Kit that has stationary, it's got a rocket pen with four colors in it. You get a candle shaped like a rocket, that smells like sharpened pencils and friendship. You get a rocket stamp.

Basically, anything you need to keep in touch. And then at \$35 a month, you get the Keep in Touch Kit, you get the pin, you get the bonus content, and you get some engraved beer mugs. Engraved with the Max Fun rocket logo.

Justin: But you know what, Trav? It's not really just about the gifts. The gifts are nice, but what you're really doing is helping to make more stuff you like in the universe.

This show exists because of Max Fun Drive and it gave us the freedom to be able to create it. And we wouldn't be doing it without it. So, by voting with your dollars— By voting with your dollars, you are helping to ensure that we make more cool stuff.

Travis: Yeah!

Justin: And that's really amazing. And we so appreciate your support in all of that.

Griffin: Yeah, this show has grown a lot and that means a lot to me. And... The Max Fun Drive is one way, in addition to just seeing how big and how passionate the community is, that inspires me to spend more time on it.

I wouldn't spend a bunch of time writing music and doing all this stuff, and writing and pre-pro and stuff, if I didn't think there was a demand for it. If I didn't think that people were going to get some level of enjoyment out of that. So, this show is what it is because of the Max Fun Drive and because of the people who support it. So...

Travis: So, if you love Max Fun and you love Adventure Zone, please consider supporting. Go to maximumfun.org/donate. Take a look at the different levels, see which one's right for you.

And if you are already a donor, please consider upgrading, because we count towards that. We're... I think we're gonna hit 20,000 by the end of the drive. But we can only do that with your help. So, boys, I would like to rapid fire lightning round some questions at you.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Specific for each one of you, and we'll see if we can just knock out some of these.

Griffin: Yeah, 'cause we literally have 100 or so on here still.

Justin: Can I do one first?

Travis: Go for it.

Griffin: Yes.

Justin: Dad, why does Merle not like Angus?

Clint: Oh. Actually, that was a very legitimate character choice 'cause I've always kind of played Magnus— I mean, played Merle as—

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: See, I do it too.

Justin: Still, to the moon.

Clint: As a character who was really kind of insecure about his place on the team. He was never much of a team guy and saw anybody that joined the party with distrust. If you look back, even Killian coming on. Anybody that came on—

Griffin: Wow, I never... Fuck, man...

Clint: I made the choice that Merle would always feel so insecure that you know... What do they need him for? He's a failed cleric, he's short. 90% of the spells he casts are failures. So, anytime anybody came along with any level of competency, he saw that character as a threat to his position in the group.

Griffin: I feel bad for dumping on Merle in so many of the arcs, right? Like in Crystal Kingdom, you were the one getting pursued because you had the highest death count. And now, Pan has abandoned you. But I promise, that sweet reward... I promise, I have plans for all y'all boys.

Travis: You mean death. [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs] The sweet release of death.

Clint: The sweet release of death.

Travis: Okay. So, Griffin.

Griffin: Yes?

Travis: Who's your favorite and least favorite NPC to play as and/or voice?

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: My favorite is Angus, of course. Although, I've gone back and listened and there are some pretty wide variations. The voice for Angus came from... one of the... It was a Superego sketch. And it was the one where they're on the go— One of the characters is on the train—

Superego is another comedy podcast that's really good. There's a sketch where there's just a guy on a train and a bunch of weird folks come and talk to him.

Clint: Oh, gosh. I remember!

Griffin: And one of them was a ghostly boy.

Clint: I never knew that!

Griffin: Yeah. And he was... What does he say... He just talks about being ethereal and— "Won't you take my clammy, diaphanous hand?" Or something like that.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: I straight just lifted that from that. Although like now I just do a, [in high-pitched tone] "Kind of a higher voice, hi." And so, I like Angus.

Travis: All right, least favorite.

Griffin: My least favorite is just any character that's like, [in low tone] "Down here." All like 12 of them. [in low tone] "I talk in a low voice. I'm either—"

Clint: So, it's strictly based on voice, not character?

Griffin: [in low tone] "I'm either Jenkins or I'm Johaan, or I'm any six characters." Like, yeah...

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Justin—

Griffin: I have like four voices that I try to do for everybody.

Travis: Justin, this is from Rick Sinchez. "Have Taako and Kravitz been on other dates, other than the one on the show?"

Griffin: Mm.

Justin: I mean... You would be on the... I mean...

Travis: A lot of people wanna know this, Justin. They want to know more about the relationship between Kravitz and Taako.

Justin: But it is... I'm not being flippant, it's an essential like... It's an essential, disparate thing to me. Like, it... I don't know, it wasn't on the show. It's up to you. Do you think they did? I don't know. My part is done.

Griffin: [chuckles]

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: I don't have to do more. I did my part of it by talking and recording it. As far as I'm concerned, that's my contribution to that stuff. And I don't wanna fill in the grey areas where other people can hang out and do whatever. I would say... I'm sure they— It seemed like they had a fun time. Like, I guess?

Griffin: Yeah, on the topic—

Justin: It seemed like they enjoyed each other's company. But I... I just don't wanna... I really feel pretty strongly that stuff that wasn't on the show, I'm not really interested in making ruling statements on. 'Cause if I, you know... I wanna leave flexibility for people.

Griffin: I just wanna hop in here and say like, the demand for Taakitz content is... Yes, definitely... It's a lot. There's a lot. There's a lot of demand for Taakitz content. And I do wanna say if only fuck'n—[laughs] Magnus had not been pulled from the clutches of death, we would've gotten a lot more Kravitz time. But now, this—

Clint: Oh, thank you! See, you're dumping on me again!

Griffin: No, no, no. I mean, that was one of my fuck'n favorite things that you guys— You guys did a cooler thing there than I had envisioned. I'm just saying like I get a lot of tweets now that's like, "Wow, Kravitz wasn't in this episode at all. And you set up this like, perilous situation."

And it's like, I know. Kravitz is a really great character, but this is me trying to reverse engineer the stuff I was gonna do in the Astral Plane, into the rest of the story. So, it's not me like—

Travis: If we hit 20,000 new and upgrading donors, Griffin will release it as a deleted scene!

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: No, stop. No, stop.

Justin: Shut your mouth. Shut your mouth.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: I will say one more note about Kravitz. I know people really like the Taakitz coupling and I'm into it, for sure. I think the reason— If there is one reason... And I'm reading into this from Griffin.

Griffin has not presented other opportunities for Taako and Kravitz to interact. But I will say this... It is zero sweat off my brow to roleplay as a male fella, going on a date with another fella. I have zero issue with that, whatsoever.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: It is however exponentially more weird to go on imaginary dates with my brother.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: It's like, a lot weirder.

Griffin: I don't wanna trivia— I don't wanna trivialize this, right. 'Cause I know it's... it's like—

Justin: No, I'm serious about it.

Griffin: For a lot of people— No, no, no, I get it. I'm just saying, it's also the only date that's ever been on the show, was the— I'm pretty sure it was the Kravitz... Like, the only romantic date—

Justin: Uh...

Travis: Uh...

Justin: Merle and the director?

Griffin: No, that was more of a—

Justin: I felt some heat there.

Griffin: That was more of a hang sesh but...

Travis: Uuh no, I think it was pretty much a date.

Griffin: Uuh okay.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Yeah, 'cause it's way less weird for dad to go on a date with Griffin.

Griffin: I don't wanna trivialize— Like, I like the— I like folks shipping our characters, right. Like, I'm into it.

Travis: Except for Magnus. Magnus has only had one love. He's done with that.

Griffin: Yeah, Magnus— Yeah, his—

Clint: Magnus.

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: No...

Justin: Steven. [laughs]

Travis: Steven.

Griffin: How about another question?

Travis: Hold on. So, let me answer that question. So, Steven the goldfish...

Griffin: Oh, boy...

Travis: Anytime anything happens to Magnus, everyone is very concerned with Steven. Let me— Let me just say this right now, if anything were to ever happen to Steven, I would say it. [laughs] Everyone's very concerned that something tragic has happened to Steven and we've just failed to mention it.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Steven is fine. He will almost always be fine. Like, I can't imagine a scenario in which the payoff is gonna be something bad happening to Steven. Steven is fine... If you haven't heard otherwise, safe to assume Steven is fine.

Griffin: And more importantly there's gonna be more Kravitz stuff real soon, I promise. Hang in there, Kravitz-heads.

Clint: Kravites.

Travis: @SwiftMartyrdom asked me, "Does Travis still have Magnus' old backstory written down somewhere. And if so, could we hear some of it?" Here's the thing... I wrote that backstory before we ever started playing. And once we actually started...

This is— This is the most like long-form improv I've ever done. Like, years long. And so, that backstory, I don't think... The backstory that you hear in the 11th Hour arc, more now— Like, more accurately reflects Magnus than anything I wrote a while ago.

It's two different characters at this point. 'Cause the backstory I had was this really broken, bitter dude that had seen some shit and was kind of forced into this heroic role. And like, it just— It is no longer representative... It was much more like Mal Reynolds, but without the humor.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: And the Magnus you see now is much more like the humorous side—

Griffin: It also— It also, it didn't fit the... not just Magnus' character, but it didn't fit the tone of the show. Like at all.

Travis: Yeah, no.

Griffin: It was pitch fucking black. [laughs]

Travis: It was dark. It was very dark. And I will say that the one huge element that carried over into both, is Julia, is the wife.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: And a lot of people I saw talking about like... you know, women dying as part of the backstory. I will say, for me... For me, it is maybe the most grounded character choice, I— Like, as far as time— If someone asks what's a thing that like I have the most... Julia asked— How appropriate— "What's the biggest thing you and Magnus have in common?"

And the reason that I made the decision to have his wife pass away is... And it might get a little serious here for a second. But for two reasons. One, our mom passed away when I was 21. And it's like one of the most impactful moments in my life to date.

Clint: Mm-hmm.

Travis: It's like what shaped me to be the person I am and inspired me to like, do more good with the time that I have left in the world. So, that was a big part of it. And then also, my wife and being married. And my wife continuously inspires me to constantly be a better person than I was before I met her.

So, those two things is what, for me, would make someone a hero. I kind of combined those elements in one. So, for me, everything that Magnus is, is from that.

Griffin: Sure. I also like... I am also kind of like, hmm. I totally get these criticisms. And there's been a lot coming in, coming from— stemming from episode 59 and some of the stuff that came in there. About like... Fridging, right? That concept, that trope of fridging woman characters to inspire male heroism.

And... I definitely get that. And I think we've definitely stepped in it. I tried so like... I tried so hard to sidestep some bad tropes when doing this show. It was important for me that there was never like a... You know, like a princess for you all to rescue.

But I definitely fucked up in that like... The bury your gays trope with the Ram and Raven, Hurley and Sloan, at the end of the Patalis to the Metal arc, which— Because when I was writing that, I was like, "Oh, it's the first like romance in the show and I'll give it a tragic ending."

Without knowing that there was whole fucking like... That's how most gay and lesbian relationships in media end, is with tragic endings. Which I didn't realize. And so, I've stepped in it a lot in that regard. And I think we've probably also not done so great about avoiding...

You know, women dying for dudes to have like, the kickstart for their adventure. We haven't done it a lot. But maybe a little bit more than I'm comfortable with. Which brings me to Lup. Which I'd like to just sort of clear the air about in the next two minutes, if you'll allow me.

I had the idea for Taako to have this twin that he couldn't remember. Everybody has things that they couldn't remember because of the Voidfish. And I had this idea for Taako to have this twin sister, Lup. And the question that we got probably most in this whole thing, in prepping for this episode was, "Is Lup's name actually Chalupa?" And here's where I'm at. And...

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: About two years ago, when—

Justin: Just let me clarify, I asked Griffin this exact question as I was listening to the episode. And his exact answer to me was, "What does your heart tell you?"

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Here's where I'm at. When Justin made Taako, when... And I'm guessing here, but I'm pretty sure when you came up with the name Taako, it was just, "Isn't this a silly thing to name your fantasy wizard in a roleplaying game?" It was done out of irreverent silliness, right?

Justin: Yes.

Griffin: It was not... It was certainly not—

Justin: It's because naming anything like that is so wack.

Griffin: Sure.

Justin: It's like, it's so lame 'cause it doesn't exist. And so it's like, [in silly British accent] "I'm Grendlethorn Winstler—"

Griffin: Yes.

Justin: Like, fuck off. His name's Taako.

Clint: [laughs] Bramble-pal.

Griffin: And at the time, Justin definitely wasn't— what Justin definitely, definitely, definitely wasn't doing... And I don't think there's been much criticism to this point. Justin wasn't making a Latinx character and naming them after a Tex-Mex dinner food, right. That would be pretty racist, pretty problematic.

It was just, "This is a silly name to name somebody." Okay. When I had this idea for a twin he could not remember, I followed the same naming convention and thought, "Well, of course his twin would also be named after a Tex-Mex food."

And so, I came up with Chalupa and shortened it to Lup, so that I, you know, could have a name that I could say that wouldn't give away the reveal. That also sounded like a cool, actual name, right. And Lup has been referenced a lot. Pretty much most of the arcs, her name has been referenced.

So, fast forward to now and I think we're all a lot more cognizant about how people consume the show and how people have head-canons for.. basically how every character looks. And we encourage that, right. I encourage that. I think it's cool. I think it's the coolest thing about this podcast, if I'm being frank.

And there are a lot of people now who have this head canon for Taako being a Latinx dude. Thereby, as an extension, his sibling would also be Latinx. And now, all of a sudden, if that is your head canon, having two characters named Taako and Chalupa, who that's how you interpret them, that sucks, right. That's—

Justin: It sucks!

Griffin: That's very, very, very problematic. And so now, all of a sudden, I'm— I as sort of—

Travis: And just to be clear, it doesn't suck because they're Latino. It sucks because of the naming.

Griffin: No! No, no, no. It sucks because the naming— We're all fuck'n four white dudes. And that I think is pretty problematic if that's how you interpret those characters. And it does create a sort of like, Schrödinger's racism. [laughs] Where if you interpret these characters as...

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: If you interpret these characters as Latinx, then those names are problematic. If you don't, then it's just like, "Oh, what silly names." I, as the DM and the person who came up with the name for this other character can't say, "Well, that's on you if that's how you interpret them." And also say, "I

want everybody to interpret their characters however they want." You know what I mean?

So, that being said... And I don't want folks who... There's been a huge amount of people who are like, "Oh, Chalupa. I figured out your name. Griffin, you've been setting up this joke for such a long time." And I think there's people who are into the name because maybe they don't interpret those characters in the same way.

And I don't want those characters— This is not a judgment on those people or anybody. It is just my own sort of discomfort at this thing, now, based on how a lot of people— A lot of people— 'Cause a lot of people have been reaching out... Have interpreted it.

So, here's what's up. And I can make this decision 'cause I can do whatever the fuck I want with the characters in this world, or the world itself. Lup's name is just... I think canonically, it's just gonna be just Lup. Right, that's what we've been calling her. And I think that's the best way to kind of move forward. I think... No, I need to be a little bit more steadfast here.

Clint: Spell it L-O-O-P.

Griffin: No, Lup's name L-U-P. It's how we've spelled it and it's just— It's not short for anything. Lup's name is just— is just Lup. And that's the end of the story. Because there's so much more— There's more stuff I'm doing with Lup. Like, a lot. A lot more stuff I'm doing with Lup. And I don't... I don't know. I don't want anybody to listen to listen to this podcast and be uncomfortable because of some racist undertones that were completely—

Justin: Unintentional.

Griffin: Completely and totally unintentional. Like, I don't want— It is important for me that nobody sort of has that. And it's way more important to me than landing some two-year-old stupid pun, right.

Justin: Pseudo joke.

Griffin: Pseudo kind of lazy joke.

Justin: Dad, I have a question here from Alison Wilgus. It says, "Has working on the graphic novel script and revisiting early episodes while adapting them, affected how you feel about TAZ as a player?"

Clint: Oh, as a player, it's made me appreciate, A, Griffin's story telling. Griffin's world building.

Griffin: Thanks, Daddy!

Clint: Because really and truly, by about the third or fourth story, it was obvious that... Well, even before that, that you had gone off the rails and started working on your own thing. And it has affected me in the fact that it... When I realized that, it kind of made me realize that I had to up my game a little bit.

And it's sort of like what Justin touched on before. You know, we... You know, when people were asking about, "Do we do things that push Griffin's buttons on purpose?" Yeah, we do that. But do we do things to try to derail the story? No, we don't.

And I'm being honest here, I really think that we become actors... And I think we really try very hard to balance out the riffs, the meta kind of stuff... and the current references and the pop culture references, with trying to be pure to our character.

And honest to God, we really didn't have characters until, I think, like the second arc. Maybe the third arc. For me, a big moment was Merle getting his arm chopped off. That made me kind of realize that it was... you know, it was real. And this was... this was kind of full-fledged character building.

And that's informed a lot of the things that have happened since then. Merle's attitude towards Magnus, a little bit, in kind of a fun way. But... Going back and redoing the graphic novel... I mean, adapting the graphic novel has just kind of reimpresed me all along.

'Cause man, I'm telling ya, there's a lot of jokes. But there's a lot of heart. And I think that's what— That didn't start showing until later, I think. We had a few flashes of it early on. But I think that's when it became kind of special.

Justin: Well... I think we didn't know that we had— that the show had the capability for that early on.

Griffin: Yeah, uh -huh.

Travis: Yeah, I agree.

Justin: We didn't... It wasn't in our—

Clint: It was a joke fest.

Justin: Yeah. And we didn't know that it had— Like, we didn't— It's like a car that flew all of a sudden.

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: It's like, "Wait a minute, can we really..."

Griffin: That is such a good way of—

Justin: We built this to do—

Travis: We Grease ending'ed it, really bad. Like, the ending of Grease. Like, "Wait, what? Are they dead? What's going on?"

Griffin: I see folks recommending the show to other folks on Twitter all the time. And they say like, "You gotta listen to this show. The story goes some places." And I see a lot of people say it emotionally affects them. And like, "Oh, man. I cried so much during this episode."

And then somebody actually— [laughs] And then, I see somebody say, "Ah, I'm gonna start listening to The Adventure Zone." And then a day later it's like, "I just hit this point in The Adventure Zone where one of them

murdered somebody and asked why they got a boner.” Like, “Are you sure this is the same one?”

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: I have a question here for all of you and it’s from Lilly Beside the Rocks. Who says, “What are each of your favorite musical pieces Griffin has produced for the show?” Hm, yes, tell— Mm-hmm. What are they?

Travis: I really, really like— I just like the whole soundscape of Petals to the Metal. But for me, I just really love the music Griffin made for this year’s bonus Adventure Zone: (K)nights. I know you said you cranked it out—

Griffin: It’s a banger. No, it’s rocks.

Travis: It’s just really good.

Justin: I like the Crystal Kingdom song. I think it’s the best. I find it very like... To hear it later, I find it very sort of like chilling.

Griffin: Well, it’s ‘cause you... You got a lot of ASMR stuff going on. And so, I made that— And you know, I thought that might—

Justin: My brother can’t give me ASMR, I’m a normal person.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: Like, that’s ridiculous.

Travis: [chuckles]

Justin: I’m immune to your ASMR charms.

Clint: Arms Outstretched—

Griffin: Oh?

Clint: ... I think the music that you had in there, that was pretty cool.

Griffin: Well, thank you. I asked this to you guys as a joke—

Travis: You don't get to talk? We've talked about your stuff.

Justin: Let Griffin talk about the favorite piece of music that he's written himself.

Clint: For himself.

Griffin: No... I wanted to say for.. One of the most interesting things about doing the music is I did a mostly Western sort of acoustic soundtrack for the 11th Hour, right? And I got a lot of people saying, "Wow, it's cool that you're sampling Bastion." Which is a really fuck'n great... What would you say, like twin-stick RPG sort of thing?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Maybe not twin-stick, that's not the right word for it. But... And a lot of people are like, "Wow, you sampled Bastion a lot." And as that arc went on, it was more where people were like, "Okay, wow. You're sampling Bastion in like every song."

And I realized it's because both me and the composer for the soundtrack for Bastion used a bunch of SoundCloud— Or not SoundCloud... GarageBand, which is the software I use... Use the same pool of loops. So, I wanted to clear the air about that 'cause I also saw a lot of questions about me yoinking Bastion stuff.

And it's like, well, I promise I wasn't like, "Oh, I'm gonna take this from the Bastion soundtrack." It's just, we took from the same pool of loops. Because there's stuff like slide guitars in Roswell's theme. I don't own a slide guitar or know how to play it. So, I used loops and it was just the same ones that they used in Bastion.

Travis: We had a question from Felix. And I think we can answer this pretty quick. "Any chance we can see y'all playing some female or gender

non-conforming characters in future iterations of TAZ?" And I do wanna say, if you haven't listened to The Adventure Zone: (K)night's yet, you should.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Justin plays as a Tiefling Monk, who I believe identifies as female, named Troth.

Griffin: Yes, Troth kicks ass. I think this is important, right. I talked about I want there to be good representation on this show. And I just would wanna make sure that... I wanna make sure we do a good job of it, if we do it as player characters.

I'm not like... I wouldn't be afraid, right, to play a woman or a non-binary or non-gender conforming character. I just would wanna make sure that... I don't know, that I did a good job and I didn't fall into any pitfalls.

Justin: Remember we just talked about how we made one stupid naming decision and it haunted us for years and years?

Griffin: Yeah! [laughs]

Justin: Like... It's hard, y'all.

Griffin: It's hard, but like—

Travis: But to answer your question, yes.

Griffin: Yeah, we'll do it.

Travis: We want to make great, interesting characters and like... So, the answer is yes. But I don't ever wanna do it as a stunt. I don't ever wanna do it because like, "Hey, fandom! Do you like this?"

I always want it to be because it's the right thing for the character, the right thing for the story and the right thing for us and the audience. You know what I mean?

Griffin: Yeah. It's a tricky balance, but it's something that we'll definitely focus on.

Travis: Griffin, I have a question for you that a lot of people asked, that I don't know the answer to.

Griffin: Okay?

Travis: Which is, you talk about, in episode 59, like... Well, two questions. One, so, Magnus has the new body, right?

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: And the physical stuff that he lost during—

Griffin: Oh, does he remember Kalen?

Travis: Yeah?

Griffin: No, no, no, no. So, the way that I kind of thought about this... And you all— This is what fucked me up when you guys were like, "Oh, don't get back in your body. You'll forget everything." As we were kind of thinking about it a different way.

And I was thinking that your memories and the things that you remembered kind of resided in your spirit or whatever, that was inside of the mannequin. And so, when it was outside of your body, you were technically dead. And so, the Voidfish didn't work on you and that's why you're remembering those visions and all that shit.

But like, I think your memory lived in your spirit. So, when it got back in your body, just because your body was from a time before Wonderland, your brain would still remember Kalen. That's not really how I think about it. And frankly, that moment was too cool to take away.

So, no. Magnus doesn't remember Kalen. 'Cause I do kind of like this idea of Merle and Taako having to go on this vengeance quest for this dude they've

never met before. That, we may not... Which may not happen. But just like, I'm not gonna take that away.

Justin: So, I'm gonna call it, right— I'm gonna call it right now. We're gonna have— At some point, we're gonna do a live show. And it's gonna be a two night... The Hunt for Governor Kalen.

Clint: Oh, yes!

Travis: I'll play as Kalen.

Justin: Stunt spectacular.

Clint: That's excellent!

Justin: Stunt spectacular!

Clint: Like a Rogue One spin off, okay. I like that.

Travis: And for those of you asking, K-A-L-E-N, Kalen.

Griffin: It's not... I don't think you meant to do it like Kaylen... Like Elliott Kaylen from—

Travis: No, he is named after Elliot Kaylen. He is named after Elliot Kaylen. It's just spelled differently.

Griffin: Oh, great.

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Hey, folks—

Travis: Sorry, there was one other important question, Griffin.

Griffin: Yeah, yeah, yeah?

Travis: Why was Garfield growing Magnus' body? And I bring this up—

Griffin: I will never— I will take that to my fucking grave.

Justin: Is there a reason?

Travis: I do wanna say—

Clint: But there is a reason.

Travis: When the Interrobang live show, here in Cincinnati, in February, someone came up to me and was talking to me about Adventure Zone. And this was after Magnus was in the mannequin.

And they said, "You know, Garfield has been collecting these things. Maybe he's growing a body?" And I was like, "Holy shit, that's amazing!" And I said, "If that turns out to be the case, I'll remember and thank you." And I cannot remember his name.

Griffin: And you did not do it. Oops.

Travis: And so, I am saying now, I was inspired to pursue that—

Griffin: Because of that person.

Travis: That was a joint collabo. If you're listening, please tell me it was you, so I can thank you officially.

Griffin: I'll never say. I think it's too... Garfield is such a nebulous, fascinating character to me. And so much so that people do not know if he is a cat or not.

Travis: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: And so—

Justin: But that's another great— That's another great example of a character that is like... was a punchline. And then, just by necessity, we started to hang other things on.

Griffin: But that's The Adventure Zone. That's why Davenport is the captain of fantasy NASA, apparently. That's what I've kind of been— That's been the big payoff. That's why Barry Blue Jeans is fucking alive again. Like, yeah, that's... And I don't do that stuff purely as jokes or whatever. But it's certainly a benefit.

But no. I'm not gonna tell you why Garfield was growing an extra Magnus body. He was a fairly evil warlock... mercantile warlock guy. So, maybe figure it out. But I... To me, leaving that a mystery is fucking hysterical. And I'll never, ever, ever, ever say.

Travis: All right.

Justin: We're gonna talk about the future of TAZ. But real quick, we wanna make one last push for the MaxFunDrive. Maximumfun.org/donate is the address you can go to. And if you enjoy the show, and I know a lot of you do, it would really mean the world if you could kick in just five bucks a month.

If you like this show and you want to help keep this and other stuff we do rolling, and make it easier for us to make this stuff consistently, it really is the best way to do it. We only do this once a year and we come to you and say, hey, please... If you can help out. If you can...

If we all pitch in a little bit, then it makes it so much easier and it lets us create stuff. And it really... it means a lot. For just five bucks a month, you're gonna get days upon days of bonus content. If you can kick us 10 bucks a month, you get all that plus a pin based on whatever show that you like the best.

For 20 bucks a month, you get the pin, you get the bonus content, and you get a really cool Keep in Touch kit, with all the stuff Travis listed before. But really, it's just the act of... Like, this network isn't founded on a few 100 to

200 dollar a month donors. We certainly appreciate the people who are able to do that.

But what it is built on and the strength of this network, is the multitudes of 5 and \$10 and \$20 donors. Like, that is what— And \$35 donors. That is what the network is founded on. And it really is thanks to you that we're able to make the stuff that we make. And we appreciate it so much.

And if you haven't taken the time to... And you know, we're down to the final days of the drive. So, please. Please, please, please. Maximumfun.org/donate and kick us a few bucks. It really would mean the world.

Griffin: Yeah. I don't really know what else to say. The support the show has gotten has changed my life and... This is like the first piece of fiction that I've ever done and that all of us, collaboratively have ever done. And your response to it has been incredible.

And the support that we got in the last couple MaxFunDrives has been overwhelming. And just... thank you so much. If you enjoy the show and you spend time with it, and you have the means, just think about donating.

Travis: Maximumfun.org/donate.

Griffin: Alley-oop, there it was. There was that slam dunk. Let's talk about what's next. 'Cause I can say...

Travis: We're gonna end the show.

Justin: Bye!

Griffin: Yeah, bye! No. We...

Clint: Tell 'em you're joking, Trav.

Travis: Oh, thank you for all your support, it really means... But two more episodes and we're out!

Griffin: And then, we're out. We'll take the money and run.

Travis: No. No, no, no. No, no, no.

Griffin: [sings melody of Take the Money and Run]. So, next in Adventure Zone is gonna be a sort of special thing for... In this campaign, it's gonna be kind of a special thing that gets into the— what I referenced at the end of the last episode. The Stolen Century is gonna be the name of it and we're gonna dive in. And we're gonna answer basically every question up to this point. And my hope is that—

Clint: Except about Garfield.

Griffin: Except about Garfield and his purposes. And my hope is that by the end of that, we will basically be at the starting line of the finale. Which will definitely, definitely take more than one episode to get through. So, that's sort of the road map for the rest of this campaign.

Travis: The Balance Arc. The Balance—

Griffin: The Bureau of Balance, Grand Relic saga. The Grand Relic—

Justin: It's called the Balance— it's called the Balance Arc. We came up with a whole catchy name for it.

Travis: Balance Arc.

Justin: It's Balance Arc.

Griffin: Balance, okay. After that, we're gonna... We're gonna be transparent here, because we've kind of struggled with this a lot. Because this show does have a pretty big following now and a very passionate following.

And we struggle with this idea of doing something new and pulling the rug out from under people. And the transition, no matter what we do, moving from this thing that a lot of people are really, really passionate about, to something new, even if that new thing is great or better, it will be a rough transition.

And so, we've struggled a lot with the best way to do it. A way that will make the transition easiest for the listeners but also will result in us starting in on the coolest and best imaginable thing that we could do next.

Travis: And let me also say this, just 'cause I think this is... maybe this goes without saying. But I do wanna just reiterate, no matter what we do after this, it does not erase the 60 some— 70, possibly, episodes of The Balance Arc. That will be a thing that exists. You know what I mean?

Griffin: In fact—

Travis: It will always be there for you to go back to.

Griffin: My desire to wrap up this arc and have it be done is... well, two-fold. First of all, I think it would be— I think we'd eventually— It would be shitty, eventually. Eventually, if we kept doing Taako, Merle and Magnus, it would be bad.

I need to... We need to be able to close this thing out. But also, I love the idea of just like closing it out and there it is, it's done. This thing that the four of us made over the course of almost three years, that we can all be really proud of. Here it is, it's done, it's got a nice little bow on it. There it is, that's it.

So, next... What we're doing next, I will say, we don't have set in stone. I think we're just gonna try some stuff out for a little while? Travis has sort of brought up the idea of doing some mini— mini stuff. Some one shots. Which will take a little while.

Travis: Yeah. So, basically... What I suggested was like, you know... We've talked about it before, of us all taking turns GM-ing something. And so, different mechanics, different settings, different stories.

One or two episode arcs of just, here's what Justin's vision of this would be, here's what Dad's vision, here's what's mine. That kind of thing, where we try different stuff out. Instead of just trying to jump headfirst into another big arc. Having little, you know, little excursions into different worlds.

Griffin: Until we find what the next thing is. What the next thing that makes sense is. I have a few ideas. And then, once we get— Once we find our footing and we feel really confident about it and think we have something that folks are really gonna like, then we start in on the next big arc. And I think the next big arc probably won't be as long as Balance. It's not gonna be two and a half years, I hope.

Justin: Yeah, I think that we made a tactical error— Not a tactical error, but it's like figuring it out as we go along. This show was always intended— Well, not always intended. It wasn't always intended to be fuck'n anything.

Griffin: Right.

Justin: But to be a consistently produced thing, this show needed to be able to evolve beyond individual story lines and individual, specific games.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: And it will do that. We're still going to be telling stories. And hopefully, we'll be better at it.

Griffin: We'll be way better at it! Yeah.

Justin: From the jump, than trying to back into it. Dad, you're looking at me furtively. What do you think?

Clint: No. No, no. Nah-uh.

Justin: No, not— I don't know what the word furtive means. But you're just looking at me—

Griffin: Not what you thought.

Clint: I am, I mean—

Justin: I was wondering if you had some thoughts.

Clint: Oh, I was just gonna say that you know, Marle, Taako, Magnus and—

Griffin: Everyone.

Clint: ... Griffin, the DM, will continue in other forms. I mean, we got—

Griffin: Yeah, so—

Clint: We've got the graphic novel that's gonna be coming out.

Griffin: Yes.

Travis: We have the bed sheet sets that we're working on.

Griffin: Well, the big— The big thing— The big thing that's gonna be—

Justin: Space Balls, the cereal. Space Balls, the toilet paper.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: The big thing that's gonna be germane to you, the listener, is one thing we've talked about, is just live shows. Still gonna be Tres Horny Boys. Because I don't know what the... We don't know what the next shit's gonna be. And so, the idea of just like once the Tres Horny Boys thing is over, I don't know if the next thing is gonna be good for live shows.

This thing— This thing is, but I... We don't know. But this is one way that we can keep their thing going, with little side stories and stuff like that. So, I think yeah, live shows, we can still do Balance. One thing that I kind of wanna do is move away from D&D. Which I think is...

I know there's a lot of folks who play a lot of tabletop games who are kind of... hard on D&D. Like, very negative about it. I still think it's a great game, I just don't know that it's suited for our purposes really well. Like, case and point, if you're a magic user, there's almost always a billion things you can do. And so, most of the stuff I edit out of the show is Dad or Justin.

And this is not a knock against them, 'cause if we were just playing around a table, it would not be a big deal. But because it's an audio medium where there's other people listening, it is a big deal. Like trying to figure out what to do next because they have this huge multitude of options.

And so like, I wanna move to something that's more rules light and more... And not to say that D&D can't be a narrative heavy game. But something that is sort of more designed around that. I'm gonna reference—

Travis: And we've already been playing this version of D&D as rules light as we possibly could.

Griffin: Yeah. And I get a lot of flak from people. Just like, "Well, that's not how that works." There's a lot of people who are very angry that I say the word bluff-check instead of deception-check and it's... First of all, I'm sorry. That's what they called it in fourth edition, get out of my butt.

Justin: [chuckles]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: But like I just... I feel like something that is more rules light where you guys can do things and interpret them using a smaller set of rules, will be way, way, way better for this.

Justin: And it may actually make us adhere more.

Griffin: Yeah, sure!

Justin: Because there is that issue of slippage.

Griffin: Yes.

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: Where you know, I'm not gonna talk about the material... I referenced material components for my spells once, when it was like a cool thing to do.

Griffin: And that was that.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: I'm gonna reference fiends—

Justin: After that... And spellcasting time.

Griffin: I'm gonna reference Friends at the Table here again because they... they use rule systems that are... It's a system kind of like how D&D is a part of the D20 system. There's a system called Powered by the Apocalypse that I really like. It's all like... You just roll two D6 and that determines fucking everything.

And there are hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of games covering hundreds of different genres, that like... I'm looking at that. Like, I think that could be... I don't wanna chomp their flavor. But like, I think is... it's just better. Like, it's a better... It is a better format for a narrative-heavy, game-light, actual play podcast.

And I don't wanna like... I think Critical Role plays... either D&D or Pathfinder. Like, I'm not dragging actual play shows that do D&D. Because they're fucking super, super good. I just think, the more we go along, the more D&D stuff I ignore. And I don't know that we're doing ourselves a service.

Clint: But let's be honest, we'll always have a debt to D&D.

Griffin: Yeah, for sure!

Clint: I mean, that's what started TAZ.

Griffin: Yeah, I think it's a good first game to play, definitely. And it's good for— It's a fun game to play, like as a game... Like a tabletop game. It's just like, it's not... I don't think so suited to the way that we do the radio show.

Travis: And I also think it's... I think it's just these characters, just like Griffin said in the beginning. If we kept playing D&D— There's other options

out there. And like, this is our D&D arc with Merle, Magnus and Taako. You know what I mean? Like, that's—

Griffin: So, specifics...

Clint: Do we wanna toss out a couple of the genre ideas we've had?

Griffin: Yeah, so I... Dad, why don't you tell them yours? 'Cause I've been... I'm excited about it.

Clint: Well, I've got an idea to do a superhero story. And it's... Actually, the basic framework of the story is based on a comic book premise that I sold years and years and years ago, that just never came to print. And I'm really—

Griffin: Is it Freejack?

Clint: No.

Griffin: Can I say that?

Clint: It's not the 3 Ninjas Kick Back either.

Griffin: Did you ghost write both of those?

Clint: I didn't illustrate any of my—

Justin: Ghost write.

Griffin: Ghost write.

Clint: No, I didn't ghost write 'em. I actually got credit for that.

Griffin: I thought you ghost wrote Freejack?

Clint: The first issue with Chick Dixon—

Travis: This is so not what this is about!

Griffin: All right, fine.

Clint: But anyway, I'm looking at a superhero setting. And just... that's kind of the idea I've been kicking with.

Griffin: I've got a—

Travis: For—

Griffin: Yeah, go ahead.

Travis: For mine, the one I'm kind of looking at as inspired by The 11th Hour. I would like to do kind of like an Old West RPG. And kind of focus more on an Old West, like actual real world Old West setting. So, I'm gonna try to find a mechanic that works for that and write a story.

People have asked about Adventure Zone: (K)nights, if that would expand. I think that would be tricky 'cause there's so much info that exists for donors only. But also like, I just didn't— I didn't create it for an arc. I created it—

Griffin: As a one-shot thing.

Travis: ... As a one-off story. So... maybe.

Griffin: I have an idea for a... like a persona and Buffy inspired RPG about... A sort of unsuccessful West Virginia ski resort town that monsters start attacking.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: And I also have an idea for a Cowboy Bebop and Battlestar Galactica inspired, like post-apocalyptic, hip, jazzy space opera.

Justin: I have an idea...

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: It is like a Sherlock Holmes and we're all Sherlock Holmeses. And we find different clues that are better than the other ones.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: And it's like, "But wait, you missed this." And that's like the whole thing, is like four super smart Sherlock Holmeses. [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: And also, one of us is a vampire. But are we good enough detectives to figure out which one it is?

Griffin: Oh, shit!

Travis: Ooh!

Clint: Yeah!

Griffin: I don't know if you're joking, but I wanna play that super bad.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: I'm obviously joking. We need to wrap up so bad.

Clint: Keep your feet on the ground and—

Travis: No, hold on!

Griffin: No, we need to say some stuff!

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: You can't just say the fuck'n outro.

Travis: Yes! So, as is clear, we are still kind of like nailing it down. But that gives you kind of a basic idea. The show will not stop when the arc is done.

Griffin: No! It's too much fun.

Travis: And there will be... There will be some like you know, finding our feet and everything. And once again, as has been up to this point the deal with Adventure Zone, audience feedback and you guys buying in is going to kind of shape the way it goes. But that's where we're at.

Justin: But to be clear, we didn't mention this to like put— This is not up for a vote.

Travis: No.

Justin: We'll pick something that works and do it. But we of course wanna hear from you... after we're making the thing.

Griffin: Yeah. And again, it's a biweekly show. So, it's gonna take us... It's probably gonna take us a while before we get onto the next big, big arc. But I promise you, it's gonna be fuck'n... I'm really looking forward to it. It is going to be so much fun to make new characters and explore new worlds and new genres and all that stuff.

Like, I think it's gonna be... I think it's gonna be incredible. And I think the next thing we do, like I'm already... I'm already excited for it. So, we hope you can get on board.

Clint: And we love Merle, Magnus and Taako, we really and truly do. And we appreciate you loving them. But let me be the dad and let me just say, just trust us.

Griffin: Just trust us. It's gonna be good!

Clint: You trusted us before... You trusted us before, keep trusting us.

Travis: We also hope that you'll consider donating to the MaximumFunDrive. Maximumfun.org/donate. Support the art and artists you love and let us know. But you've heard us talk enough about that. I think it's time for us to wrap up.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: I think... I don't know how we end this. But thank you for listening.

Griffin: Thank you all for listening. Thank you to John Roderick— No, thank you to Mort Garson and... just Mort Garson, for the use of our theme song, Déjà Vu, off the album Ataraxia. That's it. Thanks for listening to The Adventure Zone... The The Adventure Zone Zone rather. And we'll be back with a new episode next Thursday. Which is April the 6th. And yeah, it's gonna be big. Thanks for coming along!

Justin: All right, Dad. Now hit it.

Clint: Okay. [in radio voice] So, keep it really everybody! Thanks for being here!

Griffin: Hang it up.

Travis: No, bye!

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

[“Déjà Vu” by Mort Garson plays]

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