

The Adventure Zone: Balance – The Stolen Century: Chapter Two

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Griffin: Previously on The Adventure Zone: You see the Hunger. You don't call it that yet. Reaching down and into your world. Sort of reaching down around your ship, to the world that you're flying away from. Davenport takes the Starblaster back down and into the Prime Material Plane. This is not the reality that you left. This is a different reality all together. The first of many that you're going to encounter during this mission.

Travis: I'm checking on bear cubs and telling people to get to cover and—

Griffin: You're left behind and you only sort of outlast the Hunger for so long before you are killed. And you pass through the threshold between realities. And as you pass through that barrier, time stops once more. You see these white threads of light begin to encircle the ship. And they stitch back together Magnus. The Hunger is stronger now. Because that's what happens when the Hunger feasts.

Griffin (intro): And so, our heroes find themselves leaping from world to world. Hoping each time that their next leap will be the leap home. Or something like that. It's the Adventure Zone!

[“The Unexplained” by Mort Garson plays]

Travis: Okay, but first, Griffin, I have a very important question that I should've asked at the end of last week when—

Griffin: Is it about your fuck'n hard candies, like what flavors did you bring or...

Travis: Well, shit.

Griffin: It was, wasn't it? It was, wasn't it?

Travis: Well, I mean, not what flavors, but...

Justin: [chuckles]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: What did you want to ask about your hard candies?

Travis: When everything resets, do I have my supply of hard candy back?

Griffin: No. Sadly, no.

Travis: What?

Clint: Aww...

Griffin: No. So, let's actually go over... We're gonna start things out on—

Travis: This is bullshit!

Griffin: I'm so sorry.

Justin: [chuckles]

Griffin: We're gonna start things out on cycle number eight. Like I said, we're gonna kind of skip ahead. The last one, the animal kingdom, was cycle number one. This is cycle number eight. And in the past few cycles, the seven of you have worked out some of the rules of this journey.

To Travis's point, for some reason, whenever you crossed out of the boundaries of your own reality, your like... your existence, your very being, was stitched into the fabric of all realities. And it takes Lup and Barry a whole cycle of working together to figure this out. They spend countless nights hypothesizing and testing theories to this effect.

And basically, what you realize is whenever you cross into a new reality, your physical forms are brought back to what Lup and Barry call your recorded state. Just literally, how and where you were when you first left your home world.

Some other things you realize, just by like going through these cycles a few times, is you don't choose what realities you come to. And you're not exactly sure what does choose it. And also, you've seen this now... I guess, seven times up to this point.

Whenever you enter a new reality, a few days later, the Light of Creation descends at a random point in the sky and falls. And then, a few days after that, that dark force— which Lucretia actually comes up with the name for, the Hunger— just locates the plane that has the Light of Creation in it.

And then, about a year later, the Hunger arrives in proper. And once it arrives, one of two things happen. Either it assaults the plane, as it scours it looking for the Light of creation. Or once it has—

Travis: Or it peppers it.

Griffin: Oh, geez. Or it—

Justin: Oh, golly.

Griffin: ... If it collects—

Clint: That was not me. That was not me, making—

Travis: Well, it was kind of you? I would say it was your influence, after 33 years.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah, I would say it's... by proxy. If it finds the Light of Creation though, it uses it to absorb the entire plane, adding it to its mass.

Travis: So, Griffin, have we... Have we yet, in any of these cycles, been able to save a plane or protect a plane? Or do anything to change—

Griffin: So, yeah, if you—

Travis: ... A plane being destroyed?

Griffin: A couple times now. You didn't do it that first time. The Hunger, you all remember, descended on the animal kingdom—

Justin: It didn't go great.

Griffin: Collected the Light and absorbed the Animal Kingdom plane. Which, I guess, mechanically speaking but also narratively speaking, means the Hunger has that plane now. And everything in it. But a couple times now, you have recovered the Light. And you've managed to leave the reality you're in with the Light.

And then, the Hunger goes and attacks the plane, looking for it. But doesn't find it. And so eventually, it gives up and kind of chases you down. And it doesn't absorb that plane. It fucks it up a little bit, but it ultimately, you know, leaves it be and chases you down.

However, whenever you leave a reality with the Light, whenever you escape with the Light of Creation, once you cross over into that new reality, you don't have it anymore. And a few days later, it follows you down and you have to find it all over again.

So, I've been using the term 'cycles' because like that's kind of what it is. You have a year here to find the Light, to learn about the Hunger, to empower yourselves to maybe one day take down the Hunger. And if you don't find the Light in one year and escape with it, the Hunger uses it to consume that world. Which means it's basically the end of that world. And also, the Hunger just got stronger.

So... Also like, this mission is... it's tough, right? But you are emboldened by one important fact. And that is that if you die while carrying out this mission, it doesn't matter. As long as someone escapes on the Starblaster, you'll all be revived before the next cycle. So, with that in mind—

Justin: But we're dead for that year, right?

Griffin: Yeah, yeah.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: Which isn't ideal, I imagine.

Justin: No...

Griffin: I know that was a lot, but again, 100 years, here we go. This is cycle number eight. So, each reality up to this point has been as diverse and kind of fantastic as that animal kingdom you encountered first up. And here in the eighth cycle, you encounter possibly the strangest world yet. Your flyover reveals a world where 80% of the land is covered in these gigantic, bioluminescent mushrooms, that glow in bright neon hues at night.

Travis: Important question.

Griffin: Yes, please?

Travis: Is it a lot of little mushrooms or just a couple giant ones?

Griffin: I mean, it's— I mean, it's millions of very big ones. Covering like 80% of the land on this planet.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: It's almost always raining in this world, which kind of gives the lights cast by these mushrooms a sort of hazy effect. Lucretia is particularly taken by these mushrooms. She's always sketching these vivid illustrations of them in her journals. Which again, she always keeps—

Travis: With dancing teddy bears around them and—

Griffin: Yeah. And again, the little Ziggy cartoons. And these towering mushrooms are also emitting this thick cloud of spores that Davenport is hesitant to kind of bring the ship down into. But you swear, you can occasionally see through the smog, you can see the world below and you see these figures moving through the spores.

The rest of the land, the land not occupied by mushrooms, there are a few settlements in that land. And they are entirely occupied by smaller races, like Halflings and Dwarves, and Gnomes, who eke out kind of a harrowing existence in this world.

They have these staggered fences of these bonfires that surround their tightly packed villages. Most of them wear these makeshift masks to keep from breathing in the spores, which you learn are without exception, fatal when inhaled.

They have these scorch teams that go out every night just hoping to burn back the forests, to stave off being overrun. But it's an uphill battle, because the forest is always producing more spores. And you learn that this fungus is being cultivated by living human-sized mushroom beings that wander the forests during the day.

So, you've kind of been accepted into one of these small settlements. And outfitted with... All seven of you are outfitted with these masks. And after a few days after arriving, the Light of Creation falls so far away, you just barely see its trail over the southern horizon.

And wherever it landed, it is far, far beyond the border of the mushrooms. And a few days after that, the Hunger's scout finds you. So, you have a year. What do you do?

Travis: So, I was thinking about it, and I think... Magnus, as far as like process of elimination and kind of having experienced this... I would be waiting on the ship for the Light of Creation. And as soon as I saw it, go. Take the ship and go.

Griffin: Okay. I mean, though the— Yes. The problem with that, the only problem with that— You've tried it probably a couple of times at this point. Because of like, the curvature of the Earth, there's no guarantee that you'll see it, right. Like, if it falls in the other hemisphere, you just might not see it. And that's kind of what happened this time.

You know kind of it's to the south. But it fell so fast, that's basically all you know. Also, the like... The spore thickness is so thick, that it's not one of

those things where you can just fly around and eyeball it. You get the impression that if you wanna find this thing, you're gonna have to get in there. But that expedition is going to be kind of— kind of difficult.

Travis: I see.

Griffin: If you wanna go looking for it, absolutely do it. I'm just telling you like, flying and trying to catch it out of mid-air is not...

Travis: No, no, no, not catch it. But I figure, head that direction, at least.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: To save some time. You know what I mean?

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: I think Merle is going to stay this time, in the settlement. If these poor creatures have such a harrowing, awful life, he's gonna stay there and try to bring them some... some spiritual enlightenment. Not really specific, but just kind of like to be a beacon of hope and to... you know, kind of teach them some life lessons and give them some confidence and...

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: You know. More like— More like vacation Bible school, than like... church.

Griffin: They don't— So, they... This settlement doesn't have— Give me a name for this city.

Clint: Uh, Fungus... ton. Funguston!

Justin: Mushroom Kingdom.

Griffin: How about just Fungston? I don't know that they would like, celebrate the fungus. But I think that they definitely don't have church. So

like, you would have to— This would be you building a church, I think. And like starting a congregation.

Clint: Right!

Griffin: Which like, I'm curious why Merle would do that in a world that he knows, in a year, he will not... be in anymore. Not that I'm saying don't do it, but I'm curious what Merle's thinking.

Clint: Well, if he starts— If he starts something... You know, these people don't know they're gonna be obliterated in a year, right?

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: Why not give 'em some hope for the time they're here?

Justin: That's nice.

Griffin: All right, let's say like you start this church, by growing a congregation. And I think this is just you in the town square, fuck'n doing your thing, right? Like proselytizing, standing on a soapbox and doing your stuff. So maybe roll, plus heart. And we'll see generally how well you do at that.

Clint: Okay. So, that's rolling the two? Correct?

Griffin: Yeah, two D6, plus 2.

Clint: Okay.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: 5 and 3, that's 8. Plus 2, is 10.

Griffin: It's 10. So remember, 6 or below is a failure, 7 to 9 is a mixed success and a 10 plus is a complete success. So like... yeah. I think everybody kind of gets on board. They actually build a church building that

is... I think that they haven't been so interested in expanding their town as much as they have been like just, "Man, we've just got to fuck'n survive."

But you kind of give them a bit of hope, in the form of this church. So, they actually build this big, grand, wooden cathedral. That I think probably repurposes some of the... the less sporous mushroom meat. So, there's like a little bioluminescent thing going on there. And sure enough, you get this settlement of Fungston, real into Pan. And—

Clint: So, this is the First Church of Fungston?

Griffin: This is the First Church of Fungston. I mean, maybe they had church before this fungus took over the world. So, I'm gonna say take plus 2 bond. Just to represent your like— You're probably an unofficial leader of this town now.

And I will also say, if anybody does anything about going into the forest or whatever, or anything that you might need these townfolk's help with, they will— they will go with you. Because they are like... They are feeling the seven of you now.

Travis: I think I'm sticking— I think, for Magnus, if finding the Light of Creation protects the plane, that's what I'm doing. Plus, it gives me something to do that feels—

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Travis: ... Like, adventure questy. That feels actionable.

Griffin: Okay. How do you wanna go about that? And Taako, if you have something you want to do to this effect, there's no reason y'all can't like, work together.

Justin: Yeah, well, let him... Let Trav go ahead and start his—

Griffin: Okay, cool.

Travis: I think that taking the ship in that general direction, at least to cut down the time, is good. I would need someone with me, to stay with the ship. Because that seems like— Making sure the ship is available for when the Hunger shows up.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Like, it needs to clear the plane for any of this to continue. So, if I die on the quest—

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: ... The ship still has to get back there.

Griffin: Yeah, I mean, that's a strategy you guys have probably employed. Taking turns just being like, "All right, for a year, you live in the fucking ship. And if the Hunger shows up, you have to keep us alive." Basically.

Travis: Also, Griffin, have we, in these cycles, been able to figure out any way to magically or scientifically track the Light in any kind of effective way other than just like wandering around?

Griffin: I mean, that's up to... It hasn't happened yet. But like, if one of y'all wanna spend your turn— I don't think that you would be the best candidate for that.

Justin: Mm-hmm?

Griffin: But if you wanna spend your turn on one of these things, working on that, then yeah. For sure.

Travis: Like you said, I don't think that's really Magnus' deal. I mean, I might ask Barry to work on it later. But... I think I'm gonna see who wants to pilot the ship with me. And I'm going looking for the— I'm going looking for the Light.

Griffin: Okay. I'm gonna ask Taako what he wants to do, because that feels like kind of maybe one of the later things that should happen? I kind of

envisioned this round being folks working together, to prop up the expedition before it sets off. And it sounds like you wanna go on this expedition. So, Taako, can I ask what you wanna do this year?

Justin: Yeah. I've got a fuckin' genius plan and I'm gonna fix everything.

Griffin: Okay?

Clint: Yeah!

Justin: Come close, Griffin.

Griffin: I'm...

Justin: 'Cause I'm about to blow your game wide open. [chuckles]

Griffin: Oh, no...

Justin: I'm gonna make... a fake Light of Creation.

Griffin: Okay?

Justin: I'm gonna spend this year, like a Survivor contestant on their last legs—

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: ... Crafting a false hidden immunity idol. I'm going to craft, to the best of my ability, a fake Light of Creation. A decoy, if you will.

Griffin: All right. Now that I know what you wanna do, I actually think Magnus' thing should go first. Because the way I think we rectify this is you can do that if you have the Light of Creation on hand right now. Which you don't. But if Magnus can get it back, then yeah. Go for it. Otherwise, I think you'll be at kind of a disadvantage working on this.

Justin: I can start work on getting the papier-mâché and some of the chicken wire in place.

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: Maybe not get all the details right away.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: But like, I think I can definitely get that far.

Griffin: Do you enlist anybody's help on this? Or is this a solo project?

Justin: This doesn't seem like it would be Lup's jam? But I feel like she would probably hang around and help, yeah.

Griffin: Yeah, she'll hang out. She'll hang out and just sort of keep you company.

Travis: I feel like I would love Cap'n'port and Barry's help on this. I think science and my pilot is going to help me track this thing?

Griffin: Yeah, Lucretia wants to come too. Just because this expedition seems like it could be worth telling a story about. She wants to come into the forest with you and not be the one that stays behind on the ship.

Justin: Would— Can I ask, Griffin, would Lup... Would Lup wanna go with them?

Griffin: Um...

Justin: It seems like— I mean, I don't know, like...

Griffin: It's up to you. Do you want— Do you wanna ask Lup to stay with you or no? Like that's the way I—

Travis: I will say— Okay, I as Magnus, will say, I would ask Lup to come with me if Taako's staying behind. Because if, I think— Here's the thing, if— It doesn't sound like Taako needs help on this thing. And we know that getting the Light is kind of the end all be all important mish.

Griffin: Sure.

Travis: So, it feels like all hands defend the ship, all hands find Light, unless otherwise required.

Justin: I also, I would ask— What were you were just gonna say?

Clint: No, I was just gonna say that she also has shown the tendency to be able to track things and you know.

Griffin: Well, and also, she's an evocation specialist. So like, burning shit is her whole jam. Like, she's the best at burning shit, ever.

Justin: I would ask her to go mainly because if they're not able to get it back, if I wanna try this again, I would rather her, somebody who I know and trust, go and get a really good look at the thing. And get a sense of the magical energies and stuff like that.

Griffin: Okay. So, Magnus, you are basically taking everybody with you, except for Taako and Merle. And the town folk want to help out too, there's a scorch team that's particularly badass. They have sort of these... low-fi, medieval flamethrower situations.

Travis: Do they have an extra one?

Griffin: Yeah, sure. They can definitely—

Travis: Hell yeah.

Griffin: They can definitely whip one of those up for you.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: So, yeah. Do you wanna take them with you?

Travis: I want two. One on each arm.

Griffin: They say no to that. It's too— They say, "It's too heavy. It's too heavy!"

Magnus: Oh, is it?

Travis: And then, I pick up two of 'em.

Griffin: Okay, they are— they are blown away. "It's not too heavy, wow!"

Travis: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: How are you gonna pee?

Griffin: They say, "How are you gonna pee, sir?"

Magnus: Very carefully. [laughing] Just watch!

Travis: And then wait, hold on...

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: [laughs] I rolled an 11!

Griffin: All right.

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: You pee while shooting two flamethrowers in the air.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: [laughs]

Griffin: It's absolutely amazing. Okay. So, I think this expedition's ready to start. And Magnus, you say you just wanna fly south? And then, once you... How are you feeling this out? I think this may be a couple of rolls. So like,

the first one is like, how do you... I think roll, plus... Roll, plus mind. Just as like a... a stage setter of like how close you—

Travis: Can I count that 11? Or was that struck with me peeing?

Griffin: No, that was piss. That was definitely the plus piss roll.

Travis: Okay. Ah, man. Okay...

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: Well, it's not bad— Well... It was an 8. I got 4, plus 5, minus 1.

Griffin: Okay, yeah. So, a mixed success. I think you... I think you land like kind of far away from it. And you know it's still south. Are you just like walking on foot? Or do you think that this trip is gonna take like—

It's a pretty big planet that you're on. It would probably take like the rest of the year to get there and get back. Are you like— What's this trip through this deadly mushroom forest look like?

Travis: Well, okay. So, here's what would make the most sense to me. What would make the most sense to me is having Barry and Lup work together... Barry, Lup and Davenport work together, as far as tracking and triangulation goes. 'Cause we may not be able to pinpoint it, but if we make short hops...

Griffin: Okay?

Travis: It seems like what we'd wanna do is land, clear a spot... Triangulate what we know about the Light to see if we can kind of get a beat on it. And then, head in that direction. Short hop, check, short hop, check. Rather than just going on foot. So, I guess the first thing would be to see if we can get any kind of read—

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Travis: ... On the Light.

Griffin: So, with that mixed success you got earlier, I'm gonna use that. And also, I got kind of a hard time from folks listening, who said that I wasn't hard enough on you guys, on mixed successes.

Clint: What?

Griffin: Yeah... I mean, it's a good point and it's a fair criticism. This is supposed to be like you give something up in exchange for accomplishing the thing that you want to do. As opposed to a complete success being just you get to do the thing you want to do, which I was kind of doing for you last time. And a failure as being, you give something up and you don't get to do the thing you wanna do.

So, I think that either everybody that you brought with you from the town dies, or one of the teammates that you brought with you dies. And you're not— You're not killing them. I'm asking you to make a narrative decision here.

Travis: Oh. Then it's gonna be everybody I brought from town. I don't know their names. What do I care?

Griffin: Okay—

Travis: Oh, no. But now I feel bad 'cause there's gonna be people who say, "But you guys regenerate and the people from town won't." Oh no, Griffin. You've really put me in a bind.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Uh...

Griffin: Or.. Or, or, or, or I'll give you this third option. You... By accident, you inhale some of the spores and it'll put you at a disadvantage for whatever the resolution is at the end of this.

Travis: Then I'm gonna take that.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Yeah, I'll take that.

Griffin: Yeah, you just like... It's like one of those Survivor challenges where it's just like, "Hold up a paint can for... until you die". And it's easy to do, until you lose your concentration for a second.

And I think one day you're just getting ready for bed. And you lay down for bed, and you take your mask off. And you're like, "What the— Why— What the fuck?" And you breathe in some spores. And from that point on—

Magnus: Oh, I took it off to eat some hard candy. What was I thinking?

Griffin: Yeah, it's a very Boyland way to go.

Clint: [laughs]

Magnus: Hard candy, how could you do this to me?

Griffin: But for the rest of the—

Magnus: I'll never eat hard candy again.

Justin: You don't mean that.

Griffin: For the rest of your trip though, you are feeling shittier and shittier, and shittier and shittier. And everybody else is like... The townsfolk actually know some ways to keep you going. But you are definitely much weaker. So, you're not going to have your plus 2 body thing.

Which is a shame, because I'm gonna make you— for your final thing, to actually represent your traipsing through this forest. Roll, plus body to see if you make it to the Light. I think the triangulation method you're using works. They notice that the mushrooms are getting bigger.

And so, they just think like, "Well, that's probably the right direction to go. The Light would probably make these mushrooms grow more and more. So,

let's just follow the path of the bigger, bigger, bigger mushrooms." But let's see how you do.

Travis: Come on, baby.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: And I don't have the plus 2?

Griffin: You do not.

Travis: Oh... it's a 6.

Clint: Oh...

Griffin: Okay. And nobody else came with you, right? Now, this is gonna be tricky for me, because I don't know how to... hmm...

Travis: Well, I mean, I brought help?

Griffin: You did bring help.

Travis: So, it's one thing if I fail. But I don't know why everyone else would automatically fail.

Griffin: Okay, here's how we'll do it. Either... you recover the light, but you, Magnus, die. And you don't get any score improvements this round, at all. Or you don't get the Light and you do get score improvements.

Travis: Oh, I'll die then. That's fine.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: [chuckles]

Griffin: So, yeah. You don't get any EXP this round or anything like that. That's the only way that I could think to punish you. Because you got really close and I don't see any way that the rest of your team doesn't get there.

So you, Magnus... One morning, they're really close to the Light and they go to wake you up. And you're just... you're gone.

And you were like up and about the previous night. And seemed to be actually like kind of on the mend. But they come and get you one morning and you are just gone. And so, I guess from the point of view of the rest of your party, who take some time...

This has happened a few times now and it's tough every time. Like, you're dead. They know you're coming back, hopefully. But it's still really tough. But the rest of your party and the remaining townsfolk make it to basically the center of the forest. And there, they see the Light.

And while the Light itself is beautiful, the scene that your party finds it in is kind of grotesque. The mushrooms around this spot have grown huge and nearly blinding, with all of their neon tones. It's lighting this place up like Tokyo.

And laying prostrate, in a circle around this light, are hundreds of those mushroom beings. Who you've seen here and there in the forest. But usually, they just kind of run away from you whenever they see you. Here, they're all just lying, like they died while worshipping this thing.

They just laid down and gave up. And they're all kind of withered. And it's almost like they fell before the Light, but were unable to figure out how to wield it. So, they just kind of bathed in its splendor. Completely malnourishing themselves in the process.

So, there's no struggle as the rest of your party does collect the Light of Creation and gets back to the ship. And brings it back to this town that you were in. And Taako, I think this is like... There is not much time left, but you do have the Light. So, if you want to—

Justin: Yes.

Griffin: I guess, roll, plus mind and tell me how this works. You trying to recreate— You goofed about papier-mâché. I imagine it's more sophisticated than that.

Justin: With what I have access to? I would be thrilled to have papier-mâché and chicken wire. That would be amazing. I mean it's basically... I mean, I was using chunks of— Well yeah. Let's do this, I was using— carving chunks of mushroom into the shapes that I needed.

Griffin: Okay?

Justin: And then, using transmutation— What is the— what does the Light look like?

Griffin: It looks like a ball of the most beautiful light you've ever seen. And it doesn't hurt to look at it. It actually feels really good to look at it. But it's not like—

Justin: Perfect.

Griffin: It is tangible in that it's light you can touch. But it's not like an orb. It's not like a crystal orb, illuminated from within, or whatever.

Clint: And you are talking about bioluminescent mushrooms—

Griffin: Yeah. Sure, sure.

Justin: Exactly, that was my thinking. So, they're bioluminescent. And I'm using my magics to make them more impressive.

Griffin: Okay, yeah.

Justin: So...

Griffin: Roll, plus mind.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: So, that is a... 8.

Griffin: Okay. So, that's a mixed success. Take... let me think... Take plus one asset, right? Like, he made a thing. And so, you have plus one asset. But again, remember assets are abstract. So like, you can spend it later to be anything.

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: Here's how I think this resolves with the mixed success. You make it and it's... You can tell, because you've spent some time with both of these things and also, you know that it's a fake. But it's kind of clearly a forgery, if you know what you're looking for.

But working with the Light in this way made you appreciate something about the Light that's kind of unique and stands out in your mind. And that is that this Light, it really... it really wants to be wanted. If that makes sense?

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: This Light is giving off this... This Light is giving off this energy that you can tell, it wants to be used.

Justin: It's needy. It's needy light.

Griffin: It's needy, yeah. But this, it's— Imagine that, projecting out, a beacon of sorts. It's why everybody is kind of entranced by it. It's not just because it's beautiful and powerful. It's because it is putting out this... this like... these waves of just, desire.

It wants to be desired. And so, you made this mushroom ball look a lot like it, right. And you used your magic to create a pretty good forgery. But you can't— you don't even know how the fuck to make that happen.

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: So, when the Hunger comes, let's do— We'll get to the resolution. When the Hunger comes, you all have the Light and you escape. What do you do with your forgery?

Justin: So, I... It's not a guarantee that we escape, right? Like, if we have the Light, do we always escape?

Griffin: Yeah, you're never gonna have to— Davenport is a dope ass pilot. So, he gets you— If you're on the ship and the year is up, you get away.

Justin: I feel like the best, highest use of my decoy... Is there a way that I could use the decoy in such a way that I can limit the amount of damage that is done to this plane? Like as a—

Griffin: Sure.

Justin: Because I left it where they... I mean, I could send it to where— somewhere near where they found it, initially. And hopefully by doing that, I bought this plane some time.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: So, it couldn't ravage it this badly 'cause it was... you know, tripped up.

Griffin: Sure. Here's where your mixed success comes in. This is how I'll resolve that. While you're flying away, you go over that mushroom forest and one of the survivors points out, one of the— I should say, one of the surviving... Lup and Lucretia, and Barry, and Cap'n'port, they point out about where they found it in the forest and you just drop your forgery off the side of the ship.

Justin: Oh, great yeah.

Griffin: And when you do, you see the Hunger kind of shift its position and drop one of those big, inky columns down. Basically, literally exactly where it lands. It drops a ton of columns, right, this thing's the size of a billion planets.

So, it definitely has like... It can do more than one attack, so to speak. So, I think this planet does get hit a lot, right, but you specifically see the Hunger

go for the Light. And from that, you intuit two things. One, it's chasing this Light down. The Hunger is pursuing the Light, in a way.

And the other thing is that, pretty quickly, it retracts that column. And you also sort of figure this trick is not gonna work again. It didn't really— It fell for it temporarily. But it's not going to... This dog won't hunt twice. So, that's sort of the—

Justin: Are you sure? Because it would've been pretty fun to listen to me do that every time. [laughs]

Travis: [laughs]

Justin: Are you sure you don't wanna—

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: So, that was a cycle. Taako—

Clint: Wait a minute, wait a minute. Can I... I think Merle would stay—

Griffin: Oh, okay?

Clint: ... With the congregation. I really do. I think that there's no way that he could justify leaving them with the darkness descending.

Griffin: Okay, so—

Clint: After spending a year—

Griffin: Yeah, definitely.

Clint: Trying to build up their faith, that there was life... you know, that there's an afterlife and everything else. So, I think he would gather them, as many as he could, in the big wood cathedral. The big shroom cathedral. And... sing, "Nearer my Pan to thee."

Griffin: I mean, you're goofing, but this is a pretty incredible scene of—

Clint: No, I'm serious! I'm serious.

Griffin: Yeah. You built this— You built this church, right? And you knew that the Hunger was gonna attack. And if you got the Light, then they'll survive it, but the Hunger's still going to attack. So, as long as they survive that attack. So, you probably built it pretty fuck'n sturdy.

So, I think the whole town is in this church when the Light comes and you decide to stay behind. So, you're standing in front of this congregation, knowing in a minute you're gonna be taken away. You're going to be pulled away and back onto the ship as it leaves this reality. So, do you wanna break me off a piece of what you say?

Clint: Yeah. I think I would say:

Merle: Brothers and sisters—

Justin: Hold on one second. You wanna try a character voice? Just—

Clint: Yeah.

Justin: You know, we don't have that many episodes left. I'm moving Dad's Christopher Lloyd toy in front of him.

Clint: Thank you.

Justin: So he can visualize the fact that he has to do a character voice for our podcast.

Merle: Dearly beloveds, we are gathered here as one. Facing the future as one. Whether that future be darkness or light, we do not know. Just like we do not know, in our lives, if we're going to head into darkness or light. But that's what—

Griffin: There's a loud— There's a loud boom from somewhere outside and overhead.

Merle: But that's what faith is all about. 'Cause even though we don't know what we're headed into, we believe that we are headed into something. And so, we share that today. And this is the only place I would like to be, is here with you. Pan bless you.

Griffin: And I think they sing a hymn. A Pan hymn that you taught them. In this really nice harmony. They probably didn't sing much before you came here. But they are now. And they watch, sort of— and I think they... they survive. Most of 'em survive. Most of the folks in this town survive. And they survive the Hunger.

I don't know what's gonna happen with the mushrooms. But I think they talk about you for a long time after this. Because as they sing this hymn, they watch you kind of get pulled away. As you are sort of turned into these strings of light that are pulled up through the ceiling and out of sight.

[ad break]

Griffin: I have some Jumbotron messages here. This one is for Jill, supreme ruler of pugs. And it's from Edo, professional loser. Aw. Edo tells Jill, "Hey, buttface." Wow. "I wanted to give you the gift of a McElroy blessing. Oh, and I guess some lame, sappy words from me too. I can't believe it's been like four years since we became friends. You're already graduating!

I am so incredibly proud of you and I love you so much, you talented asshole." Wow, just really.. "You're gonna do amazing, artsy things in this world." And then it says, "Leen-kaya? Forever." And I... I don't know what that means.

But I hope it wasn't some sort of secret, coded, hateful message. This one was also supposed to go up before April. So, with that in mind, congratulations on your graduation, Jill. I hope you're making your way downtown, walking fast, faces past and I'm homebound.

Here's another message for Tiffany and Niel. And it's from Eric and Lacy who say, "Congratulations Niel and Tiffany, you're married! Now, roll initiative. No, really, we'll wait. Done? Good. A Griffin steps out from this message and

attacks. Ouch! Rolled a 20. That's gotta hurt." I mean, you faked that roll, but we've all done that from time to time here on The Adventure Zone.

Anyways, "From you proud judge and McMiller killer and his wife, future McMiller killer, we wanted to say happy wedding and wish you many happy years." And I think their wedding popped off in March. So, congratulations on your nuptials and I hope you're just making your way downtown, walking fast, faces past and I'm homebound.

[ad read]

Griffin: Next cycle?

Justin: Boys in the house.

Clint: Yeah!

Griffin: This is cycle 17. So, it's been a while. Again, you've had some hits and some misses. Narratively speaking, I'm not gonna have any kind of big ramifications for the cycles we didn't play, obviously. 'Cause that would be kind of bogus. Again, 100 years, abstractions, a lot of telling and no showing. And that's where we're at. But cycle 17.

So, after several days of fly over reconnaissance of this new reality, this new planar system, this new world, you're about to write this whole world off as uninhabited. Which is not... It's happened before. You've just showed up to a world and there's just been nobody there.

And in this world, there's just these ruins of this once somewhat advanced civilization. But all of these massive cities have long since fallen into decay. You don't see another living person for weeks. The Light falls and the Hunger comes. And what's worse, when the Light of Creation falls, you don't even see it streak down from the sky.

Lup tries to triangulate it, but she says it just fell on the wrong side of the planet. So, it leaves you a haystack nearly the size of a hemisphere, to find this needle in, if you wanted to. And without any people to talk to, you don't really have any leads to help find it either.

But after several months of sort of searching and camping out in these derelict cities, you do find something. You find faint signs of life, from a peculiar set of ruins that must have once been a truly spectacular city, some centuries, or maybe even millennia ago.

Grass and moss have long since overrun it but you can still sort of appreciate the complexity of its design. It's got these tiered districts that raise up into the sky and lower down into this gulch below. And this gulch has been completely overrun.

There's a small river that just falls into it now and it forms a waterfall that drops near the city's edge. And it's completely flooded the lowest tier of the city. It's a spectacular sight and it's made more unbelievable by its inhabitants, which are all robots.

All of them are walking, bipedal machines. They don't seem to be specialized workers in the way that the home world you came from probably had some powered golems. As far as you can tell, the several 100 robotic inhabitants of this city are just conducting their lives like people.

They have homes, they converse. You do reconnaissance and you see them like mime eating meals, but they're not actually eating food. Some of them are married. They go on dates. And they are congenial towards you. And they're so, like, emotive.

So, after about another month of Lup and Barry working together to try and triangulate the location of the Light, they declare it just a futile effort. There's just too much ground to cover. So, instead you decide to spend your time seeing what else you can glean from this fascinating city. So, how do you spend—

Travis: One, awesome. Thank you, Griffin.

Griffin: Yeah, you're welcome.

Travis: Two, have we been able to—

Griffin: Travis—

Travis: What?

Griffin: I don't if this has clicked with Dad or Justin yet. But Travis may have a distinct advantage in this cycle.

Clint: He can rip their arms off.

Griffin: Mm-hmm?

Travis: No, not that. We're in... We're in TAZ: (K)nights territory. The tiered capital city.

Clint: Oh!

Travis: Griffin, have we been able to take anything... Like, if we get stuff onto the ship with us—

Griffin: Yeah?

Travis: ... Does it travel with us to the next plane or does everything reset?

Griffin: So, if you bring stuff, inanimate objects, it comes with you. That's like... assets are exactly that.

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: But... hmm... Have you tried to bring a person on board? Any of you?

Clint: That's what I was wondering.

Griffin: I mean, I'm asking. I'm asking you.

Travis: Yeah, I would say... I would say that like, second time out. The first time, we once again weren't able to find the Light. I feel like we would, at the very least, try to bring some people with us, knowing that plane would be destroyed.

Griffin: Okay. You've brought some people with you, just to say, "Let's bring as many survivors—" And I think Cap'n'port was against this. Just like, his whole thing is sort of a cold arithmetic of he wants... As far as you know, you're the only people from your home world still alive.

And so, he doesn't wanna bring other people on the ship who are going to complicate the mission in any way. He's not cruel about it, but that's sort of just how his mind works. So, he kind of doesn't want that to happen, but you all manage to get some people on board.

Travis: I think the deal we would work out, Ditto, would be that it would be like, they're not— this is not a permanent crew change. That we are just taxiing them to the next plane. Doing something.

Griffin: Yeah sure.

Travis: Trying something, you know what I mean? To make sure somebody survives.

Griffin: But— And you had this argument and you got them on board. But that time when you left the reality and you all sort of went through this reshuffling, those people were gone. When you broke through to the new reality. So, you can't— you can't bring... you cannot bring people with you.

But at the same time, at a later cycle, one of the ones I guess we didn't cover, one of you realized that there's a rat on board. And there wasn't a rat— I mean this is fuck'n spaceship. There's not rats on board this spaceship.

But you figure like, it must have gotten on board while you were on one of these cycles. And so like, lower life forms can come with you, but not folks. If that is... That's a very convoluted answer to your question, but...

Travis: Understood.

Justin: I have another question. If we don't find the Light, does that mean that Griffin is gonna destroy his brother's reality?

Griffin: Um...

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: This is— This is... maybe not exactly TAZ: (K)nights. That's the way I kind of thought about it. And also, it's thousands and thousands and thousands of years in the future.

Justin: Trav, Griffin's gonna— Griffin got to do his show for so long. And now, he's gonna destroy yours.

Clint: He's gonna break your whole reality.

Travis: That's okay.

Justin: He's gonna break your whole— Dad!

Griffin: I did— I did ask permission.

Travis: It's okay. Boys, it's all right. I'm going to make it so that in the next TAZ: (K)nights, somebody wakes up from a dream and all of the Balance Arc was just a dream.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Don't even worry about it.

Clint: And can we name the rat Templeton? Please?

Griffin: It's been like over a decade. This rat is dead. Sorry.

Travis: Cool.

Griffin: I think that's how rats work.

Travis: Griffin, I think, if... So, we are all to assume that the Light just ain't happening this time around. But advanced technology, even if it is laying

fallow, if it is you know... There has to be something that would help develop some kind of weaponry for the ship, or shielding for the ship.

I would like to spend this round researching ways to fight. Whether it's hand-to-hand weaponry, or ship weaponry, or what. I wanna be able to—"I'm fuck'n sick of running," is I think where Magnus is at, at this point, in the arc.

Griffin: Okay. What does this look like? 'Cause you mentioned a few things. Are you trying to... 'Cause again, I think it's important that we try to dial down to one abstract thing that you can spend a whole year doing. So, you mentioned training or building weapons, or what?

Travis: You know what? Here's what I want. Here's what I want, Griffin. Here's what I want.

Griffin: Okay?

Travis: I am inspired by robots and arms. And I want to figure out a way to have some kind of grabbing arm attached to the ship. So that if we find the Light of Creation, we don't always have to descend to the forest, to the floor, to get it.

Griffin: Okay, yeah. Help me— Help me think of what this looks like. Because it sounds like you're gonna make a mind roll? If you wanna build onto the ship?

Travis: Well, here's the way I look at it. I figure these robots already know how to do it. They understand, they must understand the technology. They must be able to help me. So, I don't need to figure out how to build it, I just have to build it.

Griffin: Okay. That's a fair way of doing it. Then I think this is a case of you working with the robots. And these robots... I can't even tell you what you don't know about the robots, until I think you make a heart roll to get to know them a little bit better before— And I'll count this also towards your convincing them to help you build the ship thing.

Travis: Okay, heart roll.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: Hell yeah. It's a 9? 9.

Griffin: Okay. So, mixed result. They... They tell you a little bit about themselves and they will help you do this thing. But it's gonna take all— It's gonna take a whole year, right? 'Cause you didn't get like— I don't think you get everybody from the town to help you out with this— to help you out with this project.

The way I think this works is it takes a really long time. Imagine that you've lived in this world of robots for centuries. These robots are centuries old. And then, you see a flesh person again and it's like, "What the fuck?" So, that is— I use the word 'again' because there did used to be people here.

They lived in this city and this whole world was very vibrant. And this capital city was vibrant and alive too. And there was a lot of... There was just a lot of culture and a lot of people living in this capital city. But a plague swept through the planet and it just eradicated the world's population.

And there were these two organizations that tried to fight it off. But they really were only trying to help out the best and brightest, and richest, and most royal people in the city. But their efforts were in vain and ultimately they—

I think they built a shelter. But the shelter was unsuccessful. Because this plague was just so powerful that it took out everyone. But there was a sort of underground organization. The name of which they've forgotten. It's just been so long. That—

Travis: Oh, it's The Beasts of the Ring.

Griffin: Yes.

Travis: I'm just— It's The Beasts of the Ring. It's the Beasts? Okay.

Griffin: They manage to save people the only way that they could, the only way that— 'Cause no physical organic matter was gonna survive this thing. So, they sort of captured the spirits of hundreds of people in a massive control gem which folks can leave at will to inhabit these robot bodies, in this city. And so, they kind of..

You meet a couple of them that tell you... that sort of give you the score. And there's more that they don't tell you. But that is sort of what they clue you in to. And then, they help you build this robot arm. What does it look like and where does it go on the ship?

Travis: I'm going to... It looks like Tom's— It's looks like, Crow T. Robot's arm.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: You know, like a desk lamp arm. You know what I mean?

Griffin: Does it retract or is it always sticking out?

Travis: Oh, yeah, it retracts. It folds up on the belly of the ship.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: And then, think like a... like a claw arm. You know, like a claw game.

Griffin: Sure. I think the best way for me to handle this is to give you plus one asset. Just like, you have this dope fuckin' thing now.

Travis: Okay. Works for me.

Griffin: So, you tell the other folks on the crew what's up with this civilization. And Merle and Taako, what do you wanna do?

Clint: I think I'm gonna go Fahrenheit 451 on you. If this civilization is gonna be wiped out and all of this society, all this culture, all these— this history, all these wonderful things. And it's just gonna be wiped out for good, I'm gonna ask Lucretia to go with me.

And I'm going to use my persuasive skills to try to get as many of these robots to tell the stories of the souls that inhabit them, so we can record it, for posterity. And while we may not be able to actually save the civilization, at least we'll have the memories of it. And at least we'll have the story of it to pass along to other people.

Griffin: Okay. Yeah, that's dope.

Clint: And as part of that, we discover this thrilling story of these three adventurers. One, a tavern keeper—

Travis: Well, let Griffin do it? Hold on.

Griffin: No, no, no. No, no, no—

Clint: No! This is my turn!

Griffin: Do it, yeah. Fuck yeah.

Travis: [laughs]

Clint: One, a monk and one, an extremely handsome bard. And through their efforts, a magistrate is empowered and goes on to rule with incredible skill and compassion, and he makes it a great civilization. And it all starts with that magistrate, who had an awakening, a moment where he realized, you know, "This is not the way to go, I need to make this a better world."

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: And so, as they go through this, they find all these paintings of this handsome bard and his flunkies.

Griffin: [chuckles]

Travis: This is all non-canonical. [chuckles]

Justin: [laughs] It's another reality.

Clint: And basically, while they cannot save the actual, physical civilization, they can save the record of it.

Griffin: I'm into it, yeah. So, tell me if this is plus mind? Like, you going around and doing this. Or plus heart, which I guess would be you working really close with Lucretia this whole time. Which I'm, you know, I'm into doing more stuff there.

Clint: I'm thinking, well... I'm thinking heart.

Griffin: Okay. And—

Clint: I'm thinking heart.

Griffin: Okay. And does that reflect you working with Lucretia or are you getting these stories out of these robots?

Clint: I'm getting the stories and she's taking `em down.

Griffin: Okay. So, I think it's both. I think it's both.

Clint: But we are working— We're working hand in hand. We're working very closely on it.

Griffin: Okay.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: Ugh... 3. Oh, wait a minute, plus... plus... 5.

Travis: Do you have any assets, Dad?

Griffin: Yeah, do you wanna spend an asset?

Clint: I got four bonds?

Griffin: You don't have any assets at all?

Clint: No, I have not been awarded any assets. Unless it happened in one of those other 16 cycles?

Griffin: [laughs] I'm trying to decide if I—

Travis: Can I spend— Can I spend my assets on Dad?

Griffin: Yeah... I'm trying to decide if I wanna let y'all do that. I think it makes sense, right? Like, I don't want you to be able to do this with your other stuff. But for assets, yeah. I mean, one of you is losing an asset to give it to somebody else. So, if you wanna spend it that way, then yes. Magnus, you can.

Clint: Whatever you guys think best.

Travis: The reason that this is a hard decision, Dad, is I don't know how this directly benefits the mission. But— And so, there may be a time later where we need that asset to like get the Light or—

Griffin: I will find— I will find a way to make it benefit the mission in some way. A minor score improvement from one of you benefits the mission.

Travis: So, okay. I'm gonna say that having worked with the robots, you know, maybe they're a little distrustful. And I... maybe I vouch for them and do the robot secret handshake with the big robot arm?

Griffin: Sure. What is the asset that you spend though? And it's abstract. It can be literally anything that like— What do you give a bunch of robots, or give to Merle, to make him... you know? I need a narrative thing you can give somebody to get the thing you want.

Travis: Oh, I've got it!

Griffin: Okay?

Travis: Having used the knowledge that I've gained from the robots about the before time, the long, long ago, I'm able to find an eyepiece— an earpiece of robotic origins with technomancy—

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: ... Imbued within them. And impart those to Merle, so that he's able to have a technomantic connection with the robots.

Griffin: That's great, okay. That fucking rules. And Merle, I assume you accept that?

Clint: Thank you, Travis!

Travis: You're welcome.

Griffin: All right, Travis, spend one asset and we upgrade this to a mixed success. So, with a mixed success, you get this— you get all this stuff. You get these great stories of high adventure. And because they are the ones who ultimately saved, not the world but... 150 people, the last remaining inhabitants of the world, these stories are pretty Beasts of the Ring centric.

They are... They are telling these stories. And so, when these robots see these artifacts on you, these are... these are holy artifacts, Merle, that you have on. And so, they tell you their stories.

You can still tell they're being a little bit reserved, though. There is still something that they're not telling you. But you get these great stories. And I think when you are working with Lucretia to write them down, I think she really, really appreciates this. And in this conversation, she's like:

Lucretia: I've lived my whole life writing down other people's stories and I've been doing this for almost two decades now. And there's still part of me that thinks, "One of these years, Merle, we're just... we're not gonna make it out." And if that happens, all of these stories are just gonna die with us.

And I really appreciate you thinking of this world in that same way. I think we've done— I think we've done really important work now. Now we just

need to make sure that somebody else other than myself reads these one day.

Merle: That's... that's very well put. You know what? For somebody who doesn't talk much, you have a lot of good leadership instincts.

Griffin: She says:

Lucretia: I don't know about that. I'm keen to just sort of sit back and watch, and record. But I appreciate you saying that.

Merle: Well, you can't always do that.

Griffin: Take plus two bonds, because you're... yeah. You're working on some good stuff.

Travis: It's cute.

Griffin: It's not just that, it's setting up... that good shit. Taako?

Travis: I would also... Juice, I feel like... Okay. I'll just say, as Magnus:

Magnus: Something's up. There's something we don't know.

Justin: Well anyway, that's all well and good. Lup and I are going fuck'n scrapping!

Clint: [laughing]

Justin: This is the most civilized— this is the most technologically advanced place that we've been to yet and I wanna load the ship with all the valuable mechanical components I can find. So, I'm going fuck'n looting. I'm gonna destroy as many robots as it takes. I'm gonna take these motherfuckers apart.

Clint: [laughing]

Justin: Piecemeal.

Griffin: Okay?

Justin: So I can take whatever cool magic is powering them. And I'm gonna loot this motherfucker to the... to the... to brass tacks. I'm gonna just loot and pillage.

Clint: Burnt earth!

Justin: I'm gonna— Yes. Yes, exactly.

Griffin: All right. Roll, plus mind.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Oh!

Clint: Whoow!

Justin: That's a 12.

Griffin: A 12. Fuck, okay.

Justin: That's some good pillaging Lup and I are doing.

Clint: [laughing]

Griffin: Yeah, with a 12, you realize, "I don't need to murder everybody in this town. If I just go down, if I just go down one tier, nobody lives down here. And it's just... nothing but artifacts." So, you go down to the next to lowest tier. And there, you— sure enough— you find tons of shit. What do you find? Like, what are you looking for?

Griffin: Fuck'n Lup finds like a gun. Like a big old school Tommy gun. And she just—

Justin: Sweet.

Griffin: When she finds it, she's like:

Lup: Taako, look!

Griffin: And she just points it up at the sky and just like unloads it. Just screaming, like:

Lup: Count the shells!

Clint: [laughing]

Griffin: Just like fucking... like Scarface, kind of a little bit.

Taako: You are hysterical! That is hysterical. Do it again.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: She does. She literally finds another gun and does it again.

Lup: Count the shells! [shooting noises]

Taako: Ah! I'm dying.

Justin: I think we're looking for... Here's what I'm thinking. Things that can repair the ship. That is one thing we're looking for, because we do not have a plan for that.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: Like, we know there's a base state of the ship. But if it's damaged at some point, I wanna know that we have the material components on hand to repair it. I'm also looking for just anything that looks powerful. Anything that could be a source of power.

Griffin: Ooh.

Justin: I wanna try to loot as much crap as I can.

Griffin: Okay, here's what we'll do. You find, easily enough— like, this was a city of steel and arcane energy. So, you find metal plating that you think like... Well, you check with Cap'n'port, who's sort of the ship health liaison, kind of the engineer pilot, in one. And he's, like:

Davenport: Yeah, that... Yeah, that's a... that's a great idea. I don't know why we didn't think about that before. It's been almost two decades.

Griffin: And you load some of this back up onto the ship. And with a 12, I think take two assets.

Clint: Nice!

Griffin: But, with the other thing you mentioned I do wanna circle back to, is you search for magical energy. I think this is equivalent to an arcana check, right? So, while you're down in the second tier—

Justin: Sure.

Griffin: ... Which is the only like— it's the lowest non-flooded tier. The bottom one is completely flooded by this waterfall. Roll plus mind.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: 6.

Griffin: Okay, you don't find anything.

Clint: [chuckles]

Travis: Well, you have plenty of assets?

Justin: ... -Teen.

Griffin: 16? Wow!

Justin: Okay.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Do you wanna spend one of your assets upgrading that?

Justin: I thought 6 was a—

Griffin: It's a failure.

Justin: 6 is a failure?

Griffin: 6 or below is fail.

Justin: Yeah, this seems like a good time to do that.

Griffin: All right, what do you use?

Justin: I found a fuck'n metal detector down there, but it's for magic.

Griffin: [chuckles] Okay.

Justin: So, it's just like, I'm just waving it around. Maybe Lup's doing it. Lup's probably just fucking around with it and I'm like:

Taako: Stop, you'll drain the battery!

Griffin: It doesn't have much battery left, because I think it breaks after you use it, or else you just get another asset again.

Justin: Right.

Griffin: But yeah, you use it. And with a mixed success, you know that there's energy below you, in the bottom tier of this world. Which you know, talking to some of the robots, there's like one... One robot remembers, "Oh. Well, that's Underton." So, you figure out that there is some energy below.

Clint: Please, some fan artist, draw that.

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: Just the gun trick?

Clint: Please. [chuckles]

Griffin: Okay. So, that's y'all's year. And again, abstracting it like... it's probably tough scavenging for shit. Like, it's exhausting going through a whole city and looting it. So, that's your year. And so... I think just before the Hunger comes, you know you have maybe about a week left.

You know you're not gonna get the Light, right? And I'm not giving you kind of an extra turn, but whenever you go back to Davenport and tell him about this energy that you detected down there, he says:

Davenport: Well, if we can't get the Light, we may as well try and find out what that is, right? Before we go down and... before we leave this world. If it's a powerful form of energy, we don't want the Hunger to get that when it consumes this world. So, I think we should try and head down there, don't you think?

Magnus: Agreed!

Taako: Yeah, sounds good.

Merle: Uh-huh.

Griffin: Who are you leaving behind? Barry volunteers. Barry volunteers to stay behind. Because he's still very nervous. [chuckles] You know what it is? He can't swim. Barry can't swim.

Justin: [chuckles]

Barry: I can't swim—

Travis: No, 'cause they would— His jeans would get wet and that's incredibly uncomfortable.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: Oh, yeah.

Justin: It's the worst.

Griffin: No. So, he just can't swim, he never learned how. He has bad ears, you know? He has those—

Travis: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Griffin: He gets ear infections every time he gets in a pool. And so, he just like kind of just gave up at a certain point. But the rest of you can. So, you need to get into this flooded part of the city. How do you all go about doing that? We're gonna have to make a couple rolls to get through this resolution.

Clint: May I make a suggestion?

Griffin: Sure.

Travis: Yes.

Clint: That Davenport stay with the ship as well?

Griffin: Davenport really wants to come with, actually. Davenport like— Davenport says:

Davenport: We don't know what we're gonna find down there, we should have all hands that we could possibly go. I'm coming. Barry's fine. Barry can— I've been showing Barry how to fly the ship. He'll be able to get us out.

Travis: And we know we have a couple of days. So, Barry could actually just leave like as soon as the Hunger gets there.

Griffin: Yeah, exactly.

Travis: Like, we can be ready.

Magnus: Taako, Lup, you guys got any kind of like bubble spells? Or air things? Or..

Griffin: If wizards have like a breathing spell in D&D, I'm happy to let you just do it.

Justin: Yeah. Yeah, we got one. Probably. Right? Yeah, we have— We can make gills, I think. That sounds right, doesn't it?

Travis: It's definitely canon in Harry Potter. So, why not in D&D?

Justin: I might be thinking of Harry Potter. But yeah, I definitely have a spell for breath and stuff.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: There's a spell called Water Breathing.

Travis: Perfect.

Justin: There we go. That sounds like it's—

Griffin: It's a level three transmutation spell. So Taako, you fuck'n defo know this.

Justin: Perfect.

Griffin: Like, transmutation is your shit. Okay... So, yeah, don't worry about rolling. You all can just breathe water. Magnus, you have to move some stuff out of the way. Some big, heavy pieces of machinery that are covering up some tunnels and some aqueducts, that allow you to sort of swim into Underton. But once you get down there, you eventually end up in one large, open chamber.

The air is so stale down here, but it's breathable. It's just like a little self-contained bubble of air in this massive room in what are essentially the sewers of the city. And you sort of follow this light and this sound through

the tunnels to reach this chamber. What does the symbol of the Beasts of the Ring look like, Trav?

Travis: Ah, it's a great question. I think it's a... it's a howling wolf. With a... gear, as the moon.

Griffin: Okay. It's just a dog yelling at some—[laughs] some technology. I like it.

Travis: It's a howling wolf on a gear, all right?

Griffin: It's a dog who saw a gear and got really scared and yelled at it.

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: You follow those symbols and you follow this light and sound. And for a second you think, "Wait a minute, did we find the fuck'n Light of Creation?" But as you enter in this chamber, you realize that's not what it is. What you see is a massive, blue crystal that is shining and there's this swirling light inside of it.

And inside of the swirling light, you can swear you see like... people, a little bit. And standing in front of this crystal is a robot. And it is big and burly. It's far larger and more imposing, and like... battle ready than any of the robots you saw topside. And as you enter, you hear a voice say:

Robot: Hello. I see you've found our secret here. We've discussed among ourselves what we'd do if this day ever came. Though, to be honest, I doubted it ever would. What are you all looking for?

Magnus: We wanna help.

Griffin: She says:

Robot: I'm... I'm not sure exactly what that means? You wanna give us some oil or something? I've got a—

Magnus: There's a force coming that is going to destroy everything. And I don't mean like the plague. I don't mean like a monster, or 'destroy' where you just go back and find a new body. I mean unmake everything. And it's gonna be here in a couple days.

Griffin: Roll plus heart.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: All of us?

Griffin: No, just Magnus.

Travis: 7.

Griffin: With a 7, she says:

Robot: I'm not entirely sure why I should believe you. But if what you say is true, is there anything we can even do to fight it off?

Taako: Yeah, lady... I'm afraid you're up shit creek. I don't really know what to tell you on this one.

Travis: How big is the crystal?

Griffin: It's— It's huge. It's like 10 feet tall by like 8 feet wide. And Davenport is sort of in the back of your party and says... And I guess Taako and Lup, and everybody with magical abilities is— just like feels this immense power radiating from that crystal. And Davenport says:

Davenport: Guys, I'm so... I'm so sorry. But we... we can't let this technology get consumed by the Hunger. We can't give the Hunger an army of robots and a way of transferring people into even more powerful robot bodies. We can't. I'm sorry, we just can't do it. We have to... We have to destroy this thing.

Taako: Okay.

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: Are you in? Are you doing it, Taako?

Taako: Yeah. Lup and I both do it.

Griffin: As it, this thing, detects some hostile intent from you, Taako, she walks over to this pile of junk in the corner and picks up this long, long piece of rebar from the ground. Which she twirls effortlessly and then holds at the ready in front of the crystal. And Lup is not like— You step forward— And you said Lup, right? You tried to get her—

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: She doesn't. Like, she says:

Justin: She's not down to—

Lup: Taako, this doesn't... This doesn't feel right. We shouldn't... We shouldn't be interfering like this. This would be— we would be eradicating everybody else on the planet. I don't... I'm... I don't think that's right, Taako.

Taako: But... Okay. But listen... That's happening— Why am I always the only pragmatist with you people? That's happening anyway.

Griffin: Lup gets like... she gets a little bit more... defensive now. And she says:

Lup: Are we just gonna burn every world that we can't save? Just to keep the Hunger from getting its hands on it? How does that make us any better than them?

Magnus: If we don't, if we let the Hunger get stronger, doesn't it make it harder to save the next world? I mean, we're still figuring this out...

Lup: We're still figuring this out. But Magnus, you're telling— You, Magnus, are telling me that it makes sense to kill this entire world, just so that our enemy doesn't get stronger. That's what you, Magnus, are telling me?

Magnus: If we don't, we're not protecting future worlds— This is hard, Lup. I'm not saying it's an easy choice.

Griffin: Lup goes and kind of stands between the rest of you and this robot. And says:

Lup: We don't know what happens to the worlds consumed by the Hunger. They could still be alive in there. We could save them. This is the point where we get to decide who we are. I refuse to let us be the type of people who would destroy an entire world, for any reason. This... This isn't us! This can't be how we do this.

Taako: Lulu... Lulu, I really wanna destroy it though. I—

Clint: [laughs]

Taako: Listen, I understand where you're coming from. For sure. But I don't... [stammers] It's called the 'Hunger'. Not the the 'Pocket where things are cool'. Like, it's definitely a bad place, right? It's a big black thing in the— did you see— Remember when we saw Never Ending Story?

Clint: [chuckles]

Taako: Do you remember the—

Magnus: Wait, what? [laughs]

Taako: Remember the— It was...

Clint: That was two V's, N-E-V-V-E-R.

Taako: It was a scroll that we looked at. It was a moving scroll.

Lup: It was a great— It was a really good scroll.

Taako: It was a great scroll. And there was that thing, the Nothing. Remember? With two T's? Trademark, trademark, trademark.

Clint: [laughs]

Taako: And it was eating everything. This is just like that. Like, we don't want it to get more powerful. This is the best understanding that we have, right? Like... Unless you have more insight into it than I do?

Merle: I have a suggestion. Why don't we leave it up to them?

Lup: That's a... That's a fair point. Robot friend? This thing's coming and we don't know exactly what it does. But it's gonna eat this whole world. Do you wanna sort of destroy your whole civilization? Or are you... good?

Griffin: And—

Magnus: Well... There's maybe a better way to phrase it than that, Lup.

Taako: Yeah. Not a great sales job, Lulu.

Lup: Hey, Taako? Mm-mm.

Taako: Yeah?

Lup: Mm-mm, mm-mm-mm.

Griffin: She gets really— like right up, face to face.

Lup: Mm-mm. Mm... Mm-mm.

Taako: I get it. Okay.

Merle: Well, let me take a shot at it.

Taako: Here we go.

Merle: Do you guys—

Magnus: Yeah, this'll be good. [chuckles]

Merle: Listen.

Taako: Get comfy.

Merle: I—

Travis: [laughter]

Taako: I'll just start shooting it? I should just start shooting it.

Merle: We can't do anything to help you. Can't do a damn thing to help you. Maybe you got another week and you're gonna be gone, okay? You're already disembodied spirits.

But they're gonna take your energy, they're gonna take your spirits and do horrible, horrible things with them. Is that why you want to hang around? To help evil and help other people get destroyed? Is that the big deal? That's why you wanted to hang out in this crystal?

Griffin: The robot says:

Robot: We've been through... a lot, here. And this force that you're describing, it sounds pretty tough. But I feel like we've been through worse. And I haven't met a force yet that can make me go against my will. So, if the other option is the absolute destruction of myself and my people, I refuse destruction and I refuse to be consumed.

Griffin: And this robot kind of jabs this rebar pole into the ground, sort of defiantly.

Taako: Okay... All right. Here's the plan... This crystal is used to power your people. The souls are somehow connected to this crystal, correct?

Robot: Correct.

Taako: Okay. There is a chance, as Lup pointed out, that the Hunger isn't destroying everything. That there's something we can do to bring your

people back from the Hunger. Here is what I would like to suggest. Let us take the crystal with us. I can shrink it to a small enough size that I can keep it on my person. And I will do so.

And the moment that we— If we have the chance, if we have the ability to bring your people back, I will restore the crystal to its original size and location. And it will be as though you just had a power nap. That is the best shot we— But if this force gets stronger and eats this crystal, we may not be able to stop it. This may be a moot point. But it's a chance. You have a chance.

Griffin: She says:

Robot: How long do we have to make this decision?

Taako: I got an itchy spell finger, so I wouldn't linger. You know how on Shark Tank— You know the one scroll, Shark Tank? Where if you wait too long, the offer gets worse.

Clint: That was with two K's, Sharkk Tank. And then—

Taako: Where if you wait too long to take the offer, maybe it gets worse. Like, I think this is your— My first offer's my best offer, like Marcus Lemonis.

Magnus: I think we can maybe do like 12 hours. How long 'til your friends wake up? You probably wanna talk it over?

Griffin: She says:

Robot: Yeah, I... I can't make this decision unilaterally. I'll need to... We'll need to reach a consensus. But I—

Justin: Okay, can I— Can I ask my sister:

Taako: If they don't get on board, can we destroy this crystal? We're giving them a chance. Fair?

Griffin: She kind of sighs and is like:

Lup: You do what you want, Taako. I don't... I'm not gonna burn a whole world. I'm not gonna destroy a whole world, Taako. I don't care if our enemy gets 100 times stronger as a result of it. I'm not going to be the one that pulls the trigger on an entire civilization. I won't do it, Taako. I won't do it.

Taako: That's fine. I won't do it if you don't do it. But these jokesters are going to either way. So...

Griffin: Here's how this resolves. This spirit goes back into the crystal. And I think when you all get back topside, all of the robots are kind of powered down as they have this sort of group meeting.

Travis: I draw on 'em with sharpie.

Griffin: Okay. What do you do?

Clint: [chuckles]

Travis: Just like mustaches, mostly.

Griffin: Okay, no— Okay.

Travis: No. No dirty words or anything. I'm not that— I'm just like... Maybe I draw smiley faces on the robots. 'Cause mostly, I picture them as kind of you know, kind of blank, neutral faces. And I just kind of draw some raised eyebrows, so they look really, really surprised. Or like—

Justin: "Huh?"

Travis: Yeah, right? So, it's like something—

Justin: "Some oil? Huh?"

Travis: "What? What did you say?"

Justin: "Free oil?"

Travis: "The Hunger is coming? Huh?"

Justin: "Huh?"

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: So, here's how this resolves then. Some of, but not all of them, go with it. I think that a lot of 'em just stay behind and they just inhabit these robot bodies permanently at this point. They don't have this crystal, they are kind of separated from the source to live in these robot bodies.

Which is not ideal for them. It's not as safe, I guess. And not as liberating. 'Cause if they go down in these robot bodies, they just go down. But a lot of them do decide to take you up on this journey and this robot is arguing this case for you. The robot that you met down in the... Underton.

And so, that robot comes and works with you, Taako and Lup, to shrink this crystal down to go along with you. And there's probably about... There's probably about 100 souls in this crystal. And hands it over. And you're taking it, Taako?

Justin: Yeah.

Travis: The ones that stay, I picture Magnus coaching them on like, "Okay, when the Hunger comes, here's what we've seen so far. Be ready for this. Get somewhere. Get to Underton. Be ready for this. Buy yourself some time by doing—" That sort of thing, you know? Giving 'em any kind of tactical insight that we've gained over the last 20 cycles, or whatever.

Griffin: Okay—

Clint: And Merle's giving last rites.

Griffin: Okay. So, you take most of these people with you in this crystal, Taako, that you now have. And the rest of them stay behind. And Magnus, you train them. And that robot that you met in the sewers is... She tells you all that she's staying behind also. And she brought up that rebar pole with

her. And she's also helping with the training, Magnus, because she's very, very accomplished with this thing.

And I think, do you have any parting words for this robot friend, before you all get in the ship and go? I think you know the Hunger is coming in a few minutes. You hear this loud boom in the sky that lets you know it's time.

Magnus: If we can undo this, we will. At the very least, we're gonna try. I... I wish we could promise anything else but... Are you sure you don't wanna come with us?

Robot: This is my home. And my neighbors, many of them have elected to stay. And I cannot... I can't just leave them unprotected.

Justin: Merle, do you have anything you want to say?

Clint: Yeah. I look in her eyes and I say:

Merle: See ya! Wouldn't wanna be ya!

Clint: And I run for the ship.

Griffin: She chuckles:

Robot: Okay.

Taako: Yeah, for sure. Keep it sleazy. All right, we're out. Bye!

Clint: [engine revving noises]

Justin: Yeah, that's right, it's a diesel engine in this bad boy.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: I don't know why we didn't think through that.

Griffin: I think Lup also walks over to this robot that you all have sort of gotten to know the best out of all of these folks. And she says:

Lup: Listen...

Griffin: And then hands this robot one of the guns that she found. And says:

Lup: Light them the fuck up.

Griffin: And then turns and walks onto the ship. And so, the seven of you fly away in the Starblaster. All seven of you, intact, having saved... Well, kind of saved the sleeping forms of 100 of the last sort of known survivors of this world. And the robots, their perspective on the ground, they watch you fly away as this storm starts to materialize overhead.

And this main robot looks and she turns. And looks at all of the other robots and just kind of nods. And holds her staff defiantly. And as this storm intensifies, she is unshaken. Because this isn't the first storm that she has lived through.

And so, she does what she's done countless times before. She thinks of her friends and she prays for sunrise. And onboard the ship, I think Lup turns to the rest of you as you're flying away, before you sort of cross over. And she says:

Lup: Listen... That stuff I was saying down there, that wasn't just... that wasn't just talk. I believe that, one of these times, we're gonna get it right. And we're gonna find a way to defeat the Hunger and... save everybody inside of it. I... I have to believe that, to keep doing what we do. Because I have to believe... that I'm gonna get those \$15 back from Greg fucking Gremaldis!

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: And she walks over to the rest of you and says:

Lup: Seriously though, it got... We got dark down there. I know this journey's been hard and it's only going to get harder. But we can't allow

ourselves to... to get to that place again. To even think about destroying an entire world. We need to promise each other, right now, we won't let one another get to that place. Never again.

Taako: Deal.

Magnus: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Travis: I put my hand in.

Merle: All right, as a— Let's— As a rough guideline, okay.

Griffin: She smiles and everybody else makes their way to the center. And I think that's the last thing we see, the seven of you— Well, the six of you—

Travis: Who's driving?

Griffin: Davenport's like:

Davenport: I'm putting my hand in too!

Griffin: And he like veers the ship left. And so, the rest of you are just— have your hands in the middle, making this promise not to destroy a world, or even think about it.

Justin: It's funny... [chuckles] You never see the Justice League have to make that promise, huh?

Travis: Yeah.

Clint: [laughing]

Justin: [laughs] You never see the Teen Titans like, "Hey. From now on, no more destroying entire civilizations. Okay?"

Travis: "No more threats of murder. Can we all agree, no more?"

Justin: [laughs] "Can we just—"

Griffin: I think the last thing we see are just like the six of you— and Davenport, who is close by— sharing this moment of determination. As you all sort of share this moment, everybody take plus one bond.

Travis: Yeah!

Justin: Nice.

Griffin: As you sort of share this moment of just realization, of how bad it just could have gotten. And as you share this promise to never get back to that place again— And I think that's what we see, as all seven of you are sort of pulled apart into these beautiful white threads and into the positions that you always return to. Ready now to take on whatever the next cycle has to bring.

[“The Unexplained” by Mort Garson plays]

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