

## **The Adventure Zone: Balance – The Stolen Century: Chapter Six**

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**Griffin:** Previously, on The Adventure Zone:

**Barry:** If a lich can anchor themselves with a powerful enough sort of emotional attachment, then they can sort of maintain their identity and they can maintain their sanity.

**Griffin:** You see what looks like some sort of jellyfish.

**Travis:** I look down in the water and I say:

**Magnus:** I'll protect it. I promise.

**Travis:** And I grab it and run.

**Griffin (intro):** Our heroes' journey has been... difficult. But they've been lucky. I wonder what happens when that luck runs out. It's The Adventure Zone!

[“The Unexplained” by Mort Garson plays]

**Griffin:** It is the 65<sup>th</sup> cycle and things in the back half of your century long—

**Travis:** I can't wait for four more cycles, am I right? [chuckles]

**Griffin:** For what?

**Travis:** 'Cause then... 'cause then it'll be the 69<sup>th</sup>. [chuckles]

**Justin:** Actually, 69s don't exist in the world of The Adventure Zone. It's very—

**Travis:** Oh, no!

**Justin:** That number doesn't mean anything here.

**Griffin:** But they do have 27s! Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah!

**Clint:** Yeah, 27s!

**Travis:** Stay out of this, Dad!

**Griffin:** Stay out of this, Dad. It's not for you. So, things in the back half— Things in the back half of your century-long voyage are... they're more fraught than the first half. Your escapes at the end of the year, they're getting narrower. And the Hunger isn't just getting stronger, it's getting better at hunting you. Your time during these cycles is less carefree.

All seven of you, your efforts to self-improve and study your foe are doubled. Because you've had a few close calls now and the weight of those close calls is a lot to bear. It's becoming more and more evident that if you are all ever completely taken over by the Hunger, that would be it for everything.

So, that's sort of where you are, in this headspace, when you enter the 65<sup>th</sup> world. And this world, from above, it looks... it looks cruel. There's an expansive land mass here with little defining features. It's just these long stretches of ash-grey rock. There's almost no rivers or lakes below.

You see these small settlements of like ramshackle tents, built around bonfires that are giving off these black columns of smoke. And you see some figures below, in those settlements, and you can't imagine how they live in these places. But after a few hours of low flyovers, you finally find a place that breaks up the monotony.

It is a city of white marble and it's built in the center of this massive blue lake. And from above, you can see into the city, you see these verdant lawns and mansions, and a towering college and a municipal building surrounded by a botanical garden. It looks idyllic, it looks textbook utopian.

Save for a bizarre feature, right in the very center of this city. The core of the city is surrounded by this tall, circular stone wall. And kneeling within

that circle are four humanoid figures, statues. They are 20, maybe 30 stories tall and they're all facing each other in this kneeling position, casting shadows over everything else in the city. And Davenport comes out of his helm onto the deck of the Starblaster, where you're all standing. And he says:

**Davenport:** Well, we have a couple of days before the Light falls. Do you all think that maybe we should set down there and get the lay of the land?

**Magnus:** This place looks incredibly boring.

**Davenport:** I mean, I... I agree. But they might, you know... There might be something that we could learn there? Or you know, we could at least find out more about this world.

**Taako:** Yeah, I don't agree with Magnus's suggestion that we leave this world to its grim fate, unaided. Even though it may be boring, I think we should try to help them.

**Merle:** Yeah, let's be human about it.

**Magnus:** No, no, no. I just mean I'd rather check in with the people living outside whatever this shining city on the hill is.

**Griffin:** Davenport says like— Davenport says:

**Davenport:** Okay. Well, why don't we do another low pass before we—

**Griffin:** And then, there's a flash of light. And a feeling of heat against your face. And a thunderclap. And something has shot the Starblaster right out of the sky. And you're falling and then, you are unconscious.

**Travis:** Well, dump.

**Griffin:** When you come to, your hands are bound behind your back and you are on your knees on a hard, stone platform. And wherever you are, it is extremely dusty in here. You're breathing in this grit that's just clinging to your mouth with every breath.

Taako and Merle, you two feel powerless. You feel like something in this room is like, suppressing your magical abilities. This space is a large, circular clearing. There's a 20-foot sandstone wall running around the perimeter of this place.

And this area is dark, even though there's no ceiling. The sky above is... it's exposed and it's just a pale, sunless gray. And above you are the forms of those statues, those humanoid statues, hundreds of feet tall, just looming over this area.

And you're on this circular stone dais in the center of this clearing. And a tall man wearing a bright purple suit walks around that dais from behind you, and stands behind a podium, facing you. And he... he looks kind of... he looks kind of... not bored, but just sort of like, this is sort of a rote occasion for him. And he addresses you and says:

**Olsen:** Hello. My name is Prosecutor Olsen.

**Griffin:** That's named after Mike Olsen, @Devlin1 on Twitter. Thank you, Mike. He says:

**Olsen:** The six of you are being tried for... let's see...

**Griffin:** And he looks down at this clipboard he's holding and he says:

**Olsen:** Interloping, malicious intent and violation of a no-fly zone ordinance. Just making sure I have your names down right for the record here, Merle, Davenport, Lup, Magnus, Barry, ta— Tayko?

**Taako:** It's Taako. Like from TV?

**Merle:** There's an umlaut.

**Griffin:** He looks down and like, makes a note on the clipboard and he says:

**Olsen:** Okay. Well, this is just a preliminary hearing to establish veracity for the defense. Before I begin, how does your party plead to these charges?

**Taako:** Not guilty.

**Magnus:** Yeah, what he said.

**Griffin:** He takes another note and sort of nods. And looks up at you and says:

**Olsen:** Okay, we're gonna begin the preliminary hearing—

**Magnus:** May I— Just a quick question?

**Merle:** You have to say, "May I address the court?"

**Magnus:** May I address... this— you? Were you the one who shot down our ship?

**Olsen:** That was the defense ministry. That wasn't me, exactly. I'm just a, you know, prosecutor here. I don't aim the cannons or whatever.

**Magnus:** Okay. You just saved your life. You don't know it, but you— that was close. That was close for you.

**Griffin:** He takes a note down on his clipboard and he says:

**Olsen:** The defense will restrain itself from threatening the court in this courtroom.

**Magnus:** Wasn't a threat. Just an explanation. Just a reality. You know? Just a fact.

**Griffin:** He says:

**Olsen:** If the defense continues to conduct themselves in this manner, they will be held in contempt.

**Taako:** Cut it out.

**Olsen:** Justices, I leave it in your hands.

**Griffin:** He sort of steps down from the podium. And as he does, you realize, just sort of looking at your party, you know, kneeling on this stone dais, Lucretia isn't here. Lucretia is nowhere in this chamber at all.

From above you, you begin to hear voices. You hear four voices, that I'm gonna try to do and try to keep separate. And they are— they are just like booming down thunderously from the heavens. And you hear them say:

**Justice 1:** You're a long way from home, from your journey's beginning. And still away from your journey's end, aren't you?

**Griffin:** And then another voice says:

**Justice 2:** The truth of this matter is already known. Speak it openly.

**Griffin:** And you hear another voice say:

**Justice 3:** Piety will be rewarded. Corruption will be punished.

**Griffin:** And you hear a fourth voice say:

**Justice 4:** None of your deeds will be kept from our divine providence. The measure of your words and deeds throughout the fullness of your lives will be considered and weighed.

**Travis:** [spoofing Justice 4] "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain."

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Clint:** [spoofing Justice 4] "Guilty!"

**Griffin:** And you hear a voice say:

**Justice 1:** Are you ready to begin?

**Magnus:** Yes?

**Justice 1:** We'll start with you, human.

**Justice 4:** Magnus. You fought with others your entire life. Throughout your adolescence, you celebrated strife. I didn't mean to make that rhyme.

**Travis:** [laughs]

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Justice 4:** Magnus, your past sins are pride and wrath. How do you plead?

**Griffin:** Doing a courtroom game here and it's very lightweight. And again, it's using kind of the same systems we've been using this whole time. But I would encourage you to— in this section where you're sort of establishing character veracity and morality— to argue your case against these justices, to help you out in a future roll.

**Travis:** You got it.

**Griffin:** Basically, they are going to leverage charges against you based on your past. And I want you to try to argue against it, if you want. If you don't, then you don't have to.

**Travis:** Got it.

**Magnus:** I plead not guilty. What you call— what you call wrath, I call bravery. What you call pride, I call confidence. It's given me the strength to do the good that I have and accomplish the things that I've accomplished. To do otherwise would be to go against my own character and that would be a far greater sin.

**Griffin:** All right. One of the statues above you... Again, it's like really dusty in here and it's kind of— you kind of just see these four shadows above you basically. But you swear you see one of those four statues nod. You hear a voice say:

**Justice 2:** Barry Bluejeans, you've spent your whole life—

**Clint:** [laughs] Never heard it with the accent on the first syllable before.

**Justice 2:** You've spent your whole life locked in libraries and studies, learning about the world around you without ever entering it. You're filled with jealousy of those who do. Your past sins are sloth and envy. How do you plead?

**Griffin:** And Barry kind of like shakes his head for a second and says:

**Barry:** Not guilty? I'm a pretty good dude. I'm just— I'm doing my best out here. What are we— What are we doing here?

**Griffin:** And one of the statues above you kind of shakes its head, 'no'. And another voice from above you, the higher voice, says:

**Justice 1:** Merle Highchurch.

**Merle:** Mm-hmm?

**Justice 1:** You spent your youth languishing in a home that left you unsatisfied. Jealous of those outside, but too afraid to act. You also harbor a desire for... arbor, that does not bear repeating.

**Justin:** [chuckles]

**Justice 1:** Your past sins are sloth, envy and lust. How do you plead?

**Merle:** Can I... break those three up and plead differently against all three?

**Justice 1:** If you so choose.

**Merle:** I'm pretty guilty of the... arbor ardor.

**Travis:** "Objection!"

**Justin:** Yeah, me too. Just like, in general.



**Griffin:** Prosecutor Olsen says:

**Olsen:** Sustained.

**Justin:** [chuckles]

**Clint:** Wait a minute! How's this working?

**Travis:** Nope. Enough said, the end.

**Clint:** You know what? I'll tell you what—

**Griffin:** Prosecutor Olsen says:

**Olsen:** Please continue with your defense, just like, no more puns. This is serious business.

**Merle:** I am a representative of a whole 'nother planet. So, I claim diplomatic immunity. Your charges, your laws, have no effect on me. I'll be in the ship.

**Griffin:** The prosecutor reaches down into the podium and pulls out this big, thick book and flips to an index in the back. And then thumbs through a few of the pages and looks up at you and says like:

**Olsen:** That's not actually how any of this works.

**Merle:** It's not?

**Olsen:** No.

**Merle:** You know what? I think I am guilty of those three things. I am guilty of those three things. The old Merle? Yeah, I was terrible. But I've changed. I'm not that guy anymore. And I'm very happy with my life and I'm very happy with what I've done. And... So, yeah. Merle version 1.0? He was pretty shitty. But the new Merle, the current Merle, pretty good dude.

**Griffin:** That statue addresses you again and says:

**Justice 1:** It is your past that is being measured, Merle. Your answer is sufficient, though.

**Merle:** Thanks.

**Griffin:** You hear a voice say:

**Justice 3:** Lup.

**Griffin:** And Lup just says like:

**Lup:** Wait, I'm gonna guess. I mean, definitely some lust... Some gluttony in there, probably. Pride, for sure. Did I miss anything?

**Taako:** Wrath? Don't forget wrath.

**Lup:** Oh, hella— hella wrath. Yeah, definitely.

**Taako:** For sure.

**Magnus:** Sloth? I mean, you nap. Does that count?

**Lup:** No, I'm pretty on my grind.

**Magnus:** That's fair.

**Lup:** Did I get everything?

**Griffin:** And that voice says:

**Justice 3:** Yes? How do you plead?

**Griffin:** And Lup says:

**Lup:** [chuckles] Guilty, yeah.

**Griffin:** And the statue nods its head. And you hear a voice say:

**Justice 4:** Davenport. Your even temperament has been sullied with rage and denial over the difficulties you have faced during your journey here. Your past sin is wrath. How do you plead?

**Griffin:** And Davenport just like shakes his head. And he looks kind of like, downtrodden. And you can tell like the wheels are kind of spinning. And he is just... he is just thinking about the ship going down and, is this it? Like, are you all done? And he says:

**Davenport:** Have we not... earned a little wrath? Given what we've been through, we haven't earned that?

**Griffin:** And you hear another voice from above say:

**Justice 2:** Taako, you were born with so little. And therefore justify your insatiable desire for more. You champion your own growth and power, and station, but have never known a moment of satisfaction your entire life. Your past sins are greed, envy and pride. How do you plead?

**Justin:** I very dramatically lift my chin and say:

**Taako:** I plead not visible!

**Justin:** And I try to cast Invisibility. And I'm pretty sure how this is gonna shake out.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Justin:** But this is what Taako would do, so—

**Griffin:** I mean, I'm not going to give you a response to that, because literally nothing happens. So, you just say it and then like Prosecutor Olsen is just like looking at you like:

**Olsen:** Can the defense clarify its statement?

**Taako:** Yes, allow me to clarify. I misspoke. One of my sins is poor pronunciation.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Taako:** Not guilty at all. I have been satisfied many times. One time I made the perfect amuse-bouche that included lemon and saffron. And it was delicious and I was extremely satisfied with that. Never even attempted it again.

So, I was definitely satisfied then. And what you call... Let me ask you this. You say sloth is a sin, but if one is satisfied, is that not a form of sloth? I don't see how those two aren't contradictory. So, no. I don't think I'm guilty.

**Griffin:** Prosecutor Olsen kind of like crooks his head. Like, 'hm.' Like he's never heard that— He's never heard that defense before, during this phase of the trial. After all six of you have been tried for—

**Justin:** Yeah, did I just like undo the seven deadly sins?

**Clint:** Yeah!

**Justin:** Sorry, God. Like, I guess I just messed up your whole jam.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Prosecutor Olsen steps back up to the podium and he says:

**Olsen:** Thank you for your answers, defendants. The justices will now ask a series of questions to help guide their case during your proper trial, later on. Their divine providence is infallible. So, I guess, answer truthfully, please.

**Griffin:** And he steps back down, and you hear those voices again.

**Travis:** Wait, hold on. Then why do they need to ask us questions?

**Griffin:** He steps back up and he says:

**Olsen:** All of this is just to establish character. We don't know the six of you and this is how we establish veracity before—

**Magnus:** Lucky for you, I've got a character sheet right here.

**Griffin:** Bazinga!

**Travis:** Hey, there it is!

**Griffin:** You hear a voice boom down from above you and during this phase—

**Travis:** [Spoofing Justice 4] "No puns!"

**Griffin:** [chuckles] Oh wait, that is true. I did say no puns.

**Clint:** You did— That is a legal precedent.

**Griffin:** I don't know if it was in character, though. 'Cause if Magnus understands that he has a character sheet, that would be pretty fucked up. You hear a voice boom down from above you, and during this phase, any of you can sort of answer and make your case.

I am sort of keeping score, behind the scenes, on how you answer and how those answers are accepted by the court. Again, I'm trying to get through this quick 'cause I wanna do two cycles this episode. But you hear a voice from above boom down and say:

**Justice 4:** Are more of your people coming from whatever world you call home?

**Merle:** Pretty sure not.

**Taako:** Yeah.

**Magnus:** Yeah.

**Taako:** I think that ship done sailed.

**Magnus:** Not in the form that we know them as. There's a thing that has been chasing us. It does not originate in our world. But it does kind of swallow up everything as it goes. So, it might be bringing something of the people of our world with it. But not like we know it, not like us. Everyone that we brought with us is on this planet already.

**Griffin:** You hear another— When you say that about like something coming that ate your world, Prosecutor Olsen like sets down his clipboard and shakes his head. And looks at you and he says:

**Olsen:** Wait, what are you—

**Griffin:** And then another voice booms down from above and says:

**Justice 3:** What is your intention for coming to our world?

**Taako:** Honestly, we didn't choose this place. We just sort of arrived here. Honestly, we didn't even know you folks were here. Until... well, you shot us. Which, I assume, there will be a separate trial for that later? Is that— We're just taking one at a time?

**Merle:** Can we sue? We could sue.

**Taako:** Civil. Yeah, for sure.

**Magnus:** Well... I mean, we could settle. You know what I mean? We don't have to jump to immediate— Just in general, we kind of bounce from place to place, looking for a thing that we call the Light of Creation. And if we find it, it's better. If we don't find it, it's bad.

**Taako:** Just to clarify, not the Spark of Creation, like in Children of Eden.

**Merle:** No, no.

**Taako:** I was very confused about that early on.

**Magnus:** No, this is a light of creation, I think little L, little C? I don't think we've capitalized— Is that the proper noun? Light of Creation, is it... It doesn't matter.

**Griffin:** When you say that, Prosecutor Olsen's like:

**Olsen:** Light of— Light of Creation? It brought you— what are you—

**Griffin:** And then, you hear another voice from above.

**Magnus:** Yeah, read a book!

**Griffin:** You hear another voice from above say:

**Justice 3:** We have reason to believe there may have been more crew on board your ship before it crashed. We have not located your ship to confirm this. But are we correct?

**Magnus:** Are you talking about Fisher?

**Griffin:** There's no response to that.

**Taako:** Who?

**Merle:** Fisher Stevens was on our ship?

**Magnus:** I don't know who you're talking about. His name is just Fisher. That's my... Well, I don't... It's this floating, kind of light up, fish buddy that I have. Do you know, like a jellyfish? That was on the ship. You know, as far— I'm trying to think... Was there anybody else... Taako?

**Taako:** Lucretia?

**Magnus:** Okay, well, I was trying to... All right, yes. So, there is another person, Lucretia. Lucretia and Fisher. But you probably killed them when you shot the shit out of our ship. So...

**Taako:** So...

**Merle:** And how do you not know where the ship is? You shot it down?!

**Griffin:** You don't really get an answer from those four statues. And Prosecutor Olsen steps up and says:

**Olsen:** Don't worry, we will locate your friend and they will be tried. Just like the rest of you here. We've completed the—

**Taako:** Hey—

**Magnus:** Wait, I have a question—

**Taako:** Hey.

**Merle:** Wait a minute. I think Taako has a question.

**Taako:** We'll take `em one at a time. Why don't my superpowers work?

**Olsen:** There's an anti-magic field here in the court, of course.

**Taako:** Oh, I see.

**Olsen:** We couldn't have somebody you know, blasting a hole in the side of the chamber. Or you know, taking a shot at a prosecutor or anything like that.

**Taako:** Fine, just curious.

**Magnus:** So, the statues here, the stone buddies, they like, know truth and stuff. So, here's my question for you. When you find our ship, are you going to fix it and let us take it? Or else, everything is pretty fucked. And I think, if you check your stone brains, you'll know that when I say everything will be fucked if we don't do that, you know that is the case.

**Griffin:** The four statues above you remain motionless and they don't respond to that. But Prosecutor Olsen addresses you and says:



**Olsen:** You're Magnus, right?

**Magnus:** Yeah.

**Olsen:** If you're found innocent in the proper trial of the charges set against you, of course, you'll be free to go. And we will make sure you are repaid for the damages done to your vessel. So, don't worry about that, as long as you all are telling the truth.

**Merle:** Is there an appellate process?

**Magnus:** Good question.

**Merle:** Because if this takes too long... [chuckles] The decision's kind of gonna be taken out of your hands.

**Olsen:** There's no appealing the voice of the justices, their providence is infallible. I don't understand—

**Griffin:** And as he's talking, those four humanoid statues above you, they move like a lot now, with surprising quickness. You see them sort of lean in close to each other, forming almost like a pyramid overhead. And you hear them whispering in some sort of language that you can't understand.

And they lean back to their original positions, and they begin delivering judgment. I want all of you to roll two D6. Magnus, for your answers, but also your initial trying to bluff about Lucretia, you ended up with a plus one. Merle, for your answers you ended up with a plus 1. And Taako, mostly for that really good answer that you gave, you got a plus 2.

**Justin:** Hell yeah.

**Griffin:** So, roll that and add those bonuses.

[sound of dice thrown]

**Justin:** 10.

**Clint:** 9... I got a plus 1?

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Clint:** 10.

**Travis:** Well, I got a rock. 3 total.

**Griffin:** Okay. A voice overhead says:

**Justice 4:** Merle Highchurch, Taako, Barry Bluejeans. Our providence has witnessed your past deeds and found you worthy.

**Griffin:** All three of you, take plus two experience points.

**Clint:** Yay!

**Justin:** Woo-hoo!

**Griffin:** Not Barry. Sorry, Travis. You don't get any experience points.

**Clint:** Ooh...

**Griffin:** Another voice says:

**Justice 1:** Davenport, Lup and Magnus Burnside's. Our providence has witnessed your past deeds and found you wanting.

**Magnus:** This is bullshit.

**Merle:** Atta boy!

**Travis:** Griffin, I would like to roll— I would like to roll a body check to try to break my bonds. My binding, or whatever it is.

**Griffin:** Okay. Yeah, it's just like a... it's like a sort of cable that is wrapped around you. As you say that—

**Travis:** 11.

**Griffin:** Yeah, okay. As you say that, Prosecutor Olsen says:

**Olsen:** The defense will restrain itself before—

**Griffin:** And you snap your bonds.

**Travis:** And I charge him.

**Griffin:** You take a step. And freeze. And I don't just mean like you stop moving. You feel something seize up within you, as the dust that you breathed in as you've been in this chamber instantly calcifies and spreads throughout your body in the blink of an eye. And you are gone. And the rest of you look over and you just see a Magnus Burnside's statue made of the same white limestone as the walls surrounding you. Just frozen in place.

**Travis:** Well, see you all next cycle! [sings silly tune]

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Prosecutor Olsen says:

**Olsen:** Please... This—

**Taako:** You know, I know I should be mad. But I think he would be so flattered to see a statue of himself, honestly.

**Merle:** Oh, he'd love it!

**Taako:** I'm only sorry he can't be here to witness this.

**Merle:** Ah...

**Magnus:** [mumbles] Oil can!

**Merle:** Oh? He wants pigeons to poop on him.

**Griffin:** Prosecutor Olsen says:

**Olsen:** That was unfortunate and completely unnecessary. This is just a preliminary hearing. Please, restrain yourselves until we can have the full trial. Now—

**Griffin:** You hear a voice above you say:

**Justice 3:** The rest of your lives continue. As does our judgment.

**Griffin:** And Prosecutor Olsen says:

**Olsen:** The justices have ruled on the defendants' past character and found cause in their past deeds. Before adjourning, if the justices wish to audit the defendants' deeds to come, please do so now.

**Griffin:** And the sky changes again. And it grows... dark. It's not just this pale grey anymore, it is like night has suddenly descended. And the few sort of wispy clouds in the sky come together to form this wild spiral shape, immediately overhead.

And those four stone statues, they lean way down now. And they bring their stone-wrought, motionless faces into view. And they start reciting off a list of accusations, in just this cacophonous chorus. Without pauses for you to respond. You hear these voices overhead say,

"They willingly tear out their souls. They shatter the very will of god. Who are they to take the fate of the world in their hands? They'll burn the world down around them. We must find the seventh harbinger. There will be a necessary betrayal."

And the statues start moving, and they're just lowering their faces more and more towards you. And they're just staring intently down at the six of you on this dais. And the voices continue and say,

"They abandon their family. They run away from the town they kill. They run away from the town they let die. They kill so many goblins, such brutality, for what? They are a moment too late. The town will be engulfed. They killed him in the street, threw his body off a cliff, torn apart by dogs.

They take time from their rescue to steal from the bank. They assault the guardian of clay. They know they'll forget. So much cruelty towards a child who loves them. He took the guards with them, left them for the monsters. A terrible choice, it is not theirs to make. It is nobody's to make."

And you don't understand. Like, it's hard enough to pick out these individual voices. But the charges that you do hear, they don't make any sense. These are not things that you have ever done. And one of the voices cuts off the chorus and says, "Enough."

And another voice says, "Your path leads to indescribable destruction. Much of it will come at your own hands." And another one says, "You will face choices with terrible outcomes, choices no one should be allowed to make." And another voice says, "Your path leads to the end of our providence. We don't know why."

And one last voice says, "Your path is your own. But our providence has touched your futures. The six of you will fall short of glory. So it is known and so it has always been known. Our judgment is decided." And Prosecutor Olsen says:

**Olsen:** Wait, hold on! This is just a preliminary hearing?

**Griffin:** And all of you feel it now. Just for a moment, something... something hard just emerges from within you and you are instantly frozen. Your shapes frozen atop the dais, just lifeless, carved in stone. And there's darkness for a while.

And then, you wake up a year later. And you're on the Starblaster again and it looks... it looks kind of rough. Some of the... Those metal panels that one of you— I forget who— recovered from the robot cycle, they've been sort of bolted on to just a big hole in the side of the hull of the ship.

And there's a few other components too that are... have been replaced. And you're back on the deck and you're in your recorded state. And when you come to, you kind of look around at each other. And as you get your bearings, you see Lucretia just slump down. Her back up against the bridge, her head is in her hands and her breathing is labored. And you hear her muttering to herself saying:

**Lucretia:** I made it! I made it... They tracked me down and I got away on the ship. But they kept following. For a year I ran and I hid. And I had to fight, and I... I had to repair the ship in secret. I had to learn how to repair the ship. I was the only one. If I died too... I don't even know how to fly the ship. I fucking made it!

**Griffin:** And over the next few days, she tells you about this year that she had. Her constant pursuit by the officers of this court. The marauders in these outlying villages that tried to take the ship away from her. Of all these forces that constantly threatened to end her and permanently end your escape from the hunger for good.

And you've all had difficulties on this journey, but you've never been alone before, not like this. You never knew that weight. And Lucretia lived with it, along with all the other challenges that this world threw at her, every day, for a year.

And she was different after that. In a way that made the rest of you proud. She never volunteered to stay back with the ship again. She spent less time chronicling your journey and more time participating in it. She became fierce and confident, and decisive. She wouldn't go on to found the Bureau of Balance for decades still. But this, this horrible, lonely year, this is when Lucretia became Madam Director.

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

**Griffin:** Got a Jumbotron message here and it's for Marty, Sean and Tim. And it's from Ally— or perhaps Ali? Who says, "Guys, we made it! I bullied

you all into listening to The Adventure Zone. And now, it's something I cherish sharing with you beautiful boys. I love you.

Tim and Sean, I love you like fantasy brothers. And Marty, I love you big time. Like with smooching and stuff. I'm so glad I have you all. Double peace signs. Ally." Oh, you got that big time love? You got that big time love? Celebrate it, Cherish it. You gotta celebrate the big-time love.

[ad break]

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** I would like to establish something before we start on the next cycle, before anybody tweets at me. As soon as Magnus woke up on the ship, the first thing he did was check on Fisher. Like, Magnus is taking the responsibility of caring for this voidfish so seriously.

**Griffin:** Yeah, sure, sure.

**Travis:** I can't stress enough how much he cares about this dang fish.

**Griffin:** There was a crack in the side of the tank.

**Travis:** [gasps]

**Griffin:** That Lucretia managed to seal up.

**Travis:** Oh...

**Griffin:** She went down sort of with the ship and sort of repaired it. Trying to not get caught. And some of the water got out, but Fisher's fine.

**Travis:** Fisher doesn't need water to survive, that's been established—

**Griffin:** Have you canonically— Did you— Is this canonical? That you named the fish Fisher, is this like a...

**Travis:** Correct.

**Griffin:** All right.

**Travis:** I've been thinking about it for two weeks.

**Justin:** And that's what you came up with?

**Travis:** And the best I came up with was Fisher.

**Griffin:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** Well, I figured I already had another fish named Steven. And dad already blew my joke that my two fish are named Fisher and Steven.

**Justin:** Ah...

**Clint:** Sorry, I can't help it.

**Travis:** No, that's all right, old man. Just take every bit of joy I have.

**Griffin:** Doing a quick Fisher Stevens search... Okay. American actor, director, producer and writer. Okay! And now— All right. Do y'all wanna do the next cycle?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Clint:** Sure!

**Griffin:** We're so close to the end. Because this is cycle 82!

**Clint:** Whoow!

**Griffin:** So, I mean... It's been a while since that... since the last cycle that we just heard. And I mean, things are still... things are still really difficult for the seven of you. Though you're all getting stronger and smarter, and more capable, it just feels— there's this feeling like the Hunger is closing in around you.



And so, you're all just much more cautious now. Especially after this cycle that Lucretia had to solo. But it's still tough. The certainty that you once had that you could just always escape this thing, it's not there anymore. And you've had a few bad years in a row. And it's just wearing you down. You're all so tired.

**Travis:** Can I also just add, since we're moving through the cycles really quickly, just as a little character fill-in?

**Griffin:** Yes, please?

**Travis:** I also wanna say that, over this time, as he has really embraced the responsibility for Fisher, I would say that Magnus is a lot less cavalier about like sacrificing himself and throwing away his extra lives, knowing he'll wake back up.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Because he then is not there to help ensure that we are able to continue and that Fisher is protected. And I don't think anybody's quite certain, if Fisher were to die, if he would regen when the ship did. But I think everyone is pretty certain that wouldn't happen.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Travis:** So, I think Magnus is... This is like his budding protection instinct—

**Griffin:** Sure.

**Travis:** ... Really developing, protecting Fisher.

**Clint:** I'd like to state that after cycle two, Merle got life insurance from Farmers Insurance.

**Griffin:** [chuckles] He's a trillionaire!

**Clint:** And is now a trillionaire.

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Clint:** A trillionaire.

**Travis:** Man, good luck claiming that, dude. I can't get 'em to pay for my baby being born.

**Griffin:** So...

**Travis:** Not Farmers, I'm sure Farmers is good.

**Griffin:** Farmers is great, they got J.K. Simmons. So... This 82<sup>nd</sup> cycle, when you enter this world, before you even drop down into the plane, you see something extraordinary. Every planar system that you've visited has been more or less the same from far way, right? There's 12 planes. 11 of which are arranged in orbit around the Prime Material Plane in the center. And that's where you, you know, perform your search.

This system is different, though. There's the Prime Material Plane, right in the center of the system. But it's been like... vivisected. Cutting across it at a diagonal angle is the plane of magic, which has been pulled from its orbit and thrown like a frisbee, just directly into the Prime Material Plane. And Davenport carefully lowers the ship— the Starblaster— down into the world. Sort of unsure of how this phenomenon will manifest in the world below. What you find—

**Travis:** Griffy, visually, is it like an X/Y axis kind of thing? Like, how does it—

**Griffin:** It's not like a... It's not a perfect— Like the plane of magic came in at sort of a diagonal. So, it's completely in the center of it. I'm trying to think of like a... kind of like an X-wing, I guess? Like that sort of angle.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Griffin:** This world, when you lower down into it, more than anything else, the adjective you would use to describe it is... it's quiet. There are... there are no people, whatsoever. There are no animals. The waves in the oceans have

stopped. There's no wind. The sun is still in the sky, just a few minutes after sunrise.

And there are cities and signs of civilization, they're mostly built along the coast of this motionless sea, with just nobody in them. And to the west, the western horizon is this purple shimmering field that stretches up and up, and up and up as far as the eye can see.

And that's just where the plane of magic just cuts into this world. And Davenport gives it a wide berth when he comes down, 'cause there's just waves of energy coming off of the intersection of these planes that's way too dangerous to approach. But it's always there, just taking up half of the horizon.

And you find books in this world and journals and learn that, in its heyday, more or less everyone in this plane had some sort of magical capability. And they studied it insistently and mastered new spells, and were insatiable in their growth.

And it was that sort of hubris that led them to pull the plane of magic right out of the sky, which resulted in their ultimate destruction. And in this world, you find the Light of Creation without much trouble, like a few days after it lands. And so, you're left with a year in this quiet world where just countless arcane secrets wait to be discovered. What do you do?

Taako, this is going to be a very Taako-centric year. Sort of— So— But I have like a specific, sort of shorter thing for you. So I wanna hold off on you until last. This is sort of your featured cycle, if that's fine with you?

**Justin:** Okay, great.

**Griffin:** But Merle and Magnus, what you got?

**Travis:** You know, Griffin, I'm just gonna spend this time hanging with Fisher. Going on a sojourn. Doesn't sound like there's much in the way of like, threat. So, I'm just gonna take my fish buddy on like a camping trip.

**Griffin:** Cool. You take your— You take Fisher to a camping trip. And it's sort of like, you take it to this clearing in the woods and it seems uncomfortable. Like, it doesn't really wanna chill here. And it sort of drifts away, looking for a better spot.

And so, you follow it. Fisher, by the way, is getting bigger. Not like enormous, but Fisher's almost as big as you are now, Magnus. Because again, it's been what, 30 years since you found—

**Travis:** Fisher's getting yolked.

**Griffin:** Well, not getting stronger, just getting older and bigger. The rest of you aren't aging. Like, I wanna make sure that this image is clear in your mind. Like, every time the cycle resets, you are all physically returned to how you were the day you left your home world. Every time the cycle resets, Magnus, you I think, have a cut across your eye? Or—

**Travis:** A black eye.

**Griffin:** A black eye. And Merle, you have a cut from where the bottle cut you, the night before you left.

**Clint:** Right.

**Griffin:** Those come back every single time you appear. You all are not getting older when the cycles reset. But—

**Travis:** We're just getting better.

**Griffin:** ... Fisher is. So anyway, you're following Fisher. And Fisher leads you into a library that has been like kind of overgrown. So, there's like trees poking in through the windows and there's like roots busted up through the black and white tile floor. And this is where it wants to set down to camp out. And... Is it just you two on this camping excursion?

**Travis:** I mean, listen. I'll say I opened up the invitation, if anybody else wanted to go. This is not— I don't need a solo adventure with me and my

fish buddy. Anyone else who wanted to can come along. But I'm not gonna speak for them.

**Griffin:** All right. Let's just do this scene. You spend a couple of days here. And when you get here, it drifts through the shelves of books and it's— This library is like super... it's not very long or wide, it's just really tall. And there's just rows and rows and rows of books.

And your first night there, it brings you a book. And it's a historical tome about this world. And it kind of hands it to you and— Did you build like a... did you build like a fire, I'm imagining? For your—

**Travis:** Ah, yeah! Hell yeah, I did.

**Griffin:** It brings you this historical tome and it kind of like floats near you. And it sort of like pushes the tome into your hands and pushes it.

**Travis:** Okay. I take it.

**Griffin:** It like opens it up with its hand— with its tendrils. And like pushes it toward you.

**Magnus:** All right, Fisher. Do you want a story?

**Griffin:** It hums a little tune.

**Magnus:** Okay. But you gotta promise that you'll sit and listen. All right? I don't wanna have to stop a bunch.

**Griffin:** It folds up some of its tendrils under itself like it's sitting cross-legged, and is sitting next to you.

**Travis:** I open to the... I assume there's some kind of you know, table of contents.

**Griffin:** Okay?

**Magnus:** Which one of these do you wanna hear? Any one in particular?

**Griffin:** It just sticks its sticky tendrils against the pages and like opens it up to the first page.

**Travis:** Okay. I start reading.

**Griffin:** Okay. You read this historical tome and you learn a little bit more about this world and how sort of everybody came to possess all of these magical abilities. And it's really fascinating. I don't think— Magnus, you probably don't put in this much effort to actually read about the worlds you go to, right? Like that's— I don't think of that as being Magnus' main way of interacting with the cycles during this time.

**Travis:** Reading? No

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Travis:** [laughs] I think— I think we can pretty conclusively say, this might be the first time he's read a book in 82 years.

**Griffin:** Yeah. So, you read a chapter or two out of this book. And you learn about this world too. And then, Fisher floats upward and kind of takes the book out of your hands, and then eats it. And you see the book sort of float up into its... into its jelly cap. And you see it sort of consumed by the lights within. And the book is gone, and all of the stuff you just learned about this world is gone. And it doesn't come back. Fisher doesn't like rebroadcast it at all.

**Magnus:** Hey... Hey, Fisher? That's not cool. Now I—

**Clint:** How do you know?

**Griffin:** Yeah, Fisher's like— Fisher's really happy after it gets, basically, a meal. Like, Fisher looks pleased as punch.

**Travis:** Okay, wait. This is a good question. I can't remember how this worked before. It's been a long time.

**Griffin:** Yeah, sure?

**Travis:** Do I remember that there's a void in my memory? Like, do I remember that I had sat down to read a book, but now I can't remember what the book said? Or do I forget the existence of the book entirely?

**Griffin:** Shit, that's a good point. I don't think— Yeah, I think...

**Justin:** But he would have to remember... Like, okay, stick with me here.

**Griffin:** Yeah, yeah, yeah?

**Justin:** The existence of the materials and the experience of the thing are not the information contained within. So, I feel like he would have to remember. Otherwise—

**Griffin:** Yeah, okay. That's true. So, you—

**Justin:** Otherwise people will be like, "Hey, Johann. Did you do that thing?"

**Griffin:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Justin:** And he would've been like, "I don't fuck'n know what you're talking about."

**Griffin:** He could just— he could also lie and just be like, "Yeah, I did it." Okay, yeah. So, yeah. You remember that you read something to him, right? You remember the action that you took. You do not remember a single word that was on the page. It destroyed the information, it did not destroy the object, the book, from your mind.

**Travis:** Got it.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Taako like, walks by the door. And you just hear him shout:

**Taako:** Give him the complete works of Nathaniel Hawthorne next!

**Griffin:** [chuckles] You fuckin' hate that guy.

**Justin:** Fuck that guy.

**Clint:** What do you have against Nathaniel Hawthorne?

**Justin:** He is the worst writer. And everybody has to read him, and it makes kids hate reading.

**Clint:** Last of the Mohicans?

**Justin:** That's not him. That's James Fenimore Cooper.

**Griffin:** Booyah!

**Travis:** Oh!

**Griffin:** Fuck...

**Clint:** Did he write Helter Skelter?

**Griffin:** [sings] Take him to school!

**Justin:** Y'all, I know the name of two authors from that time period.

**Griffin:** And he just did it. [laughs]

**Justin:** And he did the one pull. That's gonna sound so fuckin' smart. 'Cause he's the other one I really hate. By the way, James Fenimore Cooper can kiss my ass, too.

**Travis:** Oh. Fuck, man. Deer... Is it Deer Hunter? Deer— Whatever it is, it's fuck'n terrible.

**Justin:** Deer Slayer.

**Clint:** Did he write Johnny Tremain?



**Griffin:** I think it was Deer Blaster.

**Clint:** You had to read that one too, and you hated it.

**Justin:** Last of the Mohicans, too, is him.

**Clint:** Yeah.

**Travis:** So boring. Okay. So, I would say that like, we just chill out. And I just systematically read through these books. Now I will say, if I find anything in these books that's like, 'wait, this is super useful,' I'm not gonna feed it to him.

**Griffin:** I don't think you do. I think the scene here is you just feed the voidfish these books. And like, you know that this is a possibility, right? This goes one of two ways. You feed him works and either Fisher like, rebroadcasts it to everybody in this reality, or doesn't. And Fisher just doesn't. You don't see...

You don't see Fisher like, project that information out ever again. It just destroys it. But it's so happy when you feed it. And so, you— When you spend this year with him and you spend this time with Fisher and feed him books, it doesn't come back. It's just gone. I wanna move on—

**Travis:** I don't find anything useful in this whole library. So, let that be a lesson to you, kids. You'll never find anything useful reading books.

**Griffin:** No, but roll... What's the rule for just scenes where you just spend time? I think it's just like, I base it on how much I like the scene, right? And I really liked that scene. So, take plus two bond.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Griffin:** Merle... Let me do, actually, somebody else.

**Travis:** [chuckles] Suck it.

**Clint:** There isn't anybody else!

**Griffin:** There is, there's a lot of folks. So... Davenport spends his time mastering illusion magic. And his argument for that is pretty straightforward. Pretty much everybody else here has like a magical specialty. And he wants one too, he wants to make himself useful. Maybe he can use it to deceive the Hunger in some way.

And by the end of the year his illusion magic, it is amazing. His creations are remarkably intricate. On one occasion, sort of close to the end of the year, he summons this small house. He summons the building itself and the furniture within, and the food in the cabinets. And it's all fake, but the detail of what he conjures is astonishing.

**Travis:** Oh, shit. Could I have been learning magic instead of feeding books to my buddy?

**Griffin:** Your scene was really good though.

**Travis:** Oh, man...

**Griffin:** Merle? Merle, you got something?

**Travis:** I could've become a wizard!

**Clint:** Merle realizes that he has led a fascinating life. And that you know, someday—

**Griffin:** [chuckles] Just now? Just now, like, "Woah!"

**Justin:** "You know what?"

**Clint:** Yeah. Well, I've been to— Hey, man. I've been living it, okay? I've been living my life.

**Justin:** He asked a lot of people for their life stories and then he was like, "Hey, that was boring. By comparison..."

**Clint:** There are a lot of people who might pay big bucks for a boring life story. So, Merle decides to use this year to write his memoirs of the... You don't call 'em autobiographies anymore.

**Justin:** Really?

**Griffin:** You call 'em—

**Clint:** So, they're memoirs.

**Justin:** Memoirs.

**Griffin:** Memoirs?

**Justin:** Memoirs?

**Griffin:** M-E-M-W-A.

**Justin:** Memwas!

**Travis:** There's actually a difference between a memoir and an autobiography. But that's okay.

**Justin:** Wait, is that true?

**Travis:** Yeah, an autobiography encaptures— encapsulates an entire life. A memoir is about specific events or a specific time, without starting at the beginning and going to the end.

**Griffin:** Woah?

**Clint:** How can an autobiography encapsulate your entire life if you die?

**Justin:** Yeah?

**Griffin:** [laughs] That's it. [in silly old man voice] "And then, I was super old. And..."

**Justin:** "Save! Quick save! Quick save!"

**Griffin:** "Quick save! Quick save! Save, save, save!" Beep. Do you—

**Clint:** And the one thing I do is keep it away from that damn fish.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Travis:** You can try!

**Griffin:** Do you seek out Lucretia's help in this? With her being sort of the—

**Clint:** Yeah, she can draw like the little... What are those, you know, where it says, "Turn to page 56." And she does those cute little illustrations.

**Griffin:** Are you talking about a choose your own adventure—

**Justin:** A choose your own adventure book? [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Are you pulling a Neil Patrick Harris here?

**Clint:** No, I was— I was actually thinking of Winnie the Pooh. But...

**Justin:** Oh, sure.

**Griffin:** Okay. So, I think Lucretia sees you writing a lot this cycle. And pretty early on in the year, she comes to you and asks if she could help you out and do like some copy editing and illustration work if you want. And she finds it—

**Clint:** Yeah!

**Griffin:** ... I don't know, cute, that you are also you know, writing everything down.

**Clint:** Yeah—

**Griffin:** She's also interested in your past, right? Like she—

**Clint:** Yeah. Well, not only that, but she's also gotten so busy being an administrator and taking on this new role—

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Clint:** ... that I don't feel like she's done a sufficient amount of time you know, dedicated to writing down Merle's adventures.

**Griffin:** Okay. So, you're trying to relieve some of the weight of that job. Of chronicler.

**Clint:** And build my brand.

**Griffin:** Sure.

**Clint:** I learned from Taako to build my brand.

**Griffin:** You... Roll plus mind. And I'll give you— take plus one additional, since Lucretia's helping you out with this.

**Clint:** Okay.

[sound of dice thrown]

**Clint:** Ooh! 10, plus 1, plus 1. So, a 12.

**Griffin:** Wow, fuck. You do good—

**Travis:** This book is super good.

**Griffin:** It's really good. Like, I think Lucretia helps you out with it. And at first, she thinks it's just quaint that you're like writing down your story. But you're actually able to conjure up these images of your childhood with profound sort of clarity. And I think you probably also spend some time in the libraries in this world, just like reading the prose of this world. And so, you actually become a great author as well.

And so, you write your journey down. And there's a day— Lucretia's been helping you out this whole time and has provided a few illustrations. But when you first turn in the first like final manuscript to her, she's like... she is like, shook by it. And she says:

**Lucretia:** Merle, I had no idea. I had no idea you could write like this. This is beautiful.

**Merle:** Well... Thanks. It really focuses in on my teenage years too. 'Cause I went through a lot of shit.

**Lucretia:** Yeah, you went... you went buck wild there.

**Griffin:** So, I'll leave it to you. Do you think this is a plus asset, because you have this book now? Or plus bond, because you spent time with Lucretia? I'll let you choose sort of the reward for this.

**Clint:** I really need assets.

**Griffin:** Yeah, okay.

**Clint:** I really need assets.

**Griffin:** Take... I know it's weird 'cause there's only one book, but we'll say it's maybe multiple volumes. That roll was so fucking good and this idea is so good—

**Clint:** It's actually a three-book— It's a three-book series.

**Griffin:** Well, I'm still just gonna give you just plus two asset.

**Clint:** Oh... See, the first volume was little Merle.

**Griffin:** Sure.

**Clint:** Second volume was extreme teen Merle.

**Griffin:** Right.

**Clint:** And the third one is—

**Griffin:** Oh, shit, I just got that. Okay.

**Clint:** Run through the cycles.

**Griffin:** Lucretia, during this time, when she's like helping you out, she asks you to help her. She wants to develop a new spell. And she's been kind of reclusive about it. And she comes to you and asks for your help, because the spell she wants to make is like a protection spell. And she knows that like with your sort of divine power, you know some of that stuff. So, she asks you to teach her like... What are some spells? There's like a shield spell, right? In there?

**Clint:** Yeah... There's the shield spell...

**Travis:** Shield of faith.

**Clint:** Yeah, yeah. And then, there's the making people feel better spell...

**Griffin:** Good, good, good. Yeah, she wants you to show her shield of faith.

**Clint:** I got that, yeah.

**Griffin:** You do. It creates a shimmering magical field around the touched creature that averts attacks. She wants to learn that spell really bad, but she wants to like, master it, and then improve it and make something new. And so, you work with her on Shield of Faith. You teach her Shield of Faith.

And she practices it constantly. And you see her, you... You know, you'll step outside of the ship and see her outside, just practicing this spell. But it starts to change. It's not just sort of this shimmering field that just barely wraps around her form, it starts to turn into this big, like, semi-opaque bubble.

And one day, I think close to the end of the year, she comes to you and asks you to like hit her with the biggest shot, the biggest like magic spell you've got. And so, you throw a lance of faith at her. And she throws up this shield,

this big, almost completely opaque bubble, that just completely deflects the attack. And when the bubble comes down, she looks so pleased. And she says:

**Lucretia:** I'm gonna save all of us, Merle. We're done dying.

**Griffin:** During this year, Barry spends time studying the Light of Creation. 'Cause it's rare that you all have this much time with it. And one night, a few months in, he gathers everyone together and reveals this discovery he's made.

Barry has discovered how the Hunger is finding you every year. The Light, this force that it gives off, where it is desirable and it needs to be desired. That sort of... It's tough to put a name to that force. But it is just radiating—

**Travis:** Craveability.

**Griffin:** Craveability?

**Travis:** Mm-hm.

**Griffin:** [chuckles] Craveability is radiating off this thing. And like, Barry sort of locks into the wavelength of it. And this like, this radiation—

**Travis:** The crave wave.

**Griffin:** The crave wave, it's like a beacon. It is a breadcrumb trail that the Hunger just knows how to follow. And he explains he's tried everything to figure out how to block it, but he can't seem to interrupt the signal. But he's still trying to figure it out. And that's about as far as he gets this year.

Taako, I wanna... The thing I have for you is kind of shorter. And so like, if you can give me just a really short, like what you want to spend this year doing. Some sort of proficiency you want to study? Some sort of magic school or a specific spell? Or like some way of improvement that we can talk about in like really broad terms, really quickly and then get to the scene I have for you?



**Justin:** This year, Taako is gonna work on his voices. Like, impersonations and different voices. He's gonna try to find somebody who can help him work on that. Because he's got spells that can make him look like different people, but not necessarily sound like different people. So, he wants to work on his voiceover reel, pretty much.

**Griffin:** You find like a bardic college, then, here.

**Justin:** Okay, yes.

**Griffin:** And there's a lot of stuff here of like, you know, songs of inspiration and performing all of these instruments. But there's also like an actor's guild in this bardic college. And you study books written by the masters of voice acting. Roll plus mind.

**Justin:** Oh, damn! I rolled a... 14. [laughs]

**Griffin:** Jesus Christ! Did you roll double 6s?

**Justin:** Double 6s, plus 2.

**Griffin:** Wow, okay. Okay, take plus two experience.

**Justin:** Nice.

**Griffin:** So, Taako, one morning, about a month out from the end of the year, Lup knocks on the door to quarters, which represents a level of formality and boundary respecting that I think has probably long since passed between the two of you. And she comes and sits next to you and pours you a cup of tea and she says:

**Lup:** So, I've a got weird request... And it's gonna sound like I'm goofing ass. But it's imperative that you take it seriously.

**Taako:** Okay? Hit me.

**Lup:** I don't know how to phrase this... I need you to help me have a really, really good day. The best day ever, if you can swing it. And not today. Too

much of the day has passed already and this is too important to rush. I need you to work hard on this, Taako, and take it seriously. And just really, really knock me out. Does that make sense?

**Taako:** Can I ask why?

**Griffin:** Roll plus heart.

[sound of dice thrown]

**Clint:** Jeez.

**Justin:** Dunk, a 10.

**Griffin:** Okay. That's a complete success. She just lays it all out. She says:

**Lup:** Don't... Don't freak out. Barry and I are researching a type of magic and it's gonna make us stronger, and ultimately, safer. It's gonna give us a safety net so we don't have cycles anymore where if all of us die, it's all over. But it's really risky. And this great day, Taako, that you can give me, it's gonna help limit that risk.

**Taako:** Okay.

**Griffin:** So, it doesn't have to be today. You have like a month to plan it. But Lup has asked you just to like, help her have the best day of her life. And stresses that it's really important. And she doesn't check up again on it, after this encounter. She kind of pretends like this conversation just didn't happen.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Griffin:** What does Taako do for Lup?

**Justin:** Okay. Well, we wake up— I wake her up, I go in there. And of course, I've got the greatest spread possible. Like, we've got bacon, cooked to perfection, natch. Scrambled eggs, cooked the only way scrambled eggs

should be cooked, which is in the pan, with butter only. Don't stir 'em beforehand, you lunatics.

And French toast? You got it. Pancakes? Why not. Double up the carbs. What's that on the corner of the tray? You guessed it. It's a mimosa. Delicious. Perfect. All of it is the highest levels of refinement and perfectly cooked. Always, of course, natch.

**Griffin:** She slams it. And like after— It takes her a while into the dish where she says:

**Lup:** Oh, shit. Is it today?

**Taako:** It's today.

**Griffin:** She like snarfs it all down and she's like:

**Lup:** I don't know what else you have planned. But you gave me two types of carbs there, son. I'm about to take me a big old nap.

**Taako:** Hell yeah, you guessed the next one. Go back to sleep, I'll check you at noon.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** [chuckles] She crashes and goes back to sleep until about like— actually, about 1:30. She gets up and she is finally dressed, gets cleaned up and comes to your quarters. And says:

**Lup:** That was... Taako, we've been alive for like over 100 years now. That was one of the dankest naps I've ever taken in my life. You're on your way. What's next?

**Taako:** We're going to go to the park.

**Griffin:** Tell me about this park.

**Justin:** It's... huge.

**Griffin:** Is it like park-park, or an amusement park? Or...

**Justin:** No, it's like a park-park.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Justin:** It's huge and sprawling. And there are people who are enjoying the day out there—

**Griffin:** There's nobody alive on this planet but the seven of you.

**Justin:** Well, we're the people out there, enjoying the day.

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Clint:** Not being bothered by other people.

**Justin:** Yeah. Oh, shit. Man, I forgot about the no people alive on the planet...

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Justin:** That's really hard, other than that.

**Travis:** Well, except for the seven of us.

**Justin:** Okay. We go to the park and we find... We see, up in a tree, Davenport is birdwatching.

**Griffin:** There's—[chuckles]

**Clint:** There's no birds.

**Griffin:** There's no animals. There's no birds. [laughs]

**Justin:** Well, he's just finding that out. He's very disappointed.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Travis:** [laughs] It's not going well.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Travis:** "Where's all the ding-dang birds?!"

**Justin:** No, he's up there reading a book like a nerd. It's like his secret getaway.

**Griffin:** Okay?

**Justin:** Okay.

**Taako:** Okay. So, here's the next best part. I found out that he does this like once a day, right here in this tree. And he has no idea I know. And here, I fashioned this for you.

**Justin:** And I had her a squirt gun.

**Griffin:** Okay?

**Taako:** Just like blaze him. 'Cause this is gonna be hysterical.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** She kind of... She takes the super soaker from you and just kind of drops her arms, and slumps her shoulders and says:

**Lup:** Taako, that is the captain of the Institute of Planar Research and Exploration. That is the captain of our mission. Why do you think I'd wanna— blam!

**Griffin:** And just like turns and shoots right at Davenport, up in this tree, reading a book. And as the like big, heavy stream of water shoots and hits Davenport, it passes right through him. And the tree and the Davenport just

disappear in a puff of smoke. And he's behind you and he jumps up on your back, Taako. And he whispers:

**Davenport:** Illusions!

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** And hops down. And he pulls out a water gun and actually blasts the two of you. And—

**Justin:** We have a fun squirt gun fight, at that point.

**Griffin:** Okay. It's like late afternoon now, after this fun squirt fight in the park. And Lup is like wringing out her hair. And she says:

**Lup:** Taako, this has been pretty great. Was there anything else?

**Taako:** Yeah, you know it. Of course! Okay, for this next one— and I'm really excited about it— But make sure you bring your wand, okay? And here, I'm gonna have to blindfold you.

**Griffin:** She says:

**Lup:** Okay... Let's see where this goes...

**Justin:** And I lead her— It's not that far. And I reveal— I pull off her mask to reveal... this planet's only DMV. There's one DMV on the entire planet.

**Taako:** Okay—

**Griffin:** Then it's huge, right? It's huge and there's kiosks everywhere—

**Justin:** It's massive. It's a massive DMV. And here's the thing. It's like glass— all kinds of glass—

**Griffin:** Yeah?

**Justin:** There's like really nice chandeliers in there—

**Travis:** And a lot of 'hang in there, kitten' posters. [chuckles]

**Justin:** Yeah, they had a vast collection of Fabergé eggs, that are just like lying around. And I say:

**Taako:** Okay, here you go. Do you wanna use my wand too? Or... Okay, just your wand. That's fine. Okay, go ahead. And... level it!

**Griffin:** She like— You say like, "L—" And she's already— She pulls out a wand and starts just like... She lights up the chandeliers first and just cascades of crystals come down. And she takes a pause after she like, blows up all the chandeliers in this room. She looks like tearful as she turns to you and says:

**Lup:** This is the best gift you've ever given me. Can I have your other wand?

**Taako:** Sure, yeah. Go nuts.

**Griffin:** She has two wands now. And she just like runs down the center of this like, huge chamber, just like blasting kiosks to the left and right. She does like a fuck'n face off knee slide and like spins 180 degrees. Just like fanning out bolts of magic missiles and just sending these big glass sheets just crashing to the floor. And then she says:

**Lup:** Hey, we're pretty far from where the ship is parked, right?

**Taako:** Yeah, we actually have to get back.

**Griffin:** She says like:

**Lup:** But if I cause like a big... fire...

**Taako:** Oh, yeah! Go hog wild.

**Lup:** Oh, good.

**Taako:** We're fine.

**Griffin:** And then just like fireballs just stream— a tornado of flame shoots out of one of her wands and just like bakes this room. And you're just like... You look at her, you look at your sister, as just flame is engulfing the beams that are holding this room up, that holding this room together, and crackling through the walls. And she says:

**Lup:** We should go.

**Taako:** Yeah, we should go. This might spread.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Taako:** Okay. So, the timer went off. We have to hurry back to the ship.

**Griffin:** Yeah, it's night. Do you have any other stuff?

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Taako:** Okay. So, here's the last thing.

**Justin:** And she probably, as soon as we get on the ship, probably... smells it. I have prepared for her our aunt's turkey recipe, that takes so long to do properly. Because there's brining and then there's a long roast. She only made it on Lup's birthday. That's the only time that she would actually put the time into making it. And so, I have prepared that recipe.

**Taako:** Now let me say in advance, the turkey is conjured. So, it may not taste exactly right. But I—

**Griffin:** Did you have a— If you've been hanging out with her all day, did you have like a sous-chef helping you out?

**Justin:** Well, it's not high intensity. But I did enlist... Barry's help.



**Griffin:** Okay.

**Justin:** Just in switching it over. Even he couldn't fuck it up. It's pretty much foolproof. Once you do that seasoning and what have you, and put the bacon grease under the skin, there's not a lot of skill required.

**Griffin:** Okay. Then when you come back into the chamber where you've been cooking this, you see Barry and he's juicing it. He's juicing this turkey, still basting it. And...

**Justin:** I smack it out of his hand. Like:

**Taako:** I did not tell you to baste fucking anything. Thank you for your help, I really appreciate it.

**Griffin:** He nods and smiles. And like, he knows what's up. Like, he knows... He knows what you're doing today. And he goes and says:

**Barry:** I'll... I'll get out of your hair. Have a good rest of your night.

**Griffin:** And he gives Lup a little kiss and takes off the apron he was wearing, and hangs it up, and leaves the room. And the two of you have this very emotional dinner. And... Any side dishes?

**Justin:** I was gonna make side dishes, but I thought that I would just take up more room for the turkey. And since it's conjured, it's not gonna be around forever. So, we kind of need to act fast. It won't keep.

**Griffin:** Sure. She finishes the dish and put her cutlery down. And takes the napkin out of her lap and places it on the plate. And looks you in the eye and says:

**Lup:** You did good, Taako. I... Here, in a couple of days, Barry and I are gonna do something. And I want you to be there for it. We're... Don't freak out, promise me.

**Taako:** Okay?

**Lup:** We're gonna become liches, Taako. And that sounds... That sounds way scarier than it actually is. But... We're going to take our living essence, our... souls. And combine it with our magical essence. And we're gonna become something... new. Something... something powerful. And... we'll still be Barry and Lup. I'll still inhabit my body. Unless I'm killed, and then things are going to get a little spooky.

And... it should stick. If we do this, the next cycle, we're still liches. The risk is, it's hard to combine your soul with raw power and keep your mind right. You need something keeping your feet on the ground. An emotional anchor. And when I go all ghosty, I need to have things to remember to hold on to who I am. Today is... it's gonna be one of those memories.

**Griffin:** She pauses and she says:

**Lup:** Barry already gave me a day. And... I love him, Taako, with all of my heart. But you... I needed a day from you, because you are my heart. You know that, right?

**Taako:** Yeah.

**Lup:** You're why I got here and I'm why you got here, and that's something that can't be broken or lost, or taken away. It's always going to be so important.

**Taako:** Well, let me just say, bearing all that, I'm really happy I saved one last surprise. This very large bottle of Grey Goose.

**Clint:** [chuckles]

**Taako:** Now don't— I know, it wasn't too much. I conjured it, again. But it should still get the job done.

**Justin:** And Taako's acting very jovial like that. But if she were to look under the table, she would see that his legs are visibly trembling in absolute panic.

**Griffin:** He's afraid of this change?

**Justin:** Absolutely.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Justin:** 100%. Well, he's terrified, for Lup.

**Griffin:** You continue the rest of your night and just like down this Goose. And... cheers to your aunt, for the use of her recipe, in her memory.

**Justin:** Who, by the way, I tried to google. And there is a fan made wiki page. And she is listed under "Taako's aunt who taught him how to cook."

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Justin:** Like, I'm assuming her tombstone doesn't say that?

**Griffin:** No.

**Justin:** [chuckles] But like, that's... that's apparently what she is named.

**Griffin:** A few days later, the ceremony is short and it's—Well, it's unceremonious. You're on top of a hill, the three of you. And Barry and Lup work together to produce the proper runes on the ground. They find this temporary vessel. It's a pillar of carved whalebone that they excavated from a long dead necromancer's keep. And they hug for a long time, in front of this pillar. And they kiss. And Lup takes Barry's face in her hands, and she says:

**Lup:** You ready? Are you sure you're gonna be able to keep it together, once you turn?

**Griffin:** And Barry smiles and he looks back at the love of his life and he says:

**Barry:** Yeah, I got this.

**Griffin:** And seconds later, Taako, you watch as their bodies fall slowly into the grass. As two red robed specters take shape above them. And for a

moment, just a moment, they're out of control. These bolts of red electricity just peel off of them, scorching the ground below, just narrowly missing their bodies. And I imagine, in that moment, knowing what I know about your reaction to this, like... it's the scariest thing you've ever seen.

But quickly, those specters calm and they gain composure. And Barry's spectral form turns toward you, Taako, and nods. And then lowers back down into his body. And then Lup's form turns towards you, Taako, and stares for a while. And then dabs, and then lowers back down into her body.

**Justin:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** And they stand back up. And you wouldn't know that what just happened had happened, talking to them or seeing them. I'm not sure if... I'm not even sure if they tell the rest of you immediately. I think it comes out in later cycles. But they don't tell everybody. This is just—it's just kind of a special moment that happens between the three of you. So, at the end of the year, the seven of you are ready when the Hunger attacks.

You gather up the Light, you board the Starblaster and you lift off. And the Hunger's tendrils, they reach down and they slam these enormous black columns down from the sky, smashing into the ground. And this horde of shadows starts pouring out of each one, just rampaging across the countryside. And once you're a couple thousand feet off the ground, Lup looks at a nearby, you know, column of Hunger and says:

**Lup:** Let's see what this baby can do.

**Griffin:** And she winks and she steps backwards off the deck, falling out of sight. And on the ground, a red robed specter raises up from where Lup fell. And sensing her, the hordes from the nearby pillar start racing towards her. And she extends a fist and aims it at the pillar. And every inch of her is just shaking. She's channeling just this enormous amount of power, calling upon those memories to stay grounded. Leaning into her wrath.

And just as the horde is about to overtake her, she steadies her fist and extends her fingers. And from the ship you see this one black column illuminate from within and then turn bright red, as an explosion tears

through it. Starting from its base and just chaining upwards and upwards into the heavens.

And when your eyes adjust after the light from this explosion passes, you still see the Hunger overhead. And you still see dozens of tendrils all around, reaching downward. But that one column, that one tether, is gone. And when you're all reformed at the beginning of the next cycle, Lup is beaming. And she turns towards the rest of you— and she's in her body. And she turns towards the rest of you and she says:

**Lup:** Okay... Blowing it up didn't exactly work...

**Griffin:** And she grabs the railing at the edge of the deck and she looks outward and she says:

**Lup:** But we're close. We're real fucking close.

[“The Unexplained” by Mort Garson plays]

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