

The Adventure Zone: Balance —The Stolen Century: Chapter Seven

Published on June 29, 2017

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Griffin: Your years are still stressful, but tucked away inside of them are long stretches of quiet days, and this is one of them. It's night and... Taako, you and Lup just cooked the team a delicious meal, something low stress.

Travis: Oh man, I'm glad you finished that sentence.

Griffin: What did you want to finish it with?

Travis: Well I just thought you were gonna say they just cooked the team. It was horrifying.

Griffin: Oh, okay. Oh, no. No, you just cooked them a tasty meal and it was something like low stress, but it was tasty nonetheless. What did you— What did you make for them, just this sort of innocuous evening?

Justin: Stew.

Travis: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Any particular kind—

Justin: It's a good— It's a good— The good thing about stew that I've discovered over the— over the years, is that it's very flexible, right. Like you can't really mess it up, and you can have other people get the ingredients for you. And then when they bring it home it's just like, "Fuck, fine. Yes, I'll make a stew out of this, I guess. This like pile, this like handful of grass and also like, beaver skin that you've brought me, I'll just whip up a stew."

Griffin: So you made a tasty stew. And everybody loved it, except for— except for Barry. Towards the beginning of this year, the seven of you recovered the Light of Creation from an ancient drake who hoarded it away in his lair. And in the confrontation, Barry was killed. Leaving him in—

Travis: Oh, that probably is why he didn't enjoy the stew, I guess.
[chuckles]

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah, it left him a... It left him a pretty long lich shift to carry out before the next reset. And so, he's not eating much food. Death is like that for Barry and Lup now. It is, more than anything, an annoyance. And the conversation you all were having continues. And you hear a voice from Barry's red spectral figure as he says:

Barry: I mean... The Conservatories, I guess, for obvious reasons.

Griffin: And Lup says:

Lup: Oh, oh, sure. Honey, that was a... that was a good one. But man, the food in Tesseralia, though. Like, it's hard to beat that.

Griffin: And Lucretia says:

Lucretia: I mean for me, I... I liked the beach year. I feel like it's cheating. But yeah, that one was my favorite.

Magnus: You know, call me crazy, I actually like the one where I got turned to stone.

Lucretia: That's... kind of perverted, maybe, a little bit?

Magnus: Well, it was just... You know, it was just such a weird— Like, how often do you get to know and like, remember the sensation of dying by being petrified. You know what I mean?

Lucretia: Sure. Sure.

Magnus: Like, so unique!

Griffin: Barry says:

Barry: What about you, boys? Favorite year so far?

Merle: Well, I like the one where we lived with the civilization that lived in the hamster Habitrail.

Barry: Oh, yeah.

Merle: And we were running through those plastic tubes... That was awesome.

Barry: That one was weird, I liked being a hamster. Taako?

Taako: Jello Town. I mean, obviously. I mean, an entire world made of Jell-O and everyone's Jell-O. And they don't just discourage you from eating them, but they like, love it?

Travis: Wait, I didn't— I didn't know we could make it up. I want to go back and say:

Magnus: Puppy Town, where it was just all puppies.

Barry: Puppy Town?

Magnus: Yeah, Puppy Town was the best.

Griffin: Lup's like:

Lup: Puppy Town was on point. What about you Captain, you got a favorite?

Griffin: And Davenport says:

Davenport: I... I guess... Home.

Magnus: Boo!

Taako: Come on...

Griffin: Lucretia stands up and she carries her plate into the— or I guess her bowl into the kitchen and she starts scrubbing it in the sink. And you see— you see her mouth moving and just static is coming out. And she's staring intently down at the sink, not speaking to anyone. It almost looks like she's singing. But there's no words, no melody, just static. And Lup kind of looks over at her with puzzlement, and then back at the three of you. What do you do?

Magnus: What's in this stew?

Clint: [laughs]

Taako: Lucretia, are you... are you okay?

Lucretia: Yeah? I'm just doing my dishes, what's up?

Griffin: And then, she... looks back down and the static starts up again as she starts singing.

Taako: So... you're singing static right now...

Justin: I'm assuming this is something that we have not observed before?

Griffin: No, you've never seen this before. She says:

Lucretia: What are you talking about? I'm just... I'm singing... I'm singing... Oh, god, what was the name of it? From back at the Conservatory, remember? That red-headed kid, he worked on it for months, he was always bellowing it down on the quad?

Griffin: And Barry says:

Barry: Yeah, what are you guys talking about? I can hear it just fine. You're sure you can't hear it? Is this some— are y'all— Is this a gag you all are planning?

Magnus: Barry, you sing it.

Griffin: He starts singing it, too. And it's... just static.

Taako: Lup, can you hear this?

Griffin: Lup stands up from the table, she's like freaked out. She says:

Lup: What the fuck is going on? [through increasing static] Barry what are you saying? What... What the fuck is going on? Is this... Is this... Fisher? [breaks into static]

Griffin (intro): To understand this next part, I need you to imagine the apocalypse. Imagine it happens tomorrow, and that everyone you ever knew, every place you've ever been, every performer whose work you admired, every band who's ever written a song that meant something to you, all of it was gone. And that you survived.

Imagine that feeling of loss, imagine that guilt, the pressure it would put on you. How you would change beneath that pressure. Now imagine that apocalypse occurring annually, 100 times over. What would you do to stop it? What would you do to protect the ones you loved, the ones who also felt that terrible weight? That is the reality of our heroes. That is what will lead them down the path to their destinies. Further from home, away from each other, into... The Adventure Zone.

Griffin: It's the 92nd cycle and your journey has not stopped being exhausting. Your escapes are still performed with zero margin for error. The Hunger is still accumulating power at a horrible rate, but in recent years, there are glimmers of hope. Barry and Lup's studies of the Light have proven fruitful. And in the last decade, you've finally come to somewhat understand this force, this tool that some divine creator used to author all of existence. And they don't have answers on how to end your escape from The Hunger, not yet. But there's a feeling, to quote Lup, that, "You're really fucking close."

And that's the general sentiment as you enter into this 92nd cycle. The world you descend into is populous and prosperous and vibrant. There are cities of

gemstone and glass, all built on these massive floating landmasses that hover above the uninterrupted ocean below. The surface of which is constantly troubled by massive waves that lap at the bottom of these islands. And the light plummets into the vast waters, and you lead a treacherous but ultimately successful undersea recovery.

And several weeks later Lup approaches the rest of you with a discovery. One of these floating islands is home to a massive facility where immensely powerful magic items are manufactured by artificers, working with methods that she's never even heard of before. This facility, it's called The Hanging Arcaneum, could teach you what you need to know to truly harness the power of the Light to stop The Hunger for good.

And you're welcomed into the Arcaneum by the chief artificer, a half-orc named Holdsworth. Named for Holly Holdsworth on Twitter, thank you. And she hears your plight and is happy to instruct the seven of you, but explains that there's no special privileges that are gonna be handed down.

You'll have to train under the Arcaneum's instructors just like every other apprentice and study to master the principles of artificing from the ground up. You'll be provided some of your materials, but you'll have to provide most of your own for your work. And only once you've proven yourself will the Arcaneum's most powerful secrets be revealed.

So, during your tenure, your studies are grueling. But eventually you produce items that Holdsworth deems suitable evidence of your mastery of this craft. And let's figure out what those items are. So, this is the first chance to spend these scores that you have been building up over this sort of mini campaign.

You're gonna have an opportunity to do stuff with experience and bond later on. But now, we're gonna spend your assets to make some magic items. So, everybody takes plus one asset right now, which represents sort of the basic tools and materials given to you by the facility to begin your work. And with that in mind, let's start making some magic items.

Travis: Now Griffin, this isn't in the instructions you sent us, but I would like to make a lightsaber. Is that possible?

Griffin: Absolutely not.

Travis: Well...

Griffin: No, no, no—

Travis: Yes and...

Griffin: So, Taako, you— No, but, we can't do Star Wars. Taako, you've got five assets, Merle you have three, and Magnus you ended up with just one.

Travis: Material goods mean nothing to Magnus!

Griffin: Yeah, apparently not. Just a quick breakdown for how this works for the folks at home, I've given you sort of a list of things that you can make. Which is either plus one armor, weapon, or magical instrument, plus two, or plus three. Or you can make an accessory. And accessories are free, but you can only make one of them. And the idea is that you will then go down to this list of effects which I have given you about like 16 or so of, and you will sort of put those effects on these magic items and spend your assets accordingly to build a magic item that you will then take with you into the finale.

Travis: So, Griffin—

Griffin: Where we will be playing 5th edition again.

Travis: Just to clarify, like for example, Merle has three assets. Could he make like three plus one things? Or do you only get to make one?

Griffin: No, he could make three plus things, or he could spend all three assets on— you see where plus two armor, weapon, or magical instrument costs three assets? You could just make that and not put any kind of special effects on it. Or you could build a plus armor, weapon, or magical instrument, which is only one asset. And then spend two assets to put two effects on it.

Travis: Got it.

Justin: So, you could— So, all right, and so the effect is... The accessory is something that attaches to the armor—

Griffin: An effect, but it doesn't have— The accessory is just like a blank canvas that you can put one effect on. I basically added that in because I kind of wanted Magnus to be able to make something that has an effect on it, if you want.

Justin: Well, I'm actually gonna give Magnus one of my assets.

Griffin: Oh, that's nice of you.

Travis: Oh, thank you.

Justin: Well, I had a surplus—

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: ... For what I wanted to make, so...

Clint: How many— How many does that leave you?

Justin: Four.

Griffin: He's at four and Magnus is now at two. Just to give the folks at home some idea— By the way, the plus one, plus two, plus three, I don't know if we've ever talked about it, but that basically adds to rolls. So like, if you have a plus one sword and you attack with it, you get plus one to attack and damage. And it works the same way for armor, it just as an AC bonus. So...

And then the effects are stuff like resist damage type, where you choose like a type of damage and then you take half damage from it. There's one in here called champion's might, which gives you a critical hit on 19s as well as 20s. Yeah, there's a bunch of stuff we can get to as we make stuff.

Clint: I'd like to give one of my assets to him as well.

Travis: Oh? Woah, yeah! Oh, boy.

Griffin: That's going to mean that he has more assets than you, but I like it.

Justin: Well, that'll give him 3 and you 2?

Clint: Yeah, I don't mind. I think it's more important that he's... either weaponed up or armored up.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: Sure.

Travis: You guys are the best!

Griffin: I would like—

Justin: They're your assets, buddy.

Griffin: We have a lot of ground to cover. So, I'd like to move through this very quickly. I sent you this list yesterday and I'm curious if you have any sort of initial thoughts of what you wanna make. I also sort of encourage you in this email, not to keep in mind what equipment you have now when making this stuff. Like I want you to make cool shit that is going to be cool for your character to have.

Travis: Okay. Well, you guys go first. 'Cause I now find myself with extra assets I wasn't prepared for.

Griffin: Yeah. Justin, it sounds like you have an idea of what you want for Taako.

Justin: I know I already have a cool staff. But I... just a plus two armor for me is like not that interesting. 'Cause like—

Griffin: Yeah. And like I said, I don't—

Justin: It's not— It ain't gonna help that much.

Griffin: We need to lean into sort of the dramatic irony of this episode. So, I don't— I genuinely don't want you to think like, "Well, I've already got a staff. So, I won't make a staff." You know what I mean?

Justin: Okay. Yeah. So, I am making something that... it is so sweet. [chuckles] It's like really sweet. It's called... It's a glaive. Like, shaped like a... You remember the movie Krull?

Travis: Yes!

Justin: It's basically a glaive like in Krull, but it's a casting glaive. So, instead of like actually throwing it, it throws out like a projection of itself.

Clint: Nice!

Justin: To cast with.

Griffin: That's fuck'n sick, dude.

Justin: It's got... It's a plus two magical instrument.

Griffin: Okay?

Clint: Can you still throw it, though?

Justin: It's got— What?

Clint: Can you still throw it?

Justin: Sure, yes.

Griffin: I mean it's sharp. It's probably sharp. And you can throw sharp things.

Justin: Yeah. I mean, I can definitely throw it if I wanted to.

Griffin: You have one asset left over. Which effect do you wanna toss onto—

Justin: It's got—

Griffin: Or you could not put an effect on it, and then make an accessory and put an effect on that. And by accessory, I mean anything that's not armor. So, it could be a helmet or a cape, or a ring, or a necklace, or whatever the fuck.

Justin: It's elemental damage. I'm gonna put lightning damage on it.

Griffin: So, that's for weapons only. If this is a magical instrument, I don't know how that would work. Unless you want to be able to use it as a weapon also? And...

Justin: All right, you know what I'm gonna do instead? That I think would be perfect for this, because the glaive is designed to come back to you. I'm gonna give it Mulligan's Blessing.

Griffin: Okay, that's perfect. So, that's an effect I have on here where if you miss with a spell attack, you don't spend a spell slot for that attack.

Justin: And also... it's called the KriebStar.

Griffin: The KriebStar is perfect, okay.

Travis: Nice.

Clint: [in cool voice] The KriebStar.

Griffin: All right, Taako's good. Merle and Magnus?

Justin: It's fuck'n high fantasy, by the way. Bejeweled—

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Like, high fantasy.

Griffin: Deffo.

Justin: Like, yeah.

Griffin: Can you spell K**r**e**s**t**a**r, just for the folks at home?

Justin: K—R—E—B...

Griffin: Star.

Justin: S—T—A—R. K**r**e**s**t**a**r.

Griffin: Sick. Okay. Merle and—

Justin: And it is intercapped.

Griffin: Great. Merle and Magnus, what you got? Merle, you have two. Magnus, you have three.

Clint: Maggie?

Travis: No, I'm not— I'm not ready yet.

Clint: All right. I'm going to make... a single stick. Also known as a cudgel.

Griffin: Okay. Is this a weapon or is this like a holy item that you use for—

Clint: It's a weapon, but I'm gonna use it as a holy—

Griffin: Okay, so it's a magical instrument then?

Clint: Magical instrument.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: Sort of like a stave. And whereas—

Griffin: I guess it's gonna be a plus one, right? 'Cause that's all you can afford?

Clint: Yeah.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: And whereas he's got— His glaive is really really fancy. This is mostly wood and it's got like a leather cup around the handle. And maybe it looks a little twiggy, just in keeping with the whole—

Griffin: Yeah, yeah, yeah, sure.

Clint: You know, tree arm kind of stuff.

Griffin: Natural, sure.

Clint: And I can add... I can add a plus one to it, right?

Griffin: Yeah, you can add one effect to it. For— And that'll be all your assets.

Clint: You know what? I'm gonna add vampiric damage to it.

Griffin: So that's for— again, that's for weapons only. If you're using this as a divine— or as a—

Justin: There's a healing one on there, dad, if that's something—

Griffin: There's a healing one, there's a lot of cool shit on here.

Justin: ... You might wanna experiment with.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: Retribution is cool, "After taking damage in combat, gain plus two on your next action during your next turn." Arcane Assurance is cool, "You

can spend two spell slots whenever you cast a spell to gain advantage on that spell.” There’s a lot of cool stuff for magic.

Clint: I might wanna use that.

Griffin: The arcane assurance?

Clint: Yeah! I think that might make a lotta sense for me, in that case.

Griffin: Yeah. So, whenever you cast a spell, like say you cast a 5th level spell, you can spend two level five spell slots and then gain advantage on the roll. It’s kind of a way of just like, if you’ve got one sort of clutch action, you can double down on it.

Clint: Yeah.

Griffin: Okay. So, keep that in mind—

Clint: So make that arcane assurance on that.

Griffin: And that should be... two. That’s two assets. Do you have a name for this cool stick?

Clint: Yes... Gilley.

Griffin: Yeah?

Clint: G—I—L—L—E—Y.

Griffin: [in silly voice] Gilley!

Clint: [in silly voice] Gilley!

Griffin: Oh, Jesus. All right, Magnus. You got three to burn, what you got?

Travis: I’m going to get plus one armor...

Griffin: Okay. This is just— By armor, I mean, like chest... chest, breastplate, armor, like—

Travis: Can I do a helmet?

Griffin: Yeah, I guess so. But I basically just made it chest armor so that you couldn't like do a bunch of level one armor.

Travis: Well I'm only gonna get the one armor. I just don't— I know we're trying not to play meta, but I—

Griffin: I got you.

Travis: I like my feathered cuirass.

Griffin: If you have a cool idea for a helmet, definitely do it.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: What's the— What's this helmet's deal?

Travis: I want it to look very much like ram's horns.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: I don't know why, that's just the first thing that popped into my head. No, you know what? Hold on. Hold on. If I'm making it, I want it to have, like a kind of... Think of like a faceplate, like a football helmet.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Except, instead of like a grate, it's like bear's teeth. It's like fangs.

Griffin: Cool. Yeah, I'm into it.

Travis: And I wanna get retribution on it.

Griffin: Yeah, that's a cool one. Like I just said, if you take damage in combat, on your next action during your next turn, you gain plus two on whatever that action is.

Travis: And then I'm gonna get an accessory.

Griffin: Okay. What is it?

Travis: I want it be just a really sick-ass pendant.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: You know, just like... You know what? Continuing the theme, like I... It's like a... a metal bear fang chain—

Griffin: Just a lot of bear stuff, then.

Travis: It's— I'm— Listen. I'm leaning into it. You know what I mean?

Griffin: Definitely.

Travis: Like, I'm remembering my training, my inspiration. Going for it.

Griffin: What effect do you want on that?

Travis: I'm gonna go with gambler's luck.

Griffin: Okay. That one lets you reroll any 1s that you roll on attacks only. Not skill checks. So, if you attack something and roll a 1, you will get to roll again. That's a pretty good one, I think.

Justin: And you've already been doing that anyway. So I figure...

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Yeah, that didn't cut it. I'm gonna call the helmet, Bear Face. You know, naming stuff just isn't Magnus's strong suit.

Griffin: Sure.

Travis: And I'm gonna call the pendant Tooth Necklace.

Justin: [chuckles]

Griffin: [laughing] Okay.

Travis: Spelled exactly how it sounds. Two words.

Griffin: So, it takes you guys most of—

Travis: No, no, you know what? It's number 2-T-H Necklace.

Griffin: Why?

Travis: Because.

Clint: It's his.

Travis: Because it's mine, dammit!

Griffin: All right. So, you all spend the better part of the year like practicing. These are not the first magic items you make, but they are like the best ones that you make. And so, it takes you a while to produce these. While you're in the thick of your training at the Arcaneum, Taako, Lup drops in and challenges you to a wizard's duel. She wants to test out what she's been working on. Do you agree?

Justin: Yes.

Griffin: Okay. Not to the death or anything. Sort of Harry Potter style.

Justin: Yes.

Griffin: So, you all find like a large clearing and she steps several paces away from you. And she's carrying this long instrument that's wrapped in

brown canvas. And as she steps some paces away from you, she lays it down at her feet, and she kneels down in front of it. And she says:

Lup: You ready, bro?

Taako: Hell yeah!

Griffin: Roll plus mind.

Clint: To the pain.

Travis: No... To the tickles.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: 9.

Griffin: Okay. With a 9... you... What do you cast? What do you shoot at her?

Justin: Like a big-ass fireball. I don't have my spell cards, but you know, a big fireball?

Griffin: Okay. Yeah, sure. You cast a big-ass fireball at her and it hits her, just barely. She tries to get out of the way of it and it just kind of nicks her. And she rolls forward and grabs this wrapped package. And as she completes the roll, you see the canvas fly into the air. And there she is, in kneeling position, and she has an umbrella held out in front of her. And she hits you with—

Justin: Fuck you!

Griffin: ... A couple of magic missiles. And you kind of fall backwards as these magic missiles hit you. And as you are sort of knocked down, the KrebsStar comes flying out of your hand. You see this umbrella turn inside out. And just as it's about to— just as your shiny new glaive is about to fly into this hungry mouth of this umbrella, she pulls it back and catches the KrebsStar. And hands it back to you. And she walks over and she says:

Lup: So, this is... well, it's called an Umbrastaff. It consumes the power of defeated magic-users. It's pretty tight, right?

Taako: Well, okay. Two things. Three. One, that wasn't on the list that Griffin said, so I don't know how you did that. Two, that really fuckin' hurt. Three, it looks ridiculous. I'm sorry, but you look like a clown with that thing. It is ludicrous.

Griffin: She says:

Lup: Yeah. Like a cool clown.

Taako: No. No. Don't play the Pennywise card like you always try to. No. Not a cool clown, like a ridiculous clown. Remember Mr. Bing-Bong?

Lup: Oh, who could forget Mr. Bing-Bong?

Taako: You look like Mr. Bing-Bong right now. He would get drunk in the middle of the town and we would all laugh at him and throw cheese at him and we hated Mr. Bing-Bong and that's who you look like. Like a bad, drunk clown.

Griffin: She walks away, back to the Arcaneum. And she says over her shoulder:

Lup: Well, there's no accounting for taste.

Griffin: Take plus one bond, Taako. It's the last month of this cycle now and the seven of you have gathered together in the galley of the Starblaster for a strategy meeting. And you've had these every year. Like, it's an opportunity for you to talk about the big picture and figure out what you've learned and what you need to do next to try to thwart The Hunger once and for all, if you can. And this is the last of those meetings that you'd ever have. You're all seated around the dinner table and Lup speaks first. She says:

Lup: We need to make sure our friends in the ethereal plane aren't listening. Taako, could you do the honors and shoo them away?

Taako: Go away!

Lup: Dear, you need to blink over there.

Taako: Ah. Yes, of course. I knew that. It's just been a long time since I've played D&D.

Griffin: Yeah, yeah.

Travis: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: D&D is of course the nickname of the game that Lup and I came up with—

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Justin: ... For when I blink and...

Griffin: And don't remember the rules that Gary Gygax came up with.

Justin: [chuckles] Right, right.

Travis: And Gary Gygax is code for..

Griffin: Yeah, he's an ogre or something, whatever. Can you— So, do you do it?

Justin: Yeah. For sure, I cast blink and just duck my head in.

Griffin: Yeah, you duck your head in. And as you do, you see this like wispy white version of the room you were just in. And there are these little... these little, white, sort of knee-high creatures, with these blank expressions and big eyes. That as they sort of see you and you start to sort of like motion towards them, they scatter and disappear, and the room is clear.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: You're back in the room now and you're all together. And Lup says:

Lup: Show `em, Barry.

Griffin: And Barry takes out his wand. It's a new wand he made...

Magnus: Ah!

Griffin: Why do you keep reacting to Barry like that?

Travis: `Cause he's scary. He's... Oh, he's probably not a lich—

Griffin: No, he's alive now. Yeah.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Griffin: He takes out his wand and he begins to conjure up a scene on the dinner table. And the room darkens as these projections take form. A white disc floats above the center of the table and then 11 other discs appear around it, floating in orbit. And Barry says:

Barry: This is the Planar System. This is what it looks like each time we come into a new world.

Griffin: And you see a small projection of the Starblaster flying in from the edge of the table, landing on that center plane. And Barry continues and says:

Barry: Each cycle, within a day or two of us landing, the Light of Creation emerges and follows us to this plane.

Griffin: And you see a small light lower down from the ceiling and it lands on that central plane as well. And he says:

Barry: And then about 48 hours or so after that, The Hunger's scouts find us.

Griffin: And then there's a dozen white eyes floating over the projection.

Barry: And they relay our location to The Hunger. And then about one year later—

Griffin: And then a round black disc appears from below the table and slowly consumes the scene. And Barry says:

Barry: That's when The Hunger arrives. And then rinse and repeat.

Griffin: And sure enough, this scene plays out. It rewinds and then plays over and over again. And Barry says:

Barry: I've been trying to figure out why the Light follows us down into these new worlds, and I... I don't know. There's so much about The Light that we don't understand. What I do know, though, is how The Hunger keeps finding us.

Griffin: And you see the light descend from the ceiling again. Only this time, there are waves. There are ripples of energy coming off of it that reach far beyond this scene. And they start bouncing all around the kitchen. And Barry says:

Barry: This is that force. It's that desire to be desired that The Light gives off.

Magnus: Craveability.

Barry: [sighs] It's the craveability.

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Barry: ... That The Light gives off. It's... It's a signal. It's a beacon. And it reaches well beyond the edges of our reality. The Hunger's scouts are attuned to it. They're able to follow it as easy as a path. Unless...

Taako: Unless...

Magnus: Unless...

Barry: Unless we interrupt it.

Griffin: And then suddenly the scene changes. And those ripples cascading off the Light of Creation, they grow weaker. And they're not bouncing all around the kitchen anymore. They're just sort of surrounding the plane in the center of the projection. And Barry says:

Barry: If we can reduce the signal's strength to, according to my calculations, about 15% or so, it won't be able to escape the boundaries of our reality. The Hunger won't know where to find us. We can hide, wait it out. Starve it out.

Griffin: And Lup says:

Lup: And we can do that with artificing. We can divide up the Light of Creation into seven parts. And then we hide those parts inside of magic items. And those items, well... they'll be incredibly powerful. But the signal will be weak.

Griffin: And Barry says:

Barry: There's one problem with this plan. That... That craveability...

Magnus: Mm-hmm?

Barry: It needs to be fed. If it doesn't, this division, it won't take. That means once we've made these items, we can't just keep `em for ourselves. We'll have to circulate `em out into the world and let them be... quested after and valued and pursued. Only then will this plan work. And it will work.

Griffin: And Lup says:

Lup: There's another complication, too. It's too late for that plan here. And in fact, we're only gonna be able to execute this plan in a cycle where we can recover the light before The Hunger finds it. And that's a tight window. We've only done it a few times.

Griffin: Barry says:

Barry: So... What do you all think?

Magnus: Well, it's better than what we had before, which was nothing.

Taako: Right, as an improvement on nothing, I'm very high on it.

Magnus: Mm-hmm.

Justin: Now, Griffin, do we... We know that this is 100 years, because it's called The Stolen Century.

Griffin: Mm-hmm?

Justin: Do we know, at this point, that we've got like eight more cycles—

Griffin: No, you don't. No, basically what he—

Justin: Or is it unending, as far as we know right now?

Griffin: What he just said is, essentially, the next time you can find the Light before the scouts find it, you do this thing. No matter how long, it could be the next cycle. It's too late now, The Hunger knows where you are in this cycle. Maybe in the next cycle, you find the light really quick and it happens.

Taako: Yeah, I'm for it. Is there... Is it gonna be dangerous?

Griffin: Lucretia says like:

Lucretia: Yeah, I don't... I don't know that I wanna be responsible for putting anything dangerous out into the world. Barry, Lup, I... I know you

know your stuff, it's just... The Light is a sickeningly powerful energy source. Any items powered by that energy are going to be... devastating.

Merle: We could keep an eye on `em?

Griffin: Barry says:

Barry: Listen, this... Part of this plan is once we put `em out there, they're out there. We have to let them be... craved. Or else it's not gonna work.

Taako: So, but the first time though, we can sell `em, right? For sure? Like, we're gonna be able to turn a profit here.

Griffin: Lup laughs and says:

Lup: However we put them out into the world, it's up to us. But from that point on, we kind of just have to let it be.

Magnus: Here's my thinking on this, as far as the danger thing goes. I'm... I've been thinking about this for a while, about 92 cycles now. And you know that feeling— I don't know if you all feel this, but that feeling when we arrive to a new plane and it's populated? And this feeling of fear and like regret that there are people here that even if we get the Light, it still isn't great for them. And... is a little bit of danger out in the world... isn't that better than the entire world being destroyed?

Griffin: Lucretia speaks up and she says:

Lucretia: Magnus, I've been thinking about that this whole time too. And... I've come up with a plan also. And I didn't think it was ready, but I figure now is the time to talk about it. I think I can channel the Light into a spell. A warding spell, to defend against The Hunger's advances.

Griffin: And she waves a wand at this projection on the table and a light barrier surrounds that central plane. And she says:

Lucretia: I've been practicing this spell for decades now. A final barrier. With the aid of the light, I can weave it around an entire plane. And it will be strong enough to keep out everything. And that includes The Hunger.

Griffin: And Lup says:

Lup: Lucretia, that's... Let me show you something.

Griffin: And then this projection changes again. And you see thousands of little threads of light stretching between all the planes. And past the projection, out of the projection, reaching out into other realities entirely. And Lup says:

Lup: If that barrier cuts off everything from outside, you risk severing the bonds between this world and the rest of existence. A world cut off like that... I'm sorry Lucretia, but it... it won't survive.

Griffin: And Lucretia gets kind of upset. She says:

Lucretia: You don't know that. We don't know anything about what the Light is capable of. Even if that's true, fine. This world has some lean years until we starve The Hunger out. But please, I'm begging you, just— just think about it.

Griffin: And the seven of you spend some time debating these two plans, and things get a little heated at times. And finally, Davenport cuts everything off and he says:

Davenport: Now, that's enough. We'll put it to a vote. Barry and Lup, I imagine you're supporting your plan. Lucretia, for yours. What do the rest of you think?

Taako: I'm with Lup.

Griffin: Lucretia says:

Lucretia: Taako, you won't even consider it? You won't even consider my plan?

Taako: You know I wish I could.

Magnus: Here's the thing, I... I'm torn, honestly. Because I... love a good shield. [sighs] I don't know. I mean, I wish there was a third option, where we could just fight and beat them.

Griffin: Lup says:

Lup: I've thought of that too, Magnus. I promise, I've tried everything to blow up The Hunger. If I could channel the Light into a big explosion, it would not be enough. It is... It's the size of a lot of planes at this point and you can't just blow something like that up.

Magnus: I'm sorry, but when it comes down to it, your plan is us making a decision for a world that's not our own. To cut them off from everything else. And I don't... I just don't feel comfortable doing that.

Taako: Listen, I'm on your team. But in fairness like, it's a pretty big decision to unleash seven ultra-powerful artifacts across a planet too. Like, we're putting some incredibly dangerous weapons into the planet. Again, on your side. But let's look at this with clear eyes. We're making decisions for other people regardless.

Magnus: Okay. Well, let me make— let me make another reason. If the seven artifact thing falls through, we can get on the ship and fight another day. If we cut it off, if we close off the world and it doesn't work, we're fucked.

Taako: Okay. Love that. Did everyone hear that part? Loving that. That's a great point. Also, the other thing about it is like, I know we're gonna get rid of him. But I think I'm immortal now? So eventually, statistics say I won't get one again. So, I am pretty jazzed about that.

Merle: Listen, I... I've gotta go with the majority here. Besides, we've got the meat shield here, he can protect us all from stuff.

Magnus: Wait, are you—

Merle: No— I'm gonna have to— Yeah! You have a shield.

Taako: Yeah, you have a shield that should help against a reality killing, all-encompassing Hunger. Sure.

Merle: Your gig is to protect us!

Magnus: I don't know whether to be annoyed or flattered, honestly.

Griffin: Davenport says:

Davenport: Well, it sounds like we have a pretty big majority here.

Griffin: And Lucretia—

Magnus: Listen, if I can, real quick. Lucretia, let's do... Here's the thing. If you think about a logical order, let's do the seven artifact thing. That doesn't work, the next time we get the Light of Creation on a future cycle, we can do your thing?

Griffin: She looks up at you, Magnus, and her eyes meet yours. And she takes that to heart. If this was a fuck'n Telltale game, it would say, "Lucretia will remember that," at the top-right corner of the screen right now. She does look disappointed, though. She looks... downtrodden. She's been working on this plan for like decades. And it kind of just came to an end. But Lup sees that and says:

Lup: Lucretia, I promise you, I swear on my life and my second life, this is gonna work. We're nearly done, okay?

Griffin: And Lucretia says:

Lucretia: Okay.

Griffin: The next few cycles, your efforts to quickly recover the Light prove unsuccessful. But it gives you the time that you need to design the magic

items that you'll hide the Light away in. Each of you, using the artificing skills you learned in the last cycle, will build one.

Justin: I think I speak for the rest of us and like the entire audience when I say, I cannot wait to see what these fuckin' seven items are.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Yeah!

Clint: Ah, I know.

Griffin: Each of you will build one and be responsible for putting it out into the world. And for a bonus experience point, do you want to guess what your grand relic was? I can list them off and—

Clint: Yeah, list them off.

Justin: Yeah, that's what I was gonna say.

Griffin: Okay, so there was the, in or —

Travis: No, wait. I wanna guess. Hold on.

Griffin: Well, no, no—

Justin: No, he's just gonna list what the artifacts were.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Griffin: In order of their appearance, there was the Phoenix Fire Gauntlet, the Oculus, the Gaia Sash, the Philosopher's Stone, the Temporal Chalice, the Animus Bell and then the staff that you only saw at the end of the last episode. Which is called— and you know this because one of you talked about what it is called, the Bulwark Staff. Which one— for an extra experience point, which one did you make? One of these should be very easy for one of you.

Travis: I think I made the Temporal Chalice.

Griffin: Well, yeah. Of course. We saw as much in a flashback.

Travis: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Griffin: Yeah, take one—

Travis: Well, to make it a little bit tougher, I will guess somebody else's. How about that?

Griffin: Well, let's let Merle and Taako guess theirs. But take one experience point. Think— Keep in mind what— If you were making an item, what your interests are, what you think power is, what you would think is desirable, that is sort of the guiding principle for how you made these.

Clint: Go ahead, Juice. Gaia Sash! I did the Gaia Sash.

Griffin: That's right, take one experience point.

Clint: Whew.

Justin: Did I do the Philosopher's Stone? 'Cause I'm a big HP fan?

Griffin: You did. Yes. You're the biggest HP fan. All right, everybody take experience points. Davenport—

Travis: Did the Oculus, right?

Griffin: Yeah, because of his interest in illusion magic and what the possibilities would be if you could make those illusions real, he made the Oculus. Barry, with his interest in sort of some of the necromantic arts he picked up when he became a lich, made the Animus Bell. Lucretia—

Travis: Do you guys ever think about how weird it is that romantic is in the word necromantic? Just—[chuckles]

Griffin: Hm? It is strange.

Travis: Isn't that weird?

Griffin: Lucretia made the Bulwark Staff and Lup made the Phoenix Fire Gauntlet. So the seven of you have designed your relics. You haven't built them yet because the time hasn't been right. But the plan is set. And then after a few more cycles, finally, it happens. The Light, it comes down right on top of your ship. And you recover it within the hour. And when you do, there is a dawning realization of what that means. Your journey is over. You are home, here, in cycle 99.

[music plays]

[ad break]

Griffin: Got a personal message here. This one is for Morgan and it's from Keenan. I believe that's how it's pronounced. Or Keen— Canon. I think it's Keenan. Who says, "I can't believe we've been friends for 21 years. When we first met, I honestly had no idea how important you'd become to me. I'm so proud of you for fulfilling your dream of becoming a professional animator. Maybe those doodles on my grade nine math homework will be museum or biography material some day." And then there's a smiley emoticon. I'm so sorry. Listen, when I read these things I'm very far away from my screen. It is a winking emoticon. Please reach out for a full refund, I completely dropped the fucking ball here. Congratulations on becoming an animator, Morgan. That's very, very exciting, I'm really happy for you. It just sounded like I was being facetious, I wasn't. I'm genuinely very happy.

Here's another message, this one's for Jacob and it's from The Cult of Dumb. Who says, "Thank you, Jacob, for organizing and DMing us for the last year. Your hours of preparation each week provided us with a rich and full world and you were always quick on your feet when our more chaotic elements strayed from the path." There's always one, huh? "Though you have moved to a new realm, rest assured, we will continue to carry your torch." That is such a sweet message. God, I love fuckin' D&D groups using this as like a love note message board. It makes me so happy.

[ad read]

[music plays]

Griffin: What is most peculiar about this new world that you will now call home is how closely it resembles the home you first left. Biologically speaking, it's nearly identical. There are humans and elves and dwarves and dragons and halflings and goblins. Merle, as sort of the chief biologist of this mission, you are struck by the familiarity of the flora and fauna in this place.

Justin: I bet he is.

Travis: [chuckles]

Griffin: [chuckles]

Clint: Especially the flora.

Griffin: The sky above is blue and there's only one sun. But otherwise, it feels like home. But it's more than just the biological makeup of this world. There are echoes of the world you left all over. There's technology in this world and it's being advanced by this laboratory that you hear of. And later on, you hear rumors that they're studying the planes, too. Just like the Institute of Planar Research and Exploration.

Merle, you know some people in this world. And they don't know you, not right now, anyway. But you have like, some distant relatives that existed in your home plane too. And the odds of that are just astronomical. And there are cities and national parks and beaches and music. And Taako, there's so much food here.

And your journey could have ended anywhere. It could have ended in the ruined world with those... the judges ruling over everything. Or it could've been the world where the planes intersected and there was nobody there. But it ended here, and you're so grateful for that. And the seven of you rushed to complete your relics in the next day, hoping to complete your task before The Hunger's scouts arrive.

And the work is surprisingly easy. Barry and Lup carefully divide up the Light and you take that power, and you put it inside the items you designed. And it's just done. And you can feel the thrall of these powerful artifacts pulling at you but you... you resist them. And you stow them away for the moment and you just wait.

You wait one day. And two, three. And after a week, the finality of this situation sets in. You did it. The Hunger's not coming. You're safe. And so, you celebrate that night. And in the morning, you decide it's time to put your relics out into the world. And I wanna know how you do that. Magnus, again like—

Travis: I take it to Refuge, right?

Griffin: Yeah. Magnus, you take it down and you, I guess try to find somewhere sort of isolated to put the Temporal Chalice. But you kind of get lost in your journey and you are out in the Woven Gulch. And you're so thirsty you like fucked up and didn't bring enough water. And you're lost—

Travis: Well, I think that this is— I think this is interesting. Because you have to think, for the last 100 years, like mortality hasn't really been a concern?

Griffin: That's another thing. Like, this has set in on all of you when you kind of realize this is home. Like, you can't die anymore. You're not leaving.

Clint: Ooh...

Griffin: So, yeah. I think you're probably having a tough time with that. Like, "Oh, shit. Am I gonna die in this gulch?" But you are found by Jack and June. And they're so kind to you. And that kindness is what lets you know, like, these are the people I can trust with this.

Justin: I... I head to Phandalin. And I throw the rock in the well. And then I walk away and shout:

Taako: Hey there's a cool rock in this well, tell everybody forever!

Justin: And then I go back to do whatever I was doing.

Griffin: Nobody really listens to you.

Justin: That's fine.

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: Not at first. But I think what we see is some miner coming back to town after a sort of long and exhausting shift. Maybe at Wave Echo Cave, maybe somewhere else. And as they walk by this well, the same route that they've walked between work and home, hundreds if not thousands of times during their stay here, they hear a voice coming from the bottom of the well. Merle what do you do?

Clint: Don't I have to go back to the... Goldcliffs?

Griffin: I mean you do not— you do not—

Travis: Hey, you remembered!

Griffin: These— These relics—

Travis: Hold on a second, let's all take a second.

Griffin: Yeah, no, no, no, no. This is great.

Travis: Dad. You remembered the name of a thing. I'm so proud of you!

Clint: Ah, thank you, Travie.

Griffin: I'm extremely proud of you.

Justin: Yeah, me too.

Griffin: These relics are gonna move around a lot. We have a lot of time still between now and where our story begins. And so, don't worry about putting it right at Goldcliff.

Clint: Okay. Well, I have an idea. I'm going to hide it in plain sight. Which is what Sherlock Holmes always suggested you do. And there's this massive statue. You know, like the Colossus of Rome?

Griffin: Sure.

Clint: And I tie the Gaia Shaft... [chuckles]

Travis: Hm?

Clint: Sash.

Travis: Thank you.

Clint: Around its head, like a headband.

Griffin: Okay. Yeah, I think... Again, like... You hid it in plain sight. And sure enough, like I think it takes a while for anybody to even realize what it is. But there's a— there's a sculptor that comes to study this statue and sort of how it was made. And this thing's been here for a while. So like, not a lot of folks still appreciate this thing. But this sculptor does. And the next time that this sculptor comes around, they see this sash. And they hear— they feel it calling to them.

And things don't escalate all at once. It takes time for the legend of these powerful relics to spread throughout the land, for the avarice of the world below to truly catch fire. But once it does... Well, you know how this next part goes. After about 10 months after your arrival in this world, the conflict that you've heard referred to now as the Relic Wars truly ignites. And the devastation it wreaks is immeasurable.

Every party in this world, every band of adventurers, every mercenary guild, every kingdom, wants the Grand Relics. And as you coast above this land aboard the Starblaster, every few weeks or so you see a battle raging down below. And the relics are just unearthed, and they change hands, and they are squirreled away. And then that cycle begins anew.

But it's not just the conflict surrounding the relics that is so troubling. You also hear reports and you see first-hand exactly what these relics are capable of. And they're capable of so much more than you assumed when you were making them. Maybe they're getting powerful. Maybe just in the hands of the wrong people, they can be used to so much greater effect than you assumed.

The Gauntlet, the Phoenix Fire Gauntlet, it surfaces every few months and it leaves a circular glass scar on the world's surface. Once it was at the scene of one of these massive battles. Once it was where just this sleepy agrarian village once stood. There are reports of impossible things, monsters and other phenomena conjured into existence by the Oculus.

Deadly, unceasing storms take shape overhead. And Merle, it's the telltale sign of the Gaia Sash's power. A string of cities built upon the Moonshae Isles are drowned in minutes under the weight of one of these storms. Taako, you only see a couple of instances with the Philosopher's Stone being misused, but they're so horrible.

One that hits hardest is the city of Armos. A child found the Stone somehow, Taako, and turned their home and everyone inside of it to peppermint. Magnus, your relic might be the most distressing of all of them. Because you don't see anything change because of the Chalice, and that's the problem. Time can be rewritten with the Chalice, made miserable without your knowing it. And what you don't know, it haunts you, Magnus.

But the year passes. And the Hunger never comes. And that is cause for celebration. But the weight of what you've done to this world is always present. It's looming overhead. And that's the scene now. It's been a little over a year and your team is celebrating the success of their plan. You have hidden from The Hunger. You have staved off the apocalypse.

And so, you're having a little celebration with just the seven of you, and Fisher. And I want you to just sort of choose a character to do a scene with at this party and sort of explore how your character is reacting to this situation.

Clint: Let me just say, parenthetically, we've gone from wrecking trains to starting a global conflict. [laughs]

Justin: Yeah...

Griffin: Well, to be more precise, you started a global conflict and then you started wrecking trains.

Clint: Well, yeah...

Justin: We got better at it, actually, if you think about it.

Clint: Yeah!

Travis: Yeah!

Justin: Our arc is actually an impressive one. [laughs]

Clint: Yeah, we're doing good!

Griffin: I want these scenes to be relatively short. So, just like pick a character and I mostly just want to see how your character is reacting to what you've done.

Travis: I would like to have a scene with Barry.

Griffin: Okay. What are you doing at this party with Barry?

Travis: Man, that's a really good question, Griffin. Maybe we're looking through our albums to pick the next music to play.

Griffin: Okay. Yeah, there's probably... I think we have some sort of... I don't know what the rule is for like music storage in this world, but there's probably some sort of album-like thing.

Travis: Griffin, I put on the new album by My Morning Cuirass.

Griffin: Okay. Barry says—

Travis: My Morning Cloak? Wait, which was better? Hold on. Ugh...

Clint: Cloak. Clock.

Travis: Yeah?

Griffin: My Morning Cuirass is great 'cause their songs are usually a little bit somber sometimes, a little bit bittersweet. And that's definitely the tone here.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: And Barry looks up as you put that album on and he says:

Barry: Oh yeah, this is a... this is a good one. It's really gonna get the party bumping, Magnus.

Griffin: He says:

Barry: Hey—

Magnus: Barry—

Griffin: He says:

Barry: Hey, how you doing bud?

Magnus: You know... a little split. It's been... Here's the thing, dude. Like... We've been going so long and then it reset. You know, like we'd do a year, it resets. And you get used to... You know, we... For 100 years, we knew what the next thing was gonna be, what the endgame was. We had to find the thing or we had to get away. What... What's the endgame here?

Griffin: He says:

Barry: I think this is it, bud. This is... This is life now. We've... We saved the world. It sure doesn't feel like it, but... there is no... there is no finale. If there was, we already did it.

Magnus: But what do we do now? Like, how do we make... What's next for us individually, you know what I mean? Like... We've been so goal-oriented for 100 years. And now, I don't know what's next.

Griffin: Merle, Taako?

Clint: Well I think it's pretty obvious what Merle wants to do at a party. He wants... to dance!

Griffin: Okay, this is gonna be fuckin'—

Clint: So he asks Lup— He asks Lup to go on the dancefloor with him.

Merle: Come on, sis, let's go! Let's cut a rug!

Griffin: Lup is just like— Lup's in the kitchen, she was cooking up some— some party favors. And you realize she's just been like stirring the same pot for like 20 minutes now. It smells like it's burning maybe a little bit, she's just kind of absent minded. She looks up and she says:

Lup: Oh, Merle, I'm... I'm sorry, what was it?

Merle: Come on! It's time for you to have a little party at the dance. At the party, let's have a little fun, come on out on the dance floor with me! Put that ladle down, take that off the burner or whatever it is. You are gonna dance with Merle.

Griffin: I'm getting like a real feeling of fuckin' Leland Palmer dancing—

Justin: Fuckin', [sings] Oh mares eat oats and does eat oats and little lambs eat ivy, a kid'll eat ivy too, wouldn't you?

Clint: [laughs] I was thinking tequila, but...

Griffin: Lup says:

Lup: Merle... how the fuck can you feel like dancing right now?

Merle: [chuckles] Listen kid, you gotta dance every day. Every day, you gotta dance. It's good for your physical, it's good for your mental health. Now, if you don't come out on the dance floor with me and dance, and have a little bit of fun, I'm gonna cast... planar warts on you. And you're gonna get warts on your hands, and Barry's gonna be grossed out.

Griffin: She says:

Lup: Don't cast any spells on me. I'll take a... I'll take a rain check. I... I'm just not in the dancing mood right now, Merle.

Griffin: Lucretia sees you having this conversation with her and she sees you being sort of... like extremely positive in this situation. And...

Clint: And she's jealous.

Griffin: No, she looks like, kind of distressed. Like, I know I referenced Leland Palmer, like dancing after his daughter's death in Twin Peaks. But like, it's... I feel like there's a sort of uncomfortableness of like, "Why is this dude so turned up right now? Like why is he like... This doesn't seem like the time or place, really."

Clint: So, this is a wake and not a party?

Griffin: It sure feels like it. Taako.

Justin: I wanna talk with Barry.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: Like, we're just kind of bumped into each other. I feel like we're kind of maybe watching this, and as it starts to wind down, I'm just sort of talking to him.

Taako: Hey Barry.

Barry: Yeah?

Taako: You know what's kind of fucking me up?

Barry: What's that, Taako? Speaking personally, I would assume a lot of stuff.

Taako: Yeah, it's weird though. We traveled around for 100 years and... didn't really have a place to call ours. And now that we're stuck here, I can't stop feeling like we're technically homeless. Like, think about it for a second. We've been waiting for the other shoe to drop for so long, over a year now. And we live on a spaceship?

It's still really weird to me, like... Do you remember about 70 years ago or so, 70 cycles, I just stopped learning math. 'Cause everybody did math differently and I just got sick of it. So, I just stopped learning math. I'm gonna have to learn... the math here now. I have to make some sort of life here. But... of all of the places to call home... I don't know, it just seems weird.

Griffin: He says:

Barry: No, I know what you're talking about. And you know, we talked about it. It's not right for us to really live in that world until... I don't know, we see how things play out. I would feel guilty being a citizen in a world that I... poisoned. But like, can I speak frankly? I... You're my family, Taako. Can I speak frankly?

Taako: Please.

Barry: I can't believe that's what you're worried about right now.

Taako: Listen, I'm just trying to get by, man. Thanks for the shade, I guess. This has been great. Thanks.

Barry: I don't mean to, it's just like...

Taako: Uh-huh?

Barry: I'm struggling with it too and I don't know how... I don't know how you shut yourself off from that.

Taako: We— I mean... I'm sorry, but I've been living 100 years with me and one year with millions of people, interchangeable. I guess I just got to a point where I was the one that I could focus on. Because everybody else that I ever met, aside for the six of you, were dust. They were just talking dust. Okay? So, I started worrying a lot more about me, because what was the fuckin' point?

Griffin: That's the scene, I think.

Justin: By the way, I did spare everyone. I was going to make a sick Groundhog Day reference where I talked about being in an island world once and I met a guy and we ate lobster and drank pina coladas in the sunset we made love like sea otters. And I didn't.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: And I just want everyone to know I was going to. And imagine that I did. It may be in the expanded version.

Griffin: Yeah, the cut— it's a deleted scene. So, you've been in this world... 20 months now. And the conflict over these relics shows no sign of stopping. Nor does the occasional bits of devastation that they visit on this world. And one morning, Lup gathers everyone in the kitchen. And she seems just... so tired.

And she explains that, during the night, a city called Cordelia was destroyed by the Phoenix Fire Gauntlet. And estimates put the death toll in the low thousands. And Lup tells you all this with a stone-faced expression and adjourns the meeting. And everybody kind of goes back to their quarters. And Taako... she looks heartbroken.

Taako: You know you didn't... mean... to make something like that. I understood the rationale you came up with. I mean... It was just damage, it was just... damage. The other ones that we made, they can be twisted and perverted in so many different ways. And I think... At least the way you explained it to me, that by making something that was just damage, you would limit it. You didn't mean for any of this to happen.

Lup: I know that, Taako. I know. I... And I know it's good. Like... The Hunger's not here. And The Hunger's worse than anything we've done. I get all that. I just... I can't help but ask... Did we make the right decision?

Taako: I mean, hindsight's 20/20.

Lup: Yeah.

Taako: We don't... Who knows if the shield would have worked. You know, sometimes there aren't right decisions. Sometimes there's just decisions. I mean, at the scale that we're talking about, the devastation that The Hunger brought to all those worlds? I can say pretty certainly that it's better than that, right?

Lup: It's got to be, I know. You're right.

Griffin: She still looks really bummed out.

Taako: [sighs] Okay, I'll do it one time.

Justin: And then I go to the record player and I turn on the Thong Song. And I do my fuckin' Thong Song lip sync. It is... basically amazing. I can't even really do justice to it with words. But I feel like it always makes Lup laugh 'cause it's really ridiculous.

Griffin: She does, she laughs. She laughs so hard she has to sit down at the kitchen table. And she watches the rest of your performance. And...

Merle: Can I be your background dancer?

Justin: I think you've done quite enough at this point.

Griffin: [laughs] She laughs so hard that she is like crying a little bit. And she wipes those tears from her eyes and says:

Lup: Taako, I can't... I couldn't have done any of this without you. I wouldn't have made it here without you. I know we don't say this enough, but... thank you.

Griffin: That was the last conversation you ever had with your sister. When someone leaves your life, those exits are not made equal. Some are beautiful and poetic and satisfying. Others are abrupt and unfair. But most are just unremarkable, unintentional, clumsy. Where Lup went, she didn't intend to end up there. And she certainly didn't intend to spend as much time away as she did. And we'll talk more on that later.

But from your perspective? Lup was there and then the next day she wasn't. And you all searched for her. Barry tirelessly, painfully so. But she was nowhere to be found. And all you had to go on was a note that she left behind on that kitchen table. And its two-word message offered no clues to her whereabouts. But simply a promise that was left unfulfilled, "Back soon."

Now we see Lucretia in her private quarters and she's working by candlelight and the soft glow from Fisher's tank. And she has one of her journals open in front of her and a large well of black ink uncorked on her desk. And she reaches for a quill and then stops. And then instead, takes up a small brush. She's had to do remarkably difficult things to survive this journey, but this is the hardest.

In order for this plan to work, she would have to go over every word of the record of your mission, relive every moment of terror and pain and joy and loss and choose what to keep and what to erase. She spends entire weeks in her quarters. You don't see her much during this time, as she shapes your memories, your lives, with a long and agonizing redaction.

It's the early afternoon now, on a day two years into your stay here. And this is where you were when it happened. Merle, you're spending some time with Davenport and you're all aboard the Starblaster still. But right now, it's just the two of you. You and Davenport. What are you doing?

Clint: Playing tabletop games. Playing a game.

Griffin: Like a card game or like a board game or..

Clint: No, we're playing... Yeah, we're playing a card game. We're playing Euchre.

Justin: Two person Euchre? Is that possible?

Griffin: It's possible in this world.

Clint: It's spelled Y-O-O-K-E-R. Yooker.

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: Do you... Do you play that often? With Davenport? Just to like kill time?

Clint: You know, it's kind of become a thing we kind of do. We just—

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: Because you don't have to talk.

Griffin: Sure. Yeah— I think it's—

Clint: And so, we just sit there and play. And we play— What's neat is, we play it with a... like a tarot deck. So, it's a very complicated game.

Griffin: Sure. I like the idea of you guys just playing this game in silence. And you've played like several rounds now. And I think you're just trying to like... I don't know, man. Like distract yourself from everything that's going on.

Clint: Well and he also owes me a lot of money. [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Clint: 'Cause I'm really good.

Griffin: And after a few rounds, he breaks the silence and he says:

Davenport: Holy shit... I think it's my birthday. I... I guess we got to start... I guess we gotta start caring about stuff like that again.

Merle: What are you, like 130, 140?

Griffin: He says:

Davenport: Yeah, I don't know. Do we count those years? I certainly didn't age during that— Jesus, Merle! We're gonna get older now!

Merle: Hm...

Griffin: He says:

Davenport: Do you... Do you think we'll be able to have normal lives after this? Nobody's ever had a life like ours. There's no rule book. I don't even know where to begin.

Merle: Why would you want a normal life? Normal lives suck.

Griffin: He laughs.

Merle: Like, this game, we play this game, we just sit here. It's just a way to kill time. Come on, skipper. You don't want to just kill time all the time.

Griffin: He says:

Davenport: I know. I just... How do you wanna live, Merle? Like, I don't have a— This mission has been my life for a century. I don't know what I want to do.

Merle: You wanna know what I'd like to do? I'd like to move to the beach. You know why? Because with the ocean, the scenery is always changing. And

I want the scenery to always be changing, man. I don't wanna be looking at the same thing all the time. I wanna see a million, billion shells. I wanna watch rain come sweeping in. That's the life right there. Change it up, man. Keep it interesting.

Griffin: As you're talking to him, Merle, he drops his cards. And he's blinking like really fast, and he wipes his eyes and his face. And he looks around. And his breath, it quickens, he's panting. And he says:

Davenport: Yeah... wait... wait... Where am I? You're— You're Merle, right? I know you... What's going on?

Griffin: And Merle, you see this panicked guy in front of you. And you want to help this guy out. But this guy, you, you can't remember who that is in front of you. And you see out the windows and you're up in the sky? And the details of why that is leave you. Your memories, your time on the beach, your conversations with John, the First Church of Fungston, they're fading. Everything's fading, Merle. The world is coming down around you, you're lost. Everything is just static.

Merle: Wait... who are you?

Davenport: [panicked] I'm Davenport! [through increasing static] I'm Davenport! I'm Davenport. I'm Davenport... [breaks into static]

Griffin: Taako, you're spending that day, or at least this moment, with Barry. And you're up on the deck of the Starblaster, just sort of looking around at the world below. And as you come out onto the deck, you see Barry standing over this table that he's dragged out here. And pinned down is a map. And it's showing all the locations where he has searched for Lup. And he's leaning over this map, his head's in his hands and you see him just like nodding off. He's so tired. He's been at this so hard for so long. What do you do, Taako?

Justin: I guess just try to strike up casual conversation.

Taako: How's it going?

Griffin: He says— You sort of wake him up. And he kind of like jumps with a start. And he's like:

Barry: Oh sorry, I... Sorry. So, anyway, there's a... there's a dungeon out beyond the Felicity Wilds? It's a subterranean demonic keep thing. There's a bunch of arcane energy coming off of it. I was gonna check it out tonight, if you wanna come with?

Taako: Yeah. Remind me, how far is that in relation to the last glassing?

Barry: I've triangulated it here.

Griffin: And he shows you the map and there's some black circles drawn on it. And it's pretty well within... it's fairly close to one of the circles.

Taako: Yeah, it seems like a good a place as any. Do you wanna do the usual? I'll go down and start casting around, see if I can pick up anything. And then you start talking to folks?

Griffin: He says:

Barry: Yeah, that's... I mean it hasn't worked so far. But... it's gotta work one of these times.

Griffin: He says:

Barry: Taako, what if she's just gone?

Taako: Who?

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: He says:

Barry: Taako? Taako, I'm...

Taako: What if who's gone?

Barry: What are we... Oh, god. Lup... Taako, I'm... I can't remember her face, Taako. Taako, where—

Taako: Whose face?

Barry: Is this Fisher?

Griffin: And Taako, sure enough, you feel it too. The mongoose family that taught you their language, the meals in Tesseratia, the best day ever, your sister? Those memories are fading, Taako, and they're nearly gone. And Barry stands up and he says:

Barry: Taako, kill me, right now! I'll remember if I'm a lich. I can— Please, Taako! Just kill me! I'll be okay! I can't forget. I'm begging you. Please, Taako! Please!

Justin: I blast him. I just blast— I'm already blasting him!

Griffin: He is knocked backwards by your spell, up against the railing on the Starblaster's deck. And he looks up at you and you see a brief, pained smile on his face as he topples backwards and off the ship. And as his body falls further and further down, you realize... you don't know who that is. And as you fall to your knees on the deck of this ship that has served as your home for 100 long years, [through increasing static] you realize you don't know where you are and you don't know how you got here. [breaks into static]

Griffin: Magnus, you've been worried about Lucretia. She has spent so much time hiding away in her quarters. And you've brought her something to just try and cheer her up. What is it?

Travis: It's a duck.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: But I personalized it. I made it like— I painted it so it would look like her. But in duck form.

Justin: That's fun.

Travis: Yeah, I invented that. I definitely didn't steal that idea from anyone else.

Griffin: You walk in and you see her bathed in the light of Fisher's tank. And she turns to face you, and she has tears in her eyes, Magnus. And behind her, floating in the tank, wrapped in Fisher's tendrils, is a thick blue book, bound with silver trim.

You see one of her journals, and it's being consumed by Fisher. And immediately, the details of your journey are... blurring and vanishing one by one. The Bear that taught you the meaning of strength, the victorious season of the Tesseralia Winners, that fish floating in the tank? What is that thing?

Travis: No, no!

Griffin: Lucretia speaks and she says:

Lucretia: God, Magnus, no... You weren't supposed to see this. I'm so sorry, Magnus.

Magnus: What are you do— What?

Griffin: She says:

Lucretia: Magnus, please... This is just for a little bit. I'm gonna stop this, what we've done to this world. I'm gonna find you a place where you can be happy again. It's just for a little while and then you'll remember, I promise.

Magnus: Who are you?

Lucretia: I can do this Magnus, please. [through increasing static] Please just lie down. I don't want you to fall and hurt yourself. I love you, Magnus. I love all of you. I'm sorry. It'll be over soon. [breaks into static]

[music plays]

Griffin: Not all exits are made equal. Lucretia didn't intend to spend as much time as she did away from you, saving the world. She could not live with the cost of what the seven of you did to the world below. She could not sit idly by as the world killed itself pursuing the weapons you created. But she couldn't go against the will of her friends to fix it. And so, that will had to be altered.

Moreover, she couldn't handle what the destruction you caused was doing to you. She couldn't bear your sorrow, your pain, your guilt, how it made you... miserable and calloused and shut off from the world. That anguish, it could be altered too. Before her work could begin, she had to make sure her friends, her family, were safe and happy.

You were walked to the beach in a daze, Merle. She arranged everything for you, a home, a society you could slot right into. You were so happy back on the beach. And in the years that followed, you thrived in that society. You were at peace. You never saw her, but she would check in on you from time to time. When things were most difficult for her, it brought her some small measure of peace to see you lounging in the sand, laid back, your feet soaking in the retreating sunset tide.

Magnus, your home was the easiest to find. She just found the most prestigious woodworking shop in this whole world. Built high atop The Pillars of Raven's Roost. She found you a home, humble but cozy, with a spacious studio fully outfitted with everything a craftsman might need. In time, you'd be invited to take a residency at the Hammer and Tongs. And the years that followed would be filled with joy beyond measure.

Taako, she struggled to find you a place to fit in, because what home is good enough for Taako? The answer was, there isn't one. Everyone in the world deserved to be around you, Taako. To see what you do, what you're capable of. And you deserve it too, Taako. To be recognized, to be admired by every living person you ever encounter. She finds you a stagecoach, a supplier, an audience. You're Taako, from TV. And you are so, so loved.

Barry was gone and she didn't know where to. It was a source of constant distress for Lucretia. Was he out in the world somewhere, his memory purged, lost? She didn't know. The alternative was difficult too, Lucretia had

realized, after finding Fisher, that imbibing its ichor made you immune to its power. It was a discovery she made accidentally when she was doused by its family back in the world of the Legato Conservatory. But if Barry became a lich, he could remember too. That much, she knew. She would have to take measures to keep him at arm's length, just in case.

And Lup... Lup was just gone. In her limited spare time, she looked. She looked everywhere. But Lup was nowhere to be found. And if she was truly lost, it was another reason to forget. She could hardly bear Lup's absence. How hard would it be for her brother? How hard would it be for her love?

What happened to Davenport was the most challenging side effect of all of this. She was so careful in the redaction. She made sure to just leave in the parts of her journal pertaining to your mission. But Davenport's life was the mission. His memory was so severely edited, it left him a shell of who he was. Most days, he could only say his own name. She would keep him close and ensure his safety herself.

The three of you found happiness in the lives Lucretia made for you. But in enacting this plan, Lucretia found little happiness at all. She recovered her relic easily enough. In pursuing the second, though, her journey nearly met its end, in Wonderland. She was trapped and if not for the selflessness of her companion, a sorcerer she'd hired to explore that place with her, she would have died there.

It was too close, she needed help. She recruited the scientists you discovered upon arriving in this world, the Millers, who helped her found the Bureau of Balance. They built her a headquarters in the sky. And in exchange, she inoculated them, taught them what she knew of the planes, advanced their research in binding souls into robotic forms with the help of a crystal you recovered from the robot kingdom you discovered so many decades ago.

And the Bureau thrived. She installed a series of checks and balances among its members, hoping it would counteract the temptation built into these relics. But it wasn't enough. Without fail, her reclaimers were lost to the thrall of the grand relics, one by one. And Lucretia was tormented by these failures, by how long this was taking, by how distant she felt from her

friends. Few people who have lived have ever experienced such loneliness, such hopelessness.

It was Fisher who provided a way out. A child. A second Voidfish. One that offered a redundancy that could, once and for all, help her gather the relics and cast her barrier around the world. The only people who could recover the relics without succumbing to them were the people who made them in the first place. You could drink from the first fish and learn about the relics, learn just enough to let you recover them. While the second fish could continue suppressing the truth of their origins. You'd know enough to find the relics, but not enough to know that you made them. She could finally bring you in. She could finally bring you home. `

Sitting upon the throne on top of this fancy-ass platform is a human woman in her... You would say about her 50s. Holding a white oak staff.

Lucretia: Welcome, the three of you, to the Bureau of Balance.

Taako: Elderflower macaroons!

Lucretia: Hot diggity shit.

Taako: That's what we do. That's how we do it.

Lucretia: That is a baller cookie. How did you—

Taako: Yeah.

Lucretia: How did you even do this?

We're getting so close. I mean, we're getting closer to finishing our goal. And I guess we're also getting... You know, closer as people. It's just, I—

Magnus: High five.

Lucretia: One day, I made the decision to stop championing other people's heroism and to take the direction of my life into my own hands. And I lost dear, dear friends because of that decision. But it was the only one to make.

So, I admire your faith, Merle. I do. But I think I'm done waiting on anyone to fix my problems for me.

Merle: Hey, you gotta stand for something or you're gonna fall for anything. So... Listen, you have got faith. It's faith in you.

Lucretia: I guess that's a good way of putting it.

Merle: Yeah.

Griffin: When you were away on missions, she worried. When you came home, she rejoiced. She tried her hardest not to show it, not to give herself away. With each meal, each Candelights gift exchanged, the nights spent walking the Bureau's campus, the trips to the spa... She fought back a smile that you came to treasure during your 100 year journey. A radiant smile, full of joy and relief.

It's the same smile you just saw, moments ago, when Magnus burst into the dome. Alive again, a mannequin no longer. Her friends were here again. In her hour of greatest need. But that smile is gone now. The Hunger's here again. You've escaped it 100 times, but no more. This is it.

This is it!

[theme music plays]

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