

The The Adventure Zone Zone: Versus Dracula Wrap-Up!

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[The Adventure Zone Versus Dracula theme music plays]

Dracula: Good evening! Welcome to my domain!

Griffin: I haven't gotten to do the voice guys in over a month and it's—I have it swelling up inside of me.

Travis: It's all pent up.

Griffin: It's all pent up. I gotta bust.

Travis: You're having a Drac attack.

Justin: Dracula flood.

Griffin: [titters] Hey, everybody. Welcome to The The Adventure Zone Zone, everyone's favorite podcast about the podcast, done by the guys in the podcast. This episode, we're recapping our adventures in Angrave with TAZ Versus Dracula. Hey, I'll start. I had a good fuckin' time doing this with you guys.

Justin: Yeah, this one was like a game. To play.

Griffin: This one was like a game—like a fun game and you—yeah. I would agree with you, this was our most game-like season.

Travis: It was nice to finally have fun with you guys.

Griffin: You're making it sound like we don't have fun doing other seasons of the show.

Justin: No, I'm interested, let's get—are we gonna introduce ourselves? [in a silly voice] I'm Justin McElroy, I did—

Travis: It would be so wild to listen to the commentary episode.

Justin: Okay, I want to have a—

Griffin: They all know who we are by now.

Justin: I know we usually do Q&A, but before we get into that, I want to have a naval gazy—

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Justin: No-holds-barred, free-flowing conversation about why—

Griffin: A debrief.

Justin: A debrief. Some seasons are really easy, and some of 'em take a lot more work to—take a while to find their footing. Why do you guys think Versus Dracula—what are the reasons that it worked as well as it did?

Griffin: Gosh, I hope everyone out there—like, I'm so unplugged from—

Justin: It's in context—I'm saying like within the context of the stuff we made.

Griffin: Of the four of us.

Justin: Why don't we have—

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Justin: Let's just call it fun then. Why was this one so much fun? I have theories, but I want to get your thoughts.

Travis: One of the things that I really think worked very well is from the get, like you can't deny a clear objective. [titters] It's right there in the title, right? Of just like, yeah, we gotta stop Dracula.

Griffin: Yeah. I think that... I could think of I think 10 reasons off the top of my head of like things that I tried to do purposefully differently from how I

did it in like Amnesty or Ethersea. Which is way less prep and predefined like courses of action. I had like ideas and events that you could sort of swing on a vine to if you needed 'em. But like way, way, way less prep on my end, which just means naturally kind of like more improvisation on your guys' end. I also think like, and this is very purposeful, again, we talked about this a lot when we were trying to decide what the next season should be. Like wanting to do one with a concept that is kind of funny.

Like I think that for everything we've done, except maybe TAZ Balance, which maybe there's a lesson there, like the ideas have been more kind of like fleshed out. And you know, with Ethersea, we had all the world building that we did and had like all of this big, rich world that was fun to play around in. But having a guiding light of like, everything can just be like dead-ass stupid was very liberating for me. And frankly, I think plays to our strengths a lot better than, you know, starting out a season with like a whole bunch of lore and stuff that we want to, you know, bounce off.

Justin: Dad, what about you?

Clint: I like the fact that after, whatever, nine years? Eight years, however many years. We have—we were able to kind of get back to thinking outside the box when it came to solving problems and doing stuff. But we—that's tempered with our experience that you don't want to go too far outside the box.

Justin: Yeah.

Clint: We just stayed within a slightly bigger box than the slightly smaller box.

Griffin: Sure.

Clint: But I think we were—

Justin: The possibility space was larger, yeah.

Clint: And I think we—but I think it challenges your creativity instead of just saying the wildest crap you can think of in an attempt to derail. I think we

tried to think teamwork and tried to think what would be really not only kind of cool, but it would be fun. I think getting back to entertaining ourselves, I mean, to a large—I think we've never not entertained ourselves. But I think the fact that we got back to, let's the four of us have a blast, and if everybody else likes it, that's great. And I enjoyed that quite a bit. And I think the fact that we went in without too much character delineation, that we were able to, you know, free things up or completely change character if need be. [laughs]

Travis: Mm-hm.

Griffin: Well, yeah, that wasn't a conscious choice on your part, at least not—

Clint: No, no!

Griffin: No, it was not a conscious—

Clint: We'll get to that question.

Griffin: [chuckles] Okay, cool, yeah, I can't wait to debrief all the fucking completely unpredictable, wild moments that made me throw away large portions of my prep work.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Travis, did you answer the question?

Travis: Well, yeah, no, I said the clear thing. But I also think to Griffin's point, I think we do well in like the juxtaposition of like us as players and our characters juxtaposed to like the world. And so like, a world in which you know, on paper, it's like there's a scary monster king who has been like—stolen the sun. And like the undead walk the earth. And it's like, yeah, okay, cool. Those—but that didn't inform like the way that we interacted with people.

Griffin: A lot of the stuff that actually happened?

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah. Right.

Travis: And so I think it creates a lot of really good and fertile ground for having fun, to be able to react to those things and have expectations subverted and stuff like that. I think is—

Griffin: I also want to say here at the top, there may be a question about this later. But much like Balance, I springboarded this season off of the Curse of Strahd. Which is one of the you know, book campaigns that they sell.

Justin: Here's a question from Keith, Griffin. Let me set it up for you, okay?

Griffin: Okay, yeah, please.

Justin: "I've enjoyed the many different styles and narrative directions you've experimented with over the years. This season felt like a return to a goofier, more revered style, similar to the tone of Balance. Was this a conscious choice or something that happened organically? Do you have conversations about tone and style before you start recording a new season?"

Griffin: I mean, yes. I mean, I think we've said as much in our sort of talking about this. But like we definitely... we wanted to take some of the pressure off of ourselves. To like set up huge lore, huge narrative before like starting the game. I think that's the main difference. And then whenever an opportunity comes to then like build off of whatever and improvise whatever, like we can still follow that principle. I think it's like, honestly, it is one of our great challenges on this show, is like trusting ourselves to come up with stuff on the fly that can like eventually turn into, you know, character beats and stuff like that.

And I think it is when this show works the best. So I think that was the first conversation, is like how do we kind of focus on that? And I think that talking about a setting that is so kind of silly really makes that a possibility. I was also looking at Curse of Strahd at the time, and was—those two pieces

kind of connected, like it would be funny to do a season that was just about trying to kill Dracula. But instead of him being this scary, dark warlock, he was... I don't know, cartoon Dracula.

Justin: I will say it also never—I feel like there was one rule with this show. And like if there's an exception to this, I don't know what it is. But there were more tender moments, but nothing I think was played with 100% sincerity. Like we didn't get to a place where characters were having deeper, earnest conversations about their feelings.

Griffin: Yes.

Justin: It didn't get deep, it didn't get earnest. And that is one rule, as wild as all the things were. And that is something where like... it's tough sometimes when like—because of the kinds of stories you want to tell, sometimes there's that compulsion. Like, "Oh, let's dig deep into this. This is interesting. I wonder what's going on." And like, I don't—we never consciously decided this, but like we all sort of I think subconsciously agreed like we're not going to get deep with these characters. We're not going to get into their inner workings. We're going to understand them at a primary and perhaps secondary level, but we're not going to get super deep.

Griffin: I want to give special kudos to Travis for this with Mutt, because I think we all feel this compulsion of like how can I make this a bigger—how can I make this a bigger, more emotionally resonant thing? Like, is this an opportunity to kind of like include a little bit of that spice in here? And at the end, your resolution with the Invisible Man I thought was truly, truly inspired.

Clint: Yeah. It really was.

Griffin: Truly a genius, very like true to character. I feel like you learn more about Mutt from that choice than any conversation they could have had about like, you know, "Maybe we both do carry a lot of generational trauma." Like instead of that, Mutt saying like, "No, no, no, no, no, no!" Like tells me a lot more about Mutt and his like avoidance. And there doesn't have to be like, I don't know, we don't have to fix Mutt by the end of this thing. But I do certainly feel like I learned a lot about Mutt in that moment.

Clint: He's one of your best characters, Trav.

Travis: Thank you, yeah. I had a lot of fun. I told Griffin afterwards, there was a—I can't remember exactly when the conversation happened or how—like how it came up. But something about like Mutt being hired as a guide and like babysitter for Lady Godwin and for Phileaux. And then treating it like that, of basically being a little bit like, yeah, man, I'm part of the team. But I'm also like on the clock, trying to keep them from dying. And trying to like keep things—like I'm here to make sure you guys don't eat poisonous like things you find while you're out foraging.

Justin: It's harder to do—it's harder in some ways to do a character that is like disciplined, is probably the word, right? Like, I think Duck is a good example of this, with regards to like his forestry work, right? It's harder in some ways to be a professional, because it assumes a level of like experience and credibility that can be hard to role play, right? There's a reason a lot of role-playing characters are like vagabonds or—

Travis: Yeah!

Griffin: [titters] Yeah, sure.

Justin: Jack of all trades, because it's like, because I don't really know how to do horse stuff, so I can't be like a horse expert.

Griffin: They can't get fired for doing wild shit.

Justin: Right.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: But it is—

Travis: I will say—

Justin: There's a fun stability I think to having a character that is that settled, to where they know themselves and they know what their job is.

And I think that it actually—the structure is helpful. Because I think it lets other people play off of that.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: I will also say, a combination of the strength of like ranger—like because a ranger inherently is like, hey, here's a thing they're good at. Like this wedge of space is what they're good at. But also, man, I got some really good rolls when it came to like sneaking through the forest or finding tracks and stuff like that. That was like, oh, okay, good, my character isn't pretending to be good at this stuff, which is the other side of it.

Griffin: I wasn't planning on the Invisible Man being a like character-character in this season. But anytime you would do like a really, really good roll, I always thought it was the funniest solution to be like, "And then you find the Invisible Man's footprints."

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: And it's like, shit, I'm writing a check for the Invisible Man that I do not know how to cash.

Clint: Trav, is it—just real quick, this is for my own edification. The name is an obvious clue, but is it safe to say that maybe a little bit of Crawford's personality you kind of took from your grandfather?

Travis: Oh, 100%.

Clint: It seemed like a lot of his personality.

Travis: Yeah, our mom's dad, Crawford Kitchen. One, I just like the name Crawford. And Crawford Kitchen? What a great name.

Justin: Crawford Kitchen is killer.

Travis: Yeah. But I mean, it's also in the last name too. Because like it was basically that mixed with like a kind of bloodhound personality, like an older hound dog kind of deal.

Griffin: Mm-hm.

Travis: Where it's just like, "Yeah, man, I don't know, I'm just happy to be here," kind of feeling of like getting excited about things. But like our grandfather, Crawford, would also occasionally just like mutter jokes to us while like mom and his wife Diane, our step grandma, would like be having conversations. And I remember one time they were having a conversation and Diane was like completely monopolizing mom's time. And pop-pop just like muttering to me like, "Yeah, man, she's just my daughter. And I'd love to get to talk her, but I never get to—"

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: [chuckles]

Travis: And like that, it cracked me up so much. And like—

Griffin: Incredible mustache on that man.

Travis: Oh my god, powerful.

Griffin: My head cannon for Mutt is like is pop-pop Crawford's mustache.

Travis: The man who taught me all about metal detection, just—

Griffin: Oh, fuck yeah.

Travis: Yeah, very much—

Griffin: Coolest dude.

Travis: Very much.

Clint: It was a very good—

Griffin: All right.

Clint: Energy, Trav.

Griffin: I am going to start imposing a one answer per question rule. Because we've done exactly one and we're well into this. So let's start—let's pick up the pace.

Justin: And no more than one minute per answer, everyone.

Travis: Oh my god.

Griffin: Whoa, holy shit.

Travis: It's starting to feel like a speech and debate competition, Justin.

Justin: Yeah, well, get a little discipline.

Travis: I got one here for dad from I think Fee. "When it comes to DnD classes, I'm a huge fan of mixing up flavor text and game mechanics. Phileaux is a great example of this, being an artificer, alchemist and a man of the cloth. As opposed to a class like cleric or paladin. What inspired this class choice, and did it inspire any of the rest of y'all to consider other potential background/class pairings?"

Clint: I really was excited about playing an artificer. I just, I had, I mean, goofed around with it a little bit on a couple other projects. But something about really trying to play within those confines, I seem kind of drawn to builder characters, engineer-type characters. And the fact that he was a magic user and could use magic, but the same time, had to incorporate that into some kind of physical context, the tools he used, the things he built—

Griffin: That's the coolest shit about—that's the main reason to play artificer I feel like. Is not just the stuff they can do, it's like, it's because each of their spells is like a little bomb or whatever.

Justin: I also feel like though that Phileaux is one of the best I think that you've ever done on TAZ, in terms of—or that any of us have done. In terms of like the character really working in concert with what the class is. Like everything that you would do that was part of your like toolkit, a lot of times

in TAZ the comedy is like 'this is such a weird thing that I'm able to do,' right? It's that juxtaposition. But I think with Phileaux, it was really interesting because everything you did felt very plausible within who this character was, right? There was a really good like continuity between this is who I understand this person to be, and these are the like the mechanical skills that are available to them.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: They really work nicely together

Griffin: In my head canon, when Phileaux does something with magic and technology, he is an absolute expert in his field, one of the greatest of our generation. And then when he's having to make choices out in the world, something misfires in his brain and he's like, "I put the hat on and press the button." Like there's something, there's—he knows what he knows, which is potions and technology. What he doesn't know is how to stay alive, making basic sort of human judgments in the face of danger and traps.

Clint: Well, I think that also holds—and I made a conscious effort to do that because he basically was a monk—

Griffin: Sure, yeah.

Clint: A friar who had lived in a monastery and had, you know, done his community work. And that was, you know, he hadn't been out in the world very much. And you know, and I think that that's a good analogy. I can also deal with another question or two that were on here about—well, you asked me about why he put the helmet on.

Griffin: Yeah, we have literally—I'm looking at the list of questions. There's three of them about putting the helmet on, how you felt about not having a human body. And like what twists and unexpected things happened this season. And this was I think the one that started it all, basically to go behind the curtain real quick. That was supposed to introduce to you Van Helsing in the body of Pinocchio, which Dracula trapped him in. And I was like, leaving clues like there's a skeleton. If you look around, maybe you'll find some of Van Helsing's stuff. And dad was like, zoop-bip-boop! Pinocchio. And the—I

don't know if you could pick up on the panic in my voice where I was like, "Okay, is this like a fucking... are they roommates in there? What's going on?"

Clint: What I thought was it would give control over those disembodied hands.

Travis: Now here's the thing, dad. I love knowing what you thought was gonna happen. Because from the fact that there was a skeleton strapped in there—

Griffin: A dead—

Justin: A dead skeleton.

Griffin: A dead body!

Justin: This is—

Travis: And the hands were still moving around.

Justin: This is the helmet that lets you control the hands. But at what terrible cost?

Griffin: Yeah, dad, if you were walking around and you saw a dead skeleton, former human, dead body, holding a hamburger in their hands, would your thought not be like, "I bet that hamburger is what killed—" Like that—

Clint: But who knows how—

Travis: Or would you think like, "I bet that hamburger gives me the power to fly." Like why—

Justin: The hamburger's in the danger zone, it couldn't be more than—

Clint: I thought maybe he had died happy with that helmet on and that, you know—

Justin: Maybe he died—

Griffin: He wanted to do die—

Clint: Centuries—

Griffin: And it came true.

Clint: Centuries ago, and—no, that really is what I thought.

Justin: He died of dehydration because he never wanted to stop controlling the hands—

Clint: He never wanted to stop.

Justin: With the hat.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: But once it—I gotta tell you, I was completely shocked with the Pinocchio thing. I did not see it coming.

Justin: No kidding?

Clint: But I almost immediately embraced it because it was such a funny concept. And it kind of—it kind of gave me an out in the fact that, you know, suddenly this character, it would be so funny to see this guy—and I wouldn't be necessarily tied to the whole cleric religious—

Griffin: Yeah, sure, sure.

Clint: Character, which Brother Phileaux was. And I was a little hesitant about playing Brother Phileaux. And I gotta throw this in, my inspiration for him was a fictional character named Brother Cadfael, who was a monk who solved mysteries. A great book series. And that was kind of what that was. But I didn't want to play necessarily another... you know, religious character—

Griffin: Straight-up man of the cloth, yeah, sure.

Justin: Yeah.

Clint: And the fact that then Pinocchio could then become not a tank, but—

Griffin: The pope, yeah.

Clint: A fighter and—

Justin: The way it—

Clint: All these other—

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: The way it went though, and the way he accepted it so quickly, I think those two—that's a really good example of like where randomness and choice kind of like make a new reality when you're doing a role-playing story. Because like that vibe of, "I put the hat on and I'm fine with what happened," it gave Phileaux this vibe of like—I don't know, he doesn't make a lot of good choices. But things seem to basically work out for him okay.

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: Like, he's—it's—

Griffin: I—

Justin: It's like, it reminds me—I was rewatching Deadpool 2, and reminds me a little bit of Domino. [chuckles] You know what I mean? Like the bus crashing around Phileaux because he's crossing the street at an opportune moment.

Clint: Because he has good luck powers?

Justin: Right.

Clint: Yeah.

Griffin: I also feel like there is a... I feel like there is a meta story happening about Phileaux, where he is a man who is somewhat detached from reality. And I think that's maybe a facet of his origin. But the quickness with which you were like, "Yeah, no, I'm a puppet now, and I love being a puppet." And then there was a scene when you met Ahn, where you found out that the turbo cardinal had turned into a vampire and killed everyone in your whole order.

And Van Helsing was trying to check in with you after like, "Hey, man, are you doing okay?" And your response was like, "Yeah, you know, I'm getting really used to being a puppet." And Van Helsing was like, "Okay..." I tried to play it more like Van Helsing is worried about you a little bit. And so I tried to slide in little warnings to you throughout as Van Helsing like, "Hey, man, just don't lose sight of the stuff that—" And you're like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. Anyway, I'm gonna turn myself into the pope internet."

Justin: [chortles]

Griffin: Like there's a—like it's a character who I think is genuinely very interesting. Because it's like, I don't think Phileaux is completely in touch with—

Clint: Yup. And it sounds apocryphal, but I think going into the puppet body, I decided, well, I think you would lose some humanity.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Clint: Not all of it. Not all of it. Still a good dude.

Griffin: Anyway, we broke our one answer per question—

Travis: Immediately! Immediately broke it!

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: But I answered four questions.

Griffin: Yes, that—we did. I will say also on the subject of other big twists, when you guys killed Ahn, didn't think that was going to—my thought was like this could go one of a few ways. You take the sword out and you're like, "Yeah, I'll keep the sword." And then Ahn comes back and then you have to—maybe you have to fight a god, what? But then you just like did it.

Justin: Yeah, we just killed—

Griffin: And killed him.

Justin: Killed a god.

Griffin: And you took Excalibur, or took Xcalibur and I was like—

Justin: You didn't think we're gonna—you had to know we were gonna take the sword?

Griffin: This is the second time I've been sort of... my hubris has been my undoing.

Justin: Got it.

Clint: [chuckles]

Justin: You can't put it in front of us not to—supposed to steal it.

Griffin: Yeah, absolutely.

[theme music plays]

[ad reads]

Griffin: Okay, another question...

Clint: I got one for you. May I read one? Raps asks, "How many pages of Dracula's diary did you have prepared for the episode's intro? Were you

picking which one to use depending on what the party's goal was? Or did you have specific information you needed to give out for that episode and then improve the page's contents on the day? Thank you—"

Travis: Improv.

Clint: "For all you do."

Griffin: Yeah, improv the pages. I did improv the pages.

Clint: Oh. [chuckles]

Griffin: No, I mean, it would be—it would be—it would—I would love a world in which I could write an entire diary for Dracula and then as we play an episode be like, I bet this will be germane today. But I did write all of those as part of sort of my loose prep for each episode. And sort of think about—I don't really love the 'previously on' thing, like as a rule on any show. And so having it be a kind of, I don't know, diegetic part of the of the show I thought was a good solve for that.

Justin: Thank you.

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: I just did the last season, so I thought you were talking about me. I'm so sorry, Griff. Go ahead. [titters]

Griffin: Oh, hey, I got one from Steve. "How fun was it performing these characters in live shows? Now that the campaign is over, will you continue to use the Versus Dracula characters in live shows?"

Travis: It's a—I mean, I think that Mutt is one of my favorite characters to perform live. A little bit because his costume is basically just clothes, which is nice.

Griffin: A huge upgrade, yeah.

Travis: Huge. But it also is just like, man, it's really fun to play these characters that we've spent a lot of time with and are very comfortable playing. But without a lot of burden of like rich inner life so much. Of like, there's very little of like, "Well, they wouldn't do that. Oh, and they've already interacted with this person." And like, "Oh, we've had this big character development, so they wouldn't make that comment anymore." It's very much just like playing a cartoon character. Of getting to be like, yeah, man, I just get to step in and do it and react to the thing the way that they would react to it, and have fun with it.

Griffin: Yeah. I will also say as DM for it, having just a huge slate of public domain works to try and like choose from is like just enough of a boundary on prep work and idea stuff, that it has been very helpful to just look at it and be like, "Oh, fuck. I don't know, we could do Great Gatsby."

Justin: I have one I want to ask.

Griffin: Yeah?

Justin: "I loved this season," says Abby. "Were there any plans that had to be changed or reworked due to unexpected character deaths or crazy rolls? IE, was the Wolfman, Ahn, or Frankenstein going to have a bigger role that got cut short? Short." You touched on a couple of these. "What was the original plan for Van Helsing before Brother Phileaux pushed that button?"

Griffin: Yeah. I did some of it. Killing Ahn, I did not expect and was wild. Although I was happy to kind of like, I don't know, tie back into that at the end with Mutt's sort of scene. Frankenstein, I don't know. I had Frankenstein pretty fleshed out, and was then just kind of like going to use him as I was going to use him. But I don't like forcing, I don't know, character interactions down your guys' throats. And so, you kind of just hung out with him for a little bit, cut his arm off. I had a beat where I was considering bringing him back in at the end. But again—

Justin: It wasn't very memorable the first time, I guess. [chuckles] So, I'm not sure it would have hit, you know?

Griffin: Yes. I think Wolfman getting killed was a huge surprise. Did not expect that.

Travis: I feel like I tried to give the Wolf Man plenty of opportunities.

Griffin: Yeah. No, yeah, no. But that was—I don't know, we haven't played like that in a while. Where a character just vengefully slays—

Justin: Here's—here—

Griffin: Another character.

Justin: Okay, this is actually—

Griffin: It's great! It's fuckin' amazing—

Justin: I didn't get to touch on the—

Griffin: And a great character moment, but—yeah?

Justin: I didn't get touched on that, but I think that one of the things that was really helpful is clear good versus evil. Like clear sides. And we—dramatically, that's not always the most interesting. But if you're not trying to do a drama, it's pretty helpful. [titters] To know that like that's a bad guy. And even if it's not a bad guy, there's something about the iconographic power of some of these characters where like even if you kill them, you know you're not really killing them, right? Like, even in the fiction—

Griffin: Sure.

Justin: Of the worlds we've made, like... you're not gonna kill Dracula. I mean, you can't, you know, you're not gonna kill any of these guys. They could come back anytime, it's magical. And I think—

Griffin: I mean, I have a great idea to that effect that I had ready this season, but did not end up deploying.

Travis: I do want to highlight, I think the Warehouse kind of chapter of it was maybe some of the most fun I had.

Griffin: I think it was my favorite, yeah.

Travis: The like series of like—it was a great kind of like throw off joke when we talked about everybody having to intricately go back and re-bite like the—of like trying to like track like, "Okay, then you bit me, and I bit you."

Griffin: Yeah, we were making up entire world rules in real time, which is fuckin' so fun. And then having to like say like, wait a minute, if that's how—if that's how wolfmanism works, then that's got to be crazy for everybody who's a wolf person. It's got to be just a constant—you would have to—your Google calendar would be like, "Bite Ricky. Bite Dave. Get bitten by Ricky." Like—

Justin: There was a moment I think I may have misread it, but like it was one of those moments where as we were doing it there's that sense of like, maybe we should just stay here? [titters] Like, maybe we should forget about Dracula and just live in this situation for a few weeks.

Travis: The payoff with the goldfish made me incredibly happy.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: The—

Griffin: Yeah, where he became a revolutionary against the Wolfman forces. I feel like, to get back to Godwin killing Wolfman, I feel like Godwin was great for me this season to remind—to like keep the stakes in mind. I feel like you had the best sort of motivation to keep going and really like were great at pulling stuff along. But like, we would get in situations where, and the Warehouse was a great example of this, where these are monsters. Like these are monsters who kill and eat human beings. Like they are—and they're fun. They're fun guys to party with. But like, I think also there's this other side of every monster in this story where it's like they're really likable. They also murder people.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: They murder people! And a lot of 'em eat the people. And so Godwin was great at being like, "Don't forget, they also murder and kill. Like these are dangerous creatures and they are sympathetic and fun to hang out with, but like they are killers." And I felt like that was genuinely helpful also for me as DM to be like, you're right.

Travis: [chuckles]

Griffin: These are dangerous monsters. You would want to slay them.

Clint: Speaking of Godwin, we have a question from Pseudonym. And this is one I've wanted to know about. "I've always wondered about the body that Lady Godwin's head was grafted onto. I know she was a gladiator of some kind who won every battle until her last one, but was there ever a fuller backstory there? Have you ever considered introducing the body's previous owner as another character?"

Justin: Okay, so—

Clint: "And why is the name—why is the axe named Jennifer Myers?"

Justin: So, they—okay, so I was puzzled by this, but they haven't heard the last episode of the season, right?

Clint: Oh!

Justin: At this point.

Griffin: Oh, yeah.

Clint: Right.

Justin: So they wouldn't have heard...

Griffin: At the end—

Justin: At the end, there's an incredible teaser about—

Griffin: Yes.

Justin: The anti-Godwin. [titters]

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: Which is... [titters] Which is an idea—

Travis: God-lose.

Justin: That came to me like as—[titters] that morning. Like, "Oh, shit!"

Griffin: It really was an incredible moment of collaborative storytelling where Justin was like, "Shut the fuck up."

Travis: "And read this."

Griffin: "I wrote this thing and it's the introduction of the anti-Godwin. And this is—this is my ending." I appreciate that—

Justin: [chortles] It was not collaborative—

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: So you're being sarcastic—

Travis: Especially after it came after a pretty lengthy like, "Oh, and what's Mutt up to?" And [Justin's??] like, "Okay, cool." And now he has 30 seconds of introducing this script that Justin wrote. Read it!

Justin: It's just a—

Griffin: It also—

Justin: It's a great gag, and I couldn't do it with any help—[chortles]

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: History needed it and I couldn't risk anybody else getting their fingerprints on it.

Griffin: If you could attempt to remedy one sort of small plot hole for me in this moment, live in person. When you all sieged the City of Lumino and crashed the car, Dragula, you did see all of your bones go flying out of the trunk of the automobile.

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: Did those bones then sort of re-muscle-ize and—

Justin: So you saw the bones?

Griffin: I think you saw the bones—

Justin: So you just saw the bones. So, Griffin, what you're saying is, you never saw me die. [titters] Interesting!

Griffin: Okay, so the suggestion here is that the anti-Godwin that shows up at the end has no bones.

Travis: Or different bones.

Justin: They're not my bone—no, man, it's not my bones.

Griffin: "That's not my beautiful bones!"

Justin: [titters]

Clint: [chuckles]

Travis: What's Jennifer Myers? What is Jennifer Myers—

Griffin: Yeah, what the fuck is that?

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: [chortles]

Griffin: Was it just the first name that came to your mind?

Justin: Jennifer Myers, I thought it was really funny to... I always think it's funny when there are like hard names for weapons, right? Like Oathbringer or whatever, right? So—

Griffin: Sure, sure.

Justin: If the sword is just named—I like the idea—I have had a lot of named weapons.

Griffin: Mm-hm.

Justin: And I have continued that proud tradition in our next arc. [titters]

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Of another named axe. But I just really like the idea of a mundane name for a weapon, because she had no real connection to it. So it was just like—I feel like someone said pick a name for it. And she just... picked the first name—

Griffin: Said two names, yeah, sure.

Justin: That came to kind.

Griffin: I love that.

Travis: I'll tell you what threw me, is the first time I heard it, for some reason, my brain connected it to Stephenie Meyers, who I think wrote the Twilight books.

Griffin: Yes—

Travis: And I—at first I was like, is it named after an author? And my brain just like chewed on that for like four or five episodes. And wouldn't let go of it.

Justin: I—here's—okay, here's the actual like... I have gotten more comfortable, and I think it is a kind of thing that is just specific to this kind of thing that we do. I think that it's okay to throw out stuff that doesn't land initially. And that can feel kind of uncomfortable. But I've gotten pretty comfortable with just opening my mouth and seeing what comes out and then finding it later, right? Because—

Griffin: Yeah, sure, sure, sure.

Justin: You—I don't—if I throw out a completely—and this is something we've tried to do with other characters, I think, and it doesn't work. If I try to have pages upon pages of mythos figured out for myself, it's not very interesting to figure out. But if I have like questions for myself, like why is the axe named Jeffrey Meyers? I thought I'd have a satisfying answer to that by the end of the season. Didn't work out that way.

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: You know, not all the—

Griffin: I did consider the axe at one point becoming sentient and being like—

Justin: We've done that. We've done that though.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: We've done sentient—well, guys, we've been doing this for 10 fucking years!

Justin: I know.

Griffin: We've done everything at this point!

Justin: Except not murdering. [chortles] Like other than that, like, they have to have axes.

Griffin: I'm pretty sure—

Justin: So like, do you not want them to talk? Like—[titters]

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: All right, what else do we want to get up on?

Clint: Trav, you got one you want to ask?

Travis: Daran asks, "This season of TAZ has been my favorite since Balance. I'm dying to know, what song was stuck in Dracula's head?"

Griffin: Oh...

Travis: I assume it was 311's Amber is the color of her energy?

Griffin: [titters] So, that was—I was trying to think of like a resolution for Dracula. And this was me like leaning into my baser instincts, of like what if the villain did have like a secret motivation for the things that he did. Beyond like biting everyone, biting everyone in town. And I am very interested in the concept of like when an immortal being eventually loses their mind. Because like if you're alive for too long, I can't imagine that continues to be a pleasant experience mentally.

And so the idea of like Dracula being driven to do all of this wild shit because he had a song stuck in his head for several centuries, and how to resolve that. So the song that was stuck in his head, I tried to set up as at least having the notes C-A-B-B-A-G-E in it. But it's not—that wasn't a reference to—it was not like if you punch those into some sheet music, you're gonna play, you know, Five for Fighting Superman or something.

Travis: So there wasn't a specific song that you had in mind?

Griffin: No, I wasn't like sourcing some—I wasn't doing a needle drop. And I could have done it with some sort of public domain music that—maybe I'll explore that for next season.

Justin: Travis, I have a question here from Coliv. "I didn't expect Crawford's change of heart about killing the Invisible Man, but I really liked how it played out. Did Crawford's decision surprise you in the moment? Have the other players ever been surprised by their own character's choices?"

Travis: So, I just wanted to—because I know we talked about it, but I did want to—when that was happening, I felt my own impulse to be like, time for a big, dramatic scene and resolution to this thing. And it was just like, yeah, that's not—not only does that not fit the moment of the thing, it just wasn't what that would be. And I started thinking about like very much, you know, the kind of like rugged Appalachian man I was kind of basing Mutt off of. And that idea of like, hm, I'm gonna have a big, emotional moment. And it just didn't resonate there. And I just like the idea of him being like, "Yeah, I get it. I see the problem. We don't need to figure that—"

Griffin: I see what you're trying to do. That was very much a conversation between Travis and Griffin, in addition to the conversation between Invisible Man and Mutt. Of me saying like, are you sure you don't—are you sure that you don't want to make more of a meal of this? Are you sure, man?

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Okay. I'm glad it went the way that it did, though.

Travis: But it's like if a friend started saying like, "Hey, man, I just want to talk to you about this problem—" And you instantly understand the problem that they're addressing and you're like, "Oh, yeah, I get it. You're absolutely right. I will work on that." But they've been preparing like a full explanation of it and I'm like, "No, no, no, I get it. Yeah, you're right. I do need to work on that."

Justin: Here's one I think is interesting. "In past TTAZZs, you've talked about the balance between really fleshing out the PCs before a campaign versus keeping it vague and discovering it as you play. How do you guys feel

about the characters in TAZ Versus Dracula in terms of pre-planning and discovery?"

Griffin: Yeah, Juice, I mean, you touched on this with Godwin, right? Like leaving questions open.

Justin: Yeah. Here is one—here is one thing that I didn't... that is—that—I don't know, is interesting about Godwin. I thought at least that. And this is in terms of like pre-planning and discovery or whatever. I came up with the idea of—I like the idea of, I wanted to do some sort of barbarian, but I wanted to like really play against the type of the character. So I—and I really like playing high-status characters. And I thought that like a high society woman who has a barbarian's body was like a really—I think that was a fun idea.

Griffin: Who's your most high status? Augustus Parsons?

Justin: I mean, if you think about like Taako is high status, Augustus is high status—

Griffin: Yeah, that's a fair point.

Justin: You know, I like playing that kind of character. I think it's fun. So I came up with the idea, and as I started playing it—and this is something that like didn't occur until we started being in the show. The drama of her story was a really close parallel, unintentionally, to people who are in bodies that they don't love and that they aren't comfortable in. And I had—and I realized as I was doing it like, well, I don't want to try to tell other people's story. Even though I didn't—especially not one that I like didn't set out to tell, right?

So I had to make the decision at that moment that like... she is gonna be someone who this body that she is in, it's about someone who is loving the body that they're in and learning to love the body that they're in. And that was not a story that I had to—like that I set out to tell. But it was one that I had to kind of become aware of as we were doing it, right? Because otherwise—and we have definitely done this before. Just through improv-ing and then sort of like finding the things that feel organic, because you have

lived them so many times and heard the story so many times, like you end up unintentionally paralleling stuff that you didn't necessarily—

Griffin: Yeah, of course.

Justin: Plan to tell.

Griffin: Yeah. I think you did a good job with that. I'm not the right person to make that call—

Justin: I don't know about that, Griffin. Who better?!

Griffin: [guffaws]

Travis: As far as Mutt goes, there was very little pre-play—like, I think of any character I've ever played in Adventure Zone or anything else, it was the one that I most said like—

Griffin: I wonder if I can find the email pitches for these—

Travis: Yeah, that I was like—

Griffin: Because I'm pretty sure some of 'em are—

Travis: I know I wanted to be like an Appalachian like mountain man, monster hunter. And I think Griffin had asked like what the motivation is for like why he wants to kill Dracula. And I think I was like, "Yeah, like a family of monster hunters and like they—" But then like the stuff with like the Invisible Man and go get his teeth to make—like that was all like, okay, cool, man. And what I really actually loved about that and continued to be a thing throughout, is that there was no passion in Mutt's desire to kill—oh, no, I think it was like he wants to retire from monster hunting.

But doesn't want to do it with like the Muttner family name being like associated with failure. So wants to kill Dracula so that he can comfortably retire. And like, so there was no passion in it. There was no like, "I am a monster slayer," or good versus evil. It's just a job, you know? It's just like, "Oh, I do it because that's what the Mutter family does." And getting to play

it as like not like full of vitriol and emotion, but just like, yeah, man. It's what I've always done. It's what I know, man.

Clint: I think for Phileaux, first of all, I think the big prep for me was learning the new class, learning the artificer. And I think that kind of informed a lot of Phileaux/Pinocchio's personality after that, because he had to be a scavenger. And I think that became kind of a keynote of his personality that you know, he'd pick up this junk and you know, saved his own body and used magic to shrink things down into components. And that whole junk dealer MacGyver kind of angle I think was kind of informative for—he's a cross between MacGyver and Fred Sanford!

Griffin: I can see that.

Travis: I loved the sense of experimentation that Phileaux approached everything with. I also want to highlight when Phileaux turned into a fish to swim into the heart and swim up the bloodstream. And that was one of my favorite moments as Mutt, is that I was like, "I'm gonna sneak over there. You guys wait here, and I'll signal you when the coast is clear." And then you guys both instantly did other things.

Griffin: Just beefed it, yeah.

Travis: And in character being like, okay. And then Mutt turns back, and neither one of them are there! [chuckles]

Griffin: It's no fun to just hide.

Travis: I know—

Griffin: To have your thing be hiding.

Travis: It was perfect.

Griffin: I did want to just real quick, I found Justin's Slack message to me. December 14th, 2023. "You think a barbarian would be okay? A fighter just looks really boring." Me; "Sure." Justin; "Okay, here's the pitch. She has body parts from several different fighters, but her head doesn't know about

fighting. So rage for her is like letting muscle memory take over. Oh, oh, oh, fuck, her head is like Maggie Smith."

Travis: [chortles]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: That's the end of communication between me and Justin on his character.

Justin: Oh, that's how—and that's how the magic happens, folks. That's how the—

Travis: Yeah, there it is!

Griffin: "Oh, oh, oh, fuck."

Justin: That is the character creation—oh, oh, oh, fuck.

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: Her head is like Maggie Smith. Kick ass, dude. This one's for me, but I think we can all talk about it because it's a question that shows up in a lot of these or—let's see. Zip and a lot of others say, "This question's for Griffin. I was curious to know if there was a public domain character you really wanted to use, but for some reason, they got put on the cutting room floor? Also for everyone else, was there a character you really wanted to see in the adventure once you knew Griffin was going for public domain characters?"

Justin: Is this your trailer for upcoming live shows? [titters]

Griffin: No, I don't have any live show ideas. I have some if we wanted to return to TAZ Versus something else for like another short season, some ideas. But I don't think I'm like, I don't know, sitting on big ones. But man, if you look at the list of public domain characters, it's fucking crazy how much stuff is on there.

Justin: Thank you, humanity. [chortles]

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Thanks, humanity.

Travis: Thanks for being around so long.

Justin: Griffin, that is such a wild thing to say, man. [chuckles]

Griffin: What do you mean? I think—

Justin: If you look at all characters ever created in human history, other than the last 75 years, we've really done some amazing stuff over the millennia.

Griffin: No, I'm saying as a—as a—

Justin: Like Homer? [titters]

Griffin: [guffaws]

Clint: Ooh!

Justin: Okay, have you guys seen—

Griffin: No, wait—

Justin: Where Dizzy is this wild man, he's going to all the different islands. We could do that for free! Like no problem.

Griffin: This is what—

Travis: We don't have to pay Homer's estate a single dollar!

Griffin: I mentioned this earlier, right? I think that there are a lot of ways of looking at the choices that largely I have made this season—

Justin: Sorry. Just real quick, I love this. Griffin, just, I want to say TAZ Versus commedia dell'arte before I forget about it.

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: Because—

Griffin: Yeah, yeah, put that out there.

Travis: TAZ Versus Dante's Inferno. Okay, go on Griffin. If you...

Griffin: You hear about The Dark Pictures Anthology.

Justin: [chortles]

Griffin: And you think—

Travis: [chuckles]

Griffin: That is a—that is a crass marketing effort to take these great books—

Travis: Is Guernica in the public domain yet? Can we do TAZ Versus Guernica?

Griffin: To take these great works and put them into the grinder to fill with the Tom Cruise sausage, you see that you say gross. As an artist, a capital A artist and writer, looking at the list of public domain works is like challenges that are fun and exciting, I feel like. How can we do a wolf—how can we do a Wolfman, how can we do a Pinocchio and have it make sense in this world? That's so much easier than just coming up with a whole new fuckin' idea.

Justin: Well—

Griffin: That could be—

Justin: It does—

Griffin: That could be anything!

Justin: Kidding aside though, I know we kind of backed—

Griffin: Not kidding! That's 100%—

Justin: No, we backed into it—

Griffin: On the nose.

Justin: With a joke sort of. But like it is—I think another strength of this season is that so much of the like chunky shoe leather of world building is sort of pre-built, right? It's Dracula, moving on. Like, you know what I mean? Like—

Griffin: Yeah, right.

Travis: There's a shared like vocabulary.

Griffin: And then anything we—and then anything we do and any choices we make with those characters is the informative stuff. Like, okay, it's like Dracula, but he loves to party with Wolfman. I know that about—yeah, it was—it's fuckin' great. It's genuinely super-duper—especially for live shows, it's so fuckin' hard to come up with an idea for a live show. It is so hard to come up with an idea of something that's gonna work in like an hour and a half—

Travis: You gotta onboard the—

Griffin: With some wiggle room if like—

Travis: Whole audience with—yeah.

Griffin: If things go wrong and there's an audience. And like there's all these different parts that are just like impossible to start putting down the groundwork for. And having the prompt of *The Great Gatsby* or—

Clint: *Moby Dick*.

Griffin: Moby Dick is like, yeah—it's like, oh, okay, well, how can you turn Moby Dick into like a DnD thing? That's so—that's so actionable and so exciting and so fun to like figure out how those two things interweave. And so like I genuinely, I don't look forward to going back to a season where I don't have this huge like... I don't know, creative pool to be able to—

Travis: I think Sherlock Holmes would be fun.

Griffin: Holmes is big. Travis like—I think the only request I got all season for like, "Can you please put this guy?" Was Sherlock Holmes in your sort of like conclusion. But I felt like Mutt had so much stuff that he had changed about the world fundamentally—

Travis: But not about him! Mutt was unchanged. [chuckles] There was no character arc!

Griffin: Yes, no, absolutely. He was the—he was the rock in the middle of the Zen garden.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: That is not interested in shifting around.

Clint: But you know, there's a lot of detective fiction that could be parlayed into—I mean like, some Agatha Christie?

Griffin: If I—if we did do Sherlock Holmes, I would want to play a different game. I would want to play—I would want to play Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective.

Justin: But like it's so weird to do—like we have played a game called Sherlock Holmes and a Vampire before. It's very wild if we were to do it. [titters] Like...

Griffin: A different Sherlock Holmes game than our Sherlock Holmes and a Vampire game?

Justin: Yes.

Griffin: With Sherlock Holmes and a Vampire?

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah, that's a good point.

Clint: Can I ask—may I ask one?

Griffin: Sure, sure.

Clint: From Theo. Theo is very complimentary about how we're not quite as bad DnD players as we used to be.

Justin: Love all that compliments in these guys, really hits home. Thank you. [titters]

Clint: Thank you, Theo.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: But then Theo asks, "And what is something in the world of TTRPGs that you are yet to explore and looking forward to in the future?" I would like to lead off by saying we have really wanted to do like a big hineliney... space opera.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Clint: You know, with—

Griffin: We do kind of do that already.

Clint: Well, I know. Yeah, well...

Griffin: With Hootie and the Nannies.

Clint: Hootie and the Nannies.

Travis: And a little bit with the star blaster—

Justin: That world is so much more—I mean, this is the thing about Hootie and the Nannies though—and like some people may not even be—I don't know, if you don't listen to the live ones, you haven't heard of Hootie and the Nannies. But like—

Griffin: You've never heard Hootie and the Nannies.

Justin: It's an original. Like, the idea of like a space opy is like, is a—is a—I like that vibe better than—that's a more fun space world than we're gonna make if we set out to do like, we want our Mass Effect.

Clint: True.

Justin: You know? But...

Griffin: Yeah, sure, right.

Justin: I'm still very interested to see... I wanna—we've always tried—talked about trying to do a horror. And like, I don't know—[titters] if we could pull it off. I legitimately don't know if we could make it work.

Griffin: I mean, Monster of the Week is very much a horror—

Travis: Eh.

Griffin: Game.

Justin: Yeah, but like that never got—we had like—

Travis: That's Monster of the Week. I mean, I wouldn't call Supernatural like a horror—

Justin: It's exciting, like you're not trying to—you're not trying to scare people—

Griffin: Scare you.

Justin: Right? Like, I don't know that we've done one, other than I guess like... No, I mean, I don't think we've done one trying to scare people. And I don't know that we could. Like, I don't know if we could—I don't know the context in which we could expose people to that. Like we talked about trying to do something live around Halloween, but it's like, that may be an absolute bomb like live on stage.

Griffin: I still really—I still really want to play Ten Candles. Do you guys remember that one? Me telling you the premise of—

Travis: Oh, yeah.

Griffin: You have 10 candles and it's sort of like your HP. And you have these cards with your like traits on it that you burn in order—in a—with one of the candles in a little bowl. I don't know if we could do that in a live show, actually, because I don't think that most theaters will allow you to set flame to paper on stage.

Travis: Yeah, no. Yeah.

Justin: Probably let you use electric candles.

Travis: I—

Griffin: That's not as cool.

Travis: I think though in general, another one of the things that I think worked in this season as far as like stuff we haven't explored yet, is I think that sometimes you can get in your own way by trying to say like I want to do something I haven't done yet. Something completely original, something that doesn't feel like I'm rehashing old stuff. And I think that isn't necessarily always conducive to creativity.

Griffin: Sure.

Travis: Where I think like for example, I think one could make a comparison between like Merle and Phileaux, both men of the cloth and blah, blah, blah. But they ended up being wildly different characters. And like, you know, making different choices than each other would make. And so I think that trying to get into a mindset of like, well, I want to do something completely different than we've ever done before, can block creativity sometimes

Griffin: Yeah. I also just want to say that I'm deeply interested in the entire sort of kids on bikes ecosystem of products. [titters]

Justin: Yeah. Yeah, I'd really like to do one of those.

Griffin: I don't know which of those myriad things we would want to do, but they have sort of a system for most genres it seems, so... Here's one from Helena, who says—and others who asked, "Did you anticipate this campaign running as long as it did, or did you expect it to last longer?" Definitely not the latter. This was part of a sort of initiative we've kind of taken after Ehtersea to do shorter—to do shorter seasons. Like the... what, Outre Space was... was that four or five episodes? We... yeah, I mean, we've been trying to—I guess Steeplechase. How long was Steeplechase? How many episodes? That was like 30-ish, right? That was about the same length as Dracula. Yeah, I think we've been trying to kind of like do shorter form stuff, but—

Justin: 42. Ha-ha.

Griffin: 42? Wow. I think that we had a conversation after recording a few episodes of TAZ Versus Dracula where we were like... we should do a little—we should do more with this. We should try to, you know, see how far this thing goes.

Travis: If anything, I will say as we were trying to plan for the next season, there was, hm, I would say multiple times over a series of months where someone would say to Griffin like, "How many more episodes do you think this is gonna go? So we can plan when it—"

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: And Griffin's like, "I don't know, man. Maybe eight?" And then he'd be like, "No, no, maybe 10? Maybe 12 more."

Griffin: Yeah, I think it was originally, the date I said was—yeah, it'll wrap in April. And I think it just finished up in August, so I missed that by just a little bit. It's fucking hard to figure that shit out when you're doing it weekly. It's like really tough to kind of like, I don't know, adjust the scope of the thing with that kind of turnaround.

Justin: Hey, let's talk about what we're doing next. Huh?

Travis: Ah, speaking of.

Griffin: I would love to do that.

Justin: Yeah, what's going on?

Travis: We're going to be playing poker. And then just kind of talk about the hands—

Clint: That's been done. That's been done.

Travis: Ah.

Justin: They're going to know—

Griffin: They're done it.

Justin: We got the silliness out of our system. It's time to get serious again. Hardcore—

Griffin: Let's hear—

Justin: Rules. Lots of 'em. Pluses, minuses. You won't... you won't believe how many Ds.

Griffin: When we sit in together to try and figure out what the next season is, I feel like we all kind of make hard sells for our ideas, if we have any. And I think Travis, lead off.

Travis: So, in doing this, I think it was Griffin who proposed the challenge of like think about the thing that you would run that just makes complete and absolute sense, that you would be the one do it—like that it just makes complete sense that you're doing it. And literally that night, I was trying to fall asleep and I couldn't, and it just smashed into my brain. And the next day, I got on a call with them and I was like, "Guys, one word, abnimals." And abnimals—

Griffin: Just instantly.

Justin: Yeah. It's like—

Griffin: Instantly—

Justin: Yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Griffin: Oh, fuck yeah.

Travis: Yeah, yeah!

Justin: Obviously.

Griffin: Yeah, of course that's it.

Clint: Here we go.

Travis: Abnimals is the blanket term that I use, and I've talked about on My Brother, My Brother and Me and McElroy Family Clubhouse numerous times. Of like those '90s and 2000s cartoons, of like animal heroes with muscles in places they should not have muscles. These teams of guys. And so that's the concept. And then we were going through like rule systems and everything, and nothing fit. So, I developed my own kind of very simple—it's like three and a half pages of rules for the game. And basically set up of like you have abs kind of skills that you have—

Griffin: The two skills are abs and animals.

Travis: Yeah. Ab skills and animals skills.

Justin: Easy to keep track of, yeah.

Griffin: Yeah, I don't think we need to break down—there's an episode zero that I think is probably going up.

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: But it's... it's gonna be swear-free.

Travis: Swear-free.

Justin: So if you wanna—

Griffin: No cussing in this season.

Justin: If cussing bothers you and you got people you want to listen to that don't like cussing, this won't have cussing in it.

Griffin: Yeah. Can we talk about that decision for a moment? Because that might seem out of left field for our program.

Travis: Yeah. So, as we were planning the season, talking about it and talking about like the source material that it was inspired by, we started talking about like, oh, maybe it has like a Saturday morning cartoon vibe and blah, blah, blah. And then that led to, what if it was something that people whose kids have started getting into Adventure Zone and role-playing games and this kind of thing could listen to without needing to turn the volume knob down real quick or say, "But you're not allowed to say that at school." They can say it. It's okay for them to say that word, but you can't say that word.

Griffin: Yeah, exactly.

Travis: And so—

Clint: Who do you think is gonna have the toughest time with that between us four?

Travis: Oh, it's Griffin. Are you kidding me?

Clint: Yeah.

Griffin: You say that, dude...

Justin: I pop 'em off—

Griffin: Record—record a few—

Justin: Without thinking quite a bit.

Griffin: Justin drops some heavy ones. Some heavy doobies. Yeah, it's—I am excited. I know that like Henry has an interest in TAZ, but also like it's a foul program made by bad men who say raunchy stuff non-stop. So, it'll be great, personally speaking, to have something that I can show him for that.

Justin: Killer. Well, I'm looking forward to doing it with you guys.

Griffin: Is there anything else you want to say about Abnimals?

Travis: Yeah. Any—do you guys want to say who your characters are? Or save it.

Justin: Let's save it. There's a whole episode for that. It's fun. You're gonna listen to it. It's good.

Griffin: It's good.

Travis: Oh, I will—

Griffin: You're gonna like it.

Clint: What about the—what about the music?

Travis: Yeah, without saying anything about it, the theme song is unlike anyone we've had before.

Griffin: I didn't make this. I didn't fuckin' touch this one.

Travis: Yeah, we can't reveal it, because it's coming out pretty soon and it's gonna be a whole thing. But it's maybe my favorite. I love it very much. It's just very fun, it's been stuck in my head for months.

Griffin: Yeah, and thank you again to John Legend for—I mean, oh, ooh!

Justin: Oh, sheesh.

Travis: Oh, Griffin!

Griffin: I'm not supposed to... shit.

Clint: But I do think it—I do think it's important to say that we're—another part of Abnimals is continuing this kind of footloose, fancy free, really enjoying the moment.

Justin: Yeah, it's a fun, loose—

Clint: And having fun with it. Yeah. Within the no cussing structure.

Griffin: Sure. Dad has not cussed so far. Dad is crushing the no cussing game. He's so freaking good at it.

Clint: Do you think that it's not just no cussing, but content wise? I mean...

Travis: There's—there's a—I will say that there is—

Clint: Adult content?

Travis: Thought put towards it, but no promises.

Justin: [chortles]

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: I like that, Trav.

Griffin: I think in our character descriptions, we do describe them as sexy animals, which abnimals are I think as a rule. But if that's—

Travis: It's right there in the name.

Griffin: It's—that's the baseline right there. So, if that is unacceptable, maybe wait for—we'll do—dad played a Smurf RPG when we were at Gen Con. Maybe we'll do an all Smurf season that'll be like totally TV-Y7 minimum.

Justin: So, make sure you stick with us for that and so much more.

Griffin: That is it for this breakdown of TAZ Versus Dracula. Genuinely, I just want to say again, I think it's the most fun I've had doing this show with you guys. And I really, really, really enjoyed kind of like focusing on goofs first with y'all.

Justin: Yeah.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Because that is like always the most—that's always the most enjoyable that I think us working together is, is when we—when we kind of—

Travis: And I'm sure during the break you heard all the announcements, but just real quick so it doesn't pass us by. We're going to be at Rose City Comic Con coming up pretty soon, so make sure you come out and see us there.

Griffin: Yeah. Okay, everybody! Until next time when we'll recap TAZ Abnimals. Do we want to give people like a sneak preview clip of, "When the milk came out of dad's character—"

Travis: No, we're just gonna end it—Griffin, no, absolutely not. We just talked about difficult concepts and having to explain it for children! [titters]

Clint: [chuckles]

Justin: Let's just be honest, guys, we never came up with a way of ending The The Adventure Zone Zone that didn't give us hives. We just have no way to—

Travis: I have a great idea.

Justin: [titters]

Clint: Good good bye bye.

Travis: Bye!

[The Adventure Zone Versus Dracula theme music plays]

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