

The Adventure Zone Royale: Episode 3

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Griffin: Previously...

Osham: In sixty minutes time, the flames above shall descend, and only those standing within this barrier shall survive its fury. Scattered across this island are forty-eight keys. With a key in your possession, you shall be granted entry into the Ziggurat, thereby passing this second trial. To the rest, know that while you fall short of your aspiration, your contribution to this institution will be eternally treasured.

[The Adventure Zone Royale theme music plays]

Griffin: Welcome back! Welcome back to The Adventure Zone. TAZ Royale, as we're calling it. When last we left our heroes, they were in the middle of the Trial of Abjuration. A great big fireball fallen out of the sky, racing to find keys to take shelter within the Ziggurat at the center of this floating island. Rictus.

Travis: Yeah?

Griffin: We're gonna pick things back up with you. At the top of the order, in the last episode, you had run down into a tomb in the island's graveyard, where you found a long bridge over an infinite dark chasm. You saved a young woman in sort of athletic gear from this statue, at the end of the bridge, clutching a golden key that has been trying to possess your mind.

Travis: Right.

Griffin: And her—she just took flight after you pulled her back up onto the bridge. Some spit was exchanged. It was pretty gross. And you were—

Justin: I'll say very gross.

Griffin: You were trying to decide what to do here.

Travis: Okay, so, Rictus is gonna do the most obvious thing, and kick the wall of the cave as hard as he can.

Griffin: So, you are on a bridge, kind of in the middle of this gigantic cavern.

Travis: Mm-hm.

Griffin: Tough the... I guess you could sort of run back to the entrance to do that.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: But it's not like you are in a... you know, a tunnel or anything or anything like that.

Travis: Okay, he's gonna run back to the entrance and do that.

Griffin: [chuckles] Okay. This statue watches you like, "What the fuck? What's this guy doing?" Okay, you make an attack roll against the wall of this tomb.

Travis: Okay. Do you want to know why or are you just going with it?

Griffin: Well, let's see the number, and then you can tell me why.

Travis: Ah.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: It's a seven.

Griffin: Seven...

Justin: Doesn't matter.

Griffin: Not very good.

Justin: [laughs] No matter what you're trying to do, tough guy.

Clint: Do you best!

Travis: Well, I don't know—

Griffin: What are you—what are you trying to achieve?

Travis: Yeah, I don't know here if a success or failure works for what I want to do. He's trying to break his foot.

Griffin: Oh? All right, yeah. That is a normal... that is normal.

Travis: Well, the idea being he knows that pain... right? Breaks control. Right? Because he used it to free her from her charm.

Griffin: Yes, that is true.

Travis: And so his idea is here, with a broken foot, if he gets possessed, every step he takes will cause pain and give him—

Griffin: That's fair.

Travis: A chance to break out of it.

Griffin: That's really good. Here's how we're going to resolve this, okay? If you want to really fuck up your foot—

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: I want you to tell me how you're gonna—how you do it. You kick the wall and like, I think your body doesn't have what it takes to force itself to injure itself this—in this way. If you try to imagine doing this in real life, I think you would probably struggle with the mental aspect of it.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: You are also still kind of being psychically assaulted by this thing. If you want to try something else to injure yourself or in some other way enact this plan, you will have a little bit of time to do so. But then I think, you know, one more failed attempt and you're gonna have to—

Travis: Right.

Griffin: Make another wisdom saving throw.

Travis: He is going to, with all of like the reanimation training that he's had to go through—

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Right? He's going to think about, as hard as he can, try to think of his body not as like him, but as like sections of a thing, right? The way it would be in putting together a dead body from parts.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Right? And—

Griffin: That's pretty fucked up.

Travis: Yeah. Listen, man, he's a necromancer.

Griffin: I guess that's the vibe, yeah, for sure. Okay, let's say this, how about... I think this would be a... definitely a wisdom role of some sort. [titters] You know what? I'm not gonna make you roll to see how effective this is. I like that, I think it makes sense. So, whatever you do next to try to injure yourself, I will—I will grant you advantage. You are in the right headspace.

Travis: Okay, he's gonna pick up the biggest rock that he can find and lift, and drop it on his foot.

Griffin: Okay! You find... there is like a low sort of... almost cinder block style wall on either side of the bridge right by the entrance. You're able to

find one of those blocks that is loose. I'm gonna say give me a strength check, just to see how big a rock you're gonna be able to lift here.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: Okay, a 16.

Griffin: Sixteen. A pretty big rock. Okay, you are holding it over your foot, able to hoist a fairly large block into the air. And are you—how—you're real sure—

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: About this plan? Cool.

Justin: Guys, Griffin said very large rock. And dad did not start singing Big-Ass Rock from Full Monty. And I think we should do a wellness check.
[chuckles]

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: If we don't send an officer to his house, we will regret it. [chuckles]
Who know—I hear him laughing, but that could be—

Clint: No, I—I—

Griffin: You know.

Clint: I was thinking of an even worse joke, believe it or not.

Griffin: Oh.

Clint: I was thinking—

Justin: Oh, okay, good.

Clint: He said 'biggest rock,' and I saw Ziggurat on the map, and I was trying to figure out a way to rhyme those two. So, I did—

Griffin: Wow, that doesn't even make any sense at all.

Clint: I know! I know.

Justin: Dad, you didn't—no one made you toddle that one out of the—
[chuckles] out of the dungeon.

Clint: That was not—

Griffin: Okay—

Clint: That was not gonna make the Instagram promo.

Griffin: All right... Okay, I mean, you drop a large rock. And it lands right on your foot?

Travis: Mm-hm.

Griffin: You take two points of bludgeoning damage.

Travis: Oh, okay, great.

Griffin: And you... you have fucked your foot up. You're not sure if it is broken—

Travis: Yes!

Griffin: But it is extremely, extremely ginger. And as promised, I need you to make a wisdom saving throw now, to see if you can resist this thing's thrall, as it sends out sort of another pulse of this mind control.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: Oh my god.

Griffin: No...

Travis: Well, I'm glad I did. Well, I have advantage on it from [being charmed??], but it was a ten and a six, so...

Griffin: Yes. Neither of those is enough. You are swayed. And it is like your mind splits in two. Your mind is as fractured as your foot bones. Part of you is aware of what your body is doing, the other part of you is under the thrall of this statue at the end of the bridge. And you are going to take a step towards the edge of the bridge, very, very quickly. And as the spasm of pain shoots up your leg, I want you to make another wisdom saving throw with advantage.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: Nat 20.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: Wow!

Clint: That's more like it!

Griffin: With a nat 20, I'm not gonna do what I was going to make you do, which is you regain control of your body, and you had some momentum as you were going towards the edge of the bridge—had you sort of at a sprint. But you immediately snap out of it. And in fact, another pulse of that sort of control magic goes through you, and you completely ignore it. You are going to be able to close quite a bit of distance now, but your foot's fucked up, so it's not gonna feel very good.

Travis: Yeah, that's fair. Listen, he's done a lot of mental training and stuff.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Travis: A lot separating how maybe gross the thing he's doing is from what he needs to do.

Griffin: Okay! Let me think... I mean, movement is guaranteed, right? You are... I think it is a question of, are you able to get to this key before another

pulse of this stuff comes out and hits you? So, why don't you make just a dexterity check here, and... I like what you're—I'm not going to give you disadvantage.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: That's a gentlemen's 20.

Griffin: A gentleman's 20, okay! You are able to reach the statue, and it is holding a golden key in its sort of stony grasp. I think—I think you're able to get here. It is going to emit another pulse, sort of in a panic, one last sort of attempt to get you to leap to your doom. So, make another wisdom saving throw with advantage, please.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: Another gentleman's 20, and a 13.

Griffin: That 20 definitely does it. You look—

Travis: And I look at the statue and I say...

Rictus: Not today, death.

Griffin: [chuckles]

Clint: [chuckles]

Justin: Which is, of course, a quote from one of your favorite, favorite movies.

Travis: Oh, is it?

Clint: Land Beyond Time.

Travis: Mm-hm.

Justin: [chuckles] Ow!

Griffin: You okay, Juice?

Justin: I pulled something yesterday hauling set around, and now every laugh—

Travis: Oh, I thought—I thought dad did psychic damage to you. [chuckles]

Justin: Every laugh does psychic damage to me now, man. [chuckles] This is what psychic damage is.

Griffin: It's sort of like... eye sockets were glowing with this sort of ominous light, starts to... starts to fade a bit. And as that happens, the hand unfurls and releases a golden key into your grasp.

Travis: Cool. I leave, just to establish that clearly.

Griffin: Sure. Next, let's hop back over to Lorovith. Lorovith, you had just scaled this cliff's face towards a cavern that you had seen, after claiming a strange crystal that seemed to grant you the memories of some other wizard, granting you the power to absorb elements. You were scaling this cliff up towards the cave. You were a bit slower than the Yellow Elemental Ranger, who you saw scale the cliff face, run into the cave.

And then after a spout of flame shoots out of the cave, you see her crystal go flying away into the sky, and hear the chime of a fallen competitor. Moments later, the other three Elemental Rangers, who were kind of conspiring about how to get this rock away from you earlier, they reach the top of the cliff face. And the Red Ranger runs up to you and says:

Red Ranger: Ah, greetings, friend Goliath, I'm... I'm afraid we got off on the wrong foot. I'm Ignacio, the Elemental Ranger of fire. Have you seen where our teammate, who looks a lot like me, but in a yellow sort of color palette, where she went?

Lorovith: My friend, she has become ash, and I can't imagine how hard that is for you.

Ignacio: She's... what do you mean?

Ignacio: She was your friend, and now she is unto dust. It is sad, yet inevitable.

Griffin: He looks around, and then he looks at the cave and sees like scorch marks on the ground outside. And he's wearing a full helmet, covering his face, but his body language changes in a way that tells you that he's pretty bummed out. [chuckles]

Justin: Can I ask a clarifying question, Griffin?

Griffin: Yes, please.

Justin: The—okay, I got this crystal.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: And it gave me magic powers.

Griffin: Right.

Justin: The crystal that—or the gym, or what have you, that just was like.... [chuckles] spawned off of her corpse.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Is that—is there—

Travis: The loot.

Justin: The loot. Is that—is there a value to—is that the same kind of crystal? Is there a value to trying to track that down, or what's up?

Griffin: It flew like way far away, off into the distance.

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: You are not sure how you would go about tracking it down. I will tell you this, now—

Justin: Yeah, if you're—if you're trying to ward me off of doing something in Dungeon and Dragons by saying there's a lost gem and you're not sure if you can find it, that's gonna put an end to a lot of quests pretty early, Griff.

Griffin: That's a good point, Juice! I will—

Justin: If you're trying to dissuade me from going to look for the power gem in the forest. [chuckles]

Griffin: No, yeah, I mean... clearly, I'm setting a sweet honey pot up for you.

Justin: Right. [chuckles]

Griffin: No, I will give you this; you are the first person to have sort of like found one of these crystals. And so, you placed it in your... your Grimoire glove. And you're able to kind of look at it and see that it does kind of look similar to the crystal that was already in there. There was one stone sort of in there. And when the other crystal flew out of the cave, it appears to be, you know, this bigger, kind of milkier crystal, like the one that you have set into your gauntlet. But they do—

Justin: Damn, if I had known it was big and milky, I would have made a reach for it, Griffin. [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Thank you for that detail.

Griffin: You see the Elemental Rangers sort of conspiring, and the Red Ranger walks up and says:

Ignacio: Well, I...

Justin: Are we—are we non—are we done with climbing?

Griffin: Yeah, yeah, you're done with climbing.

Justin: There's just this cavern, right?

Griffin: Yeah, yeah.

Lorovith: All right, well, let—here's what I'd suggest; Red Ranger, you... you're a fire user, yes?

Ignacio: Yes, I—yes, I can use fire.

Lorovith: The threat in there seems to be primarily fire-based. So, it seems to me that you would fare the best getting the lay of the land.

Griffin: Make a persuasion check.

Lorovith: Not my strong suit.

[sound of dice thrown]

Lorovith: But a natural 20.

Griffin: Holy fucking shit.

Justin: [chortles]

Griffin: Man! [chuckles]

Travis: Anything for you, my lord!

Griffin: Literally—

Justin: All right, so this is what I wanted to start doing—this is what I want to start doing a better job of.

Griffin: Okay?

Justin: Now, I want to... now that I have the 20—

Griffin: Yeah?

Justin: Now I will—now we can have a conversation about it. [chuckles]

Griffin: Right.

Justin: Okay.

Lorovith: I feel that at you as the Red Ranger, the master of all that is flame, certainly you are best equipped to suss out the situation. Or as my people say, take a butcher's around.

Ignacio: Hm... yes, you're right. I don't need to be afraid. I am the master of fire, the Elemental Red Ranger. Flames bend to my will, and my foes will be scorched. I'll be right back, dudes.

Travis: [chuckles]

Griffin: And he runs—

Justin: Okay, I want to prepare a lightning lure for when the gem comes. I really am going to make a shot at it! [chuckles]

Griffin: [chuckles] Okay, you ready in action. Sure enough, moments after he runs into the cave—[spoofs the sound of an explosion] another burst of flame shoots out. You see the remaining Blue and Green Rangers take a step back away from the cave mouth. And then seconds later, you see another one of those milky white crystals come flying out. Make an attack roll with your lightning lure. If you hit—this is going to be a tough—a tough attack, because it's a small target. I'm saying if you hit a 15 or above, you will snatch this thing.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: An exact 15.

Griffin: A 15 on the money. Jesus, man. You whip out your lightning lure. What's it look like? It's been an episode since you've wielded this power.

Justin: It is an extension from the... top of my wrist, that whips out as I extend my grasp, so it's almost like an extension of my own reach. Made of a glowing white lightning that doesn't move, obviously, at lightning speed, but it crackles quickly across to the target and wraps around. Wispy.

Griffin: Wispy. Rad. You see this white stone, you had your arm sort of like arced backwards, ready to go. And as it flies out, you whip it right on the money. And as you rip it back towards your hand, you can feel it pulling away, like as if... it is in this thing's like programming to like return somewhere. You can feel a force trying to take it. But as you grab it, that force only lasts for like a second, and then it seems to sort of acquiesce. And you are able to claim it and—

Justin: I turn to the nearest—who's the nearest Ranger?

Griffin: Blue.

Justin: Yeah. I turned to the Blue Ranger.

Lorovith: That looked quite impressive, I know. But I'll be honest with you, I very nearly missed that. I know it didn't seem it, but I was very, very fortunate. I was within a hair's breadth.

Griffin: The Blue Ranger... is going to just sort of take a step back, take a step away from you. And in fact, the Blue Ranger takes off. The Blue Ranger starts scaling back down the cliff, and the Green Ranger's like:

Green Ranger: What are you—what are you do—come on! Don't run away! We—oh... god... can I have that stone, please? We were sort of like a team and... I'm—

Lorovith: Well, that hardly seems fair, does it?

Green Ranger: Look, I just, I really would like the stone. I—

Lorovith: Oh, I like it! I like it a great deal. If liking is a determinant, then I like it very, very much.

Griffin: The Green Ranger, again, wearing this helmet, you can't quite make out their expression. But they stand there looking at you, and then kind of reluctantly follow the other Blue Ranger in climbing down the cliff and out of sight. Do you slot in this gemstone that you have recovered?

Justin: Absolutely. Welcome to the family.

Griffin: You slot it in. You are fuckin' Thanos out here with your incredible collection of power. Hold on, I gotta check Ignacio off the list. Okay! As you slot it in—

Justin: Hey, I don't know if we got a body count, but I'm taking that one, guys. [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah, for sure.

Justin: That's a direct—that is a direct talking another living being to their death!

Griffin: Yeah, absolutely. Put it—put it—put a notch on the old belt. [chuckles] As you slot it in, you see... memories that are not your own. And now you're kind of like ready for it. It is just like what happened when you slotted in the Absorb Elements spell, only this time, you are seeing the memories of this guy, Ignacio, that you were just... that you were just speaking to moments ago.

Travis: You see him giving to his community. You see him—

Justin: [laughs]

Travis: Making great change, helping those who need it.

Griffin: Talking to his grandpa who's like, "Now, son, people are gonna try to trick you sometimes, Ignacio. You have to keep your head on a swivel—"

Justin: Yeah, but then I guess you see him with like earbuds in like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, gramps, whatever!" [laughs]

Travis: [laughs]

Justin: "What are the odds?" [laughs]

Travis: "Yeah, yeah!"

Griffin: And you see the Elemental Rangers. You see these four heroes working together to defeat these great magical threats across the land, and getting these big, lucrative toy lines. And then you return to your senses and your hands ignite. And then de-ignite? I don't know what the opposite of that is. And you have learned the—

Travis: Extinguish?

Griffin: Extinguish, thank you. You learned the spell Burning Hands!

Travis: Man, you're collecting plasmids left and right, J-Man.

Justin: Heck yeah.

Griffin: No freakin' kidding, man.

Justin: Okay, so—

Griffin: All right.

Justin: Can I—okay, I have a—like a—if I had been someone who had been absorbing elements a lot in my life, I would probably already know this, but since I'm not. This sort of like fire type thing that is consuming people, whatever that is—

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Is absorb elements the kind of thing where I'm going to cast that on myself and then just like go—like be okay, or no?

Griffin: I think, based on kind of what you remember from the memories that kind of came into you, you sort of have a basic understanding of how this spell works. It doesn't make you immune to like different elemental damage. What it does is it reduces the effect on you, and it also sort of stores some of that elemental power that you can discharge with an attack.

Justin: So weak. So weak, though. Currently, I'm so weak. I would like to, here—I would like—I don't feel like I've given it like a good looksee. To what extent can I get an investigation off here?

Griffin: I think that—you can certainly make an investigation check, if you want to get kind of like up close to try and spy in there without getting hit by the flame. You I think realize now, because you've seen it twice—

Justin: Hey, wait a minute! Wait a minute. Wait a minute.

Griffin: Yeah?

Justin: I don't have to do that.

Griffin: Okay?

Justin: I want to look at the memory.

Griffin: Of Ignacio, yes.

Justin: Yeah. I don't have to get close to it, I want to like—

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: I have the memory.

Griffin: Absolutely, I love—

Justin: What's the very last thing I saw before I *toast*?

Griffin: These memories are really fresh, and for whatever reason, become a little bit more abstract. Like they hadn't finished, you know, cooking yet. But you do see the inside of this cave, which at the moment of Ignacio's death, you can tell there's like a little antechamber, a little side chamber, running off of this tunnel where the flames shot out of. And in that little antechamber, you can see a... a small little alcove containing some lockers. And there's like a little table in here. And there's a... a mostly-scorched skeleton in here with a sort of rusty pickaxe.

You can see that there is—there are actually mine cart tracks going deeper into the tunnel, that seem to start right about where this alcove is. And there is a—there's a single mine cart that has been pushed sort of off the tracks, just sort of off to the side, probably by, you know, repeated explosions. I think you also know, because you've seen it twice, that these flames didn't shoot out until someone went into the tunnel. They don't appear to be happening with, you know—

Justin: Am I able to tell from Ignacio's memory if this is like I could... this is something that could be avoided?

Griffin: I would say from Ignacio's memory, you have a lay of the land. If you were quick enough, you could probably get into that alcove before the flames hit you. But the tunnel is like about as wide as this like burst of flame is. There's no... there's no great way to be able to discern that. And you also, I will say, he could not see the end of this tunnel where this fire was coming from.

Justin: But he—I could—but I would have a—but I'd have a good shot at making it to the alcove?

Griffin: Yes.

Justin: Okay. I'm gonna cast—I'm gonna—then I will cast Absorb Elements on myself.

Griffin: So, it's actually a reaction. You actually don't have to—

Justin: It's a reaction.

Griffin: Cast it on yourself, it is—

Justin: Great.

Griffin: Whenever you take—

Justin: Well then if I need it, maybe it'll help me offset something.

Griffin: Yeah, for sure.

Justin: But I'm gonna make a... I'm gonna make a run at the alcove.

Griffin: Okay. This is going to be a... this is gonna be a dexterity saving throw. I think I will grant you advantage on it, because of the kind of like intel you have from this memory. I like that play. So, let's get a dexterity saving throw going. You are look—I'll tell you, above the table, you're looking to beat a 13.

Justin: Okay. Man, it's really, it's a negative two, though. All right, here we go.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Well, okay, so what we've got here is a nine.

Griffin: Okay, you have advantage. So, roll again, and maybe it'll go better.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: A 19, minus two, 17.

Griffin: That does go better!

Justin: That's way better than the other way it could have gone.

Griffin: You hurtle into this cavern, and you see that you have about a good 15, 20 feet or so to this alcove off to the left. As soon as you take a single

step into the cavern, you see a light at the end of this tunnel. Not like in a fun heaven way, but in a fire coming to consume you way.

You, however, are... you know exactly where to go. You saw a—you saw where you're supposed to be. You also see the sort of ashen, scorched remains of two of the Elemental Rangers, who you leap over. Before diving at the last second into the relative safety of the alcove, as flames shoot down the tunnel behind you.

Hellgrammite, in your sort of unconscious state, you can hear those voices in the distance that you could hear as you wandered into the gardens, following sweet Powder Keg Kelly. Before you were both cut down by the triple-headed razor weed. As you are cut down, you hear those voices in your unconscious state sort of like peak in intensity. And then you drift off.

And then, you come to with the extremely unpleasant sensation that you are drowning. But your panic subsides very quickly, because you realize you are not dead, and you recognize the taste of this fluid that is drowning you. You are being fed a potion of healing. You're going to take two D4, plus two healing. That is five, plus two, seven. You heal for seven points of damage.

Clint: Oh? Nice.

Griffin: As you come to and, you know, your senses return, you try to move, but you realize that you have been pretty thoroughly tangled up in a sinewy web. And you have been dragged to safety, you are no longer in the gardens. You are now on this observation platform, this wooden deck reaching out over the edge of the island, overlooking the gardens. Someone has dragged you up here, in this web. And really quickly, as you open your eyes and come to, you see the party responsible for this. Standing over you is a seven foot tall tarantula. And I think Thrikeen come in sort of—they come in many bug shapes and sizes.

Clint: Right.

Griffin: With sort of variable levels of anthropomorphism. This guy appears to be quite bug-forward. Just a big, hairy spider with pants on. He also—

Clint: Thank god.

Griffin: [chuckles] He also, over his head, you can see a sort of illusory symbol above him. And it is a symbol of a golden key. And this giant spider says:

Tarantula: Oh, you all right there, brother?

Hellgrammite: Yes... Do I owe my life to you?

Tarantula: Well, yeah... I know we're supposed to be competing and all, but I don't know, I couldn't leave a fellow Thrikeen to his death at the hand of a plant. It's shameful, and I wouldn't want that for you. So, yeah, I did. I brought you to safety. After securing the key.

Hellgrammite: I will remember you when I come into my power, and you will serve at my right hand. Thank you so much, my friend.

Tarantula: All right, kind of regretting... kind of regretting my decision now, because that was a pretty creepy way to say your gratitude...

Hellgrammite: And what is your name?

Justin: Make something up. Make something up. [chuckles]

Tarantula: Well, that is a matter of some contention at the moment.

Griffin: You see that there's two other people on this observation deck, and you piece together that these were the three voices you heard arguing right before you were cut down. This tarantula says:

Tarantula: Well, they call me The Spider.

Griffin: And one of the other two—

Hellgrammite: Right on the nosy!

Griffin: One of the other two guys, this bald man wearing sort of simple robes, says:

Bald Man: No, I'm called The Spider!

Griffin: And then there's a guy wearing like a red and blue kind of like coverall onesie, with a similar mask and a symbol of a spider on his chest. And he says:

Masked Man: No, I'm called The Spider!

Tarantula: So, there's a bit of a trademark issue that we've run into. We're trying to deliberate that amongst ourselves before I heard you being... murdered. But you can call me The Spider for now.

Hellgrammite: Well—

Tarantula: What's your handle?

Hellgrammite: Oh, I am Hellgrammite.

Tarantula: All right, Hellgrammite. I like the cut of your jib.

Hellgrammite: Thank you. May I interrupt you just for a moment? Is that my gold key? The one that I almost died over?

Tarantula: Yes, it is. I do owe you, I suppose, a small debt, as you distracted the razor weed for long enough by being killed by it, for me to snatch it with my web.

Hellgrammite: Well, to be fair, you snatched it from me, because I successfully grabbed the golden key before I was struck down. So, obviously, your web is a little off here?

Tarantula: Well, as I see it, the moment you died, your right to possess things was... was rescinded. And so, it was sort of free property. So I did take it.

Hellgrammite: Are you Lincoln Lawyering me?

Tarantula: I don't know what you're referencing. I'm just trying to do my best to stay—to stay alive.

Hellgrammite: Well, I do appreciate you keeping my key safe. Could I have it back, please?

Justin: As we evolve as artists—sorry, as we evolve as artists, I really like—I want Griffin, the—I love the choice that you could make this TAZ season, where pop culture references are just *absolutely* lost on these characters.

Griffin: Yeah. Yeah, for sure.

Justin: That there is no space. "I'm sorry, stranger—"

Griffin: No silly shit this time, man!

Justin: [chuckles] "I'm sorry, stranger, I don't—that doesn't make any sense to me."

Travis: "How is the lawyer linked in? Linked in to what?"

Justin: [chuckles]

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: You can tell that this guy wants to get out of here. Your vibe has been quite aggressive. He says:

Tarantula: Look... I got that potion for free from the apothecary... I suppose we're even Steven; I got the key, and you got your life. I'm gonna start making my way back to the Ziggurat.

Hellgrammite: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait! Perhaps there is a way I could do a favor for you, and you could give me back my key? Here's what I propose; what if we were to team up and... *ahem*, take care of the two pretenders to your title? I mean—

Griffin: That—

Hellgrammite: That would obviously help you, correct? Because you're not really *the* spider, right now you're just *a* spider.

Griffin: I'll let you make a persuasion check here. He seems uncomfortable with this suggestion, partially, I think, because you know that you can't hurt anyone else on the grounds, unless you are in a designated hurting zone. [chuckles] But also because I just don't think it is in his nature to murder someone because they have the same name. But it is a novel enough idea. So, make a persuasion check. I think if you... if you can hit a... let's say a 17 or above, this idea will take purchase.

Clint: Well, it's not going to, because I have yet to roll over ten.

Griffin: Well, this'll be your chance.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: Nope, it's not, it's a 12!

Tarantula: I'm... I'm gonna get going... There's some nasty-looking customers camped out in the red zone. I'm gonna wait 'em out, just to ensure there's not as much resistance when it comes time for me to make my way through. I wish you the best of luck and if you—

Hellgrammite: Yes.

Tarantula: If you're able to find another key, I'll see you in the next round.

Hellgrammite: I don't suppose the key would open the door wide enough for two of us to squeeze through, would there?

Tarantula: That doesn't seem—

Hellgrammite: I mean, they didn't say only one key per customer, did they?

Griffin: I think they pretty explicitly did, yeah. He's going to—he's going to just kind of walk away. You are still sort of—

Hellgrammite: Fine! Fine. That's fine. Just go on! Go on! I am rescinding the offer to make you my right-hand person! Deal off!

Tarantula: All right... okay, let's go.

Griffin: You can see the other two spiders sort of follow him as they walk away from the observation platform, leaving you tangled up in goo. My favorite—

Clint: Tangled up in goo!

Griffin: [chuckles] Damn it!

Justin: *Ha-hah!*

Clint: I'm back!

Justin: He's back from some—no. [chuckles]

[theme music plays]

[ad read]

Griffin: Rictus.

Travis: Yes?

Griffin: We are back to you. You have claimed a golden key. And I think it takes you a second to realize this, but as you are sort of like standing here in this dark cavern, you see a source of illumination above you. And you look up and you see that this illusory symbol of a golden key has appeared above your head, right as you have claimed your own key. The statue appears to be deactivated, and now you are just standing in this chasm, sort of alone. What do you do?

Travis: So, he's gonna hobble his way back to the surface and try to make his way towards the waterfall, that great grandpa ghost told him about.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: To see if the thing is still there. Because as long as he's not in the red zone, right? He's gonna draw attention to himself that he has a gold key.

Griffin: But you cannot be attacked unless you are in a red zone.

Travis: Yeah, nobody can do anything about it yet.

Griffin: Okay...

Travis: Oh, when he gets back up, there are the skeletons still a going thing? Are they still there?

Griffin: You are able to reach the top of the stairs with some effort. Your foot is very badly damaged. When you reach the top, you are able to kind of, one, get a breath of fresh air. And two, kind of get a bit of a lay of the land. Those skeletons are not there anymore, and the graveyard appears to have cleared out quite a bit. You're able to see the Ziggurat from here as you come out of the tomb.

And you can see this like... you know, these symbols that were floating overhead, denoting time and keys remaining. A good number of the keys have been cleared out at this point. And you can tell from the clock in the sky that nearly half of the time has elapsed. I need you to make a constitution saving throw. Your foot is very, very badly damaged and if, you know, trying to respect that—

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: Okay, cool, 15.

Travis: Yeah, I got a 15.

Griffin: You are going to periodically, until you get this fixed, like have to fight your... have the willpower to stay upright, with a fucked up foot. Otherwise, you are going to start taking on exhaustion. But for now, you are able to reach the top and kind of grin and bear the pain. When you get up here, like I said, it has mostly cleared out. You do see that young woman in athletic gear, still kind of like catching her breath, sitting on a gravestone. And she looks at you and says:

Athletic Aspirant: Oh, you got it!

Rictus: Yeah, I had to break my foot to get it, but I got it.

Athletic Aspirant: You had to break your foot to get it?

Rictus: Yeah, so I wouldn't get, you know, caught by the... like the charm thing. So I wouldn't—

Athletic Aspirant: That's crazy, man! That's crazy. I would never break my foot. That would hurt so bad.

Rictus: It made the most sense at the time. And it worked.

Griffin: She's wearing sort of like track and field gear. And when she took off from that tunnel, she did so with like pretty supernatural haste. She says:

Athletic Aspirant: Well, my feet are my business. Nope! That sounds bad. That sounds like I'm... I do sort of foot stuff for money. And that's—

Rictus: We listen and we don't judge. It's okay.

Athletic Aspirant: Okay, that's great. I'm... I mean, do you know who I am?

Rictus: No, sorry, I don't get out a lot.

Athletic Aspirant: Not a big sportso, huh?

Rictus: No...

Athletic Aspirant: I'm... you know, Jane. Jane Jennings. Hasty Jane Jennings. Fastest woman alive.

Rictus: Cool.

Athletic Aspirant: Yeah, I—

Rictus: I'm Rictus Ravenwood IV, heir to the Barony of, you know, the Breathless Fields.

Jane: I don't know anything about that, man. That's cool, though.

Rictus: I don't know anything about you either, so I guess we're even.

Jane: Okay, look, we're not even, because you saved me, and I do not like being in people's debt. So, when you think of how I can repay you, please let me know. And in a timely manner, please. I'm sorry for spitting in your face. I do think I can see through the fog of memory, and I do think you tried to do it first. And so like, I hope that wasn't... something untoward. And—

Rictus: No? I was trying to break the—

Jane: And you did! And you did. And you did great. I'm gonna go run off now. I gotta go find another key.

Rictus: Okay.

Jane: Honestly don't care if it's gold or not, I never have cared so much about first place. Just want to hit the podium, you know?

Rictus: Yeah.

Jane: Or I'll die.

Rictus: Okay, good luck!

Jane: Thanks!

Griffin: And she zooms off, leaving a sort of cloud of dust—

Travis: Shaped like her?

Griffin: Shaped like her in the—

Travis: [chuckles]

Griffin: Yes, full cartoon style.

Travis: Incredible.

Griffin: What do you want to do?

Travis: Hobble my way to the falls, please.

Griffin: Okay. I'm not gonna make you roll again. The falls are right next to the graveyard. You are able to sort of reach a little patch of turf next to the falls. When you get there, you see there is a man on the other side of this kind of lake that the falls are feeding into. And through the kind of like mist that the waterfall is kicking up, you can sort of see him. He is wearing a sweater and what appear to be headphones over his ears. And he's just kind of like watching you intently, as you reach the falls.

Travis: Are there any like fish in the water?

Griffin: Give me an investigation check.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: A 16. 13 plus three.

Griffin: Are there fish in the water? No, actually, there doesn't appear to be any kind of life down in the water at all. I think with an investigation check like that, like I'm gonna just sort of tell you that this island is impossible,

right? It would be impossible for, you know, a waterfall to just form out of the side of this mountain and pour over the side. This appears to be sort of like artificially, you know, generated in some way, probably by magic.

Travis: Hm... yeah, that feels like a safe bet.

Griffin: You also, I think, with that investigation check, you can see that there is still something shining behind the waterfall, in a small kind of like alcove behind it. But you are unable to tell exactly what it is.

Travis: Okay, are we like equidistant to it?

Griffin: Yeah, you guys are standing basically on opposite sides of the falls, maybe ten feet away from where the water—

Travis: This is my Moriarty.

Griffin: Okay?

Travis: I don't know. Maybe he's nice. Well...

Justin: People have never stopped to think that about Moriarty.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: No.

Travis: Maybe he tried—

Justin: Wait, what if he's nice—

Griffin: What if he's chill though? Yeah.

Travis: We're only getting it from Sherlock Holmes and Watson's perspective, is all I'm saying.

Justin: Oh, shit, Travis, you just got a fuckin' seven series order—

Travis: *Yeah!*

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: From BBC Four. [chuckles] They love it.

Travis: *Ah yeah!*

Clint: [chuckles]

Travis: I don't need this show anymore. Bye, losers!

Justin: Oh, shit, Trav, it just got adapted to America, man!

Travis: Ah—well, no, now it's ruined.

Justin: Starring a British guy. [chuckles]

Travis: Oh, it's back! It's good again. Okay, my—

Justin: That is my—that is the best thing about—[laughs] Elementary. Oh, Johnny Lee Miller.

Travis: Ah, finally, a vehicle worthy of your talent.

Justin: [chuckles] "Some people say he's still making Elementary to this day."

Travis: Mm-hm!

Justin: "Him and Lucy Liu are locked in a bunker somewhere, making season of it."

Griffin: [chuckles]

Travis: "Nobody watching, it's just liked in Cannes!"

Justin: "Nobody watches—"

Travis: "And nobody comes out."

Justin: "Episodes never go in, episodes never come out."

Clint: [chuckles]

Justin: "Royalties never go in!" [chuckles]

Clint: "Up the misty mountain!"

Justin: [chuckles]

Travis: I'm going to hobble my way to the falls, I guess? I mean...

Griffin: Yeah, I mean, you're right—you are right on the shore.

Travis: Yeah, I'm gonna try to get to where that shiny thing is.

Griffin: Okay! This will require some effort. You will either have to try to make like a pretty heroic leap here, or kind of like balance on these rocks, these stones that the falls are pouring onto, to sort of get in a position where you can try and like get through the water. The water is like, you know, it's a waterfall falling down from quite high. It's not going to like crush you or anything like that, but you do not get the sense that it will be a, you know, a shoo-in that you will be able to get through there. But you are fully, fully able to attempt that, if that is what—

Travis: Then I am fully, fully going to attempt it.

Griffin: Okay, are you trying to do sort of one big jump here, or balance on the rocks? Or what's your—what's your plan of attack?

Travis: Yeah, I think balance on the rocks. I don't think big jump is where he's at right now. Well, it depends, big jump...

Griffin: Big jump would be a sort of athletic check. And I think going through the—through the rocks would be more acrobatics, balance—

Travis: Yeah, strength isn't his standpoint, or isn't his—strength, he-he. But dexterity, like as an elf, he knows that he's better at like balancing and stuff like that. So I think—

Griffin: Sure. Okay, cool! I already told you I wasn't gonna make you do another con save. So, it sucks and it hurts, but you are not sort of exhausted. Go ahead and make an acrobatics check for me. I want you to beat a 15 in order to get through these waters safely.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: How about a six?

Griffin: No, that actually weirdly doesn't do it. You slip on one of these rocks, and as you do, you kind of get into the flow of the water, which pushes you down into the lake. And you, as you're sort of underwater here, you hear a splash. And as you look up, you can see an arm. You can see through the water, you can see that guy in the sweater is reaching down into the water to try to give you a hand.

Travis: Okay, yeah, I take his hand.

Griffin: Cool. He—

Travis: I've safely pocketed my key, right? Like, I'm not at risk of like dropping it or anything?

Griffin: Yeah, no, I wouldn't make you drop it to the bottom of the lake.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: I'm not that mean of a DM. [chuckles] "A big bird comes and swoops down and steals it—"

Travis: No!

Griffin: "Because you didn't say you put it in your pocket!" He pulls you up, and you can see this guy very closely now. He has a very gentle sort of demeanor. He is still wearing these headphones. He kind of pulls you half out of the water, grabs your wrist to try and gain some leverage. And before he fully pulls you up, he looks at you in the eyes, and he says:

Guy in a Sweater: You need to give me your key.

Griffin: We'll jump next to... Lorovith. Lorovith, you have made it into this sort of... this ready room, for a mine, that is pretty shitty as far as mines go. What with all the fire.

Justin: Uh-huh.

Griffin: You are standing in this room and have a beat here. You seem to be safe from the path of the flames. What do you want to do?

Justin: Okay, I'm gonna poke around and see what I can figure out about this room.

Griffin: Okay, give me an investigation check, please.

Justin: Hm... let's start with a good old investigation.

Griffin: Okay.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: I need answers. [titters] Sixteen.

Griffin: Sixteen, really good! You go through most of the lockers in this room. They are—they are mostly cleared out. In terms of like, you know, stuff that is in here, that appears to be like salient or whatever, you can see there's like a diagram, actually. Like a small map that appears to be sort of functional in nature. That was a dumb thing to say. Of course it is, it's a map! But you can sort of tell from—

Travis: It could be whimsical?

Griffin: It's a silly map, like a child's... map.

Travis: Like a place mat one—a child might get at a restaurant.

Griffin: Like a scavenger hunt for toddlers. No, it's a real map. It's a—

Justin: Oh?

Griffin: This is a real fuckin' map, man.

Justin: Cool.

Griffin: Yeah. And it is of this mine. You can tell that some parts of it have been sort of like scratched out with red ink, leaving just sort of like this direct path, this main shaft, straight forward. And you can see sort of a diagram of tracks on the map. So, I think looking at the map, you get a sense for, you know, how far you are going to need to go to reach the end of this tunnel. And it is a good like fifty feet. Which is not maybe as bad as you were expecting, but it's certainly longer than you can do in a single sort of sprint.

Justin: Do I notice any other similar like alcoves or anything like that, that's being mapped out?

Griffin: This—no, this is the only sort of like way off of the main track here.

Justin: Is there any protective gear lying around in this room?

Griffin: Hmm...

Justin: The lockers and all?

Griffin: There's... with a 16 investigation, I will tell you there's—there doesn't seem to be like a, you know, a flame proof suit or anything like that. But if you wanted to make a sort of like makeshift, you know, barrier or barricade or something, there's stuff in here that you could—

Justin: is there a table?

Griffin: Yeah! There's a table in here. There's a table, there's this upturned mine cart. There's this skeleton holding a sort of rusty pickaxe. That's sort of the main contents—

Justin: I'll take... I probably couldn't. Ooh—eh? Is it—eh-heh. Is it—[laughs] How's the wheels on the mine cart?

Griffin: They appear to be fine. It is not on the track. If you wanted to get this thing on the track, you would need—

Justin: Can I take it off the track? Is it... do I have the—

Griffin: It's already off the track, it's just kind of—

Justin: Can I roll it?

Griffin: Yes, the tracks go straight down the tunnel. So, you can—you can—you would—you would have a much easier time, I will say, rolling it down the tracks. In fact, if you wanted to get this thing down the tunnel, it would basically have to be on the tracks, because they're running through the center of this—

Justin: Okay, I am going to... take the cart back up to the beginning of the tracks.

Griffin: Okay?

Justin: And then what I'm gonna try to do is run alongside of it, and then hop in it. And then try to ride it in.

Griffin: Yeah, man.

Justin: So I'm gonna ride it in.

Griffin: You're gonna ride it right in.

Justin: I'll just crouch down.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Protect it, beautiful. And ride it on in.

Griffin: [chuckles] I love that.

Travis: Like a—like a level in a Diddy Kong game.

Justin: Precisely, Travis. And this episode is brought to you by the Switch 2 and Donkey Kong's thunderous rampage. Coming to you in July. [chuckles]

Griffin: [chuckles] Jesus, his thunderous rampage?

Justin: [laughs]

Travis: Yeah, man, watch out! This time, he's pissed!

Justin: He is pissed this time, Travis. I will say he's going—it's a banana-nanza.

Griffin: It's a banana-nanza, he does send out a manifesto to all—

Justin: Bananafesto! [laughs]

Griffin: [guffaws]

Travis: Ah!

Griffin: Okay, so... the first thing I'm going to need from you is a strength check to get this mine cart back on the tracks. I will say this, if you get a ten or above, you can do it. If you get a 15 or above, you can do it so quickly that you are not going to have to dodge, you know, sort of flame as you try to set up this... this contraption.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: So...

Justin: Athletics.

Griffin: Just strength check.

Justin: Just strength.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Oh, that's a 20.

Griffin: Fuck yes, man. Holy shit, guys, these rolls today are insane.

Justin: Good rolls today.

Griffin: Lorovith's rolls have been kind of crazy for the entire campaign, actually, so far. [chuckles] Okay, yeah, man, with a 20, you are able to pretty easily lift this mine cart back up off of its side. It plops down with a satisfying clunk onto the tracks. And then you just sort of like casually take a big step backwards, as another burst of flame shoots down the tunnel, avoiding you by just a few feet.

Justin: I got the pickaxe too.

Griffin: Okay! You have the pickaxe.

Travis: Don't say that he didn't.

Griffin: [chuckles] Fine. So, the mine cart's on the tracks, you have the pickax. You're gonna try and get like a running start with this thing—

Justin: Exactly, yes.

Griffin: And then hop in and take cover, right? Okay.

Justin: Yes, exactly.

Griffin: This, I think, will be an athletics check.

Justin: Perfect.

Griffin: And I think if you can hit a—you will be able to get in, it's just a question of like how many bursts of flame you're going to have to deal with. I think if you can get this athletics check with a 15 or above, you're able to get in the mine cart before the first flames arrive. Less than that, you're going to be able to get in the mine cart, but you are not going to have coverage on this first kind of blast.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: Let's see if this hot streak continues.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Oh, that's a two.

Griffin: Okay, so it does not. There's a—there's one frickin' rock in the way, and it kind of like—

Justin: Frick!

Griffin: The mine cart sort of skips up a little bit and comes off the tracks as you start pushing it. You are able to get it back on the tracks, but not before this blast of flame hits you. That is a 19 versus AC, which is going to hit. And... you are going to take six points of fire damage.

Travis: Quickly, Justin, Absorb Elements!

Justin: I'm going to cast—I'm going to cast the incredible spell. [chuckles]

Griffin: [chuckles] Okay.

Justin: Everyone, step back. [chuckles]

Griffin: It is not—it actually isn't that flashy. It's like a—because it has to happen in like a split second, it's just *pip*. But you actually can like feel the flames brushing off of your sides. It is definitely doing some damage—

Justin: What did you say the roll—I have a—

Griffin: So you take three points of fire damage.

Justin: I'm trying to get back to the...

Griffin: What's that?

Justin: It does a one D6 roll to see how much damage it mitigates, is how I'm understanding this.

Griffin: No. So, you have resist—you have resistance to the triggering damage type. Until the start of your next turn, resistance is half damage. Next time you hit with a melee attack, you can discharge this fire energy to deal an extra one D6—

Justin: Oh, with a one D6.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Got it. All right, now I understand.

Griffin: Okay! You... you take some damage, but you're able to get in this mine cart. It is going at a good clip. You can see, as it zooms down, you can see another fireball start to form. And it is forming—now you can tell the source of this fire, there is a... what appears to be a sort of crystalline model of a dragon, made of—made of, what you think at first is sort of clear crystal. As you get even closer and, you know, this model is illuminated by these flames, you can actually tell that it is actually hewn from ice. You are—in the mine cart, you are going to...

Justin: Griffin, are you telling me it's made of ice, but it's shooting fire?

Griffin: Yeah, man, shit's really, really weird here.

Justin: Dude, your brain is like—

Travis: Twisted.

Justin: Brandon Lee who, you know what I mean?! Like—[chuckles]

Griffin: Don't say that!

Justin: You're twisted, dude.

Griffin: I will let you make a dexterity saving throw with advantage, to duck down into the mine cart and avoid the next blast of flames. You are gonna get hit one more time before you are able to reach it.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: So that first one is going to be... what—a zero.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: Wow!

Justin: An actual zero. That's a two, minus two, for a zero.

Griffin: Not... not great.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: And a 19, minus two, 17. [laughs]

Griffin: Okay, yeah, man! You managed to duck down at the last second. The flames coast overhead and—

Justin: Do you guys ever think that's what déjà vu is? You just roll advantage on something and you didn't know it? [chuckles]

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah, you threw—

Justin: Like, "Whoa? Oh?"

Clint: That's you tying into the multiverse—

Justin: Right.

Griffin: You duck down, the flames shoot overhead. It is hot and sweaty and somewhat uncomfortable, but your Absorb Elements spell is still a bit—a bit active before it fades after this next burst. The mine cart reaches the end of the tracks and stops, and kind of like tumbles off the edge, and you come spilling out of the cart onto the ground in front of this big, icy dragon. You can see sort of lodged in its head—these flames are shooting out of its open mouth and it appears to be charging up another burst. Lodged inside of its head is a golden key.

Justin: Am I within reach? Can I reach it?

Griffin: Oh, you're right up on—you're right up—

Justin: I'm gonna cast—I'm gonna cast Burning Hands.

Griffin: Okay?

Travis: Yeah, give that dragon a taste of its own medicine!

Griffin: If I can be—

Justin: You know it's made of ice, dude?

Griffin: If I can be deadass with you, Juice—

Justin: Yeah, man.

Griffin: For just—for just—I forgot that you just got that. But that's—

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: [titters] That's very good. Okay, Burning Hands! How does that work?

Justin: I kind of thought, Griffin—I mean, the credit to you, and maybe there's something subconscious going on here, but it's a great design.

Griffin: I mean, I knew, if you—if I gave you guys sort of Mega Man style—

Justin: Yeah, but like this is paying off so quickly! You should be pleased.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Justin: This is good.

Griffin: Okay. This thing is—Juice, this is just going to succeed. This thing cannot make a dexterity saving throw, it is an inanimate object. You are going to roll 3d6 fire damage, and then that number will be doubled.

Justin: Here we go.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: 13.

Griffin: Jesus Christ, man!

Travis: Pretty good.

Griffin: All right! What is—you are the one with the power now. What does burning hands look like when Lorovith casts it?

Justin: They—it's like—it looks like inflammation at first, and then it just gets redder and redder and redder. There's no fire or anything, it just looks more swollen and red. [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah. Cool.

Justin: And like you could see that his hands are—they're not inflamed or anything, they just look—they're not in flames, they're inflamed.

Griffin: Okay, cool.

Justin: Just look like really irritated.

Griffin: And then it just kind of like bursts? Like it just like overflows?

Justin: No! It doesn't. It doesn't do any of that—

Griffin: Oh—

Justin: It's just extremely hot—

Griffin: Just—

Travis: So your hands are hot with flames but they're all they're all inside?

Justin: Yeah.

Griffin: [chuckles] That's cool, man.

Justin: They're just really, really hot. Like it's deceptive.

Griffin: Yeah. Badass, dude.

Justin: Like if you—they don't look even that hot.

Griffin: Yeah, cool.

Justin: They just look really red.

Griffin: I love that, man, cool. You hold out your swollen—[chuckles] your swollen, gnarly hands that are so hot, dude.

Justin: Like steam instantly starts dissipating as I touch it.

Griffin: Yeah, in fact, it's more dramatic than that. This thing was charging up another blast—

Justin: Oh, sorry, let me try again. [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah, do better with your description.

Travis: Yeah, come on, man!

Justin: [laughs] No, go ahead, Griff!

Griffin: It... you dissolve—

Justin: You're the guy that came up with the fire-spitting ice dragon. I wouldn't dare to presume to dally in your playground. [chuckles]

Griffin: You reach and touch this thing right on the snout with both hands. And the head just—you send this like wave of melting right down—it dissolves the entire head. The key clatters to the floor. The flames disappear. But then it just like keeps going. and you like half disintegrate this draconic like sculpture of ice.

And now that you have sort of melted the front half of it, the back half loses its balance and falls forward, crashing to the ground in a big scattering of giant chunks of ice, that slide to a halt at your feet. And you claim the golden key. We'll jump over to Hellgrammite. Hellgrammite, you have had some time to think about your choices. You are, I believe, healed up now at this point.

And the webbing that has surrounded you begins to melt, and you are able to get to your feet. You are standing on this observation platform, granting you, appropriately enough, pretty good view of the island and the lands below. At the end of this deck, on this sort of like overhang going over the edge of the island, there appears to be like a big, silvery magnifying glass that is, at this moment, facing outward over the lands below.

But you are able to kind of—you can see the symbols over the Ziggurat. You can tell nearly all the golden keys have been seized at this point. Maybe half the silver keys and half of the bronze keys have been claimed, and time is a little bit more than half elapsed at this point.

Clint: Okay, that answered one question. I was going to look at the giant fireball in the sky and—

Griffin: The fireball is not moving. It appears like it is not going to drop until time runs out.

Clint: Okay... I want to use the giant lens to... I'm gonna assume they wouldn't have put another golden key in the gardens—to look at that area around the tower.

Griffin: Okay?

Clint: Off to the side there. The woods, I guess that's woods, around the tower.

Griffin: Yeah, rad. I mean, you—I think you are able to kind of like get on the other end of this magnifying glass and turn it to face the inside of the Ziggurat. You can tell that this was like set up to observe the lands below, but with a little bit of elbow grease, you turn it to face the tower and woods on the western edge of the island. Give me an investigation check. I will give you advantage, because you're using a giant investigating tool to do this.
[chuckles]

Clint: All right. And that would be...

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: An 11 plus three, 14. And that would be...

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: A 19 plus three, 22!

Griffin: Damn, dude! Okay. 22 is incredibly good. You're able to fully survey the tower and the woods. As you look towards the tower, you can see through windows. At the very top, almost like a sort of lighthouse, there is this glass chamber. And sitting on a pedestal, at the middle of this glass chamber, at the top of the tower, is a golden key. You can also see through small windows going up the body of the tower, that there is a spiraling staircase that runs up the length of it.

And you can see a wizard running up those stairs. And with an investigation check as gnarly as that, you can see what happens next. You see as they are approaching the top of the tower, they stop suddenly. And then they are lifted in the air. And they are ripped out of the nearest window of the tower, and flung like a ragdoll into the woods. You are able to see the faint traces of some giant, invisible humanoid shape that is responsible for this wizard's demise. That is what you're able to see in the tower. The woods, you... you can tell that there's—certainly, some wizards have gone out in here.

It is like the most obscured part of the island, so I think some of the more desperate Aspirants have made their way here to try and find like the keys that are almost certainly tucked away in the thicket. I will say, with a 22, you can tell that soaring above the woods are what you think at first are birds. But as you kind of like focus this lens to see them, you can see that these are actually small crystals with wings, that seem to be sort of like flying around in sort of random smatterings across the—across the woods. You are not able to see a key in the woods, but that is what you're able to discern.

Clint: Do I see where the body landed of whoever just got snuffed?

Griffin: No, they were—they were yeeted pretty—I mean, you could probably triangulate it based on you were watching them. They landed pretty far away in the woods. They were thrown a good like, you know, three hundred, four hundred feet or so.

Clint: Okay, Hellgrammite beats his feet and makes his way to the tower.

Griffin: A lot of foot beating in this episode!

Clint: A lot of foot beating, yeah.

Griffin: Okay! You're making your way towards the tower?

Clint: Yeah.

Griffin: Okay. You are able to do so fairly easily. It is pretty much right down the stairs from this observation platform. You walk through a very short sort of like thicket of trees. There's a trail leading from this path, encircling the Ziggurat at the center of the island, leading out towards the outer boundary. And you are able to reach the tower. As you approach, you don't see any giant humanoid figure. You are not sure exactly why, but you could kind of get the shape of it while looking at it from far away through this lens. Up close, if there is something here, you cannot see it or hear it or sense it in any way. There does not appear to be anyone else in the tower at the moment.

Clint: Would there be any... no, why am I asking you for advice? Okay... I wanna make a—

Griffin: That's a totally normal thing to do.

Clint: I'm going to make a history check to see if I can summon up any knowledge of what kind of creature this might be.

Griffin: Okay, let me think... Okay, you could—I think a history check for something this big and weird, like, there would probably be some history. Typically, I would want, you know, arcana or nature, or something like that. But a history check, I think, in this case, would be—

Clint: I can do either history or nature. Do you think nature would be better?

Griffin: Up to you, I think either one will get you kind of the same—the same result.

Clint: I'll stick with my history check. Okay, making a history check.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: That is a 22!

Griffin: A lot of 22s. Okay, yeah! You have heard stories about this. And I think anyone who is a practitioner of magic, who aspires to, you know, join the Octave in the sky, kind of knows a little bit about what happens up there. Not the details of the Conclave, but, you know, stories of their—of their power. Residing on the island is a Titan. And it is a huge, stocky, powerful, monstrous sort of man-shaped entity. And it is able to hide in sort of a pocket of space time, as it wants to. It is a—

Travis: Like Elementary.

Griffin: I think—what's that?

Travis: Like Elementary?

Griffin: Like Elementary did it. How they have their own little pocket universe. Twenty-two, I think you know like some lore about this thing, which is that it has a bit of an Achilles' heel. Which is that it can't—it's vision, because of how sort of high up off the ground and how big it is, is quite bad. And so, ironically, while he is nearly impossible to see, he also has a difficult time seeing, you know, small creatures and humans. Specifically, when they are standing stock still. So, that is—that is quite a bit that you learn about this Titan.

Clint: Okay. And I remember the spot where the Titan showed up on the spiral staircase?

Griffin: It showed up outside of the tower, and pulled the—pulled this wizard out. So, yeah, you know where it was when it kind of disappeared.

Clint: Okay, am I close to that spot yet?

Griffin: I'll say it's on the other side of the tower from the—from the entrance.

Clint: Okay, is there anything like a window? Well, there was a window, because I could see through the window, right?

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: Okay. So, I am close to the invisible creature.

Griffin: You assume.

Clint: I assume. So, I am going to... [laughs] Okay, I'm going to cast Infestation.

Griffin: Okay?

Clint: I'm gonna make it... let's see, what'd I do last time, mosquitoes? No. I'm gonna cast No-see-ums.

Griffin: What is that?

Clint: No-see-ums are those—

Travis: You know, the little gnats.

Clint: Tiny, little gnats, but they can bite.

Griffin: Okay?

Clint: I'm going to cast them as No-see-ums, and send it through that window.

Griffin: Okay?

Clint: In the general direction of wherever the... the invisible creature, where I would have seen them.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: And I am—but also, I have Chameleon Carapace, so I'm going to stand completely still and change the color of the carapace to match the wall of the tower.

Griffin: Okay. So, attacking someone invisible in 5e is sort of half narrative-faced—like narrative-based. You know where this thing is, because you did see it just a moment ago. You are still going to have disadvantage on the attack, because you can't quite see this. But it will have, I will say, some effect. With your Chameleon Carapace—

Clint: It gives me advantage on dexterity checks—stealth checks.

Griffin: Okay, yeah, this is definitely going to qualify as that. Why don't we resolve that first? We'll do a stealth check with advantage here. And based on how that goes, we will...

Clint: And to be fair, I'm not really trying to use infestation as an attack.

Griffin: No, sure, it's a distraction, right?

Clint: I'm trying to get the creature's attention.

Griffin: Yeah, yeah, for sure. It is so big, I think this is a question of like, are these little bugs going to be able to even get this thing's attention? I would like to resolve that.

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: 17 on your first stealth check. You have advantage, so go and roll that again.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: And we'll take the 17, because that's five.

Griffin: Cool. You change the color of your carapace. And as you do, you hold out your hand, and you produce a swarm of gnats. You feel like you are pretty well hidden at this point.

Clint: It doesn't show me having to do anything to make it effective.

Griffin: Oh, is it a dexterity saving throw situation, perhaps? Okay, this giant Titan actually has to make a con save. That is how it works.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: So, yeah, I mean, I guess, sort of using the rules, like you... you are able to send this swarm where you remember this thing being. And it is going to make a big con save here. That is a... 12. Which I do not—

Clint: Had to make 13.

Griffin: Does not beat your save. You see these gnats fly up into the sky. You made quite a bit of them. And they begin to form almost like a ring. And when they do that, you can actually kind of make out there's a part of this ring that kind of gets a little bit blurry, where you assume they are passing behind this Titan. But you don't have much trouble triangulating his position now, actually.

Because as soon as... as soon as these bugs swarm and attack him, a like huge circle of trees about 30 feet away from you just like explode as they are crushed by a giant footfall. You hear a low, horrible groan, and then you see this weird ripple just in the air. And a pop. And then all of a sudden, that blur is gone. The woods are quiet and still. It would appear like you have scared this thing into its little pocket space, leaving you alone at the foot of the tower.

Clint: I'm gonna ascend the rest of the way up the spiral staircase and get the key.

Griffin: Easy, tiger. You haven't even gone into the tower yet, have you?

Clint: Oh... well, I thought I was? I thought I was... okay, I understand. I thought that the invisible creature was like part way up the tower.

Griffin: The invisible creature is standing outside in the woods. It is huge and invisible. It reached into the tower to grab that—

Clint: Gotcha.

Griffin: ... wizard and throw him outside.

Clint: Well, then I'm gonna really hurry up the spiral staircase, in a stealthy way.

Griffin: [chuckles] Okay! Those are two sort of objectives at odds. But you step into the tower. As you step foot in here, you look around. You can see that there's just a bunch of wizardly stuff around here at the ground floor of the tower. Some barrels stacked with sort of, you know, magical reagents scattered all around. Some—

Justin: If we have time this season, we should probably just start referring to wizard type stuff in terms of tonnage. You know what I mean?

Griffin: There's four tons—

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: There's four tons—

Justin: Square footage of wizard shit. [chuckles]

Griffin: There's two square tons of wizard shit in this base floor of the tower. And you can tell the—it has these stone steps running along the outer wall. I guess I should say the inside wall of the tower, leading up. It's about a good... 80 foot climb to the top. If you want to move up there stealthily, it's going to take you a few checks to do so. If you want to try to scurry up those steps, it'll take you fewer checks.

Clint: I'll... yeah, I'm gonna stick with stealth.

Griffin: Okay. Give me a perception check, please. Since you've elected to take sort of the slower route here, you have kind of a beat.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: Nine.

Griffin: Okay... so, that's nothing.

Justin: Never mind.

Griffin: Yeah. [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Travis: It smells weird. There's a weird smell. You can't place it.

Justin: Griffin, you gotta get better at doing—[chuckles] asking for perception checks when there isn't anything.

Griffin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Just to throw you off the scent—

Justin: Maybe that was an example of it! We'll never know, right?

Griffin: Yeah, no, I was just fucking with you, man.

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: All right, then how about a—can I do an investigation check of these barrels and crates and—

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Clint: Square tonnage.

Griffin: You go to the Crate and Barrel, which is the real world shop in—

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: Wow, dude.

Clint: That's a nine, too. Wow.

Griffin: That's another nine.

Travis: There's eight bates—eight barrels and ten crates.

Griffin: You... you are—you go through, it seems to be sort of just like basic spell components and stuff like that. There is—there is one barrel at the end. It's quite large. It's like a—like a fifty gallon barrel. Is that a lot? I don't know. It's like a fifty gallon barrel, and there's no top on it. It is filled with some sort of liquid that seems to have a pretty pungent aroma. But you can see at the bottom of this barrel, through all this clear liquid, is a stone, that looks somewhat similar to the one that is set into your gauntlet. What do you do?

Clint: I'm going to sit on the barrel.

Griffin: There is—

Clint: And...

Griffin: There is no lid on this—I guess you—

Clint: I know!

Griffin: Put a lid—okay.

Clint: I'm going to sit on it like a... like a toilet.

Justin: [titters] Uh-huh?

Clint: And use my pincher tail to stretch down into the pungent liquid, and get that stone.

Justin: Speak... speak... speak on—

Griffin: Speak of the—

Justin: "Sit on it like a toilet." [chuckles] Why—

Travis: I think it—if you didn't—

Justin: Of all—

Travis: Immediately conjure an image, Justin, I don't know what to tell you. I thought it was evocative, powerful.

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: Okay. So, this is going to be a... [chuckles]

Travis: Toilet check?

Griffin: No! You're wanting to do this very quickly, right? Is that—I'm assuming that is why you're using your sort of like scorpion-like tail, is because—

Clint: Yeah.

Griffin: Of that sort of snapping motion. I like that, that's cool. But it's gonna be a sleight of hand check, but for tail. Sleight of tail.

Clint: Yeah, sleight of tail. A sleight of tail check.

Griffin: So, a sleight of tail check to see how quickly you can reach in and snatch this thing. Let's roll that beautiful bean footage.

Clint: Can I use my heroic inspiration?

Travis: You don't have that.

Clint: I know... All right, sleight of hand...

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: 13.

Griffin: Okay! What's it—what's it look like when you deploy your—actually, you're sitting on it like a toilet, man, I'm not sure I want to ask this question.

Clint: I'm sitting on it like a toilet!

Griffin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Clint: The tail kind of extends.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Like a claw machine?

Clint: And stretches out.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: And it takes a lot of effort, so Hellgrammite is kind of grunting.

Travis: Mm-hm.

Griffin: Yeah.

Hellgrammite: [grunts] Hmph.

Travis: Mm-hm.

Clint: Because it takes effort to extend your tail—

Travis: Sure.

Griffin: Yeah. It is—it is not one smooth snapping motion, right? A scorpion tail kind of just does—is supposed to bend the one way, when it's cocked and loaded. And this is—

Hellgrammite: *Hmph!*

Clint: Doing really a lot of grunting. Yeah.

Griffin: The grunting—it starts as grunting. As you snap your tail down into this liquid, you do it, you know, real fast. You get it way down in there. You feel, you know, the stone—the pincers close around the stone. But you also feel a horrible, horrible burning sensation.

Clint: Yeah. Yeah, I kind of figured that.

Griffin: All along—

Travis: From pushing too hard.

Clint: Your tail for pushing too hard. No, it is—as you—as you dunk your tail into this liquid, it begins to bubble and froth up. And you are going to make a... make a constitution saving throw for me. You're going to take damage. This is to determine if it's half or full.

Griffin: Looking to beat a 13.

Clint: Constitution saving...

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: Wow!

Clint: 22!

Travis: Nat 20.

Griffin: Nat 20! Okay, nat 20, you pull your tail out of this liquid very, very quickly.

Justin: Unbelievable rolls, guys. Unbelievable.

Griffin: Really, really remarkable.

Clint: You forget the zero earlier.

Griffin: [chuckles] You... you snatch this stone out of the liquid. You take two points of acid damage. Which is, you get the sense, not nearly as bad as it could have been. And you pull this stone up. And you... as you sort of like take this damage, you feel this burning sensation. You let out like a sort of reflexive... yelp.

Hellgrammite: Ah-ha-oww!

Griffin: And when that happens, you hear a loud pop from outside. And through the windows, you can see the trees near you rustle as the Titan reappears.

[The Adventure Zone Royale theme music plays]

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