

The Adventure Zone Royale: Episode 14

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Griffin [as Narrator]: The wizards' numbers nearly halved, are separated wheat from chaff, to measure with a trial so strange their minds' capacity for change. They sink below and then ascend, as one by one they meet their end. 'Til eight escape the quiet pond, to glimpse the lifeless lands beyond.

[The Adventure Zone Royale theme music plays]

Griffin: Hello, and welcome back to TAZ Royale, our PvP, winner take all, one V 63 season. Today, we begin a new trial, the fourth trial, as we approach the halfway mark of the Conclave. It's been... 100 years since we've recorded, due to having to reschedule for illness and tour, and what have you. I'm excited—

Clint: So, everybody's dead.

Griffin: Everyone died and came back to life. And—

Travis: Ooh?

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: Yes, there's a whole Christ allegory thing. And if you want that, you gotta subscribe to the Patreon. That's where we put the bonus episodes.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: That's where all the lore drops are.

Griffin: And the lord drops.

Travis: We should start putting in like voice recordings, like that people can find around the area.

Griffin: Oh, cool.

Travis: Where they get like lore drops from within the world.

Griffin: Yeah, that's cool. And you can like—

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: It'll be like Bioshock, where you'll be kind of listening, while someone's like—

Travis: Yeah!

Griffin: "He threw the party, but the plasmids were—" But meanwhile, like—

Justin: [chuckles]

Griffin: A bunch of, you know, masked killers are trying to—

Clint: Can we—

Travis: That's why you have to do it that it's unidirectional. And if you're not standing in front of the player, and you start to walk away, it like fades out and you're like, fuck, now I gotta stand here and look at it.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: Can we call 'em pop-up audios?

Griffin: We can call—

Travis: Yeah!

Clint: I just invented that.

Griffin: We can call 'em papa audios, for you.

Clint: Aw.

Griffin: Okay, the—

Travis: Different skins that you can get from loot boxes that you pay for. Go on.

Griffin: Yes, all that is going to be in after the next content drop. The sun rises over the Octave Ziggurat. As the three of you open the doors and flaps of your respective lodgings, you find a small copper-colored card sitting right before you, and it reads in embossed lettering, "Group one, first horn, The Gilded Lily." As you arrive at The Gilded Lily, over the Northwest sort of quarter of the—of the Octave Ziggurat Island, you make your way to the luxurious crystalline spa on the sort of man-made lily pad island there at the appointed time.

And as you arrive, there's a small crowd of other Aspirants gathering inside The Gilded Lily. You see a few familiar faces. You see Scorpo, your teammate from the previous challenge. You see the skateboarding birdman, Tommy Falcon. You see Rhyme, the final icy survivor of the Elemental Rangers, who Lorovith dispatched in the—in the very first trial, or I guess second trial.

As well as like a half dozen other faces you're not quite as familiar with. Moments after your arrival, sunlight glints off of a shape that comes flying from the top of the Ziggurat, and soaring in your direction. And moments later, a glorious golden thrieken scarab hovers over the waters in front of the group.

Hellgrammite: Mine, mine, mine! I call it, I call it! That's mine. That's mine!

Rictus: What do you mean "mine?"

Hellgrammite: Mine! It's mine! Oh, isn't it beautiful?

Rictus: Gross.

Griffin: As you say all of that, this golden scarab kind of floats into The Gilded Lily where everyone is standing, and gives you sort of a weird look, Hellgrammite, that lingers for a moment.

Hellgrammite: Yes... oh, mutual admiration.

Golden Scarab: It is not mutual at all, believe me. Good morning.

Justin: [in a silly, deepened voice] I want to do a Zorak too, if we're all getting to do Zorkas. [chuckles]

Griffin: No, Zorak voices, you—only if played a thrieken, you get to do the Zorak voice. That's the—that's the rule. You recognize this golden scarab as one of the members of the Octave that has appeared before you during past trials. And he speaks, he says:

Golden Scarab: Good morning, Aspirants.

Hellgrammite: Good morning!

Golden Scarab: I like that chipper. Good, face the day with zeal and enthusiasm. It will serve you well. I am Set, and today, I will be administering the Trial of Transmutation. This group of 12 has been assembled based on your placement in the previous trial. However, today, this is not a team challenge. You shall soar or fall based solely on your own individual merits. Transmutation is a peculiar discipline. While my colleagues' schools measure power based on intellectual acumen or spiritual attunement, transmutation is the study of flexibility, adaptability and cleverness. These are the virtues that shall be tested today.

Griffin: And Set flutters his golden wings, and the doors to The Gilded Lily seal shut. And almost immediately, the entire building begins to descend downward into the lake, the sunlight from above—

Justin: While this is happening—

Griffin: Yeah?

Justin: Lorovith is looking around at everybody with this really smug expression on his face, because he definitely knew this was happening.

Griffin: Yes!

Justin: Because of the last episode. There's no context for it, and no one clocks it, but he's looking around, he's—I like to think he's the only one who's like, "Yup, this is exactly what I thought was about to happen."
[chuckles]

Griffin: Yes, because you saw the golden tower, you definitely feel a little bit prepared. I'm gonna give you a point of inspiration, if I did not remind you to do that in the previous episode—

Justin: Oh, oh, baby, you know that that's on the sheet already.

Griffin: Kick-ass, cool. So, the sunlight that was kind of, you know, coming in from over the foggy wall surrounding The Fold is replaced by these flickering neon flashes from these tiny bioluminescent fish, schooling sort of around the spa as it sinks down into the lake. And through a rising curtain of tiny bubbles, you see a structure built onto the floor of the lake coming into view.

It is a large, ornate golden tower, the one Lorovith saw during his intense massage. And The Lily thumps down into the lake floor, sending up a plume of sediment. And you see the whole building kind of move inward toward the entryway, into this golden tower. It thumps to a stop, and it forms a seal.

You hear a sort of sucking vacuum sound, and then the doors to The Gilded Lily unseal and slide open, you see it has docked with this golden tower, which Set leads the group into. As you step into this golden tower, I'm going to now start the virtual tabletop so you can see the map, you walk into a tall, tall, tall building with a very prominent, three-story-high spiral staircase, right in the center of it.

Justin: [chuckles]

Griffin: I can't tell if you're laughing at—

Justin: I'm laughing at all your icons, Griff. I'm sorry, bud, I just—

Griffin: I did some good work on the icons!

Justin: No, there's like—it's good, man, there's like—it's the thick Spider-Man that really got me. There's like a—there's like a Spider-Man that's been edited by a small-town newspaper ad director—

Travis: Yeah!

Clint: [chuckles]

Justin: The pictures are all stretched to hell, you know?

Griffin: He's the only—

Travis: He only knows how to do the—like drag the corner.

Griffin: Right.

Travis: And doesn't know how to do individual—

Justin: Yeah, just drag the corner, didn't hit Ctrl and T to transform, just kind of swooped it on out there.

Griffin: Yeah. Unsurprisingly, when adding—

Travis: "Get me square pictures of thick Spider-Man!"

Justin: [laughs] "Get 640 by 640 pictures of Spider-Man!"

Clint: "Parker!"

Griffin: "Bring me a rectangular picture of Spider-Man that will be auto-corrected into a perfect circular form."

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: "This is a PNG! I can't make this—"

Travis: "No, I don't want cropped pictures of Spider-Man!"

Griffin: Yes. Every other Aspirant—

Justin: "Did you say a Jif or a Gif of Spider-Man?!"

Griffin: All the other Aspirants here—this art was included in D&D Beyond. The Spider-Man picture did have to be added in post.

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: You all walk into this golden tower—

Justin: They had no pictures of spiders—

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: In D&D Beyond? [chuckles]

Griffin: No spiders men. Your foot falls, crunch, into dried red kelp that lines the floor of this chamber, which stands about 50 feet wide. There's this huge three-story-tall spiral staircase, and the tower extends up well beyond that. There are these big, bulbous, kind of porthole windows looking out into the lake, where you see those flashes of fish swimming by periodically. And all around you, the walls are just coated in this glimmering, golden façade.

And you make your way in—surrounding this huge—this huge spiral staircase. You can spot periodically, at certain points around this like column that this spiral staircase is winding up around, small alcoves with different runes etched into them. From your position, you can't quite make out exactly what those shapes are or what their purpose is, but you do clock those. Set continues, he says:

Set: I will not overburden you with explanations, as it is my intention to measure your ability to think on your feet. However, I must establish some

ground rules before we begin. The point of today's exercise could not be simpler; survive. The trial shall end when four of you have been eliminated. Now, you may not make armed attacks against one another, nor may you directly target each other with your suite of spells.

You must find more inventive methods of defeating your rivals. To further test your resourcefulness, there will be one more restriction applied to this trial. While the spells you have slotted into your Grimoire will be available to you, you may only use each spell currently seated within your Grimoire a single time.

For the eight of you who survive, your reward tier shall be determined by your height upon the staircase when the trial concludes. In addition, the survivors will be granted an insight most rare. You will be given an opportunity to gaze upon the blighted world beyond The Fold, a privilege afforded solely to the Octave alone. You may have a few moments to discuss these rules amongst yourselves before taking your place, and then we shall begin.

Griffin: And—

Travis: Rictus raises his hand.

Set: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I heard that some of you do like to ask a lot of questions. What—I don't know any of your names.

Rictus: Rictus, Ravenwood.

Set: Ah, of the—of the—like, of the Ravenwoods?

Rictus: Yeah! Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Set: Interesting—

Rictus: Of the—

Set: Yes, oh—

Rictus: Fields, yeah.

Set: What is your—what is your question, Rictus?

Rictus: Is this—did you do this kind of challenge when you went through your like process of becoming a member of the Octave?

Set: Hm... I'm not sure how much I'm allowed to divulge. I am one of the newer members of the Octave, although I suppose since the Conclave is held every several generations, I have been at it a while. But—

Justin: When he says that—

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: When he says, "I'm not sure how much I'm allowed to divulge," does he look around? Does he feel—is there somebody watching him?

Griffin: Give me an—give me an insight check.

Justin: Okay.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Hm, 15.

Griffin: He does not look around. He says it in a way that suggests that it was—he didn't actually think about it. He doesn't want to share this information, and so—

Justin: But maybe he hasn't been asked all these questions 100 times before, like he's having to actually think about it.

Griffin: No, the exact opposite. It is like he is saying that because he doesn't want to answer that question, and so—

Justin: Got it, okay, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Griffin: He just basically—you clocked him basically just—he made that up entirely.

Set: My trial—

Justin: Oh, okay!

Set: My trial was similar to this in nature. It tested my transmutational magical abilities, and my flexibility. And I believe that today's trial shall measure your own capabilities in these—

Travis: Rictus raises his hand again.

Set: Does anyone else have any other—

Rictus: But you did—

Set: Yes?

Rictus: But you did go through a series of trials like we're doing to become a member?

Set: Yes, that is how—

Rictus: Not just one?

Set: Yes.

Lorovith: I have a question.

Set: Yeah, how about this, everyone gets one question.

Lorovith: What of the flyers among us?

Set: Are there?

Lorovith: What of the flyers?

Set: Are there flyers among you?

Lorovith: What of the flyers among us?

Griffin: He looks around, there are a couple of... of Aarakocra. Specifically Tommy Falcon here, with his flying—

Justin: Right.

Griffin: With his flying hoverboard.

Justin: What about Hippocrates?

Griffin: Hippocrates, you look at and—

Travis: Kenku, baby can't fly.

Griffin: Well, actually, you think at first like, oh, that is a—that is a Kenku, or some sort of bird, you know... you know, race in the—in the DnD sort of parlance. But actually, looking at him, it appears like he is wearing an elongated sort of black mask, sort of like a plague doctor mask. He does not have any wings to speak of. You see Set a smile and say:

Set: Ah, yes, you would... you would assume that they would have an unfair advantage in this trial. But for those who are... insightful enough and most attuned to the arcane energies of this place will find a way of dealing with them as well. I would—I would advise you all not to lean on shortcuts. This trial has a—

Justin: I whisper—I whisper to Rictus as he continues to talk.

Lorovith: I think he wants us to—[chuckles] I think he's saying smash him in the head with a hammer.

Set: Nope, no armed attacks against one another.

Justin: That was not to you, Griffin, if—I specifically said—

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

Justin: I'm not speaking to you. I beg of you.

Hellgrammite: He said something about not attacking each other.

Lorovith: Hellgrammite, no, you must listen to me. I'll find the biggest hammer, Bugman, and smash that bird.

Justin: [chuckles]

Hellgrammite: I just—

Lorovith: It will quite literally, Bugman, be two birds with one smack.

Hellgrammite: Well, I have wings? Look, I have wings.

Rictus: Mm-hm.

Lorovith: I'm eliminating two winged foes in one. You directly attack Tommy Falcon, you understand? Yes, Bugman?

Hellgrammite: You and your jokes. [chuckles]

Rictus: Hey—

Hellgrammite: I would like to take this moment to remind you of the blood oath you swore to me in episode seven, to always have my back and always protect me. You remember that? I'm sure you do. As a matter of fact, I think both of you—

Justin: It's not fair—

Hellgrammite: Both of you—

Justin: For Dad to use the fact that I don't remember things very well—

Travis: Yeah, he's—for all we know, he's making that up.

Griffin: It's his main power.

Justin: This feels targeted.

Hellgrammite: No. No, no. This is—

Justin: Hey, you're—how—hey, Dad, how is this gonna feel like? Remember, you signed this will, Dad. You promised me everything." You know? That's not gonna be very fun.

Griffin: [chuckles]

Rictus: Hellgrammite, I used my questions up. Can you ask a question for me?

Hellgrammite: Yes! I will. I assume that there is—

Rictus: No, wait—

Justin: [laughs]

Hellgrammite: A possibility that people will be afforded some extra benefits?

Clint: And he winks his giant compound eye at Set, and it's really—

Justin: [laughs] Yeah, he thinks he's—he thinks he's—Griffin thinks he's gonna get a little home cookin', huh?

Hellgrammite: So, yeah—

Justin: [laughs]

Hellgrammite: I mean, I'm sure that even vestigial wings—

Justin: [laughs]

Hellgrammite: Will be... [chuckles] an advantage?

Justin: Oh my god, Hellgrammite trying to be subtly charming has got to be one of the most unsettling—

Travis: Yeah, off-putting as hell, man.

Justin: Like it's like making weird noises, like weird clicking and creaking. [chuckles]

Clint: He doesn't have eyebrows, or he would wiggle his eyebrows.

Justin: It's like—it's like listening to Tik-Tok from Return to Oz fall down a flight of stairs.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: [chuckles] Set looks at you and says:

Set: Do you—

Hellgrammite: Uh-huh? Uh-huh? Uh-huh?

Set: Do you feel as if you require extra help?

Hellgrammite: Oh—

Rictus: Oh! Sting!

Hellgrammite: Oh—

Rictus: He got you, man.

Lorovith: Withering, Bugman.

Rictus: Oh!

Lorovith: Withering!

Rictus: Oh! You're gonna feel that one for days.

Hellgrammite: No, we're from the same...

Rictus: Uh-huh.

Hellgrammite: It's okay—

Rictus: No, no, he—that's a—he burned you—

Hellgrammite: No!

Rictus: Real bad, man.

Set: Okay—

Hellgrammite: Thank you for the encouragement.

Justin: By the way, the hood—

Hellgrammite: Blink, blink, wink, wink.

Justin: Is the technical term for the dome that covers the cloacal opening—
[chuckles]

Griffin: [chuckles]

Justin: [crosstalk] ... emerged from, so it is technically the same thing.

Griffin: Sure.

Justin: Because there is—

Griffin: Right, yeah.

Justin: Biological.

Griffin: I think—

Hellgrammite: No! I'm sure there's no special favors. [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah. Is Adventure Zone the podcast that contains more uses of the term cloaca per capita than any other in our staple of products? [chuckles]

Travis: That's what we got the iHeartRadio podcast award for, Griffin!

Griffin: Yeah, that's true.

Justin: Yeah.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Rictus raises his hand and says:

Rictus: I know I already asked questions, but that was before you made the one question rule, so can I have one more?

Set: It depends on the question.

Rictus: It's simple.

Set: Yeah.

Rictus: And I—it's kind of embarrassing that we're on, what, like the fourth trial now? And I didn't think to ask this before, but... what happens if we like abstain?

Set: What do you mean?

Rictus: Well like—

Hellgrammite: Not have babies.

Rictus: No.

Justin: [chortles]

Rictus: No.

Set: I suppose that is everyone's choice.

Justin: [laughs]

Rictus: Hellgrammite... I told you that in confidence, no.

Justin: [laughs]

Rictus: No.

Hellgrammite: I saw you had that ring on, that's—

Rictus: No—well, that's because I'm married.

Set: Yes.

Rictus: But no, what I'm saying is, if like, if we decided not to go through, if we said like, okay, I don't want to do this and attack people, would we just get to like leave the island and go home? Would we be killed? Would we just sit out this challenge?

Griffin: With that, Set flies back down. He lands close to you. Looks at you kind of inquisitively. He says:

Set: Have the terms and conditions of the Conclave not been made explicitly clear, Rictus Ravenwood?

Rictus: Oh, I'm speaking purely hypothetically. I'm perfectly happy. Yeah, kill everybody. That's great. I'm just wondering, I'm just curious.

Griffin: He says:

Set: All who stand here have cleared the Trial of Divination, the first trial we placed before you, where the dangers and rewards of this process are outlined. And by agreeing to those terms, you have bound yourselves to a type of contract. That is what brings you here. If you do not feel like... terminating the Aspirants around you, that is your prerogative. However, I will remind you that only one wizard will emerge from the Conclave, and I have—

Hellgrammite: Wonder who that will be!

Justin: [chortles]

Griffin: He says:

Set: To my knowledge, that champion has never been a pacifist.

Rictus: So, just to simplify, kill or be killed?

Set: I thought that would be obvious at this point.

Rictus: Just wanting—I just—it makes choosing in the future way simpler to have it laid out like that, and makes the pathway way clearer for me. Thank you—

Set: Glad I could clear it up.

Griffin: He, with that, flies very quickly, exhausted by the salvo of questions, up to the top of the tower. There is a small observation perch built into the wall—

Travis: Are we the only three Aspirants that ever have questions?
[chuckles]

Griffin: No, the other ones ask questions too, I just don't include it in the show.

Justin: Those are edited out.

Travis: Oh, okay, for time yeah.

Griffin: There are nine other wizards in this chamber. And so, you know, if we included all of those—that's what the—that's what the Patreon bonus episodes are.

Travis: Oh, okay, great, great, great.

Griffin: As people kind of mill about as Set takes his place, Hellgrammite, you see Rhyme, this sort of masked, blue-clad sort of ninja-looking wizard, sort of slink towards you and try to get your attention to pull you aside for a conversation.

Hellgrammite: What? I'm with my fellas here.

Rictus: No, it's okay, you can—yeah, you can go.

Rhyme: We have not met, I am Rhyme. I am... I am the sole survivor of a group called the Elemental Rangers.

Hellgrammite: Mm-hm!

Rhyme: I heard you saying that you were looking for an advantage, a bonus, some sort of leg up, so to speak, in the trials?

Hellgrammite: Oh? Yeah?

Rhyme: I have an offer for you. I am happy to give you my prize in this contest, under a certain condition, and that is that you help me fulfill a sort of oath of vengeance that I have made against one of the Aspirants here.

Griffin: And Rhyme points at Lorovith, very subtly, and says:

Rhyme: That Goliath there led to the death of my friends in the in the Trial of Abjuration, and I am unmoored without them. And my rage is the only thing that I have really been able to find solid ground with. If you help me to defeat the Goliath, I will happily give you whatever prize we may earn from this trial. You strike me as an enterprising sort, and maybe this—

Hellgrammite: [chuckles]

Rhyme: Maybe this offer would appeal to you?

Hellgrammite: Well, I will say that unmoored rage is the worst rage. That's... whew, it chills the blood. Exactly what kind of revenge are you—are you talking about? I mean like, maybe that's just like displeasing him? Or you know, cheating him out of the—

Rhyme: Four of us are going to die during this trial. I would like him to be one of them. If he is, you get my rewards.

Hellgrammite: Wow. And what will I be adding to this? I mean, just—am I just standing by, ready to act when you want me to?

Rhyme: I leave that up to you. I have—I have seen you in previous trials, you are... you are quite canny. And I—

Hellgrammite: Thank you!

Rhyme: Yes.

Hellgrammite: Thank you. I work on my can.

Rhyme: I will do what I can. If you choose to assist me, I will reward you in the end.

Griffin: And with that, Ryme slinks off, starts doing some calisthenics, starts stretching and getting ready.

Travis: Can I approach Scorpo?

Griffin: Sure, yeah.

Rictus: Hi, man... Did you have a good break between, you know, the last challenge and this one?

Scorpo: I spent my time contemplating the... the challenges before us and the... unfavorable odds each of us face. How fair you? Have you recovered from the death mark's curse?

Rictus: Yeah, I—so, you know—you know what it was, right?

Scorpo: I am... something of a recluse. I have no hive. I find myself drawn to the fog wall, the borders of The Fold. And out there, things get strange, the connection to death and its ways is different from how it is in the interior. I am familiar with the workings of death, yes, and I saw it upon you.

Rictus: Yeah, man. Tell me about it.

Scorpo: Did you make some manner of bargain with death?

Rictus: I—hm...

Scorpo: Because I would—

Rictus: I mean—

Scorpo: Assume someone in your position, from the family you come from, would know better than that?

Rictus: Well... you'd think that, but even—like, I think the curse is gone, but it's been kind of weird since then.

Scorpo: Yes.

Rictus: There's like a linger—you know what? That's not why I came here. Why I came here, you've got a pretty good like strategic mind. Looking around at the group here, who's—like, who are your—who's the target for you?

Griffin: He looks around and you get a sense that he's doing so a little bit theatrically, because it doesn't take him very long to look down at you and he says:

Scorpo: You're not going to like it. I hope I have earned some level of trust with you in sharing what I know. And I have no reason to think that you wish me harm, and so I will tell you. I may not move on it during this trial, but Hellgrammite cannot win the Conclave. I have seen into his mind. I have seen what he wishes to do with the powers granted to the Octave. And it simply cannot come to pass. I realize that the two of you have worked together in the past, and I am not going to ask you to... to take any kind of action against him. I merely want to advise you that his intentions are perhaps not as pure as his... his gregarious demeanor might suggest.

Rictus: Okay, I was gonna do Randolph.

Scorpo: Yes, that seems good too—

Rictus: Because he's old.

Scorpo: He's an old man.

Rictus: He's an old man.

Justin: [chuckles]

Griffin: With that, we jump over to Randolph and Doober Sweetleaf have approached you, Lorovith. Randolph, a tall, sort of slender, aged-looking wizard, with a long white beard. And Doober Sweetleaf, a kindly little halfling cherub-cheeked little guy, wearing sort of farmer's clothing, overalls, barefooted, crunching in the—in the red kelp on the ground. Randolph approaches you, Lorovith, and says:

Randolph: Ah, excuse me, sir, may I introduce myself? My name is Randolph, and this here is my halfling ward, Doober Sweetleaf.

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: And Doober Sweetleaf says:

Doober Sweetleaf: Oh? Hello there, sir! Hello there, sir. I'm Doober Sweetleaf and—

Justin: [laughs]

Doober Sweetleaf: This is the grand—this is—this here is the grand sorcerer, Randolph.

Griffin: Randolph says:

Randolph: Yes, yes. May I ask your name, sir?

Travis: Randolph, the puce.

Lorovith: Yeah, Lorovith Gonjuban Dreamwanderer.

Randolph: Ah. A grand name for a person of such grand stature, such as yourself. I...

Lorovith: And Doober, what a pleasure it is to make—is it all right if I talk to Doober directly?

Doober Sweetleaf: Yes, of course you can talk to me. I'm Doober Sweetleaf—

Lorovith: Listen to him go! [laughs]

Hellgrammite: [chuckles]

Doober Sweetleaf: I'm just a little guy.

Lorovith: [laughs] *Ha-ha!*

Doober Sweetleaf: I'm the little guy from Swineberg. I love nothing more than a kind helping of the good green smoke from... old basher. And even the—

Lorovith: [laughs] Is he a little boy that smokes? Is this a character that—

Clint: [laughs]

Lorovith: Is this what he is? Is this just a little boy who smokes?

Griffin: He is... [chuckles]

Lorovith: He's fantastic, though!

Griffin: [chuckles] You have a hard time discerning Doober Sweetleaf's age. He says—

Justin: I pick him up and put him on my shoulders, like Tiny Tim.

Lorovith: Everyone, look!

Doober Sweetleaf: Look at me.

Clint: [chuckles]

Doober Sweetleaf: I'm up—I'm way up high.

Lorovith: Ha-ha!

Griffin: He rips out a big—he casts Fog, actually, as he draws from his slender, wooden pipe. And—

Travis: Man, I hope the one-time per spell thing doesn't happen now.

Griffin: Yeah. [chuckles] Randolph smiles and says:

Randolph: Ah, good, I see you are similarly taken with Doober Sweetleaf. He is under my protection. And during this trial, I must say, my own arcane abilities are nothing to be sneezed at, but it seems like this one shall be more of a measure of our physical prowess, which myself and Doober sorely lack. You are tremendous of frame, and I was hoping that you might keep an eye out for the two of us. And if you do, we shall make sure to return the

favor in future trials, ones that perhaps do not measure our physical prowess quite as judiciously as today's.

Lorovith: If you round up, the two of you are perfectly safe. Because one of you—I assure you, no harm is coming to Doober Sweetleaf!

Randolph: Oh, I do hope that you will honor that promise! Once we are free from here, I would love to take you to Swineberg. And we will go to Mark Kessel's place and have a fat rasher of bacon, mmm! And—

Lorovith: I can't understand a single word he says, but I'm obsessed!

Griffin: You adopted this fuckin' little fuckin' Labubu, as he sits on your shoulder. [chuckles] Randolph nods and says—

Lorovith: Labu time. [chuckles]

Griffin: He says:

Randolph: I—

Travis: Yes, Labu boy.

Randolph: Yes, I... I suppose that will suffice. I can watch out for myself. But Doober Sweetleaf, he is a helpless little baby, and...

Travis: [laughs]

Randolph: He—

Travis: "I'm right here, sir."

Randolph: I am so glad that he will be protected.

Griffin: As you all sort of finish up these conversations, the 12 Aspirants gathered here, including one sort of mechanical-looking construct with a—almost looks like an alarm clock for a head—the wizard, Klaxon. And also,

one that is just a huge, somewhat realistic, stuffed teddy bear, the wizard, Snug Jaw. There's also, Spider-Man is here.

One of the three, the spiders, the one that is Spider-Man is also here. The three of them seem to be congregating and strategizing. And from way up high above you, past the surface of the waters, beyond the ceiling of this tower, you hear a horn drowned out slightly by the depths of the lake that you are under. And with that, Set looks down at the 12 wizards gathered below from his perch and says:

Set: Begin.

[theme music plays]

[ad reads]

Travis: Got some announcements for you, real quick, before you go anywhere. Wait, these are important! Because we have an Adventure Zone: Balance dice tray in the merch store now, mcelroymerch.com. And you can bundle that dice tray with dice. It's perfect, right? We have the dice tray and the dice tray bundle, along with everything else there Perfect for holiday gift-giving, or a gift for yourself. You're worth it.

And 10% of all proceeds this month will be donated to Harmony House, which seeks to end homelessness in the Huntington area through permanent housing and supportive service programs. Harmony House is also our partner for Candlenights, which is this week, December 6th, in person, at 7PM Eastern Time, in our hometown of Huntington, West Virginia.

But if you're not able to make that, you can also get a virtual stream ticket to watch it on December 19th, when we premiere it in the video on demand. We'll be in the chat. And if you get that in-person ticket, you also get a ticket to watch it virtually. So, why not, huh? It's a great deal.

The video on demand access will be through January 4th, so you'll be able to watch it through all the Candlenights season. And all benefits from the show are going to Harmony House. So, tickets for both events are available at

bit.ly/candlenights2025, get yours now. Also, Champions Grove packages are still available at www.championsgrove.com.

It's a weekend-long gaming event that I host in Ravenwood Castle, in Hocking Hills, Ohio. It's going to be an absolute blast filled with amazing guests, amazing attendees, at an amazing castle. It's going to be an amazing time. So, if you haven't checked that out, or if you want to get packages for that, www.championsgrove.com. And now, back to the show!

[ad break]

[theme music plays]

Griffin: Let's roll for initiative, guys.

Clint: Before we do, can we do one quick thing?

Griffin: If it's very quick, yes.

Travis: Pray.

Clint: Very quick. Can we just have a quick—

Travis: Just have a quick prayer.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Clint: Yeah, just a quick prayer.

Hellgrammite: Oh, dear—

Travis: Oh, I was joking.

Hellgrammite: Dear gods above, as the three of us gather close together, please let us win. Amen.

Clint: And while he's saying this prayer—

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: Without him knowing it—

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: Hellgrammite casts Alarm on the back of Lorovith's back.

Griffin: Okay? You cast alarm on the back of Lorovith's... back.

Clint: On his back, on his back. You set an alarm against intrusion—

Travis: Would the back of his back be inside his body?

Griffin: Yes, it would be—

Clint: Ooh, good point.

Griffin: [chuckles] Yes.

Clint: On his jacket. "Choose a door, window or an area within range."

Griffin: Okay?

Clint: And the spell lasts for eight hours.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: And if anyone touches his back, there will be an alarm that alerts me that the creature has touched or entered the warded area.

Griffin: Yes, so when you—this is an uncommon usage of the spell, but you can designate creatures that—

Justin: The McElroy story.

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: [chuckles]

Griffin: You can designate creatures that won't set off the alarm. So, I assume you designate him.

Clint: Right.

Griffin: Right. And you're casting this on who? On Lorovith?

Clint: Yes.

Griffin: Okay, you can also choose if the alarm is mental or audible. So, this can be an alarm that—

Clint: I want it to be audible.

Griffin: Okay, cool.

Clint: I want it to be audible.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: And I want it to be:

Hellgrammite: Aviso! Aviso! Aviso!

Griffin: No, it's actually, it produces the sound of a hand bell for 10 seconds within 60 feet.

Clint: Oh. So, I can't have that.

Griffin: No, you can't.

Clint: I'll live with that.

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: Okay, you have cast this spell. If anyone touches Lorovith's back, you will be...

Clint: That is not me or Lorovith.

Travis: And Rictus pats Lorovith on the back—

Clint: And Rictus.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Griffin: [chuckles]

Clint: And Rictus.

Griffin: Bing-bong, bing-bong! Okay, cool. With that, please roll initiative.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: I got an 18.

Griffin: Amazing roll.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: Three.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: God almighty! I'm getting new die.

Griffin: Lorovith?

Justin: I have got...

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Damn...

Griffin: Damn.

Justin: Damn. A four.

Griffin: Great! So, you all take off as the horn rings and Set begins the trial, up the spiral stairs. I'm going to place you all on these stairs based on the results of these initiative rolls. Some surprising outcomes here, didn't expect Randolph to beat much of anybody. But here we are. Doober Sweetleaf, also ahead. And down here, we've got Lorovith, Hellgrammite and... tragically, Spider-Man.

Okay, you all race up the stairs as the horn sounds. Looking up, just to give the folks at home a sense of the battle map here, there's a three-story tall spiral staircase, sort of measured out here into 30 steps. Rictus, with your very high initiative roll, you are front of the pack with Scorpo and Klaxon, up on the fourth step, the rest of the crowd kind of gathering behind.

And then on the very first step, Lorovith and Hellgrammite and Spider-Man have—are rounding out the pack at the back. As you all begin racing up the stairs, you feel the ground moving beneath your feet, and see that these spiral stairs surrounding the central pillar have begun to rotate around that pillar, and descend down the height of the tower.

Looking up, you can see new steps seemingly appearing from thin air at the very top of the tower. And at the very bottom, the step that you are standing on, Lorovith and Hellgrammite, has begun to like vanish into the ground at the bottom. It is forming a sort of like spiral escalator type effect, where the steps are constantly moving down.

Travis: Are they at the bot—at the bottom, are they at risk of like... danger from this?

Griffin: That's a really, really great question. As you look down, as the stairs begin to descend, you also notice that water has begun to trickle in through small vents around the ground floor. And as water splashes onto this carpet of dried red kelp, you see a sudden, violent transmutation take

place as all of the kelp is transmuted into a vicious swarm of blood-red, fanged eels.

Hellgrammite: Oh?

Griffin: That is what is happening in this room. Every round of combat, the stairs will descend, the waters will rise. If you find yourself in the water, you are going to be set upon by many, many eels. Okay, first in the order is Rictus. Now, Rictus, with a speed of 30, you are able to move up six of these stairs with your move action, if that is how you want to spend your entire move action. Scorpo, standing right next to you, he could have an attack of opportunity, but you have no reason to think he would do that to you.

Travis: The alcoves are staying in place?

Griffin: The alcoves are built into the tower. You actually see that the stairs are kind of rotating, you know, around this central pillar. But the alcoves are set into that pillar, and they are not moving. So, yes, they are set in place.

Travis: And are these stairs... like, can you tell me about the construction of the stairs? Like, are they—

Griffin: Yes, imagine—

Travis: Supported all the way to the ground? Or—

Griffin: No, they don't go all the way to the ground. Imagine sort of like a big, sort of thick slab, cement slab, like fan blades almost.

Travis: Great.

Griffin: That are coming out. There's not much clearance between the different steps, but it takes you, you know, about five feet of movement to get up onto the next step and move all the way forward.

Travis: Okay, great. First, I'm going to cast mage armor on myself.

Griffin: Okay?

Travis: Which increases my AC to 15.

Griffin: And that is action, bonus action?

Travis: That's an action, that's my action.

Griffin: Okay, great. Mark that as being used for this trial.

Travis: Yeah. And that's gonna last for eight hours.

Griffin: Yeah, you're good on that.

Travis: And then I'm gonna... listen, the clear red exclamation point you've put here—

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Is probably a danger warning. But it could also be like a Mario Kart like block, that gives me a turtle shell that's gonna knock everybody down.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: So, I'm gonna duck into that there alcove.

Griffin: There's not enough space for you to get into the alcove, right? There's not enough space for someone to stand and, you know, be exempt from this constant downward spiraling movement. There is just sort of a very, very narrow pocket of the wall that has been carved out where there is this rune resembling an exclamation mark. What would you like to do to sort of examine it?

Travis: Let's do an arcana check.

Griffin: Okay.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: Oh... three plus five, an eight?

Griffin: Yes, it definitely appears to be something that is like a receptacle for kind of magical energy. It would take some time to interact with this and figure out what it does and how to use it. And as you have already acted on this turn, you get the sense that you, you know, are not—are not—

Travis: Rictus loudly announces:

Russ: Oh, no, a curse.

Travis: And continues up the stairs.

Griffin: Okay, you want to use the rest of your movement?

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: So you can go one, two, three, four, taking up to step number 10. That is it for your turn. Scorpo is going to do the same thing. He is going to move up his six. He is going to step up to the rune that is here on step number 10.

You watch as he kind of places his clawed hands against the rune. As he does, you see an exchange of kind of magical energy take place. As he places his hands on the runes, it seems to drain him of some of his—some of his essence, some of his magical ability here.

As he does, you see vines emerge from the rune and begin to drape downward over two of the steps here, surrounding them in tricky-looking, thorned, brambly vines, making those two steps difficult terrain, requiring double movement to get past.

Next in the order is Klaxon, who runs up and gets tangled up in those spaces. And he is actually going to spend his movement, or his action, as a Dash, to move up five more steps, to reach the front of the pack. The rest of the group is going to...

I'm going to get through their moves fairly quickly, as I don't want this to take all day. Of note, Tommy Falcon, on his hoverboard, is able to fly immediately over the vines without being slowed by them at all. He started on three, so he is going to move up 12 whole steps, up to 15.

Travis: Whew!

Griffin: Yeah, he is moving—he is moving very, very quickly. Randolph is not—

Travis: How did Klaxon move so quickly?

Griffin: Klaxon Dashed, he used his action to Dash.

Travis: Oh.

Griffin: Which, I will remind you, is something you can do. In lieu of taking an action, you can—you can take another move. Randolph moves ahead. Doober Sweetleaf gets stuck a little bit in the... Doober Sweetleaf is gonna take a push action, a shove action against Rhyme, just for shits and giggles here. But it's unsuccessful, because Doober Sweetleaf is very small. And Rhyme looks at him like:

Rhyme: What the fuck, kid?

Griffin: Continuing to move up, you see... everyone else has gone up to make their way up to the respective stairs, leaving just Hellgrammite and Lorovith at the bottom. Next up is Lorovith. It's your turn.

Justin: Hm... Well—

Griffin: You actually have 35 feet of movement. So Lorovith, you are actually able to move seven steps with your move action. I don't know why you have extra, maybe your legs are super long? But that's what your character sheet says.

Justin: So, what stair—if I use the maximum of my movement, who would I be on a stair with?

Griffin: You would make your way up to this sort of first viny stair that Snug Jaw is on. To move past that square, you would have to use double movement, but that is—you could land there.

Justin: I want to get up—I want to stand—there's like an open spot, if you were to triangulate between Doober Sweetleaf—

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Snug Jaw. If you triangulated, there's a spot there.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Justin: That's where I want to get to.

Griffin: Okay, you—

Justin: I want to be in between Doober and Snug Jaw.

Griffin: You make your way up the seven steps, from step one up to step eight, you step into these viny brambles. And even with your considerable height, you find yourself slightly tangled up by them. That is your move action. You still have your action and bonus action. What would you like to do?

Justin: Oh, man, I can't—so, I can't attack anybody—

Griffin: You can make unarmed attacks, you can take—you know, pushing and shoving is okay—

Justin: Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Okay—

Griffin: You can't make armed attacks or directly target someone with a spell. If you have a spell that, you know, attacks an area or does like a burst or something that, that is not prohibited. You just can't, you know, set someone on fire from inside—

Justin: Right. Okay, I am gonna try something.

Griffin: Okay?

Justin: A technique.

Griffin: Great.

Justin: I'm gonna throw Snug Jaw off the stairs. [chuckles]

Griffin: Okay. So, this is going to be a shove. Instead of making an attack roll, you make an athletics check, contested by the target's athletics or acrobatics check. They're going to use athletics, because they are a big bear. And if you succeed, you will either knock the target prone or push it five feet away from you, which, because Snug Jaw is standing on the edge of the stair, you could elect to knock him right off! We're going to roll this right on the table. Oh my god! That's a critical fail from poor ol' Snug Jaw!

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: And I rolled a 15.

Griffin: Yeah. Okay, as you place your hands squarely against his chest—looks up at you. You hear like a—

Justin: With a critical failure, Griff—

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: I would like—I would just feel like—

Griffin: Oh, you yeet him.

Justin: He has stuck out his leg. And it's not even like a—it's not hard.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: He's like using momentum against him, right? He's like tripping him at the bottom.

Griffin: Right.

Justin: Sweeping with the leg, shoving with the top. Like, he's played this game a lot.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Back in—

Griffin: He—

Justin: Back at the—on the—on the hills.

Griffin: He's—

Justin: Like—

Griffin: For sure.

Justin: King of the hill is like one of his faves.

Griffin: Yeah, absolutely! This is a—this is—this is like your area of expertise, as it were. And Snug Jaw falls bad. Snug Jaw... Snug Jaw has a bad dive off of this step. And you see him look at you and go:

Snug Jaw: *Huh?*

Griffin: And—

Lorovith: I saw the way you looked at Doober!

Travis: [laughs]

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: And he goes flying off the step, and falls and lands in the water. As he does, you all watch as these sort of ropey red eels from all around the circle surrounding the spiral staircase just converge on Snug Jaw. Snug Jaw is attacked by these eels and... takes 24 points of...

Justin: Snugging damage.

Griffin: [chuckles] Of eel damage.

Justin: [chuckles] Eel base—it's the screeching eels!

Griffin: That is actually, looking at Snug Jaw's character sheet—you lose sight of this enormous, kind of like somewhat grotesque living teddy bear, as he is consumed by these eels. And moments later, they part, and there is nothing floating in this shallow water but stuffing, as Snug Jaw is instantly killed as he lands in the water. And I think all of you have a moment where you think, boy-howdy, you don't want to go into the eel water. [chuckles] Holy shit, oh Christ, no.

Justin: And then Lorovith looks behind him—looks behind him, back at everybody, and says:

Lorovith: In a sense, you could blame society.

Justin: [chuckles] And then continues on his way.

Griffin: [chuckles] Okay, with that, you hear the chiming of a bell from the waters up above you, as another Aspirant falls in the very first round of this trial. And one of the four required deaths have taken place already. We move to the bottom of the order, which is Hellgrammite. You turn, Hellgrammite.

Clint: Okay, Hellgrammite is going to move up into the space formally held by... Sweetums? Whatever his name was.

Griffin: Snug Jaw. So, you—

Clint: Snug Jaw.

Griffin: You are not actually able to get all the way up there. With your speed, which is 30, you can get up to step number seven, which is where Hippocrates is.

Clint: Well, then I'm going to use Dash.

Griffin: That is your action, if you do that. You can do that if you want, that would give—

Clint: I realize that.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: Yeah. I'm gonna to Dash.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: So that I'm right there in that space.

Griffin: Okay?

Clint: And I'm gonna stop on eight.

Griffin: Okay. You are right up in the brambles with Lorovith.

Clint: Yeah, and just kind of—

Hellgrammite: Oh, that feels... that's kind of good. Oh, wait a minute, wait a minute, yeah...

Clint: And he's kind of, you know, like you do when you scratch your back against the corner of a wall and your wife yells at you? Yeah.

Griffin: What?

Clint: Yeah, against the—

Travis: Like a big bear.

Clint: Scratch his back—

Travis: Or—

Clint: Yeah, like a big bear.

Travis: Or timing, Dad. A bear just died.

Clint: Too soon? Is it too soon?

Griffin: Yes.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: I would say so. Okay, you do that, to what end, may I ask? Or—

Clint: Why do I stay there?

Griffin: Yeah.

Clint: I just kind of like it.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: It's pleasant.

Travis: Because he's a weird beard, Griffin.

Griffin: Okay, cool. Cool-cool-cool-cool! All right, that brings us back to the top of the order. Before that happens, the stairs rotate downward. We go...

Travis: Oh, it rotates a lot.

Griffin: It rotates three steps. Everyone moves three steps down. The vines, you can see, because they are being projected out of this runic symbol, they stay sort of put where they are on steps seven and eight, but

everyone else moves down three. And the other thing that happens is the water rises. You all watch as the first step disappears underneath the rising water, and is overtaken by eels. Next in the order is Rictus.

Travis: I want to target the—where step four—

Griffin: Yes, where Hippocrates is standing.

Travis: Yeah. Right next—like where the step is attached to the center pillar.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: With a thunder damage Chromatic Orb at level two.

Griffin: Okay, read me the description of Chromatic Orb, if you would.

Travis: "You hurl a four-inch diameter sphere of energy at a creature." Oh, I guess it's not creature...

Griffin: Hm...

Travis: Hm...

Griffin: Tell me what you're trying to accomplish here.

Travis: I'm trying to blast the step loose from the wall.

Griffin: Okay, I will allow this to happen. These steps are extremely sturdy, and so... I'm trying to remember the term for it in fifth edition, where an object is not invulnerable, but you have to deal a certain threshold of damage for it to have any effect at all.

Travis: How thick is the slab?

Griffin: I mean, it's like a... six-inch-thick sort of—

Travis: Oh, okay, I didn't realize it was so heavy. Okay, different idea!

Griffin: Okay?

Travis: I'm gonna cast Cause Fear at level two. And this is a new thing I got, because of the curse that I had and the death mark that was on me—

Griffin: Yeah

Travis: I'm now Shadow Touched.

Griffin: Oh?

Travis: Which was the feat that I took at my last level up.

Griffin: Well, tell me what that means, Travis.

Travis: It gave me some stuff.

Griffin: It looks like you have some extra spells like Cause Fear and the Invisibility spell prepared.

Travis: Yeah, because I'm like—Shadow Touch, you know the shadow—

Griffin: Yes.

Travis: It touched me.

Griffin: So, you can cast... you can cast each of these spells without expending a spell slot.

Travis: Correct.

Griffin: Great.

Travis: Does that—how does—but I assume it's still the same deal with the one per thing—

Griffin: So, as long as cause—so, Trav, unfortunately, this is a target—a targeted spell.

Travis: Yes, correct. But I'm not dealing damage.

Griffin: It's still, you—the terms of the—of the challenge are as such that you cannot target a—if this was like an area fear spell where you made everyone afraid in a certain range, then—

Travis: This might surprise you, a lot of my shit is targeted spells.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: What if you target the darkness?

Travis: *Eh?*

Griffin: [chuckles]

Clint: Hm...

Justin: Just target the space directly above them. [chuckles] Just like right above.

Travis: Okay, I'm gonna Dash up the stairs then.

Griffin: Okay, cool. So, you first take your first six steps of movement. The vines are going to require double, so that's two, four, five,, six, bringing you to 11. And then...

Travis: Did Tommy and them rotate down, or does it stop?

Griffin: They already did rotate down.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: They were—they were higher up. They moved three steps down already. I got everyone, don't worry.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: And then you're gonna keep rockin'?

Travis: So, now that I'm up here?

Griffin: Yes. You have made it to where you are right now without Dashing.

Travis: Oh, okay, great. I'm gonna try to... push Klaxon down the stairs.

Griffin: Okay, down the stairs, or off of the edge of the stairs? Direction is important here. If you want to push him, you know, down the stairs, to take a tumble down the stairs, that's one thing. If you want to push him off the edge, down over the side and downward, that is—you can do that too—

Travis: How sturdy does he look?

Griffin: I mean, he is a metal construct. So like, he looks somewhat sturdy, but also at the same time like, maybe not the strongest. There's a heaviness there that is suggested, but not a strength, because he is made of, you know, kind of reedy, brass piping and stuff.

Travis: Oh, wait, actually, I want to grab the disc that Tommy is floating on.

Griffin: Oh? Amazing! Okay, yes, he has Tenser's Floating Disk. You are going to just grab onto it? Are you skitchin'?

Travis: Yeah, I'm gonna grab onto it. I don't know how high he is, but I want to have a hold on it.

Griffin: Tenser's floating—

Travis: To try to slow him down.

Griffin: Yeah, that's great. Tenser's Floating Disk... floats three—oh, okay, so it floats three feet above the ground. So, I mean, he's on the next step, but you are able to grab onto it. It can hold up to 500 pounds. And—

Travis: Well, if he goes, then he's taking me with him.

Griffin: Okay, why don't you make a... let me think what kind of check this would be, just to see how good a grip you can get onto this, you know, magic flying skateboard.

Clint: Can we see this going on?

Griffin: Yeah, I mean, you're—

Clint: I mean, looking up?

Griffin: You are close enough to see this going on.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: You... give me just a...

Justin: "Am I in the room when he's doing all this?" [chuckles]

Griffin: "If there's any babes—" Okay, you—

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: We can actually only reference that—

Justin: Sorry, Griffin, yeah—

Griffin: Once.

Justin: If you say Tenser's Floating Disc one more time—

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Justin: [chuckles] You're gonna have second virginity—

Griffin: Sure.

Clint: TFD.

Justin: Griffin, it's gonna return.

Griffin: You—

Clint: TFD.

Griffin: TFD. You are able to grab onto it, Trav, it's just a question of how much of a grip you're going to be able to keep on it once Tommy starts moving. I really do like this move quite a bit, so give—just give me a strength check, just to see how much you're able to hold on to them.

Justin: While this strength check is happening with Travis—

Griffin: Yes, yes?

Justin: We've referenced that thing now twice. Have you guys ever thought about how much actual play podcasting does owe to that one—

Griffin: Yes.

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: That one skit about the dangers of Dungeons and Dragons. It's like, it's just an expounded version of that. The entire genre is just based on this one dumb skit.

Griffin: Entirely, yeah. Okay—

Travis: I got a seven!

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Which isn't good.

Griffin: It is—it's not great. It is enough for you to hold up your own weight, right? So like, Tommy Falcon on his flying board—

Travis: On his wonderful flying machine.

Griffin: On his wonderful flying machine, is continuing to, you know, move upward. As he does, you are able to grab onto it. If he tries to shake you off, it would not be super hard for him to do that, but you can get—you will get a little bit of extra movement here off of Tommy's board, if you so choose.

Travis: I'm drafting.

Griffin: Okay, cool. Next in the order is Scorpo. Scorpo is going to take a shove action against the Spider. The Spider is going to try to acrobat his way out of it... which he does. He is unsuccessful, Scorpo fails at that, and is going to take his movement. Spider's just going to punch him with his attack of opportunity here in retribution, and Scorpio takes four points of bludgeoning damage.

But he moves upward two, four, five, six, landing on the same step as Klaxon and Rictus Ravenwood. With three of you on these higher steps, you notice that the steps kind of like emerge outward further from the wall, the further down it goes. It is kind of cramped, having three people on the same step up here.

Travis: Well, I mean, technically, I'm holding on to the hoverboard, so—

Griffin: Yes, absolutely. Next in the order is Klaxon. And you all watch as Klaxon takes one step forward, and on his second step forward, he... places his metal foot on step number 13 here. And as he does, it turns into sand, it transmutes instantly before your eyes. And Klaxon, just completely absent-mindedly, steps forward and then falls 10 feet, coming down with a crash on the ground next to Randolph, who looks down at him and kind of chuckles knowingly.

As that happens and this trap, that you're not sure when it appeared, was deployed, you see the sand reform back into a step. Klaxon takes... six

points of bludgeoning damage and is prone on step number three, close to the rising waters. Rhyme is actually going to step forward towards this red exclamation point glyph.

Hellgrammite and Lorovith, you are right next to Rhyme as this happens, you watch as Rhyme puts their hands up against the glyph. And you see the same kind of like magical exchange happen where they are channeling some of their own arcane energy into this rune in the tower. And you see no effect that you can tell on the tower, as they do this, but they are then going to take a step upwards and stop on spot number nine there.

Most of the other folks here in the order are going to just try and get some distance from this water in a sort of reactionary fearful response to watching Snug Jaw be torn apart. Tommy Falcon is going to move. And I'm going to say because this trap has been deployed, there is not any danger really to you, Rictus, so you are going to be pulled alongside. Tommy looks down at you and says:

Tommy Falcon: Hey, what the hell, man? You could at least ask first, I don't mind giving folks, you know, a lift, but damn.

Rictus: Thanks, dude!

Tommy Falcon: Yeah, no problem.

Rictus: Sorry, it was kind of a panic response.

Tommy Falcon: Yeah, sure, I get it. This is scary stuff, man!

Griffin: Tommy Falcon—

Rictus: You seem nice.

Clint: [chuckles]

Tommy Falcon: Yeah, I guess. Thank you.

Griffin: He is going to move up to spot number 18. I think that's as far as he's going to be able to move, actually, with you hanging on to his ass. With that, he says—

Travis: Griffin, please. [chuckles]

Griffin: He says—

Travis: I'm not hanging onto his ass.

Griffin: Yeah.

Tommy Falcon: Hey, can you please—will you please let go?

Rictus: Oh, sure. You seem cool.

Griffin: Do you let go?

Travis: Yeah. He asked nice.

Griffin: Okay, great. Okay, you have disengaged from the board, but you have moved up extra spaces, up to spot number 18. So, Randolph is going to move his few spaces here. Klaxon is prone, so he can't take a sort of retaliatory attack. But Randolph is lagging behind, because he is not moving very quickly. Hippocrates is going to move up.

Travis: Do the people that he passes get opportunity attack?

Griffin: If you want to use your reaction to place an attack, or a shove or whatever, against people who are moving past you, please holler and say so. Placement on the tower, again, is important, right? So, Hippocrates is kind of on the inside track here. You wouldn't be able to necessarily shove him off, but... Hippocrates moves up there. I. And you see Hippocrates move up to step number eight, and then Hippocrates casts Misty Step—is going to teleport up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space that he can see.

That doesn't mean he can go to the very top of the tower, because of the way that this spiral staircase is laid out, but he is able to Misty Step basically

to the spot directly above, which is where Rictus and Tommy Falcon are placed. You see, all of a sudden, *poof*, this plague doctor just appears in a cloud of mist directly next to you. Brings us to—

Travis: Can I use my reaction to shove him?

Griffin: No, because he has not moved out of the space. That is how opportunity—

Travis: I know, I just got surprised!

Griffin: Yeah, whoa! You can use reaction—

Travis: It's fight—

Griffin: To just be startled.

Travis: It's fight, flight, or shove.

Griffin: Yeah. Doober Sweetleaf is up next. Doober is going to go one, two, three, four, five—oh, god, someone's making a scary red triangle on the map.

Travis: I'll take care of it.

Justin: Hey, fuckin' give me my triangle back, dick!

Clint: [titters]

Justin: I'm trying to do measurements over here!

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: Doobers—

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: Doober Sweet Leaf is... going to cast Burning Hands to shoot forth a 15-foot cone. Actually, from the tip of his pipe. He is actually going to do it right here, and he's going to blast it towards the vines and towards Rhyme. Rhyme is going to... fail their dexterity saving throw, and is going to take quite a bit of damage here. 3D6... okay, nine points of fire damage.

In addition, these vines that have been covering the stairs are burned away, as Doober Sweetleaf melts them with his powerful magics. So, those vines are now gone. Okay, next in the order is the Spider. The Spider, get this, casts Spider Climb, jumps onto the pillar, starts to climb straight upward. Now, it's not like a great solution, because he can't climb upward through the stairs.

Justin: [chuckles]

Griffin: But he is able to sort of like climb clockwise around the tower, not stepping on any of the—I think he saw what happened to Klaxon and is like, fuck that. So, he's just—he's just not gonna go on the steps anymore. So, he's just kind of like holding on to the wall here at step number 12, moving us to Lorovith. Your turn.

Justin: I'm gonna bound up as many stairs as I can.

Griffin: Okay. One, two, three—

Justin: When I pass step seven, I whisper:

Lorovith: Close your eyes.

Griffin: Okay. You pass by Doober Sweetleaf and Randolph, warning them to close their eyes. Step eight, step nine, you are... As you land on the same step as Rhyme, they look at you and just through their like—give me an insight check, actually.

Justin: Okay.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Four.

Griffin: They look at you in a somewhat sort of inscrutable manner. Last time you saw Rhyme, it was when you killed all of Rhyme's friends. [chuckles] Or led to the sometimes-accidental deaths of Rhyme's friends in the—in the Trial of Abjuration. You know, there's beef there, but Rhyme is giving you a look that you cannot quite interpret.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: You still have movement. You were on step five, so you can keep rocking up if you want to.

Justin: Okay, I look at Rhyme, and Rhyme looks at me, and I say:

Lorovith: Watch this!

Justin: [chuckles] And I keep going up!

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: Make a dexterity saving throw for me, please.

Justin: Okay.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Oh, it's a natural 20.

Griffin: Holy shit.

Clint: Whoo!

Griffin: You are—you are a very, very fortunate man, Justin. With that natural 20, you take a step forwards on to step number 10. As you place—

Justin: Griffin, if there's one thing I believe, it's this, Gary loves a bold player.

Griffin: Gary does love a bold player.

Travis: It's true.

Justin: Gary loves a bold player.

Travis: That's true.

Griffin: As you take a step forward, you feel... and it is I think of your mountaineering nature, right? You know how to scale craggy cliffs, you know what it feels like when your footfall doesn't land exactly how you expected it to. You take a step forward, instantly, as soon as your foot touches the surface of this step, you realize something is wrong.

And you do not allow yourself to fall through, as it also disintegrates into quicksand beneath your feet. Instead, you go into a controlled fall, using your tremendous height to reach forward and catch yourself on step number 11. And in a physics-defying forward roll, you step directly over the trapped stair that Rhyme had set for you.

Instantly, the neurons fire and you connect that Rhyme was pretty excited for you to take a step onto this step number 10, where they had channeled this trap. However, you foil their plan, and you hear a scream of impotent rage coming from behind Rhyme's mask as you land safely next to Scorpo. It is still your move action. Actually, that is the end of your—

Justin: Oh, cool—

Griffin: Move action, you have your regular action. Instantly, the step reforms, and step number 10 is returned to its normal state.

Justin: So, what step—

Griffin: You are on step number 11, next to Scorpo. Rhyme is still on step number nine. You have your action, you could Dash or do whatever else you would like. It's your prerogative.

Justin: I'm having trouble. This has become a three dimensional—

Griffin: Yes, we're playing hyper chess.

Justin: Issue I'm trying to solve—yeah. [chuckles] Okay, here's what I'm gonna do, I'm just gonna tell you what I'm gonna do, I'm gonna do a... What I'm doing, Griff is the—is I'm gonna cast Color Spray.

Griffin: Oh, cool. What does Color Spray do?

Justin: "You launch a dazzling array of flashing colorful light. Each creature in a 15-foot cone originating from you must succeed on a constitution saving throw or have the Blinded condition until the end of your next turn."

Griffin: Okay, so you're just aiming this squarely at Rhyme. Are you trying to catch Scorpo in it too?

Justin: Oh, no, no, no! No, no. I'm trying to catch the highest number of people possible—

Griffin: Oh?

Justin: But I can't do those calculations when I'm splitting—

Griffin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Justin: You know what I mean?

Griffin: Right, I feel you. So—

Justin: There's an artificial split in our diagram.

Griffin: Yes. So, you can see Rhyme is two steps below you, right? You are—you are essentially here, but like 10 feet up, right? So like, you can see

Rhyme very clearly, they are just two steps behind you. You could aim this at Rhyme, you could also hit Scorpo with it. These three, Tommy Falcon, Hippocrates, Rictus, they are all, you know, way fairly high up above you. So, with your 15-foot cone, you could get Scorpo and Rhyme, or Scorpo and Spider, and that is pretty much... that is pretty much all you can get.

Justin: Yeah, well, if that's the situation, I've changed my mind and the cone, instead, it's going to be one of Burning Hands.

Griffin: Okay, great.

Justin: And I'm going to cast a 15-foot cone, just at Rhyme.

Griffin: Yeah, cool.

Justin: And Rhyme's gotta do a dexterity saving throw.

Griffin: Yeah, again, Rhyme is gonna roll a dexterity saving—

Justin: And I'm gonna cast—now, since we can only cast it... Are we doing spell levels or slots? Or is it one per like—

Griffin: So, yes, we still—you still do—yes, you—if you want to cast it at a higher level, you can absolutely do that, but it is still like your only use of Burning Hands that you have available.

Justin: Gotcha. Well, I'm gonna keep it at a first level—

Griffin: Okay. Cool. They rolled a two on their dexterity save, so that's not gonna hit.

Justin: And...

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: That's six damage.

Griffin: Oaky, Rhyme already took some damage from Doober Sweetleaf's spell, which looked quite similar to the Burning Hands you just cast.

Obviously, there was like a different kind of like visual effect to it, it wasn't like explicitly the same exact thing. Rhyme is bloodied. Rhyme is having a very, very difficult time now getting up these stairs. Okay, and that brings us to Hellgrammite.

Clint: How big are the steps, dimension-wise? I mean—

Griffin: Yeah, I mean, they are, you know, roughly four feet across. And then moving from one step to another is maybe like one foot of height total. So, the steps are like six inches high and about four feet across.

Clint: Okay, Hellgrammite is going to use his motion to get as far as he can.

Griffin: Okay, so that moves you up to step number 11, with Lorovith and Scorpo.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: That's just your move.

Clint: And he is going to cast Obscure Object. "An object you can see within range becomes invisible until the spell ends. The object can be no longer than a five-foot cube, and it can't be worn by a creature." So, basically, what he's doing is, I want him to cast it on 10 and 11.

Griffin: Okay, so the object can be no larger than a five-foot cube. I think you can get one step with this, right? If it's in a five—a five-foot cube would get you one step. Also like, these steps are separate objects, technically.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: So, if—you are more than welcome to do that.

Clint: Then he's just gonna cast it on 10, to make 10 invisible.

Griffin: Okay, weird. Awesome, cool. Instantly, Rhyme looks in front of them. Rhyme, who is kind of like looking a little bit worse for wear, looks down at 10 and then looks at sort of the gulf above you all, and looks very, very nervous about this sudden development.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: That's it for Hellgrammite.

Griffin: Okay, cool, that brings us back to the top of the order. With that, the waters are going to rise once again.

Clint: Aw... [sings] Goodbye, Klaxon.

Griffin: Step two has been overtaking my water, and everybody is going to be pulled down three steps. As that happens, Randolph and Doober Sweetleaf go down, Rhyme goes down, Scorpo and Lorovith Hellgrammite go down—

Travis: Now, Spider's on the wall.

Griffin: Oh, you're so right, Travis. Where was he? He was on 12, yeah, so he does not move at all. Thank you so much for clocking that, Travis. Hippocrates, Rictus, Tommy, down to 15. Okay, everyone moves down, the waters rise up. And Klaxon, who was prone on step three after falling through the trap set by Randolph, is pulled down under the waters.

And immediately, you see these eels converge on Klaxon. Klaxon, being a kind of metallic construct, you see the eels maybe don't exactly know what to do with him, but they are still going to swarm and attack him anyway. He takes 17 points of damage. And for a moment, you see just kind of like this loose machinery floating in the water and you think like, oh, damn, that's just scrap.

And then you see, fuckin' Terminator 2 style, a single metallic hand punch its way out of the eel pile, as Klaxon drags himself up onto step number

three, leaking oil, making horrible grinding noises, as half of his machinery he leaves behind him floating in the water, as the stairs continue to turn ever downward.

[The Adventure Zone Royale theme music plays]

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