

The Adventure Zone Royale: Episode 20

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Griffin: Previously, on TAZ Royale... Six daggers plunge into him. And you see him stand stock-still, and fall backwards over dead.

Hellgrammite: Leggy! [shudders] *Ah...*

Travis: I want to chop his arm off.

Griffin: And The Gentleman is gone.

Travis: In rage, Rictus takes off for I guess the Ziggurat.

Lorovith: Becoming a father of an adult man didn't make me weaker! It's made me stronger than you could ever know!

Justin: Then I give him one big kick off the bridge. [chuckles]

Lorovith: Damn you, Grakhan! Even in death, you've failed me!

Griffin: You see a message is in your own handwriting. That message reads, "Thrikeen inside."

[The Adventure Zone Royale theme music plays]

Griffin: Hello, everybody! Welcome back to TAZ Royale, our battle royale, winner take all season of The Adventure Zone. On the last episode, we finished the Trial of Conjuraton, the fifth of our eight trials here, of the Octave Conclave—

Travis: Completely shockingly, frankly!

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: We all, the three characters we've been playing, survived.

Griffin: Yes.

Travis: That was long odds in Vegas. That was not predictable. We're all—

Griffin: Yeah!

Justin: I was on the—I was on the edge, I—

Griffin: I was gonna say, Grakhan—

Justin: This has all taken a lot.

Griffin: Grakhan V Lorovith was the closest we got to a—to a, you know—

Justin: That was dicey.

Griffin: A competitive sort of match. You embarrassed The Gentleman with your ploy and, well, Dr. Legume never really stood much of a chance. Let's pick up right where we left off, which was Lorovith, you were on the bridge where the duel took place with your old friend and rival, Grakhan. You defeated him in just a punch—a punch festival, and—

Travis: Killed him!

Griffin: You killed him, yeah, I mean, you killed him. You punched him so hard that he died from it and fell into the waters, drifting off over the edge of the Octave Ziggurat island. You are standing on this bridge, looking around, and you can see most of these like big, red, rectangular walls that were sectioning off the different arenas have vanished at this point. During your duel, you were distracted by the dueling grounds, where your dear... ward, I guess?

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Not your ward, like you're protecting him.

Justin: Son.

Travis: Yeah, ward.

Griffin: Your ward, I guess, Doober Sweetleaf, was battling Pip, the gigantic gnome. The duel has ended, what do you do?

Justin: I need to stride over there.

Griffin: Okay. You stride over, crossing across the island, until you reach the woods on the southwest quarter of the—of the island, where the Mage's Tower stands. As you reach that part of the island, trying to catch a glimpse of this battle, you see the red light barrier surrounding the arena where Doober was fighting suddenly disappears. And it leaves behind it just a big, solid block of fog--

Thick, dense, roiling fog, that as the barrier disappears, this fog then drops and begins to slowly sort of disperse through the island. And as it does so, it reveals Pip, who, again, had magically enlarged himself to a gigantic size, is lying impaled on the top of the Mage's Tower. Give me a perception check, please.

Travis: Griffin, Pip is still enlarged, right?

Griffin: Oh, yeah.

Travis: Ah, we won't starve! Excellent.

Griffin: You're gonna eat Pip?

Travis: I'm not saying—

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: That's my first choice!

Justin: Nine.

Clint: Nine.

Griffin: With a nine, you show up to this very, very grisly scene. With a nine, you hear movement up in the—in the trees, sort of near your location, in front of the tower. There is a slow drip of blood falling out of the boughs of these trees. And looking up, you see Doober Sweetleaf was hiding up in the boughs of these trees, and he looks pretty bad off. He's got a cut over his eye, with some blood dripping down. And he is just kind of trembling in fear.

Justin: I'm going to use Battle Medic. As a utilized action, I can expend one use of a healer's kit to tend to a creature within five feet of myself.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: That creature can expend one of its HP dice, and then I roll that die, and the creature regains a number of HP equal to the roll plus three.

Griffin: Okay, so that's a D6, plus a three.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Five plus three, eight.

Griffin: Okay, yeah, I mean, within five feet—you are a tall goliath, and you can basically just sort of reach up to where he is in a fetal position—

Justin: I'm also still big.

Griffin: In this tree. Right, yeah, so, you just sort of two-hand grab him up out of the tree and set him on the ground, and tend to his wounds with your—

Lorovith: Doober, I'm very proud of you for not dying.

Doober Sweetleaf: What happened?

Lorovith: You took a life, Doober. How do you feel?

Griffin: He looks up at where Pip is impaled, just kind of like trembling, shaking his head, sort of catatonic. He is in shock, as you are sort of tending to his cut.

Doober Sweetleaf: I won?

Lorovith: Yes, you won, you—you won, Doober! And yet you lost something very dear... innocence.

Doober Sweetleaf: I just meant to hide, I didn't...

Lorovith: Yes, yes, yes.

Doober Sweetleaf: I didn't know that he would—he would fall and become...

Lorovith: You, Doober—

Doober Sweetleaf: I'm going to be sick!

Lorovith: Made the proper choice. I'm very proud of you, as I've said.

Doober Sweetleaf: You survived, though, that's... that's good—

Lorovith: Deep breath!

Doober Sweetleaf: So, what—

Lorovith: Deep breath! Hold on, this will sting.

Doober Sweetleaf: Okay, what of—

Lorovith: *Rah!*

Doober Sweetleaf: [yells out] *Ah! Aah!*

Lorovith: Good boy, Doober!

Doober Sweetleaf: What of Grakhan then?

Lorovith: Dead. Dead as yours—well, not quite that dead! Oh, boy! Doober!

Griffin: [chuckles]

Lorovith: I believe you have a taste for the darker—the darker things. A little bit of shadow in you, boy.

Doober Sweetleaf: I wish Randolph were here. I wish I was back home... Please—

Lorovith: Yes, you say, that Doober, but think of this: what if the Doober of you, today, were to meet the Doober of then? Who would emerge from that dark alley victorious, hm?

Doober Sweetleaf: I suppose... I suppose I am stronger, sir... I think I need to go and lie down. Will you—

Lorovith: That's highly advisable, Doober. I'd stay off this leg too, if I were you.

Doober Sweetleaf: What? Nothing happened—

Lorovith: Would you like me to put you in a papoose sort of situation on my back?

Clint: [chuckles]

Doober Sweetleaf: I think that would be—

Lorovith: I'm quite large, you can see, Doober.

Doober Sweetleaf: I think that would be nice.

Griffin: He climbs up into your little papoose.

Lorovith: I didn't expect that answer, all right.

Griffin: And he looks up at you, kind of nuzzles in and closes his eyes, and falls fast asleep. Rictus, you were storming towards the Ziggurat after defeating The Gentleman, on a mission. What do you—what are you doing?

Travis: Is there a door that he can bust through?

Griffin: You find a few members of the Octave, including Coxy, the one—

Travis: Is it—it's a yes or no question, Griffin! Is there a door that he can bust through?

Griffin: [laughs] They are standing outside—they are standing outside of the Ziggurat, watching.

Rictus: Could you all go inside? Because I was kind of gonna do a thing where I busted through a door.

Coxy: We don't want to—we don't want to miss the rest of the trial. But I suppose if you're doing a dramatic thing—

Rictus: Okay, no, you guys stay here.

Travis: He goes into the door and slams out of it.

Griffin: Okay. Okay.

Coxy: Whoa?

Rictus: [yells out] *Ooh, yeah!*

Coxy: Congratulations, Rictus. I was hoping you would be—

Rictus: What did you do?

Coxy: Well... we said, "Sure, come on in." And then we sort of jumped backwards—

Rictus: No, in the—in the fight!

Coxy: We didn't—

Rictus: Why did you intervene?!

Coxy: Oh! You mean the fire that came up out of the big flame over there. That is... yes, I mean, that—we have told you all of—all the Aspirants here on the island repeatedly that... if you remove your Grimoire from your arm, you will be eliminated.

This is one of our core sort of tenants here, it's one of the main sort of rules that we enforce. And so, when his arm was sort of removed from his person during your duel, thanks to your quick thinking and vicious trickery, I will say we, we did have to enforce that rule.

He was no longer equipped with his Grimoire, and so we... that is what happens. It would be doing us a huge favor if you wouldn't tell a lot of people about what happened. Because like then a lot of people are going to start doing like loopholes, like trying to get each other's Grimoires—

Travis: Rictus grabs him by the like lapels.

Griffin: Oh, okay?

Travis: And pushes him against the wall of the Ziggurat.

Griffin: No, you're going to—no, my friend, you are going to need to make an attack roll if you're—

Travis: That's what he attempts to do, though.

Griffin: Yeah, that's what we're gonna do.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: 19 plus three.

Griffin: Holy fuckin' shit. You jump forward and you reach your hands out to try and grab Coxy by his flashy golden lapels. As you make contact with him, you pass right through him. As you do, you see sort of this colorful cloud kind of disperse where you jumped through him. And then Coxy reappears just in front of you, in front of the door. He says:

Coxy: Rictus, Rictus, listen to me—

Rictus: He was mine!

Coxy: Rictus, listen. First of all, another one of our rules is, don't do that thing you just did. You are very lucky that I am not actually appearing here in person, or you would be punished in the same manner in which The Gentleman was. You passed the trial, Rictus. You did a very good job against an opponent that, frankly, a lot of us did not think you were going to be able to best. I think you need to take your victory in stride. But he is—no one here is yours to kill, Rictus. Do you understand?

Rictus: I demand an audience with whatever Octave member specializes in necromancy.

Coxy: You demand?

Rictus: I ask?

Griffin: Tell me, is this intimidation, persuasion, what's the tact you're taking here?

Travis: Persuasion.

Griffin: Persuasion, okay. Give me that roll, please.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: 15 plus one, 16.

Griffin: Good rolls. He sighs, he thinks for a minute. He says:

Coxy: This can be arranged. The number of Aspirants remaining is small enough that we can make some office time available to you all, I suppose, if you seek it. I will make him aware, and you can—you can visit him when he calls for you. He will answer whatever questions you have.

But Rictus, for real, bud, the attitude, you gotta turn it around. You are diabolical, my friend, and I think that you would make a great addition to the team of eight here. But you gotta get this anger thing, the ego under control. You know what I mean?

Travis: Rictus takes a deep breath.

Coxy: See, better, isn't it?

Rictus: I... I have one more ask, please.

Coxy: Yes?

Rictus: I... I would like to claim the crystal that contains the spell of time that The Gentleman wielded.

Coxy: Hm... this is unconventional, Rictus. But I will bring it up with our expert in the necromantic arts, and he can address this topic with you tomorrow when you—when you meet with him. Is this satisfactory? We'll have to recover it. It went inside that weird, crazy soul sphere thing that was glowing, and it just obliterated his arm. I saw that and I was like, *what?* So, but I bet we can probably get it put back together for you. But again, it is not my position to award things like that. I suppose I will leave it to him. Is that fair?

Rictus: Thank you for taking it into consideration.

Coxy: Of course, Rictus.

Travis: And behind Rictus' back, he's just like clinching his right fist.

Coxy: Yes.

Travis: Where that like weird, purpley, like gray and black part of the Wither and Bloom manifests from. And he's just like clenching it, like open and closed, restraining himself.

Griffin: So grump—so cranky.

Coxy: Rictus, please make your way into the Ziggurat. We will be summoning everyone for this sort of post-trial debrief. Let's find out who survived, yes?

Griffin: Hellgrammite, what are you doing in the moments after the trial concludes?

Clint: I think Hellgrammite is really studying the ground where, well, his new bride to be just scared away too.

Griffin: Sure.

Clint: I think he's... investigating it, to see if there's anything unusual about it.

Griffin: Okay, are you investigating the Crystalarium? That is where the sort of—this great crystalline centipede sort of dug underneath the structure to burrow inside. You are standing in sort of the edge of the woods, overlooking the Crystalarium where you had etched the secret message that said "Thrikeen inside" to yourself. You know what? Give me a wisdom saving throw, actually, in this moment.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: To see if you remember sort of writing this as you're confronted with—

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: God, another nine.

Griffin: I think—I think you do realize this is yours. I think you don't exactly recall the moment of writing it, but like you—I think you remember enough to know that like this isn't some trick, this isn't some illusion. Like, you very—you very much know that you did write this, in reference to whatever is happening inside the Crystalarium.

Clint: Okay, well, then I'm gonna head to the Crystalarium then and maybe investigate.

Griffin: All right. Are you trying to take a stealthy approach to this? Remembering that the Crystalarium has been sort of off limits to you all as one of the core rules of this island.

Clint: I would think so, yes.

Griffin: Okay, give me a stealth check, not using your Chameleon Carapace, because it's not a hide, it is a sneak.

Clint: Stealth check... If it's a nine, I'm gonna...

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: No, it's a—

Griffin: Oh, a dirty 20, yeah, absolutely.

Clint: Dirty 20.

Griffin: Okay, yeah! You are able to sort of creep crawl along the ground. You find like a small ridge that you can kind of skitter around to reach kind of the base of the Crystalarium where you saw this centipede burrow down into. Looking down at the ground, give me—give me an investigation check.

Clint: Could I do a nature check?

Griffin: Sure, yeah, either one would be fine.

Clint: Okay. Nature check...

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: That would be a 25.

Travis: Wow!

Justin: God! Man, you know everything about—

Griffin: All right! Yeah, okay! 25. Looking at the ground—

Travis: You are nature!

Griffin: You are unable to see through the walls of the Crystalarium. The crystal that forms those walls is opaque, sort of a dark amethyst color. So, you're unable to sort of like see inside of the structure. Looking down at the ground where the centipede burrowed, there is a, I think they're called carpenter spiders.

Whenever they dig down, they leave these like very recognizable hills of kind of round granules, that really kind of like stick out alongside the like other dirt that they—that they dig down into.

You are able to see it's not carpenter spiders, but you can see like very, very, very obvious signs of insects burrowing basically around the perimeter of this Crystalarium, literally hundreds of times. There has been a lot, a lot of coming and going from this structure, from some insects that you would estimate to be like not—

Like not that small, like roughly about the size of the centipede that you saw earlier, which was about, I forget exactly what I said, like 16 inches long, or something like—like a big, big, long, wide, sort of flat centipede. There are a lot of sort of burrows. None that you can like get down into, but this is—this is a heavily trafficked sort of insect exit and entrance.

Clint: Hm. But way too small for Hellgrammite to get into, right?

Justin: Hellgrammite Senior.

Griffin: [titters]

Justin: Hm...

Travis: Hm!

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: Something to think about.

Hellgrammite: I need a ward! I need a ward like you!

Griffin: Get in there, Doober. Yeah, no, I mean, it's—it is—you are considerably larger than those bugs are, right? It's not impossible that you could dig down through there and back up into it. But I will say from like—from what you remember about sort of the moment where you wrote this message, you know that fucking around here for any amount of time carries with it a pretty enormous amount of risk.

Clint: I know. Yeah.

Griffin: Whether it be death or you being forced to forget all of this stuff that you are all of a sudden able to remember.

Clint: Then I'm going to try one quick thing before I leave.

Griffin: Okay?

Clint: He can communicate mentally.

Griffin: Okay?

Clint: Thrikeen Telepathy. Without magic, you cant speak the non-thri—

Justin: I would love if—I would love—I would *love* to hear Daffy Duck say that. [chuckles]

Griffin: [guffaws]

Clint: [spoofing Daffy Duck] Thrikeen Telepathy!

Griffin: I would love to hear his ass even try to say that shit.

Justin: [laughs] Sorry, dude, I just think about Daffy—

Clint: [spoofing Daffy Duck] "Duck Dodgers and 25th and a half century!"
You can't speak the anon—

Justin: Trigger all your vocal stims. Dad's splayed out on the ground here, Mel Blanc has fully entered his body. I'm just trying to say if he said Thrikeen Telepathy, it would be a whole thing. [chuckles]

Clint: You can use telepathy, magically transmitting your thoughts mentally to creatures within 120 feet of yourself.

Travis: Any creatures.

Clint: Yeah.

Justin: Any creatures.

Clint: I've been saving this.

Griffin: Okay, Thrikeen Telepathy... to any willing creatures?

Clint: Yeah. I figured they came up and spoke, they'd be willing?

Griffin: Is it a... is it a one-way thing? You can transmit your thoughts mentally to willing creatures within 120 feet of yourself. It must be able to understand a language. It is broken if you or the creature move apart, or if you—either of you are incapacitated. Okay, so this is a question of, you can send this message, absolutely. It is a question of whether or not you will receive anything in return. What would you like to say, telepathically?

Hellgrammite: I didn't get your name!

Griffin: [chuckles]

Hellgrammite: Or your digits! I guess she'd have—she wouldn't have digits... Come back and talk to me! Please. Please.

Griffin: This is all telepathically, right.

Clint: Yeah!

Griffin: You see a very, very small insect, a little beetle, skitters out of the ground where you are sort of looking and projecting these thoughts. As it appears, you hear a whispered response in your mind that says:

Beetle: You must flee. The time is not right. We will reach out when the opportunity strikes. You cannot be seen here. You must go.

Hellgrammite: Very well. Do you have a name? Oh, please be Ringo.

Beetle: [chuckles]

Hellgrammite: Very well, okay, but you will call, right? I mean somebody—I mean, you will communicate, right?

Beetle: We will call.

Hellgrammite: You're not gonna ghost me?

Beetle: I cannot. [chuckles] You must survive, though you must leave now, Hellgrammite.

Hellgrammite: Okay.

Griffin: And the beetle skitters back under the—

Clint: Hellgrammite, exit stage right, pursued by bear.

Griffin: You all are summoned back to the Ziggurat, at the center of the island, as the dust of the trial settles and the sun begins to slip over the horizon of this floating island. As you make your-

Travis: Is Pranklin still alive?

Griffin: Well, let's find out. It's time to find out who survived. As you make your way over to the Ziggurat, you see those big holographic busts of the entrance into this trial begin to slowly kind of migrate through the sky. They had been floating over the arenas where each pair had kind of been matched up.

You see your own visages, alongside a few other familiar faces, float over and take their place in a big ring encircling the highest tier of the Ziggurat, slowly kind of rotating as motes of light shoot up and sparkle around them in celebration.

And you see also, as the other—the other busts that were remaining over the arenas begin to wither and shrink, and zoom in through the entrance of the Ziggurat into the foyer, joining the kind of memorial exhibit where the other fallen competitors have appeared. In those fallen, withered faces, you see The Gentleman, smug, even in death, zip into his sort of his plinth.

Followed by Dr. Legume, the imposing face of Grakhan on his pedestal. You see Pip The Gnome. And then you start to see others that you had not known the results of their battle; Madmantis, the mad mantis, the contact juggling clown, Mystique, Hilda, the sea witch, Gunk, the nasty little toad man.

Travis: No!

Justin: He's gunk, he's gunk—

Griffin: The precocious urchin—

Justin: He's gunk, and now he's dead!

Griffin: [chuckles] The precocious urchin called Pockets, the fedora-capped Detective Magic. And the last two bringing up the rear of the fallen competitors—

Justin: Wait, sorry, one quick question, just because we'll never talk about this again. The fedora-capped Detective Magic, can you tell me where the capitals are in that sentence? So I know—

Griffin: Detective Magic is his name. Detective Magic was the next to last wizard I came up with—

Justin: So, Detective Magic is his name! Detective Magic—[chuckles]

Griffin: His game is detect magic, and he's Detective Magic.

Clint: [chuckles]

Justin: [chuckles]

Travis: The fedora is just—

Justin: Detective Magic is his name!

Griffin: Guys, I want you to understand—

Justin: Detecting magic is his game.

Griffin: Truly, truly, I really mean this—

Justin: He has a...

Griffin: I made a bunch of wizards, and sometimes you guys ran into those wizards, and sometimes you didn't. At one point, you rolled a dice to see who your new friend wizard would be, and you got Scorpo. You could have gotten Detective Magic, and the course of this entire season—

Justin: Yes, I'm just saying—

Griffin: Would have been different.

Travis: No, we're just trying to figure out—

Justin: I'm just saying like—

Travis: How the fedora plays into it.

Justin: There are people who are maintaining wikis about this show.

Griffin: Right.

Clint: [chuckles]

Justin: Bless you, by the way. Thank you so much.

Griffin: Thank you so much.

Justin: History thanks you. I just wanted them to know fedora-capped Detective Magic is with all-caps—

Griffin: He had a fedora—no—

Travis: But it's not his full title.

Griffin: His only name is Detective Magic.

Justin: His name—his full name was not Fedora Capped Detective—okay.

Griffin: And he's wearing a fedora. I like to give a little bit of flavor for these guys as I bury them.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: His name was Detective Magic, and he wore a fedora. I'm sorry to hang such a bright lantern on it.

Justin: That say—that says so much, though. That is the most educational garment you could put on someone, though.

Clint: And it is kind of putting a—

Griffin: Absolutely.

Justin: Shorthand.

Clint: Hat on a hat, kind of.

Griffin: The last two to join the memorial, Hellgrammite, you actually recognize them from an encounter you had during the Trial of Abjuration here. You see the clean-shaven, bald human man and the blue and red spandex wearing superhero, both known as The Spider. Leaving only the Thrieken The Spider as the sole inheritor of that name, he walks into the foyer.

And as you all gathr here, it feels, after this sort of most recent culling, like pretty barren. There are only 12 of the original 64 Aspirants, 12 wizards here in this room who are kind of peering around at the survivors, sizing them up. Rictus, you, Hellgrammite, Lorovith, Scorpo made his way through, Hippocrates. Pranklin the orangutan did come through, I believe he's the one who defeated Detective Magic. Sliding doors.

Travis: When Hellgrammite walks in, Pranklin tugs on Rictus' like jacket and points to Hellgrammite. And Rictus kind of shakes his head in disbelief, and then hands \$100 to Pranklin.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: Like, yeah, I didn't think—

Griffin: Pranklin nods, pockets it. You see Formaggio Bucatini walk in with his tall, suspiciously wiggly chef's hat. Hasty Jane has survived her trial, Burger Man. Tommy Falcon surfs in on his floating board. And of course, a

stitched up Doober Sweetleaf. These are the only 12 remaining Aspirants, the list—

Travis: But I think it's the 12 that everyone expected. Like from the beginning, I remember episode one, there were people making brackets, and those are the 12 that I think everybody predicted.

Griffin: You see the Octave members who were outside walk in and take their places over these silver pools. The rest of them kind of appear and float up over their various bowls. Rictus, you are able to see—like, now you know the identity of like most of these Octave members. You see one floating, wearing a very, very dark velvet robe--

And a sort of golden mask that is sort of round and bulbous with like two small black eye holes cut out for it. Just like looking around at the remaining sort of members of the Octave here, you are able to kind of deduce like that is the—that is the necromancer of the group. You make your way in you, you size up the crowd, and Coxy says:

Coxy: Aspirants, congratulations. You have each bested your rivals and claimed victory in the Trial of Conjunction. Your winnings will be distributed to you, if you've not received them already. As all of you selected your dueling partners personally, you'll all receive gold tier rewards. And we have reshuffled the residences accordingly, leaving 12 deluxe suites for you to occupy as you await the coming trials. Did you have a question, Lorovith? Because you were sort of grumbling and making sort of moaning sounds.

Lorovith: Just saying, don't feel much like a victory.

Coxy: Oh... okay. Well, do you need to talk about it with someone? Or...

Travis: Is there grief counseling?

Lorovith: Yeah! Oh, sorry, yes! I need to talk about it!

Coxy: I thought you would be excited, knowing how sort of competitive—

Lorovith: Yes, I am, it's just we've had to say goodbye to a lot of fine, fine people.

Coxy: Yes, it is this—these trials are... inconceivably difficult on the mind and body and the spirit. But these are the tests that we must conduct in order to ensure that only the worthiest become members of the Octave. Yes, Hellgrammite? I see you raising one of your—

Hellgrammite: I feel bad too.

Coxy: Okay, yes—

Hellgrammite: I feel very—oh... I feel bad.

Lorovith: Bug, please—

Hellgrammite: About Dr. Legume—

Lorovith: Do not feed—please, do not buy into the bug man's machinations!

Hellgrammite: Machinations?!

Lorovith: Even giving the semblance of emotions causes him to produce a crackling noise that's very unpleasant—

Hellgrammite: I am a turmoil of emotion! I just found out I'm engaged! So...

Rictus: What?!

Hellgrammite: I've got a fiancé! I have—yeah! [chuckles]

Rictus: And I guess she—and she lives in Canada, right?

Lorovith: I assumed when you said "engaged," you meant in a protracted debate on Truth Social.

Griffin: [chuckles]

Hellgrammite: No, no, no, I've got a—I've got a fiancé!

Rictus: Mm-hm. Sure.

Coxy: Listen—

Hellgrammite: I wanted to share with you two guys, but you were—you were giving money to that one guy, and you were just grumbling. So...

Coxy: Listen, okay, this is getting away from us. Eyes and ears. Eyes and—eyes and ears here, please. You all have made it to what—the quarter finals, I suppose, of this competition. There are but three trials that stand between you and your final victory in this Conclave.

The Trial of Illusion, the Trial of Necromancy and the Trial of Enchantment, they are what await you. They will not occur in the order I just said, and we, from this point on, will not be letting you know the trial that awaits you until the morning that these trials are administered.

So, I suggest you all spend your day of rest preparing yourselves for anything. As always, and this has been recently pretty relevant, we have some rules that remain in force. Do not attack one another, or any of us, Rictus. Do not remove your Grimoire, and do not approach the Crystalarium. There has been some pushing at the borders of these rules, and I will tell you now, you all have come way too far to be eliminated for doing just such a foolish mistake. So, please rest tonight, enjoy your day off tomorrow, spend it wisely, getting ready for the final three trials. And we'll be—we'll be think—we'll be thinking about you guys.

Travis: We'll leave a light on for you!

Griffin: And they sink into their basins, and vanish into the ether.

[theme music plays]

[ad reads]

Travis: Hey! A couple quick announcements too, before we get back to the episode. We've got a bunch of cool stuff over at mcelroymerch.com. If you haven't checked it out, you need to go do that. 10% of all merch proceeds this month will be donated to Border Angels. [Mcelroymerch.com](http://mcelroymerch.com), check that out. Also, Griffin's book, *The Stowaway*, is out now. It's a Choose Your Own Adventure adventure. Go to bit.ly/griffinstowaway and get all the information there, or find it at a local bookstore.

Griffin: Thank you, Travis!

Travis: You're welcome, Griffin. And Justin's great too. He does cool things.

Justin: Whatever.

Travis: All right. Back to the show!

[ad break]

[theme music plays]

Griffin: Okay! It is your day of rest, your day off. I'm gonna have you guys level up to level six, which we can handle between episodes, if you would like. Unless you want to do it right now.

Travis: I want to do it now, Griffin, I'm so excited.

Griffin: Okay, well, yeah, go ahead. Bump yourselves up.

Travis: Yeah, doesn't look like there's anything. Oh, wait, I have Undead Thralls.

Griffin: Ooh! Holy shit, really?

Travis: Yeah! At sixth level, you add the Animate Dead spell to your spell book, if it's not there already.

Griffin: You can animate the dead now... I like that for you, actually.

Travis: Yeah!

Justin: I do have Sculpt Spells, though, at sixth level.

Griffin: Ooh, what's that do?

Justin: You can create pockets of relative safety within the effects of your evocations. When you cast an evocation spell that affects other creatures that you see, you can choose a number of them equal to one plus the spell's level. The chosen creatures automatically succeed on their saving throws against the spell. So basically, I'm making a—

Griffin: Oh, that's great!

Justin: Bubble of safety in my spells.

Griffin: I like that.

Justin: Defensive, that goes in well with the narrative of our—of our game. We can—that—I can make that work.

Clint: Cool! I'm gonna have to study mine. I have—I get self-improvement biomancy.

Griffin: Whoa... Yeah, sure. Biomancy... What is biomancy? I mean, I'm—

Clint: Sixth level—

Griffin: I've never even heard of this shit, man.

Clint: School of biomancy. You can perform minor surgery on your body, improving yourself in a very literal sense. You can increase your jumping—

Justin: This is grey st—great, great.

Clint: Amphibisprings—

Justin: This is a great spell.

Clint: Where you can triple your jumping distance. You get an extra appendage, where you get an extra tail or an extra arm.

Griffin: *What?*

Clint: You get detachable hand—

Griffin: [chuckles]

Justin: I feel like Dad just picks up books at Gen Con and just like starts to read—

Clint: Firefly skin, owl eyes—

Justin: Firefly skin—

Clint: You can execute slime. Your body is covered in scales. Spider sense! I can have spidey sense! Talon—

Griffin: Okay, yeah.

Clint: One of your hands is replaced with a wicked giant hawk's talon!

Griffin: I mean, it sounds dope, man, I—it's—I—

Justin: Yeah, it's just, is he—is it made up, though, is the question on everybody's mind.

Griffin: I'm looking at home brew Helanino's guide to monster hunting—

Justin: This is what I'm saying—

Clint: I'm not on home—it's not home brew—

Justin: Dad was in—

Clint: I'm editing character—

Justin: Dad was in Scotland, in some café, and he saw this like Xerox set of rules. And he picked it up, brought it home, he said, "Yup, this is in it now."

Griffin: It says you get the key blade... it says you get the key blade? I don't know.

Justin: Key blade.

Griffin: Travis, where did you find that?

Travis: Well, I found that on worldanvil.com.

Griffin: Worldanvil.com, where it says "home brew, Helanino's guide to monster hunting."

Justin: [laughs]

Travis: Wizard—yeah, home brew. Helinia's guide to monster hunting, wizard school of biomancy.

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: I just don't think it's—I just don't think we—I just don't think it's a real thing, my... Dad. It's cool, but it sounds very—

Travis: Yeah, but Griffin, he's been playing as a biomancer since day one!

Justin: Yeah, but he's—you can't decide now that a biomancer is not real, if he's been biomancing this whole time. This is—

Travis: Or else, what's he been doing?

Justin: Yeah, he's been biomancing the stone this entire time.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: So, if I click on your character sheet and I look at wizard subclass, is it going to say that your wizard subclass... yeah—

Clint: Okay, are you on—

Griffin: Wizard school—

Justin: [chuckles] Biomancy.

Clint: Are you on my sheet?

Griffin: I am, Mac.

Justin: We have transcripts, we can see—

Clint: Okay, well—

Justin: If the word "biomancer" has ever been spoken before on this show!.
[chuckles]

Clint: If you go—if you look at wizard, it says core wizard traits; spell casting, ritual adept, arcane recovery, scholar. Wizard subclass; biomancy savant!

Griffin: I guess I can't argue with the super precedent here. You are a—you are a Thrikeen. I think it's okay. Don't make me regret this. Don't make me regret this. It—

Clint: You know I will!

Griffin: I know I will too. It is not one of the eight schools of magic that have been sort of stressed here on the—on the Octave, but—

Clint: I understand, but this is not magic, it's a feature.

Griffin: Okay, it's a feature, yeah, yes, yeah, yes. Okay! It's your day off.
[chuckles]

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: Who would like to spend their time first? Rictus, maybe we should save yours for the last—

Travis: Okay!

Griffin: Mostly to give me time to think about how to—how to—

Justin: Okay, start with me and Hellgrammite!

Griffin: Okay.

Lorovith: Start from the beginning. Biomancy, explain.

Hellgrammite: Well, I get to do surgery on myself. I guess I have to be doctor—well, you know, I killed a doctor, so I assume I become a doctor. Isn't that the way it works?

Lorovith: So, you're sort of a bug doctor. I will endeavor—

Rictus: Dr. Worm!

Lorovith: I expected a coat.

Griffin: [chuckles]

Lorovith: Try to treat you with some modicum of respect.

Hellgrammite: Oh, good!

Lorovith: So, apologies.

Hellgrammite: About time.

Lorovith: You're professional now, a professional man in a career that I can respect.

Hellgrammite: What should I go with? A third leg, scales, firefly skin?

Lorovith: Bug Man...

Hellgrammite: Yes?

Lorovith: Don't say "third leg" to me again please.

Hellgrammite: Oh, sorry. [chuckles] I didn't mean to shame you. I'm sorry.

Lorovith: So, what are your—what are your options?

Hellgrammite: I can jump farther—

Lorovith: You have to choose now!

Hellgrammite: I can attach another leg, but seven just seems, you know...

Lorovith: Greedy, yeah.

Hellgrammite: Yeah.

Lorovith: Opulent for opulence's sake.

Hellgrammite: I can have a detachable hand. I can have firefly skin, which means I can cast a light cantrip at will.

Lorovith: Exhausting.

Hellgrammite: I can have owl eyes—

Lorovith: Your people say a cantrip doesn't cost anything, but truly, does it not cost anything? Every time I do a cantrip, I feel a little bit tired afterwards.

Hellgrammite: Slime, I can exude slime. I can have scales.

Lorovith: Rough.

Hellgrammite: Spiders sense! Think about that for a minute...

Lorovith: Hm...

Hellgrammite: Wow. I can have a talon—

Lorovith: Are they—are they particularly adept? I feel like I've gotten the upper hand on spiders repeatedly.

Hellgrammite: I can have a TL. You told me not to say—

Lorovith: Sorry?

Hellgrammite: You told me not say third leg again. And, ooh-ooh-ooh! Trimorphism, which sounds even nastier. You can cast the enlarge—

Lorovith: I'm going to slowly start to walk backwards, until I can turn and walk away.

Hellgrammite: Oh, I think I'm gonna go with the grow or shrink. I love that idea.

Griffin: So, you are selecting trimorphism as your self-improvement—

Clint: I don't know yet! I don't know.

Griffin: [chuckles] Okay.

Clint: I want to give it some thought!

Griffin: All right. Great, great scene!

[group laugh]

Griffin: Literally just reciting the features that were just discussed—

Clint: Hey, listen, it's enough that he showed interest in poor Hellgrammite, who has felt very neglected by him. He wants to be his friend. Matter of fact—

Hellgrammite: I'd like you to be my best man.

Lorovith: I'm not there anymore, if you'll remember. Canonically, I've left the room.

Hellgrammite: Lorovith? Lorovith?

Justin: [chuckles]

Hellgrammite: Okay, then Rictus will be my best man.

Justin: I would like to check up on Doober, if I can, see how he's healing up.

Griffin: Okay. You make your way to his sort of deluxe suite, over in the residences area—

Travis: The Doob Cave!

Griffin: The Doob Cave. As you come and knock on the door, a much smaller sort of door inside the door opens up, and you see him poke his head out kind of nervously. And he says:

Doober Sweetleaf: Ah, Lorovith, thank goodness you're here, Sir.

Lorovith: What are you doing out of bed?

Doober Sweetleaf: You knocked on the door and I came to—I came to answer your call.

Lorovith: Yes, how are you?

Doober Sweetleaf: Not great. Not great, I think.

Griffin: He shuts his little door and opens the big door to let you in.

Doober Sweetleaf: Would you like some tea or a pull of my Sweetleaf pipe?

Lorovith: Oh, yes, I suppose I'll try your pipe.

Griffin: He gives it to you—

Lorovith: Also, I brought you a—I made these. Well, they're not unlike toffees, sort of ground sugar cooked on a stove. This used to help me when—for mother, when I was injured.

Griffin: He pops them in his mouth, gives them a—gives them a suckle, as he packs a pipe for you. And he looks up at you and he smiles. He says:

Doober Sweetleaf: This is—this is quite good. I had—I had no idea that you could—you could create—are these like magically conjured? These sweets are—

Lorovith: No.

Doober Sweetleaf: Excellent.

Lorovith: It's really more of a preservation tool, a way of keeping sugar that it will last longer.

Doober Sweetleaf: Well, thank you. And here, as long as we're sort of exchanging favors.

Griffin: And he hands you a freshly packed pipe. Give me, if you're hitting that thing, give me a constitution saving—

Justin: [yells out] *Noo!*

Griffin: Give me a constitution saving throw, please. [chuckles]

Justin: Is this the first time that you have let me smoke on this show or what, Griff?

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: I think so, yeah.

Justin: All right, what's my—is it constitution?

Griffin: Yes, yes.

Justin: God, I hope I get a one. I would do anything. I'd do anything, please. I can't, because I've got plus five, but...

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: 13 plus five, 18.

Griffin: Yeah, it's—

Lorovith: [coughs] Good. Good stuff.

Griffin: He looks up at you, sort of impressed. He says:

Doober Sweetleaf: I assumed, because of your stature, that you would not have a difficult time with it. Not many outside of the Hill Folk can withstand a good Sweetleaf strain. But I cannot believe I'm still here, Sir, and I am a bit lost without Randolph, and I cannot tell you how much I appreciate your—the security that you have provided me so far, Sir. Even though I do kind of question whether or not you're keeping me around as sort of a... what's the word, a goat for when we reach the—

Lorovith: Hm, greatest of all time? I think that's a bit much, Doober.

Doober Sweetleaf: No, Sir, like a sort of final sacrifice.

Lorovith: *Oh!*

Doober Sweetleaf: A sort of easy last step to the finish line. I'm—I—

Lorovith: Well, Doober, is there... is there a difference? I mean... the way this contest is structured, supposedly, one of us has to be the victor. So... I'm not sure of the answer to your question either, Doober! We are both in this situation.

Doober Sweetleaf: Why are you helping me still, Sir? I know that Randolph promised you favors in exchange, but he is long since gone. I don't know why you are—you are still showing me this kindness, when eventually one of the two of us must perish.

Lorovith: Doober... let me hit the pipe one more time. Give me another.

Griffin: [chuckles] Yeah, sure. Constitution saving throw for me, please.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: 11 plus five, 16.

Lorovith: [coughs] Nice.

Doober Sweetleaf: A heady rip—

Lorovith: Doober!

Doober Sweetleaf: A heady rip, sir.

Lorovith: Thank you. Thank you, Doober. Doober, I am a large man and someone that many would consider a threatening presence. If I appear to have a very visible weakness, like say you, for example, people are more confused about me. They don't know quite what to think. They don't know quite what to make me, much like yourself. Yes, Doober? Does this seem fair?

Doober Sweetleaf: Yeah—

Lorovith: I'm here against some of the most powerful wizards in the world, and I am not one of the most powerful wizards in the world. If I—if that is true, then I must be something else, something which surprises even me, right now, Doober, for your benefit, that is a father!

Clint: [laughs]

[sound of dice thrown]

Lorovith: [coughs vigorously]

Doober Sweetleaf: Oh, yes...

Lorovith: Sorry. [coughs] 13.

Griffin: [chuckles] They're getting progressively worse. You just feel—you feel this slipping away from you a little bit with each passing toke.

Lorovith: Doober, I had a point...

Doober Sweetleaf: Yes, Sir, I'm waiting. I know that sometimes the Sweetleaf does make us go on a journey.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: 19 plus five.

Griffin: 24, you're back.

Lorovith: That was a better one. Sometimes you get 'em at the top of the throat, you know what I mean?

Doober Sweetleaf: Yes, Sir. We call those ticklers—we call those ticklers, in the Hills. Hill ticklers.

Lorovith: Oh, it's just good sportsmanship, Doober. You've got a big target on your back—you're just little guy pie. So, I'm just trying to help out, make

things a little more even. I don't know where that leads me, but it helps me to sleep at night. Fair?

Doober Sweetleaf: I understand, Sir, I do. I just, I don't want to be a weight hanging around your ankles. I don't know how to fight, I don't know—

Lorovith: Do you want me to get your—Doober, let me—do you want me to get a big rock and smash your head in?

Doober Sweetleaf: No, sir? Of course not.

Lorovith: Well then go to sleep, Doober! And do your best to kill me tomorrow!

Griffin: He smiles and nods. He says:

Doober Sweetleaf: I think I understand, Sir. I thank you for the toffee. You are welcome to—

[sound of dice thrown]

Doober Sweetleaf: Oh?

Lorovith: [coughs strenuously]

Doober Sweetleaf: Oh, no, you got greedy, Sir.

Travis: [laughs]

Lorovith: Ah, it's a four!

Doober Sweetleaf: Yeah.

Lorovith: Rolled a four. [coughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Doober Sweetleaf: Yeah, you should lay down here on the couch, sir, and not operate any heavy machinery for quite a—

Lorovith: Alert! [coughs] Alert!

Clint: [chuckles]

Doober Sweetleaf: The pantry is well-stocked with Funyuns and Munch 'Ems—

Travis: [chuckles]

Doober Sweetleaf: Which I brought from my home. You may enjoy them at—you're asleep, okay.

Lorovith: Randolph!

Doober Sweetleaf: Oh? Oh, yeah.

Lorovith: He's here, Doober! I can see him! I'm doing my best. Randolph! He's such a hard boy to love!

Griffin: You see Randolph in the mists, on the ceiling, looking down at you, and he gives you a big thumbs up, and retreats upwards back to heaven. You are unconscious. You are—you are fuckin' fully laid out at this—you are lucid dreaming.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: I roll the five on my religion check.

[group laugh]

Lorovith: Randolph! I'm sorry!

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: You experience a sort of conversion, I suppose, in this—in this lucid state. And we'll circle back to that. Rictus, you awaken the next morning. There is a small gold card sitting in front of your doorstep. And it is sort of an etching of the statue of Death that you have seen now a couple of times, down inside of the mausoleum in the graveyard. And you see written underneath it, it says, "Third bell." And you wait for the appointed time of the third bell. And do you answer the summons?

Travis: Yeah, dude!

Griffin: I assume that you will, since you sort of—

Travis: I asked for it!

Griffin: You make your way down the marble stairs of the mausoleum, making your way down a spiral staircase, until you reach this long bridge crossing over an endless black abyss, down here beneath the graveyard. At the edge of this bridge, there's a small sort of circular island where you can see that statue, again, of a very sort of archetypical Angel of Death. And from behind it, as you enter, you see this gold masked wizard, sort of very ethereally kind of float in front of the statue. And—

Travis: Before I go in!

Griffin: Yeah?

Travis: I cast Protection from Good and—from Evil and Good on myself.

Griffin: Okay. Remind me what that does?

Travis: A lot of stuff, but basically, one willing creature you touch is protected against creatures that are aberrations, celestials, elementals, fae, fiends or undead. The protection—creatures of those types have disadvantage on attack rolls against the target, and the target can't be possessed by or gain the charmed or frightened conditions from them. The last time Rictus was, you know—

Griffin: Oh, no, I mean, this was the spell that was meant to solve this kind of—this puzzle back in the Trial of Abjuration, so it makes absolute sense to cast it now.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Okay, you are—you are protected, as you enter into the mausoleum. You know that this is not going to turn out like last time when I think you had to spit in hasty Jane's eye, or something like that—

Travis: Yeah, and break his own foot.

Griffin: [chuckles] And break his own ankle, yeah, Jesus Christ. Rictus has really been through it. As you approach, I mean, he—you see this wizard of the Octave float in front of the statue, and then just kind of like gesture forward. He has these long, slender, very, very sallow-skinned fingers. He outstretches them as if to say like—

Travis: Is it Slender Man, Griffin? Because if it's Slender Man, you have to tell me. Or it's entrapment. Ah, it's Slenderman.

Griffin: It's not Slenderman.

Travis: Okay. Yeah, Rictus approaches.

Griffin: Okay. He doesn't react as you approach. He is waiting for you to sort of make the first move here.

Rictus: Greetings.

Travis: And he bows respectfully.

Griffin: Okay. He sort of nods his head in a very, very—like about as small as a bow as you can possibly give in return.

Rictus: I'm Rictus Ravenwood IV, a necromancer, like yourself. And I have like three questions, if I may... sir? Person?

Griffin: Seeing you kind of like struggling to identify—to identify him, he holds out a hand again and just extends four fingers, like that.

Rictus: I'm the fourth. Is that what you're saying? No.

Griffin: He shakes his head. There is a breeze, a stiff breeze from below, coming out from the void, from far below you. In the sort of echoing of that breeze, as it shoots upward, you hear words kind of form in the wind that says:

Four: You may call us Four.

Rictus: Okay. That was cool. That was very cool. I don't know where to start. First, let's start with just like the crystal with the time spell. Can I claim it? I defeated him in single combat, and as the person—like, I was able to withstand it multiple times. And it seems like from his reactions, that that was not something he was used to. So, it seems like I would be able to wield it better than anyone on this island. And as the only person who practices magic that deals with death, it seems like I would also be able to handle magic that deals with time.

Griffin: Another breeze blows up from below, and it says:

Four: This power is uniquely treacherous. Are you certain you wish to wield it? It is not the worst thing to have this world be rid of it.

Rictus: Yes.

Four: As soon as you say that, he extends his hand, and from it the stone that was sort of in the center of the Grimoire of The Gentleman drops down to the ground in front of you with a clink. You hear a voice from below in the wind say:

Four: I believe you had two other questions?

Rictus: Yes. What... what has the Octave done... when you established the veil, you separated death from this world. You disrupted the natural order. But not like in a cool, like necromancy way, but like in a bad way.

Griffin: There's a long pause, and then the wind blows up and says:

Four: Rictus Ravenwood IV, we assure you, what we did was both absolutely necessary to prevent our extinction, and also done in a very cool necromancy way.

Rictus: Yeah, I—yeah, I should have assumed that part.

Four: Your last query?

Rictus: What... what is wrong with me?

Griffin: There is another long pause. And... give me a—god, give me an insight check.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: That's a 19 plus two, a 21.

Griffin: Wow, wow, wow, wow. Okay. You are tapped into this wizard on kind of a whole other wavelength. And it is not quite anything you have felt before. You are not sure if this is coming from Four, or if it's just kind of like something you are putting down yourself. But even from behind this mask, even as sort of like ethereal as he is, he sort of swoops down low to come close to you. And as the breeze kind of comes up from below and you hear his whispered voice, you feel what you could only describe as a type of pride or affection, but not without some level of malice behind it. You hear him respond:

Four: Absolutely nothing.

Griffin: And in the blink of an eye, he vanishes.

Travis: Rictus stands for a second, looks at his hands where his right hand that, you know, black, purpley energy is just glowing. And his left hand, the green healing light is very faint.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: And he's trying harder to get it to go, and it is just barely there. And he extinguishes both of them, and picks up the time crystal and places it on his Grimoire.

Griffin: Give me a wisdom saving throw.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: Oh, the end of the good rolls, Griffin, that's a two plus five, a seven.

Justin: Ah, man, what a bad time to get it. Right? You never get that kind of roll when it's like, "I sample the smell of the bread." You know what I mean? Like you never—it's never then.

Griffin: That was not a great roll to roll that on, Travie.

Justin: Do you want me to make some more jokes about what a bad—

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: To give you more time to come up—

Travis: If I'm about to be possessed, I did cast a spell.

Griffin: You feel... you feel a hand claw at your—at your mind desperately, as you put this crystal in. You feel the barrier that you have kind of erected around yourself activate and attempt to fend off whatever this sort of attack is. But it doesn't feel quite like when this statue tried to take over your mind, like when you came down here in the first place.

This feels like something entirely different. Because you cast Protection from Good and Evil, I will give you an opportunity here to either remove the stone or attempt to thwart whatever this sort of psychic attack is, and maybe succeed, or maybe not.

Travis: Rictus grits his teeth and then screams, as he leaves the stone in place.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: And rolls it 12 plus five, 17.

Griffin: You scream, and as you do, a swarm of bats that was nesting on the ceiling above are disrupted. You see those bats begin to swirl around you as your mind is under attack—with a 17-wisdom saving throw. The attack that is happening is not from some outside force. It is literally like your mind is being overwritten.

You are trying to hold on to who you are, you're trying to hold on to your memories, as the memories of The Gentleman enter your own mind. This is something that you've experienced a couple of times, as you have slotted in these new spell stones that you've gotten.

This one is, again, on a whole other level. It is not just you are remembering things, it is The Gentleman is trying to take over your body and supplant your memories with his own, in this way. With a 17-wisdom saving throw, you are really struggling to hold on to who you are, to your identity.

And after a few kind of agonizing moments, all of the bats surrounding you in your sort of immediate vicinity freeze in place. You feel yourself immediately drained of nearly all the kind of remaining magical reserves that you have in your body.

And you feel The Gentleman, in anguish, sort of vanish into the background of your mind, as you survive this takeover. And after a few more moments, the freezing spell stops, the bats fly up and out of the mausoleum, and you collapse to the ground unconscious.

[The Adventure Zone Royale theme music plays]

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