

The Adventure Zone Royale: Episode 28

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Griffin: Previously, on TAZ Royale...

Akari: I need you to prove yourself to me. I need you to win this conclave.

Hellgrammite: Yes, yes.

Rictus: Just if it—if you're able to help.

Hellgrammite: Yeah!

Rictus: No pressure.

Lorovith: Yes, you're right, Bug Man.

Justin: And I shove him to the ground.

Clint: [chuckles]

Rictus: Well, I mean, I didn't want to risk anyone else. I was going to come in—

Death: Rictus!

Rictus: And des—and destroy the crystal and...

Death: I can't make another bond like this with another person. This is taking everything just to appear before you right now. If you die, that's it.

Osham: As such... we will not commence with the final two trials. This conclave... has been terminated.

[The Adventure Zone Royale theme music plays]

Griffin: Welcome back to TAZ Royale, our battle royale winner take all season of The Adventure Zone. You join us at a dark time for the conclave, as the eight remaining Aspirants have just been informed by the members of the Octave, the arch wizards that rule the realm of the Fold, that the conclave has been cancelled due to their many their many—their many, many transgressions.

Travis: And we don't need to point fingers at who did what or—

Griffin: That is actually exactly—

Travis: Where.

Griffin: We are picking up.

Travis: Oh, we do need—we do need to point fingers?

Griffin: There's going to be a lot—there's a—there's been so much finger pointing in the sort of few minutes following you getting caught, Rictus. The eight remaining Aspirants are sort of standing in front of the Crystallarium where the eight members of the Octave are standing on a raised dais. And the aged wizard Osham is standing at the front of the assembly, and he's holding this like illuminated clipboard. And for the—for the past like five minutes has just kind of been flipping through a list of infractions that each of you have racked up during your time here. He says:

Osham: Hellgrammite, conducting a secret clandestine meeting within the boundaries of Leomund's Tiny Hut. Lorovith, for like two dozen minor acts of unauthorized violence. Doober Sweetleaf, for ripping cotton in the sunken library. Franklin, grand larceny from the atelier? Jesus!

Travis: I do a tiny, maybe I'll have to make a stealth check, but fist bump to my dude.

Griffin: He flashes you a big, gummy smile and a... and Osham says:

Osham: And Rictus, obviously, your intrusion into the Crystallarium was the final straw, but let's not forget about the arson!

Rictus: That...

Hellgrammite: Oh...

Rictus: That—alleged.

Hellgrammite: Mm-hm.

Rictus: Alleged arson.

Osham: Nothing here is alleged. Nothing escapes our sight here on the Isle of the Octave Ziggurat.

Lorovith: Where does that leave those who've already perished?

Osham: They... it leaves them where they are. They have—they have perished—

Lorovith: What of their sacrifice?

Osham: Their sacrifice was for—was for naught. There is a certain shenanigans threshold under which the conclave may continue, but that threshold has been thoroughly crossed.

Hellgrammite: If I may say, point of order here. I had been informed that whatever happened within Leomund's Hut, stayed in Leomund's. And how do you know what I was doing inside Leomund's Hut?

Justin: Table talk. I need some—I need some evidence here.

Osham: I—

Justin: You're playing fast and loose with it. They don't know what the fuck happened in Leomund's Hut.

Griffin: Yeah, allow me to respond. Osham says:

Osham: Yes, precisely. You created a secret dome of silence where you meant to bamboozle our sight, our omniscience. I do not know what happened within—

Lorovith: That was—that one—oh, *that*? That one was planning a birthday party for you.

Hellgrammite: Yes.

Rictus: Yeah!

Lorovith: And so that—you're embarrassed now. We'll tell you all the details. If you want.

Osham: Yes, go on, tell me all the details of the birthday party that you planned for me.

Lorovith: We know you've always liked the movie Grease.

Griffin: Make a deception check for me, Lorovith.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Hm, interesting. It's only five of the 20 possible points. [chuckles]

Travis: Huh.

Griffin: A five, okay.

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: He looks down at his clipboard, he says:

Osham: Even if that is true, which... how do you know my birthday?

Justin: Oh, god, the deception hurt his feelings, didn't it? That's the worst. [chuckles]

Osham: Rven if that were—

Justin: It's the wombo combo, man! It really stings when they realize you're lying and but it's still hurtful? *Ah!*

Griffin: Yeah, maybe he was getting super excited for—

Justin: Ah, man! [chuckles]

Griffin: For the party.

Osham: Even if that—

Justin: [chuckles]

Osham: Even if we were to strike that infraction, the... the breaking of rules that has happened here has been so flagrant and so unprecedented, we have never had an attempt to choose a new member of the Octave be... be so tainted like this. And it is the will of—

Lorovith: So you're just going to give it to Doober?

Osham: No... It is the will of magic itself that no successor be named from this assembly. We must—

Lorovith: How did magic tell you that?

Rictus: Can we talk to magic?

Osham: No, you may not—there is no talking to magic, it is not a sentient mind. Its will must be interpreted by the members of the Octave, which is us. We must bring these trials to a halt and return you all to the Fold from whence you came.

Rictus: I think I have an idea, if we could just—if one of us then were to become the new member, then we could interpret the will of magic. And explain how all of this is not our fault.

Osham: The rules must be followed by us, and by yourselves. We have conducted ourselves in the manner that we are accustomed to, that has been ordained unto us. And you all have not. And so, these... these trials have ended.

Rictus: Well, that's kind of bullshit.

Hellgrammite: Point of parliamentary procedure, I was wondering, how do you reach these decisions? Surely it's a vote of some kind? Some kind of democratic process? Could you perhaps let us in on what that process is and who voted for what?

Griffin: Hm... Give me um an insight check, Hellgrammite, as you s—as you ask that.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: Hm...

Griffin: That is a four.

Justin: Very insightful. [titters]

Osham: This dis—this decision came from a—from up top, from on high. Were it up to us, I would continue—

Justin: Ted, you got to cheese it with these fuckin' dice, man. [chuckles]
These fuckin' dice on my screen—

Griffin: They are really difficult—

Justin: Is wild!

Griffin: To parse, yeah.

Justin: Wild—

Griffin: Dad's dice—

Justin: Sparkle animations. [chuckles]

Griffin: Dad's dice are sparkling sort of pink-gold, embossed with runic symbols all over. They are— They are really insane.

Justin: And they disappear with a flourish! [chuckles]

Griffin: They're really—[chuckles] They're really whimsical.

Justin: So crazy. [chuckles]

Osham: There was no vote, we did not—

Justin: For an insight check! I mean, it's like—[chuckles] it's the whole David Copperfield prestidigitation.

Rictus: Permission to speak?

Osham: Yes. Yes, Rictus, I assumed there would be much, much conversation, many questions, given this... this upsetting news.

Rictus: And listen, no offense... but it kind of seems like you're saying like we followed the rules we set for ourselves, and you didn't follow the rules we set for you.

Osham: Yes.

Rictus: So like, you got to make up rules that worked for you... Like why did you even put the Crystalarium here if we're not allowed to go in it? I assumed that was some kind of like test or something to see if we'd be brave enough, you know, to like seek the knowledge, like a conclave member—you know, like an Octave member would.

Griffin: Osham—

Lorovith: They don't want new. They don't want new thoughts, they don't want new ideas, they don't want rethinking. What they want is another member of eight.

Griffin: Osham sighs. Looking somewhat frustrated now, he says:

Osham: I can tell that the Crystalarium has become quite a distraction for all of you, so—

Griffin: He waves a hand behind him, and in an instant, the section of the island containing the Crystalarium vanishes into thin air, leaving a sort of semicircular carve out from the edge of the island, over which you can see clouds and the lands below. Absolutely just vanishes from view.

Osham: Listen. We have been very patient with your questions. But we are here because we followed this process to the letter when it was our time to do so. So you can understand our frustration with your refusal to follow our example. We have—

Rictus: This process sucks!

Osham: Thank you, Rictus, for your input. It is sagacious as always.

Griffin: Standing in front of this big sort of cavity that has formed here on the island, Osham gestures to the side, toward the eight eggs that are sort of surrounding one part of the ziggurat at the center of the island. It's where Hellgrammite sort of witnessed a trippy history lesson about the origins of the—of the universe. He says:

Osham: These... the eggs have been adapted into something like escape pods. Once you step inside the door will seal, and only then will you be permitted to remove your grimoire, at which point you will be returned to the lands below. I appreciate the strenuousness of these trials, and I deeply, deeply regret that things have ended the way that they have ended. But it is out of our hands, and it is certainly out of yours.

Rictus: And what if we refuse to do that?

Osham: If you refuse to leave our island... well, Rictus, I appreciate your renegade spirit, but we are not going to leave you much of a choice.

Griffin: And another member of the Octave, Set, gestures to his side. As he does so, another big chunk of the island completely vanishes. The entire sort of western rim of the island encompassing the woods and the mage's tower, a good like, you know, fifth of the island, completely vanishes into nothingness. Leaving a huge almost sort of crescent moon-shaped sort of cavity on the side of the island.

Osham: You may stay here if you would like, but terra firma is not going to be guaranteed for much longer. So, do as you'd like, but I would recommend the... the escape pods and a... your-

Hellgrammite: I have another question!

Osham: Yes, Hellgrammite?

Hellgrammite: Well, perhaps we could appeal to... your boss? You know, someone—obviously you just said that you thought were following someone else's orders or—[chuckles] leadership or whatever you want to call it. Could we perhaps speak to them like in an appeal process?

Osham: The will of magic is not a who, it is not something to be bargained with or reasoned with. It is like bargaining with gravity. We interpret the movements of magic, but—

Griffin: And he gestures to the black smoke that's like pouring out of the giant doors surrounding the outer ring of the island.

Osham: That is about as clear a signal as we can possibly receive. The conclave has been canceled. Your attempts to try and walk back your poor decisions will not be fruitful. I guarantee you.

Justin: Is the bracer stuck on me?

Griffin: Is the bracer stuck on you?

Justin: Mm-hm.

Griffin: I mean, it has been against the rules to take the bracer off. I don't know how much you've fiddled around with it. If you would like to fiddle around with it to find out, you are more than welcome to.

Justin: Yeah, I wanna try a—I just wanna stand here—

Griffin: Yeah, sure. Give me an investigation check, please.

Clint: This might be a really good time to start rolling maybe some 20s?

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: We could use some 20s. That is a five on the investigation check.

Justin: Damn it.

Griffin: On a five investigation check, it does seem to be on you quite firmly. I don't think an investigation check would be necessary to remember that when you sort of, during the Trial of Divination, when you sort of shook the hand of the—of the statue and the gauntlet sort of climbed onto you, it sort of jabbed a, like a probe into your elbow. So you have every reason to believe that this thing is seated on you pretty steadily. That said, you're a big, strong dude. So if you did want to try to, you know, do something about it—

Justin: I'm gonna try to take it out.

Griffin: Okay. Give me a... strength check, please.

Justin: Makes sense after a five investigation. I'm not going to be getting in there with pliers and tweezers.

Travis: Yeah, intricate like jeweler's tools.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Luckily I rolled a 19.

Griffin: Oh, fuckin' hell, man.

Justin: Plus three.

Griffin: All right. A 22 total. You reach down and grab your bracer. As you do so, Osham shouts:

Osham: Hold, Lorovith. You may not remove your bracer until you enter the eggs and the door is sealed. To do so would be another violation of the rules, one that will be punished by death.

Lorovith: Hm...

Justin: I mean, I already rolled a 22...

Griffin: All right, with a 22, I will give you this. You have these big goliath hands. You are able to sort of wrap your hand all the way around sort of the top of the bracer and begin to pull it off. As you do so, your fingers crunch into the bracer. Not in a way that you would expect from, you know, a leather arm guard. You feel something give, you feel a crunch. Give me a perception check, please.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: 17 plus one, 18.

Griffin: You hear a slight squeal as you—as you do so. Do you continue to pull it off?

Justin: Yes!

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: Yes! More so! Ugh!

Griffin: All right. You tear off your bracer. It clings on to you defiantly as you pull it off. And the last thing to go is this sort of elbow, and it takes a little bit of extra pulling to pull the probe all the way out of your elbow. In this exact moment, Lorovith, I need you to make a wisdom saving throw. And it's a—I will tell you it's a doozer.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: 18 plus four, 22.

Griffin: [laughs] Ooh! Okay, that is a 22. Okay. A lot of stuff happens all at once. As you pull off your grimoire, you feel it begin to give more in the hand that you are sort of clutching it in, you feel more crunching. You hear a shriek begin to emanate from it. The rest of you can hear this too, this is not just purely in Lorovith's mind. You instantly feel a hollowing out of your memories.

You feel the experiences that you have gleaned from other wizards through these spellstones that you have been slotting into your grimoire the entire time that you have been here, you feel them fade like turning off a light switch. All of the crystals that are sort of connected to the back of your grimoire begin to kind of pulsate, glowing with a sort of fluctuating light.

The one at the very center, the one that was there sort of at the—at the very beginning when you first kind of came to with this grimoire on your arm, you see it flicker as well. And in this exact moment all these memories fade, and you feel your own memories, your own training with Lightning Lash, you feel it begin to sap away also. But you find something there, you find your training with Grakhan, you find your...

Your goliath sort of clan and your ceremonies, your rituals, your upbringing, your exploration of the mountains below. It gives you something firm to hang on to. You feel your memories begin to be sapped away, and you deny that. And as that happens, the crystal at the center of this grimoire shatters. And instantly, the illusion is dispelled, and you can see that you are holding in your hand not a gauntlet, but a large, segmented insect.

Travis: Gross!

Griffin: You are holding an insect with these crystals kind of growing out of its back, slotted into these gaps between its sort of segmented carapace.

Justin: Fuck, I'm glad I rolled a 22.

Griffin: Yeah, dude!

Justin: This is freaking my bean, I think.

Griffin: Yeah. Everyone else doesn't seem to—doesn't seem to recognize that you have just ripped this giant bug off of yourself, but you can see it clear as day. And—

Justin: What is that—what does that guy look like now?

Griffin: The bug?

Justin: The guy who's talking to us.

Griffin: I will tell you. You look up toward the dais.

Justin: Uh-huh.

Griffin: And there is nobody there. And then there is a flash of red light behind you. And the ever-burning flame at the other end of the island produces a pillar of roaring flames, that shoots upward and then begins to arc downward in your direction. I'll need a dexterity saving throw from you.

Travis: I tackle him in Thunder Step.

Griffin: Okay, I like that. Yeah, you all can see the pillar of fire for sure.

Justin: Yeah—

Griffin: Then I'm going to need a dexterity save, just for the timing on this, Rictus, to get to him without sort of an issue.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: 16 plus two, 18.

Griffin: You guys did save these for the correct time, yeah.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Okay, Rictus, you run and tackle Lorovith. He is a big sort of sturdy dude who does not seem to move a whole lot, but as you sort of get your arms around him, you Thunder Step. Where are you Thunder Stepping to?

Travis: I'm trying to picture the scene...

Griffin: Yeah, you're sort of standing in front of the big, gaping hole where the Crystallarium was, right sort of near the eggs.

Travis: I mean, I'm going to Thunder Step... how far can I go? Any unoccupied space I can see within range, which is 90 feet. So I mean, I'm gonna move the full 90 feet away.

Griffin: Okay. Each creature within 10 feet of the space you left must make a constitution-saving throw, taking 3D10 thunder damage on a failed save. You did a running tackle, right? It's sort of up to you where you activate Thunder Step. So I guess first like, where do you—are you trying to catch anyone in the damaging part of Thunder Step? Or are you...

Travis: You know, if it ends up, Griffin, that the dais is in range where they were—where the Octave were standing, I'd be okay with that.

Griffin: Okay. Awesome. You run and tackle him toward the dais then, and then you activate your Thunder Step easily within 10 feet of where Osham was standing at the front of the pack. And then you are going to move... let's see... How far away?

Travis: Up to 90 feet.

Griffin: Okay. So where do you want to go? I mean that's like anywhere on the northern half of the island basically.

Travis: Towards the mountain.

Griffin: Okay, great. Like up it?

Travis: Yeah, let's get Lorovith on home turf.

Griffin: Okay, cool. You rush forward, activate Thunder Step. A peel of thunder that can be heard from 300 feet away booms across the remnants of the Island of the Octave Ziggurat. Hellgrammite, where you and the rest of the Aspirants are standing, you are sort of pushed backwards a bit.

And Rictus and Lorovith vanish. You all appear back up 90 feet up the mountain. That puts you about near that cave where you sort of found the ice dragon in that second trial, Lorovith, where you sort of tricked the—tricked Ignacio into getting burned up and stole his spell crystal. Right near that cave.

As you reappear, Rictus, you can see back down, back on the dais, that Osham was completely unaffected. Completely unaffected by your Thunder Step spell. Didn't seem to be phased whatsoever. And Hellgrammite, where you're standing, you see Osham look around. And I think he's gonna have to roll a perception check... Let me roll a perception check here, just to see if he can spot where you ended up.

[pause]

Griffin: No. That is a five on his perception check. Okay, the members of the Octave now, they seem... give me an insight check, Hellgrammite. You're still standing here, as this kind of crazy thing just happened.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: Gah.

Griffin: Four. Keeping the good insights rolling. They seem to be largely unfazed, again, not just by the, you know, sonic boom of the Thunder Step, but you would probably categorize their response to this, you know, this teleportation as somewhat lightly annoyed. Osham says:

Osham: [sighs] Ah... I... this is disappointing, I was hoping you would take this opportunity to seize our grace and survive, and return to the world below. But I see that that is not the choice that they have made. The rest of you, I would encourage you to make a different decision.

Griffin: Lorovith and Rictus, you all are up on the mountain in front of the cave. You can—you have a very good vantage point on the whole of the island here. You can see, you know, the scorch marks where the pillar of flame smashed down and missed you. But you can also see the ever-burning flame down in the—that side of the island is beginning to ignite once again to sort of charge up another blast. What do you do?

Rictus: What the fuck?

Lorovith: Listen. Listen. Listen! I don't have much time. This isn't going to make much sense, but please, you have to believe me. Recently I've been reading up on illusory magics. I was studying the bracers that... they're bugs, man! [yells out] They're just a bunch of funky bugs!

Rictus: The bracers are bugs?

Lorovith: [yells out] They're a bunch of bugs, man! You gotta take it off!

Griffin: Rictus instantly, as soon as he says that, you look down at your grimoire and the illusion is dispelled.

Rictus: Ew! Ew! Ew!

Lorovith: [yells out] I said—I'm saying it!

Rictus: [yells out] Get it off!

Lorovith: Now, listen—no, listen, listen, listen! Don't get it off.

Rictus: Hoh...

Lorovith: I know.

Rictus: But... ew!

Lorovith: I know, but—

Rictus: Ew!

Lorovith: I handled my stuff, because I am so tough! But it may make you absolutely gaga! I have been through it, my man!

Rictus: *Uaah!*

Lorovith: [yells out] Don't pull it off!

Rictus: Gross, gross, gross!

Lorovith: No, no, no! Don't pull it off.

Justin: [chuckles]

Rictus: Can I kill it?!

Lorovith: No! [yells out] No!

Rictus: Let me kill it!

Lorovith: It'll make you insane!

Justin: [chuckles]

Russ: It might not!

Lorovith: Don't! I got so lucky!

Rictus: No, I'm pretty good at this!

Justin: I mean, I'm saying what I'm saying, but he can do whatever he wants! [chuckles]

Griffin: I think the span of that conversation was long enough that the pillar of flame has recharged and—

Justin: Oh! Fuck you! What, we can't do a—we can't do our podcast, Griff?

Travis: We can't do a bit?!

Justin: We can't do our podcast? [chuckles]

Griffin: And another pillar shoots upward and begins arcing towards where you're standing on this sort of mountain ledge, near the—near the cave where you killed Ignacio.

Clint: It begins to do that?

Griffin: Yes.

Travis: Go in the cave! Go in the cave!

Clint: I'm gonna cast Counterspell.

Griffin: Oh, okay?

Clint: To try to prevent it from erupting.

Griffin: You're casting counterspell on the—on the ever-burning flame itself?

Clint: [chuckles] Hey, why not? You said take big swings. [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah. Fuck, yeah, man. Okay, so, the range on that is 60 feet. You're gonna have to hoof it a bit to reach the pillar of flame, and sort of move away from the conversation with the Octave that was happening. But you, I think during that conversation you have time to do that, to sort of

clear around the corner of the ziggurat, so it's sort of in sight. It is... it's casting a spell of fourth level or higher, make an ability check using your spell casting ability. The DC equals to 10 plus the spell's level. So, use your spell casting ability, the number that you're trying to beat here is... this is a fifth level evocation spell, so you're trying to beat a 15 on your, just your spell casting modifier roll here.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: Good shnike.

Griffin: Okay, that is a—

Justin: Advantageous roll? I wasn't paying attention.

Griffin: It was not an advantageous roll, that is a five plus six, for an 11. Here's what I will give you, you do not stop this pillar of flame. However, you are able to slightly divert it. Lorovith—

Justin: Towards yourself. [laughs]

Griffin: Towards yourself—

Justin: Killing yourself instantly! [chuckles]

Griffin: Lorovith and Rictus you see the column shoot upwards, and then you see it kind of divert off to the side a bit. And then it smashes into the side of the mountain, sending a few boulders down in your general direction.

Lorovith: Do you see it, Rictus? You see? This is all his plan! This is all the bug man! He put these funky bugs on us and now he's trying to kill us with fire!

Rictus: But he's wearing one too?

Lorovith: I know, he's incredible!

Justin: [chuckles]

Travis: Okay, I run into the cave.

Griffin: Okay.

Lorovith: [yells out] Doober!

Griffin: Doober looks up at you, and so do the rest of the members of the Octave.

Justin: Shit. [chuckles]

Travis: [laughs]

Lorovith: [yells out] Doober, they're are a bunch of funky bugs!

Doober: What?

Lorovith: [yells out] Don't take it off!

Doober: What is a bunch of funky bugs, sir?

Lorovith: [yells out] The braces are all funky bugs!

Griffin: Instantly... I think, Hellgrammite, you are in the—you are in earshot of this as well. All of the Aspirants look down at their arms and—

Lorovith: [yells out] Don't take them off!

Griffin: They begin to freak out. I'm gonna start making some rolls here. Down—the people who hear this—okay. Hellgrammite, Hasty Jane, Doober, Hippocrates, Pranklin and Scorpo. I'm gonna say Pranklin and Scorpo look down at their bracers, and they appear to be somewhat alarmed, but they are keeping a somewhat cool head. Hippocrates, I'm gonna make a roll here, just to see if he is able to not reflexively reach up and tear this giant bug off of his arm. That is a four. You look down and you see Hippocrates does not heed your advice. Reaches down, grabs the bug off of his arm, pulls super, super hard and rips it clean off.

Justin: I—this is—seems out of character, Griff, but I do want you to know that Lorovith has a brief moment where he kind of kicks himself for not building more of a rapport with Hippocrates. [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Because he feels like—you know what I mean? Like if there had been maybe a little bit more trust there.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: You don't know, it's like, you know.

Griffin: Hippocrates tears this bug off of his arm. As he does so, it bites him, bites his sort of winged arm, and scurries away. And Hippocrates looks around confused for a moment and then just kind of collapses to the ground. I'm gonna roll for Hasty Jane now, to see what her sort of—no, you know what? Hasty Jane... Hasty Jane maintains her composure as well. I am gonna roll for Doober though, because he is a fret—he's a fretful little guy.

Justin: I do think he should get advantage, though, because I told him not to.

Griffin: You're his dad, yeah. Okay.

Justin: [chuckles]

Griffin: I'll roll one more. Okay, Doober starts to pull it off of his arm, but then—

Lorovith: Up-up-up-up!

Doober: What a... what a... it's disgusting! What do I do?!

Lorovith: You heard me!

Griffin: Hasty Jane kicks on the jets, and she is going to sprint sort of up the mountain, up to where the two of you are, into the cave where you have taken shelter, Rictus. Lorovith, what are you doing now that you've warned sort of everyone about what's happening?

Justin: I mean... I guess I'm continuing to—I guess a... I probably want to try to get to Doober.

Griffin: Okay?

Justin: But while stay—using the mountain as like cover. I don't want to fully expose myself, but I want to try to get to where I can get to Doober, I think.

Travis: I cast Fly on Lorovith.

Griffin: Oh, hell yeah. Okay, you cast Fly on Lorovith. And Lorovith—

Justin: I miss that. I don't see that, and I say—[chuckles]

Lorovith: Good news, Rictus. I have a cape for just such an occasion.

Rictus: Okay, yeah.

Griffin: [chuckles]

Rictus: Go for it.

Lorovith: [yells out] See you later!

Griffin: Okay, Lorovith, you dive off of the mountain, and what you think is your cape grants you the power of flight. The wings of fatherly love carry you down the mountain in Doober's direction.

Travis: [yells out] On the wings of love!

Griffin: Hellgrammite, you... you look down. And as you look down at your arm, hearing Lorovith shout—

Justin: Rock hard and love it. [chuckles]

Griffin: You are—

Travis: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: You are—

Justin: That's absolutely your shit. [laughs]

Griffin: You are maybe the only one here who is—

Travis: It's your friend, Jim! Jim the bug!

Justin: It's Jim!

Travis: You know him! You bowl together!

Justin: You guys went to Awana! [chuckles]

Griffin: You are the only one here who is maybe not confused, because you have seen this before. This is an echomite. It is sort of parasitically linked to you... and I mean, you know a lot about these guys. You've studied them in the library, you've, you know, conversed with Akari, before that connection seemed to—seemed to fade. You know that—what they are capable of, they are capable of sort of draining and crystallizing memories. You know what is happening. So, I'm not going to like make you roll a sort of panicked roll here, what is—what is your response?

Clint: I think... use the Thrikeen psychic link and say:

Hellgrammite: Akari?

Griffin: All right, give me a Wisdom saving throw, please.

Clint: Come on, baby...

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: 13.

Griffin: You—

Travis: You know his rolls have been bad when he's so proud of a 13.

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: 13! 13!

Griffin: He never gets his hand on the dice!

Clint: A 13!

Griffin: You... you reach out, asking for Akari, using this echomite as a sort of conduit for that. And as you reach out, you do not feel this comforting presence that you have felt whenever you have communed with Akari in the past. Instead, you feel another presence come through this connection, with a force that knocks you off of your feet. I'm gonna ask you for... I'm gonna ask you for a check here to sort of glean something about what this presence is that has reached out. It is something... I think I need an arcana check from you, to sort of get a feel for what this is that has just kind of assaulted your mind.

Clint: Not a history check?

Griffin: A history check I would also allow. Yeah, sure. A history check I would allow.

Clint: All right, let's do a history check.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: 16.

Griffin: Okay. On a 16 history check... the way that your—that your senses were just kind of overwhelmed by this connection, by this thing that is kind of brute-forcing itself through this Thrikeen psychic link into your mind, there is something familiar about it. It is not... it's not one of the Octave. But you feel a... you feel a familiarity in the way that it kind of almost sort of condescendingly tries to occupy your mind.

You can't quite exactly place what that—what that is, but you have—you have no doubt that as you try to reach out and make this kind of like, you know, collect call to a... to your Thrikeen betrothed, that something tried to come through. And it is a presence that you felt somewhat familiar with, but like never to this kind of like degree. Never quite in this—never quite in this way.

Hellgrammite: Can you identify yourself? Is this... is this the Queen? Is this Larbosa?

Griffin: Make—

Hellgrammite: Of the Scritch?

Griffin: Make a... make another wisdom saving throw. You continue to try to talk to this thing, it's going to continue to try to push its way into your mind.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: 10...

Griffin: No. You feel that presence again. It is—it is—

Clint: Wait! Wait, wait, wait! It's trying to come into my mind?

Griffin: Yes.

Clint: Let it.

Griffin: Oh, interesting?

Travis: Huh.

Clint: Let it into my mind. No, I won't resist.

Griffin: Okay, here's what I'm—here's what I'm gonna do, okay?

Justin: It's just a bunch of dusty old Steely Dan lyrics up there.

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: The girls don't seem to care!

Griffin: [sings] No static at all!

Clint: [sings] FM!

Griffin: I w—this is—I will allow this to happen. You will allow this to happen, and you are going to let this presence into your mind. It is—it's gonna hurt, I will tell you that much, if you—if you want to let it into your mind. But if you—if you're trying to identify this thing, you know, this might be a... a method of doing so.

Clint: Bring it on.

Griffin: All right! You do not resist, as you feel this presence push back into your mind. And as it does so, you topple over, landing sort of paralyzed on the ground. You are going to take... 18 points of psychic damage. And you are unable to move, you have been held here on the ground. Your thoughts are... are disorganized. They are chaotic. It is—it is impossible to try to connect the neurons in your brain to the—to the, you know, Thrikeen muscles in your body, to tell yourself to get up, to stand up. You can no longer see, through your eyes. You are in a state of darkness. And the thing you can see sort of in that place is a silent image of a giant bright white flaming eye.

[theme music plays]

[ad reads]

Travis: Hey, everybody! In case you've somehow missed it, Story and Song, the final graphic novel in our Adventure Zone Balance graphic novel series, comes out next week. You can pre-order it right now at theadventurezonecomic.com. If you pre-order from one of our indie bookstore partners, you'll get a book plate signed by one of us and Carrie.

Book release event next week in Boston. Tickets are on sale now. It's going to be July 16th at 7PM, at the Chevalier Theatre. Each ticket includes a signed paperback copy of Story and Song provided by Brookline Booksmith. And we have a special mid-month episode of Clubhouse on Tuesday, July 14th, to celebrate the book coming out.

And the regular monthly Clubhouse is still on the 21st, so check that out. We've got some new merch this month. There's a Trav Nation centennial magnet, along with a bunch of other great stuff. 10% of all merch proceeds this month will also be donated to the Asian Pacific Environmental Network. So go check that out, mcelroymerch.com. And back to the show.

[break]

Kirk: Hey, are you playing a video game right now?

Maddy: Maybe you put on a podcast while grinding in an RPG.

Jason: Or maybe you just don't want to hear that boss fight music one more time.

Maddy: Been there. I'm Maddy Myers.

Jason: I'm Jason Schreier.

Kirk: And I'm Kirk Hamilton.

Jason: We're the hosts of TripleClick! A video game podcast.

Maddy: A podcast you can listen to while you do other things!

Kirk: Like driving or cooking or playing video games.

Maddy: On TripleClick, we share our thoughts on the latest games.

Jason: And breaking news out of the video game industry.

Kirk: And we also talk about other stuff besides games.

Jason: So while you're doing something else, make sure to check out TripleClick.

Kirk: Listen on maximumfun.org, or wherever you find your podcasts.

[break]

Dan: The Flop House is a podcast where we watch a bad movie, and then we talk about it.

Elliott: Robert Shaw in Jaws, and they're trying to figure out how to get rid of the Ghoulies. And he scratches his nails and he says, "I'll get you, ghoulie."

Dan: He's just standing above the toilet with a harpoon. [chuckles]

Elliott: [chuckles]

Dan: No, I was just looking forward to you going through the other ways in which Wild Wild West is historically inaccurate.

Stuart: You know how much movies cost nowadays, when you add in your popped corn and your bagel bites, and your cheese fritters?

Elliott: You can't go wrong with a Henry Cavil mustache. Here at Henry Cavil Mustaches, the only supplier!

Stuart: [laughs]

Dan: The Flop House. New episodes every Saturday. Find it at maximumfun.org.

[break]

Griffin: Back up to Lorovith. You're flying down the dais, toward where Doober is standing. The others—

Justin: From my—from the skies... From the skies, I wonder if maybe I saw what was happening with Hellgrammite and thought I might have been wrong about—[chuckles]

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah, I mean—

Justin: As I pass over and say it—see him lying on the ground, and presumably—[chuckles]

Griffin: Sort of rigid, catatonic—

Justin: Right!

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: It's a sort of like rigor mortis pre-death. [chuckles]

Clint: Or is that just part of his plan?

Justin: [chortles] Yeah, I don't think I'm willing to give him enough credit for that.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: I mean, you are definitely able to see this, right? You are able to see Hellgrammite go down. Is that diverting your path at all? Or are you still making a beeline for Doober?

Justin: No, I'm making a beeline for Doober. But I think I should later mention to Rictus that I think I was wrong—

Travis: [chuckles] Okay. Just a—

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: Mental note.

Justin: Yeah. How far away are they? How far separate are they?

Griffin: How far separate are Doober and Hellgrammite?

Doober and Hellgrammite, yeah.

Griffin: I mean, about 30 feet or so. You fly down towards where Doober is standing in front of the dais. You can see that he is still looking up at the dais and pleading. He says:

Doober: Please, stop! We'll escape! We'll do what you want, just stop! Please, don't—

Griffin: But you can see he's talking to nobody. There is nobody up there for him to—

Justin: I grab him around the waist and scoop him up.

Lorovith: Come along, Doober!

Doober: What?

Lorovith: We've got to go help the bug man!

Doober: But we can't... we can't fight the Octave? Sir, the—he's the—

Lorovith: There's no Octave, Doober! They're all just a bunch of fake, funky bugs. Come on, Doober. Get with it!

Griffin: As you—

Justin: [chuckles]

Griffin: As you say that, another part of the island vanishes. You can see that sort of the rest of the western side of the island, the lake and the Gilded Lily, the arena, everything kind of surrounding the western side of the ziggurat, vanishes into thin air, leaving just half of the island sort of standing. You swoop down and you're able to grab Doober quite easily. He's a—he's a little guy. And you make your way over toward where Hellgrammite is laying in the grass.

Justin: I scoop up Hellgrammite too. I carry both of them to the goddamn eggs.

Griffin: Okay, you start to make your way toward the eggs with Hellgrammite sort of slumped over your shoulder. Let's hop over to Rictus, as you begin to make your way over toward the escape—

Justin: Just so you guys know, here's what I am doing, because let's say you can probably intuit this from my movements, but what I am doing is I'm taking Hellgrammite and I'm taking Doober, and I'm gonna put 'em in these eggs, and I'm gonna send 'em out. So that's where I—I'm—if you want to stop me, you can, but that's what I'm doing.

Griffin: Okay. Rictus, you are in the cave with Hasty Jane. Just a few moments—

Travis: Oh, she just got there?

Griffin: Yeah, I mean, she has super speed, so—

Travis: Yeah, she's fast!

Griffin: She fuckin' blazed her way up there. But a few moments later, you see Scorpo, who's carrying a prone sort of Hippocrates sort of slung over his shoulder. Scorpo scales the mount using his claws and his sort of spiky tail. And Pranklin makes short work of the climb also—

Justin: Hey, Griff, am I—am I correct in my assumption—just to double check with you—

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Justin: Am I correct in my assumption that if I try to cast one of my non-lightning lure spells, I would basically just generate a dry fart noise?
[chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: Okay, I thought as much.

Griffin: Yeah, no rolling necessary for that—

Justin: I wanted to double check—

Griffin: You don't remember how to cast those.

Justin: Okay, good. [chuckles] I want to save myself the embarrassment of trying to cast it—

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Justin: In opportune time. [chuckles]

Travis: I turn to Scorpo and I'm like:

Rictus: Hey, can you do the mental bug thing that Hellgrammite can do?

Scorpo: I am not as practiced at it as he is, but I can give it a try. What...

Rictus: Tell Lorovith, the eggs were made by the bugs.

Scorpo: It's—well this is—

Rictus: Very good chance they're just gonna kill them.

Scorpo: Well, it's—I ca—I can only talk to Thrikeen. Let me—let me talk to Hellgrammite.

Griffin: He closes his eyes, and then he falls to his knees.

Travis: Damn it.

Griffin: I'm going to make a wisdom saving throw here for... Scorpo. That is a two. Scorpo... you see him sort of put his hand to his temple, reaching out to Hellgrammite. And then just a moment after that, he collapses on the ground, sort of rigid. Hasty Jane says:

Hasty Jane: I... should I stop them? Should I—should I—

Rictus: Yeah! Yeah, yeah, yeah!

Hasty Jane: Okay!

Rictus: There's no way they were just going to send us back!

Hasty Jane: Okay.

Rictus: There's no way!

Hasty Jane: Yeah, got it!

Griffin: Hasty Jane—*pvt*—instantly—*fewf*—rushes down the side of the mountain, dashing at lightning speed, and intercepts you, Lorovith.

Lorovith: Sorry, what...

Hasty Jane: Hey! Real quick, Rictus says don't go in the eggs because they were probably made by the bugs, and they'll kill you if you go in—

Lorovith: So should we just stand here and wait to die?

Hasty Jane: I don't...

Lorovith: Would you... would you be a dear? Run back to Rictus and say, should we just go ahead and die?

Hasty Jane: I don't really appreciate that tone of voice, actually. Do you want to try that again?

Lorovith: At the moment, I honestly, there's no crisis—

Hasty Jane: You heard it, right?

Lorovith: I heard it and I want to get out in front of this thing.

Justin: [chuckles]

Hasty Jane: Okay. Well, listen, Scorpo—

Lorovith: Stress does wild things. I'm really, really sorry. I just don't—I feel like... I think emotionally speaking, I think we're going to die.

Justin: [chuckles]

Hasty Jane: Yeah, no, for sure... I don't know what to do. If we don't go in the eggs, I don't—I... Do you want to sort of regroup maybe and we can sort of figure out what to do next? Because like half of us are paralyzed now.

Justin: I mean...

Griffin: Hasty Jane delivers this message, and as she does so, you hear a rushing wind behind you. You turn to see the entire sort of residential quarter of the island vanish into nothingness, taking with it the ever-burning flame that has gone sort of dormant ever since Hellgrammite kind of diverted the... diverted the flow a bit.

Travis: But it's like ticking around, right? Because it started at the Crystallarium, then went to the woods, then went to the arena, then went to the residences.

Griffin: It does seem to be moving around the island, sort of vanishing the outer ring of it in a counterclockwise fashion, yes.

Lorovith: It seems like the ziggurat's our best chance.

Travis: Yeah, I think I figured that out at the same time.

Griffin: Yeah, I mean, you can see absolutely that, you know, 75% of the island has disappeared at this point.

Justin: Okay.

Griffin: Hasty Jane says:

Hasty Jane: Well, so we're not... taking the eggs, we... we stay here?

Lorovith: Hm... I think at this point, everyone should do what they think is best.

Griffin: Doober says:

Doober: I don't want to go in the eggs.

Lorovith: Oh, don't—Doober, you weren't allowed to go in the eggs, sorry, I should have been more clear. Everyone but Doober should do what they think is best. Doober will do what I think is best.

Justin: [chuckles]

Doober: Of course.

Clint: [chuckles]

Doober: I'm—of course.

Griffin: He says.

Clint: Could I do something with Hellgrammite?

Griffin: You can make a wisdom saving throw for me. You are still in this kind of catatonic state. And if you would like to try to break out of that—

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: Okay!

Clint: 16.

Griffin: Yes. Okay, with a 16, you feel your senses return to you, Hellgrammite, as this conversation is taking place. As you kind of come to, you gaze around and see that most of the island has disappeared at this point, and you are kind of slumped over Lorovith's shoulder. Doober actually sees you, he's on the other shoulder, he looks over and says:

Doober: Oh! Hellgrammite's awake, everybody! Hellgrammite's awake.

Hellgrammite: Eh... I... I have had a vision... of a giant eye. A giant white eye. And I have... is it possible that this whole thing is an illusion? All this destruction, all of this—these things being revealed to us, could this be the illusion test?

Lorovith: Good lord...

Griffin: You, Hellgrammite, and Lorovith, and Rictus, where you're standing sort of in the mouth of the cave—where you—where you... you had mentioned that you were—you had picked up on the kind of order of the disappearance—

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Of this island. Are you heading back down towards the ziggurat?

Travis: Yes, I am.

Griffin: Okay. Then—

Travis: To the cigarette!

Griffin: Down, down to the—[chuckles] down to the cigarette. You reach the center of the island and regroup with the others—

Travis: And with Franklin's help, am I able to get like Scorpo and Hippocrates down there?

Griffin: Yeah, everyone is able to kind of follow along with the plan of regrouping with the only part of the island that doesn't seem to be vanishing into thin air. You all are standing in the shadow of the ziggurat, and watching as this kind of just wave of shimmering light vanishes the remainder of the island.

The mountain vanishes right behind your sort of final footfalls, stepping into the lawn, surrounding the central structure here. And you see Scorpo come to, as Hellgrammite sort of wakes up as well. And Hellgrammite, as you say what you just said, asking if this whole thing is perhaps an illusion, you see... the island reappear. Like a bolt of lightning. As if it had never been affected at all.

You... you see that the grimoire is still attached to everyone's sort of arms, except for Lorovith and Hippocrates. You can still see them, plain as day, the echomites, the insects, sort of clinging onto you. And you all can see the Crystallarium, where there are no members of the Octave standing in front. The Crystallarium begins to... vibrate. Not earthquake-like, but like electric toothbrush-like.

Travis: Mm-hm.

Griffin: Blurring, as it sort of shakes so violently, giving off this high-pitched sort of hum. And the sort of crystalline spires on either side of it begin to emerge upwards from the earth, forming these two great sort of amethyst

pyramids, that begin to sort of split and branch outward in fractal patterns. Almost like an orchid blooming. The Crystallarium grows and begins to part.

And as it does so, Rictus, you can now see it as you saw it from within. You can see that the grandness of this space that was sort of contained within the Crystallarium before. You see rows upon rows of these sort of organic chitinous shelves where the spell stones are stored. You see hundreds of echomites sort of scurrying to and fro, some smaller ones with these light kind of dragonfly wings arranging the crystals as they go.

And now you can see in the sunlight overhead, what you couldn't quite make out when you first intruded on the Crystallarium, you see a massive composite gemstone made of countless thousands of much smaller sort of spell stones. They have formed together into a... a sort of spherical shape with jagged edges reaching upward, like a—like a fireball sort of frozen in time. Multicolored, multifaceted.

And draped over top of it, you all can see what at first appears to be a very, very large bug, similar to the one that is attached to all of your arms. But you recognize pretty quickly that it is—it is not quite like the bug that is on your arm, because it appears to be desiccated. It appears to be long, long, long dead. It is mostly hollowed out.

And it is draped over this... this giant sort of jagged crystal, almost like a—almost like a crown. You see this Crystallarium bloom, exposing the heart of this thing at the rear of the island. And as you all sort of stare at it in stunned silence, you see an eye appear, flashing across the facets of this... of this crystal. And everybody give me a history check, please.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: 13!

Justin: 16?

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: Dirty 20.

Griffin: I think with all those rolls, you all are able to recognize what this is. Because it is a... it is a vision that you all have seen... dozens of times since you've been here on the Isle of the Octave Ziggurat. You see this giant white flaming eye appear all across the faces of this crystal, and you hear the voice of Chris say:

Chris: Congratulations... you've passed the Trial of Illusion.

[The Adventure Zone Royale theme music plays]

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