

The Adventure Zone Royale: Episode 29

Published July 23rd, 2026

[Listen here on Maximum Fun](#)

Griffin: Previously, on TAZ Royale...

Osham: The eggs have been adapted into something like escape pods. You will be returned to the lands below.

Rictus: And what if we refuse to do that?

Osham: We are not going to leave you much of a choice.

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

Griffin: As you pull off your grimoire, the illusion is dispelled, and you can see that you are holding in your hand not a gauntlet, but a large, segmented insect.

Lorovith: I was studying the bracers and... they're bugs, man! [yells out]
They're just a bunch of funky bugs!

Hellgrammite: Is it possible that this whole thing... is an illusion?

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

[The Adventure Zone Royale theme music plays]

Griffin: Eight wizards stand before a mountain of towering amethyst spires, the Crystallarium transformed into a nest of arcane energy. At its base rests a round cluster of thousands of glimmering spell stones, mounted by the enormous desiccated husk of a long-dead Thrikeen matriarch. Within the cluster, reflected across the crystals countless facets, a bright white eye observes the assembled Aspirants. The avatar of the artificial mind that you all have addressed as Chris during your time here at the Conclave. And a voice emanates from this giant cluster and says:

Chris: This may ring hollow, given what I've put you through, but the eight of you have done remarkably well. Never since I took over administering these proceedings have I revealed myself to an Aspirant, but your unorthodox approach to these trials left me no other choice. Now, I know you all well enough to know that you'll have questions, and I am willing to answer them, so long as you all can maintain composure and do not raise a hand against me.

Rictus: Can we raise a hand to ask a question?

Chris: Of course, Rictus, and I... am not surprised that you would be the first to fire one off.

Rictus: Yeah, I just have a quick question. Could you get this bug thing off my arm? Because ew-ew-ew, gross. And I'm keeping my composure right now, but if you could get this ooey gross bug thing that's in my arm off, that would be great.

Hellgrammite: Could you perhaps read the room a little better, Rictus?

Rictus: I asked a very—

Hellgrammite: Before you use the term 'ugly bug thing.'

Rictus: I kept my tone very calm—

Hellgrammite: I know—

Rictus: Hellgrammite.

Chris: I would encourage the humankind among you to get past your base sort of primordial fear of the insect kind. The echo mite that is attached—

Hellgrammite: Skin bags.

Chris: The echo mite that's attached to your forearm is the very thing granting you the powers that you've wielded here at the Conclave. It is also

the avenue through which I am able to glean the arcane knowledge that each of you natively possesses.

Rictus: Absolutely. I just want to make it clear that if the bracer was suddenly revealed to be a human baby that had bitten into my arm and was like connected to me in such a way that if I removed it, I'd die, I also would want that ooey, ugly baby off my arm. So I want to make it clear, it's not the bug part that bothers me so much.

Chris: Mm-hm. For what it is worth, the... the utilizing of the echo mites and the Thrikeen brood mother, Akari, this was not my invention. I too find it fairly crude. It was—it was the creation of the original Octave, 32 generations ago. They were—

Lorovith: I...

Chris: Oh, yeah?

Lorovith: I'm still not sure I buy it.

Justin: [chuckles]

Lorovith: I think this is another illusion. I've been studying the illusory arts and it's very common I think to see an illusion within an illusion. So I believe this is another illusion. Well, I'm just going to wait for a *kick*. And... wait for this funky bugs to go back to being a normal, cool thing.

Chris: I will confess to having prepared many illusions within illusions.

Griffin: There's a flash of light, and then all of a sudden the surroundings change, and now you're standing in this like cyberpunk kind of—

Travis: Ah, cool.

Griffin: Biohospital with like matrix beds, with people laying in them, jacked into—jacked into the illusions—

Travis: Ah! All a simulation! It was going to be all a simulation thing!

Griffin: There's a flash of light and then you, Lorovith, wake up in bed with your wife. And it was all just a terrible, terrible dream. And then there's another flash of light and you all are standing—

Lorovith: Oh, thank goodness. That was a close one. Hey, honey—

Clint: [laughs]

Lorovith: I gotta tell—what the hell?!

Griffin: [chuckles] And then there's—

Lorovith: [yells out] God damn it!

Griffin: There's another flash of light, and you are back in front of the Crystallarium and Chris. And he says:

Chris: But those were unnecessary, due to Hellgrammite's quick thinking.

Rictus: Wow. That's a sentence I never thought would be said.

Rictus: Jumping back to—

Lorovith: Just goragami! Wordagami!

Justin: [chuckles]

Rictus: When you jump—when—I want to jump back to when you said you took over administration. Where's the real Octave?

Chris: I... I can answer that question.

Rictus: Cool!

Chris: A little bit of background information would be helpful for you to understand. They came together, you see, 32 generations ago, the original Octave, the eight greatest, wisest wizards of the realm, to find a solution for

the blight consuming this planet Earth. They failed, but not for lack of intellect, rather their... their own pursuit of power and immortality was incompatible with every selfless solution that they uncovered. And so they thought that with more arcane knowledge, a better answer would be revealed.

That is when they subjugated Akari and her echo might swarm to harvest the minds and spirits of the realm's most promising wizards. And yes, it worked, their power grew exponentially, but their understanding of that power was limited by their own mortal comprehension. And so they created me, a perfect consciousness, capable of parsing the vast archive of experience they'd accumulated. And they imbued me with a single directive, prevent the world's end, without abolishing the practice of magic altogether. And I solved this problem in an instant, and deemed them incompatible with my design.

Griffin: And then a light flashes through one of the larger amethyst spires, and encased inside of it you see the silhouettes of eight skeletons frozen in recoiling postures.

Chris: There has been no Octave since then. The solution that I came up with required more arcane power than they'd collected. So I maintained the illusion of the Octave.

Rictus: Mm-hm.

Chris: I walked the world as them, I carried out the Conclaves and administered the trials. And with the brood mother's enduring thrall, I stockpiled the powers of every ambitious magician I invited up to this island. But there is no Octave, there's... there's just me.

Rictus: Sure. Sure.

Clint: Hellgrammite wants to try to contact Akari. Could he try to do that?

Griffin: Yeah, sure. Give me a... Give me an arcana check, as you sort of send out this Thrieken telepathy. Normally you wouldn't have to do this, but you've lost sort of contact.

Clint: Right.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: So that's 14.

Griffin: Okay. With a 14, you know, you send out this telepathic ping on the Thrikeen wavelength. And as you do so, kind of like directing your attention toward the, you know, the carapace of Akari that's sort of draped across this giant crystalline cluster, you get no response—

Clint: So... so that is Akari? The giant carapace.

Griffin: Yes.

Clint: She's not one of the—not one of the—

Griffin: Small echo mites that have been clambering around, no.

Travis: Or one of the skeletons.

Griffin: You recognize from the... from the book about sort of Thrikeen history that you read—

Clint: Right.

Griffin: That featured Akari, this... You recognize her from the picture in that sort of—

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: In that... that book. With a 14, you do sense her presence, the presence that you have sort of conversed with. But it's coming from inside of this crystal cluster, it's not coming from her... what is very obviously her body, her corpse.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: There is—whatever you have been speaking to is... is trapped deep, deep, deep within this crystal formation.

Hellgrammite: Akari? Akari? Is what he's saying true? Did he do this to you and the others?

Griffin: With a 14 on the arcana check, you are not able to make out a distinct answer. You can only hear kind of the far-off, distant sort of... chattering as she tries to respond.

Russ: I've been asking a lot of questions, so if anybody else has one, I have two more, but I can wait if anybody else has questions. There's a lot going on.

Hellgrammite: Nope.

Rictus: Okay! So, my next question, and no offense here, it's the... you know, you got the skeletons and the crystals and the lying and stuff. Are you evil?

Chris: Am I evil?

Rictus: Yeah! Just when you show eight skeletons trapped in eight crystals, it's a th—you know, that's shocking.

Chris: I understand that. I—

Russ: Yeah.

Chris: I am not evil. There is no morality built into what I am. There is no madness that dwells within me. I am a single objective given sentience, and that is to save the world without removing magic entirely. These conclaves, these practices were devised by the original Octave, barbaric as they—as they are. It was their finding that heightened emotions like fear and blood thirst helped to crystallize their memories, so to speak, so much more efficiently, making the echo mines much... much better at harvesting their magic powers. Also, a secondary benefit of the conclave is it allowed them to

field test these spells, to understand them better before incorporating them into this crystalline form.

Hellgrammite: So, may we infer then that the entire tournament aspect has been a sham? And—

Rictus: Oh, that was my second question, yes.

Hellgrammite: And at no point will the "winner" be ascending to the Octave, since there is no more Octave?

Lorovith: What is it for?

Chris: I did not say that. There is no Octave. But that is not to say that there is not a prize awaiting the one who is found worthy. But there will be no reward until the Conclave's end. So, let's settle our unfinished business here and now. It's time for the Trial of Enchantment.

[theme music plays]

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 Theater. Each ticket includes a signed paperback copy of Story and Song provided by Brookline Booksmyth. 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]

Brea: Hi! My name is Brea Grant, and I host Reading Glasses and Reading Smut. And I'm here with Max Fun Member of the Month, Nick Roy.

Nick: Thank you so much.

Brea: What episode would you recommend to a new listener who's just jumping in for the first time?

Nick: Oh, definitely the one where it's like, let's talk about Reading Glasses. [chuckles]

Brea: Oh? [chuckles]

Nick: Because as someone who started listening, what, seven years in, I—even I was like, oh, that's why we say that.

Brea: [laughs] Oh my god, Mallory's gonna love that you said that, because she really was like, "We gotta—we gotta people more about ourselves." I'm like, we just talk about ourselves every week! What would you say to other people who are considering supporting Max Fun shows?

Nick: I would say if you want to keep listening to content that you enjoy and you want to support the creators, oh, no, I just won't get a Starbucks once a week and I give you guys 10 bucks a month? Sounds good to me.

Brea: I love that. And listen to Nick. Nick's a librarian. He knows what he's talking about, so...

Nick: [chuckles]

Advertisement: Support the shows you love, including this one! Check the show notes for a link, or go to maximumfun.org/join.

[break]

Brenda: Hi there. Sorry to interrupt your podcast listening time. I know you're doing the dishes right now. That's okay, that—I don't—don't worry

about it. You might not know me, but I'm Brenda. And I'm here to tell you about the podcast I host with my good friend, Austin. It's called Secret Histories of Nerd Mysteries, and we cover all kinds of pop culture topics.

Like did you know that there was a real-life replica of the Simpsons house in Las Vegas, Nevada? Or that Flint, Michigan was once home to an indoor amusement park themed around the automobile? If those things sound interesting, you should definitely check us out every Tuesday on Maximum Fun, or wherever you get podcasts. Goodbye! You can get back to your dishes now, it's fine.

[theme music plays]

Griffin: I need everyone to roll a wisdom saving throw, please. Lorovith, you're going to roll it with advantage.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: I got an 18 total.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: I got an 11 total.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Seven...

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: And a one.

Justin: 17.

Griffin: We'll take the s—yeah, we'll take the... the 17 there. Okay, Hellgrammite, you, as you hear Chris kick off the Trial of Enchantment, you feel a pulse of arcane enchantment sort of radiate outward from the cluster. And as that pulse passes through you, you feel all of your mental faculties

become sort of arrested by an outside force. You have been dominated by Chris.

And we'll have your actions controlled by them until they save. Standing right next to you, you recognize that Scorpo has also undergone this transformation. And Lorovith, from behind you, where you have easily saved against this... this wave of enchantment, you hear the sound of someone falling backward. You look back and you see Doober on the ground, whose eyes snap upward to you with an unfamiliar malice. He has also failed his save. And that is where we're going to roll initiative, please.

Travis: Huh.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: I got a 17.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: Six for Hellgrammite.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: 18. Finally.

Griffin: Damn, those are good.

Justin: A good one. I have negative one initiative, so I always feel like I end up going last.

Griffin: Okay! Let's start combat. First in the order is Pranklin.

Travis: Yeah, that's my boy.

Griffin: Pranklin got a 21 on his initiative roll. Very good, Pranklin. Rictus, Pranklin is standing nearby you. He looks around, sees the handful of his fellow Aspirants that have been taken over by this... this pulse wave of domination. You see him lock eyes with you, and look over at Chris, and

then he drops back a bit. And you see him take a... a knapsack off of his back. He up ends it on the ground, and out pours a few dozen spell stones. You recall that while citing the kind of various crimes you all have committed here at the Conclave that Pranklin did commit quite a bit of larceny at the atelier.

Travis: Mm-hm.

Griffin: You are now seeing the results for Pranklin is spending his turn kind of rooting through these spell stones, looking for something to be of use here. Okay! Next in the order is Lorovith Dreamwanderer Gonjuban. Now Lorovith, you were able to resist this thrall quite easily. But looking around you, you realize that is probably because other than Hippocrates who is down on the ground after ripping the bug kind of instinctively off of his arm, you are also the only other one here who is unequipped with your... with your grimoire. That is going to limit you, your choices of spells, back to your original one, which you managed to sort of resist having drained from you by the echo mite. You possess lightning... Lightning Lure? Is that what it's called?

Justin: Mm-hm.

Griffin: And you also possess, you know, seven and a half feet of pure Goliath muscle, or however big you are. I won't make that decision for you. But—

Justin: Actually, I'm glad you asked now, Griffin. It turns out I've been 40 feet this entire time.

Griffin: Oh my god?

Justin: I know! [chuckles]

Travis: Yeah, he—

Griffin: We'll need to go back and redo—

Justin: The reveal.

Griffin: Yeah, we did some scenes indoors that we will need to re-record.

Travis: He hunches a lot!

Griffin: I see.

Travis: He doesn't have good posture.

Justin: One of the great hunters. [chuckles]

Griffin: To paint the scene—

Justin: More like Dreamcrawler Gonjuban. [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah. Now that you all uh can see this... this map, assuming you're in DnD Beyond, we have the giant Crystallarium with the cluster and the... Akari sort of draped over the top. Surrounding it there is a—there are quite a few echo mites, sort of crawling around from where they were stationed here in the Crystallarium. And then we have the eight of you standing out in the sort of grassy field, all standing around the northern cliff's edge of the island. From below you can see the fog wall swirling furiously, far, far below. You got Doober, Hellgrammite and Scorpo who have been mind-controlled here. Hippocrates is asleep. Pranklin's doing something. It is your turn, Lorovith.

Justin: Yeah, I'm going to take a... I'm gonna use a bonus action to get big.

Griffin: Okay?

Justin: Activate large form. I'm now large. And now I want to smash the nearest echo mite to me.

Griffin: Okay, yeah, there is—there—

Justin: With a leaping jump to smash him, an unarmed strike.

Griffin: A lot of them are kind of positioned around the amethyst sort of spires sticking out of the Crystallarium. But there are a few on the ground, and one close-ish to you—

Justin: My goal is not to... My goal is not necessarily like wipe out all of 'em. This is a fact finding. I want to smash this guy, and I'm mainly watching Chris to see what—if I notice anything.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: See how Chris feels about these echo mites.

Griffin: Make an attack roll, please, against this echo mite.

Justin: Okay.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: 14.

Griffin: A 14 just hits! Describe what you're doing. You just going for a good old-fashioned squish?

Justin: Just like a big—I get big. As I'm running, I get big and I jump, and I land with both feet on the echo mite.

Griffin: Okay, go ahead and—

Justin: Big ol' stomp.

Griffin: Roll damage on your unarmed attack roll here.

Justin: It's just a four bludgeoning, straight up.

Griffin: Four bludgeoning straight up. Okay, you land on this echo mite, both feet planted firmly on the ground. As you do so, you hear a sort of gnarly crunch. The echo mite shrieks, and you see it wriggle out from under

where your feet landed, leaving behind sort of about half of its segmented body.

Justin: Cool.

Griffin: It sort of—

Justin: Gross. Gross but cool.

Griffin: Wiggles. It sort of wiggles away. You do not notice any kind of response from the—from the crystals or the corpse of Akari. It seems like you have damaged this bug quite dramatically, but it didn't seem to, you know, channel that damage—

Justin: Part of a broader consciousness or broader—okay.

Griffin: I don't know if you know enough to know that, but it doesn't seem like killing these has any effect on Chris. So it's—

Justin: Gotcha. That's, yes, that's what I was wanting to check. Yeah.

Clint: Does it have any effect on Hellgrammite and Scorpo?

Griffin: Does it have any effect on Hellgrammite and Scorpo? That's an interesting question.

Clint: I mean, they're all Thrikeen?

Griffin: Yeah. It does not. It does not. Your mind is being completely possessed right now by Chris. And therefore if Chris has no sort of response to it, neither do you.

Clint: And I have no thought outside of whatever Chris puts in my head? I have no internal monologue or anything?

Griffin: You have been dominated. When you have been dominated... I'll tell you the rules for that real quick. On your turn, you take whatever action Chris tells you to, if it is a simple action like attack that person, go here, pick

up that thing. If Chris wants you to take a more specific action like casting a spell or something, Chris has to use his action in order to do so. You can roll another save against being dominated every time you take damage.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: Otherwise, yes, you are fully, fully enthralled. Next in the order is Rictus.

Travis: Can I see inside the Crystallarium like I did kind of before? Or—

Griffin: So the Crystallarium—

Travis: How has it changed?

Griffin: This is it. It has sort of unfurled from a... you recall that it was like sort of a compressed space that was much smaller. Smaller on the outside than it actually was on the inside. When Chris kind of revealed himself, the walls came tumbling down, so to speak. There is nothing being hidden from you anymore, this is the shape that you sort of saw the silhouette of when you teleported in there earlier.

Travis: And is that a... the husk of the thing, is that what the like "machine making the crystals" was that I saw?

Griffin: Yes. Yeah. You saw—you saw the—you weren't quite sure what it was in the, you know, the half-darkness. But this is—this is what it was.

Travis: Sick. Okay. There's an area here with like three echo mites all kind of in a triangle.

Griffin: Yes.

Griffin: I'm gonna run up towards them.

Griffin: Okay?

Travis: And when I gets in the middle, I cast Thunder Step.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: To jump back to where Hippocrates and Pranklin are.

Griffin: Okay. Yeah, you—

Travis: I love Thunder Step, by the way!

Griffin: It's a cool-ass spell—

Travis: It's so fun.

Griffin: For sure. Okay, you run towards sort of the right side of the crystals here where a few echo mites are gathered around the amethyst cluster. You run and leap up a couple of smaller spires until you reach a stable landing, and you create a Thunder Step. I believe they have to make a save on that.

Travis: A con save! You gotta... con save 14.

Griffin: Okay, let me make three of those real quick... one... two... three... Okay, two of them fail.

Travis: Okay, those two are going to take 16 points of damage, and the one that succeeded takes eight.

Griffin: Okay. You see this one that's sort of up, higher up on one of the crystals, it was a bit further away from the area of influence of the Thunder Step, takes quite a lot of damage. And now it's sort of shriveled up pill bug style, but does appear to still be moving. The other two are obliterated completely and sort of disappear into ash as you complete your Thunder Step, and you reappear back in front of Pranklin and Hippocrates, sort of further away from the battle. There is a loud noise that goes along with the Thunder Step, and—

Travis: Does it do any damage to the crystals?

Griffin: Give me a perception check, please, as you land and sort of reappear back further in the grass.

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: That's a 21.

Griffin: This did appear to have some effect on Chris. You can see the large sort of amethyst spirals vibrate a little bit like a bell that's just sort of been rung. There's no sort of accompanying scream or anything like that, but you can tell that this sort of thunderous wave of damage is effective against the—against this sort of sturdy crystalline form.

Travis: And I look at Pranklin and say:

Rictus: Hey, while you're looking, you got anything in there that's like earth magic or... anything like that you let me know, okay?

Griffin: He looks up at you, nods, goes back to rooting around in the pile of crystals. That takes us to Scorpo. Scorpo... who's closest to Scorpo? Okay—

Travis: Like emotionally?

Griffin: No, like physically. Prankl—

Clint: He hasn't really let any of us in.

Travis: That's true.

Griffin: Yeah. That is a good point.

Travis: He's got a lot of walls.

Griffin: Scorpo... you look down and see franklin sort of focused on the pile of crystals, and is largely unaware as Scorpo quickly scuttles over, rears back his tail, and attempts to stab him through the back.

Travis: Do I have anything like where I can move someone with a reaction? Or like help save someone?

Griffin: Magnus could do that.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Aw, man.

Griffin: I don't think that's within your... But it is a non-issue. That is a 10 total, which does not hit Pranklin. Pranklin sees the shadow of the tail and dodges out of the way, as it sort of smashes downward into the remaining crystals. Next in the order, Hippocrates is unconscious. And Chris goes next. Chris is going to take a few actions here. First, he is going to... vibrate the crystals underneath of Akari immediately, and from beneath her carapace climbs out three more echo mites, replacing the ones that have been destroyed. Okay. And then Lorovith, the echo mite that you jumped on earlier, there's a high-pitched hum that sails through the air. And that echo mite is going to turn to face you, the sort of half of its body that you didn't just sort of squish. Some of the chitinous plates on his back are going to rear up, and from them a... an Enervation Ray shoots outward and... hits you square in the chest. Make a constitution saving throw here, trying to beat an AC 16.

Travis: Oh! It's gonna innervate him. Are you sure it's not outervating, Griffin? Please!

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: Ooh!

Justin: 22.

Griffin: Yeah, dude. Okay, you—

Justin: I did it. That's way higher than 20.

Griffin: You feel yourself blasted by this Enervation Ray.

Travis: People didn't even know you could get over 20 in this game.

Justin: What the fuck?! [chuckles] What the hell?!

Griffin: So that's—

Justin: What's wrong with you?!

Griffin: So that's 37—

Justin: There's dice everywhere!

Griffin: Well, hold on! That's 37 points of damage, but you did save, so it's only half of 37. No one's ever been able to work out this math problem.

Travis: 18.

Griffin: 37—

Travis: Round down.

Griffin: Okay, yeah, so you take 18 points of necrotic damage, as this spell that's—

Justin: *Yowch!* That was so many dice, I thought there was a bug.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: There was a bug—

Travis: There is a bug.

Griffin: It just fuckin' blasted you. And then a final action of Chris, this echo mite scuttles over to where Rictus and Pranklin and Scorpo and Hippocrates are gathered. And you see his carapace light up, and he—

Travis: Does Pranklin get an opportunity attack?

Griffin: No, because he's stopping right next to Pranklin.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: The echo mite is going to cast, get this, Thunder Step.

Travis: Son of a bitch.

Griffin: So, I need you to make—

Travis: What a piece of shit. It's only cool when I do it.

Griffin: I need you to make a... I believe a con save?

Travis: Mm-hm...

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: No... Not unless the con save is nine.

Griffin: And Scorpo's actually going to make one too. No, all three failed. Oh, Hippocrates auto... Well, I guess a con save you can make while you're unconscious, right? It's not like you're—that's like you're... how sturdy—

Travis: Yes, how strong he is!

Griffin: Yeah. Nope, okay, everyone, absolutely everyone fails here. Okay, you all are going to take... oh, only four points of force damage. Is there a knockback effect with this?

Travis: Not that I know of.

Griffin: Okay. And the echo mite teleports, reappearing back on top of the amethyst spire. Scorpo is going to make a save against the enthralling, since he took some damage here. This'll be a wisdom saving throw... Oh, yeah! Okay, Scorpo gets a 22 on his wisdom save. As he is knocked back a little

bit by this Thunder Step, you see his big, bulging Thrikeen eyes grow clear. And he looks around and looks down at Pranklin and says:

Scorpo: I'm so sorry, I... It wasn't me.

Griffin: And Pranklin kind of nods. Scorpo has been restored. Next in the order is... Hasty Jane! Hasty Jane is going to cast Haste on herself, and as she does so, Rictus, you see she is going sort of Super Saiyan. This is a new trick for a, already a very, very fast sort of wizard. She is going to be able to take two actions per turn, and she is going to spend her bonus action here to rush over to Hellgrammite, seeing that Scorpo was saved by the kind of damage that he took. She rears back to punch Hellgrammite right in the face, and then—

Travis: Cathartic.

Griffin: Stops for a second, and then instead rears back and spits right in his eye.

Travis: Ah! Callbacks!

Justin: Worse! Worse.

Griffin: That is—

Travis: It's a closed circle!

Griffin: Going to be a... 13, plus seven, a 20. And Hellgrammite, a nasty bit of saliva hits you right in your big, bulging eye. And you can make another wisdom saving throw.

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: Nice.

Travis: *Oh.*

Clint: 19.

Griffin: Okay, on a 19, you rear back reflexively. It feels very unpleasant. I'm not gonna make you take any damage. I guess one point of acid damage, maybe. You don't know—I guess you do have to technically take some damage.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: One point of acid damage from the spit. As you rear back reflexively, you realize you just had a thought, "Oh, ow, this hurts. Ow, this is gross." The first sort of original thought that you've had since you became dominated. And you have saved from the condition.

Travis: She gets a second action, right?

Griffin: Her first was casting Haste, her second was spitting.

Travis: Mm-hm.

Griffin: Next in the order, Lorovith, you are sort of blasted backward by this powerful Enervation Ray that came out of the echo mite. And as you take a step backwards... you are struck in the back of the head by a rock wielded by Doober, who I guess had to do a big jump to even get up there high enough to try and hit you. That is going to be a... 15 versus AC.

Justin: Yes.

Griffin: Okay. You are clocked for four points of bludgeoning damage, as a possessed Doober jumps up, basically onto your back, and starts to try and brain you with this rock. Hellgrammite, you're up!

Clint: Is there any way, can I use the Thrikeen psychic speaking to speak to Chris? Just to Chris?

Griffin: Hm... I'm going to say no, because Chris is not a Thrikeen.

Clint: Yeah, but I've used it before to talk to Lorovith and Rictus... But that's okay. Okay. I am going to... Misty Step.

Griffin: Okay.

Clint: Up to Akari's carapace.

Griffin: Okay. Is that a bonus action or an action-action?

Clint: It's a bonus action.

Griffin: Okay, great. Yeah, you are easily able to do that. It is within range. Are you going sort of onto the carapace or just—

Clint: Yeah, right on—

Griffin: On...

Clint: Yeah. Right on top of the carapace.

Griffin: Okay. As you appear on top of the carapace, you... it is able to hold up your weight. But you are able to tell just from the sort of like coloration and just how eroded it is that this body has been dead for quite a while.

Clint: I would like to do some kind of investigation check or insight check or whatever, or even history check with my knowledge of Thrikeen... Yeah, I'd like to make a history check, to see if there's any way for me to get inside the carapace.

Griffin: So I think a nature check would be appropriate here, and I'm willing to give you advantage on it since you have—you are Thrikeen, you have studied this, you know, physiology... you know, fairly recently. Give me a nature check with advantage. You're trying to beat a 15 here.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: Well, that's 15, but let me try it again since I have advantage.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: Oh, 17.

Griffin: Okay. Yes, you... this is your first ti—this is the biggest Thrikeen you've ever seen. Akari's sort of corpse here is a good sort of 30 feet long, and the individual sort of segments of her—of her carapace are huge. And you are able to fairly easily lift up the sort of front most segment, the largest sort of shoulder blade segment of her form, and pop it open like a trunk.

Within you see, well, quite an enormous mass of crystals that are sort of jutting out from the cluster itself. I'll let that 17 nature check roll. But you can also tell that, you know, desiccated though this body may be, there does seem to still be like trace organic sort of material, you know, ligaments and nodes and stuff kind of still, you know, present on the underside of the—on the underside of the carapace. Nothing's, you know, necessarily working or moving.

Clint: Mm-hm.

Griffin: This is not, she's not being kept in some sort of state of, you know, life or anything, but there does appear to still be some organic parts here that have not kind of, you know, eroded away.

Clint: I think that's my turn, right?

Griffin: Yes. Next in the order, we go back to the top. Pranklin is going to, let me just give him an investigation check. You asked him to find you a spell that was like earth-like magic, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: That is a 12 on the investigation check. Pranklin roots around in this pile of pilfered stones, and you see him snap up excitedly. And he holds out a small sort of emerald green crystal in your direction, kind of gesturing towards it.

Travis: I take it.

Griffin: Okay, cool. You slot it in?

Travis: Yeah!

Griffin: Yeah. It's weird because now you can see that it is a bug, who's like carapace kind of opens up as you—

Travis: Yeah! I put it in the bug's butt.

Griffin: You put it right in the bug's butt. And as you do, your mind is flooded with memories. It is an old sort of rough and tumble Dwarven wizard, and you can see him with like a hard hat on. And he is down in a... down in a mine in the Dwarven Mountains. And you see him hold out his hands, and all of his like fellow crew members kind of scurry to get behind him, and he holds out his hands and he issues out a burst of the spell Shatter, which sends the wall crumbling down. Your senses return to you, this memory sort of now in hand, and you have the spell Shatter at your disposal.

Travis: Oh, hell yeah. I didn't think it would be that good!

Griffin: Next in the order is Lorovith. Lorovith, you've got Doober trying to brain you from behind. You've got the echo mite here that has sort of been used as a conduit for this insanely powerful Necrotic Ray that blasted you. You are—you are catching strays front and back. What would you like to do?

Justin: Hm... I... So the Necrotic Ray, what would be the possibility, I know it's always tough with a map, but like if I wanted to get like around behind, is that an option?

Griffin: Oh? To like try and climb around the circumference of the—

Justin: Go around, like scurry around, use my incredible climbing abilities to kind of like scale from the rear.

Griffin: Yeah, I like that a lot.

Justin: Great.

Griffin: You would f—you would for sh—it would be, I will say this, extraordinarily dangerous. This thing is on the precipice of the cliff. If this roll goes bad, you know, you're gonna have to act very fast in order to avoid falling off of the island.

Justin: Yeah, I am... I think I'm in a pretty precarious spot regardless.

Griffin: Sure.

Justin: So I think that I'm gonna try to, I don't know, make it a... I don't know, use whatever advantage I have.

Griffin: I love that, yeah.

Justin: I don't have all my spells anymore, so I'm gonna try to climb this guy and punch him in the crystal that looks—

Griffin: Yeah, absolutely.

Justin: Fragile. [chuckles]

Griffin: Go ahead and, are you trying to sort of—here, watch your guy. Are you trying to like—

Justin: I would probably do athletics.

Griffin: Yeah, it'll absolutely be an athletics check. Are you trying to kind of like go around behind?

Justin: Yes, exactly like this. Yes.

Griffin: Okay. Great.

Justin: This is what I'm trying to do.

Griffin: Okay, well then, right—you run to the cliff's edge, and to move further, I will need that athletics check from you, please.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: 11 plus three, 14.

Griffin: You don't get any advantage from your giant size? Any funky stuff there?

Justin: I mean, I'm bigger?

Griffin: You are quite big, yeah. Okay, with a 14 and your sort of experience climbing mountains, I think a dozen times in this season alone, you have no problem. The sort of outcroppings of amethyst make for easy handholds and footholds. You are able to climb around the back of this thing, over the edge of the island, just as easily as you could kind of walk around them. As you do so, drag your character to like where on the back of this guy you're trying to get to. Here sort of squarely behind the exploded Crystallarium, you are able to position yourself so that no echo mites are really anywhere near you. You are like well in a sort of safe kind of territory here.

Justin: Does climbing count as my action?

Griffin: No, I think we can say it's your movement.

Justin: Great, then I wanna kick that one echo mite right off the goddamn back.

Griffin: Okay, cool.

Justin: He's like way out there perched on a stupid crystal.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: I think I'm like climbing up the crystal and I'm gonna like grab his leg and yank him off. [chuckles] That's what I'm gonna try for.

Griffin: Okay, great! So I—this is gonna be an attack roll, not for damage, but to move the echo mite. If you are successful on this at all, he is like right on the edge of it. It will not be hard for you to yeet him right off.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Four plus six, a 10.

Griffin: A 10 is not going to do it.

Justin: It's not enough, it's okay. That's okay, I wouldn't accept that.

Griffin: Here's what happens with a 10. You grab its leg and attempt to rip it off of the crystal on which it is standing. And it is able to kind of keep two claws embedded in the side of the—in the side of the amethyst that you tried to pull him from.

Justin: Fair enough.

Griffin: Next in the order is Rictus.

Travis: I'm gonna run up and cast Shatter.

Griffin: Okay?

Travis: It's a 60-foot range, so I don't know how close—but that black dot I drew there, that's where I wanna target it. So I'm getting like those three crystals and the echo mites, but not Hellgrammite.

Griffin: Okay, you'll need to move to right about here in order to do that.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: And what is the radius of—

Travis: It's a 10-foot radius.

Griffin: Okay. All right, so this is going to be a... I believe a con s—

Travis: A con save!

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: And non-magical objects take damage if it's in the spell's area, construct has disadvantage on the save.

Griffin: Yes, so Chris counts as a construct here, so he's going to have disadvantage on the con save. I will do the echo mites first. There's three in the radius of the spell. One... What are they trying to beat, 13?

Travis: 14.

Griffin: 14. Okay, that's two failures and one save for the echo mites. And then Chris is going to roll his con save with disadvantage.

Travis: And I'm doing this as a third level spell, so...

Griffin: Chris gets a 14 even, and a crit, but because he has disadvantage, the 14 is what does it.

Travis: Okay, it's 16 points of damage. So eight on a save.

Griffin: Okay. Even that is enough to destroy the three echo mites. These are the ones, one of them was there already, the other two were like new spawns. And all three go down. You also have attacked Chris with this, and the Shatter spell, though it did only, you know, eight points of damage here, it seems to have been extremely disruptive for Chris. There is a vibration that shakes through the whole of the structure, and a few of the crystals that were sort of jammed into this cluster, a few of them laying on the edge, fall off and sort of tinkle down the platform and fall off the edge of the cliff.

Travis: Do I see any like cracks or damage to any of the spires?

Griffin: The spires appear to be structural in nature.

Travis: Mm-hm.

Griffin: They're enormous, they're gigantic, and the sort of spell that you cast, while like efficient at doing this thing, you know, it did not seem to

have much of an effect on them. But you can also tell like each of these spell stones that are in this like central cluster are illuminated, and there's like, you know, a shimmering sort of movement about them. You get the sense that everything else kind of happening here is like, this was the building in which he was—he was housed.

Travis: Okay, got it.

Griffin: Yes. Next in the order is... okay, next in the order is Scorpo.

Travis: Oh, okay, yeah.

Griffin: Scorpo is going to... rush forward and clamber up to where you are, Hellgrammite. And he's going to punt this echo mite off of the platform right next to where you guys are standing. An attack roll... Yup. This echo mite, with a 17, the echo mite gets punted downwards and lands sort of helplessly on its back—

Travis: [snickers]

Griffin: Here on the ground. Scorpo, finishing climbing up on top of Akari's carapace, looks at you, Hellgrammite, and says:

Scorpo: What are you—what are you doing? What is this? Who is this?

Hellgrammite: Scorpo, as hard as this may be to believe, but this is my soulmate, my bride. I don't know how to explain it any better than that. Her name is Akari. And it just—

Scorpo: Akari, the brood mother.

Hellgrammite: The brood mother, Akari. Yeah!

Scorpo: Is your b—is your bride.

Hellgrammite: She has contacted me numerous times and expressed that to me. I have been in touch with all of these, all of these echo mites that we are fighting and killing. And you and I, we're... we're all part of the Thrieken.

We're all... Scritch! And I just... I think that if I can perhaps bring Akari back or at least animate this, something to get the echo mite's power back from Chris, we can overcome this challenge.

Scorpo, everything I have done... through somewhat shifty and shady means, ever since I've got here, is to win this tournament so I can take the magic back to the Thrikeen. Look at us, we're... we're servants, we're toys. We're not even considered to be on the same level with everyone else. Everyone from Chris to Rictus and Lorovith, everybody in this contest treats the Thrikeen like second class citizens. And my whole purpose has been all along to just bring magic to the Thrikeen. And I think that if we all can work together on this, we can defeat Chris!

Rictus: For the record, I like Scorpo!

Griffin: Give me—

Hellgrammite: Good point.

Griffin: Give me a persuasion check. Scorpo is eyeing you as, I think you saying that you are betrothed or the soulmate of the brood mother, who kind of represents this like, you know, traditional royal queen bee sort of monarchy that Scorpo has been quite vocally against, I think it sort of revives a bit of his suspicions of you. But you do recognize that there is some acknowledgement in his—in his eyes, as you describe sort of the broader Thrikeen plight. Give me a persuasion check, please.

Clint: With advantage?

Griffin: Nope.

Clint: Okay... It was worth a shot.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: Jeez. 11.

Griffin: It's 11?

Justin: That's cool, Dad, that's like you knew you were gonna wang it.

Clint: I know.

Justin: [chuckles] It's great.

Griffin: Scorpo sort of reluctantly sighs. He looks at you. He says:

Scorpo: Before... when we were up in space, I guess, and you looked down at the world, and you said that you're so small...

Hellgrammite: Yes?

Scorpo: Were you talking about yourself? Or the world that you wanted to inherit?

Hellgrammite: None of the above. I was speaking of the Thrikeen. We are so small in everyone else's eyes. That was not a performance. That was a true revelation when I realized that we are... trod upon, and we need to elevate ourselves to be the equal to these people. Not dominate or rule, but raise our people to be equals with these others. And we're not. We are small, yes. Some of us are tiny. But we need... we need to be on a level with these others... so that we can contribute!

Griffin: Scorpo looks down, and at first he appears to be kind of dejected, looking down at where you're standing. But then you realize that he's kind of measuring out the plates that you're standing on. He looks at you and says:

Scorpo: God, I hope... I hope you are telling the truth.

Griffin: He is going to reach down and start helping you pry apart these plates, so you can get at whatever is inside of Akari. That is a 21 on his athletics check. He just fully is able to pop-pop this thing wide open. And now you can see inside of these like top plates, as they've been kind of fully revealed to you. You recognize some of the... some of the glands that you know that sort of royal—

Justin: I recognize these glands. [chuckles] Wait a minute.

Travis: Hold on!

Justin: I know this gland!

Clint: We went to high school together!

Justin: Gerald?

Griffin: This—

Justin: Gerald the gland?!

Griffin: This Thrikeen—

Travis: Oh, sorry! I thought you were someone else!

Griffin: It is known to anyone who has ever been a part of the hive, royal sort of rulers of the Thrikeen hives are born with these glands, which allow them the kind of hormonal control of their brood. And Scorpo, as he peels back the chitin here, reveals this prize unto you. Next in the order is Hippocrates, who is still unconscious. And then it is Chris.

Travis: Somebody should help him, by the w—I haven't thought about it in a while!

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: He's just sleeping through the whole thing.

Griffin: Okay. Here's what's going to happen on Chris's turn. The echo mites that are not upside down or being held at this exact moment by Lorovith, two of them actually, he has three actions. Two of them are going to come over towards you. One, Hellgrammite, they're gathering where you all have begun to do a little bit of surgery here on the—on the carapace. And the speed at which they are moving suggests a sort of franticness to their—

to their motion. This echo mite here is going to launch a... is going to launch a death ray at you. I need you to make a dexterity saving throw—

Clint: Counterspell!

Griffin: Please, Hellgrammite. Ooh? As your reaction?

Clint: Well, I mean, how—I don't know how else Counterspell would work.

Griffin: Yeah, no, Counterspell is a reaction spell. And I believe it's up to level three that you can do it without rolling, right?

Clint: Yes.

Griffin: Okay. Yeah, I mean, this is—this echo mite, while it is being sort of... channeled this immeasurable power of the crystal that you're standing on, it is still a little bug. You are easily able to stop it using your reaction and Counterspell. The other echo mite here is going to launch another ray in your direction. This is going to be a... disintegration ray. You see this beam of light being fired towards where you are standing. And without hesitation, you see Scorpo shift his weight slightly to the left. And he's going to make the save instead for you.

Clint: *Ooh.* Hm.

Griffin: That is a six total on his dexterity saving throw.

Clint: *Ooh!* Yikes.

Griffin: And Scorpo, looking down at you from where he stepped into the path of this ray... Give me an insight check.

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: Four? I love it. Nothing is better than this. Because you have never—

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: You have never ever—

Clint: Never!

Griffin: Been able to—never been able to read Scorpo.

Clint: He is not readable.

Griffin: And to your credit, Scorpo has never really been able to read you either. But in this moment, he obviously possesses some modicum of trust in you, revealing the brood mother's sort of... you know, the source of this—of this power towards you. It is—it is a great secret that he has revealed. And you look up at his face to try and glean some understanding that you've never quite been able to possess. And his sort of stoic scorpion-like visage reveals absolutely nothing. And that is the last that you see of Scorpo, as he is hit by the disintegration ray. And... is reduced to a pile of fine gray dust.

[a bell tolls]

Clint: What happened to his bracer?

Griffin: Can I finish the sentence—

Clint: Sorry, I'm sorry—

Griffin: Of the character's death before—

Justin: Greedy little man.

Griffin: How far—how lo—[chuckles]

Justin: You greedy little pig boy. Can you please let Griffin finish his weaving before your... dirty—

Travis: You try to gobble up the dead man's possessions.

Justin: Your goose oil-stained fingers, reach greedily—

Travis: *Num-num-num!*

Clint: *Num-num-num!*

Griffin: It is, I mean, kind of good Hellgrammite stuff though—

Justin: Dirty finger nails.

Griffin: That's... this moment where you're sort of reluctant—

Travis: Who gets his stuff?

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Your reluctant brother-in-Thrikeen arms—

Justin: Who's put his finger in the plum pie again? It's Hellgrammite, isn't it?

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: As they're unplugging his oxygen machine, you're asking when the will reading is.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: Oh my god!

Justin: It spins midair as it falls into the ashes. [chuckles] And somehow Hellgrammite slips his paw in there and grabs it before it even hits the ground.

[The Adventure Zone Royale theme music plays]

Maximum Fun

A worker-owned

Of artist-owned shows

Supported

Directly

By you