

The Adventure Zone Royale: Episode 30

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Griffin: Previously, on TAZ Royale...

Chris: There is no Octave, but that is not to say that there is not a prize awaiting the one who is found worthy. But... 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.

Griffin: All of your mental faculties become sort of arrested by an outside force. You have been dominated by Chris. 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.

[The Adventure Zone Royale theme music plays]

Griffin: Hello, everybody! Welcome back to TAZ Royale, our battle royale, winner take all season of The Adventure Zone. We are currently in the throes of the final trial of the Octave Conclave, the Trial of Enchantment. Chris, the sentient sort of mind dwelling within the Crystallarium, this giant mass of crystals at the back of the island, has revealed himself to be the true mastermind of this Conclave, and its nasty games, having killed the rest of the Enclave a long, long time ago and imprisoned them within his crystalline mass.

You all have been embroiled in a battle against Chris, fending off waves of psychic attacks, and attacks from the swarm of echo mites that he seems to be controlling with the long dead corpse of Akari, the first queen of the—of the Thrieken. The very last thing that happened, I believe, in order, it was Chris' attack where, channeling his power through the swarm of echo mites, he disintegrated our dear friend Scorpo, who stepped in the way of the blast to protect Hellgrammite.

Clint: Nobody saw that coming.

Griffin: Nobody saw that coming, and nobody immediately pivoted to trying to pick his dusty ass clean of any loot that may still be dwelling on his person.

Clint: Oh, then I hope I go first.

Griffin: Actually, the next person in the order, after Chris and the echo mites, we got, let's do Doober. Lorovith, you were climbing around sort of the back of Chris, being somewhat disempowered, kind of staying a little bit out of line of sight while doing a little... little sneak attack, a little guerrilla combat.

Justin: Yeah. Trying to use my climbing abilities that are, I mean, that's all I got anymore. Climbing and a little shitty lightning whip.

Griffin: Hey, man...

Justin: Stupid little—[chuckles]

Griffin: Hey, Lorovith's got a lot going—he can get stuff off high shelves.

Travis: He's tall, yeah, big.

Griffin: I mean, you should have thought of something else other than tall, because like my thing covered tall.

Travis: Yeah, no, no, I, yeah, I...

Justin: Yeah, his tallness is not indisputable anymore.

Travis: Determined?

Clint: Does lanky fit in under tall?

Travis: No! You can be tall—

Griffin: No, he's not slight of build. Lorovith, you were climbing around the back of this crystal structure, had reached up trying to yank one of the echo

mites down from a crystal overhead, and were unsuccessful as it dug its claws into the side of the mass. As you were sort of like reaching up, tugging on this thing's leg, trying to pull it down, you see a small sort of cloud of fog begin to appear around it. And from that cloud of fog steps Doober Sweetleaf, who you can see looking in his eyes, they are opaque, dark purple, as he has fallen under the thrall of Chris. He looks down at you, dispassionately, as you kind of wrestle with this echo mite. And he is going to hold out his hands and try to hit you with Burning Hands.

Justin: Not me?

Griffin: You. All right, so you and this echo mite are going to make a dexterity saving throw. I'm going to say you're probably going to make this with disadvantage, since you're currently climbing. I don't know that that would make things easier for you to...

Justin: That makes sense.

Griffin: Dexterously avoid.

Justin: This is a dexterity saving throw... Oh, man, I already am not a big dexterity guy.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: 18 minus one, and—

Griffin: Hey!

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: A six, minus one, five!

Griffin: Oh! Beans! Okay—

Justin: Five... is that good?

Griffin: It's not good enough. The 18 would have definitely cleared.

Justin: Oh, yeah.

Griffin: The echo mite is also going to be obliterated by this plume of flame.

Justin: Got him!

Griffin: So let's delete, yeah—[chuckles]

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: Mission accomplished.

Justin: [chuckles]

Clint: My plume of flame spell!

Lorovith: You fell for my plan!

Clint: [chuckles]

Lorovith: My perfect plan has worked!

Griffin: All right—

Lorovith: I paid a hefty price! That's a lot of good lore, this, by the way.

Justin: [chuckles]

Griffin: [chuckles] All right, you're going to take 3D6 fire damage. That is 11 points of fire damage, as Doober aims his hands down towards you. You see the echo mite sort of vanish in the blast, and you manage to hang on for dear life, as you are buffeted with flame. Next in the order is Hellgrammite! Hellgrammite, you have just finished prying up one of the plates of Akari's carapace here, where you sort of discovered the lymphatic kind of system inside there, where these pheromones seem to be issuing from. You had done that with Scorpo's help before his untimely end. What would you like to do?

Clint: I'd like to make a nature check to see if there's any way I can control the echo mites.

Griffin: Okay, yes, absolutely. This is... I'm trying to think of what kind of check, like how—this seems like it would be an incredibly difficult check. No sort of way around that. You are trying to sort of biohack into this incredibly powerful, you know, source of pheromones that you're not super familiar with. I think—I think go ahead and roll it. You need at least a 15 to kind of get anything at all.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: A 16.

Griffin: Yeah, dude, you have a plus nine on nature checks. That's crazy. Okay, yeah, taking a look at this sort of system, you have nothing like this in your own sort of physiology, nothing really to kind of base it on. But you do notice that there are sort of almost swarms of pollen, clouds of pollen kind of issuing from some of the larger nodes still built into the plates on Akari's back.

They don't seem to be moving or functioning at all, but they are—they must be so potent that even though, you know, she apparently died quite a long time ago, these still seem to have the power to issue commands to the echo mites. I think knowing that, you know that, you know, it could be worth a shot to take those pheromones for yourself. The best way to do that I don't think you would be able to quite piece together, but you know that like using those in some capacity is how you're going to get this done.

Clint: So they're like glands?

Griffin: They are like glands, yeah, sort of fastened to the back of the plates.

Clint: How big?

Griffin: About the size of your fist.

Clint: Okay. And how many are there?

Griffin: Let's say six.

Clint: Okay. I am going to...

Travis: Eat 'em.

Clint: Gosh, the most obvious thing is I'm gonna try to eat one.

Travis: Yeah!

Griffin: Okay, awesome. Bugs are so cool. I'm so glad we've done a bug season. You pop one of those bad boys off. It's a—I mean, are you going to try and do it in one bite? Is it a hold your nose and go for it thing? Or...

Clint: I think I'm going to do it like you if you were challenged to eat like a, one of the... What's the super-hot peppers, Trav? The...

Travis: Carolina Reaper?

Griffin: Carolina Reaper?

Clint: Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah, okay.

Clint: Gonna try to—

Justin: Just get it down. Just get it down!

Clint: Just get it down, you know.

Griffin: It's bug versus food, and you're going to Joey Chestnut it down.

Clint: I gotta dunk it in a glass of water first.

Griffin: Right, right, right, right, remove the bun. Okay, so what we're going to do here is going to be a constitution save.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: To get this thing down and not be sort of overpowered... I'm going to tell you with that nature check, I'll also let it ride, like you can tell that this stuff is affecting you a little bit too. Like you feel a bit...

Travis: Naughty.

Griffin: Inebriated. Just kind of like being close to this like... this pheromone system. So to kind of like fend that off and to, you know, get the thing down, I would love a con save from you. Or like a constitution—

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: Yeah, a con save.

Clint: *Ooh.* Well, 11.

Griffin: Okay. With an 11...

Clint: I get a little reflux.

Griffin: [chuckles] I would say the eating it part is actually pretty easy. You are able to sort of like take it down in one gulp. And it is not... it's not like yucky tasting. It's you know, so kind of withered at this point, it's got a sort of jerky like sort of consistency to it. You are able to sort of get it down quite easily. But you are overwhelmed in this moment, as these pheromones kind of begin to overload your system. And... you feel yourself rooted to the spot, as you swallow this sort of pheromone pod. And you are going to be stunned. This means you are incapacitated, can't move, and can speak only falteringly. And attack rolls against you have advantage.

Clint: Is that a spell against me? Or just a like a—

Griffin: No, that is just a—

Clint: Chemical reaction?

Griffin: That's just a condition. Yeah, I mean, it is a... a poison, I guess, to be—

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: To be specific. Do you have anything to protect against that? I don't know if Thrikeens have like cool poison resistance or something.

Clint: I was looking... No, I'm just trying to figure out if this... I still haven't figured out biostimulation, but I didn't know if that would help me in any way.

Travis: Your bios are stimulated too much.

Griffin: Give me a—

Travis: They're too stimulated.

Griffin: Can you give me a perception check here? As you're kind of like stunned to the spot standing on top of Akari's shell here.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: Yeah, a whole four.

Griffin: Okay. Yeah, your, I mean, your eyes are like stuck forward. You are unable to—

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: To clock anything else sort of happening around you.

Clint: Then I think I'm probably done.

Griffin: [chuckles] Yeah, I think so. Okay, next in the order is... Pranklin. Pranklin is going to continue rooting around in his bag. He's tossing a couple stones over to Hasty Jane, to try to sort of bolster her arsenal. And then he's just going to work on trying to wake Hippocrates up, just to get another hand in the fight here. Which brings us to Lorovith. Lorovith, you are... you are in a very precarious spot, hanging off the back of Chris, as you rock climbed around. Were just blasted by Doober Sweetleaf with Burning Hands. What would you like to do?

Lorovith: Doober, you don't want to do this.

Griffin: He stares down at you, and you see his mouth open and you hear Chris' voice say:

Chris: That's not going to work. That's just—that's just not how it works.

Justin: Okay, Lorovith is going to try to pull himself up to a more secure position on the crystal.

Griffin: Okay. I think this is going to be an athletics check, and it's going to be... I think Doober's going to try to contest it. I think he's going to try to interfere as much as his little body will allow him to, since you are sort of dangling off of the crystal he is standing astride. Okay, Doober gets a six total on his athletics contest.

Justin: My athletics contest...

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Is a six. But I have a plus three in athletics, so that's a nine.

Griffin: All right, with that—

Justin: My hearts are really in it, can't you tell?

Griffin: [chuckles] You pull yourself up on top of the crystal next to Doober. He just kind of fruitlessly tries to stomp on your fingers, but he wears like a size four. A little—just like a little shoe. And it doesn't do very much

damage, you're able to sort of climb up as he fruitlessly tries to get you away. That is going to be your movement. You are now standing, however, up on top of the crystal. And that was just your move action, so you still have your regular and bonus and reaction.

Justin: [sighs] God, man, this is really difficult.

Travis: Maybe a hug?

Justin: God damn it...

Lorovith: Doober! Or Chris... I love this boy! This man! Like I love myself. But I will not lose.

Justin: And I'm gonna kick Doober off the fuckin' crystal. [chuckles]

Griffin: Whoa!

Clint: Ah-ho!

Griffin: All right. Go ahead and make your melee attack roll.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Fucking are you fucking serious? Are you fucking serious? Is it like actually fucking possible?

Griffin: [chuckles] That's a one on the dice.

Justin: That I actually rolled a one on the die, just a one.

Griffin: It's a one on the dice.

Justin: It's a one. God! [yells out] Gary!

Griffin: This is such a—this is—this feels like a big roll to have a critical failure.

Justin: I know! And it's like, and it feels true to me. It's like there's something right about it that I'm, I can't argue with.

Travis: The dice tell a story.

Justin: The dice tell a story! Gary's dice. [chuckles]

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: You are shocked as Chris, you know, with Doober's little body, maybe couldn't do too much damage with stomping, but seems to have made Doober extremely live and agile, as he sidesteps your kick, sending you falling on your face onto sort of the very edge of the crystal. And you hear Chris laugh through Doober's mouth, as you are there sort of laying on the ground on your hands and knees. Give me a wisdom saving throw, please, Lorovith.

Justin: Okay.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: 15.

Griffin: You are just for a moment staring face down into this amethyst crystal spire jutting out of Chris' enormous kind of form. And you see a reflection. At first, you think it's your own reflection as you stare down into this crystal, but you quickly kind of realize that it's not you. You see like the silhouette of Grakhan inside of—inside of the crystal. And he is flanked by other sort of less... detailed kind of shadows. But him, you can make out very, very clearly.

And as you sort of make eye contact with him, you are... you are transported by a memory from the distant past. You are... sitting in a large structure made of these massive, pointed logs, held together with vines, all just jutting out in every direction like a jagged crown. And there's no roof or ceiling, it's a starry night that you can see overhead, as you and about a dozen other adolescent Goliath are gathered around a large, heavily-scarred

warlord, illuminated by torch light that is whipping into a frenzy as a storm approaches. And you remember this figure saying:

Warlord: Our forebears were nomads once. They sought refuge from the wars that they were engineered to fight. Some went to the shores, hoping that the waves might take them far from the battlefield. Some went to the badlands, so certain they would not be followed. But our forebearers, the only Goliaths to survive the century, chose the mountains as their home. Who here can tell me why?

Lorovith: I can! Me! Choose me! Me, Lorovith! I can tell you!

Goliath: Yes, go on, Lorovith.

Lorovith: We wanted to be able to be alone and follow our own... cultures and customs! And live in harmony with the land!

Griffin: This warlord sitting in the middle of this circle smiles and nods, and says:

Warlord: Yes, Lorovith, all of those things are true.

Griffin: You notice, as you're sort of perceiving this memory, you remember the words that you spoke, you remember this moment, but your voice sounds very, very far away.

Travis: And very, very high.

Griffin: And very, very high! But very, very like distant, like it is not actually coming from your body. And you hear a voice much closer that you can feel coming out of you say:

Voice: Because mountains don't move!

Griffin: And the warlord smiles and says:

Warlord: The sea, in all its tempestuousness, comes and goes each day, but the mountain remains. The sky scatters storms in ever-changing

arrangements, but the mountain recurs. The land swallows and swells, and its inhabitants forget its face, but...

Griffin: And the warlord looks directly at you. And that's when you realize, looking around this circle, that you see yourself in the distance. And you realize that this memory that you're perceiving is not yours. And the warlord says:

Warlord: The mountain remembers.

Griffin: And as you snap back to the present, Lorovith, you realize that you've just remembered something from Grakhan, from not yourself. And you realize that the memories that dwelled within your grimoire, the memories of all of the wizards whose stones you collected, those were not pulled away from you either. You are able to remember things that you had borrowed through the stones. And you feel your memory and mastery of all of your magic return. What would you like to do?

Justin: Hm... Ha! Da-da-da-da-da! I'm gonna cast Spider Climb! [chuckles]

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: [chuckles]

Lorovith: I've just remembered my greatest friend! Spider!

Griffin: [chuckles]

Justin: No, I... Yeah, I'm gonna cast Spider Climb.

Griffin: Okay!

Justin: For god's sake.

Griffin: Remembering the—[chuckles] remembering the intense training under... under Cousin Ban.

Justin: [chuckles]

Griffin: And hanging out with his pal, Steel Guy, and...

Justin: [chuckles]

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: The whole—the whole crew. You remember the Spider, training his Spider Climb, and you feel yourself become quite adhesive.

Justin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Lorovith: I can feel my power returning! It's coursing through my veins! My incredible stickiness!

Griffin: Was there a follow-up to Spider Climb, or are you just getting prepared not to fall off the edge of the island?

Justin: No, I cast Spider Climb, and then I'm gonna go for the center of Chris.

Griffin: Oh, okay, awesome. You have already used your movement, but we'll start you on the path climbing down this spire, away from Doober, as you easily sort of bounce from spire to spire, hopping with superhuman dexterity. And next in the order is Rictus.

Travis: Sick. So, I am going to bolt up onto the big old crystal.

Griffin: Okay?

Travis: Trying to get as close to the spires as I can.

Griffin: Are you just, you know, running and jumping? Or—

Travis: Just running, yeah.

Griffin: Okay. Yeah, I mean, that is, I mean, well within... well within your 30 feet of movement.

Travis: And I recognize... Well, I want to like move towards the center, if possible—

Griffin: Oh, okay, yeah, sure.

Travis: Take an opportunity attack from that echo mite there. Or—

Griffin: Yeah so—

Travis: Why is it in orange?

Griffin: I forget, I think he's blinded, maybe? And blinded creatures, let me see... Okay, yeah, he's going to take an attack of opportunity against you, but it's going to have disadvantage.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: Yes, that is a five. That is not going to hit you.

Travis: No.

Griffin: Okay. Go ahead and move yourself.

Travis: To the music.

Griffin: Okay, cool. You run and do a hop up onto the core of the Crystallarium, where Hellgrammite is, you know, maybe five or six feet away and above from you, climbing and eating something pretty gnarly-looking that you can't quite discern.

Travis: Yeah, I'm just blocking that out.

Griffin: Yeah, yeah, sure, sure. Probably wise. Okay, you've made it up here. What would you like to do?

Travis: I would like to recruit a little help for this battle. And I'm going to cast Animate Dead at fourth level, which allows me to target three different dead things; a skeleton, a pile of bones or corpse. And I'm going to choose the three middle skeletons trapped in the crystal spires of the original Octave.

Griffin: Fuck yeah. Okay. All right, so, I'm going to read what this says. You imbue the target with a foul mimicry of life. Gross. You can use a bonus action to mentally command any creature you made with this spell. If the creature is within 60 feet of you, you decide what action the creature will take and where it will move during its next turn, or issue a general command. Okay, so... you don't have to roll anything. I don't think.

Travis: No. Also, wildly for a necromancer, my first time animating dead in this campaign.

Griffin: Yeah. These corpses that are frozen in the crystal, the skeletal sort of forms of the—of the octave, they are too kind of eroded in order for you to kind of like detect who is who.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: I'd like you to roll a D8 a few times, and I've got a list here of the—of the schools, and we'll use that to kind of figure out who you are able to bring back.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Whoa.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: Eight, four, two.

Justin: Eight, four, two.

Travis: Eight, four, two.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: 14. I mean, I don't want to flex, but—

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: [chuckles] That's pretty good.

Clint: Or 842.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: He's from West Virginia. I don't know.

Griffin: Mm-hm!

Justin: Coincidence? [chuckles]

Griffin: [laughs] I think not!

Justin: I think not! [chuckles]

Griffin: Okay. You see three skeletons in these three center spires. You reach out your hand and a wave of sort of like faint green necrotic energy pulses through you. And you see it resonate up the three crystal spires. And from within them where they are sort of frozen in time and place, you see three skeletons begin to glow from within. They are frozen solid. They're not going to be able to move or do anything sort of physical. However, you do feel yourself tapped into the tremendous kind of, you know, arcane energy that they had at their command during their lifetime. You feel yourself sort of swell up and gain access to the powers of the schools of enchantment, of transmutation, and of... what are the numbers again? Eight, three, one?

Clint: Eight, four, two.

Justin: Eight, four, two.

Griffin: Eight, four, two, sorry.

Justin: It's okay. Ask me again in 30 years, I'll still remember 'em.

Griffin: [chuckles] And of abjuration. That's the—that's the sort of shielding school of magic. Myeagic. That is, I mean, that is your main action. You can go ahead and try and issue a command to one of those three with your bonus action as well.

Travis: I'm looking at the fifth edition description of the thing, which says I can command all three at the same time if it's the same command.

Griffin: Yeah, if you control multiple creatures, you can command any of them at the same time, issuing the same command to each one. Okay, yeah, sure.

Travis: I'm gonna give the command... weaken him.

Griffin: Cool. Give me a perception check, please.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: Oh?

Travis: A seven.

Justin: Didn't see it? Whatever it was, you didn't see it.

Travis: Yeah, man. It was them—it was all three skeletons giving me a thumbs up.

Justin: That's the heartbreaker about actual play. If he don't see it, nobody sees it!

Griffin: Nobody sees it—

Justin: That's not fair!

Griffin: His eyes—

Justin: Man!

Clint: [chuckles]

Travis: No, maybe my eyes closed and everybody else saw it except me.

Rictus: What was it?! Guys! What was it?! I blinked! God! No! Tell me!

Griffin: What you—what you are able to see with a seven, because you are standing right next to the sort of, the center mass of Chris, you notice as the kind of like small white eye that's reflected in the facets of these crystals that you sort of, you know, recognize as the symbol that would appear of your grimoire whenever you consulted with Chris during the Conclave, you see them all flicker and move to look in the direction of what you're doing, and you see those eyes widen slightly.

Three things happen simultaneously. The first thing that happens is you all see a pulse of purple energy start outward in the distance and be pulled back in, as though a spell were being kind of reversed. And as this wave passes back over through you and condenses down to disappear within the crystals, Lorovith, you hear from behind you as you spider climb down the, the crystals:

Doober: What? What happened?

Griffin: You notice that the powers of enchantment that Chris has been sort of wielding against you all have faded entirely, as it is cut off.

Rictus: Oh, you're fucked now!

Lorovith: You tried to kill me, Doober! But I forgive you!

Doober: Oh, I'm so sorry, why are you—why—how are you running like that?

Lorovith: I'm back.

Justin: [chuckles]

Griffin: [chuckles]

Lorovith: And Doober! I'm stickier than ever!

Travis: [laughs]

Griffin: [chuckles] Okay, the next thing that happens—

Lorovith: I used to just have the powers of stickiness! Now I remember how to really get sticky! My cousin, Dad, and I practiced stickiness for many weeks! In a small suburban apartment. And so I'm way better than ever, Doober! Stickier than ever!

Griffin: The next thing that happens is, from another one—

Justin: Webs?!

Griffin: Of the crystals is—[chuckles] Maybe!

Justin: Sorry! I just, it was a guess, I don't know! [chuckles]

Griffin: The next thing that happens, another one of the crystals with the skeleton inside of it illuminates. And a seam begins to split down from one side of the crystal, down towards the core, almost like a banana being kind of unpeeled. And you watch as this seam lights up, and where there was once, you know, hard, purple amethyst, instead there becomes sort of a soft kind of layer of mud. And you see this kind of change instantaneously transmuted from one state to another. And then crystals begin to just slop off, as following the seam, crystals no longer able to bear their own weight topple and fall off the back of the island, cutting off these two, well, this whole section right here. And now I'm going to put the Ghostbusters 'no' sign over them to let you know.

Travis: Yeah.

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: And you hear—

Travis: No crystals!

Griffin: You hear Chris shriek, as he is dealt a tremendous blow. And the final thing that happens is the final crystal, one of the ones that was sort of separated off with the—with the skeleton inside of it, you see its eyes flash. And then there is a strange sensation, a lurching in all of your stomachs, and a silence kind of falls over the battlefield. It takes you a second to recognize what it is, there's been a sort of steady wind the entire time you guys have been here on the Octave Isle.

And that is because this island has been in sort of a state of constant motion, as it floats through the skies overhead. In this moment, when you bring back this Octave member, you feel not just this huge wave of energy sort of pulsate off of it, you feel fury. And you realize, Rictus, standing where you are, you've begun to feel a bit weightless. Whatever controls that Chris had to pilot this island through the air have been removed from him, and it has begun to descend.

Travis: Good?

Justin: Bad, because I think—

Travis: Bad?

Justin: We're on it. Be bad because of our proximity. [chuckles]

Travis: We just have to jump. We have to jump at the moment it lands. I've seen this on Mythbusters.

[theme music plays]

[ad read]

Griffin: Hey, folks! Thanks for listening to The Adventure Zone. I'm Griffin McElroy, your dungeon master and your best friend... your master of

ceremonies. And I hope you're enjoying this episode, whichever one you're listening to, maybe it's the finale of TAZ Royale?

I don't know, because I don't—this could go in really virtually anywhere, because that's the sort of reality we live in and the technology available to us as podcasters. Hey, guess what? If you listen to The Besties, the gaming podcast with me and Russ and Chris, and formerly Justin, then we're going to be doing a live show on Broadway that you might be interested in coming to see.

October 9th, at Town Hall in New York City, you can come on out and see us, and you can go get tickets right now, actually, at bit.ly/bestiesonbroadway. It's going to be an absolute blast, and we're going to do Besties stuff, we're going to talk about games and stuff, and it's going to be our very first live show. So please, come and join us if you live in the area. Hey, our final TAZ Balance graphic novel adaptation, Story and Song, is out right now.

You can go buy it at pretty much any bookstore that sells graphic novels, or you can just go to theadventurezonecomic.com and you can find links to, you know, all the storefronts where you can buy it. I'm so proud of this book, so happy it's out there. It's been such an honor seeing people's sort of reception of the book. And if you enjoy TAZ Balance, I guarantee you are going to enjoy Story and Song, as well as all the graphic novel adaptations if you haven't dipped into any of 'em. Now's your opportunity.

We got some new merch in the merch store. We got a "Stick With It Big Boy" card designed by Maddy Vian. There's some new Sawbones logo merch, some new Shmanners logo merch, a McElroy Family Clubhouse pin, a bunch of stuff! And 10% of all merch proceeds this month will also be donated to Native Women Lead, which revolutionizes systems and inspires innovation by investing in native women in business. All that merch stuff is over at mcelroymerch.com.

Hey, if you've got questions about TAZ Royale, now that we're wrapping it up, we'll probably do a The The Adventure Zone Zone next as we figure out what season is going to come after this one. You can email us at adventurezonecast@gmail.com. Again, adventurezonecast@gmail.com, and put TTAZZ Royale in the subject line, so we know that your questions about

that. That is it for the ad break here, please enjoy the rest of the episode. Send in those TAZ Royale TTAZZ questions, and I'll talk to you real soon. Bye!

[break]

Travis: What is manners?

Teresa: It's kind of a social dance that we've all agreed to.

Travis: *Who* is manners?!

Teresa: Well, we reference Emily Post a lot.

Travis: *Why* is manners?!

Teresa: Let's go back to royal etiquette.

Travis: Shmanners answers all these questions!

Teresa: Through examining history, culture, literature and more, we'll give you the ultimate insight on why we did it, how we do it and why we still might do it today.

Travis: So check us out every Friday on maximumfun.org, or wherever podcasts are found.

Teresa: Manners-shmanners, get it?

[break]

Mallory: Good evening. Thanks for tuning in to 101.1 Max Fun. It's midnight here on Host to Coast, and we've got Sarah from Michigan on line one.

Sarah: Hi! I'm calling in for some help. I used to love reading, but between grad school, having kids and the general state of the world, I can't seem to pick up a book and stick with it anymore.

Mallory: Sarah, this is an easy one. Just listen to Reading Glasses, a podcast designed to help you read better. Brea and Mallory will get all the pressure, shame and guilt out of your reading life. You'll be finishing books you love in no time.

Sarah: Great! That sounds amazing! Also, I do think my husband is cheating on me with Mothman. Can you help me with that one?

Mallory: Ooh! I don't think they cover that. Reading Glasses, every Thursday on Maximum Fun.

[theme music plays]

Griffin: Okay. Next in the order is Chris.

Travis: And is he mad?

Griffin: Chris is very, very, very, very upset. He is—

Travis: Hippocrates is still down?

Griffin: Hippocrates is... Well, let me roll a... You know what...

Travis: Yeah?

Griffin: Yes, Hippocrates is still down.

Justin: Are the—

Clint: What kind of rolls had happe—may—oh, I see.

Justin: Sorry, just as long as we're asking questions. Are the echo mites still under—were they like independent agents? Or do they seem to have like lost the thread as well as Chris is starting to lose power?

Griffin: No, the echo mites do not seem to be kind of affected by this. They are—they are being controlled via sort of pheromones. So even as Chris takes this like enormous blow, they do not seem to be impacted by it at all. I

will say, Lorovith, because you're climbing down straight at them, you can see the echo mites look pretty confused, maybe? But they don't seem to be kind of bothered by the sloughing off of like the crystals, as much as they seem to be like looking intently down at... or up, I should say, at Hellgrammite. Chris is going to cast a spell. Hellgrammite, Rictus, from where you are standing, you look down into sort of this crystal mass right at the center of the Crystallarium where Chris dwells. I wish I—I now wish I had called him something else, because I am saying just sort of the prefix Chris a lot already.

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: Mm-hm.

Griffin: You are—

Justin: Is that intentional?

Griffin: I guess I just didn't really think about it in practice like just what saying that often—

Justin: Audible! The audible version.

Griffin: Yeah, the audible—

Justin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Griffin: Yeah.

Justin: I understand.

Griffin: You are looking down into that central mass, and you see a singular light, a faint blue and white light, spread from the very core of it. And that light expands quickly, and the crystals you're standing on begin to vibrate. And you are going to make a constitution saving throw, as you are blasted by a Thunder Wave cast at 5th level.

Travis: Woo! Okay, here we go. Why does it keep rolling off my screen?

[sound of dice thrown]

Travis: Okay, 18.

Griffin: 18 saves.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: 11.

Griffin: 11 does not save. Okay. So...

Justin: Oh, fuckin' hell!

Travis: That's a lot of dice, man.

Griffin: Okay. So, this wave of Thunderous Force is the most powerful spell that either of you have ever been subject to. Despite that, Rictus, you're dialed in. You're able to kind of brace yourself, and you take 15 points of force damage as you are kind of pushed sharply against some of the crystals jutting out from the core. Hellgrammite, you take the full brunt of this thing, and the—you see that the spell is sort of shaping itself around Akari's body, around the echo mites that are here being carefully sculpted, so as to only really focus on you and to specifically stop you from what you're doing. You're going to take 30 points of damage. And—

Rictus: Are you okay?

Griffin: And you are going to be pushed 10 feet... yeah, I mean, towards the edge where the crystals have fallen off. I think you might actually automatically fail, because you are also stunned. You go flying over the side of the crystal, and you begin to fall.

Clint: Okay.

Griffin: Next in the order are the echo mites who, I'm going to say just because of the action you took last time, are not able to kind of copy the

spell that Chris just cast in the manner that they have been doing so far. Let's just jump to you, Hellgrammite.

Clint: So, I... did that not take me out of being stunned? Being knocked all—

Griffin: You did take a lot—you did take a great deal of damage. I'm going to say go ahead and roll another con save to shake off this... to shake of this...

[sound of dice thrown]

Griffin: Good god!

Justin: Dad... You've gotta—

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Wait, can I talk to Dad for a second? Listen, Champ, we're going to need you to roll better.

Griffin: That was a five, on your con save.

Travis: So... I need you to focus up and roll like higher numbers.

Justin: "Yeah, okay."

Travis: Can you do that?

Justin: "Cut me, Nick. Cut me."

Griffin: [chuckles] No, you are not able to save from this condition, as your body just kind of ragdolls over the edge of the crystalline island. You begin to topple ass over teakettle, over the edge of the crystals, and into open air. You... you hear a voice calling out to you, and it is coming from the form of Chris. You can see sort of the underside of it as you begin to fall. And you hear the voice of Akari say:

Akari: You will not fall here, Hellgrammite. I have seen the future that awaits us, and this is not it. Seize this power, it is my gift to you. But you must... you must be confident and use it as if it were always your own.

Hellgrammite: Thank you.

Clint: I'm trying to think of what I could say, "it's done."

Griffin: Give me another con save.

Clint: Oh, god...

Travis: This time, Champ, come on!

Justin: Let's go high. You go low, you go high. [chuckles]

Travis: Big, big numbers.

Clint: [yells out] Con save!

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: That's an eight.

Clint: 10.

Justin: Plus two, 10.

Travis: Better than he's done all day!

Griffin: [chuckles] With a 10, you are unable to move. And you think to yourself for a moment, "What is wrong? Why is my body not—why is my body not reacting? Why am I—why am I frozen?" And you realize here just for a moment that, actually, your body's not frozen. It is—it is bound. It is as if you have been tied up and restrained. There is something physical kind of holding you in place as you fall, keeping you from moving. You are able to regain control of your neck and your head, and you angle your chin downwards towards your body as it falls. And you can see that your body is

enshrouded in a layer of soft silk, transparent. And you look down as this— as this silk enclosure climbs up your body, before completely absorbing your head and your form. And you briefly lose consciousness as you are reduced to a sort of... a sort of goo of imaginal cells. And... you pupate.

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: Hell yeah.

Clint: Oh, god, I did it in front of all of you guys too?

Travis: I mean, first day of school, you know? It's the worst.

Griffin: Roll, Dad...

Clint: Oh, god.

Griffin: Roll to pupate.

Clint: Roll to pupate. That sounds like a nature—

Justin: Hey, for the love of god—

Clint: Sounds like a nature roll to me.

Justin: I don't want to know how one pupates incorrectly? But I'd rather live without it.

Griffin: This is a nature roll. Roll to pupate.

Clint: Here I go. [yells out] Pupate!

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: 26!

Griffin: Fuck yes!

Clint: I pupated the hell out of that!

Travis: Good job, Champ! Ah, man, yeah!

Clint: Now I'm going to start putting Playboys under my bed and... have hair on my chest.

Griffin: Rictus, you are standing on this crystal core, pierced by—

Travis: Don't make me watch him pupate.

Griffin: Crystals as you are pushed backwards—

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: By the tremendous thunder wave.

Justin: Everyone just briefly turns their heads.

Griffin: Lorovith, you are scaling down the side of this crystalline spire with haste.

Justin: I catch a glimpse and lose my grip.

Lorovith: *Aah-ha!*

Griffin: You do see Hellgrammite topple, frozen into the clouds, disappearing into a—into the silvery clouds sort of obscuring the surface of the world below. You watch him vanish. And then from deep within those clouds, there is a flash and a beam of light that splits the cloud in two—

Justin: Ah, pity. And then I continue climbing.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: [chuckles] And scaling upward through that beam of light, a figure emerges over the surface of the crystals, glorious, resplendent, glowing with

power and authority. Hellgrammite, you have been transformed. What do you look like now?

Clint: Hm... The body is a little bit spindlier. The... the biggest thing I think you notice are the large dragonfly-like wings sprouting from his back.

Travis: Good choice.

Clint: And he's taller.

Travis: Ooh?

Clint: So he's larger—

Travis: And a mustache!

Clint: [chuckles] And he has a really cool handlebar mustache.

Griffin: [chuckles] Sure! Yeah!

Clint: And he's j—it's just hard to look away from him. He's so gloriously beautiful. He is absolutely the most beautiful bug ever to live.

Travis: Can I—may I suggest, Dad, like that iridescent sheen that you see on like beetles?

Clint: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah!

Griffin: Mm-hm! We love a sheen.

Justin: And the haircut that you see on The Beatles.

Clint: Yeah! All with a—

Travis: Yeah! Yeah, yeah.

Clint: With a Beatles haircut. And the mustache would be like George Harrison's—

Justin: Yeah.

Clint: In the—in the Yellow Submarine.

Travis: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Griffin: Cool.

Clint: So he has become a giant Beatle beetle.

Griffin: Awesome. It's Beatlemania here—

Clint: [chuckles]

Griffin: At the final trial of the Octave Conclave. You soar resplendent over the edge of the—

Justin: It's your second resplendent—

Travis: You like that—

Justin: Of the episode, Griffin. You gotta be—you gotta be careful.

Griffin: Let me look up—I'll—let me—

Clint: Replete!

Griffin: Open up RhymeZone—

Travis: Try pulchritudinous—

Clint: Say replete with!

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Pulchritudinously.

Griffin: You—you—

Clint: Oh, yeah!

Griffin: You're just pulsating with pulchritudinous aura.

Justin: [chortles]

Griffin: And believe it or not, pupating is a bonus action, so you still have your action on this turn. What would you like to do?

Justin: Check out that shirt, by the way, in the merch store next month, pupating is always a bonus action. [chuckles]

Griffin: Pupating is always a bonus action! [chuckles]

Clint: All right, I want to take a big swing.

Griffin: Sure, man.

Clint: With the combination of consuming the gland and the increase in my power—

Travis: Yeah.

Clint: The ability to communicate mentally with Thrikeen, I would like to cast Infestation, but the end of an infestation where the insects are recalled to him.

Griffin: Okay, cool.

Clint: And I want him to say... What do I want him to say? I want him to say:

Hellgrammite: [yells out] To me! My echo mites!

Clint: And try to call all the echo mites into him.

Griffin: Give me a—

Travis: Into him?

Griffin: [chuckles]

Justin: He said into him.

Travis: Yeah.

Griffin: Give me a nature check.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: How do you like a 23?

Griffin: I like a 23 a lot, actually. As if remote-controlled, moving in perfect synchronization, the five surviving echo mites here on the battlefield, they immediately hover upward to your height and swarm over to you. They begin to kind of fly around you in a kind of... a pentagon. Almost like a wingman fighter pilot sort of formation, swirling around you. Rictus, you can see this, it's happening directly overhead. And then you feel something moving just off to your side, and you see from beneath the corpse of Akari, the crystals are beginning to split. And from the cracks, more and more echo mites have begun to emerge.

Hellgrammite: That's a lot of echo mites...

Rictus: Lorovith, there'll be no living with him now. We're gonna hear about this for weeks.

Lorovith: Listen, I'm already looking for plane tickets. I've made a huge mistake.

Clint: [laughs]

Rictus: Yeah.

Clint: [guffaws]

Lorovith: Huge, huge mistake. You bet on a horse.

Rictus: Yeah.

Lorovith: You do your best.

Rictus: Yeah, man.

Clint: Good god!

Lorovith: Good lord, I swear—

Rictus: I didn't know he could pupate. You know?

Griffin: 12 echo mites now swarm around you in the sky. You have used your action, you have used your sort of first command in this resplendent body.

Travis: Mm-hm.

Justin: Plus three.

Griffin: And as they sort of emerge from the body of Akari—

Travis: Resplendently.

Griffin: Resplendently, so—

Clint: With great pulchritudinosomy.

Travis: Yup.

Griffin: It begins to fall apart. Its purpose sort of—its biological imperative apparently having been sort of fulfilled. Crystals on that central mass also begin to shatter under the force of these echo mites who are sort of furiously

crawling throughout it and emerging to surround you in a cloud in the sky. The central form of Chris now, Rictus, that you are kind of laying on after having been blasted by the... by the thunder wave, it has begun to form some very, very deep cracks leading right into the center heart of the thing. And next in the order, let's jump to Lorovith.

Justin: Mm-hm. What is the—I know that you have like an icon here. What would you say is the center of Chris at this point?

Griffin: I will move it now. It's sort of right under where Akari was. The cracks seem to be forming from kind of a central sort of gap, right at the very center of this kind of busiest cluster where there's, you know, still hundreds of these spell stones jutting out of.

Travis: Also, in an alternate universe, The Center of Chris would have made for a killer fifth Chris Gaines album.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: [chuckles] You're right.

Justin: And what is—what is happening with Chris right now?

Travis: God, that's such a good question, Justin. He's still making music.

Griffin: That's the sixth Chris Gaines album. [chuckles]

Travis: Yeah.

Clint: [laughs]

Justin: [chuckles]

Griffin: What is happening with Chris right now is... it is in terrible shape, compared to how the battle started, this central mass. Now there's like dozens of these crystals just kind of like scattered around the grass surrounding where the Crystallarium stood. This like, the central cluster is probably about half the size it was, and it's also like not held together quite

as cleanly. In addition, the other thing that is happening with Chris is the same thing that is happening to pretty much all of you, which is that you're falling. Not at sort of terminal velocity here, but at a rate that is definitely perceivable as you, you know, spider climb downward, down the spire.

Travis: Increasing speed?

Lorovith: All right! I want to see who else you've got booted around in there!

Justin: And I'm gonna... I'm gonna cast fourth level Absorb Elements on Chris.

Griffin: Interesting. Okay.

Clint: [chuckles]

Justin: The spell captures some of the incoming energy, lessening its effect on you, and storing it for your next melee attack. So, I assume there's a lot of different—I know this isn't exactly the intent here, but like I only got a few spells, and I want to see what I can try to absorb. I feel like at this point he'd be losing magic at a pretty—

Griffin: Yeah, for sure.

Justin: You know, I want to try to see what's what—you know, what I can absorb.

Travis: This guy is—

Griffin: Okay—

Travis: Pupating magic left and right, you know?

Griffin: He's absolutely.

Justin: [chuckles]

Griffin: He's absolutely pupin'. Big time. Okay, this is, yeah, this is an unconventional use of Absorb Elements, but I do like it a lot. I mean, you can see sort of bright purple steam kind of emerging from the cracks in this cluster. And it is not hard for you to kind of position yourself over them in the way that you are suspended now, and begin to try to absorb them. Give me... These are in the form of, you know, like arcane memories. I think a wisdom saving throw would be best here. And you know, you're casting this spell to specifically allow you to do that, I will—I will grant you advantage on the wisdom save.

Clint: You want me to roll for you, bud?

Justin: Nah, bud. Thank you so much.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: 16 plus four, 20. And a—

Travis: 4-20.

[sound of dice thrown]

Justin: [chuckles] I rolled two 16s.

Griffin: Awesome. Okay. You scamper with your spider climb down toward the cracked cluster, and you begin to draw this purple steam into your body. And as you do so, you are buffeted by the memories of just countless wizards. And as they sort of enter your mind and flow through your consciousness, it is like a... it's like you've spun a roulette wheel almost. And you feel yourself cycling through all of these different sort of abilities and masteries. I'm going to give you the opportunity here to cast any spell of fifth level or below that you want, drawing this arcane energy in this way.

Justin: Aw, damn, man.

Clint: [chuckles]

Justin: Any spell I want?

Griffin: Yup!

Clint: It's like a shopping spree.

Griffin: Fifth level or below.

Justin: All right, I'm going to harness all these old magic dudes, and I'm going to try to levitate this island.

Griffin: Fuck yeah. Okay!

Justin: I want to pilot it with my mind!

Griffin: Yeah, I mean, you already rolled for this—

Travis: Flight of the Navigator style, you know?

Griffin: You feel yourself grab onto this island, and you feel it tugging at your biceps. It is as if you are—you are holding it up yourself. And there are two things that you are very grateful for in this moment. One is that you are a Goliath, and therefore your biceps are insane. You feel this weight pulling downward, but you've lifted heavier things before. And with this kind of just crazy augmented version of levitation, you begin to feel yourself pulling up so hard. And you see the clouds that were just moments ago beginning to whip by the island as it fell, begin to slow and slow. And it feels so natural because of the other thing you're grateful for, which is what is an island but an upside-down mountain?

Travis: Mm-hm.

Justin: Mm-hm.

Travis: Beautiful.

Justin: Mm-hm.

Griffin: Rictus—

Travis: I think Granny used to have that in a cross-stitch pattern, hanging in her house.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Rictus, you are up. You are standing—a lot has happened since your last turn, but you are still sort of standing on this crystal cluster that Lorovith has just leapt down to. And you see him go basically Super Saiyan, as he catches the island mid-air and lowers it at a much safer rate downward towards the surface. What would you like to do?

Travis: I am going to first command the transmutation.

Griffin: Yes. Transmutation I think is the one that fell off of the—that sort of ripped off its quarter of the—of the crystals down to the ground. But you're still connected to it, because actually, as you were falling, it was also falling at the same rate.

Travis: Yeah. Gravity.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Command it to cast Fly on... if Lorovith loses his connection to the crystals, is he going to be in trouble, or is it a magical thing?

Griffin: It's a magical thing.

Travis: Okay, great. Cast Fly on me, Doober, and Lorovith.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: So that we're like hovering.

Griffin: Cool. I mean, it looks cool.

Travis: Yeah. And then I'm gonna cast Shatter, specifically on that muddy vein of the crystal thing where it's like weak and shit.

Griffin: Okay, cool. I mean that's—that is—I think that's two actions?

Travis: Well, it's a bonus action to command.

Griffin: Oh, you're right! Very good, very good. Okay, cool. It has to make a...

Travis: Well, so yeah, I'm casting it at third level. It needs to make a con save, but a construct has disadvantage on the save.

Griffin: Okay, sick. Okay, and you're casting it at third level.

Travis: Mm-hm.

Griffin: All right, here we go. That's a seven and an eight, neither of which are going to be successful—

Travis: No, it does not beat 14.

Griffin: So I believe that's going to be 4D8 thunder damage, if you're casting at third level.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: *Shew-wee!*

Travis: So 22 damage.

Griffin: Fuck yes, dude. All right, you reach your hands out and, focusing on this muddy seam leading upwards through the crystal cluster, you extend your hand and form a tight, sudden fist. And you see that seam begin to just absolutely disintegrate as it is shattered, not like a brick through a plate glass window, but slow, as its sort of internal structure is reduced to a fine dust that blows away in the wind. And as the island lowers itself downwards, into the round lake where you all first boarded the island at the beginning of this whole process, as the island settles down and splashes into a halt, the crystals that you have been standing on this whole time suddenly give up

the ghost. Whatever energy was binding them together into one form, it dissipates. And you lose your footing a bit, Rictus, but you were flying, weren't you?

Travis: Yup.

Griffin: So then you don't lose your footing. You watch as the crystals harmlessly begin to roll off of the side of the Crystallarium, some landing softly in the grass nearby, some falling into the water that the island is now sitting on. And everything on this island goes silent. As things come to a quiet sort of conclusion, you see, all of you, Hellgrammite flying in the sky with your swarm of echo mite thrall, Lorovith and Rictus sort of hovering nearby with Doober, you see one crystal that is sitting still on the ground. It seems like all of the others that sort of lost their shape and fell off have fallen off in a kind of clean circle around this very center, this very center amethyst gem. You see it flicker with light, and you hear the voice of Chris say:

Chris: You've done it. I was beginning to think it wasn't possible, but you all have done it. You have—you have proven yourselves worthy of the power I've cultivated. A power to change and save this world. I had to know. I had to know that the person who would wield this power would be responsible enough to use it. I grant this to one of you now. I trust you'll be able to choose... to whom I will grant this wish.

Griffin: And the eye on this crystal dissipates, leaving just a single crystal, a single active spell here sitting at the center of the fallen Crystallarium. A single cast of the spell Wish. And you see Hasty Jane and Pranklin, who's just managed to rouse Hippocrates, who's kind of holding his head still completely befuddled, having his memories sort of taken from him in the way that they were, look around and everyone is just kind of sitting, staring at this one crystal at the center of the formation, in a kind of uncomfortable silence.

Rictus: Well, I think we all kind of agreed earlier that, you know, Doober would be the choice, right?

Lorovith: I think Doober is a fine place to start. I think—I would love to hear what Doober thinks. I think we should all perhaps weigh in. Doober did just try to kill me, so perhaps—

Doober: That was not my fault though? We were all being assaulted, psychically, and I—

Lorovith: I remember keeping myself together quite well!

Doober: You tried to kill me—

Lorovith: I remember comporting myself with quite a bit of dignity!

Doober: Okay. Well there was a kick—I—hey, I know what we had discussed, and that was all very abstract when we were talking about the great power of the Octave, and the chosen golden boy of Doober! And now that I know it all kind of boils down to a single wish, that's a—that's a—I don't know if I—I don't know if I can handle that. What if I have—what if I have the errant thought of like I wish I had a centaur body? And even me saying that right now makes me nervous that I—

Lorovith: [yells out] No! He's changing!

Doober: No, no, no.

Lorovith: Look at his toe!

Doober: No, no, no, it's—it's—I...

Lorovith: His carapace! Why do you have a carapace?!

Rictus: You're looking at—that's Hellgrammite.

Hellgrammite: There's nothing wrong with carapaces.

Rictus: Whoa!

Doober: I don't know if I can do it.

Rictus: I mean, I... I'd be willing to do it if no one else wants to.

Lorovith: Well, what would you wish for?

Rictus: World peace—no... That's a—it's such a big quest—what I—maybe we should all discuss the wording of it until we're all happy with it, then someone wishes that wish.

Hellgrammite: May I simplify the situation?

Rictus: Jesus Christ...

Hellgrammite: I entered into this whole thing to gain power for the Thrieken, for my people.

Justin: How big is he right now?

Hellgrammite: I'm big.

Griffin: [chuckles]

Justin: Is he still pretty big? Because I'm trying to imagine how big he is.

Hellgrammite: I'm really big. I have achieved that goal. I—

Justin: I'll be honest, the ascension of—[chuckles] For Lorovith, the ascension of Hellgrammite has really thrown a lot into disarray in terms of my understanding of the world and my place in it. [chuckles]

Hellgrammite: I understand, my child. I understand.

Lorovith: I hate this. Let's not.

Justin: [chuckles]

Hellgrammite: But all I'm saying is, you may gift this gift to whomever, keep it yourself, take me out of the equation, because I now have the power.

Lorovith: I wish Hellgrammite never existed!

Justin: [chuckles]

Doober: No, can we please be careful just saying the I-W words, just in case it—

Rictus: What about—

Doober: It hears one of us.

Rictus: What about something like, undo the negative outcomes of the abuse of magic from generations ago and reconnect us with the natural world?

Lorovith: So verbose.

Doober: And it may be a bad—

Lorovith: So much daylight.

Griffin: Hasty—

Hellgrammite: Couldn't get that on a poster.

Griffin: Hasty Jane says:

Hasty Jane: And what if it's like a bad genie thing? Like a mean genie thing where like—

Rictus: [yells out] Well that's why I said we'd talk through the wording of it!

Hellgrammite: Ah. You are wise, my son.

Rictus: I'm not your son.

Hellgrammite: Oh, in a way, you are.

Rictus: No?

Doober: A lot of people adopting—

Rictus: I think we're the same age?

Doober: A lot of people adopting a lot of adults lately.

Hellgrammite: In a way...

Doober: I...

Griffin: This whole time you've said all of these things about how satisfied you are with your power, Hellgrammite. You begin to feel a sort of tug at your—at your instincts from within. And now, not from some like external source that you're receiving through radio broadcast, you hear the voice of Akari in your own mind. And she says:

Akari: This is it, Hellgrammite. This is the moment I've been waiting for, the reason I brought you here. This wish, I have seen it grow inside the heart of Chris. I know the reality-altering capabilities of this singular spell. You can use this to recreate this world, Hellgrammite. And we can rule it together, not as a king and queen, but as gods! As a paradise for all Thrikeen.

Hellgrammite: Oh... Oh? Remake the whole world? *Everything*? Ah... You know, to be honest, Hun... I kind of wanted to run everything myself. My plan all along was to take this immense power back to the Thrikeen, and take over everything. You know, conquer the world with this infinite power. But ah... with all this power, I think it makes a lot of sense for me to, you know, go back, empower the Thrikeen, make them a magical, murderous mob, and take over the whole planet. And I kind of envisioned doing that as a one-hander, so... I will, you know, I'll call. I'll call.

Griffin: Give me a wisdom saving throw, please, Hellgrammite. I mean, you are a god ascended, let's—how about this? Why don't you make that wisdom saving throw, why don't you do it with advantage?

Clint: Okay. God roll! [whispers] Do it, baby.

[sound of dice thrown]

Clint: Be a big ol'—

Justin: 15, that's good.

Clint: 18—

Justin: Plus three, 18!

Clint: Would be—18? And...

[sound of dice thrown]

Hellgrammite: Well, we don't even need to talk about that one—

Travis: Seven!

Griffin: Okay—

Clint: 18!

Griffin: With an 18, you stand up to this voice. And you find it extremely easy to do so. It's not just the sort of arcane power that's sort of coursing through you, it is the authority that you have so clearly been granted. You know, the battle has ended, but this fleet of echo mites continues to sort of hover around you in formation. And I think in recognizing you as their patriarch now, any influence that Akari may have had over you, now that you have sort of made your position known, you feel it sort of drift away into absolute silence. And you—

Travis: Yeah! Down with the matriarchy!

Griffin: [guffaws]

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: Doober takes a step forward. He says:

Doober: I... I can tr—I can try.

Rictus: What would you wish?

Doober: I... I just... I would wish that... I would wish that any of us had been given a fair chance. I would wish that we hadn't been born into a world that was already lost. I would wish that power, magic or otherwise, didn't corrupt, and that good lives could be lived without interference. And if I can fit in there that I also wish I had a centaur body that was tall and sinewy, then... it seems like maybe it would be difficult to make it fit—

Rictus: I mean, do you want to write it all down?

Griffin: He takes a step forward and picks up the crystal. He takes a look around at the five of you, the other surviving Aspirants, and at the wall of fog holding back, you know, the apocalypse in the distance. And he says:

Doober: I wish it wasn't already too late.

Griffin: And a noise begins to build. It is the noise of whipping wind that begins to swirl around the fallen island where it has settled into the middle of this lake. A whirlpool begins to form as the wind begins to build in a cyclone. You all watch as in the distance, the giant wall of fog built by the Octave to hold back the blight that had destroyed the world, it begins to swirl as if you were in the eye of... of a massive tornado.

It swirls and swirls around, and then it begins to lift. It lifts upwards into the sky, joining with the clouds. And then it streaks violently downwards towards Doober, who looks up and opens his mouth, and inhales all of the fog, all of the smog and smoke, just rips it deep, deep down into his mighty powerful lungs. Before arcing his spine back—

Travis: It's what he's been practicing for his whole life.

Griffin: Opening his mouth, and upwards into the heavens, blasting a five-foot-wide column of smoke, upwards into the sky, out into space, into the cosmos, where it dissolves. The wall of fog is gone. And from where Doober is standing, having just ripped the tallest plume of cotton conceivable, like a volcano erupting, a wave of light emerges and sails over the horizon, turning the once ashen, white, still surroundings of the blighted world beyond, breathing life back into the trees and grass and rivers and stones, reviving the world that once was.

Lorovith: I thought—hm... I thought it would affect us too?

Rictus: Am I taller?

Hellgrammite: I was sure I was going to lose my wings. I was—that—hoo... that was freaking me out.

Lorovith: I remember. Doober, did it work? I remember. I remember everything that happened.

Griffin: Doober looks around and you see a... you see in the distance, there is no—there is no wall of fog. The spell has—the spell has worked. The wish has reversed the blight. And Doober says:

Doober: I think so.

Griffin: He looks down.

Doober: Ah, damn. Damn it... I thought I c... I thought I squeezed in there sort of organically my horse body, but...

Rictus: Mm-hm.

Doober: I think the rest of it... I think the rest of it worked. I think... I think I did it?

Lorovith: I never had any doubts.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: [chuckles]

Lorovith: Sorry, I tried! Sorry!

Justin: [laughs]

Lorovith: No, it's a good work, it's a good turn. And you've done—you've done fine work. My question for all of you... what do we do different? Hm?

Rictus: I... I know, I—it's—I... it's what I should have done. I came here to change the way people thought about necromancers to give my son a better future. But I think I can give him a better future by going and raising him away from my terrible, terrible family.

Lorovith: Maybe they're good now? I—

Rictus: Hm...

Lorovith: Doober—

Rictus: I don't know, man!

Lorovith: Doober?

Doober: No, I didn't—I—

Lorovith: Did you fix them?

Doober: Sorry, no, I didn't make your family good. My...

Lorovith: Damn, Doober.

Doober: I—

Justin: [chuckles]

Lorovith: What did you do?

Griffin: [chuckles]

Rictus: It ripped mad cotton, man!

Doober: I ripped the tallest—

Lorovith: Bogarted all of our fates!

Justin: [chuckles]

Hellgrammite: I don't know what that means, but yeah!

Griffin: You feel a hand on your shoulder, Rictus, and look down to see Franklin.

Rictus: My dude...

Griffin: He has his hand on your shoulder. He's looking up at you smiling and... nodding. And—

Rictus: Will you help me kidnap my son, Franklin?

Franklin: Of course I will, Rictus!

Rictus: [gasps]

Franklin: That's right, I could talk the whole time!

Rictus: Franklin, you got me so good!

Clint: [laughs]

Lorovith: His greatest prank.

Rictus: Oh my god, dude! I totally bought it!

Franklin: Would it be quite all right if I joined you, Rictus?

Rictus: *Yeah!*

Franklin: I... you saved my life a couple times on that island—

Rictus: You're my dude!

Franklin: I feel honor bound to help you out. Because you're kind of— you're kind of a fuckin' mess, dude. And I think—

Rictus: *Yeah!*

Franklin: You could use a buddy to help you sort of... you know, keep things light and fun, as you kidnap your son and try to change the way that your family does just about all the weird dead stuff that they do.

Rictus: That's perfect. And then we can get my wife's brother, Jesse, to come live with us too, to help raise the kids. Just the three of us, a dad, a funny kind of comedian, and a cool guy named Jesse, raising kids together.

Franklin: I think that's a capital idea, Rictus. I think... I think this is the start of a new chapter in both of our lives. But I am a bit nervous, I have heard tale of some of the scary things that dwell within the crossroads... I am happy to come and stay with you and Uncle Jesse and the whole crew. Just so long as you can promise me your castle keep isn't called home by any mind goblins.

Rictus: Mind goblins?

Franklin: Mind goblin deez nuts. Let's go!

Rictus: *Aah!* Franklin! My dude! You got me again. Best friend handshake.

Franklin: We haven't... we haven't done that, but we—

Rictus: I know, I was just saying it—I was saying it more of a placeholder.

Franklin: Yeah, yeah.

Rictus: That's where it would go.

Franklin: We'll put it on the to-do list.

Rictus: Okay.

Griffin: Doober looks up at you, Lorovith, and says:

Doober: I was just—

Lorovith: Do you want me and the bug to be your two dads?

Doober: Sorry?

Lorovith: I thought not.

Doober: No, I... Listen, I—this whole thing about you being my dad, I didn't quite understand. At first I thought it was sort of a quirk of maybe Goliath culture, because I'm not particularly well-versed in it. Maybe the... I don't know, that that... that is sort of a fundamental kind of dynamic between two adults in, you know, the civilization from which you hail. But I... I would be happy to have you as a friend and a... And a, you know, a guide, if... if you will? I... I would like to go back home and just sort of check on things and on—in the hills. But I... I don't know.

Lorovith: Doober, you want to know something?

Doober: What?

Lorovith: Every time you talk, all I hear is a little piccolo, like from Peter and the Wolf.

Griffin: [guffaws]

Lorovith: I'll tell you what, little bean, I'm going to keep following you wherever you're going. And I hope that's all right, because I'm much bigger than you are. I'm going to follow you wherever you're headed. You just keep tweeting away, whatever you're saying.

Justin: [spoofs a piccolo tune]

Clint: [laughs]

Doober: Okay, Lorovith, then... we'll return to my home. I think... I think you're going to like it there. You'll not be able to fit in any doors. And that's something I've been sort of kicking around in the background, thinking about bringing you home. Just like, you know, there's... are there buildings with sort of cargo loading bays? We are a slight people. And... but we'll figure that out. You can probably just Kool-Aid man in right through most of our walls—

Lorovith: I'm sorry, little guy! You're going to have to incorporate some hand gestures or something! I'm getting absolutely nada!

Justin: [chuckles]

Griffin: [chuckles] Hellgrammite—

Travis: Hasty Jane and Hippocrates kiss.

Griffin: Yeah, they made up.

Travis: We've been dancing a—it's been building—

Justin: It was always you! [laughs]

Travis: It's been building this whole time. We were all waiting for it.

Justin: He turns into a hawk, she turns into a wolf.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: The dream!

Griffin: Hellgrammite, everyone else is having these kind of tender reunions. Well, not reunions, but tender unions, I guess. You look—

Travis: Of souls.

Griffin: You look around, you notice that your echo mite sort of swarm is kind of just like standing at attention around you. Almost like soldiers awaiting orders. And you can—you also notice that like other insects, not like giant, you know, brain stealing mutant bugs, but you know, normal regular insects have sort of joined the fray. Your infestation sort of continues to grow every minute. And they seem to be looking at you, awaiting some sort of royal guidance.

Hellgrammite: Yes... I... I fear, friends... speaking to... all of you. Especially you, Rictus and Lorovith.

Rictus: What?

Hellgrammite: I am afraid this is probably goodbye.

Lorovith: *Gah!*

Rictus: Okay.

Hellgrammite: I mean like for good, for...

Rictus: Mm-hm.

Hellgrammite: For permanent.

Rictus: Yeah.

Hellgrammite: My whole wish all this time was to, as I said, get all the magic.

Rictus: Yeah.

Hellgrammite: So I could share it with my people. And so that is what I have achieved, almost. And that is what I'm going to... that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to return to my hive, to my people, and share the magic with them. I believe the Thrikeen can ascend to a level superior to the rest of the world.

Rictus: Huh.

Hellgrammite: And eventually... take it all over.

Rictus: Okay.

Hellgrammite: And—

Rictus: Hey, Lorovith, should we kill him now?

Hellgrammite: No, no, you don't have to.

Travis: You couldn't hear that! I was whispering.

Lorovith: Excuse us. Excuse us, we're clearly talking quietly.

Hellgrammite: Oh, yeah.

Lorovith: If we're going to do it, we should have done it before he became a god.

Justin: [chuckles]

Rictus: I know, right?

Lorovith: I don't know that we've got the juice to get this done! [chuckles]

Rictus: I thought he was very benign like this whole time. Not benign, but like not a threat.

Justin: It is very non-Castlevania of us to finish this with the giant bug creature flying in the air.

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: [chuckles]

Hellgrammite: Well, I haven't told you everything.

Justin: [yells out] How could it be worse?!

Hellgrammite: I—well, the way I shared—

Justin: You just told us you envisioned a more perfect bug-centric world! [chuckles]

Hellgrammite: Wa—no! I think that's still going to happen. But the way I share the magic with them is, well, you saw how I got the magic to control them, right?

Rictus: Uh-huh.

Hellgrammite: Basically, they have to... eat me. They will have to devour me to absorb the magic that is within.

Griffin: The echo mites around you are just kind of nodding their head like, "Yes, yes. We will do this, yes."

Hellgrammite: So that's why I, yeah, I'm going to go back to the hive and basically be brunch. But I'm willing to make that sacrifice because you both have taught me...

Rictus: Uh-huh.

Hellgrammite: Sacrifice.

Lorovith: Mm-hm.

Justin: [chuckles]

Hellgrammite: And you know, like sacrificing your pride and sacrificing your self-respect and you know, all that stuff. So, this is going to be it for the old Hellgrammer! Ah, no, no, no, please. No tears.

Rictus: Are you sure you don't want to like backpack around Europe for a couple of years to give us some time to figure out what to do? I mean—

Hellgrammite: You mean before my people start conquering the planet?

Rictus: Yeah!

Doober: You could—

Hellgrammite: *Eh...*

Doober: You could come with us to the hill country? I would be happy to show you around the docile lands that you would then sort of be contributing to the razing and conquering of.

Hellgrammite: Yeah, I think—I think I'll probably see it when we do raze and conquer.

Doober: Right.

Hellgrammite: But I appreciate the invitation.

Rictus: You could come check out the Breathless Fields and see like where your victims will be buried?

Hellgrammite: Maybe second in my itinerary, yeah, that's what—where we'll go. And you know, we'll hit the hills that, you know, Lorovith, you know, you come from and... So, yeah! You know, it's just a work in progress. But if this is just the prep for the—for the big meal—I really don't like how they're looking at—

Lorovith: We need to do another season, I'm realizing.

Justin: [chuckles]

Hellgrammite: So...

Travis: How's your health looking after that battle, Dad?

Griffin: [chuckles]

Travis: You got hit for like 30 points, right?

Hellgrammite: Oh, I only have like 10 left.

Travis: Oh, okay, I'm gonna cast shat—

Clint: That 30 hit.

Travis: I'm going to cast Shatter on—

Justin: Fuck yeah! Let's go!

Griffin: [chuckles]

Travis: Hellgrammite!

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: Now we're fucking cooking! This is how this is ending. Yes!

Travis: I think that's where like the freeze frame of the end of the episode is, is—

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: Just the other six Aspirants just turning on Hellgrammite and starting to blast him with magic.

Hellgrammite: Echo mites! Defend me!

[The Adventure Zone Royale theme music plays]

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