**Griffin:** Merle, hey.

**Clint:** Hey!

**Griffin:** It’s just the two of us. You don’t have to use your character voice, you can talk to me like Clint for now.

**Clint:** Ok.

**Griffin:** So Merle, you are standing in a space that feels kind of similar to the white space that you’ve found yourself in so many times whenever the loop resets. But as you look around it dawns on you that Taako and Magnus aren’t here anymore. It’s just you, and standing immediately in front of you is June, who is holding the Temporal Chalice and already she actually looks a bit more vital than when you spoke to her just moments ago. Instead of this, like, you know 90 year old woman, she looks like she’s in her 60’s or so.

**Clint:** Niiiice. Yeah. Okay.

**Griffin:** [Laughing] Ok. Alright.

**Griffin:** She is deep in concentration, and you realize it’s because she is scanning through your memories. And those memories are being represented in a very real way everywhere around you. It’s almost like you’re standing, kind of, in the Holodeck, if you will, and your life is flashing before your eyes as June kind of goes through your memories and you find yourselves in all of these different scenes as she rewinds the span of your life. So you see like the past few loops as she’s scanning slowly at first, and then you see your entrance, your cannonball entrance into Refuge. And then you see your time in Lucas’s laboratory, and she slows down a bit there, and she nods.

**Clint:** Hm.

**Griffin:** And then she rewinds a bit faster and you’re in Rockport, and then you’re in Phandalin, and then you’re in the years preceding Phandalin and preceding the adventure that has been covered in this show. And this brings us to our first of a few questions that I want to ask all of you guys to kind of flesh out your characters a little bit, and that is: How did Merle come to be an adventurer? Like, I wanna get into like how he became a man of the cloth a little bit later, but like how did you decide to sort of become an adventurer? Is this, like, your first real quest, were you a priest of fortune before that? Like, what's--how did Merle get into this adventuring life?

**Clint:** No, this was not. This was not the first. No. Really had a terrible home life, uh.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Clint:** He was in a loveless marriage.

**Griffin:** Oh, interesting! Alright.

**Clint:** Yeah, I mean it was--it was ugly.

**Griffin:** What was--what was his husband or wife’s name?

**Clint:** Hekuba. It was Hekuba.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Clint:** It was, uh--you know, dwarves’ marriages are usually arranged marriages, you know because we’re really into this whole, you know, keeping the gene pool, you know, “dwarf pure.”

**Griffin:** Sure sure sure. Were you sort of secluded mountain dwarves, or like hill--hill dwarves, more like, you know, civilized human like--

**Clint:** We were beach dwarves. We lived on the beach.

**Griffin:** [Laughs]

**Clint:** We had a--we had a--you would call it a cottage, but to us it was home.

**Griffin:** Alright, that is unconventional, but so are so many things.

**Clint:** Yeah, and here I came up with this great beach property. And it *still* wasn’t enough.

**Griffin:** How did this loveless marriage to Hekuba result in you becoming an adventurer?

**Clint:** I, uh--I ran down to the dwarf store. I said, I’m going out for smokes.

**Griffin:** Right.

**Clint**: She said [sarcastically] “What do I care?” And she said it just like that. “And get my lotto tickets.” She--she said that. So.

**Griffin:** Okay. Is Merle still *legally* married?

**Clint:** [Sighs] I--with my religious pull, in my mind I had it annulled.

**Griffin:** But not on paper?

**Clint:** Legally, Hekuba is still floating around out there.

**Griffin:** Okay this is interesting.

**Clint:** Because if she ever found me, she would cut meeee. Wh*ooh*.

**Griffin:** Okay so you’re kind of a man on--you’re kind of a dwarf on the run a little bit.

**Clint:** Dwarf on the run. I’m a running dwarf, yeah.

**Griffin:** Alright, interesting. So yeah, then--then while June is scanning past Phandalin, uh past sort of your meeting the other boys, she sort of finds a few years of your nomadic lifestyle. She scans to your humble but cozy beach cottage that you shared with Hekuba. She rewinds even further to--oh, you’re there on your arranged wedding day, and it was a pretty horrible event, I’m imagining?

**Clint:** Oh god, it was terrible. The catering was horrible.

**Griffin:** Yeah, sure.

**Clint:** Ugh, the deviled eggs went bad.

**Griffin**: And so you rewind past that. And she’s scanning a bit faster now and these memories, these like, this holodeck chamber of memories that you are standing in, sometimes like the picture gets a little bit blurrier where your memories falter a bit. Some bits that, like, you just can’t remember at all are just complete static, right?

**Clint:** Okay.

**Griffin:** And as she rewinds past your wedding day, and a few of the years before that, she actually hits a point where there’s a lot of static. Like, a really, really long, unbroken period that June is just scanning through more and more quickly. And she's frowning, and she seems like she’s unsure whether this error is on your side or hers, but there’s like a long span of time that’s just *not there*. But then, all of a sudden, your memories do pop back into view as she rewinds beyond that static. And you see yourself as a younger man, and you see the time where you first sort of joined the cloth. Which brings me to my next question. How did you--

**Clint:** Dwarf, by the way. Dwarf, not man. Dwarf.

**Griffin:** Oh, sorry. Dwarf. A young dwarf. And you join the cloth, that leads me to my next question, which is, um, how did you convert to become a follower of Pan.

**Clint:** Um, well, my dad was a Pannite--

**Griffin:** Interesting, okay.

**Clint:** --and always, I mean, it was, wow. *Every* Sunday morning, *every* Sunday night, *every* Wednesday night, *going* to Pan service, *going* to Pan service, you know.

**Griffin:** Sure. I’ve always kind of envisioned Pan followers and, like, Druids being--I mean they’re basically the same thing--just kind of being buds and like living in like a hippie commune or something like that?

**Clint:** Yeah, yep that’s exactly what it was. All the nature crap, and you know [Falsetto] “Oooh trees, animals, birds.” Oh, god. And, you know?

**Griffin:** So you didn’t like, you didn’t like growing up in the commune?

**Clint:** Well, no I mean I had to go, and you know, I didn’t wanna get grounded, so yeah, I went along and I went to, you know, every summer Pan Camp. You know, going along on the Pan retreats. But it was really, you know really forced down my throat. I didn’t--I didn’t dig it. But I had to--you know I had to--it’s your old man. You gotta act like you wanna be there.

**Griffin:** Sure. So it seems like Merle is strong in his faith in Pan now. Was there something that happened that sort of awoke that in him, or has it always been sort of, just like, second nature, like it’s just sort of a thing that he *does* without feeling especially strongly about it.

**Clint:** Well, the thing is, when things are going good it’s easy to be, you know, a Pannist. [**Griffin:** Okay] Uh, you know it’s “Oh yeah, oh well this is good. Yeah. I’ve got a way. Oh, yeah, living my life.” And then, you know, all of a sudden I was in the middle of it. And it’s easy to be a Pannist when life is good [**Griffin:** Sure], because you know, let’s face it: if you’re gonna worship a nature god, and everything around you is trees and rocks and animals and shit, I mean, it’s--what else you gonna think? It’s not like you know I was walking through cities or any of that kind of stuff, and when you’re, y’know--

**Griffin:** Yeah, so this--this religion--I think this is super duper interesting because it seems like this, you following Pan was inherited and not so much came as like a moment of divine inspiration, so like--

**Clint:** Oh, no no no no. Lord, no. It was a good way to meet girls, to be honest with you. ‘Cause all the girls in the--in the Pan choir.

**Griffin:** Sure, sure. With their Pan flutes. It sort of paints the rest of the adventure that’s happened in like a really interesting light of, you’re not this super hardcore devout dude as much as you are like kind of still exploring what it means to be a Pannist.

**Clint:** Well yeah. Well I tried to switch to Istusism, [“Isthmus-ism”] but my damn finger fell off.

**Griffin:** Sure. Okay. Yeah, then you, then you rewind your time sort of growing up as a moody 20-something and a moody teen in this commune, and you sort of hit the end of the--the end of the track. And June fast forwards back through that early adulthood period, back through that long long *long static*, and fast forwards back into the past year. And, in fact, you know exactly the day that she stops at because this--this projection stops and you find yourself in the middle of a familiar and disturbing scene. And I should point out at this point that what you’re seeing here is in 3rd person, for lack of a better term. Like you see yourself.

You are sort of standing there, Ghost of Christmas Past-style alongside June and the Chalice as you look at this scene. And she, June finally speaks up after scanning through your life for a really long time, and she says:

**The Chalice:** You’ve lived a fairly charmed life, Merle Highchurch. And we currently stand at the exact moment of your worst, and most fixable mistake.

**Griffin:** And you realize you’re standing in Lucas’s lab during the Crystal Kingdom arc. And you see yourself in your null suit, and you look dumbstruck. You’re kinda facing yourself. And across the room is Noelle and Taako and Magnus who are chipping away at a frozen door, and floating immediately in front of you is a crystal shard, which has emerged from a rift in spacetime. And you realize when you see that crystal, you look at yourself, you look at the projected version of yourself--you’ve still got both your arms. And you hear the voice of Pan, which you know to be the false voice of Pan, and it’s beseeching you to grab the crystal and save your friends. And this scene is just frozen in front of you. And she says:

**The Chalice:** You shouldn’t have grabbed that crystal, Merle.

**Merle:** [laughing] No shit. [snorts]

**The Chalice:** If you claim me, Merle, and you use me, you can stop yourself from grabbing it. You can be whole again, Merle, that is--that is my offer to you.

[The Chalice plays]

**Griffin:** Um, so Taako, you are with June and the Temporal Chalice in the white space, and I’ve kind of described what the scene is so our radio audience didn’t have to listen to it a second time. But you’re in this white space and you are sort of scanning through the memories of your life. And at first the scan is kind of going back day by day, and then week by week, and then month by month, and you’re seeing sort of recent history play out all around you.

So like you’re standing in the Crystal Kingdom lab in the Cosmoscope, you’re looking into the different planar mirrors, and then all of a sudden you’re standing in front of a cherry blossom tree in the middle of Goldcliff and your arm is on Magnus’s shoulder and then you rewind a bit faster and you’re taking a job, in a tavern in Phandalin. And you’re just sort of scrolling back through the history of your life. And where the memories are, um, a little less memorable things get a little bit blurrier. When it’s things that you’ve just kind of forgotten there’s just static.

And while June is scrolling back through your life, and through the years preceding the adventure that this podcast has sort of contained, she hits a long, long, long period of *static* that she seems to just sort of look around kind of quizzically during, and she’s just like fast forwarding, or I should say rewinding, faster and faster and faster, and then once she gets past this long static the picture returns and you find yourself standing in your early adulthood and adolescence.

And this brings me to my first question of, like, stuff I want to dive into with Taako, and that is: how did Taako first get into magic? Because you’ve talked about how it was sort of a modifier for your cooking, so I guess I should also ask how like that came - how cooking came to be an interest of Taako’s as well. Like, what the relationship is between those two, what he got into first, how he got into them.

**Justin:** Taako had been on his own for quite some time. He, uh, from the time he was about 12 years old on, he had to sort of fend for himself, and the way he would sort of make his living was by traveling with troupes--sometimes performers, sometimes mercenaries, whatever--different groups of people, anybody who was traveling, because he never felt like he had any one place that he specifically belonged.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Justin:** He didn’t have any marketable skills--he did not fight, he did not, uh, he was not--

**Griffin:** Didn’t fly, didn’t crow.

**Justin:** Didn’t fly, didn’t crow. Didn’t have a lot of marketable skills so the way that he sort of learned to make himself useful, was he would serve as the chef of the crew, so that would be the role that he would play, and that would be sort of how he paid his way with these traveling crews. And you know the fact that he’s so hesitant to get into danger is just sort of instinct from those days from when he didn’t have anybody sort of watching his back so he had to kind of fend for himself.

**Griffin:** Okay. And how did, like, how did magic get into it? Was there--did he have some sort of teacher of the culinary arts, did he go to cooking school? Did he go to, like, where did Taako--that’s how Taako like started cooking, where did he get--

**Justin:** It’s when--it was when the, when he started doing the cooking show, when that opportunity came up, he would go from town to town keeping with that traveling spirit. He would, you know, he would go from town to town. He had his own sort of production going, but he noticed that the audiences were flagging. And so he was looking for some way, to sort of, like, elevate his cooking and make it seem like something really special; so he started sort of messing with magic, but he obviously had no concrete training in it.

**Griffin:** Sure.

**Justin:** And that’s how things sorta broke bad.

**Griffin:** Is he self taught? Both in magic and in cooking? Did he go to any sort of cooking school or magic school, or anything like that?

**Justin:** He learned coo-- He did not-- He learned cooking from an aunt of his--

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Justin:** --that he was very close to and she taught him cooking. The magic he just picked up out whatever books and stuff he’d strung along. When you’re on the road like that, you know, you pick up little things here and there. He had travelled with wizards a couple of times and learned very small things, but he basically knew just enough to be dangerous when we got started.

**Griffin:** Okay. Interesting. Alright, so… Alright, so while June is sort of scrolling through your early adulthood she got past this long period of static where you just couldn’t see anything, right? She’s going through this period where you’re travelling with these different caravans and making yourself useful while cooking. And while, like, those days were probably hard, those were probably really difficult days, of--you know. Just scraping by and doing everything in your power to, like, stay onboard these caravans where you had any, you know, small amount of safety that you could grasp onto.

While you’re looking through these memories and seeing yourself inside of a caravan and then, like, doing some cooking in there; there’s some--there is something in there about the memory that’s a little bit off. There’s something--it’s almost like there’s parts of it that are a little bit staticky as you look around you can’t *see* the whole picture. And while--when June sees that, sees like this distortion of this memory, she kind of sighs and fast forwards back through your life, back through that long period of static and into the years preceding this adventure. Somewhere within like, I wanna say about--I forget the timeline that we established in an earlier episode. I think it was six years ago before the current episode that we’re on now. [**Justin:** Okay] At the fateful final episode of “Sizzle It Up With Taako”.

Here she stops fast forwarding and the scene stops and you see the town of Glamour Springs. You see your stagecoach and it’s been kind of being deployed at the--there’s a little window where you are doing all of your cooking. The stagecoach is nice and big and it’s got all of the cooking instruments you could possibly need, there’s, like, a little oven in there that sort of pops out of the back of the stagecoach for ventilation. There’s a stovetop where you’re doing some stuff. There’s a big long counter for prep and where you do all your magic. The first question I want to ask about this scene is: how many people were in attendance at this final show in the town of Glamour Springs?

**Justin:** I have, uh, I may have given--[sighs] the only thing that’s fucking me up, Griff, is I don’t remember if I’ve given these details before.

**Griffin:** I don’t think you have. If you have that’s fine--listeners, you’ll have to forgive us. It’s–-we’ve been doing this podcast over the course of two years, so if we go against canon--whatever. But I think--I don’t think I’ve asked--

**Justin:** Pretend that I’m like a new writer taking over on the Taako story.

**Griffin:** Sure. But not only that--we’ve done such a bad job of diving into our characters’ backstories I see no reason why we can’t, sort of, more firmly establish them now. So how many people were in attendance at this show?

**Justin:** There were forty.

**Griffin:** Forty people, okay.

**Justin:** Mhm.

**Griffin:** Just sort of a mix of, uh, folks?

**Justin:** There was always- there’s always a few sort of--uh, a few teens that had nothing better to do.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Justin:** Usually the older people in the village were usually the biggest audience. A lot of, y’know, housewives and househusbands that looked after the home that were looking to elevate their cooking to--

**Griffin:** I see! I got you!

**Justin:** --for their special someone, and there were always a few looky-loos that just were looking for a free show.

**Griffin:** And free food! I’m imagining Glamour Springs as being kind of a frontier town, and I think the people there really love you, like, you’ve probably been through here a couple times?

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Forty is probably a pretty big crowd and so you got a decent sized turnout here. I think a lot of people maybe just turn up for the free samples, because it’s--they’re one of the better off frontier towns, but there’s still a lot of poverty; and so a lot of people are just, like, “Oh hey! Free food, and also a great show!” What’s the show like? What’s “Sizzle It Up” like?

**Justin:** It’s a lot of talking, honestly. As the years went on there was a lot more sort of bloviating. Taako does a lot of things to show off of his cooking prowess, like, he’ll pour–-like, he’ll say this recipe calls for a teaspoon of worcestershire, and then he’ll pour some worcestershire in his hand and he’ll be, like, you know, a lot of people say--

**Taako:** You know a lot of people wonder how I can do that and-and-and be so inaccurate--but look!

**Justin:** And then he’ll pour some worcestershire in his hand and pour it into a teaspoon and it’s, like, exact. He’s like--

**Griffin:** [laughs] That’s really gross though!

**Justin:** It’s so great.

**Griffin:** You just poured worcestershire in your hand!

**Justin:** That’s not for the foo--no the hand--worcester--I mean--his hands are clean! Like--

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Justin:** I mean that’s how chefs work! Come on.

**Griffin:** I guess so, although I don’t think chefs pour liquid ingredients into their hand before they add them to the--

**Justin:** Well yeah! But if they’re making meatballs or something they’ll use their hands.

**Griffin:** Okay. Fair.

**Justin:** Worked with clean hands. He’s not a savage.

**Griffin:** Uh… so… I wanna ask another question. And this is something we’ve definitely never talked about. Was this a one-man operation? Was this just you and a traveling stagecoach, *or* did you have help with “Sizzle It Up” or was it just you?

**Justin:** No. I had a, uh, driver who--well. Sort of a driver/stage manager--

**Griffin:** Like a roadie.

**Justin:** Roadie.

**Griffin:** What was their name?

**Justin:** Um, I gotta remember…

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Justin:** ...their name. ‘Cause I’ve got- I knew him--it was weird. I knew ‘im like--

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Justin:** --like the back of my hand. Sazed! (pronounced like say-zed)

**Griffin:** Sazed. What is--

**Justin:** S-A-Z-E-D. Sazed.

**Griffin:** Sazed, Sazed… What is Sazed?

**Justin:** Sazed is--he was a… Sort of my right-hand man.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Justin:** He thought I hung the moon, and, uh, you know. He learned some of the cooking from me. But mainly he was just sort of there; he was sort of a combination of bodyguard and, uh…

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Justin:** Yeah. He was, like, my right-hand guy.

**Griffin:** Okay, so you’ve been traveling with Sazed for a long time performing “Sizzle It Up” for varying sized crowds. Obviously you’ve played the Underdark--that was probably a weird show--but that’s where Ren sort of first encountered you. You’ve traveled all around the land both playing bigger shows in towns and big citadels like Neverwinter, and then the smaller sort of villages, on the frontier.

And your relationship with Sazed has been pretty well! You’ve been teaching him how to cook and he in turn has done a good job, you know, keeping the trains running on time; but your show’s been growing in popularity and it’s grown a lot actually in the last year, and Sazed has wanted a little bit more responsibility. A little bit more, sort of, featured placement? Sazed has asked to do a spot on the show. In the last couple months or so, Sazed comes to you before each show and is like,

**Sazed:** So, uh, you think I could do my stuff on this one? Just, like, a little spot?

**Taako:** I mean, I’ll let you do… you can get the *mise en place* together and stuff. Measure things out--the little cups makes everything run smoothly. That’s fine.

**Griffin:** Okay, while they’re getting the *mise en place* together during those shows though--I think it would only happen a couple of times--they would turn around and hand you the thing, and then like, dish out a little catchphrase to the audience. Like shop some stuff out, test it out.

**Justin:** Yeah, they’re kind of floating. Trying to build their brand.

**Griffin:** They’re tryin’ to build their brand and then, like, I think after a couple of shows Sazed says, like,

**Sazed:** Look. Listen. I’ve… I’ve really enjoyed working with you, and I think--I think--what would be great is if we could co-host this thing. Just like shared credit. Put- your name’s up on the--the stagecoach and it looks awesome; but i--what do you think about “Sizzle It Up With Taako and Sazed”? Just like, shared credit! Fifty-fifty split! And, you know, we share the workload and, uh, share the--share the glory, you know? And we--

**Taako:** Hmm…

**Sazed:** -We just--What do you think?

**Taako:** Well, that is so groovy, I love that. It trips off the tongue, you know, but, um. [fart noise]. I got all these t-shirts that already say “Sizzle It Up With Taako” and--

**Sazed:** I can get new t-shirts! I can--y--I can--I printed those t-shirts for you! So I can print out new t-shirts.

**Taako:** That’s bad business, Sazed! I-I would love to help you out, but it’s just bad business! “Sizzle It Up With Taako” is the brand! I mean-- We’d have to throw all these in the- in the junkpile! And you can’t write on them! There’s not enough puffy paint in the world for all these t-shirts to add “Sazed” on there. Sorry! It’s mainly a merch thing. A licence, a merch, then the brand--you know--got the logo painted on the side of the, uhhhh, wagon. Already. So, I don’t know. I’ve got my brand established. I just don’t think it--it jives!

**Griffin:** Sazed’s like,

**Sazed:** Okay. Alright. I get it. I get it. Okay.

**Griffin:** Ah and-

**Taako:** Do you get it?! Because I don’t want to keep having this conversation.

**Sazed:** No, it’s locked in. Definitely. I-I got it, Taako…

**Taako:** Excellent!

**Griffin:** Sazed’s kind of dejected and goes back to cleaning up the stagecoach after a particularly rambunctious show that you did. So I think Sazed’s kind of moody over the next couple of months. Not as talkative between shows, and this brings us to the final show at Glamour Springs! What’re you cooking?

**Justin:** Meatballs.

**Griffin:** Always meatballs.

**Justin:** My famous meatballs.

**Griffin:** Okay--

**Justin:** No wait! I--no. I can’t cook meatballs because that’s a little--around--

**Griffin:** That’s a little taco-like, yeah.

**Justin:** It’s ground beef in ‘em and that would not be great. I am making my… thirty garlic clove chicken.

**Griffin:** That’s a lot of garlic cloves!

**Justin:** You know, you would think so--

**Griffin:** [Laughs]Okay.

**Justin:**  –-but you cook it so long--

**Griffin:** Sure.

**Justin:** That you really-- You lose a lot of the, like, most pungence and the most heat, but you definitely get that flavour deep down in it. It’s a long cook. It’s a long cook.

**Griffin:** I-- um… I shouldn’t doubt you, because I bet Taako remembers this recipe like the back of his hand, like over the next… you know. Until today! Probably every day Taako thinks about this recipe, and thinks about the measurements, and thinks about what they could have possibly screwed up so very, very badly. So you’re doing this flashy production. You’re making your thirty garlic clove chicken. Which--like all of your productions--is sort of a combination of an equal measure of advanced cooking techniques and transmutation magic. I think some of the latter is probably, like, unnecessary. Like transmuting sugar into salt when you had a big tub of salt, just like, right there.

**Justin:** Yes. Absolutely. Like taking the skin off the chicken and then transmuting the chicken into chicken with skin on it. Like just pointless.

**Griffin:** Justpointless shit.

**Justin:** Pointless magic.

**Griffin:** You finish the meal and the audience has been rapt this whole time, and you go to offer samples. The audience starts to walk towards your stagecoach and time freezes. And you remember what happens next. Um. Everybody dies, who eats that chicken. You’re lucky that you didn’t eat the chicken to taste it. Which is weird, because normally you would sample the food while you’re cooking it. Which I think could be leveraged as evidence against you for whatever repercussions you face for this horrible event that happens. And that’s the last time that “Sizzle It Up With Taako” ever takes place; but it hasn’t happened yet in this scene! Time has been frozen. And June sort of grabs you by the wrist, still holding the cup in her other hand and she says,

**June:** Come with me.

**Griffin:** She walks you behind the stagecoach to another smaller wagon that you towed alongside the stagecoach, used for storage. It’s also where Sazed hung out most of the time. And she--you sort of pass through the wall of that smaller wagon. Sitting inside on a small crate and looking extremely nervous, like, gripping his hair and staring intently down at the floor is Sazed. And they’re holding a bottle and there’s an apothecary’s note scrawled on its lid, and you can see this was a bottle full of arsenic. And June says,

**June:** Well I--I guess this must come as some small relief, right? Like all this time you thought your transmutation, your reckless magic, is what killed the town of Glamour Springs. In actuality it was, you know, plain ol’ jealousy. But… still, all those people died.

**Griffin:** And then she snaps her fingers and you’re back at the stage and you see yourself about to hand out these samples.

**June:** The people of this town died all the same and you fed them their death.

**Griffin:** And before I pose this question to you, what was the aftermath to this? Like how did you--how are you not in prison right now? Did you escape? Were you tried? Were you--what happened?

**Justin:** We ran. Soon as the first person got sick I- I knew what was up. I thought I knew what had happened. I thought I’d confused--basically used elderberry garnish and I thought I confused elderberries for--that I had transmuted them basically into deadly nightshade, because the berries look very familiar and I wouldn’t’ve noticed. That’s what I always assumed ‘cause anything else I would’ve seen. But we ran as soon as the first person got sick. I told Sazed to get in the driver seat and we just drove. We drove for two days straight before we stopped to look back.

**Griffin:** And I think at the first chance that he got, like, the first settlement you got to after that--

**Justin:** He abandoned me. Absolutely. Yeah. I assumed because he didn’t want to be associated with somebody who could do something like that.

**Griffin:** But in actuality it’s–it was something else. But we’re not there yet. We’re still at the wagon. We’re still about to hand out these samples. She says:

**June:** This is the worst thing that ever happened, Taako, in your life. And you can fix it. If you claim me, none of this ever happened. Glamour Springs lives--

**Griffin:** Although not everybody in Glamour Springs died, right? It’s not like it wasn’t a town of forty, [**Justin**: No.] but still, that’s a big big chunk of people. [music starts in background]

**June:** And you can keep doing your cooking show and you won’t have this-- you won’t have this horrible black mark on, what is otherwise, a heroic legacy. Take me, Taako, take the cup, and you can fix it all.

[Music]

{33:48}

**Griffin:** And finally we come to Magnus. Magnus, you’re in the same white space with June, and the Temporal Chalice, and June is scanning back through your own memories. You’re seeing them appear in the white space around you. She starts out kind of scanning slowly and picks up the pace a little bit faster so you see recent events, like, Roswell’s sort of, uh, a, uh- rapid expansion in the bank that just happened. She rewinds a bit faster and you’re standing in the core of Lucas’s lab facing off against Legion, and then she rewinds a bit faster. You’re using Railsplitter to chop Trent the treant in half in the lobby of the Goldcliff Trust.

**Travis:** I don’t remember any of this.

**Griffin:** Oh, it’s definitely real.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Griffin:** Then you’re diving out of a glass walkway to attack an ogre in the test of initiation, and then you’re in the years preceding the adventure; which June is watching intently and kind of taking mental notes as she goes. Then she rewinds a bit faster through the years preceding this adventure, and then she hits this long period of static. That, like, you’ve seen it pop up a couple of times where your memories are actually a little bit blurry - they become literally blurry around you and you can’t quite see them quite as well. The things that you’ve just forgotten, they just disappear and are sort of this static, and she’s just hit this *huge, huge* period of static. While she’s rewinding quickly through it she says:

**June:** What--what happened to you guys? You’re all missing– *time.* Like- like a lot of time.

**Travis**: Where- Where are- Where- what this- What period is that?

**Griffin:** This would be about twelve years before the adventure started or about twelve years before where we are now. Somewhere in that time frame. She’s rewinding.

**June:** There’s just- there’s a lot of static. Like, *a lot* of it! I guess it’s not really- [sighs] important to what we’re doin’ here, it’s just like… It’s weird, man.

**Griffin:** Then she gets past the static and you see your sort of early adult life, and then she rewinds back into your adolescence. This brings us to our first question that I want to ask you to kind of flesh out Magnus. Which is how did Magnus become a Ruffboi? Do you remember when you first became kind of a burlyman? Was there, like, a first time that you ever protected somebody? Maybe? And sort of led you down the career path that you ended up on? Not the carpentry path necessarily, but just sort of [crosstalk] the nature of Magnus’s --

**Travis:** Oh, the nature into the-- the hero thing?

**Griffin:** Yeah, and to being, like, not a hero, but just, like, a protector of people.

**Travis:** I mean there was a big event is that what you’re talking about in the Magnus backstory?

**Griffin:** No, I think before that. Like, when you’re, like, a kid.

**Travis:** Um, there was a time in which, I think, probably the first thing Magnus can remember as far as, like, being a protector was seeing some bullies picking on a mongrel dog. You know, pulling its tail, throwing rocks at it, and he stood between the bullies and the dog. And I mean they outnumbered him three-to-one. The dog was able to get away, but he got beaten up pretty bad. And then, uh…

**Griffin:** Oh no!

**Travis:** But he protected the dog, and the dog was able to, you know, run away and get away into the woods.

**Griffin:** Did Magnus get his ass kicked?

**Travis:** Oh, so bad! So bad!

**Griffin:** [chuckles] Okay.

**Travis:** I mean- he was, like, ten, and all the boys were, like, thirteen to fourteen around him.

**Griffin:** Did Magnus ever see the dog again or…

**Travis:** No. I mean, it was too afraid of humans at that point. He never saw the dog again, but he knew it was the right thing to do.

**Griffin:** [crosstalk] That’s really sweet.

**Travis:** And so after that he started, you know, toughening up and… He didn’t- he didn’t like seeing someone weaker than him get hurt. I’m going to choke up through this whole thing by the way.

**Griffin:** [crosstalk] No, yeah, we’re going to get-

**Travis:** [crosstalk] I’m deeply connected to Magnus and-

**Griffin:** We’re going to have some big emojis. Travis, by the way, did a really great Q&A session on Twitter the other day, talking about some Magnus story stuff that was really good. Um, so, she sees that scene and goes:

**June:** Aww! That’s really sweet.

And keeps rewinding and sorta hits the end of the tape and fast-forwards really quickly past that scene, past the rest of your early adolescence, past the long period of static, and then into the years preceding your adventure. This scene that we’re going to stop at is about five or six years before the adventure began. You’re standing- you know where you’re standing – You’re standing in a building that housed basically the happiest years of your life. You are standing in your woodworking shop. You’re in the Hammer and Tongs. [**Travis:** Mhm.] The pride of the craftsman corridor in the town of Raven’s Roost. By the way, I’m repurposing a lot of backstory stuff that Travis has actually- that you wrote before we – did you write it before we even started playing?

**Travis:** Uh… yeah! I think I wrote it before we recorded episode one.

**Griffin:** It’s a shame that it’s taken forty-eight fucking episodes to get here- but here we are! And you see yourself. You’re watching this scene in third-person. Your sideburns are couple inches shorter and better kempt than your current facial hair configuration, but you see yourself. You’re polishing a beautiful, black oak rocking chair that you fondly remember to this day. It’s a *beautiful* chair! *Beautiful* grain in this wood. And sitting at a desk behind you, pouring over some order forms with a reading glass, is your mentor. The tongs to your hammer – um, what was his name?

**Travis:** Oh shit. Did I give him a name? ‘Cause I can’t remember now.

**Griffin:** Nope!

**Travis:**  Okay. Steven Waxman.

**Griffin:** Okay. Steven Waxman – Steve? Just Steven?

**Travis:** [crosstalk] Yeah. Steven. I named my fish after him.

**Griffin:** [sounds like he’s smiling] That’s very, very sweet. He is an older man – can you think of any other, sort of, descriptors for Steve?

**Travis:** Uh, he has a small - you know, it was a well tended to, so it healed well but a small, kind of a C-shaped crescent scar next to his right eye. You know, a little goatee. Kinda scraggly, like it wasn’t fully grown out, but he wears it well.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Travis:** Um… I-I wouldn’t say portly, but, like, you know, he’s up there in years he’s- but underneath you can tell there’s tons of muscle. Um…

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Travis:** He’s got kind of like a blacksmith build to him. Like you look at him and you’re like “Ah, that’s a dude who could, like, swing a hammer. That’s a guy who could, like, carry some logs. That’s a guy who could do some work.”

**Griffin:** So he’s sort of like a general craftsman, then it sounds like, who took you into his shop, and you showed such a, like, proficiency for carpentry under- while serving as an apprentice to him that he took you on as a partner, and sort of built this brand.

**Travis:** And I mean, more than anything, he was really more of a dad. I mean, let’s be honest.

**Griffin:** [crosstalk] Yeah! Sure.

**Travis:** I mean, partner, yes. But like taught Magnus everything he knew.

**Griffin:** [crosstalk] Father figure–

**Travis:** Father figure, yeah.

**Griffin:** Your shop has been especially busy in the past few months, as have a lot of shops here in the craftsman corridor of Raven’s Roost. Which– you named it, and now I’m envisioning it as a town that is named Raven’s Roost because it’s literally built on these natural rock formations. Almost like stone pillars somewhere with these long, really sturdy bridges, that I think the craftsmen of the city are- it’s like their pride and joy, that they built connecting the different columns that hold Raven’s Roost aloft in the sky.

**Travis:** [crosstalk] and each of the columns is pretty much designated for different things. There’s like the different crafts, the wrenches, the-

**Griffin:** [crosstalk] Yeah, it’s like the different crafts the- the craftsmen corridor, the more of the residential district- yeah. The craftsmen corridor, like all of the shops have been so busy since the blockade broke, and the mad governor Kalen was ousted. We’ve touched on this a little bit before, and you know all about that rebellion against the mad governor Kalen, because you, at one point, kind of led it.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And I’m wondering if you can sort of give me a sort of a brief summary of like why governor Kalen was such a shithead, how you became involved with that rebellion, and how you became its leader.

**Travis:** Well, I mean, it’s an old story I think that most people are familiar with. The convention of the despot who everybody kind of, like, accepts for a while- is the way that they are, but then their desire for power, and the lack of limitations, and their perceived lack of limitations starts to grow to a point where you can no longer stand it. And, you know, for Magnus it wasn’t about power, glory. It was his duty. It was just a thing. It was a habit.

**Griffin:** It was literally- to put a nice little bow on it- big fucking bully.

**Travis:** Yeah! He was just- he was a bully. He was picking on the weak and Magnus just can’t stand that. And so he did what he needed to do - because he needed to do it - and then it was all done. He was happy to return to a quiet life. It was all that he ever wanted. He didn’t want to be a hero. It wasn’t his desire.

**Griffin:** Shit! It’s fucking so easy to draw a line from point A to point B here, of how… just of the way that, like, your character… The build, like– the in-game mechanics of Magnus. I can see Magnus sort of forming this rebellion of other, sort of, craftsmen, right? - ‘Cause soldiers would be on Kalen’s side, I imagine – using his fucking rustic hospitality, like, using his folksy charm.

**Travis:** [crosstalk] Yeah! I mean, we’re talking, like, basically the way that America fought the British in the revolution. That, you know, fight from the trees and-

**Griffin:**  Okay. On a smaller scale, we’re talking about a city, but like a big - a big city! A decent sized city. Okay. Um…

**Travis:**  And we also had the height advantage. You know. Raven’s Roost. We have the lay of the land. We know the areas and we’re able to drive them back.

**Griffin:** So you deposed the governor, um, but the mad governor Kalen lived. How did that happen? Did he escape? Did you show- did you grant clemency to Kalen and then they disappeared? Because no matter what happened, we’ve sort of established that this guy’s still out there somewhere, so you didn’t kill him.

**Travis:** Basically what happened was that it reached a point where the victory, like, it was clear who had won, and his forces stood down. And you, it know, it wasn’t - We weren’t doing it because we wanted to kill everybody. We were doing it because we wanted to defend the country. So, like, once the battle was won - the fight was over - and we thought that that was it. You know, like, he had clearly lost, his forces were demolished, and his base was weakened.

**Griffin:** [crosstalk] You routed him.

**Travis:** Yeah! So we were like “Okay. We’ve proved our point. We made it clear. You know. Everything’s done now. That was it.”

**Griffin:** And for three months - three very successful, very happy months for you - that seemed to be the case. Like, you- nobody even talked about this fucking guy anymore. It was like you so completely routed him, that his very legacy was gone. So fruitful and happy was the city of Raven’s Roost because of what you did. So it’s been three months. Things have calmed down. Your shop is super busy. Your renown as a carpenter has grown, because I think it’s got pretty conflated with folk-hero Magnus Burnsides, that people were like “Well, that dude fucking saved our town, so I *gots* to get a coffee table from him.”

**Travis:** Yeah. I mean, and also the coffee tables are damn fine.

**Griffin:** No, they’re really, really good! That’s the other thing - you’re fucking super good at carpentry! And in fact today you are submitting this beautiful, black oak rocking chair at the Continental Craftsmen Showcase. Which is an interdisciplinary competition held in Neverwinter. Which is about a ten day’s ride from Raven’s Roost. And with this chair, like, it’s a shoo-in. You’re gonna win the woodworking small projects category pretty handily.

**Travis:** Well if I do- And Magnus is very excited, because this is his chance to earn the title Master Carpenter, you know what I mean?

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Up ‘til now, everyone has known, but it hasn’t been official. But, like, with this award it’s pretty cemented, you know.

**Griffin:** Yeah, and as you’re working on this chair Steven is just, like, blown away. He, like, looks up occasionally looks up from the desk like, uh… Give me a carpentry term that you would use for a chair. Like, he compliments something about the chair. What is it?

**Travis:** He compliments the spun- spindles, he compliments how well the joints are formed and fashioned.

**Griffin:** Yeah, and then I think he says:

**Steven**: That- the chair smells good! How did you do that?!

**Magnus**: Uh, well, uh, I worked in a lavender polish before the final lacquer to give it a nice, kinda, aromatic- When you’re trying to put a baby to sleep you want it to be pleasant for all the senses. Rocking a child, singing to the child, and also a pleasant lavender smell.

**Griffin:** You’re describing the smell of your chair to your teacher, and it’s the afternoon of your departure to this Continental Craftsmen Showcase. Just as you put the finishing touches on this chair, the bell hanging over the entryway into the Hammer and Tongs rings, and enter Julia.

[music]

**Griffin:** And… Can you tell me, like… Tell me about Julia. Julia is… You’ve talked about- or I don’t know if you’ve talked about- but in your backstory she is the daughter of Steven. And the two of you are… married? Or just together? Or? What’s…

**Travis:** Yes. We are married. Very recently. Shortly after the-

**Griffin:** [crosstalk] You wanted to wait until after the rebel- yeah, okay.

**Travis:** Shortly after the rebellion we got married in a gazebo that Magnus built himself-

**Griffin:** Jesus, dude…

**Travis:** And she’s the most beautiful woman Magnus has ever seen.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Travis:** I’m-I’m not- Griffin, let me ask this too. As all this is playing back, is present day Magnus watching this in third person?

**Griffin:** Oh yeah! But in third person. Not first person. You’re not- you are not this Magnus making this chair, looking at your wife as she comes into the room [crosstalk] You are third person.

**Travis:** [crosstalk] I just wanna make that- When Magnus sees Julia - present day Magnus - it just *wrecks* him.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Travis:** It is a *gut punch*.

**Griffin:** June holding the cup doesn’t make a move to help you out. She is watching the scene intently. Kind of curious to see what happens next. So she walks in, and she plops down a few orders on the desk that Steven’s working on, like, a lot of orders. Like, so much so that they were cumbersome for her to carry into the room, and she plops down in the rocking chair and is sort of admiring your handiwork. And she says, um-

**Julia:** This chair smells like grandmas.

**Travis:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Kind of, like, also making fun of you. Like kind of antagonising you, kind of playfully. And the two of you just like, have a regular conversation. Like it is not… This scene is not… It is memorable to you *now*, but in the moment, like, you weren’t thinking, like, “I’m going to remember everything about this moment” while it was happening. ‘Cause that’s just the way that things go sometimes. And she motions you towards the door and outside on the street she has readied a cart for your departure. You give Steven a hearty handshake and you give Julia a hug and kiss goodbye. Do you remember the last thing you said?

**Travis:** I said:

**Magnus:** I love you, Jules.

**Griffin:** And you sling this chair carefully - it’s wrapped - but you put the chair over your back and you put your hand on the doorknob. And the scene freezes. And finally June talks and she says:

**June:** Two days after your departure… Kalen returned to Raven’s Roost. And operating from a mindset of “If I can’t have this city nobody can!” He bombs the support column for the craftsmen corridor. An’ seventy-six people died. Julia and your mentor included. Hammer and Tongs is - quite literally - shattered. And after the two ten days it takes to get to Neverwinter and back, most of the town is just kind of evacuated. Sort of afraid of similar attacks on their columns and today Raven’s Roost is… just a ghost town. Magnus, you *earned* this happy ending. You worked so hard for it. It shoulda been yours! But it hasn’t happened yet. Not here! Not yet! Not now! [music starts] If you claim me, you can still stop Kalen. You can save Julia. You can save Steven. You can save Raven’s Roost- You can save this life that you earned. Take me, and we can do it together.

**Magnus:** [sighs]

**Griffin:** The three of you are back in the Davy Lamp saloon version of the white space, with the shadowy figures occupying the bar. Sitting in front of you is June, who by this point I think just looks like a little girl again, like she has reverted almost completely back to the age that she was when she first got trapped in the bubble. And June says to all three of you:

**June:** I need to lay out the rules for you, ‘cause I feel like that’s only fair. If you take the cha-- [pronounced like *shall*] I keep saying *shallice*-- if you take the chalice, there are three rules that you have to follow. The first is that you cannot walk the path that you walked in this timeline. Specifically, there’s gonna be no joining the Bureau of Balance. ‘Cause the further you stay away from creating a paradox, the easier your new timeline is gonna be to maintain. The second rule is that you forfeit your place in this timeline completely. There is no comin’ back if you take the chalice and cross over. And the third rule is the hardest rule, and it’s the reason I’ve never successfully been able to change the past like this before. I’m gonna create a new timeline for you, but *you* have to sustain it. And all that entails is that every single thing that happens in this new world we create - good and bad - you have to *want* it to happen. Or else the timeline won’t hold and you’ll be lost.

**Griffin:** And with that she picks up the Temporal Chalice and places it in the middle of the table that all of you are sitting at.

[extended pause]

**Magnus:** Uh…

**Justin:** What’s in it?

**Griffin:** Magic!

**Clint:** Beer.

**Griffin:** No, there is nothing in it. It is just a very magic chalice that will let you fulfill the offer that June made to you.

**Magnus:** Uh, Taako. Merle… I-uh… I assume that we all kind of just had… similar, but different experiences. Uh…

**Merle:** I had an apostrophe!

**Clint:** [stifles laughter]

**Magnus:** Yeah, I thought that might be the case. Of things that we might be able to change, if we were to pick up this cup.

**Taako:** Yeah.

**Magnus:** Merle? Same deal?

**Merle:** You wanna talk about it?

**Magnus:** Not really. Um…

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Magnus:** Soon. Soon! I’ll-I’ll tell y’all about it when this is done, but… [sighs] I know my answer.

**Taako:** I have a question, um, are we, like, can just one of us take it, or…

**June:** Only one of you. Only one of you can take it.

**Taako:** Okay. Okay! Okay…

**Merle:** Might’ve included that in the rules. Just- I’m just sayin’.

**Taako:** Yeah, next time you do this. [snorts]

**June:** Uh, whenever- whoever takes it is going to rewrite this timeline completely, and that’s a trip only one person gets to make.

**Taako:** Hoo!

**Magnus:** I-I’m ready to give my answer, but I don’t… [sighs] Listen, boys. I know what my offer was and I can only assume that yours was as powerful, so I’m not going to judge either one of you for whatever you say. Um… But my offer - the ability to go back and change that thing… It was everything I’ve- I’ve wanted for a *really* long time… And it would mean… like, that I wouldn’t be there to help people who really needed help and save many, many, many lives - and I don’t *care*. Because it’s what I want… But it’s not what *Julia* would want. And I’m going to have to pass.

**Taako:** … Okay. So, that’s a pass… from you. Um…

**Travis:** [snorts]

**Taako:** So would you say we have- so we have two options. Is this correct?

**June:** Yup. It’s a yes or no answer.

**Merle:** I know how I’m going to vote.

**Taako:** How are you voting?

**Merle:** I’m not a big one for regrets. I figure you make your best choices with the information at hand, and you live with the consequences. That’s kind of a “Merle Pearl” to throw out to everybody. So I’m going to say… Thanks, but no thanks, little, strange girl with a *chalice* [pronounced “shalice”].

**June:** … Taako?

**Taako:** Hm… I mean, here’s the thing for me-

**Justin:** [wheezes laughing]

**Taako:** Here’s where I’m at. The vision revealed to me was chill as hell.

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Taako:** Here’s how it shook out for Taako - and we can get into this a bit more if you guys want. But as it turns out; remember that thing that I’ve spent so long feeling kind of bad about - not super bad - but like *pretty darn* bad?

**Magnus:** Yeah.

**Taako:** Get this! Not my fault! Like, I have nothing to change! I didn’t do anything wrong! This is a- it was a very chill vision for me - I’m feeling, like, amazing! And I feel no obligation to go back and change anything, ‘cause it was like… Best pos- I’m in the best possible timeline for Taako; *personally*.

**Merle:** [chuckling]

**Taako:** Just from my vantage point. It is very good for Taako.

**June:** So-

**Magnus:** So it kinda sounds like it’s a ‘no’ all around, cup lady.

**June:** I would be lying if I said I wasn’t… disappointed. I… I’m- I’m sorry. I have to make one more offer.

**Griffin:** She stands up from the table that you’re sitting at and grabs the cup, and suddenly the table disappears and the bar disappears in, like, a wisp of smoke. And then-

**Magnus:** Aww, I just put in an order for chicken wings!

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Clint:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** And then sort of that same holodeck effect starts happening to all three of you, and it’s going back to a memory that all three of you share. The scene starts to put itself together, and you’re standing in a, uh, in a grassy plain, and there are a couple bodies-

**Travis:** And we can see a motorcade coming up over a hill!

[They all laugh.]

**Griffin:** Uh, no. There’s a few bodies on the ground, and there are a couple of burned out wagons. There is one wagon that has fared a little bit better that has a cage in the back of it, and inside of that cage is Kurtze, the orc boy! And you realise you’re back at the very beginning of your adventure! Gundren Rockseeker has claimed the Phoenix Fire Gauntlet and is blazing a path towards Phandalin at this very moment. Killian is with you and you’ve just taken care of these slavers who took over this- who burned down this orc caravan and imprisoned Kurtze, the orc boy - who you *freed* - and ended up shooting Gundren and setting him off, destroying Phandalin; but you haven’t let Kurtze out yet! You’re standing in front of the cage and June says:

**June:** This is the last offer I--I have to make. It’s the last thing I can think of that the three of you could fix. You free Kurtze, and Kurtze, in an act of vengeance, sets off a series of events that destroys Phandalin. You can stop this from happening if you just don’t let him out of the cage. It’s my last offer, and, will any of you reconsider?

**Magnus:** Uh, um…

**Taako:** Well, this one’s tougher, right?

**Magnus:** ‘Cause this was- this *was* our fault.

**Taako:** [crosstalk] This was our bad one hundred percent.

**Magnus:** [crosstalk] Hands down! Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Merle:** Sorry!

**Magnus:** Kinda hard to- to shift the blame on this one. Uh–

**Merle:** But we didn’t know! We had the best of intentions.

**Magnus:** [crosstalk] We could shift it onto Kurtze. Like eff that dude, right? We have that to… yeah…

**Taako:** Kurtze… I mean. [sniffs] We wrote the check and Kurtze cashed it.

**Magnus:** [crosstalk] Yeah, that’s true.

**Merle:** You know, blowing up Phandalin was kind of our signature move though…

**Taako:** Right? It was a very explosive beginning.

**Merle:** Yeah, I mean…

**Magnus:** [crosstalk] It did kind of establish a pattern.

**Taako:** [crosstalk] It elevated- elevated the drama.

**Magnus:** Mmm…

**Griffin:** She says:

**June:** It sounds like it was maybe a cool moment for you - let me just show you something really quick.

**Magnus:** No… no, no…

**Griffin:** Then she walks you- uh… you don’t walk. You’re just all of sudden inside the big tavern in Phandalin, and you see Gundren in this tavern and he’s - the scene is frozen - and he’s got these whips of flame coming off of him. And then all of a sudden you’re in the store room of this tavern in Phandalin, and you see some people huddled, hiding in fear from Gundren. And you see a halfling woman with red hair who is, uh– she’s holding a barrel of booze from Redcheek Farms, and you realise it’s Noelle.

**Justin:** Eughh… Hmm…

**Magnus:** Yeah, but at the same time, can you show us Rockport if we didn’t stop the train? Can you show us the world if we didn’t stop the pink tourmaline from taking over?

**Merle:** Ooh!

**Magnus:** Can you show us all of that?

**June:** This is the only offer I can make to you.

**Magnus:** Yeah, but like-- you’re showing us one thing we *can* change, and not the stuff that we *did* change.

**Merle:** [sighs] Is Barry- is Barry Bluejeans one of the people huddled in there with us?

**Griffin:** Barry Bluejeans is actually out in the bar trying to calm Gundren down.

**Merle:** [sighs] That’s so Barry.

**Griffin:** But you see Barry Bluejeans - Tom Arnold-lookin’ ass - and his blue, blue denim pants before he was incinerated.

**Taako:** Is there- is there any reason to think that- is there any reason to think that we *wouldn’t* do all that other stuff if we save Phandalin?

**Magnus:** Well yeah! She said the rules. We gotta stay away from the Bureau of Balance. We’d never know about all that stuff! The Voidfish would knock us out, we’d- like, we wouldn’t be able to join the bureau. We would have to stay away from… everything! We forfeit our place in the timeline. We’d save *these* people, but we wouldn’t save any of the others.

**Taako:** Yeah, but certainly they have some competent people they could send, *right?*

**Merle:** [laughs]

**Magnus:** Apparently not! We were the first people to bring any item in.

**Merle:** You know, fellas. I know this is big, and I know there’s been a lot of death, and destruction, and other crap but… You know, we’ve had some laughs! We’ve had some good times! Crashing trains, and getting our arms chopped off and-

**Magnus:** [laughs]

**Merle:** – y’know, poisonin’ a lot of folks, and… I’d hate to lose the good times that we had. I- I’m still not tempted. I’m still happy with the Merle life!

**Magnus:** [crosstalk] Yeah, I’m going to have to pass as well. Like Merle said, I- y’know. I spent a lot of time living my life in regret and I don’t do that anymore. We gotta keep moving forward towards good. Not looking back at the bad.

**Taako:** Listen. [chuckles] If I wasn’t gonna use this to clean up a mess that was *half* my fault, I’m certainly not going to use it to clean up a mess that’s *one third* my fault - at *best*! Um… Plus I can’t say as I was… much better off before. I mean, we’ve certainly helped some people. There’s some people that’ve been - let’s call it “unhelped”, I think-

**Merle:** [laughs]

**Taako:** - certainly along the way. We’ve unhelped some folks. Uh…

**Magnus:** And you know what? Noelle ended up with a new shiny robot body, so like-

**Taako:** An unkillable robot; I think that’s an upgrade!

**Magnus:** That could be significantly worse, really.

**Taako:** Barry stings. That one…

**Magnus:** Yeah, the Barry one hurts. If we could get him into a robot, eventually down the line, that would be super cool.

**Taako:** They can’t hear us, right? I mean, we’re just like- spectral?

**Griffin:** No, but June can hear you and she looks really- she looks really glum, because, she, like, is starting to realise that - not only are you not going to take this offer - but that, like, you are so unswayed by the offer that it doesn’t seem like you’re taking it seriously. And she says, like:

**June:** Okay. Well. I did my… best.

**Magnus:** I have one question.

**June:** What?

**Magnus:** If we pass on this, what happens to June?

**June:** I told you- if you- I just wanted to give you my offer, and if you listened I’d let her go. And I’ll let her go because you’ve listened to my offer, and you have abstained- and since you’re apparently *so okay* with living with the consequences of your actions then, [melancholy, delicate piano music starts in background] I guess… Well, I guess I’ll leave you with this.

**Griffin:** And June and the cup disappear. And time starts to- starts to back up again, but it’s moving *painfully* slowly. And you watch as a wall of fire consumes the stockroom of this tavern, and everything and everyone inside of it. And then the scene changes, and you’re standing in the home of a young couple, and you see a man cooking a stew in the kitchen, and his partner - she’s reading a book in bed - and the wave of fire consumes this home as well.

**Clint:** Oh hohohoh! God!

**Griffin:** And then you see a woman playing with her dog in the garden. [music accelerando] And you see a kind-looking blacksmith cleaning his shop after closing. And you see a young hedge wizard practicing his spells. And- y-you see all of these scenes of Phandalin’s citizens which, maybe out of spite, the Chalice is forcing you to witness all of their destruction.

[music gains a subtle drum beat] And then you’re standing at the epicenter. Right in front of Gundren’s blackened bones. His arm - with the gauntlet on it - held up to the sky in the centre of this roaring, expanding pillar of fire. And you are forced to watch Phandalin’s end as you didn’t see it before. And it is *absolute*, and *vicious*, and *quick* as it reduces this city into a perfect circle of black glass. [loud chord, back to piano only] And you’re back, at the top of shaft B. And you see June in front of you and she’s young again. And she falls to her hands and knees. And the cup rolls away from her and falls off the platform, and bounces once with a heavy clunk, and lands *perfectly* at your feet.