**Griffin**: So, Taako, that night in your dormitory that we kind of ended the last episode with, you had a nice long discussion with Kravitz, who, for those of you who are maybe skipping ahead, or don't remember because it's been seven months since Kravitz was on the show, is a bounty hunter for the Raven Queen, who's the goddess of the natural passage of life and death. So you had this conversation with Kravitz in your dormitory for a good long time, and he seemed much less aggressive than he did when you encountered him in Lucas's lab, where he, you know, was mostly trying to kill you.

**Griffin**: He sort of sat patiently while you explained the events of your time in Refuge. But- so you're having this conversation with him and explaining what happened in Refuge, and he sort of explained like, you're kind of- you guys are in trouble, obviously, because you've added to your death count which he's not a fan of, but everyone in Refuge also died, like, a lot, during those loops, and somebody has to answer for that. But your discussion was cut short when Kravitz was summoned to hunt another bounty for the Raven Queen. But before leaving, he attuned your Stone of Farspeech to his own, and told you that he would reach out again to continue your conversation about what should happen to you all, and to everybody in Refuge.

**Griffin**: But you, Taako, decide to take the initiative in setting up the next meeting with Kravitz, and you're kind of hoping to sway him to your way of thinking, to sort of save you guys and everybody in Refuge from getting sort of your... your comeuppance. So my question to you is, what do you do with Kravitz? What sort of hang sesh do you set up with Kravitz when you contact him?

**Justin:** Um... let's see. I don't wanna seem too eager...

**Griffin**: Right, that's important.

**Justin**: Fishing is probably out.

**Griffin**: Does Taako– does Taako fish?

**Justin**: Yeah, Taako fishes.

**Griffin**: I mean, you-- it's not-- I didn't know that.

**Justin**: Well, we haven’t really passed any bodies of water--

**Griffin**: I’ve never asked--that's true.

**Justin**: I'm not sure we've encountered a body of water.

**Griffin**: Water doesn't exist in this universe, so.

**Justin**: [Laughing] Oh! Did you hear what just opened on the satellite? On the station?

**Griffin**: No...?

**Justin**: It's so fun, it is a wine and pottery place. These are getting really hot right now.

**Griffin**: So there's one in the Bureau of Balance HQ?

**Justin**: Yeah, they opened one in the Bureau of Balance HQ, as just sort of a way to like, stress relief for everybody. So you go there, you unpop a bottle of *vino* and you just make a sculpture.

**Griffin**: Okay, so you've invited-- you call Kravitz up on the Stone of Farspeech and invite him to a wine and pottery class... in the Bureau of Bal-- what's this place called?

**Justin**: [stalling, laughing] Uh, this one?

**Griffin**: Yeah, this place, this specific place.

**Justin:** This one... that they opened? [snorts]

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Justin:** [muffled by his hands] Uh... Chug and Squeeze.

**Griffin**: [laughing a bit] Chug and Squeeze?

**Justin:** ‘The Chug and Squeeze’ is the name of it.

**Griffin**: Is this the franchise of a larger...?

**Justin:** Uh-huh.

**Griffin**: Okay.

**Justin:** Yeah, it's a franchise of a lot of these. [Griffin laughs] ‘Cause you chug the wine and you squeeze the pottery, [**Griffin:** Squeeze the pots, yeah.] so what they call it is The Chug and Squeeze.

**Griffin**: All right, so... a sort of a pretty unsophisticated name for what I would say is a pretty sophisticated business, but okay.

**Justin:** Well, they have to differentiate. This is the rowdy one.

**Griffin**: So you--

**Justin:** This isn't the one that like, caters to like, your pseudo-intellectuals and your... [**Griffin:** Absolutely.] Yeah, this is like, the fun one.

**Griffin**: You book two seats at a class, an evening class at The Chug and Squeeze... during... today - it's all Cabernet and vases. It's their “Cab And Vase” class. It's very popular and actually it's really hard to get seats. But you manage to get two seats together at the Chug and Squeeze for the Cab and Vase.

**Griffin**: You get there early to sort of prep your station, there's some finger foods being handed out, and... Kravitz doesn't show up for a little bit, you're actually worried that he's blowing you off. But eventually he does come into the room and hang up his dark cloak and sit down, sort of uncomfortable next to you, sort of unsure why you brought him here. Also, as you look around, you realize that it's um... like, everybody else here is in couples. Carey and Killian are actually here taking a class together, and everybody here is, like, more or less on a date.

**Justin:** Did you say discomfort, or *super* comfort?

**Griffin**: Uh, for Kravitz, Kravitz seems a little like, Kravitz thought maybe you would go to a place where you could have a quiet conversation about this, but instead has been dropped into this place. And he says,

**Kravitz**: Well, Taako, this is uh... Taako, this is a pretty unconventional place to have an argument about sort of the fate of a whole, sort of small community, but... I do like wine, so... [suddenly stops using the accent that Kravitz has spoken with since his first appearance] I'm sorry, do you mind if I drop the accent, it's like-- it's really really hard to keep it up, and when I'm not on the job it just feels weird doing it. Is that okay?

**Taako**: Yeah, of course! [lowers his voice] As long as I can drop my accent too.

[laughter]

**Griffin**: He says,

**Kravitz**: So why did you...? Why are we...? Why are we here, Taako? Why can't we just like, go back to the dorm and finish our conversation?

**Taako**: Well, ironically because I thought it would get weird. But- that is. I don't know why I thought this would be a better option. Um, also you're like, very dangerous so I didn't want to necessarily leave myself in– in private with– with you, necessarily.

**Kravitz**: I'm not gonna-- I'm not gonna attack you, Taako, that's-- that's-- I don't, here's the thing, I don't actually have a contract out on you, or Merle, or Magnus or anybody in Refuge. I'm just trying to make sense of it, because like, I've never-- I've been hunting for a good long time, and I've never known anyone who has sort of bent the laws as much as you have. So I'm just trying to understand what makes you guys so special.

**Taako**: Hmmm. Look at what I'm sculpting here.

**Kravitz**: What are you sculpting?

**Taako**: It's a bowl.

**Kravitz**: Well, I do want to--

**Griffin**: A big burly sort of instructor comes by and says,

**Instructor**: Hey, it's vase day! It's Cab and Vase! No bowls!

**Taako**: Let me reshape it.

**Justin**: As soon as he turns away I fuckin' turn it back into a bowl because that's what I feel like making today. That's where my *muse*-- I don't fuckin' chain my muse up.

**Griffin**: Kravitz chuckles;

**Kravitz**: Aheh, I like your renegade spirit, there.

**Taako**: Well, that's kinda what I want to talk to you about. Look at this bowl, right?

**Griffin**: He's looking at it.

**Taako**: Okay, so. You see how it kind of curves up on each side, and in the middle, there's like a whole big flat part. Right? That's where most people fall into. Lot of people are in this area, right here. And really people like you who are charged with sort of keeping the status quo, those are the people that you need to worry about, the people in the middle of the bowl. Me, the other guys--

**Kravitz**: This is a very confusing analogy. I--

**Taako**: It's not confusing at all! The people who are straight up, who are down the middle, who are sort of regular [Justin raspberries] Joe Pastas, they're always gonna be here on the flat part, and as long as you keep *them* under control and as long as you keep the herd thin there, it'll be fine. There's always gonna be edge cases, is what I'm saying. There's always gonna be people on the fringe that don't necessarily adhere to whatever rules you set out for yourself. That's *everywhere* in the universe, in every plane.

**Kravitz**: I mean... you explained to me last time we talked, sort of, what you all are doing here, and it sounds very-- it sounds important, but the fact that I've visited you as much as I have means this line of work is just preposterously dangerous. So why are you doing this, Taako? Why aren't you doing a- a safer career?

**Taako**: ...Because I'm worried no one else will have me.

**Kravitz**: Wow, that was... a very honest answer. I'm a bit shocked.

**Taako**: Well, I mean, that's the truth. If I can't be honest at the Chug and Squeeze then I- frankly, my man, I don't know where I can. What else am I gonna do? As far as anybody else knows, my career as a chef is over. Nobody wants an adventurer who's got as little experience as I'd have, going in. I can't tell any-- I can't put any of this in my resume, it'll look like scribbles! So that's out. I don't have a lot of job prospects on that front. So here I am.

**Kravitz**: I can certainly understand that. I was given a pretty... pretty difficult choice when I was faced with being, the career of being a bounty hunter for the goddess of death. I didn't grow up wanting to be that, of course.

**Taako**: Who does?

**Kravitz**: No. I wanted to be a conductor. But unfortunately, you know, just... life finds a way... or death, I guess, the goddess of death.

**Taako**: In this case specifically, yeah, death.

**Kravitz**: Her, yeah. I appreciate you being so open and honest with me, Taako. I feel like I kind of understand where you're coming from. How much more dying do you think is going to happen, just so I know how to-- sort of pitch your case to the Raven Queen?

**Taako**: Well, dag, now we've reached something of an impasse, huh? [clicks his tongue thoughtfully] How much more... us dying, or like, other regular dying?

**Kravitz**: Just like... any dying, at all. What's the game plan there?

**Taako**: Well, I mean, there's gonna be some. The thing at Refuge was definitely an outlier, I don't plan to die that many times again. So that was probably-- here's what I'm going to say.

**Justin**: And I put my hand on his hand to help him shape the vase he's been working on.

**Griffin**: It's very very-- it's very cold, his hand is.

**Taako**: Oh boy. Oh boy howdy, that is a clammy one. Listen. If we can overlook that unpleasantness, I think you're going to find a very acceptable level of death in the days and weeks ahead. That's what I'm going to say to you. A very normal, sort of corporeal, just, usual amount of death.

**Kravitz**: Okay. I think I can– I think I can close the case on this one. The people of Refuge will be safe, obviously. You all will... there will be certain exceptions made where they need to be made, for the three of you. The Raven Queen is actually good good buds with Lady Istus, so…

**Taako**: Nice!

**Kravitz**: … I understand you are now in her retinue, so-- I think I can close my investigation here. I guess let's just enjoy the rest of the class...?

**Taako**: Hell yeah! Let's open up another bottle and see where the evening takes us!

**Griffin**: Yeah, you have a couple of bottles and you make-- how does your-- his vase turns out pretty well. About a five out of ten, how's yours?

**Justin**: It's fucking perfect. [**Griffin:** Okay.] There's never been a better vase than this, it's fucking tasteful and rad.

**Griffin**: Okay. You fire it, and you all get to keep your vases at the end of the day. While you're walking out, you're a bit drunk, just a little bit faded, and you're walking back. It's nighttime and you're walking across the big grassy quad of the HQ, and Kravitz turns and he asks,

**Kravitz**: Taako, I want to know...

**Taako**: Yeah?

**Kravitz**: Was this call for business or pleasure?

**Taako**: Yeah, I mean, a little bit of both. I– I, uh, for sure didn't want to be dragged to hell or whatever it is you do. Stored in the ghost house or wh- with Casper and the lot. Don't wanna do that. In the mirror, if I remember? [**Griffin:** [laughing] Yeah.] I am not interested in that. But if, like, also, I love your style. Not crazy about the sort of cold clamminess of the skin, but like, yeah, you know, it's been a while out here.

**Griffin**: He steps backward with a start and extends his arm and his scythe appears in his arm, and a black cloak just kind of unfurls itself over his head--

**Taako**: Love this.

**Griffin**: --and sort of surrounding his whole body, and all of a sudden his super handsome face is now a skull. And he starts looking around desperately. And he says,

**Kravitz**: There's something here. There's something here, Taako, it was--

**Taako**: I feel it too!

**Kravitz**: It was-- no, not this, the-- there's something here, it was in the Millers’ lab too, I could feel it. It's dead and it's powerful and it's extremely close. Are you harboring a dark spirit, Taako? Do you-- do you have suspicions that you might be some sort of vessel?

**Griffin**: And he's kind of eyeing you over with the scythe in his hand.

**Taako**: Maybe? I mean, it's been, like, a few years. Was that a thing

for a while? I eat old dead dudes with my umbrella, is that a possibility, maybe?

**Kravitz**: I don't-- no, I don't think it's that.

**Griffin**: He starts looking around, and Kravitz turns his back to you. And starts to sort of walk toward the middle of the quad, still kind of looking around for whatever this powerful dead thing is. And Taako, you actually feel the Umbra Staff in your hand start to raise itself up. It's not controlling you, it's controlling itself as it sort of raises itself up, and then your arm is outstretched holding the Umbra Staff, and it is pointed at Kravitz's back. What do you do? It looks like it's charging up a spell.

**Justin**: I... point it skyward...

**Griffin**: Okay. You point the-- you sort of wrestle with the umbrella for a second and you point it skyward, and you shoot a Scorching Ray into the sky. And it doesn't hit anybody, but it launches a flare up into the sky. And Kravitz turns immediately back towards you and he says,

**Kravitz**: What was that?

**Taako**: The Umbra Staff's trying to kill you, man, it's not me!

**Kravitz**: What?

**Taako**: The Umbra Staff, check it out, I used to think Umbro but it's actually Umbra-- it- it, uh, acted on its own.

**Kravitz**: I don't understand, that's not-- can I see it?

**Taako**: Okay!

**Griffin**: You hand it over, and he looks it over, and he says,

**Kravitz**: This isn't like a cursed item, maybe your umbrella's cursed and maybe you should get that checked out... this is an undead being, this is like a lich or something big and powerful, and it's- you're not a lich, are you, Taako?

**Taako**: Not to my knowledge, not a lich, no.

**Kravitz**: I mean, you're not, I would know if you were. Okay. Well... I've had a lovely evening, but this, this, this-

**Griffin**: you realize he's torn another little rift in space and time to travel back to the astral plane, and he steps through. And he says, uh:

**Kravitz**: Taako, it’s– I've had a very- I've had a lovely evening, do you think I'll be hearing from you again any time soon?

**Taako**: Ah… yeah, I mean as long as I don’t--you know… die? A-again?

**Kravitz**: Well. Even so, we have--(he chuckles) we have ways of dealing with that.

**Taako**: Well, yeah, that’s pretty much the best excuse I’ll ever have, so you’ll definitely be seeing me again, for sure!

**Griffin**: He chuckles and says, uh,

**Kravitz**: Well-- if that’s the case, then hopefully not too soon.

Goodbye, Taako.

**Taako**: ¡Adios!

**Griffin**: And the rift closes.

[music plays]

**Griffin**: So Merle! You are on an away mission, for this Lunar Interlude. Um, and it’s something that you’ve done pretty frequently, between, between uh, the main story missions and deployments and scheduled Bureau of Balance events, um, and these little away missions are something that you handle with the utmost secrecy. And, it’s on one of these outings that you find yourself in Neverwinter. Um, specifically in the Sea of Gardens in Neverwinter’s Blue Lake district. And it’s your favourite place in the city, it’s just this beautiful piece of landscaping, masterfully designed. Neverwinter is known as “The City of Skilled Hands”, and that shows here, because this, this Sea of Gardens is just like a horticultural masterpiece. Um, it’s-

**Clint**: Is the Blue Lake district anything like the red light district?

**Griffin**: No, it’s actually the exact opposite.

**Clint**: Ok, cool, cool, cool.

**Griffin**: It’s a good way of thinking about it though. So you’re making your way through this area, which is this essentially just this big beautiful public park… You get the impression that someone is following you. Um, go ahead and make a, uh, make a perception check.

**Clint**: Alright.

[dice roll]

**Clint**: Four…

**Griffin**: Oh, you have advantage ‘cause you have those--

**Clint**: Oh I do have advantage, yes!

**Griffin**: Yeah yeah yeah, you have those glasses.

[dice roll]

**Clint**: Ok… oh, fifteen.

**Griffin**: Okay! Uh, with that perception check, as you’re walking through this park, you turn around really quickly and you see a feathered cap duck behind a tree, just like, a moment too late to keep you from seeing it. Um, and it is- the feathered hat of this, uh, of this person who’s been following you.

**Clint**: Merle says, uh,

**Merle**: Okay! I see ya! Come on out!

**Griffin**: From out behind the tree, Angus McDonald, boy detective, [**Clint/Merle**: Oh, god…] walks out, uh, and he has his hands up, and he says,

**Angus**: I’m sorry! I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry! I knew you were going out on secret missions, and I just got so panicked about it, and I tried to talk to you about it but I got too nervous, so I thought I’d just do some detective work, and I’m really sorry!

**Clint**: I take the Adamantium Spanner, and I walk over and I raise it up and--

**Griffin**: While you’re doing that, uh, walking over with the Adamantium

Spanner, you are tackled by a little dwarven boy, with dark, wild hair, uh, and several prominent missing teeth, and a face full of light freckles, and, uh, it’s just a little dwarven boy, he’s wearing a beanie, and on that beanie is a little cartoon illustration of a hamburger. And this little boy runs up and tackles you right as you’re about to clobber Angus, uh, and he says, uh,

**Dwarf boy**: Whaddja get me?! Whaddja get me?!

**Griffin**: And the- he’s accompanied by a dwarven girl who looks a few years older than him, and she’s got straight red hair, and glasses that almost mirror your own, and she’s wearing clean linen robes with a book bag slung over her shoulder, and she says,

**Dwarf girl**: God, how many times do I have to tell you, don’t tackle him every time you see him.

**Griffin**: And, Angus says, uh,

**Angus**: Sorry, sir, who-- who’s this? Who’re these people?

**Merle**: (Deep sigh) Okay. Look, kid– Angus, whatever. You gotta promise me, give you your word of honour, that you won’t say anything to anybody back at the ol’ base about this, OR, the Adamantium Spanner is gonna go splatskie.

**Griffin**: Uh, he promises, he crosses his heart.

**Angus**: Ok, sir, who-- what-- what is this big secret you’ve been keeping?

**Merle**: (Another deep sigh) Angus. I want you to meet… my… kids… [grumbly sighs]

**Griffin**: Uh-

**Merle**: This is Mavis--

**Griffin**: She does a little curtsy, and says,

**Mavis**: Hi, it’s-- it’s nice to meet you? Who, who’s your new friend, Pops?

**Merle**: Eh… this is, uh [stammers] a child detective. He, uh, I think he, I dunno, I think he looks for missing children or something,

**Angus**: That’s not-- that’s not actually true, I just-- I’m more of a--

**Merle**: Well, whatever the hell, it doesn’t matter, you’re never gonna see him again, Mavie, so don’t worry about it, this is the last you’ll see of this guy. And this is, this is my little fireball, this is Mookie.

**Griffin**: [amused] Mookie… Uh, Mookie, uh, doesn’t even address Angus at all, uh--

**Clint**: Good boy.

**Griffin**: Angus has, Angus has taken off his feathered cap, by the way, and is being very polite now, to your children. Mookie just says,

**Mookie**: Whaddja get me?! Whaddja get me?!?

**Merle**: Well--

**Griffin**: He’s like, pinning you down on the ground, demanding.

**Merle**: [amused] Alright alright alright, god, okay, wrassle wrassle wrassle! Wrassle wrassle wrassle! Haha, okay! Here ya go, fireball! I got you this delicious root beer barrel.

**Griffin**: [laughs]

**Mookie**: [lisping] It’s dirty! It’s real dirty! Is it-- is it okay to eat still?!

**Merle**: …Yeah! Listen, let daddy tell ya, that’s called “roughage,” and you eat the root beer barrel, and it makes you regular.

**Griffin**: He throws the root beer barrel in his mouth and, just, is love-in’ it. Lovin’ it!

**Merle**: [laughs]

**Griffin**: And Mavis says,

**Mavis**: Mookie that’s-- that’s really gross-- okay. Okay. You sure that’s okay for him to eat?

**Merle**: Oh, yeah, honey, don’t worry about it, would Daddy give one of you kids something bad? [chuckles]

**Griffin**: Mavis walks over, and, uh, starts talking to Angus, and says, uh,

**Mavis**: He didn’t tell you about us, did he? Okay so, uh, I’m Mavis-- I’m Merle’s daughter by marriage, my mom is Hekuba Roughridge, formerly Mrs. Hekuba Highchurch during their shortly lived marital union. And that’s Mookie, that’s Merle’s boy with- with Hekuba, and my dear half-brother.

**Griffin**: Angus is just like, slack-jawed at all of this by the way, Angus does *not* know how to respond, and Mavis walks over to you, and-- sort of picks Mookie up and dusts him off, and says like,

**Mavis**: Okay so, tell us about your adventures then. Out with it, what-- what have you been up to?

**Merle**: [whew] Well, just a bunch of stuff, uh, some-- I died a bunch of times…

**Mavis**: You what?!

**Merle**: Yeaaah, it was really weird, there were these worms--

**Mookie**: Did you go to heaven?!

**Merle**: Uhh...no, [chuckles], not much chance of that, fireball, no, not much chance of that... Everything worked out, and we were actually heroes! This is one of the few times where we didn’t uh, kill a bunch of people and, and blow a bunch of towns up so uh, it was kind of a, a, blue ribbon day for the Tres Horny Boys-- uh I mean uh, your--

**Mavis**: The what, the--

**Merle**: --daddy and his associ-- Daddy and his co-workers.

**Griffin**: [smothering laughter]

**Mavis**: ...what did you call yourselves before?

**Merle**: Nuh-- Nothing, no, no, it was, it was-- oh forg-- it’s anoth-- it’s like another language, it’s uh, it’s uh, Phandalinian, so uh, yeah don’t worry about that-- Oh, oh, by the way Mavis, I brought you a little something too, I-- I don’t want you to think that--

**Mavis**: It's not a gross root beer barrel, is it?

**Merle**: No no no, no no.

**Mavis**: Okay, because I'm allergic to... dirt.

**Merle**: I know we haven't really... you know, I haven't been a very good correspondent, and I know I haven't spent a lot of time with you kids growing up, so, you know, you're getting to the age now, you're what, 150?

**Mavis**: I'm-- no, I'm like 12.

**Merle**: Yeah, but in dwarf years, that's like 150-- [crosstalk]

**Mavis**: [laughing a little] Like 12 years, yeah, 12 of 'em.

**Merle**: So I want to give you this so Daddy can stay in better touch with you.

**Clint**: And I give her the Stone of Farspeech.

**Griffin**: Okay. You give her another Stone of Farspeech, I assume, not your own.

**Clint**: Yeah. That way--

**Griffin**: Okay. You give her a Stone of Farspeech and she says,

**Mavis**: Oh, man! I've actually been wanting one of these-- all the other kids in my class have a Stone and like, Mom won't let me have one yet, so, I'll just keep this one secret, I guess?

**Merle**: I still have to, you know, okay any apps that you put on your Stone of Farspeech, and, you know, there is a data limit, but... you know, I just, I think you're of the age now where you could, you know, use some sage advice and, while you won't get that from me, at least maybe I can tell you somebody to talk to.

**Griffin**: Mookie spits out his root beer barrel which he's been sucking intently on and he says,

**Mookie**: Does mine have apps, too!? Can mine get apps?!

**Merle**: It has... app-etizing flavor!

**Mookie**: Good enough!

**Griffin**: And he pops it back in.[**Merle**: Good boy.] So you have a nice day in the park with Angus and your children Mavis and Mookie. Do you have any questions for, for them?

**Merle**: Yeah. So... um...

**Clint**: I kinda pull Mavis off to the side.

**Griffin**: Mookie starts trying to wrestle with Angus, who is like, who's definitely never wrestled before?

**Clint**: Oh, he'll kill him.

**Griffin**: Oh yeah, Mookie is just like, destroying him.

**Merle**: [calling out] Mookie! Go easy!

**Mookie**: Okay, Daddy!

**Merle**: He's a big weenie! [quieter] So, Mavis, honey, you know, not that I care, but how’s, um... how's your mom?

**Mavis**: Oh! Yeah, I mean, she's doing really well. Her, her pearl farm has been really, really productive this year actually? She's got really the biggest beachside property of the whole Coralheart clan. So yeah, she's doing well. She's started dating again, like, and I thought it was gonna be weird, but um...

**Merle**: Wait wait, wait, she's da-- uh, she's dating again?

**Mavis**: Yeah, yeah. Oh yeah, no, she's been doing that for, whooh, a while now, but yeah, she's seeing a, a, a nice dwarf, you know him, uh, Glymeth, he was one of the, you know him, he's been part of the Coralheart clan for decades now...

**Merle**: Maybe... yeah, but uh, you know, Daddy meets a lot of people, honey, and... not sure if I remember. So she's dating again, no shit. I mean, no kidding, no kidding, no kidding. Wow.

**Griffin**: Mookie runs up to you and interrupts your conversation, says,

**Mookie**: Daddy, how much longer you think you're gonna be adventurin' for? I'm gettin' bored on the beach, hangin' out!

**Merle**: Well, you know, fireball, that uh... Daddy really kinda thought that, well, you know, when he gets done with this bunch, maybe you would wanna go into the adventuring business with him. You know, it would be, you know, Highchurch and Son and Daughter, or Highchurch and Daughter and Son.

**Griffin**: Simultaneously Mookie says,

**Mookie**: That sounds like fun!

**Griffin**: And Mavis says,

**Mavis**: That sounds extremely dangerous.

**Merle**: Oh, honey. [chuckles] You got Dadski here to take care of you, you don't have to worry about anything. You know, I don't like to brag, but in my little group, I'm the go-to guy for any action, any fighting, any combat. Any spellcasting. I'm kind of the guy.

**Griffin**: Angus is standing next to you now when you say that and just gives like a biiiiiig fake shit-eating grin and gives a thumbs-up and nods, to, like, agree with what you've been saying.

**Clint**: And I glare at him and put my hand on the Adamantium Spanner.

**Griffin**: [laughs and claps] Okay. So you all have like a nice day in the park, and it's getting late now. And you are, the four of you cross the bridge out of the Blue Lake District to head to the docks to get your kids back on the boat to get back to the home beach of the Coralheart clan. And it's gotten fairly late, the docks have more or less cleared out at this point with most of the sailors having receded to the seedier parts of Neverwinter for the evening. And Mookie has run really really far ahead, and is sort of investigating the display window of a port sweets shop that has been closed for a few hours now, and Mavis shrugs and runs up to kind of console him, because Mookie's very upset that the store is not open and in business. So they're way far ahead of you and have finished crossing the bridge. You and Angus are sort of further back, and Angus says,

**Angus**: Sir, I know it's none of my business, but I'm– I’m curious why you haven't told anybody about your kids.

**Merle**: Angus, I was a really crappy dad, and I was an even crappier husband. And, you know, one of my biggest shames is that I kind of left 'em in the lurch, and I've been... [sighs] Now that I've come into a little bit of dough, I've kinda been, you know, trying to rebuild my relationship with the kids, and, you know, I'd-- I don't want everybody to think I was a complete and total shithead. Oh, I'm sorry- *poophead*.

**Angus**: Oh, you can swear in front of me.

**Merle**: Oh, shit, thank God. So... I didn't want them to know what a turd I was, but I really... [emotional] you know, Pan has really helped me turn my life around.

**Both**: [laughing]

**Merle**: I'm a new man. I'm a new man in Pan.

**Griffin**: He says, uh:

**Angus**: You know, just watching you all day, it's just... I don't think you have anything to worry about. I think you're... I think you're gonna be a good dad, from here on out.

**Merle**: God, don't make me like you, you little turdbottle. Look. Thank you. I appreciate it. But I still don't want anybody to know about this, okay?

**Angus**: Okay, it'll be our secret.

**Merle**: Yeah. And, you know what, I trust you, because I think you know that if you say--

**Angus**: Yes, I know, you'll beat me to death, yes, I gotcha, I gotcha.

**Merle**: I'll murder ya.

**Griffin**: About eighty yards or so ahead of you, you hear, on the far end of the bridge, you hear a commotion. And you see, coming down the staircase from the shopping district of Neverwinter and barreling down towards the docks, is a huge wagon that is loaded with crates of trade goods, that has come loose from its hitch up in the trading quarters, and is barreling down this long staircase towards the dockyard. And Mavis is too busy trying to wrangle Mookie away from the candy store to notice this wagon that is flying directly at them. And they're so far away from you and Angus, too far away for you to do anything except sort of run towards them and watch what happens next.

**Griffin**: And what happens next is pretty incredible. Because right when the wagon is about to fall on your kids, it changes directions, suddenly and violently, and it pitches just ninety degrees to the right instantly, sending the whole wagon and all of its contents crashing through the front wall of this candy shop, sending the jars of sweets inside just scattering to the floor and just, just just destroying the front facade of this shop.

**Griffin**: And Angus is sprinting towards your kids, but you look around just for a moment, and to the left of this scene of destruction, several yards away, you see, obscured by a pile of shipping crates and downed sails, you see the red-robed figure that you've encountered half a dozen times now. And his arm is outstretched and crackling with energy. And he lowers his arm, and he turns to face you, and nods, and then disappears.

[A Lunar Interlude plays]

**Griffin**: So Magnus, after--

**Travis**: Yes, Griffin? Wait, let me-- [in exaggerated Magnus voice] Yes, Griffin?

**Griffin**: After the events of the last episode, you are having kind of a rough time. Because there are things that you saw on that scroll and there are things that you know, but there are things that you can't think, and there are things that you can't understand, and that divide is just like, it's just killing you, man.

**Travis**: Is it like, fugue state, you know what I mean?

**Griffin**: No, it's more like, what you saw on the scroll, you saw yourself wearing a red robe, right? So you have that information, you saw, you see yourself wearing a red robe. But there's like a next logical thought that would come from that observation, but when you try to think it, your mind just turns to static. So you saw it, but you can't understand it, but you know it, but you, like, can't figure it out, and it's, it's just tearing you apart and keeping you up at night.

**Travis**: Is it safe to assume that it's the same kind of static as is usually associated with stuff that the voidfish has blanked out?

**Griffin**: Yeah, that's the only thing you can think, is that it's a familiar sensation of when information was sort of kept from you before you were inoculated by the voidfish, but that's not how the inoculation works, right? Like, after drinking the voidfish's ichor, it shouldn't be able to suppress anything from you. So you decide during one of your many sleepless nights after your discovery to head to the voidfish's chambers to get sort of a direct answer from it.

**Travis**: Well, as direct as you can, from the voidfish.

**Griffin**: Sure. It's really late, it's like 3 AM, um, there's just a small amount of, a small outfit of guards guarding the hallway into the voidfish's chamber, and they allow you to pass through undisturbed. I think you probably have like a certain amount of--

**Travis**: Swagger?

**Griffin**: Hero worship- well also swagger, but I think these guards also know your name and know what you've done at this point, and like, just think the world of you, so... so they let you pass through, no problem. And you enter the voidfish's chamber, and you realize that Johann's already retired to bed, this is the first time you've been in the chamber alone with the voidfish, ever. And the voidfish is not asleep, and in fact as soon as you walk into the room, it twirls and fans out its tendrils in its tank as you enter the room and approach it. And it immediately sings a refrain of its little song.

[music playing]

**Griffin**: Um, what do you do?

**Travis**: I... put my hand on the glass.

**Griffin**: It immediately puts a tendril up on its side of the glass where your hand is.

**Magnus**: Hey, buddy.

**Griffin**: It twirls around again, and sings another refrain of its song, and then it takes one of its tendrils, and it kind of like, motions upward, like pointing at the top of the tank. And then with another tendril kind of like motions, like, beckons you towards it.

**Travis**: Okay. In for a penny, in for a pound kind of thing, you know? I came to talk to the voidfish, I'm gonna talk to the voidfish.

**Griffin**: Okay. So it's motioning like upwards, what do you--?

**Travis**: Is there any kind of like stairs, or any kind of like...?

**Griffin**: There's a ladder leading up to the top of the tank.

**Travis**: Okay, I climb the ladder, do I need to do like an acrobatics, athletics check?

**Griffin**: No, it’s just a ladder. You make your way up it. The tank has a...

[dice noise]

**Travis**: I rolled a 19.

**Griffin**: [exasperated] Oh *shit* yeah, you climb it super cool and good, you do it one-handed. No legs, one hand. *Totally sick*. And at the top of the ladder, you're on the heavy metal sort of lid to this tank, and there's a hatch with a long handle on it. And it pops open easily, and below you is just... the tank, and the liquid that the voidfish is suspended in. And it's sort of backed away from this side of the tank that the hatch is on, sort of giving you room to hop on in.

**Travis**: To get *in*...?

**Griffin**: Yep.

**Travis**: Well, you know, I said that thing about the penny and the pound, like... [making squeamish noises] I get in its... I get in.

**Griffin**: Okay. You take a deep breath, and... are you going in like full, full, like, with all your stuff, what are you taking--

**Travis**: No, no, I'm in my fantasy underpants.

**Griffin**: Okay, you strip down to your fantasy underpants. What are they, are they fantasy MeUndies?

**Travis**: Oh yeah.

**Griffin**: Okay, so they're stylish and comfortable, made of a modal fabric that wicks away moisture.

**Travis**: Yeah, and they're, can I just say? They look great.

**Griffin**: Oh, *of course* they look great. Anyway, you, you strip down, and hop into the tank. The water is surprisingly warm. It's not like-

**Travis**: I do want to paint a- I do want to say it's just occurred to me that if anybody walked into these chambers right now... I would probably either never live it down, or get in the *most* trouble. Like, this thing that I'm doing, I almost guarantee there's probably rules against like, please don't get in the voidfish's, like, pool.

**Griffin**: Yeah, people have to drink this stuff, right? At the very least you are hopping into the beverage center of people of like, the inoculation station. So you think about that, but you lower yourself into the water, and um, you're actually like, you're able to open your eyes in here, and it doesn't sting or anything like that, everything is pretty cool, and you lower yourself down to be, like, on the level with the voidfish. And a single, it outstretches a single tendril, and it starts to reach towards you with this tendril.

**Travis**: Okay...

**Griffin**: Do you allow, are you cool with that?

**Travis**: Can I tell you something, Griffin? I, Travis McElroy, would not be, but I think Magnus is totally down.

**Griffin**: Okay.

**Travis**: I have all these damn questions!

**Griffin**: It reaches out and taps you on the forehead, and as soon as it does, your vision kind of goes dark.

**Travis**: And Magnus is dead.

**Griffin**: And Magnus dies and that's it. Thanks for listening, everybody! And now it's on to the next- no. You actually are shown a memory, and it's not your memory. You are seeing a memory and you know that you are seeing it from the perspective of the voidfish. And you're in a dark place, filled with twinkling crystal, and- that are just sort of casting these dancing lights on the wall, and it's a- the wall of a cave, you're inside a cave, but it feels... because you're feeling what the voidfish is feeling in this memory, it feels like home. And you know that, because there's other voidfish here too.

**Travis**: [gasps]

**Griffin**: And they are of varying sizes, with, with sort of, you know how the voidfish has like a spiral galaxy of lights inside of it? There are other voidfish with like, different patterns of lights rotating inside of their gelatinous bodies, and you feel like, safe in this place. But you know that the other voidfish have been communicating stories of a coming storm that will doom this home, that will doom this safe place. And so the voidfish worked to build up their defensives, and shut the world out, and because they're sort of isolating themselves from this coming storm, they don't really have any interest in entertaining these visitors that arrive, who are groundwalkers, and they're clad in these brilliant red robes, and then suddenly the vision goes to static.

And it sort of, it pulls away from you in shock.

**Travis**: Okay, I, I grab a quick gulp of air--

**Griffin**: You swim up to the top of the tank and get another breath and then swim back down. And the voidfish seems, like, kind of, kinda scared. It seems like kind of worried. But after a moment, it reaches out a tendril and touches you on the forehead again, and you're pulled into another vision. And... you are... the voidfish again, and you are with a, uh, one of these red robes, and you are sprinting towards a great silver ship, like a great silver boat, um, that is starting to lift upwards out of the water where it's docked. And then suddenly the vision goes to static. And the voidfish kind of retreats again. Scared that it can't show you this, this vision.

Do you have any question for the voidfish? I realize, like, the voidfish is like revealing these things to you, but like, does Magnus have any questions he wants the voidfish to try to answer?

**Travis**: Um... I'm gonna try something. Magnus thinks, *Can you hear me?*

**Griffin**: Um, the voidfish spins around and sings out its song.

**Travis**: Okay.

**Magnus**: Why... why me? I feel like we are connected in some way. Why?

**Griffin**: Um... hm. Okay, the voidfish thinks about it, and then... it touches you on the forehead again with one of those tendrils, and it tries to show you that exact same scene of the- of, uh- of- of it being taken toward a big silver ship. This time, in this memory, which again, you can only see a few seconds of before it sort of statics out, ah, you see the sky is just pitch black. There is nothing happening in the sky. And you also see something horrifying, it looks like there are these big black pillars of tar, sort of just falling out of the sky and smashing into the world that you're on. And you also realize that you are sprinting towards this ship, and then the vision goes to static again. And it pulls back away from you.

**Magnus**: Is this the past...? Is this happening, is this the future? What am I looking at?

**Griffin**: Um... it... doesn't know how to answer that.

**Magnus**: Okay. Let's simplify. Flash once for yes, twice for no.

**Griffin**: Okay. It flashes once for yes.

**Magnus**: Is that a vision of the past?

**Griffin**: It flashes once for yes.

**Magnus**: Is that a vision of *my* past?

**Griffin**: It doesn't know how to answer that.

**Magnus**: Is it a vision of *your* past?

**Griffin**: It flashes once for yes.

**Magnus**: Were you separated from your family?

**Griffin**: It flashes once for yes. Um... it, it re--by the way, you probably need another breath. Um... and when you come back down from taking this breath, it, uh, it sort of spins around like it's excited, like it has an idea. And then it reaches out and touches you on the forehead, and you see... you see what looks like a galaxy, you see this big scene but it like really quickly it statics out, and then it tries it again, but this time, the galaxy, like, this vision looks like... it looks more rudimentary, like it looks like, like a 3D animation or something like that, but *that's* staticked out.

**Griffin**: And it keeps trying this and trying this, but every time it does, like, the vision becomes more and more and more abstract, and finally, it shows you a vision that you can see all of, without any static, uh, that has been abstracted down to the point of looking like a child's drawing. And it's all just like crayons and abstract shapes, and these, these shapes seem to tell a story that you can see all of, without being interrupted by the static.

**Griffin**: So, [music quietly coming in] you see twelve circles of all different colors and they are arranged in a larger circle, and they're rotating in perfect harmony with each other, and they continue this orbit for a few seconds, and then you see a bright white circle of light that sort of flies in and lands in the middle of their dance. And for a moment, these twelve multi-colored circles rotate a bit faster, with more complex rhythms, spiraling inward and outward in this beautiful choreography, all with that white light at the center of it, and during that movement, that frenzied movement, another shape appears, and it's a huge black circle that slowly encompasses everything you see. And it grows larger with each circle that's consumed, and then it's just that big black circle, all menacing and stationary. But then the white light shoots out of its mass, out of its side, and flies away, and then the black circle moves slowly in pursuit. And then you see the same cycle again, of the spinning circles and the light appearing and then the big black circle coming to devour all of it. And it plays about four or five times before you have to swim up to get a breath of air.

**Travis**: Okay... I have... I have at least three questions.

**Griffin**: Okay.

**Travis**: Question one, and this is for Griffin the DM--or no, I'll ask the fish.

**Griffin**: Yeah, please.

**Magnus**: Does this have anything to do with the planes that Lucas was working with?

**Griffin**: It doesn't know how to answer that question.

**Magnus**: Are you a prisoner?

**Griffin**: It flashes twice for no.

**Magnus**: Would you like to be free?

**Griffin**: Um... It sings its song, it sings a refrain of its song. Um, and then it looks like it's tired? It looks, it looks actually extremely exhausted.

**Magnus**: I just have one more question.

**Griffin**: It looks up at you one last time.

**Magnus**: Should I trust the Director?

**Griffin**: It doesn't answer you. It doesn't know how. You climb out of the tank, sort of leaving this thing to recover. And as you start to walk out of the room, and dress back up, you start to walk out of the room and the voidfish slams against the wall of its tank. And it's kind of scary. And it sings one more refrain of its song, and it sounds like--it sounds like panicked, it sounds like it wants something from you desperately, as it's singing. And it motions towards a small desk in the back of the room with one of its tendrils.

**Magnus**: Are you hungry...?

**Griffin**: It blinks twice for no. And it, it's pointing, pointing, pointing, pointing towards the desk.

**Travis**: Okay, I check out the desk.

**Griffin**: Okay. This, it's just a small desk that Johann has set up in the back of the room, that sure enough, he does have a bunch of compositions on. And there's one that is almost like, on a comically small scroll that Johann has titled “The Voidfish's Lament”. Magnus plays an instrument, right? That's something I vaguely remember from character creation.

**Travis**: Yeah, he definitely does, he loves music and dance.

**Griffin**: That's right. Okay. Can I assume... I don't think you're like a master, you know, lutesman or anything like that or else it certainly would have come up in your story, but I remember when we were doing character development that he has some sort of--

**Travis**: Yeah, he's got some musical abilities.

**Griffin**: Um, so you see this, this this this sheet music for “The Voidfish's Lament”, and it's not an especially difficult song to play because it's just seven notes, all arranged on a staff in two different phrases. So you see this sheet music and you kind of play it out in your head and it echoes the tune that you've heard the voidfish sing. Only, it's been awhile since you've played any music, and so you read this sheet music like you used to, when you were first learning music, by reading it letter by letter, instead of reading it as, you know, tablature on a sheet of music. And so you read the composition like that, letter by letter, and when you read it like that, the notes read, [music accompanying each letter] E-G-G, and then a rest, and then, B-A-B-E.

**Magnus**: Baby. You had a baby? You have an egg…?

**Griffin**: As soon as you have that realization, as soon as you say that out loud... in a room you're not in, and in a room you've never been, something reacts to you saying what you just said in the voidfish's chamber. And a quick, bright light flashes, and a small, quiet alarm bell rings.

**Griffin**: So, starting off with everybody's favorite section of the podcast, the level-up… time.

**Clint**: Wheeeee!

**Griffin**: The level-up shuffle. Um, we'll start out where we usually start out, I guess, which is with a trip to Leon the Artificer to put your tokens in the Fantasy gachapon.

**Travis**: I put mine in myself and turn the handle myself.

**Griffin**: You fuckin' sprint into the room, and Leon is like--

**Leon**: Hello th--

**Griffin**: And you just like hold up a hand like, no, fuck you, Leon, and you just sprint up and slam-dunk it into the coin slot and turn the handle, and he's like, a tear wells up in his eye, he's so proud and so relieved. Uh, roll a d20 for me, ma’boi.

[phone buzz]

**Travis**: Oh, hold on, sorry, one second. Yes, hello? This is Travis.

**Griffin**: Oh...

**Travis**: Hi, Luke!

**Griffin**: I think he's getting a call from an apartment place.

**Travis**: Oh, I'm doin' great.

**Griffin**: [hushed] Listen to how cordial he's being.

**Clint**: [hushed] Magnus rushes in, but Travis is very cautious about his domicile. We sound like we're doing golf commentary, Griffin… I think he ought to go with a mashie niblick [type of golf club] here.

[snickering]

**Travis**: Um, we could be there as early as Monday.

**Clint**: So let's see, that'll be maybe a wood, he might go with a wood, here.

**Griffin**: I think he's definitely, definitely got wood, nobody can argue with that.

[snickering]

**Clint**: Oh, I know, 'cause he loves housing, and that gives him wood every single time. Ah, now you've seen Travis in this situation before, Griffin, what can we expect him to do, how can we expect him to attack the hole?

**Travis**: [simultaneous] Great. That sounds fine to me.

[snorting]

**Justin**: Yuckarooney. I could be playing Destiny right now.

**Griffin**: I could, I’m gonna actually, Juice, do you wanna knock out a quick Iron Banner match?

**Travis**: Great!

**Justin**: Yes, let's get a quick IB in.

**Travis**: Um, so, yes, send me the lease and tell me the best way to get it signed and get it back to you and then--

**Griffin**: [simultaneous] Listen to this businessman! [gruff voice] I'll have the lease, on my desk.

**Travis**: Okay, I mean, it's really up to you guys, it's whatever you guys are comfortable with... [continuing]

**Griffin**: Mm, have it *your* way!

**Clint**: Well played, well played indeed.

**Griffin**: Sounds like we're about to have a fateful signing, of an important document. [pause] Gotta be, gotta be gettin' to the end of the phone call now, right?

**Clint**: Yeah, I know, 'cause we're almost done with the podcast! [drops his voice, croaking, pretending to be the other side of the call] Mh meh mrh meh, we pay cable and water.

[smothered laughter]

**Justin**: That's what it is! It's just like, people live there right now, who gives a shit?

**Clint**: [croaking] Now you know that we have a li'l--

**Travis**: Yeah, I don't think-- I think that'll be fine.

**Clint**: [croaking] We have a water issue in the basement, uhhhh…

[laughter]

**Griffin**: [croaking] We just, you know, we just decided it's a swimming pool now.

**Clint**: [croaking] Yeah, that's the way to look at it. And you don't have to have a washing machine, you just dunk your clothes in the basement.

**Griffin**: [croaking] Dunk ‘em right in the basement zone. [crosstalk]

**Clint:** [croaking] And that keeps it clean.

**Travis**: Sounds great!

**Clint**: [croaking] And the rat problem is almost completely under control.

**Travis:** Cool, yeah, I’ll let you know.

**Griffin**: [croaking] I mean a good majority of them did drown.

[laughter]

**Clint**: [croaking] Yeah. Now you're gonna have to scoop up the floatin' dead ones…

**Travis**: Great, thank you so much. Have a great day. Bye.

**Clint**: [normal tone] Aaaaannd…

**Griffin**: And...

**Travis**: Sorry about that, fellas.

**Griffin**: BAZINGA! We have him!

**Clint**: It's in the hole! It's in the hole!

[crosstalk]

**Travis:** I’ve got an apartment.

**Griffin**: All right, congrats, Trav!

**Clint**: Way to go, bud.

**Griffin**: All right, let's, we *have* to get back into the game.

**Justin**: Yeah, please. My character sheet says I'm level 10, is that right?

**Griffin**: Yeah, you are now, and we're gonna get to that.

**Justin** **&** **Travis**: No no no, we *were* level 10 [crosstalk]

**Griffin**: Oh really! Oh shit! Well, we're going up to 12 then, boys! Let's resolve this gachapon roll first.

**Travis**: I rolled 14.

**Griffin**: ‘Kay. All right! So, you put your token in and turn it, and a fairly small capsule pops out of the fantasy gachapon. And when you pop it open, you see inside just... it's just a plain, sort of bronze or maybe even copper ring. It doesn't have any sort of etching or anything on it, it's just like a plain sort of brown metal ring. And you bring it to Leon, who cracks open his big book of magic items and is flipping through it, like,

**Leon**: Let's see, rings, ring, rings...

**Griffin**: And he's holding it up, because there's a bunch of rings in this book. But he thinks he's finally found it, and he says,

**Leon**: Oh, this is ah, this is kind of a neat one. This is the Ring of the Giant Slayer.

**Travis**: [imitates Leon] It goes on your penis!

**Leon**: It's meant for your dingle-donger. No, it's a finger ring, like a normal one, but you wear it and it grants you some extra proficiency when battling something much larger than yourself.

**Griffin**: Which means that while you're wearing the ring, you have +1 Attack against and +1 AC versus attacks done by enemies who are of the size category Large, which means like, 8-16 feet or higher. So anything that's like, anything that's 8 feet tall, or taller, is technically of "Large" category, or "Giant" or "Gargantuan" or "Colossal"...

**Travis**: I fight a lot of those things, so I think that's probably useful.

**Griffin**: Yeah, so when you're fighting something basically much bigger than yourself, you get 1 extra AC and +1 to Attack.

**Clint**: So look out Yao Ming!

**Travis**: Cool. I put it on my non-wedding-ring finger.

**Griffin**: Okay. You have nine of those, so... [crosstalk] ...I didn't think you would stack them up like a roll of Life Savers.

**Travis**: [simultaneous] Yeah. Uh, let's say, I put it on my left pointer finger.

**Griffin**: Okay. Cool. Who's up next?

**Clint**: Okay, Merle... Merle steps into the room and from about ten feet away, takes his token--

**Griffin**: Oh God.

**Clint**: --and bounces it on the floor like beer pong, and it goes right into the slot.

**Griffin**: Okay, well, no.

**Travis**: You gotta roll for that.

**Griffin**: You're gonna roll if you're gonna do a trick stunt.

**Clint**: I'll do it, I'll roll! I have that much confidence.

**Griffin**: This is just like a, I guess, a... a ranged attack? With a coin? Why do you guys do this every time?! As soon as Leon sees you stop and not approach the machine with the token, he's like,

**Leon**: GOD! NO! PLEASE, GOD! NO!

**Travis**: I whisper to him,

**Magnus**: I just wanna remind you, I was a good, good gachapon boy.

**Leon**: You're a good boy.

**Griffin**: He hands you a toffee.

**Magnus**: Yayyy! [nom nom nom noises]

**Clint**: This should be Wisdom 'cause it's calculating the angles and it's a lot of trigonometry.

**Griffin**: Okay, sure, yeah, why not.

**Clint**: Okay, so. [dice] 15 plus 3 for Wisdom. 18.

**Griffin**: Oh, with an 18, it still doesn't go in.

**Clint:** [crosstalk] Oh, come on!

**Griffin:** This would require maybe basically the greatest roll of all time, and in fact it plinks off the glass of the machine and it hits Leon in the face. And he like recoils, he's like,

**Leon**: AH, GOD, JUST PICK IT UP, PLEASE, and put it in the machine! Please! I'm dying. I'm in hell. I'm in hell and you're Satan.

**Clint**: [morose] Okay. So I pick it up and I walk over to the slot. I'm a bit chagrined.

**Griffin**: Yeah.

**Clint**: Although I'm not really sure what a chagrin is. I put it in the slot and turn the crank but I turn it the wrong direction.

**Griffin**: (very exasperated) It just doesn't do it like that. It doesn't turn like that. It won't turn like that.

**Clint**: Well, it should!

**Griffin**: (still exasperated) It doesn't, it turns in one direction.

**Clint**: Which direction does it turn in?

**Griffin**: [exasperated] I think clockwise! But do it, just--

**Clint**: You think? You *think* clockwise? [crosstalk]

**Travis**: It's not real, Dad, he's making it up!

**Griffin**: It turns clockwise, and I *know* it.

**Clint**: Okay, so I start to turn it clockwise...

**Griffin**: And it goes. The coin falls in and then it--you--it does the thing.

**Clint**: Okay. All right.

**Griffin**: Roll a d20.

**Clint**: How 'bout a 6?

**Griffin**: [tone of dread] Oh, no. Oh, god.

**Clint**: Is that Griffin saying 'oh, god'?

**Griffin**: Oh, no. [back to normal tone] No, it's fine. Oh, no, this one's amazing! Okay. Uh, a fairly large capsule, about three feet long, falls out of the machine, and you sort of make an effort to pop it open-- how tall is Merle? The thing may be taller than him.

**Clint**: Wow. Probably... well, not 4 feet, maybe 3 and a half feet? 3 and a half.

**Griffin**: Yeah, this thing is about as big as you, and you pop it open and inside of this container is a broom. And... that's it, it's just a nice broom and you sweep things-- No, you take it over to Leon, who is like:

**Leon:** Oh, well, I don't even really need the book for this, but I guess let's keep it official.

**Griffin:** --And he opens up the tome to the only entry for "broom" and he says,

**Leon**: You lucky boy, this is a fun one! This is a Broom of Flying!

**Travis**: [gasps]

**Griffin**: And sure enough, this wooden broom, which weighs 3 lbs, functions like a mundane broom until you stand astride it and speak its command word. It then hovers beneath you and can be ridden in the air. It has a flying speed of 50 feet, it can carry up to 400 lbs., you can send the broom to travel alone to a destination within one mile of you if you speak the command word, name the location, and are familiar with that place. The broom comes back to you when you speak another command word, provided that the broom is still within one mile of you. You have a magic flying broom.

**Clint**: Awesome! I can play Quidditch now!

**Travis**: Yep.

**Griffin**: You can definitely play Quidditch.

**Clint**: Awesome! That's cool!

**Griffin**: Yeah, that'll be a fun one.

**Clint**: Thank you, gachapon machine!

**Griffin**: That's good because you also like doing dumb mounted attacks that never work.

**Clint**: Yeah, yeah! And I apologize for being a prick.

**Griffin**: Leon just nods, shakes his head. And then Taako, Leon doesn't say anything to you, he just like fuckin' stares daggers at you. In your direction, just stone-faced.

**Justin**: Leon sees Taako walk dutifully across the room, and walk up to the machine, and drop a coin in and turn it, and he hears--his back is--he hears it, 'cause Taako's back is to him.

**Griffin**: He falls to his knees and thanks a god, the name of which you've never heard before, and he is weeping and shuddering and--

**Justin**: And just then, Taako's coin flies across the room and smacks Leon in the face, 'cause it had been a clone. I cast Mislead out in the hallway.

[laughter]

**Justin**: And Taako's just screaming with laughter. It's the funniest thing that's ever happened in Taako's entire life. It's literally the best.

**Taako**: I don't even want anything! You can keep the-- literally! Keep the coin! Nothing you can give me would be better than your expression right now!

**Griffin**: Uh, the coin bounced off his face and rolled off his desk, landing fairly close to you again. And he is just like... he's in shock, I think? He's stopped crying, he doesn't seem like sad or disturbed, you see--he seems... like he's broken. Yeah, he's no longer functioning. You have thoroughly broken this man.

**Taako**: I win!

**Justin**: All right, then I pick up my coin and put it in the machine, [dice] and it is 16!

**Griffin**: Okay. A capsule about the length of your hand falls out of the machine and when you pop it open, there is what looks like a small circular bracelet inside. And you are gonna have to look this one up, you like, scoot Leon's book away from him as he is frozen in place, and start looking through the bracelet section, and you finally find one with the picture of the bracelet that you have. And you find an entry for the Band of Projected Thought. And what this does, simply, is: you can communicate telepathically with any creature you can see within 30 feet of you.

**Justin**: Okay, cool!

**Travis**: Like forever?!

**Griffin**: While you're wearing it, yeah.

**Travis**: Wow! Nice!

**Griffin**: That was a good batch of items, guys! But you know where we can find an even better batch of items?

**Justin**: [theatrical gasp]

**FANTASY COSTCO THEME**: Fantasy Costco, where all your dreams come true. Got a deal for you!

[rest of Fantasy Costco theme plays]

**Griffin**: That's where the music just played, there.

**Travis**: Griffin, I have a question for you. Did you purposefully not tell Merle the command word for the broom? Does he have to guess it? [crosstalk]

**Clint**: I'm gonna come up with my own.

**Griffin**: Oh, he's deffo gonna come up with it himself. Okay, I sent you all the batch of Fantasy Costco suggestions. I just wanna say, we got 1300 emails with suggestions, and I went through, it was a labor of love, but I went through pretty much all of them. And gang, they got so good! We're gettin' like fairly close to the end, this may or may not be the last Fantasy Costco trip-- It probably won't be, there probably will be one more, but like--y'all are getting so good at this! And thank you all for sending in those suggestions. So yeah, we got some new items, and then I have also every item that you all haven't purchased, so the store's catalog is pretty enormous at this point. So... oh, and you have 1800 gold pieces plus if you had any left over, I don't know if you've been tracking that, from previous trips, money that you didn't spend.

**Clint**: I think we had 200 left.

**Griffin**: Are you makin' that up, or...?

**Clint**: No! I don't know why, but I seem to remember 200, maybe not. 'Cause we didn't spend everything, because we put some in the pool.

**Griffin**: Let's just stick with the 1800 for now.

**Justin**: Why don't we just ask our listeners to tweet it at us right now?

**Griffin**: Yeah, just tweet it at us right now... oh wait... that's not how time works, damn.

**Clint**: Now the 1800, was that our reward for bringing in the item?

**Griffin**: Yeah, that was your payment, each of you got 1800.

**Clint**: Each!

**Griffin**: Yes, yes.

**Clint**: Sweet.

**Griffin**: Yeah. So we got some new stuff in here! I'll just start going down some of it, and if you all want to purchase any of these new items, holler so we can just read it that way.

**Clint**: I already know what I'd like to buy.

**Griffin**: Okay?

**Clint**: I want to buy the Ring of the Grammarian.

**Griffin**: Oh, that is such a fun one.

**Clint**: You can use the Ring of the Grammarian to, once per day, alter one letter in a spell title, as you're casting it, for a different effect. For instance, user can start casting Cause Fear and activate the ring to instead cast Cause Bear.

[laughter]

**Clint**: The effect of these spells are determined by the DM, taking the wishes of the caster into account.

**Justin**: Literally. The best. [crosstalk]

**Griffin**: Maybe one of the best. And appropriately it was sent in by Harry Best.

**Clint**: It was!

**Griffin**: Fucking incredible.

**Clint**: The guy that started Best Buy!

**Griffin**: Yeah, that was him. So good. Okay, so you're buying that, that's 700 gold pieces so you have 1100 left.

**Clint**: And I am going to stash the 1100 because I'm gonna start saving up so I can buy the buttkicking John Williams' 8-year-old son Colin, Flaming Poisoning Raging Sword of Doom.

[crosstalk]

**Griffin**: Now that one does cost 60,000 gold pieces.

**Travis**: And you remember Griffin saying that this may be our last arc, right?

**Clint**: I'm planning on making a looooottt of moolah moolah in the next arc.

[Griffin laughs]

**Travis**: And then buying a sword for like, the final scene?

**Clint**: And then buying a giant swo- Yes. Yes, Travis.

**Griffin**: Hey, go for it, dude. I'm totally into it.

**Travis**: Some of your teammates could totally use that money.

**Griffin**: No, dog. No, you can't, this is good shit. That's good shit.

**Clint**: Think about it Travis, I buy swords all the time that I don't use!

**Griffin**: That's capital-G capital-S Good Shit. We're moving on.

**Clint**: All right. Yay me!

**Griffin**: Garfield the Deals Warlock goes,

**Garfield**: I love it! Chase that paper, son!

[laughter]

**Garfield**: Don't stop thinkin' about tomorrow!

**Travis**: I see two things I really want, and I can't decide between them.

**Griffin**: Does it include things like the Slicer of T’pire-Weir Isles, sent in by Riku Sakunen, which is an item that is useless, but with a good enough sales pitch, you can convince anyone of its value, and get them to trade you their most valuable possession. That's a fun one.

**Travis**: That is good.

**Griffin**: I do wanna point out, we got about 20 different vaping based items... [Clint laughs] the one I went with is the Billow-Branch from Jordan Reed, and it just is a cool vape that you can use to gain advantage on the appropriate Persuasion and Intimidation checks, or just use it as--for other purposes as well.

**Clint**: [quiet, crosstalk] Oh, that's funny.

**Travis**: No... neither of those...

**Griffin**: What're you thinkin' about?

**Travis**: I do like those. I'm looking at the Pocket Workshop, because I'm pretty sure it was created for Magnus.

**Griffin**: Uh yeah, this one was sent it by Joshua Kelly, do you wanna read the description?

**Travis**: Yes. From the makers of Pocket Spa comes the Pocket Workshop. Our top of the line master craftsman's woodworking shop is concealed within a battered red toolbox. When opened, the toolbox reveals a descending staircase that leads to a pocket dimension containing your deluxe craftsman's workshop. Your workshop is well-lit, properly ventilated, and equipped with saws, planes, lathes, and dozens of hand tools, everything you need to make your project a success. The workshop is always stocked with the highest quality wood from across the realms, as well as nutritious snacks and refreshments.

**Griffin**: So it takes-- it's kind of like the Pocket Spa, it's a pocket dimension where you can go and do some woodwork, and while you're inside of it... uh... I don't actually like the time distortion thing 'cuz I feel like you could use that to do some really fucked up shit--

**Travis**: Oh, and I so would, Griffin.

**Griffin**: Yeah, so there is no time distortion field inside of it, but it's just a little workshop that you can pop into whenever you need to.

**Justin**: Then you're gonna need to lower the price on that, 'cause if it doesn't have time distortion I think... [crosstalk]

**Travis**: Yeah, I agree. I'll tell you what, I'll take the Pocket Workshop and the Grappling Hook for 1800.

**All**: Hmmmm... hmmm...

**Clint**: The Grappling Hook--[drowned out, crosstalk]

**Travis**: The Grappling Hook you can only use once a day. I think that's a fair deal.

**Griffin**: The Grappling Hook was sent in by Brent Tucker, and just basically once a day it is a hookshot you can use. I put the once a day restriction on it, because otherwise you could more or less nullify most Acrobatics, Athletics checks that you would ever need to do. So yeah, you could use it for all kinds of different stuff. Garfield approaches and says,

**Garfield**: Mmm, angling to make a deallllllllll-llllllllll-llllllllll-llllllllll-ll?

**Clint**: That was 42 L's. [Transcriber's note: thanks for specifying!]

**Garfield**: What can you give me to sweeten the pot?

**Magnus**: I think that since you removed the time distortion thing, that's a discount. That's a, it's clearly faulty, the description says that it distorts time, but I tried it out, I plugged it in, it didn't do it, so... I feel like that's at least 25% off right there.

**Garfield**: If you can sweeten the pot with goods of your own, maybe we can-n-n do a handshake thing.

**Magnus**: I've got a frosty mug?

**Garfield**: That's some bullshit!

**Magnus**: No no no, I don't have a frosty mug, I've got a mug that doubles the potency of the drink.

**Garfield**: Oooooh! Still bullshit!

[assorted giggling]

**Magnus**: How is that bullshit?

**Griffin**: He, um... [laughs] He goes,

**Garfield**: I know what I want! Your sideburns!

[all gasp]

**Garfield**: Give them to me please!

**Clint:** Ooh!

**Magnus**: Well, the problem is, I would do that, but I physically cannot. I drank a magic potion to keep my facial hair always looking exactly the same, I can't change it.

**Griffin**: He pulls out another magic potion, he says,

**Garfield**: This magic potion cancels that one out!

**Griffin**: And he pulls out a razor.

**Garfield**: C'mon! Let's get a-goin'!

**Magnus**: I have to pass because if I did this, there'd be a lot of fan artists who would be very mad.

**Griffin**: He comes in really close, he says,

**Garfield**: How about just a little, just a tiny little scraping? And you can do it yourself. Just a few hairs off those beautiful 'burns, what do you say, bud?

**Clint**: [stage whisper] Do it!

**Magnus**: How many hairs? Name it, name a--pick a number.

**Garfield**: For my needs...

**Travis:** Urgh.

[laughter]

**Taako**: Dark needs...

**Garfield**: Five hairs, thank you, will be good.

**Magnus**: Deal.

**Griffin**: Okay. You hand over 1800 gold pieces and a few hairs off of your 'burns...

**Travis**: It's gonna take me a minute to pluck these babies, they're... heavy roots.

**Griffin**: Okay, how does that... I mean, are we talking like two hands on a big pair of tweezers just like pulling as hard as you possibly can?

**Travis**: Yeah, but we'll let Taako shop while I work on it.

**Griffin**: While you just scream in the background? Okay. But you hand over these five hairs and 1800 gold pieces, and you get the Pocket Workshop and you get the Grappling Hook. Taako?

**Justin**: Yeah, I would like to take the Slicer of T’pire-Wheer Isles... [sic; they both pronounce this name completely differently]

**Griffin**: Okay. Not sure how that one's pronounced, but the description is very cool. That's the one that you can convince somebody of a magic item. Let's see.

**Justin**: And the--what's wrong?

**Griffin**: I was just gonna read some of the descriptions because it feels like we're wrapping up here. There's the Rickul Axager's Pocket Guide to Adventuring, Third Edition--

**Justin**: This is the other item I'm picking up!

**Griffin**: Oh excellent! Well, let me read one of the other ones then, because another really good one was sent in by Sebastian Sebant.

**Clint**: Oh, the Jar of Beezzzzz!

**Griffin**: It's a Jar of Bees, which is a literal jar of bees. Could probably throw it at enemies or through a window and create a distraction, but they could also be dum-dums and drop it and get stung a whole bunch.

**Clint**: We would.

**Griffin**: That is how that would work out. But you're going with the Pocket Guide to Adventuring, Third Edition.

**Justin**: Yeah. That'll be 2000 total, so I'm hoping that we can strike up a deal.

**Garfield**: What are you sellin', stranger?

**Taako[not in character voice]:** I will give you this very cool Ring of Pointing in addition.

**Garfield**: Didn't you buy that here? And then never used it, huh?

**Taako**: Yeah, it's still in its mint condition.

**Clint**: It's still in the package.

**Travis**: Maybe you could get a refund. Do you still have the receipt?

**Justin**: No, I ate the receipt.

**Garfield**: I could give you 200 in store credit for that, completing the transaction!

**Taako**: Perfect, great!

**Griffin**: Um, did you explain what the Guide to Adventuring does?

**Justin**: Yeah, once per day, I can read a section on an associated skill check, and for the next 24 hours, I can have Advantage on it, and I can also read that aloud to give the Advantage to another party member.

**Griffin**: Yeah. Which is a pretty good item, but it's also very expensive, and also like, how often do we do the same skill checks over and over again? Not that often, so.

**Clint**: Are you trying to talk him out of it?

**Griffin**: No, I'm saying like, I'm talking to our listeners, some of whom are going to know that that is a very powerful object. Alright, is everybody done shopping?

**Justin**: Yeah, I'm gonna read the section on Persuasion in there first, 'cause I figure, there's no need to waste it [crosstalk] --get poppin'...

**Griffin**: [crosstalk] What’re you talking about. Oh, okay. Yeah, cool. Um... okay, are you all done here at the Fantasy Costco?

**Taako**: I have one more transaction I'd like to conduct.

**Garfield**: Okay.

**Taako**: Garfield.

**Garfield**: Yes?

**Taako**: I have something that I think is really gonna interest you.

**Griffin**: [sudden realization] OH MY *GOD*.

**Taako**: This is the Slicer of T’pire-Weir Isles.

[all snickering, someone wheezes, Griffin actually dying]

**Taako**: And I notice that you have a really cool sword, it's a Flaming Poisoning Raging Sword of Doom? I believe it's called.

**Griffin**: [muffled, mouth covered] Oh my Goddddd.

**Taako**: I'm looking at your entire stock and it does seem to me that's your most valuable possession, would you say that's accurate?

[laughter]

**Garfield**: [long pause as Griffin pulls himself together] Yes, it's absolutely the most valuable thing in the store!

**Taako**: Well, get ready to talk about that in the past tense, my man, because I have got something *really* special for you. This is, number one, an exotic item. I know people are always looking for those, you can't buy this at any store around the block... [crosstalk]

**Garfield**: From a faraway land! It smells of exotic spices!

**Taako**: I'm very impressed, you know, not a lot of people have the sort of olfactory acuteness able to sense that, you must be a very *discerning smeller*. So this is a very valuable item, and trust me when I say, it is going to pay big big dividends for you... if we could just make this transaction. This is, as much as this pains me to say, I've come here and I only have this to offer. I have no gold. And I say it pains me because you're getting SUCH a good deal off of me, but I do need the sword.

**Garfield**: But, but my thing costs 60,000 GPs! So how many GPs is yours?

**Taako**: Get ready for this: 61,000! Can you believe it? What a steal, eh?

**Garfield**: That's quite a profit!

**Taako**: Mmhm, and I know that's what you're all about, is profit, hm?

**Griffin**: Okay... well... make a Persuasion check... that you have Advantage on!

[Clint losing it in the background, dice]

**Justin**: 2. That's probably not gonna get it done. [dice] And 18!

**Griffin**: Plus?

**Justin**: Zero, just 18.

**Griffin**: Um... shit!

**Travis**: I will point out to you Griffin, 18 is the third best number he could roll.

**Justin**: Yeah, it's pretty good. [crosstalk]

**Griffin**: Of all the numbers you could roll...

**Travis**: I also wanted to say, I can't speak for Merle, but while all this is going on, Magnus is just like, darting his eyes back and forth, kind of like, *Is this gonna work? Is this a thing? Is it?*

**Griffin**: He says, uh,

**Garfield**: Let me smell it!

**Griffin**: And he takes the item and he smells it.

**Garfield**: Mmm! Those spices, though!

**Griffin**: And he gives it a little taste, he says,

**Garfield**: Mmm. All my senses are delighted by this bad boy! [pause] Yeah, okay, it sounds fair to me!

[wild laughter]

**Taako**: Nice!

**Griffin**: And he goes and cracks open the case and retrieves the Flaming Poisoning Raging Sword of Doom, and hands it over, and puts the Slicer in the case in exchange. And he comes back to you Taako and he says,

**Garfield**: Sucker! You have no idea what you've just done, do you?

**Taako**: No...?

**Garfield**: You've just made a bad trade! This stone you said is worth 61,000 GP is worth easily double that in the hands of a brilliant merchant like myself, Garfield!

**Travis**: I mean, I do wanna point out, he did just sell it for 900...

[giggling]

**Garfield**: What are you talking about?

**Travis**: Don't worry about it.

**Justin**: Don't worry about it!

**Travis**: That was OOC!

**Griffin**: Alright, well, I guess we'll figure *that* out later...

**Justin**: I strap the Flaming Ragining- [laughs] the Flaming Poisoning Raging Sword of Doom to my back, where it shall remain.

**Travis**: You're not gonna let your ol' fighter buddy use that sweet-ass sword?

**Justin**: No.

[laughter]

**Clint**: I knew that was coming!

**Justin**: No, it was just a style play. It's like a spoiler up there.

**Travis**: It does +20 melee damage!

**Justin**: It's like my neon undercarriage. It's just trying to get a great look.

**Clint**: Well, I guess saving my money was a stupid-ass mistake.

**Griffin**: Holy shit, that was funny. As soon as I realized what you were doing, like, I was sent into a panic spiral. [laughter] Let's go ahead and level up and then be done with it.

[They level up their characters. Summarized:

Magnus is now a level 10 fighter, he has 113 HP, his superiority dice are now d10s, and he gained Indomitable (once per day, a skill that lets him get a second chance on a save roll) and the Precision Strike maneuver (which allows him to add his superiority dice to his attack rolls). His Wisdom is now 12 and his Strength is now 19.

Merle is level 12, has 71 HP, he can cast level 6 spells, and his Turn Undead can destroy more powerful undead. His dexterity is now 12 (+1 modifier).

Taako's level 12, with 64 HP, and 1 sixth-level spell slot. His intelligence is now 18 (which increases his spellcasting modifier) and his Charisma is now 11.

{92:25 / 1:32:25 is end of character level ups}

**Griffin**: Okay, that's everybody, right? Let's end with an epilogue. Just to give it something hot here at the end. Something spicy. I love me a good epilogue now. I wish it hadn't taken me 40-some-odd episodes to discover the power of a good epilogue now. This is the epilogue. Are you ready? Are you ready for the-

**Travis**: We're in it. Yes.

[“Big Prophecy” starts playing]

**Griffin**: Okay. So, you all aren't seeing this; Taako, Merle and Magnus aren't seeing this, this is just sort of like a shot in the movie that the audience is seeing. And what we're seeing is a disheveled study of somebody who's preparing for something *big*. It's somewhere underground; there's a chill in the air, permeating these wet stone walls, and the room is lit by several dozen candles, which are all arranged around a desk, which is piled high with magical tomes and piles of maps.

**Griffin**: Behind that desk is a large wooden board that is displaying a map of the whole of Faerûn, the continent that this story takes place on, and there are strings connecting images and diagrams at certain points on the map, like Phandalin and Armos and Greenhold and Rockport and Goldcliff and Neverwinter. And all these different cities are sort of connected by this web of strings and pictures and diagrams. And it's the board of somebody who's been tracking the Relics and the Bureau intently.

**Griffin**: Other than the candles there's another source of light in this room, which is a six-foot-tall glowing pod that stands on the opposite end of the room from the desk, and it's full of a swirling green liquid, and inside we can see something growing, or rather, *someone* growing. There's a body being created inside of this pod, but the liquid inside is too opaque for us to see who it is.

**Griffin**: And the last thing we see is the desk again, and there's a scroll that is unfurled and held in place by four candles, one at each corner, and this scroll is an incredibly detailed map with a route drawn through it in red, and it is a map depicting, with perfect accuracy, the headquarters of the Bureau of Balance.