

Hi folks! Welcome to Follow the Leader's second episode! In this episode we continued our game of Follow, by Ben Robbins, from episode one. If you're here and you haven't listened to that episode, you might wanna go back and do that first, or [skim the episode summary](#). The players in this episode were Kales, Han, Alix, and Dora. (Direct quotes from the players are highlighted in their color.)

In the previous episode, we established our Quest (the Show), our characters (Merril, stage manager; Lucent, gloryhound; Persimmon, victim of stage fright and lead actor; Parker, stagehand; Zephyr, washed up star; Kuiper, journalist; Grace, moneybags; and Marius, playwright), and played through our first challenge. At the conclusion of that challenge Marius walked out of the show, bringing our merry band of intrepid theatermakers down to seven.

## CHALLENGE TWO (1:15)

For our second challenge, Han jokes about the challenge being to fix the script, but since we already did something similar for the first challenge they lean away from that towards "get the critics on our side with a sneak preview." Though the show isn't in any state to be seen by a critic, it is sort of getting down to the wire. And another thing, as Kales points out: "Our director is a cryptid." Since they're not around to do interviews, it falls to people who it wouldn't normally fall to to promote the show. Alix: "Merril sent the director an email saying 'Will you be there?' and the director just responded 'Great!'" Kales drags a past director of theirs.

FIRST SCENE: Merrill's scene, with Lucent, Persimmon, and poor Parker. (3:12)

"Parker's trying to coil extension cords." "And everyone's standing next to the door, so he can't leave." — Kales & Dora

Merril calls Lucent and Persimmon to meet with her in a room where Parker happens to be to tell them that they're going to do a preview for a critic, even though they're really in no shape to be doing a preview right now. Lucent mutters that only some of them aren't in good enough shape. Merrill also says that since the director is in Cancun ("What?!") they'll have to do it themselves. She emailed them about the preview and they sent a photo message back saying "Wish you were here!" Parker points out that it's very sweet that they thought of the crew; Merrill grudgingly agrees. Persimmon laments that they want opening night to be opening night, and the idea of doing a preview doesn't sit well with them. Lucent tries to sneakily convince them to quit— "Well, you could always... you don't have to..." "Don't have to what?" "Nothing, nothing. I didn't say anything."

Merril tries to reassure Persimmon that it's not going to feel like a performance, that Persimmon probably won't even see the critic and there will be two audience members at most. Persimmon says even two people is more than they expected, but they backtrack and say they can handle it. "Are you sure?" Lucent isn't sure even Persimmon thinks they can handle it. Merrill's about to

lay into him, but Persimmon claims that they're just acting— "I really made you think I was nervous, so I'm getting better all the time."

Parker, sweetheart, says that it was super convincing and they were worried for a second. Persimmon is delighted that Parker was worried about them, but Parker seems completely oblivious to their affection— "We've got to make sure this show go great, and I was worried, how could we lose one of our actors?" But at least no one's been injured so far. Persimmon is completely focused on the notion that Parker would miss them, while Lucent claims that "it wouldn't be as disastrous as you think." "Oh no, losing someone's body parts is very disastrous." "Oh, I meant losing an actor."

Han wants everyone to know that they've been holding an empty wine glass while speaking as Lucent.

SECOND SCENE: Lucent's scene, with Grace. (7:36)

"I'm going to pretend to hold an owl in my hand." — Alix

Lucent does NOT bust down the door of Grace's office. He knocks on it. Grace calls him in and Lucent is very very polite. Grace calls him Lucius. Lucent corrects her, but when she apologizes says it happens all the time. He tells her he's doing the show that "doesn't have a name yet," and she's attending the preview— "Hold on, I must respond to this email." Lucent waits while she does so.

Five minutes later, she returns to the conversation. "The show without a name? That's not a bad name, write that down." Lucent asks if she's coming to the preview, and Grace replies that she's considering it, as she's a very busy woman. Lucent just wanted to give her a heads-up that everyone's doing their best but he doesn't want anything that's happening, or the show in its current form, to reflect badly on anyone trying to make this their career. "So, are you trying to apologize for your own mistakes, or your crewmates?" Lucent, flustered, says the latter mostly, and then course-corrects, saying the latter entirely. Amused, Grace notes that Lucent thinks a lot of himself, to which he says, "Isn't it good business practice to know your own worth?" Grace agrees, and says she will come to the preview, a little worried about the return on her investment, but she's sure Lucent will do a good job. Lucent thanks her for her time.

THIRD SCENE: Persimmon's scene, with Kuiper, and the occasional shout from Merrill. (12:28)

"So if they're backstage, might Merrill just shout things?" — Kales

Persimmon, taking matters into their own hands, has invited Kuiper to see the mess that is backstage to try and convince them to not come to the preview. Kuiper asks Persimmon if they're in one of those weird performance art pieces where they're in the middle of the show, right then and there. Because if it is, she doesn't get it. Persimmon says that what they're doing

is much simpler and more boring, and they're in such a preliminary stage— Persimmon hasn't memorized all their lines yet. Wait, yes they have. "Don't you open in like, four days?"

Persimmon asks how much Kuiper knows about theater. Kuiper's girlfriend took her to see Jersey Boys once? Persimmon dismisses this, and says that theater isn't theater til opening night, and they need every single second of production time. "I can control every single muscle in my eyebrows." Merrill berates a stagehand for using magic to hang the lights. "Is that standard?" Persimmon is sure they'll have it worked out by opening night. Merrill agrees, and then runs off to correct the placement of the projectors.

Persimmon tells Kuiper that Merrill's the one making sure everything's going smoothly, and "look at her. She's so freaked out right now. That's not acting. She's not even an actor." Kuiper asks if she's gonna get to see the show, and she sort of has to see it. Persimmon says she can see it opening night, but Kuiper says the review has to go out before the show opens. "How much do you know about my job?" Normally Kuiper writes the obituaries, but the usual art critic is on maternity leave, and she was the only one who wasn't super busy, and she has to write it before the show opens. "I mean, do you write the obituaries before the people die?"

They claim it's the same thing. "It's not the same thing." "I mean, theater is really related to death, if you think about it."

Kuiper has to write the article, but she'll put a positive spin on it, if that's what Persimmon is worried about. If it'll make more people come to the show, then Persimmon doesn't want that, but as long as Kuiper doesn't bring anybody, then it should be fine. Kuiper asks if Persimmon is okay. Persimmon repeats, for the fourth or so time, that acting is hard. Kuiper says she'll go and not waste any more time, and she'll write something nice about the show. "But not too nice." Kuiper tells Persimmon to break a leg, "if that's what they say." Parker suddenly interjects, "No, please don't break any legs!" Poor kid.

FOURTH SCENE: Parker's scene, with Kuiper and Zephyr. (19:27)

"Zephyr has been gay this whole time." — Dora

As Kuiper walks out, she bumps into Parker, who drops every single thing he's ever held in his life. He apologizes profusely, and starts to collect his items. Kuiper asks if he's okay, and he says he's fine, especially if no one loses any limbs. "Please don't tell actors to break legs, around here, cause they might take it seriously."

Zephyr picks up one of the items Parker drops and hands it to him, and Parker doesn't even bat an eye at the ghost. Oh, wait, did we not mention? That Zephyr is a ghost? They're mostly formless, like a very short Slenderman. Dora: "A Thickman, if you will."

Kuiper is just staring. Parker asks if Kuiper is new to the theater, and tells her that she'll want to see Merrill if she's new here. Zephyr picks up Lucent's contour palette and hands it to Parker, patting it a few times. (Dora: "If only Parker knew what a contour palette looks like.") He thanks

Zephyr, however, and goes back to reassuring Kuiper that working in theater isn't such a bad job.

Kuiper is completely focused on the ghost, and asks if Parker is seeing what she is. "It's not that much of a mess!" He stands and looks at Kuiper, asking what's wrong. "You look like you've seen a— Well, I'm not going to say that." Zephyr is also looking at Kuiper in some confusion. Kuiper stumbles a bit, and Parker tries to reassure her, and Zephyr pats her shoulder. "What. The **Fuck.**"

Parker finally gets the picture that she's a reporter and tells her how excited he is, and asks if she feels the same. Yes, she is, but she first wants to talk about the elephant literal ghost in the room. She asks if Zephyr talks. Parker thinks she's talking to him, but Zephyr gives a thumbs down.

Finally, Parker gets a clue. Unfortunately, Zephyr isn't a part of the cast, and there wasn't any room for them, and they cut all the jokes... but Parker's just here for the internship. Kuiper tries to ask Zephyr another question. "Who... were you? Is that offensive? I'm sorry, I don't really do this." Since Zephyr doesn't have a voice, they just shrug. Parker asks if they want them to find a Ouija board so they can communicate, but Zephyr just pats the makeup he was holding and points in the direction of makeup. Kuiper is ready to get the FUCK out. Parker tells her to enjoy the show. Zephyr waves, as she leaves.

## CONCLUDING THE CHALLENGE (26:45)

As before, we contribute stones. The first stones, if our main character is unhappy with the path of the fellowship, or wants us to fail the challenge. Only Alix submitted a red stone this time, since Persimmon's stage fright is really getting to them, and if it was opening night it would be better.

The second stones are for if we, the players, think the fellowship did what was necessary to succeed at the challenge— white if yes, red if no. Only Dora submitted red here, since "we literally scared our reporter with a ghost, and since one of our actors tried to convince the reporter to not give us good reviews," we did not take the best course of action. Han: "We at least confused her into writing something sort of interesting."

Then, we draw stones. The first stone drawn was red, and the second drawn was a white, so we win the challenge (hooray!) but lose a character. We go back and forth between losing either Persimmon, to a complete anxiety breakdown; or Grace, to a bad show. Dora wants to keep Persimmon around to induce more anxiety in them; Kales agrees, but also really wants to see Grace as a main character. Dora: "Yeah, I feel like we haven't been divorced enough." Alix thinks they've done a lot of Persimmon, so it's time to "divorce everything." On some level this is probably good for Persimmon, to leave the show. Big wrench— Persimmon had the lead role, but now Lucent has it.

## CHALLENGE THREE (31:51)

We all concur, the last challenge is that we perform. The question becomes, what makes this difficult, besides 1. missing our lead 2. our director remaining a cryptid and 3. not having a writer? Yeah, that's about it.

(Oh. Han tells us the article is largely a fluff piece with a lot of plot summary. "The chairs in the theater felt real good." "They had good snacks. There was also a ghost. I don't know if that was part of the show.")

### FIRST SCENE: Lucent's scene, with Parker (34:00)

"I can't decide if Lucent is the kind of actor who's in costume an hour before, or like, is in costume thirty seconds before the curtain opens, and I'm leaning towards the latter." — Han

Lucent has commandeered Parker as his personal assistant and is still, somehow, in street clothes five minutes before places (giving both Merrill and Kales a heart attack). He's been making Parker hold the bobby pins while he puts them in his hair, one at a time, but tells Parker he's done with that, and asks after Clarisse. Parker says he heard she went on a beer run? Lucent freaks a little. Parker wonders if it's for the best, since opening night is always "a little iffy." Lucent says opening night can't be a little iffy, and grumbles that he'll be going on stage in an ill-fitting costume. "At least we found your contour palette!"

Lucent sighs, and then asks if he's sweating or if he looks like he's sweating. Parker stammers the negative, and Lucent wonders why he feels so nervous, which is unusual for him. "Parker, what if this goes terribly?" "Did Persimmon die and possess you?" The resemblance is uncanny. Lucent says that ghosts don't do that. Parker asks if the nervousness is because Lucent took Persimmon's part, but Lucent denies this.

"I need this to be perfect, and I'm surrounded by idiots." "Wow, rude." Lucent says that Parker is fine; he's talking about everyone else.

Lucent asks Parker to tell him it's gonna be fine, and Parker immediately replies that it's going to be amazing, and Lucent will be amazing. Lucent, done with the touching moment, tells Parker to go get his leotard. Parker salutes and jaunts from the room.

### SECOND SCENE: Grace's scene, with everyone except Kuiper. (39:20)

"She claps her hands like, once and somehow everybody starts paying attention." — Alix

Grace opens the door in a way that is attention-catching and tells everyone to listen up. Merrill snaps to attention, pen at the ready, and Grace tells everyone that the first act was a disaster. They need to turn this around in— how much is left? "It's another hour and fifteen minutes." Grace tells Lucent she doesn't feel it, and asks when he was given the part, cause it feels like it was just two weeks ago. "It was about three days ago..." Grace demands to know where the

director is. Merrill tries to cover, saying the director is on a coffee run, and will be back in a moment, hopefully.

Grace spots the ghost and asks if there are ghosts in the show; Merrill says she thinks Zephyr is part of the theater. Zephyr gives a thumbs up. "Can you maybe work ghosts into the show?" Zephyr looks between everyone as if asking if they can. Grace says they need something drastic, since she's falling asleep. "Can we put ghosts in the show? Is that allowed?" Parker doesn't think there are laws against it.

Lucent calls a huddle. Grace is not invited but Zephyr comes in. Lucent asks Zephyr if they know how to do "this" e.g., act. Zephyr nods vigorously. Lucent asks Merrill, who says there might be an issue with equity. Parker wonders if makeup will stick to Zephyr. Zephyr doesn't know, but Lucent wonders if they need it. Parker just knows you have to accentuate features so they can be seen from the back.

"What features, Parker?" "All of it? Like, the entire ghost?"

Zephyr waves them both off. "Okay. Okay. I took an improv class, it's gonna be fine." Lucent decides to go get into his act 2 makeup, since it's a process, and he's sure the rest of them will figure it out. Grace states that there will be no more show if the second half of the show disappoints her. Zephyr salutes.

THIRD SCENE: Parker's scene, with Merrill. (45:16)

"So, in that case, Merrill, call your things." — Dora

Parker's on the fly system, so he and Merrill are speaking over headset. She's told him to stand by for a cue that he's not sure the actors on stage are going to follow, and Merrill tells him to just run the cue, and she's paying attention to the stage, and if they don't do what they're meant to that's their responsibility. Parker asks what happens if someone doesn't get out of the way in time. Merrill says that's not their responsibility and tells the cue to go.

It's not even something onstage, that wouldn't hurt anyone if it came down, but Zephyr does end up walking straight through the piece. "Um. Shit. We should have blocked them." Parker wonders when they would have done this. Merrill admits that they couldn't have, but since they're intangible they'll be fine.

Parker hopes Zephyr won't make Lucent step out of place, since he doesn't want any of the set pieces to come down on him. "Lucent took an improv class. Can you go make sure that Betty is running the projections okay?" Parker agrees.

FOURTH SCENE: Merrill's scene, with Lucent and Parker. (49:30)

"They're sharing earbuds!" — Dora

In a small moment when Lucent is offstage, Merrill asks to speak to him. “How’s everything going for you?” “Well... how does it look?” It looks like a ghost is phasing through set pieces, but Merrill wants to know how the show’s going for Lucent. “I mean... it’s a little weird!” Lucent thinks it’s okay. He’s adding jokes back, and he thinks it’s helping.

Merril says that’s fine, but to try and cut some other stuff, especially if Lucent forgets other lines. Merrill asks if Parker is okay. “Fine! I’m fine!” Merrill tells them to go get ready for the next cue.

Everyone’s sure possessed by the anxiety demon now.

## CONCLUDING THE GAME (52:00)

Drawing stones is as before, except this decides the *entire quest*. One white and one red in the pool, as well as one white for each successful challenge and one red for each failed challenge. The first stones contributed are for if our main character is unhappy with the path of the fellowship, or wants us to fail the challenge. Only Dora contributed a red stone, since poor Parker is having a bad evening and flashbacks to the previous show.

The second stones are for if we, the players, think the fellowship did what was necessary to succeed at the challenge— white if yes, red if no. Kales contributed a red stone, since we maybe succeeded in putting on a show, but they don’t think we necessarily succeeded in putting on an enjoyable show. Han points out that they like going to see community theater where things are going wrong, but Kales doesn’t like to be in those shows. Alix is just glad we put the jokes back in. Dora thinks adding Zephyr into the show was probably exactly what it needed to make it not suck so bad.

Then, we draw stones. First we drew a red, and then a white. Dora suggests that Zephyr got to fulfill the final thing holding them to the mortal plane by being in the play. Alix: “They take a bow, and they just don’t come back up.” But it was just what we needed to not have a sucky show. the only issue is that since they lost the ghost actor, Lucent has to do all of act two pretending that there’s a ghost for the rest of the run of the show. Or— “What if they make Parker do it? Since it’s a silent role?” He does a great job.

Han: “It was a little bit of poignancy after a whole lot of bullshit.”

To conclude Follow, we give a short epilogue following our characters after the quest.

- Merrill gives up on stage managing, as it isn’t worth the little money she makes for it. But she’s gotta find another day job, since she can’t make any money being a criminal.
- Lucent has an illustrious career in regional theater, getting his equity card. He’s definitely still a nightmare to work with, but just a little bit mellowed out. Just a little bit.
- Grace is pleased that her idea saved the show, and becomes very interested in ghosts. She starts to fund paranatural research as well as theater, “on the philosophy that just adding ghosts to things makes it better.”



- Parker gets really into the role of being the ghost, and decides to take a minor in theater. He follows Lucent's career pretty closely, and maybe becomes a theater journalist.

And hey! That's it! Thanks for joining us for our first game as Follow the Leader! We'll be back in two weeks with something new? We don't know how to sign the summaries off any more than we know how to end our episodes.

Kales: "Fix it! In! Post!"

END EPISODE SUMMARY.