

*Episode description: A basket of precious apples goes missing during the harvest, and Rion takes on the case!*

*This episode was written and produced by Tal Minear. Oliver was voiced by Reggie Gacad. Alden was voiced by Bret M-W. Quinn was voiced by Sarah Wheatley. The kid was voiced by Mira Leigh. Jones was voiced by David Hanna. The voice of Rion was Tal Minear.*

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It's harvest time in this village, which is famous for their apple orchards. Apple trees are everywhere throughout here, so much so that it looks like the village itself was an afterthought. The homes are built around the trees, and there's no rhyme or reason for the layout of the town - except, of course, to prioritize the apple trees. The air smells of cider and pie and I am SO HUNGRY.

Some of the townsfolk said they'd pay me to climb the trees and get the apples down from the top branches - but honestly, I'd do it for free. I really miss tree climbing. When I was little, my mom quickly learned that if she couldn't find me around she just needed to look up.

But when you're all grown up, people judge you for being in a tree for no reason. Not that I usually let that stop me... but it's nice to just climb around for an afternoon and have people thank you for it instead of asking you why you're up there.

In this town, apple picking is an entire-village effort. Young kids are running around shaking trees and gathering the fallen fruit. Parents are holding ladders for their teenagers. I see a few

grandparents sorting apples or, having already found the best ones, starting to cook.

In addition to the several community orchards, lots of people have their own special apple trees they've been tending to for generations. Unlike the town's community apples, the bounty from these trees is closely guarded. Years of careful pruning, grafting, and fertilizing has gone into these apples, which are needed for very specific recipes. Every single apple, apparently. Of course, those with their own trees are plenty happy to share the food they make with these apples - they're just very stingy with the raw product. I guess I understand that. If you can only make your favorite recipe once a year, you're going to be protective of the ingredients.

Plus, there's so many apples to pick in the community orchards, and I'm not letting a single one escape my grasp. I will figure out how to get up every tree. And onto every branch. Every apple is going to be on the ground when I'm done here.

I'm deep in thought about if I could feasibly jump from tree to tree when I hear a cry.

Oliver: My basket!!! It's missing!!

The way he says this, you can tell it's probably the worst thing that's ever happened to this man. Sounds like it's time for me to get out of this tree.

[SFX: Tree dismount noises (good luck sound editor Tal), then footsteps]

[Fade in Oliver complaining]

Oliver: Where did they go? The apples from my sweetest tree! I've spent all morning gathering them and now they're gone and I think someone took them! The whole basket!

Rion: Hey there. So... you're missing a basket of apples?

Oliver: Not just any basket of apples! A basket of my pristine, delectable, *personal* apples! I tend to these trees all year to ensure the perfect harvest for my perfect apple crumbles. But there will be no apple crumbles today! My apples have been stolen!

Rion: Do you want some help looking for them?

Oliver: I don't need help looking! I need help taking them back from the no good rascal who I know took it!

Rion: What? Who would've taken it?

Oliver: No one other than my neighbor a few houses down, Alden. They've been trying to tend to their own trees, but those trees don't have good fruit. I've seen them eyeing my orchard. Sometimes they'll comment "Wow, Oliver, your trees are sure looking good. I can't wait for the harvest!" ...They're undoubtedly jealous of my apples. I'm sure they've been planning to take them all year.

Rion: Well, I don't know if Alden for sure stole your basket, but I'll go talk to them and see what they say. How about you look though the orchards and see if anyone accidentally moved it?

Oliver: [exasperated] Fine. I don't think it will be there, but I'll look.

Looks like it's time for Inquisitor-Rion! I'm going to put on my detective hat and solve this mystery. [a pause] Okay, I don't have a detective hat but I'm going to solve this mystery anyway! I'll start by talking to our prime suspect Alden. It seems like Oliver really has a grudge against this person, and personally, I'm not convinced this case is as open and shut as it seems. But it's the obvious place to start.

Rion: Hi Alden. I'm looking for Oliver's apple basket which has apparently gone missing. He seems to think you've taken it...?

Alden: [dismissive] Of course I didn't. I don't care about his apples.

Rion: But your trees don't have good apples...?

Alden: I grow these trees because I love tending to the. I'm always trying out new ways of grafting branches and making the fruit different... Anyone can have my apples, people are usually just wary of them.

Rion: Oh. That's actually pretty cool.

Alden: I moved here only a few years and I've been trying to be neighborly... cheer on people's hard work and compliment their gardens and stuff... but I guess I've only succeeded in getting Oliver to think I was after his fruit.

Rion: He did say you sometimes talked to him about them.

Alden: [sigh] So much for being nice, huh? Besides, when could I have taken them? I was over with Hazel ([muttered] one of my nicer neighbors) helping her sort apples all morning. Anyway, it was probably Quinn trying to frame me. They've been pretty unhappy with me lately. I guess my plants are growing into their lawn or something? [sadly] I'm trying so hard to be on people's good side but all the things I do backfire.

Rion: I'll figure this thing out. [hopeful] Maybe when I find his basket, Oliver won't be mad at you anymore. Anyway, thanks for the info.

Our prime suspect has pointed us towards someone else. This isn't surprising - I didn't expect a confession this early in the game. But were they framed??? Let's go talk to suspect number two.

Rion: Quinn? Hi. I'm Rion. Did you by any chance take a basket of apples to frame your neighbor Alden [quietly] who you're mad at for unclear reasons?

Quinn: Yeah, I'm mad at Alden, but not enough to frame them! I'm not going to steal some poor sap's food to enact some "dastardly plan of revenge" against someone else. Do I wish Alden would make sure their contaminated plants stop growing into mine? Yeah. But the farthest I'd go would be to trim those branches... And I've been alone in my kitchen baking all day. I wouldn't have known that basket was there for the taking. Anyway, it was probably some kids trying to do a prank or something.

Rion: [unimpressed] I don't suppose you have anyone to back you up about where you were?

Quinn: [grumpy] Nope. I said I was alone, didn't I?

Rion: I guess. [pause] Thanks for your help.

The lack of credible alibi is definitely suspicious... but I do see a kid over there looking guilty. She keeps glancing up at me and then looking away. If that isn't a cue to go and talk to her, I don't know what is.

Rion: Did you by any chance steal a basket of apples from Oliver over there?

Kid: Okay okay, I'm sorry! I took some of the apples from the basket. I was really hungry! And they looked really good! I'm sorry! I promise I won't do it again. And I would never take the whole basket. That's too many apples! I can't fit that many in my tummy. There's

only room for 2. Or 3. Definitely not 5. That's too many. I saw Mister Jones take the basket away after I was there. I was scared he saw me and was gonna yell at me, but he didn't say anything. I guess he was too busy. He probably moved it up where I can't reach. Like on a table. A BIG table. I hate big tables. Please don't put all the apples on big tables!

Rion: [softly] Hey, it's okay. I promise I won't tell. Who among us hasn't snuck a few treats during apple picking? Thanks for your help. I need to go talk to Mister Jones now.

[SFX: footsteps]

This kid might have just solved this mystery for me. Why would Jones move the basket? He was up in the trees with me. He shouldn't have been near it... Oh! There he is. Let's see what he says.

Rion: Oliver is missing a basket of apples and I've just received word from a, uh, very credible source that you were seen taking it away. Do you have anything to say for yourself before I drag a very distraught Oliver here to accost you?

Jones: I just wanted to eat some of those apples!! Oliver keeps bragging about them, going on and on about how special they are and delicious and sweet and wonderful! Ugh! I couldn't take it. I got so tired of hearing him talk endlessly about them without sharing any so I just... took the basket.

Rion: Wow. That's a terrible reason. Please tell me you haven't eaten them all.

Jones: I haven't! They're (mostly) all still in my kitchen.

Rion: Okay. How about you give them back, yeah? Or else you won't hear the end of his complaining about his delicious apples missing. Next time you could try (gasp!) talking to him about it?

Jones: Okay... maybe.

Rion: [big sigh] Go say sorry.

And so off goes Jones to confess and apologize to Oliver. Funnily enough, Oliver had no idea Jones was mad at him. Jones would've gotten away with it if it weren't for... uh... that meddling kid. And me! Meddling adventurer extraordinaire. Oliver also apologizes to Alden for thinking they did it. He promises them some freshly baked apple crumble, and assures them next time he won't jump to conclusions. It's actually really nice. I think I see Alden wipe away a tear. Aw, this is just what they wanted.

As if inspired by Oliver, Alden also goes to apologize to Quinn. Quinn stays grumpy, but I think they're warming up to Alden. Nothing like a small crime to bring folks together. All my suspects are getting along. Well, former suspects, I guess.

And just like that our case comes to a close, with the apple basket safely returned. The sweet cider can be made, and the festivities can continue... as long as those dark clouds in the sky don't rain us out.

At least nobody is to blame if it does.

Thanks for Sidequesting with us! This episode, Basket Case, was written and produced by Tal Minear. The voice of Oliver was Reggie Gacad. Alden was voiced by Bret M-W, and Quinn was voiced by Sarah Wheatley. The voice of the kid was Mira Leigh, and Jones was voiced by David Hanna. The voice of Rion was Tal Minear. A big thanks to Ilya for supporting this episode.

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