

Beyond the Gap

Season One

Episode 1 - The Gate

Deep beneath the surface, nestled in the vast expanse of darkness, lay the hidden realm of Amura. This subterranean city thrived in isolation, shielded from the outside world by layers of rocky terrain. Its existence was a secret, veiled from prying eyes and the relentless march of time. Amura possessed an otherworldly beauty. Bioluminescent flora adorned the cavernous walls, casting a soft, ethereal glow upon the bustling streets. The inhabitants had built their lives around this subterranean haven, creating a self-sustaining society that thrived on resourcefulness and resilience.

In the heart of Amura, two main characters, Randy and Bruce, toiled in their lush underground gardens. Rows of vibrant vegetables stretched out before them, nurtured by their green thumbs and unwavering dedication. The air was filled with the earthy scent of fertile soil, and the sound of water trickling through irrigation channels provided a soothing backdrop to their work. Randy and Bruce shared a profound connection with the land, cherishing the fruits of their labour and finding joy in the bountiful harvests. Despite the uncertainties that loomed beyond the unseen barriers of Amura, they found peace and fulfillment in the simplicity of their existence.

Randy wiped the sweat off his brow with the back of his hand and surveyed the rows of flourishing vegetables. "Bruce, these crops look incredible this year. We've really outdone ourselves." Bruce nodded, a faint smile playing on his lips. "No doubt, Randy. The yields keep increasing, and yet the food rations seem to be going down at the same rate. It's been puzzling me for some time now."

Randy paused, "You're right, Bruce. It's strange. We put in so much effort, working day and night to grow more food, but it feels like we're barely keeping up with the demand." Bruce leaned on his shovel, a thoughtful expression on his face. "You know, Randy, I've been hearing whispers from folks saying there may have been more people born up top recently. Could that be the reason for the rations?"

"By the roots, Bruce! That might explain it. If the population is growing faster than our crops, it's no wonder our food reserves are dwindling. But why would they restrict having children in the bottom level like us? You would think if there were more of us, we'd be able to grow more food."

Bruce sighed, his voice tinged with resignation. "It's the way it's always been, Randy. We were sent here when we were born, destined to farm for our entire lives. I guess they think it's the only way to ensure enough food for the rest of Amura. It's a heavy burden we carry."

Randy nodded solemnly, the weight of their circumstances settling upon his shoulders. "Well, Bruce, it looks like we'll have to work twice as hard this year to produce as

much food as we can. Maybe then, they'll reconsider their stance on allowing us to have families."

Bruce straightened up, "Agreed, Randy. Let's get back to these gardens." As Randy and Bruce continued discussing the food shortage, a soft voice chimed in. "You know, guys, I've been thinking about this shortage for a while, and I have a theory," said Star, her eyes sparkling with a mix of curiosity and apprehension as she spoke.

Randy and Bruce turned their attention to Star, welcoming her into the conversation. "What's your theory, Star?" Randy asked, his interest piqued.

Star took a deep breath before she spoke, choosing her words carefully. "I believe the food shortage gets worse the farther down the city you go. The Clouders, living in the upper levels, consume more than they need and send the excess down to the next section. By the time it reaches us, there's not enough to go around."

Randy tried to comprehend Star's idea. "So, you're saying the disparity in food distribution between the levels is intentional? That seems unfair."

Star nodded, her voice tinged with a hint of bitterness. "That's exactly what I think. It's like we're caught in a cascade of scarcity, a never-ending cycle of hunger that trickles down from above. It's as if we're slaves and not civilians."

Randy looked at Star, his eyes filled with empathy. "But why would they do that to us? Is there a reason we were sent here as babies?" Star paused for a moment, a mixture of sadness and defiance flickering in her gaze. "It's just a fairytale, a tale passed down through generations. But, what if we were sent here because our parents committed crimes up there, crimes we had no part in. We became the prisoner race within their perfect world."

Bruce's eyes widened, "A fairytale, you say? But what if there's some truth to it?"

Star glanced upward, her finger pointing toward the circular Gap that adorned the top of their world. No one knows what's on the other side. "I don't know if it's real or just a tale, but beyond the Gap could be an entire world waiting to be discovered. Imagine what lies beyond it." Randy, Bruce, and Star stood in silence, their minds filled with thoughts of the unknown. As the echoes of their contemplative silence lingered, Star's voice broke the stillness. "You know, guys, I'm part of a group that meets to discuss alternate histories of Amura. We mostly fantasize about the outside world and the possibilities that lie beyond. Would you be interested in joining us?"

Randy's eyes widened with intrigue. "A group like that? Count me in. It sounds like fun." Bruce nodded hesitantly, a glimmer of curiosity overcoming his caution. "I suppose it couldn't hurt to see what they have to say. Count me in too, Star."

Just as their excitement began to grow, a voice, dripping with sarcasm, interrupted their conversation. "Oh, look who's here. The dreamers and their fantasies," sneered Chrys, his figure towering over them. "You really believe in all this alternate history nonsense?"

Randy, Star, and Bruce turned to face Chrys, their expressions a mix of annoyance and defiance. "It's not nonsense," Randy retorted. "We're entitled to question and imagine a world beyond what we know." Chrys chuckled condescendingly. "Well, while you're busy dreaming, I have bigger plans. This year, I'm challenging the current Deforcer, Ethan, to a challenge. I'll become the Deforcer and set things straight. No more secret meetings like this. I don't know why he allows it."

Bruce's eyes narrowed, his voice laced with determination. "You think you can change things, Chrys? You are nothing but a bully."

"Well, maybe it's time someone challenged Ethan. Maybe it's time for a change." with this Chrys walked away confidently.

Randy placed a reassuring hand on Bruce's shoulder. "You're the biggest one down here, Bruce. If anyone can make a difference, it's you. You should challenge Ethan, win, and you'll have the power to make things better for all of us. And attract Bunni."

Bruce's cheeks flushed crimson as Randy mentioned Bunni's name. Star couldn't help but let out a mischievous laugh. "Oh, look at Bruce blushing! Could it be that someone has a crush on Bunni? I'm just playing, it's pretty obvious." Randy joined in the teasing, a playful smirk on his face. "Come on, Bruce, don't be shy. Bunni is quite the catch. Challenge Ethan, win, and who knows? You might catch her attention too."

Bruce's face turned even redder as he tried to hide his embarrassment. "Alright, alright, enough teasing. Let's focus on what's important. If challenging Ethan is the path to change, then I'll do it. But, it's not for Bunni."

As Randy, Star, and Bruce sat together after their group discussion, Star's eyes sparkled with excitement. "You know, guys, what if those fairytale books we were told as kids weren't just stories? What if there really are planets called America, Australia, Asia, and all those places? Imagine the wonders they could hold."

The group burst into laughter, the sound of their mirth echoing through the cavernous walls. Randy chuckled, shaking his head. "Oh, Star, you always come up with the wildest ideas. That's a stretch, even for our imaginations." Bruce joined in the laughter, his voice filled with amusement. "I must say, Star, your imagination knows no bounds. But let's not get carried away. We have enough mysteries to ponder within Amura."

Star grinned, her eyes reflecting the warmth of their camaraderie. "You're right. It's time to call it a day and retreat to our beds. We can let our minds wander into dreamland and explore the realms of fiction and reality there." With a collective agreement, the group bid each other goodnight, their laughter lingering in the air. Randy and Bruce exchanged a nod before heading towards their designated sleeping area.

"Goodnight, Randy," Bruce said, his voice filled with affection and exhaustion.

"Goodnight, Bruce," Randy replied, a hint of weariness in his tone. "Rest well."

Bruce grabbed his worn blanket and found his spot on the ground, where he had made a simple bed using layered earth and soft moss. He lay down, letting the comforting embrace of the soil cradle his weary body. The distant sound of water trickling in the irrigation channels provided a gentle lullaby as he closed his eyes, ready to embrace the realm of dreams.

As Bruce settled though, a restlessness overtook him, preventing him from sleeping. He gazed up at the rock ceiling, the faux sky of Amura, with its mesmerizing patterns of stalactites and intricate formations. His eyes fixated on the centerpiece—the Gap, a colossal opening that revealed a sliver of the mysterious world beyond.

The flickering glow of bioluminescent flora cast an ethereal hue upon the rocky canvas above, enhancing the sense of wonder that stirred within Bruce's restless mind. He pondered the Gap, its vastness beckoning his imagination to venture beyond the confines of Amura. "What lies beyond?" Bruce whispered softly to himself, his voice swallowed by the vastness of the subterranean expanse. He let his mind wander, embracing the realms of possibility, free from the constraints of the known world.

In his mind, he envisioned a world vastly different from the one he had ever known. A place where sky was an open expanse of infinite blue, adorned with fluffy white clouds drifting lazily across the horizon. A world where oceans stretched as far as the eye could see, their depths teeming with vibrant marine life. He imagined lush forests, dense and alive, where towering trees whispered secrets to the wind. The melodies of countless creatures filled the air, accompanied by the gentle rustling of leaves. Mountains loomed in the distance, their majestic peaks kissed by the sun, inviting exploration and discovery.

Bruce wondered about the people who inhabited those far-off lands, their customs and cultures, their languages and traditions. Were they aware of Amura's existence? Did they gaze at the stars, pondering their place in the universe, just as he did? His mind wandered further, envisioning bustling cities with towering skyscrapers reaching for the heavens, their lights painting the night sky with a tapestry of colors. Technological marvels awaited, surpassing the limits of his imagination.

Yet, amidst the splendor of his fantasies, a tinge of longing seeped into Bruce's heart. The beauty of his imagined worlds only accentuated the confines of his reality—the knowledge that Amura, his home, was a hidden sanctuary. He also wondered if this life is all that there is and the Gap could lead to a wall and nothing else. It's the mystery that overwhelms him. It could be anything but he's not even allowed in the next section of the city, let alone close enough to see the Gap himself.

Lost in contemplation, Bruce yearned for something more. He yearned to traverse the Gap, to witness with his own eyes the wonders that lay beyond. As Bruce continued to gaze at the Gap, his mind aflame with imagination and longing, he clung to the hope that someday, somehow, the secrets of the Gap would be unveiled.

The morning glow cast a warmth upon Amura as Bruce awoke, feeling a renewed sense of energy coursing through his veins. Determined to seize the day, he rose from his makeshift bed, stretching his tired limbs. Today, he wanted to make an impression, to show his dedication and prowess on the farm.

Meanwhile, Randy, ever the optimist, was already up and about like every morning, his enthusiasm contagious. He meticulously tended to the lush underground gardens, carefully watering the rows of vibrant vegetables and inspecting their progress before anyone even wakes up. His green thumbs worked their magic, coaxing life and abundance from the fertile soil. As Bruce joined Randy in the gardens, a hint of weariness still clung to his features. He couldn't help but jest, "Randy, you're always up before the roosters. I suppose my early awakening today makes up for my usual slow start."

Randy chuckled, wiping the sweat from his brow. "Ah, Bruce, it's good to see you up and about with the early birds. Their conversation was interrupted by the sound of hurried footsteps. Star approached them, her voice filled with anticipation. "Guys, there's a meeting at the gate today. I overheard the murmurs. It seems like something big is about to happen." Bruce and Randy exchanged intrigued glances, their curiosity piqued. Meetings at the gate were rare and often signified important announcements or events that could shape the course of life in Amura.

As the anticipation for the meeting at the gate grew, Bruce and Randy couldn't help but engage in a lively exchange of ideas, their voices filled with excitement and speculation. Randy scratched his chin thoughtfully. "I wonder what the meeting could be about. Maybe they finally noticed our hard work and want to reward us with extra rations. Or perhaps they're planning some improvements to the irrigation system."

Bruce chuckled, his eyes gleaming with enthusiasm. "Oh, Randy, you're always dreaming big. It's going to be about more shortages." Star interjected with a knowing smile. "Guys, I have a strong feeling the meeting is about the upcoming harvest festival. It's just around the corner, and there's always a meeting to discuss the preparations."

Bruce and Randy exchanged glances, their faces lighting up with realization. "The harvest festival! Of course," Bruce exclaimed. "We've been working so hard lately, we didn't even realize it was coming up."

Randy nodded in agreement. "You're right, Star. The meeting must be about the festival. We'll need to ensure our crops are at their best, showcase the abundance we've nurtured." Bruce grinned, a newfound sense of purpose kindling within him. "Absolutely, Randy. Let's make this festival one to remember. Our hard work will shine through, and who knows, maybe our efforts will catch the attention of the powers that be."

With a shared determination, the trio made their way to the meeting, their minds filled with visions of bountiful harvests and the joyous festivities that awaited them. They knew that their dedication would be showcased during the harvest festival, a testament to the resourcefulness of the Belowers and the vibrant spirit of Amura. It was lunchtime so they swiftly made their way towards the meeting location, their steps quickened by a mixture of curiosity and anticipation. As they joined the gathering crowd near the gate, the air was charged with a sense of anticipation. The powers that be, the overseers of Amura, stood at the forefront, ready to address the assembled residents. Bruce and Randy exchanged a glance, silently conveying their shared anticipation and hope for something extraordinary.

Amidst the hum of whispered conversations, the voices of authority finally rang out. Bruce and Randy listened intently, their eyes locked on the figures before them.

"We gather today to mark the arrival of the harvest festival, a time of celebration and unity," one of the powers declared. "It is a tradition that has been cherished for generations, a testament to the strength and resilience of the Belowers."

As the powers spoke, Star whispered "Told ya!" Randy leaned towards Bruce, excitement evident in his voice. "Can you imagine the cheers this year? We've more than doubled the harvest rations compared to last year. The cheers from the other communities will fill this place like never before."

Bruce nodded, a glimmer of pride shining in his eyes. "Hopefully, Randy. The harvest festival is when we receive the respect we deserve, even if it's only in the form of cheers. It's the one week when we don't have to toil in the fields, and we celebrate amongst ourselves." The powers continued their dialogue, discussing the customary rituals and festivities that awaited the Belowers during the harvest festival. However, their words were soon overshadowed by the arrival of Ethan, the current Deforcer, whose authority commanded the attention of the crowd.

"I have an announcement to make, one that marks a special occasion for our community," Ethan proclaimed, his voice echoing through the gathering. "For the first time in the history of Amura, a select group of you will have the opportunity to venture beyond the gate and visit the community on the other side for a day."

The crowd erupted in a cacophony of whispers and excited chatter, their faces filled with wonder and anticipation. This unprecedented opportunity sparked a renewed sense of curiosity and longing within the Belowers. In the midst of the buzz, Randy, Bruce, Star, and even Chrys found themselves engaged in an animated conversation. The magnitude of the announcement bridged the gap between them, momentarily setting aside their differences.

"Can you imagine, visiting a different community, seeing the world outside of the farm for ourselves?" Randy exclaimed, his eyes shining with enthusiasm.

Bruce nodded fervently. "It would be a chance to experience something beyond our wildest dreams. To see the faces behind the cheers, to witness firsthand the wonders that lie beyond our subterranean sanctuary." Star chimed in, her voice filled with excitement. "We could learn so much, bring back new ideas, and share them with our community. It would be a turning point, a moment of connection and discovery."

Even Chrys, known for his brash demeanor, couldn't hide his enthusiasm. "Yeah, yeah, it sounds cool. I mean, who wouldn't want to be part of something like that? It's a chance of a lifetime." As they continued to discuss the possibilities, their voices filled with anticipation, it was clear that this opportunity held a special significance. It transcended their everyday lives, bringing with it a glimmer of hope, a glimpse into a world beyond the confines of Amura. In the face of this extraordinary occasion, even the boundaries that separated them momentarily faded away, replaced by a shared sense of wonder and the thrill of the unknown.

As the harvest festival meeting concluded, the powers that be acknowledged the efforts of the Belowers, praising them for their hard work throughout the year. Their voices carried a tone of appreciation and satisfaction, yet they reminded the community that there was still one more week remaining to push their limits and strive for a little more.

"You have all done well this year," one of the powers declared, his voice filled with a mix of pride and expectation. "We have seen a doubling in harvest rations, a testament to your dedication and resilience. But remember, there is still a week left to make that final push. Let us strive to maximize our yields and provide for our community." As the Belowers dispersed, returning to their respective tasks, a renewed sense of purpose washed over them. They had received their recognition, the cheers and admiration, but they understood that it was time to push harder than ever before, to exceed their own expectations.

Later in the day, as their bodies wearied from their arduous efforts, Randy couldn't help but reflect on the day's toil. He turned to Bruce, a sense of awe in his voice. "Bruce, did you notice something? Every member of our group worked harder today than we have all week. It's as if the meeting infused us with an extra burst of determination." Bruce nodded, wiping the sweat from his brow. "You're right, Randy. The atmosphere at the meeting, the announcement, ignited a fire within us. We wanted to show our best, to prove that we are capable of even more."

Just as they were about to head home, Star intercepted them, her eyes sparkling with excitement. "Guys, the group is meeting tomorrow by the Sandberry Farm. We have so much to discuss." Randy grinned, a hint of curiosity dancing in his eyes. "We'll be there, Star. Count on it."

As they prepared to leave, Randy noticed that Bruce hadn't packed up his bedroll like the others. Curiosity piqued, he asked, "Bruce, what are you doing? Aren't you tired?"

Bruce's expression turned resolute. "I want to talk to Ethan, Randy. It's about time someone voiced their concerns and ideas. You rest, my friend. I'll handle it."

Randy hesitated for a moment, his weariness tugging at him. "I trust you, Bruce. Just be careful." With a nod, Bruce headed off towards the Gate. Randy, carrying his bedroll, made his way back home, thoughts swirling in his mind.

Bruce walked up to the gate where Ethan stood, engaged in conversation with Shana, the Gatekeeper for the other side. He approached them with a determined stride, catching Ethan's attention. Sensing Bruce's intent, Ethan bid farewell to Shana and descended from his post, ready to take a walk with Bruce.

"Hey, Ethan. Mind if I talk to you for a moment?" Bruce asked, his voice filled with a mix of curiosity and eagerness.

Ethan glanced at Bruce, his face carrying a hint of intrigue. "Sure thing, Bruce. What's on your mind?"

As they strolled along a path nearby, Bruce's eyes flickered with anticipation. "I've always wondered about your role as a Deforcer. Do you enjoy it? What does it entail?" Ethan paused for a moment, considering his response. "Being a Deforcer comes with its challenges, but it's a responsibility I take seriously. I ensure the safety and well-being of our community, enforcing the rules and maintaining order."

Bruce nodded, his interest piqued. "And what about the other side? What can you tell me about it?" Ethan sighed, a trace of regret in his voice. "You know I can't divulge too much about what lies beyond the gate. It's for your own safety and the preservation of our way of life." Bruce understood the boundaries but persisted. "I understand, Ethan. But is there anything you can tell me? Even just a little?"

Ethan pondered for a moment, his words carefully chosen. "Well, let's say each community has its own unique characteristics, customs, and resources. They each contribute to the overall balance of Amura." Bruce absorbed Ethan's vague response, sensing a glimmer of information hidden within. "So, there's an... expedition planned to visit the next community, right?"

Ethan raised an eyebrow, his gaze fixed on Bruce. "Expedition? I think you meant to say 'visit,' Bruce. It's an opportunity for some members to connect with the neighbouring community, fostering understanding and strengthening bonds."

Bruce blinked, realizing his slip of words, but a spark of curiosity ignited within him. The notion of an expedition, however subtle, lingered in his mind.

"You should consider signing up for the visit with the next community," Ethan suggested, his voice carrying a hint of encouragement. "It could be an eye-opening experience for you of all people, Bruce." Bruce hesitated, his thoughts whirling with the possibilities. "I... I'll definitely think about it, Ethan. Thank you for your guidance." With that, Bruce and Ethan continued their walk, their conversation shifting to other topics. However, the seed had been planted in Bruce's mind—a glimmer of hope, an inkling of a journey beyond the gate, waiting to be explored.

As Bruce and Ethan walked, engrossed in conversation, a sudden and thunderous crash echoed through the air. Startled, they instinctively turned towards the source of the disturbance. Dust and debris swirled, obscuring their vision momentarily.

"What was that?" Bruce exclaimed, his voice laced with concern, as he looked toward Ethan for answers. Ethan's eyes widened, his gaze fixed on the impact site. "I don't know, but we should check it out immediately. Stay close, Bruce."

Their pace quickened as they made their way towards the epicenter of the commotion, hearts pounding with a mix of apprehension and curiosity. What could have caused such a powerful impact? Was it a sign of danger, or an unexpected arrival from the unknown? As they reached the scene, the dust began to settle, revealing the aftermath of the impact. The ground trembled beneath their feet, and their eyes widened in awe and uncertainty at the sight that awaited them.

End of Episode.

On the next Episode of Beyond the Gap.

Episode 2 - The Lottery

In this episode we'll find out what caused the commotion as Bruce and Ethan investigate the impact site. What it turns out to be will shake the understanding of their world as questions must be asked to the powers that be. We'll also have the first meeting for the group that Star invited the boys too. What kind of theories will they have, and what will they say about the commotion from earlier in the day? Find out next week as we continue Beyond the Gap.