

Into the Woods (S1, E24)

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Jake: Did you get my email earlier?

Rev: I did.

Jake: I got the final versions of two more theme songs for two of our upcoming games done.

Tass: Nice!

Jake: Got some Hero Salad and some bunnies --

All: *cheer*

Jake: -- thematics musics.

Teej: Can't wait to hear them.

Tass: And speaking of other games, I think I've, uh, I think I've really got a bead on what I want to build for my own game. As you all know, I've been working on it for a long time.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: Trying to make it a d20 system and just running my head into a wall on how I want the mechanics to work. But, after doing so much of this and looking through so many other games, it just makes the most sense to be Powered by the Apocalypse. So, I have adapted it. I think I've got the rules more or less set how I want. And the only thing I have left to do is essentially build the classes and have them set. I've got most of the abilities and the spells and, you know, all that stuff that you'd usually see in a DnD or Pathfinder-esque game. I've already got most of those down. I just have to change them to Powered by the Apocalypse system.

Teej: Do you have, like, a title? Or a working title?

Tass: Yes, absolutely. It is the... well, the whole thing is called The Pangaea Scrolls, and I may even name some of the core characters after people.

Rev: Dibs.

Tass: *laughs* Damn it.

Rev: Oh you meant "people," like... Oh, I see. I see.

Jake: Are we gonna try to make a pirate game? Do you really -- do you genuinely want to try and make a Powered by the Apocalypse pirate game? Because I almost started working on it the other night, and then I wasn't sure if that was a joke.

Tass: Let me put it this way. I --

Jake: -- want to --

Tass: -- on my own, don't want to do that. If we want to do that: Hell yeah.

Rev: I've been looking at a bunch of Powered by the Apocalypse games to kind of figure out where we're gonna go next. It is amazing the kind of skins that people have out there. There isn't just a swashbuckling one that I've been able to find yet.

Jake: OK, I'm going to create that.

Rev: There is a --

Jake: I'm gonna make a pirates game.

Rev: There is a pirate class for, I think it's for Dungeon World. But, yeah.

One of the really fun things about the Ko-Fi account or the "Ko Phi" is that people can send you messages with it. We won't get into them, but we've gotten some very sweet messages. Some very uncomfortable, sensual messages.

Tass: *laughs* That's also bonus content.

Rev: Yeah, yeah. You know what? We cracked the champagne bottle on that ship. We can't be mad.

Tass: That's true.

Jake: We kind of, like, we cracked the champagne bottle on it and we lifted the anchor, and nobody was on it.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: We just sent it out.

Rev: Yeah. And then it came back, like the --

Jake: *laughs*

Rev: -- tide changed and it came back and it was just full of people all of a sudden.

Tass: Like just a skeleton crew, literally.

Rev: Where did all these people come from on this ship?

We released actually the first photo today that we took with Wes The Portrait Dude, of Jake as The Divine. People are responding very well to it, because Jake's Jake. And luckily we have quite a few more photos from that shoot that we will, uh... we'll let them out every now and then, and then Tass and I are gonna go see Wes here in a couple of weeks, so.

Tass: Yeah!

Teej: Nice.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Here's the -- here's the inverted Jabba the Hut. That's what he looks like.

Teej: Why does he have regular feet?

Jake: That's his whole -- because he's got a regular tiny body, and then a big Jabba the Hut head.

Teej: Okay.

Rev: Um... *long silence* I got no good segue.

Jake: "I'm Revs, and whatevs --"

Rev: -- Whatevs. *laughs*

Teej: I'm telling you, it's a classic.

Jake: A classic for us!

Rev: Yeah, you know, a couple of weeks ago, we were stuck for a segue out of this section. And I think it was -- was it, T.J., who said that? "I'm Revs, and whatevs." And now it's become a joke, and maybe that's just how we do this exit. Well, whenever I don't have a good segue to get us out into the recap, I'm just gonna sit in silence for a moment and then go: "I'm Revs. Whatevs."

SFX: RECAP MUSIC

Rev: You see a 50 foot spider. But at the top, instead of this centaur person, it has the upper torso and head of a bear.

So you guys come into the Chamber of Rest. It goes up hundreds and hundreds of feet. And every three, four feet is an arch carved out in the wall. And you can see one of these forest nymphs standing in it, frozen, with their eyes closed. Layers and layers and layers high of these hibernating nymphs.

You see this gland on the back of the spider pulsing as it raises up its hands to cast a spell down on these two guards. And you would think that this is actually some kind of a magic gland, or something, that this specific version of this spider-person has.

Teej: I want to shoot him in that stupid magic gland.

Rev: And the bullet pierces straight through this gland. The four spiders and the two guards cease to be in this magic eruption.

Rev: FERGUSON: There is no guilt to be had for their death. They would have gladly given it to save the rest of the people in this room. How did you make it explode like that?

Teej: "I was able to see their weak point."

Rev: CONOVER: The journey that the queen described to us that she went on, it can't possibly be true, because the journey she described took days. But when she vanished from the castle, she was only gone for a matter of minutes.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC FADES

Rev: You hear this argument made by Conover as to why the queen story can't possibly be real.

Tass: "Oh, my God."

Jake: "I mean, it makes sense that time passes differently. A lot of things happen differently in this place than where we're from. Magic works differently. It could just be that time's passing differently. But if that's the case, then we are burning daylight back on Earth."

Tass: "Yeah, OK. Well, that gives us a little urgency."

Rev: FERGUSON: Do you want to have a lie down? Maybe think about it a while?

Teej: *laughs* "No!"

Rev: FERGUSON: No?

Tass: "I'd rather not!"

Jake: "Quite the opposite."

Rev: FERGUSON: Oh, all right.

Jake: "We need to expedite things. We need to get home."

Tass: "OK. So, what exactly have they been doing? Like, what -- what's the skinny here?"

Rev: QUEEN LEAH: They have been attacking us on a very constant and consistent basis. They appear with portals. They summon more. They are... mindless. Their only goal seems to be to overrun us.

Tass: "How have you been destroying the portals?"

Rev: QUEEN LEAH: We have not. The destruction that I saw you cause, of the first one, is the first that we have seen be destroyed.

Tass: "Oh, so they haven't been making them appear in here until today?"

Rev: QUEEN LEAH: No, until just now. We have been losing ground every day.

Tass: "We know where that largest concentration of energy is. It's behind the giant, giant, horrible thing. So that's not great. But, it seems to me like that's the clearest target. Problem is gonna be getting to it, and then deciding how we deal with it."

Jake: "I mean, a grenade seemed to do a pretty good job. How many more are there?"

Tass: "I've got two left."

Jake: "Welp."

Teej: "You have so many people asleep in your Hall of Rest. Is there no way for them to help us out?"

Rev: QUEEN LEAH: Help how? We have not been able to even kill these creatures, except for what you saw that Ferguson has been able to do.

Teej: "Like, you have no weapons? Or no training of --"

Rev: QUEEN LEAH: We do have weapons, but they have seemed ineffective against these creatures.

Teej: "What kind of weapons?"

Rev: Obviously, you've seen the bow on the lady's back. She has some wood-tipped arrows. You can see that the woman standing next to her in the wooden armor has a very large wood mace. Ferguson's got his staff.

Tass: "All right. We're the key here. We've got metal, and it messes them up. It seems like there's just too many of these things. So we gotta go strike team on this. We've got to get to wherever the source of this is. We've got to find a way to kill that beast. Has it done anything besides stand out there and roar at sun rise?"

Rev: QUEEN LEAH: It has killed every single one of my hunters that have got within proximity of it.

Teej: "Has it moved any from that position?"

Rev: QUEEN LEAH: Not far.

Teej: "Could it be moved far enough out of the way that we might be able to destroy those portals?"

Rev: QUEEN LEAH: It never seems to move in the times that we have gotten it to engage with us more than a couple hundred feet from the portals.

Tass: "Everything's got a weakness. I don't care how big this thing is, there is a way to deal with it. We just -- we don't know what that is until we get out there."

Jake: "If it had that magic gland, its explosion would wipe out everything around there."

Tass: "That's true."

Rev: For what it's worth, with the size of that creature, T.J. looking out when he saw the magic and the portals and stuff, he did not see anything like that in the area where the essentially invisible creature now was.

Jake: *disappointed* Aww....

Tass: Please?

Teej: I would like to ask Fox "When you go out hunting, do you take any hidden paths or anything?"

Rev: FOX: We just conceal ourselves in the woods.

Jake: "Are there paths? Or do you just navigate through the trees as they stand?"

Rev: FOX: Yes. I mean we can all fly. We have wings.

Tass: "Y'all don't by chance have any magic that can make some people that can't fly, fly?"

Rev: FERGUSON: It's not something we've ever taken the wasted energy to research. We can all do it.

Tass: "Yeah, that's true. It makes sense."

Jake: *laughs*

Tass: "Solid logic."

Teej: "I noticed the ballista on the walls, and I assume they're also made out of wood. There's no, like, metal parts or anything?"

Rev: Correct.

Teej: "Is there any way to fix those up that we might be able to use it to destroy that beast?"

Rev: FERGUSON: We don't know what can harm the beast. The person in charge of the siege weapons -- he has been kidnapped. We were building those to defend, hoping that they might do enough impact to hurt those who were attacking us.

Teej: "Kidnapped by the spider-people?"

Rev: FERGUSON: Correct.

Tass: "Have a lot of people been taken?"

Rev: FERGUSON: No, only two that we're aware of.

Tass: Who is the other?

Rev: FERGUSON: That is Saige. She was our armor and weapon carver.

Tass: "OK, so somebody that can build defenses and somebody that can build your weapons and armor are the only two that have been taken?"

Rev: FERGUSON: Oh, in fairness, they are the only two out in the woods at the time of the first attack.

Jake: "What were they doing out there?"

Rev: FERGUSON: Gathering wood.

Jake: "Asked and answered. Okay."

Rev: FERGUSON: You and I have a good rapport.

Jake: *laughs*

Tass: They have maps, yes?

Rev: Correct.

Tass: Okay. So, you know, I want to really look at these maps that they have out and kind of get a gauge of that. Just the lay of the land, you know, where they think, based on the maps to the castle, etc., exactly where that bear-spider-creature... Invisible thing is. What's in my head is I want to go out and see exactly what's there. Because I feel like we can come up with some kind of plan, but it just hinges on we don't know exactly what's there. If they don't know, then we gotta go see. So, I think I would ask first off "Do you have any concept of where the people were taken?"

Rev: FOX: No, we don't even know that they were taken, they could be dead.

Tass: "Oh, that's fair. And nobody has survived that's went to check out the spot where the thing is?"

Rev: Correct.

Tass: "Okay. I hate to say it, but I think that's what we need to do, is maybe the boys and I here need to go take a look and see if we can get in, get some information, and get back. Formulate a better plan off of that."

Teej: And all while they're, like, discussing and looking at maps and doing this whole conversation, I am gonna be right to work on my electro-blaster.

Jake: "How did the first portal even open? Did just one of those open one day? Or did all three of them open simultaneously?"

Rev: FOX: We don't know. I went out ranging with my group and came across the creature and the portals.

Jake: "Hmm. I guess we go do recon, then. Maybe we can see through one of those portals if we manage to get close enough to see where the hell they're coming from."

Tass: "Do you all by chance have any kind of clothing or armor that we could wear that might help conceal us a little bit? As you can see, we sort of stand out."

Rev: FOX: I might be able to craft some for you, but it will take some time. You're much bigger than we are, just in the sense of the thickness of your bodies. We wouldn't have anything on us that would fit you.

Jake: I self consciously grab my tummy.

Rev: *laughs*

Tass: I'd say, sure, that'll give T.J. here a little time to fix his weapon. If we get something that'll give us a little bit better chance out there, that ain't bad.

Jake: I mean, I hate spending any more time than we have to, but I can't argue it's worth it.

Rev: It'll take about three hours for T.J. to fix his blaster and for them to attempt to make you some armor.

Tass: Absolutely. Let's do that.

Rev: What are you guys going to do while T.J. repairs his blaster?

Tass: I want to continue to familiarize myself with the maps and stuff. And then I'd probably actually find the person working on the on the armor -- on the gear. Which -- who is that? Was that one of --

Rev: That is the larger of the females who was standing next to Queen Leah and talking to her.

Tass: With the armor?

Rev: Uh-huh.

Tass: OK.

Rev: Yeah. She introduces herself. Her name is Vitz and she is the leader of the Defenders.

Tass: Ooh. Oh, the Defenders.

Teej: Is she Luke Cage? Or is she, like, Jessica Jones? Or --

Tass: Probably be Daredevil, who's the leader of the Defenders.

Teej: Oh, you're right. I'm sorry. Daredevil.

Jake: I think several of the other Defenders would take umbrage with that statement.

Rev: I'm gonna go Luke Cage.

Jake: She's Luke Cage?

Rev: No, for the leader of the Defenders. Sorry, I'm going down a different rabbit hole.

Tass: I can 'Medic' you guys in this time, too.

Teej: I would like some healing, please.

Tass: Kay, there's a five and a four is a nine, +2 is eleven. You get all the goodies.

Teej: Yay. Thank you so much.

Jake: My turn.

Tass: OK. That is a seven, +2 is a nine. You get 2 healing.

Jake: I guess then, once that's taken care of, maybe I'll go... I might just walk around, like, the castle.

Rev: So you go around this castle, and something that you hadn't quite discovered yet is that it is carved out of the center of a very large tree. You realize that the Chamber of Rest is the trunk of the tree, and that is how it is able to go up so high, and that the room that you were in when you first arrived must be in one of the roots. But there are not windows. There are these few doors that you have seen, and everything else on the

outside, except for the stairs leading up to that parapet, is tree. Think of like Minas Tirith. There is one way in and one way out, and it is down those stairs on both sides.

Jake: If there's enough time left, I want to ask Ferguson about the sleep, the big slumber that everybody seems to be in.

Rev: OK.

Rev: FERGUSON: What would you like to know about it?

Jake: "Uh, what is it? It's a phenomenon that I'm not familiar with."

Rev: FERGUSON: Oh, yes. I mean, everyone here knows about it. If you want a really deep dive, you would speak to Pryde. He's the Keeper of Record, how traditions work and the different magics of the clan and whatnot.

Jake: Okay. Yeah, I'll go talk to Pryde then.

Rev: PRYDE: So what do you want to know?

Jake: "The sleep. It's interesting. It's not something like -- we sleep on our world, but it's just kind of, you know, we rest for a number of hours and then we're back up. For you, it seems more like a permanent or semi-permanent phenomenon. What exactly is it? What does it accomplish? How does it happen?"

Rev: PRYDE: Oh, it a state that you get put into, and it helps revitalize your system. It heals you, but it also makes you defenseless. If there's a disease or a sickness perhaps going through the clan, then we can put people into the sleep and they will heal from it, and not be able to be affected by it, and not pass it on to others. But obviously, as you've seen, when invaders get in, they are defenseless to protect themselves.

Jake: "So they can still be caused bodily harm when they're in that state, but like disease and illness and things like that are --?"

Rev: PRYDE: Yes, they go into overdrive when it comes to the defenses inside of their system.

Jake: "And why are so many people in the sleep right now? Is that normal?"

Rev: PRYDE: We keep most of the people in the sleep because it's a safe place. But, I mean, look around this hall, don't get the wrong idea that we are the only ones awake. It's just that so many of us have died at the hands of these invaders trying to defend the castle, trying to push them back, that we've lost a lot of people. But you know, the people that you see here, we never go into the sleep because we're the constants. You know, the Keepers, the queen. We're all here whenever anyone is awake. We still need rest, but we don't go into the actual sleep. That's just part of what you give up when you become one of the Keepers or the queen for the clan. Are you interested in taking part in the sleep?

Jake: "No. We are already spending, I think, too much time here relative to our home. I can't possibly do that. We need to act fast here."

Rev: PRYDE: OK.

Tass: I think I'd want to talk to Conover if she would.

Rev: Yeah, absolutely.

Tass: "I don't mean to bother you. Do you mind if I ask you a question or two?"

Rev: CONOVER: Yes, of course. I deal with the truth.

Tass: "Well, fair enough. And this is just for my own curiosity, but, why did several of you in this sort of council not want to call in help?"

Rev: CONOVER: It wasn't that we did not want to necessarily call in help. We didn't know that actual help existed. We've spent a very long time as a self-sufficient society. And the thought that we would need help, let alone help from what we all assumed was from a dream... Especially at the cost of the expenditure of the magic in that room to bring you here, it seemed like it might be a long shot. And the expenditure of that magic, it takes us a long time to gather that and build it up. Those runes will take hundreds of years to recreate.

Tass: "And what does that mean for you? What purpose did they serve?"

Rev: CONOVER: Well, the runes are essentially compressed magic that we store up over the course of years. It takes a long time to create one of those runes. And they don't have a specific thing that they do, but it takes a certain number of them to activate the chamber to do things for us. Like to get you here, that chamber holds seven runes and

we burned four of them to bring you here. That's a huge expenditure for us. My understanding is that Ferguson activated a 5th to help with the battle, and so now we only have two left. And so, it will take a lot of time for us to use those. We use them to resurrect someone if they have passed. We use them to bring people back who are lost. If we ever have to travel to dimensions, you know, they have many uses and they are very, very important to our society.

Rev: And really essentially it's their version of 'Big Magic.' This is how they're able to perform 'Big Magic.'

Tass: OK. "But I think they made the right choice. I know I'm a stranger and that probably means nothing to you. And I respect that, too, but... It's the first time I'm going to say this in a while: I think we're pretty good at what we do. And, you know, our priority is keeping people safe. So we're gonna do everything we can. I want you to feel good knowing that. I hope you do."

Rev: CONOVER: That is good. It would be horrifying to think that you were here and didn't believe in your own abilities. What hope could we possibly have?

Tass: "Yeah..." I gotta walk away at that.

Rev: And as you do, she actually shouts out:

Rev: CONOVER: Just so you know, My pledge is to the truth. There is another who deals with faith. I had to go off of what the old records told us, not what I hope. Good luck.

Tass: "Thank you."

Rev: So three hours pass. T.J. has been able to repair his wrist blaster, and Vitz has been able to adapt three of the sets of wooden armor so that you guys can put them on, and hopefully blend in a little more to the surroundings as you try to go out and scope out the area. The wooden armor will give you a +1. Is everybody wearing it?

Tass: Yeah, I sure am.

Jake: I don't know if I can, because he's made such a big deal about me not wearing the armor. I don't know if this is a worthy reason to not wear it. He's already mad at me.

Rev: I think this would be a worthy reason. I think the situation before was that you were taking a power to get more armor and just ditching his, not putting on another set of armor for, like, a tactical reason.

Jake: Okay. Well, you are God, here.

Tass: *laughs*

Jake: So I'm going to trust what you say.

Rev: I mean, I wouldn't.

Jake: OK. I'll wear the wood armor. I need to make sure my good armor's somewhere very safe.

Tass: In the car?

Jake: Oh, yeah. Yeah, sure. I'll put it back in the car.

Rev: All right.

Jake: In one of the secret... Do the secret weapon compartments, can one of them be a secret armor compartment?

Rev: I don't see why not.

Jake: Perfect.

Rev: So this armor will help you guys be kind of sneaky and stealthy, help you blend in a little bit. It'll give you a little bit of armor protection. Tass, you had no problem memorizing the maps, and they actually ask as you guys are getting ready to go out if you want anyone to accompany you. There are a couple of people who would be willing to go. Fox, of course, offers to go -- who again is the leader of the huntresses. Vitz offers to go. As does Ferguson. So you can pick one of them to act as your escort.

Tass: Say their names.

Teej: Fox, Vitz, or Ferguson.

Jake: Are you going to roll a die for this?

Tass: Fox.

Jake: That's fine. That's the one I was going to pick anyway.

Teej: Yeah, we're going out recon. She'd probably be the best to do it.

Rev: All right. So is there anything you guys want to talk to her about before you head out?

Jake: Does... Now that T.J. doesn't need the gun, do we literally want to show her how to use a revolver real quick?

Teej: Oh, my god.

Jake: It'll be like a two-hander for her, I assume.

Tass: I would ask her if she would like to. "I can show you how to use this. This will really hurt them --"

Rev: FOX: Yes.

Tass: "But it takes... Yes?"

Rev: FOX: Yeah.

Tass: "Yeah?"

Rev: FOX: Yeah.

Tass: Okay.

Jake: *laughs*

Rev: Yeah. Absolutely, she does.

Rev: FOX: This is the thing you use that kills them, right? Yeah. Yeah, I want that.

Tass: I even think that would be kind of part of that half hour or, you know, like the half hour before we're leading up to leaving.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: While he's still fixing stuff. Asking for recon and going over the maps, and take her over to the side and let her practice a little bit.

Rev: All right. Roll --

Teej: -- Dry fire.

Jake: Roll +Teach.

Rev: OK. So this is gonna be a strange one. I want you to roll 'Help Out.'

Tass: That's a seven.

Rev: All right. So she will be able to use the gun instead of her bow, but you're gonna take a minus one on your attack rolls while she is with you using the gun. Because you're gonna be kind of watching her and shouting out instructions to help her to use the gun. So that is how she can use this gun. The trouble that you expose yourself to is that you have to be watching her, and 'OK, rotate the cylinder. Cock it. Hold, up higher --' that you've got to give instruction on the fly.

Tass: Let's do this.

Rev: So she takes this gun and she puts it into a pouch around her waist. She takes off the bow, sets it on the ground, and she shimmers and turns into an actual fox. And turns to you and says:

Rev: FOX: All right, this way.

Tass: That's so good!

Jake: Did you say she puts the bow down?

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Can I put in my extra dimensional space?

Rev: Sure.

Jake: Just in case she needs it.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Cool.

Rev: So she leads you out of the hall, then out onto the parapet and down the right ramp. It takes a few minutes to get to the bottom because the wall, you know, as we said before, is about five hundred feet high. The ramp comes to its end facing the bottom of another ramp, which you assume must be if you had gone down the left side. And in front of the ends of these ramps is a very ornate wooden gate in the middle of a very thick wall of brambles that stretches both directions as far as you can see. She places her paw on the gate, and it opens. And then once you're all through, she turns back around and does the same thing, and it closes. And she starts to lead you out towards the location of the three portals.

It's going to be a long trip. To the portal is a little over four miles. And it's gonna be a lot of weaving in and out, trying to avoid the enemy that's out here. So everyone roll 'Act Under Pressure,' and that'll be how well you guys are able to sneak.

Jake: Eight.

Teej: Seven.

Tass: What's a five? What do I -- what can I -- what do I, uh...?

Teej: Oof.

Rev: Fox begins to lead you guys through the forest, and it's not long before you hear the enemy around you. That familiar chittering sound through the gaps in the trees. You see the foot soldiers, and occasionally you see a few of the generals, or that red glow that, you know means a portal. And you also start to come across the bodies of the fallen nymphs. And this actually isn't something that you've seen before. You haven't seen any of their fallen people. And it's really strange, because they are completely lifelike in the way that they look when you talk to them. But again, they are bark and moss and vines. But you almost don't realize that this must be one of their corpses, because it just looks like a dried-out log.

Tass: *disgusted noise*

Rev: It's when you find that kind of husked log that, just, is brittle. But you recognize the structure of the body, the face. And there is a bow next to the first one you come across. Fox goes up to it and looks at it for a moment, before moving on. And the deeper you guys travel through the woods, the more frequent you start to come across these. Some of them are in that heavy wooden armor that you saw Vitz wearing. A lot of them have the huntress bows, and you even see some that don't seem to have anything, that they're probably just people out here that got caught.

You notice that their weapons aren't taken. Their armor isn't taken from them. They're not displayed as a warning. They just seem to be thrown to the side. You continue in deeper, and you feel the weight of this chittering all around you as it becomes more and more constant. And you're seeing trees that are covered in the webbing that you saw from the top of the parapet. And you can see that it's causing the trees to rot from the top down. You guys stop. And Fox is like --

Rev: FOX: This is -- this isn't gonna work. You guys are too clumsy and loud. They're going to hear us.

Rev: So with your combined stealth, you have a couple options. So you guys can split up and send one of you with Fox, and she'll essentially make sure that you get there OK to be able to see what's going on. You guys can all get there, but you're not gonna get nearly as close as you want, and so it's gonna be harder to try to figure out what's going on. Or you can all get there, and it's gonna be a very small window before you are noticed.

Jake: "I think just one of us should probably press on with Fox."

Tass: "I agree."

Rev: FOX: Which one of you wants to come with me? I can... I can sneak one of you through here, so you can at least get a view of what's going on.

Teej: "Ok, Teej, here's my pitch, buddy."

Teej: "OK."

Tass: "You've got your sort of analytical mind. If you get a look at this stuff, you know, I trust whatever you come back with. What you think, man?"

Teej: "OK, guys. If you want me to go, I'll make the big sacrifice. That's fine."

Jake: "Godspeed."

Tass: "I mean, if you get in any trouble, just try the mike, you know?"

Teej: "Oh, yeah, totally forgot about that." I'm going to actually go ahead and try it right now. *mike test noises*

Rev: Nothing happens.

Tass: "Oh, good... OK, well..."

Teej: "Test, test..."

Rev: Fox is kind of giving you a dirty look as you hear the enemy talking, as you're trying to talk a louder into this microphone.

Tass: "Well, that ain't great. Good luck."

Rev: It takes about 20 minutes for you to make it the rest of the way following Fox, but she gets you to a safe spot. From here, you can see that the clearing these portals are in has been created by destroying all the trees in the vicinity. You can see the three large portals and you also see, right at the edge of the perimeter, three of the small portals. So how do you want to go about trying to gather intel? Are you staying in a specific spectrum? You gonna try to switch between them?

Teej: Um, well, since I am still on the... I think it was the electromagnetic spectrum from the last time -- I will probably go ahead and just keep that on. Because it seems like the thing that is actually giving me the information I need. I mean, I don't think these things are giving off any kind of heat because they would have bloomed if whenever I put on the, I think it was the the heat vision.

Rev: Yeah. You were trying to spot the, uh, the bear with --

Teej: -- The bear with it, and it didn't see anything.

Rev: Yeah.

Teej: Not even, like, the portals, right? From --

Rev: Correct.

Teej: Yeah. So I'm just gonna keep these on, and analyze where the energy seems to be flowing from the most.

Rev: Roll 'Investigate a Mystery.'

Teej: Eight.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 1.

Teej: 'What is being concealed here?'

Rev: So on the setting that you're on for these goggles, you're trying to read the magic, trying to follow the magic, and see where it's coming from. So as you look through your goggles, you can tell right away that the big portals aren't connected to anything. They must be self generating, somehow. But you can see that the smaller portals seem to be connected by a very thin strain of magic to the general that cast it. And then the other thing you notice is that they're very precisely spaced. That you have the portal here at the edge of this clearing, and then about three hundred yards away, you have another portal. And then there's a second portal right next to it. And then again, three hundred yards away, another portal, with a partner by it. And another one. And there are three rows of these, kind of spider webbing out from the center. And I think from what you've seen of the generals, you can tell that what's happening is that they're casting a portal, taking troops through it, and then the next general is casting his portal right next to the one they just came out of. And it's moving them 300 yards away each time.

Teej: OK, all right.

Rev: And you don't see any of the portals that are not 300 yards away from beginning to end.

Teej: OK. All right.

Rev: And so it's a safe assumption that that might be why they hadn't made it into the castle yet, that they had to be that close. They can't just create them 50 yards away. They can't create them five hundred yards away. It is always -- it's like they're dropping down a reticle in WoW, and this is where it will appear at.

Teej: OK, I getcha.

Rev: And they can't change the distance.

Teej: That makes sense. Yeah. And so, after this initial investigation, I want to go ahead and, like, take my goggles off. And like, just look at it with my eyes. See if, like, these portals are actually something I can see as well.

Rev: OK. Roll 'Investigate a Mystery.'

Teej: Uh, that would be a nine.

Rev: You get a hold 1.

Teej: 'What is being concealed here' as well, with just my naked eyes?

Rev: About 100 yards away from where you stand, you see the generals and some of the smaller arachno-people coming out of the portals, but they're giving a wide berth. And you can see, just faintly, that enormous bear-spider. It's moving around not very far. And it stops, and it sniffs, and it lays down. And it gets agitated, and gets up, and it moves. It's amazingly silent, and almost transparent. You're only able to see it in this moment because you're getting some of the reflection from the portal coming through it. And so you can see the -- essentially like in Halo. You can see that little bit of distortion as it moves.

Through the portal, you see a blasted land. It is just dust and sunlight. But very harsh and red. And these arachno-people are actually crossing maybe half a mile of it. And you can see that there are portals there as well that they're coming out of and coming through.

Teej: So, portals within portals.

Rev: Yeah. It seems like they have come through another plane to get to this plane. And you're having a hard time seeing it because of your location, with the bear in the way. But they go as far as you can make out. There's at least two, three, four...

Teej: Oh, god. It's like looking into a mirror, into a mirror...

Rev: Yeah, exactly. That you can see this army marching through different planes to get here.

Teej: Oh my god. All right. Um... Man, this has got to be shut down. "OK, Fox, I think we're good here. This is just a lot to take in. I need to get with the guys and we need to have a talk about this."

Rev: All right. So she leads you back to the group. It's a pretty quick return trip.

Tass: "What'd you see? Whaddya got?"

Teej: "So, yeah, um, I saw these portals. The big ones, if you looked into them, you could actually see another world. Almost like -- there were, like, troops. Like spider troops within this other world. And then on the other side, like maybe half a mile away or so, there's another portal. And I could just see worlds, within worlds, within worlds, within these portals. Almost like they'd conquered these places. And it was, like, in all three of these different portals. And then, like, the smaller portals: So what's happening is a general will create a portal next to himself, but he also creates one 300 yards away. Like an 'in' and an 'out' door. So it's like basically spider webbing from these three different larger portals up to the castle."

Tass: "So they're just... They're essentially making a hallway."

Teej: "Yeah, basically."

Tass: OK. Did you see clearly, like is it -- are they just sending one through that's just making these? Or is it a new one of these magic users every time?"

Teej: "Well, it is like a new magic user every time."

Tass: "That's smart. They have a different one doing every one of these. I mean, I'm sure that's probably necessity, right? They probably have to do it that way, but --"

Jake: "Yeah, I wonder if one of them could throw down a portal and then go through it, or if they have to stay back to maintain."

Tass: "Maybe. But either way, that just sucks. It's not like we can take out one of these things to shatter all of its line. We have to really do some work there."

Rev: Yeah. From what you saw, T.J., you know the generals are going in and out of the portals. But you can still see that there is a magic, essentially, thread connecting them to their portal.

Teej: Right.

Rev: So they can travel through it, they can wander away from it, but they're still connected to that specific one that they created.

Teej: Gotcha.

Tass: Wow, OK.

Teej: "Oh, I just actually had a thought. That probably means there's, like, one of these generals really close to the castle, then. Like, if he was able to shoot a portal inside the castle, he's got to be pretty close."

Tass: "Yeah. Because if it's 300 yards --"

Teej: "Yeah."

Tass: "I mean, especially as high up as it got, if that works vertically too. He had to have been really close to get one up that high."

Teej: "Right."

Rev: And you also remember too that there was one inside of -- right outside of the Room of Magic which was much lower down.

Tass: "So if they were close enough to get one right outside of the Room of Magic... Now that I think about it, it could have been from there if they put one essentially straight up, up to the parapet. I don't know, man." Like at this point, I think I'm just kind of scoping the trees, and just trying to think about this information. And I just... It's good information to have, but it doesn't really give us a direction. Like, we still don't know what can break these portals. We don't have any idea how to fight this giant. I hate this. I hate using this, because I don't traditionally roll well with it. But I think I'm gonna try to 'Trust My Gut.'

Rev: All right. Roll it.

Tass: Well, don't want to do this. I'm gonna use a Luck to make that six a full success.

Jake: Oh, wow.

Teej: Sweet.

Rev: All right.

Tass: Because I don't want to be led into danger, a.k.a. giant invisible bear-spider. So, here we go.

Rev: OK.

Tass: '10+: the Keeper will tell you where you should go.'

Rev: Your gut is telling you that you need to get someplace where you can watch the camp. You almost feel like you need a sniper's eye view. You need a high place to sit and watch the camp. You haven't seen everything here you need to see yet.

Tass: OK. "Fox, I need to see it. I just -- I need to see this place. Do you know of anywhere high up, like a cliff-side or something, that I could get up to to see that whole area from from kind of afar?"

Rev: FOX: To see the camp?

Tass: "Yeah."

Rev: FOX: Yeah. Actually, there's a tree -- really tall, it's got blue and purple berry bushes at the base of it. It's about half a mile to the side of that camp.

Tass: And you're very familiar with the maps. You spent a lot of time talking with her, studying them. And she actually kind of sketches something out on the ground in the dirt that you're able to make out no problem. It'll take you a little bit of time to get there.

Tass: "Guys, I'm gonna go check this out. But again, that's where it gets a little more dense. I don't want you to come, like --"

Jake: "That's fair."

Tass: "No, really, what I mean is I want you guys to definitely be safe. This is just a hunch, but I gotta follow it. So I think it's best if you guys go back and be ready in case anything comes. Fortify, get shit ready. I mean, if you guys are up that high and I'm in a tree that high, I think if I shoot my shotgun a couple of times in quick succession, you'll know, 'oh, god, help?'"

Jake: Does a gunshot travel, like, what was it -- like three and a half miles? Four miles, or something?

Rev: From where he will be compared to the castle? It'll be about five.

Teej: "Well, I could probably, like, build something to hear it from far away."

Tass: "OK, that is a terrifying --"

Teej: "Like a megaphone."

Jake: "Like an ear trumpet!"

Teej: "Like an ear trumpet, yeah."

Tass: *laughs* "OK. I mean, that's the best I got. And at the very least, you guys will be there, and hopefully this doesn't go south and I'll get back."

Jake: "OK. Yeah, we'll keep an eye out and hopefully work something up to hear better. And as soon as I get the signal, I'll pull you back."

Tass: "Awesome."

Rev: And Tass, actually, as you start to walk away, you turn back to say one last thing, and the sunlight glints off of T.J.'s goggles. And you know that you should take them with you.

Tass: Oooh. "Uh, Teej?"

Teej: *slowly* "Yes?"

Tass: "Can I actually borrow the goggles?"

Teej: *slowly* "No?"

Jake: *laughs*

Teej: "I mean..."

Tass: "Please?"

Teej: "Yeah, here you go."

Tass: "OK. Thank you."

Teej: "You're welcome."

Tass: "See you later."

Teej: "Bye."

Rev: All right. So you guys head your separate directions. Fox is obviously gonna go with the two of you to help lead you back, kind of, through the quagmire of the enemy. So both of you roll 'Act Under Pressure.'

Jake: 11.

Teej: 10.

Rev: All right. It's gonna be a bit, but you're gonna make it back safely. She's gonna be able to navigate you through. You guys are quiet enough. You've kind of learned a little bit of stuff on the way out. Tass, while they are travelling back to the castle, your trip is much shorter. You do get to the location that she indicated. And sure enough, it is a very, very large tree with the berry bushes at the base.

Tass: I want to try one of the berries.

Teej: You die immediately.

Rev: Uh, roll Luck.

Tass: Oh god. OK. That is a seven.

Rev: So you eat one of the purple berries. Tastes a little bitter, but it seems fine. For now.

Tass: *laughs nervously* Good. I'll start climbing.

Rev: And it is very high. But as you get towards the top, you can tell people have been in this tree, and you actually find a branch, almost at the very top, that the twigs and stuff have been broken off of it. Someone has clearly perched here before. And yeah, you

have a very clean view of the camp. You see the three portals. You see the three smaller portals. And you see troops moving around inside of the camp. Some time passes -- about an hour. And you don't know that you are seeing what you're supposed to see. There's a little bit of movement. There's troops coming in and the portals. But nothing that really kind of gets your dander up.

Tass: Really trying to watch for patterns, to see if there's anything there that sticks out. Like maybe that's what I'm supposed to be seeing is some sort of a hole in the timing of when these things are coming and going that might be important? That would give us a good opportunity to get in, do some kind of a strike on the portals... Or, you know, especially watching to see if they have anything. Are they bringing something important in and out, some kind of artifact or weapon?

Rev: Roll 'Investigate a Mystery.'

Tass: That is super good. How's a 12 do me?

Rev: All right. You get a hold 2.

Tass: 'What is being concealed here?'

Rev: So as you watch the business of the camp, you can't make out the Goliath -- I'm just gonna start calling the giant bear-spider the Goliath. But you can tell it must be there because when they come out of the portal, everybody veers very wide, left or right. And then comes back to the center. They're all going around something that is there.

Tass: Oof.

Rev: You also notice that they use a set number of troops in each group. You see a general, and the general almost always has four foot soldiers with them. And whenever they deploy through a portal, they go with at least one or two other groups. And you assume, based off what T.J. has told you, it must be to expand their reach. And from up here, you can actually see that the portals branch off. The center one happens to be going right towards the castle. The other two are kind of going wide of it left and right. It's probably that they didn't know exactly what they were looking for, where it was. And so they just literally started to spider web out. And so you imagine that as you get closer to the castle, there might be more of these, and it's going to be a much wider net.

Tass: Oh, good. So they're going to be flanking it eventually.

Rev: That's very possible.

Tass: Oh, good...

Rev: Not necessarily intentionally.

Tass: Sure. 'What can hurt it?'

Rev: In the sense of the troops and their movement: the footsoldiers, they communicate a little bit, but it seems really rudimentary. Even then, you can't understand that language. You can tell that the generals are getting a word or two from them. But the generals seem to be having a much more in-depth conversation. And you get the idea because of the amount of eye contact, or the amount of time, or the hand gestures, and you're not seeing that from the foot soldiers. You get the sense that maybe if you can take out generals, the foot soldiers may not know what to do, or they may just act on their own accord, and maybe not be as strategically minded.

Tass: Dope. OK.

Rev: So Fox is able to get you guys back to the parapet with no problem. What are you going to do? Are you just going to kind of hang out? I know T.J. said that he was going to try to build some kind of a megaphone to listen.

Jake: Yeah, I guess until he has that done, I'm just going to stand out here with, like, my ear trumpet, and hope that I can pick it up in case it happens right out of the gate.

Rev: Yeah. T.J., you think that just with what you know of Jake's car, that if you take a couple of the sound system pieces, you could make this.

Jake: I... hate you. You car scavenger.

Teej: *laughs* I was just gonna make it out of wood. But, man, this is so much better!

Rev: That ain't science.

Teej: That ain't science. That's craftsmanship.

Rev: Exactly. You didn't take 'Weird Craftsmanship.' You didn't take 'Weird Wood Carver.' You took 'Weird Science.'

Teej: That's right.

Jake: I hope you can also 'Weird Auto Mechanic' and put my shit back together when we get home.

Rev: That, sadly, is not on his list.

Teej: I've got repair. No, I've got repair!

Tass: 'Engineering'!

Teej: 'Engineering.'

Rev: Oh, that's fair.

Teej: Yeah, no problem. I got this. No problem.

Tass: There's only one carpenter that uses weird and you are not him.

Rev: Ron Swanson.

Teej: Right, we talked about that.

Tass: Ron Swanson, indeed.

Teej: All right. Here we go. 'Weird Science'-ing.

Rev: Yep. Roll it.

Teej: Here we go. Woo! That's an 11.

Tass: Nice.

Rev: All right. So what is your one requirement?

Tass: Please make this 'a lot of power.' And it's a crank that, like, 30 nymphs have to constantly move.

Teej: 'It won't be very reliable.'

Rev: All right. So it is not very reliable. You have figured out how to make it without having to hijack the battery from his car. But because the power source isn't very strong, you're not positive that it's always working. It seems like it cuts in and out. But when it cuts out, there's some feedback that almost makes it sound like it's working like, "Oh, yeah. I think that's the echo of that bird, I think." You kind of know that, taking it out onto the parapet to hand off.

Teej: "OK. So yeah, this may or may not work as well as it should, but I'm gonna go ahead and try and point it in the direction of that tree and see if it can pick up better that way."

Tass: *laughs* Jake looks so fundamentally upset right now. Oh my god...

Jake: "All right. Well, I guess I can just keep an eye on this. It doesn't really take two of us. Is there any other better way we could spend our time?"

Teej: "Well, I mean, there is the possibility of the other, like, general or whatever that might be around."

Jake: "Oh god."

Teej: "Yeah."

Jake: "Yeah, uh --"

Teej: "So, maybe going after that?"

Jake: "Do you want to do that, or do you want me to go?"

Teej: "Well, I figured that you'd probably be better at smashing the hell out of these things."

Jake: "That's accurate. But like, for the same reasons that we've sent you to scout ahead, I think it would probably be better for you to go check this out, too. Like, I can get you out in an instant if things go bad. The gunshot signal will work a hell of a lot better from 300 yards away than five miles."

Teej: "Sure, sure."

Jake: "I mean, you could take Fox, though. Like, you don't have to go alone."

Teej: "Oh, right. Yeah." So I go over to Fox and say, "Hey, will you come with me to see if we can figure out where this particular portal is that's pretty close to the castle?"

Rev: FOX: Oh, sure.

Teej: "Well, I know that the line of portals comes basically straight at the castle. So I guess we could probably just go straight down from the parapet."

Jake: "So, I mean, you can basically Pythagorean theorem out, based on how high up that portal was and how far off the wall and what the hypotenuse is, where it should be."

Tass: Cool.

Teej: "That's some dope-ass shit."

Jake: "Thank you. I learned that in high school mathematics."

Teej: I'm gonna try and figure this out, and see if I can maybe triangulate where this particular portal might be.

Rev: All right. Roll Sharp.

Teej: Six.

Rev: Yeah. You think you know where it's at.

Teej: Awesome. Oh, also, I level up.

Rev: Oh, well!

Tass: Aww, yay!

Rev: All right. What are you gonna take?

Teej: That's a good question. Let me take a look through my...

Jake: Can you can you take a move that is 'High School Geometry'?

Teej: I'm gonna go ahead and take another move from another playbook.

Rev: Mmhmm.

Teej: And because I loved it so damn much.

Rev: Oh no.

Jake: *laughs*

Tass: Yes!

Rev: No, no, no.

Tass: Say it!

Teej: I am going to go ahead and pick up the 'Oops!' Haha! You thought it was gone, but now I've got it back!

Tass: I am so happy right now. I can't even tell you. Well done.

Rev: You can take the scientist out of the T.J., you can't take the T.J. out of the scientist. All right...

Teej: Damn right, you can't.

Rev: All right.

Teej: It's one of my favorite powers!

Rev: Yeah, that's fair. OK. All right. So you've got that. So you have leveled up. You think that you have mathed so good that, for some reason, you have gained a new ability. And you tell Fox where to lead you.

So as T.J. gets ready to leave with Fox to try to hunt down where this portal might be, let's jump back to Tass. Another hour has passed. And again, you don't really see anything that's drawing your attention. What are you doing to kind of pass the time? Or are you just still watching? Or do you think there's a point where you just kind of start fiddling with, I don't know, any of your equipment, or --?

Tass: I don't think so. I think with as strong of a sense as I got, that I am not dicking around up here. I think it's that sniper sense of waiting for that instant, you know? You

know, there's that moment where this is the time you take that shot. And I'm not necessarily looking to take the shot, of course, but to get that information, to get that important detail that I'm zeroing in on. So I think that the closest thing to maybe piddling around would be putting the goggles on and off, like, you know, looking around in different directions. And trying to focus on the same spot with the goggles on, and then with them off.

Rev: And I think as you look through the goggles, you actually have the idea at some point like, man, this would be a lot easier if you had your sniper scope. You know, cause we hadn't really talked about your sniper rifle leg.

Tass: No. Like, what are its deets here?

Rev: Well, I think that as you're sitting in this tree and you have this thought about, like, 'Man, I wish I had that scope with me,' and you haven't really thought about it, but ever since Jake has healed you, your leg feels fine.

Tass: Son of a --

Rev: And as you have this realization, I think that you also know, looking at this contraption around your leg, that you don't need it, but you have no idea how to turn it back into the sniper rifle.

Tass: So I can't get it back into a sniper rifle. Can I get it off my leg?

Rev: Yes. Yes, that you can't do.

Tass: Yeah, I probably do that. Disassemble it, test my knee out a little bit.

Rev: Yeah, and it feels fine. It actually feels a little better than the last time --

Tass: Oh!

Rev: -- that you were, like, uninjured.

Tass: Nice!

Rev: Yeah. Something about the magic of this world. Whatever he pumped into you.

Jake: Can't wait until it just wears off as soon as we get home.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: Oh my god...

Jake: Everybody's like shipshape fighting fit. And as soon as we get home, we're like, *pained* 'Oh, no!'

Tass: OK. So I think when I do take my eyes off of the camp, it's to just glare in irritation towards the castle --

Rev: In the direction of the castle.

Tass: Yep.

Rev: That's fair. So T.J., Fox has led you down the ramp again and back outside the gate. She's following the directions that you gave her. And as you approach, you hear the sound of weapons hitting each other. What exactly are you doing? Are you just crouching behind her and following exactly where she goes? Are you trying to look around?

Teej: I'll follow her, but I'm gonna keep track of those sounds out of my peripheral hearing and vision and everything, to see if I can see where it's all coming from.

Rev: OK. Roll 'Read a Bad Situation.'

Teej: Oh, no, that sucks. That would be a five.

Jake: My God.

Tass: Yeah. Woof, buddy.

Rev: OK, before we resolve that, let's jump back to Tass. The last sliver of the sun starts to sink past the horizon and that instinct hits you that now is the time. And you turn your focus back to the camp and you see the same moment you saw this morning at sunrise. The light from the sun makes the Goliath's translucent body glow and pulse, before it roars and the energy is expelled. And the roar it lets out, you can tell it's pain. But even more importantly, seeing it through T.J.'s goggles, you can see that it's not just light that builds up in the Goliath's body, it's magic. And having seen it twice now, you know that at sunrise and sunset for a window of like three seconds, this monster is filled to bursting with the magic of this world.

So, T.J., you start thinking about these sounds of clanging weapons you hear, and you get lost in this thought of 'What could that be? The nymphs? I know they're not out here fighting them...' And it causes you to take a misstep around a tree, and you find yourself standing in a clearing. And the first thing you notice is that there are eight of these arachno-people, but they are much larger than the others you've seen -- maybe two feet taller. And they are wearing stone armor and wielding spiked maces, also made of rock. And they are sparring with each other. And then your attention is drawn to the center of the clearing, where three of the generals link hands and they create a portal between them, from which a female arachno-person appears. And she is terrifyingly beautiful, and she is familiar. Because you saw her in the nightmare you were pulled into a couple of weeks ago. And as she exits the portal, she looks right at you and she begins to speak to you in a whisper. And it seems like you can hear it all around you.

Rev: SPIDER QUEEN: You should be with me. I love you. No other could treat you as well as me. Join me. We should be together. There is no one for you but me.

Rev: Roll Cool.

Jake: Make a will save. *laughs*

Teej: Nine.

Rev: Yes, she does love you. Of course she does. But then one of the huge brutish enforcers grabs you and picks you up and starts to carry you towards her, and that snaps you out of it. Jake, roll +Sharp.

Jake: Three.

Rev: You get a feeling that T.J. is in a bad way.

Jake: I'm going to pull him back, then.

Rev: As he appears, the last bit of the light casts a shadow at your feet of something very large that you have brought with him.

SFX: OUTRO MUSIC