

The Battle for Elnore (S1, E26)

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Rev: So we have two kind of important dates coming up for us. One being next week, Halloween.

Teej: Woo-hoo!

Rev: And then a month from that is our six month anniversary.

Tass: Already?

Rev: I know. That anniversary, I think, is paper flowers.

Tass: Yeah. Something like that.

Rev: It's where you --

Jake: Now why were you staring at me when you said that?

Rev: Because I just imagined you, like, with the little... "Purple: P-U-R-P-L-E. 7: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7."

Teej: Oh! Cootie catcher.

Rev: Is that what they're called?

Teej: That's what they're called, yeah. Cootie catchers.

Rev: All right.

Teej: Yeah.

Rev: I did not know that. I just know them as the piece of paper that's a flower, that tells the future.

Jake: I think I could still make one of those. I haven't done it since grade school, but I bet I could.

Rev: Okay. That's the six month anniversary, as my understanding, is paper cootie catchers. So in honor of that, I was talking to Wes over at Stylish Senpai. We're gonna do two different giveaways. We're gonna give away two hoodies.

Teej: Sweet!

Rev: One of them will be for Halloween. So, this contest is really just gonna be -- it's going to be super simple. Our email is thecast@thecritshowpodcast.com. All you need to do is send us a photo of you celebrating or enjoying Halloween. Send us a photo, and we will enter your name into the drawing. And if you can somehow get our logo, or your phone with the podcast pulled up, we'll put your name in twice. And we will draw that on November the 4th. So you've only got, like, two weeks. So send us your photos of you enjoying Halloween, since Halloween is obviously kind of special for us, running Monster of the Week, and you will get entered into that. The other one's a little longer. This one will end on the 25th of November. This is going to be a fan art contest.

Teej: Oh, sweet.

Rev: So if you're an artist out there -- or even if you're not an artist, if you've got Microsoft Paint and the ability to make stick figures? Awesome. Submit a piece of fan art. It can be your favorite moment. It can be a player. It can be a monster. It can be an NPC, whatever you want. And we'll enter your name into a drawing for another hoodie. We've gotten some amazing fan art already, and we realize that it takes a lot of time. So if you enter this, regardless of winning the hoodie, we will send you something. We will send you a Christmas card, some stickers... Everybody who enters this will get something. But again, the date for that will be November the 25th. And that will be, kind of, to celebrate our six month anniversary. And so for both of these contests, for the celebrating Halloween and for the fan art, in that email, when you make your submissions, just let us know in the email if it's OK to share your photo on social media. And the same thing with the art.

Tass: I dig that. That's gonna be good.

Rev: Because these hoodies are super comfortable.

Tass: They are. I just got mine two, three days ago, I think. And yeah, I've worn it almost every day.

Teej: I am wearing mine right now as we speak.

Rev: He is. I'm looking at mine longingly in the other room. I put on the wrong hoodie. I regret my choices.

Teej: We also regret your choices, sometimes.

Rev: *chuckles* That's fair, that's fair. I would see if we have more to talk about, but this is a long episode, because we got to get ready for Halloween. So let's let the recap rule.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC

Teej: "As sun rises and/or sun sets around this place, some kind of magic burst happens. Jake, if you could create some kind of lightning at the same time as well, that culmination of those two coming together might create some sort of portal for us to get home."

Jake: I'm going to basically mimic the gesture I did when I pretended to raise a shield in the Circle.

Rev: A huge bolt of lightning comes down out of the blue sky and cracks.

Tass: "We have to figure out something that we can use to hurt it, pretty much at the same time you're doing your thing to make sure that the portal is at least there."

Jake: "Here's what we're gonna do: T.J. is going to create a device that will essentially turn parts of our car -- that's all made of metal -- into weapons for you guys. So the next thing T.J. is going to do is essentially make a rocket."

Tass: "Kill the Goliath."

Jake: "Yes, from a distance."

Tass: "We're fairly certain that that blast won't get this far. Whether you want to evacuate and get all the people sleeping way further out somewhere, that's up to you."

Rev: QUEEN LEAH: We have been the guardians of this tree --

Rev: And she reaches out her hands and you see that Robear and Ferguson both take her hands. This energy radiates off of all three of them. And as the energy coming from the three of them passes over the hibernating nymphs, you see them all start to shift and wake.

Rev: QUEEN LEAH: But you do not become the guardian of something without knowing how to fight.

Rev: We are at the point now where you have armed maybe half of the group. T.J. is about halfway through his time with the rocket. It's about one o'clock in the morning. Jake is still outside calling the lightning. And as the lightning is striking in the darkness, we see a figure appear on the parapet behind him.

Rev: SPIDER QUEEN: You should join me. We belong together.

Rev: And you turn around and you see this terrifyingly beautiful spider woman, with two enforcers flanking her, and a small army down the parapet ramp behind her.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC FADES

Rev: So, T.J., Tass, and Ferguson are in the Room of Magic. Tass is churning out the different weapon heads, T.J. is still working on the very delicate projectile for Tass's sniper rifle, and Ferguson is carving, actually, on some wood. He hasn't really said what it is that he's doing, but the last thing that he talked to you about was that he had an idea to help protect you, maybe, and he wandered away. And now he's come back, and he is over a little table, just working on some stuff. And pretty far away, you hear a door being broken down. And it sounds like the door at the parapet that leads down to the Room of Magic.

Tass: I'm gonna grab my shotgun and run down to the, uh, the door at the end of the hall.

Rev: OK. And, you know, real quick, I realize actually, talking to you guys, that the image of how you get to the Room of Magic is a little muddy. So just to clarify: in the Room of Magic, there is a door, and that doorway leads out into the hallway. This is the hallway where, like, T.J. got dragged and where you guys threw the grenade. And then at the end of that hallway is another door. And you open that door, and there's a very long ramp that goes up to the door that opens up onto the parapet. And that's where you guys had the fight with the spiders on the parapet. So you run down to that second door that leads up to the ramp at the top, and you see Jake. And over his shoulder, you see the spider queen that you saw in that nightmare, as well as a few of the other arachno-people. And Jake sees you and he smiles and he starts running down the ramp towards you.

Tass: "Oh, no. Oh, no." I think I'm going to backpedal and close the door.

Rev: All right. So you back up and you close the door to the Room of Magic. Do you say anything to the room?

Tass: Yes, as I'm spreading my arms across the door. "There's like a spider queen lady thing. And Jake, I think she has Jake. Oh god."

Jake: Leeeeeroy Jenkins!

All: *laugh*

Rev: And so, Jake, the last thing that she has said to you is 'Kill those people who you call your friends, because they're messing up my plans.'

Teej: Which is exactly what Leroy Jenkins did. So, yeah, that makes sense.

Rev: So what would you do? You've seen him backpedal into the room and close the door.

Jake: I pull him to me.

Rev: You can't.

Jake: Oh, OK.

Tass: Yes! Magic room!

Jake: All right.

Teej: Thank goodness.

Jake: Then yeah. I'm gonna go bust down that door.

Rev: All right. Just straight up, kicking it down?

Jake: I think so.

Rev: Roll 'No Limits.'

Jake: *laughs* Hot start. That's a five.

Tass: Yes!

Jake: I hope I level up again in a single session.

Rev: In a repeat of a move that we have seen before, you go to bust down the door. You swing your arm forward, trying to smash the door with your hammer, and your hammer goes out your grip. And a hole appears in the door, and the hammer goes through, into the room. Tass, roll 'Act Under Pressure.'

Tass: I will! And I will prevail! I think... Yeah, I prevail with a ten.

Rev: All right. Yeah. This hammer comes smashing through the door. And almost like you were expecting it, you dodge to the side as the hammer flies by your head.

Tass: So there's a hole in the door?

Rev: There is.

Tass: I'm gonna put my face to it. Not in it, not punching range, but like, where I can see out, and start trying to talk to him. "Jake, buddy, it's us. You've got to snap out of this, man. Jake. I love you, buddy. Come on."

Rev: Jake, what are you doing to get in the room?

Jake: Like I am, other than having switched sides, I am still in my right mind, right? Like I'm not a just a dumb rage monster right now.

Rev: Yes, correct.

Jake: Yeah. So like, 'Oh, damn it, I lost my hammer. And I can't magic anybody out, I can't magic in.'

Rev: Yeah, exactly.

Jake: And so I know that he was blocking the door? Or I guess no, I don't.

Rev: Yeah. Now he's not, because you can see that his face is pretty far away from the hole.

Jake: Yeah. Okay. Then I'm gonna go through the door. Just gonna gently open it.

Rev: You see him starting to wiggle the handle of the doorknob.

Tass: I'm going to pounce forward if I see him jiggle it, and try to do that -- you know where you put your foot right at the base of the door, so it's like almost impossible to open?

Teej: *laughs* 'You can't get in!' 'Yes I can!'

Rev: Yeah. Roll 'Act Under Pressure.'

Tass: Ooh, god.

SFX: *dice rolls*

Tass: Oh, there it goes!

Jake: Oh, goodbye.

Teej: Oh, no.

Tass: *sighs* It didn't land in the roller. That doesn't count, right?

Jake: No, you take that.

Tass: Damn it. That's a six.

Teej: Sheesh.

Rev: Yeah. You lunge forward, right as he kind of gently opens the door, and you catch the edge of the door on your chin. And it kind of staggers you backwards.

Tass: Good.

Teej: Owie.

Tass: Pardon me, while I mark experience.

Teej: *laughs* Good.

Rev: You know, it's very rare that, in the moment while we're actually playing the game, that we talk about some mechanic of the game, or some hidden thing that I have built in.

Tass: Yeah.

Rev: But I feel like we have to, in this moment. Normally we would talk about this after, when we're kind of doing the wrap up. I could not have imagined, in my wildest dreams, that T.J. would have put his workshop in the Room of Magic. Because as Jake passes into the Room of Magic, the room that blocks magical effects, his mind is cleared.

Jake: Yeah!

Teej: *laughs* Yeah, see? I'm smart. I am smart.

Rev: I could not believe one: that you picked the magic place for your workshop. And two: that she got you. *sighs*

Tass: OK. Well, that said, he's through the door, so I'm punching him in the face.

Rev: No, you've just been knocked backwards. Things went to hell for you.

Tass: Oh, that's true.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: So I'm on my butt.

Rev: You are on your butt.

Tass: OK.

Rev: Jake, you are in the room, and all the sudden you come to your senses.

Jake: OK. I am going to look at Tass and mouth, like, 'Just go with this.' And I'm going to grab my hammer off the ground and then walk over, and loom over him and be, like, loudly so they can hear me: "You will die for forsaking my master." And I'm just gonna, like, smash my hammer into the floor or something -- like something that will make combat noise.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: And then I'm gonna give them like a gesture, like a like a 'Make fight noise' thing.

Tass: *laughs* I think I shit my pants on that first one, because I'm not really sure what's happening?

Rev: Ferguson just starts clanging the chisel against the table, he's like:

Rev: FERGUSON: *unconvincingly* Ahh, have at thee...

Jake: I thumbs up Ferguson, like, emphatically.

Rev: FERGUSON: *still unconvincingly* Take this, you scoundrel...

Jake: And I'm like "Have at thee!" And, like, hitting the hammer on shit again. And once there's some noise going, I'm just gonna be like, "They had me mind controlled, and they think I'm killing you guys. We need a plan to whoop their asses, because the queen and her crew are up there."

Tass: "Oh, who all's up there?"

Jake: "Well, there's the queen, and there are two enforcers, and there is an entire army."

Tass: "We're trapped in a room. Like what the hell are we supposed to do?"

Jake: "I don't... I don't know." Bam, bam, bam. "Scurvy dog!" Bam!

Tass: I shoot the shotgun in the air once.

Rev: FERGUSON: Well, it's not going to be very useful, but I do have --

Rev: Actually, Ferguson flips open the book that he had been looking at previously.

Rev: FERGUSON: There are just a few things left that we could do with the magic runes. We only have two left -- that won't do anything... neither will that... Ooh, I could bring one other person here that I know, for the cost of one. That's all I got. Everything else is... It takes a lot more power.

Tass: "I can't think of anyone that would help in this particular situation."

Rev: FERGUSON: Yeah, I thought when I opened this book that there might be more, but this stuff is pricey magic. You know.

Rev: T.J. in the corner, just *science noises*

Jake: Yeah, ideally. Every now and then he, without looking up from his work, he goes "No, you die!" And hits something with a screwdriver and then continues.

All: *laugh*

Jake: "Yeah. I mean we could get Queen Leah down here to be, like, safer than, maybe, up there? If they're swarming that other room, they're unprotected. Like, we're not there, we can't get to them."

Tass: "Ah, there's a whole army..."

Rev: At this point, you have outfitted about half of the denizens here.

Teej: Are there any right here in the actual workshop with us?

Rev: No.

Teej: OK. So it's just us four.

Rev: Yeah. He's been basically making baskets full of this stuff. And then Vitz would come down, grab it, and she takes it up.

Jake: Can he summon the Goliath? *laughs*

Tass: Oh, my god...

Rev: FERGUSON: We're barely on speaking terms. I don't really know him all that well. He's like one of those 'I saw him at a party, we nodded...' But he doesn't even follow me on on Nymphstagram.

Teej: Nymphstagram!

Jake: Oh, boo....

Tass: Oooof.

Teej: I love it. Shut up, you two. It's wonderful. That was a great one. Keep going, Rev.

Tass: "I mean, the only thing I can think of is getting holed up here, or getting holed up there. If we can try to punch a hole through this army to get to where the rest of them are, that wouldn't be bad. But I mean, all the workshop stuff is down here. I'm in the weeds here, man."

Jake: "And I mean, we can't stop T.J., or else the thing doesn't get done. And we we don't finish this plan."

Tass: "OK, Jake. This puts you in a little bit of danger, but go with me, here." And I'm like shooting the shotgun into the ceiling once, and cry out in pain.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: "Do you think you could get her to have one of the mages come to the front of the hallway?"

Jake: "I don't know. How?"

Tass: "I don't know. Like, I don't know. We get you back out in the hallway. Say that you need a magic user to shoot the door down or something. And... And I'll try to shoot that gland while it's at the top of the stairs."

Jake: "OK. I'm going to get closer to the door. When I give you the signal, like, fire off that shotgun."

Tass: "OK."

Jake: "We're gonna make it look like you just blasted me out of here."

Tass: "I love it."

Jake: "OK." So, yeah, I'll go move to where, like, I know they can't quite see me. And I'll give him like a '3, 2, 1" And like it's time to just fire anywhere. And as soon as he fires, I'm just gonna, like, hurl myself backwards out the door and onto the ground at the bottom of the ramp.

Tass: So when I fire the shotgun, I actually want to shoot it at that door at the ramp. So that I have the hole where I can look up the ramp and get a view.

Rev: So yeah, you fired the shotgun into the door and you make a little hole. Jake stumbles backwards onto the ramp.

Jake: And I want to look up to them at the top of the ramp. Like, she's there, right?

Rev: Yeah. You see the queen up there.

Jake: Yeah. I want to just be like "My queen, they're too powerful. I need help. Can you send me a magic user, please?"

Rev: Roll 'Manipulate Someone.'

Jake: This is just the worst one for me.

Tass: I can't wait.

Jake: *rolls* I lost it. *rolls* I lost it again.

Tass: Twice!

Jake: Eight. That's maybe the only not-failure I've had since my Charm got dropped.

Rev: SPIDER QUEEN: Yes, I will send you assistance, but please come. Come back up so you may escort them. I believe there is power in your presence.

Jake: What does that mean? Power in my presence?

Rev: She thinks you're balling.

Tass: Yeah, you're charismatic, buddy.

Jake: I got it. She gave me a gift. And inside of it is batteries. There's power in my presents. Boom. Bad Joke. Bad joke.

Teej: I liked Rev's better.

Tass: Yeah, I do too, actually.

Jake: I don't blame you. Uh, OK, I'll go back up there.

Rev: All right.

Tass: **quietly** Oh no...

Rev: And so you go up to the top.

Rev: SPIDER QUEEN: How many do you think will it take to finish the job?

Jake: "Oh, I think I only need one. I can handle a lot of it, just not all of them."

Rev: She gestures to one of the generals to go with you. You can see, down to your right, that one of the enforcers has just broken the main door down.

Tass: Oh, no...

Rev: And they are starting to go inside that door as well.

Jake: To, like, the main hall?

Rev: Uh-huh. The hall of the Royal Court, and the Chamber of Sleep.

Jake: OK. OK. "My queen, if you want, I think that if you send two magic users down there, they'll be able to finish them up. And I can lead the forces into the main hall, where they trust me. And maybe we can take them by surprise as well."

Rev: Roll 'Manipulate Someone.'

Jake: **rolls, laughs hysterically**

Tass: Oh, no!

Jake: Oh, god, that's a two.

Tass: **laughs** Oh, good!

Rev: She gives you a crisp backhand.

Jake: I deserve that. *laughs*

Rev: SPIDER QUEEN: Do not think that even though I was willing to lend you aid, that I will let you lay out the battle tactics. We have been doing this for longer than you and your planet have been alive.

Jake: "I apologize." I kneel. I take a reverent kneel.

Rev: So yes, she sends one of the generals with you.

Jake: OK. I'm going to look at him and be like, "OK, I'm going to go bust through there and scatter them. And then you come in and blast him, OK?"

Rev: He nods.

Jake: And I just start sprinting down. And as soon as I think I'm out of that diameter, I'm just like "Do it!"

Rev: All right. So, Tass, how have you set yourself up, here?

Tass: I have been watching through the hole in the door with a sniper rifle, ready to just slip through, raise, and pull the trigger.

Rev: Roll 'Kick Some Ass.'

Tass: OK. *sighs* Oh, no...

Rev: I think, before you roll, I think this will take a total success. So that your 'pick an extra thing' is a specific spot that you have hit.

Tass: OK... How much luck do I have -- Nope, don't think about that. Here we go. That's a nine. *sighs*

Jake: Do you really have +1 Tough?

Tass: Oh, I rolled an eight. Oh! I rolled an eight, not a seven. Math is hard. That's at ten.

Rev: All right.

Tass: I'm an idiot.

Teej: Give a guy have a heart attack...

Rev: So Jake sprints down the hallway and is like, 'Do it!' And he dives, and as he's in the air we see, in slow motion, the bullet pass over his head. And the general is starting to come down. He's like, 'I'm gonna -- oh no...!' And the bullet passes through his abdomen, into the gland, and he explodes. This explosion radius is about 25 feet. And so, you know you caught some people up the door outside.

Jake: "OK, I think that's the only hole we're gonna get to punch. Let's push through."

Tass: And yeah, I'm going to kick the door open. Then with the sniper rifle raised up, and I'm ready to shoot anything I see.

Rev: What are you doing, Jake?

Jake: Can I see how big of a hole we just made?

Rev: When you look back up at the door onto the parapet, you don't see anybody.

Tass: Good.

Rev: You don't necessary think that you killed everybody, but it seems like people got out of the way.

Jake: That's fine. Yeah. We made an opening, so I'm just gonna start moving right back up that direction, before that opening starts to close. To try and get through them, and into the into the main hall.

Rev: And Tass, are you leaving the door open? You closing in on your way out?

Tass: I will absolutely close it on the way out.

Rev: Any parting words to Ferguson? Or T.J.?

Tass: "Keep that door shut at all costs. Good luck. Godspeed. Love you."

Rev: So the two of you charge up this hallway, onto the parapet, and you've cleared a decent sized hole. You would guess that you probably evaporated five or six of the

people standing right by the door. Three of the enforcers look in bad shape. You do not see the queen.

Jake: "Oh, I hope we disintegrated the queen, but I can't imagine it was that easy."

Tass: "I'm sure we did. Easy peasy. We figured it out."

Teej: Good job.

Rev: Her weakness was being vaporized.

Jake: Like many people! OK. Is there room to move through to the main hall?

Rev: Roll 'Read a Bad Situation.'

Jake: Damn it.

Tass: Oh, no.

Jake: That's a six. I literally already have three experience from this.

Tass: And we've been here for moments.

Jake: I'm going to level again.

Rev: As you start to make your way towards the door to the main hall, you yell back over your shoulder to Tass. You're kind of flustered, and you're like 'I hope Ferguson can defend T.J. by himself.'

Jake: *laughs*

Rev: For some unknown reason.

Teej: Jake, why would you do such a stupid thing?

Tass: I get a little tingle at the back of my neck and I say, "Jake, please stop. Let's stay here for a few moments." And switch back to my shotgun as I'm running. And I'll post up at the just at the doorway at the top.

Rev: OK. So you guys are splitting up?

Jake: Evidently.

Rev: Let's go with Jake first, then. So, Jake, you get into the main hallway that leads into the hall of the royal court and the Chamber of Sleep. It is loud in here. You see in front of you the backs of a lot of these arachno-people, all different types of troops. And at the top of the hallway, you see some of the nymphs darting around, firing arrows into the crowd and diving in with spears.

Jake: Do they seem to be doing a good job?

Rev: They're not doing a bad job, but they're not all equipped yet. They're only like half-equipped.

Jake: How many bad guys are already in here?

Rev: Thirty.

Jake: Yeesh. Do I see Queen Leah?

Rev: In the hallway? No.

Jake: Do I see the spider queen?

Rev: No, you do not.

Jake: Think I'm just going to start picking at them from the back, in the hopes that I kind of split their forces.

Rev: OK. Roll 'Kick Some Ass.'

Jake: Gonna get those disappointing dice out of my way. Grab a fresh set. Eleven.

Rev: What's your extra effect, and what type are you targeting? You know, I don't think he read the call sheet -- T.J. is not called till 8:00. We had this whole battle to get through while he worked. I can't believe you're not in your trailer.

Jake: If I have sort of the element of surprise, I think I'm gonna target one of the enforcers, while they're not really, like, looking at me. So I think I can get a good shot on them, and I am going to 'suffer less harm.'

Rev: I think you can pick something else because they're not aware of you. So I'm not going to have them deal harm to you.

Jake: Then just terrible, nasty harm on those guys.

Tass: Yeah!

Rev: And it kind of surprises him, and he spins around to face you, but it doesn't seem to draw the attention of the others. Everyone is so focused on defending themselves from the arrows coming from the sky, and from the people diving in with the spears. Right now, at least their attention is forward. Tass, so you have posted up at the top of the ramp that leads down to the Room of Magic. You've got a fairly decent crowd around you. There's three of the damaged enforcers, there's a couple of mages, and a couple of the foot soldiers.

Tass: The ones that are already damaged are in bad shape?

Rev: Yeah, the enforcers. They're the only ones kind of left alive from that, and they're pretty beat up from that explosion.

Tass: OK. I want to shoot at those.

Rev: All right. Roll 'Kick Some Ass.'

Tass: Uh... That one's a re-roll. *laughs* Fuck these dice.

Teej: It's what we've been saying this whole time!

Rev: Finally! It took three episodes.

Tass: Thirteen.

Rev: One of them goes down, but he does make a swing at you as he does. And you take 3 points of damage. From somewhere you can't quite see, you hear the queen's voice.

Rev: SPIDER QUEEN: I think that you should be helping us. Why would you turn against the ones who love you? Why would you ever consider doing this?

Rev: Roll Cool.

Jake: We didn't get her.

Tass: I yell back, "Bitch, please!" With my eleven.

Rev: OK. You yell back, and there's this kind of beat.

Rev: SPIDER QUEEN: Fine. Kill them. But make sure to get whatever he's protecting in that hallway.

Tass: "Jake, come back!"

Teej: *laughs* 'Jake! Come back!'

Tass: "Jake! love you, buddy. Come here!"

Rev: And as if set on rails, you see everyone basically swarm at you and that door.

Tass: Oh, good...

Rev: Jake, this one has spun around and is facing you now.

Jake: Do I hear Tass call out for me?

Tass: *quietly* He does...

Rev: Roll, Sharp.

Tass: *quietly* Of course he does, yeah...

Rev: There's a lot of battle going on in here.

Tass: Did you just level up?

Jake: That's another experience point for me. I'm one away from leveling up again. I failed.

Tass: Good lord.

Rev: OK. Yeah. No, you do not hear him.

Jake: OK.

Rev: The big one that you have taken by surprise has turned to face off with you.

Jake: I want to suplex him, so that he's belly up and I can get a good swing on him with the hammer.

Teej: Sweet.

Rev: All right. Roll 'No Limits.'

Jake: Ten.

Tass: Yeah!

Rev: Yep.

Teej: Nice!

Rev: It is on its back like a turtle trying to, like, 'Oh, god. This is my one weakness.'

Jake: 'This is my nightmare!' Can I take a swing?

Rev: Absolutely.

Jake: I level up again.

Tass: Congratulations!

Teej: Yay!

Jake: I am not prepared for this level up. I didn't think it was going to happen this fast.

Rev: All right. Well, let me explain what happens to you, and you can ponder it while this explanation happens. You slam it on the ground, and you slam it a little too hard, and it startles it. And webbing flies out from the backside of it and wraps around your legs and you trip forward, just, onto it. Now, you guys are just kind of face to face and it's got its legs wrapped around you.

Jake: *laughs*

Teej: In a warm and loving and loving embrace.

Rev: Just a warm and loving embrace. So have you thought about what you want to do to level up?

Jake: Yeah. So I haven't thought about this one since the Halifax, but this time I'm gonna do it. I'm going to take a lesser divine being as an ally.

Rev: Oh, OK.

Jake: Sent to help with my mission.

Rev: All right.

Teej: It's going to be awesome.

Rev: So you have a couple of options to choose between. Do you want an ally who is a healer, a fighter, or a little of both?

Jake: A little bit of both, please.

Rev: So as you have this thought of 'Oh god, we need help. I can't. You know, this is -- this is so much going on.' And you level up, and this glowing orb appears next to you.

Rev: SAUL: Well, hey, Jake, how are you doing? Everything going well on your plan?

Tass: Oh my god. Is it Saul?

Rev: It is Saul!

Jake: Oh, god. "No, Saul! Everything is not going well. Could you help me?"

Rev: SAUL: Oh, sure.

Rev: And you see him fly into the spider that you have on the ground. And it lets you go and it gets up.

Rev: SAUL: So what -- what do we need to do?

Teej: Oh, it's a possessive Saul! That's awesome!

Jake: Oh my god.

Rev: Mechanically speaking, here is how Saul works. And so this is for you to keep track of. Once a day he can take over the body of an enemy that is at least half damaged. And twice a day, he can put out a pulse of energy that will heal whoever is in his radius for 3 points and stabilize them.

Tass: Dang!

Rev: And essentially, once that battle is done, he'll get ejected from that body. So he wouldn't be able to stay in this for, you know, ever.

Jake: "Go protect T.J."

Rev: SAUL: Oh, OK. Where's he at?

Jake: "Out this door. There's another door on your left that leads down. There's gonna be just a bunch of bad guys in the way, so mess them up on your way through. Get down there, and don't let them stop him from working."

Rev: Yeah, he turns and goes out the door.

Jake: OK. I'm gonna keep trying to make my way into the main hall, then.

Rev: Tass.

Tass: Hi.

Rev: So you have heard the queen yell for them to swarm you and take whatever it is you're trying to protect in the room. What are you doing when that happens?

Tass: I want to look approximately 30 feet out towards the parapet, and see if I can see another general.

Rev: Yeah, you can.

Tass: OK. I want to try to get a shot off at its abdomen.

Rev: All right. I'm actually gonna have you roll 'Act Under Pressure.'

Tass: OK.

Rev: Because it is not a matter of being able to get the shot off at this point, I think. It is more of a matter of getting it off before you are in the radius. And it's also a matter of switching out guns as you move, too, because 30 feet will be a little too far to get that precision shot that you want with a shotgun.

Tass: All righty. That's a ten.

Rev: You are able to hit this general in the gland. He explodes, and he does -- he clears out the left side that was advancing on you. But that right side is pressing strong.

Tass: OK. I think at this point, then, if they're, like, really closing in on me, I'm gonna get back down the hallway.

Rev: So you truck on down the hallway. So what are you doing when you get to the bottom of the hallway?

Tass: Be yelling "Let me in, let me in, let me in!"

Rev: FERGUSON: No, you said that under no circumstances...

Tass: "This is not a joke. It's just me. We have to bar the door, quick!"

Rev: FERGUSON: Oh, okay. I thought we were doing a bit.

Tass: "Oh, my God. Ferguson, I love you. But not right now, buddy."

Teej: "You're such a turd, Ferguson."

All: *groan*

Rev: Yeah, he opens the door and lets you in.

Rev: FERGUSON: How do you want to try to bar this?

Rev: As he keeps kind of peeking out the hole that's in the door from Jake's hammer.

Tass: Is there anything left of this car to push over in front of the door?

Rev: Yeah, there's some unused pieces.

Tass: "Yep. That. Come on. Let's do it." I'm trying to drag and push some stuff over.

Rev: Yeah, and he helps out. And you guys are able to move some of the frame over, and a couple of the side panels that have not yet been cut into arrowheads and spearheads.

Tass: Cool. Is there enough space in this frame for me to sort of get in the frame, and shoot my shotgun out the hole that Jake made?

Rev: There is.

Tass: Sweet.

Rev: Yeah, there's not a lot of metal left on it. So you're able to get inside of the frame and kind of post up there.

Rev: FERGUSON: What did you see up there?

Rev: Ferguson asks you, as you're kind of climbing into the frame of the car.

Tass: "There's a lot. There's a lot of them. We cleared out a couple of chunks, but there's still a bunch, and some of them broke their way into the main hall."

Rev: FERGUSON: They're going towards the main hall?

Tass: "Yeah. Jake went that way. He's he's helping him out there."

Rev: FERGUSON: All right.

Rev: And you see him go over to the runes on the floor, and he takes his staff and he hits one, and then hits the other. And they both glow.

Rev: FERGUSON: There's no point in trying to save this if we're not here anymore.

Rev: From now, while you guys are in this fight, everybody gets a +3 to hit and a +3 damage.

Tass: Whoa!

Jake: Damn!

Rev: So he has activated the last of the two runes, and used them to increase the battle prowess of the castle's defenders.

Tass: I kiss him clean on the lips.

Rev: So Jake, what are you doing?

Jake: Still trying to peel off some of the back line there, I guess, and get them away from the nymphs. Can I see them? Can they, like, if I call out, can nymphs hear me?

Rev: Yeah, you can see -- essentially, think of it as they are the upper half of the hallway, and the arachno-people are the bottom half of the hallway. And so they're fighting kind of vertically, instead of horizontally.

Jake: OK. I'm going to yell out their weaknesses, like as I fight my way through here. Like, I just want to call out, like, "The middle-sized magic guys have a gland on their butt, and if you shoot it, it'll detonate 25 feet around them. The big guys in the armor have a bald spot on their tummy where the metal will hurt real bad." And I want to try and hit one of them in the weak spot again.

Rev: Yeah. That, you know, that wasn't information you guys had shared with them yet. But I assume that's probably something you would have gone over during that three hours that Tass was gone.

Jake: Yeah. Like I didn't -- I hadn't gotten the chance yet to coach them. So, you know, I would have maybe, like, pointed it out on some dummies, or drawn sketches. But now, this is gonna have to do.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Hopefully they get it.

Rev: All right. Roll 'Kick Some Ass.'

Jake: You said I have a +3 to hit?

Rev: You do.

Jake: So that's a twelve.

Rev: All right.

Teej: Sheesh. Nice.

Rev: Oh, you took the advanced --

Jake: I took advanced 'Kick Some Ass.'

Rev: What have I done?

Jake: Yeah!

Rev: I've created a monster!

Jake: And I'm going to go with 'Your attack inflicts double the normal harm,' because we've got +3 to Harm right now, too. *laughs* I'm just going to explode one of these guys.

Rev: So I assume you're going after one of the enforcers? And it does. And actually, roll Luck.

Jake: Six.

Rev: So you yell this information out, the archers kind of start taking notice of the gland, and some of them start to fire. You roll this beautiful hit and you crack this enforcer, his head caves in and he instantly falls to the ground dead. And as he hits the ground, three eruptions happened in the hallway. They understood the concept that, 'Oh, hey, you can do this and it's gonna kill them.' But there was no coordination between them. And you can tell that some nymphs are lost, some big chunks of the hallway are cleared, and everybody is kind of startled by it and dazed for a moment in this large explosion.

Jake: Oh, man.

Rev: So the hallway is a little clearer. Do you want to try to push your way through and get into the the royal chamber? Or continue to fight from the back?

Jake: I imagine that when a bunch of them explode, I kind of, like, freak out for a second.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Like tense up. And I'm like "Twenty five foot radius! Twenty five feet! Everything in it will die! Be careful." And then I will try and push my way through and get into the hall.

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

Jake: Eight.

Rev: You get a hold 1.

Jake: 'What's my best way in?'

Rev: Yeah. So, you can see that, just with a little bit of maneuvering and some ducking, you'd be able to get out of the hallway and into the royal chamber. Because about now, the ones that are left alive in this hallway are starting to become wise to the fact that there is someone behind them.

Jake: Perfect. All right. I'm going to bob and weave my way in there.

Rev: You get into the royal chamber, and the first thing you see is Queen Leah standing on her throne with a bow and arrow. And she is firing into the horde that is inside of this chamber. And to the right of her throne is Fox, popping off shots with a gun that no one has taken back from her yet.

Tass: I might ask her to marry me before we leave this wonderful place.

Rev: And you have this very strange moment where you walk in the room and you see a bullet hit. And time kind of slows down for a second, because as it's travelling, it looks like it starts to glow, and you feel like your hammer glows. And the tip of the arrow that Queen Lee is getting ready to fire glows. And you see these projectiles hitting and just passing clean through, and enemies dropping.

Jake: Nice.

Rev: Tass, so you have barred yourself in the door, he's activated the last two runes, and the enemy is at the door.

Tass: I'm gonna shoot it.

Rev: Roll 'Kick Some Ass.'

Tass: OK. Yep. That's like a... oh god, ten -- like a twelve.

Rev: All right. And what's your extra effect?

Tass: 'Take lesser harm.'

Rev: So you take 1 point of damage as a magic bolt comes in the window. But there is a detonation in the hallway as you explode one of the generals. And from the back of the hallway, you hear:

Rev: SAUL: I've come to help. I'm kickin' some spider butt back here, just, uh -- whatever you did to him, don't do that to me. Jake was very, very insistent that I help.

Tass: "K, whoever that is. K. We got you, buddy."

Rev: SAUL: All right. I'll be there in a minute. Pretty hairy up here.

Rev: So, Jake, you are inside of the royal chamber, and it is filled with archers. And they are making short work of the horde inside of this room.

Jake: I want to relay to them that, like, "The queen seems to be moving the whole army in -- like up the stairs. There is a huge force. The queen herself is here. She is using mind control shenanigans to turn allies against each other. And like, you know, be careful. Lock yourselves away. We are still working on the plan. I think we're going to do this. Just keep kicking ass and taking names."

Rev: And you actually notice that, as you are kind of having this conversation, over your shoulder, you don't see any more enemies coming in to the hall.

Jake: That's somehow more concerning. Once I get that information relayed, does anybody -- does anybody seem like they have words for me? Cause if not, I'm gonna go.

Rev: No, I don't think so.

Jake: Yeah. OK. Then I'm gonna go back out the hallway, and back towards the Room of Magic. Start picking more people off on my way out.

Rev: So when you come back out onto the parapet, it's empty.

Jake: I wanna go look over the stairs.

Rev: Roll 'Investigate a Mystery.'

Jake: That's a four. This is the worst night I've had in as long as I can remember with dice rolls.

Tass: Yow. Oof.

Rev: Roll Cool.

Jake: OK. *rolls, laughs* Oh my god!

Teej: You poor, poor man.

Jake: That's a three.

Teej: How did you make it past grade school?

Jake: I'm real bad at Yahtzee.

Teej: You got your ones covered.

Rev: SPIDER QUEEN: Finish what you started. Don't worry, this time I'll take precautions.

Rev: And as you start to walk towards the Hall of Magic, there is a red shimmer that goes over you. So, Tass, you were at the bottom of this ramp and you hear this voice like:

Rev: SAUL: Oh, yeah, I'm going to come help out.

Rev: And then you hear:

Rev: SAUL: Oh, hey, I'm glad you're here! What're you doing --? *yells* Uh, OK. All right.

Rev: And you see Jake coming down the hallway, just smashing his way through the remaining enemies.

Tass: "Jake, how's it going, buddy?"

Jake: "It's going super well! Whatever you guys did down here, I'm kicking ass."

Tass: "All right. Hell yeah. Who's your friend?"

Jake: "Oh, it's Saul. Yeah, I called him. I didn't mean to, it was kind of reflexive, but like, he showed up for backup. So he is here to help. Except he just got wasted out of a spider body back there. So he's just kind of floating around now."

Tass: "Okay." Can I see the shimmer? The red?

Rev: Yes. Because you are wearing T.J.'s goggles.

Tass: Oh, that's right. "What is -- what's that? Is that what it looks like when you're charged up?"

Jake: "Isn't it? I thought that this was, like, the effect that -- so one of you guys did something, right?"

Tass: "Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah." And I'm going to look, and look at Ferguson, and like, look down at my hands, and look at T.J.

Rev: You notice that they all have a glow over them, but it's kind of gold.

Tass: Oh.

Rev: Roll 'Manipulate Someone.'

Jake: OK.

Tass: Are you kidding me?!

Jake: That's a three!

Tass: Are you kidding me?

Teej: I'm glad I'm just not even doing anything.

Rev: Yeah.

Teej: It's all Jake.

Jake: Oh my god.

Rev: So, yeah, you tried to explain away this glow, and Ferguson looks to you and is like:

Rev: FERGUSON: No. That would be evil magic of some kind, I think. You know, the glow from us is gold.

Tass: "Jake?"

Jake: "Yeah, man?" Am I to the door yet?

Rev: You are at the door.

Jake: I'm gonna just start to walk through.

Tass: I mean, there's a car frame pinning the door shut.

Rev: Oh, yeah, there's a car frame. Yeah. You go to open the door, and it's jammed.

Jake: "God, what's going on here?" I'm gonna like, you know, give it a little push.

Tass: "Why do you have a red glow, buddy?"

Jake: "I don't know? Again, I thought you guys did this."

Tass: I'm so conflicted right now.

Jake: I'm going to try and push the door hard enough to move the car frame.

Rev: Yeah. Jake, Roll 'No Limits.'

Teej: *laughs*

Tass: Go on.

Jake: That's a five.

Rev: So with that fail on 'No Limits,' something goes horribly wrong. You are able to push the door open and get inside the room. You see him muscle his way in.

Tass: "Dude, what are you doing? They can get in if the door's open!"

Jake: "I'll put it back. They're not back there, dude. I just obliterated the last of them. They're -- they left. They moved down the parapet. They're gone." And I'm just walking towards Tass.

Tass: "OK. I mean, Ferguson, he's glowing red, man. What do you got for me?"

Rev: And you actually see a very strained look on Ferguson's face. Jake, roll 'Kick Some Ass.'

Jake: This is gonna be the double sixes right here. It's gonna be another level up. I -- oh wait. With the +3. Cause it would have been a level up. Instead, it's a nine.

Rev: For you, with 'No Limits,' something went wrong. You obviously don't know what it was. But in the moment of you breaking in the door and having this magical flare up, Ferguson recognizes what it is, and his staff starts to glow. And as Jake raises the hammer out of nowhere to bring it down on Tass, Ferguson appears in front of Tass, the hammer hitting the top of the staff. And there is a crack of lightning that channels out of the hammer, into the staff, and through Ferguson's body. He falls to the ground as the red energy dissipates from Jake. You are in your right mind again.

Jake: I drop to my knees and 'Lay on Hands' Ferguson.

Rev: Nothing happens.

Tass: "Oh, shit. What happened? Are you back? What happened?"

Jake: "I got mind controlled again."

Tass: "Son of a bitch!" And I'm down, trying to check on Ferguson.

Rev: You kneel down and you start to roll him over. And as he rolls over, you see everything drying out, and you have this vision of the husks in the forest. As he starts to fade out, you see his hand extend and point towards the table. And then he is still.

Tass: "No, come on. God damn it. No!" I pick up my shotgun and I walk towards the door that's cracked, and I start stalking up the ramp. "You ugly bitch. You're gonna fucking die."

Jake: I just killed a person. Again. I'm gonna walk out after Tass, and I'm going to drag him back, like I'm going to just teleport him right back down to me.

Tass: I think I'm just weeping at this point.

Rev: I imagine that this scene is Tass starting to struggle his way up and Jake pulling him back, and Tass trying to go again and Jake pulling him back. Until it is essentially him holding you in place and embracing you, and pulling you back into the room where everyone is safe from her mind control. You both sit there for a couple of minutes and Fox comes down.

Rev: FOX: I think they're all gone. I don't know if we killed them all, but we certainly did something to disrupt the army. And there's no sign of the queen that you talked about. I think what happened is that when we started killing those generals, they closed their portals. And so we cut off their their way to get here. We started making gaps in their advancement through the forest. So they could still be here, but they're back at the camp. They don't have a way to quickly get here. So we have time.

Tass: "Ferguson did it. He saved us. He saved me."

Rev: She goes over and she kneels down next to him.

Rev: FOX: This is exactly how he would have wanted to go. Everyone here would die for anyone else here.

Rev: And she touches his hand. And then she follows where his hand is pointing and goes over to the table, where there's a book and a box. And inside the box, she pulls out a necklace with these symbols on it, and you saw him carving these symbols earlier. And she starts flipping through the book.

Rev: FOX: I think this is for you.

Rev: And she hands it to you, and she can barely make out the description. But what Ferguson had designed was runes to, essentially, absorb the magic. So that when the explosion happens, it would absorb whatever would hit you.

Tass: I take it and put it on, and I think I'd finally sit with Jake, too. "You didn't do it, man. That wasn't you. We got to get this done. T.J., How's it coming?"

Teej: "It's coming right along."

Tass: "All right. Keep it going. We got to finish arming them. We've got to get it all ready."

Rev: And I think the last two hours goes without incident. You're able to finish the piece. And you know that some of the hunters are starting to circle around above high, trying to watch for the reappearance of portals. But as of yet, there haven't been any. Jake spends the next couple of hours training the people, talking to them more in detail about the weak spots. T.J. continues to help with the armament process. You're able to cut out the rest of the arrowheads and the spearheads as Fox leads Tass back out into the woods. So we get to that critical moment right before dawn. Tass has made his way up to the top of the tree. He's gotten into position with this altered sniper rifle, and its payload. Jake stands on the parapet with T.J. next to him. So Tass, roll 'Act Under Pressure,' and Jake, roll Luck.

Tass: Uh, OK, I want to use my 'Bottle It Up' and I want to use all three. So that I can bring it up to a full ten.

Rev: All right. Jake?

Jake: Eleven.

Rev: So Tass fires this bullet right as the sun starts to peek up. We see the Goliath start to glow. And right before he roars, it hits. And there is an enormous explosion. At the same time, a bolt of lightning strikes the parapet and a rift opens. And even though he's a little blinded by the light of both these events happening at the same time, through the rift, T.J., you can see Main Street. You can tell that this has appeared in the little park downtown. The three portals next to the Goliath are gone. All the troops moving around, scrambling, trying to draw up a new plan of attack, don't exist. Tass in the tree gets washed over by this energy, and the tree from underneath him evaporates and he starts to plummet. But none of the energy hits him, and we see the seven runes on his necklace, glowing and pulsing, and then they discharge. And there's a blue flash against this red flash. Jake, I think you knew that this was... Part of the plan was to pull him back.

You don't need to roll your hunch. You know, you've got to bring him back. And so there's a moment where we see Tass free falling. Jake clenches his fist, and Tass arrives on the parapet next to the rift. And here we are.

Teej: "It's probably not going to stay open for long. We've gotta get going."

Tass: "We don't know. We don't know if we got her. We have to get her."

Jake: "How long was Queen Leah gone before? How long do we think we have for this to stay open?"

Rev: She doesn't really know how long she was gone. Conover had said a couple of minutes, but Conover also didn't know when she left, or when she got back into bed. She just knows that there was a point where she checked the bed and she was gone, and then she was there again.

Tass: Can we -- I mean, is it just a crater? Like, is it just trees destroyed?

Rev: It is. It is. It is a crater. And there is no sign in the forest of any magic out there.

Tass: I rip those off and hand them to T.J.

Rev: Fox comes up out of the Room of Magic.

Rev: FOX: Come here. You should see this.

Tass: "OK."

Rev: She takes you back down into the Room of Magic, and all seven of the runes are full.

Tass: "Oh!"

Rev: FOX: I don't know how he came up with this, but that necklace, he built it to absorb the energy and refill the runes.

Teej: "What does that mean?"

Rev: FOX: It means that all the things that can be done here, we can do.

Jake: "Bring back Ferguson?"

Rev: FOX: We could.

Tass: "Let's do it."

Rev: FOX: Before we do, I think... I think you should see this.

Rev: And she flips the page, and you can see scratched onto the paper, he has written a spell. Fox looks at it for a moment.

Rev: FOX: He figured out a way that you could adjust for the passage of time before you go home. He must have been doing this before he started to build that necklace. It seems like he thinks he figured out why time passes differently. The magic here during the day, it stops the passage of time for us. But at night, when we don't have any magic, it's weaker. It's faster. He thinks that he could cast the spell on your portal, and it would go back almost 100 percent from the moment you walked in. It'll take four of the runes. There are seven total. To bring Ferguson back would take four as well.

Tass: "Bring him back. That's my vote. I don't want someone else to be dead because of me."

Jake: "I agree."

Teej: "Bring back Ferguson."

Rev: And she moves him to the center of the circle. And she activates four of the runes, and she utters a couple of words. And the energy from the four runes moves across the ground, through the circle, and into his body. And it's like a stop motion video of someone growing a new plant. You see the moisture returned to his body. You see the moss fill out his beard again. And his eyes open.

Rev: FERGUSON: Oh, well, that was... That's a whole new field of study. I didn't think I'd ever get to see the other side.

Tass: Oh my god...

Jake: I want to give Ferguson a big hug.

Tass: Yep.

Rev: FERGUSON: Oh!

Jake: And I'm just apologizing profusely for having killed him.

Rev: FERGUSON: No, no, it's not your fault. It was... I saw it in the moment before you struck. There was something in your eyes. You weren't affected the same way you were when you came into the room. You weren't freed. But I knew that all of that energy would short circuit whatever she had done to you.

Rev: Ferguson looks around and he sees the three full runes on the floor, and then he notices his book is open. And he moves to it and he starts running his fingers over the spell that he'd scribbled into it.

Rev: FERGUSON: It's a shame that there aren't enough runes to cast this for you, but it might be a sliding scale. We might be able to use one or two or three of these to get part of the effect. These are yours by right. You recharged them with your daring action. How many would you like to try to use? If you leave us with none, we will be no worse off than before.

Tass: *laughs* Fuck!

Rev: FERGUSON: Let me hand you one moral decision after another.

Jake: "I vote that we... I vote we use them all. I don't want to screw you guys over, Ferguson, Fox. With how much time has passed in our world, and we haven't been there... I think the farther back we can go, the better off we are."

Rev: FERGUSON: From my best estimate, having a little bit of description from you about how your world works, and knowing something about the magic of our world, what it does to us during the daylight hours, I would guess that maybe thirty four, thirty five days have passed since you've been gone.

Tass: "Woof."

Jake: "And if we use all three runes, when do you think we get back?"

Rev: FERGUSON: I'm not sure.

Tass: "I wasn't going to use all four to do it over bringing you back. But now that we have, let's use them."

Teej: "Yeah, let's use them."

Rev: So Ferguson goes over and he puts the butt of his staff under the three runes, and you actually see the energy go up into the staff with each one. And he leads you back up to the parapet. And as you arrive on the parapet with Ferguson and Fox, you find Queen Leah, and Vitz, Pryde, Conover, and Robear, and they're all looking at the portal and chatting about the various things that they see through it on the other side.

Rev: FERGUSON: If there's any last words you've got to say to anyone, now would be the time.

Jake: Can I make an argument for something?

Rev: Sure.

Jake: I think that someone being in your head is pretty intimate. And it probably leaves some traces.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Can I pull the queen? Or at least try to?

Rev: Roll 'Angel Wings.'

Jake: Hell yeah. That's a twelve.

Rev: So you focus down and you pull, and there's this weird sensation of seeing her through like 20 panes of colored glass. It seems it's so far away that you shouldn't be able to see her or reach her, but you feel a hand on your shoulder at the last second and some energy pours into you. And you can sense that Ferguson is behind you, channeling something into you, and she becomes clear. And then she is there on the parapet with you, and she is very disoriented.

Tass: If she's holding still, my shotgun is against her temple and the trigger is being pulled. Without any hesitation whatsoever.

Jake: OK.

Rev: So Jake closes his fist and the queen appears. And before anyone has an opportunity to react, Tass steps forward, raising his shotgun, puts it against the side of her head, and pulls the trigger. Everybody is stunned at the sound of this gunshot ringing out, and her body crumbles to the ground.

Tass: And I'm just -- I think I'm just standing there breathing heavily and just staring at it. "I'm sorry, guys. I just, I couldn't -- I couldn't chance it. She, I mean, almost single-handedly took so many of us out. She did kill you, Ferguson. I couldn't... I couldn't give her the chance. I'm sorry."

Rev: QUEEN LEAH: Will they be back?

Jake: "So we had stymied them pretty good. And they had been blasted back home, essentially."

Rev: QUEEN LEAH: I mean, was she a queen? Was she the queen? Do you know?

Teej: "Can I borrow your knife, Tass?"

Tass: "Yeah."

Teej: "Awesome." I'm gonna try and carve out her, like, web sack. I want to -- I want to see if I can't, like, get our team back at home to maybe create spider webbing for us?

Rev: OK. Yeah. Roll Sharp.

Teej: OK. That would be a eleven.

Rev: You're able to find it and cut it out no problem.

Jake: "Maybe you can study her remains, essentially? And kind of figure out a way to ward against it. You know, like next time, if they tried to send a force again, they'd have to send someone like her again, presumably. But maybe you could find a way to shut them out by..."

Rev: FERGUSON: Oh, yes. If there's something in her, like that magic gland, that's allowing her to mind control, or whatever it was she was doing. Yes, it's worth a shot. Do you see anything with your strange binoculars?

Teej: Yeah, I'll take a look and see if she's got the gland, too.

Rev: All right. Roll 'Investigate a Mystery.'

Teej: That'd be six.

Rev: Yeah, you don't see anything. And actually, as you're kind of looking around trying to poke through and see, it kind of goes into the brain.

Teej: "Whoops!"

Rev: FERGUSON. Oh. Well, I guess we'll just try a different route, or something.

Teej: "I am so sorry. I thought I could get it out of there by --"

Rev: FERGUSON: Oh, yeah. I'm sure it'll be fine. Yeah. This is fine.

Teej: "Scrambled eggs, maybe?"

Rev: FERGUSON: Gross. Well, OK. Well, anyway. All right. Well, back to the task at hand.

Rev: He starts to cast the spell on the rift, and you see things starting to go backwards through this little vision that you're seeing of Main Street. You see people walk by the other way. You see the light go down and up. You see cars going by the opposite direction. And it speeds up. He releases the energy of the spell, and steps back. And he's:

Rev: FERUGSON: *sighs* All right. Again, I don't know what it will do, not at full power. But it will have some effect.

Tass: "Conover? Make sure this gets written down in the history, all right? I want you voting for us next time."

Rev: CONOVER: Yes, of course.

Tass: "Fox, is there marriage here? Is that a thing?"

Rev: FOX: Oh, there is a kind of union. But, you wouldn't be able to handle me.

All: *laugh*

Teej: Yup.

Tass: "Seriously, thank you for everything."

Rev: She still has your gun, by the way.

Tass: Oh, she does!

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: I could probably get a new gun from IPT, right?

Rev: You could.

Tass: OK. I think I'd give her all of the ammo that I have left, which is probably like... Oh, no, you know, they have the car. I'd show her where the car is, and she'd kind of know what the bullets look like. There's got to be at least seven or eight boxes of ammo down in there, so.

Rev: Yeah, that's fair.

Tass: "Use it well."

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: And yeah, I definitely give Ferguson a big hug, and kneel before Leah.

Rev: QUEEN LEAH: You've saved me twice.

Tass: "It was our pleasure. Can barely comprehend all this, the magic and the time. But, you know, if there is a way for you to get us back... If you need us, don't hesitate."

Rev: QUEEN LEAH: Yes. And the same with you. We owe you a debt. If you can find a way to open something that would allow you to call us, we're happy to help.

Tass: "Thank you."

Jake: And I want to go to Robear and put a hand on his shoulder and say, "I'm sorry that none of us interacted with you even once during this whole adventure."

Rev: That's how little he was interacted with: He doesn't even have a voice. He just nods solemnly, and then shrugs.

Jake: "But next time, I would love to check out that temple."

Rev: We'll find out what this faith is all about. He shrugs again.

All: *laugh*

Teej: Well, with that, I'm gonna go ahead and step through the portal, then.

Jake: Yeah, I'll give a last wave and step through as well.

Tass: Same.

Rev: And as you do, the portal closes behind you. And there is a moment where you feel very disoriented, and then you feel fine. And you are standing in this small park on Main Street in downtown Indianapolis. And it's about 8 o'clock in the morning. And there is the hustle and bustle of the traffic and people walking by. And you are overcome with this feeling of 'It's nice to be home.'

SFX: END OF SESSION STINGER

Rev: All right. So it is time for the end of the session recap. So let's go through and ask our four questions. Did you conclude the current mystery?

Tass: Yeah, I'd say we did. This magical world needed help from an army, and we thwarted it. Figured out, sort of, who at least was at the head of that particular army, and shot her face.

Rev: Yeah.

Teej: You sure did.

Rev: Yeah. Did you save someone from certain death or worse?

Jake: Yes. I think we saved every nymph on the planet, because they were completely unable to harm this invading army without us.

Rev: Did we learn something new and important about the world?

Tass: That that one exists.

Rev: Yeah, that's fair. I mean, we learned that there are other worlds than these.

Tass: Yeah, I think just the concept of that, just, was probably in our heads, just based on... We know for sure that all these things go bump in the night, and there are ghosts and poltergeist and things. So there has to be an element of other worldliness, but we got to walk into one. So that's a whole different playing field.

Teej: And not only that, but we saw other ones, outside of that one as well and our own. So... that's pretty scary.

Jake: That you can, like, daisy chain realities.

Rev: It's probably safe to assume that you also saw your neighbor. You know, if a natural cause could create a portal for her to get here, and vice versa. Safe to assume that your guys' realities must be very close to one another, so that they might be your neighbor on one side.

Teej: Oh my gosh. Like our quantum neighbor, or something.

Rev: Yeah. Did we learn something new and important about one of the hunters?

Tass: Yeah. I'd say that just the way Jake's magic works is --

Teej: It's not at, like, a constant level, yeah.

Tass: Right. Like, it's not just a static 'This is how your abilities work.' Depending on where we are, magic works differently. It just does. And that isn't immune to even, like, a god giving you power.

Rev: All right. Anything else that we think we've learned about anyone else? I think we might have learned the Tass is becoming less tactical. I mean, he is the team leader. You know, you guys caught someone who was the leader of an army. Instead of questioning, he executed. I think that's a... kind of an interesting thing from him to see.

Teej: Like, he got really emotional with, like, the death of Ferguson and everything. But then it was really interesting that when he came back, he still was like really pissed off about that.

Rev: And it's interesting for me, because -- and this is something we haven't talked about in probably twenty five episodes, and we're starting to kind of see it rear up. But Jake, can you remind me, what is your connection to Tass on your character sheet?

Jake: 'They are at heart a good and righteous person. You must help them stay that way.'

Rev: And so it's interesting, because that's something that hasn't come up much as he's going down this dark path. A lot of things that are happening, that are causing you to go that same direction. And so you guys are kind of feeding each other down this path of anger. So I find that really interesting.

Teej: Oh, boy.

Rev: All right. So from that, you get two experience points. You guys get eight gear points. Does anybody level up from that?

Jake: Yep.

Tass: Yep.

Teej: I absolutely do.

Rev: Oh, god, all of you?

Teej: Yeah.

Rev: All right. So what are you going to take?

Jake: Well, I'm running out of things to take at this point.

Rev: Yeah. That happens when you level up seven times in three episodes.

Jake: So I'm going to take +1 Weird, which bumps my Weird up to a +2, same as my Tough. So I should start landing 'No Limits' a little bit more often. And since I did advanced 'No Limits,' I feel like that's a good call anyway.

Rev: Oh, yeah.

Jake: Increase the chances that I roll a twelve. And the way I feel like this manifests is just that coming back from this world, where all my magic worked incredibly well, that coming back, I brought a little bit of it with me, somehow. Just that little... A little bit of that extra power came with me. And so I'm just a little bit better at magic now.

Tass: I like that.

Teej: That is a great justification.

Jake: Thank you.

Tass: Yeah, I dig it. I actually had something similar in mind, but I think, in real time here, I need you guys to help me decide. And not by giving me your input, but by deciding which number equals what when I roll a die to figure this out.

Jake: OK.

Tass: Because I think I did, yeah, I think this magic affected me in particular, because I was so close to that blast. And I was wearing this artifact covered in the runes that soaked into, and through me, and past me.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: So I think, for the first time, this is a reason for The Professional -- who's not at all magically inclined -- to have a little bit of something. So I think it either needs to be that I can turn into an animal, after having worked with Fox. And that something about that working in proximity, or something about thinking about her and thinking about that magic as we were leaving, stuck with me. Or something to the effect of, like, I was in this other universe or this other world, and now I'm kind of phased in and out a little bit. And because of that, I can walk through walls.

Rev: Oh, that you're a little less tethered.

Tass: Yeah.

Rev: You're part of our world, part of their world...

Tass: Exactly. So those were both actually Monstrous moves from that playbook. And one of them is 'Incorporeal,' and the other one is 'Shapeshifter,' I think it's called. And I can't decide which one I want to do. So what I need is... How do we want to do this? One of them -- one of them is odd number, one of them is even number.

Rev: Or you make one die one power, and another die the other power.

Tass: And then roll them both, and the higher one gets it.

Jake: And if you roll the same number, you just get both.

Tass: I get both!

Rev: But at half strength.

Tass: I turn halfway into a fox. OK. Which one's the orange?

Jake: The animal.

Tass: OK. The orange is the fox. The blue is...

Teej: Incorporeal.

Tass: Yes. Incorporeal. Here we go. *rolls* I can turn into an animal. I think that this is tied to me specifically, so I don't -- I don't think I quite turn into a fox.

Rev: Can you write down on a piece of paper what you turn into?

Tass: OK. OK...

Rev: OK. So I think that, in the sense of the story, that the night that you guys come back from the other world, in your dream, when you sleep that night, that you actually have a vision of this place. And you're kind of going around inside of the castle, and up on the parapet, and out into the woods. And you realize that you're seeing through Fox's eyes as she is kind of going on her rounds. And you get this feeling of the muscles she's flexing to do this. And you wake up, and your bed is huge. And you see these little brown legs kicking as you wake up from your dream.

Teej: *laughs* What is this?

Rev: And the camera pulls back to see Tass's very large bed with a dachshund in it.

Jake: ...A dachshund?

Tass: Yep!

Jake: All right.

Teej: Oh, is it a little baby dachshund? Or is it like a full grown dachshund?

Tass: Full grown dachshund.

Rev: Yeah, it's got some grey in its beard.

Teej: Because a little baby dachshund would be so cute...

Tass: Yeah, it's a long hair miniature. It's dappled.

Rev: And what does that do, mechanically?

Tass: It actually gives me a +1 when I 'Investigate a Mystery.' So... because of the heightened senses of an animal.

Rev: Oh, OK. So yeah, you can, at will, turn into this -- this little dog. And I think that you realize that waking up, and then you're back in your normal form in bed. You probably go dog - Tass, dog - Tass, dog - Tass, dog - Tass, and then you stay dog and curl up on your own pillow and go to sleep.

Tass: Yup.

Rev: So, T.J., what are you gonna take?

Teej: I'm gonna go ahead and I'm gonna take another move from The Science Guy. And in this case, it is the 'Laboratory.' 'You have a lair... err... lab that is quite adequate for working in private. Pick three of the options below for your lab.' And so I chose the 'Examination Room,' which I can use to find out more about creatures by taking them apart. And then that apparently gives me a +1 going forward to 'Investigate the Mystery.' One called 'Off the Grid,' which means that due to the covert nature of my research on these creatures, it is hidden and untraceable. Even the other hunters cannot find it unless you lead them in. Also, all communication made from within the lab are untraceable as

well. And the third one is a 'Fabrication Workshop,' since I'm making stuff all the time. I might as well have something that I can build stuff in.

Rev: So where is your lair located?

Teej: I'll have to think about that a little bit.

Rev: OK. Well you let me know.

Teej: Will do.

Jake: Can I make a pitch?

Teej: Yes. Fastball me.

Jake: The grates in downtown Indianapolis that lead down to, like, the... Not like the sewers, but that sub level where there's, like, ventilation and stuff?

Teej: Oh my god, yeah.

Jake: That one of those secretly leads into your lair, instead. So that way it's still in the city and close to headquarters, but it's not headquarters. It's your own special thing.

Teej: I like the idea of it. Probably that sublevel of Indianapolis.

Rev: OK.

Teej: Yeah, just one of the random streets, I guess.

Rev: So how far away is this place from where you and Tass live?

Teej: About a block away. So that way I don't have to travel all the way across Indianapolis to get there in traffic.

Tass: I say it's a good cover anyway, because there's always construction down in that area. They're building something new all the time.

Rev: That's fair. So is there anything you guys want to ask about the, um... About the story itself? I mean, she's kind of dead. I don't think that there's a lot of stuff that would be that we couldn't really talk about.

Jake: Are they going to invade Elnore again?

Rev: Oh, I guess that's probably... That's good. Good first question. Probably the one that I can't answer.

All: *laugh*

Rev: I mean, it will definitely be a different world if they show up to Elnore again. But from what T.J. saw, them coming through a plane portal, them coming through a plane portal, it's safe to assume that if that explosion didn't kill those other big portals, this is still the next plane in their path unless they choose to go a different direction.

Teej: Possibly to Earth.

Jake: I wonder if they can.

Teej: What have we done?!

Jake: They would have to outnumber us so incredibly to not just get obliterated.

Rev: Well, that's actually something I want to talk about. So you guys saw that there were eight enforcers. That was what were brought over. And enforcers for them are hard to come by. They're hard to make, to train. And they're kind of their heavy hitters. And you guys actually did a really good job of splitting those enforcers up and dealing with them. But really, that's the, kind of, the might of their army. You know, the magic users, for some worlds, would be very difficult. But really, the thing that you were able to take away is that a big part of their conquering powers that the queen is able to get in, get into someone's head, and they start controlling key people. And you guys were really in such a good place with being in that magic room. If you guys had been set up anywhere else and Jake had come in, it would've been a whole different ballgame.

Tass: Yeah. Yeah, that was lucky.

Teej: It's a good thing I did that, and knew all about the magic.

Rev: Yes. All along, it was his master plan. T.J. is such a brilliant scientist, he's making plans five episodes ahead.

Teej: That's right.

Rev: He's rolling dice today for matches we're gonna do in episode 50, is what he's saying.

Tass: Master planner.

Rev: So that kind of talks about why the battle started to get easier. Once Ferguson turned on those buffs, and once you guys equipped those people with metal, they didn't really have a chance. Before, what was really helping them was that element of surprise. It was the element of her being able to control key people. And just so happens that this plane did not have, you know, one of their weaknesses.

Which actually brings me to talk about... I love this Luck mechanic. There are times where, you know, there are a couple of things that could happen, and I'm not sure how I want to choose. Having you guys roll Luck, I'm really enjoying. And I think one of those really good examples that we actually didn't get to talk about on the air was when you arrived. If you guys remember all the way back at the very beginning of the story, I had Jake roll Luck. And there were three scenarios that you guys would have been in. And he had, I think he rolled like an eleven. And so that put him, and you guys, in his car. And I realize that Jake never got to use his car.

Jake: Nope.

Rev: But luck wise, that was the best scenario for you. You had this source of metal, and that was why -- I think at some point it kind of became a joke. Like, 'Oh, yeah, we're not going to destroy the car, we're not going to destroy the car.' And I'm sitting here thinking, 'Oh man, that was the benefit of when they got pulled.' And so that's why I gave T.J. the keys on his 'Oops!' Because, you know, if you guys had gotten... If he'd gotten a mixed success on that Luck, you probably would have had some of your weapons on you, but you would have been, you know, coming out of IPT on your way to lunch. And you would have just had what was on you. Or if you had rolled the worst success, you guys would've been sitting around your apartment, watching a movie. And you wouldn't have had shit on you.

Tass: Oh my god.

Rev: And so really it was... That was the best scenario, that you were in the vehicle. You had a source of metal, which I knew, you know, was the weakness. And you had all of your armor and your weapons, because the car is designed to hold that. So I'm really

enjoying this Luck element, when I don't want to just either be too harsh or be too lenient. I like letting the dice decide on that.

Tass: Yeah, I think that's fun. I dig that.

Teej: Man, we could have almost died because Jake is so damn powerful right now.

Tass: *laughs* Yeah, he is.

Teej: He rolls crits, but the opposite crits.

Tass: Yeah.

Teej: The ones we don't want.

Rev: Yeah, I hadn't really thought about that idea of one of you getting possessed again when Ferguson activated those runes to help with the battle. And essentially the way those runes worked, you know, he'd activated one before and it gave a bonus to the fight. And they stack. And so now he had three burning. He's like, 'Oh, shit, the castle's under attack. Well, let's do this then.' And so the idea of you all having kind of +3 for combat seemed like a good idea to him.

Jake: Yeah, I could have... Like any full success, I could have outright killed either of you. I could have one-shotted either of you dudes.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: Yep. Oof.

Teej: Especially me just sitting there, working on something.

Rev: Just execution style.

Teej: Yeah.

Rev: Hammer, head. Hammer, head. Hammer, head. Just, as you slowly go into the ground.

Jake's got a buddy now.

Jake: Yeah.

Rev: He's got a little -- He's got a friend.

Jake: We were buddies, anyway.

Rev: Yeah. But now he's here.

Jake: Now he's here, and he gets to be around all the time. I think having a, essentially, a fourth on the team will be especially handy. I like that one of the one of the advanced improvements I could have taken was to create another hunter and play them alongside us. And then we could have a team of five!

Tass: Oh, I have that, too.

Jake: Perfect. And I don't know who it would be, though, is the thing.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: We are us.

Teej: I think it should have been one of these fairies.

Jake: We get through the portal and one of them has, like, jumped through after us. Like, they decided that they didn't want to not be with us.

Rev: Yeah. You're just like 'You know what? I want to have a Spellslinger. So Ferguson follows us through.'

Tass: But he is six inches tall. The magic's just as potent.

Jake: Yeah.

Tass: He's just little.

Jake: He's extremely stealthy, extraordinarily stealthy.

Rev: TINY FERUGSON: Well, I feel like this is going to be a little bit of a challenge for me...

Jake: I've changed my mind. I don't want the +1 Weird any more. I want Ferguson!

Rev: *laughs*

Tass: We could build up -- really, just an army here. Because I can also get the, you know, second hunter to play along. And, command of an agency team of monster hunters. Team! Ridiculous.

Jake: Yeah. Like ten guys. We don't even have to go anymore.

Rev: You guys could just franchise.

Jake: Yeah. What precisely was the, uh... the time? Like, how did it equal out, time there to time on Earth?

Rev: Twenty minutes was a day.

Jake: Damn.

Teej: Cool.

Rev: And so, but that effect was halted during the day. The magic there is so powerful that they essentially go into stasis when their sun is up. And so the only hours that counted against you were the nighttime hours. And you guys managed, as Ebenezer Scrooge said, to do it all in one night.

Tass: Yeah, oof.

Rev: So you guys only spent one night there. But yeah, essentially, every night you spent would have been about a month.

Jake: Damn.

Tass: Yeah.

Rev: And so then, with the spell that Ferguson cast, you got back essentially two-thirds of that time.

Tass: God. That's... that's fantastic, by the way. Just, even the moment that we realized what you were saying, when that sank in. 'Oh. Oh no.' Just... 'What -- What does this mean? How long is going by?' Just that real terror of what we're missing right now.

Rev: I don't think enough time has passed for there to really be a problem. I think that when you guys, you know, get a hold of Margaret, she's really kind of like:

Rev: MARGARET: oh, good. You took the two weeks off.

Rev: You know? She wasn't planning on using you guys, kind of keeping you out of the spotlight. I'm sure your personal lives are a little shaky, but--

Jake: Eh. I've done worse.

Tass: Not any more than usual.

Rev: *laughs* Yeah.

Tass: I honestly was expecting, like, two years have gone by and here is the hellscape that we have to deal with.

Rev: Yeah, I kind of wanted to paint the picture that it was drastically worse, but Conover essentially just saw from the moment that the bed was empty, and then went out. And then came back and she was there again. And so she assumed it had only been a couple of minutes, because that was the last time she had checked. And then 'Oh, a couple minutes passed and she's back in bed. That's weird. And she describes a couple of days passing.'

Tass: Well, it worked. You scared the shit out of us.

Rev: And so something else I want to mention is that this is episode 26. And up until now, we have bleeped every time someone has used the F word. Not because I find the F word offensive, but because at one point we just talked about like, 'Oh, when we get first listeners, how do we want to deal with that? Some people will turn off. We have our mothers listen to this. Some of us have young cousins and nephews.' And so we just kind of started with the idea of 'Let's just not use that word.' And then a couple of times it was funny, to me personally, to bleep it. Because I just think that you can't make that word impactful if it's bleeped. And so it suddenly became a 'Keep them in, because I think that's funny.' But this episode has our first uncensored one. And I knew that it would happen eventually. But I wanted it to be impactful. I wanted it to have a purpose. You

know, a lot of people use that word as a comma, and that's what I wanted to get us out of the habit of. Because the first recording we did, it was like every third word. Just because that's how we talk. But there was the one that Tass used, when they were dealing with the queen towards the end. And there was me sitting at the computer editing it: bleeping it made it a funny moment, which it wasn't. Cutting it out short-changed it. And so, assuming that it is still there when you heard this, that's why. Because that moment loses something without that word.

So it probably won't happen very often. But it'll happen every now and then, when I think that it matters.

Tass: I barely even remember that moment. Because you hit me.... Oof, you hit me in the spot that always gets me to the height of emotional, too. You know, Ferguson stepping in front of that hit. It's the sacrifice. It's the sacrifice that gets me every time. I cannot watch Lord of the Rings when the riders of Rohan come up over that hill.

Teej: Oh, god.

Tass: And they're like "Well, we're going to die."

Teej: Hold my hand.

Tass: I know. "We're gonna die. But we're doing this anyway." I am in tears every time.

Teej: Absolutely.

Tass: When they're... When they're running at the gate, you know, "It is not this day." And so, wow, yeah, I was in our rage. 'She's gonna die. She's gonna die. That's what's gonna happen. She's gonna die.' It gets me.

Teej: Can we talk about Lord of the Rings more?

Rev: And that's something that I've found, you know, the more we go through this story. You know, one of the difficult things about you guys being yourselves is that obviously there's danger to you. And there's a very good possibility that one of you, two of you, might die. But it is equally painful, and maybe even more so, that I have to put more and more weight on the other people in the world that you care about. That's how the enemies find that they can hurt you. It's kinda like Spider-Man. There's not as much joy in trying to kill him, if they can hurt the people around him. And so it's nice. It says something about your guys' role playing in this. You know, we dick around in this a lot.

We're playing -- you guys are playing yourselves. And there's a lot of joking. But you can always feel in the room when the moment changes. When something bad has happened to someone that you guys care about, I wish that everyone listening could be in the room, because it changes so dramatically, the air in the room. And I try to leave a little bit of that silence in, but it's... it's a whole different environment. Which for me, as a storyteller, is really enjoyable.

Well, I think that brings us to the end of our time in Elnore.

SFX: MUSICAL STINGER

Rev: So you guys have been home for a day. And in that time, Tass has had a strange nightmare that left him feeling a little fuzzy... Or, little and fuzzy. Jake started going through the voicemails left from his stunt at the Monument at the Circle. And T.J. has started to go through his voicemails. And T.J., as you do, you find one from Lindsay, the scientist who helped you make the shield for Jake's fight with the Thunder Lizard.

Teej: Oh, yeah. Good old Lindsay.

Rev: You hit play.

Rev: LINDSAY: Hey, T.J., this is Lindsay. I'm ready to call in that favor you owe me. Every year, the science team has a contest, and every year I come in second. Well, I am done with that. Be at my place Wednesday at 8:00 a.m. We got work to do. This year, with your help, I'm finally taking home first place.

Rev: And the voicemail ends. And we see T.J. look a little confused. 'What's Wednesday?' And he opens his phone, and he opens a calendar, and a somewhat maniacal grin crosses his face as he sees Wednesday's date, October 31st.

Teej: *maniacal laughter*

Rev: See you next week.

SFX: OUTRO MUSIC BEGINS

All: *laugh*

Jake: Oh, shit...

SFX:

OUTRO MUSIC CONTINUES