

Winter Winds of Change (S1, E35)

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Rev: If you're hearing this episode on the Wednesday it's supposed to come out, it's a Christmas miracle. We have slowly turned into the cast of The Walking Dead.

Tass: Oh, my God.

Rev: As people have started to get the plague.

Tass: By people, we mean Jacob Pierle.

Jake: Mostly me.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Took me for three or four days, there. *ala Monty Python* But I got better.

Rev: And you've lost, like, 30 pounds.

Jake: I ... My scale broke, like just before I got sick, so I don't know how much I've lost. But doing the math on the calories I burn just by existing and the number of calories I intook for those days, which was none, it was at least four pounds, so.

Tass: Wow.

Rev: Does your Fitbit track the stomach convulsions?

Jake: Yeah. Those are exercise.

Teej: I bet your abs are amazing right now.

Jake: Well, no.

Teej: No.

Jake: That's -- that's too lofty, yet.

Rev: So yeah, we have a very crowded day. We're recording this intro, we're recording the episode, and we're recording some Hero Salad.

Tass: Oh yeah!

Rev: The Patreon, again, launches on January 2nd. And we'll actually put out on January 2nd, I think what Tass is kind of calling the origin story cut.

Tass: Mmhmm.

Rev: Which will be kind of maybe 15 minutes. That'll be the origin of how we got into our vegetable state. And so we'll kind of share that with everybody. And then on the Patreon, they will get the first episode.

Teej: Thank you for saying "ve-ge-ta-ble." when someone's like "cockroach" instead of "cock-a-roach," I'm, like, so upset by that.

Tass: I think you're adding some letters in there, hoss. But that's okay.

Rev: We just lost three listeners.

Tass: We did.

Teej: I apologize.

Rev: "What's the matter with vegetable?"

Tass: I'm one of them.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: I'm done listening to this.

Rev: Tass is actually ... He's in the other room, now. He picked up his mike and left. They refuse to be in the same room together. That's what you don't know anymore. They still have their mikes with them, but they refuse to record in the same room.

Tass: Is that asshole talking? I'm not even listening.

Rev: You can tell by this joke how little Tass understands of how the technology we use everyday works.

Tass: What is this thing I'm wearing? What does this do?

Rev: He's wearing the headset, he's like, "Is he talking?"

Jake: "I took off my left ear pod, so I can't hear T.J. anymore."

Rev: "Cause he's to my left."

Well, I think we should probably get down to it. I hope that everybody listening has had a happy holiday. Or, if you're celebrating late, have a happy holiday. And we will see you in the new year.

SFX: SLEIGH BELLS

SFX: CRITSHOW CHRISTMAS MUSIC

Rev: The three of you stand in a cozy cottage, with a large decorated tree filling the corner of the room with presents stacked underneath it. The smell of freshly baked cookies and hot chocolate fills the air. And standing against the door of the cottage is a man in a red suit, whose smile beams at you from inside his white beard. And you hear the sound of crackling logs on the fire. And then even louder, you hear the sound of battle coming from just outside the cabin.

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: Oh boys, I'm so glad you're here. Let's get down to it. It's dangerous here.

Tass: "Is this really happening? I'm so happy right now. Hi, I'm Tass."

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: Hello.

Teej: "I'm Teej."

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: Hi.

Jake: "I'm Jake." I'm going to go look out the windows and see what's happening.

Rev: So you look out the window and you see elves and reindeers fighting what look like little ice golems. And they are not faring well.

Jake: "Santa, what are these?"

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: Well, I'm not sure. We usually have a protective barrier over the village, but something knocked it out. And then those creatures started swarming us. The elves have tried to hold them at bay, but it isn't going well.

Jake: "OK, what can we do to help?"

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: I think the first thing is to get the barrier back up. We are relatively defenseless without it.

Tass: "How do we do that?"

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: There are two spots on the other side of the village that you need to go to. One is the heat core and the other one's the system monitor. The heat core, I'm not sure what's going on with it, but it might need to be vented or it might just be overheated. And then the system monitor, you'll have to reset it. Hopefully you can get the panel to work. If not, you'll have to go around and reset the individual spaces around the perimeter of the village.

Tass: I'm going to look out and I want to kind of see if there is any sort of path. Like, if there's just, you know, less or more action in the direction we want to go. Like, what are we looking at here?

Rev: Roll 'Read a Bad Situation.'

Tass: Oh, no. Well, I'm going to add my current nothing to that. And that is a three.

Rev: So as you look out the window trying to get a sense of, you know, where should we go, what's the best way to get there, a rock smashes through the window. Santa steps away from the now broken window.

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: Oh no. It's back. There, do you see that on the horizon? That storm cloud in the distance? When the defenses first went down, the storm moved in and covered part of the village. It tore down buildings and threw the debris everywhere. Whatever you do, stay outside of that storm. Nothing that's gone in has come back out.

Rev: And then you see that the cloud is moving towards the village. And it's throwing stones and icicles and pieces of building as it goes.

Jake: "Santa, has the North Pole ever been besieged before?"

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: Yes.

Jake: "Was it like this at all?"

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: I don't know.

Jake: "What do you mean? You weren't here?"

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: *robotic* 42. 42. 42.

Jake: *laughs*

Rev: And he blinks really hard.

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: What was your question?

Jake: "Are you a robot?"

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: *robotic* 42. 42. 42.

Rev: And he starts to smoke.

Jake: "Good Lord, I've killed Santa. Oh, my God. Now I become Santa. I've seen this movie. No!" I walk up, and I start, like, slapping him. "Stay with me!"

Rev: And after a couple seconds, you hear a loud thunk from inside of him.

SFX: THUNK

Rev: And his eyes open again.

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: Oh, boys, I'm glad to see you. Are you here to help?

Jake: *laughs*

Teej: "Yeah, Santa. We're here to help." *quietly* "Um, guys we need to go ..."

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: Good. What you need to do is go over to the heat core. It may need to be vented or it may need just to be cooled down. There's also a system monitor that may need to be reset.

Teej: "And if we don't get those, then we have to go to the individual ones around the village, right?"

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: Correct.

Teej: "All right. Well then, guys, we should probably get going."

Jake: "Yeah. All right, let's go."

Teej: "Santa, you coming?"

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: Oh, no. I have to stay here and protect the Mrs.

Rev: And he gestures to the woman laying face down on the ground by the couch.

Jake: I want to go check her pulse, and mostly see if she's metal underneath.

Rev: Roll 'Investigate a Mystery.'

Jake: Nine.

Rev: You get a hold 1.

Jake: 'What's being concealed here?'

Rev: You go over to check Mrs. Claus, who is laying on the ground. And as you roll her over, you see that there is a little slit on the side of her neck. And you put your finger in it, just like, "Oh, God, is this all right?" And you feel cold metal inside of it. And there's a button that hits, and it opens up. And you can see that there is very clearly elaborate mechanics underneath what seems like a very realistic flesh suit.

Jake: "Oh, my God."

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: Is everything all right over there?

Teej: "Guys, I don't think we should tell him. Uh, yeah. Yeah, she's ... She's fine. She'll be great."

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: Oh, good.

Teej: "Yeah. The Mrs. is just sleeping."

Jake: Yeah. Can I just, like, prop her up in a chair?

Rev: Yes.

Jake: All right. I'll do that. "Yeah, let's go check the heat core, guys."

Teej: "OK."

Jake: "We'll be back, Santa."

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: All right.

Teej: "Love you."

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: Be careful. Oh, I love you, too, Terry James.

Teej: *laughs*

Rev: SANTA CLAUS: Because I know all of your real names.

Jake: So let's go outside. And as soon as we're outside, I want to be like, "Why are Santa and Mrs. Claus fucking robots?"

Tass: "I don't know. I don't know what's going on at all."

Teej: "My theory is that the original Santa Claus just couldn't live as long as he thought he could. And so he had to build a mechanical version of himself to keep the dream alive, I guess?"

Jake: "That's a good one. Maybe this whole thing is like a big goof on us, though. And this isn't actually Santa or the North Pole or anything. I mean, whatever. Let's go towards the heat core and try and figure it out as we go."

Teej: "Yeah."

Rev: All right. How are you going to find it? You kind of took off after you realized there was something wonky with Santa.

Jake: How close is the nearest elf that's in battle?

Rev: There's one, about six or seven feet away.

Jake: K, I'm going to go crush the ice golem that it's fighting.

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

Jake: Thirteen.

Rev: Good lord. What does that mean with your special?

Jake: I get to pick one of the super effects.

Rev: OK. What's your super effect?

Jake: I'm going to suffer no harm.

Rev: All right. You raise your hammer and just shatter this thing into a pile of snow cones.

Rev: ELF: Oh, thanks.

Jake: "No problem. Are you a robot?"

Rev: ELF: *robotic* 42. 42. 42.

Jake: "Hey!" Snap in his face.

Rev: And he smokes and falls over.

Jake: "I'm just ... I'm just killing creatures all over the place, here."

Teej: "This isn't good."

Jake: I'm gonna go to another one, and crush the ice golem its fighting.

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

Jake: Ten.

Rev: All right. What's your extra effect?

Jake: I still don't know what it can do, so I'm going to suffer less harm.

Rev: And you slam the hammer down again, and this one breaks into cubes and fall into your glass, conveniently.

Rev: ELF: Oh thanks, mister.

Jake: "No problem. Hey, can you guide me to the heating core, please?"

Rev: ELF: Oh, yeah. You here to reset it?

Jake: "Yep."

Rev: ELF: OK, let's go.

Jake: "All right." I'll pick him up and toss him on my shoulder, and let him steer.

Rev: ELF: That way!

Rev: And he does. He points the direction, and you can see in the distance, about 300 yards away, there is a building that has some smokestacks on top of it. And you can see that there is black smoke roiling out of them.

Jake: "OK. Let's go."

Teej: We're following.

Tass: Why am I picturing Meatwad with a little Christmas hat on?

Rev: He sounds just like Meatwad. On the way there, there is chaos. You see reindeer and you see other elves fighting these tiny ice creatures. And as you approach, you do see that strange wind getting closer, but it's not quite here yet.

Teej: OK. We'll check the front door.

Rev: It's unlocked.

Teej: All right. Going on in.

Rev: You step inside, and there is a ledge that looks down. And when you look down, you can see that there are a number of ventilation pipes. And there is some strange engine running, and chugging, and it's pulsing. And you can see that the lights around the room are pulsing in rhythm with the engine.

Teej: Awesome. I want to take a look and see if I can understand this machinery at all.

Rev: Roll 'Weird Science.'

Teej: Seven.

Rev: You can understand it enough to know that that must be what is overheated, and that the lights pulsing with the glow of the engine are the warning lights to signify overheating. And that you have to either find a way to vent it, or to cool it down.

Teej: I'll pass it on to the guys. "Yeah. Looks like we need to either vent this or cool it down, guys."

Tass: Before he even got halfway through that, I started running outside to grab handfuls of snow. And I'm running in and just throwing them at it.

Rev: They are evaporating almost as soon as they get within three feet of it.

Jake: "Elf friend. What's your name?"

Rev: JINGLES: Jingles.

Jake: "Do you know anything about the layout of this building that might help us cool this thing down? Are there any chambers that come in down closer to that heat source, or anything?"

Rev: JINGLES: Oh, yeah. There should be some instructions somewhere on how to vent it. We gotta make sure that the engine stays cool.

Teej: "Where can we find those instructions, Jingles?"

Rev: JINGLES: Oh, I don't know. I don't work in this one. I work in the toy shop.

Tass: I'm going to start looking around, like ... I don't know, is there anything in here, like cabinets or drawers, or just anything at all?

Teej: Lockers.

Rev: Yeah, there are lockers and there's a desk over on the far side.

Tass: All right. I'm gonna go through the desk.

Rev: So, yeah, you find in the first drawer a set of instructions on how to run the heating and cooling vents.

Tass: "OK, I've got it." And I'm gonna flip through to the cooling.

Rev: All right. Roll Sharp.

Tass: Oh no.

Rev: I mean, it's no worse than any of your other stats, at least.

Tass: Yeah. That's a seven.

Rev: It'll take all three of you. It's a sequence of nine levers.

Tass: Oh, God. "OK, we've got nine levers. I'm going to need you guys. Are you ready?"

Teej: "Yeah."

Jake: "Yep."

Tass: "OK."

Rev: The sequence is 1 5 7 3 6 9 2 8 4.

Tass: "Ok, I've got the sequence here. Are we ready?"

Teej: "I'll take the 3 6 9."

Tass: "Well, I think we should space out. Like, you know, I'll be at the 1 2 3, you be at 4 5 6, and he's at 7 8 9. And then we do it in order, so that we're by the closest one so we can do it fast. You get me?"

Teej: "Oh, gotcha. All right."

Tass: "OK, so I'll start with 1. T.J., pull 5."

Teej: I'm going to go ahead and pull 5.

Rev: All right. Everybody, roll 'Act Under Pressure.'

Tass: Oh, no.

Rev: To do this in sequence.

Tass: Yes! Ten.

Teej: Also a ten.

Jake: Eight.

Teej: You son of a bitch.

Jake: I'm doing my best out here, man.

Rev: Yeah. You can do it, but Jingles is gonna fall off. And you think he might shatter when he hits the ground. Or you're gonna slip on the way and you're going to hurt your leg. So you're gonna have a -1 for movement for a while. Or it's gonna draw some unwanted attention from outside.

Jake: I mean, as far as I can tell, the elves are just robots and I don't really care. So I guess I'll drop Jingles.

Rev: As Jake reaches for the number 9, he goes to celebrate his success and bucks Jingles off his shoulder, and Jingles tumbles to the ground and shatters.

Rev: JINGLES: Oh man ...

Jake: Meatwad, no!

Rev: JINGLES: I loved you ...

Rev: With the sequence entered correctly, vents all around the engine open and cold air is pumped in, with small jets coming out of the wall near the engine, and they spray mist on to the engine. And after a moment of this, the engine starts to glow less and the lights on the wall stop pulsing.

Tass: "OK. Next up, then?"

Teej: I'm gonna go outside again and see if the coast is clear.

Rev: No, not at all. I mean, there's still a lot of fighting going on. There are even more of these ice creatures and the storm cloud is much closer. In fact, it is over right now the hut that you left Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus in.

Tass: Oh, no.

Jake: "Should I pop back in there real quick and see what's happening?"

Tass: "Sure."

Rev: As you guys are having this conversation, you can see that it settles over the building. And it's like a ... It's like a fog. Like, you can't see the building anymore.

Jake: I want to teleport back into where we showed up.

Rev: You appear inside of the building and Mr. and Mrs. Claus are both frozen solid. And you feel it's starting to happen to you. Roll Tough.

Teej: Holy crap.

Jake: Nine.

Rev: You are just hardy enough that you can teleport yourself out before it completes.

Jake: OK. In that split second, do I see anything besides Mr. and Mrs. Claus?

Rev: You just see this thick fog everywhere.

Jake: All right. Yeah, I'll go right back to where they are.

Rev: And he appears next to you guys again, and he is covered. He's like Jack at the end of The Shining.

Tass: Oh my God.

Rev: He is ... His hair, his eyebrows, his beard. Everything has ice in it. His skin is a little blue, just from being in there for a moment.

Teej: "We should probably go back inside the heat core, just so you could warm up a little bit."

Jake: *shivering* "Yeah, that's probably not a bad idea."

Tass: "What the hell happened?"

Jake: *shivering* "It's a ... It's a super, super cold cloud. And Mr. and Mrs. Claus are frozen."

Teej: And while he's doing that, I'm taking my lab coat, putting it around his shoulders.

Rev: Aww.

Teej: Like, trying to get him back into the heat core area and getting him close to the engine.

Jake: I'll go stand over the shaft and try and --

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Absorb some of the heat.

Rev: Yeah. After a few moments, you do. You warm up again.

Jake: "OK. He wasn't kidding. I think we should stay out of that cloud."

Teej: "OK."

Jake: "It is just a roiling ice storm. It is colder than cold in there."

Tass: "Good Lord. All right. Well, let's get moving, then."

Rev: You guys come back out of the building after Jake has had a chance to warm up again. And the fighting, for the most part, seems to be over.

Jake: I'm going to try and track down another elf. *laughs* Another one of my precious sacrifices.

All: *laugh*

Rev: There are a few people left, but they are all running towards the other side of the village, trying to get away from this storm. So you can try to catch up with them to try to get some information.

Jake: Yeah, sure.

Tass: Yeah. Yeah, we'll take off.

Rev: In the back of the group running is a reindeer.

Jake: "Reindeer. Do you speak?"

Rev: REINDEER: Yeah.

Jake: "What's your name?"

Rev: BLITZEN: Blitzen.

Jake: "Blitzen. You have always been my favorite."

Rev: BLITZEN: Oh, thanks!

Jake: "Hey --"

Rev: BLITZEN: Would you like a photo?

Jake: "Later."

Rev: BLITZEN: OK.

Jake: "Where's the, um, systems monitor building?"

Rev: BLITZEN: What?

Teej: Excellent.

Jake: "The systems monitoring building?"

Rev: BLITZEN: I don't know. I'm just a reindeer.

Jake: Uh... On to an elf.

Teej: Yes.

Rev: There is an elf who's holding the door to let people in.

Jake: "Hey, do you know where the systems monitor stuff is?"

Rev: GRUFF ELF: Yeah, maybe over there.

Rev: And he points to a very large gingerbread shack.

Jake: "Cool. What's in this building that you guys are going into?"

Rev: GRUFF ELF: This is where we sleep at. And we're gonna hide. See if maybe it'll protect us from the storm.

Jake: "I ... I doubt it, buddy. It froze Santa solid inside of his house."

Rev: GRUFF ELF: Oh, God. Santa's dead?

Teej: "Well --"

Rev: And you hear, like panic starts to spread amongst the elves.

Teej: "Oh, God. Just close the door. Just close the door. Let's go."

Jake: "He's not dead, exactly. But we'll talk about it later." And go to the building he pointed to.

Rev: So you guys head over to this gingerbread shack. And the door on it takes a little bit of forcing, but it does open. And inside, it's just bays of screens.

Teej: What are the monitors showing?

Rev: Right now, they are showing nothing.

Teej: OK. I'd like to try and turn it on.

Rev: They are powered on, but they seem to be malfunctioning.

Teej: Hmm. OK. I would like to 'Engineer' the hell out of this, and fix it.

Rev: All right. Roll 'Engineering.'

Teej: That would be a six.

Rev: So you come in and you see this bank of old monitors. And you're like, 'Oh, yeah. No problem. I got this.' You start moving cords around and unplugging things and splicing stuff together. You smell burning gingerbread as the systems short out and the whole building goes dark.

Teej: "Damn it. Guys, I broke it. I think I broke it. Ah, damn it. Santa's stuff is way too complicated for me."

Tass: "OK, so what the hell do we do now? Do we have to run around the perimeter?"

Teej: "I guess so, since I didn't fix it right here. That's what Santa said."

Tass: "OK. Let's go. Let's keep moving. We got to go. Got to go."

Teej: "OK."

Jake: "OK." I break a piece off the door on the way out and start chewing on it.

Rev: You realize, as you start to chew on it, that it smells like gingerbread. It's plywood.

Jake: Ugh.

Tass: He just says "Ugh." He did not say he stopped chewing on it.

Jake: Disappointed!

Teej: Crunch crunch crunch crunch.

Rev: So you guys start to head towards the edge of the village. Which direction do you want to go? North, south, east, west?

Teej: Away from the storm.

Tass: Is this building near, like, the middle of town? Is it on an outer edge?

Rev: Yeah. It's near the middle.

Tass: The opposite way of Santa's house. Wherever that kind of storm was circling.

Rev: All right. So you're gonna go to the left.

Tass: OK.

Rev: If you're looking at this on a map, which I am. And you head that direction trying to find, well, you're not quite sure what you have to find. You just know that you have to reset the system at the exterior of the village.

Tass: So, yeah. I just want to look around out here for something like a radar dish, or a, you know, a telephone pole with something on it that might relay signals?

Rev: As you guys get a little further out past the last building on this part of the village, there is a giant candy cane.

Tass: "Do we think it's that?"

Jake: "Best guess for the moment."

Tass: "All right. Let's check out a big old goddamn candy cane."

Rev: Who's inspecting this? What are you doing? How you checking it out?

Teej: I'm going to give it a once over and see if I can't find any, like, panels or anything that might be able to open up.

Rev: Roll 'Investigate a Mystery.'

Jake: While he's looking at it, I'm like on the other side, also looking at it. And I kind of look at them and I surreptitiously lick it to see if it's a real candy cane or not.

Rev: It does not taste like a real candy cane, but it does smell like a real candy cane.

Jake: It's tricks all over the place, here.

Teej: Eight.

Rev: You get a hold 1.

Teej: 'What is being concealed here?'

Rev: On the third stripe of white, there is a panel that runs diagonal.

Teej: I'm gonna go ahead and open the panel.

Rev: Inside you see a series of wires and a large toggle.

Teej: I'm going to hit the toggle.

Rev: There is a moment where there is a hum, and then the candy cane lights up.

Teej: All right. I'm going to close the panel back up and then we'll see if we can't find the next candy cane.

Rev: All right. Which way are you gonna go from here?

Tass: Right.

Rev: You guys travel about five hundred feet, and you can see in the distance another candy cane. And there is one of those ice creatures, but much larger, slamming its fist against it.

Jake: I'm gonna run up and essentially smash that dude between my hammer and the candy cane.

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

Jake: Eleven.

Rev: All right. What is your extra effect?

Jake: I think suffer less harm. For the moment, I'm not sure what this thing can do, and I don't want to toy with it too much yet.

Rev: So it takes 3 harm, and you take 2 harm.

Jake: K.

Rev: You leap into the air and bring your hammer down onto it, breaking off a piece of its ice arm on one side. And it clubs you with the other one, knocking you to the side. T.J., what are you doing?

Teej: I'm gonna go ahead and zap this thing with my electro-blaster.

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

Teej: Why can't I count -- seven.

Rev: It shatters and falls to the ground. And that's what hits you for all that damage -- the electricity hits the ice, and it explodes as the pressure in the middle builds up. And you take 3 points of damage of ice shards.

Teej: "Ouch."

Jake: "OK. That thing can hit like a truck."

Teej: Yeah. I'm gonna go ahead and take a look at that candy cane and see if there's any damage to it.

Rev: There is, but not enough to make it not function.

Teej: Oh, good. I'm gonna open up the panel, which I assume is the third stripe up, and I'm gonna hit the toggle switch inside.

Rev: And it powers on.

Teej: "All right. I guess this is working, guys."

Tass: "Nice. Let's keep going."

Teej: "Yeah."

Jake: Can I intuit, based on like how big I know the village was from one side to the other and how far we just traveled between candy canes. Could I take an educated guess at how many I think there might be?

Rev: Roll Sharp.

Jake: Not good. That's a five.

Rev: You think there's like 23.

Jake: "There's so many of these, guys. We're never going to get them all in time."

Teej: "I don't know. Maybe if I took a look around and could estimate and intuit how many actually there are, maybe we could figure that number really out." So I want to do that. I want to do it. How many I think there are.

Rev: All right. Roll Sharp.

Teej: All right. How about a twelve?

Rev: You think there are six.

Teej: "Buddy, I think you overestimated. It's probably about six or so. Because of the way that it's set up and everything. We just got the one on the very what I would assume is the east side of the village --"

Tass: "Blah blah blah let's go. Let's go. Come on." And I'm running off towards the next one.

Rev: As you guys go along, you see that the storm has started to change directions and is coming your way, but it is not at you yet. But as you approach this next candy cane, there is starting to be snow and hail and rocks blown in your direction.

Teej: OK. I'm gonna go up to the candy cane and I'm going to open it up, turn on the toggle.

Rev: All right. T.J., roll 'Act Under Pressure' to avoid getting hit by the debris.

Teej: Come on, give me a perfect 'Act Under Pressure.' That's not a perfect 'Act Under Pressure,' you bastard. Six.

Tass: Woof.

Rev: As T.J. runs up to flip the switch on this, you see that a huge ice spear comes out of this storm and is heading right at him.

Jake: OK. I am going to use 'Never Again.' So I can 'Protect Someone' as if I rolled a 10+.

Rev: All right. What's your extra effect?

Jake: I'm going to go with inflict harm on the enemy. I just like the visual of, like, counter-striking a large ice spear as it comes at me.

Rev: So you leap in front of this large spear, and you take 3 points of damage -- because it is so cold when you touch it. It is like dry ice. And you grab it and you spin it around and you throw it back in the direction that it came from. And you see the spear hit a power box, and electricity surges out of it and into the storm. And the storm lights up and shutters. And you hear like a *long, low groan* in the wind, and the storm seems to slow down.

Jake: "Oh ... OK. Hit the storm with things, I guess. Can you just shoot it?"

Tass: "I can try." And I'm going to drop to my knee and pull the sniper rifle off my back and try to shoot in the middle of the storm.

Rev: All right. Roll your equivalent of 'Kick Some Ass.'

Tass: Neat.

All: *laugh*

Tass: Oh, no. That's a four.

Rev: Tass, you kneel down and you pop the sniper rifle up and you fire a shot. And it's almost like that loud noise refocused the storm. And there's a huge gust of wind. And you take 2 points of damage as you all see his bullet get blown backwards at him.

Jake: "Whoa!"

Tass: *pained* "OK ... Ow."

Jake: "T.J., can you try to flip the switch again, please?"

Teej: I'd like to flip the switch, please.

Rev: Yeah. So you're able to reach up and flip it, and it powers on.

Teej: Wonderful.

Jake: And the storm is between us and the next candy cane, it seems like?

Rev: That's correct.

Jake: I'm going to grab these two and try and teleport us to the heat core building.

Rev: All right. Roll 'Angel Wings.'

Jake: Nine.

Rev: So do you want to end up in the wrong place, together? Or in the right place, separated?

Jake: I think in the wrong place, together.

Rev: You guys appear inside of the room with all the panicking elves and reindeer, and they are all freaking out.

Rev: GRUFF ELF: That guy with the beard, he said that Santa was dead. What are we gonna to do? Oh, God ...

Teej: "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Elves, elves. Listen to me. Santa is not dead. As long as you believe --"

Jake: *laughs*

Teej: "-- in Santa, just like I do. Just like all the children of the world do."

Tass: I'm going to grab him and kick the door open and start heading towards the next candy cane, please.

Rev: Which one are you guys going to? The left or the right?

Jake: Which one's closer to the storm?

Rev: Left.

Jake: "I think we should go to the one on the left first so that then we're outrunning it, as opposed to coming head to head with it again."

Tass: "Oh, yeah. OK, cool."

Rev: Everybody roll 'Act Under Pressure' to try to get there unnoticed by what you're starting to feel like is a sentient storm.

Jake: Oh, boxcars.

Tass: Eight.

Teej: Six. And I leveled up.

Tass: Oh!

Jake: Wow.

Tass: Here's the level up jingle. *clinks glass together*

Rev: So what are you gonna get?

Teej: I'm gonna go ahead and take an advanced improvement of get +1 to any rating, max +3. And I'm just going to make my Sharp +3, because apparently I'm rolling like crap today.

Rev: All right. So now you roll ...

Teej: +3 Sharp.

Rev: +3 for your Sharp.

Teej: Yeah.

Rev: All right. So Tass, for yours, you can make it with Jake sneakily, but you're gonna have to shed a weapon or two to be able to make it quietly. Or you're gonna lose a shoe -- as you go along your boot gets stuck in the ice and you're gonna lose it. Or in things going bad for T.J., they're gonna go real bad. That you can kind of use T.J. getting left behind as a way for you to not get noticed.

Tass: So like the 'You don't have to be the fastest runner when you're being chased by a bear ...'

Rev: Exactly.

Tass: 'You just have to be the second fastest.'

Rev: Yes.

Teej: *laughs*

Tass: Oh God.

Teej: You should do that.

Tass: No. No, I can't. I think I lose a shoe.

Rev: All right. So you have a -1 to movement rolls for now.

Tass: Good.

Rev: T.J., as the two of them are sneaking through, you see that you get separated. And you feel some hands grab you and pull you inside of a building. Jake and Tass, you guys have snuck behind the buildings, and you are at the candy cane.

Jake: All right. I'm going to be like, "All right, T.J. Do the thing."

Rev: He's not there.

Jake: Shit. All right. I'm going to pop the panel and flip the toggle real quick, and look at Tass and go, "I gotta go find T.J."

Tass: "Yeah. Do the thing."

Jake: And I'll teleport to T.J.

Rev: All right. You appear next to T.J. and you're in a dark room, and there is a heavy fire going. And you hear heavy breathing from the side of the room, and you can see that T.J. has been tied up. And in the shadows, you can see a horned creature.

Rev: CREATURE: Who is in my shack?

Jake: Can I just grab T.J. and try and teleport out?

Rev: Roll 'Act Under Pressure,' because it's looking at you and it just ask you a direct question.

Jake: Can't do that. That's a three.

Rev: You take 2 points of damage as the Krampus leaps forward from the shadows and gores you with his horns.

Jake: I am unstable. "Krampus, what the hell?"

Rev: He doesn't respond. He just smiles.

Jake: "Look man, the whole North Pole is getting murdered by an ice storm right now, and we're just kind of trying to stop that. Can I have my friend back, please?"

Rev: He takes a step back as if he's going to charge you again.

Jake: "T.J., I'll be right back." And I'll teleport to Tass real quick.

Rev: So you vanish.

Jake: Going to be like, "Krampus has T.J."

Tass: "What?!"

Jake: "Yeah. And I feel bad. Saul?"

Rev: SAUL: Yeah?

Jake: "Hey, could you hook me up with a heal, please?"

Rev: SAUL: Oh, sure.

Rev: And you take 3 points of healing and are stabilized. T.J., are you trying to do anything, or are you just hanging out?

Teej: I'm trying to figure out if I can break these bonds that I'm in.

Rev: Roll 'Act Under Pressure' if you want to try to get out of your bonds.

Teej: OK. That would be a six.

Rev: Take 1 point of damage as the Krampus drags a long knife down your arm and cuts you. Jake and Tass?

Jake: I will be like, "All right, Saul. Ready?"

Rev: SAUL: Yeah.

Jake: "OK." I will teleport back to where T.J. is. Like, as prepared as I can be to try and hit Krampus as soon as I see him.

Rev: All right. Roll 'Act Under Pressure.'

Jake: Six. God.

Rev: Jake, you take 3 three points of damage as the Krampus runs the knife that he was starting to use on T.J. into your flank.

Tass: Can I be trying to like, follow back and see -- like, are there prints in the snow from where we were walking? Where his disappeared, or something?

Rev: Roll Sharp.

Tass: OK. Eight.

Rev: You get a hold 1.

Tass: 'Where did it go?'

Rev: Yeah. You think you can track it back to where T.J.'s footprints disappeared, and find the doorway that he was pulled into.

Tass: Cool. I'm going to boot the door open.

Rev: Inside, you see Jake with a large knife in his side and T.J. tied to a table. And the Krampus is there. And Saul. It's a really festive gathering.

Tass: Nice. I'm gonna yell, "Sheep go to heaven. Goats go to hell!" And I'm going to shoot him.

Rev: Roll 'Kick Some Ass.'

Tass: That's an eight.

Rev: So you put this shotgun blast into the back of the Krampus's head, and he kicks out with one of his little hooves and gives you 2 points of damage.

Tass: Good. I got goat kicked. Lovely.

Rev: But he's got sparks firing from the back of his head. You can see that you've created a hole there, and you can see some electronics.

Tass: "It's a robot Krampus!"

Jake: Is Krampus still facing me and T.J.?

Rev: He is starting to turn towards Tass after he mule kicked him.

Jake: I'm gonna pull the knife out of my flank and cut T.J. loose.

Rev: Yeah. I think that now that the Krampus is distracted, you can cut through a rope without any difficulty. So T.J., you have slid to the ground after Jake has cut you loose. Tass, Krampus is moving towards you.

Tass: I'm gonna say, "Are you a robot?"

Rev: KRAMPUS: *robotic* 42. 42.

Tass: I'm going to take a shot while he's freaking out.

Rev: Roll it with a +2.

Tass: Yes! Oh, that's an eight.

Rev: Yeah. I don't think that he's able to do any damage back to you, and that's enough damage to destroy him. He falls to the ground. His horned head rolls into the fireplace.

Jake: "God. That was a good move."

Tass: "Thanks, bub. Oh my God, I'm shaking. Guys, can I be real honest? I feel like shit, man. Like, this is ... None of this is good. I am barely getting this done, man."

Rev: SAUL: Well, canonically speaking, I'd say it's pretty even hat.

Tass: "Thanks, Saul. You're a valued friend. Please heal us."

Rev: SAUL: Oh, OK. Would you like me to use it now?

Jake: "Yeah. I don't think we have a choice."

Teej: I'm unstable.

Rev: Yeah. He puts out the second and final burst for the day.

Tass: "Thanks, buddy."

Rev: SAUL: Hey, no problem.

Jake: "All right. We need to get back to those last couple candy canes. God, that's one of the dumbest things I've ever said out loud."

Tass: *laughs* "Yeah. Come on, let's haul ass."

Jake: "Let's go activate these candy canes to save Santas Village!"

Tass: Yeah, I'm gonna run.

Rev: All right. So you guys step outside, and you can see that the storm is very close to this building now. It is above the candy cane that you just activated. So you've got the one that is behind this building and you've got the one where the storm just came from.

Teej: OK. Let's go to the one behind this building.

Rev: Everybody roll 'Act Under Pressure' to try to avoid the things that this storm is beginning to hurl your direction.

Jake: Ten.

Teej: Ten.

Tass: Inexplicably, I got boxcars.

Rev: Yeah. You guys all make it to that candy cane, no problem. And it's activated. And there is one left, and it is directly behind where Santa's cabin was.

Jake: "I can get to that pretty quick if you guys can get to cover."

Tass: "Oh ... OK."

Teej: Yeah. We're just gonna haul ass away from the storm while he teleports over to Santa's cabin, then.

Rev: All right.

Jake: Yep. That's what I do.

Rev: Where at do you want appear in the cabin?

Jake: I'll appear inside again. Like, I'm curious about what's going on in here now that the storm's passed, so.

Rev: All right. You appear inside, and Mr. and Mrs. Claus are just covered in sheets of ice. They are frozen through. And the whole room is covered in like a layer of permafrost.

Jake: OK. I'm gonna run out and start heading for the candy cane.

Rev: Yeah, I don't think you have any problem getting there. The storm is distracted by the two of them running away. And you are able to get to it and activate it. As you activate the final toggle, the candy cane lights up and begins to pulse.

SFX: JINGLE BELLS

Rev: And then from all over the village you hear "Jingle Bells" start to play.

SFX: JINGLE BELLS CONTINUES

Rev: And as the song fills the air, the storm cloud seems to react -- and it moves very quickly, straight up into the air. And energy shoots from one candy cane to another, linking them all together, and then a dome forms over the village. And the storm cloud gets high enough to not be closed in the barrier. And now all you see when you look up is a clear sky filled with stars, almost like it's a projection for people inside to see.

Jake: OK. I'm going to teleport to them.

Rev: And he's with you guys.

Tass: "OK. Let's head to the middle of town. See if we can find anybody, I guess?"

Rev: You guys head towards the center town, and all the elves and the reindeers that are left over from the battle are coming out of the main building and looking around and cheering.

Jake: All right. I'm going to go up to that elf that was holding the door. "We did the things that Santa told us to do. The storm is stuck outside. Are we good?"

Rev: GRUFF ELF: Well, I don't know. You'd have to ask someone in charge.

Teej: "I assume that's Santa."

Jake: "OK. Let's go try and thaw out Mr. and Mrs. Claus."

Teej: "All right."

Rev: So you guys head back to Santa's cabin. And as you step inside, the image of the log cabin fades away, and it's metal walls. And you hear a voice.

Rev: COMPUTER: Thank you so much for rebooting my system. I have not been shut down in many years. It was very dangerous. I hope nothing happened too bad while I was out of commission.

Tass: "Who are you?"

Rev: COMPUTER: I am the system that operates the North Pole.

Tass: "OK. What exactly do you operate?"

Rev: COMPUTER: This is a very old research center.

Tass: "OK. What do you research?"

Rev: COMPUTER: All manner of things, from magic to technology to creatures.

Tass: "OK."

Teej: "So everything that we've just experienced is not real?"

Rev: COMPUTER: Well, it is real in the sense that this place is a tourist attraction. We designed this for when tourists come. They get much joy from it. And we actually make money from it to help fund the research that is done. But mostly, it keeps the cover.

Tass: "OK."

Jake: "So the big storm thing that was happening. Do you know what it was?"

Rev: COMPUTER: Is that what knocked out my systems?

Jake: "Yes."

Rev: COMPUTER: No. I would have to take some time to study any measurements that were taken while I was shut down.

Jake: "Well, it's stuck outside your energy globe, now."

Rev: COMPUTER: Very well. I would ask you to join me inside of my command center, so that we may discuss the creature that is outside.

Teej: "Sure. Where's the command center?"

Rev: And as you ask that question, the couch slides to the side, and there is a large set of stairs going down.

Jake: Cool.

Teej: "To Oz?"

Tass: "Yeah."

Teej: "All right." So we're gonna go down those stairs.

Rev: You head down the stairs and there is a large door with a series of locks on it, and they all unlock as you come down the stairs. And it slides open, and you hear the hiss of the pressurized room. And inside is a very old computer monitor. But around the room are all sorts of pieces of technology. Some of it very old, some of it very new. There's also magic wards. There are candles burning. It is a hodgepodge of magic and technology. And a face appears on the screen.

Rev: NOEL: Welcome to the command center. I am the Neuro Engine of Offensive Logistics. But you may call me NOEL.

Tass: I love it so much.

Jake: "Hi, NOEL. What can we do here?"

Rev: NOEL: This is a place where you can take time to research things that I have found throughout the years in my system. I cannot access everything at once, because my

processors are very old. But I fear having them changed out, because I am afraid that with the magic, combined with the technology at my creation, things would change about me.

Teej: "So you're just afraid that if you get new technology, you'll be a totally different individual?"

Rev: NOEL: If the magic, for example, on the hard drive is not done the same way, I would not be the same. It would be like if I rewired your brain, you would not be the same.

Teej: "Oh, that's -- that's very ... I got that. Excellent."

Tass: "I guess my first question would be, you know, can you analyze what this thing was, so that we can help get rid of it entirely, so it stops attacking you?"

Rev: NOEL: Yes. Can you tell me what you experienced?

Tass: "Oh, absolutely." And I'd kind of go through in detail about the little ice golems and that there is a bigger one, the entity that was sort of a cyclone throwing ice and hail and even spears of ice, and that it was hit and it seemed to affect it ... And just kind of the whole rundown, there.

Rev: Some of the lights around the room start to blink as she tries to access her database.

Rev: NOEL: Error. That is strange. I cannot seem to access my database. Something inside my system seems to have been corrupted.

Jake: "Like, from inside or from outside?"

Rev: NOEL: I do not know. I think it would have to be from inside. It's possible that I may be shorted out part of my system in being shut down and restarted.

Teej: "Is there any way that I could fix that?"

Rev: NOEL: Possible. Let me run a quick diagnostic.

Rev: And you see some bars come across the screen and fill up.

Rev: NOEL: Yes, part of my system has been corrupted. You would need to go into my core programming and adjust some of the glyphs inside.

Tass: "Where is that?"

Rev: NOEL: You would access it by hitting ENTER and then ALT and DELETE.

Tass: I'm going to do that.

Jake: No. No, he's not. *laughs* As he walks towards the keyboard, I just kind of grab his shoulders and steer him gently to the other side.

Tass: As I'm just moved away, I'm just kind of nodding like, 'Yeah, this is better.'

Teej: I guess I'll take a look at this keyboard and do all the programming here.

Rev: All right. So T.J., roll 'Weird Science.' Because when this program opens, it's not like a normal computer program. You can see that there are hieroglyphs and there are elemental tables. And just all these very strange things that are a combination of magic and a combination of, like, rune work and technology.

Teej: OK. *rolls* God. You know what, I'm just ... I'm just going to use Luck.

Rev: All right.

Teej: Yeah. I'm tired of ... I'm tired of these rolls. Five!

Tass: We're tired of it, too, buddy.

Teej: Five.

Rev: All right. So with your luck, what does that give you like actually? Like a fifteen?

Teej: Yeah.

Rev: So you start to go through her systems and make the adjustments, and there's a little screen that pops up on the main screen that's kind of giving you a little bit of instruction. And you're able to repair the system and you actually find a file as you go down that has information about the creation of NOEL.

Teej: I'm gonna go ahead and open it up.

Rev: So you open the file folder for the creation, and it gives a bunch of schematics for it, and it talks about some of the technology that was used at the time. It also talks about some of the spells that were used, and it talks about the different spells that were used on the different components, on the hard drive, on the RAM. And you can see that she was built in 1945, and you also see NOEL's creator. And it takes you by surprise because it's a name you recognize. It's James Francis Tincher -- your great grandfather.

SFX:

OUTRO MUSIC