

Black Night and the Deathless Man (S1, E42)

INTRO

Rev: So after sitting in 45 minutes of stopped traffic on sixty five, in the snow while Jake desperately looked for a place to pee and only found the tops of houses over the overpass, we're back from Lodge Con.

Jake: I was gonna say, that makes it sound like I'm very tall. Yeah, I mean it was a pretty good weekend, I think. We got to go to Illinois and just dick around in a hotel room all weekend, which is not common and not ideal for us probably, but a good time nonetheless. We got our booth. We got to spend time with a lot of people we don't get to see very often. Got to meet some people who listen to the show and hang out with them. That was cool. Got a lot of fun goodies. You got some good shit while we were there.

Rev: That's true. So when we did the fan art contest a couple months back, Megan had made the cross stitch of our logo, which is awesome to look at.

Teej: It's beautiful.

Rev: And I found a cross stitch of a D20 that's on the one side and it says "Well, shit." So that's going to hang next to the logo that she has made.

Jake: As a summation of our experience.

Rev: Yeah. I also got the radiuses and the cone effects for, like Pathfinder and D&D, where it's a 3D print and it is just all the shapes you would need, depending on what the blast radius is of your spell or the cone effect and you can just place it down on top of your mini and it shows you exactly what you can hit. Rachel reminded me that the Twitter give away will end. We're giving away a book of 'Monster of the Week', as well as a series of dice. So if you want to enter that, you can go to @thecritshow on Twitter and you can enter by following the link that is the pinned tweet at the top. We got a really cool compliment the other day on Twitter. The guy who writes the IDW D&D comic, mentioned us and talked about the podcast and the way that we run monster of the week. He actually has written a number of RPGs as well, as well as he created 'Leverage' and the 'Librarians' and 'Jackie Chan Adventures'.

Jake: Which was a childhood favorite of mine and also a freshman year of college favorite of mine.

Rev: What was your favorite medallion?

Jake: If I remember right, I think it was 'The Ox'. It's an episode where a Luchador has it and he is using it to win fights, but he's doing that to like, pay for an orphanage or something. Like, he's cheating, but with a very noble cause, the only way that he can make this money to save somebody is by using the talisman and and that's a really cool episode.

Rev: I noticed the other day that as I was going through a bunch of our "statistics", I guess you would call them, that our iTunes reviews have steadily been going up suddenly. So if you are taking the time to fill out those reviews on iTunes or Facebook, thank you so much. It does help us reach a broader audience. If you haven't had the opportunity to do that yet or the time, you could take a second. It really helps us out in the sense of being seen by new people, or rather being heard by new people.

Jake: Really trying to climb back up from that two star. We've been fighting our way out of there for a long time.

Rev: It hasn't been a long road to hoe, but we're almost there. Oh, also while we are at Lodge Con, we signed up for 'Extra Life' and so we are going to take the opportunity, I know that they have their national day, I think it's the last or the first weekend in November, but they also said, you know you can kind of do it whenever you want. So we each individually signed up for 'Extra Life' and we're gonna make a team, we're gonna make a Critshow team and I think the conversation we had was possibly trying to do our livestream on our anniversary. Since that point will kind of be, I think, where the first season might be wrapping up. So maybe something fun to do. We can do a 24 hour stream and set up a couple different things of people running games, or playing video games. Kind of do things in cycles. I know Jake had talked about the idea of, "is there a way to write and run a RPG that goes 24 hours straight, where different people weave in and out and how would the D.M., or any of the players who are there for the bulk of the time, survive.

Teej: Holy crap!

Jake: Yeah, like an, like an entire season of 24. Just real time over the course of 24 hours.

Teej: Jeez!

Rev: Speaking of how will people survive, I think it's time to let the recap roll.

THE RECAP

Rev: This tall, dark haired figure with a sunken face. Scars and puckers over all the exposed skin that you can see. The nose looks like it is broken, bones aren't set correctly and he's wearing rags and dragging this sword. He grabs you by the collar and then he is at T.J. and he has grabbed him and he slams the two of you together. And Tass you hear this clap down the hallway.

Teej: In my unstabled, bloody condition, I'm gonna grab a wolf serum. I'm gonna hit him with it.

Rev: So you inject this werewolf serum into his arm as he is holding you up and you see this wash go over him as old scars plump up and his whole physical form takes on a little bit of a glow and you see teeth and hair start to reform and his eyes clear and he looks at you and he looks at Jake in his hands and then he looks at Tass down the hallway and he starts to cackle.

Rev: MUTTERING MAN: I have not felt this good in years. Oh, you, you I might keep around, but you others, you must die for you have invaded the layer of Koschei the Deathless.

BLACK NIGHT AND THE DEATHLESS MAN

Rev: Tass you are standing in this dark corridor underground and this man has just been infused with werewolf serum. You saw T.J. inject into him and all of his wounds healed up and he looks far less dead than he looked before and he is holding Jake and T.J. like rag dolls one in each hand. He is just slammed them together. What are you doing?

Tass: I've got the shotgun up, but I'm not taking a shot or anything. I think I'm going to address him now that I know that he can communicate. Oh ok buddy, look, we're not looking for trouble from you. If there's something that we can do to avoid a fight, let's explore that.

Rev: He pauses. Roll 'manipulate someone.' Oh no.

Tass: 8.

Rev: He lowers them down a little bit and the tension goes out of him.

Rev: KOSCHEI: What do you mean that you would do something for me?

Tass: Well I mean, just by nature, we're not looking for a fight. We don't want to offend you. Any aggressive action we've taken towards you, has been in self-defense. I just want that to be clear. I don't want to cause you trouble. So if there's something that you want that we can maybe settle on sort of a truce, I'd be willing to explore that.

Rev: KOSCHEI: Why are you down here?

Tass: Woof. I'm here for the spear of the chosen and in order to get that I'm essentially trying to complete a trial for Baba Yaga.

Rev: KOSCHEI: Interesting. Yes, there is something that I would like very much. I would like to be free of this place. She has trapped me down here, treats me as some kind of guardian to the things that she wants to keep a secret. But this is no life for me.

Tass: Oh shit man. And I'm just fully like putting the shotgun away like taking casual kind of stance. I'm sorry, that, that sucks. Look you have my word that I am, I'm willing to help you get out of here. Some of the things that we have to do is, I have to figure out the other things that I need to take out of here to her. Unfortunately I have no real way to research "here right now" how to get you out. But, I give you my word, I will do everything in my power to find out what this enchantment is and break it.

Rev: KOSCHEI: There is something down here. There is a room I cannot go into because it is above running water.

Tass: Oh.

Rev: KOSCHEI: I cannot pass across the water.

Tass: Yeah. If you're willing to show us where that is, I'm happy to take a look.

Rev: He sets Jake and T.J. down and he starts to walk down the hallway towards you Tass.

Tass: Ok. I'll kind of step out of the way so I'm not taking up the whole hall and kind of see what he's gonna do.

Rev: Yeah. You guys get set on the ground.

Jake: I mean we've heard every bit of that conversation right? I think I'm on board with this. So I don't think I do anything. I might follow him.

Teej: That's fine too. In fact I'm gonna go ahead and hit myself up with one of those werewolf serums, because I am unstable.

Rev: So he leads you down almost to the bridge, where Tass had thrown his sword into the water and he touches the wall on the right side and it slides open.

Tass: Oh fancy.

Rev: And he walks into the opening and vanishes.

Teej: We're right behind him.

Rev: So you guys follow him down this corridor and he comes to another flat wall and he touches it and it slides open and you're in a hallway that looks familiar. It is right before you came to the circle with the pillar in the middle.

Tass: Okay.

Rev: And he leads you around the circle. And after a couple of seconds of walking you realize that he's taking turns pretty quick. I think before you guys were kind of trying to map this out in your heads as you went, but he is just moving briskly and turning and turning and turning and so you're not quite sure where you are in this maze anymore, but he comes through a long hallway finally and he points down.

Rev: KOSCHEI: Down at the end of this is another bridge. It does not have passage I can find, that leads to it. And I think that whatever, perhaps keeps me here, is there because she knows I could not get to that room.

Tass: Ok, boys. You ready to check this out?.

Teej: Ready and willing.

Jake: Yeah.

Tass: OK we'll go check it out and I'm gonna head that way.

Rev: So you guys go down this hallway and it curves around to the right. And sure enough there is a bridge again and there is running water, and you see his sword float by, and there is a little room on the other side of this bridge and there is a chest in the room.

Teej: Is it magical?

Teej: I'm gonna go ahead and put on my my goggles. And since they're already on electromagnetic spectrum, everything's fine.

Rev: It is very magical.

Teej: Yeah. This thing is glowing, like hardcore. I want to take my car keys out and I just want to tap it on the top like, a la Sora from Kingdom Hearts. See if it opens, just *dink, dink*.

Rev: It does not, but your key melts and you can't turn the car on anymore.

Teej: Ahh...

Rev: No it does not open.

Jake: I mean we could just try and carry it back to the the deathless man. And he can do whatever the hell he wants with it.

Teej: Oh.

Jake: Right? Isn't his whole problem that he just can't get to it.

Tass: That's a good point. Yeah let's try to lift it.

Jake: All right. Try to lift it.

Rev: It does not move.

Tass: Well that figures.

Teej: Like it's basically stuck to the ground then.

Rev: Correct.

Jake: Okay.

Teej: Is there anything else in here, besides this chest.

Rev: There is not.

Tass: All right. Cheers and I'm going to try to open it.

Rev: Roll 'weird'.

Tass: New set of dice, don't fail me now. That's, that's a 5, that's 5, is what I got.

Rev: You take 2 points of damage, as you get blown backwards, down the hall, onto the bridge.

Jake: I'll run after him. Like, help him up like, What was that?

Teej: Yeah same.

Tass: It hurt. It hurts so bad.

Teej: Yeah you need one of these? And I produce a werewolf serum.

Tass: No, Get. No not yet. Calm down. Oh my God. OK. So just opening it's kind of a bad idea.

Jake: What did the force that knocked him back look like? Was it just like an invisible force, or was it like a spark of electricity, or like fire, or anything.

Rev: For you it was an invisible force. But T.J., since he has his goggles on, did see a flare come out from the chest at Tass's touch.

Teej: Well guys I would suggest we don't touch this. There's gotta be a way to open it up.

Tass: Try the latch with your hammer maybe.

Jake: What?

Tass: You know just like get the tip, one of the corners of the hammer under the latch and just try to lift.

Teej: Yeah. Just fiddle with it.

Jake: All right, I'll try that.

Rev: Try what?

Jake: I agree. I think he's saying just like scoop the latch up with the hammer sort of. Like if you were trying to flip a light switch with something, you're just gonna drag it along the surface and flip the switch up.

Teej: With like a baseball bat or something yeah.

Rev: So you're trying to undo the latches with the hammer.

Jake: Evidently.

Tass: I'm not saying you have to do it. I'm saying, that's what I'm suggesting. Those are two different things.

Jake: I think I will try and just like touch it with the hammer, see if anything happens. Nothing happens. I'm just gonna give it a shot even though it failed for you.

Teej: With your hands?

Jake: I think with my hands you saw that it was a blast of magic.

Teej: Right. Yeah.

Jake: I'm more magical. So I'll give it a shot.

Rev: All right roll 'weird.'.

Teej: Good luck.

Jake: Thank you. 13.

Rev: It opens.

Tass: Oh OK. All right. All right. Appreciate you. I feel like an idiot. Thank you.

Teej: Tass is brooding like, "I'm not magical." *and other muttering sounds*

Jake: What's in it?

Rev: A rabbit. Very large. And it looks at you and it is scurrying around inside of the box.

Tass: What!? OK. Watch it for a second. I'm gonna like, before we touch it or do anything, I want to go like report this to him and see if he has any context here of what we should do. And I'm gonna just turn on a heel and sprint back.

Rev: All right.

Tass: Hello. So there is a chest that was magic and it hurt me real good, but we got it open and there is a rabbit in it.

Rev: You see his eyes get large and he grins.

Rev: KOSCHEI: Yes. You must kill it and get what is inside out. Keep going till you find what I need.

Tass: OK. Do I get a hint of what's inside.

Rev: KOSCHEI: Oh, you will know when you see it. *forboding laugh*

Tass: Cool. I'll be right back. And I'm going to very disturbingly run back down the hallway.

Rev: And as you're leaving, you can hear him muttering.

Rev: KOSCHEI: I can't believe that she would keep it here. She will be sorry...*forboding muttering*

Tass: Ok. So I'm gonna get back down and kind of huddle them up. OK. So he wants us to kill the rabbit and there's something inside the rabbit that we're supposed to bring to him. And he really seems like he is going to try to mess her up after we let him free. So I'm really at a crossroads here y'all.

Jake: I don't love the idea of betraying Baba Yaga.

Tass: Look all she told us, all she told us was that we need to come down here and get the thing and that we wouldn't be alone. So I mean this is a way that we're dealing with it. It's problem solving.

Jake: Yeah I think let the powerful man that wants to kill me, free to kill me, is kind of implied in any given deal.

Tass: That's true, but she, I don't know, she could have given us some context and didn't. I know that's going to suck but a deal's a deal. She seemed very compelled to have to deal with us completing this if we do so.

Jake: Right.

Tass: Cheers. You know what I mean?

Jake: I get it. On the other hand, when I call Door Dash I don't say, "Bring me a pesto kava-tape from Noodles and Company and also, don't free the man that wants to kill me. Like that. It's just, It's just implied it's just understood.

Teej: That is the best analogy I've ever heard.

Tass: Ok so two choices. We do it and we let this guy free, or we just charge down that hallway and try to kill him again, knowing that he is the deathless.

Jake: What if we take the rabbit and we run away. He can't cross the water. What if we go down the water? Wheres the water go?

Tass: I mean this is the only spot that we know he can't cross.

Jake: But, like, if we go back down and we hop off the bridge into the water...

Tass: Oh if we just jump in the water, deep in the earth, in an underwater cave? I can't imagine that going wrong.

Jake: I don't like this guy or trust this guy. So I know we're not going to manage to kill him, we might manage to keep him at bay until we do what we need to do though.

Teej: Is it weird that I want to inject the rabbit with werewolf serum just to see what would happen?

Jake: Yeah it is. But that's why you're you.

Teej: OK.

Jake: That's what makes you the science guy. Here's what I feel like we should do. I think you should go talk to him again and basically negotiate that he waits to make his move, until we have accomplished our goals and are gone.

Tass: Right. Because if we do this and kill this rabbit and set him free and he goes after her, we still have to go up and get more information. Like, some stuff can break bad here. I like it. Good call. I'm gonna go back down the hallway. Koschei, Hello!

Rev: KOSCHEI: Where is it?

Tass: OK. I just want to straighten some things out, because again, my prerogative here is to get you free. That, that is what I have promised to you. That's what I'm going to do. But I'm just hoping that we can kind of work out a timeline here, because, I assume, you're gonna want to go after her and get your revenge and do all that good stuff right? Which I respect.

Rev: He's just looking at you dead-eyed.

Tass: Cool. OK so here's the thing, because I still need her to be able to get that spear. So I'm not even gonna like, I'm not gonna do this hostage situation where I'm like, "hey I'm going to do all my stuff first and come back." This is the olive branch I want to offer you right now is, we'll do this right now. Take care of the rabbit, get you the stuff, let you be free, but I just would very much love it if you could wait to make whatever your move is, until after we accomplish our mission and get out of here. Would that be OK?

Rev: KOSCHEI: Oh yes, of course, my friend. It is no problem.

Tass: And I have your word?

Rev: Yes, of course.

Tass: Yeah. Can I roll like a I don't know...

Rev: Yeah, Roll sharp if you want to try to see if...

Tass: That's a 9.

Rev: He seems to be legitimate.

Tass: OK. All right. I'll be right back. And I'm gonna walk back down. I'm inclined to think that we're cool.

Jake: Ok. God I feel so bad for the rabbit.

Tass: I know dude. I know but-.

Jake: Can I hold it for a second?

Tass: Yeah. No don't get attached.

Rev: All right Lenny.

Tass: I just walk up and shoot him in the back of the head.

Rev: Steinbeck ya'll.

Tass: No don't get attached, don't do that.

Jake: OK...

Tass: I'm going to pull out my pistol and go to the rabbit in the chest.

Rev: All right.

Tass: Is it scurrying around and stuff still.

Rev: No it's it's just kind of sitting still and looking up at you as you approach.

Tass: Does it look like, evil or anything.

Rev: It looks old and very large.

Tass: Like old, like, man it's just at the end of its road...like just frail and large with age and just like can hardly want to go on right?

Rev: No.

Tass: I hate you so much.

Jake: Old like it's incredibly wise and powerful and has much to offer.

Tass: Oh shit y'all. And I'm gonna kill the rabbit.

Rev: You pull the trigger on the pistol, at the rabbit. And when the bullet strikes, the fur seems to part and a large hole forms and from the hole emerges, a duck.

Tass: What!?

Rev: *quack, quack, quack*

Tass: Guys I'm in the weeds here again. Do I take him the duck? Do I kill the duck? Do I find something in the duck?

Teej: I think we should just tell him about the duck and see what he says.

Rev: He did tell you that you'd know what he needed when you saw it the first time you talked to him.

Jake: Just walk back towards his line of sight and just told up the duck and go, "Eh??" He shakes his head and it's like it's like trying on clothes montage. It's Winston and CeCe you're just like the duck, "Eh?" "Uh, uh!".

Tass: I eventually just have a polar bear that I'm just riding on, like, I don't, I don't know.

Tass: You're just like, "Yeah, this one." And he's like "No."and you're like "Okay..."

Tass: Betty White's in there, like it's just, it's just those Russian dolls getting bigger somehow. I don't know.

Jake: Oh no it's Betty White the deathless.

Rev: It's reverse Russian nesting doll.

Tass: Oh my God. OK I guess I'm gonna shoot duck.

Rev: You shoot the duck. And Betty White--No. You shoot this duck and the bullet passes through. The duck seems to peel away and there is a large egg inside of the duck.

Tass: I feel like I have to crack the egg now. What is an egg have to do with getting out? He said I know.

Teej: Well maybe it's symbolic. Maybe it's like you know cracking the egg....is like breaking the prison.

Tass: I'm gonna crack the egg.

Rev: You crack the egg and inside of it is a needle, like a sewing needle.

Tass: I'm going to pick up the needle. I have it my hand.

Rev: Yes.

Tass: Does it seem flimsy like it could break?

Rev: Not more so than a normal needle.

Jake: Maybe this is the one. Maybe it's like he needs to stitch up his wounds.

Tass: Maybe.

Teej: Maybe it's symbolic. Maybe it's--

Tass: I guess I'm going to take him the needle.

Rev: So you guys head back down the hallway and he's there waiting.

Tass: I'm going to hold up the needle.

Rev: KOSCHEI: Very close very close. I will take it from here though.

Tass: Cool and I'll hand him the needle.

Rev: You hand him the needle and he takes his long fingernails and he puts them on either side of the eye of the needle and he snaps the eye. And T.J. with your goggles on, you see a flare of magic. And a human heart comes out of the eye of the needle and he catches it in his hand and it's pulsing and he looks down at it and he grins and he holds it to his chest and it absorbs in through his chest cavity. And again, like when T.J. shot him with the werewolf serum, a transformation happens in him, he looks more vibrant, he becomes more muscular, his hair becomes darker his eyes become clearer and he pounds the ground with his fist as he bends over and he coughs and then he begins to laugh.

Rev: KOSCHEI: Oh yes oh I am whole again yes. This is...

Tass: Ok, all right I'm going to offer him a high five.

Rev: He looks at it quizzically.

Tass: Oh you hit your hand against my hand and that's like a victory, a symbol of like, we did it, we did good.

Rev: He punches your hand very hard.

Tass: Okay. Yeah like that. That was good.

Rev: KOSCHEI: Yes, is the highest of fives.

Tass: Ok. Awesome dude. We're gonna go up and take care of the rest of this stuff. We'll have to come back down to get those items for her, we'll get out and then...

Rev: KOSCHEI: I care not. I'm leaving this place. I will not be here when you return.

Tass: Ok. Godspeed. Maybe not. I don't know what you...do your thing.

Rev: And he starts to walk away and I think for the next couple minutes, you guys have that very awkward moment where you've said goodbye to him and then you walk the same way towards the exit, but you try not to acknowledge him.

Rev: We start to walk the same direction.

Jake: It's kind of like, "Oh, are you--?," "No, are you go--?" And I just turn around and jump in the river.

Rev: But he does, he offers to lead you back to the entrance through a series of these hidden doors.

Tass: Oh cool. Oh hey just out of curiosity do you have any idea where we find Red Sun and Black knight.

Rev: KOSCHEI: He would be wherever Bright Day was left standing.

Tass: Oh.

Rev: KOSCHEI: It is a shared body. They can not be in existence at the same time they share a body.

Tass: Oh OK. Awesome. I appreciate that. Thank you.

Rev: KOSCHEI: Yes of course.

Tass: All right boys let's haul ass.

Teej: Yeah.

Rev: You get back to the entrance and you pass through. And again there is that sensation of falling and twisting and then you are standing outside of that tree and he breathes in deeply and pounds his chest and he lets out another laugh and he starts walking north.

Tass: Ok. And we know that's not even close to the direction of her cabin.

Rev: That is correct. You know that that is essentially out of this five mile area.

Tass: Boys, I think we just released a monster into the world, but...and that's it, I just walk away.

Rev: There is no "but".

Teej: So do we want to head back to that clearing then?

Tass: Yes.

Teej: That's what I thought.

Tass: Yeah. We're gonna go ahead and head back to where that ring was.

Rev: So who's leading the way.

Jake: Are we going to get lost again. Like do I feel like, oh we walked this direction. Like do I have a good idea now that we've made this trip back?.

Rev: With a number of times you guys got lost getting there, I don't think so.

Jake: Nothing is certain.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I mean, I'm not, in the fiction and out of the fiction, I'm not a great navigator, so probably not me.

Teej: I will lead the way with my electromagnetic goggles upon my face.

Rev: Roll 'sharp.'.

Teej: That would be 13.

Rev: No problem you're able to navigate your way back to the ring. As you guys are going, it's about an hour in and off in the distance you hear a twang and in the sky in the red sky you see this black arrow travel, hit where the sun is, and it shifts into the moon.

Tass: Ooh! Did that look like it was coming from the direction that we're going?

Rev: From the heading that you guys were going, yes.

Teej: Then yes.

Tass: Yeah. Oh cool. OK.

Rev: It takes you about three more hours to get there, but you are able to pass through even in the darkness with no problem. You arrive at the outside of the ring and inside is a knight in, I can't even say that it's dark armor. It just looks like shadow. It is the absence of color. And it has a long lance at its side.

Tass: Ok, well, the last one we just beat the shit out of until he gave us stuff. So do we try that again, or do we assume there's something else going on here?

Teej: Is the ring still visible to me like, that boundary, that outline of magic.

Rev: It is not.

Teej: I think we're going to be doing something different, guys, because the boundary's not here. Is there any other kind of magic, besides the knight itself, that I can see?

Rev: There is not.

Tass: Ok, I guess I'll approach and just be ready to hit if he gets aggressive.

Teej: Why don't we all three approach. That way nobody loses a leg again.

Tass: I mean yeah absolutely. Let's all go up. But I will, you know, I at least want to address him and try not to fight if possible.

Teej: Sure.

Rev: Are you leading the way, Tass?

Tass: Yeah.

Rev: As you approach him, he turns and he faces you and he knocks the butt of the lance against the ground and then holds out a hand.

Tass: Like palm up, or I like to shake?

Rev: To shake.

Tass: Oh I will shake his hand.

Rev: You shake his hand and you are both engulfed in shadow. There is a hissing and a wailing and a flurry and T.J. and Jake, you're both driven backwards from the sound and the ferocity of this. And it clears and there sits Tass on a horse and the knight in the shadow armor is on a horse as well. And it turns and starts to gallop away.

Tass: Am I in my right mind?

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: I want to try to turn the horse and follow him.

Rev: You cannot. If you try to follow him, you cannot follow him.

Tass: Oh no.

Rev: And after you sit there for a moment, the horse starts to move on its own accord and walks you back the opposite direction and turns and faces him across the diameter of the circle. And he lowers his lance in your direction.

Tass: Oh no.

Rev: So, Jake and T.J. you see these two horses trot away from each other and turn and the dark knight lowers its lance and Tass is sitting on his saddle with his lance up just looking around Panicedly.

Tass: And I have no control of this horse, I have to assume.

Rev: You had control initially, but when you weren't doing anything, it started to take over for you.

Jake: Channel your Knights Tail knowledge. Good luck.

Teej: He doesn't have any armor, doesn't have a shield, or anything either?

Rev: Correct.

Jake: My God. I'm going to walk over toward Tass's horse like a, what's the name of the corner men for a jousting knight? I don't remember.

Teej: Squire.

Jake: Yeah. Like a squire. And like, give his lance the once over and stuff and be like, do you want my armor?

Tass: Is that even possible?

Jake: I mean, I can take it on and off, so I don't see why I couldn't put it on you.

Tass: Yeah. Try to give me the breastplate, at least, real quick.

Jake: Yeah, I'll try and give him my breastplate.

Rev: All right. Roll 'act under pressure.'

Jake: OK. Oh! Box cars! 14.

Rev: You reach up with one hand and you quickly undo the two buckles on the side and open it up like a clam shell and throw it on him, run to the other side and buckle it, right as the horse takes off.

Tass: Oh, my God. I'm gonna lower the lance and just try to bear down and do this thing.

Rev: All right. Roll 'kick some ass.'

Tass: Oh Lord.

Rev: Somebody give me a set of dice. Here take these.

Rev: You know what's happened in the past when you've tried to give me your cursed dice.

Tass: Yeah, I know, 9.

Rev: You pass him and clip his shoulder. He staggers a little bit and the horse continues on and you turn back around. And he lowers his lance again.

Tass: I'm gonna like, raise mine in the sort of lancer salute and then lower mine again.

Rev: Roll 'kick some ass'.

Tass: Oh. 8.

Rev: You peg him again, as you charge passed each other and as you hit him, part of his shoulder armor comes off and bursts into shadows and melts away.

Tass: Ho ho ho ho ho. And I'm going to shout over my shoulder, Well jousted!

Rev: And he turns and lowers the Lance again.

Tass: And I'm going to salute and go for it. Oh, 3.

Rev: You pass by each other and you're both off the mark.

Tass: Oh my god.

Rev: I'm rolling dumpster.

Tass: OK.

Teej: Is there any way for me and Jake to help out by maybe shouting out some vice or anything?

Rev: What do you know about jousting?

Teej: I have seen a few things and I know that usually they don't just lower the lances right off the bat. It's almost like, as they're racing the horses to, the lance comes down slowly into place, almost like a person raising a gun up.

Rev: Yeah. Roll 'help out'.

Teej: I got a 7.

Rev: All right. So Tass, you get a plus 1.

Tass: Oh good. That brings me up to a 3.

Jake: Oh my God.

Rev: You take two points of damage. Part of your shoulder feels like it comes away, it doesn't, but it sure feels like it.

Tass: Do I get to subtract armor.

Rev: You do.

Tass: Awesome. Ok ready to go.

Rev: All right.

Tass: I assume that plus 1 was not ongoing.

Rev: It is as long as you keep doing the maneuver.

Tass: I will absolutely then, ahh, 6.

Rev: The horses buck at the last second and you both narrowly avoid each other.

Tass: Wow!

Jake: So our our devices don't work in as far as like, no signal gets in or out or anything but like it'll--

Rev: You can absolutely record this.

Jake: I'm going to start playing some pump-up music through my phone.

Rev: Okay.

Jake: Does that count as a 'help out'?

Jake: I was going to do, 'We Will Rock You' a la A Knight's Tale.

Rev: Tass would that pump you up?

Tass: Oh, Fuck, yeah! Because I love 'Knight's Tale'.

Rev: Roll 'help out'.

Jake: 11.

Rev: All right. So Tass, you get a hold 2 as long as your horse is galloping to the rhythm of the music.

Tass: Oh yeah. Gives me an 8.

Rev: You take 1 point of damage, it does not defeat armor. You clip each other as you pass, but it's a glancing blow.

Tass: Oof. OK. And a salute. 5.

Rev: As you pass by, you catch him in the hand and he almost drops his lance and reaches across his body and snags it with the other hand.

Tass: Oh.

Rev: Snake eyes.

Teej: Wow, they are cursed.

Tass: There we go. That brings me to a 10.

Rev: You bare down right as the music starts to get into the heavy rhythm and you lower the lance and it occurs to you, that you'd been letting the horse do all the work and you spur once, right before the point of contact and it jumps just a little bit and the tip of your lance adjusts just slightly and catches him dead in the chest and knocks him off the horse.

Tass: YEAH!

Jake: YES!

Teej: SWEET!

Tass: Oh ugghhhhhh.

Rev: The horses vanish from underneath you.

Jake: And he just careens across the ground!

Rev: You just fall to the ground unceremoniously. He rises and kneels down and holds up his hand and in it is a piece of paper.

Tass: I will take it and then instantly like grab his forearm in the handshake and just say, that was awesome. Even though I know he's probably not getting this, I'm given it.

Rev: There is a return squeeze.

Tass: Oh OK, I guess I'll look at this new piece of paper that says, Woof. This one is a mouthful. Ok here we go. "The last is in me. You are the one before, but trailing behind the first of last and low the second in the whole family comes first." I throw up.

Jake: Yeah. You might as well just spit gibberish.

Tass: I love these kinds of riddles. OK T.J. you're my Ka-tet here my Dark Tower brother-in-riddles. I think this is a word riddle.

Teej: I think you're right.

Tass: "The last is in me." So I think the last letter of whatever we're looking for ends in either an "M" or an "E".

Teej: Okay I'll write that down.

Tass: "You are the one before." I mean again, this is just hoping that, if this is the riddle trope, then that just means the letter "U" is the second to last letter.

Teej: Okay.

Tass: Does that track?

Teej: Yeah. Because I mean...Yeah. So it's either something that has an "um" or an "ue" sound to it.

Tass: Okay, "but trailing behind the first of last", "but trailing behind the first of last." So all of that is after the first letter of "last", "L"

Teej: Oh yes. OK. So like the first of "last" which was the me and so before "M" is "L".

Tass: So either "lum" or "lue" so far.

Teej: Yes.

Tass: "And lo the second in the whole family comes first."

Teej: I think if we're talking about the entire alphabet, I think the whole family is the entire alphabet. So...

Tass: I love you.

Teej: So the second in the whole family is the letter "B".

Tass: So she wants a "blum". OK. I'm going with this. I think this a solid, blue, a blue rose?

Jake: Oh. Can we read the clue over again. There was interference. Could you just read it one more time?

Tass: The last is in me--.

Jake: Oh guys it's "blue". Oh I figured it out. It's blue.

Rev: That's the cut I'm going to do is just, Tass confusedly reading the riddle for that first time and then Jake just going, "Oh it's blue." Cause, he gave me five dollars and a sandwich earlier.

Tass: OK, let's hunker down, let's camp it out.

Rev: Is there anything you guys are gonna do as you wait, essentially, half a day?

Tass: Jake, do you want to just take a minute and pop out of here and just, I don't know, check back with Margaret and stuff?

Jake: Sure.

Tass: I mean, just because we've been out of contact for like a day and a half, it may not hurt for us to just be like, hey we're still alive, we're working on it.

Jake: Yeah I can do that.

Teej: Also get us some s'mores we're gonna be, we're going to be out here in the woods, it's gonna be a while so...

Rev: You guys have not eaten in a little over twenty four hours.

Tass: Wendy's or something.

Jake: I will, I will bring food.

Rev: All right so Jake...

Teej: Errand boy, Jake.

Rev: ...Teleports. Where are you going first?

Jake: IPT.

Rev: Jake you arrive outside the IPT and you step inside and it's pretty chaotic here compared to what you're used to. People are running around on cell phones with files filled with paper and you see Margaret up in her office and she's yelling into a phone and she hangs it up and she sees you and she waves for you to come up.

Jake: I'll go up there.

Rev: As you come up, she meet you in the doorway.

Rev: MARGARET: Oh Jake, it's, it's good to see you.

Jake: What is going on around here?

Rev: MARGARET: We've lost everything, we've lost contact with all of our agents out in the field. None of our computer systems are working properly. We can't get a hold of anyone.

Jake: Why? What happened?

Rev: MARGARET: I don't know. I think it might be NOEL. Can you go check on her? We haven't been able to reach anyone to get there, to check on her. She runs everything that is IPT, she is the central hub.

Jake: Yeah I'll go check. I mean, I'll run back outside and teleport to the north pole.

Rev: All right. Where do you want to teleport to?

Jake: Probably Santa's cabin. I feel like that's where we spent most of our time.

Rev: You appear in Santa's cabin and it is unrecognizable. All you see around you, for as far as you can see, is ash and black glass. This place has just been decimated.

Jake: Like, the building that I should be standing in is gone and every other building is also gone?

Rev: Correct. As far as you can see on the horizon, it is char, it is smoke. It is not cold here right now. You feel warm.

Jake: I'm going to try and figure out what the hell happened I guess, what caused it?

Rev: Roll 'investigative mystery'.

Jake: 6.

Rev: You're unable to see anything here that gives you a clear idea of what happened. It is just ash and heat. And like I said before, the earth that you can see is glassed.

Jake: Is the way into NOEL's operating center there, or openable, or open?

Rev: You don't see it.

Jake: OK. Hmm. Can I do kind of like a, like a walk around, like instead of just trying to kind of identify landmarks and actually move around, kind of kick some rubble around, like see if I can find anything with a more thorough search.

Rev: Yeah. Roll 'sharp'.

Jake: 7.

Rev: As you move around, you start to get the sense of where things used to be. Off in the distance you can see the base of what were the candy canes that made the force field. You come across the rubble of the buildings and as you're by the location where Santa's workshop used to be, something underneath a pile of ash starts to stir.

Jake: I'm going to ready my hammer and kind of move over there and kick some of the ash away to see what it is.

Rev: As you kick the ash away to see what's moving underneath, you see a familiar small face. It's jingles and he's got wires protruding from the side of his head. One of his eyes is completely blacked out and you can see his arm and his leg on one side are gone.

Jake: Oh my God.

Rev: JINGLES: Jake, what happened, man? Whats going on?.

Teej: Oh no. Poor jingles.

Jake: I don't know, buddy. I was hoping you could tell me what happened here.

Rev: JINGLES: There was a flash of light and, I don't know. Everything was gone and there was a lot of screaming, ugh.

Rev: And his eye is very slowly pulsing and you can see that is pulsing slower.

Rev: JINGLES: Jake, will I dream?

Rev: And the light goes out.

Jake: Oh my God. I mean, I'm going to, I'm going to pick him up, I'm not going to leave him here.

Rev: You pick up jingles and as you do something falls out of the hand that was still underneath the ash, as you kind of pull him free.

Jake: What is it?

Rev: It's a very small remote. It's the same remote you saw him use in Santa's workshop.

Jake: Okay I'm going to grab that and is it just like one button.

Rev: It is.

Jake: Like a garage door opener? I'm gonna press the button and see if I can hear it do anything around here.

Rev: Roll 'sharp' again.

Jake: Ah, dang. 7.

Rev: In the direction you came, you do hear a whir and a grind and it seems like gears breaking.

Jake: God I'm gonna go that direction, see what it is.

Rev: It leads you back to Santa's cabin and as you approach you see the gap of the floor trying to open, where you used to go down into NOEL's command center.

Jake: I'm going to pry it the rest of the way open.

Rev: Roll 'No Limits'.

Jake: 13.

Rev: Yeah no problem. You slide the door open and you're charged with strength for a while. You head down the stairs and you get into her control center and everything is gone. Chunks of the wall have been torn out where you know that there used to be pieces. All of the shelving units that held the various vials and components are gone. Her main monitor and her tower are gone. Even all the cords running to other rooms are missing.

Jake: What about the teleporter room. Is it exposed?

Rev: It is, in the far corner that door has been pried open.

Jake: I want to go check that room too, see if it's intact.

Rev: You walk into the teleportation room and the first thing you notice, is that all of the monitors are still in fact there. And you step into the middle of the room to look at them to see why someone would have pried their way in, and your eyes drift down as you're thinking, "What could someone have taken out of here, if all the computer equipment is still there?" And your eyes fall upon a divot in the ground and you follow the divot around and realize that the teleportation ring is gone.

TO BE CONTINUED