

The Magic Portal (S2, E7)

INTRO:

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Rev: Alright, so if you are someone who tunes in for the game play, I apologize. This intro is probably going to be a little longer than normal because we haven't had a chance to talk about Gen Con, at all. We had so much happen with the live show and then with the games that we ran and the people we encountered and met. You know, one of the things I first want to mentioned is that we got a Tweet on like Thursday from Barry who had said that he had just started listening to the show. He was at Gen Con and he was going to try to catch up so that he could go to the live show and not be behind.

Tass: He's amazing.

Rev: Herculean task. He did not make it.

Tass: He did not.

Rev: I think simply because there weren't enough hours in the day. I think he said he was halfway through the Halloween episode and then he did, he came to the live show and he also came to the after event and had his first alcoholic drink with us as we shared Werewolf serum with, you know, almost 40 people.

Jake: Congratulations, Barry. I'm sorry that we perverted your integrity immediately.

Rev: I need to have some again actually, because I was so just kind of beat up for that weekend. I didn't really take in the fact that I was drinking the serum and I never tasted it again to see if like I made it properly because I made it just slightly different based off of our kind of time, so...

Tass: Yeah. We were actually, uh, just watching that again, watching the video that I took.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: And I work with Reeves and we were kind of giggling watching it. And she goes, "Rev does not look like he took that well."

Rev: I think you she mean the weekend.

Tass: Oh. Oh, I see.

Rev: The weekend was great. I just slept poorly, like leading up to it. I prepped real bad. So I was kind of--I had a hitch in my my giddy-up, on day one, so...

Tass: But, it was still--it was a blast. I assume I cannot say that buying dice was my favorite moment. Is that--is that agreed.

Rev: That's up to you. I mean, live your life, baby.

Tass: I--I probably shouldn't, but I bought so many dice and I'm so happy. But really, God, it's hard to pick. It's hard to pick a favorite moment because we spent so much time in the room teaching the games. And just, I can't speak for everybody here, obviously, but every one of my groups was a blast. They were so funny. They came up with just amazing ways to get around these mysteries that we wrote for them. The live show. Oh, my God, ya'll. I can't wait for everybody to get to hear this. It was superb. The crowd was amazing.

Rev: Yeah. I'm gonna have to apologize for anyone that wasn't at Gen Con. It's gonna be a minute before that comes out because, you know, with them being in 'Dungeon World' right now, but I want the live shows to be 'Monster of the Week'. I had to kind of figure out my head where I think it falls. So, it's gonna be kind of like a .5 episode. So, it will come out at a very specific time so that when you listen to it, it flows with the story. So, it'll be a couple of weeks yet before you get that.

Tass: Yeah. But, will be worth the wait. It was a blast and then the meet up was amazing, y'all. Next year when you're coming in for Gen Con, make sure you sign up for this--

Rev: Ah, man.

Tass: --because we had a ball.

Teej: We also had the Director of Special Projects for Evil Hat come out, Sean.

Rev: Yes. He is the reason that we have had access to so many games and a couple of them early. It was really cool that he and his wife showed up.

Teej: Absolutely. And thank you for coming, Karen, appreciate it, if you're listening.

Rev: Yeah. And Karen, Tass and I reviewed her book. She is the one who wrote 'Improv for Gamers'.

Tass: It's awesome.

Jake: And Sean was wearing a dope pair of shoes and I never told him and I regret it and I'll regret it until the day I die. Sean, Your shoes, very good.

Rev: Yeah. We just met so many new people. Kayla, who gave me--she has a friend who makes cryptid pin. So I have a little Moth-man now, to wear on my badge.

Teej: I saw that.

Jake: I want a Moth-man.

Rev: Right?

Jake: How do I get one?

Rev: Well, I--she did give me the name of the website that makes them, so...

Tass: It was really cool to see--well, to meet Scott and Stephanie from 'Shocking Gasp' in person.

Rev: Yes, that's right.

Tass: They came to the meet up and hung out. That was really cool.

Jake: How did I miss that one? I saw pictures of you guys with them, but like the-- and I was like, wait, where!? Like how? I just somehow...

Rev: Yeah. They were at the far end of the hallway.

Teej: I did not know we had so much like gaming royalty at our little meet and greet.

Rev: Right?

Teej: I feel so humbled and just, ahh, so cool.

Rev: You know, the thing I would love to do is just talk about the play-throughs that we did cause--so the way that we ran it was that, uh, each of us wrote a story. And then one day we all ran that same story. So everyone in the room was playing the same game. And just afterwards we would all kind of reconvene and talk about how drastically different they were. Obviously, we can't sit and chat about every single one of them, but is there like a moment you want to highlight from one of the stories?

Tass: I certainly do want to highlight one moment, where, in the mystery, essentially, we were battling these like Tooth Golems.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: This is one that--that Rev wrote. And the whole idea behind these Golems is that they're little and then you defeat them and then they essentially reform. It's like baby teeth to--to grown up teeth.

Rev: Yes. And this is--this is actually a creature that I got off of the Monster of the Week sub-Reddit.

Tass: Oh, nice.

Rev: Yep.

Tass: OK. So, they had just defeated the little one and it had fallen into just a pile of teeth and was starting to reform. And, so they started scrambling for--like, "oh, OK, I'm going to do this, this and this." And there were all these insane ideas that I'm like, "OK, yeah, you can try." And they all got resounding successes. So in order, they--Mike started throwing handfuls of teeth in the toilet and flushing it. One of the other guys started kicking piles of them into the storm drain and their mundane started shoveling them into his skater helmet and just skating down the road to get as many of the teeth away from the pile as possible. And so by the time this thing reformed, it was about a foot tall.

Rev: The, uh, in that same story, a guy came in with his daughter and asked if it would be OK for his daughter to play. I was like yeah absolutely. And, so they were doing that same story. And she was a 'Monstrous' and she was half dragon. And, you know, I had designed the creature so that they were trying to get teeth and so they would punch you. And if they did enough damage, you would lose a tooth. They would grab the tooth and add it to their collection. Well, as soon as someone got their tooth taken, she kind of freaked out. She was like, "Oh no. I've got these big, beautiful dragon teeth. I don't want anybody to take my teeth." She's like 10 years old. And she goes, "The wall that the

creatures crashed through?" I was like, "Yeah?", "I want to fly out of it." It's like, "OK, where you wanna go?" She goes, "I just want to fly away." I was like, "Well, how far?" She goes, "Until I can't see any of this anymore." And her dad goes, "Well, you know, that means you won't be in the game anymore, right?" She's like, "Yeah, I know. That's fine." And, so she just flew the fuck off. And she was like their heavy hitter in combat and she was just gone for like two of the three hours of this game. We kept kind of checkin in and she's like, "I'm just flying around. I'm like, getting a hot dog and get my nails done." And like...

Jake: She knows what she's about.

Rev: Yeah. And she came back, eh, she came back for the final strike at the end. Like she drove out of the sky and landed the killing blow on the creature.

Teej: That's awesome.

Jake: My favorite moment from the bone--the tooth game also, is that somebody made a soda gun as the weapon to exploit the weakness. It was like--

Tass: Nice.

Jake: It was like, you know, what can hurt it? Well, think about things that hurt teeth. Okay. I'm going to make a soda press into a weapon. It's like, damn right you are. That counts.

Teej: One of my favorites was, I was playing Jake's story, which was a sort of take on Willy Wonka, except it was like Jim Jam Jolly B, I think. Right?

Jake: Oh, yeah. It was all just--.

Teej: Yeah--

Jake: Just--

Teej: Non-copyright.

Jake: Adjacent to the real thing.

Rev: Yeah, yeah.

Teej: Exactly. And I had one of the players playing the 'Meddling Kid'. And the 'Meddling Kid' has a power called 'Unmasked' where they can basically say, "I think that it's this person who is actually the monster", pull the head or mask off the monster and--.

Tass: It was old man Jenkins the whole time.

Teej: It was old man Jenkins the whole time, whoever, you know. And I was like, "Alright, I'll allow this power." Because I really wanted to see what it was like, because we've said that that power is kind of O.P. *Over Powerful* and kind of just cuts off everything that we've created. Well, he was kind enough to be like, "Oh, I'm pulling the head off this like Candy Spider and it's Jim Jam Jolly B. And he rolled and he got a success. And sure enough I was like, "Yep. Jim Jim Jolly B, the actual creature, is hidden inside this sort of spider thing. They didn't have to, like, look for him or anything, didn't have to really do any investigating or anything.

Rev: So, in unmasking like a minion, he actually named the main monster.

Teej: Correct, yeah. Oh, that's--that's funny. And so then Jim Jim Jolly B, he was like, "Here I am. Now I'm going to transform into my big giant taffy monster creation that I am." It's really great.

Rev: See, in my Jim Jam Jolly--and for me it was Jolly Bean--game, I had a party wipe. I was pretty excited about it because it was, uh, it was Nyx and Tass and, uh, Jessie and it was just the three of them. And it did not go well, very badly at the end. And it just ended with 10 years later, the candy factory opening up again for the next group of visitors.

Tass: Yeah. That--if we had survived, we all would have leveled up twice--

Rev: Yeah

Tass: --just from the end of mystery. Like, it was so many fails in a row. And it wasn't--you know, I get frustrated with that, but in this case, we were just howling at the horrible, horrible things that were happening to us.

Rev: Well, needless to say, we will be back again next year. We will be doing it all again, the live show and the meet up. And we will be running games. Special thanks to Nyx, who stepped in and ran a game for us. She probably will run some games with us next year. And thanks as well to Jessie and Kim for taking the time to help set up the entirety of the after party and decorate. And thanks to everybody who showed up. I think with that, it's time to let the recap roll.

RECAP: THE RECAP

Rev: Jake starts to look around and you do notice that there is a figure sitting at one of the tables and they are cocked in a way that they are watching you, which is not the natural seating position of their space at that table.

Rev: ARMORED MAN: What seems to be going on here?

Tass: A misunderstanding.

Rev: CLOAKED WOMAN: No, there is no misunderstanding.

Tass: Yes, there is.

Rev: CLOAKED WOMAN: These are the three corpses of my friends that I just lost days ago.

Rev: And there is a blast of white energy and it rolls over all of you and nothing happens. And she sees this and she staggers back and falls into her chair. And after a moment, she looks up at the three of you and indicates the empty chairs at her table.

Rev: CLOAKED WOMAN: I suppose there's a conversation between us that needs to happen now.

Jake: We're here to help. We're here to save lives. Unfortunately, it's like a bunch of idiot children that were spilled into this world. We have no idea what we're doing. But you seem good and invested and competent and it would be really awesome to have an ally like you.

Rev: NYX: Yes. If we can cleanse that place entirely, I will gladly help you through the path that we took to get in.

Rev: You see this jagged scar in the earth made of stone, and you can hear grumbling from inside of it. You can smell death and decay coming from inside. And as you stand there doing your final prep to go in. You notice that on the hill next to the entrance is a sleeping Water Troll.

TITLE: THE MAGIC PORTAL

Rev: Here, the four of you stand, in this dense forest. Ahead of you is a clearing with a jagged rock scar in it that has the entrance into the underside of Tombwall. And next to it on a hill is a sleeping Water Troll.

Tass: OK. I know we said that we want to sneak past as much of this as we can and only fight when we have to. But we have the drop on this thing. I would not be opposed to taking this thing out just immediately so that we don't have something behind us right at the start. And, you know, get stuck like rock and hard place situation.

Jake: We only have five fire arrows, though. So, do we want to use one of them on a fight that we don't necessarily need to have?

Tass: I mean, we have a little time here. I hate to overlook the fact that we have the drop on a thing. Maybe I'll just chill here and keep an eye on it. And as long as it stays where it is, I don't know, make an actual fire or something and then we can use that somehow.

Jake: Make a fire while we keep an eye on the thing and then I'll just fashion a hand weapon of some kind to murder it with.

Tass: Yeah. Works for me.

Teej: And if anything, I can just beat it to almost death and then we can stab it while it's on the ground.

Jake: Yeah. Exact--just beat it until it's unconscious and regenerating and then T.J.'s job is just to stand there and keep bonking it on the head so it doesn't regenerate--

Rev: Forever, yes.

Jake: Yeah. Until we get something that will kill it forever.

Teej: We've just created a, uh, one of those perpetual motion machines.

Rev: Yeah.

Teej: Yeah.

Jake: Alright. I would like to look for materials to start a fire and something that will serve as a spear.

Rev: Alright. So you and Nyx head off into the woods. Um, I don't think you guys have any problem gathering up what you need to make a fire and finding a branch that is thick enough to sharpen into a spear. It takes a couple of minutes for this to get ready. Are you going to set the spear on fire now or you just have the fire going for later or...?

Jake: I mean, I think I'm going to kind of set the spear in the fire because presumably it'll take some time to actually catch.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: So, by the time the fights over, hopefully the spear is on fire.

Rev: Alright. So you head back to the other two who are on guard.

Tass: I think I had transformed to mountain lion so that I could stay close and low and not smell like a Halfling.

Rev: Okay. Alright. Roll it.

Tass: Cool. 9. So that is 2 hold.

Jake: Ok. The fire is set. The spear is ready and should be on fire by the time we've killed this thing. So what's our kind of approach on the Troll, now?

Teej: I think we need to sneak up and just bash the hell out of it until it's down.

Jake: Alright. We gonna do like a--what--you going to go at its head and are we going to kind of like encircle it and come in from all directions?

Teej: Ooh! Good call. A pincer move.

Jake: A pincer move or--I will--I mean--I gue--I'm an archer. I'll hang back and pick at it. You guys go in and kind of flank it and try and mess it up.

Tass: Yeah, I'm down. I'm literally just going to try to tear its throat out so...

Jake: What can we expect from Nyx? How much is an NPC gonna help us fight? Should I ask Nyx to help?

Rev: Uh, Yes. In this world, I think that people you pick up will help, as much as I hate to roll dice.

Jake: Nyx, how do you want to help, or do you want to help kill this troll?

Rev: NYX: I'm with you. I am also a user of the bow.

Jake: Okay, so we'll hang back and pick at it. You guys get up close and tear it apart. And once it goes down, give me a shout and I'll get the spear on fire and run up and kill it.

Tass: Ok.

Teej: Sounds like a plan.

Jake: This is gonna go good.

Teej: Yeah.

Jake: This is gonna go great. I believe in it.

Tass: Alright. I'm going to start prowling up.

Rev: OK, T.J., what are you doing?

Teej: I'm going to ride on his back as he prowls up.

Rev: Alright. So, Tass, roll 'Defy Danger' with 'dexterity'.

Tass: There's that experience I've been hoping for.

Jake: Good.

Rev: So, you guys are sneaking up on this Water Troll and very quietly low to the ground. You think everything is going very well. And you both take 5 points of damage--

Teej: Oof!

Rev: --because as you get within arm's reach of it, you notice that its eyes are slitted open and it back hands the two of you and you tumble backwards onto the ground and it sits up and starts to get to its feet.

Teej: It's no longer surprised. Oh, God!

Jake: Can I shoot it?

Rev: Yes.

Jake: Super. That is an 8.

Rev: Alright. And what is your consequence?

Jake: You have to move to get the shot, placing you in danger of the GM's choice. But, ooh! I do 6 points of damage, max damage.

Rev: So, Jake steps forward and loses an arrow and it hits into the troll. But, as you are firing, you feel the wind shift and you can tell that the breeze from outside, you are standing almost in front of the cave and you can tell that the wind is blowing into the cave. Nyx steps up next to you and fires an arrow.

Rev: Um, who wants to be even? Who wants to be odd?

Tass: Even.

Teej: Odd.

Jake: I have a coin. Do you wanna use my handy D2?

Rev: I do.

Teej: Woop!

Rev: Even.

Tass: Your coin's a dick.

Teej: I love your coin.

Jake: It's good coin. Got butterflies in it.

Tass: It does have butterflies in it.

Rev: Tass, you take 8 points of damage as Nyx's arrow flies and hits you directly in the back of the head.

Teej: Oww!

Jake: The back of the head!?

Tass: Holy shit.

Jake: You're dead. Comes out your eyes socket.

Rev: T.J., you have been knocked backwards. You hear Tass Let out a yelp from beside you. But this troll is on its feet.

Teej: I'm going to go ahead and I'm going to take a move from fighting the giant goblin and I'm going to smack this thing right between the legs.

Rev: So you trying to damage it or you trying to like disable it?

Teej: Damage.

Rev: Okay. So this is just personal.

Teej: Yeah.

Rev: Alright. Roll 'Hack and Slash'.

Teej: That is an 8.

Rev: Alright. Roll your damage.

Teej: 13!

Jake: Damn.

Rev: Wow. So, you run up and you slide between this Water Troll's legs, and you slam your mace into its crotch. It punches down at you doing 11 points of damage.

Teej: Woah.

Rev: But it does tumble forwards afterwards and it is not breathing at the moment.

Tass: Fire! Fire! Get the fire!

Jake: OK. I'm going to run and grab the fire spear.

Rev: OK.

Jake: And just hoof it over to that thing and try and plunge it into whatever part of it I can.

Rev: Yeah, I don't think there is any problem. You're able to do some fire damage to it. And you notice that it is not regenerating.

Jake: Nice. Wow, you got shot. Nyx, you shot him.

Rev: NYX: Sorry, I don't know what happened. I just, um--I suppose it was the first time seeing those things again. It was a very harrying experience, being chased by goblins through their home. And I think that might have been the biggest one. And that was the one that at the end I thought might get a hand on me.

Tass: Hey, I'm irritated, but I'm not mad at you. I know a thing or two about wildly missing shots. So, I could not possibly be upset with you for this.

Rev: And as you guys are having this conversation, she's wiggling the arrow to get it out.

Tass: Ahhhhhh.

Rev: Does the troll have anything on it?

Rev: It does not. It was just out here napping in the sun.

Jake: Alright. You're hurt.

Teej: Mmhmm.

Jake: You want me to sing a song or you want me to use bandages? We've got all these fancy bandages now.

Tass: Let's just use a bandage and we'll go from there.

Teej: Yeah, that sounds good.

Jake: Ok, so I will take a little bit of time to bandage each of their wounds. So, you each heal 4. And I am down two bandages or 2 uses rather.

Teej: I think I remember last time we fought the water trolls that they had the sense of smell that like let them target us and everything. I had a great idea as we were killing this thing. Let's cut it up some more.

Jake: Yeah.

Teej: And rub it all over our bodies.

Jake: Walking Dead style. Yes.

Teej: *at the same time as Jake* Yes.

Jake: I agree, because, while we were back there shooting, I can feel that the winds blowing into that cave and it is carrying our scent in there.

Tass: Oh, good.

Jake: Those things probably know we're coming. So, yeah, maybe if we get smelly like Water Troll, it'll confuse 'em and they won't see us coming.

Teej: Ok. I'm gonna start bashing this Water Troll with my flail till it's a pulp.

Jake: Gruesome.

Rev: Yeah. I mean it is not overly necessary to describe this.

Rev: You are able to get it open so that you can cover yourselves with its insides.

Jake: Disgusting. But, the right choice I think.

Teej: Yeah.

Jake: OK. We're all good and gooped up. Who wants to lead the way into the cave? I nominate T.J..

Tass: Seconded.

Teej: Alright. I'm going to pull out my light gem and we will head into the cave then.

Rev: Yeah. And I think that, as Nyx is covering herself in this, she seems a little put off by it and she whistles at her shoulder and Rambaldi flies off of her shoulder into the woods.

Tass: Oh, fair.

Rev: NYX: Yes. He would be eaten instantly. And if I put this on him, I don't think he'll be able to maneuver very well.

Tass: Fair.

Teej: Alright. Headin in.

Rev: Alright. So, you all climb into this opening. It leads down about 20 or 30 feet into a very large cavern. But right now, there's nothing in here.

Jake: Cool. Let's try and--do we recognize the direction, yet, that we came from? Like, can we kind of see the end of what we had seen from the opposite side yet?

Rev: No, not yet. But, this cavern does have a hallway that leads out of it, that dog ears to the right.

Jake: OK. Alright. Let's just try and sneak our way through here.

Teej: Yeah, OK.

Rev: Alright. So, I think to try and sneak through here, everybody is going to roll 'Defy Danger' with 'dexterity' and give yourself a +1 for the smell you have added.

Teej: Yes!

Jake: Thank God for that +1. That's a 7 for me.

Teej: I received an 8.

Tass: Ten.

Rev: So, the four of you move down this hallway and you turned to the right and instantly you are greeted with a view of a very large cavern that is filled with multiple pools. And you can see that there are three other Water Trolls in here. They're swimming around in the pools. One of them's asleep. One of them is crunching things up and eating them. And at the far side of the room, you can see the hallway, that Tass got hit with the boulder in, that you know leads into another room that just has a single pool and then leads to that hidden passage that goes up. So, Tass and Nyx have no problem sneaking through here. They are able to duck and weave behind the rocks, even use the water at some point to be unseen and unsmelled by the three of these creatures moving around. It's a very large space. Jake and T.J., you can get through here unnoticed and I'll have this be a group decision. But, either the trolls, as they kind of get up and move about their day, are all going to move eventually into that front room. So if you have to come back through here, you know that all three will be right there. You're gonna have to leave something behind that you notice right away is making a little too much noise or the smell of the burning Troll outside, once you leave, is gonna make its way in here and they're gonna be aware of what happened.

Jake: I vote for they're all up here in this main room in case we need to come back.

Teej: I also voted for that.

Rev: OK. I think the last part of this is that you dive into the water as the three of them get up and start moving towards the bigger pool and you swim underneath and you realize that these pools connect from room to room and they sense some kind of movement in the water and they all go down in. But as the four of you duck into that passage going up, you are unseen. But you see the three of them climbing out and kind of looking around and sniffing around this room as if they think something was there, but they can't quite find it.

Jake: Hey, all right, squad, that went pretty well. Now, where are the Troglodytes?

Rev: So, when you come up into the next open space, this is where, down far to the right, you know is the garbage room. That's where the portal is. If you go north, that is where it used to lead up to where the prisoners were. And then to the left is the area that you had

not traveled. That when T.J. kind of inspected it, smelled strange and musky. And that is the direction that Nyx indicates, when you asked that question.

Tass: OK, well, let's get down into the garbage room and, uh, let's grab this portal.

Jake: Yeah, I think we should do that first. I agree.

Tass: I just am looking around here. I know this was kind of frequented. Like, clearly goblins had come from where they usually hung out down into the garbage room. We, you know, saw several of them there. I just want to stop and gauge if there's anything going on after we lit this place up.

Rev: Roll 'Discern Realities'.

Jake: *making a prediction* Now that you think about it, you notice that Troll zone, littered with goblin corpses.

Rev: That's what the one was snacking on.

Jake: Just--just eating them like Popums, as the goblins tried to run out of here on fire.

Tass: Woh? 7 by a nose.

Rev: Alright. You get a hold 1.

Tass: What should I be on the lookout for?

Rev: So, as you start to move down the hallway, towards the garbage room, you do realize that there are some fresh tracks leading from the ladder that went up towards the direction of the garbage room.

Tass: Guys, there's something fresh here, fresh tracks. There might be some folks down here.

Jake: Oh, my God. I hope they didn't go through the portal.

Tass: Well, if there's nobody else down here, that might mean exactly that.

Jake: Let's go find out. Let's go kill them before they get to, if they haven't yet.

Teej: Can we do some healing again? I got hit pretty hard by that troll and I'm still not at 100 percent.

Jake: Yes. I wonder how bandages work mechanically. Can you just stack bandages?

Rev: We'll save for our purposes that you can use them one at a time. But, if some time has passed, if you've done something, you could use another one. They've got like a five minute in-game cooldown.

Jake: Yeah. I mean, how bad are you? Bandages or song?

Teej: I would say song only because bandages are they're kind of leaking a little. So, I mean, they only do so much.

Tass: Yeah. I mean times an issue here. I don't think we have time to sit around and bandage yah up.

Jake: Okay. That's a 14. So you are healed 15 points.

Tass: Wow!

Teej: Jeez! I am at full health then, thank you.

Tass: Ok. Come on. And I'm bounding down the hallway.

Teej: So, as the four of you head down the hallway, you come to the room on the right, that was directly before where all the garbage was, where you woke up. And you do hear chittering in there.

Jake: Is the door closed. Is there a door?

Rev: There is not a door.

Teej: Can we discern whether or not it's goblin chittering?

Rev: Yeah, I think that you've heard enough of that that you can tell it's goblins in there.

Tass: OK. Yeah. I just wanna get like super low, like a hunting cat and try to see in and see what is there.

Rev: So, you sneak around this corner and down the little bit of this corridor and you see that there are three goblins sitting around. They're all pretty beat up and they are surrounded by what looks like stuff they have scavenged from the fire. And over in the corner of the room is the chef and he is cutting up some meat on what looks like an old desk.

Tass: Okay. I'm going to backpedal and get around the corner. Okay. There's three and, um, that big guy.

Jake: What big guy?

Tass: The one that was in the in the last room before we went up to the boss.

Jake: The cook?

Tass: Yeah.

Jake: That mother fucker's still alive?

Tass: Apparently.

Tass: He got buried and burned.

Tass: Well he a bad ass then.

Jake: Yeah. And I don't think we want to mess with him then.

Tass: Yeah. If we want to avoid them entirely. But this is also a chance to get more information about exactly what they're doing.

Jake: Oh, boy. I mean, you're--you're not wrong. But, like the top two priorities are fulfill our word to Nyx and kill a bunch of Troglodytes and collect the portal. So I think maybe we go for those first. And if those go off without a hitch, we come back and maybe we pump these goblins for information.

Tass: Ok, just be ready to fight if they happen to saunter down the hallway. If you guys even want to stay here, I'll sneak past and do the portal thing.

Jake: I think that's the best idea.

Teej: Yeah. I'll stay at the corridor and wait to see if these guys come down or anything.

Jake: Yeah. And I'll--I'll nock an arrow. Well just take up arms and kind of watch that opening while he goes to retrieve the portal.

Rev: OK. So yeah, I think that's another use of your hold, but you can silently stealth down into the garbage room.

Tass: Ok. Yeah. I'm gonna head back to that area where I knew that the portal kind of lives and see what's there.

Rev: So, you get down to the garbage room and it is got more stuff in it now. You can tell that the goblins must be clearing some of the burned debris and tossing it down because they're not sure where to put it. But on the back wall very faintly, you do see the shimmer of the portal.

Tass: Okay. I guess I'm gonna take out this like it was like a crystal, right?

Rev: Mmhmm.

Tass: And--I guess I don't know how to activate this. Um, like touch the crystal to that portal area?

Rev: Yeah. So you turn back into your halfling self. You pull out the gem and start to lean it forward towards the portal. And there is some fluctuation in the energy of the portal, but you can see it being drained into the crystal. And after seven or eight seconds, all the energy is gone. But the pink crystal is now pulsing.

Tass: Sweet. I'm going to tuck that into a pocket and then I'm gonna try something even sneakier. I'm going to try like for my little shrew form again.

Rev: Alright. Roll it.

Tass: That is a 7. So I get 2 hold.

Rev: Yeah. So you can sneak past. I don't think you have to use one of your hold to sneak past, as a shrew. But, you guys are standing in the hallway keeping guard. And you can hear a little bit of the goblin chatter and every now and then the cook chimes in.

Rev: GOBLIN COOK: Yeah, that's what we're gonna do next. We make sure that everything gets ready and, duh, just move on, I suppose.

Rev: And, um, Tass comes back as a tiny shrew. But you recognize him from the horns.

Jake: From the horns, yeah.

Tass: I'm gonna skitter up on Jake's shoulder and just point.

Jake: Okay. Um. The only thing I was gonna say is, does one of us create a distraction, to maybe beat one or two of them out and get the drop on them? You know, I could fire an arrow just into a wall, make a clatter that might lead them out of their nest? Whatever they live in, den?

Teej: Well, I don't want to make assumptions about Troglodytes, but what if they have a pack mentality where they all come?

Jake: Well, then we didn't gain any ground, but we didn't lose any ground either.

Tass: I'm also happy to go look around. As, you know, a shrew, that they will hopefully overlook, and see what I see.

Jake: I don't want to make assumptions about troglodytes, but what if they love eating shrews?

Tass: Then I'll run.

Jake: Um. Yeah, that's probably the best idea. Go scout.

Tass: Okay. From the look on the GM's face, they love eating shrews, but here we go.

Rev: It's just a simple. It's like a--like an hors d'oeuvres.

Tass: Yeah. Right.

Rev: You're so small.

Jake: They'll--They kind of hold it by the tail and lower it into their mouth and then bite down and just throw the tail away.

Tass: Ohhhh. Come on.

Tass: I was going to say like just the cartoon bones come out as he pulls the tail. Just like, *makes a slurping sound*

Tass: Yeah, I'm gonna sneak down the hallway.

Rev: Where you two and Nyx going to be at, while he sneaks down into the Troglodyte nest.

Jake: Uh, I think kind of at the corridor opening again, kind of how we were taking up arms to watch the goblins.

Teej: Yeah.

Jake: Kind of between where the ladder corridor is and where like the hidden Troll corridor is.

Rev: Okay.

Jake: So, that we have a, not a view clear down to where we think the troglodytes are, but we have a clear view of a pretty significant chunk of it.

Rev: Yeah. So, right about the place where T.J. noticed the smell.

Jake: Yeah. Where he picked up the smell.

Teej: Yeah.

Rev: How you wanna do this?

Tass: I am just thinking like a rat. I want to stay close to the wall, like hugging the wall. Just stay as dark and deep in shadow as I can.

Rev: Okay. So, it sounds like you are more so hiding and ducking and dodging than trying to use your intellect to go to the right places at the right time.

Tass: Very much so.

Rev: Okay. So, roll 'Defy Danger' with 'dexterity'.

Tass: That's a 9.

Rev: Alright. So, you can sneak down and get a sense of what is going on in the Troglodyte nest. But, one of them is going to get a sense of you and not be able to find you. And you think it's going to enrage it. One of them, patrolling about, will hear a noise that you make and start to patrol closer to where Jake and T.J. and Nyx are. Or something that you climb into to hide at some point is going to collapse and make entrance or egress a little more difficult into this area.

Tass: Uh, I like the first one, where one is going to kind of notice me, but not know where I'm at.

Rev: Ok, so you duck down into the hallway and the first thing you come across is a very stagnant pond. It's probably 10, 12 feet across and it is just filthy water, especially compared to what else you have seen down here. And about five or six feet behind that is a barricade. And it is made of bones. And it looks very clearly like Human, Dwarf, even Goblin bones. And there is a very narrow path that leads deeper into this cave between all of the bones. So, you start to weave in and out of that. And as you do, you feel the light of a torch hit you and you can see a Troglodyte. And this is the first time you have seen one of these. And it is about eight feet tall and a humanoid, but like devolved it is got a sloped forehead. It is hunched over at the back. Its teeth are cracked. Its drooling a little bit as it breathes very heavily. Thick muscle covered in lots of hair. And it spots you for a moment and you get the sense that it actually notices the horns, the unnatural horns. But then you're gone. And the whole time you are checking out the rest of this camp. You can feel it moving around, trying to see you again, but it isn't able to. And it's getting frustrated and it's bumping into other Troglodytes down here and screaming at them in a very raw voice. And it's just getting more and more frustrated. But, what you do find as you go through their nest, is that there are five of them living in here. There is an exit out the back, which you assume must be the way that Nyx, in this party, originally came in. And then there is just more junk. It is not like the garbage room for the goblins, but it is armor, weapons, shiny things, just stuff they have collected as they have killed things that have passed through. But you are able to get back out of their little nest through that bone hallway past the stagnant pool. Back out to the group.

Tass: Ok, guys. Uh, I saw five of them. At least one of them is real pissed off. I think it saw me and was like sort of hunting for me and like it just kept getting more and more pissed.

Jake: Great. I hope they don't have like barbarian rage or anything. Hopefully it's not just getting more powerful, the angrier it gets like the Hulk.

Tass: Well, I guess we'll see.

Jake: Ahh. OK. So we just going in hot, runnin in starting to mess 'em up?

Teej: Well, the way he describes 'em, like five of those guys, eight feet tall. That's--that's like taking on five Water Trolls, I think.

Jake: You said you went through kind of a bone threshold?

Tass: Yeah. They have the barricade after the pond. The pond is gross.

Jake: Do we want to try and rout them through the barricade and pick them off, battle of Thermopylae style?

Rev: Not a gate, just a--just a hall. Like it is a bigger hallway that bones were just stacked in to make it smaller so that only one person could go through.

Tass: Yeah. I mean, I can go in again and at least try to just get one. Get the--maybe the one that's pissed off to follow me. They might all follow, but at least we'll have them in that corridor.

Teej: So, I was just having this thought just now and thinking like, oh why don't. Well I should know something a little bit about troglodytes. I would think only because they're underground. I'm a dwarf and I'm an underground sort of creature. I knew about the goblins before. Is there anything in my memory about Troglodytes?

Rev: Yeah. Roll 'Spout Lore'.

Teej: That's a 5.

Rev: They do get stronger, the angrier they get is your unfortunate truth. So, T.J. how do you know this about troglodytes?

Teej: So, there is a tale in Dwarven legend about an old fighting arena that the Dwarves used to have. It since--like since civilization has sort of come a long way--it's since been shut down. But one of the sort of animals or enemies that were fought in this arena were Troglodytes. And one day a very famous Dwarven fighter fought this Troglodyte basically till it just raged and raged and raged and it got stronger. And he couldn't fight it anymore because it basically raged and Hulked out and destroyed this famous Dwarven fighter.

Rev: Oh, like he couldn't finish it off. So it just kept getting stronger, and stronger,.

Teej: Right? Yeah. Guys, I--I think what you said about Hulking out. I think that's--that's ringing true with me. I think it's gonna get worse the more angry they get.

Jake: Excellent.

Tass: Well, here's a thing. If we're gonna fight them at all, they're probably gonna get real pissed off while we're fighting them either way.

Jake: But, maybe you can go bait that one that's already mad, because it's already looking for you. And, then at least we can like four-on-one the one that's already at an advantage. And then maybe once he's down, we deal with the rest of them or we bait another one. I don't know how long they'll fall for that.

Tass: Okay. Wish me luck.

Jake: So, I'll take up a position where I've got a line of sight on kind of the way out of that bone hallway so that when something comes through, I can start shooting it.

Rev: So you were kind of posting up on the far side of that stagnant pond?

Jake: Yes.

Rev: OK. And that's where Nyx will stand as well.

Teej: And I think I will stand right next to the bone hallway, but not like in it. So then that way, whenever the thing comes through, I can just pincer attack it from behind.

Rev: Alright. So, Tass, roll 'Defy Danger' with 'dexterity' to dart in, find this one and try to kite it out.

Tass: That'll be a 5.

Jake: Wooh!

Tass: Unless...

Jake: Unless.

Tass: I mean, I still have 1 hold left and a shrew is a bouncy, springy, hoppy little rodent. Is there anything I can use that for to like...

Rev: What's your dexterity?

Tass: Zero. Nothing.

Rev: I think you can bump it up to a mixed success because a shrew would have a much higher dexterity than that. But, I think part of the result of this is that I'm going to give you your options, but they are all going to involve you being a halfling again as you finish this out.

Tass: Like my last stretch, my last hundred yard dash.

Rev: Yeah, uh huh.

Tass: Okay. Yep. One hundred percent.

Jake: Running back through the hallway. AHHHHH!

Rev: So, you find him and lead him out and you get about halfway down the bone hallway and you feel the transformation come over you and it's going to follow you out here. But it is either going to take on another level of its enraged. It's going to wreck part of this bone hallway as it goes flailing and make the opening larger or it's going to get a swipe at you and knock you into that pond.

Rev: I think I'm going to let it knock me into the pond.

Rev: Alright.

Teej: You mean the Bog of Eternal Stench.

Tass: I am never going to leave this place, not stinky.

Rev: Yeah. Tass, roll 'CON'.

Tass: Yes, that is 11.

Rev: Ok. You do not have to pick any hold.

Jake: Wooh!

Teej: Oh No.

Rev: So, the two of you and Nyx see Tass shift back into his halfling form and get booted by this Troglodyte and he sails into this filthy pond and comes up coughing out water.

Jake: I am waiting until T.J. gets a swing on it, basically. I don't want to shoot it while it's in the hallway and prompted to turn around and run. I want it to be past T.J., so we've got it stuck out here with us.

Rev: Alright. Yeah, it passes, T.J., and is headed towards Tass in the pond.

Teej: Gotcha. I'm going to invoke my Belt of Embigining by pressing on the the Gem.

Rev: Oh, right. OK, so our first magic item here. T.J., roll a D4.

Teej: I got a 4.

Rev: Oh, shit.

Rev: Alright. So, you add that to your damage, your armor and your hit points.

Teej: Holy shit. That's awesome.

Rev: Good start on that roll.

Teej: Thank you.

Rev: Alright. So you have activated the belt and there is this pulse. And T.J. gets almost four times his normal size. And so he is about the size of a Water Troll, right now.

Teej: Nice. I want to grab this Troglodyte by the leg and see if I can't just Hulk smash Loki, this--this guy.

Rev: Alright. Roll 'Hack and Slash'.

Teej: I've got so many dice, right now. It's ridiculous. That is an 8.

Rev: Alright. Roll your damage.

Teej: 15.

Rev: So, you grab this Troglodytes legs as it sprints by and you slam it into the wall, into the floor, into the wall, and then you go to slam it into the floor again and there's nothing left in your hand.

Teej: Oh no!

Jake: Alright!

Rev: So, the two of you and Nyx see T.J. splatter paint this wall with the Troglodyte.

Jake: Okay, that went excellent.

Teej: I'm, uh, throwing this thing's leg, which I assume is the only thing left out of my hand, like, ow, ow, ow, ow.

Tass: And I'm crashing up out of the water, just vomiting, I guess.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: It's gross. It's so gross. Oh, I'm going to have to--I'm gonna have to buy new clothes again.

Teej: I think you need to take a shower, buddy.

Tass: Yeah. Thanks.

Jake: Three or four showers, maybe. Do you want to turn back into something and try to kite another one? Or should I, like, fire an arrow down the hallway and see if it piques their curiosity? What do you think?

Tass: I mean, this worked. Let's try it again. Yeah, I think I'm gonna just do my shrew thing again.

Rev: OK.

Tass: That's an 8. So hold 2.

Rev: Alright. Roll 'Defy Danger' with 'dexterity'.

Tass: A 7.

Rev: Alright. So, you will be able to go in and try to pull another one of these out. But, you going to get two, or the one that you bring is going to smell the blood of the dead one to become instantly enraged, or it's going to see Nyx and Jake across the pond as it chases you.

Tass: I think he's enraged.

Rev: So, Tass comes down again, as a shrew, down the hallway and there is a Troglodyte chasing him. And you actually see that as it chases him, it gets a little larger as it's screaming and foaming at the mouth.

Teej: I am going to boot that thing like the other one booted Tass, but against like the wall.

Rev: Alright. I think 'Defy Danger' with 'dexterity' to step out and surprise this one with a hit.

Jake: HO,HO,HO,HO,HO.

Teej: Double 6's are my favorite baby. That's a 12.

Rev: Alright. Roll damage.

Teej: 11.

Rev: So, for any of you who have ever played like "WoW" or any of those just MMO RPG's where you go back to the first level zone when you're lvl 70. This Troglodyte sprints past T.J. T.J. steps out and gives it a hard sidekick into the wall. And you hear it's neck break and it falls to the ground dead.

Tass: I just skid to a halt before I slide into the water, 180, and sprint back down the hallway.

Rev: Roll 'Defy Danger' with 'dexterity'.

Jake: I'm Just--I'm just like giggling. I've got an arrow drawn like the whole time. And I'm just like, hehehe. I don't have to do anything.

Tass: We're about to pay, I'm sure.

Teej: Yeah.

Tass: That's a 6. Unless again, I can use my last hold.

Rev: Yeah, I think you can. But at this point you guys have made so much noise. You can use a hold, but you're gonna pull two of them. I don't think there is any way for the rest of the group to be unaware of all the death sounds coming from 20 feet away.

Tass: Fair. Yep.

Rev: You come running back into the room and there are two of them near the entrance and you can tell that they can tell something is up and they notice you at the same time and both chase after you. So, Tass comes back down the hallway, but there are two of these in tow with him.

Teej: I want to grab both of them and then smash their heads together.

Rev: Shit I forget you can attack multiple targets. This is, uh, for everybody listening at home, I think this is what Nyx is experiencing. She's never been in a world before where she has been in combat with people who have played video games where there is like kite mechanics and things like that. So, she's just befuddled by this. She's like, "Why aren't you all wading into battle?" Um. Yeah. So roll 'Defy Danger' with 'dexterity' to grab a hold of both of them.

Teej: Oh, my God. 11.

Jake: Oh, my God. This is excellent.

Rev: Alright. Roll damage. This is the turn I wasn't expecting, was for you guys to come down here and just shit on everything.

Teej: 9.

Rev: Alright. So, you slam the two of these together and they both reached down with their very large hands and grab a hold of a finger each and start to bend it the other

direction. So you take 12 points of damage, armor defeating, as these Troglodytes bend your fingers backwards and you can feel the joints popping and cracking.

Rev: Jake.

Jake: My main desire is to try and heal, T.J., but I'm very afraid of also healing both of these Troglodytes. So, I think I'm just going to fire an arrow at whichever one looks like it successfully broke his finger.

Rev: Ok. And Nyx is going to fire at the other one.

Jake: 8.

Rev: All right. What's your consequence?

Jake: I'm going to say I have to take several shots, reducing my ammo by one.

Rev: Okay.

Jake: But, I do 3 points damage.

Rev: Alright. So Jake and Nyx both draw arrows, she fires hers and it hits the Troglodyte square in the chest and it falls to the ground dead. Jake, takes three or four shots to hit his because it is flailing around in T.J.'s hand. But, the arrow does finally land true and the Troglodyte is dead in T.J.'s hand.

Teej: I'm shaking my hand like, Ahh, God, Ugh, my thumb, ow, ow, ow.

Jake: Yeah, I'm going to--I'm going to sing him the healing song.

Tass: Okay.

Rev: Okay.

Jake: Doesn't really matter if I draw unwanted attention at this point, but I don't. That was a 12.

Rev: Alright.

Jake: 8 points of healing.

Rev: T.J.--

Teej: Thank you.

Rev: --as this magic washes over you, you shrink back to normal size.

Jake: Oh, man.

Tass: That's OK. That's OK. We've got this. You guys ready? OK. I'm going to get this last one.

Teej: Why don't we all just run in there and just really make this guy's day really awesome?

Tass: Yeah. That's--that's probably the best course at this point.

Jake: Sure. I'm with that. As we do, can I sing my buff song, for T.J.?

Rev: Yes. Roll it.

Jake: Give him a little bit extra damage. That's an eleven. So you add a D4 to your damage on your next hit.

Teej: Awesome.

Tass: I think I'll take bear form as we go and take the lead since I know where abouts it was.

Rev: Alright. Roll 'Shape Shift'.

Tass: K. Well, you get some fun stuff to play with because that's a 5. So, I get my 1 hold and whatever you say.

Rev: Yeah. So, I think what happens is that you start to run down this hallway and you shape shift into a bear, but you are like a halfling sized bear. You're just like a little tiny bear cub.

Tass: I'm a bear cub, awww. And the horns are like, not fully formed--

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: --Ram horn. They're little kid horns, I guess.

Rev: So what's your order?

Teej: I'm right behind the bear.

Jake: And I'm right behind T.J. and Nyx is right behind me.

Rev: So, the three of you and Nyx start to sprint down this hallway. Everyone roll 'Defy Danger with 'dexterity'.

Jake: Oh boy.

Teej: I got a 9.

Jake: I got an 11.

Tass: I got a 12.

Rev: Alright. As the group moves down this bone covered hallway, the sheer size of it starts to hit you for the first time. I mean, as high as these bones are stacked and just how much space they cover both length and width of the hallway. I mean, this must be the remains of like hundreds of name givers. As you all run through here, there is a moment where you hear a very clear and sharp click sound.

Jake: Oh no.

Rev: And in the silence, you all kind of stop for a second and you pause and you look to see what the noise was. And you turn back and you see Nyx, frozen in place and her foot is resting on a stone that has sunk into the floor beneath her heel. You all have a brief moment of seeing flashbacks of the Troglodytes running down this hall and doing this weird stutter step as they came. And you now realize that they were avoiding this spot in the hallway. And with this realization comes a sound like an avalanche.

Rev: As the bone walls collapse in on you.

TBC: TO BE CONTINUED

Carolyn: The Critshow, part of the NerdSmith Network, is a Critshow Studio's production. Edited and Produced by Brandon Wentz with Music by Jake Pierle. You can find more information about us at TheCritshowPodcast.com. To keep up to date with upcoming live shows, contests and other special events, follow us at The Critshow on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. For even more weekly content, join us at Patreon.com/TheCritshow.