

Split Paths Ahead (S2, E15)

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Rev: So I have to ask: do you like Harvey's panda costume?

Jake: Yeah. Did you not hear me when I came in the door?

Rev: No, nuh-uh.

Jake: I just ... This low, like a madness overtook me. Like he waddled down the stairs and I saw him, and it's just like ... [low chuckle]

Rev: Yeah, he got some ... Like, some little warts taken off, but he could scratch them. And so I was like, "Oh, I need something to cover these." And so I went to Meijer in the middle of the night. Usually they have like, dog hoodies. I was like, "That'll be perfect." But because it's October, it's just all dog costumes. And so I found the one that was most hoodie-like. And so now he's been going around as a panda.

Jake: Will he wear the hood?

Rev: He will. It covers his eyes, though.

All: [laugh]

Rev: And so I can position it a little higher to cover the little wound on his head. But it's caused him to leave it alone, which is good. And I just now call him Panda. And it really works because lately when I take him outside, he has a very specific tree out back that he eats the leaves off of.

All: [laugh]

Rev: So now he's sitting there in this panda costume, eating leaves off of a tree. Like, the transformation is almost complete.

I've been talking about how we're going to be going to a AcadeCon and running some games. Tass is running Worlds in Peril, Jake is running All Out of Bubblegum, and I'm going to be running Monster of the Week. And it was brought to my attention the other day that it's probably "Acada-Con" because it's put on by the RPG Academy.

Jake: That makes sense.

Rev: But I'm a big, dumb animal when it comes to words. And so if I don't have it written out phonetically, I just read it the way that it looks to me phonetically. So yeah, we'll still be there. Doesn't change the time of the games, doesn't change the days we're going to be there, but it does change the name in our heads.

Jake: This should be like our "Quebec" on Letterkenny. All three of us should all pronounce it in a different way.

Rev: OK. So I'm "Acade-Con."

Tass: "Acada-Con."

Jake: "Asady-Con."

Rev: [laughs] Asady-Con!

A couple months ago we had talked about Ben. Ben is up in Michigan and he works at a gaming store, and he was looking for some people to run Monster of the Week for. We got a message from Ben. He's going to be at Youmacon on November 1st and November 2nd. And on the 1st at 5:00 p.m. and on the 2nd at 5:00 and 9:00, he's going to be running some sessions of Monster of the Week. So if you're gonna be at Youmacon and you feel like playing Monster of the Week, you can find Ben on November 1st at 5:00, November 2nd at 5:00 and 9:00. This Friday, two days from now if you're listening to this on the day the episode launches, at 9:00 p.m., we're going to be doing some more End of Days. And Carolyn will be here again to inject her special brand of unintentionally horrific violence.

All: [laugh]

Teej: Gruesomeness.

Rev: So that'll be at 9:00 p.m. Eastern. I'm just chock full of announcements today. Last week I said, oh, next week I'll get a second chance, and then I instantly discovered all the things I had forgotten.

Tass: Oh, no.

Rev: On October the 24th at 8:00 p.m. on Twitch, we're going to be playing a game with a Keeper from the Thornvale -- Keeper Susannah. Her world is based off of a series of books that she has written, so she has very specific lore for her world. And she has invited us in to do a one shot in her world. And so we'll be streaming that on Twitch at 8:00 p.m., and that will be on Twitch.tv/DragonNightsOneShots. And then also this last Thursday, I was on You Are Not Alone, which is a podcast that takes one guest through a one-on-one horror roleplaying game. So the first part of that is out right now, and way more creepy than I thought it would be.

Tass: Nice.

Rev: Like, just sitting in my office recording with someone who's not here. Stressful, but in a fun way, because of ... So the way that this works is that when he asks you to be on, he then asks you, "Hey, what are some things that you have phobias or fears of that you are willing to deal with?" And so --

Jake: That is an important distinction.

Tass: Yeah, right?

Rev: And so he was very clear about, like, stuff that you would be OK with dealing with. And I went, "OK, well, here we go." And so you kind of go in too, knowing that, "Oh god, this is structured to get me." And so it was ... It was fun.

It is October. And so it is also time to thank our new patrons: Kimberly R., King Bumi, Matt N., Stephen D, and Dr. Whited. Not Dr. White, but Dr. Whited. So thank you all for joining us this month. If you have not joined the Patreon and you're considering it, the Discord community that we have in the Patreon is amazing. Quite easily probably the most valuable thing that you would get from being one of our patrons.

Tass: For sure.

Rev: Like yeah, we put out five hours of additional content every month. And it's a good game. Tass runs an awesome game. And Carolyn does amazing stuff with the Investigate the History. But to have the Discord there every day, talking about things, playing games together, it is a great community. So we welcome you to join us there. That again is Patreon.com/TheCritshow. They just set up the Secret Santa last night, so I'm very excited about that.

And then lastly, I realize it's been a long time since I've mentioned this, but if you have not done it yet, if you could take a minute and rate and review us wherever you listen to podcasts, it is very helpful. We have discovered a lot of people who are finding our show based off of recommendations. So whenever you share our podcast, whenever you tell someone about it, whenever you get onto Facebook or iTunes or wherever and you rate and review the show, it helps us a lot. It helps us get additional reach. So if you haven't done that yet and you could take a moment to do it, it really means a lot to us. And if you've done it already, we appreciate it. I think that's everything. Like, I had so much stuff that I forgot last time.

Jake: Are you sure? Because we're here for another, like, three, four hours.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: So if you want to just keep going.

Rev: Yeah. I think this episode is gonna be all intro.

Teej: Maybe you should put like your grocery list up? You know, turnips, carrots ...

Rev: Does anyone remember anything that I'm forgetting to buy? So with that, it is time to let the recap roll.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC

Rev: She raises her hand and she snaps her finger. Half a dozen dwarves step out with weapons drawn.

Rev: INGRIT: Get him to the tunnel. I don't know what's going on with him, but he's not right. We'll figure him out at home.

Rev: But you see that a stone door has slid open.

Jake: Does it lead to a hallway or a staircase or a ladder?

Rev: From what you can see here, it is a hallway with stairs in it. So Jake, as you start to creep into this room to get a look at it, you trip forward. This iron golem come into the circle and clamp its hands around your mouth and start to squeeze. And there's a brief moment of panic, and then unconsciousness. So as you go around looking for Jake, you don't see any sign of him. And all of his stuff is still on the ship.

Tass: I think the first thing I do is transform into a bird.

Rev: And you look around with your enhanced vision and you don't see any sign of him. And as you start to circle, you see the Scoundrel's Fortune start to set sail.

Tass: Oh my god, I'm never going to forgive myself. I fly back to the boat.

Rev: The camera follows Tass back to the boat as he lands. And he transforms back into his halfling form and stands at the railing, looking out back towards Alpo. And we see T.J. being escorted down some very dark stairs, towards a very large tunnel that leads underneath the ocean. And we see the pale, frail figure raise his hand, and a portal opens. And the metal golem carries Jake through, and the figure follows.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC FADES

Rev: So T.J., you are being led through the streets of Alpo by your sister, and the vanguard that she has brought with her from the Iron Striders. So as they march you through the city towards the underground ocean tunnel that will lead you to Vargos, let me ask you: how exactly does the underground tunnel work?

Teej: Under-ocean tunnel, technically.

Rev: Yeah, that's fair. That's fair.

Teej: That is basically a straight line from Alpo to Gulgeroth, the city of the dwarves. And it like has waystations along the way. Like, I'd say maybe four.

Rev: Oh, OK.

Teej: Waystations. And the way that people travel on it is there's like a sled basically, that is pulled by dwarven goats. Not like tiny goats, but like ...

Jake: Like 40 tiny goats.

Rev: You mean like Thor's goats that pull his chariot?

Teej: Right. Yeah. Just slightly bigger than Clydesdales.

Rev: Oh, OK. And so it's pulled by how many?

Teej: Just four of them.

Rev: OK.

Tass: I wish I had known about that before I went and studied a stupid horse.

All: [laugh]

Rev: So these goats pull a sled. So it's like icy and cold down there?

Teej: Yeah. Actually in fact, the dwarves created this -- it's like an ice track that they run on, and everything. And they use like refrigeration to basically turn this track into ice. And so they have like these pipes that vent all the heat out of the tunnel and everything. Including, like, some of the surrounding, you know, air and everything.

Rev: OK. So they have, like, these pipes that draw the heat out of the tunnel and push it out. Where does it push it out?

Teej: Into the ocean.

Rev: Oh, OK.

Teej: And so like along the ocean, there is this entire like just warm water track that goes up through. If you were to like, scuba dive ...

Rev: Yeah. Yeah.

Teej: You'd be nice and toasty through there.

Rev: And so is this self-sustaining?

Teej: Actually, the dwarves maintain it. Then they have like a team of dwarves that come along every once in a while, make sure that the track is still frozen and everything. If not, they like just take some buckets and throw some water on.

Rev: Oh. So like, those are some of the people who live at the waystations?

Teej: Oh yeah. Yeah.

Rev: Like that's your section to monitor. OK.

Teej: Yeah. The waystations, in fact, are like ... I wouldn't say like they're cities by any means of the word, but they're like --

Jake: A settlement.

Teej: Yeah. Basically. So they've got like, you know, they've got the main refrigeration unit sort of there, and then the dwarves who take care of it. And then they have like the main refrigeration unit there, and then like the town around it. And like, people can go to the bar and they have houses there and some of their families, and everything.

Rev: OK. So, you know, we talked about before that this was a 24 hour trip. What I'm kind of seeing in my head is that there is a -- whatever you want to call it -- a depot at the beginning and the end. You know, those stations are there at each city, and so then are they like six hours apart? So there's essentially five depots, but two of them are the beginning in the end?

Teej: Yeah.

Rev: OK. So they're about six hours apart to get from one waystation to the next?

Teej: Correct. Yeah.

Rev: OK. So with it being underground and these waystations being about six hours apart, what is the lighting like down here? Like, the rest of the area?

Teej: Have you ever been to like a big city and then as you start to leave --

Rev: No, never.

Teej: Oh. OK.

All: [laugh]

Teej: Yeah, I know. Just coming out of Georgia, and everything.

Rev: Yeah, right?

Teej: We were never there for eight to twelve days.

Rev: Never in Atlanta or Chicago, yeah.

Teej: But as you start to leave like a major city and everything, you notice that like the streetlights become fewer and far between, and eventually you get out into the city -- er, country -- and there's very little light, or fewer lights.

Rev: Yeah.

Teej: It's the same thing there. They're like along the ceiling, and everything. So all you have to do is just like look up and you'll see them as they get further and further apart.

Rev: Oh, so it's like the opposite of like the lights on a runway. There's a light just along the top to kind of guide you as you drive until you get to the more lit area around the depot.

Teej: Right. Yeah.

Rev: So when you say that the lights are built in to the ceiling, you mean like the light crystals that you guys have encountered before?

Teej: Yeah.

Rev: OK.

Teej: Yeah. They're just like little collections of them.

Rev: And so what's the name of this thoroughfare?

Teej: I think that the dwarves, as much as they have like their own language and everything, I think they wanted to keep it simple for like the other folk of the world. And so they just made it the Line, because it is just a straight shot.

Rev: So the entrance to the Line is pretty far inside the city of Alpo. There is a simple sign that reads in large letters, the Line, and there is an enormous set of stairs leading down that you can feel cold air flowing up from. And next to where the stairs descend are a number of large square holes with pulleys above them. And you can see people hoisting things up from below and loading these goods onto carts, while others are lowering things down to be transported over to Vargos. So you all head down the stairs, and Ingrit pulls her pack off about halfway down and pulls out a large warm coat, as do the other

Iron Striders. And they start to put them on, and she looks at you and sees the frost forming on your beard, and she tosses you that coat with a grin, and she pulls out a second one from her pack.

Rev: INGRIT: If there's one thing I remember about you, Honin, it's that you never pack for the weather.

Teej: "Oh, thank you, sis." And I will put on the nice coat.

Rev: So we cut to inside of the Line and we see the ten of you standing around this large sled with these four enormous goats. And we can see the heat rising off of them in the cold air. And we can see it as they breathe out. And everyone is piling on to the sled. And Ingrid takes a look back at everyone and grabs a hold of the reins.

Rev: INGRIT: Everyone ready?

Teej: "Aye."

Rev: INGRIT: All right. Let's head home.

Rev: So, T.J., I'm going to ask you to roll the Line's custom move. And this is just like Undertake a Perilous Journey, but it's for navigating the dangers of traveling the Line. So roll 2d6 + Wisdom, and on a mixed success, I'll have some options for you.

Teej: All right. How about a dirty old four?

Jake: [chuckles]

Rev: So as you travel down the line to the first waystation, you notice that after about three hours that the lights start to wink out -- and they're actually winking out in front of you in the distance, as well.

Teej: "Ingrid, do you see that?"

Rev: INGRIT: Yeah, that's strange. I wonder what's going on.

Teej: "Well, they shouldn't be doing those. Those are magic lights."

Rev: And as you're looking up at the darkness, the sled comes to a very sudden stop. And you hear the sound of metal on stone, where for the last three hours you've been hearing the sound of this metal over the ice. And it feels a little warm here.

Teej: "Did the temperature change or is it just me?"

Rev: INGRIT: It does feel warm here.

Teej: And I'm going to take off my parka and see if, like, it does feel a little bit warmer?

Rev: It does.

Teej: Oh, goodness. I'm going to hop off the sled since it is stopped and I'm going to check the track.

Rev: All right. So how are you looking around in the darkness?

Teej: I'm just going to use my adventuring gear and pull out a torch.

Rev: All right. So mark off one charge from that. And you've got a torch you can use.

Teej: Nice. I'm going to look around the track to see if I can figure out what's going on with the track. Why is it so warm here?

Rev: All right. So roll Discern Realities.

Teej: I got an eight.

Rev: All right. So you get a hold 1.

Teej: What happened here recently?

Rev: So as you hop off of the sled, the first thing you notice is that your boots land in slush. It is not ice here right now. And you start to look around and you find, through the light of your torch, that the entire area across one side of the tunnel to the other is mush. It is not frozen here. And you actually see a couple of very derelict looking pipes coming in the side of the wall. And it looks like someone has moved the pipes that kick the heat out, and have it kicking the heat back down in.

Teej: Oh, OK. "I see our problem, sis. Looks like somebody's messed with the pipes. Maybe we can get our guys to help and fix it up?"

Rev: INGRIT: Maybe a couple of them start working on that, and the rest of us could try to pull this down, see how far before it ices over again and get everything set back up?

Teej: "That sounds good." And I'm gonna go see how far down the slush goes. So that way we know how far we need to push, or if we need to just wait and wait for it to freeze over.

Rev: So yeah, you start to head down the tunnel. Is anybody going with you?

Teej: I'd say probably like one or two of the other dwarves.

Rev: So yeah, you and two of the Iron Striders head down this tunnel, and it takes you about 60, 70 yards before you find that it is just stone on the ground. It's not even slush here anymore. And you see more of those pipes.

Teej: "Oh, great. All right. Well, I guess we're going to have to tell someone about this, because this is looking like it's going to take more than just us to fix all this, boys." I'll head back to the sled and inform Ingrit all about it.

Rev: INGRIT: That can't be right. We just came through here not even half a day ago, almost.

Teej: I want to look at, like, the pipes to see if I can see any claw marks, or if this looks like maybe the pipes were actually, like, taken apart, or just ripped apart.

Rev: Roll Discern Realities again. And you get a +1 forward since you're dealing with the answer from your last question.

Teej: Oh, very good. Well then that would mean a ten.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 3.

Teej: Wonderful. What should I be on the lookout for?

Rev: So as you're examining the pipes, the thing that you notice is that the top of the tunnel they are going out, and then you should never see them again. But you can see that, looking through the crack, that they are coming back in through the side. That it is

that same pipe that has been bent, through sheer strength, to wrap back around and come back into the tunnel.

Teej: What here is not what it appears to be?

Rev: So as you're inspecting these pipes closer, the walls you find by the pipes are hollowed out. Like, this should be a solid stone tunnel. And you initially had thought that there was just enough space for, like, these pipes to have been bent around. But as you're peering inside and kind of looking at the angle of them, you can see that there is an area at every location where there is a pipe coming out that is at least as big as this tunnel.

Teej: And I want to use my last question. Who's really in control here?

Rev: So as you are looking at this, you can see very faintly in the darkness that there are small holes, filled with what looks like magma. And then you realize they're not holes, but they're footprints. And the only thing that you can think of in this moment that is large enough and strong enough to do this and loves the heat and the magma are goliaths.

Teej: "Oh, shit. Oh, shit. Oh, shit. We've got to get out of here."

Rev: INGRIT: Why? What's going on?

Teej: "They're goliaths. This has got to be goliaths."

Rev: INGRIT: Why do you say that?

Teej: "Well, look at this footprint here." And I point it out. "And it's got magma and everything, innit?"

Rev: Yeah. And she comes into that side tunnel with you and looks around, and is just stunned.

Rev: INGRIT: We've got to go.

Teej: "Yeah. All right. What if we unhitch the goats and then we just drive us on them instead?"

Rev: INGRIT: We could try it. Definitely be a faster way to get out of here.

Teej: "All right."

Rev: So you guys are going to hop on these goats and get two to a goat. Well, some three to a goat.

Jake: One person gets to ride on the goat horns, like the handlebars on a bike.

Rev: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Teej: Because they have to hold the torch in front, you know. So they can see.

Jake: [laughs]

Rev: So T.J., I'm gonna have you roll Defy Danger with Dexterity for this. And this is going to be everyone getting onto the goats, and the goats getting out of here.

Teej: OK. Uh-oh. [chuckles nervously] That is a three.

Rev: So as you start to unhook these goats, they start to panic. They are not used to being off of their harnesses. They are trained very specifically to pull these giant sleds. And so when they are let loose, they start to panic and run. And two of them go straight into the hole in the wall, crushing the sides of it and making the entrance larger. And from inside, you hear a rumbling, and then there's silence. And you hear thump, thump, thump. And it's getting closer into that opening.

Teej: And I'm gonna shout to the ones riding the goat that crashed through the door, "Get that thing back on track. We've got to go!"

Rev: As you yell after the Iron Striders riding the goats that have gone through that entrance that has been cracked into the side of this cave, one of the goats with two riders comes tumbling back in, end over end. And a giant head looks through the hole and grins.

Teej: Oh, shit. "All right, sis. Get off the goat. We're going to have to hoof it."

Rev: INGRIT: Run? All the way down this thing?

Teej: "Well, it's better than staying here. Did you see the size of that thing?"

Rev: And it starts to put its hand in the tunnel, and it's breaking the wall apart to make the opening large enough for it to come in.

Teej: And I'm just gonna start running down the tunnel, towards hopefully a waystation.

Rev: OK. So roll Defy Danger with Dexterity to get past this goliath that is hanging partway out of this tunnel.

Teej: That's a six. Damn it.

Rev: So you take ten points of damage as you start to run down this tunnel, and the goliath backhands you. And the force of it knocks you backwards, and it starts to pull itself even further into the tunnel.

Teej: "God damn it, I didn't want to have to use this." And I'm going to press the jewel on my belt.

Rev: All right. Roll a d4.

Teej: One.

Rev: You become one times your normal size.

All: [laugh]

Rev: You just look like you put on a few pounds.

Teej: Wonderful.

Rev: Add 1 to the damage you roll, you become twice your normal size, and you get 1 additional hit point.

Teej: I'm gonna go after it with my flail.

Rev: All right. So right now you are about 20 feet away from it. Are you gonna get up and charge at it? How are you approaching?

Teej: Yeah, I'm gonna charge at it. I'm gonna keep the family safe, hopefully. And as I'm doing this, I want to yell to all the other dwarves. "All right, boys. This is our tunnel. Let's protect it."

Rev: All right. So roll Hack and Slash.

Teej: That is an eleven.

Rev: All right. Roll your damage.

Teej: 13.

Rev: All right. So you pull your flail back and you swing it about your head as the goliath climbs fully into the tunnel. And it stands up, and this is the first time you have seen it in full. It takes up the entire height of this tunnel. It stands about 25 feet high, and you can just feel heat radiating off of it. And you bring your flail around, and it cracks into the side of the goliath. And it staggers to the side, and you can see that there is this boiling blood washing down its side, and it pulls a very large spiked mace from its back and starts to move down the tunnel. And in the distance, you can hear more of that thump, thump, thump ... Ingrit draws the shield from her back and charges at the goliath. [rolls] And she rams the shield into the ankle, and you hear this very wet snap. But as it falls to the ground, it brings its mace down on her.

Teej: So actually, I want to try and bring my shield up to keep that mace from really doing any damage to her.

Rev: Roll Defend.

Teej: Oh, awesome. That is an eight.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 1.

Teej: I want to halve the attack's effect or damage.

Rev: So, you notice when he brings the mace down that it clips off of your shield before it hits her, and she takes a pretty large gash on her shoulder, but she hops back and brings the shield up again.

Rev: INGRIT: Oh shit. These things are big.

Teej: "Aye. I think if we just bring this one down, maybe we can get past the rest. I hear some more in the background." You said it fell?

Rev: Yes. It is down on one knee.

Teej: Then I want to take a play from my old enemy, the giant goblin. And I want to go for the jibbly bits in between.

Rev: Roll Hack and Slash.

Teej: Yeah. Oh, not so good this time. Six.

Rev: As you run to slide between this goliath's legs and hit it, another mace hit you from the side, and you see that two more goliaths have climbed out of the hole. 12 points of damage.

Teej: Ouch.

Rev: INGRIT: What do we do?

Teej: "I think a retreat is an order."

Rev: INGRIT: Just back the way we came, over the ice?

Teej: "Yeah, I think so." I'm gonna pick her up and start heading that way, back the way we came.

Rev: If you are just trying to pick her up and run straight down this tunnel, roll Defy Danger with Dexterity.

Teej: That's a six again.

Rev: So you take 9 points of damage as part of the tunnel collapses onto you. And before it hits you, you hear the sound of one of those giant maces slamming into the ceiling.

Teej: I am just agog at how many fails I've rolled at the moment.

All: [laugh]

Rev: And you can see, as you are laying underneath all of this fallen stone, that the other dwarves are trying to fight these off, but they are having just as much success as you are.

Teej: Would I know whether or not goliaths eat other beings, or if they're just doing this because they're tired of people drilling in their tunnels or not?

Rev: Roll Spout Lore.

Teej: That's a 10.

Rev: So what you know about goliaths is that, no, they do not eat namegivers, but they kill them out of pure hatred and spite. Long ago, these titans lived above ground and they were driven underground by the other namegivers and their armies and their heroes. And they've learned to adapt to the heat and love it. And they are just underground, waiting for any chance they can to get revenge. And I think that the useful thing that you know in this moment is that the way that you try to deal with goliaths when you find them is by playing cat and mouse. Finding small places, running in ways that they cannot follow you. You know, right now you are in a very large, open area, and you're running in a straight line. They will absolutely catch you. But if you can find a way to get into small, cramped spaces and move, they won't be able to follow you as quickly.

Jake: It's a shame you invented such a long, wide, straight tunnel.

All: [laugh]

Jake: Perfectly manicured tunnel.

Teej: Did I say the Line? What I meant was the Parabola. Yeah, a parabola. Crud. I guess I need to find some kind of crevice or crack in the tunnel that I can jam me and Ingrid into.

Rev: All right. Roll Discern Realities.

Teej: All right. All right. That's a ten.

Rev: OK. You get a hold 3.

Teej: What here is useful or valuable to me?

Rev: So there were small openings all along these hallways where the pipes were being vented back in. They've only made an opening at one of them. So theoretically, you could go to the other side of the hall and squeeze into those cracks made to put the pipes through, and it at least would take them a while to either get through that wall, or for other goliaths to come down that hallway -- assuming there aren't any there currently.

Teej: I want to go for the little tunnel, then. And I know I'm big at the moment, so I'm going to have to shrink down. And the only way I've seen myself shrink down is if somebody used an effect on me. So I'm going to try and press the button on the belt and see if it reverses.

Rev: Nothing happens.

Teej: Oh, god. I'm going to take the belt off and see what happens.

Rev: Yeah. So roll Defy Danger with Dexterity to try to get this belt off and get into the tunnel. And you get a +1, since you are acting on an answer you got from your Discern Realities.

Teej: Thank you.

Rev: Don't thank me. Thank the game mechanics.

Tass: [chuckles]

Teej: That is an eight.

Rev: All right. So you can get this belt off and get into the tunnel. But Ingrit is not going to make it with you, the goliaths are going to see which crack you ducked into, or when you take it off, you will shrink but the belt will stay its enlarged size until the magic effect wears off.

Teej: [laughs] So I've just got, like, this oversized belt on me.

Rev: I don't know that you'd be able to -- yeah, to try to drag it behind you, since you'd have to leave it behind.

Teej: I kinda hate to say it, but I think I'm going to leave Ingrit behind.

Jake: [chuckles] Yeah, I thought that might be the direction this went.

All: [laugh]

Rev: So T.J. takes off the belt and it shrinks down with him, and he runs forward to the far side of the tunnel and leaps into one of the cracks next to these repurposed pipes. Ingrit

follows behind you and she leaps for the crack, and then one of the large metal maces comes crashing down on her. And all you can see through the gap now is the gore-covered mace.

Jake: Oh, my god.

Rev: Jake. You wake up and it is dark and you have got a headache, and you feel something tight clamped around your mouth.

Jake: Are my hands free?

Rev: They are.

Jake: Is it pitch black?

Rev: It is not.

Jake: Then I want to look around and see what I can make out.

Rev: Yeah. So you start to get your wits about you and look around, and you are inside of a cage. And you can see a dimly lit room that is filled with tables and the gems that you have seen before. There are vials, there is a desk, there is a large fireplace. And you can see the hunched figure in the cloak sitting at the desk. And in the corner of the room, you see what almost looks like a suit of armor that is just standing in the corner and watching your cell.

Jake: How many points of egress does it look like there are from this room? Are there doors, windows, passageways?

Rev: You do see two doors. There's one right next to his desk, and there is another one on the wall about 10 feet away from this metal golem.

Jake: OK. I want to kind of, like, shimmy my way up into a seated position on the ground there and start rocking, like, left to right as much as I can, just to see if that thing's vision seems to be following me. Like, if it's locked on me specifically.

Rev: Oh like, so just with your butt planted on the ground? Like metronoming?

Jake: Yep.

Rev: Yeah, it does. You notice a very slight tilt as it watches you.

Jake: All right. What is that thing? Is it like ... I've seen -- Jake has seen a couple of things that I feel like it could be. Like I've seen Yaga's knights and I've seen the metal golem. Do I know what I think this thing is?

Rev: Yeah. So roll Spout Lore.

Jake: Three.

Rev: It does look like a golem and it also looks like Yaga's knights. It seems like it is almost entirely metal. But you know that this is not a golem. This is called a Soul Trap. And it is a magical device that needs a spirit, a soul to operate it. And so that means that whoever this is, they have captured somebody inside of it to power it.

Jake: Damn. OK.

Rev: And I think the unfortunate truth that you get is that they do not have to obey their master. But the first time they choose not to, there is no chance that the soul will ever escape from the suit of armor. How do you know that?

Jake: I actually just learned it. It was just part of one of the exhibits. There were suits of armor like throughout the museum, but there was a plaque next to one of them talking about how castles have suits of armor lining the hallways, and some of the reasons that that is. And one of them is some of them are trapped. Some of them are Soul Traps. And, you know, it seems like an innocuous thing. You wouldn't expect it to be ready to attack you. But here they are.

Rev: Oh, and so some of those traps use either the white or the black gems, the life or the death magic to trap people inside.

Jake: Yeah. And it kind of depends on whether or not it was voluntary. Like, it doesn't have to be a ... I mean, it's a "trapped soul" in quotation marks, but someone who is willing to die for their cause -- you know, like a bodyguard type person -- could let their soul be put into this. And that would be like a white gem thing, like it's a life -- you're giving your life. As opposed to having your soul stolen, that's like a death magic thing.

Rev: Yeah. And so I think that as you are looking across the room at this Soul Trap, you see that the eyes on it are made out of the black gemstone.

Jake: So I know that this thing was taken. Like, is in there against its will. But if it acts out, it's stuck forever. So it's just kind of gotta do what this dude says.

Rev: Mmhmm. And as you're watching, the man in the cloak gets up and moves over to a wall and he takes out a piece of chalk and starts writing on the wall. You can see that there are notations and equations and just sometimes drawings of things all over the walls of this room.

Jake: Does any of it mean anything to me? Does my bardic lore: spells and magics cover any of it? Or does this seem like some wild experimental shit that I wouldn't understand?

Rev: It does seem experimental. You can tell looking at it, especially with what you studied at the museum before you stumbled across him, that much of it has to do with the magics around these gems. It seems like he is finding alternative ways to use them. And so he is experimenting outside the bounds of normal magic.

Jake: I want to figure out as much as I can before he realizes that I'm awake. So I just want to look around the room in general and try and take in information, see if I can get an advantage. Like, I want to get some knowledge that might help me before he realizes that I know that.

Rev: So roll Discern Realities.

Jake: Ten.

Rev: You get a hold 3.

Jake: What here is useful or valuable to me?

Rev: So I think that there are a couple things here. The first is that when you woke up, I had described that you felt a pressure around your mouth. And I think now that you are sitting up and just even a little bit in the bottom of your vision, you see some kind of a clamp over your mouth. And as you bring your hands up, you can feel that it wraps around to the back and there is a lock at the back of it. You can tell that the door next to his desk, there there's a little bit of light coming out from underneath it. So you feel like that might go into another room of wherever this is. But the other door seems to be much thicker, and there is no light coming from underneath it. It has a lock on it, but you can see that the lock is not engaged. And you can tell, even as you move around in here to get a better look at the room and the figure of the Soul Trap follows you with its head,

that the cloaked figure is so enraptured in his work that he is not noticing what is going on in the room right now.

Jake: What here is not what it appears to be?

Rev: As you look across the room, your eyes go back to the heavier door that there is no light coming out from underneath. And you realize that that's not actually true. There is something coming from underneath the door, but it almost looks like shadow. There is darkness coming from underneath the door, and it almost seems like the same color that is inside of the eyes of the Soul Trap. And so you feel like that they might be linked somehow.

Jake: What should I be on the lookout for?

Rev: With what you have seen at the museum and what you have seen in this room and what you know of this world, you know that these gems and the magic in them, they shouldn't work in tandem with one another. That he is somehow perverting magic to make things that should not work together, work together. And you see things around the room that can't possibly be from this world. It seems like he is getting supplies, getting devices, getting knowledge from other worlds. And so I think the thing that you should be on the lookout for in this moment is that what your Rolodex might know about these magics may not always give you the correct answers, because he is somehow operating outside of the laws of magic of this world.

Jake: OK. I have a question that kind of tacks onto that, then. Like, so I understand that he's receiving things from other worlds. In the realm of what should be on the lookout for, do I recognize anything in this room that somebody from this world shouldn't recognize?

Rev: So yeah, I think as you look around this room with Jake's knowledge in mind, the thing that you see that stands out are little clusters around the room of candles and runes and artifacts. And they stand out to you because you've seen this pattern before. It's the layout that T.J. and Rev created in the underground lair to recreate NOEL's teleportation device.

Tass, you have been heading for Dunehurst for about half an hour now. You've gotten to the point where you can no longer see Alpo from where you stand on the ship. What would you like to do?

Tass: Now that the fog of what I've just done is clearing a little bit, I think I remember that weird box that was in storage, and I want to go check that out.

Rev: Yeah. So you head back down below deck and it is there, that strange crate with markings on it that you have not seen in this world since you've been here.

Tass: OK. Can I try to access the Rolodex and see if any of this rings any bells?

Rev: Yeah, it does not seem familiar. In fact, it is alien to the mind you're trying to look through the Rolodex of.

Tass: Oh, OK. I think what I want to do is go find Cordelia. Because, you know, we had a good idea of what was here obviously, when we were giving stuff away to the pirates. We were the ones that restocked. And so the fact that there's just something different here rings weird.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: So I want to find her and ask her about it.

Rev: Yeah. So you find her and you bring her down, and she is standing next to it looking, and she is looking over her checklist.

Rev: CORDELIA: I don't have any idea what this is.

Tass: "Oh, god. Well, is there anybody on board that ... I don't know, like knows a lot about runes and stuff like this?"

Rev: CORDELIA: I've never seen anything like this in my life.

Tass: "Well this is gonna be kind of a odd question, but should we just toss it?"

Rev: CORDELIA: I mean, I guess we could.

Tass: "Nobody knows where this came from. This just seems dangerous, right?"

Rev: CORDELIA: Yeah. I mean, unless someone smuggled something on. I guess we could always check with the captain. But I can't remember the last time that a crewmate smuggled anything onto the ship. The captain gets very upset when people try to do things like that. He likes to keep a very tight record of everything that comes and goes.

Tass: "Sure. And I mean, it's not super hidden. Like, I found it fairly easily. Like it is not like they're trying to hide it in a hole somewhere." I think that I just want to look at it a little closer. I just want to study this, and see if there's anything about any aspect of this that will give me a clue as to what it does.

Rev: Roll Discern Realities.

Tass: That's a nine.

Rev: OK. You got a hold 1.

Tass: There are like four of these I want to ask. That's not great. What here is not what it appears to be?

Rev: So as you step up and start to move around this crate, there are very strong smells coming off of it, and they smell alchemical. And you notice that on the top there's a very small compartment that is hidden and it looks like it would open separate from the rest of the crate.

Tass: "Oh, look at this." And I'll kind of point that out without touching it. "I feel like ... Oh god, I feel like I should remove this? There's something alchemical about this. And if this is anything like, you know, even the grenades and stuff that we've used, if chemicals are going to come out of one compartment and go into another, that could be very, very bad."

Rev: CORDELIA: Yes, that would be very bad.

Tass: "OK, maybe go upstairs. Just if something does break bad here, I don't want you near the whatever might happen."

Rev: CORDELIA: All right.

Rev: And she turns and starts to kind of skitter out of the room.

SFX: "Tell the captain."

Rev: CORDELIA: Yep.

Tass: OK. I think what I want to try to do is, if I think I can, remove that? Like, get that away from the rest of the box.

Rev: Yeah. So you reach out and you pull up this little compartment, and inside of it is a piece of paper.

Tass: I guess I'm gonna take the piece of paper and look at it.

Rev: So you open up that piece of paper. On it is a note, and the note reads:

There are many worlds. Each one drastically different, with its own story to tell. But there are some events so critical that they have no choice but to repeat indefinitely.

And then the air is ripped apart by an explosion.

SFX: EXPLOSION

SFX: OUTRO MUSIC