

Clearwater's Well (S2, E26)

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Rev: So we had my family holiday gathering last night, and I think I got the best review for the podcast ever.

Teej: Oh yeah? From who?

Rev: My 17 year old niece came up to me and said, "Hey, my boyfriend and his friends are really into DnD and role playing games. So we listen to your show, and it's actually kind of cool."

All: [Laugh]

Jake: Good.

Rev: End of statement. I can't tell which part of that is my favorite, the "actually" or the "kinda." I think it's the "actually," because that's a commentary on me.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: Like, on what she believes I'm capable of helping to create, as opposed to the "kinda."

Teej: "You know, Uncle ..." I don't know if she knows you by your first name or not.

Rev: My niece? No. I make her call me Uncle Wentz.

Teej: "Well Uncle Rev, I thought you were kind of a dork before, but you know what? You're actually ..."

Jake: "But your tabletop role playing game podcast is pretty lit." That's how I feel any time somebody compliments anything that I do and says that, it's like, oh, that's pretty cool. Hey, that's pretty good. Like, the word "pretty." I know people put in to kind of, like ... They mean it as an emphasis. But to me, it's always, "It's not just regular good, but it's pretty good."

Rev: Right. As opposed to a qualifier that takes away.

Jake: Yeah.

Rev: So once they eventually get to this point, you know, thanks for the compliment.

Jake: Thank you.

Rev: So just a reminder that we have auditions open until January 15th. We are taking remote submissions now. So you can go to thecritshowpodcast.com/auditions, and all the information you need is there, as well as the links to submit your audition.

Last week we announced Tales from the Omniverse, and in the next week actually, we start recording two of them. Is there any, like, tease or anything anybody wants to say about what we know about these first two games?

Jake: It will not pay off for the listener at all, but I am creating many maps from scratch.

Teej: Ooh.

Jake: So it'll ... Well, it won't pay off for you guys, either. But I'm -- I feel good about it.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I'm proud.

Tass: One of them will be delicious.

Rev: I have a gun in one. That doesn't sound like it really matters. Like, oh we've got guns in Monster of the Week, but it's special in this world.

Tass: It is. It is.

Jake: [Whispers] It matters.

Rev: It matters here. And next week at the beginning of the episode, we will announce the new Patreon tiers. There are, I believe, three new ones. All of them have had just a little bit of tweaking done in response to the feedback that we have gotten from our patrons. And so those will all go live on our Patreon -- Patreon.com/TheCritshow -- on January 1st as the episode goes live. Which I realize, in hindsight, means that like ten

seconds after the ball drops, I need to run upstairs and submit the new text and everything to Patreon.

Tass: Oh, yeah.

Rev: So Happy New Year to me.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: I think that is all we've got for this week. So it's time to let the recap roll.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC

Rev: So you're standing watch. As you're looking to the south, you hear ...

Rev: FORMIAN: [Chittering]

Jake: I want to see what that is.

Rev: You turn around, and standing on one of the dunes looking down, you see two very large antmen. The one that's flying draws its spear, and it gets right in front of the wagon and drags a line in the sand. And it points from the side of the line that's on the north to the side of the line that's on the south.

Rev: LANDARA: Are you kidding me? They were this far?

Jake: "Yeah. OK. So that's not -- that is unexpected?"

Rev: LANDARA: I guess it's not unexpected. It's just ... I haven't been out here in a few months, and it's hard to know, with the Formians, where their territory begins and ends because everything's underground.

Jake: "Well, so what do we do? Like are we crossing over into their zone right now? Unfortunately, we're kind of marked, now. Two of them have seen me. And from what I understand, if two of them know us then they all know us, right?"

Rev: LANDARA: We're not crossing into their territory yet. Essentially this morning we were supposed to bank west. I thought we just had more time.

Rev: And you see the well at the center of town. And you see a woman carrying a very big haunch of meat, and she walks up to the well and you can hear that she mutters something. And then a very large, almost translucent tentacle comes out of the well and wraps around the meat and pulls it down into the well. And from deep below, you hear the sound of chewing.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC FADES

Rev: In the darkness, we hear the sound of chewing. And the camera pans back and we see stone, and then the camera tilts up and we see Jake, standing in the middle of this fairly busy marketplace, staring at this well.

Jake: I would like to find someone to ask about what just happened.

Rev: That's fair. There are a lot of people around.

Jake: Just whatever like the nearest vendor is, or something.

Rev: The nearest vendor would probably be the person you gave the camels to.

Jake: "Hey."

Rev: CAMEL VENDOR: You come to collect the camels already? I've already got them watered.

Jake: "No. No, no. I actually just had a question."

Rev: CAMEL VENDOR: Oh, yeah. All right.

Jake: "About the well? You know, on our way here I was told that, like, you make an offering to the well for the water. But it wasn't really explained to me, like why or what takes the offerings. Can you explain that to me?"

Rev: CAMEL VENDOR: Oh, sure. Offerings for the Voice.

Jake: "The Voice."

Rev: CAMEL VENDOR: Yeah. It's what lives in the well. It's what gives us all the clean water.

Jake: "The Voice has tentacles?"

Rev: CAMEL VENDOR: Oh, yeah.

Jake: "How come it's called the Voice?"

Rev: CAMEL VENDOR: Just because that was how we first encountered it. Hearing it talking, and all that.

Jake: "OK. Does everybody hear it?"

Rev: CAMEL VENDOR: Yeah, as far as I know. Oh no. Not Danny. Danny's deaf, so.

Tass: [Chuckles]

Jake: "Oh so it's like ... It's not like a voice you hear in your mind, or anything? Like you hear it in your ears?"

Rev: CAMEL VENDOR: Oh, yeah. Where do you hear?

Jake: "No, I just ... Nothing. Never mind. What is the voice? Like, taxonomically speaking. Is it a creature?"

Rev: CAMEL VENDOR: I don't think I quite kept your question.

Jake: "Like it's not like a god, is it?"

Rev: CAMEL VENDOR: Not that I know of. It's never asked us to pray to it, or anything. Never smote anybody.

Jake: "Is it friendly?"

Rev: CAMEL VENDOR: Oh yeah. I mean it makes water for us. Makes it so we can have this town, here.

Jake: "Can I talk to it?"

Rev: CAMEL VENDOR: Yeah.

Jake: "Do I need the offering first? Or ..."

Rev: CAMEL VENDOR: Only if you're going to get water. I mean, that's usually why you go over to the well, is to get water. So yeah, you could take something, offer it up, get some water.

Jake: "OK, thank you."

Rev: CAMEL VENDOR: Yeah. Have a good time.

Jake: [Laughs] Oh no. What's that mean? What does he know that I don't?

Rev: [Laughs]

Jake: I guess I'll shop around for a haunch of meat.

Rev: Yeah, no problem. There is a butcher here. What kind of meat you want?

Jake: Oh, you know.

Rev: Yeah. It'll be an amount of money.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: Yeah. I mean like I guess I might as well just fill the waterskins now and pay the tribute and have a conversation with the thing while I'm over there, while everybody sleeps.

Rev: Yeah. You can get a good haunch of meat for a coin. Everything's a coin. So unfortunately the cheapest coin thing is a coin. The most expensive coin thing is a coin.

Jake: All right. Yeah, I'll do that. And I will take it over to the well and talk to it.

Rev: So what are you doing? Like paint me a word picture here. You've got this haunch of meat, you've got your waterskins to refill.

Jake: I think I go over and I like, lean the haunch of meat against the well and just kind of like, look over the edge a little bit. And be like, "Hello?"

Rev: THE VOICE: How are you?

Jake: "I'm good. How are you?"

Rev: THE VOICE: I'm good. You're not from here.

Jake: "No, I'm just passing through."

Rev: THE VOICE: Oh. It's a very nice offering. I just ate, or I would take it right now, but I think I'll wait just -- well, I'm always a little peckish.

Rev: And again, this large tentacle comes out of the well. You said you were looking down -- it is completely pitch black. And the tentacle almost brushes your face as it comes out because it is almost like a jellyfish. Like, it is just that translucent but kind of opaque, clear. It comes out and grabs a hold of the haunch of meat and pulls it down inside.

Jake: So how thick of a tentacle are we talking? Like, does it fill the well on its way out?

Rev: It does not. It takes up maybe a fourth of the well. So still pretty big. And when the haunch of meat vanishes into the darkness, you again hear this echoing, crunching sound.

Jake: Is there like a bucket or anything on the -- on the well?

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: "So can I just lower the bucket down to get water?"

Rev: THE VOICE: Mmhmm.

Jake: "OK." I'll start lowering the bucket down to fill -- start filling the waterskins. "Hey can I -- can I ask you a question? I don't -- I don't know, I don't want to come off as offensive or anything. But, what are you?"

Rev: Jake, roll Defy Danger with Charisma.

Jake: OK. [Laughs]

Tass: Oh, no.

Jake: Uh-oh. Six.

Rev: As you are asking that question, a little bit of a line has formed because you've got multiple waterskins. And you hear like a "harumph" from behind you, and you hear people starting to talk. And they just seem almost insulted by your question. And it's starting to spread around this shopping area.

Jake: Do I get any sort of answer from the well?

Rev: There is an uncomfortable silence. Like when it occurs, you become aware of having heard the water and the echo and just, sound. It is dead silent.

Jake: "I'm sorry. I didn't -- I didn't mean any offense by it. I'm just, I'm not from here. And I was just curious. But I get the impression that that was a -- that was a bad question. So I apologize. I'll just take my water and go. Thank you for your kindness."

Rev: THE VOICE: [Petulantly] You're welcome.

Rev: And you do -- you hear that little bit of a pout in its voice.

Jake: OK. Yeah, I'll fill up the rest of the water and walk back off to, like, where the cart is. And just kind of like, giving like small like, "I'm sorry. I'm really sorry" to just everyone.

Rev: And it is like the people like, "Hmph. Well." It's like the beginning of Beauty and the Beast, if everybody disliked Belle. Like, they're all having an interaction with you and then just giving you the stink eye as you go by.

Teej: [Sings, to the tune of "Belle"] Look there he goes, the Soul Trap with his smirk mouth.

All: [Laugh].

Teej: [Sings] How could he talk about our well? [Laughs] Yup, there you go. Brought it back around.

Rev: [Sings] You can tell just by his face, he's got no social grace.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: [Sings] Listen to him insult our dear well.

Jake: I'll go put the water skins back. And ... I can't imagine what else I can do in this town now. I made an enemy out of goddamn everybody, right on the first try.

All: [Laugh]

Teej: They're singing that song too, which is funny.

Rev: Like, it gets to the end, and they just start over.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: Every time you close a door and you open it, they've started over again. Yeah. So the rest of this day passes pretty uneventfully. If there's nothing else you want to do?

Jake: No, there is nothing else we needed in here. Yeah. Just keeping an eye out.

Rev: OK. So the day passes and the sun starts to set, and the rest of your group wakes up.

Tass: "Hey, how'd it go?"

Jake: "I refilled the waterskin. It cost us just a coin to get the meat for the offering."

Tass: "OK."

Jake: "I did ask what the thing in the well was ..."

Rev: LANDARA: Ooh ...

Jake: "And I upset everybody in the town."

Teej: "Then we should probably get out of here."

Jake: "Well, they didn't seem like they wanted to run me out or kill me or anything. They just ... They were a little harumph-y."

Tass: "Ah, it was a faux pas."

Jake: "Yeah."

Tass: "Hmm ..."

Rev: And really faintly in the distance, you can hear the song's closing note.

Jake: For the 715th time. Who made the 'Oh' sound?

Rev: Landara.

Jake: "So you would have expected that?"

Rev: LANDARA: Well I just ... It had never occurred to me to like, ask ... Who did you ask?

Jake: "The thing in the well."

Rev: LANDARA: Oh.

Jake: "And he talked to me afterwards."

Rev: LANDARA: Oh, that's good.

Jake: "Like, he didn't answer my question, but he didn't completely cold shoulder me."

Rev: LANDARA: That's good, I suppose.

Jake: "I say he -- it, she, they. I have no concept."

Tass: "What did it say? It talked to you?"

Jake: "Yeah. The people in town call it the Voice."

Tass: "Oh. Like in your head?"

Jake: "Evidently not. I asked that too, and they kind of dragged me for it."

All: [Laugh]

Jake: "No, he's just a ... It talks. Regular voice came in my ears. I asked what it was -- very, very pregnant silence. And then I apologized and I thanked it for the water. And it said you're welcome, and I left."

Tass: "What the hell?"

Jake: "Oh! It's got big translucent tentacles."

Tass: [Gags]

Jake: "I mean, it wasn't -- it didn't seem that yucky. It was weird. I didn't expect it. Never seen anything like that come out of a well before, but ..."

Tass: "Yeah. Landara, you've been through here a few times?"

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah. Mmhmm.

Tass: "And you drank the well water?"

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah.

Tass: "Everything's cool?"

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah. Other than the time I've been to the Towering Mountains, it's the clearest water I've ever drank.

Tass: I think I perk up a little bit at that. I don't know why, because like, I've never been there. But a little bit of Walfus spills through, hearing the Towering Mountains.

Jake: "Yeah. Well, we've got it, and our offering is paid. So unless there's anything else we want to do while we're here, we're clear to go."

Tass: "I want to make friends with a Well Tentacle Monster."

Teej: "And I want to leave well enough alone."

Jake: [Laughs]

Tass: "Yeah, that's probably the correct thing."

Jake: "Yeah. I don't think it's necessarily unfriendly. But if it decided to be, its tentacle was like the size of your torso."

Tass: "Oh, good."

Jake: "You are welcome to go try and have a chat with it and see if yours goes any better. Maybe you just don't ask it what it is, right out of the gate."

Tass: "Yeah. I have -- I just, I have no clear purpose for this except the curiosity of this world, you know? And if it was speaking to you, I doubt it's considered natural enough for me to be able to study it, if that makes sense."

Jake: "All right. Let's take off, then."

Tass: "I guess so, yeah."

Rev: LANDARA: All right.

Rev: And so you all go down and you get your camels and get the wagon set up. And everybody roll Undertake a Perilous Journey to get you to Isolation. And again, if you are the quartermaster, you get a +1 because of Trog. And if you are the trailblazer, you get a +1 because of Landara.

Teej: I will trailblaze again.

Jake: Got a ten, but I have my -1 forward to Wisdom. So, nine.

Teej: Trailblazer got a seven.

Tass: And scout got an eight.

Rev: So this night of travel passes without incident. It's taking, again, just as long as you expected. No extra rations are needed. And you don't catch sight of anything, but you don't get the sense that you are in danger. The landscape is pretty much the same. You notice that while there is more and more sand -- piles of it, that it's not in big dunes. Like, it's starting to flatten out. It's, again, still getting colder at night, but the wagon and the camels don't have any problem navigating through the sand. Landara starts to take you on a pretty zigzag pattern, and she has the map out way more often. And you can tell that she is trying to avoid what she thinks is the boundary lines for The Eternal Colony. And as the sun starts to rise, she pulls everyone to a stop.

Rev: LANDARA: So as far as I can tell, we should be OK here. How do you want to set up camp?

Teej: "Well, probably the same way we did before, just making sure that we're not crossed over into their territory. You've been checking the map lately, right?"

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah. But as we've seen already, the map isn't always right. I haven't been out here in a while.

Jake: Which side are we approaching from now? Which direction?

Rev: So when she left Clearwater, she started to take you north again. And now the direction you've been traveling has been northeast.

Jake: "I mean, do we all want to stay on the side of the wagon that would be the side further from their boundary, just in case? Like everyone sleep on kind of the southwest side of it, so that if we are in their zone, we're at least clearly we were trying not to be."

Tass: "Yeah. I mean, that's as good a thought of any. I mean, if anything, it seems like last time they gave you a chance. You know, they weren't just attacking you. So maybe with this thought of -- hey look, we're trying. Maybe we'll get a break if they do come along?"

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah, actually, that's a good idea. Can I see that for a second?

Rev: And she gestures at your spear.

Jake: "Sure."

Rev: And she puts it in one hand and gets the map out again, and actually drags a line for about 100 feet, indicating where she thinks the border is.

Rev: LANDARA: Then if they come by, you know, at least we could feign ignorance. Because I think that they know even if the boundary has shifted, what it used to be. They keep pretty tight track of it, so.

Tass: "Nice. Yeah. Good call."

Jake: "Well then yeah, let's position the wagon on the safe side, kind of along the border, and have everybody else just kind of halfmoon around it."

Rev: Is there anything else that anybody wants to do this morning before you go to bed?

Teej: I've been thinking about it, and I wanted to use one of my adventuring gears to have pen and paper, and I'm starting a list of 101 uses for an Immovable Rod.

Rev: Oh. Do you know how to write?

Teej: I, T.J. Tincher, absolutely know how to write.

Rev: OK.

Jake: [Laughs] Do you? Are we sure? Let me see your notes -- that's gibberish.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: What's on the list so far? See, you don't even know how to hold a pencil!

Rev: He teed up his own bit and wasn't prepared to execute it.

Teej: Let's see. I have at least --

Jake: Christ, there's more than half of a page already written.

Teej: Fourteen things here. Doorstop.

Jake: OK.

Teej: A hanger -- like, a thing to hang things on.

Jake: Pick the top three.

Teej: Paperweight.

Rev: Unfortunately, those were the top three.

Jake: [Laughs] That was it.

All: [Laugh]

Teej: Also, pull-up bar, hitching post ...

Jake: Uh-huh.

Teej: Wheel stop.

Jake: Uh-huh.

Teej: Flag holder.

Jake: I'm actually genuinely -- like now I want to have these in mind, in case they come in handy.

Teej: Sure. Waypoint.

Jake: Uh-huh.

Tass: A step up. Just one step though, because, you know, it's just one. A piton for climbing.

Jake: Uh-huh.

Teej: A fulcrum to do levers on.

Jake: Yes.

Teej: Also like a pulley -- you could like wrap a rope around it to make a pulley, possibly? Keystone.

Jake: Uh-huh.

Teej: Like let's say you're building like an arch and he want a keystone, it would make a pretty good keystone.

Jake: Kay.

Tass: Oh! Write this down. When I go into horse form, you can put it on my forehead and I'll look like a unicorn.

Jake: You won't be able to move, though.

Tass: I know, I know. But like, you know, it'll cut a striking silhouette.

Rev: Is there anything on your list that's like ...

Tass: Helpful.

Rev: That accentuates the fact that it's like this magic item. Like, that couldn't just be replaced by a mundane item. Like, oh, it can be a hanger. So can a hanger. It can be a fulcrum ...

Teej: Um, like ...

Jake: Like, oh, it can stop me -- if I fall off a mountain, I can push the button and it will stop me from falling.

Teej: Right. Yeah. That's one of the things I was also going to say.

Tass: He actually has that entire sentence right now. That was the next one.

Jake: He's writing 16 -- if I fall off a mountain ...

Teej: But that's about it, so far.

Jake: I feel like I should be finding a use for the Immoveable Rod. Like, just implementing it as like an almost a "just in case." I might -- I don't know why somebody would try to take our wagon, but I could just put the Immoveable Rod like, in the wheel spokes. So the wagon can't go anywhere. Or like -- I'm going to like, put it in the wagon. Like, against an edge of the wagon so that you wouldn't -- it would just look like something that's sitting in the wagon. Except if you tried to move it, it wouldn't be able to move past the rod. Just cause. Just in case.

Rev: OK.

Tass: Since it seemed like I had enough time last time, I think just this first few hours before actually getting rest, I'd want to go ahead and study a camel while I'm out here.

Rev: Yeah, no problem.

Tass: Awesome.

Rev: So T.J. is writing his list, and Tass is staring deep into the eyes of a camel.

All: [Chuckle]

Rev: Landara has set up her tent and is going to sleep. Drog is doing the same thing. So Jake, roll Take Watch.

Jake: Eight.

Rev: So Jake, you are standing watch. Roll Defy Danger with Constitution.

Jake: Nine.

Rev: Yeah. So I think it's the same results. That it's either going to affect your speed, or your mental fortitude, or your exhaustion level.

Jake: Same choice.

Rev: OK. So it's about six or seven hours after you have made camp. Tass and T.J. have been asleep for about three hours. And as you are looking to the north, a shadow falls over you, and two figures fall from the sky and slam into the ground.

Jake: I want to see who or what it is.

Rev: Yeah, you turn and you look, and there are two Formians. One of them has a spear, and has a dark green mark down the side of its face -- like paint. And the other one has a whip, and it is cracking the whip, trying to subdue the one with the spear.

Jake: So they didn't die on impact?

Rev: No.

Jake: "What is this? What's going on?" And see if either of them tries to tell me. I won't understand it. But ...

Rev: So you shout this out at them as they are scuffling, and the one with the whip does not turn to you, but it strikes out at the one with the spear and it says ...

Rev: FORMIAN: The exiled one came back. They are not allowed back into the colony.

Jake: So it seems like the green face painted one is the exiled one, from what this thing said?

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Oh man, I'm so scared. I'm going to -- I'm going to try to curry favor. That one said he's part of the colony. So the exiled one -- I'm going to go try to punch him.

Rev: All right. Roll Hack and Slash.

Jake: Nine.

Rev: All right, roll your damage.

Jake: So I want to use Pinned Down -- when you would deal damage to someone with a melee attack, you may instead choose to grab them. You will never lose your grip on someone you have grabbed, unless you choose to.

Rev: So you reach out and you grab this struggling Formian, and it jams its spear at you as you grab it. And you take 5 points of damage as its spear hits you in the side. But now you can feel that you have it in your grasp, and it cannot escape.

Jake: OK. I wanna hold on him and say, "Don't worry, sir. I'll keep him from getting back into the colony."

Rev: FORMIAN: He must be destroyed. He has broken the law.

Jake: "Destroyed? Isn't exile enough?"

Rev: And he brings this whip down, and creates a huge gash across the face of the Formian you have pinned down.

Jake: "Wait. Hold on. Hold on. We're not technically in Eternal Colony land right now, so I don't know that you can enforce Eternal Colony laws. If he's been exiled and he's outside of your bounds and he stays that way, isn't that the end of it?"

Rev: FORMIAN: He has already been sent away and come back. Are you harboring this fugitive?

Jake: What I'm trying to do is convince this guy. Like is that -- does that seem like it's not an option? Like he's just not going to buy this argument?

Rev: Roll Discern Realities to try to get a sense of what's going on here and the way that their rule works.

Jake: OK. Nine.

Rev: OK. You get a hold 1.

Jake: I think, who's really in control here? Like, trying to answer my own thought. Does he have the authority to be doing this outside of his bounds? And I mean, the way I imagine this is like I'm reading him. Like when I say like, I don't think you have authority out here, does he betray that that might be the truth? Does he, like, flinch or think about it for a second, or seem caught off guard? That it would lead me to believe -- oh, I was right.

Rev: No. He does not flinch. He does not hesitate. In fact, I think the thing that you notice about who is really in control here is that the one that you are holding down has stopped struggling, because it feels like you are doing something to protect it.

Jake: Even though it just got whipped in the face?

Rev: Yeah. Because I mean, you are, for this moment, holding back its pursuer.

Jake: Hmm.

Rev: And so the question it just asked you was, are you harboring this fugitive?

Jake: Fuck. They all know everything! All of them, all at once. Whatever I do here, all of them know. [Sighs] "I'm not harboring this fugitive. I just met this fugitive. I am currently restraining this fugitive. But, I'll pay you for this fugitive."

Rev: I think, because you are watching for his reactions, it's an oddly similar reaction to what you got in town. He seems offended by this.

Rev: FORMIAN: You try to use currency to circumvent our laws?

Tass: Shit!

Jake: [Sighs] "No, I'm not trying to circumvent your laws. I don't know. I'm sorry, I don't know how any of this works. Clearly, I'm not from around here. I apologize for my ignorance. What did he do that you want him so dead for?"

Rev: He uncoils his whip again, and it seems like he's going to strike. And you can't tell if it is at the one you're subduing, or at you.

Jake: Doesn't seem like is going to answer me though, huh?

Rev: It does not.

Jake: God damn it. I'm going to toss him over to the guy with the whip. I don't -- like, he doesn't seem inclined to tell me what's going on. But places in worlds have their own judicial systems, and it's not my place to decide whether they're right or wrong. So even if I might disagree with this, that's just not how the world works. I am not judge and jury, so. [Laughs] I'm not Judge Judy and executioner.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: So, yeah. I can ... I mean, I can -- that's literally one of the things I can do with this move, is toss them somewhere within reach. So I'll toss them on the ground in front of that guy.

Rev: So you throw him to the feet of the Formian with the whip. And it snaps the whip out, but you can tell that it adjusts something about the crack right at the end, and the whip actually comes back around and wraps around its own wrist. And it pulls the whip across the neck of the one on the ground and puts its knee in its back. And there's twenty, thirty seconds of struggle, and then it stops moving.

Rev: FORMIAN: Safe passage to you and yours.

Rev: And it flies away.

Jake: Does it leave the corpse?

Rev: It does.

Jake: I'm gonna bury it. I'm going to take it somewhere ... Once the other one is gone, once the one with the whip is, like, gone gone, I think I want to bury it just on their side of the border. And I want to like say, I mean, effectively, like a prayer to Death. Like whatever, I'm his dude now. So just be like, "Hey, take care of this guy. Give him his ... Whatever his just desserts are, let him have it."

Rev: All right. So I think that is how the rest of your daylight hours pass. You have just gotten yourself dusted off from digging a hole in the sand and saying your prayer when the sun sets and everyone starts to get around.

Tass: "Oh, hey. How'd it go?"

Jake: "Every time you ask me that, the answer is worse."

Tass: "Oh, god. Was there another tentacle?"

Jake: "No. A Formian killed another Formian, which he referred to as an exiled one, right in our zone."

Tass: "Oh, god. So some kind of civil war type thing?"

Jake: "Landara, does that sound like anything to you?"

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah. I mean, you can be exiled from the colony for breaking a law of the colony. They mark you with paints or a scar or a tattoo. It's different depending on the colony. But The Eternal Colony marks you with a green mark on the face.

Jake: "Yeah. I mean, that's what he had. They wouldn't tell me what he was exiled for, but I figured it better off honoring their laws than making an enemy of the entire colony."

Tass: "Yeah, man. That's fair. Landara, about how much time do we have left on this, do you think?"

Rev: LANDARA: In the sense of all of us traveling in a big group? I'd say four and a half more hours, probably. After that it's probably another half hour away, but I don't imagine we want to ride up to it on a bunch of camels with a wagon in tow.

Tass: "Yeah. Right, right, right."

Jake: "So what? We'll travel the few hours and then stop and send you in as a bug from there?"

Tass: "Yeah. I guess my concern is what happens if we're spotted on the way? Is this a situation where they like murder anybody on sight in their land? Do they just escort? Like, what do you got for me there?"

Rev: LANDARA: It really all depends. You've been spotted by them once, Jake. Well twice, technically. So we've been seen skirting around the outside of their territory. You know, if you're caught on their land, it's usually a, "Why are you here?" And if the reason is good, you can pass through. Or if the reason is bad, you're turned away. And if you try to hem and haw about it, then it's going to turn into a fight.

Tass: "Sure."

Rev: LANDARA: And just for the record, breaking into a fight will then ...

Jake: "Put the kibosh on any chance we have."

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah. It'll basically be the equivalent of breaking a law in their city.

Tass: "Cool. OK. So essentially we need an excuse to be there to try to avoid a fight in the first place. Cause, 'Hey, we're about to break in your place' doesn't do us good."

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah.

Tass: "God. And something that lets us continue on our way? Do you know what I mean? Like --"

Jake: "Something that even if they decided not to kill us, they wouldn't just turn us away for?"

Tass: "Right. Like, you know, I keep kind of jumping back to the thought of, hey, even if it's just our only option. Sure. Yeah. One of us is a prisoner that we're coming to drop off. But then they're just like, 'OK, got the prisoner, and then we'll escort the rest of you off.'"

Jake: "Yeah."

Tass: "That's not great."

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah. And this is ... I mean, this is their personal prison. So like, you wouldn't be bringing someone to them.

Tass: "Gotcha. Gotcha. Gotcha."

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah. I mean, I guess ... Well, that's not true. I guess maybe you could be asking them to take the prisoner. That's not entirely unheard of. But you wouldn't be

delivering them a prisoner. But you could be asking them if they would be willing to take a prisoner.

Tass: "Right. Oh, god. I don't know. No, that's another one that'll just get us turned around. I thought for a second maybe we lean on the fact that you also had a bounty? That we're just out here looking for James Tincher. But then they go, "Nope, we all ready got him."

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah.

Tass: "Off you go."

Jake: "What if ... This is a bad idea. Or it's not a -- it's not a good idea. I was going to say, like ...+ I could just ... Like, they've seen me. That if we encounter one, I can just be like, 'Hey, you guys saw me, I helped you kill a guy. And I just feel wrong about it. And I was really hoping that I could talk to someone who could maybe, like, set my conscience at ease."

Tass: "That you, like, actually helped subdue a criminal instead of helping a murder."

Jake: "Yes, exactly."

Teej: "So maybe like they owe you one, or something?"

Jake: "Or just like that they would be like, 'OK, come on and talk about.' Like, 'You need to talk to this person who's in charge. You've got to come here to do it.'"

Tass: "Huh."

Rev: LANDARA: I mean, half of that kinda works. They're not so much about feelings. It's law and order and structure. There's not going to be someone you could report to, because everyone's following the letter of the law and everyone above them knows it. But you could come looking for something, for having aided in taking down one of their exiles?

Tass: "Ooh."

Jake: "Well, that's not nothing."

Teej: "Yeah."

Jake: "Do we think that they would take kindly to that? Is that something that they'd be like, 'Yeah, that's fair.' Or again, couldn't they just be like, 'No, piss off.'"

Tass: "What about just bringing body even too, as a little more proof? Like 'Hey, I helped with this and your guy just ran off. So like, how about a little compensation?'"

Jake: "I don't think that would make the difference, because everyone knows that I was there."

Tass: "Oh. Yeah, no. You're right."

Teej: "And plus, didn't you try to bribe him?"

Jake: "I did, yes."

Teej: "And it didn't work?"

Jake: "Yes, I did. That didn't go well."

Teej: "I don't think it's going to be mutually returned."

Jake: "No, yeah. Probably, no matter what, like they're not going to ... I'm already working from a disadvantage on, like, getting them to grease my palms, or whatever."

Rev: LANDARA: You remember when that first night they came and they drew a line, and you were on one side or the other?

Jake: "Uh-huh."

Rev: LANDARA: It's like that. You didn't cross that line. So in their heads, you're still on the other side of the line."

Jake: "Oh, OK."

Rev: LANDARA: It's once you cross over, you can never come back.

Jake: "OK. You know what we could do? It's a little bit ghoulish. We could take the body and like I could be like, 'Hey, this dude came back and I didn't know what to do, but

clearly he wasn't supposed to get away. So I'm bringing him to you.' You know? Like like, hey, this guy cut a deal with Death and he came back, so I grabbed him."

Tass: "Oh ..."

Jake: "You know? Like, it seems like he's dead again, but I don't know what's going on. But the only thing I could think to do was bring him to you, because he wasn't supposed to get away. That's a big lie."

Tass: "Yeah. But, like ... OK." Is this a different enough thought track to think through Walfus's Rolodex about these people? And like, more specifically, like their belief system?

Rev: You could roll Spout Lore. Especially since you have a character that deals in communicating with spirits, and it's not out of place to think that Walfus would know about the different beliefs of the different races on this planet.

Jake: Use a book. Use a book.

Tass: Oh, yeah. And I will get a book out and try to look through and see what I find.

Jake: As I see him, like, buckle down on this and reach for a book to study, can I offer him Estin's book too? Like "Here, man. Cross reference. There's all kinds of good shit in here."

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: OK. Yeah. I think as they're packing stuff up and getting stuff ready, I'm going to dig through these books and see if I can find anything.

Rev: Roll Spout Lore.

Tass: Twelve.

Teej: Oh yeah!

Jake: Yeah! That's number we need for Estin's book!

Rev: Oh shit. Jake, remind me, what does it say on a twelve for Estin's book.

Jake: You give us the solution to the problem.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: Oh my god. Yes!

Rev: So what is the problem you're trying to solve? Is it if you encounter them, how to not get turned away? Is it how to ensure you all get into Isolation? What is the specific problem you want the answer to in regards to the Formians?

Jake: I think it's, if we get encountered, how are we allowed to stay? Right?

Tass: Yeah. I guess the question would be if we are spotted by them, how can we continue on to our goal?

Rev: So the thing that you find in Estin's book is that the Formians are not superstitious about death, they just have a different understanding of it. Because as far as they are concerned, whenever a Formian dies, the spirit of that Formian is reborn from the queen, so that there is never a member of the colony fully lost. So if you were to take this body with you that you have buried and tell them that it came back, they would want to question you and examine the body and examine you, so that they could understand what's going on, and if there is some supernatural element going on that is disrupting the way that they know life and death works.

Tass: OK. "Guys, so look at this." And I think I would kind of go over some of those passages. "So I don't think this is going to translate as something that they'll just be like, 'Oh, OK, you guys are fine' and let us keep going. But if we tell them that this body came back, that's going to mess with them. They're going to want to know what happened and what's going on, and they're going to want to inspect it and talk with us about it. So that tracks. That would work."

Jake: "So we get you close. And then if we get caught, we're coming to the same place as you, because we'd be going to talk to them."

Tass: "Yeah, I think so. I think the only problem here is that let's say we get halfway to where we're going before I even leave you guys, and we get spotted and they want to bring us in. I have to figure out a way to disappear in that process. And that's going to raise questions. So do I just go down to beetle form now, and we make this trek?"

Teej: "I think so."

Tass: "OK."

Teej: "I'll help unbury this dead dude."

Jake: "Yeah, I don't love that. Is it grave robbing if I made the grave?"

Teej: "No. No, bro."

Jake: "Good." Yeah. Dig him up, and I guess I'll spend a charge of my adventuring gear to have like rope and a sack over his head. You know? So that it looks like it's a prisoner that I was bringing in, and for some reason he's limp now.

Rev: And where are you putting him?

Jake: I think in the back of the wagon, like laying on his side or something in the back of the wagon.

Rev: OK. And what are you going to do with the spare camel?

Jake: [Laughs]

Teej: Just let him go. No, that's probably not a good idea. We could just have the other camel trailing behind on a lead, behind the wagon.

Jake: Yeah, that's true. Or we could, like, put the dead Formian on the camel. [Laughs] Like, he's just -- he is a rider.

Rev: Oh. I was picturing like a bounty that you'd caught.

Jake: Oh, yeah. Like tied around his belly, like he's ... Oh, I'll do that. Yeah. That's a great idea.

Tass: Yeah. That is way better.

Rev: Just masterful puppetry of it's up and bobbing back and forth.

Tass: Oh! No, that doesn't make sense. I kind of want to just see if I can take the water form and seep into this thing's mouth and puppet him.

Teej: Weekend at Bernie's this thing? Good lord ...

Jake: That's gruesome, but very good.

Tass: I can't imagine that tracks.

Jake: I don't know, man. I don't know. There are cartoons that would lead me to believe that this does work.

All: [Laugh]

Teej: Oh my god. And then you become their new god. Because they're like, "Oh, our understanding of death is not what it was. Lead us into the afterlife."

Tass: Or they throw me in the oven to cremate this thing and then everything's dead. Everyone's dead.

Teej: And then you just steam out. Yeah, that's fine.

Jake: Yeah.

Teej: Yeah.

Jake: Water cannot be destroyed.

Tass: Oh my god.

Teej: Yeah. [Sings] It's the circle of water ...

Tass: I was water and I got stabbed. I don't think ... I don't think that's going to help.

Jake: You just turn into a rock then, when you're in the oven. And then you're fine.

Tass: Original plan. I'm the bug. OK. Let's do this.

Jake: You're the bug. I tie this guy like laying crossways over a camel, where like his hands and feet are tied under the camels belly so he couldn't "move" -- quote unquote. And then that's -- yeah, that's how we'll present him if we have to present him. Like, "Oh my God, he came back. I tied him over the camel. He's not moving anymore. He might have died again."

Rev: All right. Tass, roll your Shapeshift.

Tass: OK.

Teej: [Sighs]

Tass: Are you kidding?!

Teej: [Sighs]

Tass: Are you serious?!

Teej: Oh, boy ...

Tass: Five.

Rev: All right. So you all get loaded onto the wagon, onto your individual camels. You get the other camel tied up to the back, and you get the body of the Formian slung over the camel. Tass, like whose shoulder were you going to ride on?

Tass: Probably T.J.'s, because I had the idea that if anybody's going to get close, I'm going to hide in his beard.

Jake: [Grimaces]

Rev: So you stand over next to T.J. and you do your Shapeshift, and you turn into a fire beetle. And T.J., this little fire beetle appears where Tass is standing, and it starts to fly towards you. And then it seems like it's kind of caught up in the wind, like it's starting to fly away from you.

Teej: "Tass? Tass, I'm over -- over here, Tass. Tass?" I'm going to see if I can't catch him. Maybe the wind's too strong for him.

Rev: Yeah. You reach out and you snag him and you tuck him into your beard, and you can feel the fire beetle crawling around inside of your beard. And Tass, from your point of view, there is no Tass. There is only the fire beetle. And this is your life now.

Teej: [Laughs]

Tass: Oh my god ...

SFX:

OUTRO MUSIC

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