

The Sandstorm's Fury (S2, E28)

SFX:

INTRO MUSIC

Rev: So last week, we released our new Patreon tiers, as well as updated a couple of the old ones. The Founders tiers are sold out, and we have actually passed our first three new goals. Which means that in the future, we will be releasing the first three stories in our Tales from the Omniverse mini series, which you can get on the \$5 tier on Patreon. We have already started to produce two of those stories.

Jake: Yeah.

Rev: One of them is complete. It just has to be edited. The other one has a few more recording sessions to go. I think it might be one of our longer stories.

Jake: And the third one is a twinkle in our eye. You guys really broke those three goals faster than I think any of us expected.

Tass: Yup.

Jake: I cannot express, though, how much that means. You all kick ass. Thank you so much for your support.

Rev: Yeah. The game master and the guest are secured for the third one.

Jake: Perfect.

Rev: It's just a matter of getting the recording time in. If you are interested in being part of one of the tiers that has the swag or the new t-shirts, make sure to sign up this month to get you in on the cycle. Those will go out every four months. So January will be the first month to sign up to make sure you are in that rotation. And with those tiers, if you are an international listener and you are interested in getting on one of the tiers that has a physical reward, you'll notice that we don't have international tiers up anymore. But you can contact us through the website at thecast@thecritshowpodcast.com and chat with us if you'd like to set that up. Because it's just different shipping to different countries. So I thought it might be easiest to actually deal with that on a one on one basis.

Also, we would like to thank our new patrons for December: Ben T., Keeper Susannah, Ruth N., and Kyle A.

And then I think before we get into this episode, the last thing I want to remind everybody is that we are having our auditions. Thank you everyone who has submitted thus far. If you have submitted an audition and not heard back from us, do me a favor and look inside of your spam folder. I have talked to a couple of people who I have sent them something, and because it comes from my Critshow email, it goes into their spam folder, and they have missed the response.

Jake: Because it comes from your email, which is Advertisement@MaleEnlargement.biz.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: And we will be accepting submissions, both local and remote, until January 15th. And so with that, it's time to let the recap roll.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC

Tass: "I haven't even done anything yet!"

Teej: "You were a beetle, dude. Did you, like, become one with the beetle?"

Tass: "Maybe."

Rev: The ants here, and the Formians, they don't need to see you. Because they can smell you, and sometimes they can even feel you on the ground. They can feel the tremors that you make. And the thing that you get from this is that to communicate with any of the ants, you would have to be in this form.

You know, from this book, that the prisoners are not just in a sphere of earth. That there is some kind of impenetrable bubble around them that keeps the earth from collapsing in on them, that keeps them from using magic and things like that.

Rev: FORMIAN: [Chitters]

Rev: And he raises his spear and points it at Trog.

Rev: TROG: Oh, no. He says he's going to call his superior to take us in. Not "and" take us in.

Jake: "He's trying to arrest us?"

Rev: TROG: I think so.

Jake: "Trog, help me. Tie him up. Like, we need to gag and bind this guy and keep him out of sight."

Rev: TROG: Oh, yeah. All right.

Rev: And he does. He goes over to the cart and pulls some stuff out, and you both tie up this Formian.

As you scrape the last of the sand away. It's almost like you uncover a window. There's just a clear barrier in front of you. And you peer inside, and what you see is this large sphere of slightly illuminated energy. And laying on the ground in the middle of it, clutching the colored gem to his chest, is James Francis Tincher.

RECAP MUSIC FADES

Rev: Tass, here you are in your ant form, several hundred feet underground, pressed against this magical bubble. And inside, you see James Francis Tincher, the man you came here looking for, laying at the bottom of this bubble, clutching the IPT communicator gem to his chest. What are you doing?

Tass: Good Lord. So the bubble -- how do I ask this? -- is it like ... Does it feel very much like a physical barrier? Or is it like an energy that I can't traverse through? Like, I guess the difference is, is it like something that's repulsing me from getting in? Or does it feel like I'm touching glass, or something? You know what I mean?

Rev: It feels like you're touching glass, but there is a glow to it.

Tass: OK. I want, with my tiny little curling horns on my ant head, to just kind of head butt it and see if it makes a noise.

Rev: It does not.

Tass: Damn it. Do I feel like I can hear anything going on in here? Like him breathing or shifting? Anything like that?

Rev: You cannot.

Tass: Shit. OK, so my tapping out Morse code on the side of this wall is out. I wonder if I can like try to dig in a way that I can spell words in the sand -- or in the dirt -- that are pressed up against the bubble. Do you know what I mean? Like ...

Rev: I don't see why not. It'd be just like when a kid has an ant farm.

Tass: Right. OK, I'm going to start digging along the side of this and try to write ...
[Laughs] I don't know!

Rev: "Hello there," that then crumbles and turns into "Hell here."

Jake: And he just starts weeping and rolls over so he's not facing you anymore. Welp, I blew it.

Rev: Don't forget: you're here forever.

Tass: I guess it has to be cursive. Um ...

Rev: Yes, absolutely.

Tass: Oh, no. I'm going to just try to write, "We're here. Prepare for extraction."

Teej: "Get your hopes up."

All: [Laugh]

Jake: I found one problem.

Tass: Uh-huh?

Jake: The apostrophe in "we're" immediately breaking your cursive. Can say "were."

Rev: "Were here."

Jake: "Were here. No longer."

Tass: No, I have to dig back into the soil and up and around.

Rev: Oh, I see. I see. Boy, what in the world is this going to be?

Tass: [Laughs] I don't know.

Rev: Because I assume that you don't want to spend a hold for this. You'd rather try to do it on your own accord.

Tass: I think I need to. Yeah.

Jake: Is this your last hope? You write that message and then turn back into a halfling, crushed under the dirt.

Teej: Oh, god. Up against his window.

Rev: OK. So I think to try this, I think it's going to be a Defy Danger because this place is dangerous. You know the Formians can sense movement, and you're going to try to spell words in their earth. So are you trying to do this quickly? Are you trying to do it cleanly? Are you trying to do it without being noticed? Describe to me how you are spelling these words out, and the time you're taking with it. Because I think that's going to decide what the Defy Danger is rolled with.

Tass: I don't know what this falls under, but I just feel like I would want to be doing it as cleanly and precisely as possible. Like, I think my goal is to make sure that this thing is noticeable to him as soon as possible. So that it is wide tracks, easy to see, just glance over and read. "There are words there that shouldn't be there. What's going on?" Do you know what I mean?

Rev: Yeah. So I'm kind of torn between this being Int or Wisdom. Because I think what you're facing here is trying to write a message in cursive on a piece of paper that you can't see. So like, you're writing and then you burrow back away from, and then you have to come back in and hope that you're still aligned with the previous words you've written.

Tass: Sure. Can I sell you on Wisdom, based on the idea of, like, art over writing. Like that thought of people that make crop circles and stuff, and they make images in a big, wide open space. And that idea of using your whole self to space out a picture.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: You know? Since I'm going to have to kind of be going in and out and finding a certain spot, as opposed to just looking at a page and writing something precisely.

Rev: Yeah. So roll Defy Danger with Wisdom.

Tass: OK.

Jake: Yeah. This almost reminds me more of like sculpture. Like, instead of putting something there that wasn't, you've got all of it and you've got to remove the right part.

Tass: Yeah. That's eleven.

Rev: Yeah. So no problem. You are able to write out -- and remind me again, what does this message say?

Tass: "We're here. Prepare for extraction."

Teej: Says, "Not Penny's boat."

Rev: Yeah. All right. And then what do you do after you finish writing this?

Tass: I'm going to wait for ten minutes or something, to see if he's moving at all, to see if he notices. And if he doesn't, I might try a little something else.

Rev: You finish this and you wait a little while for some time to pass, and you don't really have a sense that he -- he seems like he's just dead asleep. He's in an environment where, as far as you can tell, there's no sound. And so it would be very easy to just sleep in the darkness.

Tass: Yeah. No sound. That's the hard part. And if he's got his eyes closed, I had the idea of like, maybe going to the opposite side, where I don't disturb the message. And try to, like, dig out a little hole and disrupt some dirt to like, fall. Something that he would notice. But if his eyes are closed, he's not going to see it. If his sound is blocked, he's not going to hear that. So I guess I just need to get back.

Rev: Just taking the same way that you came? The ant paths?

Tass: Do I have a gauge, like from here, of if I were to just burrow straight out, like in an incline up to the surface. Do I feel like I might be able to get more directly to them?

Rev: Yeah, I think you could theoretically dig in their direction. It would just be a much, much longer process, as opposed to taking the already dug tunnels.

Tass: OK. So how about this, with that in mind? This could be complete nonsense. But what I want to try to do is gauge how I can have these ant colonies start digging, so that once we do come back and start pushing through, this is a much easier thing to get out?

Rev: So it seems like you're trying to understand more clearly how the ants here work. So I think that's going to be a Discern Realities. Since you have the ability to go back out into the tunnels to talk to them in their manner of communication, I think this is a Discern Realities.

Tass: OK. That's eleven.

Rev: OK. You get a hold 3.

Tass: What here is useful or important to me?

Rev: So the thing that you know that is useful to you in this moment, in the sense of trying to get control over the ants to help them do your bidding, is that they work in a hierarchy. And so they follow the orders of whoever is above them, whoever is above them, whoever is above them. And so you know that they work based off the instructions of whoever is above them in the pecking order.

Tass: OK. So who's really in control here?

Rev: So as you go through the tunnels, you see that there are at least three different types of ants. And they all have a distinctive smell, a distinctive ... The strange kind of color cloud way that they communicate with each other. And mixed inside of that, you see like, oh, here the worker ants. And this is -- they are, you know, they all communicate in this color. But what's above that is yellow. And then they all communicate in that yellow. And there's green at the bottom, and there's red at the top. And then the same thing -- it's like layered. And so you can see the color of whoever controls them layered into their communication.

Tass: Hmm.

Rev: And there is like a silver at the top of the third type of ant. But you haven't encountered anything that's silver, that you would assume that that's the queen. And just from going through these tunnels, you know that she must be here somewhere.

Tass: OK. So I'm trying to get a sense of what do I do with that from here? So can I jump back to what's useful or valuable to me, with a sense of how to get in on this hierarchy?

Rev: Yeah. So as you are intermingling with all the different ants, I think you start to even come out in the tunnel and see Formians. And Jake has described some of them to you. You've also seen a dead one. But there are some with wings and whips, there are some with spears. And you also see ones that just are using their hands to do menial tasks. And they all have this same inlaid layer of color to their communication. Even the ones that can talk, like they still seem to broadcast to one another, but it's in spurts. And they have that silver at the top, too. And so I imagine that you are burrowing down and you're following them as they talk, trying to get information. And you've been doing this for quite a while. You've gone very deep. And at some point you come out into a huge opening. And in the center of this room is this enormous Formian queen that takes up 20, 25 feet of space. And that silver is coming off of her. And so you realize that she controls not just the Formians here, but she controls the ants.

Tass: Oh!

Rev: So to get at least in control of the worker ants who would be able to help dig in the earth and, like, loosen it up for you, you'd have to find a way ... Because right now you are a worker ant, unfortunately. Like, that's the most common kind. It's what you studied. You'd have to find a way to get promoted. You would have to do something noteworthy so that you got moved up. And then you'd have to talk to the group below you to do the task that you want. And you'd have to be very careful not to communicate what you are doing to the levels above you. It's like steam rising -- that they give you that information, you'd have to be very careful not to open your valve to let that information go up to the level above you.

Tass: Oh, god.

Rev: So it could be done, but you would have to be very tricky to do it.

Jake: So how do you get promoted at Ants-R-Us? I bet if you provided like a good quarterly report.

Tass: Yeah. I mean, if I'm like hitting over my projected commissions, I think.

Teej: I think what it is, is you have to go to and ruin a picnic. That's how you ...

Jake: Another company's company picnic.

Teej: Yeah.

Tass: Oh. OK. I can't imagine that putting in the time and chancing trying to work in on this hierarchy is going to yield enough reward for it to matter. So I think I'm just going to start making my way back up. Like, how deep did I get? I don't know how else to ask that. Like ...

Rev: Yeah. Very. Like, you wandered for a while while doing these questions for Discern Realities.

Tass: Mmhmm.

Rev: It is much deeper than you even got a sense of, when you could sense things moving around in Isolation.

Tass: OK. So it's like Isolation is the top level, here. And then there's just more a living area below?

Rev: Yeah. And that somehow ... Like, you sensing this area below Isolation -- like even in this ant form -- like there was something that was blocking it. Like you didn't sense or smell any of the ways that they communicate. You had no idea this was under here.

Tass: Wow. OK. I mean, that is a lot. That's good information. I have Grandpa's location. I have an idea of what he's being held in, literally from seeing it, left this message, and got a good look at the literal queen of this whole place. I think I need to get out now, so that I have some good details to report.

Rev: OK. I don't think it takes anything for you to wind your way back out. Once you get out of Isolation, are you staying in ant form? Are you traveling all the way back this way? Or ...

Tass: I think that's the safest. If like, this is not something that's completely hidden the whole way, I can't imagine that I would drop it. I think I need to keep it until I'm at least very close.

Rev: OK. So once you get outside of Isolation, Tess, it is dark, and you start to head back towards the camp.

So Jake, back at the camp, you have gotten this for me and tied up. You and Trog are awake dealing with it. Are you waking Landara to tell her, or T.J.? Are you just letting them sleep?

Jake: They actually need their sleep, right?

Rev: Correct.

Jake: I mean, I guess I don't see a reason to wake them up. It seems like we have this in hand. So no, I'll let them sleep.

Rev: So I think we come back to the camp. There is a Formian who has been tied up, and Jake and Trog are standing over it, looking down. What are you doing?

Jake: "We got to hide this guy."

Rev: TROG: Where?

Jake: "I mean, I think just in the wagon, like under a blanket is even better than nothing. Just if another one gets the drop on us like this, we don't want the first thing it seems to be its de-antennaed friend."

Rev: TROG: Oh, yeah. All right. Lift him up, there.

Jake: Yeah, I'll pick him up and move him into the wagon and find something to like, cover him up with.

Rev: You know, you have tied him up already, you get him into the wagon, and you throw a blanket over him. So after you have this Formian loaded into the wagon and covered up, what are you doing?

Jake: I mean, I think my main thought is to, like, take watch again. To make sure that if another one comes to follow up on him or anything like that, that I see them coming and can do something about it.

Rev: Yeah. So are you doing that from your normal watch position, on top of the wagon?

Jake: No, I think I want to get higher ground. I think I want to climb one of these dunes and kind of lay to where I can just see over it in all directions. But, you know, I would be hard to see from a distance.

Rev: OK. Towards Isolation? Away from Isolation?

Jake: Towards Isolation, I guess. If they're going to send out another one to follow up, it's probably where it's coming from.

Rev: As you start to head up that dune, you do see its footprints in the sand.

Jake: Oh, I want to bury those.

Rev: Are you burying them and continuing to walk on? So you're just leaving your tracks?

Jake: I think I will trace them like a ways out from where I'm going to stop, disturb them out a distance, and then on my way back, disturb my footprints again behind me. So that it will look like it ended a good distance before anyone would get to me and our camp.

Rev: OK, so how far out do you want to go from the camp?

Jake: [Sighs] We're back to just me being bad with distances. Hundred yards.

Rev: Yeah. So you head out about 100 yards, and you dust away the footprints of the Formian. And as you travel backwards, you get rid of your footprints. I think this is going to be a Defy Danger with Dexterity as you try to navigate these shifting sands and dust away the footprints, not leave any of your own, not stumble backwards down a sand dune. And it's not going to have the normal results that we give. I don't think there's going to be options. It's either going to be a full success -- it will be done well enough to essentially give them minuses. A mixed success will be neutral -- you did an OK job. And then a fail will be, you know, you make it more obvious that something came this way.

Jake: OK. Wow. With my 0 Dex, I still got a ten.

Tass: Nice.

Rev: All right. Yeah. So you have this idea, you scoop up a bunch of sand in your big metal hands, and you're like ...

Jake: [Sprinkle sounds]

Rev: Yes. You're like ... What is that -- the salt chef, or whatever?

Teej: Yeah.

Rev: Yeah. And you're just sprinkling sand as you go to make it look as natural as possible. You're like, dusting it in the wind so it blows across. And so there is no evidence that anything has come this direction for at least 100 yards from Isolation. So you come back and you go on watch. I think this is going to be ... I think we're going to go back to Take Watch.

Jake: Not as good that time. That's a six.

Rev: So as you get into your position on the dune, a shadow falls over you.

Jake: Fuck.

Rev: And you hear the buzzing of wings. And you can see when you look up, 20, 30 feet above you, flying around is one of the Formians that speaks language, with the whips.

Jake: Is he coming for me?

Rev: He is looking around in this area. Like you can tell he has followed these tracks, and something's not right. And so he is starting to circle and range out further and further to try to figure out where these tracks pick up again.

Jake: Does it seem like he has seen me, but he doesn't care right now because I don't seem to be one of the puzzle pieces?

Rev: It seems like he has seen you, but in the hierarchy of issues, you're not the top on the list right now.

Jake: Oh, boy. I'm going to wave him down. I'm going to try to get his attention to get him to come to me.

Rev: All right. It notices you and starts to make a beeline in your direction.

Jake: Heehee. A beeline.

Rev: And you can see behind it that the sun is starting to set. And it lands.

Rev: FORMIAN: Why are you here?

Jake: "Do you remember when me and one of your guys killed one of your exiles that was trying to get back in?"

Rev: FORMIAN: Yes.

Jake: "So he just left the body there, and he took off?"

Rev: FORMIAN: Yes. Exiles do not come back for burial.

Jake: "And I suppose they're not supposed to come back to life either, right?"

Rev: FORMIAN: Correct.

Jake: "But he did. He came back. You guys left -- you left the body there. I don't know if his soul came back, or if he was reanimated, I don't know. But he came back to life, and clearly that wasn't supposed to happen. So I bound him up and I was bringing him back to you guys, so you could deal with it. Because that seemed very, very wrong to me."

Rev: All right. So roll Parley, and you have a +1 from the knowledge that you have of their superstition and beliefs on death.

Jake: Perfect. Nine, +1. Ten. Booyah!

Rev: Yeah. It looks very concerned.

Rev: FORMIAN: Where?

Jake: I'll call down for Trog to walk the camel up that the thing is tied to.

Rev: TROG: You want to see it?

Jake: "Yeah. Bring the -- bring the exile up here."

Rev: TROG: Oh. All right.

Rev: And he goes over and he unties the camel, and starts to move it up the dune very slowly.

Jake: [Laughs] There's basically elevator music playing as me and this other ant just watch. I mean, yeah. I'm trying to like, gesture for him. Like, hurry hurry. I don't know how fast his top speed is, but I'm trying to keep the illusion of urgency here.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: To keep the one that's like the middle management guy, like, nervous. You know?

Rev: Yeah. Like you get a sense that it's getting ready to start moving towards Trog to see what's happened.

Jake: Then I just want to kind of double talk. Like, I just want to keep his attention. I'm just repeating things that I've already said.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: And like clarifying details that clearly don't need to be clarified. And like, I'm just distracting him so that he can't focus on anything except -- oh no, undead antman.

Rev: All right. So as Trog leads this camel up with the dead Formian, Jake, I want you to double talk me and keep me distracted for like twenty seconds, to see if you can keep it up.

Rev: FORMIAN: We should get down there. This is dangerous.

Jake: "Yeah. So when we found him, you know, you guys left the body behind. And he stayed there and he stayed dead. And I was like, man, do I bury him? But like I don't really know what your guys's kind of functionalities are. And he's an exile. So he was a bad guy. So I decided not to bury him because I know that nobody cares. There's no ceremony to that. But then sure enough, as I was thinking about it, I thought I saw something, like, twitch? And I looked over there. And for a second I didn't think that anything was moving, but then all of a sudden he was moving and I was like, oh my god, maybe is the sand shifting? And I kind of rolled him over. But I'll be damned if his eyes weren't open again! And he was starting to get up! And I didn't know what to do, right? So I just started punching him. Because he was already a bad guy. We already killed him. So it didn't matter if I punched him some more. I was trying to knock him out, but he wouldn't get knocked out. So I grappled him, and I tied him up, and I brought him over to one of the camels. And I strung him over the camel and I tied him up there, and he was struggling. Or at least he was struggling, but he hasn't really been struggling --"

Rev: And at about that time, Trog gets to the top of the hill.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: And yeah, I think this is all still rolling on your initial Parley. But he goes over and pulls the blanket away and starts looking at him, and is still listening to you talk.

Rev: FORMIAN: Was there any kind of a flash or sound?

Jake: "Not that I noticed, but I'm not, like ... I didn't expect it at all. So I wasn't paying very close attention. As far as I knew, there was just a dead body over there. I wasn't watching it."

Rev: FORMIAN: Yes. We should bring him back to the colony for examination.

Jake: "Yeah, yeah. By all means. You can take him. Go ahead." I'll like untie him. I'll be like, "Careful, you know. I don't know. He might have fallen asleep, or maybe you got, like, heat stroke while he's been out here." But I'll untie him from the camel and then re-hogtie him just with the rope, so that he's not wrapped around anything. And just like heave him onto this ant. You know, like put him -- literally put him in his arms, so it's his problem. Be like, "Yeah. Take him back, figure out what's going on with him. I can't wait until you know the answer and you can deal with this problem, once and for all."

Rev: FORMIAN: Yes.

Rev: And it takes off into the air. And I imagine that, like, it's got its two arms tied and it's just holding the rope in the middle. It's almost like that video where someone's on a zip line and they just go unconscious.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: So this Formian is flying and it's carrying the dead one, and the body's just -- yeah, it's just limp and flapping around. And it flies off into the night. And Tass, that is what you see as you approach the camp, is a Formian flying away, carrying what looks like an unconscious Formian, tied at the wrists by a rope.

Tass: I'll be goddamned. I'm going to get back up into the camp and drop ant form. "What was that?"

Jake: "That was the gambit. One of them came and found us, and that was the only thing I could do to keep him from telling us to leave or bringing us in, was send him off with the dead guy. So that card is played."

Tass: "I'll be real honest. I didn't in a thousand years think that was going to work. Nice."

Jake: "Thank you. What did you find out?"

Tass: "Oh, God. So ..."

Jake: "Well, wait. Let's wake everybody up, first."

Tass: Yeah, I think we gather everybody up. "I found him. He was asleep. He's literally in like a sphere of energy. This like, pod of magic. And sound isn't traveling through it, so I wasn't able to communicate."

Teej: "Well, how did he look? Did he look healthy?"

Tass: "I mean, I couldn't really tell, like, what shape he was in. But I mean, he was just asleep. Like, he was alive, and ... He literally hadn't aged a day."

Teej: "What do you mean, like from his pictures that we got?"

Tass: "Yeah."

Teej: "That's crazy."

Tass: "Yeah. I mean, we'll figure that out later. But I couldn't communicate at all, so the best I could do was like write a message in the dirt around the sphere."

Jake: "OK. But you know where it is?"

Tass: "I know where it is. I saw the queen of this place, too. There's like an ant queen that's huge. And she like controls all of it. Not just the Formians, but even just regular-ass ants that are around the area. Yeah, I was going to try to do this whole thing about maybe getting ants to help dig the pod out, but it just -- there's just too much going on. But I know where it is."

Teej: "All right. Do we want to stick with the plan and just bust our way out?"

Jake: "I don't know what else to do. I mean, we don't have a reason anymore to, like, be traveling that direction. This seems like our only option, is to just bust in and try to bust out. Unless for some reason we lie and say that we followed ... You know, like hey, I realized that I had more information for you when you flew off with the undead ant. Like,

you know, that might get us in the door. But that seems like a waste of effort. One way or another, we're getting in and we're busting out."

Tass: "And they're going to be pissed off once we pop that off."

Jake: "Yeah. Oh, also. I don't know if this will help or hurt, or anything. We have one of them in the wagon."

Tass: [Sputters]

Teej: "What?"

Jake: "Yeah. So one of them turned up first, to figure out like what we were doing. Got the drop on us, Trog cut his antenna off -- deftly."

Tass: "Oh!"

Jake: "Which meant that it couldn't broadcast, right? So ..."

Tass: "Yeah."

Jake: "It didn't get the signal out that like anything was fucky. But I didn't want to just kill him, because he's just doing his job, which is perfectly legitimate. So we tied him up and we threw him in the wagon."

Tass: "OK. I mean, not to put a damper on this, but I have a bad feeling we're going to be fighting and maybe even killing our way through a few of these, one way or another. Like, there's just -- there's so much. It's so big. I just, you know, it's got to be said. Like, if we want to save him, they're going to try to stop us."

Rev: LANDARA: You guys are going to try to break him out without anyone getting hurt?

Jake: "I'm not opposed to them getting hurt. I always like to keep casualties to a minimum when they're not just bad guys. If they can be fixed, that's fine. But, I know. Like, yeah. We might have to kill some of them. That's the way the chips fall, and I get that. In general, I want to avoid it as much as possible. But if it has to happen, it has to happen. This guy didn't have to happen."

Tass: "Yeah, that's fair."

Jake: "So, Trog. You fought these things before, right?"

Rev: TROG: Yeah.

Jake: "Did your side win?"

Rev: TROG: Oh, no.

Jake: "Yeah. What was like the ... What clinched that loss? Was there any one thing that it's like, oh, we didn't win because this?"

Rev: TROG: Yeah. It was because we were trying to, like, take their place. Like ... Have you ever seen -- you drop a piece of food by an anthil, or a wasp lands by one, and there's just a swarm of them? You know, and that thing's covered before it can do anything.

Jake: "So it's just like, you can't compete with their numbers?"

Rev: TROG: Yeah.

Jake: "Sort of?"

Rev: TROG: In this ... I've gotta, like, yell to you to do a thing, and you've got to convey it to the other guys, and they all got to act at the same time. And, you know, the ones with the whips? They just kind of got to think it, and everyone under them does it.

Jake: "And Landara, you said you can't imagine how somebody could break in here, right? Nobody's ever, like, stormed this place?"

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah.

Jake: "I mean, we cannot fight our way in here, then."

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah. Like, five of us might be real good at what we do, but I don't have any idea how many are in that hole. But I'm sure that there's at least five or six times more than us.

Jake: "So what's the plan, then? Do we try to live our way in?"

Tass: "I mean, at this point we've given up our bargaining chip to get in. And I mean -- legitimately. I'm sorry, I didn't mean, like ... You did good, obviously, because that kept them off us. So. I just don't know what we do now."

Jake: "It hadn't occurred to me to be insulted by that until you apologized for it."

Teej: "Um, I feel like we need to drop in. Like, if we could drop in from up top. Oh! We could drop Jake in and have him teleport, and then he'll have a point of reference to teleport to later."

Jake: "Back into?"

Teej: "Yeah. So then we have an in, right?"

Jake: "Why drop in and teleport back out? If we're going to get that element of surprise on them, why wouldn't we just start tunneling in then?"

Tass: "No, I think there is something to that. So if you're literally at terminal velocity, just anviling through the air. And they're like, what the hell was that? And start to follow, and then there's nothing there. Yeah. That might rile them up a little bit, but they're going to look around and be like, I don't -- I don't get it. And then go on with their day. But you have a teleport point there. So we let it calm down. Then I go back to wispy form again, just literally make us a little air cushion for you guys to stand on. And after they've chilled, bamf back in ..."

Jake: "I feel like it's going to be a tricky needle to thread between waiting long enough for it to calm down and not waiting so long that they move him."

Tass: "Right."

Jake: "So how do we ... Just, like, wing it?"

Tass: "I mean, I don't know that we have a choice. If we want to do this fast, or we do it -- we don't do it fast. We do it a little slow. We do the drop now just to have it, and we could even wait a full day. I'll run back in and scout again and try to find him again. And if you get most of the length of that entire tube, then, you know, I can tell you, hey, it was this far down."

Jake: "I don't think we should wait another day."

Tass: "OK."

Jake: "I mean, every day we wait is another day that somebody might come and take him out from under us. You know?"

Tass: "Mmhmm."

Jake: "Honestly, they might react to that by going, scramble the prisoners."

Tass: "Right."

Jake: "So I'm tempted to say that we don't wait very long at all."

Tass: "I am OK with that."

Jake: "Yeah. Like, I don't know, twenty minutes or something."

Tass: "Mmhmm."

Jake: "Before we come back. So that they all were like, 'What was that? Well, what do we do? Well let's start doing it.' But hopefully it's not, 'Let's all stand with pikes where that thing fell.' And even if it is, as long as I fall further, you know, it doesn't -- it wouldn't make sense for them to go, 'Let's pick an arbitrary point along its path.'"

Tass: "Yeah."

Jake: "And guard it. Maybe they'd be like, 'Let's guard it at the bottom, or at the top where it came in.' And if we come in somewhere in the middle, it can catch them off guard."

Tass: "Yeah. Because especially my thought would be, something rocketed through -- let's cover up the top. That doesn't mean anything for us."

Jake: "OK. Can you carry me?"

Tass: "I can sure try."

Jake: [Laughs] "OK. OK. So you drop me. Are you coming with me?"

Tass: "Yeah, I think so. Because I think --"

Jake: "You gotta point out where --"

Tass: "That. Exactly. I think we need to be dropping down this tube. I say mark, you know to go a little bit further than that, and then poof."

Jake: "OK. We drop, we teleport to Haven. We come back, and get T.J.?"

Tass: "Yeah. I mean, I think so. If we're going to put up a little cushion for you guys to fight through, I might have to be holding you there over dead air for a little bit. So it'd probably behoove us to have T.J. to fend anything off that is close."

Jake: "And what about Trog and Landara? Landara, I mean, your job was to get us here. It wasn't necessarily to help us infiltrate. So your duty is done."

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah.

Jake: "And I appreciate it, by the way. I don't know if I've made it clear. But god, thank you."

Tass: "You know it helps, actually, that she hasn't been seen by these things, right? Like you haven't interacted with any of them?"

Rev: LANDARA: No.

Tass: "There's nothing to say that you can't just turn around and be moving back towards Clearwater."

Jake: "I can just teleport them out right now."

Rev: TROG: Yeah, I was going to ask about that. Like, why make us walk back across a desert? Just take me home.

Jake: Country roads. Uh ... "Yeah. I mean, I can drop them at Haven for now. And then they're there, you know? In case whatever. In case one of them accidentally rides us back and we need help fighting it when we get through, or something. Like, might as well. Do we need any of this shit?"

Tass: "Do we think the camels will be OK?"

Teej: "Camels live in the desert, so I think they'll be just fine."

Jake: "Yeah, we can water them up."

Tass: "OK ..."

Jake: "And then kind of point them towards Clearwater and slap them on the butt. They'll make their way home."

Rev: LANDARA: Just untie them, take their blinders off, and give them a swat on the backside. They should be fine.

Tass: "OK. I love these camels."

Jake: "Because you are one now?"

Tass: "Yes!"

Teej: [Laughs]

Jake: "So OK, I will teleport Trog and Landara back to Haven. I will come back here."

Teej: "While you're doing that, we'll water the camels, get them going."

Jake: "You know what? Let me find out now, in a low stress situation, whether I can take more than two people at a time. T.J., I can take you back to Haven right now."

Tass: "That's not bad, because I think T.J. might as well be there anyway, right?"

Jake: "Because that's what we're going to go back to."

Tass: "Right."

Jake: "If we didn't have to come back here, that just cuts an extra step off the trip."

Tass: "Right."

Jake: "So I come back here for you, you fly over, we drop, we teleport back to Haven. We're all in the same place again already."

Tass: "Yep."

Teej: "All right."

Jake: OK. Well, then I want to gather up Trog and Landara and T.J., and see if I can take all three of us back.

Rev: So I think that you can teleport more than three people. But a little peek behind the curtain here: so a room of teleportation in Dungeon World lets you teleport yourself to a place. That's it. So what Estin has done is he has made the Soul Trap and these black energy gems. That's what let him recall to his place. And essentially, the Soul Trap was the energy source. So it just traveled with him as carry on luggage.

Jake: Mmhmm.

Rev: But you, Jake in the Soul Trap, the room is ... It's not very often that we kind of give these behind the scenes things. But mechanically speaking, it is tapping into that little energy that Saul gave you to take Teleport from The Divine. So that's why you can do yourself plus two people. You are the only person on this planet that can do that. I think if you want to take more, you can. But the next time you teleport, you're going to have a -1 to your roll for every person you take over, too.

Jake: I mean, I think that makes sense and is totally fair.

Rev: So yeah, you can take T.J. and Trog and Landara, and you recall is automatic. You don't have to roll that. So yeah. You are back in Haven.

Jake: "Whoa."

Rev: TROG: Oh, it's good to be home. I miss the smell of this place.

Teej: "What is this place?"

Jake: "This is where I was kept as a prisoner."

Teej: "Oh."

Jake: "And where Trog lived."

Rev: TROG: Yeah. This is where my nice kitchen is."

Jake: "OK. So that was -- that was weird. I had to push to do that."

Teej: "Are you OK?"

Jake: "I'm ... I will be. But I think that if I keep trying to do that, if I keep trying to take too many people, I just won't do as good of a job. You know, it's going to take too much out of me."

Teej: "All right. Well, don't strain yourself, OK?"

Jake: Yeah. Well, we got to kill some time, here. So I'll give T.J. the tour for the couple of minutes I need to rest.

Rev: Yeah. So you show them around. Um ...

Teej: "Hey, cool stuff, man. I'm going to touch everything."

All: [Laugh]

Rev: So enough time passes, and you are able to teleport back to Tass at your camp. Like we said a couple episodes ago, since this is not a high pressure situation, you don't need to roll. So you will carry that -1 next time you actually have to roll the move.

Jake: OK.

Tass: "How'd it go?"

Jake: "I mean, I did it. I think that I like functionally sprained something -- you know, like my teleport muscle."

Tass: "OK."

Jake: "So I mean, I can still do it. But it's ... It feels weird."

Tass: "Ok. I guess let's unhitch all the camels and leave this dude in the wagon, I guess. And give this thing a try."

Jake: Yeah. I was trying to think if I had any opposition to leaving him in the wagon. But once things go bad, they're going to search the area for us, and they're going to find him.

Tass: Yeah.

Jake: So if there's any way to get him back to his people, it's probably to leave him here in the wagon. Yeah. OK. I'll do that. Unhitch some camels.

Tass: I'm telling them all goodbye individually.

Jake: "Can you -- yeah, can you just tell them where to go? You can speak camel."

Tass: I absolutely can.

Jake: [Laughs]

Tass: I'm just like, "Yeah. You know, you remember back?" And they're like, "Dude, yes." I'm like, "OK, yeah. Sorry, sorry, sorry."

Rev: Oh, no. They're like, "Fuck no. You want us to go back to the guy who made us work all the time? No."

Tass: "Oh no. I mean where -- yeah, wherever you want to go. Just if you want to, like, Clearwater where there's the, you know, clear water."

Rev: "No way, man."

Tass: "OK, yeah. Well you guys do you."

Rev: "Hey fuck you. Get out of here."

All: [Laugh]

Rev: I don't know why the camels are so angry!

Tass: "I understand and respect your anger."

Rev: They're all spitting.

Tass: [Laughs] "I'll miss you."

Rev: So yeah, they do. They turn and they take off. Not necessarily in the direction of Clearwater, but out of the territory of The Eternal Colony.

Tass: "All right. They seem ... Chill." [Laughs]

Jake: [Laughs] I just -- I just hold my arms out to be picked up and carried by a large bird.

Tass: Oh, no. We're going wind form, baby.

Jake: Oh. Yes.

Rev: All right. So. Tass steps forward and turns into a water elemental and splashes to the sand.

Tass: No! [Laughs]

Rev: I don't know if you remember your failed water elemental roll from quite a few episodes ago that did not have a ramification.

Tass: I had forgotten.

Rev: Yes. This is that ramification. The ramification was that the next time you tried to use Thing-Talker, whatever form you tried to take, instead of becoming that form, you were going to automatically become a water elemental. So luckily, it was like here on the ground, in the sand that this happened. And not in some high pressure moment -- falling off a cliff, and I'm going to turn into an air elemental and ...

Jake: Splash.

Rev: Yeah. So it takes a moment, but you are able to pull yourself back together and turn back into normal Tass. And you can try again to become a wind elemental.

Tass: "Oh, that kind of hurt. Have you ever been water in sand -- that's nonsense. Nobody ... Of course not."

Jake: "Don't ask me stupid questions."

Tass: "I'm so sorry."

Jake: "That's better."

Rev: All right. Roll your Thing-Talker.

Tass: OK. Good lord.

Teej: Oh, no.

Tass: Oh my god. Oh, every god. All of the gods in all of the pantheons in all of the games hate me and want us to die. It's a six.

Rev: So you do still turn into a wind elemental. But you are enormous when you first form, and the wind starts to blow and howl, and sand starts to kick up. You're able to shrink yourself back down to a normal size and you feel like you're not projecting any of this anymore. And you still have the one hold, but this sandstorm isn't stopping. And it is just rolling over the desert.

Tass: All right. I'm going to heft him up and get a good distance up in the air, and start trying to get us over the hole.

Jake: And we see the camels getting sucked.

Rev: [Quietly] "Fuck you, buddy!"

Jake: A hundred feet away.

Rev: All right. So Tass, you pick Jake up and you start to fly towards Isolation. Roll Discern Realities. And because of the storm, you have a -1.

Tass: Mmhmm. Oh, good. So that brings me down to a six.

Teej: [Laughs]

Jake: Can I help?

Rev: Yeah. Roll Aid with a -1, because of the sandstorm.

Jake: Aww.

Rev: It's just the sand storm is making it hard to see anything.

Jake: [Laughs]

Tass: [Laughs]

Jake: Fuck! Five.

Rev: So as you try to help direct Tass through this sandstorm, you both collide with a flying Formian. Tass, roll Defy Danger with Dexterity.

Tass: Ten.

Rev: All right. You are able to keep a hold of Jake. But you are lost in this storm, and the Formian that you have just run into spins around and pulls out its whip and starts to fly towards you.

Tass: I'm going to try to lose this thing in the storm.

Rev: All right. Roll Defy Danger, and I think this is going to be with Intellect. This is with quick thinking. You're trying to dodge and maneuver away from this flying creature that does not seem to be affected by the sandstorm the way that you are.

Tass: Oh, what a dick.

Rev: Yeah. It's almost like he lives here.

Tass: Yeah. Uh, four. Dirty old four.

Rev: So you are able, in the storm, to out-navigate this Formian. And it almost seems like it gives up. It is not that it loses sight of you in the storm. At some point it stops and it turns around, and the two of you come crashing down to the ground. You both take 3 points of armor-defeating damage, and you are on top of a dune. The storm begins to clear and the sun is just starting to rise, and about three or four hundred yards away from you, you see, cutting across the desert, a pack of black horses flying the flag of the Dead Isles.

Tass: "Oh, shit. Are you seeing that?"

Jake: "We're out of time."

Tass: "We are out of time."

Jake: "Tass?"

Tass: "Yup?"

Jake: "Become a horse."

Tass: "Oh, boy. Here we go." And I guess I'm going to go for Clydesdale.

Rev: OK. Roll Shapeshift.

Jake: [Laughs] I don't -- I don't see any other option.

Teej: I notice that you're not rolling those other dice.

Tass: Shut up, T.J. Yes! Ten.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 3, and you turn into a giant Clydesdale.

Jake: I'm going to hop on and draw my spear.

Rev: So what's happening? Like, you've just turned into a horse. You've just mounted his back. Are you charging these guys?

Tass: Yep, I think we are.

Jake: I think we are, yes. I think we are jousting these guys.

Rev: So how are you trying to approach? Are you ... You know, right now they are basically crossing directly in front of you, about 300 yards away. Are you just charging at one of them specifically? Are you trying to draw their attention? Are you trying to be quiet?

Tass: I just want to get to them as fast and hard as I can.

Jake: Yeah. I mean, I might say that we If we can come up behind them at all, like have an extra second that they don't see us?

Tass: Sure.

Rev: All right, Tass. I think this is, since you are in control here, I think this is going to be a Defy Danger with Dexterity that you can spend hold on.

Tass: OK. I don't think I need a hold on a ten.

Rev: All right. So you are able to charge down this dune and cut up behind them. And as you get closer, you see there are four riders on these four black horses. They are not moving at a fast clip. The horses look tired. They have been out in this desert, and the one in the back is flying the flag of the Dead Isles. How are you approaching? Like, paint me a word picture, here.

Jake: I think just kind of racing up behind them. And not falling in line behind them, but coming up on the side of. Like on the right side of the one in back, right? So that I am like literally within grabbing distance of him, and within spearing distance of the one in front of him.

Rev: OK. What's happening?

Jake: I'm activating my blue gem.

Tass: Oh!

Teej: Sweet!

Rev: Roll your d3.

Tass: Yeah!

Jake: Three.

Teej: Oh, that's beautiful.

Jake: All right. So that means you get three actions before they will get to do anything. But your speed does not transfer to Tass. So, like, you're kind of stuck where you are.

Jake: Yeah. So that's -- that's fine. I imagine ... I don't imagine I'll kill, I'll one shot these guys. If I do, I'll figure out something to do with the third action. But as long as I am in reach of these two, I'm happy. So I want to stab the one in the back with a spear.

Rev: All right. I think you still have to roll Hack and Slash. They just won't be able to hit you back on a mixed success.

Jake: OK. That is a thirteen.

Teej: Woohoo!

Rev: Roll your damage.

Jake: Uh, three. I'm going to do the extra d6, since it seems like they can't do shit about it.

Rev: Yeah, that's fair.

Jake: That's an extra three. So five total.

Rev: All right. So what is your second action?

Jake: I assume he doesn't die.

Rev: Yeah. And I mean, right now nothing is moving but you.

Jake: Like I'm in the Speed Force.

Rev: Yes.

Jake: Nice.

Rev: So right now, there is nothing happening.

Jake: I'm going to give him another one.

Rev: Roll Hack and Slash.

Jake: The old one-two. But with a spear, you know. Seven.

Rev: All right. Roll your damage.

Jake: Better than a two. Better than a two ... No, it's a one instead.

Tass: [Sighs]

Jake: Two points of damage.

Rev: All right. What's your third action?

Jake: Does he even look bad?

Rev: He's in pretty bad shape.

Jake: OK. Then yeah, I'll try and top him off. Finish this guy off.

Rev: All right. Roll Hack and Slash.

Jake: That is a twelve.

Rev: All right, roll your damage.

Jake: And I'll hit that extra d6 again, for good measure.

Rev: OK.

Jake: Nine.

Rev: You slam your spear through this one. And as you do, time starts up again. And you get your arm jerked back a little bit as it falls off the saddle and slides off the end of your spear, dead on the ground. What is everybody doing in this moment as time restarts?

Tass: I think this is the first time I've really seen him do this. So it seems like in a blink, this guy is dead and on the ground.

Rev: Yeah. Like for you, you were running and all of a sudden, a guy falls off of the horse.

Tass: [Laughs] I think I'm a little invigorated by that. So I'm just trying to get him closer to the next guy.

Rev: All right. Jake, he rides you up a little further, and the other riders hear the sound of their fellow rider hitting the ground and they start to like, look over their shoulder.

Jake: OK. I think, now that I've got their attention, that I want to thin the herd. So I'm a stab a horse.

Rev: That might be literally the last thing I ever expected to come out of your mouth.

Jake: [Laughs]

Tass: Yeah. Same, dude.

Teej: Oh, he meant you, Tass. He's going to spear your ass.

Jake: Plunge it through Tass underneath me. It's more of the mentality of I'm trying to get it to buck. I don't want to -- I don't necessarily want to kill a horse. But I want it to fall out of line so that these guys start getting separated, you know? So I don't have to deal with three of them at once. I leave one behind to deal with two of them and go back. You know, something like that.

Rev: Yeah. I mean, you don't gotta justify to me. Whatever lets you sleep.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: All right. Roll Hack and Slash.

Jake: You don't gotta justify to me. I hate horses.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: Eleven.

Rev: All right. Roll your damage.

Jake: How does this work if I'm attacking the horse? I assume that if I choose the extra d6, just the rider hurts me instead of the horse.

Rev: Um ...

Jake: Well, I don't -- I don't even want the extra d6. Again, I'm not trying to kill this thing. I'm just trying to upset a horse so that it upsets its rider.

Rev: OK.

Jake: But I do get nine points of damage on that horse.

Tass: Oh my god!

Rev: This horse dies.

Jake: Oh, man ...

Rev: And the rider goes toppling to the ground. And one of the riders arcs off to the left, and the other one starts whipping his horse and tearing straight ahead.

Jake: "We gotta catch that one."

Tass: I'm going to sprint as hard as I can towards that one.

Rev: Towards the one that's going forward?

Tass: That's -- yeah. That's taken off.

Rev: OK.

Tass: Always chase the one that's running, because it's got something important.

Rev: Roll Defy Danger with Dexterity to catch him.

Tass: Nine.

Jake: I help by slapping Tass's ass.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: Yeehaw!

Tass: Flank, thank you.

Rev: So you can catch up. But it's going to set off a call that will let The Eternal Colony know where they are, it's going to get a shot at you, or the rider that fell off of its horse is going to be able to track you.

Tass: I'm going to let it get a shot.

Rev: OK. All right. So Tass, you sprint Jake up beside this other rider. You take 7 points of damage as it slashes out with a sword. But you are next to it, Jake.

Jake: I'm going to punch him very hard.

Rev: All right. Roll Hack and Slash.

Jake: Nine.

Rev: Roll your damage.

Jake: So I'm going 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. So I'm just yanking this dude off the horse.

Rev: So you take 6 points of damage as it slashes your arm with the sword, but then gets pulled off of the horse.

Jake: OK. So I've got 3 armor normally, and an additional 1 against undead, so I only take 2 of that. Nice.

Teej: Nice!

Jake: Once he's off the horse, you can end the grab at any time to do one of the following: slam them into something, dealing your damage to them. So I just grab him so that the horse goes on without him, and he hits me, and then I just throw them into the ground.

Rev: Roll your damage.

Jake: Five.

Tass: The second I see him hit the ground, I want to stomp this dude.

Rev: All right. Roll Hack and Slash.

Tass: OK. Oh, my god.

Teej: You should have switched your dice.

Tass: Damn. That's snake eyes. That is a four total.

Rev: Tass, you take 11 points of damage as you trip forward and fall on the sword that Jake had loosed from this undead's hand. And Jake is thrown from your back.

Tass: Oh, my god.

Teej: I'm scared for you, buddy.

Jake: [Laughs] Oh, no!

Rev: Jake, you have just hit the ground after being thrown off of Tass's back. What are you doing?

Jake: How far, me and Tass and the guy? Like how far are we all from each other?

Rev: You are about as far away from Tass as the undead rider is, in opposite directions.

Jake: So Tass is in the middle.

Rev: Yes.

Jake: I'm going to use one of my white gem charges. I'll burn the big charge. I'll do the 2d8, and if they both come up ones, then ...

Tass: [Laughs]

Jake: Eleven.

Tass: OK. I'll take it.

Teej: Nice.

Rev: So the white gem under Jake's chef hat flares up. There's a white pulse of energy that washes over the two of you. Tass, you are on the ground in horse form. What are you doing?

Jake: [Laughs] Scissy kicking on his back.

Tass: [Laughs] Yeah.

Jake: [Neighs]

Tass: Man. I guess I'm already low. And he is ... He's right there. So I think I just want to drop the form and pull the water sword.

Rev: Yeah. I think you can do that, no problem. He is getting up to his feet and walking over to the sword that you hit and then bounced away from, and picking it up.

Tass: OK. I think I just want to roll over and take a slash at him, then.

Rev: Roll Hack and Slash.

Tass: Ten.

Jake: Oh!

Rev: All right. Roll your damage.

Tass: And I'm going to eat a point of damage to be armor-defeating.

Rev: OK.

Tass: Three. But armor-defeating! Yay!

Jake: You were almost killed by an unoccupied sword, so I'd hate to see what would happen if you decided to take the extra damage.

Tass: Yeah.

Rev: He goes down.

Teej: Yeah!

Tass: I want to glance around and see how far away the other two might be.

Rev: The one that was knocked off of its horse is 100 yards back. The one that veered off and started sprinting to the left? I think roll Discern Realities to try to spot him.

Tass: Twelve.

Rev: OK. You get a hold 3.

Tass: What should I be on the lookout for?

Rev: So the thing that you should be on the lookout for is that the one behind you that has previously been de-horsed ...

All: [Laugh]

Rev: Scalps just full of tiny horses ...

Jake: What?!

Rev: Like deloused, but de-horsed?

Jake: Oh my god. OK. I had a much more horrifying image in my head.

Rev: Is pulling a bow around off of its back.

Tass: "We've got an archer!" What here is not what it appears to be?

Rev: A good distance away, maybe seven, eight hundred yards by now? You see what you first think is a big stone, part way up one of the dunes. And then you're like -- wait, why would there be a big stone here? And you realize that this other rider who rode hard to the left stopped his horse, and it has laid down, and his cloak is over it, and he is behind it, doing something.

Tass: With these in mind, what's useful or valuable?

Rev: You had said earlier that you were chasing the one in front, because you always chase the one that runs. But the one going to the left ran as well, and it ran away. And I think, playing back in your mind as you came up behind, you noticed that the one in the front and the one that was second both had little satchels. And you get the impression that they are not carrying one important thing, but two. And they have split up.

Tass: "Jake, I'm going after the other." And I want to try to take a big-ass condor form, and start flying as hard as I can that way.

Rev: All right. Roll your Shapeshift.

Tass: Eight.

Rev: So Tass, you launch into the air, you have your 2 hold. But you get pegged with 2 points of damage, because ... We actually don't get these very often, but this is a golden opportunity where you saw an archer and you turn into a very large bird and flew across his field of vision. So he has loosed an arrow at you. Jake, what are you doing?

Jake: So I'm going to start charging this guy. Like, I need to close the ground between us. He is a ranged fighter and I'm not. But on the way, whenever I think I'm in range to throw a spear at him, I would like to give it a shot.

Rev: All right. I think that you can charge at him and throw your spear. I think that he's probably going to get two shots off on you. That you -- your spear throw was kind of in the middle of his volley range.

Jake: OK.

Rev: What are you doing? Are you trying to get out of the way of these arrows? Are you ...?

Jake: I think I'll survive them. So, no. I don't think I am trying to get out of the way. And in fact, I'm kind of going for that Terminator vibe again, that I tried to use on Estin. I'm not dodging. I'm not blocking. He's just shooting me in the chest with arrows and it seems like I don't give a shit. And hopefully that scares him.

Rev: Yeah. So he fires his two arrows at you. Each one does 6 points of damage, not armor-defeating.

Jake: OK.

Rev: And roll your Volley to hit him.

Jake: Oh yes. A volley.

Rev: With your spear.

Jake: That's right. I'm not good at those. But that is a seven.

Rev: All right.

Jake: Well I'm not going to reduce the ammo by one, because the ammo is only one. And I like my spear.

Rev: Yeah. You don't want to be spear-less and not have your fist weapons.

Jake: Yeah. God. I guess I'll go with, like, move to take the shot, placing me in danger of the GM's choice.

Rev: All right. Roll your damage.

Jake: Nine.

Rev: Your spear goes through his chest and pins him to the earth. Tass, you are flying at this undead hiding behind their horse on the hill. It's a good distance to cover. How are you trying to get there? Are you like dodging and weaving? Are you trying to get real high?

Tass: Yeah. I think I want to sort of keep an eye on where I realize he is under this thing, and just stay either as low or as angled as I can, so that hopefully he can't constantly keep an eye on me coming in. I don't know that he's seen me. He very well might have. But I don't know if he has a bow and arrow, or it can shoot fireballs at me, or what. So I just want to try to be out of his sight for as long as possible.

Rev: Yeah, no problem. I don't think there is any hold for this. You get low so that he can't see you. I think the ramification of that is that you can't see him. You fly over the horse, and he's not there.

Tass: Shit. I guess I'm going to circle down and look, and just see what I see that is there.

Rev: Roll Discern Realities.

Tass: Oh my god. Four.

Rev: Yeah. You don't see anything here. It's just the horse. And the horse seems a little confused, and it is wearing his cloak still. But there's no sign of this person.

Tass: Damn it, damn it, damn it. I'm just literally just flying in circles, cussing. Just scanning this whole area. And I'm going to wing back to Jake and drop form. "Well ... Well done, here."

Jake: "What happened? Did he get away?"

Tass: "He's gone."

Jake: "Like how?"

Tass: "I don't know. I couldn't see what he was doing. He was staying low and like, hiding and doing something. So I assume some kind of teleport. Is that one dead? It looks pinned to the ground."

Jake: "Yes, he is dead." Is that dude's horse still just laying down over there?

Rev: Yeah. It is, actually.

Jake: I think I want to go investigate that. Like, that just seems weird. So I kind of want to go look at the horse and see if he did something to the horse. Like, I just want to get a look around that area.

Rev: Yeah. I mean, the horse just seems like it's well trained. Like it was given a command and it hasn't been told to break yet.

Jake: Is there anything on the horse? Does it have like saddlebags?

Rev: It's got a saddle and this cloak over it.

Jake: I wanna try to make it get up. Tug on the reins or slap it on the butt, see if it'll stand up.

Rev: It does not.

Jake: I don't -- I just have a weird hunch that, like, there is some connection between what the fuck this horse is doing and his disappearance. I don't know what it is at all.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: And so I'm -- but I'm just like tempted to somehow upset this, just in case.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: So I might just like deadlift this horse back onto its feet.

Rev: Yeah. So you pick up the horse, and it bites you. It doesn't hurt you because you're made of metal.

Jake: Owie.

Rev: Once it is in the air, like it starts flailing its legs.

Jake: I mean, yeah, I just kind of want to drag it somewhere else. Like is it still trying to be laying back down? If I set it down, do I think it would plop back over? Or does it seem like it's flailing its legs like it wants them underneath it?

Rev: Yeah, like it's flailing around like it's trying to run. It's like, why am I being picked up?

Jake: Then I'll set it down.

Rev: And it starts to run.

Jake: Cool.

Rev: And Tass, what are you doing?

Tass: I'm going to go over to the first guy that we chased down that ran.

Rev: Oh, the lead rider?

Tass: Yeah. I want to go through his stuff, see if there's anything in that satchel I noticed.

Rev: Yeah. So you open up the satchel, and inside is a scroll tube.

Tass: I'll pop that thing open.

Rev: And you open it up, slide out the piece of paper inside, and unroll it. And in your hands is the bounty certificate for James Francis Tincher.

SFX:

OUTRO MUSIC

Carolyn: The Critshow is a Critshow Studios 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.