

A Story of Time (S2, E29)

SFX:

INTRO MUSIC

Rev: I just got back from Midwinter Gaming Con, and I think that is one that we should start going to. There was a lot of opportunity there to play some really cool games. But I had an experience there, unlike any I have ever had with Monster of the Week. I had to figure out how PvP worked.

Tass: Oh, no.

Rev: I had the first occurrence of someone actually using Luck to negate damage.

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: You know, I say like, "Oh, I had to figure out how PvP worked," because if you would say that to me, I'd be like, "Oh, it doesn't." Like, don't do that. But it was all perfectly story driven. They had in their group, one of them was The Divine, one of them was The Summoned. And they had decided in their connected history that, "Oh, I'm here to stop the apocalypse." "I'm here to start it. And we both know that."

Tass: Oh, my god.

Rev: And so at the end, everything started going very, very badly. The creature had a mind controlled one of them. Another one of them was The Pararomantic and had failed their connection with their creature, and fell in love with the creature they were fighting.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: And so in the midst of this, The Divine spent a point of Luck. And the ramification for their Luck is like, you get message that there is something urgent from your god connected to your mission that you must do right now. And The Summoned was like, I think that their god's like, you have to kill me, because I'm about to bring the apocalypse. Because he had one point of Luck left. And so I was like, well, there's not really ... There's not really PvP, but there's also not really a good reason. Like, this is awesome story. So we kind of turned it into a OK, you roll Kick Some Ass, you roll Act Under Pressure. And the success levels kind of changed what was happening, but they just went at each other. The person who was mind controlled and the person who was in love with the monster convinced the monster to listen to The Flake. The Flake had contacted their,

like, supernatural mentors and had made a deal. Like, "Oh, just take him, and we'll lead him to another place. We'll just let him loose on another dimension. We'll just get him out of here. Is that agreeable?" And The Divine ended up having one point of health left and attacked The Summoned, and that pushed them over the edge to their death. And The Summoned used his last point of Luck to prevent that damage and then usher in the apocalypse. So like the last --

Tass: Oh my god!

Rev: So like the last shot is this very messed up team of like The Flake, who is escorting out the one victim. But he's also escorting out the monster, and the two people that are accidentally in love with the monster. And from inside the building that they have just fled from, the dragon erupts as the apocalypse is formed. And like the little kid like starts to turn and look, and The Flake just grabs his head and turns it away and is like, "We'll deal with that later." So it was such a great ending. I had such drastically different experiences with some of the same mysteries there. So it was a very good time.

Um, along the lines of running games, the Gen Con submissions open this week. So we will be submitting games for that. So if you're headed to Gen Con, you'll be able to come, play some Monster of the Week with us. We'll also be doing a live show, and we'll do a meet up again for our listeners. So we'll announce those things as soon as they're set in stone.

Um, someone messaged me the other day and, you know, we have talked a lot about the content and the rewards you get for the Patreon. And someone messaged me the other day and said, oh, yeah, I haven't signed up yet because I don't know how you listen to the bonus content. And just never occurred to me that, like, oh, we should explain how this works. The custom RSS feed that you get, you'll get an email with a link in it. You can click on that link and it'll let you add it to iTunes. You can add it to really whatever your preferred podcatcher is. You can also download the Patreon app and listen through there. You can also go to just the Patreon site and listen through there. So if you're someone who wasn't sure how you would access this extra content, or if you're someone who has signed up and has not gotten to listen to the content, you're always welcome to message us with questions. We are happy to answer them.

So I think the last thing is that later on this week, we will be releasing a Let's Play for Fate of Cthulhu. Fate of Cthulhu launched on Monday this week, and so we will be releasing our Let's Play later in the week. With that, we're also going to be doing a giveaway of a copy of Fate of Cthulhu. You can listen to the Fate of Cthulhu episodes for details on that giveaway. It's essentially going to be kind of a little questionnaire. Just about the story,

about some of the things that happened within the story. And you can answer those questions on our website, and you'll be entered in the drawing to win a hard copy of Fate of Cthulhu, which we had a lot of fun playing. But you'll be able to get all the details on that after the credits on all three of the Fate of Cthulhu episodes. And we'll also have a link to the contest entry in the show notes for the Fate of Cthulhu episodes. So if you're interested in Fate of Cthulhu, you can look forward to that at the end of this week, and enter the giveaway to win your own copy of it. And with that, I think it's time to let the recap roll.

SFX:

RECAP MUSIC

Rev: So as you try to help direct Tass through this sandstorm, you both collide with a flying Formian, 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: "Become a horse."

Tass: "Oh, boy. Here we go."

Jake: I think just kind of racing up behind them and 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: 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: 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."

Rev: 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: RECAP MUSIC FADES

Rev: Tass, here you stand in the middle of the desert. The sun has just begun to rise, and in your hand you hold the bounty certificate for James Francis Tincher.

Tass: "Jake?"

Jake: How far away am I?

Rev: I think it was like 700 yards away. [Laughs]

Jake: I'll start heading back his way.

Tass: OK. I'll get this all folded up and put it away in my own bag. And then I just want to see if he has anything else useful on him.

Rev: Yeah. You go over to him and you search. And you find 25 coin, a dagger, a long sword, and a small, dark gray gem about the size of an acorn.

Tass: Oh. OK. I think I -- I'll take the gold and that gem.

Rev: And as you're pocketing the coins, Jake walks up behind you.

Tass: "We've got it. I mean, I don't think everything we need. But the piece of paper with his name, it's here."

Jake: "Awesome. Well let's just go collect him."

Tass: "I mean, the problem is that we don't have gold."

Jake: "Hmm. Mhmm. Mhmm."

Tass: "Yeah ..."

Jake: "OK. Well, let's take ... Let's take whatever we want off these guys, anything else useful they might have."

Tass: "Right. Yeah. Check this out."

Rev: He shows you a small black, almost gray, gem.

Jake: Does it seem like a teleport reagent? Like what I have?

Rev: Kind of. Like, yours is much larger. You know it holds a long charge. Um, I think what you're looking at it actually, Tass, you could roll Spout Lore.

Tass: OK, I will.

Jake: Do you want to use a book?

Tass: Yes. I'm getting out a book, and I'm going to see if I can find anything on this that sparks my memory.

Rev: OK.

Tass: Brings me up to a five.

Jake: [Laughs]

Teej: Oh, no.

Rev: So what you know about this is that it's kind of what Jake said. It is a rudimentary version of what Estin had created. It is a much smaller gem. You think that you could crush it in your hand, and it would recall you to the place of origin. But it takes blood magic to use. So you will take 3 points of armor-defeating damage to use it.

Tass: Oh. OK. "So yeah. Good news, bad news. I mean this could hurt, but this will take us wherever these guys were posted up, probably. Like wherever they came from or were supposed to return to when they got him." Again, with this thought in mind, I want to go back to the other two that we took down and search them as well.

Rev: Yeah. You find amongst the two of them three more of these.

Tass: "Ah, so we have four total. So, yeah, I assume that was one for each of them, and one for Grandpa."

Jake: What else do they have on them, besides the gems? Do they all just have like the longsword and dagger?

Rev: Yeah. And then the 25 coin. And a flag of the Dead Isles.

Jake: I do want to take that flag of the Dead Isles. I suspect that could come in handy at some point. I don't know if I care to collect all the weapons. Well, I've got a Bag of Holding. Might as well. Scoop all those into the Bag of Holding.

Rev: OK.

Jake: Doot doot doot. Very dangerous in here, now.

Rev: Yes. Gives more random things to appear when you reach in for something.

Jake: Oh ... "Well, do we want to follow that guy? Because he probably had the money, and here's my thought: he ran with it, which meant he didn't do his job, which means he's going to be in trouble. So if we followed him, we might just be able to talk him into giving us the money if we let him run away, or something."

Tass: "Yeah, I like the thought of that. Can we go back first? Can we just convene with everybody, to like see if we should just all go together to do that? Because, I mean, you can get us back here."

Jake: "Well, ideally."

Tass: "Yeah."

Jake: "Let's bury these guys first."

Tass: "Yeah."

Jake: "So nobody stumbles upon their corpses."

Tass: "That's a good call."

Rev: So you take 20, 25 minutes and you bury all of these corpses. Are you doing the same thing with the horse corpse?

Jake: Yeah. If it doesn't seem like it will take an extraordinary amount of time to bury the much bigger creature that is a horse.

Rev: It will take time, obviously. It's like three of these soldiers.

Jake: Yeah. I think that, just before we make this decision, I think if we ... "Every moment we spend burying someone, we're losing the guy that we would maybe follow with that crystal. He went back to a spot, and now he's probably moving away from it."

Tass: "Yeah, that's fair."

Jake: "And a dead horse isn't as suspect in the desert as four dead men."

Tass: "Yeah. All right. Let's, yeah. Let's leave the horse and just get back, and see what everybody thinks."

Jake: OK. Going back to Haven.

Rev: All right. So you do your recall, and the two of you appear back in Haven.

Teej: "Oh, jeez. Thank goodness. Are we ready to go?"

Jake: "Actually, everything broke pretty bad for a minute."

Tass: "Like real bad."

Jake: "And the guys from the Dead Isles showed up to collect Grandpa."

Teej: "Oh, shit."

Jake: "Then it broke good, and we beat them. Tass, show him what you got."

Tass: I'll produce the letter.

Teej: "Nice! We can go get him, then."

Jake: "But the bad news ..." And I hold up just the 75 gold that we collected off of them. "This is not enough. The guy with the gold? He got away."

Teej: "Oh crap. We need the money."

Rev: LANDARA: I mean, technically you need the money."

Tass: "Wha -- what does 'technically' mean?"

Rev: LANDARA: Well, there's an order to it all. You present the certificate, they present the target, and then you present the money. And so nothing is ever exchanged until the step before it has exchanged hands. So I mean, you could technically have hands on him before you're supposed to give the money.

Tass: "OK. So we could even maybe start some shit. Like ..."

Jake: "Yeah. Please explain."

Tass: "Just like she said. We bring this, we have him in our grasp, we say Bennari sends his regards, and just disappear."

Jake: "OK. OK. We have a flag."

Tass: "We have a flag."

Jake: "Is there anything else to selling ourselves as members of the Dead Isles? We're not -- we're not undead. Like that's immediately obvious, upon looking at us."

Rev: LANDARA: Yep.

SFX: "I mean Landara, is it outside of the realm of possibility to just be like we're the the desert people, the local people that he hired to come pick up his target?"

Rev: LANDARA: To come pick up an eight million coin bounty? Probably unlikely.

Tass: [Sighs].

Jake: "Do you want to help with these shenanigans?"

Rev: LANDARA: In what way? Like, I am not unknown to The Eternal Colony.

Tass: "Yeah, that's fair."

Rev: LANDAR: And neither are you.

Rev: And she looks at you, Jake.

Jake: "That's true. Does it matter if we have the bounty certificate?"

Rev: LANDARA: Does what matter?

Jake: "That they know us. Like even if they know us from something else, if we show up with the paperwork, aren't they going to be like --"

Rev: LANDARA: Oh, I just mean in the sense of you trying to sell yourself as being somebody different now from somewhere else. They sell you traveling from the south. Where were these guys coming from?

Jake: "They were coming from the opposite side. OK. Well, that's a good point. So ... Well, I have to be there if we're going to teleport him out, though. So yeah, maybe the being from the Dead Isles thing might not work."

Tass: "And I mean, that's just -- I think that was a little extra. Unless ... Do they know -- I mean, do they already know that? Do they know who it is that put this bounty out? Or do they just sort of get that bounty and then wait for the paperwork to show up?"

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah, they just wait for the paperwork.

Tass: "OK. Then yeah, hell with that. That was just the cherry on top. Let's just go get him and get out of here."

Jake: "Do we think it's worth even trying to track down the actual gold total first? Because if we're not deliberately starting shit, do we want to try to avoid incidentally starting shit, here? Or do we just go for it? I mean, I know we don't plan to be here long, but our stay will be more or less comfortable if we've pissed off the entire Dternal Colony."

Tass: "Yeah, that's a good ... That's a good point."

Teej: "I like the idea of us getting him and then bouncing as soon as we have hands on him."

Jake: "I'm not opposed."

Tass: "Yeah. I mean, I just think every minute that we don't get him out of there is a minute that we're in danger. Because for all we know, this guy has bounced, he is already literally with Bennari, and they're already aware that they don't have him. So they could be taking drastic steps already."

Jake: "All right. Well, let's just go back, pick him up, bring him back here, and then figure out what we're going to do next."

Teej: "All right. Let's do it."

Jake: "Landara, you're made, so you don't want to go long for this. Trog, I presume you also don't want to go along right now?"

Rev: TROG: Well that's up to you. If you want me to come along. If you need some extra muscle, or something.

Jake: I mean, I as a character don't know exactly how the more people hurts me. But I know that it hurts me, right?

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Yeah. "I don't -- I don't think so. I mean, it would be handy, but I think just the more people I try and take with me, the harder it's going to go for me. So I think we'll manage what the three of us."

Tass: "Yeah, I agree."

Jake: "So we should be back here lickety-split."

Teej: "Fingers crossed."

Jake: "Fingers very crossed. Toes crossed. Eyes crossed. All right, let's go."

Rev: Yeah, you've got about three minutes to recharge.

Jake: "In three minutes, when I've recharged."

Rev: Is there anything you guys want to do while you're waiting for Jake's teleportation to recharge?

Jake: Yeah, I'm drinking an orange juice and eating a Little Debbie. Getting my blood sugar back up.

Tass: I'm going to drink a potion. Top myself off.

Rev: All right. So your three minutes passes. I don't think have to roll for this. This is not an under pressure situation to get there. You are teleporting some distance away from Isolation, you know the direction you need to head. So the three of you appear back in the desert.

Tass: "All right. I know the way."

Teej: Yeah. Follow Tass.

Rev: And so the three of you head off towards Isolation. You walk for maybe 15, 20 minutes, and you start to see the Formians patrolling in the sky. You come up over a crest on a dune, and you see, three or four hundred yards away, the opening to Isolation. And there are Formians patrolling the area, and two flying ones approach you instantly.

Tass: Me, as the shortest, will give a greeting wave from afar.

Rev: FORMIAN: State your business.

Jake: "We are here to collect a bounty."

Rev: FORMIAN: Writ?

Tass: I will offer it.

Rev: It lands and takes it and looks it over.

Rev: FORMIAN: Very well. Follow.

Teej: We'll follow.

Rev: And it turns and starts to march back.

Rev: FORMIAN: Has your journey through our lands been pleasant?

Jake: "Yeah. Yeah, it's been good."

Rev: FORMIAN: There are many who are not suited to the climate.

Jake: "Oh, I don't really have a problem with it." And I just kind of knock on my head -- clang clang.

Rev: FORMIAN: Yes. Refractory.

Jake: "Yep."

Teej: "And a beard is good for holding water."

Jake: [Laughs] Ew!

Teej: I just squeeze it out.

Jake: That's what I was going to -- you wring it out of your own mouth.

Tass: [Gags]

Rev: FORMIAN: Hmm. Thanks. I hate it.

Rev: And you get to the lip of Isolation where the drop down is, and the Formian with the writ ...

Rev: FORMIAN: I will be back momentarily.

Rev: And it jumps down into the hole and flutters below. What are you all doing while it's gone?

Jake: I think just standing in silence, waiting for it to come back. I'm not doing shit. I don't want to take any action that might screw this up. So I am a robot.

Teej: I'm keeping my eye out for anything suspicious.

Tass: Like, I want to be curious. I am curious. I want to be kind of looking around and stuff. But the thought occurs to me that that seems very much like scoping out their fort, and that seems bad. So I think I almost want to wear that. Like kind of like, you know, if there's any of them close, even like, this place is so interesting. But, you know, we're cool. Like, I don't want to impose or anything. Just, you guys are great. Like, this is ... This is very cool.

Rev: And three or four minutes pass. And from inside of Isolation flies that Formian, and hooked under his arms is James Francis Tincher. And he sets him down.

Rev: FORMIAN: Here is your target.

Jake: OK, I will reach out and kind of grab his arm. Almost aggressive.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Like a -- get over here. Kind of yank him over in our direction.

Rev: OK.

Jake: Are we ... Out of character -- are we clear? Are we our own cohesive unit now?

Rev: Yes.

Tass: Yeah. I think I'm like fishing through the bag and just kind of like walking up, and just lean onto Jake.

Teej: And I'm holding on to Grandpa.

Jake: And I blink.

Rev: And you vanish.

Tass: [Gasps]

Rev: And you appear back in Haven.

Tass: "Did it work? Are we OK?" I'm just looking around to see that everyone is here.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I want to like, look, Grandpa Tincher over and just make sure that he's like, OK, I guess.

Rev: Yeah. You pick him up and you notice that his hair is all messed up. And when you lean him back to look at his face, a wig falls off and it's a Formian. It's like, [Formian] "Surprise!"

All: [Laugh]

Jake: My heart rate!

Rev: [Formian] "Baba Boeey Baba Boeey!"

All: [Laugh]

Jake: [Formian] We saw this coming a mile away.

Tass: [Laughs]

Rev: Yeah. So you pick him up to look him over. And he's kind of out of it, but it looks exactly like him, from the photos that you've seen.

Tass: I'm actually going to dig in and grab another potion to give to him.

Rev: So what do you do with it?

Tass: I think I'm just sort of trying to hold it gently to his lips, and just kind of lean him back to see if he'll even take a little bit of a sip. If he's, like, aware enough or reflexive enough to do that.

Rev: He struggles against it at first, but then stops and drinks.

Tass: "Hey there, bud. Are you OK? You're safe. You're out of that hole. You're -- you're with us."

Rev: His eyes spring open and he looks around and he sees this giant metal man, he sees the giant goblin, and the undead woman, and he knocks backwards against the table.

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: What's going on?

Teej: "It's OK, Grandpa. It's me, T.J. Tincher."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: What do you mean? T.J.?

Teej: "Terry James Tincher, son of Jim Tincher and Khadija Tincher?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: How did you ... How did you get here?

Teej: "Grandpa, I ... Well, me and my friends here, we invented a portal to this world, and we were able to inhabit the bodies of recently dead people. And now we're here for you. We're the ones who sent the message on the crystal."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Oh. [Chuckles] I'd sent messages for so long and no response. And then one day it glowed. There was a glow. And then I wrote, and then nothing again. And nothing. And then a message. I thought I had recognized the pattern. And then you're here. [Laughs]

Rev: He sits down on the ground and is just laughing.

Teej: "Grandpa, you're going to be OK now. We're going to take you home. We're going to get you out of here."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: [Laughs] Oh, no. You're ... You're not.

Teej: "What do you mean?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: I can't ... I can't go home.

Teej: "What do you mean, you can't go home? We have to get you home."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: I can't. If I could, I would have. I've been here so long.

Teej: "He seems kind of out of it, guys. Grandpa, do you remember how you got here?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: NOEL. NOEL, we made a portal, and I was exploring worlds. I was trying to get information and figure out what was ... What was on the horizon. I had this sense something was coming. And so I went to other places to try to gather information. And I got here and I couldn't ... I couldn't go back. It didn't -- it didn't

work. I couldn't go back through. And it's been too long. Even if I could figure out how to go back now, it's been ... It's been too long.

Tass: "What does that mean?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: What year is it, when you are?

Tass: "2019."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: I've been here for hundreds of their years, here. I have lived through all of that. I have spent that time in this world. If I go back, the worlds they know, I'll die. It will be like I had lived that many years on our world, and I will simply turn to dust.

Tass: "Oh shit."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: The body can't survive. It can't take the time differences and the jumps and the shifts and the way ... The way that all the time moves differently.

Teej: "Well, is there a way that we can take your mind here and then ... I don't know, put it into another body back home?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: I don't ... I don't know. I tried to study the shift of time and the flow between the worlds, and I could never find all the pieces. My situation is so particular, I could never find something that covered all the bases, or find things that would work in tandem that would cover all of the bases.

Jake: I want to produce Estin's journal. "Will this do it?" Hand it over to Grandpa.

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Wha ... What is ...?

Jake: "This is the sum total notes of a crazy plane-hopping lich who took me prisoner. Everything he knew is in that book."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Did he go physically?

Jake: "Yeah, and he was driven mad for it."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes. Yes, I imagine you would be. What would I find in here, if he had not figured it out? How to get just the mind to go?

Jake: "I don't know. I'm not the brilliant scientist. You have thoughts that wouldn't occur to me to think. So I think if anybody can look through that book and connect the dots that you already know you're looking for, it's going to be you. Maybe with the help of your grandson, here."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: The science here is like a creek after a long summer of no rain. There is not much to be found. It's all magic. I had often heard that -- what is the saying? That magic is just magic ...

Rev: And you see that his eyes seem to be clouding over a little.

Teej: "Magic is just science we haven't understood yet?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes. Yes, magic is just science that we haven't understood yet. And that -- that is the thinking of people who have not seen real magic. All of my science pales in comparison to some of the things that they can accomplish here.

Tass: "Well, maybe there's something that we can accomplish here. Something that will keep you intact. If you go back through."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: You say go back through. Go back through what?

Teej: "We have a portal that could take us back -- our minds back -- to our world."

Tass: "What we'd need to figure out is how to get you through that. Because just our minds go. We don't know what happens if anyone else tries."

Jake: "You might step through bodily and turn to dust. Or your mind might go through and find its own vessel like ours did."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Oh, interesting. So we just give it a shot?

Jake: "No. We can research first, right?"

Tass: "How?"

Jake: "I don't know, man. There's fucking wizards here."

Tass: "Yeah."

Jake: "What if we go find one of them and ask them?"

Teej: "Grandpa, do you know any good magicians? People who are dedicated to actually fixing the world and solving problems and everything through magic, but aren't dicks?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: How long have you been here?

Jake: "Effectively, a little over a month. But we were gone for a pretty good stretch of it, back to our world."

Tass: "Yeah. Came in a couple of days, gone for almost a month. Back for ... Oh my, it's been a little over a week."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Do you know what the conversion is? I've -- I've guessed at it.

Teej: "Yeah. We figured it out. Every day spent here is an hour in our world."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: So to put it in perspective, from your world ... Hmm, I don't even call it "our" world anymore. From our world, I have been missing for fifty some years?

Jake: "Something like that."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: So 50 some, times 365, times 24 ... Gives you a sense of how many days I've been here.

Tass: "Yeah."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: So this problem is one I worked a long time to try to solve and figure out for the first 100, 200, 300 years. After about the 900th year, I've tapped every resource that this planet has to offer. I have been from pole to pole. I have been in every court, every kingdom. And so I don't know what other resources to pull from. Your portal, I assume like mine, is created on your side?

Teej: "Yeah, that's right."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: There'd be no way to alter it.

Teej: "Not unless we got a message out to Rev -- our other friend, who's basically in control of the portal."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Can you send messages through your portal?

Jake: "Yeah."

Teej: "We have our little capsule. I can bring things to and fro through the portal, with this capsule."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Hmm.

Teej: "But it's small. It's got to be a small message."

Jake: "I mean alternatively, somebody can go back through and work on altering the portal. If that's what we need to do."

Teej: "Yeah. I mean, I could go back and start working on it with Rev if we need to. And then even somehow if we need to also create something like what you are, Jake. A Soul Trap that can trap his soul for at least a little while before we can get something more permanent. Maybe like a crystal-run robot."

Jake: "I don't know, man. I've seen you do the wildest shit, so I'll take your word for it. But I can't go until him and Nash are gone."

Tass: "Right."

Jake: "So if you step back through and start working, that's fine and I'm OK with that. And I can stay here and protect him."

Teej: "OK. But just to let you know, it's going to take longer for us to create something."

Jake: "Yeah."

Tass: "Every hour you're building something, we're protecting him for a day."

Teej: "Yeah."

Jake: "Well, you don't got to stay here, either. You could go back and help."

Tass: "I mean, time constraints considered, I think you need more protection here than he needs help over there. I can't -- I can barely change my own tire, for God's sake."

All: [Laugh]

Jake: "That's your call. But yeah, I mean, I live here until he doesn't. So. And I am fine with that. We've got Haven. We could lay low here. I can teleport to different towns and get groceries every now and then and come back. You know, we could exist here safely for a while if we had to. That ignores the problem of what do we do about Nash? But, just a question of priorities -- who do we deal with first?"

Teej: "Well, I think we've got the beginnings of a good plan, here."

Tass: "Alternatively ..." And I'll hold up those little gems. "We have to think that they were using these to go back to where they wanted James to be. Like, we don't particularly need to prioritize safeguarding this man if we take out the problem first."

Jake: "I mean, that's a good point. And we have to deal with them eventually anyway. Well, we have to deal with Nash eventually. And presumably, he's with Bennari."

Tass: "James, do you want to go home? Is this even a priority for you? You've spent lifetimes. I don't think we've sat here and done the math in a way that the number is just out there. But my god, lifetimes you've been here."

Rev: By this point, James has sat down on the ground and his eyes are barely open, and he's humming to himself.

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: [Hums]

Rev: As he pulls the grains of sand off of the bottom of his left boot and he's dropping them into his left hand and examining this little collection.

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: I ... I wonder what my brain would do back there.

Rev: His eyes suddenly open wide and he stands again.

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Did you know that dolphins can survive both in fresh and saltwater?

Tass: "I suppose I didn't."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: My mind has been changed by the things I have seen and the things I have learned. And I wonder what the ramifications would be of my mind being forced back into a space where truths here are no longer truths. It's something I've long pondered.

Teej: "Well, you could always think of it like this: it's just another adventure for your mind to go through."

Jake: "The key to a healthy brain is neuroplasticity. Switching up those pathways." And I'm just kind of like shrugging at these two. Huh? Good?

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: My brain was in a box. And now it takes up so much more room. But the box is sharp. And if my brain were forced back into it, what would happen when all the excess is cut away? I'm sorry. I have been alone for ... For so long. Not alone -- there are some here that I have met and travelled with. And I have spent so much time studying time. [Chuckles]

Rev: And as he chuckles, he starts to stare off at nothing.

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Why did you come to find me? Is there something that you need? The communicator, it was going off again. It has not gone off in hundreds of years. What's ... What's happening?

Tass: "Do you know the name Grigori Nash?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes.

Tass: "He's doing something. We're still not sure exactly what."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: And he's here?

Tass: "And he's here. He's working with the version of himself that is also from here."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes. He sent those Formians after me.

Tass: "Why?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: He wanted this.

Rev: And he holds up his left hand. And in a very sharp movement, snaps the wrist to the side. But it pops, and you can see that there are some fairly intricate levers and pulleys and cogs inside of his arm -- in his hand. And there's a hollow that he pulls a rolled up piece of paper out of. And he snaps his arm forward, and the hand knocks back into place and the fingers start moving again.

Jake: "What the fuck? How much of you is a robot?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Just this. I lost this in a pyramid a few hundred years ago, and I wasn't very good with just the one. And so I spent some time with a tinkerer, and I was able to construct this from the things I could remember about the way that small gears worked. I had a watch once upon a time, that I tore apart to remind myself. Because the brain gets rusty -- especially on concepts that aren't practiced around you.

Tass: "Well, that's amazing. But let's jump back, here. What is this? What is he looking for?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: This? Yes, this. When you go through time, it's funny. It shifts. It tries to keep in sync. And he goes back and forth. He goes all ... All over. But this!

Rev: And he holds the paper up and he opens it. And there's a bunch of symbols on it.

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Because I thought that if I could figure out how to get home, that this would solve my problem. But that was before I realized the amount of time that might be passing. And then as the years passed, I realized that it would be worthless, because it would undo so much.

Tass: "OK. OK, so what does it accomplish, if it did matter?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes. Yes. So you take this. And once you come through your portal, you leave your home, you cast this back through the portal, hmm?

Tass: "Mmhmm."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: And then when you return, time snaps back to the moment you left.

Teej: "Time travel?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: What?

Teej: "Time travel."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: No. Yes.

Tass: "Seems like, kind of. It makes it so that functionally what you have left doesn't move on for you, right? Like you just are in and back and have done whatever you wanted to do on the other side, for as long as it takes."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes.

Tass: "Right?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Mmhmm.

Teej: "Oh! So not time travel, but ..."

Jake: "Like an anchor."

Teej: "Anchor."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes. And so he wants this.

Tass: "Oh boys, this is a lot."

Teej: "Yeah. I still say we need to somehow figure out how to get back home with him, obviously. But this does put a different wrench in the works."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: You didn't answer my question. Why do you need me? What did you come here for?

Tass: "I mean, I think it's pretty simple. We made priority one -- find you, and save you if we could. We wanted you to be safe. And I think we had it in our head that getting you home was the fix to that. In talking to you, I'm realizing that that might have been a little cocky of us to assume."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: I ... I don't know where to go. I don't know that I can go home. I haven't been able to figure it out in all these years. I'm happy to spend more time with all of you and figure out if there is a pathway that I haven't thought about. But I also

cannot stay here. It's not safe, and I don't like it. I don't like it here. The science doesn't ... It just doesn't. And the magic is so ... You can almost taste it in the air. I've thought about moving on, trying to find a way to go somewhere else, but who knows what it would be like. It could be worse. It could be better. It could be nothing.

Tass: "OK. Well, Estin was doing it, one way or another. He has a room with shit that he's gotten from other places. Like, he was sending somebody through. So it may not be our portal. That might be our way to leave. But if you two can somehow deconstruct whatever he did and recreate it? You might have a shot, still."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes. Yes. We could try to apply the elements of yours into his, but ultimately there will only be one test.

Tass: "Yeah, seems like that's the danger of anything big and important like this. So this is what we came to do. We're going to help you, but we're not going to force you to do the thing. You know, this ultimately is up to you. But hell, man, we've got some friends. We've got people working on this, trying to stop whatever horrible thing Nash is planning. You were one of the Founders, you're one of the best. We got to meet some of the others that started IPT. And we're just ... We're low on friends. And I mean, you're T.J.'s grandpa, man. Priority one is to get you out. And if we can throw a wrench in Nash's plans here? Sure, we'll do that, too."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: I could spend time with the book and with his room, and see what there is to be seen.

Teej: "That's a good start."

Jake: "While he does that, we could follow these other crystals and try and take out Bennari and/or Nash at the same time."

Tass: "Yeah, we sure could."

Teej: [Determined] "Let's do it."

Jake: Was that supposed to be kind of gruff?

Teej: Oh, no, that was just me.

Jake: [Laughs] Your throat -- it sounded like you went ... [Clears throat].

Teej: Sorry --

Jake: [Action movie voice] Let's do it.

Teej: "Let's do it."

Jake: Um ... "I mean, is that a plan we want to hop on right this second?"

Tass: "I mean, I don't know about y'all, but I've been awake for a day and a half. Like, let's maybe take a sec and get our shit together and pool resources, look through some books ourselves, and see if there's anything we know, or anything else we can find, about Bennari in particular. I mean, again, whatever they have set up, whatever this room is that we're going to appear in when we crush these crystals, we just -- we have to be ready for anything, man."

Jake: "Yeah. And I think this is another, like, if we'd gotten on it instantly, we might have caught them off guard."

Tass: "Yeah."

Jake: "So now we need to wait for enough time to pass that they're not as worried about us anymore."

Tass: "Yeah, that's not a bad thought. I mean, he's got to know that at least some of these crystals were left behind. But they don't know that we found them, necessarily."

Jake: "All right. Let's have a chill night. Trog and I can make us some dinner. We'll have a normal evening, try to get a little bit of work done, get some rest. And then maybe pick up the work tomorrow."

Rev: So just, mechanically. Right now, it's about eight thirty in the morning. So what is your plan for resting, sleeping, studying?

Tass: My priority is rest right now. Because I mean, it's probably been like two days that I've been awake at this point, with all the ant stuff. So yeah, my priority is just to find a quiet corner and rest.

Teej: I think I want to create like a nice, comfortable area that me and Grandpa could have, like, a palaver -- a talk. And we could talk about our portals, and the different makeups of them. So then that way we can like figure out what part of this brings a

person -- a whole person -- through, and not just like, you know, their soul and everything.

Jake: I think part of this day is making this place livable for regular people. Like, first it was a lich's hideout, and then it was just a stopover. But now it's like, well, he's going to be here. He has been in the treacherous world and in prison and stuff, and he seems like he's slipping. So anything we can do to make this place comfortable and safe, and give him a sense of stability. Like anything that will help him retain his mind, is what I want to do. So I want to spend the day making this place homey.

Rev: So Tass goes to sleep, and the two of you set about making the house nice.

Jake: I would at some point want to look into how to repair my caustic ability. Like, my knuckles are still jammed. And now that we're out of a bind and stuff, I need to figure out how to fix that before we willingly throw ourselves back into a fight.

Rev: Where are you doing that?

Jake: I mean, I guess like -- like the dining room, the equivalent of the common area in this place. There's not really one.

Rev: Yeah, that's really kind of the one place that everything leads to.

Jake: Yeah. I mean, probably there. Like I don't have anywhere else specific to be. If I got really stumped I might go like look through his lab to see if there was a little tool that seemed like it would help. Or you know, if I'm just puzzling it out, I just be probably sitting in the dining room table.

Rev: Landara actually comes by while you're doing that and starts chatting to you about it.

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah. It's, uh ... There's a flow pipe that goes from the elbow ...

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: And she starts describing, like, what it is.

Jake: "How do you know that?"

Rev: LANDARA: I used to repair Soul Traps.

Jake: "How did this not come up sooner?" [Laughs]

Rev: LANDARA: I mean, I told you I wanted your body.

Jake: "Yeah, I just thought you were being sexy about it."

Rev: LANDARA: Is that an Immovable Rod in your pocket, or ...

All: [Laugh]

Jake: "Can you help me fix this?"

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah, I think so. Well, it just kinda looks like you got a bunch of sand in there.

Jake: "Yeah. I mean it's just, like, super gunked up. But I can't really, you know, it's like -- it's my hand. I can't get to it so good."

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah.

Rev: Yeah. And she sits down with you and starts working on your hands. Taking them apart, getting the sand out.

Rev: LANDARA: So, um ...

Jake: "You live here now."

Rev: LANDARA: Are we -- yeah.

Jake: [Laughs] "I've accidentally kidnapped you."

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah.

Jake: "I don't suppose you want to stick with us for the rest of this, do you? Help us, you know, get rid of the other guy that's not supposed to be here? Fulfill your destiny?"

Rev: LANDARA: Is that next on the menu?

Jake: "Seems like. We're going to stay here and let Grandpa dig into it on this end and see if he can figure out a different way back, while we go deal with Nash and Bennari. If he's willing to stay here and spend time and try and do the research ... And, you know, I can't go home until they're all gone. So, no rush for me."

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah. I've been thinking about what you said about this deal that Death made, and doing good on it. I've got four of you here.

Jake: "That's true. One good explosion --"

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah.

Jake: "And eighty percent of your job is done."

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah. Or a little bit of this in the food will take care of at least a couple of you.

Rev: Holds up a vial.

Jake: "You just had that on you the whole time?"

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah. I mean, I carry lots of things. But I never used it.

Jake: "I appreciate that. Look, the pitch I've got is the same one I had before. Of the five beings that are here and aren't supposed to be, Nash is probably the hardest one to deal with, you know? You could kill four of us, and -- well, the ones easily. Me, probably without too much trouble. You're pretty capable. But boy, that last one is going to be a bitch. But it'd be a lot easier with us."

Rev: LANDARA: You got some kind of a plan?

Jake: "Not yet I don't. We need to get him back into a sense of safety and normalcy, or else he's going to lose his goddamn mind."

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah.

Jake: "I mean, look at him. He already is."

Rev: LANDARA: Everybody says they want to live forever until they have to.

Jake: "I can't even imagine."

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah. I could go with, if you can get me there with you. But unless you know what we're trying to do once we get there, I'll be just as lost as you are.

Jake: "We'll come up with a plan, you know? Before we go. We're not just going to ... Well," I like, cross my robot fingers. "We're not just going to go in there with no plan."

Rev: LANDARA: I mean, I've listened to the show before.

Jake: I know.

Teej: Yeah.

Jake: That's what I'm thinking. Also, it doesn't matter how much plan we make. "We'll come up with something before we go. You know, we're not going to go in just deaf, dumb, and blind. We'll have an idea. I can never swear that it works. It frequently doesn't. But until we come up with that plan -- might be tomorrow, might be over the next few days. I don't know. I could -- I could take you back if you want to go back and get a taste of city life for a while, and come pick you back up when it's time to, like, ride, if that's what you want? You know, could come back and pitch you the plan we have. Or you can just stay here with us. And you'll be safer, and it'll be a lot easier to communicate. And when you inevitably realize that we're saying something stupid that doesn't make sense, it'll be a lot smoother for you to chime in and fix it."

Rev: And she laughs at that.

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah.

Rev: She starts to close them back up, and you can tell that everything has been cleaned out.

Rev: LANDARA: I suppose it makes most sense to stay. And I think someone needs to keep an eye on the old man that has a little more of an objective eye.

Jake: "We're happy to have you. As long as you promise not to poison us."

All: [Laugh]

Rev: LANDARA: Like, ever?

Jake: "I mean ... No, not ever."

Rev: LANDARA: All right.

Jake: "Like if one of us was, you know, became a mind controlled champion of evil, it might be the lesser of the ..."

Rev: LANDARA: Exactly. Some fool runs mad, don't make me promise not to poison them.

Jake: [Laughs]

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: So with Tass going to sleep, and with the two of you spending some time cleaning and just relaxing a little bit, I think that this is an opportunity for everyone to level up, if you've got the experience.

Jake: I do.

Tass: I sure do.

Teej: I do not.

Jake: Aww ...

Rev: All right. What are you going to take?

Jake: I'm going to take a Ghost Warrior move called Hymn of Denial. When you chant the many reasons why it's good to be alive, choose a move you've seen an intelligent undead creature perform. And as long as the chant continues, they're so overwhelmed with melancholy and yearning for like their lost life that they can't use that move.

Tass: That's wild.

Rev: I'm trying to think of like an example of that. Like, what are some of the things that you would chant? What's good -- what's good about being alive, Jake?

Jake: [Chants] Burger King, Burger King ...

All: [Laugh]

Rev: And now suddenly this undead can't regenerate. He's like, "Burgers ..."

Jake: "Oh, I miss that charbroiled taste ..."

Rev: Tass?

Teej: Yeah. What's your favorite thing about life?

Jake: What's your favorite thing about Burger King?

Tass: Ironically, the chicken.

Jake: Get out.

Tass: I'm so sorry.

All: [Laugh]

Tass: I'm going to take the move called Shed. Which when I take damage while I'm shapeshifted, I can choose to just revert back to my natural form to negate all the damage.

Rev: Oh.

Tass: And I'll tell you why ...

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: Because that's what T.J.'s sister did to you, minus the reducing the damage?

Tass: That, too. Though I think probably almost the biggest hit I've taken in this game so far was just falling on an unattended sword.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: I would kill for some chicken fries right now.

Tass: I know, right?

SFX:

CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: Grandpa Tincher spends most of his time that day inside of the room of teleportation with Estin's book, looking through things. And throughout the day he calls out for you, Jake, to come into the room and help him out. And it seems like a mix of, "I see what he's doing," and, "Why is he doing this?" Like he goes up and he checks your gem. And in the other hand, he has five or six walnuts, and it's like he's weighing it to see if it matches. And then other times he's got like a metal device out that glows when it comes next to the gem. And he's testing other things to see if they have that same glow. So it's -- it's just a weird a hodgepodge of, "What is he doing?"

Jake: Uh-huh. I mean, and I'm happy to oblige those. And I think that each time, like, you know, before I leave or something ... Obviously we don't know him. And we didn't really, like, introduce ourselves to him. So I'm just talking to him like an earthling, you know? Like saying who I am, and talking about things that have been going on back home. And like maybe telling him the story of our excursion with the Founders -- or, well, our rescue by, any way. Like, what they're up to. And just trying to, like, give him a taste of home again, so he's hungry for it.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: So he's not losing his mind. And he's like, I'm going to go back. I want to go back. Because I can't -- I can't -- I cannot stress this enough. Cannot leave. Like, while Tass was like, do you even want to go home? I was like, this is not a good argument to make to him. Because if he decides no, I live here now. But fortunately, that is not the decision he's made.

Rev: So the bulk of the day passes like this, and it's getting close to evening. Trog and Jake have made dinner, and it's almost time for Tass to wake up. T.J. and Landara are setting the table. And Jake, you start heading to the lab to get Grandpa. And from inside Estin's lab, you hear Grandpa Tincher ...

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Ah! Stay back! No, no, no, no!

Jake: Oh, booking it to where he is.

Rev: Sprint down the hallway and into Estin's lab. And you see Grandpa Tincher on the ground, looking towards the room of teleportation. And in the doorway stands Kolvar.

Jake: "Oh! Grandpa, it's OK. It's OK. He's one of our guys."

Rev: KOLVAR: [Gasps]

Jake: "I'm so sorry. I should have absolutely mentioned that sooner."

Rev: KOLVAR: [Gasps, wheezes]

Jake: Oh my god.

Rev: Kolvar is gasping and he takes a step forward.

Rev: KOLVAR: It might be ... It might be too late.

Rev: And he falls forward, and you see three arrows buried in his back.

SFX: OUTRO MUSIC

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