

The Undead Lord (S2, E30)

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Rev: Hey, everybody. For this week's intro, there's really nothing to say except stay tuned after the episode. It's time to let the recap roll.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC

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

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

Tass: "Why?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Because he wanted this.

Rev: 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.

Jake: "We could follow these other crystals and try and take out Bennari and/or Nash at the same time."

Tass: "I mean, I don't know about y'all, but I've been awake for a day and a half."

Jake: "You know, until we come up with that plan ... Might be tomorrow, might be over the next few days. I don't know. 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? Or you can just stay here with us."

Rev: LANDARA: I suppose it makes more 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.

Rev: And from inside Estin's lab, you hear Grandpa Tincher ...

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

Jake: 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. In the doorway stands Kolvar.

Rev: KOLVAR: [Gasps]

Rev: 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: RECAP MUSIC FADES

Rev: We are in Estin's laboratory, and Kolvar is lying face down on the cement, three arrows in his back, blood beginning to pull around him. Jake, what are you doing?

Jake: "No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no." I'm going to grab, like, the nearest cloth I can find and run over there and start putting pressure on the wounds and just calling out, "I need a health potion! I need one or many health potions in here immediately! Somebody!"

Teej: I obviously hear him, and I'm going to start running that way.

Rev: As you are shouting, Jake, you can see that Kolvar is moving his lips. He's trying to say something, but it's loud in here.

Jake: Kind of like prop him up. Like, kind of hold him against me like a baby, here. So that I can apply pressure on the back and he's got his head up by my shoulder.

Rev: KOLVAR: [Weakly] Bennari's ... He's got them. And the ritual, it begins ... It begins when the sun goes down.

Jake: "Hey. Hey. I don't know what any of that means, OK? I need you to hang on, so you can explain it to me. I don't -- I don't understand. You're the smart one. You've got to be here."

Rev: KOLVAR: It starts ... [Wheezes] It starts ... It's why you're here.

Rev: And it seems like he stops breathing. T.J., you come into the room and you see Jake is holding Kolvar on the ground.

Teej: I am pulling the stoppers off the bottles, and I'm going up to Kolvar and putting medicine in his mouth.

Rev: Yeah. So you pour these two healing potions down his throat, and not a whole lot goes down, and it just starts to flow out of his mouth and down his chin.

Teej: I'll stop pouring. "What about taking the arrows out of his back? Maybe that's something that needs to happen."

Jake: "Keep pressure on the wounds."

Teej: "Sure. Yeah."

Jake: I'm going to pull the arrows out, and then I want to go look in Estin's book and see if there's anything in there that is like ... Someone died in the last minute, this is a thing that'll bring them back. You know?

Rev: Yeah. Roll Spout Lore.

Jake: Five.

Rev: You flip through the book and you do find one thing that could be used, but he will not be the same when he comes back.

Jake: I'm not going to do it. He was a prisoner in a body that wasn't his for a long time. Like, he has suffered. And I'm not going to take his agency away from him again like that. So I think I'm just sitting there holding him and just, "Come on, cut a deal. Cut a deal, you stupid bastard. Death'll let you come back if you just agree to his terms. Do it!"

Rev: As you're shouting this down at him, you feel just a little bit of movement against your shoulder. It takes you a moment to realize that it's Landara's hand on your shoulder.

Rev: LANDARA: Come on, Jake. I think we need to take care of the body.

Teej: "She's right, Jake."

Jake: "Maybe it's a long deal. Just chill out for like five minutes. Maybe Death's got a doozy for him. Give him a minute."

Rev: LANDARA: All right.

Rev: And she sits down on the ground next to you.

Jake: "He's supposed to be the smart one. Why wouldn't he come back?"

Rev: LANDARA: Maybe he was the smart one. He got you the information.

Jake: Yeah. I'll stand up and ... I don't know what I'm going to do with him, but for the moment, I guess, go like lay him in one of the beds and cover him up.

Rev: You go down the hallway and Landara follows you and opens up the sheet so that you can lay him down.

Jake: And I need to gather Tass and T.J. back up.

Rev: Yeah. It is right about the time that Tass was going to be waking up, anyway. And so I think we find the three of you in the dining room.

Jake: "He said the ritual begins at sundown. And he said, 'Bennari's got them.' I don't know what any of that means, but whatever time we were going to spend making a plan is gone."

Tass: "OK. So the plan is disrupt ritual."

Jake: "And free the them. I don't know what them is, but I guess we'll figure it out."

Teej: "Let's do it, for Kolvar."

Jake: "For Kolvar."

Tass: "Is Landara coming with us?"

Jake: "I'll ask." I guess as we start to do prep to roll out here, whatever, gearing up I'll go find Landara and ask her.

Rev: Yeah, she is in the room with Kolvar. And she has removed most of his things and set them on the neighboring bed. And she's cleaning the blood and dirt off of him with a washcloth that she's dipping into a pot of warm water.

Jake: "We're out of time. I don't know what he said means, but the ritual begins at sunset. I don't know what the ritual is, but he wouldn't have died for it if it didn't have to be prevented. So I don't know if this part exactly is your fight. I don't know if you want to come along. I get it if you don't. I appreciate it if you do."

Rev: And as you say that, she is tucking Kolvar's arm under the sheet. And you see that he has a metal bracer that he is wearing, and it has the other black gem inlaid into it.

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah, I think ... I think you're right, that if I can do what it is that Death asked, seems like it's going to be easier with all of you than waiting it out and trying to do it myself later.

Jake: "OK, then let's go gather the troops and, I don't know, overthrow a monster, I guess." Before we leave the room, I'm going to take that bracer off his wrist and tuck it away somewhere, like on my belt. So that if we need it, if we come across somebody who needs to get out or whatever, I've got it. I can give it to someone.

Rev: OK. And I think that as you are all getting things around that Grandpa Tincher comes up to you, T.J.

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: I don't know where exactly you are ... You're going, or what you will do, or how long it will take. But in case you get a chance to go home, you should take this.

Rev: And he pops his wrist back open again, and holds out the paper.

Teej: "Grandpa, I'm going to go face the guy that we don't need to have this. So putting this on me is probably the worst idea."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: But what if he's got a way home?

Teej: "At least he doesn't have this."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes, of course. I see that now.

Teej: "All right. Well, it's good to see you, Grandpa. I never really knew you in life, but you seem like a pretty chill guy. If I don't make it back and you somehow are able to get back to home, tell Mom and Dad I said I love them."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Oh, my ... My son. I hadn't thought of ... He must be older than me by now, metaphysically speaking. It would be good to see his face. What has he become?

Teej: "Well, he's a builder of houses. Contractor."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes. It runs in the family. Work with the hand and the mind, picturing things before they're birthed into the world.

Teej: "Yeah. All right. Well, I'll see you later."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes. That is my understanding of time.

Teej: And I'm just going to head to Jake and Tass and hope we're ready to go.

Rev: All right. So you all reconvene back in the dining room.

Tass: "All right. I don't know what the hell we're going to see when we come through here. We don't know what the ritual is. We don't even know where we're going to be. I'd put money on a guess, but that's not much to formulate a plan around. But magic's pretty precise. I think we can all agree that you've got to do the right shit in the right order with the right components. So we have to mess that up. I think priority one is getting people out."

Jake: "I mean, yeah, if there are people that need getting out."

Tass: "Right."

Jake: "We don't know."

Tass: "This is a lot of assumption. This is a whole lot of if. But it sure sounds like what he was trying to say is that there was someone else there. And my guess is they're part of whatever this is. So getting them out, hopefully that's going to stop whatever they're trying."

Jake: "OK. Everybody keep a potion or whatever in your offhand, because ..." I'll hold up the gem. "This is going to hurt. And we want to be tip top still when we get there."

Tass: "Yeah, that's a real good call."

Jake: I'm just going to pull out one of my InstaWelds and have it in the ... In the left hand, gem in the right.

Rev: LANDARA: Got any more of those?

Jake: "Which ones? Not mine."

Rev: LANDARA: No.

Jake: "Yes, plenty."

Rev: LANDARA: All right.

Tass: Yeah. I'll actually hand her three potions.

Jake: Fucking yeah. Amp her up, dude. Whatever. We got one hundred of them. How many -- we have 19. Give her five.

Tass: Three's enough. It'll be fine.

Jake: Fine. When Landara fucking dies ... Just know it's on you.

Rev: And I assume this is all happening in front of Landara. She's just like watching you debate how many potions to give her, and her imminent death.

Jake: We've got a very tight huddle going on that she's on the outside of.

Teej: We're like the old cartoon where, like, all three of us are huddled and then like one of us peeks up, looks at her, kind of --

Jake: [Laughs]

Teej: Like, eyes her warily, then kind of returns to the huddle again.

Rev: And it's just like that constant like ... [Huddle hubub] And somehow she can't hear. Yeah. So she takes those potions from you and then holds up the gem.

Rev: LANDARA: All right. Say when.

Jake: "Three, two ..." I'm looking around to see if anybody's got opposition. "One, go." Crush.

Rev: And you all crush these gems in your hand, and there is a jolt of black energy that surges through your palm and up your arm. And everybody takes 3 points of armor-defeating damage, and then you are gone. You all appear together again. And it is bright. And as your eyes clear, you can see there's an enormous stained glass window, and the sun is coming through it as it begins to set. And you're in a great hall, standing in the center of a metal circle that has been inlaid into the floor. The room is lined with soldiers on each side, and directly in front of you is a man sitting on a throne. He has short black hair and he looks almost exactly like Grigori Nash, except gray features and black hair.

Bennari: Oh, welcome.

Tass: [Laughs nervously] I think I slowly drink my potion.

Jake: I was going to say, yeah, think I just hit the InstaWeld.

Teej: Drink, drink, drink.

Rev: All right. Everybody roll Defy Danger with Dexterity.

Teej: I got a seven.

Jake: I got a nine.

Tass: Ten.

Rev: So everybody is able to drink their potion, but the retinue of soldiers on the sides all take about a five foot step in, and lower their spears in your direction.

Bennari: I would have been happy to offer you a drink if you needed something.

Jake: "Sorry, that just hurt like hell. Had to take the edge off. I feel good now. Are you Bennari?"

Rev: He smiles and gives a half bow.

Bennari: Baron Adinock Bennari.

Jake: "My name is Jake. I think you know that, maybe?"

Bennari: Yes, I've heard of you.

Jake: "Oh, good. I didn't want to ... I didn't want to seem like I was egoistic, but I just -- I assumed. We are here in your beautiful court. I love your stained glass, by the way. What is -- what is the -- what is being depicted here?"

Bennari: Oh, that is the moment where my grandfather sacked to the castle of the neighboring Baron who stole his daughter, my mother, and forced her into marriage.

Rev: And you see this all very nicely depicted in stained glass. There is a very muscular undead holding up the head of another undead with long white hair, and a castle in the background that is burning.

Jake: "Wow. Yeah, I can see it. Yeah. Beautifully done. Beautifully done. My compliments to the artist. Well, we're here to prevent a ritual."

All: [Laugh]

Teej: "We always thought truth was the best course."

Jake: [Laughs] I could not think of anything else to say!

Rev: I imagine that reaction is in character. Like you just turn to the rest of the team. "I couldn't think of anything else to say!"

Jake: [Sighs]

Tass: So many bad choices!

Teej: Is there, in my accumulated knowledge with Honin, is there like a point where the Dead Isles has like a code of chivalry? Or at least some kind of code where if I were to challenge someone to single combat, that they would be honor bound to do that?

Rev: Roll Spout Lore.

Teej: All right. Seven.

Rev: So the thing that you know is that there is, but you would have to be a leader here also.

Teej: Oh, so I would actually have to be an undead person, or undead lord of some sort?

Rev: Yeah. You have to be a lord or a baron within the Isle.

Teej: Gotcha.

Bennari: You all seem uneasy. Spears down, spears down.

Rev: And the soldiers, in one swift motion, reposition their spears. Over his shoulder, through the stained glass window, you can see the sun getting lower.

Tass: "I may just not have a clear understanding of the situation, but why aren't you just killing us right now?"

Bennari: Well, that's not how we operate. The Dead Isles is part of the free nations. We welcome visitors from all over the world. It would have not been looked on favorably if strangers came to my lands, my home, looking for an audience, and I just slayed them.

Tass: "I appreciate that." I'm going to glance at my three friends, here. [Whispers] "Should I just ask about the guy we're looking for?"

Jake: [Whispers] "I don't know. God help me, I don't know."

Teej: "Well, we've always told people the truth, and that never, ever turns out bad for us."

Tass: I will hit you myself. I'll turn back to Bennari. "I was not expecting all of this. So I guess I will just ask. Do you know Grigori Nash?"

Bennari: Yes.

Teej: "Are you friends with him?"

Bennari: Hmm. That is a difficult question. Friends with him ... We are different enough that I wouldn't consider him to be me. So, yes. Perhaps.

Tass: "Hmm. Do you by chance know where he is at the moment?"

Bennari: Of course.

Tass: "OK."

Jake: "Where is that?"

Bennari: Oh, come now.

Jake: "I know. It's worth a shot."

Bennari: Fellows, a little breathing room if you please.

Rev: And the soldiers in the room pivot in place. Five on each side move to the front of this large hall and exit out the door, and the other five on each side exit towards the back to some doors behind the throne. And two of them, one on each side, post up there and just resume their position.

Jake: So he just sent out all but two guards?

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: Now he doesn't stand a chance!

Teej: [Chuckles]

Jake: I think ... I think, like, out loud, I just go, "God. Power move."

Bennari: You all seemed a little on edge, as I said. I thought maybe fewer threatening elements in the room might put you at ease.

Tass: "Well, I doubt we'll get to ease. But I have to say, I appreciate what you're -- what you're saying, here. Look, you know him. You know who we are. You know that we're at odds with him in probably no small way. But we have no beef with you that we really know of. The long and short is we have to stop him from being here if we want to get to

where we want to go. So is there some kind of deal we can cut with you to get a little information and find him sooner than later?"

Bennari: I have bad news for you. You're not going to reach him in time.

Teej: "Why is that?"

Rev: He smiles at that question. And it's a broad, charming smile.

Bennari: Because I'm here to stop you.

Jake: [Sighs] "Man. Everything was going so good. We were getting along really good there. You don't gotta. You don't gotta. We can be friends, man."

Bennari: Yes. Just have a seat. We'll have a chat. We'll let another ten minutes or so pass, and it'll all be over.

Jake: "See, that's where ... That's where the friction is, there. Is because there's like one thing we -- ooh, just one that we really got to do. Just one that we really got to do. And it's get to him immediately."

Teej: "What did he promise you?"

Bennari: Oh, he didn't promise me anything.

Teej: "Then why do you help him?"

Bennari: Because I believe in what he's doing.

Teej: "The end of everything?"

Tass: "We don't -- we don't ..." I'm like kind of making slash across my throat motions. "We don't strictly -- I don't think -- we don't know that that's what he's ..."

Teej: "Oh."

Jake: "We've hyperbolized."

Bennari: The end of everything. [Laughs] Yes. Yes, we're all working together to bring about the end for no reason.

Jake: "You know, while we're just having a chat, here. What in God's name is the plan?"

Bennari: Sadly, it's not mine to tell. If it were my creation, I'd be happy to brag about it. But it was his mind that came up with it. And I know how upset I would be if he stole my thunder.

Jake: "Yeah, but can I try to sell you on something, here? Because we don't know it. You believe in it. What if we believe in it, and we just don't know it? If you tell us, we may have no problem here. We might go, 'Oh shit -- that's a great call. Yeah. We will sit down and have a chat. Out of your hair. Done forever.'"

Tass: "He literally came for my soul. And I can tell you right here and now there are not many, but a couple of things, I would willingly give my soul to accomplish."

Rev: Jake, roll Parley.

Jake: Four.

Bennari: Something tells me that you just wouldn't see it the same way I do. We have different priorities.

Rev: And he holds up his left hand and he points at the wall and he starts swirling his hand around, and some blue light appears on his fingertips. And it looks like a window appears on the wall, and you see Knottermore by the Bay.

Bennari: The vision that he and I share has a lot of wiggle room for the greater good. Wiggle room, I imagine, that you wouldn't allow. Right now, for instance, that's not just a pretty illusion. That is actually the view of the city at this moment.

Rev: He swipes his hand, and you see the perspective turn. And coming towards Knottermore, you see a huge dark wood Man of War, surrounded by 12, 13, 14 smaller boats, all flying the flag of the Monarchs of the Moon.

Bennari: I would say they'll make a landing in 10 minutes or so. And they have one goal: to see what happens when they go through your portal. So you can stay here and deal with me, or go save the world.

Rev: And he reaches out his hand again towards that little window and moves it. And you see the eye turn back towards the city. And there's a dock -- you've been on it -- it sticks the furthest out.

Bennari: Now, it is not difficult for me to contact them. If, before they make landfall, I see the three of you standing there, I'll call them off. By the time you are able to make it back, Nash will be finished and you can all go home.

Jake: "Uh ..."

Tass: "Do you mind if we huddle for a moment?"

Bennari: No, please. I've got nothing but time.

Tass: OK. I'm going to pull Jake and T.J. into a little huddle. "OK, I'll go back right now. I'll get through the portal, tell Rev to disrupt it, and jump back through. That way, the pirates can't get through."

Jake: "And so T.J. and I ...?"

Tass: "Kick his ass!"

Jake: "We stay here."

Tass: "Yes!"

Jake: "We kick his ass. And you take on a village full of pirates?"

Tass: "I think so."

Jake: "OK. We'll try and whoop his ass and get him to give up where Nash is. Or barring that I guess, we just go through him and figure out where Nash is on our own. Does that sound square to you, T.J.?"

Teej: "That sounds about right to me."

Jake: "OK. I'm OK with this."

Teej: "All right. Statue of Liberty play ..."

All: [Chuckle]

Jake: "I don't think we can call this anything but Hail Mary."

Tass: "Jake, give me the bracer."

Jake: I do. "Go close that portal."

Tass: "Say when."

Teej: "Landara, are you ready?"

Rev: LANDARA: For fuckin' what?

Teej: "We're going to fuck this guy up. You want to join us?"

Rev: LANDARA: Oh, god. I guess. Is this the guy that I'm supposed to ...

Jake: "Not. We have to get through him."

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah. I was gonna say, this is one of the lords of the Dead Isles. I didn't think he was not from here.

Jake: "No, his doppelganger is."

Teej: "Well, is there a law that, like, if you do the final blow, that you become the lord of this particular part of the Isle?"

Jake: "I don't suppose you are already a lord in the Dead Isles, are you?"

Rev: LANDARA: Oh, yeah. Yeah. It's a real Prince and the Pauper thing. I'm just hanging out in a dive bar on a cat litter island, too filled with sand.

Teej: "All right. Just wondered, you know?"

Rev: LANDARA: Sorry. Suddenly gotten very stressful.

Jake: "We don't have to stop Bennari, but we have to get him to tell us where Nash is. And if he won't, well, then we just kill him anyway. He's in the way of our goal."

Rev: LANDARA: Oh, OK.

Rev: And in the background of this huddle, Bennari has gotten off his throne and he's like putting his coat on the back of it, and he's pulling a long rapier out of a sheath on the side of the throne.

Jake: "Tass, we're probably going to need a stock of potions. So if you could ..."

Tass: I drop my bag and slide the bracer on.

Rev: All right. So you take 2 points of permanent damage, but the bracer is on you and you feel it humming.

Tass: And I'm going to hit it.

Rev: All right, Tass. Roll Room of Teleport. This is +Int.

Tass: Nine.

Rev: So Tass, you appear back in Haven, but it is in the dining room. It is not in the teleportation room.

Tass: Aww dammit. I'm going to haul ass.

Rev: So as you run through the dining room on your way to the teleportation room, you get into the workshop, and Grandpa Tincher is there. And he looks startled to see you.

Tass: "Hey, yeah, sorry. We just left, but I've got to fix the thing --"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: No, no. What's your name again?

Tass: "Tass."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes. Yes. There was you, and my grandson, and another one.

Tass: "Yes. Jake. Are you OK?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes. Yes. Where -- where are we?

Tass: "We're in the Haven. It's like a ... I don't even know. It's a -- it's a hideout that Jake found."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: You came to find me.

Tass: "Yes. We came to save you, or whatever. Whatever we can."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes, I ... Oh god, it's so hard to explain. Um ... I have messed with so much time and magic around time, my mind, it doesn't ... It doesn't always sync up correctly, and I lose track of where and when I am sometimes. Did I tell you what I found?

Tass: "You told us about the piece of paper. The thing that can ..."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes.

Tass: "Yeah, yeah, yeah."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes. The thing that will -- it will reset the portal. So when you have come through, if you put this in before you go back, it will reset your time so it's like you never left.

Tass: "Right."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: You have to take it.

Tass: "OK?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: You have to take it. This is what I came to find. I knew that if Nash found it first, it was over.

Rev: And he pops his wrist open again and you see the gears of his left hand, and he pulls out the piece of paper and gives it to you.

Tass: "Oh, boy. All right."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: So when you get ready to head back home, throw this through and it will be like you never left. Your time will snap back to the moment you left. But don't do it until you're ready to go back, because the world will still go on. Like I said,

I have had a lot of experience, a lot of time trying to figure out how the time works. This essentially is a -- is a rewind. It's a -- it's a saved place for where you were.

Tass: "OK."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: But be careful. Because there is, at least, Nash. I don't know if there's anyone else who is going to other worlds, but ... Say that Nash is gone. Say he's here, and you haven't thrown this through yet. If he goes back, that's the most recent breach of that world's time. So when you put it through, you'd go back to when he came out, instead of when you went in.

Tass: "Oh ..."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: He's reset the marker. He's put new ripples in the pool.

Tass: "Even if it's a different portal. It's just that time ripple that it's kind of feeding off of."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes, because it's still hitting your world. You share a world with him. So you're on that same link.

Tass: "Oh, god. OK. Oh shit. Yeah, I'll -- I'll keep it safe, I promise."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: I remember there was a book. The big metal one, he gave me a book.

Tass: "Yeah. Should be around here, somewhere."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yeah. And you look around, and it's on the table.

Tass: "OK. Yeah. This is ... This is Estin's. He did the traveling portals and stuff, so should have a lot of good stuff in here."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes. About ... About home. About how to get back. Because I can't -- I can't get back, you understand. I can't go through back to my home, because the way that the body works, I've lived these hundreds of years and it will all hit me, because that's -- that's where I'm from. And it'll be like I've aged twelve, thirteen hundred years in a go.

Tass: "Oh, god. So you can't come back with us?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Unless there's something in this book.

Tass: "OK. I mean, we're on a time crunch, here. As soon as this thing is ready to pop off, I have to get back through or there are going to be hundreds of pirates coming through to our world."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: What?

Tass: "They're attacking. They're attacking Knottermore. They're going to be there any minute. And I was going to go disrupt the portal so that they can't get through."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: We'll talk about this more later. If I ... If I'm bad, when you come back ...

Tass: "Mmhmm?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: There's a song ... This sounds ridiculous. There's a song. It was about the -- the soldier who wanted to be home for the holidays. Um ...

Rev: And you can see that he's starting to -- like, his eyes are starting to gloss a little bit.

Tass: "Uh, OK. Yeah, I think I know the one you mean, maybe?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: If I seem out of it, sing. Sing that. It reminds me of when I left. I can use it to pull myself back, but sometimes I forgets as I'm going, and ... [Hums "I'll Be Home For Christmas"]

Tass: "Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Absolutely. I got it. Yes."

Rev: And his eyes clear a little bit, and he goes over to the desk.

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Be careful.

Tass: "You too."

Rev: Jake and T.J., Bennari is coming down the steps in front of his throne.

Bennari: It really doesn't have to be this way. You could save so many lives. Just go back to Knottermore by the Bay.

Teej: I want to turn around, and, "I was wondering if maybe we could share that drink."

Bennari: I think we're past that, don't you?

Teej: "Yeah, we are." And I run towards him. And as I'm sprinting, I'm pressing the button on my belt.

Rev: Jake, what are you doing?

Jake: I was waiting for this sick one liner, and when he starts sprinting, I just go, "Oh, shit!" And I follow -- follow after him.

Rev: OK. And what are you going to try to do?

Jake: I'm going to try to grab him. I'm going to try to get him in my inescapable grasp.

Rev: All right. So you both charge at him. TJ grows -- roll your Belt of Embiggening.

Teej: Hey, not bad. A three.

Rev: You grow three times your normal size. And as the two of you sprint towards him, he leaps into the air and lands on the ground behind you, and the two of you collide into one another. And you both take 2 points of armor-defeating damage.

Bennari: I promise you, if you would just go, it'll be easier. You asked me before how I knew you weren't going to get to Grigori in time ...

Rev: And he reaches into the collar of his shirt and pulls out a necklace that you both recognize. It is the Necklace of the North Winds.

Bennari: My dear fellows, it's because I've seen this already.

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: So now for a moment behind the curtain. The Necklace of the North Winds, as some of you might remember, grants its bearer a vision of the next 24 hours. And if they do something to change the outcome of an event they saw that day, then the vision they saw is void now, as things will now play out differently. So I needed to figure out how to make a fair combat with a character who is in possession of this necklace. So what I decided to do is I have written down what I think your first moves would be in combat

against Bennari, and sealed it. And it is in that envelope that has been sitting in front of my Game Master screen, here. So if I guessed correctly, that means in his vision, he anticipated what you were going to do and is able to use any of his moves or powers or magic items that he might have to defend himself. If what I guessed is not correct, then he didn't anticipate you. And if he wants to avoid or counter what you're about to do to him, it means the necklace showed him this outcome and he is actively using the knowledge provided by the necklace to avoid it. So his vision of this day would no longer play out now. So if you would please, open this envelope.

Tass: [Laughs]

Jake: We have to open ...

Teej: Together. Because, yeah. Yay.

Rev: So Jake, what does yours say?

Jake: Charge.

Rev: Uh-huh. And then?

Jake: Hit/grab.

Rev: OK. What's yours say, T.J.?

Teej: Grow large.

Rev: Uh-huh.

Teej: Attack with the flail.

Jake: T.J.

Teej: Yes?

Jake: We're predictable.

Tass: [Laughs]

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: So here the two of you are, standing in Bennari's great hall. You have both just charged at him, he has leapt over you, and he has pulled out the Necklace of the North Wind, that you both recognize from your encounter with Strohm.

Jake: "T.J."

Teej: "Yeah?"

Jake: "I don't think we're going to win a straight fight with this guy."

Teej: "I agree. As much as I want to pummel this guy, I think you're right. Yeah."

Jake: "But here's -- here's what I'm thinking." And I kind of bring ... Because Bennari's, I mean, he's just content to, like, let us waste time, right?

Rev: Absolutely. Yeah.

Jake: I kind of bring T.J. in a little bit, and I'm like, "What if I just start, like you know, smashing through walls, right? And then if, like, there's guards on the side of a wall, he put them there. So we know that he changed the vision. And then we just barrel through this castle, and maybe we find Nash anyway, and we can put a stop to him."

Teej: "What are the odds that we're even going to find Nash in this castle? He may be somewhere completely different. He could be on a mountainside, for all we know. And this castle, I'm sure it's got to be huge."

Jake: "But that's our job, right? Like, we gotta -- we stop the bad guy."

Teej: "I know. And this is one of those times where it's the lesser of two evils. If we can get back to Knottermore and save Knottermore, we've got a guaranteed win on our belts. And also just having Tass there by himself to protect an entire town? That ain't cool."

Jake: Fuck, that was a good piece. I was like thinking like, oh man, I'm going to, like, Kolvar died for this, though. Like, Kolvar died for this. This is the hill I die on. But being like, oh, we just sent Tass off by himself. Like, how many friends am I going to let die alone for this? Good piece, T.J.

Teej: [Chuckles]

Jake: I think that's it. I think that just stops me in my tracks. Like, I might have been preparing an argument, and that's the end of it. "All right. We'll get out of here." I'll turn to Landara. "He's got a fancy necklace that means he's seen this entire day. This fight was lost before it started. We -- we gotta go. If we go back to Knottermore, he'll spare it."

Rev: LANDARA: What about that Nash guy? Thought you said he was the one that I had to have your help with to get rid of.

Jake: He's going to do his ... Whatever they're doing. And then his business here is done. And we lose, but he'll leave. And we'll leave. And your job's done. You did it."

Rev: And she turns to Ben-Ari.

Rev: LANDARA: Hey, uh ... Is that true, what he's saying? Is your buddy going to leave when he's done doing whatever he's doing?

Bennari: Yes. He will most assuredly be gone once he is finished. He has, after all, got other irons in the fire.

Jake: "The best we can hope for is that we can find a different one of those irons and maybe quench that one instead."

Rev: LANDARA: All right. Well, let's get the hell out of here, then. This place was dead anyways.

Jake: [Chuckles]

Rev: LANDARA: It's a place with undead, anyways.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: I'll turn back to Bennari. "OK. We can't beat you. I get it. We'll go back to the docks, you call off the pirates."

Bennari: You have my word.

Jake: "I hope so, because if you go back on that, there's not a force in any universe that will stop me from coming for you." And I'll grab T.J. and Landara take us back.

Rev: And the three of you appear back at Haven, inside of the teleportation room. And TJ, you are back to normal size. And just outside of the door, Tass is standing, talking to Grandpa Tincher. And Grandpa Tincher has just turned away and started thumbing through Estin's book.

Tass: "That was quick."

Jake: "He had Strohm's necklace."

Tass: "Shut up."

Jake: "Yeah. There was ... There's no win. This is the only guaranteed win we have. We go back to Knottermore, we stop the pirates."

Rev: And Grandpa Tincher turns around at your voices.

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Thank you all for coming to save me. I don't know what I would have become if I had been stuck, just, in that prison for what seems to be an immortal life.

Tass: "He's a little more lucid at the moment."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes, it comes and it goes. After about nine hundred years, I started messing with magics that I probably should not have to try to figure out a way to get home. And messing with that type of magic, it affects your brain and your perception of things. Wait -- did you say that he was able to see the day?

Jake: "Yeah, he's got this necklace that we've -- we encountered back home. It's called the North Wind, the Necklace of the North Wind --"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: The Necklace of the North Wind. That's how I lost this hand, was trying to get the Necklace of the North Wind.

Tass: "Oh, my god."

Jake: "Were you, like, helping Bennari or anything? How did he end up with it?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: He's the one who took my hand.

Jake: "Oh."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes. It was kind of a race for it. And I got it. And I was just a little, I don't know, delusional of, "Oh, I have beat someone else who is looking for an ancient relic" and did not think that his next move would be to spin around and lop it off at the wrist and take the prize.

Jake: "This guy's really just gotten all of us dead to rights at one point or another, huh?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes. Nash has been feeding him. They share information amongst one another, because some things that exist in your world exist here. Not all things, not many things, but some things. And it's the same across all of the worlds, I think. I haven't seen it myself. But there are things that reoccur and reappear. And Nash seems to know what things are in what worlds, so he knows where to go to find what he needs. I came here to find something about him. I thought, foolishly, that this was the only place he was coming. And so I thought I could come here to get information on him, and I ... I trapped myself. I couldn't get home.

Tass: "Well, we'll work on that. Because we want to make sure that you can come back through without melting. But right now, we have to go save a town."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes. Yes, go. I will look over this -- this book. It may have answers. Just even flipping through the first few pages, there's many details here on many other worlds.

Rev: And as he turns back to the book, your gem is ready to go again.

Tass: "OK, I can go through. I don't know that that's enough. We're doing a full stop, then? Just stopping the pirates?"

Jake: "I think T.J. was right. I think it is the -- the guaranteed win is the best course of action."

Tass: "Yeah. Yeah, you're right. We almost put a lot of people on the line. But the needs of the many just shifted, didn't it?"

Jake: "Yep."

Tass: "All right. Do we all three have to be there?"

Teej: "Yeah, we have to be on the dock, and he's got to see us."

Jake: "You can go ahead though, if you want. Maybe at least warn Yaga, in case he goes back on his word."

Tass: "Yeah. All right."

Rev: All right. Roll Room of Teleportation.

Tass: [Sighs] Seven.

Rev: All right. Tass, you appear in Knottermore, not at Baba Yaga's house, but inside The Likely Pair -- the bar where you met Nyx.

Tass: God. Close enough. And I'm going to run out and just head to Baba as fast as I can. Matter of fact, I will probably turn into like a hawk and fly, just to do it faster.

Rev: All right. Roll Shapeshift.

Tass: Oh, seven.

Rev: All right. You get 2 hold.

Tass: All right. I'm just going to haul tail feathers.

Rev: Yeah. I think that you can just use one of those holds to get there insanely fast.

Tass: OK, absolutely.

Rev: And you get there, and -- it's kind of nice out. The door is actually open. And she is sitting inside at the table.

Tass: "Baba, hi."

Rev: BABA YAGA: Oh hello.

Tass: "I ... OK, so there are pirates. They're incoming. Their plan is to sack the town and swarm the portal. I think we can stop them. The other two are on their way. As long as we get to the dock in the next couple of minutes, which we should, they should be called off. But in case somebody goes back on their word, I don't know what the hell to do to defend this town. So, cheers. Letting you know. Heading to the dock to try to stop it."

Rev: BABA YAGA: All right. Good luck.

Tass: "You too."

Rev: At this time, I think that your gem is ready, Jake.

Jake: OK. Then I'm going to try to take us straight to the dock.

Rev: All right. Jake, roll Teleport.

Jake: Eleven.

Rev: The two of you vanish and reappear at the dock at Knottermore. And you look out to sea, and the naval force of the Monarchs of the Moon is bearing down on you. And actually being here now, there is the sound of drums coming from the ships, and the din of panicking people behind you. But all that sound seems to fade away as you see this hulking figure walk up to the front of the Man of War. And it tilts its head back to the sky and lets out a long, deep howl that cuts through the air.

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.

Rev: So we are here after the episode with our very special guest, who was kind enough to voice Bennari for us. One of the creators of Dungeon World, Sage Latorra. Thanks so much for joining us.

Sage Latorra: No problem. I'm happy to be here. And thanks for having me, this is super exciting. I had never done any work like that before, and ... Yeah. Being able to drop into somebody's game kind of remotely? What an experience.

Rev: Anastacia, who listeners are familiar with -- she has created some drinks for us, she's also the namesake for one of the mentors for the team -- happens to be a friend of Sage's. And she was like, "Oh, are you going to try to have a guest for Dungeon World?" I was like, "Oh, yeah. They're probably too busy." She's like, "I know Sage. You should

contact him." So Anastacia, when you get here, thank you for telling me to email Sage, because now he's talking to us.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: Which is super exciting. So first off, can you talk to us a little bit about the process behind creating Dungeon World? Like, what was your mindset? What was your initial desire behind this?

Sage Latorra: The funny part is the initial desire was actually to play the game. So at our local small convention here in the Seattle area, Go Play Northwest ... Oh gosh, seven plus years ago? Like, the game is about seven years old now. So something more than that. Both Adam Koebel and I were there, and our friend Tony Dowler had brought what he called Apocalypse DnD, which was like this little ... Like, a couple of pages of notes on how to take a copy of Apocalypse World and a copy of a 1st edition Player's Handbook and combine them and play a game kind of on the fly with them. And so one of the first slots of the con, I played that game and I thought it was amazing, and basically hounded Tony until he gave me his notes so that I could do it. And I ended up running it for Adam. And then afterwards I asked Tony, like, "Hey, can I like maybe put these sheets together and, like, make a little play kit?" And he was like, "Oh, yeah, sure." And Adam was like, "Oh, sure. I'll take a look at those and we'll, like, collaborate on them. Like, it'd be great to help that out." And then it just kind of snowballed from there. And eventually Adam and I kind of asked Tony, "Hey, can we -- can we take this and run with it?" And he was like, "Oh yeah, sure." And we knew the name Apocalypse DnD wasn't going to get past anybody.

All: [Laugh]

Sage Latorra: So we had to name it something else. And yeah, it was -- it was a crazy ride. A lot of collaboration. I think a lot of it came from where Adam and I were, kind of in our lives at the time. Both of us had office jobs that gave us a lot of time to email back and forth. And so we would just kind of hang out and spend a lot of time talking with each other about DnD over email, basically. And that became Dungeon World.

Rev: You know, for me, one of my favorite things about this game. I love how the Defy Danger, the Act Under Pressure, picks the stat that it's based off of. It's not just the flat stat. It's based off of the danger of what you're trying to overcome. You know, all Powered by the Apocalypse games kind of have their special flair, their special pieces. What were some of the things that led you towards kind of the special flavors that you

put in to change it from Apocalypse World to what you ended up with in Dungeon of the -
-

Jake: Dungeon of the Week!

Rev: Dungeon of the Week.

Sage Latorra: Dungeon of the Week! I know we're making next. Dungeon of the Week, for sure.

Rev: [Laughs] Uh, in Dungeon World.

Sage Latorra: Yeah, I think a lot of where we ended up working from is basically how DnD felt to play for both of us at kind of like our peak DnD age, basically? For me that was like late high school. I had a couple of friends, we'd meet up every week and play for like an entire afternoon, and then sometimes more on the weekends. And a lot of it was trying to unpack why that worked and what was special about it, and then finding other ways to represent that. Like, I think Apocalypse World is a great way to think about game design. And so it was the right lens for us to take all those experiences and think about how do we make them happen in kind of a more direct way. My experience with going back to the DnD that I first played, which is 3rd edition, is ... It doesn't really do much for me anymore. And so trying to unpack why that is. Like, I've changed, for sure. The game hasn't really changed. But why do I have such fond memories of it? Why was it so great then? And how can I cut to that part of it and kind of fit that into the time that I have now? You know, I used to read through, at one point, pretty much everything that Wizards put out for 3rd edition, I would at least skim through. And that was quite a collection. And these days I'm lucky if I can keep up with a few games that are coming out. And so finding the mechanics and the gameplay that can fit into the time that I have and get straight to the point was a big part of it.

Tass: So when you're building a game, what is like the most exciting part for you? What's the thing that really kind of gets you jazzed about creation?

Sage Latorra: I think there's a few things. Like there's the moment when you have an idea that, like, cracks something. That is one of my favorite parts of design, is when there's something that I've been stuck on for a while and I don't know how to make it work, or I don't know how to solve this problem. And then something just clicks into place, and all of a sudden I have a solution. And honestly, half the time it's not even the right solution. I play it with somebody and it's like, "Oh, no, that didn't actually help at all. Never mind." But that moment where you think you figured something out is just magic.

And actually, at this point, you know, it's been long enough since we wrote Dungeon World that I look back on some pieces of it, and I see some of those things. I have some ideas of how I might stitch together some different solutions to different problems. The other really exciting part for me is hearing people play the game. The fact that other people get so much joy out of this is one of my favorite things I've done in my life, honestly, in a lot of ways? Like, I've gotten so many stories from people of how much fun they've had with something that I've contributed to. And I don't know, it's a weird kind of like mental math, but I, in a real small way, feel like it makes the world a little better place, you know? It brings some happiness and joy to people, and that ... It's one of my bigger contributions to the overall happiness of the world, as small as it is. But I like to hear people tell me anything, really. I mean, it's also actually kind of fun to have people tell me why they don't like the game?

All: [Laugh]

Tass: Oh, man ...

Sage Latorra: Especially, honestly, the people who are super over the top about it. I have a pretty thick skin and kind of enjoy the people who, like, completely miss the point and rant about how bad the game is. And so, like anything, just knowing that these ideas provoked a reaction from people and that reaction was mostly positive, is still something that I'm really proud of.

Rev: I think one of the elements of this game that's really unique, especially compared to some of the other games that we've played through, is the way that it's not just a shared narrative, but there's also so much shared world creation. So many of the moves result in the the Keeper saying, how do you know that? Why do you know this? Was there any particular intent behind that, other than just helping everybody be more a part of the storytelling?

Sage Latorra: There's a couple levels intent behind it. So the first level of intent, I actually have to give a lot of credit to John Harper -- author of Blades in the Dark, several other great games. He, especially around the time that we were working on Dungeon World, John's part of my regular gaming group. So we were gaming one night a week and then hanging out at a bar one other night a week. And so he's kind of the silent third partner of Dungeon World in a lot of ways. But the way that he runs games, he does that a lot. It's a mental flip that takes people some time. But like, when the rules say something happens and you're not sure why that makes sense, you take a step back and ask everybody at the table to figure out, OK, the rules have told us this happened -- how do we know that? Like, how did this flow from the things we already know? And so when

designing Dungeon World, a lot of that kind of got baked in without me necessarily thinking about why. It was just kind of our table style at the time. And since then, as other people have encountered it, and for them it's not what they're used to, it's made me think a lot more about why it works. And I think a lot of that is that the magic of role playing games is how many different people are at the table and bringing their own perspectives. And you don't have to always be coming up with the most amazing creative thing. By having those kinds of questions that ask somebody at the table to add something, you're getting something that isn't from your own head -- for everybody else at the table. And that always has a little bit of magic to it. It's never quite what you expect. And it's part of how, in addition to dice and other types of randomness, you keep a lot of the unknown in the game. Because you're drawing bits and pieces from every person on the table, and that means that what comes out isn't any one person's vision. It's something that's kind of new and interesting to everybody. And so that's kind of why that style works, I think. I mean, 90 percent of game design is finding something that's fun and then trying to understand why it's fun, and you're never going to get all the way there. But that's at least my understanding of kind of why a lot of those things have resonated for me, and why they stuck around in the game.

Jake: You have mentioned a couple of times ways that you've thought about like, "Oh, this is what I would fix," or things that you've kind of ironed out. Is there -- do you have any plans or in any capacity to, like, implement any of those? Is there a Dungeon World 2nd edition down the road? Or a supplementary release, or anything like that in mind?

Sage Latorra: I mean, Adam and I have kind of said a few times, we will probably do a 2nd edition. The question is really when we have the right set of things to do for it. We don't want to do just a 2nd edition because people like the game and want more of it. We don't -- neither of us actually really rely on Dungeon World as our primary income. And so we kind of want to keep it as this thing that we create because we have something to contribute and something to say. You know, we're getting far enough that I think I have some of the kind of critical distance to look at it and start to see some of those things. But we definitely don't have any kind of timeline or anything set up. Over the years, I actually have a notebook that I've kind of like, been scratching ideas in every time I, like, get to play Dungeon World again, or encounter something in another game that resonates. But I have no idea when we'll actually use those, or kind of if. I think editions are a tricky thing in roleplaying games. Like, there's this expectation because DnD is kind of like the way, that lots of games get a new edition over time. And that can be great. Like, in a lot of ways for Dungeons and Dragons, it's worked really well. But I don't think it has to be the way that it works. Which I guess is a really roundabout answer to say, like ... Probably someday, but we don't know when.

Jake: No, I love that. I mean, I think there's ... Boy, there's a lot of integrity to that answer. Just like, oh, I don't just want to do it because it's expected, I'm going to do it when there's a good idea. Like, you know, you hear about film directors that have that mentality and it's always a strong idea to have. I really respect that concept in game design.

Sage Latorra: Well, thanks. And take myself down a notch is also kind of practical, and not like if ... Making the game is a lot of work. And if we're going to put in that amount of work, it's not just going to be for churning out another hunk of paper for people to buy? Like I want -- if I'm going to put that much time into something, for it to be something that there's a real strong kind of like need, from me as a creator, for it to exist. I know that lots of folks have told us, like, you know, please tell me everything you would change, and I don't care if I have to paste it into the book myself. But I really want it to be something that maybe captures a little bit of that magic of creating it the first time. I kind of talked earlier about how great a time period that was, kind of collaborating with Adam on that. And it actually makes me think of the way that sometimes we talk about Dungeon World, when we're talking about selling people at conventions as they stop by a booth or whatever. We'll say that Dungeon World plays kind of like you remember DnD playing. It doesn't play the way that you actually played it, it plays the way that you remember it feeling. And in some ways that kind of nostalgia is what I have for the creation process of Dungeon World now. In that like, I want to find a way to approach it, if we ever do a 2nd edition, that brings us back -- some of that collaboration. Which is going to be tough. Adam and I have both, since having our nice office jobs where we could email each other about DnD all day, have developed careers and, like, other obligations. And so it'll be tough for us to find the right way to do it. But we get this question pretty often, and I think our answer is basically probably someday -- when we find the right way, and the right thing to say.

Rev: You know, I had said before how much I liked the Defy Danger, using the different stats based off what the threat was. The other thing that I really latched onto as we played through this was Spout Lore, and the fail. I think that 95 percent of the time, with the fail on Spout Lore, I always went to "you know an unfortunate truth." Because I love the idea that, oh, it's not that some bad thing has happened or you don't know anything, but that the world has now become a little worse, a little more dangerous, because of what you know. And so that was something that I loved and latched on to. Someone in our Reddit pointed out that that's the only one I ever really went to, because I thought it was just such a great narrative device that the world literally change and becomes more dangerous based off this roll. And it changes all over the world, now. Not just in this one moment, but if, say, they're rolling, you know, a Spout Lore on a troll. Now all trolls in the world work this way. It's not just a bad moment. It's a -- it's a much worse environment, now. Is there something, just off the top of your head that -- you know, you talked about

the things that you would change? What's something that you made in here, a move or something that you loved, and you know you still love it?

Sage Latorra: Oh, man. There's actually a lot. From a, like, very practical design perspective, I think most of the core moves of the game are pretty much ideal still, for me. I'm, you know, maybe shooting myself in the foot in that, like, if we get in this design process, maybe I'll figure out better versions of all the basic moves with Adam's help.

Rev: I can't think of a time where we needed to roll a move and we weren't sure which one to use, which is not always the case with Powered by the Apocalypse games.

Tass: Yeah, yeah.

Rev: A lot of times you get a move and you're like, "Well, this is kind of right." Or, "It kind of answers my question, but not quite." But I never feel like we encountered that.

Sage Latorra: Yeah. Like I think for the most part, our basic moves work really well. And the only reason ... I realize the way that I phrased that made it sound like Adam helps and I do it. But what I mean is, like, somebody else's perspective can knock you out of kind of what you're thinking and give you a new way to look at it. And so, yeah, I think the basic moves probably not an area that I'd immediately go to. There's a few very specific little bits of the game that I would have a hard time touching. Like of all things, the invisibility spell. The way that the invisibility spell is written is a super long running joke between Adam and I, because basically people kept on asking us what invisible means. Because they're coming from Pathfinder or DnD or whatever, where it's like "invisible" has these very specific, like, dice effects. And in Dungeon World, it doesn't. It means you're invisible. Nobody can see you. And so, like the spell literally says, like, "You're invisible. Nobody can see you." And like little -- little bits like that, I think are going to be the kinds of things that I associate with the game that, to me, kind of go back to that collaborative process and go back to the voice we have for the game. I think one of the aspects of Dungeon World that really resonates with people, that comes through in the writing of the book and the names of the moves in pretty much every part of the game, is kind of the voice that we have. And we spent a lot of time thinking about what our take on kind of the the dungeon-delving adventure genre is. And that voice, I think, is the most key thing, you know? Even if I'm completely wrong and Adam has some, like, burning insight that makes me realize all our basic moves are awful. And, you know, some editor tells me that invisibility actually has to say more than "you're invisible." Even if all those things change, I think the voice of the game is the, in some ways, the constant. Like that's the thing that, to me, is more Dungeon World than any given mechanic or any set of classes or any part of it, is kind of our perspective of dungeon crawling adventure. Which is this

combination of kind of like light hearted moment to moment, but with the actually very dramatic setup. We realized Ghostbusters is in some ways kind of the canonical Dungeon World movie. In that like it's a comedy -- there's lots of, like, messing around and goofy action. But when you get right down to it, it's about like the potential, basically, end of the world, and people literally saving the world. Like if you, you know, pulled a different soundtrack and stuck some different actors in, it's a drama. And that's kind of where Dungeon World lives. It lives in the fun light action, but with potential consequences that are a big deal. And it does that in a way that's maybe more pop culture aware than a lot of kind of fantasy role playing games. There's a real throughline in fantasy role playing games of like Tolkien-esque purism. Where you're like, we created our entire fantasy world and it describes everything about the entire history of everybody. Whereas our text and the way that we wrote the game brings in a lot more references to everything from like Clerks to Metal Gear Solid. Like ...

Jake: [Laughs] Yeah.

Sage Latorra: And that, I think, is part of the voice that hopefully we'll never lose, even if we come back to it.

Tass: I think a very clear byproduct of that is just this sense of accessibility to playing it. Not just, you know, oh, I got a reference. But you know, obviously Powered by the Apocalypse is going to be a little bit easier to access anyway. But I just think of every time I glanced over so many of these crunchier games that I just -- I feel tired, you know? I just, I'm like, "Oh, gosh, it's going to take me a while to want to play this." Until I can build a character over hours and hours and hours, and then be excited to play it. But, you know, even when we built these characters, we even took away a little bit of our own choice on purpose -- just for, you know, the story. But even with the choice we left ourselves, we were sitting around the table going, "God, I don't know which thing to pick. They're also good." Because it just felt accessible. So you might -- you kind of already touched on this. But I wanted to ask. For our Patreon content, I did a lot of research on superhero games -- Powered by the Apocalypse in particular. And one of the things that kept popping up was these creators having issue with how to create these playbooks or classes or whatever it might be while honoring, you know, the tropes that people expect, while also keeping it fresh. Boy oh boy is it my opinion that opinion that you guys sure did that. Do you feel like that was a tough process, to kind of honor some of the stuff people expected while keeping it an exciting new take on it?

Sage Latorra: I think it was, in some ways the entire process. Like that was the the hard part, was finding the right combination of how to talk about these things and how to represent them mechanically that resonates with people that is cool, that is effective in

the game, that drives gameplay. Like, you're balancing all these things. And that's part of why the collaboration to Dungeon World is super important. Like Adam and I both bring different things to the table. And the game is so clearly a mixture of both of us that, like, we couldn't have done it another way -- pretty literally. But the accessibility there for superhero games, I think is a big challenge for superhero games in general. Because you're either going to be creating your own characters who are always going to feel kind of like knock offs, or you're going to be trying to replicate an existing character and then it's going to be potentially feel a little kind of fan fiction-y. Which ... There is some awesome fan fiction. But fan fiction in the, uh ... I don't even want to use in the pejorative sense. It's going to feel a little imitation, I guess, is what I'm trying to get at. I think it's certainly possible to do right. So like I have a couple of kind of insights into this from a couple of different other designs that I've worked on. So actually for Blades in the Dark, I have a light hack of it that is super villains -- especially low level super villains -- in a big city with big heroes. And the way I approach the playbooks there, I tried to make sure that every playbook represented at least a few different villains that I could think of, that shared something in common in some way, and made sure that the moves really clearly called out. Like, you kind of see aspects of these different villains all there, so that you start to see both a throughline, and the different ways you could kind of branch out. So you could make the character who is kind of the Superman analog -- the evil Superman analog. Well, evil ... The not law-abiding Superman analog, let's say. But you can see elements of various other kind of like strange visitor characters there, from Martian Manhunter to Wonder Woman. Like, there's moves that kind of specifically call those out, if you look at them a little carefully, which is part of where that pop culture referencing really comes in. Like when you give people little kind of seeds to see where you're coming from, they start to get that connection, even if it's not super direct. You know, I'm not saying like choose whether to make the Martian Manhunter or Superman or Wonder Woman, but you can see those elements there. Another place this came up is a design that I've worked on for a long time and is still really unfinished, called A Storm Eternal, which is basically doing Game of Thrones. It's based on ... Vincent started to do his own take on Game of Thrones, called Apocalypse World: Dark Ages -- Dark Age? Something like that. And so with with John Harper and our friends, Paul and Shannon Riddle, we were playing this and we kind of just kept on drifting it ourselves. And so we kind of came up with a name for it. And if you Google it, you'll find a few results for it and maybe my old playbooks and stuff. But the cool thing about the playbooks there is that they all very clearly can be at least kind of two characters from the show. So there's one called The Outlaw Heir, which is somebody who should have been the heir to some important land, but who has been divested and is trying to get it back. And you can look at that as either the Greyjoys or Dany, and the moves kind of explicitly call out these options. But they are also -- each of those characters shows up in other ways as well. So like the other side of Dany is being kind of like the one who is promised with like

supernatural powers and mother of dragons stuff. And that's actually a separate playbook. And so by splitting things up that way, you give people that kind of mix and match feeling of like I can see parts of this character here, but I'm also not just making the exact character I know, which I think in superheroes is really important. Like if you give people the playbook that really clearly lets you make Daredevil or whatever, it's going to be kind of boring to make your Daredevil with a different name. But if you find a common line between, whatever, Daredevil and Batman and clearly let people navigate their own gray area there, you start to get something that feels a little better. Sorry, I know I've been talking for a long time, but the one other thing I wanted to mention on that one: these kind of pop culture references have been really rough on the people who have translated Dungeon World.

Sage Latorra: [Laughs] Oh, no.

Sage Latorra: We had a really long conversation with some Italians, trying to explain the Berserker joke from Clerks --

All: [Laugh]

Sage Latorra: And what "my love for you is like a truck" actually means. And yeah, it was ... It has been very tough for everybody to get their minds around it. And I think there's at least some translations out there that have been very literal and probably mean something entirely different.

Teej: Do you have any new projects that you can tell us about?

Sage Latorra: Unfortunately, my biggest project is very secret right now. I just had a secret meeting last night about something that I'm super excited about. But hopefully later this year, I'll get to talk about that a little bit.

Rev: That's totally fair.

Sage Latorra: My most recent stuff that I'll go ahead and throw out there is a game called Catch the Devil. It's a smaller Powered by the Apocalypse world -- Powered by the Apocalypse game, designed for kind of shorter 1 to 3 session play in the style of like True Detective, or even a little bit of X Files, maybe a bit of Stranger Things. So you're normal people caught up in something supernaturally wrong, and you are trying to survive, basically. You're not necessarily Cthulhu-style investigators trying to get to the bottom of something. But so, trying to run away is a completely reasonable response. But this thing, in some ways, has you in its target. So running away isn't going to necessarily be simple.

And the really cool mechanical thing that drives this: all the basic moves are the same for everybody, but each move can be wounded. So instead of taking HP damage, you take damage to your moves. And when a move is damaged, you get a worse version of it. The thing is, you don't know what your worse version is until you're in that situation. Because typically people don't know how they're going to respond to being wounded or under stress or whatever until they're in that situation. So I got to play this with some friends at Gen Con a few months back. And we had ... They were a bachelorette party on a bus to Las Vegas that strange things started happening in the middle of nowhere. And the bus is flipping over and people are freaking out and they're fighting their own instincts to go back into the bus for their friend, and there's strange lights in the woods. It's a lot of fun. It's been a design that I've worked on for a long time and some friends kind of pushed me to, like, just get it out there. And I'm really happy with where it ended up. And it's -- since it's a smaller game, it's also super reasonably priced. So if you would like to support me and my work, please go check it out. It's available on Drive Through and Itch. And long term, I'd love to kind of revisit it and turn it into a longer game maybe, and it'll be updated for anybody who's already bought it. So if you think you might want to see more of it, you can get it now at a cheap price. And if I ever update it, you will get even more game for the same amount of money.

Rev: So with the, uh, the things that you can talk about and the things that you can't, where can people find you? Where can they follow you? So that later down the road when you can talk about secret meeting, they'll know what's coming down the pipeline?

Sage Latorra: The best place to follow me is probably actually Twitter. From there you can find all that other stuff -- I usually talk about it one way or another. My screen name is olde_fortran, with an e and an underscore between the "old" and "fortran." And my personal website is unfortunately really hard to tell people how to get to. It's svirfnebl.in -- the rock gnomes, but with a dot before the "in." So if you look up a Monster Manual, find the the strange dark gnomes, and put a dot before the "in," you'll find my personal website which has some blog posts and stuff on it.

Jake: Excellent.

Rev: Awesome.

Jake: This leads me to the most important question of the evening, actually.

Sage Latorra: Oh, good. I'm glad we're getting there.

Jake: What was your motive for excluding the humble and lovable gnome as a playable race in Dungeon World?

All: [Laugh]

Sage Latorra: I think mostly that with gnomes, no matter what, I feel like you're walking a really fine line on how seriously you take them. And since the game already is including a lot of ... Not quite jokey stuff, but it is not taking itself too seriously. I think we tried to be really careful with any fantasy stuff that came with too many of its own jokes. So there's unfortunately no gnomes, our halflings are very much more like hobbit-ish than kender, and we didn't have, like flumphs or some of the weirder monsters. Just because you're running a risk of it just becoming a, like, gazebo and magic missile the darkness kind of joke? Which was -- we didn't want to go there. Like, we didn't want this to be the joke game. It was supposed to be the game that doesn't take itself too seriously and you make jokes at the table, but the characters are not walking punchlines. Which I know there's going to be fans out there who are going to be really mad that I just called them walking punchlines. But it's the risk you take with gnomes.

Jake: They can deal with it. You have sold me 100 percent.

Tass: Yep.

Jake: This is a perfect argument.

Tass: As a gnome lover, you get my seal of approval. And everyone else can calm down.

Rev: He has a whole lineage. How many generations?

Tass: I think it is five generations of gnomes.

Rev: He has the whole family tree of the Coppercogs. And every game we have played in the last, I don't know, twelve years, one of them will pop up.

Sage Latorra: Oh, that's amazing.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: One or more of them.

Rev: Like one of them may die!

Jake: Their sibling shows up to take their place in the party.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: They even exist in our Patreon content. You guys just haven't found them yet.

Rev: Oh, no.

Sage Latorra: Oh man.

Rev: It's like the strangest Where's Waldo.

Sage Latorra: I have some friends who have the same thing for dwarves in one of their games. There's the the Hefty Metal clan of Dwarves --

Tass: Nice.

Sage Latorra: Who have popped up many places. If we ever -- if I ever have to make official Dungeon World names for anything again, there's definitely going to be some Hefty Metals in there. Which, oh man, the name lists. I don't think anybody has still found all the jokes that we hid in various name lists throughout the game. I'm pretty sure cause some of them were only funny to literally me and/or Adam. But yeah, there are jokes everywhere in those.

Rev: Well, thank you so much for joining us and for lending your voice to Bennari -- someone who has been plaguing the characters for over 30 episodes -- and for taking the time to chat with us here.

Sage Latorra: It has been a pleasure. Thank you so much for having me. And I'm glad that I could plague you all for 30ish episodes. I'm going to take credit for the whole thing now.

Jake: It's a shame. Because man, I really like you. But boy, I'm never going to be able to listen to your voice again.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: You've just -- you voiced an antagonist, now.

Rev: Every decision Bennari made, I've been emailing back and forth to Sage.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: In the moment, at the table. So every time there was like a --

Sage Latorra: Oh man, I'm just going to take more and more credit here. Yeah, just keep it coming. Sure.

Rev: And we are about at the end of our time in Dungeon World. So we're going to do another Q&A about the team's time here. So if you have any questions -- this is kind of a short window -- but if you can get us those questions by January 31st, we will answer those in kind of our Dungeon World Q&A, as we talk through our time here before we move on to the next story. So submit those questions to us through email. Or if you're on the Discord, you can put those in the Other Side of the Coin spoiler channel. We'll see you next week.

SFX:

OUTRO MUSIC