

A Little of the Old B&E (S3, E2)

SFX:

INTRO MUSIC

Rev: Have either of you two watched any of Kim and Megan playing Mystery Detectives on Thursday night?

Jake: Yeah, I ... [Chuckles] I tuned in right when they came to a keypad that they didn't have the code for. And I told them that I would Venmo both of them ten dollars if they guessed on the first try. But they didn't.

Tass: Just a little bit.

Rev: We've had -- the last two weeks they've been doing this, we've had other stuff scheduled that we're doing at the same time. But I got to tell you, watching them, even in the replay, it makes me feel like we've got to step up our Monday night streams. Like, they've got an audience in costume, they are in costume, they're solving murders ...

Tass: Wait, I've been in costume every time we've streamed. Am I not supposed to do that?

Rev: Wait, what's your definition of a costume in this situation?

Tass: Full Spider-Man, every time.

Jake: He's been wondering why the light on his webcam hasn't been on.

Tass: Yeah!

Rev: That's the problem, is I think we have to be costumes that go with the game.

Tass: Oh ...

Rev: Yeah. Although I would love to see Spider-Man in Modern Warfare.

Tass: [Laughs] Yep.

Jake: I mean, part of the problem is we just need to know what we're doing more than one minute before we start doing it.

Rev: Boy, that is so true. Like, I'm ready for some new games to come out so that we have kind of a queue of like, hey, this is what we're excited to play -- let's schedule that out for a while.

But if you have not had the opportunity to see Megan and Kim play Mystery Detectives on Thursday night, that is every Thursday night on Twitch.tv/TheCritshow, starting at 7:00 Eastern.

Really, I think our only other piece of news is that, as I assume everybody listening knows, Gen Con has been canceled and moved online. We will still be running some games for Gen Con. Gen Con Online still runs Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, and I believe the schedule for it releases this week. And then you can book your spots for games just a few days later, after they release the catalog. But we will be running some games on Friday and on Saturday. So you can look for the title Recruited by the IPT if you'd like to get in on one of those games. I think each of us is running two sessions of Monster of the Week throughout the course of Friday and Saturday. And with that, it's time to let the recap roll.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC

Tass: "I just wish there was a better way to know what the next place is."

Jake: "I mean, theoretically, there is a Yaga in every universe."

Rev: BABA YAGA: You have done great things in other places. I sense changes rippling. No one comes to my cottage without desiring something. What is it that you need?

Tass: "Yeah, there's just a world that we want to go to, but it's been kind of a shock and/or surprise every time we go through. We're just really hoping for the advantage of at least knowing what hot water we're jumping into."

Rev: BABA YAGA: For this information, you must, as before, do something for me. There is an old burned down cottage and a rosebush. I need what is buried under that rosebush. It once was mine, and was taken. It is time for it to return home.

Jake: "On a scale from one to ten, how lethal is whatever we're going to encounter under the rosebush?"

Rev: BABA YAGA: Very.

Rev: A young woman -- fourteen, fifteen years old -- and she is carrying this skull at the end of a stick, with its glowing eyes. You're not able to stop yourself. You all turn and you look at it. And as you make eye contact with it, you burst into flames.

Directly behind the house is a fairly large rosebush. It's got two dozen beautiful roses blooming on it.

Tass: "I suppose we just start digging until we find something."

Jake: "Yeah. Like, should we blindfold ourselves?"

Rev: There is a crumbling sound. And Jake, you feel yourself fall forward and down. You see the claw marks on the walls, and the smell of death fills this place. You've fallen through the earth into a ghoulish tunnel.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC FADES

Rev: Jake, you have just fallen through the earth, removed your blindfold, and realized you were inside of a ghoulish tunnel. What are you doing?

Jake: If I give chase, am I going to lose my last 2 hold? Will it cease to be relevant?

Rev: It's hard to say. There's a chance that you might lose the hold. It depends on if the scene ... If the locale changes, I think.

Jake: OK. I'm going to call up to Tass. "This is a ghoulish tunnel. We dug into a good tunnel. I think one of them's taken off. I don't see that skull down here, but it might have it, or it might be heading to where it is. I think we need to follow it."

Tass: "Ah, shit. OK." And I'm gonna run over and hop down, I guess.

Rev: All right. Yeah. You jump down into this hole, and it is dark down here. You are standing next to Jake, but the sun is coming in through the hole that you have both dug. The sound is off ahead of you, off to your right.

Jake: So in beginning to give chase, I would like to ask, what's my best way in? This doesn't become relevant until maybe I hit a crossroads or something.

Rev: Uh-huh. OK. So you kinda want to preemptively ask the question, in case you come across a fork in the road or something.

Jake: Yeah.

Rev: OK, are you guys just full-out sprinting? What are you doing?

Tass: I mean step one is definitely get my handy dandy headlamp out. So at least we have a little light down here

Jake: Covered in dookie.

Rev: [Laughs]

Jake: Absolutely covered in dookie.

Tass: Why haven't I washed this yet?

Jake: I don't know. Why haven't you?

Rev: You guys haven't been on earth very much.

Jake: Dirty bird.

Rev: He's got it in a Ziploc bag and does it and just takes it out. "I should spend the time to wash this."

Tass: [Laughs] Why did I put this back in my clean clothes?

Rev: [Laughs]

Jake: Does it sound like we're not gonna catch it unless we go full tilt? Like, is it getting further and further away pretty quick?

Rev: Yes. Like, you've dealt with ghouls before. You know they move at a pretty good click.

Jake: Then yeah, I suppose I'm sprinting.

Tass: Same.

Rev: So I think this is going to be an Act Under Pressure to sprint through these semi dark, unknown tunnels, in pursuit of this creature.

Tass: Cool.

Jake: Nine.

Tass: Six.

Rev: So Jake, I think for you, you can make a lot of ruckus as you go. Like, nothing in this tunnel is not going to know of your approach. You're going to get separated from Tass -- he's going to fall behind as you kind of make your way through and weave over and around tree roots, and things like that. Or, you're gonna take a -1 on your next Tough roll, just from exhausting yourself.

Jake: I'll take that -1.

Rev: I think the image that we get here is the two of you are sprinting down the tunnel, jumping over tree roots and around big chunks of rock that have been dug around. And as you leap over a section of stones, Tass's spear on his back is a little high and it hits, and you hear it like start to crumble in and fall as this pretty unstable cavern starts to collapse and close behind you. As it collapses, you do come into a much larger cavern, and you find six tunnels leading out of it: two in the floor, two on the wall in front of you, and two in the ceiling. And so for your what's your best way in, you can see that there are some pretty fresh tracks in the mud of this kind of earthen floor that lead to the tunnel on the ground, to the right.

Jake: Follow those tracks.

Rev: As you both move through here and start to go down to the right, that cave in is still pursuing.

Jake: Oh, dear. Like the boulder in Raiders.

Rev: Yes.

Tass: "Oh, shit. Do we think it'll collapse this whole thing?"

Jake: "I don't know. I'm not a structural engineer. I can't tell. It seems like it's really following." Are the walls just dirt?

Rev: Yeah, for the most part. There are some sections where it's tree roots, some sections where there is section of stone. You also come across various mineral deposits. But, mostly dirt.

Jake: Tell me about the mineral deposits.

Rev: You could mine those ...

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: And turn them in, to upgrade your keep. Uh, you could also ...

All: [Laugh]

Tass: OK. So the tunnel is collapsing behind us. Jake kind of knows the direction that this thing went. Can I, like, do a ... Like a snap judgment Trust Your Gut to make sure that, like, following that is a good idea right now? Like with the tunnel collapsing, would that trap us if we went that way? As opposed to like one of the tunnels that would go up and keep us safe for the moment?

Rev: So what are you wanting? Like what are you trusting your gut about? Where I should go for safety? Where I should go ... Because ultimately, your answer is a direction, usually.

Tass: Sure. Yeah. I guess the overall goal is get the skull and be able to get back.

Rev: OK, yeah. Roll Trust Your Gut.

Tass: That's an eleven.

Rev: Yeah. You think that it seems odd to follow the ghoul. You actually think that you should go into the left up tunnel.

Tass: OK. "Jake, quick. This way!"

Jake: "Why?"

Tass: "It's all collapsing. That leads down. We need to go up. I just -- I think we need to go this way."

Jake: "OK." I skid to a halt in the dirt and go the other way.

Rev: All right.

Jake: So in this direction shift, I don't know if I can still use this last hold.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Can I ask what's my best way out? Since we're changing directions and like, if this is collapsing, if it comes time that we need to bail, do I have an idea of where would be our best way to get the fuck out of these tunnels?

Rev: The up right tunnel would be your best way out.

Jake: And he's pointing us up left?

Rev: Correct.

Jake: OK.

Rev: So how are you getting to these up tunnels?

Tass: Is it easy enough to attempt a climb, here? Or do we need to, like, boost each other?

Rev: You could try to climb. It would be a pretty far boost. And then it would be a matter of getting the other one up there, as well.

Tass: OK. I'm gonna start climbing.

Rev: OK.

Jake: I'm gonna wait until he succeeds at his climb, hopefully.

Rev: OK. So Tass, roll Act Under Pressure. This collapse is not stopping, and you are getting ready to start climbing into this tunnel, up the wall.

Tass: OK. Thirteen.

Rev: Yeah. Tass digs in his spear and skinnies his way up the wall, into the hole, and out of sight.

Jake: I teleport to Tass.

Rev: Roll Act Under Pressure.

Jake: Aww, what?!

Rev: Because I mean, he's climbing up. So if you teleport to him, you're just gonna fall.

Jake: [Laughs] Oh I've got -- I'm still picturing this wrong, then. Oh, god damn it.

Tass: It's not the teleport, it's the maintaining once you're there.

Jake: Oh, I still had the wrong visual in my head.

Tass: It's crystal now, though. [Laughs] I love it.

Jake: Yeah. Crystal clear. OK, me now understanding that, can I change my answer?

Rev: Yes.

Jake: I want to try to Use Magic.

Rev: OK.

Jake: To do something that is beyond human limitations.

Rev: All right. Roll Use Magic

Jake: Eleven. So what I'm trying to do is Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon. Like, get a good jump and just ... Keep kinda, as he's spider climbing up the wall, I'm just kipping from wall to wall behind him, on the way up the tunnel.

Rev: Yeah. So Tass is climbing up this tunnel towards the surface, and you start kicking back and forth, jumping up behind him. You both come out onto a stone floor. There are big stone walls all around you. There's one large metal door directly in front of you. And you can hear, pretty close by, the sound of snarling and slashing and some cheering.

Jake: OK. Now, wait. I don't know why, but my first thought is that we're hearing somebody watching a scary movie on television. Does it sound like it's coming out of a speaker?

Rev: It does not.

Jake: Dang it!

Rev: Just some old guard with his little black and white TV.

Jake: That's exactly what I was picturing! I was like, we came out in the mausoleum. And like, the guard ...

Rev: GUARD: What are you all doing here? Museum's closed.

All: [Laugh]

Tass: [Whispers] "What the hell is that?"

Jake: [Whispers] "Do you want to creep ahead and see if you can get eyes on whatever that is?"

Tass: [Whispers] "I guess." And I will. I'll try to stay low and move towards the noise.

Rev: OK. So there is no ceiling on this room. Are you going forward and going up the wall to peek over it? Or are you going to try to peek through the door?

Tass: How tall are the walls?

Rev: It's about ten feet tall. And the door is actually about eight feet tall and like five feet wide.

Tass: Oh, wow. OK. But that's climbable. Yeah, I think I would want to try to peek over the edge

Rev: And are you like climbing over the door? Are you gonna go over into the corner of the room?

Tass: Yeah, I think off-center of the door, just a little bit. I just don't want to make any noise by like hitting up against it or something.

Rev: You start going towards that direction. And I think there's no problem, you climbing up the stone and peeking over the side in. And the first thing that you notice is that you're at the very top of a section of stadium seating -- big stone benches. And the seating goes all the way around this large pit in the middle. And the pit has steps leading down to it, from the door connected to this room. There are nine other sets of stairs that cut through the seating, down to the pit, all originating at a big metal door, just like the one you're above. And there are a handful of people scattered around the seats, all watching what looks like an enormous ghoul -- easily four or five times the size of the ones that you've seen before -- fighting a humanoid figure that seems to be made out of a swarm of roiling ants. And the people watching seem to be betting, because you see one person going around collecting cash from the others.

Tass: Uh ... I'm gonna lower myself again. [Whispers] "It's like some kind of monster fighting arena."

Jake: "For who?"

Tass: "I don't know. There were a few people out there. Seven or eight people, something like that."

Jake: "Are we not still somewhere in Baba Yaga's forest?"

Tass: "I don't know!"

Jake: "How could this be happening under her nose?"

Tass: "There was that weird, like, walk through the woods. Maybe we're not in Kansas anymore."

Jake: "Did any of them look threatening?"

Tass: "The people?"

Jake: "Yeah."

Tass: "Hold on."

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: [Chuckles]

Tass: And I'm gonna peek back up.

Rev: Yeah. Roll Investigate a Mystery.

Tass: OK. Oh, eleven.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 2.

Tass: I think I just need to start with, what's being concealed here?

Rev: So as you look around, you do see these five or six patrons, and there's the person who's going around and collecting money. And as you peek over the wall, just below you, you can see that there is a woman with tightly braided hair. She's about six and a half feet tall, just bulging with muscles, and she's wearing one big brass knuckle on her right hand. And she has a clipboard, and she's jotting down some notes under their names as the two fight.

Tass: What are the names?

Rev: The huge ghoul is called The Hounde, and the swarm's name is T.E.C.

Tass: Is there any way for me to gauge just kind of watching how the people are reacting and how these things are fighting, to know exactly what happened here? Or is it just what it seems like, I guess?

Rev: Yeah, it is what it seems like.

Tass: Yeah. And so she is like right below me then, right?

Rev: Correct.

Tass: Oh, all right. Gonna slowly lower myself back. I'm like pointing at the wall, just where I know that she's opposite, and motioning like large brass knuckles. Like, making little fighty motions, and like trying to pantomime a clipboard. Hopping back and forth? Like I'm these two things, fighting. Trying to pantomime, like, squaring up to seem like the real big thing and lumbering a little bit. And then like jumping over, and ... [Laughs] I don't know, being a bunch of ants? I don't know.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: I'm looking at him very much as I'm looking at him right now at the table.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: OK. So I'm even -- I'm gonna go up to the wall, like right about where I think she is, and literally, like, put my fingers up and trace the outline of a person.

Jake: You just walked over to me and whispered news like ten seconds ago! Why isn't this an option anymore?

Tass: Because now I know she's there!

Jake: Oh ...

Tass: She could hear me.

Jake: OK. Yeah, I'm gonna creep his direction.

Tass: [Whispers] "She's. Right. Here."

Jake: [Whispers] "Who?"

Tass: [Whispers] "I don't know. She seems to be running it, or something. She's got names and, like, a clipboard."

Jake: [Whispers] "Did you see the skull?"

Tass: [Whispers] "No."

Jake: [Whispers] "Then is this our immediate priority?"

Tass: [Whispers] "Somehow, yes."

Jake: [Whispers] "Cause your gut?"

Tass: [Whispers] "Yeah, I'm sure. I'm sure of it."

Jake: [Whispers] "Should we get up there and try to talk to them? Or is this a punch first situation?"

Tass: [Whispers] "I have zero earthly idea."

Jake: [Whispers] "Well I feel like one of us should go up and see what happens, and the other one should stay behind, as like the surprise backup. So who should go up first?"

Tass: So I want to listen to, like, what's going on. And when I think that, like, the fighting is done, with whatever this match is? You know, when that quiets down, I think that's when I want to jump up.

Rev: All right. I don't think there's a roll necessary for this. It's pretty obvious when the match ends, because you hear a really nasty roar from the ghoul that shakes the room for a bit, and then some pounding, then some cheering and jeering from the few people watching, and then a moment of silence. And then this voice rings out.

Rev: VOICE: All right, let's try the next one.

Rev: But there's a moment of silence after that shout out,

Tass: OK, then I'm gonna jump up on the ledge and hop down, and make my way just straight into the pit and address the crowd.

Rev: What are you saying?

Tass: [Like a carnival barker] "What do we got here? I'd like to get in on this. I got a little cash I can spin. Which one we votin' on? There a ringer in here?"

All: [Laugh]

Tass: So yeah, I want to try my Big Entrance with this, to keep them enraptured.

Rev: All right. Roll it.

Jake: [Laughs]

Tass: Boxcars!

Rev: Yeah. So you hear Tass go over the wall, and you hear his voice start to get further away. What are you doing, Jake?

Jake: I wanna sneak up and out of this, and kind of stay in the back row, behind the people that are looking out into the arena. And I mean, I wanna take a good look around. Like, see where I need to be looking for the skull.

Rev: So as you hop down into the back row and start looking around, you see that in addition to the ten large metal doors at each set of stairs, there is one very large set of double doors, and this towering woman is standing in front of them. She's wearing a long coat, has two tight braids, and is writing on a clipboard, but has now looked up to listen to Tass, who is standing in the middle of the pit.

Jake: And no sign of the skull, out here in the arena?

Rev: No, nuh-uh.

Jake: Is she so close to the door that I can't -- I couldn't get through it without, like, hitting her?

Rev: She does not take up the whole doorway. You could try and sneak past her. You'd get a bonus for it, certainly.

Jake: I think I'm gonna try that.

Rev: Yeah. Roll Act Under Pressure, and you get a +1 while she is distracted.

Jake: Thank you for that +1. That is a seven.

Rev: So you can get by through the door. And when you leave, it's going to either break kind of the spell that Tass has going on, of having everybody focused on him. You're going to be marked by her, noted by her. But, you know, this is the entrance. People come and go. But she'll be aware that there was another body there, that maybe she didn't notice before. Or, once you get out the door, you're gonna make a little bit of noise and draw some attention, wherever this leads.

Jake: I will take the noticed but not yet acknowledged.

Rev: As you make your way down, she doesn't look at you. But she does shift a little bit to the side, to clear the door for you.

Jake: [Laughs] OK.

Rev: And she just keeps watching Tass. But you go through this double door, and there's a pretty long hallway that is angled up, and there are three or four doors on the right side. And you can actually see that at the very end, it goes out into daylight.

Jake: I have to see out the end of that tunnel. I have to know where we are right now. I'm going to march up that slope, to see what the hell is outside of here.

Rev: You march up the tunnel, and you peek out to see where you are. And it's very strange, because you've seen this before. You've seen this stone formation. It seems like this hole comes out in Stonehenge. But there's not a crowd of people around. There's

not tourists taking photos. But there is that same big rock formation. And it is just a big rectangle in the ground, that has this stone path that now leads underground. And you can tell by the angle of it that the fighting area makes up the circle directly underneath all of these stone pillars and columns.

Jake: OK. And you said there's a few doors? Like, I've passed a few doors?

Rev: Yes.

Jake: Do they have, like, plaques on them or anything? Like, anything to identify what those doors are? This seems weirdly like an actual, like athletic complex. So do they say, like, gift shop manager and shit?

Rev: They don't. But you do notice that as you passed by, we'll say that the first one you passed, closest to the double doors inside, did have a big lock on it, and the other three did not.

Jake: But nobody else is out here. I haven't seen another person since I came through the doors.

Rev: Nope.

Jake: How long do I want to keep doing things and making Tass do his speech? How long can I go?

Rev: I mean, really, all you've done is walk down a hallway, look outside, and walk back down.

Jake: OK. I guess I'll head back inside, and start checking those doors on my way back.

Rev: Yeah. So the first one you come to, you're able to open it and look inside, and it's a pretty small room. And you can see that there is a spot where a window opens next to it. There's a cash register in here, and like a single seat, and a metal box. And there's a sign on the ground, like that you would set out that says open.

Jake: OK. And I mean, it's unoccupied?

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I thought -- when you said there's a window, I was like, "We're underground."

Rev: [Laughs]

Jake: [Laughs] "Where does it go?"

Rev: Just shows a bunch of earthworms.

Jake: I mean, I'm not going to rob this ticket office, so I'll move on to the next one.

Rev: You go down to the second one and you open it up, and there's a bunch of lockers. And there's actually another door further into this room. But when you initially go in, there's just too long benches and two walls of lockers.

Jake: I mean, from my knowledge of locker rooms, does it seem like it might lead to like the showers or something, beyond that?

Rev: You don't get that smell. You know how like a locker room has a smell when there's a shower? You don't get that smell in here.

Jake: Do I hear anything?

Rev: You don't.

Jake: I am gonna go look around this one.

Rev: OK.

Jake: I want to know what's in these lockers.

Rev: Yeah. So you go through the lockers. Most of them are empty. But there is one locker that has like a full body, like, jumpsuit. Almost like a hazmat suit. And a pair of car keys. You don't find anything else in any of the other lockers.

Tass: I was waiting for one locker with like twenty five empty ant farms.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: Why am I so tempted to just, like, take everything right now? Like, I want to take those car keys, but I don't know why. I won't. But I want to see what's beyond this room, whatever's in that next part.

Rev: Yeah. So you walk across the room and peek through that other door, and what you see is a much smaller version of the fighting pit that was in that main room. It's not deep down into the ground. It's only sunk maybe like two feet. It's only probably twenty five thirty feet across. But it is a little sparring area.

Jake: Oh. Are there any, like, objects in it? Like not part of the terrain, but weapons or anything?

Rev: There aren't.

Jake: OK. All right. I'll creep back out of the locker room and move on to the next door.

Rev: Yeah. So you get to the third door. It is also unlocked. Inside of it is a very, very small office. There's a phone, there's a calendar. There are a couple of big, overstuffed chairs.

Jake: I want to rifle around and figure out, like, whose office it is and for what

Rev: You rifle around, and there is not anything that belongs to anyone in here. Like, it seems like this must be unused or unoccupied. That maybe whoever utilizes this office, it changes.

Jake: It's like the temp office.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: All right. I will move on to that final door.

Rev: You get to the final door and there is a lock on it. There is a deadbolt in the door.

Jake: I'm gonna knock on the door with the big lock.

Rev: Nothing happens.

Jake: I pull out the Nightsider's Key.

Rev: Oh, all right. Can you remind us what that does?

Jake: This key unlocks any door for you, provided you don't belong where you intend to go. So long as you do nothing that would alert another to your presence, remaining unheard, unseen, and unnoticed, and take nothing more than your memories out with you, the key's magic will prevent your intrusion from ever being discovered. It's like you were never there at all.

Tass: My favorite part about that is that this key will not work somewhere that you're allowed to go.

Jake: Yep.

Rev: It's like if you leave your keys in your house ...

Jake: [Laughs] Yeah, I just forget my keys. If I lock my keys in the car, I'm shit out of luck.

Rev: Yeah. So you slip the Nightsider's Key into the lock, and it clicks open.

Jake: I mean, I wanna peek the door real quick, to make sure that there's not somebody in here who was just ignoring my knock.

Rev: Yeah. You peek inside, and there is no one in here. It's a fairly large office.

Jake: OK. Then I'll go in and close the door behind me and lock it again.

Rev: OK. So you lock the door behind you and you turn around, and there is a fairly large desk with cards and paper strewn about it -- newspaper clippings. There's also a big shelf on the wall that's like a trophy display case, and inside of it are photos. And there's also a couple of cabinets with locked drawers, and a coat rack that's got a big heavy coat hanging on it.

Jake: Is the skull visible?

Rev: You do not see the skull.

Jake: I'm gonna start going through the locked drawers then real quick, to see if it's in one of those.

Rev: It takes you maybe three, and you find it. You go through the first two, and there are just random trinkets. There's a necklace, there is a knife. And the third one is this skull. It is wrapped in muslin, but you can feel the shape of it.

Jake: Is there an official letterhead on this desk? What on earth is this place? Is there a name?

Rev: Why don't you roll Investigate a Mystery, as you look around this room and try to figure out what's going on?

Jake: That's eleven!

Rev: All right, you get a hold 2.

Jake: What's being concealed here?

Rev: So the thing that's being concealed here is as you make your way around the room and past the trophy case with all the photos in it, and you see that in the trophy case are framed photos. And each one has a year printed at the bottom. 1981, '85, '98, 2003, '07, '08, '09. And there must be a dozen of these framed photos in the case. And in each photo is the woman who you snuck past. And she looks a little different from photo the photo, but in each one she's got this bright smile on her face. But the thing that catches you is that in one, she's standing next to a humanoid shape made out of bright blue

slime. And in another, a woman with two mouths filled with needle like fangs and long talons. And another one with a werewolf, another one with a man made out of jagged rock. And in each photo, the monstrous figure she's standing next to is holding a golden belt aloft in one hand, like a victory pose. And as you go over to her desk and start to look around, you find on the desk a letter. And pretty quick, you can see that it is addressed to Maddie. And you read through it real quick, and it is her invitation to the Monster Mash.

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: Which is an event where select people from around the world bring their strongest cryptid to fight it out for a grand prize. And the grand prize is a large cash purse, the magical artifact you used as your entry fee returned to you, and the choice of one additional magical artifact from a curated list. And as you're reading, there is a lot of fine print and rules, but your eyes jump to the bottom of the page where you quickly recognize the signature of the person who orchestrates the Monster Mash every year: Strohm.

So Tass, here you stand in the middle of the arena. A couple of minutes have passed ...

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: And you see the large woman, huge brass knuckle on one hand, starting to walk down the stairs towards you.

Tass: I think I am at the end of my rambling about various kinds of fights that would be fun. And I'll turn towards her with a big smile.

Rev: MADDIE: What are you doing down in there?

Tass: "Oh, kinda got lost in the tunnels and heard some sounds and popped up, and this seems really interesting."

Rev: MADDIE: Well, as much as I'd like to take your money, there is not an opportunity right now to bet. We did all the qualifiers as one single sheet of bets. All the folks are doing now is getting paid out. You'd have to come back for the main event. It'll be two

days from now, I believe. But we're almost out of time here, so we won't be in the space too much longer.

Tass: "Oh, OK. Same place, two days?"

Rev: MADDIE: Yeah, the doorway'll be in the same spot, two days from now.

Tass: "Ah, OK. Great. Great, great, great."

Rev: MADDIE: What's your name, by the way?

Tass: "Tass."

Rev: MADDIE: Nice to meet you. I'm Maddie.

Tass: "Nice to meet you."

Rev: MADDIE: How'd you hear about this, anyway?

Tass: "You know, I kind of just stumbled on it, honestly."

Rev: MADDIE: Oh, yeah? You in the habit of seeing doors and just walking through?

Tass: "Yeah, I guess you could say that."

Rev: MADDIE: Ah, that's where most adventure lies.

Tass: [Brightly] "Yeah, it really is."

Rev: MADDIE: Yeah. I'll see you back here in a couple of days, I imagine.

Tass: "I suppose so, yeah." I'm like kind of glancing out of the corner of my eye, not sure if I should be like, I'm gonna find my friend.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: That might be rifling through your shit.

Rev: Yeah. You look around, and you do not see Jake in here anywhere. You saw him leave. But Maddie is taking up your field of vision in the sense of the double doors, so.

Tass: OK, I think I hesitantly move towards the double doors.

Rev: Yeah. She steps aside and lets you start to go up. Hounde, the huge ghoul, comes out into the pit again. And from the other side comes a skeleton.

Tass: OK. I'll actually stop. "Do you mind if I watch at least, if I can't put a bet? Like, I'm just very intrigued about how this works."

Rev: MADDIE: Oh no, that's fine. It doesn't really have much ramification on the bets. Uh ... Well, I mean, the "bets." Not that we -- I just want to be clear. We don't take bets here, on the main thing.

Rev: And she drops the largest wink you've ever seen.

Rev: MADDIE: Because that's not the kind of thing we do for the main event. That's, you know, that's against the spirit of the whole competition. We don't bet on those kinds of things. And Samuel over there certainly doesn't take those kinds of bets a half hour before the matches start.

Rev: And she does, again, that enormous wink.

Tass: "Got it. That is not something you do."

Rev: MADDIE: Correct.

Tass: I think I will just kinda move forward again and see what this looks like, you know, when I'm not hiding behind a wall.

Rev: Yeah. So this skeleton comes out, and it bends down and gets on its hands and feet. And you see the bones start to shift around as it's taking a different form. Like, the

ribcage kind of spreads and moves. Two of the ribs move up towards the top of the skull and make horns. And you hear the ghoul chuckling.

Rev: HOUNDE: Oh, you're gonna try a little different this time, I see. Don't wanna face me on two feet. You don't wanna wrestle so much. You wanna try something else, eh?

Rev: You kind of hear this chittering back from the skeleton.

Tass: "Oh. My. God."

Rev: And the skeleton charges at this enormous ghoul. And much faster than it should be able to move, it steps to the side and slams its fist into the ground, and some of the bones come off of the skeleton. Like, they are just jarred off. And actually, Jake, outside in the office where you stand, you feel the room shake for a brief moment.

Jake: I'm gonna toss the skull in my pocket dimension. Then I'm gonna go out the door and, like, listen through the double doors to see if it sounds like trouble.

Rev: Yeah. You put your ear to the double door, and you hear a couple of people cheering and you hear that hard slam again. And you hear what sounds like Kali sticks being knocked together.

Jake: I'm going to text Tass. "What in the world is happening?"

Rev: So Tass, you are standing next to Maddie, and this skeleton has started to open up its form larger and wrap around parts of the ghoul. Like, it's trying to make a cage of itself around it. And your phone buzzes, and it's a text from Jake, asking if everything is cool.

Tass: I'll text back. "This is dope as hell. It's Monster WWE." I might even snap a quick picture to send to him.

Rev: So Jake, what you get back is a photo of an enormous ghoul, and it has got a skeleton partially around it. Almost like it's armor, but it doesn't seem happy about the fact that it is being engulfed by the skeleton.

Tass: [Laughs]

Jake: "Are we hanging around or are we leaving?" Question mark, send.

Tass: I'm gonna turn to Maddie, first. "I have a friend that might want to get in on this who's kind of magic. Would you mind if he just sort of appeared here, next to me?"

Rev: MADDIE: Oh yeah, that's fine. Just know that come actual showtime, that won't work up here. Only in the ring.

Tass: "Oh, sure. Yeah, absolutely."

Rev: MADDIE: Yeah. Bring 'em by. Money's money.

Tass: And I will text him, "Teleport next to me."

Jake: OK, I do that.

Rev: And Jake appears next to Tass. And as you appear, the ghoul is struggling and grunting, and it gets both of its enormous hands onto the skull. And it is prying it from its back, but you can see that there's some invisible force that is keeping this skeleton together. And you see its thumbs work its way into the eye sockets. And as soon as that happens, the whole skeleton, like, releases, and you hear this high pitched chitter, and they both relax. The skeleton gets down and the ghoul raises its fist in victory. And then it stops for a second, and it sniffs the air. And it turns and looks at Maddie, and it sees the two of you standing next to her.

Rev: HOUNDE: Hey, why do you two smell like my home?

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.