

In the Ring (S3, E3)

SFX:

INTRO MUSIC

Rev: So in my hands, I have two copies of the original run of Monster of the Week. We got one for ourselves from Michael Sands, which he was kind enough to write us a little message. And then we have another one that we will use at some point for a giveaway.

Tass: They're so pretty, too.

Rev: Right? The art is so different than the one that I think we're all used to.

Tass: So how do I enter for the extra one?

Rev: I don't know yet. We gotta have ... We gotta figure out something that's coming up that we want to use it for a good prize for.

Tass: Oh, OK. OK.

Rev: Because we've also got our copy of RapsCALLION we should use as a prize, too. Because we're not using it anymore, because we're using all of Whistler's updated notes while we play.

Tass: That's true.

Jake: Tass, you can also just take it.

Tass: Oh yeah.

Jake: Like, it's right there.

Tass: I'll see y'all later.

Rev: Get your hand back.

All: [Chuckle]

Rev: If you haven't had a chance yet, you should head over to the website, thecritshowpodcast.com. When we launched Season 3, we had a bunch of updates to the site. There are pages now for each individual show that we do that gives you a lot of information. There's some fanart on there. We also have new portraits of the cast and all of the crew, courtesy of our artist in residence, Rem. So head over to thecritshowpodcast.com and take a look at all the new updates we have got on there.

Also, I have not said this in a very long time, but if you're on social media, if you've got Instagram or Twitter, you should follow us at The Critshow. Kim and Rachel are doing a great job with our social media. They're posting a lot of really fun things, especially on Twitter. So if you're on either of those social media platforms, you should give us a follow. And with that, it's time to let the recap roll.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC

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

Rev: 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.

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.

On the desk, a letter. And you read through it real quick. And it is her invitation to the Monster Mash, 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. 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.

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

Jake: OK, I do that.

Rev: 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: RECAP MUSIC FADES

Rev: Jake and Tass, here you stand at the lip of this monster fighting pit. This enormous ghoul has just turned in your direction, sniffed the air a few times, and asked you why you smell like his home. And Maddie very quickly turns and looks at the two of you.

Tass: "Where is your home?"

Rev: HOUNDE: What has that got to do with anything?

Tass: "Well, frankly, he's a teleporter. And so we've kind of been a lot of places in the last couple days. So I don't know where you might mean."

Rev: HOUNDE: I live underground in the tunnels, near Maddie's place. I don't think you're accidentally teleporting into there, are you?

Tass: I'm gonna look up to Jake, like with that shrug that has come up dozens of times -- I have to say dozens -- in the way of, do we just tell them? [Laughs]

Jake: "Do you mean the tunnels that come up in that box over there?"

Rev: HOUNDE: Yeah.

Jake: "I mean, yeah. We fell through the ground in Russia, and we ended up lost in those tunnels. It looks like he found his way here. And now I came to him."

Rev: And Maddie turns and looks at this ghoul.

Rev: MADDIE: They fell through the ground in Russia.

Rev: HOUNDE: Well, I mean, maybe. I might have dug a little close to the surface, but that thing that you sent me after was real close to the surface.

Rev: MADDIE: Well, you shouldn't have been digging that far underneath. You should have went above and gotten it. You left a tunnel, coming all the way back here?

Rev: HOUNDE: Well, not all the way back here. I mean, there's the magic of the connecting room. So they'd have to pick the right door to come here. I guess they picked the right ... Well, that's no point. Why would you go in through my home?

Rev: And he tries to turn it back around on you, and you can tell it is a tactic.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: "I just said we fell in by accident. I think the real question is, what were you doing digging all the way to Russia? It sounds like you weren't supposed to be there."

Rev: HOUNDE: No, I was supposed to. I just probably wasn't supposed to dig that close to the surface. I had to go get the --

Rev: And Maddie stops him.

Rev: MADDIE: He was procuring the item for our entrance into the fight. We'll have to send someone back to close that tunnel up.

Tass: "Oh, it -- I think we did that already."

Jake: "Yeah, it kind of caved in behind us. That's why we got stuck, and ended up coming out over here. We couldn't just go back out the way we came."

Rev: HOUNDE: So I set it up like that on purpose. Make sure that no one can follow us, right? Like, I dig close to the surface, it'll cave in ...

Rev: And he's kind of backing towards the door that he came in the pit.

Jake: "Uh huh, uh huh."

Rev: HOUNDE: So I think we can all say it worked out exactly like it's supposed to. I got the thing, you found some new people to take bets from, and I won my match ...

Rev: And his voice is getting quieter as he walks down the hallway.

All: [Laugh]

Tass: "He was digging for their entrance into the fight, in Russia."

Jake: "Yes."

Rev: MADDIE: I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name. He just said his friend. Who are you?

Jake: "Oh, my name's Jake."

Rev: MADDIE: Maddie. Nice to meet you.

Jake: "Nice to meet you, too. This is a cool thing you got going on here."

Rev: MADDIE: Yeah. You know, it's a lot of hard work, but I really enjoy it. And I think the folks that come and watch and participate, they seem to enjoy it a lot as well.

Jake: "How long has this been running?"

Rev: MADDIE: Oh, I've been a part of it for ... Ah, since '75, I think? It's been going on well before that, but I got my first invite in '75, and I don't think I got my first win until ... Maybe '81, '82.

Jake: "How did you get your first invite? Like, how do you get involved in this when you weren't previously?"

Rev: MADDIE: Oh well, I think everybody who's involved gets involved a little differently. For me it was that I was helping to train bareknuckle boxers. I found a kid came to me and he wanted some training and I trained him, and he revealed to me later that he was not quite from this world. There was something different about him. He could focus down and blink real hard. And when he would do it, he could become almost intangible. I'd never seen anything like it, but he was able to do it to a point where if he got into some actual matches and did it fast enough, other people watching didn't notice. So I was training him to do it faster, so the punches would go through him. And then one day I went back to my office -- I had an office at the time inside of an old Boys and Girls Club -- and there was an invite sit on the desk, and it specifically told me to bring him.

Jake: "Who was it from?"

Rev: MADDIE: The same person who runs it now. A lady named Strohm, lives in Chicago.

Tass: "We know her."

Rev: MADDIE: Oh, yeah? You work with Strohm before?

Tass: [Unsure] "Yeah ..."

Rev: [Laughs]

Jake: "Yes. Yes, we have."

Rev: MADDIE: Well, that's good. She'll be by here just a little bit to collect my entry, once our time here is up.

Jake: "What's in here after you?"

Rev: MADDIE: Oh, I don't know. I don't know who gets it next, but each competitor gets three hours inside of the actual arena here. But we'll go back through that door, ten minutes later you open it up, it'll just be dirt wall. Actually ...

Rev: And she looks at her watch.

Rev: MADDIE: I should go up and get it. She'll be here in a moment.

Rev: And she starts heading up the stairs towards the double door.

Jake: I lean over to Tass. "Do we want to stick around long enough for Strohm to see us?"

Tass: "I want to stick around long enough to get what we came here for."

Jake: "Yeah, I've got it. We've got a package to deliver."

Tass: "Oh, shit. Then we gotta get the hell out of here. Oh, but she seems so nice. How do I ask her what happens if it's gone?"

Jake: "Well, it sounds like she just doesn't get to submit a fighter. It's just a payment. It's not like this was like a blood pact or anything, right?"

Tass: "I don't know!"

Jake: "I mean, it sounds like it's just her entry fee. So she can come up with a different entry fee, or else she doesn't get to submit a fighter."

Tass: "Or Strohm roasts her alive or eats her with beetles or something, because she didn't finish a bargain."

Jake: "I mean, above all else, Strohm is a businesswoman. And it would be bad business if you murdered your clients and they could never pay you again."

Tass: "We both know we're not that lucky."

Jake: "I can just go drop it off. I can be back within a few minutes."

Tass: "If we run with this, at best, they're gonna be shitty at us and they know our names. And maybe it just is that, that they don't get in. But I don't know how important this is to these people, you know what I mean? Like, this is a chance for Strohm to collect things. Obviously, if everybody has to bring something like she did, that's probably important to

her. But I don't know what to do about it. Like, if we come clean and give it back=, like, what do we have to do? I mean, do we just barter with Strohm to get it?"

Jake: "Yeah, probably."

Tass: "I think we just need to figure out how this whole thing works. I don't know."

Jake: I disappear. We're talking about this too much. I go back to Yaga's house.

Rev: You appear outside of Baba Yaga's house, and the front door is open.

Jake: I will go in, and pull the skull out of the pocket dimension. "Hey, here's your thing. Is it OK if I don't hang around just for -- I'll be back in a little bit."

Rev: BABA YAGA: You don't want the information that I've got for you?

Jake: "Can I come back and get it in like an hour?"

Rev: BABA YAGA: Yes, I suppose so.

Jake: "Thank you." And then I will return to Tass.

Rev: So in the interim for you, Tass. Jake vanishes, and then you hear someone yelling from up the stairs. And it's kind of muffled, but you hear the word "thief" and "lockdown." And Maddie comes bursting in the double doors.

Rev: MADDIE: Someone stole it. I don't know where it is, but we're gonna figure it the fuck out right now.

Rev: And from behind you, you hear ...

Rev: STROHM: What's the matter? What was stolen?

Tass: [Clears throat] "Strohm, we were just talking about you."

Rev: STROHM: Oh, I wasn't expecting to see you here.

Tass: "That goes for me as well."

Rev: STROHM: You weren't expecting to see me? This is my arena, my event. Why would you expect to not see me here?

Tass: "I stumbled here by complete accident, frankly, and just learned that that's the case."

Rev: And Maddie is pounding down the stairs towards Strohm, who is standing on the other side of the pit. You can see that a little magical door has appeared partway on the stairs that Strohm has come through behind you.

Rev: MADDIE: Well Strohm, I know I'm supposed to pay you right now, but the thing I had for you ... It was a good one, too, and it's gone missing. It was in my desk before we got our time here in the arena, and now it's gone.

Rev: And Strohm grins, and her eyes just drift over to you.

Jake, you go to teleport back to Tass. Nothing happens.

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: You've felt this before. It feels like your ability to teleport is being blocked by something.

Jake: [Sighs] I hoped I was gonna outpace that.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: I'm gonna teleport back to where the entrance was, when I went up the hallway into the daylight.

Rev: Yeah. So you appear inside of this Stonehenge configuration. And in front of you is that open rectangle in the ground that has the path going down, but you see a really thin film over it.

Jake: Can I breach the film? Like if I step a foot forward?

Rev: It's like walking on a force field.

Jake: Still, there aren't people about?

Rev: There are not.

Jake: I'm just gonna start yelling. Just, "Hey! Hey, the door's locked. Hey!"

Rev: So Tass, inside, Strohm has just turned to you, with Maddie saying that her entry has gone missing.

Tass: "I want to talk to my lawyer."

All: [Laugh]

Rev: Maddie looks at you and looks at Strohm.

Rev: MADDIE: What's that look for?

Rev: STROHM: I've had issue with this one in the past. Well, not him, but one of his friends. Stealing items from my penthouse.

Rev: MADDIE: Well, let's search him, I say.

Rev: And she starts to walk towards you.

Tass: I will put my hands up. Like, you know, not resisting this at all.

Rev: OK. Yeah. She comes over and she puts these enormous hands on you, and starts to check your shoulders and your back. She lifts you in one hand at one point.

Tass: "Oh! Uh ..."

Rev: And you can feel when she touches you with this hand, that that brass knuckle, it's almost vibrating. Something is coming off of it -- it is not natural. And then after a moment, she set you down, and she crosses her arms over her chest.

Rev: MADDIE: So what are we supposed to do now? I had something for you and now it's gone, and you're saying this fellow probably had something to do with it?

Rev: STROHM: That is an interesting question. What are we going to do about that, Mr. Tasselhoff?

Tass: "Can I take a guess, here? Can I just sort of see if what's going on with y'all matches up with what's going on with us? OK, so check this out. Baba Yaga? We're familiar. Strohm, I know you're familiar. You're familiar, right?"

Rev: STROHM: Yes.

Tass: "Yeah. OK, OK, so we're doing a job for her, because she owns an item. It's like it's her item that was lost, and we went to, like, go find it. We were gonna go find her item. And we fell into this hole, and we kinda meandered around and we found this. And it is my impression that Jake found the thing that belongs to Baba Yaga and just took it back to her because it's hers, you know? Because that's how -- you know, how that should work. And I get the impression that it might be -- that maybe that it's the same thing. It's the same thing? Is it like a skull?"

Rev: MADDIE: Yeah.

Tass: "That immolates people?"

Rev: MADDIE: It was a skull that had two burning coals for eyes. That's the story, yeah, that it immolates folk.

Tass: "It does. It does. Because I've seen it sort of in action, in a way."

Rev: STROHM: Well, it seems to me that ... I don't want to go so far as to say a crime has been perpetrated. But my friend Maddie here is missing her item for entry. What might

you have to offer up in exchange? Because I imagine that Maddie -- and you can correct me if I'm wrong -- not being able to enter would be very, very frustrating to you.

Rev: And for this brief moment, you see Maddie. She's nodding, and you can visibly see the force emanating off of this brass knuckle.

Tass: "That's pretty -- that's pretty cool. What does that do?"

Rev: MADDIE: Oh, this. This is the piece that I got the first time I won -- me and my champion. They took the entry, I got to keep this.

Rev: And she walks over to the front row -- one of the stone benches -- and she punches it, and it turns to dust. Not that it touches and it -- poof -- becomes dust, but the impact is so hard that instead of rocks crumbling, dust crumbles to the ground. And it matches in sound to what happened when the ghoul was pounding the ground earlier.

Tass: "Well, I don't have anything personally that I should offer, because it's stuff I have to have? Yeah. Oh, boy ..."

Rev: STROHM: And where is Jake now? If he's not here with you.

Tass: "I have to assume Baba Yaga's cottage."

Rev: STROHM: Maddie dear, could you do me a favor?

Rev: And Maddie glares at Strohm.

Rev: STROHM: Turn off the lockdown. I have a theory.

Rev: And Maddie grunts and she turns and she stomps very slowly up the stairs, towards the double door. And a moment later outside, Jake, that field vanishes.

Jake: And I fall like the several feet, cause I was stomping on it.

Rev: Yeah. You fall into the hallway, and you see very far down at that fourth door, Maddie's head peek out and see you.

Jake: [Gasps] I teleport to Tass.

Rev: Yeah. So Tass, you're standing there, and Jake appears next to you. And Jake, Tass is standing there next to Strohm.

Jake: "Hello."

Tass: "Jake, you remember Strohm. Strome, Jake. Everybody ..."

Rev: STROHM: Good to see you, Jake.

Jake: "Mmhmm."

Rev: And Maddie comes in, down the stairs.

Rev: STROHM: We were just talking about how Tass -- and perhaps you, now -- were going to come up with something to make up for Maddie's entrance fee to the event. Because we have got about three minutes now before the next group is due to be in here. And if Maddie has not handed me her item, she won't be able to enter. And that would make Maddie very angry.

Tass: "We don't -- we don't like that. We don't want that."

Jake: "I agree." Even if I wasn't terrified of her, I would agree. "Do you know of, uh ... Of anything, anywhere that we've been, I could just pop in, pop out, take a thing? Strohm, is your place all locked up?"

All: [Laugh]

Rev: She chuckles at that.

Rev: STROHM: Why don't you -- we did this once with your friend, here. Why don't you empty your pockets, and maybe we'll find something.

Jake: "No, I can't do that."

Rev: STROHM: Why not?

Jake: "Confidential."

Rev: STROHM: Hmm. Mmhmm.

Jake: "May I convene with my associate in private for a moment?"

Rev: STROHM: Yes. You've got two minutes and thirty seven seconds.

Jake: OK, I will put an arm around Tass and kind of walk him off a little bit. "OK, all right. This is -- I say this a lot. This is a bad idea, but hear me out. If you win the tournament, you get back your thing and a thing that's good, right?"

Tass: "Yeah."

Jake: "So that other thing you get, I mean that's probably good enough to gain entry the next year."

Tass: "OK?"

Jake: "One of us could hand over our weapons and step in as her fighter. And as long as we win this tournament, we get our thing back, and we pay her back for what we took."

Tass: "Oh. Oh, boy. So do we, like ... Does one of us hand over our weapon, and the other one fights?"

Jake: "Yeah. Unless you're not allowed to fight in this thing armed. Seems like everything you've seen so far has just been like hand to hand."

Tass: "Yeah. And it doesn't look like they kill each other. I don't know. Anything else seems like stuff we need. And after what happened at her place last time, I'm not giving her the Damien coin."

Jake: "I mean, the only thing I could give up that I don't think we absolutely need is the key, which I did just get some pretty sweet use out of."

Tass: "Yeah, I'd say! You went ninja in here in like four minutes."

Jake: "Yeah."

Tass: "OK, let's -- let's try. Let's try it. Let's barter."

Jake: "With what? With the key?"

Tass: "Yeah."

Jake: "Maybe she would just take one of us as her fighter. Maybe we give her the key and offer to fight for her. And, you know, one of us kicks the shit out of that giant ghoul, we'd be the best she's got. We've got about two minutes to prove it."

Tass: "OK."

Jake: "Which one of us fights? I'm stronger, but you're tougher."

Tass: I hold a fist out.

Jake: [Laughs] "OK."

Tass: "One, two, three, shoot?"

Jake: "Yep."

SFX: THE SOUND OF ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS

Tass: Shit!

Jake: [Laughs]

Tass: I think we walk back over to Strohm.

Jake: "OK." I will produce the key. "We offer this, in place of what we took. It is called the Nightsider's Key. This will get you in anywhere that you're not supposed to be. And if you take nothing, no one can ever know you were there."

Rev: STROHM: Interesting. May I see it? Oh come now, only one of us here is a thief. Don't give me that look.

Jake: Yeah, I'll hand over the key.

Rev: And she takes it into her hand, and it starts to glow. And you can see her eyes do that scrolling thing again, and she sniffs in.

Rev: STROHM: Oh, this has the smell of another world.

Tass: "Yeah. Yeah. Whole other world."

Rev: STROHM: Yes, I believe this will do. Maddie, are you in agreement?

Rev: MADDIE: It doesn't seem like I've got much of a choice. Runnin' out of time, aren't we?

Jake: "Now Maddie, we'll give you that regardless. But I would like to make you a pitch. Tass here is a highly accomplished fighter. Would you be willing to let him test his mettle, to maybe step in as your fighter in this competition, that we might earn back what we've just put in? And you collect the winnings?"

Rev: [Laughs] Sorry, I'm laughing because I did not realize the loser had to fight. I thought the winner got to fight

Tass: [Laughs] Oh, no!

Rev: And you guys were rock, paper, scissoring to get out of it!

All: [Laugh]

Tass: And that's better by the fact that we silently were exactly on the same page!

Jake: We knew, yeah!

Rev: Yeah, yeah.

Jake: "Is this competition strictly unarmed?"

Rev: MADDIE: No, you can use anything that's part of you.

Jake: "What do you mean, part of you?"

Rev: MADDIE: Well, like, I got a fighter who's got claws, got teeth. There's a fighter that needs a suit to be on this plane of existence. Anything that is part of you.

Jake: "But like your brass knuckle, that wouldn't count."

Rev: MADDIE: Yeah. Yeah, correct.

Tass: "What about a magical tie to a person that gives them their ability?"

Rev: "MADDIE: Well, first off, no persons allowed. This is a monster fight.

Tass: "Oh. So like, if we tried to offer to fight, we couldn't do it."

Rev: MADDIE: Oh, yeah. We're gonna let two monster hunters fight in our monster fight.

Jake: "Monster hunters is a severe way of referring to us. I mean, we get on with easily half of the monsters I think we encounter."

All: [Laugh]

Rev: MADDIE: So what you're asking is if you can use that spear on your back?

Tass: "Yeah. I mean, it was a thought. To, you know, maybe step in and try to earn back what we just put forward."

Rev: MADDIE: No offense, I don't know you from Adam. I've got fighters I've been training for the last year.

Jake: "I bet he can beat them."

Rev: MADDIE: Without his fancy spear?

Jake: "Oh, no. Not without his fancy spear. I bet I can beat them."

Rev: MADDIE: All right.

Jake: I'm immediately filled with regret!

All: [Laugh]

Jake: I'm just looking at Tass, like ... [Slow motion] Oh, no ...

Rev: MADDIE: Well again, I gotta come back to the point. You're a human.

Jake: "Part human."

Rev: MADDIE: What's the other part?"

Jake: "Divine."

Rev: MADDIE: What do you mean?

Jake: "I am imbued with the power of the gods of this world and others."

Rev: MADDIE: Well, just cause I wear a nice suit don't mean I'm part nice suit.

Jake: "How do you define a monster? I'm not a mundane human. Like, that's inarguable, right? I'm not a human. I'm not a common human."

Rev: MADDIE: Well, what can you do?

Jake: "Well, you've seen me teleport."

Rev: MADDIE: Oh, yep.

Jake: "You just saw me produce a thing out of thin air."

Rev: MADDIE: Yeah. But a thing -- you can't use things.

Jake: "No. But just, you know, I can do that. I can punch, like, pretty fucking good, with divine energies."

Rev: MADDIE: Yeah.

Jake: "I can ... View another place or time."

Tass: [Laughs]

Jake: "I can ..."

Rev: MADDIE: What was that?

Jake: "Heal 1-harm. I can ..."

All: [Laugh]

Rev: She flips open the Monster of the Week book. She's like ...

Rev: MADDIE: Yeah, I've read Use Magic before.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: And Strohm steps in.

Rev: STROHM: This is a conversation you will have to finish at your own facility, Maddie. It is time for the next person to get their time in the space.

Rev: MADDIE: Oh, fine, fine, fine.

Rev: And Strohm holds the key up and smiles.

Rev: STROHM: Well, perhaps I'll be seeing one or both of you at the event. If not, you know what? You're more than welcome to come watch. I've got an entryway at my place. Tell the doorman you're there for me. He'll let you up.

Jake: "OK. Hey, did you see any of this in your necklace today?"

Rev: STROHM: Well that would be cheating, now wouldn't it?

Jake: "Ah ..."

Rev: STROHM: Ah ...

Rev: And she gives you finger guns.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: And it's weird because, like, you can tell it's an impression of you. Like, she's trying to look like Jake.

Jake: And I look at Maddie and I say, "See, we get on with easily half the monsters we encounter. And that's one that we wanted to kill at one point."

Rev: And Maddie heads up and starts going back through the double doors.

Jake: Yeah, I think I'm, like, following. Like, kind of at a jog. Like, keeping pace with her.

Tass: Yeah, same.

Rev: Yeah. So you both go through the double doors, and she closes them and turns the knob to lock it. And almost instantly, you hear the sound of, like, something filling in. Like,

there's just a heavy thump sound, and there's a little less reverberation in the hallway. And she starts walking down the hallway towards the third door on the left.

Rev: MADDIE: I suppose if there's gonna be any chance that you're gonna step in for my fighter, you would indeed have to fight. Make sure that you're as good as, if not better, than the ones I've been working with.

Jake: "I think that's only fair."

Rev: MADDIE: So I think what we'll have to do here is ...

Rev: And she opens the door for you to go into what you saw earlier -- the locker room.

Rev: MADDIE: Take all your stuff, put it inside one of these lockers, and then we'll go into the training room, and I'll bring them in one at a time and you can see what happens,

Jake: "All of them in sequence?"

Rev: MADDIE: Well, I narrowed it down to three, and I was gonna do this between the three of them. But I mean, no offense to you, I don't know you from Adam, as I said. Don't know how you're gonna do it. Hate to put you in the ring with three other things, and ...

Jake: "Yeah. No, that's fair. Do get like a Gatorade break in between, or anything?"

Rev: MADDIE: It won't be like you against all three of them in a row. It'll be these two fight, you two fight. Take a break.

Jake: "We do the bracket."

Rev: MADDIE: Yeah. Yeah.

Jake: "Round-robin."

Rev: MADDIE: Real tiny bracket.

Jake: "OK, yeah. Let's do it."

Rev: MADDIE: All right.

Rev: And she goes back out into the hallway and goes to that second office, and you can hear her talking to Samuel and kind of setting it up.

And so we jump ahead a few minutes. And Tass, you are sitting next to Maddie in the stands. And Maddie has the clipboard out again, and now has an additional name written on it. Before you saw the name Hounde and T.E.C. And on the second sheet, you see information written out for MoSkel, which is the name of that skeleton. And now she has scrawled Jake's name, and there's no information there yet. And then down in the pit, we see Jake, clad in his armor, no weapon, standing in front of the giant ghoul named Hounde.

Rev: HOUNDE: So I'm gonna fight you to prove my place here, now do I?

Jake: "Yeah, it seems that way."

Rev: And Maddie raises her hand and gives a gesture, and you hear a small bell ring. The ghoul, Hounde, raises both fists in the air and looks like they're getting ready to slam them on to the ground.

Jake: This isn't like fists down on me. This is like a ground slam?

Rev: Yes.

Jake: I think I'm gonna start advancing on him, and just try and time out that jump right when he slams. So that by the time the slams over, I'll be in a better position.

Rev: All right. Roll Act Under Pressure to time this out.

Jake: Seven.

Rev: So you can jump over the initial shockwave of this. But when you land, you're gonna catch your ankle in some upturned earth, and so it's gonna give you a -1 forward. You're gonna be able to get over the shockwave but not get to him. I think those are really the

only two options -- that you either don't get to them quick enough before they kind of move on, or you land funny and take a -1 forward.

Jake: I'll take the awkward landing.

Rev: Yeah. So you are able to jump over this shockwave as it ripples out through the earth, but you land on the ground and your ankle twists, and so you have a -1 forward. What do you want to do now?

Jake: I'm still gonna try to carry that momentum into just a good uppercut.

Rev: All right. Roll Kick Some Ass.

Jake: Eleven.

Rev: And what is your Smite harm?

Jake: For unarmed? It is 2-harm, intimate, hand, and messy.

Rev: And what is your extra effect?

Jake: I don't know what this thing can do yet, so I think I suffer less harm.

Rev: So you punch him squarely in the jaw, and he brings a huge fist down and connects with your side. You would normally take 3-harm from this, but you're less harm in the doing, so you take 2. And it is not armor-defeating.

Jake: OK, so I will take 1.

Rev: And he staggers backwards and curses a few times, and gets back up and squares off with you.

Rev: HOUNDE: You're fast, aren't you?

Jake: "Not usually!" I think I want to press the advantage. I'm just gonna take a short run and try and Superman punch him.

Rev: All right. Roll Kick Some Ass.

Jake: Oh, that one's a six.

Rev: So you dive in and you swing at his chin again, and he sidesteps. And you take two points of damage, not armor-defeating, as he matches your uppercut and knocks you backwards across the ring.

Jake: Oh.

Rev: HOUNDE: You see, with a good heavy punch, you take the position of their feet. Not just piss 'em off.

Jake: I crawl back to my feet. "Thanks for the pointers."

Rev: HOUNDE: I've been trained by one of the best.

Rev: And he starts to run on all fours in your direction.

Jake: OK. I want to teleport to the point in the air along his path that he just knocked me in, and just People's Elbow him on the way down.

Rev: Boy, I don't think there's a roll for this. This is not a Kick Some Ass, because this is not a move that he could be expecting. And so I think you land it. You appear in the air and you drop an elbow on his head, knocking him to the ground. And for the moment, he is on the ground.

Jake: I want to try to submit him.

Rev: How do you wanna do this?

Jake: I want to get him in basically a crucifix hold: legs around one arm, arms around the other arm, and just start stretching them backwards.

Rev: All right. Roll Tough.

Jake: Seven.

Rev: So you start to do this move, and you can feel that the hold is not quite in place. You have got him in position for it, but it is not doing anything that would cause him enough pain to stop.

Jake: I think I want to try to Use Magic to just put the gas on this. To do something beyond human limitations and really, like, power through.

Rev: Yeah. I think normally with Use Magic, you would need some gestures or components or words or runes, you know, any of the things that they list in the book under Use Magic. But because you're using the one that you're used to, the one you've channeled as a Divine, I think you can do this because you only need words for feats of strength, when it comes to do something beyond limitation. I think any other limitation things, it might be different. But for this particular one, I think you can get away just speaking the words.

Jake: OK.

Rev: So roll Use Magic.

Jake: Eight.

Rev: All right. What's your glitch?

Tass: And what are the words?

Jake: I think I take 1-harm, ignore armor, straining to do this as I go, "Ooh, yeah. Dig it!"

Rev: Yeah. So you start to flex into this, and both of his arms are pulled backwards as you pull, and you hear a pop in his shoulder, and he lets out a yelp and taps his hand.

Jake: I let him go and get off him immediately.

Rev: He gets up and you can see that his arm is dangling. And as Maddie is clapping, Samuel runs down and lays hands on him, and you see that things start to shift back into place. And then Samuel comes over to you and starts touching your bruises, and you feel the life flow back into you. And you are healed fully.

Jake: "Fuck, Hounde, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to actually pop anything out of place. I'm not that familiar with ghoulish anatomy."

Rev: HOUNDE: Oh, it's all right. It's probably the only way to get me to stop, so ... [Grunts] You're strong, for something that small.

Jake: "Thank you."

Rev: HOUNDE: Yep.

Jake: "That wasn't so bad. I think I can do this."

Rev: And Maddie smiles down at you.

Rev: MADDIE: All right, let's see what's next.

Rev: And I think we cut back into the fighting pit again. Jake, you are standing there, facing a humanoid shape made of thousands of ants. And you can hear this kind of buzzing voice.

Rev: T.E.C.: Why am I having to go through this? Why do I have to fight this one?

Rev: MADDIE: I know. He wants to maybe be part of the champion. He ... Well, he kind of pissed me off -- him and his buddy -- and they want to make it up. So I thought I'd give him a chance. You not afraid of another fight, are ya?

Rev: T.E.C.: No, I just ... It's exhausting, trying to do this many times a day.

Jake: "You seem awfully familiar. Have we encountered each other before?"

Rev: T.E.C.: What do you mean?

Jake: "I don't know. Just ... What are you called?"

Rev: T.E.C.: They call me T.E.C. Is the easiest thing.

Jake: "Is that short for something?"

Rev: T.E.C.: We amongst ourselves, the collective, are known as The Eternal Colony.

Jake: "That'll do it. Yeah. I heard of you."

Rev: T.E.C.: Then you should be afraid of what is about to happen.

Jake: I'm kind of like, "We don't even have an audience. We don't need to, like, vamp here."

Rev: But you can tell that he is. Like, he says the last part louder, and like kind of turns to an audience that isn't there.

Tass: I wave back.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: "You got it, buddy! Punch it right in the ants!"

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: And Maddie raises her hand, and the bell rings. The ants all drop to the ground and start swarming towards you. What do you want to do?

Jake: "Aren't we gonna touch gloves? Where's the courtesy in this?"

Rev: They get to your feet and they start to crawl up your legs.

Jake: OK. I'm gonna try to Use Magic to do one thing that is beyond human limitations.

Rev: All right. Roll Use Magic. And I think you have a -1 as these ants are swarming up your body, distracting you.

Jake: Eight.

Rev: All right. So what is your effect?

Jake: I'm gonna do one thing beyond human limitations. I am basically gonna, like, spin so fast that the gravitational force throws the ants off of me.

Rev: And what's your glitch?

Jake: I think it has a problematic side effect.

Rev: All right. You start to spin very fast, and you throw all of these ants off of your body onto the ground. But as you spin, you start to burrow down into the ground.

Tass: [Laughs] Oh my god ...

Rev: And as the ants see this, they all start to dig and go underneath the earth. So right now, you are about up to your waist in the earth, and all of the ants have disappeared inside of the ground.

Jake: I'm gonna try to Use Magic again. I'm gonna try and bar a place from a specific type of creature, and that is ants.

Rev: OK, what is the place?

Jake: The arena?

Rev: I don't think that'll work. Like, you could not bar the whole arena, because there's no place for it to go. So like you could try to bar part of the area. But I think making it so your opponent couldn't be in the arena would probably disqualify you.

Jake: It's not sumo rules?

Rev: Exactly. They want to see a fight. They don't want to see someone hide behind a ward.

Jake: OK. Then alternatively, I'm gonna start kind of teleporting around the arena to try and, like, draw the ants toward me, to get them to kind of start conglomerating back into one unit. Like I go place A and fifty ants go there, and then I go place B and that fifty plus the other fifty get there, and then I go place C, etc.

Rev: So I think that to try and trick T.E.C. into reforming fully, I think it's gonna be a Manipulate Someone. I think you are trying to bait and switch and taunt him into reforming fully.

Jake: Seven.

Rev: All right. So on a mixed success, they'll do it, but only if you do something for them. I think what you get the sense of as you teleport around, and ... What kind of taunts are you throwing out?

Jake: I don't really know how to taunt ants. So I like bamf to one spot and I'm like, "Look at you, hiding under the dirt. You might as well be worms." And then like bamf to another spot. And I'm like, "Who thought that a million tiny dicks would just add up to one huge dick?"

All: [Laugh]

Rev: So each time you do this, you see that a bunch of the ants come out and form like half of the person, but then disperse again. And so the thing that you'll have to do is you're gonna have to stay still long enough for them to get a hit on you. Because it seems like they're not going to fully come together again unless they're sure they've got a hit.

Jake: OK, I will bear down and hold still long enough to eat one of those hits.

Rev: All right. So these ants come up and they hit you with this punch that splashes. Like, the ants splash over your body and wrap around and then come off again. And you feel all of these tiny bites, along with the impact. You take two points of harm, armor-

defeating. And in this moment, you've got a -1, because there is this smell coming off of you that's a little nauseating. Roll Use Magic, now that T.E.C. has appeared in front of you fully.

Jake: Ten.

Rev: What does this look like? How does your hold a creature look?

Jake: I have an image of a video game in my head. I think it might be Breath of the Wild? I think it's Breath of the Wild. So like golden chains kind of like spring out of nothingness -- like, they all hit at once. But there is this kind of flash of golden light as they hit that encircles the creature, like it's been cellophane wrapped. And the chains just kind of -- they appear, and that flash happens, and the chains themselves are gone. But they are trapped in this, like, field surrounding the body.

Rev: Can I ask you why everything's golden, Jake The Executioner?

Jake: Oh, good call. Yeah, I'm not -- I'm not like a ... No, you're right. It's probably like a nasty red?

Rev: Like fiery chains from God of War?

Jake: Yeah. Yeah, it's probably all fire theme now.

Rev: OK.

Jake: Got a lot of rebranding to do.

Rev: Yeah, that's true. And this field is around T.E.C., and they're just locked in place.

Jake: I look at T.E.C. "Do you give?"

Rev: T.E.C.: Why?

Jake: "Well, because you can't move again unless I let you."

Rev: T.E.C.: We'll see.

Jake: "OK." I'm gonna punch T.E.C.

Rev: I think that's gonna break the field of effect.

Jake: OK.

Rev: There's no roll for this, because there's no chance of failure. So what is your damage?

Jake: 2-harm, intimate, hand, messy.

Rev: All right. You throw this punch and the red light around T.E.C. shatters away, and you notice that T.E.C. has a lot of give. Like you feel like that when you hit, it didn't do exactly what it should. There's some absorption -- ants shifting around, crawling. And so it doesn't feel like a solid hit. And T.E.C. staggers backwards and starts to charge towards you, taking the form actually of a giant ant with very large pincers in the front, opening and closing.

Jake: But he did have like some substance, right?

Rev: Yes.

Jake: OK. Then as he charges, I'm gonna raise both fists and just smash them down on the pincers. Hopefully get him to kind of bury his nose in the dirt and go over.

Rev: OK, I think this is gonna be an Act Under Pressure.

Jake: Nope. That is a three

Rev: You mistime this because T.E.C. is moving so fast. And you take three points of damage, not armor-defeating, as they get this mandible around you and start to squeeze. And Tass, up in the stands, you hear, echo through the arena, the dull crack of ribs breaking.

SFX:

OUTRO MUSIC

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