

Small Town Living (S3, E12)

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Rev: Hey, everybody. Just a few quick reminders before we get into the episode. Until the end of this month on our subreddit, you can enter the Artpocalypse contest for art of Damien O'Doyle, to win a copy of Monster of the Week and some other goodies that we'll throw into the bag. Again, that is over on Reddit at r/TheCritshow.

Jake: Somebody on our Discord referred to their practice sessions as Damien O'Doodles.

Rev: They sure did.

Jake: [laughs]

Rev: So make sure if you post those on Twitter or other things, you hashtag those #DamienODoodles. But they do have to be on the Reddit to be entered into the contest, because then I believe the Reddit will vote on the winner.

Also in the line of contests, head over to thecritshowpodcast.com/monstermash to fill out your Monster Mash fight bracket. We have got it figured out how we're going to play through this and figure out who the winners are. So make sure to fill that out and get it sent in. You can win a 1st Edition copy of Monster of the Week signed by Michael Sands, as well as some swag from our store. And lastly, this Saturday, the 19th, it is International Talk Like a Pirate Day, and 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, you will find some members of The Critshow playing Sea of Thieves in their Perilous Tides characters — as their Perilous Tides characters, I guess, is a less weird way to say it.

Jake: I knew this plan, but I suddenly became nervous that you're about to say in their Perilous Tides costumes. And I was like, no, wait, no!

Rev: So head over to twitch.tv/thecritshow where we stream every Monday night for our weekly stream, also on Thursday nights where Kim and Megan do Mystery Detectives. And then this Saturday on the 19th, they'll be playing Sea of Thieves in their Perilous

Tides characters. And also, be on the lookout on your feed on the 19th for a little bonus something something.

Jake: Mmm. Just a little treat.

Rev: Just a little something. I think it's time to get to the episode.

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: So here we are in the underground lair. Jake, you have opened a vision of another time or place into this pocket dimension. And for the brief moment that it was active, you saw a small town in the middle of fall, people going to work, going to school ... And your vision zoomed in on a small green house with the house number 743. Your vision went inside, and you saw at the kitchen table a pepper shaker that matches the salt shaker you found in Grigori's lockbox. What are you both doing?

Jake: "He's got a whole town in there?"

Tass: "Yeah, I guess."

Jake: "Somehow that seems extra messed up. Like I was expecting like a room ... I was expecting like a storage room or like a prisoner or something, but not like a whole town. Like do you think he's got all these people trapped in there? Do you think they know it?"

Tass: "That or they've just sort of accepted it and are going about their business? I don't know."

Jake: "Well, whatever it is, it seems like at least that one house matters to him, because that was the corresponding pepper shaker to this salt shaker."

Tass: "All right. So what do we do about this? How do we go match these up?"

Jake: "Do you think that's what we need to do?"

Tass: "I mean, something like that. If this is something he's tucked away, whatever it is that's important about it, we need to untuck."

Jake: "I mean, I think with this spell I can open the door and we can go in there. It didn't look especially sinister. Like I wonder if we can just go, you know? Like I wonder if we're even going to encounter opposition, if we'll even be noticed — other than our attire, and the things we carry."

Tass: "I mean, I'm up for trying. If it didn't look like there's anything ready to attack us? Great. But I mean, if this is a prison of some kind for something or someone — whoever is in that house, maybe, or something about the house. Do we go in and we're trapped, too?"

Jake: "I wouldn't think so, as long as we still know the spell. Like a door opens two ways."

Tass: "Well hell, man. I mean, I'm in."

Jake: Do we know ... Or have we even thought about like how ... If we throw the paper through before we come back from somewhere, that doesn't affect any other universe, right?

Rev: Correct.

Jake: Like if we go in here and we throw the paper through before we come back, the world we just came from, time is still zipping by regardless, yeah?

Rev: Like from The Sprawl?

Jake: Yeah.

Rev: Yeah. I think that that is something that you guys have not necessarily thought about yet. How does time work on all the different planes? Is this world becoming out of sync with other worlds as you use this? You're not quite sure.

Jake: "Is this our priority? We know that time is flying by where we just came from. Like, if there's anything we need to go back and do, like crack that other vault? We're just ... We are losing track of the condition of that world every instant. We don't even know what the hell this is."

Tass: "I mean, this was the physical thing that was brought to a whole other world and put in extremely high security. It is my opinion that that is worth making waves."

Jake: "I mean, I guess whatever the other thing is that he's got there must be able to survive the passage of time, or else he wouldn't have put it in that world."

Tass: "Yeah, that's true."

Jake: "It's not like he's going back every day even, to check on it. I assume."

Tass: "Right. And I mean, just by virtue of it being this sort of a pocket dimension, might be sort of locked into our time anyway."

Jake: "OK. Should we try to blend in? Should we like, you know, put on our sweaters and scarves and try to walk the snowy village walk?"

Tass: "Maybe. I hesitate to go anywhere where there might be danger without the spear, and I don't have a great way to hide that."

Jake: "I do."

Tass: "Oh, yeah?"

Jake: "Yeah, dawg. I got a pocket dimension, remember? Where do you think my sword goes?"

Tass: "Well, OK —"

Jake: "Surely we've been through this at this point."

Tass: "Yeah, I just — it didn't occur to me to like, you know ..."

Jake: "Although God knows how that interacts when I step into another pocket dimension. We probably shouldn't go through with things in the pocket dimension. Maybe once we get there, I could like try to put it in there and see what happens."

Tass: "I like that better. Let's do that."

Jake: "But I feel like we should still — we should put on our pea coats and our Bean boots and stuff so that we — we blend in."

Tass: "Yeah. OK. I mean for whatever it's worth too, we might as well take the pills. Just if, you know, there's somebody there important that we need to catch up real quick on what all is going on."

Jake: "We didn't use anything. We could just take the capsule again as it is." I actually want to look through the capsule and make sure that I managed to get what I hope that I got after I dropped it on the way out.

Rev: What do you hope you got?

Jake: Everything!

All: [laugh]

Jake: Everything that was in it.

Rev: As you go through the capsule, you are missing one of the pills.

Jake: "Ah, fuck."

Tass: [sighs]

Jake: "Well, we're down to a grand total of two pills there, then."

Tass: "OK."

Jake: "But we could still take one or two of them and, you know, four of the coins still."

Tass: "Yeah. Might as well just take one. That's just too handy — at some point, that's gonna be clutch."

Jake: "OK. Maybe when we go back to Futureworld, like if we look around really carefully, we'll find it again. We'll find it where we went through."

Tass: "All right. Yeah, dude, whatever we got to do here, I don't know if I can help."

Jake: "Oh, fuck. Yeah. This is on me. That's right. OK ..." Kind of clap my hands, rub them together, wiggle my fingers ...

Rev: Uh-huh.

Jake: Make sure that all the — everything's is in working order. Do my vocal exercises ... I don't know what's involved in the casting of this spell.

Rev: Yeah. So this will be Big Magic. But you have everything you need. You've got the explanation for how it's done. You do need to summoning circle, which you have here. You're going to need some ingredients, but Rev does have them on hand. So for your part, it's just going to be a Use Magic.

Jake: Neat.

Tass: I want to help out by reminding him to step into the circle, because he forgot.

Jake: I'm gonna use a point of Luck.

Rev: All right.

Jake: That was a hard five.

Rev: So you channel the energy into this summoning circle, and a small portal comes into existence. And through it, you can just barely make out red and gold and brown leaves.

Jake: And we can assume that we did make a visit to like the winter closet?

Rev: Yes.

Jake: OK, Cool.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: "Nice, dude."

Jake: "You look amazing."

Tass: "Thanks."

Jake: "In a shawl neck? My god."

Tass: "Aww, I appreciate it. You're — you're doing all right."

Jake: "Wow. Fuck you, buddy."

Tass: "All right. Let's do this thing."

Jake: Yeah, I'll step through.

Tass: I'll follow.

Jake: You both step through, and the portal snaps closed behind you. You are standing in a small open area in a ring of trees. And just to your north, you can see the red brick of a building.

Jake: OK. I want to, like, reach down, pick up a stick or a rock or just anything, and try and put it in the pocket dimension and see what happens.

Rev: So you put the small amount of focus it takes to open up the pocket dimension. And as this glow starts to appear around the stick, the glow turns black. And you see leaves and bugs and grass starting to get pulled towards this blackness on the stick, and things are starting to disappear into it. And you can actually feel it tugging at your fingertips.

Jake: I will stop it.

Rev: Yeah, you turn it off and some leaves and some bugs fall to the ground.

Jake: "Uh ... It's probably good that we didn't put the weapons in there beforehand, because it seems like it's like a black hole now?"

Tass: "What?!"

Jake: "Like a very small singularity or something."

Tass: "Oh my god. Is this like that roleplay weapon that you can make with like a ... What is it? A ..."

Jake: "A portable hole in a bag of holding?"

Tass: "Yes!"

Jake: "By God, I think it is!"

Tass: "Oh, no ... Well, OK. Just don't do that. Let's just not do that."

Jake: "OK, now we have a spear and a flaming sword just kind of traveling about."

Tass: "Well, if anybody knows to look out for us, we will know quickly."

Jake: "OK, I feel like you're giving a lot of credit to the amount of stuff some people might consider normal to begin with. I can't imagine anybody would not know to look out for us if they saw somebody walking down the road with a flaming sword, and their friend with a spear."

Tass: "OK, sure. But there's a difference between 'Well that's weird and kind of intimidating. Maybe I'll go,' and 'That's them. Git'em!'"

Jake: "OK. Sure. Yeah. I guess if we get attacked by like not a cop, then we might expect that that person's in on the conspiracy."

Tass: "Right."

Jake: "OK ... This seems so cavalier. What if we just like stash them? No, never mind. I've changed my mind, literally before that left my mouth."

All: [laugh]

Tass: "Yeah. Yeah. Yeah."

Jake: "Should one of us move ahead? Like just kind of get a feel for what's going on, and the other one stays back here with our suspicious items?"

Tass: "Sure. I'll go take a look."

Jake: "All right. Hand me the spear."

Tass: OK. I'll hand it over, and turn towards this wall. "I'm gonna go see what we got here."

Jake: "Good luck."

Tass: And I'm gonna make my way through.

Jake: The wall? Like Kool-Aid man?

All: [laugh]

Jake: Oh, yeah!

Tass: I've got 2-armor, I'm just gonna wreck this thing.

Rev: So you walk out of this small clearing and pass through a very small grove of trees, and then come to the back of this red brick building.

Tass: Can I get any gauge of what it is?

Rev: There are large picture windows on it, and you can see that there are construction paper people taped up with names. And in soap, one of the windows says Mr. Largo's Fourth Grade Class.

Tass: OK. Yeah, I think I'll just make my way then down the length of this building and around to kind of see what this all opens up to.

Rev: Yeah. And as you go down, you do pass some other windows that have similar displays, and it's for the sixth grade in the fifth grade. And as you come around to the front, there is a giant U-shaped turn around, and there is a single bus parked there.

Tass: Do I see ... Like, is any of the rest of the town in view? Or does this seem like it's kind of off, you know, closer to the woods, I guess?

Rev: Yeah. There is a bus driver sitting inside of the bus. And you can actually see that there is a policeman further down. He is ushering some people across the street in a crosswalk.

Tass: I think I will walk over to the bus. It looks like empty bus, besides the driver?

Rev: Yes.

Tass: OK, cool. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Then I want to, like, give the guy a wave as I walk up.

Rev: And he waves.

Rev: BUS DRIVER: Hey, how's it going?

Tass: "Oh, hey. Good. Sorry to bother. I'm out kind of on a long trip — just doing a walk here, and I think I got turned around somewhere. I'm not really sure what little town this is."

Rev: BUS DRIVER: Oh yeah? You're not from around here?

Tass: "No."

Rev: BUS DRIVER: That's weird.

Tass: "Yeah."

Rev: BUS DRIVER: People don't usually just stumble across, here.

Tass: "Yeah, I guess not. Where are we? What is this?"

Rev: BUS DRIVER: Oh, this is the school.

Tass: "OK. What's the name of the town?"

Rev: BUS DRIVER: You can probably find the limits of it, I don't know, maybe ten miles down the road.

Tass: "OK. It doesn't — doesn't have a name, huh?"

Rev: BUS DRIVER: Oh, yeah. Great name. It was founded so many years ago. Everybody loves the name.

Tass: "OK. Cool. You from here?"

Rev: BUS DRIVER: Oh, yeah.

Tass: "Nice. You go to this school when you're young?"

Rev: BUS DRIVER: Yeah, yeah.

Tass: "Good grades?"

Rev: BUS DRIVER: No.

Tass: "Oh. Yeah. Me neither, man."

Rev: BUS DRIVER: Yeah.

Tass: "About how many people live in this town?"

Rev: BUS DRIVER: Oh, somewhere around four hundred.

Tass: "Oh, yeah. I grew up in a town about that size. Cool, cool." I'm gonna kind of point the opposite way of the clearing that we came from. "Is that kind of direction of town proper? Like maybe a gas station, something like that?"

Rev: BUS DRIVER: Yeah. Yeah. You just go down the road a little bit and you'll come across — there's a gas station, and a little place where you can buy some different food items. And then the main street has most of the houses.

Tass: "OK. Cool, cool, cool. Thanks. Be safe out there."

Rev: BUS DRIVER: Yeah. You too.

Tass: And I think I'm gonna kind of go wide and like around the opposite side of the school and make my way back to the clearing.

Rev: OK.

Tass: "Hey man. Kinda weird. Like it is very much set up like tiny little town, like just straight up little place where I kind of grew up, situation. But guy that I talked to wouldn't even seem to say the name of the town. Like I don't know if he couldn't or it just doesn't have one, or what. Like he just seems like he grew up here and he works here. He drives the bus, and that is his world. And that's all he seems to know."

Jake: "And he seemed sincere?"

Tass: "Yeah, I think so."

Jake: "He said he's from here?"

Tass: "Yeah."

Jake: "OK. So it's not like a situation where everybody in here has been put here. Like this isn't like a weird, idyllic prison."

Tass: "Either like he's just a part of the — whatever, the construct. He's just part of the day to day things should seem normal for who or whatever is trapped here, and the dude doesn't even exist. Or it's like that weird kind of prison where everybody here is given their job and their role and they don't know anything else."

Jake: "But like he was ... Like he was once a child here."

Tass: "Well, that's what he said. But he may ... For all we know, he's a monster hunter that pissed off Nash, and Nash threw him in here and said — boop on the forehead — you're a bus driver now."

Jake: "Huh."

Tass: "You know what I mean?"

Jake: "Yeah. I mean, other than just trying to talk to some more people and seeing if anybody else is more talkative, I don't really know how to get more answers, other than walking out there with a flaming sword in a gleaming spear."

Tass: "Yeah, me either, man. I mean, I can just canvas the whole town if you want to stay here with that. Otherwise, we just come up with a story."

Jake: That sounds super boring, and I want to be in this episode, so ...

All: [laugh].

Jake: "I mean like, if we want to keep the option for you to not explicitly seem like a threat? Like I could go get spotted and see what happens. And if it's bad, I could, like, hide. And you've still got like you're [folksy voice] 'I'm just a friendly loner from out of town!' thing going on?"

Tass: "That's true. My only other thing was like, oh, we're out walking through the woods because we're looking for a great place for our LARPing group. I mean, I don't know ..."

Jake: Does this ... I guess this might be a keeper question. Like from what we saw looking through the window, does this seem modern?

Rev: You didn't see anything particularly modern, but nothing seemed out of place. The pea coats that you described kind of fall into a number of different eras. The style of the houses, the cars, everything is kind of ...

Jake: Timeless?

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I ask that because I wonder if "LARP" would remotely be an understood explanation. If this is like weirdly locked into the '50s or something and people are like, "What are you talking about?"

Tass: Yeah ...

Jake: Um ... OK. I'm gonna try this, I'm gonna go get spotted. First I want to see if I can teleport like five feet behind me — just somewhere I was a moment ago.

Rev: Yeah, you can.

Jake: All right, cool. I don't stop walking. I'm walking, I teleport several feet back, and continue walking past Tass as I'm like, "OK, I can do that, so I can get out of here. I can get away. That's fine."

Rev: That's how you get your steps every day.

Jake: Yeah.

Rev: Just a short walk forward and teleport back.

Jake: My own magical treadmill.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I burn most of the calories doing the teleport. It's very exhausting. "So I can go get spotted. You should probably get somewhere away from this exact area, because this is where I'll have to come back to. I might just go like go around the corner and like lock eyes with that bus driver and just like, hold up a burning sword and see what happens. I feel like we'll get an answer pretty quick on how people feel about this."

Tass: "Sure. I mean, there's even a cop, actually. Sort of directing the kids and people and stuff that we're walking across. So, I mean, that's an option."

Jake: "Well, I'm less worried about the retaliation of a bus driver."

Tass: "Well, sure. I just mean ... If we want what could be the most adverse reaction, that's the one to start with."

Jake: [laughs] "Yeah. If we want to play on our hard mode."

All: [laugh]

Jake: We determined in this fiction whether my sword is always on fire? In my head, before I remembered that I got three moves for this playbook and I picked the pocket dimension, in my head, it was on fire when wielded. Because I was gonna have to have it in like a scabbard or something if I didn't have a place to put it. And I figured it probably wasn't on fire when sheathed, but was on fire when drawn. You think that's the case? It's in my hands, it's always on fire? Maybe even sometimes when it's not in my hands, like if we ever encounter that?

Rev: Yeah, I think so.

Jake: But like thunder hammer wasn't always crackling with electricity and shit, so I don't know. Razor whip isn't always razors [laughs]

Rev: Now wait, hold on —

Jake: A silver trident is ... My favorite gum.

Rev: [chuckles] This argument's getting worse and worse for you.

All: [laugh]

Rev: Yeah, I think it is always on fire.

Jake: OK. All right, then I'm going to kind of walk to the corner of the building and peek around it and see like ... You know, try to get a view of what he saw.

Rev: Are you doing this in any particular way? Just strutting down there and peeking around the corner?

Jake: He didn't mention anything before the encounter with the bus driver. Like he didn't mention any other people or anything.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: So, yeah. I think I'm kind of mostly tromping over there until I get to the corner.

Rev: I think you get about halfway down the building and you hear a chorus of screams from one of the windows next to you as you walk by, and then you hear an alarm.

Jake: Is the alarm emanating from inside the building?

Rev: It is. It was definitely the scream of children.

Jake: Do I see any adults through the windows?

Rev: You don't, because you see that some dark shades are starting to be drawn down over the windows. It seems like they are being moved mechanically. People are avoiding the windows.

Jake: I'm going to wait until the dark shades are fully drawn.

Rev: Uh-huh.

Jake: And then I'm going to teleport back to Tess. "I have an answer."

Tass: "OK?"

Jake: "You may have heard. I scared a number of schoolchildren, and somebody pulled an alarm of some sort."

Rev: Yeah, you do hear, in the distance, a shrill alarm. Followed closely by the sound of sirens.

Jake: "So the flaming sword is not welcome here, at least. But I think I made a clean exit, because they couldn't see me. They closed the blinds before I disappeared. They shouldn't even know where to begin. But we should leave this area post-haste."

Tass: "OK ..."

Jake: [quietly] Where to go? "I don't know where to go! This entire pocket dimension is this town!"

Tass: "Let's just go wide here through the woods and come out somewhere else."

Jake: All right. Run away into the woods and try to leave no trace.

Rev: So this school was to your north. Which direction are you going?

Tass: Based on where the driver had pointed and kind of explained, which direction would be closer to the houses?

Rev: East.

Tass: OK, then yeah. East it is.

Rev: So describe this to me. How are the two of you traipsing through this woods?

Tass: I think just jogging through and trying to get far enough that at the very least can't hear that alarm anymore. Preferably can't see the building, before I want to try to cut back north.

Jake: I'm following him.

Rev: So Tass, you jog for like thirty, forty five seconds and then slam into an invisible wall.

Tass: [pained] "Oh, there it is! Oh, yeah. OK. All right."

Jake: What does it look like beyond the wall?

Rev: It looks like more forest.

Jake: Just as far as the eye can see?

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: And after I hit it, it wobbles? And tips over. There's a set.

Rev: No, you can see like a little line of blood running down it from your nose, suspended in the air.

Tass: Ugh ...

Rev: There's a forehead grease stain.

All: [laugh]

Jake: Does this resemble the spell for barring a place or portal to a specific type of creature? From when we've encountered that. Does it seem like it has like the same magical theory behind it?

Rev: Roll Investigate a Mystery.

Jake: OK, that's fair. Seven.

Rev: All right, you get a hold 1.

Jake: Can I sell you on what sort of creature is it? But like, it's not ... Like what sort of magical effect is it? Like, that seems like kind of the closest question, if I can replace that noun.

Rev: Yeah. I think since you know what kind of spell this is, I think we can justify that. I think the thing that you know as you see Tass run into this barrier is that there are a couple of different ways that a pocket dimension could be made. It could be generated and filled. It could also be areas just removed from another place, if you think of like the lost city of Kandor in Superman. Like, oh, it's just this city. And then we shrunk it down and it fits in here. And no matter which one of those it is you're doing, the barrier of the pocket dimension creates the illusion of it continuing on past where it ends.

Jake: OK. So that's kind of what I was wondering. I don't think that I could get through a barrier and be on the other side of it.

Rev: Correct.

Jake: It just pretends that I could.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: It is very much like the fake set wall. Like it is — I'm getting Wile E. Coyote right now.

Rev: Yes. Except on the other side, there would be void. There would not be like a soundstage.

Jake: OK. [chuckles] I would hope not. "OK, there is nothing beyond this. Like this isn't something that could be ... I mean maybe it could be penetrated, but we're not going anywhere if we do, so. Yeah, this is like our hard ... Our hard stop."

Tass: "OK, so do we just cut straight north here then?"

Jake: "I think we should just kind of hug this edge and follow it that direction. Let's just come in with the circle."

Tass: "Yeah. All right. Well, let's keep moving then, because they had that alarm going, and that was only a less than a minute run from here."

Jake: "OK."

Tass: So I'm gonna, like, put my hand to the wall, so to speak, and see how fast I can start moving up.

Rev: All right. Yeah, you start moving up and it doesn't take you terribly far away from the school as this wall goes up. It seems like you're in kind of a tunnel.

Tass: Oof. OK. Do we see anything moving from here?

Rev: Why don't you roll Read a Bad Situation?

Tass: Eleven.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 3.

Tass: Are there any dangers we haven't noticed?

Rev: You can see off of some of the trees in front of you, the red and blue from the cop car bouncing off of them. All the windows on the school are still drawn, but you can hear some voices raised.

Tass: What's my best way out? I guess "out" is the best one? "Through" is kind of more what I'm looking for.

Rev: It would probably be to try and sneak around the far side of the school that you know leads into town.

Tass: OK. And I guess just for the sake of it, what's the biggest threat?

Rev: You know that with you, someone saw your face and could give a very clear description of you.

Tass: [quietly] We're gonna have to kill the bus driver.

All: [laugh]

Tass: So this has developed into a situation. I did forget to ask about this earlier. I think mostly because, you know, I wasn't sure what this was going to end up being exactly. But now that stuff is popping off, can I use my Destiny's Plaything to see if that gives me any extra?

Rev: Sure.

Tass: OK. That's a twelve.

Rev: Your eyes start to glow white, and you get your vision. And what you see is a manhole cover. And then you see down below it, and a whole network of tunnels going from house to house, from building to building. It's almost like you're seeing the town for this moment bisected and seeing it like an ant colony. And in the middle of it, you see this thrumming, pulsing mass of purple flesh.

Tass: "Oh, god. Oh ... That was a — that was a doozy. I had a vision. There's like a tunnel system, like a sewer system that connects all the houses? And I don't know, there's something there. There's something down there. Something in the middle of it all."

Jake: "What kind of something?"

Tass: "Some like massive purple glowing flesh, or something."

Jake: [gags]

Tass: "I don't know, man. But good to know there's more to this than just fake town."

Jake: "So is that where we need to go?"

Tass: "Like, if that's some sort of creature that's the keeper of this place? Then yeah, maybe."

Jake: "I mean if there's like a conventional manhunt starting up here for us, then down in the sewers might be a good place to go anyway."

Tass: "OK. So we go wide around to the other side so that we're closer to town. Find a manhole cover, I guess."

Jake: "OK. I mean, if it connects all the houses and stuff anyway, then we could still get to that house."

Tass: "I mean, we have to figure out where the house is. But yeah, sure. We know it was a green house. It was, what, 742? 743? Something like that?"

Jake: "That makes a big difference. Those are opposite sides of the street."

Tass: "Yeah, well, exactly."

Jake: "One step at a time. Let's not get got by the pocket police."

Tass: "All right, let's go."

Rev: All right. So why don't both of you roll Act Under Pressure to try and dart through this town and find a manhole cover before you are spotted by the people outside of the school?

Tass: OK. Eight.

Jake: Five.

Tass: Ooh ...

Jake: I'm the Bigfoot in this town. I'm the man with the flaming sword who keeps getting spotted and then disappearing.

Rev: So you both run out to the east side of the school and onto the street and find a manhole cover there. You are able to get it open and start to climb down inside. But Jake, you fall as you start to climb down and splash into the tunnel below. Tass, you are able to get through there unseen. But you're gonna leave something behind, you are also going to fall down the ladder ...

Tass: Don't make me fall into sewage again.

Jake: These people aren't real. There's no doodoo down there.

Tass: Oh, OK.

Jake: It's illusory doodoos.

Rev: I think those are the two options. You're gonna leave something behind, or you are also going to fall.

Tass: Oh god, I think I fall too.

Rev: So somewhere on your sheet, I want you to both make a area for mental exhaustion. And Jake, mark three. Tass, mark two.

Tass: OK ...

Rev: And you do. You feel mentally exhausted. You fall down into this tunnel, there's six or seven inches of standing water that you splash down into, and you just feel weary and kind of forgetful. Like everything that you've been through kind of seems like it happened yesterday or the day before. You know? Have you had those days where you kind of blink and it seems like everything's being stuck in your long term memory? Nothing's in short term, so nothing seems urgent?

Tass: Every day, my dude. Every single day.

Jake: "Man. I don't feel, like, hurt, but I really just want to go sit on the couch and watch Psych."

Tass: "Yeah. Yeah. What the hell? Like it's nap time. Like not even sleepy nap time. Like just reset time." [sighs] "OK. Well ..."

Jake: "If that thing is a creature ... Did our brains just get — not our brains, but like our thoughts. Like our psychic energy, did it just get like eaten or attacked or something?"

Tass: "Oh, god ... Maybe?"

Jake: "Like we're talking about this whole thing being maybe a construct and, you know, not a hive mind exactly, but all, like, part of the illusion. I wonder if this thing is kind of creating the scenario and we just fell down on its lair. Maybe it noticed us, maybe we pissed it off, or maybe we're just disrupting the simulation and getting siphoned."

Tass: "Ok, so what happens ... If it noticed this and did that, then what happens when we get close?"

Jake: Does anything seem like it's going worse because we fell? Like listening back up, you know, does it sound like sirens are getting closer? Like I'm kind of trying ... What I'm wondering is like, are there signs that we've been noticed and like the simulation's pinpointing us or turning on us, or anything like that?

Rev: No, nothing seems strange or out of the ordinary up top.

Jake: "I feel like if something noticed us and lashed out, it would still be lashing out. Something would still be getting worse right now."

Tass: "Yeah, yeah. No, you're right. Like we both just toppled like idiots down and took what should have been a hit, you know? That should have hurt. And instead, this. Oh, I don't know what I like less."

Jake: "Yeah. I feel like ... Kind of the comparison I have in my head here is like when desync in an Assassin's Creed game."

Tass: "Oh!"

Jake: "Like that's kind of what I feel like we need to be avoiding happening, but that's a little bit of what just happened to us."

Tass: "OK. Well then hell with the house, I kind of have an idea of where the thing is, if it was near the middle. If that thing is doing this, let's go kill the son of a bitch."

Jake: "I don't know that I'm quite that cavalier, but I do want to go at least get eyes on it, and maybe figure out what it is. So, yes, let's go that direction."

Tass: All right, let's go.

Rev: So once you get out from underneath this manhole cover, it's going to be pretty dark. How are you moving through the tunnels?

Jake: I have a burning sword.

Rev: So you going first?

Tass: I also have my headlamp, assuming the regular items came through.

Jake: I mean, I could go first if he's, like, steering me. Like I don't know where we're going, but I would be OK being basically the person holding the torch in front if he's like, OK, go left. OK, go right. So what do you think, Tass?

Tass: I mean, you volunteered. I'm not going to tell you no.

Jake: OK, guide me.

Rev: All right. So if this is Tass giving orders and Jake following ... Tass, roll Read a Bad Situation.

Tass: OK. Eight.

Rev: You get a hold 1.

Jake: Also, don't forget +1 ongoing for Read a Bad Situation. We roll Read a Bad Situation so infrequently, I feel like we don't ever think to cash that check.

Tass: So either way, that's nine, then. [laughs] Are there any threats we haven't noticed?

Rev: As you are directing Jake through these tunnels, there again is this six, seven inches of water that you're sloshing through. And you've got light from Jake's sword as well as light from your helmet, and you notice just a very small purple shimmer at one point as Jake lifts his boot out and takes another step. There's something maybe an inch, inch and a half long on his boot.

Tass: "Whoa, whoa, whoa! Stop! Lift your boot up."

Jake: I do that.

Rev: Jake lifts his boot out of the water, and you see a fairly fat inch and a half long purple leech attached to his boot.

Jake: "What the fuck is this?"

Tass: "I don't know! If there's some purple blob somewhere in the middle, then maybe it's sending these things out to do something."

Jake: "Oh, this got way more like pestilent than it was in my head a second ago ..."

Tass: "You've got a burning sword. Burn it off!"

Jake: Yeah, I'm gonna touch the sword to it.

Rev: Roll Act Under Pressure.

Jake: Oh, no. What if I didn't?

All: [laugh]

Jake: Ten.

Rev: Yeah, you hold the sword down and press it against this leech. And there is a surprisingly loud shriek that echoes through the tunnel as it sizzles and falls to the ground. And you actually hear that shriek echoed from all around you.

Jake: "Oh, no."

Tass: "Uh ... Do we charge on, or do we get the fuck out?"

Jake: Is there anywhere to stand that's not in the water?

Rev: There is not.

Tass: I mean, first thing I'm like lifting my legs up and stuff, and checking myself for any.

Rev: Roll Read a Bad Situation.

Tass: Oh god! That's ten, with the ongoing.

Rev: OK. You get a hold 3.

Tass: Are there dangers we haven't noticed?

Rev: After hearing the scream, you start to look around and examine yourself and Jake, and the surrounding area. And you do see three more of these little leeches. One on Jake's leg, and two on his back. And you see one on your shoulder and one on your side.

Tass: Good god ...

Rev: And they are the spots where you are wet from having fallen in the water.

Tass: I mean, we have to walk through this ... Do I have a gauge of what is the best way in, knowing that we have to get through these?

Rev: You would think that you are on the best route if you are determined to get to the center of this underground maze. Like you don't feel good about it, but you know that is the best way to do it.

Tass: I mean, I'm not sure what else to go with here, but might as well check. What's the biggest threat?

Rev: Numbers.

Tass: Mmhmm.

Rev: The sheer number. Like this short distance that you have covered, finding some of these on your body, on Jake's body, hearing them echo around ... Like it's not like you're just, oh, I heard a little [screech] from the water. It's just that you heard it in the tunnel.

Tass: Yeah ...

Rev: But in the sense of the biggest threat? Further down the tunnel, in the light cast by Jake's sword, there's another much larger one. Like six, twelve inches long. Kind of like a Subway sandwich.

All: [laugh]

Rev: Rooting around in the water. And you see that purple sheen of its skin.

Tass: So it's pretty much either turn back if we want to avoid that, or go through it to try to get to a next manhole if we want to get out of here.

Rev: Correct.

Tass: "Jake! Big one, right there." And I'm gonna turn the lamp so that it's facing the five dollar footlong.

Rev: This episode of The Critshow brought to you by anybody but Subway.

All: [laugh]

Rev: Yeah Jake, Tass points it out to you with his headlamp and you see, maybe twenty feet ahead of you, slithering through the water, maybe six inches around, eight inches long, this purple leech. Just kind of sloshing around. It hasn't noticed you all yet.

Jake: "It doesn't seem like it's noticed us. Do you want me to kill it?"

Tass: "I'm sure gonna try."

Jake: OK. I would like to Use Magic, please.

Rev: All right. Roll Use Magic.

Jake: That is a ten. I'm going to Burn Everything.

Tass: Oh, thank you.

Jake: So that is 3-harm, ignore armor, magic, obvious.

Rev: Is this the just one thing, not the area?

Jake: Yes. I'm choosing the 3-harm ignore armor, which is single target. Rather than the 3-harm area.

Rev: Describe to me how this looks. Like a hot dog in a microwave? It just ...

Jake: Oh, the creature?

Tass: Ugh ...

Jake: Not the doing of the magic?

Rev: No, the doing of the magic.

Jake: But the effect of it?

Rev: Eh, a little of both.

Jake: I think ... I mean I think when it's not like the area version, if it's just a single target, it looks like Scorching Ray. Like it is just holding out a hand and just a blast of fire shoots out of it in a line. And this thing probably ... Like when you put a hot dog in the microwave too long, and it just kind of busts open lengthwise.

Rev: That is exactly what happens. And you hear that shriek again, except it's a little lower pitch. And you hear it echoed around you, but not as close and not as ... The chorus of it is as large as you heard the first shriek. And it's a different tone.

Jake: "Fuck, it looks like a lobster tail."

Tass: [gags] "And there are more of those. There's like different types." And I am going to be trying to, like, just smack the ones that are on me off.

Rev: How are you trying to get these leeches off? Just smack them off? They're leeches, so they won't just, like, dust away. How are you getting rid of them?

Tass: I think I still have a couple of grenades, so ...

Jake: [laughs] You just hand me one, pull both pins.

Tass: Yep.

Jake: We cheers them.

Tass: I got you a ring.

All: [laugh]

Tass: Yeah. I think I am just kind of ripping them off by the head. You know, you don't want to grab the tail because that can go wrong. You gotta ...

Jake: Of course. Yes.

Tass: If you just pull that you just pull the tail off, and the mouth is still embedded. It's terrible. Let's talk a lot more about this.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: [laughs]

Rev: So I think for this first one, roll Act Under Pressure.

Tass: OK.

Jake: You know, I'm kind of surprised by how much leeches don't bother me, considering what I'm afraid of.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I think because they just bite on, that like it doesn't trigger my — that problem for me.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: Fair. Ten. For clarity, if it's possible, popping their little heads as I throw them off of me. I don't know if they're stronger than me being able to do that.

Rev: They are.

Tass: Shit.

Rev: Yeah. You are able to pull this one off by the head and flip it across into the water.

Tass: Then yeah, I'm gonna reach the one on my back and try to grab that one as well.

Rev: Roll Act Under Pressure.

Tass: Ten again.

Rev: Yeah. You are able to get this one off as well.

Tass: "Ok bub, these are everywhere. Do we just try to barrel through and get up and out of here until we can figure out how to deal with these? Or do we just take the pain?"

Jake: Before I answer that, I want to try an old reliable trick. Because you said I've got like three of them on me?

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I want to shock myself with the stun knuckles. I've done this before to get rid of several small things that were biting me.

Rev: Roll Act Under Pressure.

Jake: Five. That is so many fives tonight,

Rev: You go to thrust your fists into the water with the stun knuckles, and a voice speaks up from a little further down the tunnel.

Rev: VOICE: I wouldn't do that if I were you. It won't end well for anybody standing in this water.

Tass: "Who's that? Who's there?"

Rev: And you spin and turn your headlamp towards the figure. And as they step towards you, you see that they have this deep purple skin, black eyes, and a round mouth filled with sharp, needle-like teeth.

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.

