

A Handful of Black Hole (S3, E16)

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Rev: So with it being October, do any of you have any plans for spooky things?

Jake: [laughs] That was mighty vague.

Rev: You know, like do you plan on standing outside a stranger's window? Or going to a haunted house? You know, any spooky thing.

Jake: I plan on standing outside a stranger's window, but that is independent of the fact that it's October.

Rev: But still spooky.

Jake: Yeah, still spooky.

Tass: It is October, which means I watch all of the Nightmare on Elm Street movies.

Megan: I'm moving in like two weeks, so that's scary enough for me. We'll see ... [laughs] We'll see what happens after that. I'm always down for more spooky times, though.

Rev: I had big plans to try and stream the remastered Ghostbusters game this month. [sighs] Yeah. Best laid plans of Mice and Men.

Tass: Mmhmm.

Rev: Well we do want to take a moment to thank all of the patrons who joined us in the month of September.

Tass: How are we feeling about the names?

Rev: Not bad.

Tass: OK, OK.

Rev: Not bad.

Tass: I saw a little slight trepidation there, for a moment.

Rev: Yeah. I know it didn't — I didn't — it didn't go swimmingly last month, but so many people said they enjoyed hearing it.

All: [laugh]

Rev: So here we go.

Kaiber, Ryan Niemiller — he's only in the Patreon because I'm recording a show with him and he needs to get into our broadcast channel.

Jake: I wish you would have goofed that one up, on purpose. "Ree-ann. Ny-mee-ler."

Rev: [laughs] He'll never hear it.

All: [laugh]

Rev: But yeah, Ryan Niemiller from ... Last year on America's Got Talent. He's one of our oldest friends. He was a stand up comedian, won third place. And I'm doing a podcast with him called Baby Got Backlog, where he's trying to play through his thousands of backlogged video games, and I'm kind of his taskmaster. And then I ask him some questions to review them. David Hayes, Jake Davis, Tyler Ponder ...

I totally just give Ryan a free plug. What was that? Just in the middle of our patron ...

Jake: God. Cut that out.

Rev: Yeah. Jochen Huchs, Joseph M., Courtney Hill, Dragon Dragon, Seamus Tinker, Blitzberger, Jerica Bornstein, John Rogers, Elliott Holmes, Riley Taylor, Catherine Biddle, Sam Panzner. That sounds like the name of a character like in Fury's Howling Commandos.

Jake: Yeah.

Rev: Alex Lyman, Zaarg, William Hobson, Zachary Munoz, Miranda Stefanich, Tuck Shaw, and Russell Smith. So thank you to everyone who joined us this month and every month on Patreon. There's just so much stuff in The Patreon. I try to list it every time we talk about this. There are literally hundreds of hours of bonus content. We have an amazing community in our Discord — you can get access to that for just a dollar. So if you're interested in looking into the Patreon, you can go to Patreon.com/TheCritshow. You've also heard some of the play through of Tass's Hero Salad game, as well as the game we're currently playing, the pirate game Perilous Tides — which is us playing through Rapscaillon. So again, you can find all of that at Patreon.com/TheCritshow. Tiers start at just one dollar.

And I think with that, it's time to let the recap roll.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC

Megan: "I remember being brought here. I came through a portal. Some weird guy grabbed me in an alley, I think."

Rev: So as you are all standing up in this bell tower, leaning out, watching, all of a sudden you see Harrison freeze up, and then he turns and looks directly up at all of you in the tower. And you see he raises his hand and points at it.

Tass, from inside the pawn shop, and Megan, from behind the school, you see a huge chunk of rock falling from the sky and it crushes the bell tower.

Jake: Without having a better situation in which to try it. I'm just gonna go ahead and try to trap him here and now.

Rev: HARRISON: You've got me trapped here, and you say you got hatred in your heart and I'm in your way. Preservation tells me I should either help you if I know that I'm gonna get away and live my life, or just let you try to figure it out. Let the fail safes take care of you.

Megan: [telepathically] "Tass, don't say anything. I'm in your head. You can hear my thoughts right now. I can hear yours. So don't say anything out loud." And I want to try and Tune In to Harrison. Who is it going to attack next?

Rev: If given the chance, Harrison will attack the one with the spear, because he recognizes Tass as The Chosen. And on his last briefing from his boss, Harrison and the whole Nash organization was told the Tass no longer has to be kept alive at all costs, because a replacement Chosen has been found.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC FADES

Rev: So Jake, here you stand in front of the trapped Harrison, and he has just told you that he has an idea on how to destroy this place, and his requirement is that you let him out of the chains.

Jake: "All right. I am interested in hearing your plan. Here is my little snag. In your phrasing, you said that you could do this thing and then get out of here. The only caveat I want to add is that we all leave at the same time. We'll help you do whatever this thing is to, you know, your plan to shut this place down. But then we all go out the door together, so that we make as little additional noise as possible. We all make a clean break. Don't draw any unnecessary attention. Is that cool with you?"

Rev: HARRISON: And no trying to leave me behind or anything?

Jake: "No trying to leave you behind."

Rev: HARRISON: You being honest?

Jake: "Yeah."

Rev: He doesn't nod in agreement. He is still locked up in these chains. But he smiles.

Rev: HARRISON: Agreed.

Jake: OK, I will drop the magic

Rev: As you let Harrison out of the chains, he stretches for a moment and he looks over at the shopkeeper. And you actually see him reach into his breast pocket, and he pulls out a little purple something and walks over to her and sticks it on the side of her head. And when he pulls his hand away, you see he has put one of those leeches there, and her eyes just glass over.

Rev: HARRISON: No need for her to remember all of this. All right, so how soon do you want to get started?

Jake: "I think as soon as possible?" I look at Tass for confirmation.

Tass: "Now would be great."

Rev: HARRISON: All right. The first thing that's going to have to be done is we've got to take care of Mama.

Jake: "Damn it. We were hoping so much that we could avoid having to have that fight, if we just kind of imploded this place on the way out."

Rev: HARRISON: Yeah, she is part of the fail safe here.

Jake: "Interesting. How so?"

Rev: HARRISON: I don't know exactly how she works, but she puts off some kind of a magic field, and it's connected to all of her little children. And they create that lapse, regeneration effect, whatever you want to call it. And so we could try to do what I've got in mind, destroy this place, everything in it. But there's a good chance that come 24 hours, well ...

Rev: He looks at his watch.

Rev: HARRISON: 12 hours from now, it'll all be here again.

Jake: "So you're the one who created everything in here, but she recreates it?"

Rev: HARRISON: Oh, I didn't create anything in here.

Jake: "Oh. I thought ..." I guess I look at Tass again, kind of confusedly.

Tass: I think I'm doing what I'm doing now. I kind of am just biting my lower lip. "I guess I don't know either. That's what it sure looked like in the vision."

Rev: HARRISON: Oh you got some kind of a vision of the work I was doing?

Tass: "No."

Rev: His eye glows gold.

All: [laugh]

Tass: "Yeah. Something about you walking around with Nash himself, and him making comments and things springing up. And it just seemed like you were the source of it."

Rev: HARRISON: Yeah, that's partially right. I was bringing everything that I had seen here. Everything here is something I've seen before. And so I moved it here.

Tass: "Oh, OK. That is both bizarre and amazing, and not at all what we thought was happening. OK."

Jake: "So the very big rock, that was just something you've seen somewhere and you brought here?"

Rev: HARRISON: Yeah.

Jake: "And whatever you did to blast him?"

Rev: HARRISON: Oh yes. I've got a few different looks I can do, when it comes to power set.

Tass: Looks. Nice.

Jake: That sounds really cool. That sounds very X-men. I need to stop liking villains.

All: [laugh]

Jake: You come in here with your southern drawl and your cool names for powers, and you've got my pants on the floor.

All: [laugh]

Rev: And Megan, from around the corner of the building, you do hear this conversation happening now. I mean, you have been tuned in to Tass's mind, you have just gotten those thoughts from Harrison, but you can hear that the tone of the conversation has changed.

Megan: Yeah, I'll use my Telepathy to reach out to Tass and say, [telepathically] "Are you guys chatting?"

Tass: [telepathically] "Yeah, I think that we've sort of struck up a deal. If we want to destroy this place and get out, he gets out too. But you know, that's a small price, I think. If that gets us all out safely, that's a deal I'm willing to take. And everybody seems pretty chill about it."

Megan: [telepathically] "Is he still being restrained?"

Tass: [telepathically] "No."

Megan: [telepathically] "Shit, dude. You gotta be careful. I don't know if this changes now that you're apparently friends, but like just a moment ago he was planning on attacking you next, if he gets a chance."

Tass: [telepathically] "I mean, I get it. I'm clearly the biggest threat. But I mean, what do you mean ..."

All: [laugh]

Megan: [telepathically] "No. Like you specifically. You have the spear, right?"

Tass: [telepathically] "Yeah."

Megan: [telepathically] "Yeah. The guy with the spear. He says — his boss says that you don't need to be kept alive anymore. So if he thinks that he can take you out, he's gonna try."

Tass: [telepathically] "Ok, we'll table that. Step one is get out. If it looks like he's gonna turn, we'll deal with that."

Megan: [telepathically] "OK, what the hell's going on?"

Tass: [telepathically] "I ask myself that every single day."

Megan: [telepathically] "Should I come in? Should I hide and follow you? I don't trust this."

Tass: [telepathically] "Yeah, I think we need to be up front about this, if we're all gonna get out. I think if it seems like any of us are trying something, then he will turn."

Megan: [telepathically] "Don't say anything about me being able to, like, figure out what he's up to."

Tass: [telepathically] "Oh, yeah. No, no, no. Of course."

Megan: [telepathically] "OK, OK."

Tass: [telepathically] "But to that point, just come on around. Because if I yell for you, he's gonna wonder why I know that you're out there."

Megan: [telepathically] "OK. Yeah. Yeah, that makes sense. OK." And I will ... I will back up a bit to make it seem like I was further away than I was and say, "Hello? Is everybody OK?"

Jake: "Yeah."

Rev: HARRISON: Who's that? Was that Megan?

Megan: Yeah. I'll come around the corner and say, "Oh! Hi."

Rev: HARRISON: How are you?

Megan: "Glad to see that my friends weren't crushed by a giant boulder."

Jake: "Would that have stuck, out of curiosity? Us not being part of the scene here. When it reset at midnight, would we have un-died? Or would we have stayed dead?"

Rev: HARRISON: I guess there's only one way to find out.

Jake: "I don't ... It's not worth it. I don't need the answer that bad."

Tass: "Yeah. So she's coming with us."

Rev: HARRISON: I had assumed.

Tass: "Yeah. And if possible, Mama has a daughter we'd like to get out of here, too."

Rev: HARRISON: Selina?

Tass: "Yup."

Rev: HARRISON: Interesting. So we got quite a little group getting together to hock our way out of here.

Tass: "Seems that way."

Jake: "Follow up question for you, Harrison. Do you think that bringing Selina out is a bad idea?"

Rev: HARRISON: In what way?

Jake: "Well, like Mama's got these abilities and she's very dangerous and driven. Selina seems way more chill. Do you know her deal? Does she have, like, the same abilities? Or ..."

Rev: HARRISON: I couldn't say. She's ... Well, if I'm the warden of this town, she's kind of the warden below. She takes care of things down there. I don't know what all that entails. I just know that Mama doesn't move around, doesn't deal with a lot of the minutia, but Selina does.

Megan: I reached my mind out to Tass again and I say, [telepathically] "Is he asking the bad guy if the person that's helping you is trustworthy?"

Tass: [telepathically] "Yeah. You'd be surprised how often this actually works."

Megan: [laughs]

Tass: [telepathically] "I think we're good. I think as long as we don't try to spring anything on him, I think this will go off OK."

Megan: [telepathically] "OK. If you've seen this work many a time, I guess I don't really have a whole lot to compare it to, so."

Tass: [telepathically] "Yeah. All right. Let's see what he has to say I guess, then."

Jake: "All right. So step one, take out Mama."

Rev: HARRISON: Mmhmm.

Jake: "Do you have thoughts on how to do that? An efficient way to handle that?"

Rev: HARRISON: I might have some files in my office that would have a little bit of information on them just in case something ever happened and she went wild or went rogue.

Jake: "OK. What's step two?"

Rev: HARRISON: Step two would be setting up a very specific ritual in my summoning circle, something that would basically collapse this place in on itself. Can't really destroy

it, but I can put it someplace where there'd be no way to access it. Unless, of course, one of us did it, because we knew exactly how to do the spell again.

Jake: "So if the summoning circle is preoccupied, we start the destruction process ... How do we safely open the door and get out?"

Rev: HARRISON: That's a very good question. I have not lived as long as I have by not having a contingency. I like to see everything around me. So I had one of my own installed, so I've got my own that we can leave through.

Tass: "Nice."

Jake: "That is nice. Where are they? Where the regular one and where's yours?"

Rev: HARRISON: [tsking] Uh-uh-uh.

Jake: "Fair enough. Where's ... At least can you tell me where the regular one is?"

Rev: HARRISON: Yes, it's inside the school.

Jake: "That's rough. I guess they're not actually school children, but it seems like super fucked up to start the devastation of this place from within a school."

Rev: HARRISON: It's the last place you'd look for, uh, some strange creature to be drawn into a world.

Tass: "That's ... Yup."

Rev: HARRISON: I will tell you, though. Once this ritual begins, the energy that I think it's going to put out? It won't be long, but there will be a moment where, especially with Mama down, the things here will remember what they are and what they can do and that they are here. So we'll have to protect ourselves for a couple of moments before making our escape.

Tass: "I mean, it's not ideal, but I don't think there's more ideal. Anybody? Anybody?"

Jake: "I'm so torn. You know, when I did the pocket dimension thing to try and stash our stuff, like that kind of started eating this place on a small scale, I feel like there's probably a way to amplify that or something, and just kind of tear this place apart. And hopefully it could take care of everyone that's left in here, Mama included."

Tass: "OK, but if you thought that opening it was gonna start ripping the place up, like, what does that mean for us? Like, if you're literally thinking about opening like a black hole, can you control that in any way that we can actually get out?"

Jake: "I don't know. You know, I've seen this effect for a matter of a second up to this point. So maybe if we've got two circles here, we can use one to get out or at least get like the rest of you out first, and then I can fire this up and go out the other one real quick, or something like that?"

Rev: HARRISON: I think you're gonna have to explain to me what you mean by summon a black hole.

Jake: Um ... I'll just do it for a moment, I guess. I don't think there's going to be a better way to explain it. Just for a second, I'll kind of reach into the pocket dimension and let that shit start swirling up and then close it again.

Rev: And as you do this, you see that, again, his eye flutters, scrolls through colors.

Rev: HARRISON: Well, that is fascinating. Some kind of almost a magical black hole. Yes, I think that that might just do the trick. That is a wilder, less refined version of what I was going to try to do, except that seems like it just sucks things into nothingness.

Jake: "Yeah. I mean, I think this would be brute force, but irreversible. Which in my opinion, is pretty good. But I don't ... I don't know the theory behind this." You know, like just addressing everyone now, brainslug woman included.

Rev: [laughs]

Jake: "Focus, focus over here." [laughs] "You know, I'm not familiar. Like I've never seen this manifest this way, obviously, before today. So I don't get, like, the theory behind it. I

wouldn't know how to sustain it. I don't know if it's gonna pull me in. I would need to do some, like, research and stuff before I would feel comfortable trying to enact this plan."

Tass: "OK. So either way, we need some prep. In one situation, we do a little research and see how to take down Mama, and then we set up and brick the place. Or this, we do a little research and way worse than brick it, but at least we don't have the fight. So yeah, it in theory could take everything down by one step. It's just a matter of weighing the risk, I think. I think either way we should research yours first, because if it seems viable and safer overall? Let's go for it."

Jake: "I mean, is there any reason we couldn't research both simultaneously? I don't imagine that everybody would contribute a useful hand to both of these."

Tass: "Yeah, OK." I think I'm going to turn to Harrison again. "The only other thing that I'm kind of worried about is, you know, there's people here like Megan and Selina that otherwise are just not causing harm, you know? These people have been put in here because they're dangerous to Nash."

Rev: HARRISON: No, no. They've been put in here because they're dangerous to the world.

Tass: "OK."

Rev: HARRISON: Selina is a worker here, same as I.

Tass: "Mmhmm."

Rev: HARRISON: I will admit that Megan here is a bit of an anomaly, being brought here by Estin.

Megan: "He seriously never brought anybody else?"

Rev: HARRISON: No, you were the first one. He has been part of Nash's generals for quite a while. And in all the times that I have been on calls with him or communicated with him and the others, I've never met him except for that one time. And it is not something I would care to do again.

Tass: "Don't worry about that."

Rev: HARRISON: Why's that?

Tass: "He's not around anymore."

Rev: HARRISON: Did you kill him?

Tass: "We did."

Rev: HARRISON: I had not heard that.

Jake: "Has anybody else been brought in here like similar to the way Megan was? Like she seemed kind of like a, I don't know what to do I'll deal with you later, situation."

Rev: HARRISON: Everyone else has been brought here by Nash himself. Megan is the only one brought here maybe, I don't know, six months ago.

Tass: "Whoa, hold on."

Megan: "Six months?!"

Rev: HARRISON: Well, I'm sorry. It's the same day over and over again. You don't quite recall. Time is strange here. I could be a little off, but I'm usually pretty good about keeping the calendar.

Tass: "How off? You mean six months in our world, regular time."

Rev: HARRISON: Yes.

Tass: I think I'm jaw dropped, eyes wide, looking at Jake. "Hawaii was like a year and a half ago."

Jake: "Uh huh."

Tass: "OK, whole new problem."

All: [laugh]

Rev: HARRISON: What seems to be the problem? Estin not quite as dead as you had assumed?

Jake: "Or it's a different Estin."

Tass: "This is a — that's not better!"

Megan: "He just called him Estin. Is it ... Is it just all of this guy's generals are all named Estin? What ..."

Tass: "No, there are other Estins and other versions of people we killed — well, he killed another one. We've killed two. No, maybe we've just killed one. Oh god ..."

Megan: "You said he was dead!"

Tass: "Technically, he was dead before we killed him anyway."

Megan: "Oh my god, what?"

Tass: "Jake, what are you gonna do about this?"

All: [laugh]

Jake: I'm trying to remember exactly the circumstances of our first — our Hawaii Estin kill. Like he turned to dust, right?

Rev: He did, yes.

Jake: Do I have any reason to believe that's just a thing that vampires can do sometimes?

Tass: [laughs] Some turn into bats ...

Jake: Like this was — yeah, like this was a strategic possum move on his part. Like, he was just like, I am losing, but I can convince them that they've won. Dust.

Rev: You have seen another vampire who could turn into poison gas.

Jake: Fuck me running.

Rev: But I will say that you don't think that is the case. Going back, those rolls were not mixed, mechanically speaking. You think that you did the correct thing to kill him.

Tass: I don't know why, but I still don't feel good about it.

All: [laugh]

Tass: Confirmation from the GM and I'm like, no but hold on ...

Jake: "OK. So either it's a different Estin, like from a different world, or somehow this Estin was un-killed, which Nash kind of has the ability to do. He un-killed Dr. White and turned him into a thing. Or ... I don't want to get into time travel shenanigans, but like maybe he just yonked the Estin we killed out of the timeline before we killed him and like, brought him forward."

Tass: "Oh, God. OK, yeah. This is obviously big problem, big trouble. Nothing we can do about it here or now."

Jake: "I mean, also, we killed him once. So like ... I'm not like — that was like the second thing that we did. So I'm not like that worried."

Megan: "I am. You're saying that he was maybe from a different world. Does that mean he went from his world to our world to kidnap me, or does that mean I'm from a different world than you're from?"

Jake: "OK, here's what I feel like is maybe the most likely scenario: We killed Estin here and Nash was like, this simply will not do, I need my Estin, so I'll get a different one. And he pulled one from a different world and said, hey, you're here. You work here now."

Tass: "I think that's probably the best theory. But if we all get eaten up by a black hole and don't get out, it doesn't matter anyway."

Jake: "That's true. We got ... We got off track."

Tass: "Solid track to get off on, though. Solid. Good information to have."

Megan: "Six months. What's happened?"

Jake: "Oh ... Some stuff."

Rev: HARRISON: I imagine that many of your subscriptions have expired.

Jake: "How much ... How much was left in your account when you left? Because if they were auto, yeah, you might be empty."

Megan: "Yeah."

Jake: "You might be in collection."

Megan: "Maybe I'll just stay here. It's fine."

Jake: "OK. We'll cross those bridges when we come to them. I'm looking for the hat trick anyway, so I'll deal with the other Estin when we get out if we have to. But if we're gonna split up and try and get this all done in a timely manner, I obviously need to work on the magic. Harrison probably needs to go deal with the files on how to take down Mama. So who wants to go with who? Megan, I've seen you do some cool shit. Do you know, like, magic? Do you think you could help me magic?"

Megan: "No, I just — I've just been trying to figure out what I can do."

Jake: "I mean, Tass, like you don't really have much to contribute on that front either, right?"

Tass: "No. I can go with Harrison so we can divvy that stuff up and look through what we would need to do if we have to fight Mama."

Jake: "Hey Harrison, is there like a magic library or anything here that might help me with this, or am I just going to fully trial and error this process?"

Rev: HARRISON: Yeah, there's not anything out of the ordinary here, other than the two summoning circles, one of them lesser known. Like we're not keeping a magical library around a bunch of murderous convicts.

Jake: "Sure. Sure, sure, sure."

Megan: "I mean, I can come with in case you need another set of hands."

Jake: Can I teleport out of here?

Rev: You haven't tried.

Jake: "Tass, I forgot. You remember when I could just teleport to Elnore?"

Tass: "Oh, yeah. I guess, you know, that's kind of another world in somewhere you've been. Does that translate with, like, a pocket dimension?"

Jake: "I mean, I would kind of think if anything, this would be closer. This isn't even like a parallel. This is just a pocket within our world, sort of."

Tass: "You know better than I do, dude."

Jake: "Because that could also be a relatively easy way out, still ignoring the destroying this place. But if I leave ... If I try it now and I succeed ..."

Tass: "Well if you can teleport out, you can teleport back. right? Since you've been here now?"

Jake: "Maybe. Harrison, are there like protections against that sort of thing? Like does the door have to be open period, to get in here?"

Rev: HARRISON: As far as I know, the door is the only way in and out. This place is, again, I cannot re-emphasize this enough, a jail for the most dangerous things on the planet.

Jake: "Yeah. But I mean, every ... You know, every civil engineer has oversights in their designs. Like, surely there's ... There's a vent in the Death Star."

Rev: HARRISON: Hmm.

Jake: "I'm just — I'm gonna try it. We'll see what happens. I might be back in a moment."

Tass: "OK."

Jake: I'm gonna try to teleport out of this place and back to the regular world. Back to like outside the lair, probably.

Rev: You take one point of armor-defeating damage as magical energies coursing through your body from the surrounding buildings, the floor, the sky. You all see Jake light up with this dark black and red energy.

Jake: "Ow, fuck!"

Tass: "Oh ..."

Megan: [sighs]

Rev: HARRISON: I don't think that's the vent you're looking for.

Jake: "Yeah. All right."

Megan: "Are you OK?"

Jake: "That's not one of them. Yeah, I'm good. I'm all right."

Tass: "All right. Asked and answered. Let's go. Let's start getting this done so that we're ready."

Jake: "OK. Harrison, you're going to be able to keep everyone off our backs while we do this?"

Rev: HARRISON: Oh, sure. For the most part, everyone will just go around doing their daily business.

Jake: "Well, I feel like it certainly wouldn't hurt to have that circle in the school as like a focus. Am I gonna be good if I go use that?"

Rev: HARRISON: You need to wait a couple more hours, let school get out.

Jake: "All right. Well, I guess we can go pick an isolated spot in the woods and start at least kind of fiddling with this. And when it seems like we need the focus, hopefully we're free and clear to go into the school by then, or else we'll just have to kill some time."

Rev: All right. So Tass and Harrison are going to the police station, and Megan and Jake are going to the forest behind the school. So, Megan and Jake, let's go with you. The two of you appear back in the forest in a burst of flames.

Megan: So as soon as we appear behind the school, I turn to Jake and I say, "OK, here's the situation. I can kind of do telepathy and like, talk in people's minds and hear their thoughts. And I can also kind of tune in to monsters and stuff and figure out what they're planning."

Jake: "Oh, dope."

Megan: "Yeah. So I was talking to Tass and he was kind of, you know, filling me in on the plan that you had with Harrison, or whatever the hell his name is. And he plans on attacking Tass if he gets a chance. Something about a Chosen? He's a Chosen and they don't need him anymore. But I didn't want to tell you that's what I could do in front of Harrison. I don't want to leave him alone with them, but I needed to let you know."

Jake: "We just sent him off with Harrison! Uh ... Do I need to go get him? You told Tass this, right?"

Megan: "Yeah. And he said, oh, it's OK. He's cool. We've done this before a lot. It always works out. So I didn't know if that meant it was going to be OK, but I figured that it was better for me to come with you and let you know so Harrison didn't know that I knew, instead of just saying, OK, Jake, go by yourself, and then me being the person that has to save Tass against this guy."

Jake: "OK. I'm not inclined to, like, overrule. Like if Tass said he thinks it's good, then I think other than like being aware and like prepared, I guess we let him go. Like I don't — I don't think I have better judgment than Tass does, or anything. So ..."

Megan: "I mean, that doesn't sound like super sketch to you? That he thinks that he's disposable?"

Jake: "Yes. OK, explain that part to me in more detail. You said that he's a Chosen, and they don't need him anymore?"

Megan: "Yeah. His boss told him he doesn't need to be kept alive at all costs anymore, because they got a replacement."

Jake: "Hmm."

Megan: "Is that ...?"

Jake: "OK. Wow. That's probably the most concerning thing that's happened this whole time."

Megan: "Oh no."

Jake: "Does any of that mean anything to you?"

Megan: "No."

Jake: "OK."

Megan: "You look real concerned right now. I feel like this is extra bad news."

Jake: "Do you want to come with me, or do you want to wait here away from Harrison? Because I'm gonna have to go to where they are."

Megan: "I mean, I'll come with. I just didn't want to be the only person that was there to try and stop him if he tries something. I don't want to be alone, either."

Jake: "If we go pick Tass up, Harrison's gonna know that we're lying or concealing something. Maybe we just confront Harrison with ... But then — then he knows that you know this, or that we know this somehow. And that's not good."

Megan: "Uh, maybe I can try to get into his head again?"

Jake: "OK."

Megan: "And see if he's still planning on doing something?"

Jake: "Like you can read him and see if he's mellowed out any more since that one?"

Megan: "Yeah, maybe. OK, let me try. Let me try."

Rev: All right. Megan, roll Tune In.

Megan: Eight.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 1.

Megan: I guess I'll go with the same question I tried to reach out with last time when I got that answer and say, who is it going to attack next?

Rev: The sense that you get when you reach into Harrison's mind for who is he planning to attack next is that he thinks he has a way to remove Jake from the equation.

Megan: Yeah, I just turn and I look at Jake. "Well, good news is I don't think he's planning on attacking Tass next."

Jake: "Great!"

Megan: "Bad news. Bad news is he thinks he can get you out of the picture."

Jake: "What does that mean?"

Megan: "I don't know. I'm sorry. I don't know. I just — that's all I got. He thinks he has a way to take you out of the equation. I don't know how. I just know that if he's gonna make a move on somebody, as of right now, he's planning on it being you next."

Jake: "Man, I thought we were getting along. Did it seem like he planned to remove me from the equation, or just like he thought he could?"

Megan: "He thought he might be able to have a way. So I guess if we keep down the path we're going, he thinks that there's a way to get you off of it."

Jake: "OK. Well, I mean, honestly, I can't, like, super fault him for that."

Megan: "What?"

Jake: "Well, you don't ... Look, you don't get very far in this world — and by this world, I mean like the monster hunting slaying world — without like preparing some contingencies. So everybody's always a little bit thinking about how they could stop everyone else. It's like Batman. Did you read Batman comics?"

Megan: "No."

Jake: "OK, Batman's got a way to stop everybody else in the Justice League, you know? Even like Superman. Like Batman knows that well, just in case shit hits the fan, I should have a way to deal with this person. So everybody's kind of gotta be like that all the time, because you just never know. You never know what's gonna happen. I mean, mind control exists, you know? Like people ... People do things that maybe they don't even plan to do, so ..."

Megan: "Do you have a contingency plan for me?"

Jake: "No, I just met you." [laughs]

Megan: I don't know if I can tell if he's joking or not. So I think I just kind of turn away and look at the town. "So you think he's OK?"

Jake: "Tass is very survivable, and he's not a dummy. So if you are getting the vibe now that he's not even like the main thing on Harrison's radar? I think Tass can 1v1 most people. And if not, hopefully he yells loud enough that we hear him, because then we can get there in an instant. I mean, you can — like you can do mind stuff. Can you like basically keep an eye on him? Or you know, whatever, open up like a one way channel. And just if he seems in trouble, we could know?"

Megan: "Not from this far away. It's like maybe a couple of blocks I could get away from them and open it up and let him know that I've got that channel open, but not from here."

Jake: "You know, if I get you close enough, you could know what's going on. But then I don't know what's going on with you, either. Or I can open up a window and we can just check in on them. And maybe we do that every now and then? Like, set intervals? Or I could literally just pop in on him. Which is not unsuspecting, but is kind of foolproof."

Megan: "Would it be suspicious if you are popping in to give updates on your progress? Just to say like we want to keep everyone on the same page and see where they're at, so we're not spending so much time on both plans?"

Jake: "Harrison's eyes glow when I lie, though."

Megan: "So don't lie."

Jake: "I wonder if it's lying, if it's the material of the sentence, or the motive behind what I'm saying. If it's just being dishonest."

Megan: "I mean, is anything about what I suggested not something that we should be doing?"

Jake: "I just wonder if he'll know that I'm actually there to check up on Tass, you know?"

Megan: "You mean also there to check up on Tass."

Jake: "We won't know until the eyes flash gold."

Megan: Ah, yes. As the old saying goes. That old adage.

Jake: It's like my mom always said. "If it seems like at least for the moment, Tass is out of the woods and I'm the main focus, then I feel like we can leave him be and just every now and then, you know, when we're taking breaks or something, I'll just pop in on him. I'll check in and I'll try not to lie, and I guess we'll figure out exactly what he sees as far as untruths go. Have that conversation if we need to have it. I can very much just pop in and go, oh, just checking on my dude, making sure you didn't kill him yet. You're the bad guy. No offense. I'm sure you understand. And then leave."

Megan: "OK. So when you go back to check on him, how long should I wait before I assume you're both dead? I mean, I guess it's not like I can leave anyway. So ..."

Jake: "We're not ... We're not gonna both die."

Megan: "Well, yeah, I would hope not. But I've been inside this guy's head twice now, and both times he seemed very confident that he could easily take out the guy with the spear and easily remove you from the situation. And I don't know, as we've been going through all of this stuff, every plan you guys have come up with, you seem kind of half-confident that it's going to work, just because it should. And, you know, when I saw you on TV, you seemed real confident and real sure that you knew what you were doing and that you had it under control. But I just ... None of that seems real anymore. So I'm sorry if I'm not super confident that this is going to be an easy, smooth ride."

Jake: "Look, that was a long time ago, and I am not remotely that person anymore. I was greener. I had a different god. I had different powers. A lot has happened. And I have learned that thinking it's going to be a smooth, easy ride is for suckers, and confidence gets you killed. I'm not trying to convince you that any of this is going to be smooth or it's going to be easy or it's gonna go according to plan, because it's super not. That's the part that I'm sure of. And there's only so much planning and speculating that you can do before you're just spinning your wheels, and you've just got to do something. So that's what I'm laying out here. Before we start spinning our wheels, this is what I think we

should do. This is the action that I recommend we take, because I don't think we're going to get any further down this path with what we know right now."

Megan: "OK. I ... I can appreciate that. I like to think about possibilities and what can happen. And even if it's not a fully laid out plan, I like to have some idea of where things are going. And so every time I bring something up and you guys say that's not gonna happen, or we've seen this a lot and it'll be fine, I just want you to be honest with me. And that doesn't feel like honesty. Even ... Even an I don't know."

Jake: "Honestly? I'm still trying not to spook you. I don't know you that well. You're kind of new to all this. You seem a little freaked out. Do you want honesty? Do you want the truth? Cause it's not gonna make you happy."

Megan: "I know I have been pretty freaked out, but I remember now. I remember all of it. And I know that there's a lot that I don't know that you have experienced. But yeah, always. I want honesty."

Jake: "OK. Honestly, any of us could die any moment, and lots of things out there would love for that to happen. So as far as the 'that's not going to happen, we've dealt with it before?' At a point, we've gotta just pretend that that's true for ourselves. Because for us, for our motives, for what we need to get done, not getting it done is not an option. You've kind of been thrust into the big leagues here. And we've gotta do our job. If we don't? Don't know what happens. Ain't good. On a big, big scale. So for our own sanity, we've got to assume that we're going to pull it off. Because if we start assuming that we're not, we're not."

Megan: "OK. OK, let's do it. What do you ... What do you need me to do?"

Rev: You know, explain to me exactly what it is you want to do.

Jake: Ultimately, what I'd like to be able to do is open the pocket dimension and be able to step away from it, and it keep going. Because it seems like it'll just — it'll start pulling stuff in and pulling stuff in. And, you know, I don't know if as it pulls stuff in, it'll, like, get bigger? I have that just in my head, like as a black hole thing. But ideally, I'll be able to go, OK, it's open and now I can leave, but it will stay here and it will continue to just eat this place up without being able to be, like, shut down, except by me.

Rev: So I think to have a sense of this, you don't really have anything to study from because it's a strange occurrence that is happening. So I think your best bet would be to do it once and study it.

Jake: Just to like open it up in my hand and watch what happens?

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Yeah. Then I would absolutely start doing that. I would pick up a stick or a rock or something and try and put it in the pocket dimension and like give it a second. And then, you know, see what happens, shut it down, do it again for a longer time. You know, just trying to see what this thing does without me stopping it and how long it seems to take, and what the effects on other things other than what I'm trying to put in there are. What the effects on me myself are, as it like broadens or stays open.

Megan: Can I try to use my Telekinesis to see if I can manipulate any of the things that are being drawn in to this black hole?

Rev: Like to stop them from being pulled in? Or to push them in faster? Or just all of the above?

Megan: Yeah, all of the above. I just want to see how strong is this force, and do I have any manipulation over it?

Rev: All right. So Jake, as you're both working on this together, roll Investigate a Mystery. And you get a +1, from Megan helping out like this.

Jake: Nine.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 1.

Jake: What can it do?

Rev: So you spend a little bit of time with this. We'll say even a couple of hours. The two of you working together, trying different objects of different sizes. Megan trying to put

fields around it to keep things out, picking up things, trying to put them in. And the thing that you discover is that when you activate this on an item, the energy starts to pour off of it. And the longer it exists, it doesn't get bigger, but the faster it starts to pull things in. And the faster it starts to pull things in, it starts to be able to pull things in that are larger than its surface area. So, for example, you have a small rock and you let it go for a while, and things start coming in faster. And a tree branch that is much larger than the rock, it's almost like you see it stretched out before you as it gets sucked in. You have the feeling that yes, you could, with magic. It would be Big Magic. You could place an item with this field on it into a summoning circle, and it would draw everything here in and put it wherever this goes. It seems almost to be nowhere. But it would have to keep running. And so the cost of it would be the use of that ability. Because if you were to shut that ability off, you don't know what that would do. But specifically inside of the spell that you would create inside of the summoning circle, whatever connection it is you have to this pocket dimension, you would link to this item. And so you would pass it to it. I don't think it's something you could never get back, but it would take some effort.

Jake: Boy, that is ... That's a big cost. Let me ask you this.

Rev: Mmhmm.

Jake: My flaming sword, basically, it didn't exist. It was in a pocket dimension, until it was in my hand to be wielded.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I will not have a place to put my sword anymore. How many gear points is a scabbard?

Rev: You have to find something that essentially has flesh ...

Jake: What?!

Rev: That's fireproof.

Jake: [laughs] OK.

Rev: Like you don't want to just make it out of normal leather. You'd have to find something that has fire resistant flesh, to make the leather out of.

Megan: [laughs] That was wild!

Jake: Something that has flesh. What? That's fireproof. And in my head I went, those are two completely different statements. You said those like they're the same thing. Something that's got flesh, you know. But it's fireproof. Like flesh isn't all fireproof!

Megan: I didn't hear, you know, that's fireproof. What I heard was, you have to find something that's flesh. And it's like, wait, what? And it's like, cause it's fire.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: This is kindergarten stuff.

Rev: I hate to break it to you: scabbards are made of flesh. Not ours.

Megan: Ugh.

Jake: There's a reason that they don't market it that way, though.

Rev: [laughs] Oh, saying leather instead of flesh?

Jake: Yeah. We need to church it up some.

Rev: So yeah, I think that if you could find something that was fireproof that it could be made out of, it would be a gear point, for the stitching.

All: [laugh]

Jake: Two, if it's like really ornate.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: "All right. Well, now that we got this wrapped up, I'm gonna go check on Tass. Do you want to come along?"

Megan: "Yeah, for sure. I'd like to know that he's OK."

Rev: All right.

Tass, you are with Harrison at the police station. He has got a big stack of files on all of the inmates here.

Rev: HARRISON: Now a lot of this doesn't help us too much in the current, because it is Mama that you're trying to deal with. But I did take a few notes. They're over in that notepad over there, the blue one, if you want to go through them. It's just stuff that I observed about her, the way that the leeches work ... A little bit that I noticed from Selina, when I encountered her. There might be something in there for you.

Tass: "Yeah. All right." And I'll go take a look.

Rev: All right. So as you start to go through the notes that Harrison has on Mama and the leech colony, roll Investigate a Mystery.

Tass: OK. Twelve.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 2.

Tass: I guess the first thing that I'm looking for is if there's anything that we don't know so far that it can do.

Rev: So from what Harrison has in this notebook, you do know that Mama creates and controls all of this leech spawn. And that the leeches, all the various sizes, has the ability to secrete this poison that takes away your memories when they feed off of you. In addition to that, somehow she is putting off a field of regeneration. But it's not just for her children, it's also for this whole place. It is connected somehow to the cycle of the sun. That every 24 hours, she puts off this energy that regenerates everything that was here. Buildings that were broken are repaired, food is replaced, the lawn grows back to its original height. The state that this world was in when she nested here is what it returns to

every night at midnight. And that includes — and I think this is a new piece of information — people's physical location in space.

Tass: OK. Then I guess for the other, my big one is, what can hurt it?

Rev: The thing that you find as you continue to read through about his interaction, he talks about going into the sewer once before and encountering Mama. Just a welcome to the neighborhood, we'll be working together ... And it was when he was introduced to Selina, who is now been his contact the whole time. But there was a point where he took a step backwards and tripped and fell against a wall, and crushed one of the small leeches. And there was an echo of screams all around, as if all of the similar sized leeches were feeling that pain. But it also radiated from Mama. And in that moment, he realized that she feels their pain. And while their pain may not be able to kill her, it does open up her senses in a way that she is normally protected against.

Tass: OK. Kind of like almost a psychic reverb that lets her not protect herself as well.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: OK. And you said that he had files of the people here too, right?

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: Like I know that this is a big order, but I think if I found all the rest of this in even a somewhat timely manner, if we haven't heard back from Jake yet, I want to ask him if I can look through those too, just to get kind of a basic idea. In case their memory snaps and we're being attacked, maybe I will have gleaned a little this and that.

Rev: Yes. They are very incomplete files, but the files are enough that he could try to get away from things. A lot of these things don't have listings for what could kill them, because it wasn't something they could figure out. In some cases, it was believed they couldn't be killed. But he does have escape methods listed for all of them. For example, if Stu were to break free and come after him, he knows that Stu is very susceptible to heat. Or the pawn shop owner, Janine, were to come after him. She has trouble escaping from uneven or soft land. Like she has a hard time moving through rough terrain.

Tass: OK, OK. Yeah. So that kind of thing is what I would be spending this time on. Just glancing through and trying my best to retain as much of that as I can in this time.

Rev: OK. I'll be honest, I'm not gonna go through and list all of these.

Tass: Oh, sure. Sure.

Rev: But you will have this knowledge, if it comes up, of is this something that I can kill or what can I do to distract it? You'll know a little bit about each of these things, if you encounter one of them.

Tass: OK. I think, too, in the meantime, if I can, I might be chatting with him if he's staying here.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: "Hey, man. Sorry about, you know, everything kind of being rough there, and the eye poking and all that. You know, wasn't really intent to come in here and attack the workers."

Rev: HARRISON: Yes. I was quite surprised that you were able to see my true form. That is, I'll be honest, that's a little something else that Mama seems to put out.

Tass: "Oh, is that right?"

Rev: HARRISON: Yes.

Tass: "Huh."

Rev: HARRISON: It's just some kind of ... Almost like a serotonin boost. Something to make everyone feel better. That if everyone saw what everyone looked like here, it might just trigger all kinds of memories.

Tass: "Yeah. Yeah, that's fair. Yeah. But I mean, either way, wasn't personal. So I am genuinely sorry. Just trying to help out our girl, you know."

Rev: HARRISON: Yes, I understand. I appreciate the offer to help me escape from here in a way that hopefully will make it so that Nash doesn't believe I survived.

Tass: "Yeah, it seems pretty solid. Especially if whatever Jake has in mind actually works."

Rev: Yeah, Tass. And about this time, actually, Jake and Megan come walking into the police station.

Tass: "Hey, how'd it go?"

Jake: "Pretty well. There's a lot of trial and error, but I think I've done as much as I can do right now. I haven't gotten down into the basement of the school yet to, like, iron out the details in that space. But I think I can do this."

Tass: "Yeah, man. I mean, I know you can. I've got some interesting stuff on Mama. I looked over some of the files of the creatures around town, too. So if it comes to a fight, at least maybe we'll be able to hold them off a little better. But I'm hoping we don't get to that."

Jake: "All right. Well, if you're good and you're satisfied with what you got done, then we can head to the school and try and, like, put together the final product here."

Tass: "Harrison? Anything else we need to do?"

Rev: HARRISON: Yeah. Suppose that now that we're getting this close to home, I will show you.

Rev: And he actually takes a couple of steps backwards and pushes on a wooden panel, and it creaks open. And there's a little hidden room, maybe eight by eight feet. And in it is a summoning circle.

Rev: HARRISON: This will be the route by which will be leaving.

Tass: "OK. Great. Cool spot. I always wanted a door like that."

Rev: HARRISON: It comes in handy, and I've got it kind of hidden in a way that you can't tell from the outside that there's missing space. That's real tricky to do.

Tass: "I bet. Yeah, yeah."

Rev: And so the four of you head over to the school. It's about 6:30 at night now. And actually as you start to approach the front door, Selina is sitting outside on the front steps.

Jake: "Oh, good. I'm glad that you're here."

Rev: SELINA: Yeah. I remember you telling me that if I got separated from you, I was supposed to come to the school.

Jake: All right. Well, the full squad that's getting out of here is currently here. All right. So paint me ... Paint me a word picture of this. Where the fuck is a summoning circle hiding in a school?

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I know it's in the basement.

Rev: Yeah. So it's not really hiding. Harrison leads you inside — Selina falls to the back — and walk you through the center of the school, into a kind of broom closet. And then there's another one of those panels that he pushes on, and it goes down a set of stairs into a floor that takes up the bulk of underneath this school. And it is dirt and stone, but there is a metal summoning circle inlaid. The ceiling here is pretty high, because you do know that this is where they bring in creatures when they bring them in.

Jake: "So if you bring something in that's like bigger than the stair — like how do you get things out of this basement?"

Rev: HARRISON: Well, like I said, this whole how I look to you isn't quite the size that I am. There's something about whatever she does to this place, whatever you look like, as opposed to what you might truly be, that's how you interact with the world. So if you're

some big 20 foot tall thing, but you appear in this world like 5'6", you go through doors that are six feet high, no problem.

Jake: "Interesting."

Rev: But yeah, in front of you is like a 40 by 40 foot room with a big inlaid metal circle on the floor.

Jake: OK. I'm just gonna get to work.

Rev: As you start to approach the circle, you see the dirt and the rock of this ground start to shift and buckle and move.

Jake: "Harrison, what is this?"

Rev: HARRISON: I don't know.

Rev: And you hear Selina, she starts to breathe faster.

Rev: SELINA: Oh, no. Oh, I think I might have made a mistake. Mama asked me ...

Rev: And she runs up to you, and she puts her hand on your arm.

Rev: SELINA: Mama asked me where I was meeting you. Because when Mama asks a question, I gotta answer. And I told her. When Mama asks a question, I gotta answer.

Rev: And you feel that where she's touching you, for a brief second, the skin there gets hot and slimy.

Rev: SELINA: Just like when Mama gives a command, I gotta follow it.

Rev: And that's the last thing you hear before your memories go away.

SFX: OUTRO MUSIC

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