

Snowy Mountain Village Blues (S3, E19)

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Rev: Well hey, everybody. Welcome back.

Tass: Hello!

Jake: Good to be back.

Rev: I know, right? I think we should also take a moment to mention that in the interim of taking a break from Coin, we have a new person sitting physically at the table with us.

Megan: Yeah.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: Welcome to in here!

Megan: Thanks!

Tass: I can reach across and high five. I'm not gonna, but I can.

Jake: That's not true. You don't have the reach for that angle. Oh, barely! I don't know that I'd call that a high five.

Rev: Yeah. That was kinda ...

Jake: Fingertips.

Tass: It was four. It was a high four fingertips.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: That counts.

Rev: That's fair. Like if you guys were the Wonder Twins, your powers would have activated.

Tass: Yeah.

Rev: It's enough for that.

Tass: Exactly, exactly.

Rev: Well, as it is the beginning of a new month, we would like to take a moment to thank all of the patrons who joined us in the month of November. James Bricknell, LittleGnome, Wolverine Cannon.

All: [laugh]

Rev: Highly effective D&D weapon.

Tass: Oh, my god.

Rev: Cmac, Amber Nicole, Sam Pynes, Stephen Long, Lexi! — With an exclamation point. John Cahee, Ben Heart, Taiki Hayato, Kaiden Wisecap, Bru, Robin Fuller, Kristen Johnson, Carrie Unida, JT Guest, Amalamadon.

All: [laugh]

Rev: I'm confusing myself with how many additional A-Ms are in there. Amalamadon, Chris Jensen, and Paulnewmanlover.

Tass: [laughs] I love all of them.

Rev: Right? So thank you for joining us on Patreon this month, and thank you to all of our patrons who join us every month. If you would like to join our Patreon, you can head over to Patreon.com/TheCritshow. Tiers start at just \$1, and that gets you access to our Discord server. If you are a new or a old patron who has not gotten on the Discord server, I have gotten some emails every now and then about where do you find that

code? Check your junk mail when you sign up for Patreon, because usually those emails go straight into your junk. But in that first email that you get, it will have the link on there to join the Discord server. And oh boy, I highly recommend you do. We had a happy hour the other night that lasted till like 4:30 in the morning.

Tass: Yep.

Rev: We have a happy hour channel, where everybody just hangs out and chats on Friday night and has a drink and plays some games, and it was a wild night.

Megan: I had to just close out of it at one point, or else I just would have never went to bed.

Tass: I wanted to tell you about that, too. You left to uproarious laughter. Because it was just — we were in the middle of a sentence, there was a quick, dead pause, and she just goes, "K, bye." And is gone. And everyone just started cackling. It was so beautiful.

Rev: One of the other things that happened with a Patreon recently: we have started playing some video one shots when we hit certain milestones, and we unlocked one of those the other day. We have the patrons submit a bunch of games that they'd like to see us play, we narrow that down into a list of games that we have ideas to run, and then from that list we let the patrons vote. And the voting ended on Saturday, and we will be playing a game of Threadbare, run by Tass.

Megan: I am so excited for the costumes.

Rev: [laughs]

Tass: Oh, boy. I'm so excited that I don't know that I'll have to make a costume.

Jake: Well, you gotta do something.

Tass: Oh, I'm gonna do something.

Jake: I had to wear a robe, and that wasn't nothing. So you've gotta ... I don't know, just put like a big sock on, or something.

Tass: I'm just gonna glue Legos to myself.

Megan: Jake, that wasn't just your weekend robe?

Jake: [whispers] They don't gots to know about that.

All: [laugh]

Jake: Weekend robe is Jake's little secret.

All: [laugh]

Rev: Yes. Last time we played Sexy Battle Wizards, and everybody went all out with the costumes. So I don't imagine it will be different this time.

Megan: I am already planning, and I don't even know what my character is gonna be.

Rev: Yeah, me too.

Also, over this last weekend, Nyx has relaunched our merch store. So you can head over to thecritshowpodcast.com/merch. We have all kinds of new stuff. We have Damien merch. We have new art that is based off of tarot cards. We've got new hoodies. Some of the stuff on there I didn't even know she was putting on there, it was very exciting. And we're actually gonna do some more new merch coming in December. We're gonna do stuff for Perilous Tides, for Coin, also stuff for Mystery Detectives. So head on over to thecritshowpodcast.com/merch to see all of the wonderful new things that we have added over this Black Friday/Cyber Monday weekend. And it is worth noting that on the store we are now able to support international shipping, all over the world, so.

Also this week — this ends on December the 5th — Perilous Tides is up for the Audio Verse Awards. We are up for Best New Improvised Show, Tass is up for Best Player Direction, and Kim is up for Best Player in a New Improvised Production. You can head over to the audioverseawards.net/vote. It is a much more streamlined process now. You do still vote for each category, but it's a drag and drop thing, which is actually very cool. I voted the other day and it was like, oh, this is much simpler than it was the previous times

that I voted. So the voting for that goes until December the 5th. And if you enjoy Perilous Tides, you can find the first six episodes on our site. They're also on the main feed, back in ... Gosh, what was that, May?

The Monster Mash! I don't know what I was thinking. It's Roaster, not Hounde. I did not play Hounde. Hounde did not get defeated in the final round. It was Roaster. But the winner, the person who came closest to having the bracket correct, the winner of the Monster of the Week book signed by Michael Sands is Gearheart Shoot.

Tass: Congratulations!

Rev: Yes.

Megan: Good job!

Rev: Had, I believe, eight of the ten fights correct on the bracket.

SFX: That's very impressive, because so many of those turned out every way except for what we guessed.

Jake: What I think we would call upsets.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: Yes.

Rev: I think just with Jeremy and Iron Wolf, those two alone destroyed like 3/4s of the brackets that we received right off the bat.

Tass: Kim, the destroyer of brackets. Well done.

Rev: Yeah. And if you are looking for the rules to The Monster Mash, we are still working on those. Honestly, it's just me being slow as I'm reading through it and kind of retyping it, trying to make sure that everything's clear. And then once I have those all finalized, I will send it over to Nyx to be made into a PDF, so that everyone can get a hold of that, that would like to.

And one last thing I do want to announce before we get into the episode is that the last couple of weeks I have been working very hard on a project that some of you may have caught onto last week. If you listened to all the way to the end of the episode, you may have heard the stinger. But as of a couple of days ago, we are officially members on the Fable and Folly Network. Fable and Folly is a very cool network of hardworking podcasters that create such shows as The Amelia Project, Moon Base Theta, Out, We Fix Space Junk, and Civilized, as well as a whole slew of other really great shows. Joining Fable and Folly will give us the opportunity to reach new listeners who may not be aware of our show, but already enjoy the type of content that we create. And also gives us the opportunity to work with a number of very talented creators within the podcast industry. Nothing at all will change about who we are, what we do, or how we do it. Really, the only thing that changes is that we have an additional support network now of people that we can share information with and skill sets. And we also have access to Sean, who is one of the founders of Fable and Folly, who handles a lot of their ad sales. They have worked with a number of great companies. And whenever you hear ads on our show now, it'll be just like before. Where the ads you hear are created by us, in-house, with the exception of maybe a few trailers for other shows on the network that you'll hear in the post roll. We also have the option to do episode drops of some of them. So every now and then on an off day when we don't have an episode or a Let's Play being published, we might drop an episode of another show here on the feed that we think that you'll enjoy, so. Anyway, we are very excited about joining the Fable and Folly Network, and so we just wanted to share it with you all.

Oh, actually, one thing before we get into this episode. There is not a recap. But in the last story arc, we had some folks talking telepathically. So from this point on, I've actually gone in this episode and future episodes, and I've added just a little bit of an effect to everyone when they're talking to one another telepathically. Because I think it could possibly in the future get pretty easy to get lost in, oh, was that out loud? Was that — who heard that? Who knows this information? So as we go forward, you will hear that reflected in the episodes. But we just want to make sure that everybody has a clear understanding of what's being said out loud, and what's being thought at people, and what's being thought back, and ...

Tass: Would it be helpful if we just echoed our voices when we were doing it, in real time?

Rev: That might be the solution I've been looking for.

Tass: OK, OK.

Rev: Give it a test.

Jake: Yeah. Break me off a piece?

Tass: [echo] Hey-hey-hey. You-you-you. Guys-guys-guys.

No, this is not gonna work.

Jake: [echo] Peter-Peter-Peter-Peter. Quincy-Quincy-Quincy-Quincy. Taggart-Taggart-Taggart-Taggart ...

All: [laugh]

Rev: All right. And with that, it's time to get to the episode.

CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: We find Jake and Tass and Margaret standing in a small room, behind a giant window. This window looks down about 50 feet into the junk room in the basement of the IPT. Standing inside the junk room is Megan. Margaret is looking down at her, and then she turns to the two of you.

Rev: MARGARET: So she was the thing that Nash was hiding?

Tass: "Yeah, seems that way."

Rev: MARGARET: Any idea why?

Tass: "Not yet."

Rev: MARGARET: Maybe we'll figure out here in a second.

Rev: Megan, over the intercom, you hear Margaret.

Rev: MARGARET: Well, show me what you got.

Megan: OK. I am going to scramble up to the tallest pile of junk I can find.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: I wanna get — I wanna get a good vantage point, here. And I'm gonna look out at everything. So I pull out my salt shaker and look out over this pile of junk, and I'm gonna use my telekinesis and just start pulling things from all over the room. I'm gonna find some big metal boxes to kind of get a strong base. Anything I can find that's sharp and blade-like. A lotta — a lotta spikes. And I'm going to pull it all together and create a ... Like a Rube Goldberg gauntlet that spans ... I don't know distances. I don't know.

All: [laugh]

Megan: Like a ways.

Rev: All right. So I think roll Telekinesis just once for this. We're gonna kind of treat this as a single action.

Megan: OK. Seven.

Rev: All right. So choose one option from Telekinesis, and you're gonna mark 2 harm.

Megan: I will choose move something bigger than a person.

Rev: All right. So can you describe to me a little bit what this looks like? You said like Rube Goldberg machine ...

Megan: Yeah, I think it starts out and it has like a big, tall gate — kinda like Jurassic Park gates — that swing open. And then you just see a long walkway, and there are these giant battle axes that are swinging around ...

Tass: [laughs]

Megan: And I think there's one of those tunnels that spins at, like, amusement parks?

Rev: Uh-huh.

Megan: That as you walk through it, it's spinning around. So you have to try and keep your balance. It's a very ... What is that show called?

Jake: Which one? Wipeout?

Megan: Wipeout! Yeah, yeah. Like American Ninja Warrior or Wipeout kind of thing, where it very much is going to take some ability to get through.

Tass: OK. All right. So what are you doing now?

Megan: I climb down from the top of the pile and I walk back up to everybody and I say, "I need a volunteer."

Tass: "Not it!"

Jake: I look slowly at Tass, and then teleport down into the room.

Megan: I pull a scarf out of my pocket and I hand it to Jake.

Jake: "Thank you. It's beautiful."

Megan: "If you wouldn't mind, please blindfold yourself."

Jake: "Nope."

Megan: "Please?"

Jake: I ...

Megan: "Oh, come on!"

Jake: Will ... I will blindfold myself.

Megan: "Yes! You'll be fine, I promise. Probably. OK, so what we're gonna do is you're gonna head up towards the doors, and then I'm gonna tell you what to do. Like, telepathically."

Jake: "OK."

Megan: "You OK? Are you sure?"

Jake: "I ... Yeah. I suppose. Tass is ... Tass is the one who's invincible!" I yell up, in the general direction of the window.

Tass: I get on the comm. "I believe in you both so hard."

Rev: MARGARET: This will be a better gauge. With Tass, I wouldn't know if he's actually getting beat up or not.

Tass: "Yeah, it's a better gauge."

Jake: "Yeah it's a great point. No. Good ... Good baseline. OK." I like put my hands out in front of me and start walking towards the entrance.

Rev: All right. So Jake starts walking towards the entrance of this labyrinth. Megan, what is the first thing that awaits him?

Megan: So he walks up, and there are these two giant swingy doors that swing inward, kind of like the Jurassic Park doors. And he walks through, and you just see three giant battle axes just swinging back and forth. [telepathically] "OK, Jake. You're gonna get ready. And when I say, just sprint forward as fast as you can. And then when I say stop, stop. OK?"

Jake: [telepathically] "Yup."

Megan: And I would like to try and make it so that when all three axes swing out to their furthest most point, the gears lock for a moment and create an extra second for him to be able to get through in one clean run.

Rev: All right. This sounds like Jinx. Why don't you roll Jinx?

Tass: [laughs]

Megan: That's a four.

All: [laugh]

Jake: I don't know that. [laughs]

Rev: All right, so Jake is primed and ready for your instruction.

Megan: When I think everything's in place, I say, [telepathically] "OK, run now!"

Rev: All right. Jake, roll Act Under Pressure.

Tass: Yeah!

Jake: That's a ten.

Rev: [laughs] So Jake dives forward through these swinging axes and makes it to the other side.

Jake: [telepathically] "Wow, that worked great!"

Tass: [laughs]

Megan: [telepathically] "Yeah, cool. OK, you made it past the first one. We're doing great. OK."

Rev: What's waiting for him next?

Megan: So next are the chompers.

Rev: What are the chompers?

Megan: The chompers are two sets of walls that are covered in spikes that slam together, and the spikes interlock, and then they open back up. And they're one set, and then there's another set. So they're on a little bit of a delay.

Rev: OK. So Jake, you take a couple of steps forward and you hear these huge metal slams, kind of rhythmically.

Jake: Is this like open top enough? Was I able to get a clear view of this before I came down?

Megan: Oh, yeah. You watched everything fly from its different parts of the room to assemble into this gauntlet, for sure.

Jake: [laughs] So I have a general idea of what hell I'm about to walk into.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Cool. I start sweating profusely.

Megan: Yeah. And I think I would like to try and make it so that these walls, as they're slamming together, something comes just off a little bit on the tracks, and there's this kind of grinding noise as they pull apart from each other.

Rev: All right. Roll Jinx.

Megan: Eleven.

Rev: All right. So you get a hold 2.

Megan: I will spend one to interfere, and to cause this grinding noise when these walls pull apart from each other.

Rev: Oh, so like you're slowing down the pull apart?

Megan: Yeah. And I will reach out telepathically and say, [telepathically] "OK, Jake. I want you to run forward when you hear the grindy noise. You hear that grindy noise?"

Jake: [telepathically] "Yes, I do."

Megan: [telepathically] "OK, wait for it to come around again. As soon as you hear it, run forward."

Jake: [telepathically] "OK."

Rev: And you hear the slam, and then you hear this slow, grinding noise.

Jake: I will run through.

Rev: All right. I don't think there's a roll for this. We're kind of flavoring Jinx a little bit, to have the labyrinth be the creature that's being interfered with. But I think that simply interfering with one of the points of Jinx stops us from slamming back together until you have gotten through. So what's next?

Megan: So next is a very deep pit full of brightly colored balls.

Tass: [laughs]

Rev: Go on.

Megan: And I say, [telepathically] "OK Jake, you're gonna have to be very careful, here. But your mission, should you choose to accept it — and you already have. You're going to step forward, and you're gonna fall into a pit of balls. It's OK. They're gonna cushion your fall. You'll be all right. But I just need you to put your arms out in front of you, and slowly walk forward."

Jake: [telepathically] "I ... So I just fall."

Megan: [telepathically] "Well, you jump into a pit."

Jake: [telepathically] "OK." I do. I jump into the pit.

Megan: And there is no danger here. I just thought everybody would appreciate watching this.

Tass: [laughs]

Jake: [telepathically] "Now what?"

Megan: [telepathically] "Just put your arms out in front of you, and just swim your way forward."

Tass: I casually, quote unquote "accidentally," lean on the button as I talk to Margaret. "Oh god, I don't think he's gonna make it!"

Megan: [laughs]

Jake: I start scrambling across the ball pit.

Rev: There is no threat here, so ...

Tass: [laughs]

Rev: There is no roll.

Megan: As he climbs out the other side, I say, [telepathically] "Oh, man. You did so good."

Jake: [telepathically] "What was the point of that one?!"

Megan: [telepathically] "You don't wanna know right now. But you made it through, I promise."

Jake: [telepathically] "Oh my god."

Megan: [telepathically] "You're OK. You're OK. You did it."

Rev: So what is the final thing Jake finds waiting for him?

Megan: I tell him to go ahead and take his blindfold off.

Jake: I do.

Megan: And he sees a maze of mirrors and like plexiglass, so he can kind of see where he needs to get at the other end. But it's very obviously a maze. And I tell him, [telepathically] "All right, you just gotta make it through the maze, and I'm gonna try and help you out as much as possible, by making it easier for you to navigate."

Jake: [telepathically] "OK. This one seems pretty all right."

Megan: And as he steps through the first part, the floor starts moving underneath him.

Jake: [telepathically] "Hold on, now."

Tass: [laughs]

Jake: [telepathically] "Is this on purpose? Is this a good thing or a bad thing?"

Rev: You notice that it's starting to move you towards a pretty jagged shard of glass.

Jake: OK.

Megan: [telepathically] "You just gotta try and follow the floor. It's gonna move underneath you, but just don't run into any mirrors."

Jake: I start trying to navigate my way through the maze.

Rev: All right, Jake. Roll Read a Bad Situation.

Megan: And I will give him a +1 forward on this, with that hold from my last roll.

Rev: How do you give him this +1?

Megan: I'm going to try and interfere with the moving floor. So it's like kind of conveyor belt paths, and as they start taking him in the wrong direction or if he gets turned around, I want to try and reverse the direction that they are moving, so that he is guided through easier.

Rev: All right. Jake, roll Read a Bad Situation, and you get a +1.

Jake: Ten.

Rev: All right, you get a hold 3.

Jake: What's my best way out?

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: [laughs]

Rev: You are able to navigate through this maze without any problem. Every time you start to get too close to a jagged piece of glass, you feel the conveyor belt jut a little bit and move you just slightly away from it. But you come out the far end.

Megan: A little confetti cannon goes off. Just like a little one.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: "OK! I survived. Thank you. Good work!"

Megan: "That was great!" I high five him.

Jake: I give a thumbs up, up to the window.

Rev: And Margaret pushes a button inside, and the big window kind of drops down.

Rev: MARGARET: That seems to work pretty well. You can kind of sense when things are going on, you seem to be able to move things. My question is, can you catch things?

Rev: And she shoves Tass out the window.

Megan: [gasps]

Tass: "Whoa! What —"

Megan: I wanna try and keep him from hitting the ground!

Rev: All right. Roll Telekinesis.

Megan: Eleven.

Rev: All right. Choose two, and mark 1 harm.

Megan: I will choose something is held fast, and to suffer 1 less harm.

Rev: All right. So you take no harm. And right before he hits the ground, Tass freezes in the air.

Tass: [laughs] "Margaret, that was so dirty!"

Rev: MARGARET: [laughs] Oh, I miss having you two around.

Megan: "Do you wanna go next?"

Rev: She jumps out the window.

Megan: "I meant the gauntlet!"

Rev: [laughs] Margaret is falling towards the ground.

Megan: Oh, I try and stop her, too!

Rev: Roll Telekinesis.

Megan: Oh, no!

Rev: MARGARET: This is an exercise in communication!

Megan: Ten.

Tass: [exhales]

Rev: All right. You are able to catch her right before she hits the ground, and take no damage in doing it.

Tass: I reach my hand out to floating Margaret for a high five.

Rev: She doesn't leave you hanging.

Tass: "See? Megan's so freaking cool."

Rev: MEGAN: Yes.

Rev: And she, uh ...

Jake: [laughs] Can't get down!

Rev: [laughs] Yeah! They're just ... So how exactly does this work, do you think? Does it just that you release it?

Megan: Yeah, I think I just decide not to hold it in place any longer. But I ... I don't think I am yet, because I'm a little terrified that I almost just got my new boss killed.

Rev: MARGARET: Oh, that's all right. You could let us go.

Megan: And I drop them.

Rev: Margaret dusts herself off and walks over to you, Megan.

Rev: MARGARET: Yes, it's a very impressive first showing. The two of you feel safe taking her out with you?

Tass: "Oh, yeah. Absolutely."

Rev: MARGARET: Well, welcome to the IPT.

Megan: "Hey, thanks."

Rev: MARGARET: Now, before you all head off, could you tell me a little bit about what your experience was like? I know that you were kidnapped, they found you. What was your deal before? The last person we inducted into the IPT, we had to change their look and their name to hide them. Is that something that needs to be done for you as well?

Megan: "No, I don't ... I don't think so. I'm pretty sure I'm not being looked for. I left home a while ago, and I've just been traveling around, trying to do some research. I guess it was apparently six months ago. But yeah, I decided I needed to get a better control of these abilities, and just went out in search of whatever information I could find."

Tass: "Yeah, that's kind of a big one, too, that we haven't gotten to. But it was Estin that took her. Six months ago."

Rev: MARGARET: Estin from Hawaii?

Tass: "Yep."

Rev: MARGARET: Estin that you all killed at least a year ago?"

Tass: "Yep."

Rev: MARGARET: Well, that's interesting.

Tass: "Isn't it just? My theory is it's a different world one. It's one from somewhere else that Nash pulled through. I mean, we've already seen another one just like that. Like, he's working with multiple of them, anyway."

Rev: MARGARET: Where were you when you were kidnapped? Were you in Hawaii?

Megan: "No. Ireland, actually. I got a lead. There was this lady who maybe knew some stuff, and I was trying to get a hold of her, but she would not speak to me. And I had planned on going back the next day to try and get her to have a conversation with me. And I just ... I got chased by these things, and that's it."

Rev: MARGARET: Lady in Ireland. What was her name?

Rev: And she pulls out her phone and starts typing.

Megan: "Siobhan Doherty. Pretty sure that that's what it was."

Rev: MARGARET: Small little building, up on top of a hill?

Megan: "Yeah. She wouldn't let me in, but that's kind of the terrain."

Rev: MARGARET: And did you go missing in the middle of the night near a pub?

Megan: "Yeah, I was ... I was staying pretty close to there. How did you — how did you know that?"

Rev: MARGARET: Well ...

Rev: And she turns, and she holds the phone towards you, and there's some really simple notes scribbled out on a piece of paper. It's a photo.

Rev: MARGARET: Everett and Jingles went and took care of all of Siobhan's effects. It seems that she noticed you went missing, and had written some notes down about trying to find you.

Megan: "Her ... Her effects?"

Rev: MARGARET: Yes. A few months back, Siobhan died, saving our team here.

Megan: "Oh my god, I'm sorry."

Rev: MARGARET: Yes. Siobhan and I didn't always see eye to eye, but she was one of the founders of the IPT. She was a very smart woman. Very, very smart. But very stubborn.

Megan: "Yeah, I had ... I had gathered that she was gonna be my best bet for information, and she just kept closing the door on my face. And kept coming back every day, and after a couple of days, I really thought she was gonna let me in. I'm sorry."

Rev: MARGARET: Thank you. Actually, follow me.

Rev: And she turns and she walks towards the elevator.

Megan: I follow her.

Tass: Yeah.

Jake: Yeah.

Rev: She gets in the elevator and takes you all to her office. And she goes inside and opens up a small chest of drawers in the corner of the room, and she pulls out a box.

Rev: MARGARET: This is ... This is what they deemed worth bringing back when they went through her things. I'm sure Everett's got some more stuff on Mother Hen, but it might be worth taking a look at.

Rev: And she sets the box down on the table.

Megan: I open it up, take a look.

Rev: Tass, what is inside this box?

Tass: Inside there is a crossbow, an athame, and a necklace with a hummingbird skull as the ornament. The crossbow is old, but like, very well maintained. The athame, it's just — it's kind of a small ritual dagger, with an emerald in the pommel. It also looks kind of old

and worn. It's got some runes and stuff etched on it, but the blade is still very sharp. And the necklace is just on a simple silver chain.

Rev: MARGARET: Like I said, you're more than welcome to any of that. I mean, it's not doing me any good sitting in here in a box.

Megan: "Oh, wow. Thank you."

Rev: So what of this do you want to take?

Megan: I'll take all of it. [laughs]

Rev: All right. So the crossbow, tag wise, is 2-harm, close, and slow. The athame 2-harm, hand, magic, silver. And then the necklace, this actually can act as the artifact from The Crooked. Its tags are 1-armor, magic, and recharge. So it has the ability to absorb one point of damage, but then it needs to be recharged. But I think with your abilities, if you want to take this necklace, we can add an additional spot onto your Jinx. That on your Jinx, you could spend a point of that to recharge the necklace, once it's been used.

Megan: OK. Sounds good.

Rev: All right. So mark all those down on your sheet.

Rev: MARGARET: Anything else she would have had, you'd have to check with Everett. I'm sure he squirreled everything away that he thought might be useful somewhere, on Mother Hen. But this is all they dropped off to me.

Megan: "Who's Everett?"

Rev: MARGARET: Everett is another of the founders. He ...

Rev: And she pauses for a moment.

Rev: MARGARET: Is our pilot. He takes the teams around. He's got an old helicopter.

Rev: And she actually points over to a photo that's on her desk that has five men, two women, and someone in their early teens. And you can tell the photo's a good 40, 45 years old.

Megan: "Oh, wow. Is this your family?"

Rev: MARGARET: I suppose it is, in a sense. These are the founders of the IPT.

Megan: "Cool. So what else do we need to get?"

Tass: "Oh god, I don't know. If we are gonna go straight down and try to find Anastacia, we need to know where that is. We gotta figure out how we're going to get there. I'm trying ... God, Margaret, so much has gone on. I'm trying to even think of which thing to fill you in on first. But Estin's definitely the big one.

Rev: MARGARET: In Ireland?

Tass: "Yeah. Weird, right? Like they were hunting her down, for a reason. I mean, there's the chance that it's the simple, simple reason of somehow they spotted her and what she can do and were trying to get rid of a potential threat. But that just seems too loose to be why, you know? Not in the world we live in."

Rev: MARGARET: It seems like you've got a couple of different threads to run down.

Tass: [sighs] "Yeah, always."

Rev: MARGARET: Well, if you're looking for a ride, I can call Everett. He was the one who dropped Anastacia off late last week.

Tass: "Yeah. Unless ... You ever been to Helen, Jake?"

Jake: "No, unfortunately, I have not."

Tass: "Yeah. All right, then that seems like the plan. Should gather our stuff and just get ready."

Rev: All right. Well, unless there's anything else with Margaret, we're gonna do something we have not done in a very long time. It's time to do some shopping.

Tass: Oh, my god.

Rev: From the last two mysteries, you all answered every question both times. So I don't know how many points you both had in the bank, but you all get 16 additional points from the last two mysteries.

Megan: Lovely.

Rev: So what would you like to buy?

Jake: Tass, how many points does this put you at?

Tass: 35.

Jake: 48.

Tass: My God!

Megan: Hey, guys. Can I ... Can I borrow ...

All: [laugh]

Megan: Can I borrow some cash?

Tass: You know, honestly, that's something that occurred to me, thinking about Estin stuff. If for whatever reason he is after you, I think I would want to look for something compact, but like a smaller version of the light rifle that I used to have. Since I know that they're, you know, very powerful against ghouls. I thought I'd ask, like, what would it be for like a smaller, not quite as powerful, like a handgun version?

Rev: Yeah. How much did your light rifle shotgun cost?

Tass: So that was 5 total. It was 4 because the ... Like the shotgun setting for it was 4 damage, and then the adjustable tag. So that let me do a smaller amount of damage, but at range on a single target.

Rev: So yeah, I would think that if you want to get a handgun version of the light rifle, that we could say it does 2 damage that is that, again, just light. And that would cost 3 Gear Points.

Tass: OK. I think I would get one of those as a gift for Megan.

Megan: Aww, thanks.

Tass: Oh, you're welcome. And you know what? Just because, I think I wanna get some night vision goggles, too. I can think of a few times where something like that would have been handy. So, yeah, if that just applies to the sort of tactical gear section.

Rev: Yeah. So that'll be 2 points.

Tass: Very cool.

Rev: I see Jake calculating still. Megan, what would you like to buy?

Megan: "So guys, I did what I had to do when we were trying to escape the town, but I've tried to develop ... I don't know, a code seems like a weird way to put it, but ... I don't want to just jump in your heads, whenever I need to communicate with you. That doesn't feel good."

Jake: "We — yeah, we've got ..." I, like, tap the throat mic. "We've got these. We can just get you one of these."

Megan: "Oh, good. Yeah. I was gonna say, I'm pretty sure my phone is wherever I left all my stuff, so I don't have a way to contact you otherwise. But yeah, if there's a way I could jump onto your comms, I'd love to do that."

Rev: Yeah. So that'll be 2 points for a piece of tactical equipment.

Megan: And I want to get my moped back.

Rev: All right. What kind of tags are you thinking?

Megan: I'm thinking "fast." Stock wise, they don't tend to go very fast. So I'd like to put in those tags to make it go a little speedier. "Stealthy." I'd like it not to be super loud, as they usually are. So throw on a new pipe to muffle that a bit. And I'm gonna go "medical kit." I think I'm gonna have a milk crate bungee cord attached to the back of it, so that I have just ...

Jake: [laughs].

Megan: I have a first aid kit, just in there with a cargo net over top.

Rev: OK. So I think that this would cost you ... We'll say 7 Gear Points. I think it's again, per the rules that we have made up ...

All: [laugh]

Tass: Right here on the spot.

Rev: Yeah, which you can find thecritshowpodcast.com, if you'd like to purchase gear in your own game. Anyway. 1 point per tire, and then tags at the Keeper's discretion ... Let's say 2 for fast, 2 for stealthy, and 1 for first aid.

Megan: Sounds good.

Rev: What do you got, Jake?

Jake: So I've got two purchases.

Rev: Is this, like, are you pulling into the drive-through and you've got two separate orders?

All: [laugh]

Jake: No. Just, the only two things I could think of. One, if I remember correctly, my car bit shit in the race arc and never came back to life again. Like, we haven't seen that thing since. So I'm in for an upgrade. I'm due for an upgrade.

Rev: OK.

Jake: So I'm going to spend 20 Gear Points. [laughs]

Megan: Whoa!

Tass: My god!

Rev: Do you remember how much your last car cost?

Jake: The last car I think was 12.

Rev: OK.

Jake: So this is — this is some additional tags.

Rev: All right.

Jake: I've got some tags on here.

Rev: Let's hear it.

Jake: So the tags are weapons, anonymous, stealthy, tough. Those were all already there.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Classic, armored, fast.

Rev: OK. Can you remind us how much those tags were before?

Jake: So weapons was 2.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Anonymous was 3. Stealthy was 1. Tough was 2. And we talked about classic being 1.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Armored being 4, because it followed like armor rules, because we can buy armor.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: And fast being 3.

Rev: Yes. That sounds good.

Jake: So a grand total of twenty. And this car is a 1969 Boss for 429 Mustang in Raven Black. This is the car that John Wick drives.

Tass: Oh!

Rev: That's a very good car.

Jake: Yeah. So almost all of the pros of the charger, except this is a two door. So somebody's gonna have to move a seat and get into the back manually.

Tass: I know ...

Jake: [laughs]

Rev: I have to admit, while I am a fan of the Charger, I ... My heart does flutter a little that you're switching over to a Mustang.

Jake: Yeah. So somehow, I have acquired this. They made like a less than a thousand of this car. [laughs] So somehow I've got this. And my second purchase, I want to get a weapon. I want to get a grenade launcher. Specifically, I want to get an M79 grenade

launcher. It was the one that they had in like Vietnam that was basically like one big tube with a big stock on it.

Rev: Uh-huh.

Jake: But they would cut down the barrel and the stock, so that it almost looks like a flintlock. And they'd call it the pirate gun. So I've got like a sawn-off version of the M79 grenade launcher.

Rev: All right. How much damage does that do? Because the grenade launcher is in the book.

Jake: Yes, it exists in the book. So the tags for the grenade launcher in the book are 4-harm, far, area, messy, loud, reload. And I wanna add one tag to it. I wanna add "fire." I imagine this thing shoots incendiary rounds.

Rev: OK.

Jake: So if I've done the math right from our guide, this should cost 6 points. 1 for the weapon, plus 1 for every damage it does, plus 1 for an additional tag.

Rev: All right. Is there anything else gear-wise you all want to take care of before Everett shows up?

Jake: I ... There's not one I want to take care of. There's something I have to take care of. I no longer have a place to store a flaming sword.

Tass: [laughs] Yeah.

Rev: Oh, right. Without your pocket.

Jake: Yeah. [laughs] My pocket. Without my pocket. So I need to figure out a solution for that. I have an idea. Let me know if it's OK. Once upon a time, Strohm gave us her inventory list on paper. So what I want to do is pull out that list, and see if there's something in there. It's kind of hard to imagine that it would be like an extant scabbard that is the right size and everything. But maybe she's just got the material, some kind of

hide of a creature that's fireproof, or something enchanted, whatever. That I could create a scabbard for my flaming sword with.

Rev: OK. Yeah, I don't think there's anything on this list that sticks out. But I think you could absolutely go and talk to Strohm, and she could solve this problem for you.

Jake: OK. Then yeah, that is something I will have to pop out and do before we go along with Everett.

Rev: All right. Jake, you appear at the foot of the steps for the high rise in Chicago.

Jake: I walk up to the doorman and say, "She should be."

Rev: And he opens the door.

All: [laugh]

Jake: Yeah, I'll head up.

Rev: Yeah, you get up to the top floor and Strohm is there waiting.

Jake: "Good afternoon."

Rev: STROHM: Well, how are you?

Jake: "I am well. How are you?"

Rev: STROHM: Oh, it was a very good turnout for The Monster Mash. I got some wonderful items.

Jake: "Oh yeah? Who won?"

Rev: STROHM: It was Spark, the cadre of electric gremlins that operated a big suit of armor.

Jake: "Really!"

Rev: STROHM: It was quite the upset, I will admit.

Jake: "I would have never seen that coming. Huh."

Rev: STROHM: Yes. Which means that I made a good deal of profit.

Jake: "Well, I'm happy to hear it. I do have a request. There is an item that I want. I'm curious if you could provide something along these lines." I hold out the burning sword, ever present. "I need a way to carry this in a moderately less conspicuous and dangerous manner. Do you have anything? Anything scabbard-y? Anything fireproof?"

Rev: STROHM: Oh, I see. Yes, I have a couple of things that come to mind. What have you got to trade?

Jake: "Unfortunately, as far as items go, we're pretty lean right now. But I've been thinking about it ..." And I pull out that little medallion that we use to trade questions. "I'll just burn one of these. I'll ask you a nonsense question. Burn one of my charges, so you don't have to give me something good, in exchange for the item."

Rev: STROHM: I believe that, uh, one of the options I have available that would be sufficient, but ... Well, we'll talk about that after.

Jake: "Well, hold on. I want to know the terms of the deal before we cut the deal."

Rev: STROHM: Oh, no, no. There's something I have that will work perfectly well. But I do know of something that would be fantastic. But it would cost you far more than that.

Jake: "Oh ..."

Rev: STROHM: I have to admit, it's not something I have, but it is something I know where it is.

Jake: "Well, I need something like stat, so I probably need to make a deal for the intro version, at least. So what, you just want me to pop this off?"

Rev: STROHM: Yes.

Jake: "All right." I hold the medallion up to my heart. "Iron Man 2 or Iron Man 3?"

Rev: STROHM: Iron Man 3.

Jake: "Interesting. Divisive."

Rev: STROHM: I'm a big fan of props and gadgets. What can I say?

Jake: "OK." And I put my medallion away.

Rev: [laughs] She goes back through the door that you know that you cannot pass through. She comes back a few moments later, and she has a pretty thick looking red blanket.

Rev: STROHM: I believe if you sew the two sides of this together, put a strap across it, it will work perfectly fine. This blanket dampens all fire and heat that it comes across.

Jake: "That will do. I'll take it."

Rev: STROHM: Here you go.

Jake: "But what's the way better thing?"

Rev: She looks at you for a moment, then smiles.

Rev: STROHM: There was a frost giant once, who wielded a beautiful sword. The sword itself was destroyed, but the frost emitting sheath was not. I believe it's called the sheath of Jotun, and I know where it's located. But it is a powerful artifact. Combined with what you wield, it would be quite a sight.

Jake: "Boy, that sounds super cool."

Rev: STROHM: Doesn't it?

Jake: "Why is it so powerful? Other than just like serving the purpose this blanket will serve?"

Rev: STROHM: Because it can be activated to spew forth the frosts of Jotunheim.

Jake: "That is really cool."

Rev: She smiles and nods, and then pulls the coin from her own pocket and holds it up to her chest.

Jake: Oh dear.

Rev: STROHM: How did you bring back the gods?

Jake: "We unmade Death."

Rev: STROHM: Interesting.

Rev: And she puts the coin back in her pocket.

Rev: STROHM: Maybe sometime I'll use another to find out how. But the simple knowledge that he is not in play? Oh, that could be useful.

Jake: "You know, Strohm, we end up here pretty much every time I come and talk to you, but I'm gonna hit it again, because you've got that look in your eye again. Exercise caution. Just because Koschei's gone, like, the other gods are back, and they're back on their grind and shit. So I'm sure you've got ideas spinning through your head, but just be careful, all right? There's always a consequence that you can't foresee."

Rev: STROHM: Oh, as someone who cheated death thousands of years ago, I'm well aware of some of the consequences.

Rev: And she indicates towards the elevator.

Jake: "Take care. I'm sure we'll be seeing you again before we expect it."

Rev: STROHM: Yes. Good luck with whatever it is, I can't imagine, that you're planning to do.

Jake: I give finger guns as the elevator doors close.

Rev: All right. So we are back at the IPT on the roof, as Mother Hen lands. The back hatch drops open, and out walks Everett.

Rev: EVERETT: So I hear you all need a ride?

Tass: "Yes, indeed we do. How are you, bud?"

Rev: EVERETT: Oh, keeping busy.

Megan: "Hello."

Rev: EVERETT: Well, how are you?

Megan: "I'm good. You must be Everett."

Rev: EVERETT: I am. If I was to guess, you must be Megan.

Megan: "Correct."

Rev: EVERETT: Nice to meet you, Megan.

Megan: "Nice to meet you, too."

Rev: EVERETT: Well, she's not much, but she'll get you where we're going.

Megan: "She's gorgeous."

Rev: He kind of puffs up just a little bit.

Rev: EVERETT: Yeah. That she is. I heard from Margaret that you might want to take a look through the rest of Siobhan's things. I got them on here, somewhere.

Megan: "Oh, yeah. Definitely."

Rev: EVERETT: Well, daylight's burning, boys.

Tass: "Let's roll. Fly. Float. Zoom."

Rev: EVERETT: It's a helicopter. It flies.

Tass: "Fly's good."

Rev: See you all climb inside of Mother Hen, and Everett shuts the hatch. And as you walk by a metal door he indicates to it.

Rev: EVERETT: There's a table in there. What we found at Siobhan's place that I didn't give to Margaret is sitting on the table. I don't know if it'll be any use to you, but you're more than welcome to paw through it.

Megan: Yeah, I want to take a look.

Rev: Yeah, you look over the table, and there's a backpack there that you recognize.

Megan: "My backpack!"

Tass: "She had your stuff?"

Megan: "Yeah, that's my backpack!" And I rush over and I open it up and start taking a look through.

Rev: Yeah. All the stuff that you had when you were snatched is in there. It seems that when she went looking for you, she at least found your stuff.

Megan: "Oh, my god. I can't believe she got my stuff." And I look for my phone right away.

Rev: Yeah, it's in there. It's dead, but it's in there.

Megan: I put it in my pocket. And yeah, I think I just start pulling out a notebook and a couple of other books that I had gathered.

Tass: "That's lucky. That's awesome."

Megan: "Yeah. I mean, I never even got to talk to her, really. But she went and found my stuff."

Tass: "They were, by all accounts, an amazing crew. I didn't get to meet her, either. But I mean, they came out of retirement and came to save us. We would be in a bad, bad spot without them. I think it makes sense if ... You know, especially if you think she was warming up to you, and then you just suddenly didn't come back? Yeah, I imagine she would have went to try to find you."

Megan: Think I just kind of hold the hummingbird skull necklace little bit. And I, "Yeah. I mean, she took care of my stuff, so I guess it makes sense that I could take care of hers."

Rev: And with that, Mother Hen roars to life and takes off into the sky. Is there anything else that you all want to get done on the trip to Georgia?

Jake: I need to turn this into a scabbard. I've got the old Singer sitting in front of me.

Rev: Yeah. Absolutely Everett has a sewing machine on Mother Hen.

Megan: I mean, I know how to sew. So I could definitely aid with that.

Jake: Yeah, I won't say no to help.

Rev: So what does the finished product look like?

Jake: So it is a back scabbard, or a back sheath, like left hip to right shoulder. And there's got to be some kind of structure to it, so I think like the skeleton of this thing is leather, but it is lined inside and out with this blanket. So that, you know, it will fully contain the heat from the inside and the outside, but it's got enough structure to hold the sword and like keep its shape. And then it's got a cross chest strap, that I think I have to modify to

hold the grenade launcher now. The pirate gun follows lengthwise the chest strap, and just kind of hangs almost from that same shoulder that the sword comes up over, down across the front of my body.

Tass: It's a good thing that we have the sheath, now. So you don't have a conspicuous weapon.

All: [laugh]

Jake: The fucking ... It's not about it being conspicuous! Like the sword's gonna be ... I'm wearing a sword. No matter what, it's conspicuous. The question is, is it on fire perpetually?

Tass: That's fair.

Jake: That's all I'm trying to mitigate. I can't hide anymore. I accept this. So this is, I think, an in-character understanding that Jake, the character, has come to: I can no longer hide.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Like I used to try to do things to mitigate my presence and maybe go under the radar, and whatever. Can't fucking do it anymore. So now I've got a big goddamn gun and a big bright red sword and the fucking John Wick car. And this is who I am.

Rev: Jake, living his best life.

Megan: I'm very jealous.

Rev: All right. So as you are getting ready to land, Everett comes over the comms.

Rev: EVERETT: This is the same spot I dropped off Anastacia. There was just word that some children were gone missing, enough that it got her concerned. And so she wanted to come down here and see what was going on. It's a little tourist town of a thing. Maybe 500 people live there. So a couple of kids gone missing, especially this time of year? Sure didn't go unnoticed.

Tass: "So do we have, like, a current dossier? Any details with names or anything?"

Rev: EVERETT: No. Unfortunately, anything we had, Anastacia took with her.

Tass: "Oh, shit. OK. Well, I guess we just gotta kind of dive in and ask around. I mean, hopefully she made enough of a presence to have been noticed by somebody there, too. So we can track her and the kids."

Megan: "Oh, yeah. That's a that's a good point. In case we get split up, what does she look like? I don't know who we're looking for." [laughs]

Tass: "Well, most of the time she's invisible."

Megan: "Oh."

Jake: "Yeah. That was a big hope. Oh, hopefully she made enough of an impact, for our most invisible infiltrate-y comrade. She's an older woman, gray hair, a decent number of guns on her person, usually. A bit scarred up."

Megan: "OK. Good start."

Tass: "May appear out of nowhere, from having been invisible. Oh shit. She can ... She can like shape shapeshift too, can't she?"

Jake: "So ... Really just anybody. Just any old person could be her."

Megan: "OK."

Jake: "I think if you hear a voice coming from nowhere but it's like in your ear and not in your head? Good chance that's her. If anyone tells you to press a button on a clicker and then you get shot with a sniper rifle? Probably her."

Tass: "That could be her."

Megan: "OK. So don't press the button."

Jake: "If ... Just when we meet her, if she tells you to press any buttons, probably don't press the buttons."

Megan: "OK. Good to know."

Rev: It sounds like you guys were starting to do your own rendition of like you might be a redneck, or here's your sign, the way you started to set up those. If you hear a voice that sounds like it's in your head but not in your brain ...

Jake: ... It might be Anastacia.

All: [laugh]

Rev: If you push the clicker on your garage door and get shot by a sniper rifle, it might be Anastacia.

Tass: If you appear at the top of a building and get shot by a shotgun in the chest —

Rev: By an invisible person.

Tass: Might be Anastacia.

Rev: It might be Anastacia.

Megan: I love this woman.

Jake: [laughs]

Rev: Please, anybody listening, let me hear your best "It might be Anastacia" tweets @TheCritshow. Please.

Megan: "Wait. A sniper rifle? We're rescuing her, right?"

Jake: "I mean, technically, I don't think we know that. We're finding out what happened to her. She may be exactly where she wants to be. She has a tendency ... Her job is usually

to infiltrate something and kind of go undercover, unseen. So maybe she just found a lead that she couldn't report back in on, or something. We'll find out."

Rev: All right. So he lands the helicopter and drops the back hatch open. And you can see pretty clearly, about 300 yards away, is the beginning of this small town through the trees. It looks like a replica of a Bavarian alpine snowy mountain town. There are candy cane street lights. There are Christmas lights everywhere. There are cute little shops and cottages, and tons of cars parked everywhere. You can see why he said this was a little tourist trap. There are tons of families here. You can smell all kinds of sweets in the air. You can hear music playing.

Jake: "Everett, did you accidentally fly us to the North Pole again?"

Rev: EVERETT: Nope.

Tass: "All right. Let's see what we see."

Megan: "Thanks, Everett. Have a good flight."

Rev: EVERETT: Ayuh.

Rev: And he closes the hatch and takes off into the air.

So here the three of you stand outside of this small tourist trap of a town, with its Christmas lights and festive music. Tass, with a giant spear. Jake, with a grenade launcher strapped to his chest. Megan, blending in. God bless you.

Jake: [laughs]

Rev: What's everybody doing?

Jake: With a bird skull necklace!

Rev: That's just kind of goth.

Jake: And a crossbow.

Rev: Oh, that's fair.

Tass: That's very Georgia.

All: [laugh]

Tass: Would this be a good time for Destiny's Plaything to come into play?

Rev: Absolutely. Does anyone else have any beginning of mystery moves?

Jake: No.

Megan: Nope.

Tass: OK, here we go. I'm trying a new die/dice. It's a die inside of another die. Boxcars.

Jake: Wow.

Megan: Nice.

Tass: That is a fifteen.

Megan: Wow!

Rev: So Tass, as you were looking out over this small town, again, your eyes go white. And the vision you see before you is a man stumbling down an alley, and he's dressed as Santa Claus. And he is holding his stomach. And as he holds his stomach, you hear this creaking sound as his bones start to move and shift. And when he turns around, he's wearing different clothes, and looks like an old woman and turns back out of the alley and goes back the way that they came. And I think the important detail to note here is that you have been around Anastacia before when she has changed her shape, and you did not hear that sound.

Tass: Oh, OK. I think kind of as usual that clears and I'm bent over, like holding myself up at the knees, and just breathing heavy. "Oh, guys. I think there's another shapeshifter here."

Megan: "What? Are you OK? What happened?"

Tass: "Yeah, I, um ... I get these visions sometimes. Ever since I took the spear, I get them. And it kind of shows me images of what's ahead. There was something that changed its shape. It was one person, it made itself into another. And I could hear the bones moving and creaking, and ... Like, it's not what Anastacia does."

Megan: "So it's a different type of shapeshifter? Is this like the different types of ghouls you talked about?"

Tass: "Maybe. Yeah, probably."

Jake: "Well, what did it look like when you saw it?"

Tass: "It went from Santa Claus to some old woman."

Jake: "OK. Well, I mean, it's probably not one of those anymore, but at least we have maybe some descriptions start throwing out? Try to follow a trail?"

Tass: "Works for me."

Jake: "How ... Let me think about how to phrase this. How do we enter this town without the National Guard showing up?"

Megan: "How much of that red blanket do you have left? We could make you a Santa cloak."

Jake: [laughs]

Megan: "Why ... Why are you laughing? I'm serious."

Jake: How much blanket do I have left, game master? Enough to make myself an entire Santa costume?

Megan: Just a cloak!

Jake: A sweet, fireproof Santa. It's got to be fireproof. He goes down the chimney. He don't know if it's lit.

Rev: I think that you would probably have enough to make a cloak that you could put over your shoulders and back and chest. Just like ... Like a Lord of the Rings cloak, you know what I mean? Like no hood, but just a clasp at the neck, no arms.

Jake: "All right. That'll get me, then." I'll just kind of haphazardly attach a clasp to this so that it can hang over my body in a festive way.

Rev: I imagine you just pluck some pinecones out of a nearby pine tree and attach them where it meets your neck.

Jake: "Tass, your turn."

Megan: "Can we just grab some pine leaves and attach it to the tip of the spear, so it looks like some sort of staff? I mean, this is very Christmas-esque. Like I don't feel like props are gonna be odd or stick out weird in this town."

Tass: "Oh, yeah. I could maybe get a bunch of like leaves and stuff and make a wreath that goes over the top, and have them intertwined through the middle so it covers up the blade."

Jake: "Well, I love it."

Rev: Tass, roll Luck.

Jake: [laughs]

Tass: That sounds right. OK, that's an eight.

Rev: So you can find enough stuff to create a wreath and hide the silver of the spear, but you don't imagine it's going to hold together very long. So it's probably something that will need to be redone daily.

Tass: OK.

Rev: All right. So you are all here, looking a little festive. Megan, is there anything that you're doing?

Megan: I mean, I have this crossbow. That needs to be hidden. I don't know where to hide this thing. It's not gonna fit in my backpack. The athame, I can throw in there.
[laughs]

Rev: If you wanna take it apart, it could fit in the backpack.

Megan: Yeah. If it'll fit, I'll dismantle it and carry it around in pieces.

Rev: All right. So you have all got your various items hidden. What are you going to do now?

Jake: Why do I feel like it's been a thousand years since we just did like a relatively routine mission? Why don't I remember how to do this job?

Tass: [laughs] Because before we could go in with some badges and stuff and try to bullshit through it. But now we're walking in like a mix of movie extras or cosplayers, wanting to know what's going on. Like, there's just no ... There's just no bullshit approach to this.

Megan: "So where do we think we're gonna find people with the most information in this place? It's a tourist town."

Tass: "Great question. I think we just gotta start walking, and see what we see. Ask around."

Jake: I suppose I'll just start leading us toward a street sidewalk, whatever, some logical way to proceed into the town here, and walk the streets — keeping an eye out for something that seems useful.

Megan: Yeah, as we're walking into this town, I want to just stop somebody. Just be like, "Excuse me. Are you from here?"

Rev: TOURIST: No, no.

Megan: "OK. Yeah, I just got here. Have you gotten a good look around yet?"

Rev: TOURIST: Oh, we just kind of started walking around, but we've been here before.

Megan: "Oh, great! Is there like a sweet shop, or somewhere that has fudge or other Christmas type candies? I'm looking to get some snacks to take home."

Rev: TOURIST: Oh. So you haven't been here before?

Megan: "No, this is my first time here, yeah."

Rev: TOURIST: Well, yeah. You just go down the street here a little bit and, uh, find Hansel and Gretel's Candy Kitchen.

Megan: "That sounds exactly what I'm looking for. Thank you so much."

Rev: TOURIST: Yeah. Enjoy!

Megan: "Candy shop, this way."

Tass: "Oh, OK. Yeah, cool."

Jake: "Why?"

Megan: "I figured there'd be a lot of activity there, right? This is a touristy shop, around holidays."

Jake: "Oh, yeah. OK."

Megan: "Also, it's been a while since I've had candy cane, so."

Jake: "That's fair. Did he say that we're going to a place called Hansel and Gretel's Candy Kitchen?"

Megan: "Yeah."

Jake: "Aren't we in a village, looking for missing children?"

Tass: "Oh, well, God damn it."

Jake: "Are we about to walk into the den?"

Megan: "Well, it says Hansel and Gretel's Candy Kitchen, not The Witch from Hansel and Gretel's Candy Kitchen. They were the good guys!"

Jake: "You got me there. Let's go get us some fudge!"

Rev: All right. So the three of you head down the road a little bit, and turn into Hansel and Gretel's Candy Kitchen. It has got a big gingerbread-looking sign. There are people going in and out, carrying huge candied apples, and bags of various sweets, and trays of fudge. It smells delicious.

Jake: God, I'll bet.

Tass: Is the building made of candy?

Rev: It looks like it. But if you taste it, it tastes like sheet rock, as opposed to rock candy.

Tass: OK. Well, that's a good sign, in my opinion.

Jake: "So what's the plan? We just want to start like asking the employees what's been going on here?"

Megan: "Uh, yeah. I definitely want to get a candy cane, but I think I'm gonna hold on to it. Because now you've got me all paranoid, and I'm like really afraid of the candy is made out of the missing children. And I don't want to eat it until we're sure that that's not a thing."

Jake: "Yeah, OK."

Rev: As Jake is just staring down a tray of gingerbread men.

Jake: [laughs] And one of them blinks.

Megan: Oh, no.

Rev: Screams silently.

All: [laugh].

Jake: Is he made of house, or is the house made of flesh? He screams, for he does not know.

Tass: I'll probably actually stay outside when they go in, and just kind of people watch.

Rev: OK.

Jake: All right. I'll gather some miscellaneous sweets up, and like get in line to check out.

Rev: Yeah, you stand in line for maybe twelve minutes, and then you get to the front of the line.

Megan: I hand Jake a candy cane and I say, "Can you get this for me?" And I'm gonna leave and look for somebody else.

Jake: Yeah. I think I try to strike up a conversation with the cashier as I'm checking out. Like, "Man, this place is really neat. I've never been here before."

Rev: CASHIER: Oh, yeah?

Jake: "Yeah. How long have you worked here?"

Rev: CASHIER: Oh, well I inherited it from my father.

Jake: "Oh, you own this?"

Rev: CASHIER: Yeah, yeah.

Jake: "That's so cool."

Rev: CASHIER: Yeah, it's ... You know, candy ... People don't realize how much work it takes to make good quality like fudge and stuff. It's a process. It's really an art. A lot of temperature, a lot of chemistry involved.

Jake: "I believe it. So was the process passed down to you, as well? Like, is this a ..."

Rev: CASHIER: Oh, yeah.

Jake: "Wow. That's really interesting. You know, when I was Googling this place, I read that like some kids have gone missing recently? Is that true?"

Rev: CASHIER: Really?

Jake: "Yeah. You don't know about that?"

Rev: CASHIER: No.

Jake: "I wonder if it's just like a weird online rumor mill thing. Does that ever happen here? Do people just like come up with rumors about your idyllic little village?"

Rev: CASHIER: Well, I mean, we get so many people in and out, especially this time of year. I mean, no, I haven't heard anything about anybody going missing.

Jake: "Well, that's good. I mean, yeah, that would — that would be really scary. But I'm not a little kid, so, you know, I'd probably be fine. Are there even like police here? Like, is there a law enforcement in this place?"

Rev: CASHIER: Oh, sure.

Jake: "Oh, really?"

Rev: CASHIER: Yeah. I mean, this many people coming in and out, you gotta have folks to enforce the law.

Jake: "Yeah. I guess I just don't know if it was just like, you know, security guards or something like that."

Rev: CASHIER: Yeah. I mean, we do hire more security, uh, come certain times of year. Like now, for example.

Jake: "OK. So are most of the places in this village, like, inherited? Like are there kind of a few families that run this place, or something?"

Rev: CASHIER: Yeah, for the most part. Every now and then someone will decide that they want to get out, and they'll sell to whoever is looking to do something like this. I mean, it's a lot of work. It's nice if you like people, and especially if you like, you know, the holidays. Oktoberfest is huge here. Christmas is real big. But I mean, any time of the year, people are stopping here to see the various sites.

Jake: "I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name yet."

Rev: KYLE: I'm Kyle. Nice to meet you.

Jake: "Nice to meet you. I'm Jake."

Rev: KYLE: Nice to meet you, Jake.

Jake: "I'm excited to look around the rest of the place. Do you have any recommendations? Where should I head next?"

Rev: KYLE: Well, depends on what you're interested in. You wanna see Santa? You wanna get some food? You wanna have a drink? You wanna shop for some one of a kind gifts for your friends and family?

Jake: "Point me to the best food in town."

Rev: KYLE: I'm a big fan of Bigg Daddy's Restaurant & Tavern.

Jake: "Doesn't sound nearly as thematically cohesive."

Rev: KYLE: Well, yeah, it kinda ... Kinda gives you a sense of what happens when folks sell their spot and come in.

Jake: [laughs]

Rev: KYLE: Does have two G's, though. I don't know if that makes you feel any better.

Jake: "It doesn't. It makes me feel far worse, actually. But do they have like spaetzle?"

Rev: KYLE: No. If you want some German food, you go over to Bodensee.

Jake: "That's where I'm headed. Thanks a lot, Kyle. I'll see you around."

Rev: KYLE: You have fun, Jake.

Megan, so you said that you were gonna wander off and find someone else. What are you doing?

Megan: I want to look for somebody who works here and is gonna be exposed to a lot of people throughout the day, but also might not care as much about the image of this place or this town, and might be more willing to give up a little bit of information.

Rev: Yeah. I really think at this place, there's only one person you see stocking a shelf. But they are sixteen, seventeen years old.

Megan: What do they look like?

Rev: They have long black hair, a nose ring, but they are also wearing a festive sweater and a pair of green jeans.

Megan: "Hi. What are you stocking there?"

Rev: TEEN: Fudge.

Megan: "What kind?"

Rev: TEEN: Well, it depends on what kind you want. We got chocolate here, that usually sells out the fastest. That, or the chocolate with the nuts.

Megan: "Yeah. None of that sounds really good, actually."

Rev: TEEN: Yeah, I agree. You know, I like fudge. But boy, fudge every day ... Nuh-huh."

Megan: "Yeah. Can you even eat any of this stuff anymore?"

Rev: TEEN: Not really.

Megan: "Yeah. That sucks."

Rev: TEEN: Yeah. It kind of stinks. Like, being in a place with like all this cool stuff. But then if it's just the thing that's every day, it becomes less cool, you know?

Megan: "I mean does it at least only last around the holidays time? Do you get to like have a normal life the rest of the year, or is this kind of like the bullshit that they push year round?"

Rev: KYLE: Oh, no. This is it. I mean, the flavors change a little bit from year to year. I'm gonna have to start making some of them, come next year.

Megan: "Awesome. So yeah, what's it like to be here when all of this craziness is going on?"

Rev: KYLE: I don't know how to describe it. I don't ... What's it like to not be here?

Megan: "I mean, people get a little more intense around the holidays. I was hearing, you know, some people talk up front about some missing kids or something? Like is there a lot of crime around here, during this time?"

Rev: KYLE: No, not at all. I mean, I haven't seen anything. We had some break-ins. It's been a couple of years back. But I mean, they get a lot of people to come in and work extra security. But man, I feel like if any kids went missing, there's not a whole lot of people who live here. People who come visit, I'd feel like they'd make a big stink about it. I haven't heard about no kids going missing.

Megan: "Oh, shit. Break-ins though, huh? What was stolen?"

Rev: TEEN: Money. People used to leave money in their tills.

Megan: "Did this place get hit?"

Rev: TEEN: Yeah. It was like maybe three years ago, I think. This place got hit, and ... Basically every place on this street. A candle shop, and one of the ... Whatever the hell they sell now. Wood. I think wood toys. You know, every kid's favorite thing. Wood toys.

Megan: [laughs] "Yeah. That's really it, though? Like people don't get as riled up?"

Rev: TEEN: I mean, in October. Like Oktoberfest. But that's extra security comes into town. But I mean people get drunk, they get loud, and ... Usually everybody's in a good mood. I'm sure that there are some fights. I've haven't been into the bars and, you know, Oktoberfest is a little quieter here in our store, but ...

Megan: "So is there anything in this town that's actually interesting and like, worth checking out?"

Rev: TEEN: God, no.

Megan: "Nothing at all?"

Rev: TEEN: I mean, it's exactly what you see. It's a bunch of buildings built to look like a place that it's not.

Megan: "Shame."

Rev: TEEN: Yeah.

Megan: "What's your name?"

Rev: KYLE JR: Kyle Jr.

All: [laugh]

Jake: "Kyle Jr, huh?"

Rev: KYLE JR: Yeah. People call me KJ.

Megan: "KJ. Well, nice to meet you."

Rev: KYLE JR: Yeah, nice to meet you, too.

Megan: "All right. Well, I'll see you around. Thanks for the information."

Rev: KYLE JR: Yeah, no problem.

Rev: So Tass, out front. What are you doing? You mentioned that you were kind of people watching.

Tass: Yeah, I think I'm just kind of tracking people as they go by, and I'm just being more hyper alert of other people, people watching. [chuckles] Like I'm looking for people that might be glancing around in that way that I know is predatory, you know? Beyond just who's the guy with the weird wreath staff or, you know, things like that.

Rev: Roll Investigate a Mystery.

Tass: Ooh, OK. That's an eight.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 1.

Tass: What's being concealed here?

Rev: About a block down, you see someone in a Santa suit. And they stand up on a bench, and you can see that they sprint down an alley like they're chasing someone. It's hard to see because it is very crowded, but it's a pretty sudden movement in a bright color.

Tass: I think I'm gonna take off.

Rev: All right. So you take off down the street in this direction. You get to where that bench is and you can see down this little alleyway, a figure in a Santa suit. And they are grappling with a child.

Tass: I'm gonna run down and try to burst between them.

Rev: You sprint down this alley and you shoulder check this Santa out of the way. And as you do, the kid tumbles to the ground, and gets up and runs away crying. And the Santa is laying on his side, breathing heavy.

Tass: I'm gonna level the spear at his throat. "What the hell do you think you're doing?"

Rev: And there's this slow moment as the Santa turns and looks at you, and they let out a deep sigh, and they pull a beard off. And it's Wallace.

Wallace: I have been trying to catch that little shit bird for three days now. Thanks for fucking it all up.

SFX: OUTRO MUSIC

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