

Faces in the Crowd (S3, E20)

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Rev: Jake, you know, we have not played Warzone in a long time. It seems like you've been pretty busy.

Jake: I have been pretty busy. I have not had like a full day where I didn't have to do something in some weeks. I have started a new job, where I am the head instructor at a martial arts school.

Tass: Aww, yeah.

Megan: Ooh, fancy.

Jake: It is. I'm very excited. This is kind of ... It's not kind of. This is like my dream job. I got to teach for a while, and the circumstances of the employment itself wasn't great. But this rules. This kicks ass. And getting to help actually, like, bring one to open has been very cool.

Tass: It's been very intimidating around the apartment, too. Because used to be I just walk out to get a Pepsi or something and just, you know, they're chillin. But now I walk out and like nunchuks are flying through the air ...

Jake: Yeah. I had to learn nunchuks. I've never done nunchuks in any of my training in my life. And now, like, constantly while I'm at home or at work, I've just got nunchuks in one hand, and I've got to practice my nunchuck tricks.

Rev: I do have to say that on our Arlo, I have a video of, like, at some point we were on a break from recording, and I open the door to let Harvey out. And then I walked away, and then I got a notification that there was movement. I was like, oh, Harvey must want back in. So I clicked on Arlo to see, and it was Harvey standing on the patio, watching Jake do forms on the cement.

All: [laugh]

Jake: Yeah, I've been grinding. I did a lot of like intensive training with a friend of mine, Adam. We all — most of us know Adam. Kickass martial artist, like one of the best I've ever known in my life. Probably the best I've ever known in my life. And when I got hired for the job, I was like hey, hone me. I need to make sure that I'm the best I can possibly be at this. So we've been doing a lot of kicking stuff. I've been learning a lot of jump kicks and spin kicks. Stuff that I never really had to do. And it has paid off already, because in the evening time now, after I've done all of my tasks at work, I will go up to the front, and we are in the same complex as some other businesses that like cater to kids and families and stuff. So while they're like coming in and out for their shit, I'm just doing jumping spin kicks in the front window. And I finally had somebody just come in and go, hey, my six year old saw you do that. He wants to learn to do that. How do I sign up here? And was like, you've come to the right place!

Megan: Excellent.

Jake: Welcome, my friend!

Megan: My body hurts, just thinking about that.

All: [laugh]

Megan: I'm basically ... Like, I'm pretty sure I just pulled something in my hip, thinking about kicking.

Rev: What's the song that played to like Adam training you in a jump kick montage?

All: [laugh]

Rev: [sings] Jump for your love! Jump in!

Jake: Yeah, I don't ... I don't know. Something electronic.

Rev: Like the sound of groceries being scanned over a ...

Jake: Yeah. Just a barcode beeper. Not like ... Not like zen music, for sure.

Rev: Oh, yeah.

Jake: Definitely something stupid. My instinct is just to say something Carly Rae Jepsen. But that's just like a ... That's a defense mechanism in me, I think. That's a default that I spit out.

Megan: I mean, if you could teach me how to kick fancy to Carly Rae Jepsen? Absolutely.

Jake: I'll one hundred percent teach you to kick fancy to Carly Rae Jepsen. Hey, listen, I want nothing more in the world than to teach everybody to fancy kick to Carly Rae Jepsen.

Megan: That sounds pretty amazing.

Rev: That's good goals.

Megan: All right, let's go. Right now. Episode's over. Only thing on my mind.

Rev: We gotta kick.

Megan: [laughs]

Rev: We are getting towards the end of the year. And with that, we are making some minor adjustments to our Patreon, as we did last year. We have put out a survey to our existing patrons, asking them about things that they would, wouldn't like to ... [laughs] Wouldn't like to see. We'd like to not see your dumb face anymore.

Tass: [laughs]

Rev: Things they'd like to see, goals they'd like to see us work towards. So we are super happy to announce that from the result of that, we will indeed be doing a Season Two of Tales from the Omniverse. We got a resounding yes to that, on if they would like to see a Season Two. So this one will run a little differently. We've still got some details to work out on it. Some of these games from Tales from the Omniverse will be run by us. Some of them will, again, have guests from other shows coming on to run us through a game

system they are familiar with, so. If you are not a member of our Patreon and there is something you'd like to see on the Patreon, please send us an email to thecast@thecritshowpodcast.com and let us know some content that you would like to see from us. We are always looking for new ideas, new tier levels, things like that, that would hit the interests of those of you listening at home. So send us an email if you have got some suggestions of things that you would like to see.

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

SFX: RECAP MUSIC

Rev: 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.

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.

Megan: Yes, we're walking into this town. I want to just stop somebody. "You know, some people talk up front about some missing kids, or something? Like, is there are a lot of crime around here?"

Rev: KYLE: Man, I feel like if any kids went missing ... There's not a lot of people who live here, and people who come visit, I feel like they make a big stink about it. I haven't heard about no kids going missing.

Rev: And you can see, down this little alleyway, a figure in a Santa suit 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. 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: 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.

Rev: Wallace, you were in pursuit of this kid that has been eluding you for two days now, and you finally caught up with him. And then you were tackled, and you turn up and see Tass — someone who, not too long ago, you teamed up with your old ... Friends? Teammates? It's a little unclear. To help save. And he's just looking down at you, holding a silver spear in your face. What are you doing?

Wallace: You want to get that thing out of my face, please?

Tass: "Hartwell?"

Wallace: Yeah. Tass, is it? Is that right?

Tass: "Yeah, that's right. What the hell were you doing ... Just to be sure, tell me how we know each other."

Wallace: You and your squad got captured by werewolf bikers, and we had to come bail you out.

Tass: "Oh, I forgot how much that is super embarrassing when it's actually spoken out loud."

Wallace: Will you help me up? It seems the least you could do.

Tass: And I do. I take the spear out of his face, and offer a hand.

Wallace: Thank you.

Tass: And after I help him up, I gather up all this stuff for the wreath and resituate that back over the spear tip.

Rev: All right.

Tass: "Well shit, man. We thought we were looking for Anastacia, here."

Wallace: Is that why you're here? Look for Anastacia?

Tass: Yeah, she's been missing for several days.

Wallace: Well I wasn't here to look for her, I was here to help her. But by the time I was on the scene, she wasn't, so ...

Tass: [sighs] "Shit. So the kid — do you know what was going on with that?"

Wallace: No. All I know so far since I got here is, you know, Anastacia left me a message, said something about kids going missing, and that might be something I'd want to do something about. By the time I got here, she was gone. Nobody knows anything about any missing kids, but I've noticed some of the kids acting weird. But when I try to follow them, they're, like, gone. You know, I'll turn the corner and like a kid that turned down an alley and now there's just a dog sleepin' there, or something.

Tass: [chuckles] "I don't think you actually lost them."

Wallace: I beg your pardon?

Tass: "They're some kind of shapeshifters."

Wallace: The kids are shapeshifters?

Tass: "I mean, the shapeshifters are shapeshifters. If you're chasing a kid around a corner and suddenly there's a dog there, I think it was the same thing. I think they, uh ... I think

they did you a bamboozle, my dude." [exhales] "I've got a team here. Why don't you come with me? We'll convene and see if they found anything out, and we'll reset."

Wallace: Yeah. Might as well.

Tass: "Sorry about the whole thing. But I mean, you know what it looked like."

Wallace: Yeah, no. I get it. I would have knocked my ass over, too.

Tass: "Yeah. All the same, sorry."

Jake: So having, like, been told that he thinks it's a shapeshifter ...

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: So one of my Gumshoe moves is the first time in each mystery that I observe a monster minion or phenomenon in action, I may ask one question from the Investigate a Mystery list. Would this be something like that I could, you know, I just chased this kid down and tussled with him, like looking at that through a new lens? Oh, that was a shapeshifter — could I ask this question? Or do I need to wait until I see some more, like, concrete shapeshifter shit going on?

Rev: I think we can fudge that a little bit and have you roll that now, because you can also look back at all of the times that you have encountered this over the last couple of days, of following a kid, coming around the corner, going into a building, and seeing other people there, but not ever the kid.

Jake: OK.

Rev: So what's your question?

Jake: What is being concealed here? Just, what wasn't I noticing that I could have been noticing?

Rev: Having tracked a number of different people and kids through this town, now with the idea that it is a shapeshifter? I think the thing being concealed here is that every time

you think you're tracking someone, you've actually been tracking the same someone, every time. You're starting to remember little movement patterns in the way that they move, the way that they run. Even though they look different, they're moving the same.

Jake: OK.

Rev: So Jake and Megan, you come out of Hansel and Gretel's Candy Kitchen. You see Tass walking back towards you, and he has a Santa Claus in tow with him.

Megan: "Is this the Santa?"

Jake: "Is this the Santa?"

Tass: "Yes. This is him. Christopher Kringle, in the flesh."

Rev: I thought you were asking me, like as the Keeper, is this the Santa? Well, I hate to break it to you ...

Jake: Look, I've gotta fully divorce the knowledge between these two people. That means that out of character, I have to address things to the Keeper.

Rev: Absolutely. Yep.

Tass: "Like the shapeshifter Santa?"

Tass: "No. Nope." And I tug the beard down a little bit.

Rev: And Jake, you see a face that you recognize. It was one of the founders who helped rescue you from the biker gang. And Megan actually, having seen the photo, it's an old photo, but you can see familiar characteristics to know that it is someone from that photo.

Tass: "Megan, this is Wallace Hartwell. He's one of the founders of IPT. Wallace, this is our new team member, Megan."

Megan: "Yeah, I saw a photo of you. Nice to meet you."

Wallace: Yeah, you too.

Tass: "I caught him beating up a kid."

Megan: [shocked] "Oh."

Wallace: That is not entirely unaccurate, but also not the full truth. This is an unfair spin.

Tass: "It is. It is. I actually think I messed this up pretty bad. Because he's been tracking whatever this shapeshifter is. And I mean, I don't know if you're certain that that was it. But he's been trying to track it down and it's been taking the form of kids, I guess."

Wallace: Yeah. Now that you mention it ...

Jake: Actually, before we go any further with this conversation, I want to look around for those movement patterns. I want to see if this thing got away and came back as someone else and could be eavesdropping on us.

Rev: Roll Read a Bad Situation.

Jake: Thirteen.

Rev: You get a hold 3.

Jake: So this is one of my advanced moves.

Rev: Oh, what do you get to do on the advanced version of this?

Jake: On a 12+, you may ask the Keeper any question you want about the situation, not just the listed ones.

Rev: Well Wallace, what would you like to know?

Jake: For starters, do I see the shapeshifter around again?

Rev: Yes. Standing underneath an awning, about 40 feet away on the other side of the street with an ice cream cone, is a heavyset man. But you can see that he is paying no attention to the ice cream cone, and he is watching the four of you.

Jake: What shops are near the guy that's eating ice cream? I hope this doesn't count as one of my hold. [laughs] I'm just asking.

Rev: There is a beer garden and a schnitzel shop.

Jake: OK. Then I think just like midsentence, like while I'm talking to them and I notice this, I just go ...

Wallace: And I figured out that it all seemed to be operating out of this schnitzel shop. Follow me over here.

Jake: And as we approach, I'm laying out facts that are not true about this case, where the shapeshifter will be able to hear me.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: So as we get over, like start crossing the street, I'm like ...

Wallace: So from what I can tell, it's like a wendigo or something. And it seems to be snatching all these different kids. There's been like 75 different kids that have gone missing from here. And as far as I can tell, it's operating out of the back room of this schnitzel place.

Rev: Do you want to ask any more of your questions before the situation changes?

Jake: Yes.

Rev: OK.

Jake: How does it seem like I could most effectively incapacitate this thing?

Rev: You think that getting it contained in something. Like grappling with it, putting in handcuffs, trying to hold it, dog piling it. It can change and shift and flux. But if you could get it into something where it couldn't get out, then you would have a handle on it.

Jake: OK. I think for my last hold then, I want to look around and see how can I bring that awning down on this fool?

Rev: So this awning has pipe that basically makes two triangles and then a bar across the front. If you could jump up and put your weight on the entirety of that front pipe and the pipe on your side of it, you think you could pull it down so that it would come down on his side as well. Like, it doesn't seem super sturdy.

Jake: OK. I think, like, right before we get there, I look to Tass. And I say, like ...

Wallace: But if we're gonna work together, I'm gonna be the lead on this investigation, and I need you to do exactly what I do. You understand me?

Jake: And I, like, give a look of weight to that.

Tass: "Oh! Yeah. I mean, you know what to look for, man. You've got a few days on us."

Wallace: Perfect.

Jake: And I'm going to jump up and try and rip that awning down on this dude, and hope that Tass helps.

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

Jake: Nine. Oh! +1 ongoing from Read a Bad Situation! Ten.

Rev: All right. So Tass, you see Wallace suddenly spin and jump up and hang on this awning for a second, and then it breaks free and comes down on top of a man eating an ice cream cone.

Tass: So I'm gonna jump over, like on top of it, and try to hold it down so that whoever's under there can't move.

Rev: Jake and Megan, what are the two of you doing? You've just been fed a story about a wendigo who's stolen 75 children and operates out of a schnitzel shop.

Megan: I take a jump back. Because this guy in a Santa costume just jumped up and dropped this awning in the front of the shop. And I don't want to get caught under it.

Jake: I think I assume that, like, this must be the creature that he's talking about or something. And I'm gonna hang back and wait so that if it makes a break for it, I can try and pursue it and not let it get away.

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

Tass: OK. Nine.

Rev: All right. So you can jump on top of this awning and get hands on the person inside to kind of make sure they don't get out. But you're gonna draw some unwanted attention. I can't believe I'm giving that as an option and not just a fact of life.

All: [laugh]

Rev: Or you're gonna twist something, because this thing starts to writhe and fluctuate and move pretty quickly. So you're gonna have a -1 forward. Or, you're gonna drop something in the scuffle.

Tass: I think I will take the -1 forward. I have twisted something.

Rev: Yeah. So Tass leaps on top of this awning, and the thing inside of it squirms around for a couple of seconds and then gets pretty still. And you can see that it's changing volume.

Wallace: I was lying about the wendigo. This is the shifter. And if it gets out of this bag, it'll turn into anything. It'll be in the wind.

Megan: I want to try and cast Jinx on it.

Rev: Roll it.

Megan: Eleven.

Rev: You get a hold 2.

Megan: I will go with interfere with what a monster minion or bystander is trying to do, and I will hold on to my other one.

Rev: OK. So Tass, inside of the cloth from the awning, you hear what you heard in your vision: the sound of bones creaking. And the shape stops fluctuating and becomes solid, and becomes pretty docile.

Tass: [gags] "That's gross. Bag of meat. It's not moving!"

Wallace: All right. We gotta get it somewhere else. Somewhere that we can put the screws to it.

Rev: And at this point, the store owner comes out.

Rev: OWNER: Is everyone all right? Oh, gosh. Did that old rickety thing fall?

Jake: I think like Wallace eyes for like Jake to come take over holding onto this thing, and stands up. And he's like ...

Wallace: Oh no, it's my bad. I'm real sorry. I bumped into it, and I took the thing down. It's not ... It's no fault of yours, or your business. Don't worry about it. But hey, let me clean it up. I'll take care of this. I'll get it out of the way. This is on me. Let me clean up my mess. I'm real sorry about this. I hope it doesn't affect your business.

Rev: OWNER: You bumped into it? It hangs off of the building.

Wallace: Yeah. But like, you know where it braces against the wall? Like I hit that part of the wall, and it seemed to shake something loose in it. It came down.

Rev: OWNER: Oh. Roll Manipulate Someone.

Wallace: Absolutely. You got it, proprietor.

Jake: Eight.

Rev: OWNER: Oh. Well, I suppose if it's your fault, we probably should get it repaired.

Wallace: Yeah, no problem.

Jake: I pull out my wallet and just like pull out some hundred dollar bills and hand them over.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: This is absolutely on me. I'll get rid of this garbage. You fix this up, on me. My fault.

Rev: OWNER: Oh, thank you so much. Thank you so much. That's very kind of you.

Rev: And she turns and goes back inside.

Wallace: Hey, happy holidays.

Rev: Fanning herself with the Benjamins.

All: [laugh]

Rev: Turns the door on the side to Closed.

All: [laugh]

Rev: So where do you want to take this?

Jake: Have I had a place that I've been like working out of, since I've been here?

Rev: I mean, I think it would be fair to assume you either found a bed and breakfast or a hotel room, or something.

Jake: I think that would be what Wallace would recommend, then.

Wallace: I gotta room in town. Do you have a better idea of where we can take this thing?

Tass: "No. We don't know this place at all, so that works."

Wallace: All right.

Jake: I'll lead us there.

Rev: All right. So the four of you carry this form wrapped in a cloth down these crowded sidewalks, with Christmas music playing and the smell of hot cocoa in the air. And you get back to Wallace's AirBnB, and it's a back door entrance on a house that leads into a bedroom with a bathroom off of it.

Tass: Yeah. I think we set it down and like, I'll kneel on the edge so that, you know, it can't unfurl still. "All right. We need to have a little conversation, here. So what you doing in town?"

Rev: SHAPESHIFTER: [muffled talking]

Tass: [sighs] "All right. We're gonna peel this back. But like, I think you understand the situation. No quick moves, here."

Jake: "Should I try to magic trap it? Do we think that'll hold it? If it can, like, change? You know, it kind of manifests as like chains-ish."

Tass: "I mean, it's magic chains. I would have to assume yes."

Jake: "I guess I've never had to find out whether or not they resize to the creature being contained, if it changes. But we can find out. It's better than nothing, I guess, as a precaution."

Tass: "Yeah. Either way, we still have a whole lot of weaponry that's gonna be trained on it."

Rev: SHAPESHIFTER: [muffled talking]

Tass: "All right, Kenny. Hold on."

Jake: Yeah. Can I try to Use Magic to put a trap on it?

Rev: Roll it.

Jake: That is a ten.

Rev: The chains spring up from the earth and wrap around this creature inside of the awning burrito.

Tass: And I'll like tug what pieces of the awning down that I can, so that we can see and hear it.

Rev: Yeah. You tug the awning down, and there is a man in his late 50s. He's mostly bald except for a ring of hair around the sides of his head, and he looks panicked.

Rev: SHAPESHIFTER: What's going on?

Wallace: What's going on is we got some questions for you. And you need to answer them, because otherwise you're going to be in a pretty bad way.

Rev: SHAPESHIFTER: [gasps]

Wallace: So you're some kind of shapeshifter, huh?

Rev: SHAPESHIFTER: What?

Wallace: A shapeshifter. Sorry, should I speak more slowly?

Rev: SHAPESHIFTER: What do you mean? Like ...

Wallace: Look, there's no need for this, OK? We trapped you in an awning and you literally turned into a different shape inside of it while we had you. This is kind of a silly gambit to be going for.

Rev: SHAPESHIFTER: My wallet's in here. You can take whatever I've got.

Megan: Can I try to Tune In?

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: Twelve.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 3.

Megan: What is it planning to do right now?

Rev: So you get this strange feeling as you try to tune into this monster. Almost a duality. You get the sense of lying in wait, waiting till the moment is right. But you also get the sense of say whatever needs to be said, so these people will leave you alone.

Megan: Who does it regard as its biggest threat?

Rev: Wallace, because Wallace is the one talking right now. And you also get the sense of Wallace again, because Wallace is the one that figured it out.

Megan: Who is it going to attack next?

Rev: Again, this sense of duality. One saying that it wouldn't attack any of you, because you all seem capable of fighting back. The other one saying it wouldn't attack any of you because you're threatening and scary and it doesn't fight people. But it's very strange because the whole time that you are tuning in, the surface thoughts are panic and fear, but something underneath is cunning and calculating.

Megan: Yeah, I think I will just put out, with my telepathy. [telepathically] "There seems to be two different feelings going on inside of it."

Rev: Who is that to? Like to the room? To a specific person?

Megan: I think it's to Jake and Tass, because they're the only ones I really have a connection with right now.

Rev: OK.

Tass: I'll think back. [telepathically] "What do you mean? Two feelings, like it's ... Like, split decision here?"

Megan: [telepathically] "More like split motives. Like it's telling us what it thinks we want to hear to let it go. But it's also plotting. Like, waiting and biding its time. And part of it ... It's not gonna fight us, but partly because we can fight back, and partly because it doesn't want to. And it afraid of Wallace, because he figured it out."

Tass: [telepathically] "OK. Well, that makes sense. I suppose, if that surface thought is still to try to throw us off and just say whatever to have us let it go? I mean, obviously that's not happening. But if it's real fear, we just maybe need to calm it down, if it's not gonna fight us."

Megan: [telepathically] "I'm just concerned that that's gonna anger whatever is underneath. Or make it more bold, to feel like it can attack us."

Tass: [telepathically] "Oof. That is some Ed Norton in Primal Fear shit." I think I address the shapeshifter again. "All right. Hey, you're not fooling anybody. We know, more or less, what you are. We're not gonna just let you go, because people have been disappearing."

Rev: SHAPESHIFTER: I don't know what you mean. What I am?

Tass: "You mean you don't know that you were like twenty years younger and about twice the weight ten minutes ago, and suddenly you're an old guy, balding? You don't know that that happened? Honestly?"

Rev: SHAPESHIFTER: What are you talking about? Shapeshifters, and ... Is this like some kind of role play thing? Is sexual, or something?

All: [laugh]

Rev: SHAPESHIFTER: Are you deviants?

Tass: Yes.

Jake: Oh my god!

Megan: Yes, we are. But that's beside the point.

Tass: That has nothing to do with this.

Rev: SHAPESHIFTER: I don't know what you mean. Shapeshifting, and being a young man ... You sound like you're talking about a sci-fi novel, or something.

Tass: "Oh, it's so much worse than that." I think this is out loud. "Megan. Like, he believes it, doesn't he?"

Megan: "I think so. I think he ... He's just trying to protect himself. But this part might not know. How is that possible?"

Wallace: What do you mean this part? What are you two talking about?

Megan: "I get the feeling that there's something more going on here. There's something deeper inside of him, waiting and biding its time. But I don't know if this part of it's consciousness? I don't know how this works. But yeah, Tass, I think he believes it."

Rev: SHAPESHIFTER: What are you guys talking about? Something deeper underneath waiting, like this is like some Edward Norton shit.

Jake: [laughs]

Tass: "Thank you. Perfect. Yes, that's it. That's what we're ..."

Jake: Hold on. Ed Norton ...

Megan: I was gonna say, I don't think you have to specify a movie. Because it works in one, but I like immediately ... Like when you said Ed Norton, I was like Fight Club. And then you're like Primal Fear. I was like, that too. OK.

Rev: The Hulk.

Megan: Yeah! Yeah. Fuck.

Tass: [laughs]

Jake: Wow!

Megan: Damn, he ...

Jake: Jeez, Ed Norton.

Megan: I didn't realize how typecast he was.

Rev: Norton's got a problem.

Wallace: So you think this thing's like in some kind of fugue state or something?

Tass: "Yeah. I mean, it's like a shell that it's putting on."

Megan: I look at Wallace. "It sees you as the biggest threat, because you figured it out."

Wallace: Comforting. Look, what's your name?

Rev: JIMMY: Jimmy.

Wallace: Jimmy. How old are you, Jimmy?

Rev: JIMMY: Fifty seven.

Wallace: Yeah? Where are you from?

Rev: JIMMY: Pennsylvania.

Wallace: What line of work you in?

Rev: JIMMY: I used to be a cobbler. I retired last year. Like the baked good though, not the shoe.

Wallace: Oh, interesting. Interesting.

Tass: [laughs]

Jake: So what I'm going for here is I have a move called Just One More Thing. When you ask a suspect a leading questions, roll +Charm. On a 10+, hold 2. And some of my results, like one of my results is, was that a lie? So I think I'm trying to ask him just details about his life to fill out this story so I can feel out, like, whether it seems like he believes what he's saying.

Rev: Yeah. Roll Charm.

Jake: Ten.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 2.

Jake: For starters ... I don't — that's interesting. I want to ask, was that a lie? But really, I feel like what I'm asking is, does he believe what he just said?

Rev: Yes.

Jake: OK. For my second hold, I can actually spend the other hold to ask a question from the Investigate a Mystery list. So I'm gonna go with, what happened here? We watched it change. We know what it is. How doesn't it?

Rev: I think the only way in the narrative that I can cleanly answer this question is that as you're examining it, I think you get a little assistance from Megan. Because Megan, you realize that you can hear him telepathically. Not like a monster, like a person. Just like you were picking up the thoughts of anyone in the room. And when you do that, you don't hear that second voice anymore. You only hear the things that Jimmy is thinking. And so what happened here is that there are two things in this body. One of them is human. One is not,

Megan: "Whoa. This guy's human. Or at least partly."

Rev: JIMMY: No, full. Yeah, I'm full. Full human.

Megan: "No, not full."

Rev: JIMMY: Well, disagree.

Wallace: What do you mean? Like a half human, half creature? Like a werewolf dude, or something?

Megan: "I don't think it's like his mom is one thing, his dad was another. But I think it's more like they both exist in the same body."

Tass: "Like he's possessed by something?"

Megan: "Yeah. Maybe."

Wallace: Jimmy, anything weird happened to you recently? Anything out of the ordinary that you can think of? Any strange symptoms you've been experiencing? Losing time, anything like that?

Rev: JIMMY: No, I don't think so. What time is it? What day is it?

Tass: And we tell him those things.

Rev: JIMMY: All I remember is I was standing outside of the schnitzel shop, eating a schnitzel, and then you all tackled me.

Wallace: Jimmy, you were eating an ice cream.

Rev: JIMMY: No, no, I'm lactose intolerant.

Wallace: All right, Jimmy, here's the deal. We ain't going to hurt you, OK? But you're sick. Something's wrong with you. And we need to figure out what it is so you don't make anyone else sick. You know what I'm saying?

Rev: JIMMY: OK. How?

Wallace: We don't know that yet. Can I get you anything? You want a water? You want a fudge?

Rev: JIMMY: Yeah, kind of.

Jake: I'll go grab a bottle of water from the fridge and, like, help him drink it and turn to the rest of them.

Wallace: If there's two things inside of him and it seems like it's in full defense mode here, somehow we gotta get to that other thing. We need it for information, and we need it gone.

Tass: "Yeah, new theory is host body. When sly, cunning, whatever is inside him thing comes forward, that shifts his shape. But is it reasonable to think that Jimmy here is Jimmy? Or is he so good at putting on this shell of protection to say anything to get away with this, that this is what we're getting?"

Megan: I think I use telepathy again to talk to Jake and Tass. [telepathically] "I got the feeling this thing isn't going to fight us, because it knows that we can fight back. So maybe we have to put it in a false sense of security to make it show itself?"

Jake: [telepathically] "Or do we need to do the opposite? Do we need to make it feel like it needs to fight back?"

Megan: [telepathically] "It feels like it won't, if we can take it. If it thinks we can take it, it's just going to hunker down inside this human shield."

Jake: [telepathically] "So we just need to pee ourselves and seem pathetic and soft?"

Megan: [telepathically] "Well, I mean, it hasn't seen me do anything yet."

Jake: [telepathically] "Think we should leave you alone with it?"

Megan: [telepathically] "Well, I mean this as long as you're not too far away, I should be able to let you know if something happens. And you can — you can get back here quick, right? I don't want to be alone with it, but that's the feeling I got."

Tass: [telepathically] "I hate making you bait. Hate it. Hate, hate, hate. Don't want to do that to anybody, but it's not a bad plan. We say we're gonna go get some more food and stuff. We take Wallace as our quote unquote "guide," and we're literally down the hall."

Megan: [telepathically] "Hey, we should all have a ... Have something that we can use. Like a code word, right? Like shapeshifter stuff. That's like ... What if it turns into one of us?"

Tass: [telepathically] "Solid."

Megan: [telepathically] "Especially if one of us is gonna be alone with it, right?"

Tass: [telepathically] "Yeah."

Jake: [telepathically] "This is assuming that it doesn't also, like, adopt your thoughts and memories when it turns into you."

Megan: [telepathically] "True."

Tass: [telepathically] "We'll sure see. Doesn't hurt to have a precaution."

Jake: [telepathically] "My safe word is avocado."

Tass: [telepathically] "Mine's Who Wants to Be a Millionaire."

Megan: [telepathically] "Yeah, I'll just telekinesis some shit around the room, so."

Tass: [telepathically] "That's fair. Or think at us."

Megan: [telepathically] "Yeah."

Tass: [telepathically] "Cool, cool, cool."

Megan: [telepathically] "And you can leave with Wallace and tell him that I can do this kind of stuff. So hopefully ... I just haven't — I don't — we're not bros yet, so I don't think I can get in his head quite yet. But maybe if he knows and I am able to, it'll be a easier transition."

Tass: [telepathically] "All right."

Jake: And I think because Wallace is not part of this and doesn't know any of this is happening.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I think at this point I have changed out of the Santa costume and into the old reliable trench coat and fedora. And I say ...

Wallace: Jimmy thinks he's telling the truth. He's absolutely sure of it. So I do not think that this is just a capable deception. This is a true, honest feeling.

Rev: JIMMY: If you reach down inside of this awning, in my left pocket is my key to my hotel room. I'm staying at the Black Forest Bed and Breakfast. I'm room 301.

Megan: "Hey, it's OK. It's all right." And I go and I kind of sit over by him. "We're not gonna hurt you. You don't have to be scared. Are you — are you hungry?"

Rev: JIMMY: I'm trying my best not to freak out. No offense. Look at you. Like everyone here, take a second. Just look at the other people standing in the room.

Jake: I do.

Megan: "I mean, I have blue hair, but that's not ..."

Rev: JIMMY: Why are there chains made of fire on me?! I think I'm doing pretty cool, considering what the hell's going on here.

Jake: "Hey, I think you're doing pretty good, too."

Rev: JIMMY: Why can you make chains of fire?

Jake: "We are ... This is always hard to explain without just blowing somebody's mind. We are specialists of a sort, and we specialize in like the type of sick that he's describing. But it's some ... It's some pretty out there shit."

Rev: JIMMY: You almost quoted The A-Team.

Jake: "I did?"

Rev: JIMMY: Yeah.

Jake: "What'd I miss?"

Rev: JIMMY: Oh, there's a lot. But just the beginning of it. Being specialists, and ...

Jake: "Oh, soldiers of fortune? Something ..."

Rev: JIMMY: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Jake: "Yeah, yeah, yeah."

Rev: JIMMY: B.A. Baracas had gold chains though, not fire chains!

Jake: "Yeah, I love that flick. Brad Cooper and Liam Neeson ..."

Rev: JIMMY: Aww...

All: [laugh].

Rev: He turns his head the other direction.

Megan: He ages another ten years.

Tass: "Jimmy, what's your last name?"

Rev: JIMMY: Kale.

Tass: "All right. What do you like? What like real substantial food do you like from around here?"

Rev: JIMMY: Schnitzel.

Tass: "All right. Couple of us are gonna go. We're gonna get some food, we're gonna relax and figure this whole thing out. Because the long story short is there's something weird going on with you, and we want to fix it."

Rev: JIMMY: Why don't these chains made of fire burn? Like that seems weird to me.

Tass: "The same reason I can shoot myself in the chest with a pistol and it doesn't do anything. Magic is real, shit is weird, and something bad is messing with you. But we're the guys that are here to fix it."

Rev: He lays his head back and starts to cry.

Jake: As he does Wallace fishes into his pocket and gets that room key. Yoink.

Rev: Yeah. Not a problem.

Megan: Yeah. As he's freaking out about these chains, I reach out telepathically again to Jake and Tass. [telepathically] "I don't think he's gonna do anything if he's still chained up

when you guys leave. He's not attacking because he knows we can fight back, but he's not going to if he can't."

Tass: [telepathically] "Yeah, shit. OK, OK, how about this? Wallace just snagged that key. Let's set up a base line here. We're gonna keep him chained. We're gonna go check out this place, confirm that this is a real guy, you know? Instead of just one of many different personalities that he can put on and then turn into this defense mechanism. And then we confirm that, we come back, and then maybe we look at trying this sting the other way."

Jake: [telepathically] "Does Megan still stay here while we go check out the room to start lulling him into a sense of security? To start making herself seem like not a threat?"

Tass: [telepathically] "I mean, if this is a real guy under this, I don't think it's a bad idea to kind of get him to really, truly understand what's happening and see calm from him. Because we are going to help him. I mean, my god."

Megan: [telepathically] "Yeah, I can do that."

Jake: [telepathically] "Should one of us hang around a corner, like just in case still, and the other one go with Wallace?"

Tass: [telepathically] "Yeah, you go with Wallace."

All: [laugh]

Tass: [telepathically] "Yeah, I can go with Wallace, if you want to stay just in case."

Jake: [telepathically] "OK, yeah. I'll like walk out with you guys and just kind of hang in proximity here. So that if anything does go wrong, I can help Megan."

Tass: [telepathically] "All right."

Jake: And again, I think Wallace, not being privy to any of this, holds up that key. And he says ...

Wallace: I mean, we can at least start following a trail, here. See if what he says is not just something he believes, but is something true that manifests in the real world. And then that might, you know, give us something that'll help us bring him out of a shell. Something like that.

Tass: "That's perfect. We'll come with you. We'll grab some food and stuff while we're out. And Megan'll chill here with him, OK?"

Megan: "Yeah, that's fine."

Rev: JIMMY: Cobbler. You're gonna find cobblers inside of my room.

Wallace: Just whole cobblers?

Rev: JIMMY: Yeah. I brought, I think, six different flavors. I was kind of gonna test them out on the area to see if people liked them. I thought this might be a good retirement place for me.

Wallace: That's a weird play, Jimmy. But all right.

Rev: JIMMY: I just — I'm trying to give you as many facts as I can think of, just to prove to you that I am Jimmy Kale The Cobbler — the dessert, not the shoe.

Wallace: All right, Jimmy, we're gonna go look into it. You hold tight.

Rev: JIMMY: OK.

Wallace: Hot cocoa or hot cider?

Rev: JIMMY: With schnitzel? Cider.

Wallace: You got it.

Megan: "Good choice."

Jake: All right. Wallace will lead the way out, and start heading in the direction of that inn.

Tass: Yeah, I will follow him.

Jake: "All right. I'm gonna hang back here just in case anything does go wrong in there. You two go check that out and come back and get me."

Tass: "All right, man."

Rev: All right. So Wallace and Tass, you go down the street to the Black Forest Bed and Breakfast.

Tass: As we're walking over, I would definitely mention that, "Hey, Megan can talk to us with her brain. She is telepathic. So, you know ... So that you're in on that, why we were quiet several times, that's why, so. We just didn't want to startle you in the moment and tip off to the thing that that's what was going on. So, yeah. There you go."

Wallace: Yeah. All right. I figured it was something like that.

Rev: And you go inside up to room 301, and the key works.

Tass: OK. "Well, I mean, either he's got a whole bunch of identities ready to go, which I can't imagine, because then he'd have to have all of those wallets in his back pocket. Or we really do have like a host situation." Is there any reception out here?

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: I think I probably would have Googled the guy, just to see if he comes up on anything.

Rev: He does.

Tass: OK. No, like ... Are there any reports of a missing person or an obit or anything?

Rev: No. You can see that he retired and closed down his bakery, Cobbler on Cobblestone. Which was located on the corner of Cobblestone and Spruce.

Tass: "OK. This guy's legit. Let's see what he's got in his pockets, shall we?"

Jake: Yeah, I'll open the door.

Rev: Yeah, you open the door and you are hit with the smell of fresh cobbler.

Jake: All right. I pull out my tape recorder, and rewind it and press play to start listening back to all the things that he was telling us, and pull out my camera and start just — before we do anything, taking photos of everything in this room. And trying to like, you know, look at stuff and verify like, oh, he did say that, and see if it holds water.

Rev: Yeah. I mean, everything that he said to you, you find proof of in this room.

Jake: Six flavors of cobbler?

Rev: Yes.

Megan: Name them.

Rev: Cherry. Blackberry. Peach. Rhubarb. Blueberry.

Megan: One more.

Rev: Banana.

Megan: No ...

Jake: Experimental!

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: I was thinking "plum" over and over my head, and like projecting it towards you. Like, please, fucking ... Just say plum. And you went the opposite direction.

Jake: Is there not apple cobbler somehow?

Rev: Oh, there is apple. I don't know why I didn't say apple first.

Jake: I was like, how is this not happening?

Tass: Well I want the banana one, so ... You have to get rid of one of the others.

Megan: Well you can fucking have it. Gross.

Jake: Plum cobbler, huh?

Megan: I love — that's my favorite fruit.

Jake: I believe you. I've just never had — had nor heard of a plum cobbler.

Megan: Well, nor have I, but I imagine it'd be excellent.

Jake: Oh. What? No. Let's hold onto this. What makes a cobbler a cobbler?

Megan: Oh, jeez ...

All: [laugh]

Rev: But, yeah. As you are taking photos around this area, roll Investigate a Mystery.

Jake: Ten.

Rev: You get a hold 2.

Jake: What is being concealed here?

Rev: In the corner of this room, there is a decorative fireplace. Or at least it looks decorative, but as you get closer, you actually do feel a little bit of a draft. And you realize that the fireplaces on the top floor must all actually be real working chimneys. And you do see some scratch marks inside of it, like something has crawled in and out of this chimney. And there are even some footprints in the soot.

Jake: What size are the footprints? Adult man-sized?

Rev: Oddly sized. They don't look exactly human.

Jake: What sort of creature is it?

Rev: So you have seen these marks before. A big part of your past is wanting to help and protect children. And maybe five, six years ago, you saw marks just like this when you were helping track down the Krampus.

SFX: OUTRO MUSIC

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