

Network Connectivity Problems (S3, E23)

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Rev: Hey, everybody. Just a few things before we get into the episode this week. Just a reminder that on January 6th, that is Wednesday, at 12:01 a.m., we will be doing our yearly sprucing up of the Patreon. So there will be a couple of new things available, as well as updates to some of the tiers. Nothing huge, but we do have a few small changes we're making, as well as one additional new tier. So you can find all of that live on the website at 12:01 a.m. on Wednesday, January 6th. And I will also give a description of everything that's changing in the intro to the episode that comes out that day.

And the other thing I want to mention is that we are doing our push for partner on Twitch in the month of January. So just a reminder for this coming week on January 2nd at 6:00 p.m., which is a Saturday, we will be playing The Witch Is Dead. I will be running that, and all the players will be familiars of a witch who was killed by a witch hunter, and they are out for revenge. On January 4th at 8:00 p.m., we'll be playing Left 4 Dead, with jump scares and some mods activated. And then on January 7th at 8:00 p.m., Kim and Megan will be playing Who's Your Daddy? Where you play a hapless parent and a determined baby, struggling for the life of the child. And I will be moderating the chat that day and we will give out a prize for the best Dad Joke. So thank you all for joining us throughout this year. We hope that you have a Happy New Year, and that you've had a safe holiday. And we will see you in the New Year.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC

Wallace: I could go for a pinot. Does anybody else think they could go for a pinot? Something peppery. Sounds like it would hit the spot just right. I think we need to go to the vineyard.

Megan: "Vineyard?"

Tass: "What?"

Jake: Is there like, as we walk into this lobby, is there like a sign on the wall? Like founder: old woman.

Megan: That old woman that ripped the wall off your bathroom.

Rev: One hundred percent. Like I know you're all kind of joking, but as soon as you come in, there is a picture on the wall and it is the old woman who transformed and ripped the wall off the bathroom.

Tass: Nice.

Rev: So you all head down the stairs. And as you step down towards the bottom of the steps, you can see in the far corner of the room there are four rings, three acting as the points of a triangle, and the other one set in the middle. Anastasiya is bound in one, Jimmy is bound in another, and the other two are empty.

Jake: "Hey Krampus, are you a robot?"

Rev: ROBOT KRAMPUS: 42, 42, 42 ...

Jake: [laughs] Yes!

Megan: Nice!

Rev: So as you poke through the remains of this charred robot Krampus, it's hard to tell if this is the same one you encountered before or not. I think the thing that you'd probably be looking for are the char marks on the head. But since you all just killed it with fire a second time, it's kind of hard to discern. But the thing that you do spot on the spine of this Krampus, underneath all of the fur, is a Wi-Fi card that you've seen before on the back of the golem in the Eye of Horus.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC FADES

Rev: Here you all are in the wine cellar at the CeNita winery. Tass, you have just dug through the remains of this robot Krampus, and found a Wi-Fi card, exactly like the one on the golem in the Eye of Horus.

Tass: "Jake, you wanna come look at this?" And I kind of peel everything back and point at this card.

Jake: Is this like a proprietary device? Or is this like a kind of thing that could be bought somewhere?

Rev: It is something that you know was created in the engineering room on the Eye of Horus.

Jake: "Fuck. So I guess this also ties back to the mole?"

Tass: "Yeah. I mean, it sure seems that way. And if this was made on the Eye of Horus before it, like, ultimately got ripped apart and put back together, does that narrow down our field? Or could somebody have gotten this off of that after they took everything apart?"

Jake: "I don't know. I mean, or just were the plans, you know, uploaded off of the base to be replicated at IPT proper, planet-side? We don't know."

Tass: [sighs] "Megan, this all seems to really be tying around like there's a mole. There's a mole in IPT. We were up on a spaceship once and dealt with kind of a robot situation being controlled by something just like this, and only we make this."

Megan: "You guys been to space?"

Tass: "Yeah. Yeah, it was pretty awful."

Megan: "So what does this thing do?"

Jake: "It gives somebody some kind of like remote access and control over whatever it's attached to."

Megan: "How far away do they have to be to control it?"

Jake: "It seems like it's, like, Internet. So it seems like it could be basically anywhere that can tap into the Internet. I think that I can at least get us eyes on whoever put the dossier on Anastacia's desk to get us a lead. That might get us to who put this card here and who set this whole thing in motion."

Tass: "OK. Yeah. Hell yeah. Yeah. We need to get back, then. Do we tell Margaret about this? I mean, Jesus, if we can't trust Margaret, we might as well burn the whole goddamn thing down."

Jake: "I mean, that seems like kind of a cavalier assumption that if we can't trust Margaret, then there's no point to it. Like Margaret might not be Margaret even, you know? Like weirder shit has happened. We were literally just dealing with shapeshifters, so."

Tass: [sighs] "Yeah."

Megan: "How big is the IPT? Like who could have access to all of the stuff that you found out has been infiltrated?"

Jake: "IPT itself is really only the building that you've been in. But there are an assortment of like national and collaborative teams — organizations that do the same thing, that all kind of share intel. So as far as like the net, it's pretty massive. It's a global-sized thing."

Megan: "And they could all get access to the IPT. Like, I'm just wondering how ... How long is our list of suspects? You know?"

Tass: "I just don't think we know yet. Like, I know they share information, that the space stations that have existed is because they've all pooled resources and information. So we need to figure that out. We need to figure out what kind of stuff they shared. I wonder if I can figure out how to analyze this card and see when it was built. Because, I mean, if it was built on the Horus while it was still active, that absolutely puts our pool into a much smaller, easier to manage situation. But if not? I mean, god, it could ... Yeah, we could have some work."

Megan: "Do we want to start with the file, then? Taking a look and seeing who put it there?"

Jake: "Yeah. I mean, it couldn't hurt. What is Anastacia's office situation? Is she in the bullpen? Does she have her own, like, closed door office?"

Rev: Everybody's got a closed door office.

Jake: OK, good. I was afraid that we were gonna have to somehow try to evacuate the floor so that I could view another place ...

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: View another time without everyone seeing. But that'll make this easier.

Rev: Yeah, you'll have to do something ... Like you won't be able to Use Magic in the IPT unless you take down the defenses. You can't teleport in, you can't use magic, like you can't do things inside their wards, unless you were to turn them off.

Jake: Oh, god. OK, so having talked about like that we've ... Now that I know how to do magic, can I draw on — like, I've been present when wards were taken down so that blocking of spell effects was negated. Do I think I could do that?

Rev: Yeah, I don't see why not. I mean, you have been studying magic. And you've got photos of different runes and wards between Rev's place and the Eye of Horus — even in Mother Hen. That's something you could figure out.

Jake: OK. "Yeah, we can start with trying to view the desk. Magic is kind of barred inside of headquarters. I think I could disrupt that. But that's a ... That in and of itself is a pretty dangerous game to play, if I kind of disrupt the magic blocking that they use to protect themselves and HQ. I wonder if there is a way to kind of, I don't know, change the boundaries, almost? Like just to exclude a part of headquarters, so that I could just lower the wards in her office. But I think that's going to take me some time and some research to figure something else out."

Tass: "Anastacia, did you have any other back and forth with anyone besides, like, checking in with Jingles?"

Rev: ANASTACIA: No, I never even checked in with him. I got here and it wasn't 12 hours before I found myself in this situation.

Megan: "I mean, Anastacia's gonna have to go back now, right? We're gonna have to say, oh, we found her and explain what happened, right?"

Tass: "We don't have to do that, if there's a compelling reason not to. If we want to keep her under wraps and say we couldn't crack it, she's gone, there's nothing there. I mean, I don't know why, but that's something we have in our pocket. If we want to keep somebody feeling like they have accomplished their goal."

Megan: "Yeah, but how long can we ride on that, you know?"

Tass: "Yeah, probably not long."

Jake: [laughs]

Rev: ANASTACIA: I kind of feel like either way, the jig is up for me. Either I show up and tell the story. I can't imagine if there is a mole who set this trap up for me, they wouldn't be aware if I escaped the trap.

Tass: "That's fair. If this thing is still transmitting and they're controlling it, they might be listening to us all right now."

Rev: ANASTACIA: Oh.

Rev: She pulls out a gun and points it down at the Wi-Fi card.

Rev: ANASTACIA: Should I, uh ...

Jake: "I don't know. Because I think we want to follow up on that, and see if we can learn anything about it."

Megan: "Well, maybe she can go back and be honest about most everything that happened. But just say, you know, this robot Krampus attacked her and she put it down and destroyed it. And doesn't have to mention anything about the card. And then whoever put her in this situation won't necessarily know that that was discovered. They'll just think that she thought it was a robot or something. Is that like a normal thing to happen?"

Rev: ANASTACIA: Oh, like if we just say that you guys came and saved me and, "Oh yeah, somehow the Krampus from the North Pole got away and caught me." And don't acknowledge the whole it not being the main thing here. Like we just treat it like that's the whole story?

Tass: "I really like that, with one question from someone that doesn't totally understand technology. If we don't destroy this, are they gonna be able to track that chip? Are they gonna listen to our story saying, oh, we saved her from the Krampus. But they're going to be like, oh yeah? Well, then why do you have that in your pocket? You know? At that point, the only thing that we're doing, if that is the case, if they can follow this, is not telling the people that are on our side at IPT the truth. The person that we're trying to hide it from will just already know that we're just lying."

Jake: "I don't know if this is something I can do. Can I tell if there's anything magical about the chip, or if it's just technology?"

Rev: Yeah. I mean it, like most things at IPT, are a little bit of a mishmash. So you can tell there is some magic involved in it.

Jake: "I mean, if we're worried about this thing transmitting electronically, like we could just put a little Faraday cage or something around it and prevent that. Like, that's not something to worry about. But I don't know how to stop the magic element, if that's what might be transmitting."

Megan: "Well, don't you guys have runes or protective barriers as well?"

Jake: "Oh yeah, I can do that." I want to look around — we're in the basement of a winery. I want to look around for, like, foil or something metallic to wrap this thing in, and then just any box that it'll fit in, that I could start inscribing some runes on the outside of.

Rev: Yeah, you have no problem finding some foil in the basement of this, that you can wrap around. It's some stuff that they have used to wrap like the corks of champagne and stuff.

Jake: OK. Yeah, I'll just — I'll smother this thing in something conductive, and then put it in a little box and start looking — looking back through photos and looking at the runes that are on the ground, and asking Anastasiya for help and whatnot, and try and bar this thing.

Rev: Yeah, I don't think there is a roll for this. I think that with the help of Anastacia and the fact that you have these photos that show you specifically how to make sure things don't transmit out, it's just a matter of a few minutes. And you have a little shoebox with a homemade Faraday cage inside of it, both technological and magical.

Tass: "OK. Next step then is get back, I suppose. Right? We wanna see if you can do any work on narrowing down the area and see if we can see who dropped this off?"

Jake: "I mean, before that, what are we doing here? There's a magic crime scene in the basement of a winery, and I think we need to do something about it. Anastacia, did you — while you were here, was anyone here? Was the winery owner here? Were there tastings upstairs that you could hear? Anything?"

Rev: ANASTACIA: No.

Jake: "Like where is the actual owner? We saw the mannequin shapeshifted into the owner, but ..."

Tass: "Yeah. If that was just a shapeshift form, then they could easily have even just seen that same picture that we walked past to use that. I mean, was Jimmy the only one here that they brought in for one of these, like, fall-back forms?"

Rev: ANASTACIA: Yeah.

Tass: "OK."

Jake: Is there anything here to indicate that they're closed for the season, or something like that?

Rev: Yeah, I think that going upstairs — actually I even imagine that while you were all having this conversation, that Wallace has taken his bottle of wine and gone upstairs and poked around some more. And yeah, it's — you know, because it is winter, the winery is closed. And it, you know, is open only X amount of days a month for tastings, and they're usually by appointment.

Wallace: I think all we've gotta worry about here is just clean up. This place is closed for the season. Nobody else has been in and out of here. Nobody's gonna know this happened. As long as we cover our tracks, this place is fine. It'll be secure.

Tass: "OK, let's get to work." Before we start destroying it, I just want to take a last look at the circle. You know, I've taken some pictures, but I just want to see if there's anything ... I don't know, different about it. Or yeah, anything to note.

Rev: Yeah. You've become pretty familiar with these rings over the course of the last ... Unknown amount of time.

Tass: [laughs]

Rev: Over the course of our elastic time.

Jake: The last somewhere between 26 hours and 17 years.

All: [laugh]

Rev: But yeah, these do look slightly different. You notice that a number of the points that you would expect are not there. There is no spot to make it bigger. There is no spot for a large power sacrifice. This kind of looks like a very rinky-dink version of the spell you saw Anastacia use. It looks like it was put together by someone who didn't have all of the details.

Tass: OK.

Rev: And I think that while you're examining it, Anastacia comes over.

Rev: ANASTACIA: Yeah, it's not quite right.

Tass: "Yeah, I was seeing that. And just robo-Krampus is the one that kind of ran the show here, huh?"

Rev: ANASTACIA: I mean, that's the one who caught me, and that's the one who kept activating this spell.

Tass: "Bizarre."

Rev: ANASTACIA: Yep.

Tass: "You know, there's something to that, though. Like if it's somebody that isn't super knowledgeable about this? I mean, that also kind of cuts down on some of the people it could be."

Rev: ANASTACIA: Yeah. And I don't know ... I mean, I knew this spell. I don't know who all you told about it, who all you gave all the details to. But whoever did this didn't have all the details.

Tass: "That's a great point. OK, all right." And I'll start kind of disassembling it. Just trying to get rid of it.

Megan: I wanna look at the mannequins.

Rev: OK.

Megan: Is there like the name of the manufacturer stamped on the back, or something? Like, can we figure out, like, where these came from?

Jake: Yeah. Why ... Did they bring them? Why are there so many mannequins in the basement of this winery? Such to have a room dedicated to them!

Megan: You open a door and there's just a bunch of mannequins standing in there. All right.

Rev: You two are so desensitized to weird shit in the world. You're like, oh yeah, the mannequin room.

All: [laugh]

Rev: And it took Megan going, "Now wait a minute. That's not what my mannequin room looks like." Yeah. All these mannequins are exactly the same and they have a brand stamped on the back of them. It is ... irrelevant.

Jake: MacGuffin and Co.

Rev: But yeah, they are ... They are all the exact same mannequin. A simple Google search shows you that they're ones you can order off of Amazon.

Jake: Let me just open up the Amazon app real quick.

Rev: Get you a mannequin.

Jake: Look for some mannequins.

Megan: Let's price this out. How many are in there? How many Jimmys did we kill? Can you get them in bulk?

Tass: Is this what we're doing with our spare room, Jake? Filling it with mannequins?

Jake: Yeah. Yeah. So it looks like you can get a full body mannequin for as low as \$69.99 with free shipping, so ...

Megan: OK, so how many ...

Jake: How many are in here?

Rev: In here, there are about a dozen.

Megan: "Jake, is there a discount if you buy in bulk?"

Jake: "There doesn't appear to be. So we know we're dealing with a culprit with a budget of at least \$840 dollars."

Megan: "Now, OK. So that's the dozen that are in here, including the ..."

Jake: "Oh, god."

Megan: "How many? Seven, that we murdered earlier?"

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: "Point is, deep pockets. Deep pockets on this villain."

Megan: "Good to know. Because either they're ... If they are IPT, they're either paying for it themselves, or maybe it'll be on the company's expense list." [laughs]

Rev: This turns into the accounting episode.

Jake: Oh my god. That's actually kind of fantastic. If we think this is somebody in IPT, we could look for inventory disparities, where this number of mannequins are missing from a log or something. That's ... I'm writing that down.

Rev: I like that IPT would have a mannequin budget, that you would be able to track down missing mannequins.

Megan: Especially that nobody thought it out of, like, out of the ordinary. That they're just like, yeah, approved.

Tass: I mean, come on. You have to, like, set up the armor and the fun stuff on something when you're testing out new weapons.

Jake: There's got to be things that pop up for like the training, like when you're going through the slaughterhouse, what the fuck is ... Why can I think of the term for when you walk through and you shoot targets?

Megan: [laughs]

Tass: It's slaughterhouse.

Megan: No, don't say anything. It's slaughterhouse.

Jake: No, what is it called?

Megan: No, that's it.

Jake: It's in Warzone. We refer to it by name.

Rev: Yeah. The, um ...

Megan: I don't even want to know.

Rev: The shoot house?

Jake: That can't be what we call it.

Tass: That is what we call it.

Megan: That sounds made up.

Tass: "I'm running over to the shoot house" has been said more than once.

Jake: Anyway, I think absolutely there could genuinely be a supply of mannequins that IPT actually needed, but nobody really pays attention because they don't matter that much. And somebody's like, oh, now that you mention it, yeah, there are 20 missing.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: Have we seen a bunch of discarded mannequins that look like this in that junk room?

Rev: Tass, I think back in, like Episode 17, shot a bunch of mannequins just like — no.

All: [laugh]

Rev: Yeah, no. You have not seen mannequins like this just kind of lying around.

Jake: Well montage, I suppose. Let's clean this place up.

Rev: Yeah. So you all take a little bit of time and you clean up the basement. What are you gonna do with, like, the mannequins, and the material for the rings, and the Krampus parts?

Jake: I can't just take them one by one to the junk room, because that gives up the ghost that ... I don't know how much of this we're trying to hide.

Tass: Yeah, I think we just call Everett to come pick us up and see if we can just store the parts there for the moment.

Rev: Yeah. When you reach out to him, he tells you he'll be there in just a few hours. I think, knowing where the winery is, he'll land out in that area.

Tass: OK.

Wallace: You know if y'all are concerned about having that thing in the box like to be revealed against you or something, I could take it with me. And when you need to collect it, you can come get it. You know I'll disappear. Falling off the grid is what I do, so.

Tass: "That's ... That's solid. I think that would be excellent."

Wallace: All right. Yeah. Leave it with me. We can set up a dead drop so that when you need to recover it, you leave me a signal and, you know, I'll leave the thing there the next morning or something.

Tass: "Hey, thank you so much. Literally, I don't think we could have done this without you."

Wallace: Boy, this whole thing's really kind of devolved into a shit show, huh?

Tass: "Yeah."

Wallace: What are you going to tell them when you get back?

Tass: "Oh boy, that's a real good question. Like, there's no real way to give any detail at all without bringing up that there's a mole, right? I mean, unless we just strut in and say we've saved Anastacia, investigation's ongoing, so we're not going to talk about anything. But I don't know that that's great, either."

Megan: "Well, they were under the impression she was coming here to save kids. So it's gonna get real messy if we start trying to indicate that that information was or wasn't real. I don't know. I think ... Would it be a terrible thing to let people in charge know that there might be a mole? I mean, we could say, hey, none of this stuff lines up properly. We don't have to give away how much information we have."

Tass: "Yeah. I mean, one way or another, we're gonna have to go person at a time and try to figure this out. If it turns into a witch hunt, they're gonna act somehow, whether it's buckle down into their story or try to run."

Megan: "Regardless, we should leave out the part with the Wi-Fi chip, but ..."

Tass: "Yeah, good call. Maybe by virtue of that, also not mention that Wallace helped?"

Wallace: Yeah. Please. If at all possible, I would like to be left out of the dossier on this one. I fully intend to be gone before dickhead lands his helicopter and picks all of you up, so.

Tass: [laughs awkwardly] "Oh, OK."

Megan: "Well, all right. Let's leave out the part with the chip and Wallace. But I mean, everything else lines up pretty easily, right?"

Tass: "Yeah. Somebody obviously sent Anastacia here to get trapped, kidnapped. We still don't know overall why, except to make a bunch of Krampus minions. We don't really have any idea of a purpose there, unless it was to also get us here and get overwhelmed by these things. But I mean, even like, we don't know. We don't know any of that."

Jake: While they're kind of laying all this out and what they do and do not know and like the pieces that they're missing, can Wallace roll Illuminated to see if a key fact or clue comes to him?

Rev: Yeah. You know a decent part of the story. You've heard the things that they're kind of discussing, who to trust. Yeah, go for it.

Jake: [laughs] OK. That's snake eyes, with a -1. But I've got one roll left on my Postman Always Rings Twice.

Tass: Oh, nice.

Jake: I'm gonna reroll this roll. Eight. So the Secret Masters need him to complete a task for him, and once it's done, they'll reveal that key fact, clue, or technique.

Rev: Yeah. Wallace, you have the sense that as you're hearing them talk about this, you remember hearing about a underground robot fighting group. And you feel like if you spend some time and go investigate them and get it shut down — because it's pretty dangerous — that you might find some information there about robots, and particularly about this mix of magic and technology.

Jake: OK. I think he just kind of tucks that away. Like oh, maybe that's where I'm going after this.

Rev: OK. Next week we'll be back with Wallace's solo story, Real Steel 2.

Jake: [laughs]

Megan: I thought Wallace was cool, but he's gonna shut this down? I heard, like, you might want to shut it down because it's kind of dangerous. I was like, aww ...

Tass: "So I mean, what do we think is a good start, then? I mean, I'm inclined to say we have a talk with Margaret, give her just these basic details, that this doesn't match up, and just try to gauge what she does."

Megan: "I mean, I can try and read her thoughts as we explain this to her. And if I do it properly, I can maybe get an idea if she's hiding anything or her reaction to it."

Tass: "If you're OK with that, yeah."

Megan: "I mean, I don't love the thought of spying on my new boss immediately after my first mission, but this is kind of important, so. Hopefully she's cool."

Jake: "I mean, she does kind of run a spy agency. So I think if you weren't spying all the time, she might be more upset."

Rev: ANASTACIA: Yeah. As someone who spent a good deal of time as a mole myself, you're right. They'll either burn everything and run, or burrow deeper. Do you want me to come with you? Do you want me to head home once we get back to Indianapolis? I know this sounds kind of vague, but, man, I wrecked some havoc when I left.

Rev: And she turns and looks at you, Megan.

Rev: ANASTACIA: And for the record, you have my full permission at any time to read my mind if you are not sure whether I'm good or evil.

Megan: "Thank you."

Rev: She nods.

Megan: I put my fingers to my temple. No, I'm just kidding. [laughs]

Rev: She draws a shotgun.

All: [laugh]

Rev: You guys just have a standoff.

Jake: Ah, you called my bluff! "I mean, I guess if we all go back and talk to Margaret and she's not the mole, but the mole is watching, then they might be like, oh shit, they recovered Anastacia. She's gonna know they're talking to Margaret. And that might put them more on edge. Whereas at least if she comes back and, you know, she seemingly goes back to work and she doesn't report with us, they could at least wonder. Like oh, maybe they didn't make this connection, maybe they haven't found this out, maybe they're just doing their check in post mission, et cetera. So yeah, it might be best to have Anastacia break off once we get there."

Tass: "Yeah, that's a really good point. It does add at least some level of a question for whoever it is, if they're watching."

Rev: ANASTACIA: All right.

Tass: "Imminently, are we going to have the same kind of talk with Everett when he gets here?"

Jake: "I don't see why we would give Everett any more than we're gonna give everybody else."

Tass: "Sure."

Jake: "My inclination is not to suspect Everett, but he is someone who's got access to the facility. He's someone who, you know, might know some of a spell, but not all of the spell, et cetera, et cetera. Like ..."

Tass: "Yeah. He knows how to set his stuff up. I mean, Mother Hen's proof of that."

Megan: "So what are we going to tell Margaret that we're not going to tell everybody else?"

Jake: "I think we need to read her first before we know whether we're going to tell her anything that we're not telling everybody else."

Megan: "Well, no, just saying we're gonna not tell Everett more than we're telling everybody else, because we have to have that conversation first because he's flying us home. So we can't wait until we gauge Margaret. I mean, do we leave out the we think there's a mole and let him make that connection on his own if we say it was Robot Krampus?"

Jake: "Nah, I think we probably just ... I mean, we just feed him the same thing we plan to feed Margaret and we try to get a read on Everett, too. Like this is gonna be ... Kind of, maybe a dry run for how we handle this with Margaret."

Tass: "Yeah, I agree."

Megan: "OK."

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: All right, and now it's time for end of session experience.

Tass: [airhorn noise]

Rev: Feels a little forced.

Did you conclude the current mystery?

Jake: Yes.

Rev: What was the mystery?

Jake: To figure out what happened to Anastacia, and kind of figure out what happened to the kids who didn't exist.

Rev: Yeah. Did you save someone from certain death or worse?

Tass: Yeah, I think so. Random Jimmy, we did get Anastacia out of there, sort of Wallace from the peril that was surrounding him.

Rev: Did we learn something new and important about the world?

Tass: Yeah. That somebody is trying the, like, different formats with the magic circles. Like they're doing something with that to like cause different effects or something?

Rev: And did we learn something new and important about one of the hunters?

Jake: I feel like no.

Rev: All right. So everybody gets 2 points of experience, and 6 Gear Points. Does anybody level up?

Tass: Yeah.

Megan: Yep.

Jake: Yeah.

Rev: Oh. Well, all right. What's everybody taking?

Tass: I think I'm just doing a stat boost. I am bringing my Cool from a 2 to 3.

Rev: Oh, you are so cool.

Tass: So cool.

Rev: I can feel it in the room already.

Megan: I'm gonna take another one of my Spooky moves, and I'm gonna go with The Big Whammy. You can use your powers to Kick Some Ass. Roll +Weird instead of +Tough. The attack has 2-harm, close, obvious, ignore armor. On a miss, you'll get magical backlash.

Tass: Nice.

Rev: All right. Jake?

Jake: I am taking a move from another playbook. I'm taking another Hex move. It is called Force of Will. When you apply your will to dispelling a magical effect, blocking a spell, or suspending a phenomenon, roll +Weird. On a hit, momentary magics are canceled completely and long lasting spells and effects are suspended temporarily. On a 10+, you can also spend Luck to instantly snuff out a powerful spell or strange effect. On a 7 to 9, you take 1-harm as the strain of dismissing magic unravels you.

Rev: Does it have a on a miss?

Jake: No.

Rev: Good, good ...

Tass: [chuckles]

Jake: The world is your oyster.

Rev: So we hadn't had a chance to do this in a while. Is there anything you all want to talk about in the sense of like what's going on, or just the mystery, or do you feel like you're good for now?

Tass: I mean, I have a lot of thoughts, but I also don't want to bring them up and then everyone tell me later how horribly, hilariously wrong I was. So I'm just gonna bury that down deep.

Jake: If you don't speculate, you can't be proven wrong.

Tass: Exactly.

Jake: You can't be proven right, but it's more important that you can't be proven wrong.

Rev: Well, so a couple of things that I want to mention. We are using some moves that are new to us. And I have gotten in kind of a bad habit of having people call for moves instead of describing what they're doing and then me calling the moves. So just for

anyone playing along at home, I am gonna work on adjusting some of those things to make sure that, you know, just narratively speaking, we're spitting these moves proper.

Megan: Wow.

Jake: That was pretty hip lingo, Daddio.

Rev: So speaking of some of these moves. Jake, I have a question for you.

Jake: OK.

Rev: About your binding of a creature. So in the past, when we have been in the darkest timeline or when we've seen Rev do it, when you guys summon Damien ... Any time you all have someone to creature, you've trapped it in place, we've always presented it as a dome. And inside this dome, the person, the creature, whatever could wander around, but nothing they could do could get out and nothing you all could do to them could get in. Now we're kind of dealing with these magical chains and I know in this last story arc you all reached inside of the chains and, you know, grabbed some stuff. How do you imagine this works now? Do you think this move works differently than the dome, since it is chains?

Jake: Yeah. So the chains is kind of a holdover from The Initiate I played in End of Days — the livestream one. When he used magic, I had stated that they were like chains that trapped things, and I think that's just stuck in my head this whole time. I imagine that the chains are like ... They stop anything physical, you know? Like when the chains hit something, even if the chains are just like wrapped around the chest and arms or whatever, that's just kind of a visual representation of the fact that, like, physically they're trapped.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: They can't — you know, if they could shrink, they wouldn't shrink out of the chains. They're trapped there physically. Like things like that. They can't move and pick the lock or anything. But as far as like mental attacks, or like anything that doesn't require movement, they can probably still do.

Rev: OK.

Jake: But like in my head, by the same token, like because they've just got the chains wrapped around them, not like a dome around them, they could be moved. You know, like we can get in their pockets, we can move them, we could throw them in a van and take them somewhere else if we needed to. They are just unable to break that binding physically.

Rev: OK, OK. So like when you all moved Jimmy and I said, oh yeah, you gotta break the chains ...

Jake: So yeah, in my head, that's not how that would have worked. I totally understood like where you were coming from. That made sense. But in my head, it's kind of like the magic chains are just like a visual representation of a stopping them from moving kind of effect.

Rev: OK. Yeah, I think that's a good trade off. So we'll say that your binding ... You know, they're in chains, that you can physically move them, it won't be locked in a place the way that, you know, one of the domes is. But on the other hand, if it was like let's say that if it's specifically Megan, like you've trapped Megan in chains, these chains wouldn't stop her from using any of her mental powers. Stuff that doesn't require movement of hands, or ...

Jake: Right. Like Megan would probably still be able to Tune In to something or Jinx something or whatever. She just wouldn't be able to, like, run away anymore. Or like something ... I have the thought in my head that, like, we haven't come up against. I don't know if we will. But like, I don't know, something that could, like, astral project? Like, I don't know if they could kind of leave their limp physicality stuck in the chains and their spirit part to go on? Like, I don't know exactly how that one would work, but ...

Rev: Limp Physicality is ...

All: [laugh]

Jake: Was my favorite alternative hip hop artist in the mid '90s.

Tass: Yeah.

Rev: And so Megan, having been on two adventures now ... Man, what's it like?

All: [laugh]

Rev: You haven't handed me a letter yet of resignation, so I assume that's a good sign.

Megan: Yeah, I'd say that's a pretty good sign. It's pretty great. It's spooky.

Rev: You know, for anybody listening at home, Megan is caught up with, is familiar with the show. So she really is ... You know we all, whenever we roleplay a game, we have to have that level of like, oh, what do I know? What don't I know? I think one of my favorite moments from this past story arc was the tuning in on the robot that didn't work. Oh, and I guess I should mention that, too. Well, we'll get to that in a second. But you know, that conversation with Tass like, "Oh, you didn't think to check for this." "Well, you didn't tell me." You know, just that acknowledgement of what Megan in-character doesn't know versus what Jake and Tass know.

Megan: Yeah, it's been really interesting having that kind of dichotomy of what I know and what Megan the character knows. Because yeah, I've been listening since the show was, I think, three months along. So I'm very familiar with everything that's happened up to this point. And so to go into these situations where there's these reveals or callbacks to things that have happened in previous seasons and I'm sitting here like, oh, I remember this. And then I have to be like, OK, no I don't, though. This giant robot Krampus just showed up and Jake starts asking, "are you a robot" and it starts saying 42 over and over again? That means literally nothing to me.

All: [laugh]

Megan: And I have to act as such. So yeah, it's been ... It's been really interesting having to separate my knowledge of the show from what my character does.

Tass: Yeah. You got a hard job. It's weird enough to do the version of yourself when playing a game like this. But yeah, you've got it in a weird kind of difficult way, and you're kicking ass. It's so good. It's so interesting, well, literally, to watch you do

Megan: Hey, thanks.

Rev: And, you know, talking about the Tune In moment ... I don't think I've done this in a while, but I do want to throw out there. Because, you know, the moves work. The creatures in this last story, the Krampus and its minions. The minions, one of their moves was specifically that they had this monster mind and they had this human mind. And then the robot Krampus doesn't have a mind. And because we had decided that Megan's powers were mental powers, it just seemed fitting that the Tune In would not catch the robot Krampus, and that her Telepathy and her Tune In would catch both personalities inside of the minion Krampuses, so ...

Tass: Yeah, I still — I feel so bad. I didn't mean to yell at Megan.

All: [laugh]

Tass: I was so mad that the Krampus didn't have a mind to read. That's all I meant. I'm sorry, Megan. I love you so much.

Megan: Yeah, no, that's something that's also I think really funny, is every time, you know, there's something that's brought up, I have to remember, like, oh, I'm not aware of this. But the guys aren't necessarily thinking about that, so when they do something or say something, I have to then prompt again, like I have literally no idea — why didn't you tell me this? But they wouldn't think to either, because literally everything that they encounter that they've already encountered would have to be explained. So yeah, it's been really ... It's been really funny to see that happen and play out.

Jake: As she's talking about this and like having to like, remind us of things ... The monologue from Man of Steel, where he's talking about how they will stumble, they will fall, but in time they will join you in the light? [laughs] Like, that's all I can think of.

All: [laugh]

Jake: Megan's job: she has been sent here to like harness us and to remind us like, hey — stop it.

Megan: I would never.

Tass: It would be way easier if we could just do something like give her like a pill or something. So she would just be caught up with everything that went on.

All: [laugh]

Jake: We need those for adventures!

Megan: I am actually not fond of taking pills, so I would prefer ... If you have it in a gummy form, that would ...

Jake: In a chewable, preferably.

Megan: That'd be lovely.

Tass: I'm just gonna put it in your pudding. That's the best I can do.

Jake: We're like, "Here Megan, just ... A lot of this confusing. Just take this pill." And she takes the pill that shows her everything that TJ knew. And then the next time Megan talks, TJ's voice comes out.

Megan: Oh no!

Jake: And we're like oh no — an unfortunate side effect!

Rev: You didn't realize that he did a mixed success on these.

All: [laugh]

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: We jump ahead a couple of hours. Wallace at this point has absconded with a couple of bottles of red wine ...

Jake: [chuckles]

Rev: And the Faraday cage that also keeps in magical energies. As well as Jimmy, who he plans to drop off at his hotel. Mother Hen has landed just outside of the vineyard. And you have all climbed aboard with your ill-gotten ...

Megan: With our loot.

Rev: Krampus goods, yeah. How are you bringing these on board? Like ...

Megan: Put them in a barrel.

Jake: A barrel?

Megan: There's gotta be empty wine barrels.

Jake: I was gonna say a crate.

Rev: Krampus was hiding amongst empty barrels, so.

Jake: Yeah, sure. We're just rolling some barrels full of robot parts.

Megan: Yeah. It'd be a lot easier to roll them to the helicopter than us having to carry them all.

Jake: True.

Megan: I don't know. You're stronger than me, probably. [laughs] I wouldn't do that. I'd just use Telekinesis. I'll take the 2-harm. I'm not lifting anything.

Rev: Yeah. So the four of you are rolling these barrels onto Mother Hen.

Rev: EVERETT: What's all this?

Jake: "Wine. Good shit. You want any?"

Rev: EVERETT: Yeah.

Jake: "Nah, I'm just fucking with you. It's — they're barrels full of robot parts."

Rev: EVERETT: Oh.

Jake: "Can we squirrel these away with you for a while?"

Rev: EVERETT: Yeah, of course. We gonna build something fun?

Jake: "I don't know. For now, we don't know what we're going to do with them, but we don't want to throw them in the junk room or anything. So you might have a use for them if we decide that we don't need them. Or we might need to come calling for them, ask you bring them to us, or something."

Rev: EVERETT: Oh, yeah. I always find places to squirrel things away, especially if they could be useful in the future.

Rev: And as you're rolling these past him, he tosses a glance to Anastacia.

Rev: EVERETT: Turn out OK?

Rev: She just gives a nod and rolls her barrel on.

Tass: I'm gonna give the other two kind of a, I don't know, that kind of a shrug of like 'here we go,' and also nod to Everett. "Yeah, it was wild. There's this robot Krampus there and captured Anastacia. Like, lured her in. And they were using some of those circles that we keep finding everywhere to pull energy and like make new powerful mini Krampus creatures. It was a really strange."

Rev: EVERETT: Robot Krampus, like the one you destroyed up at the North Pole?

Tass: "Yeah."

Rev: EVERETT: Yeah. Jingles was telling me about him on our flight over to Ireland. Mean old bastard.

Tass: "Yeah. Like, I still don't know what was going on with that. Because I mean, what kind of feature is that to throw in the North Pole town for the kids?"

Rev: EVERETT: Yeah that is kind of strange, the fact that he was attacking folk. I mean, there had been reports of that, if it was happening before.

Tass: "Yeah, right?"

Jake: "I guess something went wrong with the programming or something. He must have just bugged out and gone bad."

Megan: "Yeah. We kind of had to destroy the whole thing, so I feel like we didn't get as many answers as we would have liked. But we saved Anastacia, so ..."

Rev: EVERETT: Yeah. I feel like a big part of this job is never quite getting as many answers as you'd like.

Tass: "No shit. Oof ..."

Rev: And he turns and starts to walk towards the cockpit.

Megan: Can I try and read his mind with Telepathy?

Rev: Yeah. Roll it.

Megan: Thirteen.

Jake: Damn.

Rev: Yeah, you get a hold 2.

Megan: What is being concealed here?

Rev: Yeah, as you scope around inside of Everett's thoughts as he heads toward the front of Mother Hen, you don't get any sense of him hiding anything from anyone. He's overly relieved that Anastacia is OK. He has traveled her a couple of times now and he

has taken a shining to her. They don't talk much, but you do get a sense that he enjoys not being as alone on Mother Hen as he normally is.

Megan: What can it do?

Rev: You get a quick flash of Everett's past, and you see some images of him as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam. You know that he learned a little magic, just being around all the other founders. But he was originally brought on just to be the transport. But he found ways to incorporate a little bit of the magic into this very old technology. You have seen these runes and things around Mother Hen. He's pretty handy with a flamethrower. He's a very good pilot. And on more than one occasion in the last few years, he has been the ringer in bare knuckle boxing.

Tass: Oh, damn!

Megan: Nice.

Tass: I love that.

Megan: I just look at the guys and nod at them. Like, we're good.

Tass: I think out loud I actually give an, "Oh, thank god."

Rev: EVERETT: What's that?

Tass: "Uh ... Nothing, man. This was all just rough. It's nice to see you."

Rev: EVERETT: Oh, yeah. You too. We'll be there in just a couple hours.

Rev: And Mother Hen takes off into the air. Is there anything you're all doing during the course of this flight?

Jake: As much as possible, I want to start trying to do some research into how I would kind of selectively drop the protections in, you know, one room at IPT. Just in case that ends up being what we need to do.

Rev: OK.

Tass: No, I don't think so.

Megan: I think I'm just asking for more information on what these circles are. I just keep getting hit with these scenarios of — wait, what is this now? Of things that I'm just not aware of. So I think if we're just ... Have some downtime and I don't have anything else to do, I'm talking with Tass and Anastacia while Jake's doing research and just, "Can you catch me up on some stuff?"

Rev: Yeah. And Anastacia gets out a notebook and she flips open a couple of pages, and she shows you the diagram of this spell. And this is a spell that she was able to get from Nash in his organization when she was an infiltrator there. And she tells you a little bit about that. But she goes through, and she describes how the rings work and how at kind of their maximum potential, what they're supposed to do is take the strongest power from whatever is in that circle and transfer it to the person in the middle of that triangle. And so you can do three different things at once, and you transfer the strongest ability from those three circles to the middle. And it requires a lot of work and a lot of setup. It requires a large amount of power. And she talks to you a little bit about what she had done to get the abilities she had, and how they required the energy from the ley lines. And that's why she thinks that this was kind of strange because three or four of the marks on her diagram were not in the photos that you took of the rings that were used here. Someone basically made a bastardized version of it. And it seems like it was somehow adapted to basically imprint on these mannequins. And I think that that's the thing that you all discover is that as you are talking with her about this and looking at the photos and looking at her notes, that the changes made are probably why it was going onto a mannequin. Like, it wouldn't be powerful enough to go into a person. It wouldn't have enough magical fuel to imprint on someone who was already magical in some way, or even just had a life energy. And so it was using these as kind of blank sheets of paper, just to throw some stuff on.

Megan: "So are those — the runes that are missing — the power behind it? Or is there something else that is missing from this that makes it so rudimentary?"

Rev: ANASTACIA: You know, some of the things that are missing that I had on mine were the ability to grow it, to send it a further distance. You know, it was doing it a much

smaller scale. The totem wasn't there, which is one of the sacrifices. The energy sacrifice wasn't there. Again, I think it's all the things that make it a strong enough transfer of power to go on to someone like me. You know, and again, this is — as far as I know, this is a magic ritual that either Nash knew or created with the help of Estin. So it could work different ways. This is just the way that I learned it. Maybe all the things that I think are necessary aren't.

Megan: "So was this a test run, if they didn't have enough power or knowledge to do the full thing? Or was this the intent?"

Rev: ANASTACIA: I mean, now that you say that, it does kind of seem like it would be a test to see if it works this way.

Tass: "Huh. Yeah, that's a good thought."

Megan: "But why you? If this can come from any creatures. Like, there's plenty of monsters out there, right?"

Tass: "Yeah. But if they're in a good position to get somebody that they know has power into the mix? I mean, why work harder?"

Megan: "Well, I think luring somebody who has the potential to fuck up your plans is a lot more dangerous than going to find some random creature that has cool powers."

Tass: "I agree with that, with the exception of we don't know their situation. For all we know, they're desperate. We've ... You know, we've gleaned a lot from this and we've done some damage. If they're in a hurry all of a sudden, maybe this is just working smarter, not harder for what they need to do fast. And hell, if they can take out a couple of the IPT's operatives in the meantime, that seems like that's probably a plus for them, too. Just didn't go their way this time."

Rev: ANASTACIA: And whoever it was that was running this, if it wasn't this robot Krampus, just learned a couple of things about me that no one knew before.

Tass: "Oh, shit."

Megan: "Like what?"

Rev: ANASTACIA: Like Nash's organization, they didn't know I could shapeshift. They didn't know I could turn invisible. Now they do.

Megan: "Oh, no."

Rev: ANASTACIA: And imagine if you could grab your enemy, throw him into a makeshift circle, and discover what their strongest ability was.

Tass: "Oof. Mmhmm."

Rev: ANASTACIA: You know, I ... God, I could have been asleep and never even known this was done to me, because it didn't take the power from me. You know, the one that I do, the big one, takes the power. This one just kind of copied it.

Tass: "Then yeah. It is looking way, way, way more like a series of different kinds of tests. How does it work, how can they do it without the big power replication over transference, like ... Yeah, OK. Now we just gotta figure out who."

Megan: "Has that research coming, Jake?"

Jake: [distantly] "Pretty good."

Rev: And as you're having this conversation, the helicopter is filled with an odd silence as the womp, womp, womp of the propellers stops, the engines cut out, and Mother Hen begins to plummet towards the ground.

SFX: OUTRO MUSIC

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