

Castle in the Catacombs (S3, E41)

SFX:

INTRO MUSIC

Rev: So a couple of weeks ago, I got a No Soliciting sign for our front door, because people just kept showing up at random times of the day trying to like sell us windows or new roofing or whatever. But we also have a camera out front, that like goes off when someone approaches?

Jake: Mmhmm.

Rev: So for the last two weeks now, I've watched people come to the door, raise their hand, see the sign, look at the camera, then walk away. Like it makes me feel so good.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: Just like a warm sensation inside of you?

Rev: But like last night at like 3:00 in the morning, I kept getting these notifications that something was at the door. So I opened the app and I look and I don't see anything. I don't see anything. So I go to the front door, I open the door, and there's a duck standing there.

Megan: Oh, my gosh. I was like, please be an animal. Please be an animal. Yes!

Rev: Yeah, it was a duck. And I looked at it and it looked at me, and it just kind of turned and walked away. And then I heard another duck from around the corner. And like it's ...

Megan: [Laughs]

Rev: Its wife, like, peeked around the corner and was like ... [Duck noises] And then they both just walked away. But they kept coming back to our door all night. When I woke up, there were more notifications. So I don't know what they wanted, but I wasn't buying it.

Jake: [Laughs] Yeah, exactly. But there was another duck around the corner and I heard it say, "Well, did you get him?"

Rev: [Laughs]

Jake: And the first duck said, "No. No, he's got No Soliciting sign."

Megan: Well no, they were soliciting, and just unfortunately they couldn't read, so ...

Tass: [Laughs]

Rev: Oh, fair.

Tass: And we watched them pack up their suitcase full of vacuums and leave.

Rev: [Laughs]

Megan: Now you just need to get another sign, just in duck language.

Rev: Or a sign that says, like, Except Cute Animals.

Megan: That's true.

Jake: But then they're just gonna walk in. Like it's gonna be beyond soliciting at that point. You open the door, they're pushing in. They're staying for the week.

Megan: That's all it takes?!

Rev: I think I'm okay with that.

Jake: Yeah, I think so.

Rev: Like if I woke up and there were just ducks sleeping at the foot of my bed? I'd be like, this is what young Rev dreamed of.

Tass: [Laughs]

Megan: Why just young Rev? Like that still sounds like golden. And just to be wake up and — cool, new animal friends.

Rev: Because I never thought about it, I think. Like I had forgotten about this dream until now.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: A dream realized.

So just to let everyone know, we are celebrating our three year anniversary all month long. We have got new merch in the store. We have got some sales going on. We also have some bundles for some of the swag. So you can head over to thecritshowpodcast.com and check out all of the sales we have going on all throughout this month. I think my favorite thing that Nyx has added is there is a shirt now that is the old British Keep Calm and Carry On, and it says Keep Calm and Roll +Cool.

Jake: Nice.

Rev: But it's in that exact same style, and then at the top it's got very stylized d6s. I'm a big fan of that one.

Also, we want to take a moment to thank everyone who joined us on Patreon in the month of April: Gabe Feinberg, Randy Oast, Pete Swan, Jason Hoskins, Dion, Mariko Fujimoto, Corin Lee, Joshua Luginbuhl, Carlos Cisco, ArticPhi, and Nick Petro. So thank you, all of you, for joining us in the month of April. And thank you to everyone who joins us every month. We have got a lot going on over at the Patreon, including the continuation of Tass's Perilous Times game. We're actually just coming up to a season break and getting ready to record a Q&A for the first season. We also have some upgrades to some of the tiers, including the ten dollar tier, which is focused on GMs, which includes a new show that is hosted by Kim called Hold 2, where she takes questions from the Patreon and answers them along with a guest every month.

Again, you can find all of that over at Patreon.com/TheCritshow. Tiers start at just one

dollar, and every tier get you access to the most aggressively welcoming Discord community on the web. And with that, it's time to let the recap roll.

SFX:

OUTRO MUSIC

Rev: You get a sense that this darkness, this fog moving around is a little magical. That it could try to confuse you, make you lost. But I think even more than that, off in the distance, standing about 30 feet high, you see these two large heads, reptilian skin, and no sockets for eyes. The mouth almost opens like the Predator as it breathes, separating in the middle and on the sides. And a long lizard-like tongue droops out and whips in the air, collecting scents.

Jake: So is there like a path ahead of me or anything? Or is this just kind of wilderness, and I see those things in the distance?

Rev: It's hard to say what the surroundings are. It almost seems to shift and change. Like at one point it looks like, you know, you see trees and they're turning to ash, and you turn away and it just becomes that fog again. So as the three of you start making your way across the Shadowveil, you do see the dull blue glow that lets you know the exit is close by. And as you start to sneak towards it, you hear the sound of two children humming. And directly in front of you on the street, out of the shadows appear these two children, very slowly spinning a jump rope, humming to one another. They turn and they look at you and they smile, and you can see that half of their faces are melted down, dripping onto the road.

SFX:

RECAP MUSIC FADES

Rev: The three of you have snuck through the Shadowveil. But out of the shadows in front of you, two small children with a long jump rope between them slowly spinning, have appeared. They've turned in your direction, smiled, as half of their face slowly melts off and drips onto the pavement below.

Megan: Ugh!

Tass: I'm gonna Ammanufacture.

Rev: Roll it.

Tass: That's a nine. So I get 2. "Oh, I didn't like that. That felt weird."

Megan: I'm gonna try and use Telekinesis to wrap them up with the rope.

Rev: You reach out with your telekinesis and you pull the jump rope from one of them. And as soon as you pull it from them, you see that it recoils into their body, like it is part of them.

Megan: Oh, no! Oh, no.

Jake: How far are we from the way out?

Rev: They are standing between you and it, and they're skipping in your direction.

Jake: I am going to run up and try to cleft one of them in twain.

Rev: All right. Roll Hack and Slash.

Jake: Twelve.

Rev: All right. Would you like to do extra damage or not take their harm?

Jake: Hmm. I'm curious what their harm is. I will not take their harm, but I will spend a magic to do some extra damage — to do my d4 extra damage.

Rev: OK.

Jake: Seven harm, one piercing.

Rev: And as you hit them with this, you notice that it doesn't seem to do much to them. Something about the magic seems to not affect them as well. Tass?

Tass: I'm going to take a shot at one.

Rev: OK, roll Volley.

Tass: There we go. Eleven.

Rev: All right. Roll your damage.

Tass: That is twelve damage one, piercing.

Rev: Yeah. You fire off a shot at this one, and the sound of this gunshot echoes through the Shadowveil.

Tass: Mmhmm.

Rev: It takes this hit and it lets out a growl and fades into the shadows, and you can hear the laughter and the skittering start to surround you.

Tass: "Oh, we got a time limit."

Rev: Megan?

Megan: I want to try and reach out into these fools' minds, and see if I can figure out what it is that they're hiding from us. Any advantage that we can get, here.

Rev: Megan, you open up your mind and try to reach out to these creatures inside of the Shadowveil, and you get this horrific backlash of anguish and rage and pain, like someone is just battering you with their nightmares. You take one point of damage, armor-defeating. I'm gonna need you to make a Wisdom roll.

Megan: Six.

Rev: The two of you see Megan put her hands to her head and start screaming as she drops to her knees in the road. In the distance, you see the Demogorgon turning one of its heads in this direction. Jake?

Jake: I think I'm gonna go scoop Megan up and just try to bullrush pass that thing.

Rev: All right. Roll Defy Danger with Dexterity.

Jake: Can I make an argument for Strength? Because I'm just trying to bullrush?

Rev: Sure. I won't accept it, but you can make it.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: Nine.

Rev: All right. So you can pick up Megan and rush past and dive through the barrier. But I think that this thing is gonna get hands on you as you go by. It's gonna reach out and touch you.

Jake: Fair.

Rev: You take six points of damage as this thing reaches out and touches you, and you feel the life essence being pulled out of you, into it. And it fluctuates a little bit and gets larger in mass.

Jake: Ooh.

Rev: And its laughter gets a little deeper.

Jake: Armor-defeating?

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: OK.

Rev: Tass?

Tass: I'm gonna take a shot at this one.

Rev: OK.

Tass: Hell yeah. That is a twelve.

Rev: All right. Roll your damage.

Tass: And I'm going to spend an ammo to stagger the enemy for a few moments. It's a good thing. That was four damage.

Rev: You fire off the shot, and this child staggers to the ground and starts shifting and convulsing, and you see the shape constantly changing of what they look like. Behind you, as you fire off the second shot, you hear thunderous footsteps moving in your direction.

Tass: I'm sprinting.

Rev: Roll Defy Danger with Dexterity.

Tass: OK. That's a ten.

Rev: Yeah. You are able to sprint past this child laying on the ground and dive through the barrier. As you pass through the barrier, it is that same sensation of falling and vertigo and the energy shifting through you. And you come out on the far side at the drawbridge of a castle. It's a very strange sensation, because you still feel all of that magical energy coursing through you, and you still have these strange, wondrous items. But it looks like the space that you're in is carved out of the tunnel of the mine. And there is this castle sitting in the middle of it.

Tass: "Megan, are you OK?"

Megan: [Pained] "Yeah, I think so. I'm sorry. I should have ... You said it doesn't work on mental stuff. I tried to reach out into its mind. It was just instinct, to see what I could find out. It hurts so bad."

Jake: "I'm sorry. I mean I didn't know about the kids. I thought the shapeshifters might be fair game for stuff."

Megan: "I should have put it together. Oh, thank you. Thank you for getting me out of there. Fuck."

Jake: "No problem. Are you good for the next phase? Because we are here."

Megan: "Yeah. I just —"

Jake: "Do you need a health potion?"

Megan: "No. No, I think I'm OK. I just need to shake it off. Man, this is real fancy, huh? There's a — there's a drawbridge."

Tass: "Yeah, this is actually pretty cool, huh?"

Jake: Are there any, like, defenses awaiting us here? There archers on the walls or anything?

Rev: Roll Discern Realities.

Jake: OK. Nope, five.

Rev: Yeah, you don't notice like archers or anything awaiting you. You do see shadows moving around inside of the few large stone windows that you can see high up, but no one seems to be watching the entrance. But with your ability to still sense what is magical here, the whole castle itself is magical. And I think what is unique about that is, as indicated before, the surrounding area is pretty mundane. Like you feel like this magical castle has been dropped into the mine.

Jake: OK. "I mean, I could teleport up to one of these windows if we see one that looks clear, and then like hook on the grappling hook and toss the rope over to you guys."

Tass: "Yeah, OK."

Megan: "Yeah. If you think you can get a grappling hook up there, maybe it'd be a good way to get a view."

Jake: Yeah. Do I see any windows that seem like they're less than 250 feet away from where we're standing right now?

Rev: Yes.

Jake: OK. And nobody is actively looking out of it?

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I will cut my rift and step up to that window sill.

Rev: Yeah. So you cut a rift in space. Spend 1 of your magic.

Jake: And that is the end of my magic for now.

Rev: And you step out onto this ledge. And the window is made out of large pieces of stained glass, and inside you can see shadows moving around. But there's enough room for you to hook the grappling hook on here as well.

Jake: OK. I'll do that and I'll cast the rope down.

Rev: OK.

Tass: "You want to head up first?"

Megan: "Yep."

Tass: All right.

Rev: I don't think there's a roll here for this. With Jake's help and the help of the rope and the grappling hook, you can both scale up the side here, and get to where Jake is perched on this large window ledge.

Tass: "OK. We don't really have any sort of gauge of which way to go in here, do we?"

Megan: "No. I can reach out and try and see if I can connect with something, someone. See if I can find out what they know. If I mess it up they're gonna know where we are, though."

Tass: "All right."

Megan: Yeah. So I think I just want to try and make a connection.

Rev: All right. Roll Telepathy.

Megan: Ten. In addition to hearing what it's thinking, I learn something useful or interesting about them, or something they know about.

Rev: So what you touch is another of these feral ghoulish minds. And I think that what you learn is that it is getting ready to go to sleep. And it has a place in its mind, like it's headed towards a very specific door. And the door has a smell to it — that's what they recognize. And so I think you learn that there's a whole lot of ghouls asleep behind a door that has a strong odor to it.

Megan: "OK. So I can tell that there's at least one of the ghouls in there, and it's getting ready to go to bed. There's something — like there's a door that like has a smell to it that it like recognizes, and it's trying to go there to go to sleep. So I don't know if, like, that's where they nest up, or what?"

Jake: "OK, so we know that's something to avoid. But we don't know exactly where to go?"

Megan: "No, just that this door has a smell to it. I don't know if that means to them, something they can pick up, or it'll be obvious to us?"

Jake: [Laughs] "Very stinky door." I'm gonna — I'm going to unfurl the arcane map and see where it is pointing me in this world.

Rev: OK. What is your greatest desire?

Jake: Estin. I shouldn't just say Estin. That's gonna lead into some weird fan art, and some questionable fanfictions.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: To find and stop Estin.

Rev: All right. So a image starts to appear on this map. Mark down one use of this map. You've got two left. And so this is what it shows you.

Jake: [Chuckles] And we just and we never mention it. Just, and this is what it shows you, in an audio medium. Here's your visual. OK, so I'm seeing ... I'm seeing two rectangles, what is maybe a staircase and a line that kind of goes around the outside of a floor. And then the other rectangle has what looks like a staircase in the same spot, and just like a spiral. Do I have any indication? Is there any You Are Here star, to tell me where I am currently?

Rev: I think that you would assume that you are at the bottom of the map.

Jake: OK. I point it out to the squad, here. "OK, so it looks like if we go in this window, we go straight a little bit, we dogleg left, and then we kind of hug the outside here until we get to a staircase. And then it seems like that staircase will just either just gonna lead us down or up. I am unclear on that one. But spiral, spiral, spiral until we get to Estin."

Tass: "OK. Left, three rights, spiral."

Megan: "Was this map the best way to get to where we want to go, or is it like the most direct way? Is there a way we can shortcut this?"

Rev: It is just the path to the thing your heart desires the most.

Megan: Hmm.

Rev: Like there is no shortcut of the safest way or the easiest way, or ... It is just the way.

Megan: This is the way.

Rev: And I will say that you notice pretty quickly that it's not like the Marauder's Map in the sense of, you know, there's a ghoul in that room. You don't see a marking for a ghoul.

Jake: Sure, yeah.

Rev: Things like that.

Jake: I'm going to take the moment to recharge my sword. I am fresh out of magic, here.

Rev: OK.

Jake: Eight, so I hold 2.

Tass: I suppose I should Ammufacture as well, if we're about to head in and start some action. Four. So I get 1, and whatever you say.

Rev: Yeah. I think since this is reasonably new to you still, like you've only made ammo within a couple of times. I think this ammo costs you a point of health, because you like pull from your body a little too much.

Tass: [Groans] "Ow ... OK. I really hate that I did this."

Jake: "Me too."

Megan: "Same."

Jake: Do these windows seem like they have any ability to open?

Rev: Yeah. I think you spend a little bit of time investigating them, and you can see that there is a latch, but it's inside.

Jake: OK. I'm gonna kind of peek through the window and then teleport to right where I'm looking, on the other side of the window.

Rev: You can't see through. Like you can only see shadows through the stained glass.

Jake: Oh.

Megan: If I can see that there's a latch on the other side, I'd probably try to use my telekinesis to unlatch it.

Rev: Yeah. Roll it.

Megan: Ten.

Rev: All right. Yeah, you are able to lift the latch and the window slowly swings open.

Megan: I slip inside.

Tass: I'll follow.

Rev: You all step into this small room. And as you do, the door to the front of it has just closed. Inside of this room there are just stacks and stacks of canned food.

Jake: Like from our world looking canned food?

Rev: Yeah. Mmhmm.

Megan: What kind of food?

Rev: Anything you could find in a can. Milk, squids, beans ...

Megan: Stop. Stop listing foods right now, Rev. Oh, no. Oh, man. Now I'm gonna be violently sick. That sounds so bad.

Tass: This one's got pig noses?

Megan: Tass!

Jake: This one's got ... Corn? Is that one OK? [Laughs]

Megan: That's fine.

Rev: OK.

Tass: "OK. Storage room?"

Jake: "I guess they're stockpiling food for something. Who wants to peek the door?" I put my finger to my nose as a "not it" gesture.

Tass: "I'll do it." I'm gonna raise my gun and head to the door and try to crack it gently, lightly, softly.

Rev: OK. Roll Defy Danger with Dexterity.

Tass: Twelve.

Rev: Yeah, no problem. You are able to crack the door. It opens on the left side, and as you crack it open, you can see that there is a ghoul low to the ground just moving away, rounding a corner at the end of this hall.

Tass: Could I assume that's the one that just came from this room?

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: All right. I'll pause there until it has made tracks and is out of view.

Rev: Yeah. You sit for a moment. You hear the sound of sniffing, and then a door opening and closing.

Tass: "OK. I think he's made his way around. I heard sniffing and a door open and close. So if he was looking for something smelly and that's where he's supposed to go, I think that one is just right around the corner here."

Megan: "OK. Are we gonna try to sneak past it, then?"

Tass: "I like that idea, yeah. Unless we want to bust in and try to mess up everything in there before we move on so we don't get pinched."

Megan: "Yeah. We can just continue on around, then. Just try and not make as much noise as we can."

Tass: "All right. Let's roll."

Rev: All right. So the three of you sneak out of this door, and in the hallway directly to your left is another doorway. And then further down the hallway to your left, you can see a set of stairs come up onto the second floor. And then at the end of the hallway, you can see that it turns to the right.

Jake: Just gonna keep creeping along the path that the map shows.

Rev: So yeah, you head down this hallway, past the door, past the stairs, and take that right. And at the end of this hallway on the right is a door, and then directly on the wall to the right is another door.

Jake: So the line leads through a door?

Rev: It does.

Jake: I will try to sneak open the door that our path should go through.

Rev: All right. Roll Defy Danger with Dexterity.

Jake: Eight.

Rev: So you can sneak everybody down this hallway and crack this door open and get into the other side. But there's gonna be a bit of a squeak to it. It's gonna make you too uncomfortable to close it behind you. You're gonna have to file in one by one because the opening is gonna be very slim. Like, you can't open the door all the way safely. Or, the door opening is fairly slim, and so anything non-essential you're going have to like sit down outside of this door to be able to fit through without it making a bunch of noise.

Jake: Do single file, and I'll go first.

Rev: So Jake, you sneak into this room first. And to your right, it's a pretty long hallway that's got a very nice rug running down the center, and it leads up to a set of double doors. And on both sides of the door are sets of large black armor holding maces.

Jake: What's up with that armor? [Laughs] Anything fishy about that armor? Does it look like maybe it's gonna come alive and try to hurt me or anything?

Rev: It doesn't, actually. It looks decorative. You don't believe me, but I promise —

Jake: I super fucking don't!

Megan: [Laughs]

Tass: [Laughs]

Jake: Not remotely. What here is magical?

All: [Laugh]

Rev: But yeah, as you're checking this out, you can roll Discern Realities.

Jake: Eleven.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 3.

Jake: I will start with the freebie. What here is magical?

Rev: You notice that the castle itself is fairly magical. Like, you know, we've had this conversation already that it seems like this is from someplace else and was dropped into the mine. The armor is mundane. It really is just decorative.

Jake: Fuck. I want it, then. Is it my size?

Rev: Sure.

Jake: It's that of my questions? [Laughs]

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: [Laughs]

Jake: What should I be on the lookout for?

Rev: As you are sliding yourself through this door — you know, you have the other to step back so you've got enough room to do it quietly — a breeze from the door right next to this one, before you came into the room, like wafts from underneath it. And it smells of like old dead fish, it's a very strong smell. And so I think with what Megan has said to you previously, that's a strong smelling door.

Jake: OK. What here is useful or valuable to me?

Rev: You get another smell, actually from the door that you're passing through. Like as you're sliding past it. And it smells like flowers and spices. And just for some reason in this moment, compared to the smell of the other door, you get the sense that the ghouls would not want to pass through this door because of the smell.

Jake: What here is not what it appears to be?

Rev: You would assume with these two large pieces of armor and the rug running up to this large double door that it probably goes into like a throne room or some kind of royal chamber. But you can see light coming out from underneath it that reminds you of the lights that you saw when you were in Dungeon World Estin's lab. Like it seems like fire and magical energy and things coming from underneath the door. So you don't think it leads into like a big welcoming chamber.

Jake: All right. I will whisper to the group then, as we get in here. "I think that next room is ... I think it's the lab or, you know, the experiment room, whatever you call where he does his dark deeds. But I also don't think that's where he is right now. So we're gonna have to pass through there, but we should probably be pretty careful. And if we need a place to hide? I don't think ghouls will go through this. I think the smell is too weird for them."

Megan: "What do you mean, too weird?"

Jake: "It's like ... It's like spices and flowers. It's not like dead fish and the kind of shit they like. I think it would kind of maybe overwhelm their senses, or something? So we can just backtrack this way."

Tass: "OK. So we go through. If anything's behind us, they probably don't want to follow. If there's anything ahead of us, if we back through, they don't follow us back. Safe assumption?"

Jake: "I think so."

Tass: "OK."

Jake: Again, I will gently crack open the door in front of us, then.

Rev: So you crack open this set of double doors and peek into this room, and the room is filled with firelight and this purple glow. There's also a green glow coming from around like the side of the door that you can't see. And directly in front of you on the far wall is a large metal container that has green, viscous fluid inside of it. It seems like there's something in there, just sleeping inside the goo.

Megan: Does this look like what I saw in the vision that I had?

Rev: It does. It doesn't look as large as the one that you saw, but it looks like the same kind of container.

Megan: "This is kind of what I saw in the vision that I had — Estin having something in a vat. I don't think it's as big as what I had seen before, but I don't know what this is." Can I try to reach out with my mind and see if I can pick up any thoughts from this thing?

Rev: Yeah, you reach out with your mind and try to connect to whatever this is. And it seems like whatever is in there is pushing away your thoughts.

Megan: "Oh, no. I can't — I can't get in its head."

Tass: "So is this another we sneak past it, situation?"

Megan: "I don't know. It's not just that there's nothing to get into. It's keeping me out."

Tass: "Huh."

Jake: "But this isn't the one you saw?"

Megan: "I don't think so."

Jake: "So this isn't like his main creature. Do we think this is like a backup or a prototype or like a less evolved version?"

Megan: "I think that's too hard to say, without knowing exactly what he's been working on."

Tass: "Yeah, damn it."

Jake: "I mean, we can try to kill it. From what I know of things in kind of vacuum sealed containers full of goo, typically they're not totally sturdy. That's why they're still in there. So maybe we can just try and take this thing out?" Like, is this like technological?

Rev: Yes.

Jake: OK, so is there like a control panel or something around here?

Rev: Yeah. So you all step into the room, and you see that there are two more of these vats in the room — one of them on the far right wall, and then a huge one directly next to the stairs. In the corner of the room, a rune lights up and shatters, and the double doors slam behind you. As this happens, the very large container bursts open. Liquid starts to pour out. And from inside of it steps Trent, the Thunder Lizard. And it looks directly at you, Jake, like it recognizes you.

Jake: "Oh, fuck."

Megan: "Oh my god, what is that?"

Rev: Yeah. In front of you, Megan, is a large four armed, two legged, long-tailed, almost lizard-looking creature. It is about twenty feet tall, and it is just breathing heavily and dragging its claws along the ground, starting to move towards Jake.

Jake: "That's the fucking lizard from my TV fight. And I feel like it remembers that."

Megan: [Gasps] "Oh, yep. OK. Why is it here? I thought you stopped it."

Jake: "I did, but I think we lost track of it."

Rev: As you're all standing here talking.

Jake: [Laughs] Yeah.

Rev: It opens its mouth.

Jake: Oh, no!

Rev: And everybody takes eight points of damage —

Jake: What the fuck?

Rev: As lightning roils out of its mouth as it screams.

Tass: I'm gonna Ammufacture.

Rev: All right. Roll it.

Tass: Oh, boy. Yeah, that's a seven. So I get 2 ammo.

Rev: What is everybody else doing?

Megan: I want to try and attack this thing with my mind and throw it back.

Rev: All right. Roll Mind Thrust.

Megan: Six.

Jake: Can I try to aid by Maximus-ing it, like getting its attention. Like, "Hey ugly, remember me?" And moving around the room to try and draw its focus?

Rev: Sure, roll Aid or Interfere.

Jake: Nine.

Rev: All right Megan, so that gives you a +1. And Jake, you expose yourself to danger.

Jake: I very do, yeah.

Rev: [Laughs]

Megan: Oh boy. OK, well that would put me at a seven then.

Rev: All right. Roll your damage.

Megan: So that's five damage. And then since it's a mixed success, I get to choose one of these. And I'm gonna go with you're mentally drained — take -1 forward to use a psychic power.

Rev: All right, Megan. So you strike out at the Thunder Lizard, and it gets blown backwards about 10 feet. It knocks its back into the stairs, and it crouches down and starts to move forward again. Tass?

Tass: I'm gonna shoot it. And I think I'm going to do ice damage on this.

Rev: All right, roll Volley.

Tass: That is an eight.

Rev: All right. So what's your pick?

Tass: I think I'm gonna reduce my ammo by one.

Rev: OK. Roll your damage.

Tass: That's six damage, and one piercing. And ice.

Rev: Jake?

Jake: I'm gonna rush in to engage in a classic melee with my old nemesis.

Rev: All right. Roll Hack and Slash.

Jake: Fuckin' twelve.

Rev: All right. Would you like to take its hit and do extra damage, or just do your damage?

Jake: I'm gonna do the extra damage.

Rev: OK, roll it.

Jake: All right. So d8 plus a d6. I'm also gonna spend one of my magic to do an additional d4.

Rev: OK.

Jake: I'm gonna try to do a big ol' hit on Trent. Fourteen damage, one piercing. Fire.

Rev: As you charge forward with this flaming sword, you slash it across Trent's belly, and he grabs you with his two lower arms and just screams lightning into your face.

Tass: [Laughs]

Rev: You take eight points of damage, not armor-defeating, as this lightning just pours over you.

Jake: And I think I'm actually gonna spend my second magic to use Aegis, where I can reduce the damage I take by 1d6.

Rev: Oh, nice. Roll it.

Jake: Two.

Rev: Megan?

Megan: I think I'm gonna try to get inside this thing's head.

Rev: You try to reach out. And just like the thing in the other canister, you don't get any sense from him.

Megan: Oh no!

Rev: It's almost like the person who built him knew you existed.

Megan: Oh no! This is bad news.

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: [Chuckles]

Megan: Well then I'm gonna go with what I know does work, and I'm gonna try and push him back again.

Rev: I think this is gonna be Defy Danger with Wisdom, to not hit Jake who is in melee with it.

Megan: Nine.

Rev: All right. So you can hit the Thunder Lizard with this Mind Thrust and avoid Jake, but you're gonna cause some structural damage to the building. Or, you're gonna have to swing wide with this blast — so you're gonna roll 2d6 and take the lesser die. Or, when

Trent staggers backwards, he's gonna knock into one of the other canisters and possibly knock it over.

Megan: I think I'm gonna have to pull back my damage.

Rev: All right. Roll your damage.

Megan: Three.

Rev: Tass?

Tass: I'm gonna keep shooting.

Rev: All right. Roll Defy Danger with Dexterity to avoid Jake, who is in combat with it.

Tass: OK. Nine.

Rev: So I think the same thing. You can avoid Jake, but you're gonna roll your damage and take the lesser, you're gonna run out of ammo, or your shot's gonna knock Trent free of Jake and position him closer to Megan.

Tass: I think I'm really trying to play this safe right now. I would rather use up the ammo.

Rev: OK. Roll your damage.

Tass: Nine. And that was still with my ice. I don't know if it's doing anything, but I'm trying.

Rev: OK. So Tass fires off of this blast of ice at Trent, and it coats his body and he starts moving very slowly. And he lets go of Jake and staggers backwards and falls to the ground.

Tass: "Trent sucks! God!"

Jake: Does he seem dead-dead?

Rev: Roll Discern Realities.

Jake: Four.

Rev: He does. He seems dead-dead.

Megan: Did the size of this vat that he came out of look closer to the one that I had seen?

Rev: Yes.

Megan: "Yeah, I think that was what I had seen in my vision."

Tass: "How the hell does he have this?"

Jake: "I think that's part of what he was doing at IPT. A bunch of the creatures either got killed or they thought got loose when the building dropped. He must have picked it up just earlier today."

Tass: "Good lord. And like, reanimated it or something. That's gross."

Jake: So is it possible to scrutinize the other tanks and see what is in them?

Rev: Sure. You head over to the other tanks and look inside of them ,and you can see that in each one there is a ghoul. And they have different nodes and spikes and claws, like just things coming out of them. It just seems like he has been tinkering, trying to make different types of ghouls again.

Jake: I cannot believe you used the word "nodes" for this.

Tass: [Laughs]

Rev: You can knock on the glass, if you wanna find out what those nodes do.

Jake: I don't!

Megan: [Laughs]

Jake: "These ones are just ghouls. I mean, they're extra weird ghouls, but they're not, like ... He didn't steal them from us, as far as I can tell."

Tass: "OK."

Megan: "Yeah. And all of them, he's doing this thing to them where I can't get in their heads."

Tass: "Shit."

Jake: "Well, if we want to stop them, we've got to keep moving. So what do we do? Do we try to shut down these tanks, see if we can just kind of kill these things by ruining their containment? Or do we leave them alone for now?"

Tass: "I mean, I'm always a fan of not leaving anything behind us. But if ... You know, if we think we really gotta get up there, then I say we press."

Jake: Can I look over, like, the control panels now and see if it seems like there would be any way to, like, just either permanently lock them in, or like ... Like these machines are keeping it alive.

Megan: Life support, kind of ...

Jake: Yeah. If they're in their tubes on life support, is there a way to shut them down?

Rev: Yeah, they're not on life support. Like you definitely think it's just gestating.

Jake: OK. "I mean we're just gonna have two more fights here if we open these up. So I think hopefully we leave them for now."

Tass: "Yeah, OK."

Megan: "Yeah, especially since we don't know what he's done to them. I mean, they definitely don't look like the other ghouls, but they might be able to do something that we've not faced before, so ..."

Tass: "Yeah, I agree. Let's see if we can just get up there and take him out as quick as we can."

Jake: I'm gonna pull out a health potion for me, and just also ask, "How's everybody else doing?"

Megan: "Yeah, I could — I could use one

Tass: "If we got them, same."

Jake: OK.

Rev: So everybody heals ten points.

Jake: I'm still not full.

Tass: I got one bandage left, if you want it.

Jake: I mean it sure can't hurt, yeah.

Tass: Just take a couple of minutes, but yeah.

Jake: OK.

Tass: And I'll bandage him up.

Rev: All right. So you take a couple more minutes to apply this bandage. So Jake, you can heal three more.

Jake: All right. I'm still — I'm still one below, but that's pretty good.

Rev: So inside this lab, you have the one opened canister, Trent's body on the ground, the two closed canisters, and then this large set of stairs that go up.

Megan: Can I look at Trent's body? I want to see if, like, Estin did some, like, science stuff to him to, like, make him be blocked from my mental abilities, or if this is like an external thing that was added on?

Rev: Yeah. Looking at him, you don't see any physical component or anything that's on him.

Megan: OK.

Tass: I'll take the lead and head up the stairs.

Rev: You climb up this set of stone stairs, and it leads you into a pretty plush study. There are large bookshelves all over the wall, a table with a chair, parchments and inks, a couple of books laid open. And there doesn't seem to be an exit out of this room up here.

Tass: "Huh. This is the way the map says, right?"

Jake: "I mean, it must be. This is the only way to go." And I'll hold the map up for him.

Rev: Yeah. And Tass, as Jake holds it up to you, you can see that the "X marks the spot" X is actually kind of moving, like it's uncertain. Then after a moment, it does move over to a wall on your left and it stays there.

Tass: "Over here, over here." And I'm gonna come over to that spot and see what I see.

Rev: Yeah. You notice that there are like half a dozen oddly colored bricks here. Like they fit into the pattern of the room, but it's off just enough that you can see that they don't quite match up with the stone in this room.

Tass: "Oh boy, we got something. I don't know what to do with this. Should I — should I touch it?"

Jake: "Sure."

Tass: "Oh god." I'm gonna touch it.

Rev: And what do you ... Like, what are you thinking? What are you doing while you touch this?

Tass: There's this hope that is just straight out of Age of Ultron, where Tony comes up and is like, "Oh, I sure hope that there's a hidden wall. Yes, there's a hidden wall." And I just have that image of him doing that in my head, as I'm like pressing in on this brick going, "Please, please, please, please open."

Rev: Yeah. So you rest your hand against this, and those bricks slide out of the wall and move in and incase your hand against the wall. And then you feel like warmth against the palm of your hand, and then it releases and slides open.

Tass: "Oh, that was weird. What was that? It was warm and it grabbed me."

Jake: What's beyond it, now that it has opened?

Rev: Inside, you can see that there is a little dark hallway.

Jake: I want to look at Tass's palm. Like hold it out and see if there's anything weird about it or on it.

Rev: It's a little read.

Jake: "What the fuck?"

Tass: "I don't think I want to know. But it worked! It worked."

Jake: Yeah. I'll hold the sword aloft to light our way, and start moving through this hallway.

Rev: OK. So you all head down this little hallway, and it turns to the right after a couple of hundred feet and it opens up into a large room. And inside this room on the floor is a huge painting. The painting consists of three large circles — a large one, a smaller one, an even smaller one. And then there is an arrow, almost like fired from a bow. And then it shows a large fire, maybe ten feet away from the tip of the arrow. And you can see that

the way that it's painted, all of the colors carry through the circle. So the first circle is like a light blue, and the second circle is a deep blue. And the swirls that go through carry that lighter color into the next one. And then into the one that is kind of gray, the dark blue and the light blue carry through, and then they go into the arrow. And it's depicted in a way where, like, it spirals. That paint gets really tight. And it comes out the tip of the arrow in a gold paint. And that's what that fire is.

Tass: "Whoa."

Megan: "OK, that's pretty."

Tass: "It is. What does it mean? Like, is this maybe like synonymous with the worlds we went through? Kind of a lighter blue — kind of ice type stuff. This deeper blue — ocean. It goes into this sort of gray — like the shadowy thing we went to."

Megan: "Yeah. I mean, the sizes line up. Each world we went through was smaller and smaller."

Tass: "OK. So last one is boom, fire, we've made the thing. Right?"

Jake: "Yeah, I guess."

Megan: I want to reach out and see if I can tell if Estin's here.

Rev: Yeah. You reach out again, you don't get any sense.

Megan: And it's no sense of anything. It's not ... Like I don't feel that push back that I felt from the things in the vats, right?

Rev: Correct. Yeah. You feel almost ... You know what? I will say this. You feel almost a deadness. Like instead of nothing, you feel void.

Megan: "I can't sense him."

Jake: "Well, we know he's here, so we just got to keep truckin'." Can I, like, scrutinize this painting? Is there anything funky about it?

Rev: Yeah. Roll Discern Realities.

Jake: Eight.

Rev: You get a hold 1.

Jake: First of all, what here is magical?

Rev: Yeah. Inside of this room, the wall directly in front of where this flame is painted is magical.

Jake: What here is not what it appears to be?

Rev: So you have spent some time studying the spell that Nash had created that channels the energy into the center circle. You're able to look at this painting and realize it is a blueprint for a bastardized version of that. That it is not as complex and powerful, so it probably does not have the same world-spanning effect. It seems like it is just harnessing and pushing the energy of the Chosen. So instead of doing the transference that Nash's spell does, this just does the single transference of one thing.

Jake: So it's like a ... It's like magnifying glasses.

Rev: Yes.

Jake: OK.

Rev: And you can see that it magnifies power, and that it needs a focus and then a target.

Jake: "I think it basically means that, like, it's that transfer energy spell, except it's single target, but more intense for that single target. You know? It's like a sun ray going through one magnifying glass, into a more focused one, into a more focused one, into a target. So if he's just trying to do Chosen energy, I think this is basically a way to like hyper beam that Chosen energy into its thing." And I'll walk over to that wall and see if I can figure out — because is there any other exit out of this room?

Rev: There isn't.

Jake: Then I'll try and suss out what sort of exit that magic wall is.

Rev: Yeah. I think you walk over to that wall and you put your hand against it, and your hand just goes through

Jake: "This wall ain't real. Let's go."

Tass: "Nice."

Megan: "OK."

Rev: Yeah. And so with the knowledge that this wall is not real, the two of you do not have any issue passing through behind Jake. As you step into this other room, the first thing you see in front of you is a floating orb of energy. And then a second, and a third. These orbs of energy are floating inside of a summoning circle. There is a ring on the floor. And floating at the very end of the smallest orb of energy is Tass's spear. And you can see that this energy is coming from one sphere, to the other, to the other, and passing into the sphere. At the other end of the room, you see one of those giant crystals. You've seen one before at Strohm's place. You also know it's a type of crystal that Chosen souls were trapped in. And Estin is standing in front of that gem with his back to it, facing the spear with his arms open, as if he's waiting to get hit with energy. And again, this is all inside of a large summoning circle. So you can see a little bit of energy rippling around the outside of it, which is what Megan probably assumes is why she can't reach his mind.

Megan: Yeah, if he looks like he's waiting to get hit by this energy, and we know that this is all about focusing in on someone. I know, I can't reach him telepathically, but I'm gonna do the only thing that's worked for me here, and I'm gonna try to thrust him out of where he's standing.

Rev: All right. Roll Mind Thrust.

Megan: Five.

Tass: Oh ...

Rev: Yeah. You go to push against this energy barrier, and it does not have any effect. You can feel that your force of will bounces off of this magic shield, and kind of buffers back at all of you. But when it hits, you see his eyes open, and he turns and he looks at the three of you.

Rev: ESTIN: Oh. Good, good. I wasn't sure if I would have an audience for my ascension. How fitting it will be all of you. [Giggles]

Rev: And the spear starts to radiate light, as the energy from the three orbs pulses into it.

Jake: I'm gonna — I'm gonna try to rush him. Like I don't know if it's gonna stop me from getting through the circle physically, but I'm gonna go for it.

Rev: All right. Roll Defy Danger. What do you think this would be with? You can choose once you hit it, which way you want to try to resist it — physically or mentally.

Jake: Physically.

Rev: OK. So Roll Defy Danger with Strength.

Jake: Eleven.

Rev: All right. So you are able to push through this barrier, and you knock into him, pushing him out of the way. As you push him out of the way, you see that the spear has finished lighting up, and it fires.

SFX: BEAM FIRES

Rev: But there is no one there to catch it. And it hits the crystal. And Megan and Tass, for a brief moment, you can see the silhouette of someone inside the crystal as it lights up. The crystal pulses with this influx of power, and then explodes.

SFX: EXPLOSION

Rev: Your world is filled with blinding light and extreme pressure, as you're all thrown backwards from the force of this magical backlash. After a moment, your heads clear and you can see a form made out of radiant light, standing where the crystal was moments before. It turns and it looks at you, Tass, but then it raises a glowing hand and examines it. And then it slowly turns and looks at the spear, floating at the center of the circle. It takes a slow step forward, and then gently reaches out and touches it. At this touch, the light making up the body starts to shift and flux, forming clothing and hair. And as all of these details take shape, color starts spreading through the figure.

Tass: "Wait, who are you?"

Rev: Their hand closes around the spear, and a final ripple of energy flows over them and into the spear, which pulses once and then goes silent. The woman holding it turns and smiles down at you.

Rev: LANA KING: My name is Lana King, and I'm so happy to meet you.

SFX: OUTRO MUSIC

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