

Wizard's Duel (S4, E8)

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Rev: So hi, everybody. We're recording this week's intro from a very special location: Gen Con!

Tass: Oh!

Rev: We're at Gen Con!

Jake: Woo!

Rev: Hi!

Megan: Yeah!

Gen Con Audience: [Cheers, applauds]

Rev: So before we get into this week's episode, there's a couple of things that I want to talk about. I've got some stuff sitting in front of me. And the first is a gift from Critical Dice. If you see the blue shirts you all have, this was a gift from The Critical Dice. And I am very excited to say — first, let's show this off. They made an Indiana Paranormal Task Force shirt.

Jake: Oh!

Rev: And they took the logo of the IPT and made it very Cthulhu-esque. And I am very excited to say — we won't say what it is right this moment, but we are going to team up with The Critical Dice to make a little something for everybody. So the other thing we've got: we got a message the other day from the Demise Dice Company, asking us what our favorite colors were. And they sent us dice. So we're gonna open these dice ...

Gen Con Audience: [Laughs]

Megan: Tass just made a face, didn't he?

Tass: I mean, I assumed, but I didn't know for sure.

Rev: [Laughs] So we've all got a little baggie with our name on them. They come in this little bag that's got ... The logo's very good. It's a skull, but the center of it is carved out so that the back of the head makes a D.

Tass: If you don't stop talking and let me open this ...

Jake: Yeah, let him open the bag.

Kim: Please!

Rev: I'm like the dad at Christmas. Like no — first, we're gonna have breakfast. And then we're gonna go to church ...

Jake: Then we're gonna do stockings. There's never anything good in stockings!

Gen Con Audience: [Laughs]

Megan: They're so pretty!

Rev: All right, everybody —

Kim: Tass is about to pass out.

Rev: Yeah. Oh, Meghan's already seen hers.

Jake: She cheated. She cheated!

Megan: I couldn't wait!

Jake: [Gasps]

Tass: Come on ...

Jake: Oh!

Rev: Holy crap.

Tass: Oh my god! I have tears in my eyes. I'm not kidding.

Gen Con Audience: [Laughs]

Rev: OK, so while everybody opens those, I asked them after they sent us this gift to send me like their information. This is from Demise Dice: "Exploring the worlds can be dangerous, especially if you don't have the right tools. We at Demise Dice Co are proud to supply you with the finest tools of the trade. Each set of dice is made with the steady hand of a master craftsman, as all arms and armor should be. Stop by our shop or order our premium line, or commission your own dice so you can roll your own demise." That's a solid tagline, too.

Jake: Mine look delicious.

Megan: Yeah, these look like fruit gushers.

Jake: I don't know what I'm gonna do about it, but it's probably put them in my mouth.

All: [Laugh]

Kim: The 20 on the d20 and 6 on the d6 are little skulls. Look at them!

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I spit it out already. You missed it. But it did drop perfectly on its pedestal.

Megan: I fully expected you to sit here with your fist over your mouth, and there was still a die inside your mouth and you were trying to hide it from everyone.

Rev: Just quiet —

Gen Con Audience: [Laughs]

Rev: Just quiet crunching sounds.

Megan: [Laughs]

Rev: So I think that is all ...

Jake: That was a six!

Gen Con Audience: [Cheers]

Kim: Did someone get a picture of that?

Jake: [Laughs]

Kim: Please tag @TheCritshow on Twitter, thank you.

Jake: They're sort of like an eldritch phenomenon that you can't actually get a photo of it. It's weird.

Rev: All right. Well, I think with that, what time is it?

Gen Con Audience: Time to let the recap roll!

SFX: RECAP MUSIC

Jake: "We've got another associate with us who would like to be involved in the meeting."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Uh-huh.

Jake: "I understand that the two of you have a history. She's on our side. Is a Strohm affiliate ..."

Rev: DAMEIN O'DOYLE: Oh, fucking Kim?

Jake: "Yeah, man."

SFX: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Oh god ... Are you — wow. Why? How did you end up ...

Jake: "We —"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: She tried to banish me!

Jake: "I heard, yeah. But you're — but you're squirrely, ain't you? She didn't get you. We came ... When we arrived here, she foretold that and was there to help get us up to speed and help us along, and everything. She's been very, very cool so far."

Megan: "Yeah. She worked with James to, like, set all of this up. Like identities and like — so we can get around here without anybody knowing."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: All right, fine. But! But. I've heard stories of the readings that she can do. She has to do one for me.

Kim: "So. They told me that you would like a reading?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: I would.

Kim: "Is there anything in particular that you would like to know the answer to?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: I want to know, a hundred years ago, where is the other piece of energy that I need?

Kim: "OK." My eyes go white, and I would like to use I, All-Seeing.

Rev: You ask this question into the open air, and you get a very quick and simple answer. The final type of energy, it doesn't exist. That gem has been altered, tampered with. It's built to look like a specific form of energy will unlock it, but the truth is that it's actually a magical lock — one that only Strohm can open.

Rev: RECAP MUSIC FADES

Rev: Kim, you are sitting in a booth at Stead 'n Shake, across from Damien. You have just asked the question that he wants the answer to: where is the final type of energy he needs to unlock the final crystal? And you have been fed the answer that the crystal doesn't work that way. It's actually a magical lock that has been altered to look like it is a magical crystal that will unlock with another kind of magic. What are you doing?

Kim: I flip over a card, and it's completely covered in dark black ink. And below it is written The Void. And I look up at Damien. "That's interesting. The energy isn't anywhere."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: What do you mean, it's not anywhere?

Kim: "There is no additional piece, but you do need someone else's help to accomplish what you're trying to do."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Oh. Who?

Kim: My hand lingers over the deck of tarot cards, and I know that the card on the other side is going to be the Queen of Swords, which is one of my indicators for Strohm. And I don't turn it over. "I'm sorry, that wasn't clear." And as I'm talking, my eyes are bloodshot and I'm starting to get a nosebleed. "These visions take a lot out of me. Maybe we could try again on another day and get the identity of that person, but I'm a little tapped out right now."

Rev: All right. I think this is going to be a Mislead, Distract, or Trick.

Kim: OK.

Rev: When you try to mislead, distract or trick someone, roll with Mind. On a hit, they are fooled, at least for a moment. On a 10+, pick three. On a 7 to 9, pick two.

Kim: Eleven.

Rev: So your options are you create an opportunity, you expose a weakness or flaw, you confuse them for some time, you avoid further entanglement.

Kim: I think definitely I confuse them for some time.

Rev: Mmhmm.

Kim: I create an opportunity. Probably in-character, as much as Kim the player loves Damien, Kim the character would love to avoid further entanglement.

Rev: So as Damien looks down at your deck of cards, you can see that this isn't quite adding up to him, but not in a way that is connected to what you have said to him. But just that information he has gathered over a very long time doesn't seem to match up. And he leans back.

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah, don't ... Don't strain yourself on my account. We'll, uh ... Maybe we'll try again later.

Kim: "Yeah, OK. Sorry about that."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah, I appreciate the effort.

Rev: And Kim, I think you're going to mark Corruption because I believe your playbook, you mark Corruption if you lie about the details of a prophecy you've given.

Kim: That is correct.

Rev: [Chuckles] And with that, Damien motions for the other three of you to join them at the booth.

Megan: Yeah, I'll slide in.

Jake: Same. [Laughs] On the same side. Just cram everybody in on one side.

Rev: All four of you on one side.

Tass: "Kim, you doing OK?"

Kim: "Uh, yeah ..."

Megan: I hand her some napkins. "Your nose, just a little bit."

Kim: "Thank you. Yeah, fate is an interesting thing. It's one thing to just get spontaneous visions about a situation or general predictions of someone's future. But if you start trying to fish for something specific, it doesn't always work out very well. I've known a few oracles that have died from asking too many specifics too quickly."

Tass: "Yeah, fair. Wow, we should talk about that at some point. I don't know how much this lines up, but I used to get visions, and got pretty good at like kind of narrowing down what they mean. They were the very general kind. Like out of nowhere — I wasn't looking for anything, necessarily. But when I did get them, I got pretty good at funneling to what exactly it meant."

Kim: "I mean, I would happily accept any help. That would be great."

Tass: "Yeah, we'll talk."

Kim: "OK."

Rev: So as you all sit down, Jake, I think that you mark a debt from Kim. Because you know that this is a very bad rivalry between her and Damien, and you have quelched it for the moment.

Jake: All right. "So you ... You good? Did you get something helpful?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Kind of. Kim tells me that the other type of energy I need isn't actually an energy, that I need someone's help to unlock the final crystal.

Tass: "Oh."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah. So anyway ... You. You needed something for me.

Jake: "I do. Yeah. Word on the street is that you could maybe tell me the location of the secret item that Clan Ozymandias holds."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Oh yeah, I suppose I could share that information. But what are you going to do to balance the scales?

Jake: "Uh ... Lunch is on me?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: No, it's not quite how it works.

Jake: "I know. Do you have anything in mind?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Well, you're asking for the location of one of these items. Do you happen to know the location of another one that I don't?

Jake: "We figured out where Tranquil Silence keeps theirs."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Oh. All right. Well, I think that's a pretty adequate exchange.

Rev: And he holds out a hand.

Jake: I take it. In the moment of this handshake. there isn't words exchanged, but you feel a little bit of energy pass between the two of you. And you feel that your knowledge of the location of Tranquil Silence flows into him as the location of Clan Ozymandias flows into you. And you know that Clan Ozymandias's is kept inside of the Carbide and Carbon building. Up at the very top of there is a dome, and it is inside of that dome at the top of the building.

Kim: I look at Damien. "What are you going to do with that information?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Oh, who knows? Trade it. Keep it. Hide it.

Kim: "Are you like the three of them? Are you all trying to do the same thing here?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Uh ... I don't really have a task right now, other than to serve the good lady. My contract with them is complete.

Kim: "OK."

Megan: "Hey I have a question, Damien."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah.

Megan: "So speaking of our deal. In all of this time that has passed, did you ever have to interfere?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Oh, yeah.

Megan: "Like what happened?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Gosh. I mean, what do you want to know? Like, a lot happened.

Megan: "How close did they get?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Fairly close, especially right off the bat. Like as soon as it was thought that you all went off on some big mission then kicked the bucket, it really kind of energized everybody to make a real hard push. And I had to trip a couple of people up with pieces of false information and bad locations. It was really tricky, not getting caught.

Megan: "Wow. Thanks. That sounds really complicated, actually."

Tass: "Best man for the job, though."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Ayy.

Megan: [Laughs]

Jake: "All right. So it's in that dome at the top of the Carbide and Carbon building. So does anybody know anything detailed about that building? Or are we just gonna have to do some recon to figure out how to handle it? I mean, I guess it's probably not really our next step anyway. But ..."

Tass: "Yeah, I think we got a lot to do there. I mean, we don't even know who's running that, do we?"

Jake: "No."

Tass: "All right. So information acquired, we'll go from there. I think we have more pressing things."

Jake: "I wonder ... I mean, it kind of seems like there's just a trend here of, you know, the items being in the HQs. So I wonder if we can kind of lean on that as we go along. As we find out The Lost One's base, maybe we just assume or operate under the idea that it's there. Because, you know, Monarchs are keeping it at their HQ, Tranquil Silence is evidently keeping it at theirs. Everybody seems to keep it pretty close to home."

Megan: "I think that makes sense with Power and Night, but I don't know if we can even guess what to expect when it comes to like the Court of the Silver Wing and The Lost Ones. That feels a little more otherworldly. Which sounds weird to say in like Monster Chicago, but I feel like if anywhere is going to be not kept on the premises, it would be there."

Kim: "Well, Borbauk owes me a favor. So maybe at some point, Megan, you can make those ... What was it?"

Megan: "OK, so they're like chocolate chip cookies, but I put rosemary and sea salt and then cayenne pepper in them. They're so good."

Kim: "That sounds delicious. So maybe at some point you could make those and then you and I could deliver them, and I'm pretty sure I could get Borbauk to arrange a meeting with the leader of The Lost Ones, if we think that would help."

Megan: "Yeah, that sounds great. If you could get him to set up a meeting. Because as far as I was able to gather from our conversation, that's the only way we're getting there."

Kim: "Oh yeah, but I think there are probably a few other irons in the fire that we should take care of first before we start on that one."

Tass: "Which ... No offense, Damien, we've already had this conversation. We shouldn't talk too much more about, because as he is still in the hierarchy, he can be compelled to give up the information he knows. So we should probably talk about that elsewhere."

Megan: "Oh, right. Right, right, right. That makes sense."

Jake: "Man, speaking of Borbauk, I can't get close to that dude again or else he's literally going to sniff me out. But to that end, I do need to make good with Zui, sooner than later."

Kim: "Yeah, absolutely."

Megan: "OK, so what's on the list to do next? Well ..." [Laughs] "Are we going to just keep talking in front of Damien, or what?"

Kim: "Do we want to talk in the car?"

Jake: "Yeah, yeah."

Megan: "OK. Well, OK. "Let's leave and go somewhere. We can talk about things."

Jake: "You enjoy your food."

Tass: "Lunch is on me."

Jake: "I said — oh no, wait. Oh yeah, because he didn't accept that. So yeah, lunch definitely isn't on me. Lunch is on Raguei." Wink. "Let's just go talk in the car, because we don't know what we're about to go."

Kim: "I'm gathering my cards back up and putting them in my pocket, and I want to look at Damien. "Thank you for not killing me."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: "Yeah, no problem."

Kim: "I walk very quickly out of the Steak 'n Shake."

Rev: [Laughs]

Jake: Yep, head back out to the car.

Megan: "See you later."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: See ya.

Tass: "Well, that was relatively painless."

Jake: "Yeah."

Megan: "So what is next on the list?"

Jake: "I feel like me having a chat with Zui could go pretty quickly. Like that's — you know, that's an hour, probably. Knock that out over coffee. And then should we try and get into the archives at the Ley Line HQ?"

Kim: "That seems to be our strongest lead right now."

Tass: "Yeah, I agree. I mean, if there's any chance that we make a wrong step in our own organization, you know, we don't want to burn those bridges. So, we're close. We might as well snag them, right?"

Jake: "Yeah. And I mean, you know, the good one on this is that at least I'm in good with Lore Merchant. So, you know, he kind of owes me. That'll help us a little bit."

Tass: "Nice."

Jake: "I've got a thought about how maybe I can get James in here. Other than James, Kim, is blending magic and technology like kind of an extant concept here? Is technomancy a thing here?"

Kim: "Not really. I haven't really been into the Rookery, but as far as I can tell, magic and technology traditionally do not mix well."

Jake: "OK. See, I think that maybe then I could swing this as like an esteemed guest of The Order of the Ley Line. That like we've got this practitioner who's starting to dabble in this new form? And that, you know, he might benefit from something in the archives. I might be able to swing that, to bring him in without like having to sneak him in."

Megan: "Like take him on a tour?"

Jake: "Yeah, something along those lines."

Kim: "Is he going to be safe?"

Jake: "How so?"

Kim: "I don't know. I just ... Bringing James into that building. Are you going to use a different name for him? Or are you going to be with him at all times? I just — I don't want anything to happen to him."

Jake: "Oh, I mean, I imagine that, yeah, one, we'd give him a different name. And two, I can't imagine they'd let him down there without me accompanying him — if they'll let either of us down there. I don't intend to, like, send him off on his own with a stranger or anything like that. I'll make sure I stick with him and cover his back."

Tass: "Hell, we can maybe even spin some of us coming along as like his just hired protection, or something like that."

Jake: "Yeah, we'll see what we can get away with. So should I reach out to Zui first here? Get this taken care of?"

Kim: "I think that's probably wise."

Jake: "All right. Well, I guess I'll just head to the lily pool and see if they're there. And if not, wait a little bit. Do we think it's a good idea for anybody to come with me on that one? As long as this stays a conversation, I feel like it's best to be alone. But as soon as it's not a conversation, it's very bad for me to be alone." Do I know, like, what the kind of layout is there? Like is there a place that they could kind of hide, waiting in the wings, to be back up? Or is that something I could figure out before I head over there?

Rev: You could Google it.

Jake: OK.

Kim: [Laughs] Google's still a thing here!

Jake: It's just got extra Os.

Rev: [Laughs] It's Boooooogle. It's run by ghosts.

All: [Laugh]

Megan: Yes! I am. So here for Monster Chicago just being Halloween-themed all the time.

Rev: Tranquil Silence runs Google.

Jake: They bought Google.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: God, that's so good.

Jake: Or, the person who owns Google died, and just stayed a ghost and is still in charge.

Megan: This is just Halloweentown. This is so good.

Jake: Yeah, I want to ... I want to do a little bit of research to figure out if there's a way that I can have them kind of out of the way, but not too far, in case things turn really sour.

Rev: So when you get out your smartphone and you look up the lily pond at Lincoln Park, you can see that there is a lot of trees there, and almost like a series of docks that stick out that go out over this pond filled with lilies. And you imagine that that dock is probably

where he waits. So there is a huge wooded area, really all around it, if people were trying to hide off of the path that you walk to get there.

Jake: Cool. Ok, yeah. I'll just kind of point that out to everybody. "So yeah, if you guys can just kind of post up somewhere in this stuff, where you can, you know, at least hear what's going on or hear if I call out, that'd be great. I'd feel a lot better."

Tass: "Sure."

Megan: "Yeah."

Kim: "I think we'll have a pretty good idea if things are going south."

Jake: "Yeah, I can definitely see a reality where things start out very south, and then I'm kind of able to turn him around. And it's that second going south that I'm really worried about."

Kim: "Yeah, like the huge fuck off sword. If that — if that ... Yeah."

Jake: "Yeah. Real worried about if that gets employed."

Kim: "Yeah."

Megan: "Do you want to have like a code word or something, to where if you think you can't turn it around and you need our help? Like you just said — if things start to go south but you can turn it around? Like we probably shouldn't jump in at the first sign of things going south then, right?"

Jake: "Yeah, let's go with avocado."

All: [Laugh]

Kim: That's the only safe word in The Critshow universe.

Jake: Which makes it really not great.

Kim: Yeah, not great.

Jake: "If you hear me say avocado, then it's trouble and I want your help."

Tass: "Ok."

Kim: "OK."

Jake: OK. I'll drive us all to Lincoln Park and kind of stop at a range that they can fan out and take positions, and I can approach where I think Zui will be.

Rev: So as you walk down the path towards the lily pond at Lincoln Park, Kim and Megan and Tass go off of the beaten path as you continue on towards the dock that leads out over the water. And as it comes into view, you can see that Zui is standing there, looking out over the water. They have their sword leaning up against the railing, and they are just admiring the sun in the sky.

Jake: I want to take a moment to Channel here, just in case things go wrong and I need a quick out.

Rev: OK.

Jake: Thirteen.

Rev: All right. And as you draw that magic in, you see that Zui turns around and looks at you.

Jake: "Hey."

Rev: His eyes narrow.

Rev: ZUI: Hello.

Jake: "I — I come in peace."

Rev: ZUI: I can sense that, by you drawing in magic from behind.

Jake: "I'm ... Look, I do come in peace."

Rev: ZUI: Mmhmm.

Jake: "But, you know, you're not happy with me. And I just — in case things do turn bad, I want to ... Look man, I want to be able to get away, OK? I don't want to die at your hand."

Rev: ZUI: Oh, I'm not happy with you? Why wouldn't I be happy with you?

Jake: "Because I cheated. There it is, plain and simple. And I'm sorry about that. It has weighed on me the whole time. I've made a lot of bad choices in my life, Zui, and I'm not proud of a lot of them. And some of them, there's nothing I can ever do anything about again. But you deserve better. I know you've been holding on to this, and that's my fault. I don't want to poison you like this. I cheated, and I shouldn't have, and I hope you can forgive me."

Rev: I don't think there's a roll here.

Kim: [Chuckles]

Rev: He listens to you as you talk, and his hard eyes become a little softer and the grimace on his face softens a little bit.

Rev: ZUI: I see. Well, I will accept your apology, on one condition.

Jake: "Name it."

Rev: ZUI: Rematch!

Jake: [Laughs]

Kim: Yes!

Megan: [Laughs]

Tass: From off to the side, he hears, "Hell yeah. Do it!"

Rev: ZUI: Oh, perfect. I hear someone out there. We must have witnesses.

Megan: I step out. "Did somebody say rematch?"

Jake: [Laughs] They just start appearing from the fucking trees.

Kim: From the trees!

Jake: Rematch? Rematch? Rematch?

Megan: Fight? Is gonna be a fight here?

Jake: Uh ... "Yeah, absolutely. I think — I think that's more than fair."

Rev: ZUI: Very well. What would you like the terms to be? Would you like a rematch in the magical arts the way we dueled before? Would you prefer fisticuffs? Would you prefer acts of daring? What would you prefer for this rematch to be in?

Jake: "Uh ... Goldeneye, slappers only, no Oddjob."

Megan: [Laughs]

Rev: ZUI: Avocado.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: ZUI: I don't know exactly what that is, but it seems like I need to say my safe word.

Jake: Oh, god. It seems like I need to say the universal safe word.

Kim: [Laughs].

Jake: "I mean, if it's gonna be a rematch, I think it should be on the same terms. Magic arts."

Rev: ZUI: Very well. As you have apologized, I will grant you the boon of going first.

Jake: And what were the terms of our last one? What was the goal?

Rev: It was to do like the most ... I don't know if — like the largest or the longest running piece of magic. Just kind of the most baller thing you could do.

Jake: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

Kim: [Laughs] Just the sickest magic.

Rev: Yeah, you're just stunting, with magic.

Jake: OK. And Zui carries this big sword, right?

Rev: Yes.

Jake: Is it inherently magical?

Rev: Yes.

Jake: All right. I think I want to Let it Out. I want to try to invoke one of my Let it Out effects.

Rev: All right, roll Let it Out.

Jake: That is a nine.

Tass: I assume I can't help in this duel. That's probably cheating.

Rev: Correct. Yeah. I mean, you could help. It just is a matter of if Zui will notice

Tass: Ah, fair. I will not do that.

Rev: All right. So what of your powers are you activating?

Jake: I want to reshape the essence or nature of an exposed object or magical spell again. I want to change Zui's weapon into something even more rad. I want to just literally re-sculpt the sword in their hands into what looks like Frostmourne from World of Warcraft. Like just an even more bad ass, bigger, cooler sword that's got like AoE effects shimmering off of it. Like just visibly sick.

Kim: [Laughs]

Rev: All right, so mark Corruption, and I will let you know how it's going to be costly, limited, or unstable. I think it's gonna be costly. Because to keep this up — that expenditure of magic that's coming off of the sword — if you Channel magic again, the most you can ever get is two while you're in this duel. Because you're always gonna have to pump one into keeping that going. It's gonna be limited in that if you try to do something else, this effect will end. Or it's going to be unstable: the frost magic coming off of it is not an illusion. Like it's actually going to start frosting things over that it is near.

Jake: I will take the last option, that the frost is real.

Rev: So Zui sees this happen. His sword turns into the sword from World of Warcraft and starts blasting off these shimmers of frost magic. And he takes the sword and he examines it for a moment, and he turns and he throws it onto the water. And as it hits the water, you can see that it turns to ice and it skips. And in the blink of an eye, he is standing on it, riding it like a surfboard.

Jake: [Laughs]

Megan: That's so rad.

Kim: This dude is the sickest NPC we've met yet.

Megan: He wins. He doesn't have to go.

Rev: [Laughs]

Kim: Yeah.

Megan: He doesn't have to take his turn. He wins.

Rev: This is his turn.

Megan: [Laughs]

Jake: I'm gonna spend one of my hold from Channeling.

Rev: OK.

Jake: To teleport myself a short distance within a scene.

Megan: [Laughs]

Jake: [Laughs] And I'm hanging ten on the front of the sword he's currently riding.

Rev: OK, I think this is gonna be Keep Your Cool. So I assume what you want to do is not fall into the water.

Jake: Yeah, I wanna be ... I wanna be doing an even cooler maneuver.

Rev: OK. All right. So yeah, roll with Spirit.

Jake: Nine.

Kim: I pull out my phone and I start recording this.

Rev: So I think what it's gonna cost you: it's gonna cost you one of your magical hold. That to kind of keep your balance, I imagine you Channeling a little bit of wind out of your hands to kind of secure yourself properly.

Jake: I'll just kind of turn around and like cross my arms, give them like a, 'What's up? I can do a cooler version of this' look.

Rev: He lifts his foot and smiles at you and brings it down. And as his foot hits the sword, it splits into two, and you both go different directions around the pond.

Jake: [Chuckles] OK. I want to wait until that piece that he sent me off on is like about to collide with something. And then I want to manipulate the wind to create a tornado under me — like Red Tornado style. That I am just flying over this pond, like 15 feet up, suspended on the air. I'm out of my Channeled energy for the moment.

Rev: He turns his sword surfboard in your direction, and again, he raises that right foot and he kicks the pommel of the sword. And as he does, more of that ice magic comes off of the front and makes a little ramp, and he flips over you.

Jake: [Chuckles]

Kim: This is so tight.

Jake: I think I need to Channel some more, to have the magic to continue.

Rev: All right.

Jake: Six.

Rev: All right. So you have one point of magic, but you cannot Channel again in this scene, unfortunately.

Jake: Well, I think one way or another, I'm about to try to end this.

Rev: OK.

Jake: So as he is about to come back down onto the water, like out of this cool jump. Right as the nose of his blade board touches the water, I just want to freeze that spot. So it just wedges that board in place. And he's still got his forward momentum, and hopefully he just goes ass over teakettle into the water.

Rev: All right. I think this is gonna be Mismatch, Distract, or Trick. So roll with Mind.

Jake: OK. Ten.

Rev: All right. So you get to pick three.

Jake: I will create an opportunity, I will avoid further entanglement, and I will expose a weakness or flaw.

Rev: All right. So as Zui's half sword board lands on the water, you freeze it with the tip in the water, and he goes tumbling off of it, hits the ice, and then splashes into the water just a little distance ahead. And he pops up out of the water, and he's laughing. As he comes up out of the water, you notice that his flight is much more difficult than any other time you have seen him fly, with his wings wet.

Jake: OK.

Rev: But he lands on the dock. And he holds out his hand and both halves of the sword fly back to him and recombine, and he sets it down on the dock again. And he holds his hand out.

Jake: Lower myself back down onto the dock and shake his hand.

Rev: ZUI: Very well done.

Jake: "You as well."

Rev: ZUI: So, it seems that things between us are rebalanced.

Jake: "I'm glad to hear that."

Rev: ZUI: As am I.

Jake: "I don't even really know what we were doing, man. You're ... You're a good guy, and a skilled practitioner. You know, I'm sorry. This was a dumb thing."

Rev: ZUI: I appreciate that.

Jake: "Well, I got stuff to do. I just wanted to make good, so Good luck, man, in your post. I hope it's uneventful."

Rev: ZUI: Yes. A word to the wise: the license plate on your car, perhaps replace it. I put out a call to a number of people to track that vehicle down.

Jake: "Uh ... What sort of people? And what did you ask them to do once they found it?"

Rev: ZUI: To bring its driver to me.

Jake: "All right. Well ..." I look at my watch. I'm like, "God, wait times at the DMV are gonna be a nightmare right now. You can't just call that off, huh? You can't just ... Can't just call it off?"

Rev: ZUI: I could, but it would cost you.

Jake: "More than the registration fees? That's like 270 right there. I mean, if I just give you two hundred and seventy dollars, can we just call it good?"

Kim: [Laughs]

Jake: [Laughs] Can I bribe this fey with cash?

Rev: Uh, persuade an NPC.

Jake: [Laughs]

Kim: You didn't even have twenty dollars when we were at the parking lot! How do you have 270 all of a sudden?

Jake: I spent one of my magic hold to fabricate some cash.

Megan: No, he's had it the whole time. He just didn't want to pay the \$20.

Kim: He was just cheap as hell.

Jake: The zoo was a cash lot, and I can Venmo Zui. [Laughs] That's really good. Even with a -1, that's a ten.

Rev: Yeah. He says that he will call off this manhunt for an appropriate token. Some kind of something that he has to show, either as a sign of ... Not necessarily fealty from you, but something that he can laud as a trophy from this day.

Jake: OK. I ... This is — this is absolutely true. This is accurate. So I kind of like pat myself down to figure out what I've got. And I feel the breast pocket on my jacket. There's a coin inside of it. And so I'll unzip that and I'll pull it out. And it is a commemorative gold Indiana University coin that literally always lives in the breast pocket of the jacket that I have said my character is wearing right now. And I will offer that to him.

Rev: All right. He accepts it. And he flips it into the air and catches it a couple of times. As he does, the sun glints off of the gold color. And he nods, and he holds his hands together, and then he whispers into them, and then he blows wind through his hands. And you can see like seven very, very tiny sprites dart out into the world.

Jake: "It's been an absolute pleasure."

Rev: ZUI: You as well.

Jake: I'll shake his hand again, and then head out.

Rev: All right, so Jake walks off of the dock and reconvenes with all of you back on the path.

Tass: "OK, so what's next? I still want to break this nightmare out of that zoo. It doesn't have to be tonight, but I definitely want to do that before they change the exhibit."

Megan: "Yeah, I should probably stop back to the church at some point and let Kit know how these vampires are tracking all the humans. Not that there's really anything we can do about it right now, but it's good to know that they are."

Jake: "I mean, I want to talk through the finer points of going into the archives with James anyway. So do we want to like kind of break off, just to have our conversations here?"

And, you know, I can hash out the details on that plan. And then maybe tonight we could either all go for the archives. Or if we wanted to kind of handle this in phases, if you want to get the nightmare out tonight, we could either do that and then the archives or the archives and then that, or we could split into teams. But, you know, I want to make sure that James is on board and we have a compelling argument before we entertain the idea of going into the archives anyway. So ..."

Kim: "OK. Yeah, how about we take a break for the afternoon and then meet back up at the 606 later tonight?"

Jake: "It's good with me."

Megan: "Yeah."

Tass: "Perfect."

Kim: "Great."

Rev: All right. So you all split up — Tass taking his motorcycle back home, I suppose, and Jake dropping everyone else off back at their respective locations. So let's start with Kim. Kim, you have been dropped back off at The Vault. What are you up to?

Kim: I want to just run to a couple of stores and pick up like some sheet masks and some skin care and some candles, as well as some food.

Rev: OK.

Kim: And I want to head up to her penthouse.

Rev: When you arrive, she is not there at the elevator door when it opens. And then a couple of moments pass and she comes up from downstairs.

Rev: STROHM: Oh, how are you?

Kim: "Hey. I heard you weren't doing too well. I just wanted to check in on you."

Rev: STROHM: Yes, there have been some issues, but I have brought in some additional hands to help secure things. So hopefully that will be of assistance.

Kim: "You're not trying to replace me, are you?"

Rev: STROHM: No. But I realize that the two of us and a handful of underlings simply isn't enough. I've been trying to do most of the tasks myself, and I've brought in some folks from other parts of the United States to help out.

Kim: "Nice. Well, c'mere, let's just go put on some sheet masks and watch something trashy on television."

Rev: STROHM: Actually, they're here right now. That's why I did not meet you at the elevator. You're more than welcome to come down and meet them, if you'd like.

Kim: "Yeah, definitely." I want to set down my stuff and follow her down the stairs.

Rev: Yeah, she leads you down the stairs into that first floor that has the presentation area, and there is a nice dining table set up there, and there are two seats and a stool set up. On the stool is a glass jar with a head in it. And sitting in the other chair is a younger man — dark skin, dark hair — and he's wearing a large cloak.

Kim: "Hey, it seems as though I missed introductions. I'm Kim. It's nice to meet you."

Rev: KESTER: Yes, nice to meet you as well. My name is Kester Danholm, and my friend here in the jar is Tiresias. How are you?

Kim: "I'm great. Strohm said. That you both were from out of town? Where you from?"

Rev: KESTER: We came in from Utah. That is not where either of us are originally from, but it is the location that Strohm had us positioned last.

Rev: And the head inside of the jar, you notice that its eyes are just very dimly glowing. And it is mouthing responses, but not anything audible. And it seems that the words it's saying match the words coming out of Kester's mouth.

Kim: "That's very interesting." I say, sort of pointing between Tiresias and Kester. "Sorry, what exactly is happening here? Is this some sort of magical effect? Or ..."

Rev: KESTER: Ah, no. Tiresias sees everything to the point that it's too much, and he seems to have bonded to me in some way so that he can have a focus. And so he predominantly sees the things that I see, until he unleashes his inner sight that allows him to ... Well, you know all about that.

Kim: "I do." I'm looking between the two of them and Strohm. "So what's our next move, here?"

Rev: STROHM: That is just what we were discussing, trying to figure out how to make this place a little safer. We have had an incident lately where our defenses were lessened, and so I'm not sure if it means that we shore up and try to focus on strengthening things here, or if we show force outward and make it so that no one has the opportunity to take pokes at our defenses until they are reestablished. That is actually why we are here. I thought I would take this opportunity to let Tiresias give us an answer. We were just about to start, but you're more than welcome to join us if you'd like.

Kim: "Oh, absolutely. I'd love to watch him work."

Rev: She gestures over to the corner of the room where there's a stack of other chairs, and Kester gets up and goes over and gets a chair and brings it back for you.

Kim: I sit.

Rev: And as Kester comes back to the table, he does not sit next to Tiresias. And you see that Tiresias's eyes start to dart from each person at the table. And what are you thinking in this moment?

Kim: I'm thinking that the constant telepathic link between Tiresias and Kester is creepy to me.

Rev: You hear those exact words come out of Tiresias's mouth, in your voice. And then you hear Strohm's voice come out of his mouth, saying ...

Rev: STROHM'S VOICE: I hope there's a good clear answer for this, because I feel like I'm caged by my indecisions lately.

Rev: And then when the eyes land on Kester, you can see that Kester focuses. And the words that come out of Tiresias's mouth are again in Kester's voice.

Rev: KESTER'S VOICE: Let go of us. See for yourself, Tiresias.

Rev: And those words cause his eyes to glow even brighter. His mouth opens in an enormous yawn. The water inside vibrates.

Rev: TIRESIAS: Regardless of your decision to go to ground or lash out, the inevitable is coming. It will all crumble around you. All you have built will cease to be, but from the ashes of that destruction, something stronger will be born. Though the cost will be your soul.

SFX: OUTRO MUSIC

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