

The Leaders of Power (S4, E15)

SFX:

INTRO MUSIC

Tass: So we almost didn't record today.

Rev: W-what?

Tass: Yeah.

Kim: Oh?

Jake: That's news to us.

Megan: Yeah. Rev's like, "I was not informed of this."

Tass: Yeah. No, I'm informing you now. We almost didn't. And it would have been my fault. Because I have seen a movie every night for three nights in a row, and I'm really digging the routine. So I almost had to just call off, so that I could keep it going.

Rev: I see.

Tass: Yeah.

Rev: What have you seen?

Tass: So I saw the brand new My Hero Academia movie Thursday.

Rev: Uh-huh.

Tass: Then I went to see Eternals Friday.

Rev: Uh-huh.

Tass: And then I saw No Time To Die last night, bringing us to what is our recording day of Sunday.

Kim: What's stopping you from just watching a movie tonight, after recording?

Tass: I don't think there are any open that I could go into the movies. That's what I want to do. That's the routine.

Kim: Mmm. That's fair.

Megan: Going to the theater.

Rev: Oh, like any start after 10 o'clock. I see.

Tass: Right. Not on a Sunday night.

Kim: I keep forgetting that you guys are on Eastern Standard Time. Because I was just at the movies last night. I went to the drive-in, and that doesn't start until like eight o'clock.

Rev: What did you see at the drive-in?

Kim: Um ... I saw ...

Megan: She's like, "I don't remember, I wasn't watching."

All: [Laugh]

Kim: Well ...

Megan: "I was a little ... I was a little busy." [Laughs]

Kim: I will neither confirm nor deny that. But what was playing was Halloween Kills and Venom: Let There Be Carnage.

Tass: Nice.

Kim: Which is, in my opinion, like a pretty rockin' drive-in double feature. Like, you don't really want movies that you really have to pay that close attention to.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: That sounds awesome. I didn't go to the drive-in at all like this summer, and I really regret it. I've only been to the drive-in ... I want to say once, and I saw Jurassic Park and that's my favorite movie. And it was very much like me in like my little spot, and then the spot next to us was our friends who had like a pickup with like the air mattress in the back and like the speaker setup. And it was really exciting just to have the whole like dinosaur screaming, and we were just like, "Yes!" And it was great. I'd love to do it again.

Kim: It's really fun. I pretty much have the entire back of my SUV is just like permanently has like blankets and pillows in there, because I'm going to the drive-in like almost every other weekend. It's really nice.

Megan: That's awesome.

Jake: There's a Halloween Kills at 9:55 at Cinemark, so if we wrap this up fairly quick, you can go see that again.

Rev: If we can stop this conversation, we might get you there in time.

Tass: Nice.

Rev: Well, speaking of Halloween Kills ...

Jake: These costumes killed.

Rev: They did.

Megan: Oh, nice.

Rev: Nice segue. We've got the winners of the Halloween costume contest. Oh boy, some stunning and horrifying things this year. Very, very good. I put all of the entries into

a random generator and let the machines, as they will in the future, make our decisions for us.

Megan: [Laughs] Like they don't do that now.

Rev: And so our winners are Mishmoshmasha as Damien, Lisa Imbryk as Selina, and Jennifer Oliphant as the crow from our Witch is Dead live stream that we did.

Megan: Yes! Oh my gosh.

Tass: What was that name again?

Megan: Oh, Moira?

Tass: That's right.

Megan: Yup.

Tass: Yeah, very good.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: That's amazing.

Rev: So thank you, everybody who entered. Everyone who won, I will be reaching out to you to get your address. And then the five of us will — I have the boxes already. We're just gonna fill them with things that we like for you. Maybe boxes of cereal, as previously discussed.

All: [Laugh]

Megan: For the one who did the crow, it's just gonna be shiny things. [Laughs] I'm gonna go around Rev's house and just any shiny thing I find, I'm putting in this box.

Rev: It's just going to be a crow. [Caws]

Jake: Just a copy of The Crow.

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

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: So this is wild, because we are still in the faction turn. We've been doing this faction turn a little differently, having things play out as they happen because a lot of dominoes just kind of fell. So we're just going to keep rolling with that. So what I need from you all first is to give you the rumors that you have overheard. Jake, you'll still take part in this, even just as a player. Maybe not so much as a character on the street, getting information.

Jake: That's gonna be awkward because I've just pre-recorded some responses that I was just going to kinda ... I've got on a soundboard here. But I'll see if I can make them fit into the scenario.

Rev: So the rumors that you hear —

Jake: Ha ha, good one!

Rev: [Laughs]

Jake: Sorry, the sound board's acting up. Hold on.

Rev: You hear about some vampires being tricked into empty buildings, and those empty buildings being used as death traps. You also hear about the return of Aiden Chambers, and him apparently cleaning house. That there are vampires dying on the streets, there also seem to be vampires dying in the ranks. Because maybe Aiden wasn't as aware of the things that were going on, and has now come in to clean. And you also have heard about the meetup between Tass and Damien and Lady Jense and Aiden Chambers. With Clan Ozymandias, you hear rumors about a ritual going off, because it seems that whoever is the leader of Clan Ozymandias is not always here and they had to be summoned. But this magic did go off without a hitch, and that they have also made the offer to bring in people from the House of Strohm as well, as they consolidate control of

their own holdings. And then the last rumor I don't think you're going to hear about until you all meet up at Grandpa Tincher's place, at the end of the faction turn.

So we are now in the rumors phase. Does anyone have any debts they'd like to offer up or favors they'd like to trade in or Corruption they would like to take upon themselves to find out some more information about any of these rumors? So again, we're going to kind of do this a bit out of order, to accommodate the other things that are happening in the world. So let's start with Jake. Jake, what are you doing for your rumors move?

Jake: You mean before I done got snatched?

Rev: Correct.

Jake: OK. I am going to first mark Corruption to expose a vulnerability in an enemy's defenses.

Rev: Mmhmm.

Jake: I want to find a vulnerability in Clan Ozymandias's defenses, now knowing that like they had to summon their leader. Like, oh, their people aren't even on site all the time. What else do I got?

Rev: OK. So I think the thing that you gather is that the magic energy it takes for them as part of Power to do things like this is much more draining for them. Because, you know, you've got them, you've got the House of Strohm, and you've got The Order of the Ley Line. The Order of the Ley Line is super tapped into the magic. Strohm seemed to have her hands on many different artifacts that allowed her. Clan Ozymandias takes a lot of manpower to pull off a ritual that the other two groups might do with just a handful of people. And you know that even on a full success, mechanically speaking, it exhausts everyone who does it. And I think that in marking this point of Corruption and finding out a weakness, you do get the sense that the person did get summoned, but those involved are not just drained, but maybe out of commission for a while.

Jake: OK. I am also going to offer up a debt to ask a follow up question about a rumor or secret. I'm gonna offer up a debt to Dr. Benson, because I want to know more about Aiden cleaning house. I know that he's killing vampires within his ranks. I want to know

what his objective is. Is it just trimming fat? Is it rooting out moles? Like, why is he eliminating people within his ranks?

Rev: Where do you imagine that you're meeting Benson at?

Jake: Uh ... Starbucks.

Rev: Excellent.

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: He sits down with his coffee.

Rev: DR. VANCE BENSON: [In a strained voice] Hello.

Kim: [Laughs] Jake's like, "I didn't sound like that."

Jake: Just do your best Archivist from the Magnus Archives. That was Dr. Benson. That was my objective.

Rev: [In a pinched voice] The archivist ... Somewhere in here, at least? It's not great, but ...

All: [Laugh]

Rev: Whatever.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: You enter in, and he is sitting at one of the little tables for two, he's got his laptop open. It looks like he might be writing a screenplay.

Rev: DR. VANCE BENSON: Hello, Brizack.

Jake: "Hello, Doctor."

Rev: DR. VANCE BENSON: Funny meeting you here. Can I interest you in partaking in a heartfelt story of lost love?

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: And he slowly turns his ...

Jake: Any notes?

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: [Laughs]

Jake: "I need a favor."

Rev: DR. VANCE BENSON: Go on.

Jake: "I hear that amidst all of the splintering and chaos within your group, that now that Chambers is back on the scene, he's cleaning up a little bit."

Rev: DR. VANCE BENSON: Ah, yes. He arrived only a few nights ago. This information, of course, will cost you.

Jake: "I offer you one debt." [Laughs]

Rev: DR. VANCE BENSON: Excellent. Let me mark it on my sheet.

Jake: "What is he trying to achieve with this?"

Rev: DR. VANCE BENSON: He's pruning. Getting rid of all the wild things that have grown in his absence. He likes things orderly, and I will admit that things got a little out of hand while he was gone. My hand was not firm enough to keep things in place. So whenever he hears of someone going against his wishes, going against the deals that he has made, they are being made example of.

Jake: "So he's just trying to get rid of any wild cards, and using that as a way to make sure nobody else acts up?"

Rev: DR. VANCE BENSON: Yes. Making sure everyone gets back to toeing the line.

Jake: "All right. Well, I think if you age your protagonist up like two years, it might make it seem like they've lived a little more, and really kind of validate some of the life experiences that they're putting forth in the dialogue."

Rev: DR. VANCE BENSON: I see, I see. Too young to perhaps have experienced some of the things I'm claiming?

Jake: "Correct. Yeah. It would just feel uninformed. Sort of hormonal and not like lived in, you know?"

Rev: DR. VANCE BENSON: Oh, yes. Yes.

Megan: I need to know the name of this more than anything right now.

Rev: It's The Embrace of the Vampire.

Megan: [Laughs]

Kim: Yeah, it is.

Rev: So Jake, you head back to The Rookery, and you notice as you head inside that there are two men. They look almost identical. It's very weird. Like, you almost feel like it's a glitch in the Matrix. Like you pass one, you pass another. But they're in these very plain suits, carrying briefcases, and they stop and admire your car.

Jake: I'll think nothing of that until I come back out the doors.

Rev: Yeah, fair. So next, we're gonna go to Tass. So Tass, you are inside of Damien's car, headed away from Lady Jencie's.

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: So what the hell was all that about?

SFX: "Oh shit, dude, I'm sorry about that. Long story short, we were going to make our connection with Strohm and the place was under siege. We need something from her, so we went to her defense. It ended up being Chambers."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Oh, that sucks.

Tass: "Yeah. Yeah, it sucked pretty bad. I may have tried to spread around a little bit his fairly poor performance while he was there. He just sort of sat back and watched his people get mowed down and wouldn't come down to fight us. Apparently, that didn't really do much, though."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Sounds about right. I mean, we're kind of in a place where you got minions, you just keep throwing them into the grinder until you get what you want.

Tass: "Yeah, that's fair. I am sorry. Truly. I did not intend for any backlash to hit you, or I mean, even the family."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah. So what the hell happened there?

Tass: "I don't know. I don't know how they did it. They put up some sort of dome, some anti magic thing that messed with how we work, and then just brought the building down. They threw everything at it. It was filled with vampires. They had some monsters coming down the stairs at us. They had bombs in the basement. That's ultimately what brought the thing down. It was wild."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah, dreadful.

Tass: "Yep. I have a question about this. Do you, uh ... Do you still have that liver that you took from her?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Maybe.

Tass: "That's all I wanted to know. I'm not asking anything about it yet. But I mean, they brought down the whole building and everything in it. I feel like you understand the repercussions of you still having a certain thing. And if it still exists and is intact? Yeah."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Oh. Oi' Damien's stock just went up a bit.

Tass: "Yeah, I'd say it probably did."

Rev: So Tass, as you were driving around with Damien, sharing the story, what rumors moves are you doing?

Tass: I would like to mark a whole bunch of Corruption.

Rev: OK.

Tass: I want to find out some weaknesses. Firstly, about the Family. I want to know what's going on with Lady Jencie. And knowing that I'm sort of on my back foot with her right now, I just — I want to know where I can hit hard if I need to.

Rev: So I think the thing that you understand as a weakness about Lady Jencie is that even though she is the top of this pyramid, she still has to follow the same rules. If you could find someone she owes a debt to and convince them to cash it in for a thing you want, she would be powerless to stop it. And based off of the meeting you just had with her, really another weakness is that you're not actually bound by her compulsions, and she thinks you are.

Tass: Great. Awesome. OK. And then I want to mark another. And with all of this shifting in New Canterbury and whatever Chambers is doing to, you know, prune, I want to know what weaknesses are open there.

Rev: So you don't know exactly why he's doing this, but you do know that he's doing it. And you saw his willingness to let the people who fight for him, fight for him while he looked on. I think a weakness is that if you could convince him that other people in his faction are doing things against what it is he wants them to do, he would remove them.

Tass: OK. So I could really ... There's potential for sowing enough discord that he starts tearing apart their strengths.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: I like that. OK. And that levels up my Corruption.

Rev: Oh. What are you gonna take?

Tass: I have done woefully poorly on a few rolls. I think I'm going to raise my Spirit stat by 1.

Rev: All right. And as Tass and Damien drive on, I think we find Megan at the Fourth Presbyterian Church, with Kit. It is a little more crowded in here than normal, because everyone has been pulled back into smaller places. You know, there was a thing that happened here in the faction moves that was like, oh yeah, these safe houses are being used. I think Megan, you just get to find this out for free because you kind of told Kit to like, "Hey, I'm going to step back. You do your thing." And this was Kit doing his thing. So when you come in, he is very excited to see you.

Rev: KIT: It worked out well. We goaded a lot of the vampires into attacking. We set up the old safe houses, the ones they knew that existed. We put decoys in them. Not like actual people, but fighters. And when they came in, we just lit them up.

Megan: "Excellent. I'm really glad that it's working out."

Rev: KIT: So it makes for a little more crowded space. And obviously we're maybe a little less safe if these new locations are found out. But for now, it's working really well, using ... Kind of using ourselves as bait, but with way more firepower there.

Megan: "Do we think there's a way we could safely try and trap any of them? I mean, like, it's great that we're taking them out. But if we're looking to get some information on where this splinter group is holed up, where they're keeping this blood ... Maybe if they're falling for these traps, that might be a good place to start."

Rev: KIT: I mean, maybe. I'm not quite sure how to do it. We'd have to get some help from somebody. You know, them turning into gas or bats or teleporting. It's so hard to keep them contained.

Rev: And he gestures over at the map on the wall to show you the safe houses that are now in use, and the ones that are no longer in use that were the ones that were known by the vampires and now are being used as decoy houses. One of those is the location that you have put Kester and Tiresias right now.

Megan: Oh! Oh no. "So I have some friends, that ... Some contacts that I've made, that needed somewhere safe to hole up, and I dumped them in one of the safe houses that we had. I didn't realize that this was being set up as traps. But it's probably not a good idea to leave them there, since the vampires know about them? But is there any of the ones that we have safe? Are any of those in a good position that I could use?"

Rev: KIT: I mean, the safe ones are filled with our people, if you don't mind them being around us.

Megan: "I mean, I don't mind that. I can double check with them. But I imagine things are going to get more crowded a lot quicker, now that we have people coming back into the Cloud Gate."

Rev: KIT: Yeah, I can't believe that people have started appearing again. I thought we were gonna ... Not even I thought we were going to run out. I just thought we might be the last one. I'm glad to know we're not.

Megan: "Yeah, it feels ... It feels pretty good to know that there's still a good stream of humanity left."

Rev: And over in the corner where the firing range is, you see a familiar woman giving pointers to the people at the firing range. It's Julie. And she has got a belt on that has got a whole lot of hash marks, indicating vampire kills.

Megan: "Looks like training is going pretty good then, huh?"

Rev: KIT: Yeah.

Megan: "That's wonderful. That makes me so happy, to know that things are going smoothly here. I'm sorry that I haven't been able to be around a whole lot, but I'm really glad that you've seemed to got a handle on things."

Rev: KIT: I mean, it's ... It's fine. I understand that, especially when you're kind of underground. It sounds strange to say, but not all leaders lead from the front.

Megan: "Yeah. I'm still, uh ... I'm still doing my best to look out for everyone here, but I've got a lot of different fires I'm trying to tend to right now. OK. So this map, which of the safe houses — I know we said we were going to pull back to like three of them, but we might have to expand that just a touch, with all the new people coming in. Which one do you think right now would be good to set up my contacts in? Maybe the one with the least amount of people?"

Rev: KIT: Yeah. I mean, if we're gonna have to expand, I don't think we can expand back to the old ones. We're gonna have to find new ones, and I'm not sure we'll be able to do that very quickly.

Rev: And I think mechanically, it would be kind of a faction turn for them to acquire new locations.

Megan: "So I will move them to this one, and everyone will just have to be cozy for now. But I'll move them out, as soon as I can find a place for them to go."

Rev: KIT: OK.

Megan: "Thank you for all of this. I will be back as soon as I can. I'll stay in touch. Let me know if you need anything, if there's anything I can do."

Rev: KIT: Of course.

Megan: And I will head to the safe house where I left Kester and Tiresias, and move them to the new one.

Rev: As Megan starts to head across town, we find Kim outside of the Carbide and Carbon building. Maxwell steps outside and greets you and holds his hand out for your invitation.

Kim: I will hand it over.

Rev: MAXWELL: It's good to see you.

Kim: "Yes, it's good to see you again."

Rev: MAXWELL: Come inside. Everyone is ready.

Rev: And he leads you inside of the building to an elevator in the far corner. He leads you past four or five other elevators, and leads you to a large gilded one and inserts a key and turns it and a gate opens, and he gestures for you to step inside.

Kim: I do.

Rev: You step inside. He reaches in and pushes the button, and he gives you a polite nod as the door closes and he steps back out into the lobby. The elevator gently takes you to the top floor and opens into a beautiful office. A lot of hardwood and sandstone sculptures. There is a large desk that is covered in stone tablets and ornate paintings along the sides. Behind the desk sits a very old man. He has a beard, about three feet long, and white. His skin is tanned with years of sun, and he is in very ornate robes, and he smiles at you as you step in. And next to the desk, on one side is a single chair. On the other side is three chairs, and in those three chairs you see the leaders of the Ley Line, The Council of Three. They all stand up and extend their hands towards you. One of them is wearing deep purple robes with arcane symbols, the other one is wearing a very sharp kind of tweed pantsuit, and the last one is in a long, dark coat. The one at the front in the purple robes extends their hand.

Rev: MASHA: It's nice to meet you. I am so sorry about what happened, but I'm glad we'll have the opportunity to talk with you and figure out how we move forward.

Kim: Before I cross the room and take their hands, I do want to just take in this office.

Rev: Yeah, why don't you roll Study a Place of Power?

Kim: OK. Nine.

Rev: All right. So on a 7 to 9, I will reveal an area, NPC, or item located within this scene that is not what it seems to be. I don't think there is any other answer I can give you here, because you are so familiar with behavioral patterns. As you get a read of this room and you see the smile that the old man behind the desk gives you, there is no doubt in your mind that inside of that body is Strohm.

Kim: Holy — holy shit.

Rev: I thought for moments of like, what is any other piece of information I could give her? But that's the only one. That's the only one. It makes the most sense.

Tass: Nice.

Rev: There's just — there was no avoiding it.

Kim: So that also leveled me up.

Rev: Yeah, great. What do you want to take?

Kim: So I'm going to take a new Oracle move. And this one seems extremely appropriate, because I'm a new leader of a faction. And also, I just discovered something major and I am going to do my best to keep my cool, while knowing this information. I'm going to take the move Foresight. Advance Keep Your Cool for any or all characters you choose in your presence, including yourself.

Tass: Nice.

Kim: Yeah. So I lock eyes with this person, and for just the briefest of moments, my eyes meet theirs with a look of recognition. And then it's immediately smoothed over.

Rev: Yeah, and the other three have stood and turned towards you. And just a shit eating grin and a wink, and then this old man stands up as well.

Kim: "Thank you for the warm welcome. I'm sad that it's under such tragic circumstances, but it's very nice to meet all of you."

Rev: And they introduce themselves. The first wizard in the purple robes with the arcane symbols is Masha, the one in the tweed pantsuit is Ruth-Ann, and the one in the long dark jacket is Roland. And the aged man behind the desk extends his hand to you last.

Rev: OZYMANDIAS: It is a pleasure to have you here. My name is Ozymandias. So the question that lies before us is how best to shore up the power within our Circle, knowing that one of our own was so viciously attacked.

Rev: And the three wizards nod in agreement and sit down. And you notice pretty quickly that Masha speaks for them. That they lean in, there are whispers, but then Masha speaks.

Kim: Mmhmm.

Rev: MASHA: We believe that something must be done with the oracles. Perhaps it's best if we share them amongst our ranks. The things you all can do would be very beneficial in the days to come. We of course could work together to find a new location for you to set up your headquarters. And perhaps the grudge that brought this end to Strohm ends with her, but perhaps not.

Rev: Ozymandias nods.

Rev: OZYMANDIAS: That is an unknown to us. Whether or not this attack was because of the House of Strohm, or simply because of Strohm herself. What are your feelings on this? How would you prefer to be addressed? I apologize for not asking initially.

Kim: "Kim's fine."

Rev: OZYMANDIAS: Very well. What are your thoughts on the placement of the oracles, Kim?

Kim: "A few months ago, I had a vision of an assassination attempt on Strohm. One that I worked very hard to prevent. I don't think that what happened last week was ... Well, I think that what happened last week was New Canterbury trying yet again to kill Strohm. This time, unfortunately, I didn't have the chance to see it and prevent it before it could happen. With respect, I don't think that we can trust New Canterbury. We can't trust

Mercury. He said that he was only there for Strohm, but I can't possibly believe that. I don't think that we're safe from New Canterbury yet. I don't think that we're done."

Rev: OZYMANDIAS: I believe this comes down to a question of what face you would like to show the world, and those in power. Will you stay with us, or brush off this offense and stand in your own stead again?

Rev: There's some more whispering amongst the wizards, and Masha turns.

Rev: MASHA: Yes, this is a very good point that Ozymandias brings up. It is very important that we keep you safe, that we keep the oracles safe. But it is also very important, the presentation. Because if we are all seen as weak together, it may not be long till that same trouble comes knocking at our doors. But if we are able to present a strong front, as if we were able to — with respect to what has happened — carry on in spite of it, the read from those around us would be drastically different.

Kim: "I agree. Aiden Chambers may have killed Strohm, but he didn't kill the House of Strohm. We owe it to her to at least present ourselves as being strong."

Rev: OZYMANDIAS: There is no rush in this decision. I think we could easily create a story of the fall of the building and the need for proper permits and things like that, a suitable location for the replacement of The Vault, and then your oracles aiding with some projects or another done by myself or our friends from the Ley Line. It would buy us quite a few weeks before anyone would ask questions about why are they staying with them?

Kim: "We've been very grateful to The Order of the Ley Line for their hospitality this past week. I agree. I think, um ... I think if all of our factions unite together, at least for the next few weeks, get stronger together. And maybe after that, the House of Strohm can stand on its own."

Rev: OZYMANDIAS: Very well. I do have some ins with a number of prominent locations around the city. I think finding a suitable replacement for The Vault is something that I could undertake, if my friends at the Ley Line — could you continue to house the oracles? Give them something to do, some task, so that it looks more like work while time passes, and not licking wounds while a new place to hide is built?

Rev: Masha doesn't even turn to the other two. She nods.

Kim: "Thank you. And I would absolutely trust your judgment, Ozymandias, when it comes to choosing a replacement for The Vault."

Rev: OZYMANDIAS: Thank you. I am quite fond of this building. There are a few I've had leads on. Some I may even already own. It's hard to remember.

Kim: [Chuckles] "When you've lived a life as long as yours."

Rev: OZYMANDIAS: Very well, and I believe this meeting is at an end. I have just recently arrived, and I am exhausted. So I will take my leave to rest. As the leaders, as always, you may reach out to me with questions, as I will do for you as we move forward.

Rev: And with that, the elevator door opens and Maxwell is there, and he gestures for the four of you to get into the elevator as Ozymandias rises again and starts to move across the room towards a door on the far side.

Kim: I get up from my chair and start moving towards Ozymandias.

Rev: And as you do, it's almost like he was waiting for this. And very quietly, you hear him say ...

Rev: OZYMANDIAS: Do be careful, where you settle down. Sometimes you're not home for quite a while, and you get nasty infestations. It's best to clean house before you bring anything important in.

Kim: "That's very good advice. Thank you."

Rev: And you can't see it, but you can feel as he continues to walk away and open the door and close it behind him, that kind of radiating energy when someone is proud.

Kim: I will go into the elevator.

Rev: The elevator takes you all down to the first floor. Masha says thank you once more. Ruth-Ann and Roland nod to you, and they open up a portal and step inside. And then you call your Uber.

Kim: [Laughs]

Rev: Where are you going now?

Kim: I would go to Kester and Tiresias.

Rev: So I think we are at Kester and Tiresias's safe house, and Kim and Megan arrive at the same time.

Megan: "Oh, hi."

Kim: "Hey."

Megan: "How's it going?"

Kim: "Uh ... A lot of it has sucked, but I'm OK. How are you?"

Megan: "I'm good. We got to get them out of here."

Kim: "Oh."

Megan: "Can you hold up on your Uber? Mine just left. Uh, hold — just wait. Wait, wait! OK. You get them to stop. OK. I'm gonna go in and grab them really quick."

Kim: "Yeah, OK." [Giggles]

Megan: And I am going into the safe house and I'm looking for like ... Like, I don't know how this place has been set up as a death trap. This is all just information I've only just learned. I feel like I walked into a Saw room right now, like ... [Laughs] I'm so scared that I'm gonna walk in and they've like, stepped on a bear trap.

Rev: Yeah. Like right now, Kester is sitting on a couch, watching a television. And he's got like his elbow up on Tiresias's jar, and Tiresias is asleep in the jar.

Kim: Aww, I love these two.

Megan: "Oh my gosh, you're alive! That's good. That's really good."

Rev: KESTER: What?

Megan: "We gotta go."

Rev: KESTER: Oh.

Megan: "This place isn't safe."

Rev: KESTER: Oh yes, all right.

Rev: And he reaches across the couch and grabs a crutch and stands up and indicates to Tiresias.

Rev: KESTER: Do you mind?

Megan: "Yeah. Kim is right outside. She can help us as well."

Rev: KESTER: Oh, wonderful. Where are we going?

Megan: "Another safe house."

Rev: KESTER: All right.

Megan: And I'll leave them outside to Kim. "Hey, can you help?"

Kim: "Yeah." And I will grab Tiresias.

Megan: "OK. So long story short, this is a safe house, but it was found out by vampires, and they are being turned into death traps for vampires. So either vampires will

potentially come here and find you, or you'll get killed by some cool traps that my people have set up. So I'm moving to you to a safe safe house, until I can find you another safe house."

Rev: KESTER: Ah. Well yes, let's get out of here, shall we?

Megan: "Yes, if that's OK. You're gonna be kind of cramped with some other mortals who are in hiding, but it won't be for very long."

Rev: KESTER: There are mortals?

Megan: "Yes."

Kim: "Oh, wow, a lot to catch the two of you up on."

Megan: "We don't need to go into details or anything right now. All you need to know is that I'm keeping you safe, and that's what you need to focus on. OK?"

Rev: KESTER: Will they try to kill us? I've heard terrible things about mortals, that they're ferocious, and ...

Megan: "No, these ones are not ferocious. I don't actually know many of them personally, but I know that they only want to stay safe, and that's why they are where they are. And if I bring you there and I say you are also there to stay safe and that I am putting you there to stay safe, that they will be OK."

Rev: KESTER: All right.

Megan: "Great. Let's get them in the vehicle, and let's get them to ... Close to the address. We're not going right there. We're going to have to hobble a little ways, but we'll get you there safe."

Rev: All right. So which of the safe houses do you want to take him to? You've got three. There's the one that you are at as your main base, and then they just get kind of progressively further away from that main base. So do you want them at the second or the third location?

Megan: I suppose closer to base.

Rev: So you're gonna take them to the second safe house, the one closer to where your main base is?

Megan: Yes.

Rev: So I think that we drop them off with no problem. There is a moment of sheer wonder in Kester's eyes when you let him into this very old bar that has been changed into quite a number of open rooms and apartments, at the sheer number of people here. And he looks around the room.

Rev: KESTER: I didn't realize there were this many people, period. Let alone in one place.

Megan: "Yep, this is ... This is what we have right now." And I think I kind of just want to talk to who's kind of heading up this — running this house.

Rev: Yeah, the person heading up this safe house is Quentin.

Megan: "Quentin, can I speak with you just a minute, please?"

Rev: QUENTIN: Sure.

Rev: And I'll pull him and Kim and Tiresias and Kester into a room. "Hi. So Kit might have mentioned this, but I have some contacts here that are in very terrible danger, and I needed somewhere to keep them safe. And I know that this is not something that we usually do, but I need them to stay here just temporarily. Everything is fine. They are in danger, but so are the rest of us. And right now, this is a enemy of my enemy is my friend kind of thing, and I just need everyone to be cool. OK?"

Rev: QUENTIN: OK. Um ... This one's a head in a jar.

Megan: "Yep."

Rev: QUENTIN: How do we keep that from everyone else? Or are they just all ... Do they all know?

Megan: "I think that's kind of up to you." And I look at Tiresias and Kester. "I can set this up so Quentin can bring you meals and kind of keep you guys secluded in your own space as much as possible, and we can kind of sneak you out when the time comes to set you up somewhere else? Or if you are OK with everyone here knowing who you are, then I trust that you don't have any ill will towards these people. Or at the very least, as a favor for saving your life, you wouldn't act upon any of that."

Rev: KESTER: Yes. I certainly have no ill will towards mortals. My only concern is the more people who know we are alive, especially those who seem to frequently be hunted by other members of other Circles, does expose the possibility of us being found out.

Megan: "Well, I promise nobody here wants to be found out by anyone. So like I said, everyone here is just trying to survive. And right now, that's where you're at too, and this is what I have for you."

Rev: KESTER: Very well.

Megan: "OK."

Kim: "This is just temporary. We'll figure out something more private soon."

Megan: "Yes, I'm working on it right now. It's just — I didn't realize that the safe houses that had been found out were being utilized so efficiently, and I just didn't want you in any more danger than you were already in. Especially since those who are hunting you were the people that would kind of know about that location in the first place. So this is just a very quick get you somewhere safe so we can move you later."

Rev: KESTER: Yes. Well, thank you. The efforts that you have put in for us have not gone unnoted. Along those lines, myself and Tiresias would like to offer you a boon, Megan. You may come to us for advice.

Megan: "Oh!"

Rev: KESTER: For what you have done for us. Same goes for your friend Jake, if you could let him know. He was very protective of us, saved our lives while we were inside of the tower. And of course, Kim. I think the whole benefit of us being in hiding, you may come to us once a day and we will use our gifts to aid you, however we may.

Megan: "Thank you. That's really kind of you. I'll let Jake know. Quentin, if there's any issues or if anybody has questions. I mean, please feel free to let them know that I okayed this. I set this up. It is very important for all of us that this remains secret and safe, and that ultimately we are on the same side here."

Rev: QUENTIN: All right.

Megan: "But let me know personally if any issues come up, and I'll be here immediately."

Rev: QUENTIN: OK.

Megan: "Thanks."

Rev: And I think mark that you owe Quentin a debt. So with that done, do either of you have any rumors moves that you want to do?

Kim: You know, I don't think I do. I think I'm still honoring tending to my business at the beginning of this faction turn. I'm not really looking into the kind of greater politics of what's going on. I'm really just trying to get my people safe.

Megan: Yeah, I think I am finally going to get around to making those cookies, and I'm going to take them to Borbauk and offer up a debt to get some information.

Kim: Actually, can I tag along for that? Because I do ... I need to warn Borbauk about something.

Megan: Oh, absolutely.

Kim: OK.

Rev: All right.

Kim: Baking montage.

Rev: Yeah, exactly. So we get a baking montage, and then the two of you head over to where Borbauk is stationed. And Borbauk raises both of his hands into the air in celebration as he sees the two of you step out of the Ryder.

Rev: BORBAUK: Oh, hello again!

Megan: "Borbauk!"

Rev: BORBAUK: How's it going?

Megan: "Good. How are you?"

Rev: BORBAUK: Oh, I'm good. I'm good. [Sniffs] Oh ...

Megan: "Guess what I have?"

Rev: BORBAUK: Oh, is it motherfuckin' cookies?

Megan: "Yeah!"

Rev: BORBAUK: [Laughs]

Rev: He stamps one of his hooves.

Megan: I'm just like, I'm running and opening the container at the same time. "Try 'em, try 'em, try 'em. Let me know what you think."

Rev: OK!

Rev: BORBAUK: OK!

Rev: I don't know why that was me. OK.

Megan: [Laughs] You were so —

Rev: Please, I would like a cookie.

Megan: I will make you those cookies.

Kim: Rev's like, "Did you bring them?"

Rev: Did you? Are there cookies here?

Megan: I do plan on making them —

Rev: Are there cookies here right now? Why is no one answering my question?! [Laughs]

Tass: I don't for a second believe that you wouldn't know for sure if cookies have entered the threshold of your house.

Rev: That's fair. Yeah. So Borbawk, you know, grabs one in each hand and stuffs them into his cheeks and starts chewing.

Rev: BORBAUK: Oh, the heat! Yeah, just a little bit of heat in there. Oh, that's good.

Megan: "I'm glad you like 'em."

Rev: BORBAUK: It was worth the wait.

Megan: "Good. I'm very glad to hear that, anytime somebody tries my cooking. How have you been?"

Rev: BORBAUK: Oh, not too bad. It's been quiet.

Megan: "Oh, good. So it's been ... It's been quiet. No, uh ... No gossip or anything?"

Rev: BORBAUK: I mean nothing terribly interesting. Is this something you're looking for? It might jog my memory.

Megan: "Yeah. I heard that there was this like big secret meeting that happened between like Lady Jencie and that Aiden guy from Vampire Town. And they got in like this weird meeting about like some demons were like doing stuff they weren't supposed to do, and it was, like, went against their deal. And like, what's that about?"

Rev: BORBAUK: Oh. This is very privileged information. You owe Borbauk a favor for these, yeah?

Megan: "Uh, yeah. I had a lot of fun on the last favor that I did for you, so I figured if you are up for sending me on fun adventures, why not?"

Rev: BORBAUK: Yeah. All right. So here's what Borbauk know about the deal between Lady Jencie and Aiden Chambers. See Lady Jencie seems to want to take back land that she used to be the queen of, or something. And she was dethroned, and the lot of her people, they died. And so she's here now. So she takes over the demons, with the ultimate goal take all the demons back to her place and win. You know? Win it back. But, not a whole lot of demons here, right? But there are more than there were before. That's because they're making more.

Megan: "They're making demons."

Rev: BORBAUK: Yeah. I think they found some way to ... Some kind of dark or black magic or blood ritual. I don't know what. But they take a soul that's lost and they can change it into a demon. And so Aiden and his group, whenever they kill somebody, they shuck that soul over so that Lady Jencie can use it in the spell. Don't matter what kind of soul.

Megan: "Wow."

Rev: BORBAUK: Yeah. I mean, that would be fine. She make demons and then go away. I don't really care for them.

Kim: [Snorts]

Megan: "Yeah, but that's probably not good that they're making more of them, right?"

Rev: BORBAUK: Well I mean, the faster they get more, the faster they go away.

Megan: "Yeah. Yeah, you're right. How do they get the soul?"

Rev: BORBAUK: Oh, just when ... When, you know, the person or a vampire or whatever gets killed. Just when someone dies.

Megan: "Do you have any idea of how many she's trying to get before she leaves?"

Rev: BORBAUK: Oh, I don't know. Might be able to figure that out. Take a little bit of snooping around.

Megan: "Hmm ..."

Rev: BORBAUK: Is that information you'd like?

Megan: "Maybe." I think I look at Kim. Like, this is not what I thought was going on. I don't know what I thought it was, but this is wild.

Kim: I think my head is kind of spinning a little bit, thinking about Tiresias's prophecy of the House of Strohm collapsing and the cost being her soul. But I also know that Strohm is alive. But I also don't really know like the mechanics of that. "Is it possible to take the soul of someone who is functionally immortal?"

Rev: BORBAUK: Oh, I don't know. Maybe. Immortal like elves? Like, oh, I want to die of poison or old age. Or like immortal like, I can't be killed no matter what you do to me.

Kim: "I guess kind of conditional immortality. Like I can't be killed unless very specific things happen. Like if an immortal being very briefly died, but then kind of came back, would that window allow that soul to be taken?"

Rev: BORBAUK: Oh, I don't know. That's very particular set of circumstances.

Kim: "It sure is. Yeah, sorry."

Rev: BORBAUK: Oh, it's OK. I like the brainteaser, though. I think about this

Kim: "Before we go. I had a vision about you."

Rev: BORBAUK: Oh, that's sweet.

Kim: "No, I typically don't have positive visions about people. I'm so sorry."

Rev: BORBAUK: Oh.

Kim: "You remember the ... I mean, of course, you remember the hairs from the nightmare that we gave you?"

Rev: BORBAUK: Oh, yeah.

Kim: "Have you ... I know that you were going to experiment with them. Have you — have you done that yet?"

Rev: BORBAUK: No, not yet.

Kim: "OK. OK. Cool. Cool. So whatever you're planning to do with the hairs of the nightmare, if you do that, then the nightmare is going to be able to control you."

Rev: BORBAUK: Oh.

Kim: "Yeah. So, knowing that, I don't know if there's a way that you could like sever that kind of sympathetic connection between the nightmare and its hairs? So that like maybe you could make this a part of yourself, but you would sever whatever the nightmare could use to control you? Because I don't want the nightmare to do that, bud. I like you the way you are."

Rev: BORBAUK: Yeah, that's not good. I was going to try and like, make Borbawk horse body like fiery nightmare body. But maybe I'll just try like tail first or something. Or what you said, see if there's like ... I'll be honest, I when I say I'm going to experiment, I mean, I got a wizard friend who I've asked to do this.

Kim: "Oh."

Rev: BORBAUK: Yeah.

Kim: "Who's the wizard friend?"

Rev: BORBAUK: My friend Audrey. She's a wizard.

Kim: "Awesome. Yeah, maybe ..."

Rev: BORBAUK: Yeah, I'll give her a heads up on that.

Kim: "Definitely do. Because I don't ... I don't want anything bad to happen to you."

Rev: BORBAUK: OK.

Megan: "Yeah, that sounds like not a good time. Maybe Audrey can help you make it so you just look that way, but you're not actually on fire?"

Rev: BORBAUK: Like a ... Like some kind of magical disguise.

Megan: "Yeah. So you can still look that way, but it's like ... Yeah, it's like makeup. So if you take it off, then you can go to bed and not be covered in fire."

Rev: BORBAUK: Yeah. Yeah, I'll take it to Audrey and let her know about this little kerfuffle.

Kim: "OK. All right, dude. It's — I'll be honest, I've had kind of an awful week. But seeing you makes me feel a lot better."

Rev: BORBAUK: It's always a good time with Borbauk.

Rev: Think that you get a debt for this from Borbauk, Kim for warning him.

Kim: I'm up to two now.

Rev: All right. So that is the end of the faction turn, which takes us to the end of session. At the end of every session, decide if you've grown closer to a Circle you engaged with this session. Increase that score in your Circle and decrease your score in a different Circle.

Kim: All right, this one's very easy for me. My score in Power is going up and then it's going down in Night.

Megan: I think I'm going to increase with Wild and decrease with Night. Talking with Borbauk and finding out more about Lady Jencie and her deal, I think I was really involved with Wild this faction turn. And actually talking with Borbauk and giving him that debt leveled me up, finally.

Rev: OK, what are you gonna take?

Megan: I'm gonna take a move from another archetype.

Rev: All right, what are you gonna take?

Megan: I'm gonna take The Best Laid Plans from The Veteran. So when you work out a plan with someone, roll with Mind. On a 10+, hold 3. On a 7 to 9, hold 2. And you can spend hold 1 for 1, regardless of distance, while the plan is being carried out to ... Add +1 to someone's roll — choose after rolling, dismiss all harm someone suffers from a single attack, ensure your people have the exact gear they need on hand. And on a miss, I hold 1, but my plan encounter some disastrous opposition right from the start.

Tass: That's pretty dope. That's like your awareness is so profound that you can Jinx on purpose now.

Megan: [Laughs] Yeah. I feel like this kind of falls in line with some of the things that I used to do. Like coming into this world and losing all of my powers and having to not only lean into who I am without those powers, but basically who Fiona is, I haven't really had an opportunity to be myself at all. And so I think that this is a really good move that lets me rely on the training and everything I've been doing as Fiona, but also kind of bringing some more of Megan back into this, so ...

Tass: I like that. I feel very much like I'm going down with Night, because I openly taunted them and got in trouble. And I think coming to Strohm's aid probably is a bump for Power.

Rev: OK.

Jake: I think mine are staying where they are. I'm already high with Power and low with Night, and I think I've just kind of reinforced that.

Rev: All right. So that brings us to the end of the faction moves, and end of session.

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: As we have previously established, after a faction turn, we find you all in Grandpa Tincher's subterranean lair. Except when you all show up, Jake's not there.

And we cut over to Jake. This monstrous car pulls to a stop, and five more of the same-faced men are waiting, and they walk over to the car. And as you step out of it, they touch it, and you see that the car pulls apart into these separate briefcases. That it just kind of sloughs off and takes the form of the briefcase. Like whatever this mimic is, has the ability to combine with others to make a larger entity. And they nod and they turn and walk you inside of a very rundown building. You head into the building and down a few sets of stairs. Again, these same-faced men following you. And they're ushering you towards a door. One of them steps in front of you and opens the door. Inside is a small, dingy office, an old metal desk, a hanging light, a file cabinet, and then multiple doors on the wall. All the doors look different. One is hardwood. One is this weird metal. There is a plastic one that looks like a dome. Just doors all over this room. And one of them opens, and through it steps a figure in the plain white mask and the long purple robe, and they turn and close the door behind them. As they're walking in, you are ushered to a seat in front of the desk. The robed figure moves over the desk and sits down and freezes, and the head tilts and looks at your face for a very long moment.

Rev: SELINA: I never thought I'd see you again, but I recognize your face, Jacob Pierle.

Rev: And Mother reaches up and pulls the mask off, revealing the round mouth, black eyes, and purple skin of Selina.

SFX:

OUTRO MUSIC

Carolyn: The Critshow is a Critshow Studios production, edited and produced by Brandon Wentz with music by Jake Pierle. You can find more information about us at thecritshowpodcast.com. To keep up to date with upcoming live shows, contests, and other special events, follow us at The Critshow on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. For even more weekly content, join us at Patreon.com/TheCritshow.